

# Image, Incorporated

A Study of Securities Buildings in Seoul, Korea

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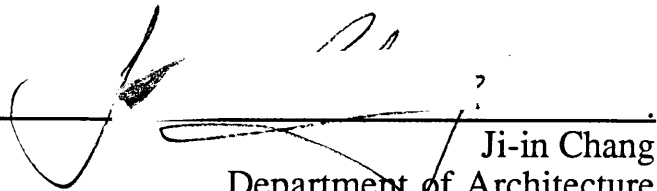
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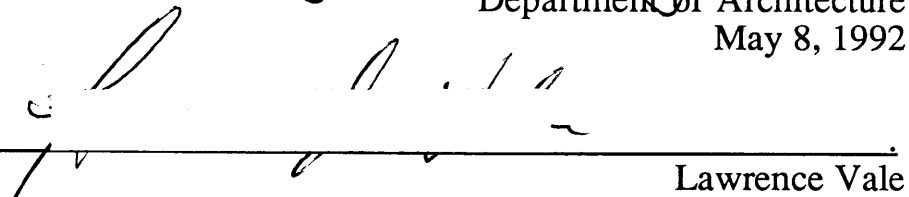
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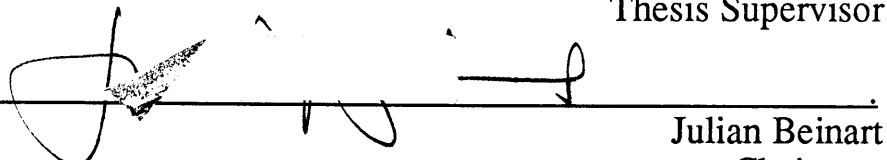
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To  
my parents,  
Aunt Chong-hee and Uncle Kyu-seul,  
and Jung-tae





# **Image, Incorporated**

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## **A Study of Securities Buildings in Seoul, Korea**

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 8, 1992  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Masters of Science in Architecture Studies

### **ABSTRACT**

This study deals with the images of corporate high-rises in Seoul, Korea, the main city of a rapidly growing industrial nation. The questions explored concern mainly the images of office high-rises. Five multi-story headquarters of securities companies were selected specifically to analyze this aspect. By interviewing the architects and managers of the respective companies, the thesis identifies the assumptions behind the designs in an effort to isolate and highlight the underlying meanings for the buildings.

Drawing upon the transcripts of the ten interviews, the study attempts to analyze the following: What are the most powerful underlying images and how do these serve the corporations? Do the interviewees help clarify a useful set of criteria for identifying demands on corporate architecture more generally? Is there some single standard or common underlying ideal in high-rise office design? Given the international nature of the modern business world, is there a viable alternative to architectural conformity to First World trends? In addition, this thesis may clarify the process of choosing the image, identify the influential actors in the process, and show the degree of reliance on images originating from the United States.

The variables of image used in this thesis are as follows:

Image of Economic Success: Clients judge firms by the buildings they inhabit in terms of economic growth, social status, and financial credibility. The firms in turn use their buildings to store up public goodwill by projecting a positive image of themselves.

Image of Visual Distinction: Recognizing that pre-eminence of skyline affects the market, companies desire high visibility for easy identification. Visual distinction serves as a marketing device and also as a corporate logo.

Image of Internationalism: Office towers are thought to be products of the West and therefore not Korean. Although architectural innovation is welcomed, the public may have a negative reaction against a design which seems too reliant on foreign imagery.

Image of Commercialism: The proliferation of "designer buildings" indicates that corporate architecture is heavily reliant on two dimensional flow of images.

Image of Intelligence: The invisible high-technology content of the buildings becomes part of the image of corporate up-to-dateness in the public conscience.

Image Shapers: Although the desire to recover maximum square footage is important, public perception greatly defines the attitudes of architects and clients in deciding the priorities for shaping the image projected by their building.

The conclusion explores the question of identity, and whether the findings of this thesis can be used to develop a viable Korean corporate architecture as an alternative to First World trends.

Thesis Supervisor: Lawrence Vale  
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## Introduction

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*Architecture is not just an art to be exercised with a greater or lesser degree of success. It is a social manifestation. If we want to know why certain things are as they are, in our architecture, we must look to the people; for our buildings as a whole are an image of a people as a whole, although specifically they are the individual image of those whom, as a class, the public has delegated and entrusted its power to build. Therefore by this light, the critical study of our architecture becomes, not a study of art, ... but in reality a study of the social conditions producing it....<sup>1</sup>*

Originated and developed in Chicago and New York, two dominant money centers of the United States, the high-rise corporate tower has its roots in aggressive capitalism. The tower of trade has become an ubiquitous symbol of the twentieth century and a telling sign of the economic philosophy. Ada Louis Huxtable, the former architecture critic of The New York Times, agrees: "No other building type incorporates so many of the forces of the modern world, or has been so expressive of changing belief systems and so responsive to changing tastes and practices. It romanticizes power and the urban condition and celebrates leverage and cash flow."<sup>2</sup> The skyscraper springs from demographic migration and industrialization concentrated in urban areas. The Central Business District (CBD), the

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Sullivan quoted in Leonardo Benevolo, History of Modern Architecture (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), pp. 238 - 239.

<sup>2</sup> Ada Louis Huxtable, The Tall Buildings Artistically Reconsidered (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p.11.

womb of the tall office building, is typically the stage for people with wealth and power to conduct their business. The site for financial, civic and other prominent institutions, the CBD reflects the gregariousness conducive to business transactions.

Kenneth Turney Gibbs in his book Business Architectural Imagery in America, 1870 - 1930 traces the development of the skyscraper and its form. By relating the changes of imagery to the prevalent public opinions at the time, he shows that business has used the skyscraper as another tool for good public relations. A more specific definition of "public opinion" seems to be in order. Gibbs' writings deal mainly with politicians, architectural critics, novelists and others with recourse to the print media. His study reveals how factors, such as technology, economics and aesthetics, have been influenced by the demands of the client and the above-mentioned public. A creation of business enterprise, it projects the desired corporate image like a gigantic advertisement sign. In discussing the change of form and how society is reflected in it, "image" is more appropriate than "form" since the bulk of the skyscraper remains essentially a long tube containing mostly office spaces.<sup>3</sup>

The styles adopted by the American skyscraper during its existence clearly demonstrates its acute sensitivity to current architectural fashion. Wrapped in neo-Gothic at childhood, it joyously experimented with art deco in its adolescence. Swept off its feet in adulthood by internationalism, it has currently reached mid-life when it looks back to the past and nostalgically dabbles with eclecticism. The skyscraper may be accused of many things, but these surely do not include lack of adaptability and responsiveness to the *zeitgeist*. The reasons for this responsiveness may be numerous, but the main motive may spring from the necessity of good business sense to gauge the dominant public mood and opinion. It is

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<sup>3</sup> Piera Scuri, Late-Twentieth-Century Skyscrapers (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990), p. 1.



to the advantage of businesses that occupy the buildings to be on the "right" side of the public; unless the building has historical value, to be associated with an architecture considered to be outmoded and dated may be detrimental to the company's public image.

The corporate tower is, among other attributes, a symbol of financial well-being and a confirmation of prosperity.<sup>4</sup> Keeping in mind that many newly created firms start off in rental office spaces, the act of owning a company building speaks of growth and a certain level of financial maturity. Not content with resting on past laurels, most corporate architecture strives to express visual confidence in a brighter future. This message is aimed not only at the public, but also at the employees working for the firm. Inspiring pride and loyalty, the symbolism and the message inherent in the tall tower may create a positive perception towards the employers.

This thesis assumes the most congenial environment for corporate towers to be in capitalist societies. Chicago, the American city founded on speculation whose real estate once traded in New York, gave birth to the first skyscraper during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Even though technological innovations, such as the elevator, telephone and structural steel frame, were significant factors in reaching new building heights, the underlying driving force was economics. Scarcity of land has often been cited as the most important reason for high-rise developments, but it may not have been crucial for the conception of the skyscraper. Unlike the island of Manhattan, Chicago is a city in the plains whose topography does not restrict horizontal expansion. Yet the city has felt a need to climb higher. One explanation is that the demand for locations with easy access to important facilities and institutions drives up the cost of land, resulting in high density

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, the assumption here is that the office tower is completely occupied. An office tower which stands even partially vacant is a palpable indication of business trouble and financial loss.

commercial land use. The high cost of infrastructure may also constrain horizontal expansion. In expanding economies, the expectation of a profitable return in investments induces property owners to build tall buildings at great expense. This, of course, presupposes the existence of favorable conditions.

If the tall building thrives in capitalism, why are these building types found in socialist countries as well? Jean Gottmann, the noted geographer, remarks that the 1954 edition of the Soviet encyclopedia is critical of the skyscraper's architectural form as well as the social/ economic forces which shaped it. Nonetheless he notes that they had already built two skyscrapers in Moscow, the Moscow State University and Hotel Ukraine buildings, and comments on their similarity to the early quasi-Gothic style skyscrapers in Chicago and New York. The motives for building these tall edifices despite their theoretical objections<sup>5</sup>, he concludes, must come from the powerful urge to be modern. To underline this assumption, Gottmann cites two cases. One is that of Swedish towns of 10,000 to 20,000 inhabitants which, citing self-respect as their reason, desire skyscrapers despite their small size. The second case is made by drawing attention to the appearance of skyscrapers in African cities where scarcity of land cannot be the crucial factor for vertical development.<sup>6</sup> The high-rises, he argues, are also civic emblems acting as highly visual collective symbols for progress.

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<sup>5</sup> "The word that means skyscraper in Russian is defined as a multi-storied, high building, again characteristic of American cities, and its existence is explained by the excessive greed of the capitalists who want to make the most they can out of a piece of real estate. ... There was condemnation of the skyscraper as an architectural style as well as a social and economic phenomenon." (Jean Gottmann, "The Skyscraper Amid the Sprawl" in (eds) Jean Gottmann and Robert A. Harper, Metropolis on the Move: Geographers Look at Urban Sprawl. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967, p.130.)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

This study has endeavored to deal with the skyscraper phenomenon in the main city of a rapidly growing industrial nation: Seoul, Korea. The questions explored concern mainly the images of office high-rises. Five multi-story headquarters of securities companies were selected specifically to analyze this aspect. Designed in the mid-eighties, all but one of the buildings are still under construction. By interviewing the architects and managers of the respective companies, the idea is to identify the assumptions which underlie the design for the buildings. The transcripts of the interviews, conducted during January 1992, are included in the Appendix. By drawing on the interviews, the underlying meanings are isolated and highlighted. For this purpose, reference sources -- such as contemporary architectural journals and books, works of business management and social studies, company annual reports -- have been most helpful in understanding the diverse issues related to the subject.

Drawing upon the transcripts of the ten interviews, the study attempts to analyze the following: What are the most powerful underlying images and how do these serve the corporations? Do the interviewees help clarify a useful set of criteria for identifying demands on corporate architecture more generally? Is there some standard or common underlying ideal in high-rise office design? Given the international nature of the modern business world, is there a viable alternative to architectural conformity to First World trends?

The study is divided into two sections. The first chapter deals with background information about Korean society and the corporations to which the buildings must relate and respond. The fact that four out of the five security companies are owned by large conglomerates, or *chaebols*, adds additional interest in discovering what the desired images are. It is interesting to see whether their role in the Korean economy and their relationship with the public affect the messages of the corporate buildings. The second chapter looks at the

various images projected by the buildings. Relying on ten interviews of Korean architects and corporate managers, their comments are used to determine which aspects are deemed to be most relevant or significant to them. At the same time, this thesis investigates how the interests of client, architect, and society interact in the business districts in Seoul. Through the discussions it becomes clear that all the five corporate buildings are used as image-forming vehicles for the companies within the narrow vocabulary of corporate architecture.

## **Operational Definition of Terms**

There is a vast literature about modern architecture started by influential chroniclers such as Sigfried Giedion, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and Nikolaus Pevsner. Even after much copious writing and heated debate among illustrious scholars, there remain tricky questions as to what constitutes "modern architecture". It would be inappropriate to enter the discussion in this thesis, but the topic of corporate architecture requires some clarifications on the matter. As all the five buildings were designed and constructed during the 1980s, the interviews and text make references to "modern" and "postmodern" architecture. Korean and American architects, as well as corporate managers and others, use the terms loosely throughout their discussion of high-rise office buildings. As stated earlier, both terms are difficult to define in specific detail, and many writers on the subject have agreed to disagree on the finer points of definition about styles. For the purpose of this thesis, the following operational definitions will be used:

"Modern architecture": Although "modern" architecture encompasses a great range of buildings, this study will use the term in a severely limited way. American high-rise

office buildings from around 1925 onwards will be interchangeably called as either "modern" or "international". These are characterized by a predominantly rectangular form, often adhering to a pure geometry. They are best represented by buildings such as the Seagram Building (Mies van der Rohe and Johnson, 1954 - 58), the World Trade Center (Yama- saki / Roth, 1976), the John Hancock Tower (I.M. Pei & Partners, 1967 - 76), among others. Buildings such as the Citicorp Center (Hugh Stubbins, 1974 - 77) with its unusual slanted roof treatment will be included under this category as "late modern". This categorization involves subjective decisions as it occupies the netherworld between "pure modern" and "postmodern" tall buildings.

"Postmodern architecture": Since roughly 1965 (some historians would give an earlier date), architects began reacting against the austerity of modernism by championing populism and eclecticism. Representative office high-rises are the AT&T building (Johnson/ Burgee, 1979 - 84), North Western Terminal Building (Murphy/ Jahn,



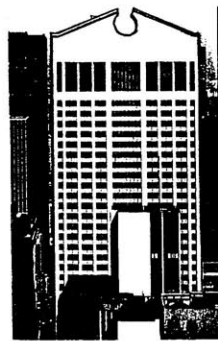
*Figure 1  
Seagram Building  
New York  
(trace, p. 14)*



*Figure 2  
Citicorp Center  
New York  
(trace, p. 129)*

1979 - 86), Yerba Buena (Cesar Pelli, under construction since 1985: completion date 1993), among others.

"Image": This term will mean the general impression, including associations and suggestions, that the building leaves on the observer.<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of the thesis, the observer will mean the architects and managers of corporations involved in the design and construction of high-rise office buildings.



*Figure 3  
AT&T building  
New York  
(trace, p. 90)*

"Corporate architecture": This term is restricted to tall office buildings providing mainly office spaces for business purposes. Correspondingly, "corporate managers" are building clients acting for the new buildings in question.

Although, undoubtedly, other groups of the society are also influential in the making of modern Korean architecture, this thesis will concentrate solely on the corporate world.



*Figure 4  
Bank of the  
Southwest Tower  
Houston  
(trace, p. 18)*

<sup>7</sup> Based on the definition in Kenneth Turney Gibbs, Business Architectural Imagery in America, 1870 - 1930 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984), p. 6.

The financial districts in Seoul will be used to trace the linkages between the taste cultures of the Korean business elite and their architects, the built environment, and the global cities of the industrial capitalist United States. The purpose is to understand the sources for corporate architectural images and to demonstrate how these are used to express a new identity.

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## Chapter One

### Taking Stock

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Capital cities tend to play an important role in the psyche of a nation. Who can think of Britain, France and Japan without mentioning London, Paris and Tokyo? So it is with Korea and Seoul; the capital is the engine of the nation, the cradle of most cultural, social and political developments, and the showcase for Korean achievements and aspirations. Unlike other capitals, such as Canberra and Brasilia, which are the centers for political and administrative but not cultural activities, Seoul is the undisputed head of the urban hierarchy in most respects. With a history of 600 years as the heart of the nation, its place in the minds of the people is firmly established. "If you have a son, send him to Seoul," is an old saying that clarifies the city's dominant position in the Korean society. In fact, a fall from power is still punished with exile from Seoul as a form of deprivation.<sup>8</sup> Seoul is where all the elite universities are located; the corridors to political and economic power are broader and shorter within the boundaries of the city. All the new technological advances, innovations and latest fashions first appear on its streets before moving to other parts of Korea.

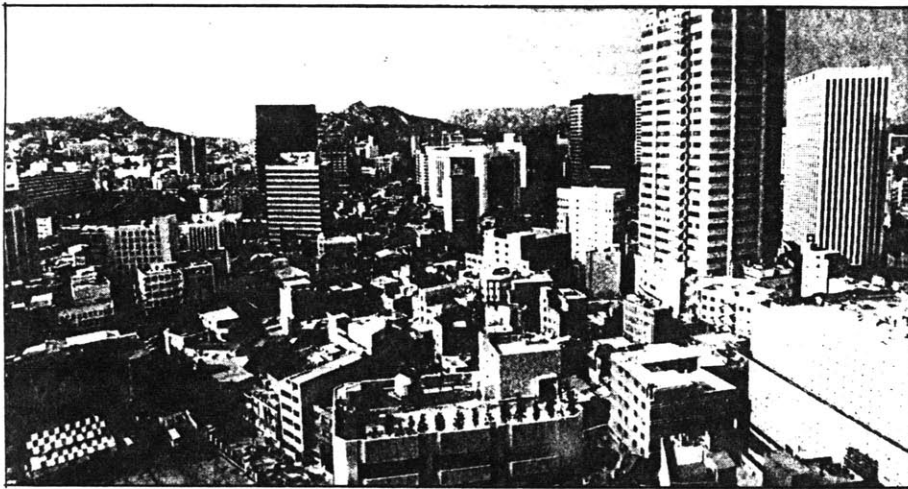
Having whole-heartedly embraced the idea of international trade and private enterprise as a means for economic progress, many South Korean cities are busily building their proud monuments to success. No other city, however, can surpass Seoul in national importance and prominence. Home to almost one quarter of the population of South Korea, Seoul is where most commercial, governmental and cultural activities take place. Even so, it is not a

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<sup>8</sup> See the case of former President Chun who spent two years (1990 - 91) in exile at an isolated Buddhist temple outside Seoul.



beautiful city; negligence under the Japanese followed by the ravages of the Korean War destroyed most buildings from earlier times. The hurriedly rebuilt city does not have the picturesque charm of the Italian towns, nor the bold radicalness of Haussmann's vision. Modern city planning ideas have been implemented only recently and, even now, have had only limited impact on the overall look of the metropolis. The majority of its inhabitants were too preoccupied with building a new nation to worry about aesthetics. Only recently have Seoulites found the time to give more than a fleeting thought to architecture and the built environment around them.



*Figure 5*  
*Seoul's commercial district*

Although concern for Seoul's environment has been voiced before, it was no more effective than a cry in the wilderness. Architects and city planners would periodically emerge with a design proposal, but their voices would soon be drowned by trade balance sheets and export projections, not to mention political upheavals and uncertainties. The catalyst for greater environmental concern came with the preparation for the 1986 Asian Games and, more forcefully, the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. Suddenly, the way Seoul looked and appeared became a national priority. Beautification programs required the cleaning of the building facades facing major thoroughfares by removing the grime caused

by air-pollution. Politicians and the media bombarded the public with news about progress made so far, and every conscientious citizen was exhorted to help improve Seoul's image before global media attention was focused on it. Holding the Olympics in Seoul can be said to have raised the level of public awareness regarding the urban environment by linking it to economic development. The government made countless comparisons of Seoul to Western cities. The campaigns alerted the public to the benefits of city planning, and awakened a desire to catch up with the West not only on economic terms but in the environmental aspects as well. "Seoul now needs to become a human-oriented city, not an economy-oriented one," said Choe Byung Sun, head of urban development at the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements (KRIHS) in 1988.<sup>9</sup>

## The Chaebols

The *chaebol*, typically controlled by immediate family members or relatives, is a conglomerate consisting of at least three diversified industries and/ or business enterprises held together as one distinct group.<sup>10</sup> Some of the chaebols have reached a stage where they are able to compete in the world market with international companies. Samsung and Hyundai, for example, are listed in Fortune magazine as being among the fifty largest business firms in the world.<sup>11</sup> SsangYong, whose securities building is discussed in this thesis, is the sixth largest chaebol in Korea. The company has constructed the Raffles City

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Lee, "Seoul: From Wartime Rubble to Olympic Host", Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 September 1988, p.61.

