

Chapter 2

The Idea and Practices of Citizenship in South Korea

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Abstract This essay examines a history of the idea of citizenship and its practices in Korea from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. Based on this historical survey, it argues that the prototype of citizenship constructed from the nationalist discourse on building a modern nation is simultaneously collectivist and elitist. This prototype shows that individualistic assumptions implied in the liberal notion of citizenship were selectively modified and reinvented in the Korean context. This prototype became more authoritarian in the discourse of *kungmin*, and was at times challenged by a populist view among some leftist thinkers and activists. But such challenges were usually unsuccessful in the face of power politics during Japanese colonial rule, US Army Military Government rule, and the authoritarian rule imposed by Korean civilian and military regimes. A significant change in this persistent pattern has emerged since the establishment of procedural democracy.

2.1 Introduction

Historically, the idea of citizenship reflects the development of a new type of membership in a nation-state, characterized by legal equality among its members who bear rights and responsibilities. This characteristic stems from the elevated status of citizen in the ancient Greek *polis*, popularized by the modern nation-state; as a prototype, the citizen was a free and property-owning political actor, engaged in running affairs of the state. In the postcolonial era after World War II, citizenship has become a normative component of political modernity, and most nation-states have adopted it with variations in their actual practices. Marshall (1950) devised the

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classic typology of civil, political and social rights based on the historical development of citizenship in Britain, but applying this typology to other societies requires careful attention to the historical and social contexts that have shaped the idea and practices of citizenship in a given society, including citizens' rights and responsibilities, and the balance between them. This chapter explores how the idea of citizenship as *equal membership in a nation-state* was adopted and has developed, in conjunction with the ways it has been practiced in Korea, since the turn of the twentieth century.¹

This broad definition of citizenship is necessary in order to avoid the automatic association of citizenship with democracy, which reflects the development of citizenship mostly in the West.² This avoidance means "provincializing" Western historical experiences of citizenship development as significant yet not necessarily the normative standard to measure or interpret such development in a non-Western context as a lack or aberration. This broad definition also helps us navigate ambiguities in the Korean translation of citizenship (*siminkwŏn*) and citizen (*simin*) and their usages. In fact, throughout most of the twentieth century, these words were not commonly used to refer to political membership in Korea. When *simin* was occasionally used, it simply referred to urban residents as opposed to residents of villages, counties, or other administrative units³; when *siminkwŏn* was used, it strictly meant citizen's rights, rather than the complex of conditions and relationships implied in the political status of being a citizen. It was not until the late 1980s that various types of grassroots organizations reclaimed the term citizen to redefine people's relationship to the state that they had fought to democratize (Moon 2005). Although these movements, known as "citizens' movements" (*siminundong*), popularized terms such as citizen and civil society (*siminsahoe*) during the democratization of Korea, ordinary Koreans who are not particularly political do not generally identify with these terms to indicate their own political status. Instead, many Koreans continue to use *kungmin* (national or state's people), which has been in currency since the early twentieth century.⁴ Others altogether avoid this politically tainted term, which has been overused by authoritarian regimes, in favor of the politically neutral term *chumin* (resident).⁵

In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss how the idea of citizenship was introduced into Korea at the turn of the twentieth century and how nationalist reformers articulated a new kind of membership in the state that had to be modernized. As reformers confronted aggressive imperialist powers, their discourse constructed a view of citizenship that was both collectivist and elitist, underscoring the people's duty as being one of usefulness for strengthening the nation. In the second section, I will discuss how the idea and practice of citizenship was depoliticized, becoming more authoritarian under Japan's colonial rule (1910–1945), and how leftist movements challenged these repressive tendencies. In the third section, I will focus on the period of US Army Military Government (USAMG) rule (1945–1948), with particular attention to the perpetuation of the authoritarian view and practices of citizenship inherited from the colonial era. In the fourth section, I will discuss the idea of citizenship and its practices in the era of authoritarian rule under Korean civilian and military regimes (1948–1987), which show striking similarities to the USAMG era. In the final section, I will highlight a significant rupture in the