<sup>10</sup> Richard M. Steers, Yoo Keun Shin, Gerardo R. Ungson, The Chaebol: Korea's New Industrial Might. New York: Harper & Row, 1989, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Carter J. Eckert, Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson, Edward W. Wagner, Korea Old and New: A History (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1990), p. 402.

Complex in Singapore (including the tallest hotel in the world), the Plaza Indonesia (the largest building complex in Indonesia), the Omariya Riyadh office in Saudi Arabia, the Al-Shaheed Faisal College and the Shamaishani Center in Jordan, and the Maghreb highway in Kuwait. By 1985 the combined sales of the top five chaebols accounted for 66% of South Korea's GNP. The figure increases to 80% for the top ten conglomerates.<sup>12</sup>

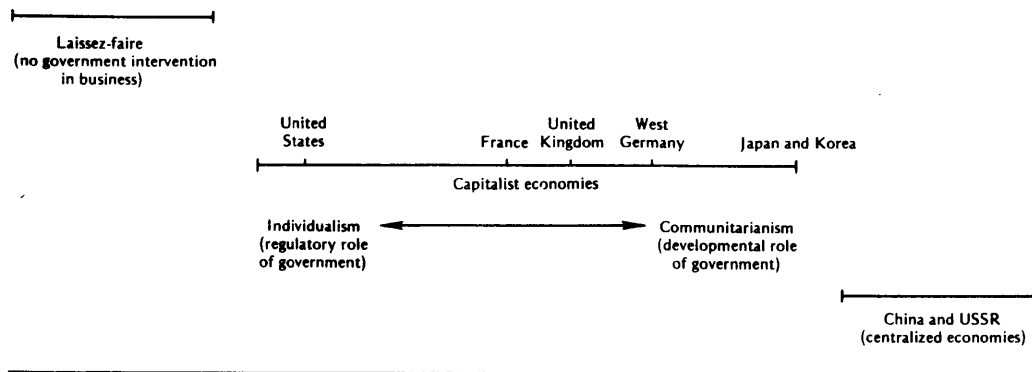
Despite the success and importance in the national economy, the chaebol is viewed with suspicion and distrust by the Korean people at large. In fact, criticism has come from both the left and the center, steadily multiplying in recent years. This is acknowledged even by the chairman of the Daewoo Group, Kim Woo-Choong: "Our country's businessmen have not been able to acquire public esteem. On the contrary, [they] have been denounced or kept at a safe distance with feigned respect."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the chairman of Hyundai, Chung Ju Yung admitted that the business elites were seen as "criminals" by the larger society.<sup>14</sup> The problem stems from the moral standing of the chaebols who, in addition to supporting authoritarian politics, were reluctant to share their wealth with other classes, especially the working class, through increased workers' wages in keeping with greater corporate profits. The lack of social responsibility of the business elites was also underscored by their land-warehousing practices which have priced many low and middle income groups out of the housing market. The numerous intermarriages of prominent chaebol families to those of powerful politicians' have further reinforced the negative public perception of a pervasive business/ government alliance.

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<sup>12</sup> Carter J. Eckert, "The South Korean Bourgeoisie: A Class in Search for Hegemony" in the Journal of Korean Studies, vol. 7, 1990. p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> Eckert, "The South Korean Bourgeoisie", p. 115

<sup>14</sup> "Korea's Powerhouses under Siege", Business Week, Nov. 20, 1989, pp. 52, 55.



*Source:* The representation of capitalist economies as individualistic or communitarianistic is partly based on George C. Lodge, "Roles and Relationships of Business and Government," *Business in the Contemporary World* 1 (2[Winter 1989]): 93-108.

*Table*  
*Patterns of Business-Government Relationships*

From the view of the business elite, their support of government is necessary for their survival. In South Korea, as in most countries, the government tries to regulate businesses which prefer minimum regulation. The nature and scope of government interventions vary considerably from place to place. To a great extent, Korean capitalism is largely a creation of the government. The government/ business relationship is clearly characterized by domination and submission, where government can make or break businesses at will.<sup>15</sup> The pattern was established during the Park regime (1961 - 79) which initiated the export driven development of the national economy. Various tax and investment incentives, inexpensive government credit, and government-guaranteed foreign loans were offered to businesses. Opportunities were created, both formally and informally, for carefully selected target industries which were judged to be instrumental in achieving rapid national growth. The government went a step further by isolating certain *target companies*<sup>16</sup> which

<sup>15</sup> Although this assertion seems strongly phrased, it is supported by the case of Kukje Group, the seventh largest chaebol during the Chun presidency (1981 - 88). Like most chaebols, it was highly leveraged and under considerable debt to the government. After falling into disfavor by refusing to pay informal political "contributions", the conglomerate was forced into bankruptcy in 1985 when the Bank of Korea refused to honor Kukje's checks.

<sup>16</sup> Steers, p. 19.

were given special assistance to speed their development. This, of course, led to the public perception that these favored companies were given an unfair advantage over other struggling firms.

The Korean business elite maintain international contacts through the nature of their work. For this reason, they are frequently exposed to the lifestyles of their Western counterparts. They are therefore the most likely and influential group in the importation and dissemination of international corporate culture in Korea. The images of successful corporate architecture are also brought via this route. More importantly, the chaebols are the clients of architects commissioned to design for the Korean corporations. The following chapter will touch upon the question of whether the standing of the chaebol in the Korean society has any influence in the creation of the corporate image for the tall buildings. Comments by architects and managers, made during the ten interviews conducted about the designs for securities company headquarters, will be studied to identify the ingredients necessary for creating their particular brand of corporate image. In addition, this thesis may clarify the process of choosing the image, identify the influential actors in the process, and show the degree of reliance on images originating from the United States.

## **Korea and Modernity**

The United States has been a dominant influence on the economy and politics of South Korea since 1945. The protector-protected relationship<sup>17</sup> between the two countries

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<sup>17</sup> After the Korean War (1950 - 53), the American army maintains permanent military bases in Korea. The US, the biggest market for Korean exports, has also been a major supplier of financial aid and

underwent change in the late 1980s due to events in remote countries like Poland and East Germany; the dissolution of the Communist governments began altering the balance of power established since the second World War. The disintegration of the Soviet Union deeply affected the special geo-political situation which has made Korea a recipient of special attention by the US and its former co-superpower and rival. Considering the historic and economic ties, the United States and neighboring Japan are the role models for modern development. Europe, both geographically and culturally distant, is rarely mentioned. Although Korea still harbors an historic distrust towards Japan<sup>18</sup>, its prominent economic status simply cannot be ignored. Japan demonstrated that, through hard work and enterprise, attaining the level of American prosperity is possible. In contrast to the United States, however, any cultural influences perceived to emanate from Japan are suspiciously scrutinized and guarded against. Despite the strong economic ties between the two neighbors, the Korean people see the US as being the more trusted and acceptable

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technological knowledge which has facilitated the growth of the Korean economy. Consequently, the political standing of the Americans in Korea is great.

<sup>18</sup> A target of Japanese pirates from the beginning of its history, Korea (or Choson, as it was called at the time) suffered successive Japanese military invasions led by Hideyoshi Toyotomi in the fifteenth century. These had a devastating effect on the flowering of Korean culture. After waging seven years of destruction, the Japanese army was vanquished and its power so diminished that it was centuries before it could invade Korea again. The invasions nevertheless gave a boost to Japanese culture. The retreating Japanese army took books on Oriental medicine, works on Neo-Confucianism, works of art as well as Korean artisans and technicians. The economic setback to Choson was enormous. The country closed its doors to all foreign influences, becoming known as a "Hermit Kingdom". Conflict arose again in the late nineteenth century when the Japanese succeeded in gaining a foothold in the peninsula. They eventually seized outright control with the establishment of the Residency-General on February 1, 1906. Four years later, Japan formally annexed Choson. Resistance against colonialism continued strong during the 36-years of Japanese occupation. Every part of the society became involved in the struggle. The Koreans began to develop a true national consciousness and a fierce national pride. The people were unified in the collective pursuit of a common goal: national independence. At the surrender of Japan in 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union divided the peninsula along the 38th parallel.

source for technological and cultural innovations. Even though anti-American feelings have ebbed and flowed recently due to economic and political frictions, Korean businesses are very conscious of their US counterparts as models for advancement.

Adopting role models provides a tangible goal. The less positive side effect is an uneasy sense of inferiority and hesitancy to trust oneself. Following this perception, Koreans seem to equate, either consciously or subconsciously, "modernity"<sup>19</sup> to "superiority". In regard to corporate architecture, this is a veritable gut reaction by both corporate managers and architects which leaves hardly any time to ask whether it is justified on all grounds in all instances. A familiar tale repeated with a resigned shrug among domestic architects and engineers illustrates this attitude. Until recently Korean construction companies were passed over in favor of foreign expertise concerning high-rise projects in Seoul. This happened even as Korean construction firms were routinely building massive structures in the Middle East and South-East Asia. Incongruously, while Korean construction companies went abroad to work on skyscrapers in Singapore and Malaysia, American or Japanese firms were invited to do similar tasks in Seoul.

## **The Five Securities Companies**

As shown more clearly later on in the chapter, securities companies in Korea often belong to chaebol groups. During the recent stock market boom in the late 1980s<sup>20</sup>, major firms decided to build their own headquarters in either Myongdong or Yoido, two business districts in Seoul. Myongdong is where business, shopping, and entertainment areas are

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<sup>19</sup> "Modernity" in this instance means both "modern" and "postmodern".

<sup>20</sup> The boom has since turned to bust with continuing slump of the Korean stockmarket.

concentrated. Close to the City Hall which can be considered the city center, the financial district is within walking proximity of various newspaper offices, deluxe hotels, the Sejong Cultural Center, ancient palaces and several foreign embassies. The site for the new Dong Ah Life Insurance and Securities Company headquarters is located three blocks away from the City Hall. The Life Insurance Co., started in 1973 under a different name, was absorbed by the Dong Ah Group in 1983. Expected to be completed in 1992, the new building is to be occupied by both Insurance and Securities companies.

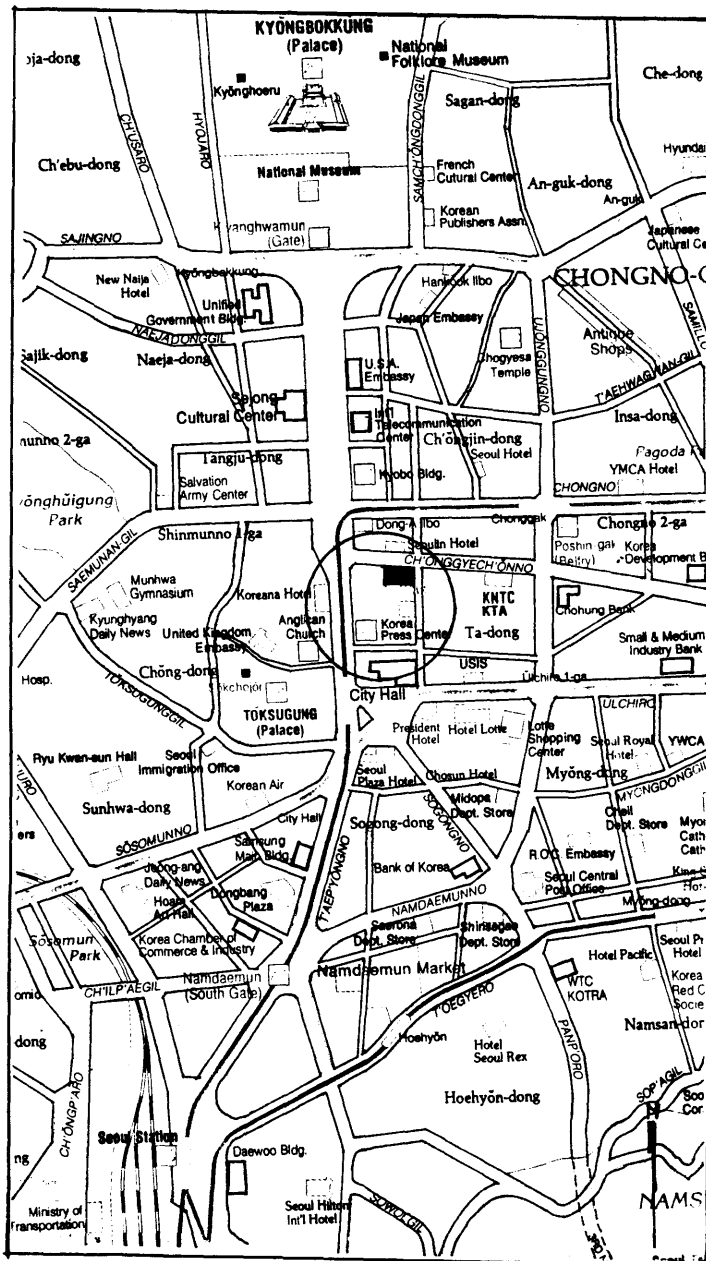


Figure 6  
Map of Seoul's CBD showing the location  
of Dong Ah Life Insurance and Securities building



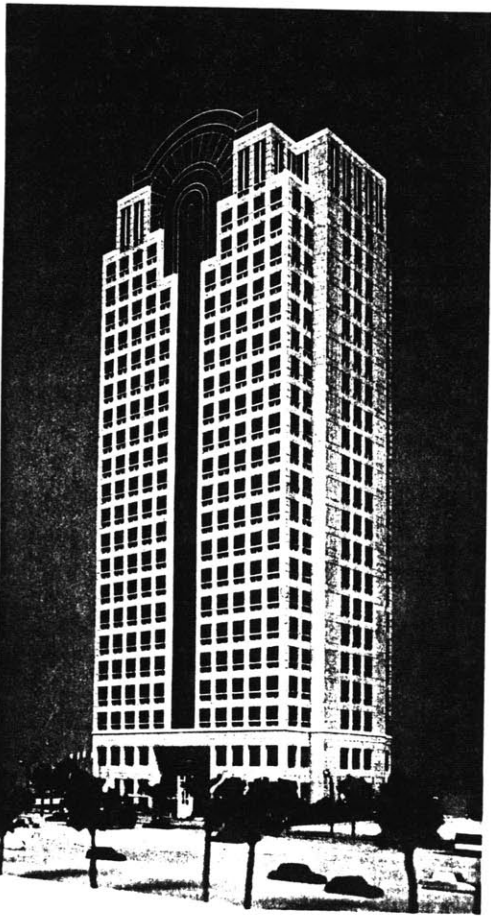
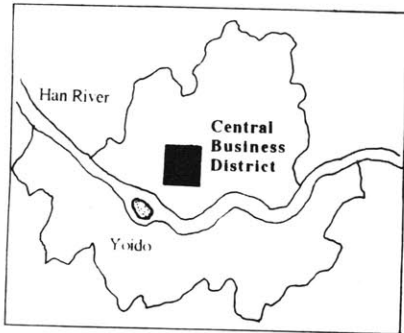
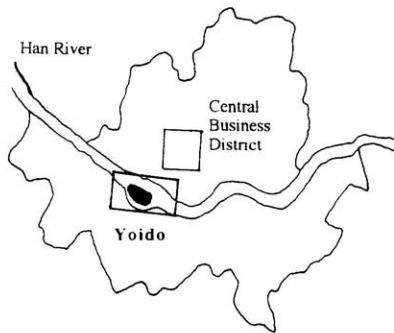


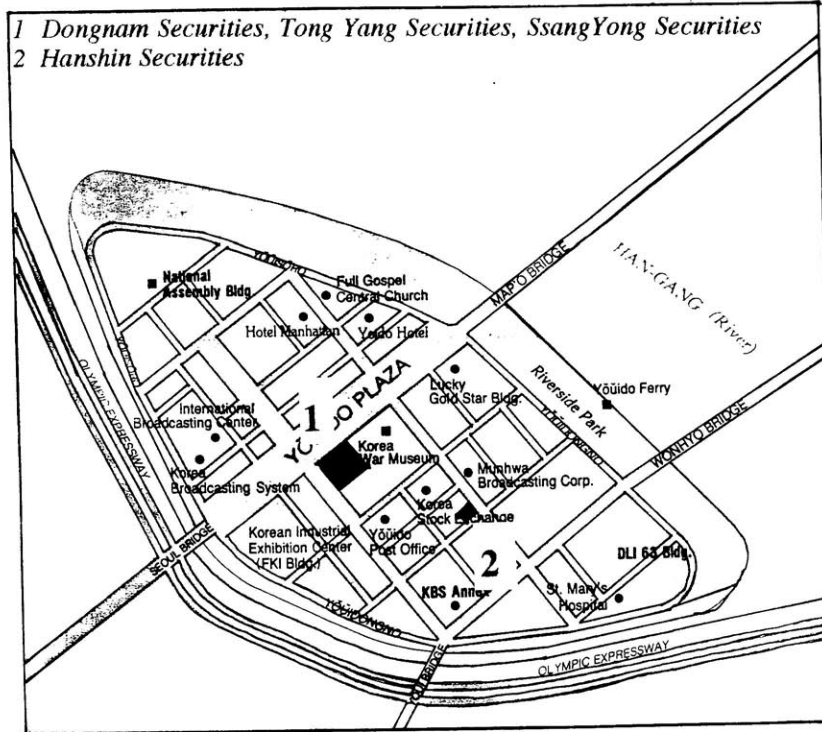
Figure 7  
Location of the CBD in Seoul

Figure 8  
Dong Ah Life Insurance and Securities building

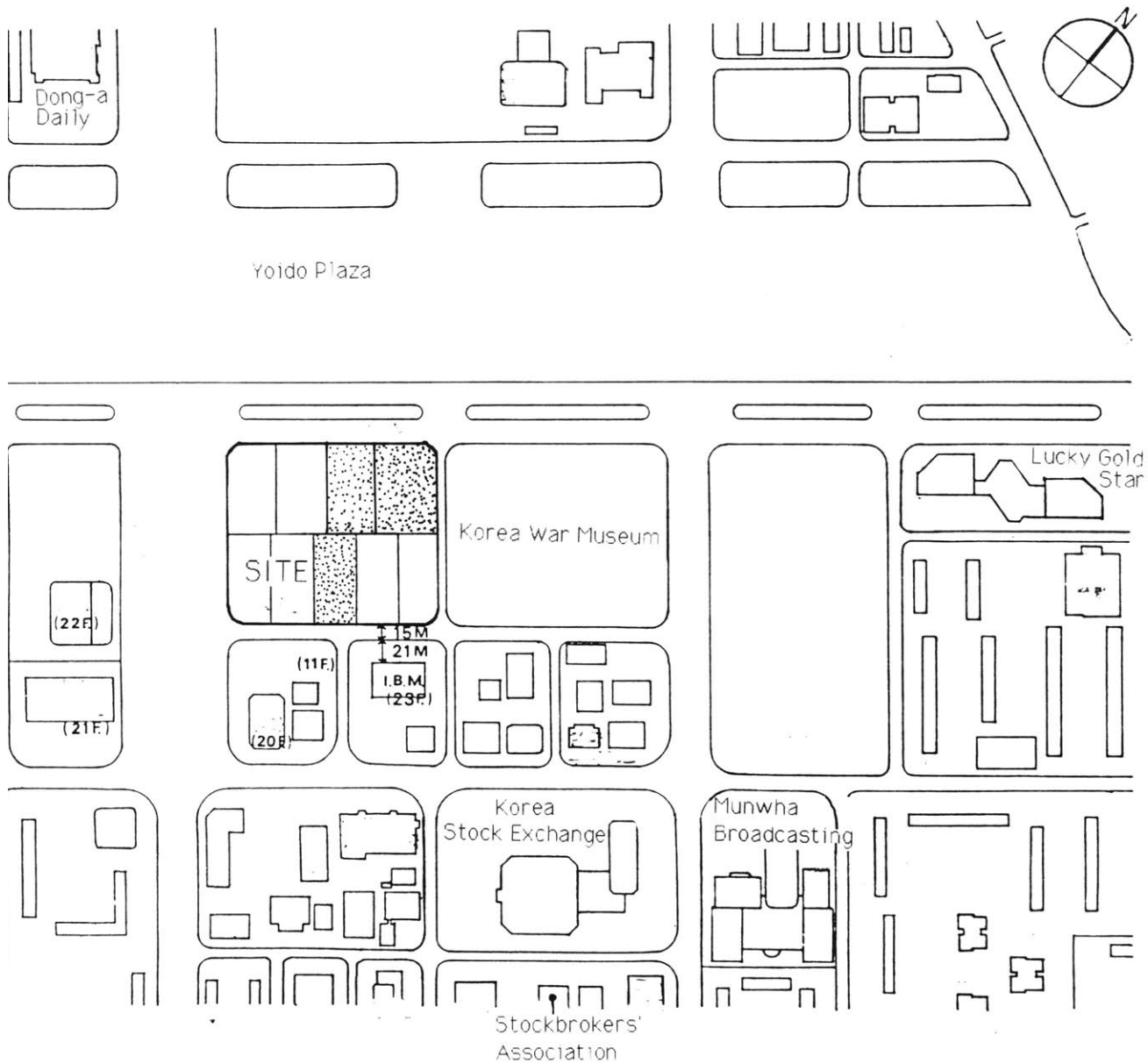
For the purpose of alleviating the crowded downtown Seoul, the island of Yoido has been developed into a government and financial center. Home to the National Assembly, the Korea Stock Exchange, large corporate headquarters, and broadcasting stations, it is commonly called the "Manhattan of Korea". The tallest building in Asia until few years ago, Daehan Life Insurance Building, is also situated here. Yoido Plaza provided Seoulites with one of the largest open spaces in the crowded city; it is bordered by the three securities buildings -- Dongnam, Tong Yang and SsangYong. Hanshin, the only completed building in the study, is across the street from the Korea Stock Exchange.



*Figure 9*  
*Location of Yoido in Seoul*



*Figure 10*  
*Map of Yoido showing the location of the four securities buildings*



*Figure 11*  
 Detailed location plan of the three securities buildings in Yoido  
 (top: Dongnam, SsangYong; bottom: Tong Yang)

A brief delineation of the company profiles may be helpful in putting them in the context of Korean business. Other than the previously mentioned Dong Ah Life Insurance and Securities Company, the following are the other four companies whose buildings are

studied in this thesis. Dongnam Securities Company was established in 1962. It is the only securities company of the five which is not part of a large conglomerate. Hanshin Securities Company was established in December 1968 and belongs to the Dongwon Group consisting of ten affiliate companies.<sup>21</sup> Tong Yang Securities Company is a core financial business arm of the Tong Yang Group together with eight other financial services institutions.<sup>22</sup> Founded in 1962 under a different name, the securities company was acquired by Tong Yang Group in 1984. SsangYong Investment & Securities Company was established in 1984 as a core company of the SsangYong Group, the sixth largest business group in Korea.<sup>23</sup> SsangYong Investment & Securities Co. is one of the five leading securities houses in Korea.



*Figure 12*  
*Photograph of Yoido site*

<sup>21</sup> These deal with foods, cold storage, economic research, construction, finance, investment management, optical, education foundation

<sup>22</sup> Tong Yang Group consists of fifteen companies involved in cement, confectionary, investment and finance, venture capital, capital management, future trading, life insurance, data communication, economic research, shipping, education foundation

<sup>23</sup> The conglomerate consists of nineteen companies dealing with cement, computer systems, engineering, oil refinery, machinery works, construction, heavy and precision industries, motor, research, paper, investment management, insurance, investment & securities, resort, shipping



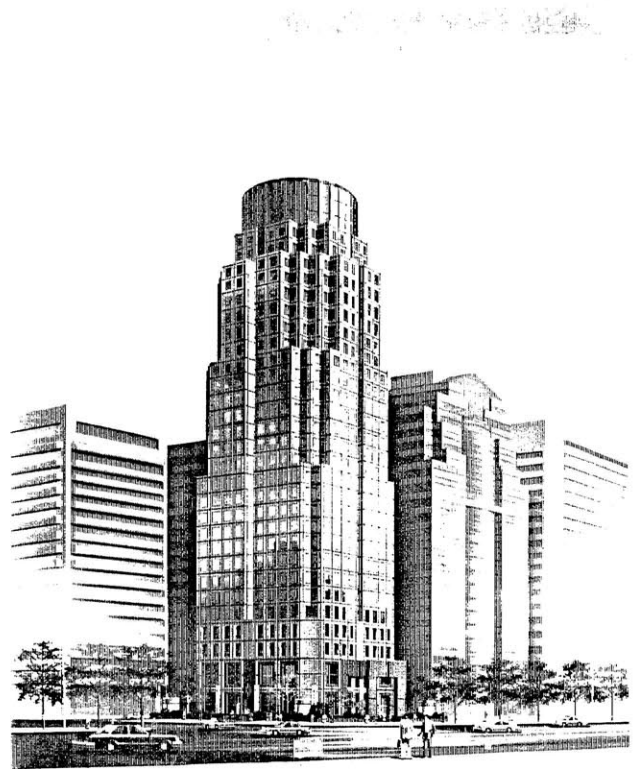
Figure 13  
Dongnam Securities building (left)



Figure 14  
Hanshin Securities building (right)



*Figure 15*  
*Tong Yang Securities building (left)*



*Figure 16*  
*SsangYong Securities building (right)*

The buildings, in which the corporations conduct their business, are manifestations of corporate identity. This is more so in case of corporate headquarters which are specifically tailored to a single company. The following chapter will explore the many images which the corporate tower projects.

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## Chapter Two

### The Images of the Corporate Tower

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Corporate towers are depicted not only in architectural journals but also in company reports, business cards, and currency notes. Images are forms of pictorial shorthand, conveying specific meanings generally understood by the society. This chapter attempts to decipher and identify the meanings through the study of five Korean corporate towers. As headquarters, the buildings are like faces by which the public identifies the organizations. In this respect, headquarters are more eloquent conveyors of corporate intentions than speculative offices with anonymous occupants. Each firm has an opportunity to make personal statements about itself: "The company that wants to project an image in its brochures will spend a great deal of money on designers for its stationery and use high quality paper for the letterhead of the president of the corporation or for their merchandising programmes. Therefore, when they are trying to make a statement, the building that they are in makes just as important a statement if not a more important statement."<sup>24</sup>

Before discussing the various statements made by buildings, it may be worthwhile to understand how meaning is conveyed through architecture. Unlike painting, a building serves a practical function as well as a symbolic one. The philosopher Nelson Goodman differentiates the building which is a work of art from the one which is not by its ability to signify in some way. He proposes that a building can have meaning in four major categories: denotation, exemplification, expression, and mediated reference.<sup>25</sup> To clarify

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<sup>24</sup> George Klein, head of Park Tower Realty Corporation in Manhattan, quoted in Stephen Games, Behind the Façade (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985), p. 60.

<sup>25</sup> Nelson Goodman, "How Buildings Mean" in Reconceptions in Philosophy, 1988.

each term here, the five securities buildings in this thesis will be used as examples. Most of the following will be mentioned again later. In short, the company name on top of Hanshin building comes under the category of denotation, while the treatment of the base and top of Dong Ah building exemplifies distinctiveness on both street level and skyline. The SsangYong building both exemplifies and expresses by having a literal and a metaphorical meaning. The form exemplifies a candle and expresses peace and light. This building also refers to something through a chain of referential links ( i.e.: SsangYong = candle = peace & light) which are called mediated references.

This chapter is built upon the ten interviews. Thoroughly combed for statements about corporations, the many strands of thoughts and intentions concerning the corporate image have been separated into six distinct groups. They are as follows: economic success, visual distinction, internationalism, image shapers, commercialism, and intelligent building. Although by no means comprehensive, they represent the strongest concerns expressed by the ten Korean architects and managers interviewed. Instead of restricting the arguments to Korea alone, references are made to wellknown precedents in the US. In this way, the images of the corporate tower in each country can be compared and contrasted between the two countries.

## **Image of Economic Success**

"A tall building signifies a growing firm," says SsangYong's section chief Bok-Man Kim.<sup>26</sup> The high-rise functions as a symbol of fiscal well-being. Images of New York

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26 See Appendix: Interview Transcript. Hereafter all references to the transcript will be marked by an asterisk (\*) instead of a footnote number



with clusters of skyscrapers talk of growth, business and the excitement of metropolitan life. "A tall building," American engineer and strong supporter of super-skyscrapers, Vincent De Simone, agrees, "is like a rocket to the moon -- it reflects a people's ambition and confidence."<sup>27</sup> New York, and more specifically Manhattan, reflects the dream of economic ambition; the business center of the world. The symbolism inherent in Manhattan is transposed to Yoido, which is, as already mentioned, referred to by many as "Manhattan of Korea". This term offers glimpses of several things; the first is the reliance on the US to supply the imagery needed. The second indicates an ambition of becoming another global financial center. The third would refer only to the dense crowding of high-rise blocks which would resemble the canyon like urban environment of New York.

The mini-Manhattan is essentially a creation of rapid economic growth in the 1970s. Seoul acts as the stage for the accumulation of capital at all levels -- regional, national, and international -- by offering advantageous conditions. It acts as the central place for the concentration of financial, commercial and industrial power and decision making. Simultaneously, the metropolis also plays the role of diffuser of lifestyles, customs, tastes, fashions and consumer habits of modern industrial society.<sup>28</sup> The rapid changes in the society have brought many benefits among which the rise of living standard and income is the most appreciated and cherished by the Koreans. The impact of Western influence has another dimension, however. The painful years of colonial domination by the Japanese started with increased foreign influence, and any overt foreign reliance triggers a deep seated unease about national sovereignty and cultural independence. "Despite pride in the country's new international economic status, the process of private capital accumulation in

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Irace, p. 24: from J.B. Tucker, "Superskyscrapers: Aiming for 200 Stories", High Technology (January, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> Warwick Armstrong and T.G. McGee, Theatres of Accumulation: Studies in Asian and Latin American Urbanization (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 41.

Korea taking place not only through a dependence on the state but also through a dependence on foreign capital, technology and markets has left a number of South Koreans feeling uncomfortable ...."<sup>29</sup> Students and the intellectual elite are concerned about what they fear to be a tradeoff between national identity for economic growth.

The images and memories evoked by the skyscrapers are created and harnessed by business people who are served by the buildings. Most are venues for value creation, and the skyscraper has been described accordingly as "a machine for making money"<sup>30</sup> by William Corbett in 1920. Although not necessarily confined to this one function, it is an accurate --if not complete -- summation of the corporate building. At the same time as being a product and a producer of surplus value, the high-rise building serves as a status symbol. Especially in the case of corporate headquarters, famous architects and costly materials produce luxurious effects of conspicuous consumption. The purpose is to discreetly reaffirm to the public the wealth which finances and maintains the tall tower.

In terms of value creation, communication equals good architecture. American developer Gerald Hines' remark that "good architecture is a solid professional investment"<sup>31</sup> alludes to the profitability of transmitting the "right" message. Indeed, in order to project an image of success, the corporate headquarters itself must appear successful. Success is plainly so profitable that investment in image-building becomes as important as investment in new

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<sup>29</sup> Eckert, "The South Korean Bourgeoisie", pp. 139 -140.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Scuri, p. 16: from W.C. Clark and J. I. Kingston, The Skyscraper: A Study in the Economic Height of Modern Office Building (New York and Cleveland: American Institute of Steel Construction, 1930), p. 79 - 80.

<sup>31</sup> Fulvio Irace, Emerging Skylines: The New American Skyscrapers (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1990), p. 17.

plant and technology.<sup>32</sup> One company in the "Manhattan of Korea" has deliberately chosen image over economic and spatial efficiency. SsangYong's section chief Kim readily admits that his company's American designed building is not economical, because it does not exploit the maximum buildable floor area and also has a very high core-to-space ratio. The dimensions of the typical floor plan are not long enough to accommodate the traditional Korean working hierarchy<sup>33</sup>. New recruits and office ladies sit closest to the door, while



*Figure 17*

*A typical office layout*

*The person of highest status sits closest to the window. Each desk away from him/her indicates a lower rank. At the farthest end sit the secretaries and new employees.*

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<sup>32</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989), p. 288.

<sup>33</sup> The Korean working hierarchy has its roots in Confucianism, a moral and ethical system which used to have the status of a state cult until the early twentieth century. The Confucian society emphasized hierarchical social relationship, filial piety and patriotism. The extended family was the basis of social and economic life, stressing the role of each according to the five cardinal rules. The foundations of the ideal society were: 1) absolute loyalty to the ruler, 2) filial piety for the parents, 3) obedience of the wife towards her husband, 4) respect of seniority, and 5) mutual trust between friends. The five cardinal rules of the moral and ethical system still apply to the modern society. In business, this translates to: 1) strong commitment to the company, 2) emphasis on family and family owned companies, 3) low status of the women in the workplace, 4) salary and promotion determined by seniority, and 5) business activities based stronger on person relationships than written contracts. (Steers, pp. 13 - 15.)

each desk denotes an increase in seniority progressing towards the window seat.<sup>34</sup> The team leader can supervise at a glance all subordinates from his/ her seat. Each working group, which includes many levels of hierarchy, has a special cluster of desks which is distinctly separate from the neighboring team's. The offices in the new building apparently come short of accommodating this layout within a single space.

Repeatedly, both company managers and architects have explicitly stated that the corporate image must stand for success, quality, and credibility. This need comes from an idealized reflection of corporate goals which is not necessarily confined to a single country: "to compete and survive in a capitalistic society, to provide jobs, to manufacture and sell a product or service, to represent the best of the profit motive, to support the national and world economies, and to contribute to the well-being of human kind"<sup>35</sup>. As mentioned before, however, the public often hold a negative image of business; they suspect corporations to be more interested in the profit motive than the welfare of the consumers. The arguments discussed in the previous chapter can be broken down into three major interrelated reasons for the general unpopularity of the chaebols.<sup>36</sup> First, as in Japan and

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<sup>34</sup> Although the traditional hierarchy is much criticized (for inbuilt sexism, for example), its structure cannot be changed so easily by ignoring it in the layout for an office space.

<sup>35</sup> James G. Gray, Jr, Managing the Corporate Image: the Key to Public Trust (Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 1986), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> The comparable counterparts to the Korean chaebol are the *zaibatsu* in Japan and the conglomerate in the United States. The emphasis on family membership to qualify for top management positions have resulted in nepotism and cliquish exclusiveness. In this regard, the presidents of each company can be seen as modern versions of kings governed over by the modern version of an emperor, the CEO of the firm. This parallel is carried to family life, where intermarriage between members of leading chaebols is leading to increased consolidation of wealth among a few select groups of people. The chaebols can be characterized as having "1) family control and management, 2) paternalistic leadership, 3) centralized planning and

the United States, Big Business is stained with the suspicion that the wealth is amassed through unfair advantage or sycophantic relationship with the government. Second, the chaebols are not particularly noted for actively investing in the welfare of their workers. This has spread the notion of the exploited laborers, which persists despite significant improvement of work conditions brought about by recent labor union activities. The third reason comes from the historical fact that the chaebols have never initiated any progressive political changes in Korea.<sup>37</sup> Traditionally supportive of the status quo, they have always stood with the government against activist students, workers, and the frustrated middle class. Their alliance with unpopular authoritarianism has tarnished the business elite's moral standing by demonstrating clearly that profit matters above everything else.

The negative view of Big Business is not confined to the Korean arena. Talking about the American business image, Gray writes: "The widely held public view is that the business/government alliance allows for tax loopholes, high-salaried leaders, influence buyers, and expanding profits. The public believes it is at the mercy of both government and big business."<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to observe in the interviews that the corporate image is aimed less at other business institutions than at the public at large. Although this may also mean that businesses are thinking of securing potential clients, the intention seems to create legitimacy and store up on public good-will. The tall building is a beacon amidst a sea of shifting public opinion, designed to project a positive light on the corporation it represents.

All the imagery and image-making is targeted not only at the people outside but also at people inside the corporations. As important is the image making within the company and

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coordination, 4) and entrepreneurial orientation, 5) close business-government relations, and 6) strong school ties in hiring policies." (Steers, p. 37.)

<sup>37</sup> Eckert, "The South Korean Bourgeoisie", p. 147.

<sup>38</sup> Gray, p. 4.

how employees see the firm that they work for. Corporate image formation begins with those inside the organization.<sup>39</sup> Some of the interviewees talked about pride and the people who use the buildings, such as the employees, the clients and even the passersby. SsangYong's section chief Kim says: "Generally speaking, [the image of the building is targeted at] everyone who works for the firm to instill pride."\* And more broadly, Architect Kim of Tong Yang Securities' building comments that "the target audience consists of the users of the building and the people who see it. One must consider what image it conveys to the people who work for Tong Yang Group and those who rent office space in the building."\* Working in a building with a good image may increase self-confidence and the status of those who come in contact with it. In short, for employees this may increase productivity at work. There was also reference to how clients choose the company by the building it occupies. In this sense, the building is a status symbol as much as a workplace. As a status symbol the top of the tall building is typically occupied by executives. When renting out floors of the company building to others not belonging to the same conglomerate, it is interesting to note that rental floors are stacked between floors occupied by the owner companies. It is suggestive as a form of territorial symbolism.

Corporations place special stress on the projection of a successful image. Chang-soo Kim, the head designer of Tong Yang Securities' executing architects' firm, remarks that "clients judge the firm by the building in which it is in."\* Design has emerged as one of the methods of influencing public perception. "Buildings have images that send direct messages, and architects who want to contribute successfully to development teams have had to become proficient in creating the right design message."<sup>40</sup> Even after the right

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<sup>39</sup> Gray, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Mike E. Miles, Emil E. Malizia, Marc A. Weiss, Gayle L. Berens, Ginger Travis, Real Estate Development: Principles and Processes (Washington, DC: The Urban Land Institute, 1991), p.11.

corporate image is created, however, defining the clients of the securities firm is an ambiguous task. All interviewees have a nebulous idea as to who the target of the buildings' image really is. Pressed for an answer, the responses include residents of Seoul, all Korean citizens, actual and potential business clients, other financial institutions, employees, authorities, and overseas firms among others. It can be seen clearly that, unlike an advertisement, the message of a building is not focused on any segment of society. The conclusion may be drawn as follows: A successfully communicative building can be likened to a Shakespearean play. The message is aimed at a broad section of the public with levels of complexity that leave everyone with a feeling of satisfaction. Whether businesses are best served by this approach in lieu of a more directly targeted message is a moot point.

The case of Singapore demonstrates an example where official perception of corporate towers is illustrated in its national currency. Singapore elevated the corporate architecture of its financial business district to a status equal with its coat of arms and national fauna. The image of economic success embodied in these high-rises indicates the pride felt by the citizens and the government in the progress made in the recent decades. The depiction of corporate towers also affirms the emergence of Singapore as one of the major financial business centers in Southeast Asia. At the same time, it refers to a future bright with equal success and prosperity. Singapore is a case where the government partakes of the economic success of private corporations, and uses the image as a national symbol.