authoritarian view of citizenship and its practices during the era of conservative democratization. Based on this historical analysis, I shall argue that the prototype of citizenship constructed from the nationalist discourse on building a modern nation is simultaneously collectivist and elitist. This prototype shows that individualistic assumptions implied in the liberal notion of citizenship were selectively modified and reinvented in the Korean context. This prototype became more authoritarian in the discourse of *kungmin*, and was at times challenged by a populist view among leftist thinkers and activists. But such challenges were usually unsuccessful in the face of power politics during the colonial rule, the USAMG rule, and the authoritarian rule by Korean civilian and military regimes, which had all suppressed grassroots leftist movements and organizations. The prominence of power politics in shaping the idea of citizenship and its practices in Korea reveals that citizenship has been a battleground between conservative forces trying to curtail political agency of grassroots men and women, and progressive forces trying to popularize such agency and empower people as political subjects. This type of battle has directly involved the wielding of political power, causing the specific characteristics of citizenship to be determined by complex power relations between the modernizing or modern state and social groups, within a given historical and social context.

2.2 The Enlightenment Era and the Prototype of Citizenship in Korea (1890–1900)

In many postcolonial societies, a broad spectrum of nationalist thinkers and politicians at the turn of the twentieth century encountered the idea of citizenship originating from the West and discussed how to adopt it to build a strong nation-state in the face of aggressive imperialism. In particular, nationalist thinkers in Korea introduced the idea of citizenship through Japanese and Chinese translations, partly because many of them were able to read and write these languages, and partly because they shared with their Japanese and Chinese counterparts the understanding that remaking the Korean people as a new people was the starting point in the creation of a new modern nation (Chŏn 2007: 400). Against the backdrop of a series of domestic and international events that heightened a sense of urgency to reform old Korea,⁶ the Korean thinkers realized that the people were members of a nation that needed to be revived and modernized, and they published newspapers to educate them.⁷ Newspapers became popular in the late 1890s as the medium of nationalist movements, but between 1899 (when the government forcefully closed the *Independent Newspaper*) and 1905 (when Japan turned Korea into its protectorate), publication of newspapers and other print materials drastically declined, increasing again between 1905 and 1910, when Korea was formally colonized (Chŏn 2007).

The *Independent Newspaper* (*Tongnipsimmun*), was published from April 1896 to December 1899,⁸ and was the first vernacular Korean (and English) newspaper produced by Western-oriented reformers. The paper played a central role in

articulating the novel idea of citizenship by recasting ordinary Korean people who used to be, at best, the object of benevolent rule. While it continued to use such old terms as *paeksŏng* or *inmin* (ordinary people who were ruled), mostly to refer to members of the state to be modernized (Ryu 2004: 55),⁹ it redefined them as right-bearing and equal members – at least in abstract terms. Positing that this right would be free from the state’s interference, the newspaper commonly paired this notion of right with the self (*chagi*).¹⁰ Yet such inalienable rights were curiously confined to the right to property and life. As the newspaper repeatedly stressed these rights, it also often asserted that the government’s primary duty was to protect life and property. At the same time, civil rights and political rights were clearly circumscribed in the discourse of citizenship in the newspaper, because the people were presumably not ready for these rights. A close reading of this newspaper for its entire duration shows that while it basically portrayed the Korean people, in reality, as being pitiful and ignorant – and therefore merely the objects of education and enlightenment – it repeatedly promoted diligent and productive people as new members of the nation, and emphatically touted economic independence as the basis of citizenship (Reading Group 2004). The newspaper only represented the people secondarily as watchmen who ought to monitor the government’s activities and exercise their political right to elect their officials (Reading Group 2004: 177, 206, 425). With their political agency circumscribed, the people re-envisioned for citizenship were expected to be productive workers, property owners and educated members of the nation. Although they were entitled to some political rights – which was indeed a radical idea at the time – their citizenship was marked by a duty to be useful to the nation and follow enlightened leaders.

What is noteworthy about the economic concept of citizenship without full political agency is that the people who were identified to build the modern nation were not hailed as the autonomous and isolated individuals of Western liberalism. Instead, they were viewed as instrumental components of the nation who were to be awakened and mobilized. This utilitarian collectivism that suppressed the individual permeated the citizenship discourse as its main underlying tone. Even individual emotion was rechanneled into a collective resource to be mobilized for the nation. During 1898, when the *Independent* was deeply involved in organizing the “10,000 people’s collaboration meetings” (*manmin’ gongdonghoe*), it frequently published editorials that underscored the people’s duty (*paeksŏngŭi chingmu*) for gaining national independence. Intriguingly, this duty was discussed in conjunction with “courage” (*yongmaeng*) as a form of political passion (Ryu 2004: 55–56). In this rhetorical style, the individual’s feelings are recognized but his potential individuality is destroyed by his sacrifice to collective survival.¹¹ In this framework, the people’s rights and equality were necessary not because they would foster independent individuals, but rather because they would strengthen the nation. It is no accident that the old collectivist terms, *paeksong* and *inmin*, were used most frequently to refer to new members of the nation-state, while such terms as “individual” or “citizen” were altogether absent in the discourse.

The discourse of citizenship in the *Independent* constructs a prototype of citizenship in modern Korea that prioritizes economic rights and agency but truncates

political rights and agency. This concept resulted from the elitist nature of the nationalist discourse¹² and the political reality of dealing with a declined monarchy bolstered by conservative forces. Those nationalist reformers were the educated elite and their views were inevitably shaped by the old social order based on hereditary hierarchical status that kept the majority of the population illiterate and subservient. While the reformers' elitism can be justified to a certain extent because the populace was in need of education, this view fails to recognize the peoples' potential, as well as their wisdom and knowledge organically rooted in their own experiences. Since its foundation, the newspaper had to confront the hostility of Russia-oriented conservative aristocrats suspicious of its political motivation. As the newspaper's influence over society grew while it actively dealt with the urgent problems of the day, the hostility also grew until finally, co-founder and editor-in-chief Chae-p'il Sō (Phillip Jaisohn; 1864–1951), was forced to resign and leave Korea. Under the editorship of another co-founder, Ch'i-ho Yun (1864–1945), the newspaper continued its political and social engagement by organizing throughout 1898 the 10,000 people's collaboration meetings, the aforementioned mass protests, demanding that the Chosŏn government restore its independence from imperialist powers and modernize. The conservative forces accused the leaders of these protest gatherings of conspiring for a republican revolution. The last gathering was forcefully broken up and Yun was finally replaced by foreign editors, Henry Herbert Appenzeller, an American Methodist missionary, and later H. Emberly, an Englishman. By the end of 1899, the Korean government took over the newspaper and soon closed it (Chŏn 2004: 437–441). This political context highlights how the new idea of citizenship imported from outside the country was influenced by the power politics between the Chosŏn government and nationalist reformers; similarly, the elitist nature of the citizenship discourse alludes to grossly unequal power relations between these reformers and the grassroots population, which remained unorganized and voiceless.

In the decade following the demise of the *Independent*, the prototype of citizenship devolved into a discourse of *kungmin* (nationals or state's people), which displayed a reactionary and more authoritarian rendition of citizenship than was conveyed in the newspaper. This discourse of *kungmin* is very crucial to our understanding of the idea and practices of citizenship in Korea because, as already mentioned, this term has been the most commonly used to indicate citizen (as a member of the state) in Korea throughout the twentieth century. It is noteworthy that this term, being a Japanese translation of *Staatsvolk*, had been widely circulated throughout China and Japan since the 1870s, and referred to the new political community of a nation. In Japan, which later colonized Korea, *kungmin* (*kokumin* in Japanese) was characterized by self-sacrificing loyalty to the Emperor, and the imperial state consciously popularized *samurai* as the model of modern Japanese *kokumin* who would serve the nation (de Bary 2004: 181). While its German meaning conveyed an ethnic group that has sovereignty over a (nation) state that ruled a given territory, its Northeast Asian translations highlighted members' loyalty to a state (Pak 2004: 229).¹³ In Korea, the term began to appear in nationalist newspapers and books in the 1890s and by the late 1900s it was more

commonly used than the old terms *paeksong* or *inmin* (Kim 2004: 198).¹⁴ *Kungminsui* (*What Nationals Are to Know*; 1906) was arguably the most significant text among three books published on the subject of *kungmin* between 1894 and 1910; it was most widely circulated among the educated elite. Before its publication as a monograph, its contents were serialized in the conservative *Hwangsongsinmun* (from 15 July 1905 to 3 August 1905) under the generic authorship of “overseas traveler” (Kim 2004: 194, 202, 205). Its authorship is putatively linked to Kil-jun Yu (1856–1914), a reformer and politician who traveled to Japan and the U.S. to explore the modern world.