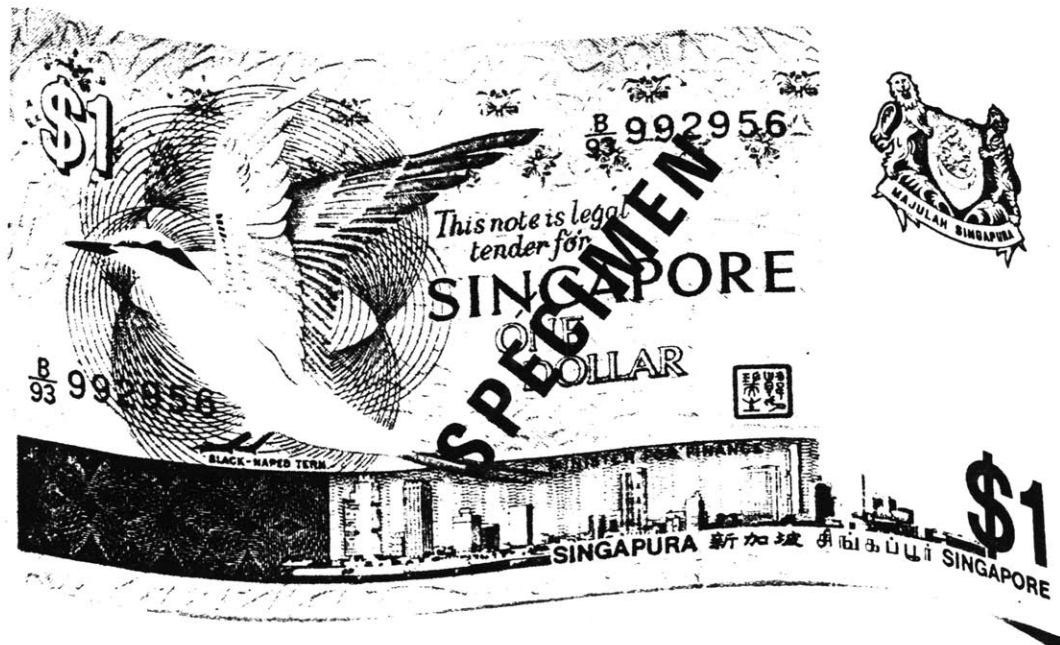


Figure 18  
Singapore one dollar bill  
(from Attoe, p. 112)

## Image of Visual Distinction

Public perception affects the bottom line and the market value. Their view "directly influenc[es] the morale and attitudes of investors, lenders of capital, and even the finance ministries of foreign countries where the company wants to do business."<sup>41</sup> A favorable public image is central to the achievement of other corporate goals. Of course, having a favorable image is more effective if it can be distinguished from those of other companies, and this is where the need for identity arises in the selection of representative architecture. "Doing business means competition, and the building needed to have high visibility for people to find it easily," says vice president Byun of Sam Kyong Construction in relation to Hanshin Securities building.\* Adjectives stressing individuality, such as distinctive,

<sup>41</sup> Gray, p. 8.



original, different, etc., are used to characterize the qualities sought for their buildings. At the same time, adjectives related to professionalism, such as smart, sharp, up-to-date, etc., occur with equal frequency.

Although late-modern office buildings strive also for distinctiveness, it becomes progressively more difficult to stand out of a sea of similar forms. "The intention was to be different from simple box shapes which constitute the majority of the buildings around it. We could have treated the rooftop in the usual 'box' way, but intentionally avoided this. The underlying thought was to look different from the neighbors. A lot of thought was put into making this a stimulating building which can stand out from its neutral background," says Junglim Architects' manager Si-Eung Kang. The ease with which traditional modernist boxes were swept aside in favor of postmodernist office buildings suggests that the former may not have been able to meet the demand for a sufficiently different identity. This by itself does not necessarily mean that the modern and late-modern office buildings are lacking in character; it may just be that they have become so ubiquitous as to have reached a point of saturation. Their presence has become so pervasive that they are seen to have become a neutral back-drop against which new structures must struggle to stand out. "Aware of the fact that a majority of Korean corporate architecture looks like match boxes, we wanted [a building] which distinguished the corporate image while also contributing to the urban environment," says vice president Byun in relation to the Hanshin Securities building.\* It is quite probable that the postmodern building will suffer the same ultimate fate as its predecessor, but it will continue to be an alternative until a critical mass is established to call forth a reaction against it.

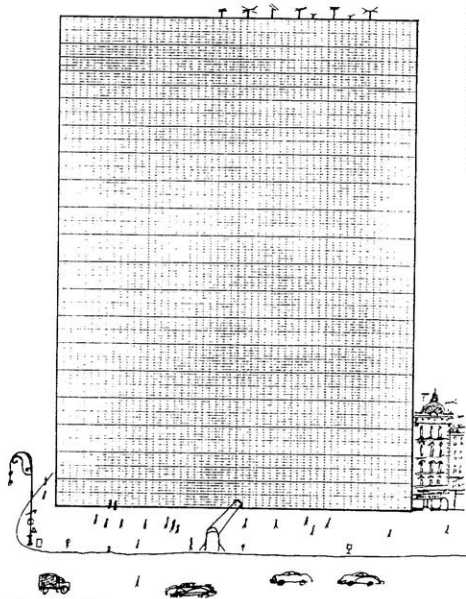


Figure 19  
*Caricature of box-shaped office building*  
 (drawing by Saul Steinberg, copyright 1951)

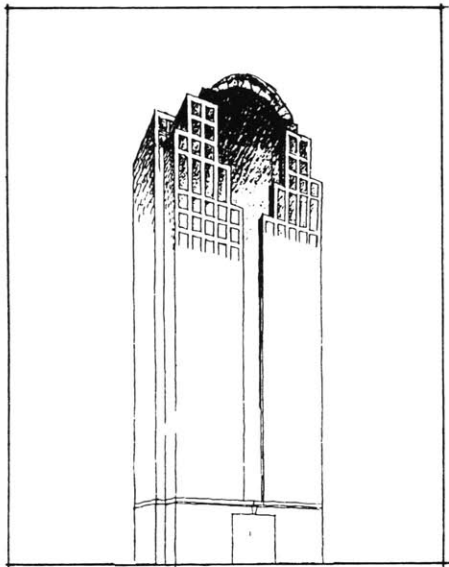
The assistant manager Hoon-chong Park of Dong Ah says: "Our building shape has rejected the box, because it has no meaning". These words may have easily come from Philip Johnson who once similarly remarked that "AT&T insisted they wanted something other than just another glass box."<sup>42</sup> The architecture which can double as a marketing device needs to be eye-catching and immediately attractive. As important as attractiveness is the greater freedom of expression possible in postmodern architecture; the typical modern high-rise was restricted to a rectangular shape with a flat top. In the late-modernist phase, imbuing a memorable character to tall buildings resulted often in expensive structural and formal contortions that had more traditional modernists cluck disapproval in unison. One of the many problems of modernist glass boxes is mind-numbing uniformity. Like a celebrity suffering public overexposure, the once revolutionary architectural form became commonplace and lost the freshness which had once captivated the minds and hearts of

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<sup>42</sup> Harvey, p. 114.

society. Not one of those interviewed failed to stress distinctiveness while describing the desired image.

The creation of a distinct image in a high-rise office building is largely confined to the treatment of the base and the top. The office tower is mostly perceived at two levels: by its street entrance at close range and its contribution to the skyline seen at a distance. Other requirements, such as capturing maximum square footage, make the tall rectangular shape most economical. For maximum effect, the image of a new and visual identity, therefore, tends to be most freely expressed against the skyline. In all the five securities buildings discussed in the interviews, the design at the top was referred to as the feature which lends



*Figure 20*  
*Design of building top*  
*of Dong Ah building*  
*(Courtesy of Dong Ah Group)*

individuality to the entire building. The tip of the tall building functions to transmit corporate aspirations and intentions in architectural form. Two companies, Hanshin and Dong Ah, decided upon a semicircular vault. The latter company deliberately imbues metaphorical meaning to the top treatment and turns it into what Goodman would call a mediated reference. "The vault projects the image of business growth; the hub at the center of the dome represents the outward growth from the center and therefore the growth of the business enterprise," says Dong Ah's assistant manager Park.\* Deciding whether this statement is valid or not is less important than appreciating the act of attributing symbolic interpretation to the facade.

"Symbols of progress, metropolitan beacon, indicator of territorial reappropriation and therefore delineation of identity"<sup>43</sup>, the corporate tower is a gigantic exclamation mark in the sky. One of its major functions is to attract attention and signal its presence in the urban landscape. The goal lies in becoming a highly visible landmark, indelibly imprinted in the memory of the city. Kevin Lynch in The Image of the City has shown that people carry with them a sketchy mental map of their surroundings. This may be easier done in the Korean context than in the West, as the city is remembered by landmarks and not by street names. "Exterior symbols are a first indication of the stature of a business. The corporate name, logo, building address are among many outward visuals that carry the corporate image to the outside world."<sup>44</sup> The ultimate success of corporate architecture is to be included and identified in the mental image of every city dweller and tourist.

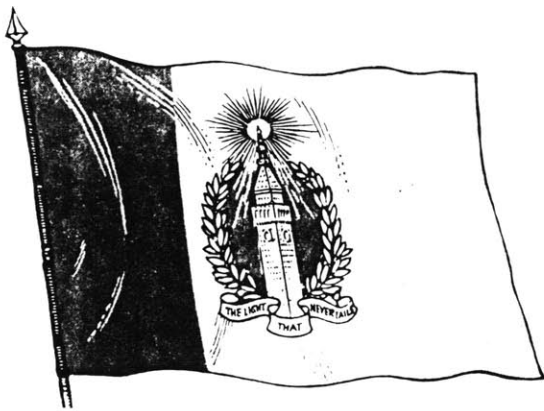
SsangYong's section chief Kim states that the form of his company headquarters building recalls a giant candle. For him, the corporate tower alludes to peace and light as mental associations.\* In what Nelson Goodman would classify as mediated reference, the building form is equated to an abstract notion via a three-link chain. This company differs from the four others in that the newly built office building is intended to represent not only the securities division but also the whole conglomerate. "The building works as an image tower for the whole Group. Regarding the concept and the height, the structure could have been built more economically in steel than in concrete. As the Group has its origin in cement, the question here is not economy but using its own product and stating its individuality," says section chief Bok-Man Kim of SsangYong Securities.\* This point is most interesting in that the exterior cladding is to be granite. The expense and lack of expertise necessary to produce the required finely finished concrete in Korea has resulted in

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<sup>43</sup> Irace, p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> Gray

the discarding the idea of using concrete on the outside. In other words, the structure will be completely hidden from view when the building is completed. Image, in this case, springs from a construction that is wholly invisible.



*Figure 21*  
*Metropolitan Life Insurance Company*  
*flag with headquarters tower*  
*(Atoe, p. 109)*

As is the case with Johnson's Chippendale crown and Stubbins' Citibank's sloping roof, prominence in the skyline combined with height provides an effective corporate emblem for AT&T and Citicorp. In earlier times, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company used its headquarters tower as its trademark. A little differently, the trademark effect of the form of corporate towers can be gleaned from the fact that two of the securities companies, Hanshin and Dong Ah, are planning to use the same building form in branch offices in the provinces. As a trademark gains

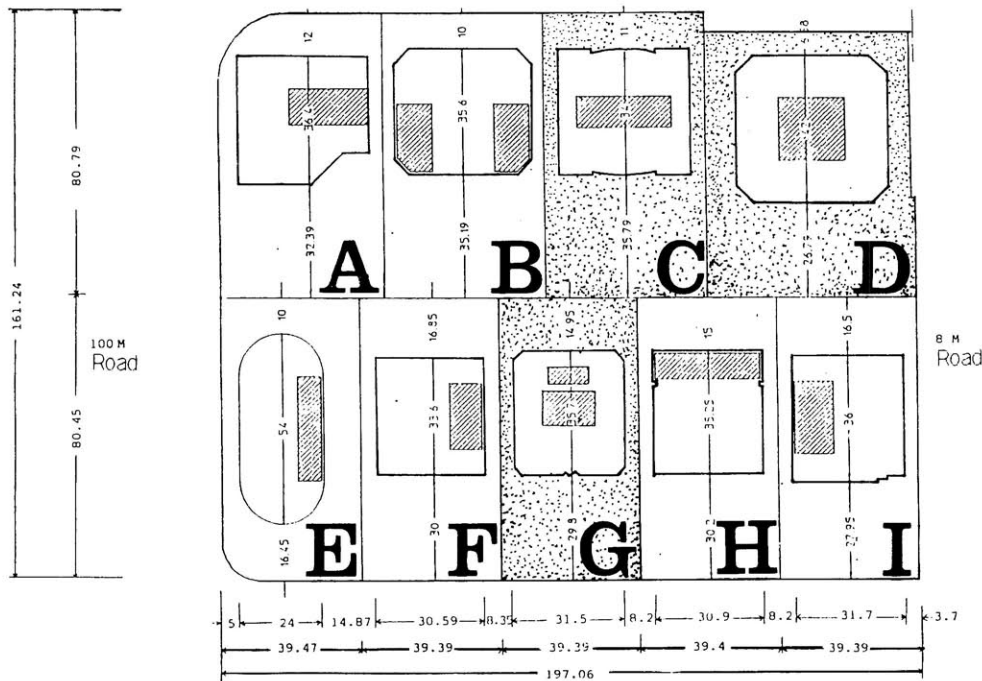
significance by constant and uniform repetitions, the facades take on this role by projecting a standardized image which is recognizable nationwide (like McDonalds).

High-rise offices which are clustered together find themselves in visual competition with one another. "Pre-eminence on the skyline does affect the market"<sup>45</sup> by increasing value, and each building must be able to call attention to itself in the architectural cacophony of the

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<sup>45</sup> Irace, p.17.

metropolis. This point is appreciated only too well in Yoido where nine securities buildings are vying with each other for attention. In the interviews with three firms on the same block -- SsangYong, Dongnam and Tongyang -- the competition among architects, developers and construction firms of the nine firms played a factor in the design decisions.



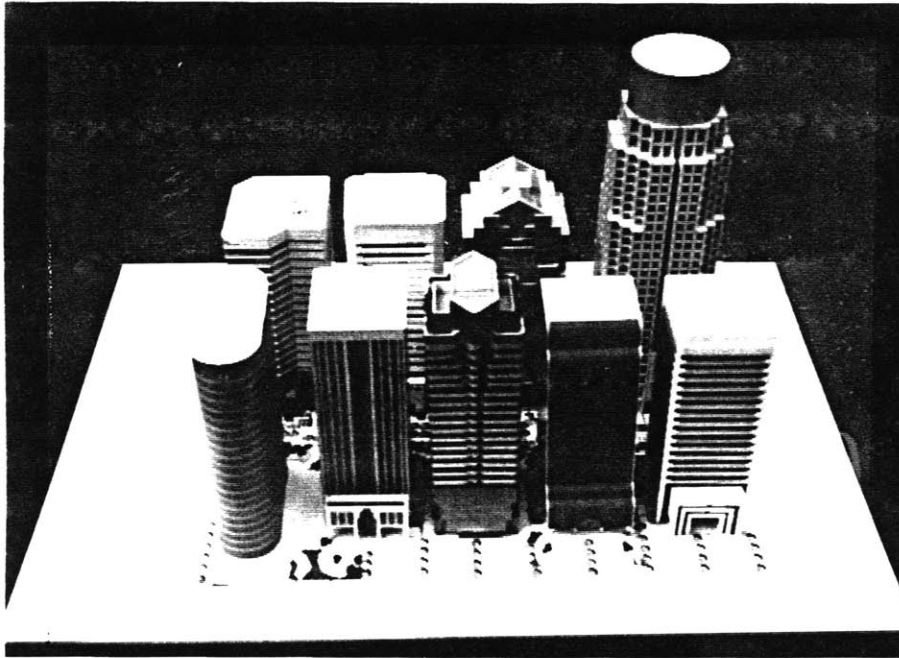
*Figure 22*

*Plan of the Yoido site subdivided into nine parcels*

*A: Chaeil Securities, B: Gugmin Investment, C: Dongnam Securities, D: SsangYong Securities, E: Goryo Securities, F: Yuwha Securities, G: Tong Yang Securities, H: Seoul Securities, I: Pacific Securities*

Each of the nine office towers was conceived separately without knowing the design of adjacent buildings. The resulting effect is an assembly of buildings which make no reference to their immediate surroundings and context. Whether the conglomeration pleases or displeases, however, is a matter of subjective decision according to the taste and inclination of individuals. "Naturally, the simultaneous construction of nine securities buildings brought out the competition. The attention was focussed to draw attention to our building from others. There was a lot of competition between the best and well-known

architectural firms," says architect Chang-Soo Kim in relation to Tong Yang Securities building.



*Figure 23*  
*Models of nine securities buildings (above)*

Not satisfied with competing through design alone, two of the nine firms are planning to add more stories to the original buildings. This news, it is interesting to observe, is not greeted with indifference. One corporate manager referred to the chairman of the enlarged corporate tower as being ambitious and greedy. Intriguingly, most of the five corporate towers have more or less forsaken economy in favor of height. As mentioned earlier, SsangYong is one such example with taller than efficient proportions and a high core-to-space ratio. Even so, its section chief Kim describes it as thus: "This will be one of the best office buildings in Korea."\* How a building can be 'best' when not efficient from a physical standpoint seems like a paradox. If the function of this "image tower" lies in sending favorable and memorable messages (and brings in business), then such a statement can be understood more readily.



"I like it. It has authority."

Figure 24

"I like it. It has authority." (from *The New Yorker*, March 31, 1986; Cartoon by Ed Fisher)

Capturing the imagination of the public is important, because it leads to an advantage in competing for clients. "The basic intention," as Gerald Hines says, "is to establish an identity, in a given market, with a project that is individualistic."<sup>46</sup> This objective was met by SsangYong in hiring American architects, Welton Becket, in designing what manager Kim calls "the image tower of the Group". Employing well-known architects to design a corporate building not only serves in getting 'good' architecture but also heightens the prestige of the firm itself. In this case, the good reputation of the architect and the high

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<sup>46</sup> Irace, p. 147.



regard he/she is held in the community<sup>47</sup> act like high quality brand names which elevates the status of the user by association. Importing architects is a method also used by Tong Yang and Dongnam in a variation; their architects are Korean who are currently practicing or have practiced in the United States. The image comes as much from *who* designs as *what* is designed.

## **Image of Internationalism**

Although corporate towers are present all around the world, the country in which it originated has a claim as creator. Despite being clear products of the West, they are seen to be international. The tall building has an ambiguous standing in the Korean society; it is not domestic, yet the term "international" denies any claim to alternate nationality. Concerning this, deputy chief Gu-Hyun Kang of Dongnam Securities is also ambivalent: "It is difficult to say that a high-rise building can be called Korean. Even so, this building cannot be said to be Western."<sup>\*</sup> Internationalism is yet another import which has been adopted as an inherent part of industrialization and modernization. The building type has not been consciously identified as being part of the national culture, and therefore the style it adopts may point to a foreign dependency even in matters of architectural style. Following the Japanese colonial period and influx of American mass culture, Koreans are very sensitive to preserving cultural autonomy. Painfully aware that Korea is still only a follower of world trends instead of contributor to it, the blatant adoption of American, European or Japanese fashion of any type is generally frowned upon by most Koreans.

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<sup>47</sup> The community referred to here include mostly opinion leaders, businesses and architects. Outside the select circle is, of course, the general public who consist of passers-by and appreciative viewers of the building.

Eight of the ten interviewees agree that only overseas corporate architecture has been considered in the search for an adequate model. Yet, at the same time, assistant manager Hoon-chong Park of Dong Ah Life Insurance company expresses reservations with architecture so obviously foreign as to provoke negative reactions from the passers-by: "It is a question of balance, the value system of the society at a particular point in time."\* The idea that internationalism in an office building can be carried too far is an intriguing one. Manager Si-eung Kang of Junglim Architects agrees and clarifies this somewhat when he says that "even though the architect designs a building, societal mood and economic circumstances among others also determine design."\* One explanation would be that the tall office tower itself is already seen as a foreign import despite its familiar presence. This perception may be confounded by adoption of the latest architectural style which originated and matured overseas. In times of optimistic expansionism, the public may be more open to importation of the latest fashion than in times of introspective isolationism.