Focusing heavily on the state rather than its people, the book portrays *kungmin* as a natural component (along with land and government) of the state, and at best, the object of the government’s benevolent rule, which echoes the Confucian notion of the sage ruler. This reactionary rendition of citizenship reveals a deeply contradictory position in its discussion of *kungmin*’s duty and rights. It stresses the duty to pay taxes and perform military service for 3–4 years. In particular, it promotes universal male conscription because paid soldiers will not sacrifice their lives for the state. Regarding *kungmin*’s rights, however, it vacillates between the modern notion of inalienable rights in the abstract and the acceptance of status hierarchy in reality. Hence, according to the book, sovereignty belongs to the monarch and the government is seen as the instrument to carry out his orders. Similar to the meanings of *paeksong* or *inmin* used in the discourse of citizenship in the *Independent*, *kungmin* – as the collectivity of people – are not sovereign subjects in reality, but objects to be mobilized to strengthen the state (Kim 2004: 207, 212–213). Unlike the newspaper discourse, however, the *kungmin* discourse does not address specific political rights to be exercised by the people. With its ironic title, this book obscures traditional paternalism in the relationship between the state and its members and fails to discuss what constitutes *kungmin*. This shows the contradiction inherent in the ruling elite that was in decline and forced to undergo change, but was unwilling to do so due to its vested interests in the status quo. Later, *kungmin* acquires a substantive meaning in an influential editorial in the *Taehanmaeilsinbo* (30 July 1908), which distinguishes *minjok* (a nation) from *kungmin*; while *minjok* refers to a naturally evolved community of people, *kungmin* signifies members of a political community deliberately bound by shared spirit and therefore ready to be mobilized, just like soldiers in military barracks (Pak 2004: 245–246).

The *kungmin* discourse disregarded individuals even more than the preceding discourse of citizenship did, due to its increasing emphasis on members’ loyalty to the state to be modernized and to be preserved. This collectivism was indeed a dominant trend in the enlightenment era prior to the colonization of Korea. The trend was mirrored in two popular literary genres during the 1900s; biographies of heroes, and the fable. Especially after the Ŭlsa Treaty (1905), which entailed the loss of Korea’s diplomatic sovereignty to Japan, nationalist writers published a series of biographies of Korean heroes and a foreign heroine who saved their countries from powerful enemies.¹⁵ Although these books narrated the lives of exemplary individuals, they were not concerned with the inner world or particularity of an individual hero or heroine. Rather, the protagonists in these books served

as a literary device for discussing ideal values and norms to be taught and promoted among the general public (Kwŏn 2003: 89). Similarly, fables published and circulated in this period used their major characters as literary devices to convey certain viewpoints concerning urgent social and political issues. This instrumental collectivism is evident in the common portrayal of individual characters and their actions and interactions which do not form a series of events that drive the underlying plots (as is the case in a modern novel), but merely function as a literary tool to convey social criticism (Ibid: 115). This dominant literary practice reflects the political exigency of mobilizing individuals for collective survival by disseminating nationalist messages and social criticism.

The discourse of *kungmin* reflects the political context characterized by the monarchical reaction to various reform movements in the midst of aggressive imperialism during the 1900s.¹⁶ In a desperate attempt to assert itself against these domestic and international challenges, the Chosŏn court declared itself as the great Han Empire (*Taehanjegyuk*) in 1897, disbanded in 1898 the Independence Club (*tongniphyŏphoe*) that cautiously promoted republicanism, and adopted absolute emperorship in 1899. This reactionary process harnessed political activism in general and in particular the discourse of citizenship, which explored new meanings of political membership. A major blow to this reinforcement of the monarchy was ironically the aforementioned Ŭlsa Treaty of 1905 (Kim 2004: 199–200). The further weakening of the Chosŏn court generated a political opening to re-galvanize reform movements; for example, *Mansebo*, a house organ of Chŏndogyo, a nationalist religion, promoted the individual's freedom to express his views through a legislative body and achieve upward mobility based on his ability, and reasserted the liberal idea of ordinary people as equal members of the nation who should be free from the hereditary status hierarchy and the gender hierarchy (Pak 2001: 63–64). In 1907, aforementioned Ki-t'ak Yang (1871–1938) and Ch'ang-ho An (1878–1938) founded *Sinminhoe* (New People's Association) and argued for a republican polity (Kim 2004: 201). But this type of revived effort could not halt Japan's colonization of Korea.

2.3 Depoliticization of Citizenship and Its Challenge During the Colonial Era (1910–1945)

Colonial rule not only relegated Koreans to second-class membership of the Japanese empire, it also facilitated the spread of the authoritarian view of citizenship previously adopted through the discourse of *kungmin*. The Japanese notion of the self-sacrificing *kungmin* loyal to the Emperor (see endnote no. 12) became the model to shape the colonized Koreans. As a result, citizenship in colonial Korea was depoliticized, especially during the first decade of colonial rule (officially called the era of “military rule”) when the colonial state deployed very repressive measures to suppress political activism among the Koreans. We can see glimpses of

such depoliticizing efforts in the aforementioned *Maeilsinbo*, the Governor General's newspaper and an important historical document that conveys the everyday lives of colonized Koreans in the 1910s. The newspaper encouraged Koreans to be diligent and productive members who could accumulate wealth incrementally and perform their duty to pay taxes, while in reality, basic civil and political rights were denied. This one-dimensional economic citizenship was coupled in the social realm with the lopsided focus on family and domestic affairs. This content was in stark contrast to the social section of *Taehanmaeilsinbo*, the predecessor to *Maeilsinbo*, which was commonly filled with reports on various voluntary organizations, including local schools, social reform groups and learned societies, which promoted national survival and the enlightenment of the Korean people (Kwön 2008: part 2). In addition, *Maeilsinbo*, the house organ of the colonial government, conveyed great hostility towards individualism, equating it with extreme selfishness (Pak 2004: 254).

The nation-wide uprising against repressive colonial rule on 1 March 1919 ended the era of military rule and ushered in the era of "cultural rule" during the 1920s, when the colonial state tolerated some limited civil rights for cultural activities in the press, publications, and associations. Taking advantage of this political opening, major newspapers with a national circulation were founded in early 1920, including the *Dong a Daily* and *Chosŏn Daily*, which still exist in South Korea as major conservative newspapers. Similarly, the Kaebŏk company, financed by the Chŏndogyo church, published a series of new magazines for various groups of Koreans, starting with a monthly general magazine entitled *Kaebŏk* (Opening or Creation) in June 1920; it began to publish a women's magazine *Puin* (Women) in June 1922, a children's magazine *Orini* (Children) in 1923, a literary magazine *Pyŏlgŏngon* (Special World) in 1926, and a student magazine *Haksaeng* (Students) in 1929 (Kim 2007: 238). Along with the internal political change, the Russian revolution of 1917 and the spread of socialism and communism in the world also contributed to a new development in the discourse of citizenship in colonial Korea. It was around 1923 and 1924 that socialists emerged in the political landscape of colonial Korea and Korean nationalism was bifurcated into rightist and leftist camps (Yun 2007: 281). While *Dong-a Daily* often printed rightist viewpoints, *Chosŏn Daily* at times printed leftist viewpoints on various political and social issues. Embedded in the social context marked by the rise of leftist views, *Kaebŏk*'s ideological orientation evolved from right to left by identifying itself as a "magazine for down-trodden Korean people" (*Chosŏn minjung*). At the same time it also functioned as a forum to advance these two different perspectives.¹⁷ The Korean Communist Party (*Chosŏn kongsandang*) was established in 1925, but the colonial state forcefully disbanded it in 1928 (Ibid: 297).