The limit to tolerance cannot be defined accurately since it is subjective and relative to the current national mood and circumstances. Architect Eung-Jae Chang talks about the SsangYong building: "I have reservations concerning the elevations, because it obviously follows the fashion of the 1980's US architecture."\* While leaning too much towards foreign styles alienates the public (and apparently even architects), seeming too Korean risks suggesting parochial unprofessionalism. Maintaining international contacts and gaining cooperation are greatly valued assets in the operation of the modern business. Vice president Hyong-do Byun of Sam Kyong Construction is all too aware of this: "The [Hanshin Securities] building must represent the up-to-dateness required of securities firms both nationally and internationally. ... It may serve as strengthening relations with international corporations."\* The exercise of finding the right balance for a corporate tower

is comparable to walking on a tightrope; the loss of equilibrium is painful regardless to which side one falls.

## **Image of Commercialism**

Consumption is increasingly widening to include more than the traditional consumer items. Not only are Coca Cola, Mickey Mouse and McDonalds without national boundaries, but so are the images of AT&T, Citibank and Ford Foundation Headquarters buildings. As Harvey Wiley Corbett says: "If commercialism is the guiding spirit of the age, the building which advertises itself is in harmony with that spirit."<sup>48</sup> Even though this pronouncement dates from the early years of the century, it still seems to be very much relevant today. Corbett's spirit of the age has grown stronger, not weaker, with the passing of time. Commercialism, closely associated with advertising, needs easily recognizable and memorable signs. Corporations, long aware of the importance of packaging consumer goods, have turned this skill in creating their image. The premium on diversity, a tangible and quantifiable commodity, competes with architectural quality, intangible and more difficult to visualize and market. Heavily involved in this process are the media which convert the architectural experience into a series of two dimensional images; these images are advertised to an appropriate audience. Corporations are polishing their image to appeal to the broadest segment of society. Not only the building form but also the material used for cladding communicates. Philip Johnson has this to say about the AT&T building: "We were looking for something that projected the company's image of nobility and strength. No material does that better than granite."<sup>49</sup> Contrary to the commonly held idea about the

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<sup>48</sup> Irace, p. 18.

<sup>49</sup> Harvey, p. 114.

expensiveness of granite, greater demand for double-glazing in recent years caused the cost of Johnson's cladding to become competitive with glass.<sup>50</sup>

The building material functions on many levels as a communicative tool. The most obvious method is to associate qualities, such as nobility etc., and use this in the building to convey the same message. Although maintenance and other practical matters are objects for consideration, the most important factor in the decision seems to be the image of the exterior cladding. The image of the material, of course, is very much associated with the market value. Expensive materials such as marble are rated highly, whereas glass comes after granite and other "noble" claddings. The second method is to make materials symbolize the company. In the case of SsangYong, a company originally involved with cement, the association between cement and the entire conglomerate is so strong as to sacrifice cost for the opportunity of using it during construction. Although pink granite became the final exterior cladding due to technical problems, the company seriously contemplated sandblasted precast concrete for final finish. This is an example of historic significance over-ruling symbolism derived from the perceived nobility of materials.

As regards to following the stylistic fashion of the United States, two architects<sup>51</sup> among the five interviewed have voiced dissatisfaction over blindly adopting postmodernism. They observe that in the years between design and construction, fashion has changed to leave a dated building at completion. Architecture has become a mere fashion and material

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<sup>50</sup> "The rising cost of fuel had led to a reduction in the size of windows in new buildings, and to the use of tinted double-glazing to control the build-up and retention of heat. For both the reasons the price of glass had gone up. This meant that, for a while, the cost of price of stone as a wall covering was able to compete with the cost of glass." (Games, p. 92)

<sup>51</sup> Jae-jong Won of Sisang Architects concerning Dongnam Securities and Young-hoi Kim in relation to Hanshin Securities

for popular consumption; the demands put upon it by both architect and client lead to increased commodification. With a relatively standard plan for office buildings, architects have become specialists providing an acceptable image for their corporate clients. In the case of the Korean securities buildings, if any alterations were done to the designs by the companies, the layout of the plan was changed without much fuss. In contrast, alterations to the facade were thought to infringe on the artistic rights of the architect. Corporate architects are essentially employed to supply individuality to the facades. "Today," Baudrillard argues, "consumption defines the stage where the commodity is immediately produced as sign, as sign value, and where signs (culture) are produced as commodities."<sup>52</sup> As architecture is disassembled into signs and substance, it is not surprising that 'designer buildings'<sup>53</sup> have become the vogue.

Commercialism in architecture is by no means a new phenomenon. Already in 1894 there was an observation that "American architecture, as no other architecture is or was, is dominated today by commercialism. Commercialism in itself is only the current form of the word 'practical'."<sup>54</sup> What is new is the increased flow of two dimensional architectural images that is reaching Korea through the mass media. Instead of experiencing a building, the first and widest contact with architecture is through glossy pictures in magazines. This architecture without depth and space is consumed by other architects in developing their designs. In many ways publications of architectural works can be said to be more influential for architects and their clients than the actual buildings themselves. Architect Kang associated with the Dong Ah building says, "Some of the younger architects may

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<sup>52</sup> Hal Foster, Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1985), p. 145.

<sup>53</sup> This term is used in the same way as "designer clothes" or "designer shoes"; the names of well-known designers give the products a certain cachet in the market.

<sup>54</sup> Irace. p. 18.

travel abroad, but most see the images [of famous overseas buildings] through periodicals. Bluntly speaking, the periodicals are the textbooks for modern design."\* The wide circulation of American architectural periodicals have an undeniable influence on the works of Korean architects. Every architect interviewed acknowledges the immense impact on their work. Whether providing material for reference, inspiration, or even outright copying, these images help in global dissemination of the most recent fashion in the US.

When talking about commercialism in architecture, it is easy to condemn it. Before jumping to this conclusion, however, one needs to consider whether architecture as a commodity automatically becomes devalued. It is mistaken to assume that building clients have no regard for architectural quality as long as a quick profit can be made. A judicious combination of the commercial aspects with sensitive design certainly can be achieved. As much as serving corporate interests in the form of advertisement and public relations exercise, architecture also serves itself in drawing attention to its existence and that of its architects. Following the logic that it is better to be discussed than to be ignored, buildings vie with each other to escape the fate of cold indifference. With only one exception, every Korean securities building has been covered in the architectural journals and publicized well before construction has begun.

## **Image of Intelligent Buildings**

Corporations have won and lost fortunes by succeeding or failing to keep one step ahead of the competition. In the global information age, technological advances need to be closely monitored and quickly adopted to maintain an edge in business. Organizational innovations are equally important, if more difficult to express visually. How technology is employed in the image-making of office structures can reveal how financial corporations would like to

be seen. In the interviews, one of the most pressing criteria was the issue of the intelligent building. The majority of the interviewees pointed out that this concept includes everything from tracking the whereabouts of executives, sensitive electronic environments to incorporation of telecommunication network involving satellites and fiber optics. The vision of the city as a telecommunication park is quickly becoming reality. The desire for technologically advanced buildings may come from the necessity for continuous growth and innovation to keep up with competitors. Deputy chief Gu-Hyun Kang of Dongnam Securities reveals that space for the installation of futuristic technology was thought only after the building was designed: "The Intelligent Building System was not thought of at the beginning of the design, and therefore there is not much space to put cables and other installations in without touching the exterior wall."<sup>55</sup> This comment leaves an impression that it is desirable for new buildings to incorporate some features of an intelligent building to stay competitive as well as improve efficiency. Access to information is one attribute of having power. Although the features of the intelligent building are not ones immediately expressed to the outside, the fact that the building can support complex informational activities leads it to be perceived as being powerful and highly competitive.

"Buildings are at once message carriers and facilities of information exchange. They are artifacts of human intelligence and more specifically manifestations of programmed societal commitment."<sup>55</sup> Architecture has long been used as a form of communication. The use of allusion, evocation, and symbolism has been an integral part in architecture since the earliest times in history. The stained glass windows of the Gothic churches have served as pictorial depictions and comments on the Bible, while the structures themselves have been eloquent expressions of the people's faith in God. Later in history the Crystal Palace has symbolized the *zeitgeist* of the industrial age marked by astounding technical prowess and

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<sup>55</sup> Peter Droege, "Future Places" in *Places*, vol.5, no. 3, p. 4.

confidence in human ability. Our period in time has been named the information age; huge leaps in technology have inaugurated an electronic era which has reduced the physical distance between nations to transfer and exchange information within seconds. With the coming of this new age, the demand on architecture as conveyor of increasingly explicit and direct information is becoming more apparent; architectural intent is also becoming multi-dimensional and greater in diversity. This trend is only logical in the context of architecture as the physical manifestation of its society and times.

The communication media are showing every indication of playing a larger and more visible role in the future. There are exciting possibilities in the combination of electronic, computer-controlled images and architecture. The architecture of the future could exploit this by making possible an on-going interaction with its users and its surroundings. One step toward the intelligent facade is the light sensitive shutter wall that gives so much distinction to the Paris Institut du Monde by Jean Nouvel. The appearance of the shutters convey information on the brightness of the day; the light sensitive computer controlled shutters interact with the stimuli of the natural environment.<sup>56</sup> The role of the building surface may very well change to being both a predominantly protective covering and a screen for everchanging visual communication.

## **Image Shapers**

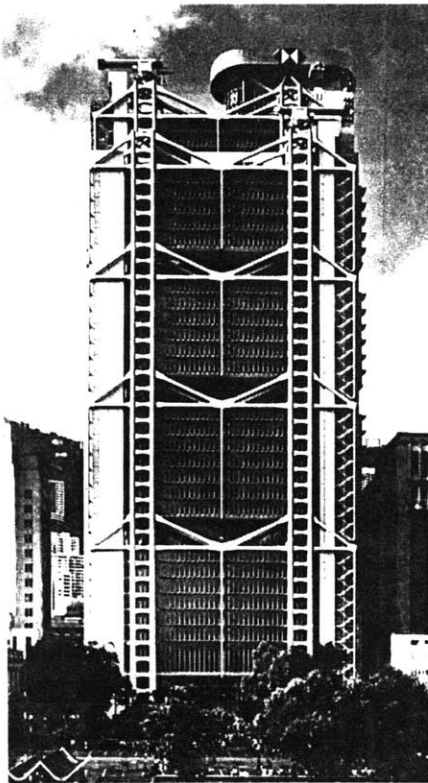
Historians have noted that the most prominent buildings usually serve the most dominant force in the society at the period. The church steeples which used to dominate the skyline

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<sup>56</sup> There are, however, problems associated with the photo-voltaic sunscreens. Due to the noise generated by their operation, they are turned off most of the time.



of preindustrial cities have become obscured in the skyline by town halls as the religious power waned in favor of civic power. Following this logic, the most important buildings in the city is now the tall office building which speaks of the power of commerce and trade. Financial institutions have always been great patrons of architects, and this tradition continues with the skyscrapers for the Lloyd's in London and the Hongkong Bank and Shanghai Bank in Hong Kong. The tall office buildings are symbols of the power held by



*Figure 25*  
*Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank headquarters*  
*Hong Kong, Foster Associates, 1979 - 84*

the institutions which occupy it. Architects come in direct contact with them, because they are dependent on the support to obtain commissions and finances. There are two ways to react to this reality. One architect firm, Junglim, at least has given priority to satisfying the demands of the client instead of insisting on some personal design principles. Pleasing the client becomes more important than artistic creativity. The other approach is to be more

independent of the client and come up with a design in which the architect's wishes are equally implemented. This seems to work best in the case of SsangYong when the building form, unable to satisfy some building codes and having an uneconomical floor layout, is nevertheless accepted fully by the company. In this case, the architect is so valued for his/her contribution that the client silently agrees. In this relationship the architect becomes the artist who insists on the inviolability of artistic creation and thoughts.

Even if the architect assumes the lofty role of the creative genius intent on creating the ideal, the fact remains that decisions related to the building is not limited to and formed exclusively by him/her. In realizing this, one must consider what the intention of the client is. The usefulness of the architect does not lie only in producing a handsome building. The purposes of the building involves some "aspiration, explicit or concealed, beyond immediate usefulness, and much broader than aesthetics"<sup>57</sup>. The corporate tower thus created embodies not only the conscious values of the client but also the unconscious value of the environment, class and nation. Seen as such, the high-rise is a highly ideological artifact of the society in which it is built. The look of the building is as much defined by the society as by the architect and the client; the Trump Tower, for example, could not have been built in Seoul due to the outcry it would have caused as a symbol of individual opulence and luxurious consumption.

One of the corporate managers swept aside the question of image for the corporate building and bluntly said that recovery of maximum square footage is the most important objective. As in most development, the company tower is built upon the maximum return of investment. Viewed in this way, the high-rise may seem less of a light house or tower than the embodiment of maximum profit. Architecture, more than other arts, is sensitive to

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<sup>57</sup> Harry Cobb, "Transitional Periods" in Harvard Architectural Review, p. 14.

market pressures and depends largely on exterior sources and power which the architect has little control over. The economic factors, such as choice of site, program, budget, materials and production schedules, are usually set for the architect to follow. This is so prevalent that some have voiced the suspicion that architects are in reality mere packagers supplying facades to cover for real estate developers their source for maximum profit. This suspicion may seem to be confirmed by the cynical reply given by Philip Johnson: ""I am a whore, and I am paid very well for building high-rise buildings."<sup>58</sup> This view has not been prevalent in the interviewees in which most of the companies thought the real estate benefits to be less important than realizing a favorable image for the company tower. In some cases, economic considerations have been put so back down the list of priorities that the building form and layout itself proved to be uneconomical. There was a very conscious sacrifice on behalf of the management in deciding which was more important to them. It can be argued that the image differentiation itself is a response to capitalist market mechanisms, but this different from being under the control of real estate development.

This chapter has attempted to show the many layers of image that are projected by the corporate towers in Korea. Architecture, as one of the forms of social communication, has been used by the Korean companies in deliberate ways to promote positive views of themselves.

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<sup>58</sup> Margaret Soltan, "Architectural Follies" in *Raritan*, p. 57.

## Conclusion

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This thesis examined the tall office building by studying its social and economic determinants in the Korean context. As has been shown, sensitivity to societal mood affects the bottom line. It can be argued therefore that business architecture cannot afford to have a slow reaction time. The point of view deduced from the collected data is that the tall office building is a visible product of social and business conditions. The persistent urge of business clients to use their buildings to say something good about themselves and their business is indeed a recurrent theme in the history of business architecture everywhere. Unlike residential and industrial buildings, corporate architecture operates in a public arena in which questions of image-making assume proportionately greater importance. Corporations, in dealing with the public, must establish prestige, status and reputation that will in some ways work to the advantage of the company. This image-making is directed primarily to customers, stockholders, competitors, and executives and workers within the company, and occasionally to legislators, business critics and writers as well.

In this age of internationalism and mass communication, architecture is no exception in disregarding national boundaries; each new development, usually originating from the West, is eagerly imitated elsewhere. Increasingly, as argued in this thesis, architecture is conveyed in two rather than three dimensions. The intense dissemination of images through journals and photographs plays an important role in its trend, but the loss of depth also signals another reason. Architecture is shifting from a spatial to a visual experience. In other words, clients, by employing architects to design image oriented buildings, are putting more emphasis on what the building says than what it does. Although this may be

a visual experience. In other words, clients, by employing architects to design image oriented buildings, are putting more emphasis on what the building says than what it does. Although this may be a familiar and continuing practice, the demand is expressed more in commercial language than before.

Architecture is merely one of the many ways available to business leaders for altering public opinion and improving public relations.<sup>60</sup> A satisfactory building form with a distinctive image may even be duplicated many times. Four of the five companies discussed in this thesis are part of large corporations with national markets; the facades developed for the Seoul offices are indeed handed down to branch offices in the provinces. Architecture itself is used as a gigantic logo to project a uniform corporate image.

It seems appropriate now to try to answer the questions raised previously in the introduction. Firstly, what are the most powerful underlying images and how do these serve the corporations? The most obvious association seems to be derived from the symbolism associated with the tall office building. At the same time, these companies desire to convey a certain solidity and reliability suitable for financial institutions. Images of economic growth and progress are appropriated by individual companies to make public statements about themselves. Architects of corporate buildings are usually expected to toe a delicate line between conservative innovation and unprecedented experimentation. Starting with essentially the same problem, architects are employed to come up with original nuances so that each building can be distinguished from the others. In short, the architect is like a make-over artist who is required to imbue personality and character to an ordinary face.

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<sup>60</sup> Gibbs, p. 169.

Secondly, do the interviewees help clarify an useful set of criteria for identifying demands on corporate architecture more generally? Yes, because their comments suggest that corporate architecture is a product of private enterprise that wishes to attract customers and new business by projecting a favorable image. Although it is owned privately, corporate dependence on the goodwill of the society calls for sensitivity to the prevalent mood and concerns of the times. The fierce battles for recognition and distinctiveness among tall office buildings are fought out in the public domain. At the same time as satisfying the clients who pay for the building, the architects are aware that their greater clientele include everyone else in the city.

Thirdly, is there some standard or common underlying ideal regarding high-rise office design? This thesis has argued that such standard indeed does exist. The most successful office building from the point of the corporation would be conducive to good public relations. As seen from the case of the AT&T building, its design called worldwide attention to itself and the company.<sup>61</sup> The ultimately favorable sensation generated by the architecture created a landmark which was easily identifiable with the company, the architect and the city. As seen from the interviews of Korean architects and corporate managers, the same ideal is equally relevant in Seoul. The importation of American architects or the employment of architects with American experience can be seen as an attempt to obtain a design which is different from the usual works of domestic architects. Whether this exhibits a sense of inferiority towards the US is a secondary question.

Lastly, given the international nature of the modern business world, is there a viable alternative to architectural conformity to First World trends? This question cannot be easily answered, and the following argument towards the affirmative constitutes a highly personal

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<sup>61</sup> At present, the AT&T occupies only part of its building (which is apparently for sale).

opinion. Progress, fondly believed to result in prosperity and happiness, is strongly identified with modernization and westernization. For this reason, imitating the West has become a widespread and even necessary practice. The adoption of Western ways, however, also produces a guilty unease about maintaining the integrity of the existing lifestyle. The opposing pull of modernization and tradition is all too familiar even in the West. The understandable trepidation about protecting one's own cultural identity can be allayed somewhat by realizing that living cultures do not remain immutable. Constant change and adaptation to existing conditions are necessary for the vital sustenance of any culture. One productive response by Korean designers, therefore, would be in reviewing the past, present and future to construct a new identity which harmoniously incorporates the modernization necessary for its survival.

As stated previously, the United States is the single most influential country in relation to the Korean culture at present. Although the capitalist world is composed of many different nations, the United States is the unrivaled core capitalist state. With its emergence as a global power, the US assumed the financial, economic, and military-political burdens of maintaining the capitalist world system.<sup>62</sup> This situation may be changing since the recent collapse of communism. Freed from the fear of communist world domination, the US is increasingly calling upon Japan and Germany (among others) to shoulder part of the financial burden. Be that as it may, since World War II and the increase of Western involvement, Korean society is rapidly becoming westernized. The threat to Korean cultural identity often springs from the perceived ubiquitousness of American cultural forms purveyed through the media. These influences through, for example, movies and periodicals, are further compounded by the continual presence of the American military on

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<sup>62</sup> Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 189.

Korean soil. With increasing urbanization, globalization, and democratization, Koreans are increasingly aware of other countries. More and more young people are educated in the West, particularly in the United States, and tend to take home new ideas to blend with their own.<sup>63</sup>

The blending of local and international ideas is a promising approach for Korean corporate towers in the future. Although some people may argue that it is inappropriate to look for national differences in high-rise office buildings, this thesis has shown that such differences do exist in the workplace to warrant a search for a design approach which is not overly reliant on foreign ideas and forms. In Saudi Arabia and other countries with extreme climates, regionalism can be expressed by emphasizing the local climatic aspects. One good example is the National Commercial Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Gordon Bunshaft of SOM, 1977 - 83) which incorporates the protected, oasis-like courtyard idea into the design of a multistory building. The outer wall shields the inner offices from the harsh desert sun. The inner facade is clad in glass with offices looking into the cool courtyard. Korea with its temperate climate cannot take this road. Some Korean architects, therefore, have experimented with superimposing historic elements onto modern forms. Opting for the most obvious, such as topping a skyscraper with a pagoda roof, usually produces an incongruous kitsch effect. A subtler solution for a truly national corporate architecture must be worked out.