On the one hand, conforming to the reality of colonial rule, right-wing "enlightenment intellectuals" continued the discourse of depoliticized citizenship. Instead of addressing the problem of citizenship in the colonial empire, they focused on Koreans' responsibility to cultivate morality and character through education and cultural activities (Kim 2007: 304–305). We can observe glimpses of this contradictory discourse in the aforementioned *Kaebŏk* (1920–1926).¹⁸ In their debate

with emerging left-wing intellectuals about the controversy over the funeral ceremony of Yun-sik Kim (1835–1922),¹⁹ such leading intellectuals as Ki-jŏn Kim, Ton-hwa Yi, and Kwang-su Yi affirmed the collectivist and elitist view of citizenship that essentially separated leaders from followers. They envisioned a modern society (not a modern state) where educated intellectuals like themselves lead the ignorant masses and shape public opinion through rational criticism and free discussion amongst themselves. They did not trust the masses' ability to articulate their own viewpoints and make decisions (Ibid: 310, 326). In particular, Kwang-su Yi (1892–1950), the major figure among this right-wing group, argued that sacrifice and service for the state and society would be more important than individual liberty and, paradoxically, asserted that “submission” (*pokjong*) is a genuine form of freedom. He also argued that equality between individuals would mean equality in terms of their human rights and humanity, but never equality of ability. Hence, he considered the distinction between leader and followers a natural aspect of human life (Yun 2007: 303–304). Ultimately, in his culturalist understanding of colonial Korea, Yi reduced political inequality to qualitative differences among individuals and failed to recognize that individual freedom and equality were political underpinnings of the modern society that its state had to institutionalize.

On the other hand, leftist intellectuals challenged the elitist view of depoliticized citizenship by anointing *minjung* (down-trodden people or grassroots people) as the subjects of politics and society. In the paucity of reliable documents on leftist movements during the colonial period, we can get glimpses of their views from the 1922 funeral controversy and the local autonomy controversy in the mid-1920s,²⁰ and the Korean Communist Party Manifesto published in 1926. In their opposition to observing a public ceremony for Kim's funeral, the leftist intellectuals clearly demonstrated that awakened *minjung* consciousness, and their sense of justice, were to be the source of public opinion and thus the people's ability to make decisions (Kim 2007: 307). Such leading leftist intellectuals as Chae-hong An and Nam-un Paek opposed the local autonomy movement supported by the colonial state by arguing that it obscured the colonial reality that reduced Koreans to laborers exploited by Japanese capitalists, and kept them deprived of basic liberty and rights to choose religion and political ideology, and to organize associations and participate in social affairs (Yun 2007: 298). The Korean Communist Party Manifesto (published in Shanghai, China in 1926) showed a similarly populist orientation, at least in principle. It pursued a democratic republic as the ideal polity where *kungmin* or *inmin* would enjoy not only the basic civil and political rights but also extensive social rights that would protect and nurture the working class (Yun 2007: 307, 308). These examples suggest that some leftist intellectuals embraced basic rights (largely ignored by the rightist intellectuals in their cultural and moral emphasis on enlightenment and characters) essential to modern citizenship. Yet these progressive ideas and their movements were suppressed by the colonial authorities; it is likely that such ideas became further marginalized as socialist and communist movements went underground in Korea and Korean communists outside Korea joined guerilla groups in Manchuria under the Chinese Communist Party to fight against the Japanese colonial empire.²¹

Outside the intellectual circle, socialism influenced local young men's movements across colonial Korea in the mid-1920s. Identifying with the labels such as "propertyless" (*musan*), "proletarian" (*pro*), "communist" (*kongsan*), or leftist (*jwaik*), local youth associations (*ch'ōngnyōnhoe*) mushroomed after the March First Movement (Chi 2007: 341). Initially, they were dominated by sons of local elite families, but as these young members of the elite were absorbed into the government's local bureaucracy in school committees, agricultural associations and credit unions, young leftist men, mostly hailing from humble backgrounds, filled the original youth associations. These associations carried out radical social reform activities by organizing night school programs and agricultural unions, performing plays, and addressing tenant farmers' problems. They were also opposed to the aforementioned issue of local autonomy supported by the colonial state (Ibid: 352, 353, 355). Owing to their subversive stance, the authorities monitored their activities and kept a file on their leaders. As revolutionary peasants and workers' movements grew in the early 1930s, the authorities suppressed them by force (Ibid: 373). The development and decline of this type of grassroots movement is significant to practices of citizenship because they reveal that the populist notion of citizenship spreads through the network of local organizations that try to solve serious problems ordinary people experience in their daily lives; the presence of such organizations induce people's willing participation in local politics. It also reveals that such grassroots movements are likely to trigger repression from the authoritarian state unless it desperately needs the grassroots population for its own political survival or to expand its power.