The following suggestion for developing a distinctly Korean corporate architecture is based on the argument that companies use their headquarter buildings as objects for public relations to project a positive image about themselves. The aim is to influence common perceptions held by their own employees as well as the wider public. Corporate managers

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<sup>63</sup> Steers, pp. 16 - 17.



and architects questioned in the interviews have indicated that the target audience for their architecture is mostly confined within the national boundary. The solution for a truly national corporate architecture therefore lies in making use of this finding. Public relations agencies have discovered long ago that many advertisement campaigns do not translate well across different cultures due to varying sensibilities and temperaments. There is no reason why Korean architects cannot adapt the images associated with certain architectural elements and forms to construct a local dialect of high-rise office towers.

In many cases, the location of the building and the nationality of the occupants seem to provide enough identity to be called Korean. Instead of being satisfied with these incidental attributes, however, architects and clients can achieve a more deliberate and distinct statement by being more mindful of local characteristics. Like the afore-mentioned National Commercial Bank in Jeddah, it matters little what the nationality of the architect is as long as the building itself acknowledges its context and expresses empathy with the culture. Although architecture does not use specific words, Nelson Goodman's four categories of meaning can be utilized to "speak" of aspirations and goals which Koreans share and hold dear as a nation. Of these, the use of metaphor in "expression" and "mediated reference" seems best suited to avoid blatant nationalism and to produce instead subtle local inflections within the international architectural vocabulary. Understanding the many images associated with corporate architecture will be the starting point to develop a viable Korean alternative to architectural conformity to First World trends.

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## Appendix

### Ten Interviews

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#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CORPORATE EXECUTIVES

1. What is the image/ message/ theme you wished most to project with your building?
2. Who is your target audience?
3. What do you think to be significant in having a custom designed headquarters building?
4. Were there particular models of buildings from elsewhere in the world what you had in mind when you chose the building?
5. Do you consider the building to be Korean? In your opinion, what makes this building Korean?
6. What were the most important considerations for deciding upon the present design? Was the corporate logo of any significance in your design consideration?
7. What factors influenced the choice of the present location for your building?
8. What was your role in the design review?
9. What contributions did you make to modify or affect the design?
10. Who else in the corporation had any significant input in the design?

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ARCHITECTS

1. What were the most important priorities or needs in the new building?
2. Is there an image you wished to project with your building? If so, what is the image/ message/ theme?
3. What was the most important consideration for deciding upon the present design? Was the corporate logo of any significance in your design consideration?
4. What do you think to be most significant in a corporation having its own building?
5. What is your target audience? What were your conceptions about the building's contribution to the urban landscape of Seoul? How did you see this building affecting the context? Was the site and the buildings around the site of consideration?
6. In your opinion, what makes a modern building Korean?
7. Do you consider this building to be Korean? If so, specify the elements that make it so.
8. Were there particular models of buildings from elsewhere in the world that you had in mind when you designed this building? If so, in which country is it? Have you seen it yourself?
9. Thinking of corporate buildings around the world, do you have a favorite and who is/ are the architect(s)?



10. What was the role of the client in the design review? What contributions did the client make to the design? What were the recommendations and the design review?
11. Who in the corporation represented the client in dealing with you on the design and program?
12. To which architectural periodicals do you or your firm subscribe?
13. Do you think American corporate buildings have had any influence on your or other corporate buildings in Seoul? If so, please describe in what way?

## **Interview One: Dong Ah Insurance Company and Securities Company Headquarters**

Interview held on 3 January 1992

Assistant Manager Park, Hoon-chong

Department of Office Building Construction within the Dong Ah Group

Q1: Mugyodong is a special place; it is an entertainment area within the Seoul city center; the building tries to recapture the image by remembering what used to be; the old buildings have disappeared and have been replaced by highly modern buildings.

- 1) Our building shape has rejected the box, because it has no meaning; we want to provide a public space.
- 2) The vault projects the image of business growth; the hub at the center of the dome represents the outward growth from the center and therefore the growth of the business enterprise.
- 3) The building materials used are granite and glass; they have a classic image; they provide the self-possessed image of financial institutions; these materials are more self-possessed and conservative than high-tech materials.

The three major characteristics are as follows: a) distinct articulation of top and bottom of the building; tripartite system; b) vault at the top; c) beauty of regular fenestration. The classical and self-possessed form is balanced by the central curtain wall which gives a contemporary and sensuous feeling.

Q2: The target audience can be said to be nearby clients; the clients of life insurance; the residents of Seoul. Nearby buildings have been considered; intention to have a distinctive facade; consideration of the special character of the place; the adjacent buildings are of relatively large dimensions (Gwangwang-gongsa, Yongpoong HQ). The area of the site and therefore is relatively small. If the same form is used as the adjacent buildings, it is difficult to have a distinctive image. The design of the top portion of the building is used to distinguish it from the rest of the surroundings.

Q3: Function: This building was originally intended to be an "intelligent building" (hereafter called IB). It is difficult to say exactly what makes it an IB, but it means to have the most up-to-date functions. All the storeys have a free-access floor. The double floor makes possible the installation of satellite communications, Local Area Network (LAN) cables, and room for future cable needs. It facilitates the most efficient installation of any necessary equipments: Building Automation (BA), fire prevention devices, elevators, automatic lighting systems. The intelligent building is composed of telecommunications, office automation and building automation. The building was to have incorporated satellite communications, but considering that the society is still underdeveloped in this aspect, only room for more technologically advanced systems were provided.

Q4: Any particular domestic buildings has not been considered. There is a particular building in the US which has been a model, but it is difficult to state here.

Q5: Personally speaking, I never considered it to be Korean in either design of the facade or plan. I cannot talk for the architect, but there was no intention to create a Korean building. I would say that, generally speaking, a Korean image can be an international one as long as it does not provoke negative reactions from the public which sees it. It is a question of balance, the value system of the society at a particular point of time. One must share the thinking of the people to be able to be received naturally as part of an era. The Korean character can also change with the times.

Banks cannot be located anywhere other than on the ground floor. The circulation pattern has changed also. As much as possible, the attempt was made to avoid expressing Korean-ness by collecting images. The Life Insurance building must be able to appear friendly and welcoming. The rooftop garden and the lobby were designed to attract many people. To compensate for the verticality of the building, the fenestration intentionally stresses horizontality to reduce awe and any sense of overpowerment.

Q6: The two elevations proposed for the building did not have a fresh, original feeling. Two more elevations were requested to fulfill this requirement to be smart and fresh/ original. As the volume of the building is limited, the design of the building was important to make people say: "That building is alright"; a new and original building. As for the logo, if too much importance is paid to incorporate it into the design, it becomes too limiting. The vault may suggest a "D" on its side. There was no attempt to incorporate the logo or any corporate symbol into the building design. The logo represents the windmill which continually turns and signifies endless change. As the main enterprise of the Dong Ah Group is the construction company, some have suggested that it stands also for the shovels of forkcranes. The forkcrane was more distinctive in the previous logo.

Q7: Although there is a trend for stockbroking firms to move to Yoido from Myongdong, the financial axis is still in Euljiro, starting from Chaeil Bank to the department stores. Dong Ah building is a little out of the axis. The new HQ is being developed to be occupied by the Life insurance Co. and Securities firms at a 4:1 ratio. Dong Ah Securities used to be formerly an investment bank. Short term loan institutions can still not move out of the Myongdong axis. That is the reason why the new building is being built at its location. In fact, the Life Insurance Co. could have been built in Kangnam. The alternatives were Kangnam, Seoul Railway station and Chongro 2 Ga. As tow two companies are using the same building, there is no room for rental space. There are two floors, the second and third, which will be rental, but they have not been of any consideration. No idea of the increased value of land. Although other locations may

be profitable, neither Kangnam or Eujiro can be said of having any advantages. The location was determined by the needs of the Securities firm, as the short-term loan institutions must be in close proximity to each other and with other banks. Most of the major banks have their headquarters in the Myongdong area. The Life Insurance company does not have such needs in relation to other buildings.

Q8: As said earlier, I provided the information and explanation for members of upper hierarchy to make decisions. I had no influence in the decision making process. I went to a meeting with the heads of administration. Even that had no great meaning, as the decisions are made by the company presidents and chairman at the top administrative level. I prepared the four proposals, perspectives and photographs.

Q9: I provided the necessary materials. In the presentation of material, I tried to make the alternative I favored to be more attractive. There was talk of eliminating the vault ; I was against this suggestion. The building has a higher floor height because of its smaller overall site. The height is 4 m which makes the overall height of the building equivalent to that of a 25 storey building. I was involved during the design process, the decision stage, the support management tasks for the smooth completion of construction.

Q10: Realistically, all decisions are made at the top. No one else can be said to have any influence in major design decision. The role of the architect was great, especially as he was adamant about his design. The architect was opposed to any design changes, and expressed his position clearly. The major design decisions were made by the top management and the architect.

Further comment: The building turns out to be quite satisfactory. There was some worrying in the early stages, but they disappeared after the completion of the upper steel structure. I received many telephone calls from passersby with favorable opinions about the building. They tell me that the building lends a new and refreshing image to the city center. The top management seems to be quite satisfied. My friends working in architecture firms have commented that the design is distinctive. As it is the headquarter of an insurance firm, the building is less thought of as a means of profit making as more of creation of a corporate image. If cost had played a greater role in the design, the vault would have been unnecessary, because it makes the building taller than functionally necessary.

The Dong Ah Insurance and Securities building appeared in the architectural periodical Architecture and Environment (October 1991).

## Interview Two: Dong Ah's Architects Junglim

Interview held on 4 January 1992

Architect Kang, Si-eung

Junglim Architects' Office

General description: There were two alternative facade treatments which were not satisfactory to the client. They brought a building in the Architectural Record as an example of what they wanted. Thereafter the design has emphasized the vault. As for the image, the first consideration was to find the distinct form which can be differentiated from the surrounding buildings. To get this final form, the architect has referred to the requirements of the clients. The vault was emphasized as well as the tripartite system.

Junglim does not have any strong views about any -isms. The images and forms of each -ism is used and assembled to serve the immediate needs. I don't consider the rigid following of any -ism to be beneficial to the design at hand. Each head of the design team has free reign to deal with each design. In the starting years of Junglim, the president and chairman Kim, Hyong-chul and Kim, Hyong-sik respectively, designed in person. This is in the 1970s to early 1980s. The firm concentrated in designing corporate institutional buildings including banks. Afterwards, directors Choi, Tae-young and Park, Cheol-in created their individual styles in their respective design teams. Each design was reviewed at a weekly meeting attended by the office heads and respective designers. The discussions usually never led to any concrete decisions as the president and the chairman differ 180 degrees in design matters. Therefore these sessions served to give suggestions, and the designer with strong convictions were usually able to follow their decisions relatively unimpeded. As the firm does not have a strong master architect, each design team is left with the forms developed by them. This leads to the copying of images in overseas architectural journals without trying to develop a philosophy of one's own.

The architectural journals are consulted regularly. Junglim style: trying to please the client. As the client tend to travel more widely than the architects, they are more immediately familiar with the new architectural styles than the architects are. The trend is in increasing sophistication of the clients.

When we were in the Space Group working on the Ramada Renaissance Hotel, the exterior material was proposed to be aluminum curtain wall. The client wanted PC, but Space insisted on its choice. After Kim, Soo-geun died, the client decided unilaterally to use PC. Junglim, on the other hand, strives to accommodate the clients requirements. The firm adjusts its design to the situations of the client and tries to base its design decisions with great consideration of the client.

Q1: The site is in the redevelopment zone. Decisions concerning the planning and layout had been already made by the time Junglim was consulted. The gross area, the number of floors and the functions had been already established. The first planning was completed by Goryo Architects who were unable to provide satisfactory elevations to the clients. Junglim was employed to change the facade of the building. The client wanted an original image, a building form which is different from those of other buildings, distinctive exterior facade, and a building which emphasizes the corporate image. Being a corporate headquarters, the interior functions were outside the domain of the architect. All that can be done is to give as much open space as possible to the public by eliminating the ground floor lobby, leaving only the core, to create maximum open space: the concept of linking the street at one side to the park on the other. The provision of a sky-lounge. To create as much public space as possible. The requirements of the client included the making of an intelligent building. The most advanced technology in communications, machinery, electricity system, sensitive systems which do not require human activation such as automatic lighting sensitive to human presence, card key system which locates each office worker within the building (most applicable to the top management) etc. Realistically, we only provided them with access floors on all storeys for future installations of such systems. We gave them ample shaft space. The clients also wanted a curtain wall sunlight control, but difficulties with existing local technology and the need to import most of the equipment shelved this. The architects suggested automatic in-house mail system, but the client did not feel the need for it. We installed cables, electric equipments, preparatory work for future LAN use. In all, the existing building cannot be called an intelligent building.

The budget and time were sufficient. The client gave the firm a free hand. As the building is being built in redevelopment zone, there was no problem with the time. The problem lies in determining the function of each floor. For example, the location of the restaurant and the executive rooms still need to be decided. The client delayed the project by giving the brief containing the various functions of the building very much late. The architect proposed some locations, but there was no approval. There seems to be no person responsible for such decisions. There are two rental floors. This is not for overly financial reasons, but the two floors were left over after all the departments had been positioned. The building houses Dong Ah Life Insurance and Securities, which fills it almost completely. They will not even have the usual rental space for a bank; instead, they will use it as their own trade floor. They intend to rent the basement floor, the second and the third storeys, but this even may change in the later stage. Maybe, they will rent to another securities firm of bank.

Q2: I don't think the design was particularly geared to Dong Ah Life Insurance's image to create a new distinctive image which can become the face of the corporation. The focus was to create a form which corresponds to an office building. It came to be that the same form as the HQ are adopted for the other provinces: Taegu, Pusan. They are replicas of the HQ in Seoul. I don't consider this to be desirable,

because the vault was used regardless of the overall proportions and height in the other cities. The interior of the top vault has not been resolved. This applies to both Hanshin and Dong Ah buildings.

Q3: Although the logo was kept in mind, it is difficult to make the form follow it too literally. Of course, we thought about the possibility. Instead of relying on the visual image of the logo, it is more important to understand the philosophy and goals of the particular firm. For example, if the image of a firm were equality, the lower part of its building would be treated similarly to the surrounding to harmonize with its environment. In the case of Dong Ah Life Insurance Co., the form was determined by trying to be distinctive rather than trying to elicit a particular corporate message. The logo was used only in part of the building, such as in the doors of the elevators, signboards, the pattern of the floor etc. In that sense, the logo was incorporated into the building in only ordinary ways.

Q4: What should a HQ building represent? The building should have some of the characteristics of the corporation it belongs to; but more important than that, it should be "good" and satisfying. It should strive to project a corporate image: for example, an individualistic presence. The Pentagon building is a good case of a successful expression of itself to the public. Another example would be the National Assembly Building (which may or may not be a good building) in Seoul.

Q5: There are two categories. The people who are related to the building. These in turn can be broken down into three groups: the clients of the firm, but the very first group constitute the people who work in the building -- the feeling of pride associated with using the building; and then there are the people who see the building without giving it much thought. I don't think the building contributes actively to the environment. Being a redevelopment project, it puts order into a disorganized surrounding. I suppose that is a contribution. As the building looks for a distinctive image, it may present the people around it with visual satisfaction. That may be the extent of the contribution.

What may be a shortcoming may be that the building does not permit maximum use of the space around it. Being in the redevelopment area in Euljiro, the new building has to compete with similar office buildings of similar masses and sizes. The intention was to be different from simple box shapes which constitute the majority of the building around it. We could have treated the rooftop in the usual "box" way, but we intentionally avoided this. The underlying thought was to look different from the neighbors. A lot of thought was put into making this a stimulating building which can stand out from the neutral background.

Q6: Personally speaking, even though the architect designs a building, societal mood, economic capacity among others also determine the design. The buildings designed by Korean architects (excluding Kim, Soo-geun and Kim, Choong-sup) may be not up to the international standards, but they were the best

that could be done under the circumstances. although it is desirable to have a strong architect to demonstrate his/ her ability to the utmost, most buildings were determined by considering the maximum buildable area. The client in turn was not well off economically, so that the natural desire was to get a building built as soon as possible. Nowadays, the client has money and is interested in cultural or/ and intellectual pursuits. The consideration is not only in increasing wealth, but the need had arisen to view a building as a cultural object. as to the question of what makes a building be Korean, the answer is: the architect makes it, and also the circumstances in which the particular society is in.

Q7: Personally speaking, I don't think this building has any Korean elements. But even before answering this, one must understand what Korean elements are: Area they forms of ancient Korean architecture? One cannot answer this easily with the resulting form. There is no one today who can definitely answer this question. One cannot say the overhanging Korean roof makes a building Korean. The Korean-ness may come from the fact that a building was designed by a Korean, is located in Korea. Maybe if the designer is Korean, the user is Korea, and is placed in Korea, then a building can be called Korean. So coming back to the question, although I did not consider this building to be Korean at first, in this way this building is indeed Korean. The crucial question lies not in whether a building is Korean, American or European, but whether the building is good architecture. Architecture must fully accept the existing circumstances.

Moving specifically to the Dong Ah building, it has details, such as the areas around columns, which evoke ancient Korean architectural details. These can be found in the traditional architecture. All this was considered during the design, but one cannot answer the question with great definiteness.

Q8: The model is in the US. I have seen it in the periodical Architectural Record. I looked at the building in response to the client's suggestion. Although I had seen that particular building before, I did not consider it before in the design.

Q9: Personally speaking: Periodicals have great influence on design. The foreign periodicals in Korea: office architecture - Helmut Jahn or Kohn Pederson Fox .... I see them often in periodicals. I use a lot of their details in the design.

Q10: The client decided which of the proposed alternatives were selected. They had the power of choice. It was more of requirement than contribution. The form was asked for; not determining whether the plan was triangular or rectangular, but rather whether the design distinguished the image of the firm. The material of this particular building is stone. Stone is usually chosen as a natural material for office buildings. as the clients lacked any technical knowledge, they asked for a smooth surface. The clients also



discussed the color of the building such as brown or white, or even reflective glass. Beyond this, the architect takes care of specific problems.

Q11: The CEO, his secretary, and later the inhouse building team. The latter dealt only with technical aspects, and the design was not touched.

Q12: Progressive Architecture, Architectural Record, Domus, Architecture, GA Special Issues, Japan Architect. Korean: Architecture and Culture, Architecture and Environment, Plus, Space, Kkumin

Q13: There is a great deal of influence. Some of the younger architects may travel abroad, but most see the images through periodicals. Bluntly speaking, the periodicals are the textbooks for modern design.

As I was involved in the design process from the very beginning, I can see many shortcomings in the details and other areas, and therefore cannot say that I am totally satisfied with it. From other people, however, I received good feedback about the distinctive building shape. Because the exterior facade was designed by Lee, Song-gwan, I cannot comment on it. The interior configurations still leaves something to be desired.

The building focused largely on the exterior treatment; the interior in this aspect was largely fitted in to go along with the outside. This is one of the more unsatisfactory circumstances of our Korean situation. The people who design the exterior give less attention to the interior. The interior designers in turn have no feeling for the greater exterior. In this way, one of the two ways must be decided upon. According to Kim, Soo-geun, it is more important to create a beautiful building than a comfortable one. Personally, I cannot say I have the confidence to give beauty priority over comfort.