By the 1930s the authoritarian idea of citizenship that stressed unwavering loyalty to the state (without guaranteeing basic rights) was fully integrated into the militaristic expansion of the Japanese empire (de Bary 2004: 179–180). The colonial state tried to weaken the organizational structure of leftist grassroots movements, strengthen its own official administrative network, and tried to co-opt existing voluntary associations in local areas in order to turn them into its own instruments (administered mass organizations).²² Faced with the persistent leftist movements that organized labor disputes, peasants' disputes, and night schools, the state in 1931 launched a nationwide repressive "rural village control policy" (*nongch'ont'ongjechōngch'aek*) along with "ideological conversion" (*sasangsōndo*) measures. Under these measures, the state closely collaborated with indigenous local elites to convert those left-leaning activists by offering monetary and status incentives (Chi 2007: 374, 376). Yet the spirit of protest survived in the 1930s in some local residents' movements in the Seoul area. Particularly in the second half of the 1930s, this type of local movement increased to address such mundane problems as garbage collection, running water and sewage systems, roads and transportation, education, public safety, housing, and assistance after natural disasters; each of these issues was made worse by increased migration to the city (Kim 2007: 223, 224–229). These residents used established mechanisms such as public grievances and petitions, which the colonial state allowed for after the March First Movement (Chi 2007: 364). Although these practices, along with mass rallies and local residents' associations, were corrupted by the collusion

between the local authorities and local elite, especially in rural areas (Ibid: 368–371), the residents' movement in Sŏngbuk-dong, Seoul, shows an intriguing subversion of the state's control over informal local politics.²³ Its residents' association, under the leadership of an indigenous elite member, worked consistently to resolve an array of urban problems affecting the lives of its residents through the established channels (Kim 2007: 232–242).

It is noteworthy that public grievances and petitions filed by local residents in Sŏngbuk-dong and elsewhere mostly centered on problems with the state's distribution of public resources among local areas, stemming from administrative negligence and discrimination (Chi 2007: 369; Kim 2007: 230). The local residents' movement in Seoul suggests that some urban Koreans developed a sense of entitlement, demanding that the colonial government fulfill its responsibility. Although members of the states in pre-modern Korea used grievances and petitions to communicate their problems, there is a significant qualitative difference between the contents of these demands. The contents of problems addressed by the urban residents in colonial Korea included an array of modern expectations for the state's public service; they were not problems of food shortages, famine, or excessive extraction of people's resources by local officials, but those of education, housing, roads and transportation, running water and sewage systems, public safety, garbage disposal, and local development. In addition, the urban residents did not ask for benevolent aid or protection from the state, but asked for fair and professional handling of the public resources that they were entitled to. This is fundamentally different than the options that people had when they were wronged in pre-modern society: (1) appeal to officials for justice and remedy or (2) resort to self-help, including the extreme case of rebellion against the government. To be certain, the colonial state frequently did not respond to the urban residents' demands and this was why some petitions were repeatedly submitted and residents' movement at times became militant. Yet this line of development shows the emergence of a novel practice of citizenship that challenged the authoritarian and depoliticized mode that had been pervasive in the colonial era.