### **Interview Three: Dongnam Securities**

Interview held on 16 January 1992

Deputy chief Kang, Gu-Hyun

Office of Construction department

Q1: There were two or three alternatives from which the president selected. There was an explanatory conference with architects. The small area of the site makes comparison with the US impossible. The small area of 3,700 sq.m. necessitated the maximum utilization of built area.

The image needed was of the future and progressive. All the adjacent buildings are of the same volume as ours, and therefore we went for a sloping roof-line. Our site is right adjacent to SsangYong and we tried to make a distinctive building. While planning for the site, there were many problems and people from different securities companies had some opportunities to meet each other. The meetings were not to discuss design decisions but to solve problems and exchange opinions on those. SsangYong's site is bigger with 1,500 pyong. Other securities firms were reluctant to build next to it, because they expected a mammoth building.

Q3: We are able to provide facilities and required uses. Because of the parking space requirements, we were unable to build a bigger building.

Q4: No. Some Americans said it looked like one in Chicago, and I went there myself to look at it.

Q5: What makes something Korean? It is difficult to say that a high-rise building can be called Korean. Even so, this building cannot be said to be western.

Q6: No significance. No influence. The logo changed once. The previous logo had no influence either.

Q7: The securities firms are moving to Yoido. The Exchange and Association are here. The firms who did not move into the first stage. There is rental space in the building, but it was not a major factor in its design. We are planning to use from 2nd to 8th floor. The 9th will be used by our Group's investment consultants. From 10th to 18th floor is for rent. There is not any specific plan concerning this. The 19th floor is used by our firm.

Q8: The department of construction deals with technical matters and cooperates with the design architects; it also does research and reports to management.

Q9: 

- 1) Getting information together
- 2) Study of needs; efficiency and functions
- 3) Cooperation with the architects; see whether changes can be made architecturally
- 4) Report and getting approval
- 5) Tell architects of requirements
- 6) Changes in design

Q10: The client was the ultimate decision maker. There were also the president and executive director.

Further comments: There are some people who are not satisfied with the design. The core to space ratio is very high. Ours comes to even 18%. I did some research in Korea and Japan, and I found that the usual is 25%. Although it may be argued that it is advantageous to have a smaller core and greater space, it is not necessarily so. The core needs to fulfill all its functions while being as compact as possible. The IBS was not thought of at the beginning of the design, and therefore there is not much space to put cables and other installations in without touching the exterior wall. The building will be completed in late 1994. It has not been featured in any magazine.

#### **Interview Four: Dongnam Securities Architects Sisang**

Interview held on 20 January 1992

Head architect Won, Jae-jong

Office of the head architect

Q1: The image is important. There were no financial or time restraints. There was time for a study. Financial companies typically have no problem with capital. As the site is divided by nine securities firms, each of them needs to be distinctive and original. The firm wanted something to enhance their image, although they did not have a specific request. As the designer had just returned from the US and was into Postmodernism, this style was used in the building to create the distinctive image. It is a copy of American high-rise. The intent was to contrast the horizontal patterns against the vertical glass curtain wall. As the facade length is greater than normal compared to the height, the middle element emphasizes the verticality. This strengthens the feeling of ascend and makes the building taller than it is.

Q2: For a securities firm, this is special and unlike common form. It is a postmodernist form. There were some difficulties with the president of the client firm during the design development stage. Although he was conservative, he had seen new buildings overseas and wanted a new image. When we took our proposal to him, he objected saying that it did not have enough weight, etc. and was opposed. We had to make him see to be less conservative. At the time of design in 1987, PM had only just been introduced to Korea and not many buildings were built that way. At that time, using the style in a high-rise was original and other firms also had that thought. The aim was to be the most original and the best among the nine securities companies. Our building broke away from the existing domestic style.

Q3: There was no use of the logo or the image of the financial institution. The architect's opinion was stronger and more influential than the client's.

Q4: There was no intention to replicate the same image to be used in branch firms in the provinces. There was a certain freedom in designing. Dongnam Securities does not have a long history, and it did not offer a special image. The thoughts of Mr. Yu was largely incorporated. Helmut Jahn's high-rise designs in the early 1980's were influential, as can be seen by the stress on verticality. Instead of a flat roof, we insisted on sloping one. Instead of trying to project the image of a securities company, the architect's interest was expressed. PM took very little time to be accepted and be built in Korea.

Q5: We were conscious of those who saw the building. The Seoul City made a mistake in not having a masterplan to develop the site. The nine buildings have been built without regard to each other and give a confused feeling instead of celebrating variety. The nine companies were conscious of the Plaza in front and how they would look from across the space. The facade treatment was stressed more than the detail. Each firm wanted to look original and to stand out of the crowd. At first there was a height limit imposed by law, but Jaeil is planning to go higher. This building emphasizes the high-tech aspects both in- and outside. The IBS was desired by the client. We studied it and put in access floor and shaft space. The stockmarket relies on electronic network. There was no attempt to fit into context environmentally, because originality was the goal. SsangYong had the largest plot and is the largest. As our building is further away from it, we were more aware of Kukmin. We had the same stories, but were not influenced architecturally as it is a commonly found office building. The volume mattered.

Q6: It is difficult to find anything Korean in an office building. One should look at a cultural center. To trying to incorporate Korean-ness is like wearing a three piece suit while wearing a *gat* (a traditional hat made out of horse hair). The same applies to any other country.

Q7: No. If we are trying to see whether it is closer to American or to European, it is closer to the US PM. It becomes slimmer as it goes up.

Q8: None. We did not consult magazines.

Q9: Personally: Helmut Jahn in the US. Korea is much influenced by the US.

Q10: The client approved the design, but no requests were made. We submitted 30 drawings of 1:30 and 1:50 scale. We appreciate the receptiveness of the client.

Q11: Executive manager Kang.

Q12: PA , Architectural Review, Architecture. We do not look at Japanese ones. We get Plus, Architecture and Culture, Architecture and Environment, and some interiors magazines.

Q13: There is great influence. There are some American designed buildings: 63 Building, Lucky Twin Tower, Samsung Dongbang Building, SsangYong etc. The generation which is designing now has been influenced a lot by American architecture. There are good and bad sides to this. The American influences have not been digested and have been just applied. The American designs are bolder, as seen by SsangYong Securities building. There is more interference when domestic architects design than when Americans do. The clients are still worshipping the powerful. There is the example of Cesar Pelli's Kyobo building which is not even featured in his portfolio. It is a copy of the original one in Tokyo. The clients want the same high tech the Americans have; they want the most famous architects in the US. This may be a reflection on the abilities of the Korean architects, but it also smacks of worshipping.

Further comments: Five years after design, the building seems to been influenced too much by -ism. When the design was just completed, the building gave a new and unusual impression; now this does not seem to be the case.

### Interview Five: **Hanshin Securities**

Interview held on 6 January 1992

Vice President of Sam Kyong Construction Co.: Byun Hyong-doo

Conducted in the office of the vice president

Q1: The building is located in the center of Yoido, the "Manhattan of Korea", and therefore its image must be distinctive. It must represent the up-to-dateness required of securities firms both nationally and internationally. Aware of the fact that a majority of Korean corporate architecture look like match boxes, we wanted one which distinguished the corporate image while also contributing to the urban environment.

Q2: Everyone in the economy; all citizens: the building may serve as strengthening relations with international corporations. As to be more specific about "everyone in the economy", I mean mostly investors in securities; these can be private as well as public. Others may be corporations planning to become involved after the liberalization of the financial sector [in Korea].

Q3: It is an advantage for a corporation to possess its own building in the age of information explosion and the Intelligent Building. Now this is not only confined to corporate headquarters but also is equally

applicable to branch offices. An intelligent building signifies the combination of Office Automation, LAN system, and Building automation. In the design stage, we left room for cables by, for example, using deck plates for floors. There are in total 5,000 outlet points for the most flexible use of space in the future. This makes possible the plugging of computers and telephones at each workstation without laying of extra electric wires.

Q4: This building was the result of a design competition. In contrast to the large buildings sites available in the US, Korean firms are restricted by the small plot sizes. This may be a great limitation in designing buildings. Ours is confined to the use of the dome and antenna at the top. I already mentioned the symbolism of the vault. The thoughts of the designer was respected. The point, however, lies not in so much in the exterior form but in preparing to meet the needs of the information age. The exterior was a secondary consideration.

The exterior cladding was carmen red granite and aluminium. The reason for the choice lies in the approachability of wood and stone relative to steel plates. The color was chosen with air pollution and maintenance in mind. We were temporarily thinking of white which had the advantage of looking clean, but the maintenance problem changed our minds. Polished as well as rough. The use of rough granite is not really a good idea in the city where the grime from the air cannot be easily cleaned off. Chemicals can damage the stone and sand-spraying is not good for the windows. Polished granite may seem lighter, but it is much more practical than rough granite.

We sent people to Japan and the US to study the requirements for an intelligent building. At the present, ours cannot be said to completely function as one, but it is built to be immediately adapted when the need arises.

Q5: I cannot say this building can be called Korean. The exterior is most definitely a reflection of the tastes of the top management. The importance lies in being structurally prepared for a complete intelligentification of the building; without this preparation, it requires demolition of an entire section to incorporate additional installations. As to Korean-ness, the securities business itself cannot be said to be Korean. There was no attempt to use Korean elements in the facade.

Q6: The greatest limitation and the most significant factor in deciding upon a design during the competition was the smallness of the site. The building needed to provide as much space as possible. There was great difference in this respect between the varying proposals for the competition.

The dome may be seen to form a semicircle of the globe that is the corporate logo for the Hanshin Group. The literal use of the logo was confined to elevator doors, and a stainless steel display in the interior. Hanshin belongs to Dongwon Industries, involved in fishing. Its logo reflects the world with depictions of the latitude and longitude. The "Dong" stands for the east.

Q7: The original location was in Myondong. When the site in Yoido was developed, the firm moved there. Most of the sites for securities buildings are located in the present location where other related firms also are situated. Yoido can be called the Mecca of Korean securities business. Although most of the work can be done by computer, the financial sector is subject to the approval of a supervisory agency. The value of the stocks is also determined in Yoido.

Renting out space had no great priority . Financial companies of the Hanshin Group which are related to securities, such as Economic research center, investment companies, investment consultants etc. have moved into the building. Even if some space is given out to rent, they will be later used to house companies of the Hanshin Group. At the moment, there are two floors which are rented out. As the building was built at the height of the building boom, it seems to have risen much in value since then.

Q8: I was the consultant for the general design and construction work.

Q9: In the facade, I was instrumental in changing the color and material of the building from white to brown. The granite is imported from Finland.

Q10: The inspector of the Hanshin securities as well as the directors of the firm concerning political matters. The CEO was the final decision maker.

Further comments: I think the building turned out well. We got a lot of positive feedback from many people. The building was featured in the May 1991 issue of Architecture and Environment magazine.

We had to construct a special slurry wall in our foundation work. The precedent was set in the SsangYong Twin Building; after its construction, the apartments nearby became flooded. The reason for this was determined to come from the change of water-level after SsangYong completed construction. Slurry walls cost three to four times as much as the normal construction. Nowadays the construction is required of all new buildings.

At the time of construction, Daewoo Securities was to the north, with apartments across the street, Doosan Building to the south and Securities Financier to the west. Doing business means competition, and the building needed to have high visibility for people to find it easily. There was some problem from the people living in the apartments opposite the road who were concerned about visual privacy. There was a petition by the inhabitants, and the firm conducted studies proving that privacy would not be infringed upon.

We used Armstrong (American) instead of Mitron (Korean), because we needed big dimensions that domestic firms did not carry. Instead of specially ordering, it was easier to import the material. Due to a special request from the government, the building also houses the Collective Telecommunications Office which covers the building as well as the entire area, requiring 600 relay cables. There was a deliberate decision not to build a separate structure for it.

The new building has special lighting installations: the lights in window areas turn themselves on and off in response to the brightness of the sunlight outside. There is no central heating system for the building; the heating is supplied by the district heating plant.

### **Interview Six: Architect of Hanshin Securities Building**

Interview held on 9 January 1992

Architect Young-Hoi Kim

Conducted at a coffee shop

Q1: The design was changed during construction. The objective was to make use of maximum possible space. As for the image, this was the first building I did after returning from Italy, and I attempted to put some Korean-ness into it. Although I haven't published my theory of "Corearchism" or "Korean Architecture -Ism" in which I wanted to capture our spirit. A good example of capturing the *Zeitgeist* is the Art Deco style. Our architecture has a different articulation method of vertical space.

Returning to the building, it is sad to see that the finishing has been done differently from the original design. I therefore don't include it in my portfolio. Even though I specified alternate treatment of rough and smooth granite, all of the facade has been covered with smooth granite. The intent of having a visible vertical line along the height of the building has been respected. This vertical line was supposed to be seen on both sides.



There is talk that Hanshin Securities wants to use my design for branch offices in the countryside, and I had an argument about it with the CEO. Brown was the original color, but white was proposed, and I had no objections. The adjacent building is also of chocolate color. The form was changed to create a heliport on the top of the building. This is the cheapest office building constructed in all of the Republic. In the securities circles, there is even talk that it has been built for no money. I was not pressed for time. The design was completed in three months. You can tell how fast one has to come up with a design here; overseas, the architects have six months to do their design. The image was not a major factor in the design. The company had no influence in determining the form.

Q2: Hanshin Securities was the last building to be constructed on the block. All the other buildings had a flat top, and I felt the need to do something different with the skyline. In trying to incorporate Korean-ness into the design, I divided the building into base, middle and top while simultaneously stressing the horizontality of the upper portion. That is why there is a lot of articulation at the top.

I have not thought about the image of a securities building, but I considered Yoido's and Korea's. Architecture occupies space and time, and we cannot guarantee that the building will always remain as a securities building; it may become some other office later on. Therefore, it cannot be seen as securities building for always, as it is the case of churches. If Hanshin uses only my design to build their countryside branch offices, it will become its image.

Q3: I did not think of the logo. I suppose the pentagon building is the best example when the form literally imitates its symbol. The intelligent building system is an interior design problem. There was talk of changing the logo, and I paid no attention to it.

Q4: Building it cheaply, and the fact that it brought a fresh breath to the surrounding area

Q5: The building contributed in being different from adjacent buildings. There are now several distinctive buildings in Seoul. Even if they are isolated instances, if they stimulate a better design, they would have contributed to a living urban environment. Architecture should impart delight to people, and this delight should be Korean.

Q6: This is a superficial answer, but modern Korean architecture must have the qualities of traditional Korean architecture. It must come from our idea. This constitute Korean-ness.

Q7: As I said earlier, the horizontality in the design reminds of the column-less architecture. One cannot ignore the Heaven-Earth-Human principle, especially in the East. There may be some criticism to the

Korean-ness of Hanshin building. The base regards the earth and represents belief. It follows the rules of nature in the ground level. The middle part represents the human being, and the head part should be dancing to represents the freedom of the sky. A good example is the Sydney Opera House by Jorn Utzon. Ours must dance apart from the earth using the mass.

Q8: There was no model for the building. It is not completely worked out, as it was a experimental exercise. One can be elegant if one copies someone else's work, but work done for the first time cannot but be awkward.

Q9: I prefer Art Deco buildings, most specially Cherny.

Q10: In deciding on the design, the company requested low cost. The design period did not take a long time. The use of maximum possible space was also an issue. The building code put limitations on height lines. Their decision to choose my design can be seen as an contribution. They did not contribute in the design scheme, but the finish was applied according to the owner.

Q11: The work manager was the vice president. There was also a managing director.

Q12: Japan: A+U, Process; UK: Architectural Record; US: Progressive Architecture; Italy: Casa Bella; Korea: Architecture and Culture, Architecture and Environment, Plus

Q13: Instead of influencing, they are merely copied. As I do not want to copy, I do not keep any books with me while I design. There is not enough study of architecture, and this leads to not having one's own architectural style, which in turn leads to copying. Due to the low level of architectural understanding in Korea, there is a pervasive belief that architecture comes on demand. As this actually works, it becomes bad influence. We do things that have been done before in the US in the seventies. We need to study the countryside and form an appropriate form for the city. There is nothing that we can call our own. When the market opens as a result of the Uruguay round, it is going to be a problem. What is most vernacular, can be seen as being most international.

Further comments: Hanshin was the first office building to use the vault. This was after my return from Italy. When I was there, I could see Korea most clearly. Italy is the mirror for us. The most important aspect in architecture is in being alive. Living Korean-ness leads to vernacularism and localism. When I design I only have one without alternatives.

As the face changes when a beauty mark is moved, so it is in the building facade; the non-specialists do not understand this. There is no meaning in postmodernism and deconstructionism. Corearchism is different from them.

## **Interview Seven: Tongyang Securities**

Interview held on 7 January 1992

Assistant Director Kim, Chang-Kyo

Department of Office Building Constructions within the Tongyang Group

Q1: We received proposals from famous architectural design firms and a Korean architect working in the US., Kil-Heup Chong. We wanted a building which had the high-tech image of internationalism. We held a meeting in which Kansam Architects (Prof. Jung-soo Chong and Prof. Sun Jee), Kisan Architects (Hyong-Young Cho, graduate of UPenn), Junglim Architects, and Kil-Heup Chong participated. The conclusion could be summed up simply: the presentation with the best visuals was selected. His scheme stressed the continuing development and societal progress of the Tongyang Group.

Q2: The primary target audience is the client; the secondary can be considered as everyone connected with the securities business including the users of the building. For the time being, offices not belonging to the Group will be using part of the building; but within five years, with increasing number of employees and need for more space, most of the new building will be occupied by Tongyang Group companies. The new building will housing not only the securities company but also others whose nature is related to it.

The clients for securities can include every Korean citizen; indeed anyone who is interested in investing in securities. In November 1987, when we began the project, the building seemed too small to hold even the securities company alone. The economic projections of the following five years incorporated great expectations of financial growth for the company, and it was doubtful the building could satisfy the projected needs. Even the Tong Yang Cement Corp. cannot be fitted in.

The site of construction was chosen at a time when the Seoul City planned to develop Yoido as the securities town. They proposed to the Securities Association to build corporate offices in that area. The site was originally intended for seven companies, but in the end was divided into nine sections. The position of each firm was determined using some original lottery method. In Korea, due to the building regulations, sites of similar dimensions cannot but produce similar building volumes. It is meaningless to build an office with the other buildings in mind. The point is to build producing maximum floor area. If

the net floor area comes to 25,000 square meters, the design must be submitted for a special review by the Metropolitan Board. Usually a building greater than 25,000 square meters will not get an approval easily, as it requires decision of the Prime Minister of the Korean government. For this reason, most buildings are designed to come slightly under that figure.

Q3: The first advantage of having a company designed building lies in being able to express the company character. The second advantage reflects the desire of the owner to provide the best working environment for his employees. Facilities to promote the welfare of the workers are important considerations. The third factor is the transportation problem. Regardless of the status within the office, everyone now owns a car. There is a shortage of parking space. The fourth and last advantage lies in being able to create an intelligent building system which includes telecommunication, office automation, and building automation. As the installation of all the system may not come about due to financial reasons, it is the desire of most companies to incorporate the latest technologies into the building of a securities firm.

Q4: This is a problem of the architect. All of the proposals submitted had a distinctive approach to creating the necessary image required for a company building. When I went to Japan, however, I saw a building which reminded me of one of the alternatives. If the designer tells me that his design is original, I have no objections. I don't think any of the proposals were copies of existing buildings.

Q5: What can be defined as being Korean. I think of the curve of the traditional tile roof or the traditional shoes that women used to wear. I suppose anything related with the cultural customs and traditions can be called Korean. I don't think the building should have considered Korean-ness in its design.

Q6: The most important factor was indeed the exterior facade. Some of the proposals were of common design, but I think the selected building is sharp and fresh. Negatively speaking, it can be said that that particular proposal was selected because the picture was drawn the best. An appealing point in the design was the treatment of the lobby. The ultimate decision was made by the building owner. If he says that the design is better, then it is better. I cannot say specifically why exactly that proposal was selected. There was no special consideration given to incorporating the logo into the design. The logo will be employed in the lobby in the form of a plaque, also in the conference room, and outside as an advertisement. The corporate mark cannot be seen to have contributed much to the overall design. The image, however, was used. The mark symbolizes the world and the challenge it represents to the Group. This image is reflected in the building design not literally but it gives the impression.

Q7: Traditionally Myongdong has been the financial district of Seoul. With the beginning of the Securities Age, the government has encouraged the creation of a securities town in Yoido. This is now the

trend. Of course, the branch offices are scattered around Seoul. The rental possibility of the office building was not a serious consideration. There is an emphasis on having a one-stop flow in the building owned by the company; for this reason, it is desirable to have a bank on the first floor. Hopefully, the building will further the growth that it symbolizes. As for the business district, I think there is a natural movement of the securities firms towards Yoido.

Q8: A brief explained in detail the various functions the new building had to fulfill. I participated in the conference in which each proposal was explained by the various architects; this meeting was crucial in deciding whom to award the project. Thereafter I was involved in construction and management work.

Q9: The design of a building is very subjective. The design may change according to different persons. After providing the basic design, Kil-Heup Kim was not involved further. Afterwards, it was difficult to change anything. If there are some faults to be found, they include the parking facilities, the moving of visitors' center from B1 to the second floor, and the placing of the auditorium and cafeteria on the B1 level. There is nothing I would like to change as far as the exterior is concerned. I think it is not right to change anything that has been chosen through a competition, because there is always the authorship problem. There are some small details that have been changed, but I was not involved in such process.

Q10: The managing director, the executive director, vice president, the president and the CEO listened to the presentations of each proposal, and selected the winning entry after some discussion. The CEO made the ultimate decision.

Further Comments: The net floor area of the building amounted to 10,000 pyong (33,000 square meters), and we were able to use the maximum floor area by going 30m underground. The nine buildings sharing the site have cooperated in the excavation work, and the construction was completed on 31 December 1991. In 24 months, our building of 6 underground levels and 21 floors will be finished. The design was published in the magazine Plus sometime in the year 1990. Generally speaking, I am satisfied with the design. It has an original style. The nine securities companies were very cooperative in the discussion of the building code, but each worked separately on their design. There is a lot of competition between them, reflected in the design. I expect this competitive spirit to continue in the construction process.

As for obeying the Seoul building code, all nine buildings had to use slurry walls for foundation. According to the rules, we had to build in a line and conform to the same height. SsangYong is the exception. The skyline was an issue, and the height limit was 90 m.

The nine securities buildings belongs to: Goryo, SsangYong, Dongnam, Gugmin Investment Trust, Jaeil, Yuwha, Tong Yang, Seoul, and Pacific. Among them, Pacific Securities will be absorbed by Sunkyong Group. Goryo securities is most competitive concerning its dimensions. As its site is opposite the Yoido Plaza, it is legally entitled to go further up. The CEO of that firm has a very strong competitive spirit. As for Ssangyong, its site area is the largest, and therefore its building is the tallest.

### **Interview Eight: Tongyang Securities**

Executing architects: Samwoo Architects and Engineers

Interview held on 11 January 1992

Head designer Chang-Soo Kim

Office of head designer

Q1: Tong Yang Group has a long history, but until now had not designed its own building. The attempt was to relate the image of the corporation to the building: fresh, progressive and high-tech were the sought after qualities. This building will set the precedence for custom-made designs that hang together giving a similar and common feeling.

As the company was dedicated in building good architecture, there was enough financial backing and time to design without any restrictions. Time for the design was sufficient, but it was difficult to get approval for it. The most important consideration was in the creation of Tong Yang's image. Naturally, the simultaneous building of nine securities buildings brought out the competition. The attention was focussed in being able to draw attention to the building among the others. There was a lot of competition between the best and well-known architectural firms.

Q2: Newness, originality, freshness, progress.

Q3: The logo has been changed, and therefore played no role in the design. Design which is determined by some other form, such as the corporate logo is less desirable than a freer design which responds to the actual needs of the project. There was no attempt to adjust the plan to conform to the shape of the logo.

Q4: There are several reasons for firms to desire custom designed buildings: 1) The need for office space, 2) Social aspects of the company -- a) to benefit from advertising value, b) to publicize the distinctive character or personality of the company expressed by its building; it is a very effective means to express the corporate image [ex.: AT&T Building managed to convey a solid image which spoke of high tech yet

willing to help the people]. Domestically speaking, Samsung Life Insurance Building and the Kyobo Building benefitted by replicating its Seoul HQ building designs in their branch offices. Profits climbed and there was a consistent image projection. Corporate architecture plays an important role in business. A lot of thought must go into building it.

Q5: The target audience consists of the users of the building, the people who see it. One must consider what image it conveys to the people who work for Tong Yang Group and those who rent office space in the building. Clients judge the firm by the building in which it is in.

The site resolution in the master plan is not satisfactory. The Seoul City has sold the plots in an unwise manner; it should have had a masterplan before selling. Instead the reverse happened, and the master plan is fundamentally flawed. If the site had been planned as one with shared landscaping and pedestrian walkways; if there had been public spaces accessible to Yoido workers and inhabitants; if the clients had a resting space -- so much more could have been possible. The area could have been beautiful. The lost opportunities are the most unfortunate aspects of the masterplan, and it can be considered to be a failure.

The competition is fierce between construction firms to use the latest techniques, and therefore may bring about the upgrading of the general standards. Not only the construction firms, but also the suppliers of materials will feel the pressure to deliver.

Q6: Korean-ness did not come into the design. Internationalism was stressed.

Q7: The Korean state of mind makes Korean-ness. It is a difficult question with which I struggle continually: how to connect tradition and modernity. There are people who insist that modifying a traditional motif makes the design Korean, but this is difficult to agree with. The reason why I consider modern Japanese architecture to be more advanced than us is that even in their most international designs, one can still feel the nationality; example: Kenzo Tange's Tokyo City Hall. In the hands of some Japanese architects, the most high tech building belonging to the 21st century still retains Japan-ness. They are solving a problem which the Koreans have not succeeded in resolving.

Korean architecture, as seen in Kyongbokkung Palace and Korean Folk Village, is characterized by a certain ease. The dimensions may not be large, but it is settled, and there is change in each corner of the room. This quality may be what defines Korean space. In case of wooden floors, the traditional architecture had two levels: the upper floor was used to play 'go' and the lower one was used to drink rice wine. Compared to the restriction of area size, the rooms exhibited an ease in utilizing it with great adaptations.

Q8: There are none.

Q9: Philip Johnson's AT&T; Welton Beckett's Ford Corporation HQ in Orange County which is noted for projecting a strong corporate image; Nihonsekei designs which are Miesian in Japan; in Korea there is the Samsung Life Insurance Building, and the Kyobo building has some problems.

Q10: Proposing alternatives and deciding upon one. Commenting on some. In the design scheme I had no influence.

Q11: Executive manager Lee, Beum-Ju was responsible for the overall work. There was also Assistant director Kim, Chang-Kyo and Department manager Kim, Il-Hyun.

Q12: There is a reference library which received most major design journals. I just browse through them, and look for specific problems without paying attention to their titles.

Q13: There certainly is. In my case I travel every year or every two years to look at the new architecture in the US: Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Houston. Through these travels, I can see the current flow of its architecture and I refer to them. In case of some buildings, we make an appointment to see the interior. I try to answer questions like how are corporate HQ buildings treated in design. I frequently take trips to Japan. There is less opportunity to visit Europe, but in 1991 I made two short trips.

There were many differences in opinion between the designing architect and us, and therefore I am not 100% satisfied with the building. The ultimate decision was made by the CEO. It was unfortunate that our firm was not free to do what we wanted.

### Interview Nine: **SsangYong Securities**

Interview held on 16 January 1992

Section Chief Kim, Bok-Man

Conference table in the office

A small office on the 18th floor of SsangYong building containing the department of office construction; one female secretary and six male employees; a framed perspective in the back of the room with a likewise



perspective of lobby beside it; all references and office supplies are in closets along the walls; out of the window, the Dong Ah Securities HQ building can be seen to be under construction.

Q1: The whole building works as an image tower for the whole Group. Regarding the concept and the height, the structure could have been built more economically in steel than in concrete structure. As the Group has its origin in cement, the question here is not economy but using its own product and stating its individuality. The building takes on the form of a candle. In plan, there are mezzanine levels which will be difficult to use. Around the periphery of the drum, lights will be continuously installed to shine with steadiness. The concept speaks of peace.

The reasons for a tall company building are:

- 1) realistic problem: SsangYong securities is presently ranked as fifth nationally, but it still does not have its own building. Our Euljiro building is rented and the various offices are dispersed. For efficiency, all related work must be close to each other in one building
- 2) external problem: With the coming capital liberalization and international securities culture, a company building is needed to participate in it. Different from the past, the securities market has developed many specialized areas which demand trust, and the external appearance cannot be underestimated. The building will belong to SsangYong Investment Securities and the securities offices will occupy 50% of the space. The remainder will be rented out to other Group companies.

Q2: Generally speaking, everyone who works for the firm to instill pride. The form was designed by a foreign firm, Welton Beckett (American). The superficial concept is that of progress; instead of a relative comparison, like "better than", we are looking for an absolute value.

Q3: Business requires a custom made building. As there is no such building yet, the working conditions are rather poor. Auxiliary facilities and recreational facilities are lacking. There is also the need to have an outward sign. A tall building signifies a growing firm. With the diversification of the securities business (internationalization etc.), the building must provide various systems, substations, and become intelligent to meet the demands of the changes. Efficient work as well as alleviating the stress experienced by employees come into it. To supply enough relaxation space, we have given 20% more from the usually accepted 8 sq.m/person to 9.6 sq.m/person.

Q4: There were none. We tried domestic architectural firms before employing Welton Beckett. There were environmental surveys, possibility studies, legal studies etc. We made models of nearby existing buildings and studied the skyline. The form was created relatively fast. Instead of trying to emulate a domestic building we liked, the focus was on finding the appropriate idea. The CEO accepted almost 100%

of the original proposal. Along with him, the participants were domestic executing architects, and SsangYong Company Building department. The decision was entirely according to the CEO's taste.

Q5: This building is not Korean. More specifically, among western buildings, this building is a tower rather than a traditional and economical structure. On a net site area of 1,500 pyong (4,500 sq.m), the building occupies only 510 pyong (1,683 sq.m) and does not exploit maximum buildable area. Raising 510 pyong to a 30 storey height is economically inefficient and produces a very small usable area. The core to usable space ratio is also very high, therefore reducing further office space. The depth of the plan is only 10.5 m long; too short for Korean structural operations. As we have a vertical work structure, the approval line needs to be long to move along each hierarchy. There are numerous stamps required, this depth is too short to provide enough space.

The Image Tower of the Group came foremost to other considerations, such as circulation and user patterns.

Q6: The logo was inconsequential in the design. It was used in the elevators, at entrances, and as pattern of the floor. The logo will be displayed on top of the building also.

Q7: The other securities buildings being in Euljiro is a mistaken idea. The first securities block in Yoido has been established. The Stock Exchange is on the next block with Dongseu Securities. We will be on the second securities block. If the CBD is where the City Hall is, then Yoido can be called a deputy-CBD. The government has the intention of decentralizing the Kangnam traffic and population and stimulate specialized district for different sectors. This prevents aggregation into one area only.

The dealing rooms can be dispersed in branch offices even though only securities HQ buildings are thought to contain them. The big institutional and private investors do not like busy places and prefer a quiet atmosphere. They seek isolated places with good parking facilities, and as they have an information system they don't appear in dealing rooms. The IBS can send information to customers nationwide. In the year 2,000 the orders will be automatically dealt without requiring people to leave their houses. Dealing rooms need not be big. The information processing is more needed. There is an absolute shortage of land in the CBD.

The increased supervision and regulation of the securities operations have produced the impression that real estate is relatively safe and secure for investment. Real estate can also compensate for an unfavorable stockmarket climate.

Q8: I determined the functions and the economic factors, but was not involved in determining the concept.

Q9: There were changes of numerous aspects: 1) As the design was essentially foreign, the domestic building code was not consulted sufficiently. Also the intentions of the designers differ with those of the construction team. If possible, the image of the building remained untouched despite the several changes. By installing an intelligent building system, there were also several alterations. Our IBS and that of the US are differently understood. The Americans think building automation while we share Japan's idea of combining building automation system + office automation and telecommunication. Therefore the shaft needed to become larger.

Q10: We were not very familiar with the operations of a securities company, and therefore consulted the trading department about various aspects, such as the dealing rooms. For future expansion of international finance sector we consulted an experienced employee. The decisions were made by the president and the directors. There were the domestic executing architects and SsangYong's construction department.

Further comments: The building is not completely satisfactory. The building code itself is not logical, and we were unable to build an atrium due to some parking space requirements. The same reason caused the B2 substation to come up to B1. The building can be changed later on. It is not economical. Appropriate site must be selected to build a building like this. The limitations of the site limit the usability of the building.

We are planning to have another in Gwangju in which we used modules and aluminium curtain wall in the facade. Later on we have further plans in Changwon and Daejeon in which we will use the same concept as the SsangYong securities building.

This will be one of the best office buildings in Korea. Jaeil Securities is planning to build 27 storeys high, but it is not really tall and is qualitatively different from ours. There is competition between securities buildings. Our site is 1,300 pyong while their's is 960 pyong. There is a difference of 1,130 pyong. For Jaeil to build a 27 storey structure on its site area is evidence on its owner's greed. It cannot be economical. Our building could be more efficiently used if we only went 20 storeys up. To build a 30 storey building with slight increase of site area makes the building inefficient; to build more than 20 storeys on a site of 500 pyong increases loss. The executing constructor has little understanding of the whole.

**Interview Ten: SsangYong's executing architects Archiban**

Interview held 21 January 1992

Partner Architect Chang, Eung-Jae

Office of Partner Architect

Q1: Profit form office rental was not a factor. Understanding the image: SsangYong Securities had a late start: eight years ago. After five years, they were number five in profit, and this project was started. Its growth rate was good. They chose a site at the very center of "Manhattan of Seoul" to project the image of the securities firm together with that of the Group. The stockmarket was booming in 1987 and expense was not an issue when the building was planned. In 1988 the designing process started. Four years since, the economic condition has changed. The desired image was Korean style: because the firm was a *Chaebol* it must represent its economic power as well as combining the productivity of the securities company while symbolizing trust. All this must be felt to emanate about SsangYong securities when seeing the building. The building is a mix of securities and Group image, in which the latter was more influential. Other Group, such as Samsung or Lucky, already had their representational building when SsangYong did not possess a comparative structure.

The building came about after the son of the founder of the Group became CEO. Although the securities building cannot be the HQ for SsangYong Group, that must have been the thought behind it. As its origin is founded on cement, it became the material around which design ideas were brought forward. 1) Usually, except in apartment buildings, a 30 storey structure does not reinforced concrete. 2) The exterior cladding was originally of precast concrete to be subjected to sandblasting for final finish. This changes to pink granite. In Korea, the pre-cast concrete sandblasted finish is too expensive and there was also no company which could do this with expertise. There was also the capacity problem of factories and the cost of manufacturing. In the end the effect of burner finished granite was the same as sandblasted concrete. For these reasons, cement was not used extensively outside.

There is not any particular image requested. They wanted an intelligent building; indeed there is no new building which is not an IB. SsangYong did not insist on anything.

The order exhibited in the building is alright. I have reservations concerning the elevations, because it obviously followed the fashion of 1980's US architecture. This form was just applied here. I am not very happy with that. After five years, there is already a new trend; and I wonder how the building will look when it is finally built. There aren't many like it in Korea, and it may create a new vocabulary. The plan on the top floors has a hole in the middle, which I don't think is related to the image wanted by the client.

As for target audience; the building is for commerce; commerce means doing business; and this building is part of doing business. It targets the ordinary citizens, the authorities, and maybe the overseas. The reason for SsangYong to build such height can be said to indicate awareness of international market, but the fundamental reason is doing business.

Q3: The mark was not very important. The logo changed while the design was in progress. Therefore there is no connection between the logo and the building form. SS signifies two dragons. About the previous logo I have no knowledge. Maybe playing around with the letters to get a dimensional effect.

Q4: In Korea, as in any other country, when a firm grows and reaches a certain stage there is a desire to advertise its success, show off its wealth, and symbolize reliability. These are the simple reasons for *Chaebols* to build. This building belongs to the securities branch of the firm, and is not intended to be the HQ. There are no special plans to build one.

The Group wanted a distinctive design and gave the project to an American firm. Financial institutions are conservative, and SsangYong Group itself is particularly so. This is the reason for its logo being colored in red and blue. The former indicates progress while the latter means conservatism. Overall it means mixing of conservative company values with high tech. Thinking along this line, the building has many conservative aspects to it. There is at the same time a desire for an intelligent building. The distinctive design can be seen in the treatment of the trading floor which differs from the normal domestic method. The standard floor plan did not give much importance to rental possibilities, and possesses a very distinctive atmosphere.

Q5: Seoul is different from the average European city which has a long history of urban architecture. There is nothing in Korea comparable to tree-lined boulevards. Yoido was uninhabited before development beginning with the Parliament. This site does not have a special context except that which is inherent of the buildings to be built there. 1) The intent is to put all securities activities in one area; 2) The spaces between the buildings are to have an open character with pedestrian routes and landscaping common areas. The nine designs of the buildings were shown only at the review of Seoul City. Only then did people realize the enormous density. The competition between firms existed with SsangYong having the largest site. Conscious of SsangYong, some firms employed foreign architects; Seoul Securities also has an American architect.

Q6: Personally speaking, a commercial building is essentially international. Korean-ness comes from its use. What makes something Korean cannot be readily defined. If designed by a Korean in Korea embodying a Korean way of thinking may be the definition.

Q7: Absolutely not. Westernized and commercial building.

Korean architects are always working on the definition of what Korean means. Generally the results are unsatisfactory. It is difficult to find an instance of a commercial building which can be called Korean. To understand the problem, one must understand the history. We are a people whose past has been interrupted. There was no period which allowed us to absorb and accept outside influences in order to digest them. In Japan, the Portuguese, French, English influences were able to be absorbed since the 17th century. And the foreign culture was not accepted by our will, but has been thrust upon us. The collapse of a dynasty, the Japanese occupation, the division of South and North, the influx of Soviet and American culture all allowed no digestive time. The Japanese architecture is also very westernized, but they succeeded in retaining their identity. Their commercial buildings and exterior spaces look Japanese. Seoul's architecture is the same as anywhere else.

In contrast to the contemplative stone garden in Kyoto, our landscaping is rough and we stress naturalness. Ours looks like it has been left to nature. When viewing a Japanese house, the craftsmanship is amazing. This comes from the cultural base that they come from. The openings have some definite intention. This kind of aspects can be read by the West, and that is why Japanese architecture is so popular there.

Q8: No. There is no domestic nor foreign model. Of course, afterwards I saw a similarity in Cesar Pelli's Financial Center. The request by the client was for a landmark building of 30 storeys height, but there was no particular model which they had in mind. The design form was not touched by them. There were four alternatives from which they chose.

Q9: I.M.Pei: Bank of China in Hong Kong, the Hancock Building in Boston, the Art Gallery in Washington DC; the Louvre. Kohn Pederson Fox and Louis Kahn

Q10: The clients completely accepted Welton Beckett's suggestions. The selected alternative was the best among the others. The only demand was to use reinforced concrete.

Q12: US -- Record, Progressive Architecture ; UK -- Architectural Review; Japan -- Architecture Document, A+U; Japan Architect; Korea -- Space, Architecture and Culture, Architecture and Environment; Plus

Q13: There is a lot of influence in the exterior cladding where I look at American handling trend of the 1980s.

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