2.4 Perpetuation of the Authoritarian Citizenship Under the US Army Military Government Rule (1945–1948)

The abrupt end of colonial rule (15 August 1945) at the end of World War II and the subsequent US military occupation of southern Korea generated a political and social context that largely perpetuated the authoritarian view of citizenship, which promoted economic agency but restricted political agency. The very establishment of the USAMG (officially on 4 January 1946) indicated that in startling contradiction to the normative ideals of the modern state and citizenship, the US and its international allies saw decolonized Koreans as unfit for self-rule (which echoed the Korean Enlightenment intellectuals' distrust of the masses). Furthermore, the U.S.

considered the southern part of Korea to be “land without an owner”.²⁴ As the occupying force, the US army treated Korean people as abject Orientals that it had saved from the tyranny of Japanese fascism, and certainly did not recognize them as modern citizens possessed of sovereignty.²⁵ The US promoted liberal democracy in Japan with serious plans and commitment, as a showcase to prove the superiority of the American political and economic system, but it had no interest in doing so in Korea, a colony it released from its former enemy. Instead, the US was primarily concerned with setting up an anti-communist regime that could serve its strategic interests in the midst of the escalating Cold War. Ironically, when it arrived in southern Korea with virtually no knowledge about the society, the US army encountered the nationwide network of the people’s committee (*inminwiwŏnhoe*) and related leftist grassroots movements for the organization of farmers, workers and youth.²⁶ Although leftist movements in Korea grew organically out of anti-colonial resistance and had broad support from a majority of Koreans,²⁷ the USAMG perceived them as a competing political force and launched a militant attack against them in collaboration with right-wing Korean elite (Yi 2008: 131–132).

Throughout its rule, the USAMG prioritized the suppression and eradication of indigenous leftist movements and organizations, while sponsoring rightist movements and organizations. This political dynamic resulted in the reproduction of the authoritarian idea and citizenship practices in South Korea. It also left a lasting negative legacy for decades to come because the ultimate political priority influenced the way the USAMG designed and implemented its policies, and established the following paradoxical patterns of ruling. First, while claiming to eliminate the negative legacies of Japanese colonial rule, the USAMG continued to use colonial methods of ruling: (1) it utilized administered mass organizations (AMOs) created by the colonial state to implement its policy and exercise ideological control over various groups of the population, including peasants, workers, local residents, youth and women²⁸; (2) under its informal but underlying tenet of anticommunism, the USAMG revived and strengthened its control over the press and broadcasting media, and consistently maintained censorship in the name of order and security (Yi 2008: 373–389); (3) although it ostensibly abolished the colonial system of state-licensed prostitution in 1947, in practice the USAMG incorporated military-regulated prostitution into the establishment and maintenance of US military bases throughout Korea (Moon 2010a). The persistence of these colonial methods of ruling indicates that the military government not only ignored basic civil rights, but also viewed its citizens as its instrument and, at best, the recipients of its benevolent rule. In particular, citizens who cannot exercise freedom of thought, expression, and conscience cannot be autonomous individuals but are arms of the state to be utilized.

Second, while the US ostensibly promoted “liberal democracy” in the world, the USAMG curtailed the exercise of democratic citizenship among Koreans – paradoxically in the name of promoting democracy against communism. On the one hand, the USAMG tolerated freedom of speech and the press in so far as it did not interfere with its policy and ultimate goal of establishing an anti-communist regime friendly to American interests, and increasingly denied freedom among leftists to

the point of their complete annihilation. It commonly exercised such aggressive measures as stopping or closing newspapers and arresting journalists (Yi 2008: 374–376). On the other hand, the USAMG directly controlled broadcasting from the beginning of its rule. Using this most effective means of communication, it propagated the superiority of capitalist society and American democracy among various groups of Koreans (Ibid: 388). Similarly, in its education policy, the USAMG purged in the name of fostering the “patriotic democratic citizen” (*aegugjŏk minjusimin*) leftist teachers and students and indoctrinated other teachers and students to become conformist members of the state (Ibid: 415–417). These selective acts of tolerance and suppression of civil rights reveal that the ideal of democratic citizenship was easily compromised in the process of maneuvering power politics. Intriguingly, this echoes Japan’s colonial state during the 1920s, which allowed for limited freedom of speech, press and assembly in cases that were not deemed to be political. It also mirrors attitudes of Korean Enlightenment intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; just like these intellectuals and the colonial authorities, in practice the USAMG promoted authoritarian citizenship that turned people into useful components of the state for carrying out its agenda; hence it promoted citizens’ economic agency in capitalist society, but truncated their political agency, especially when it challenged the government authorities.

If we look for some positive legacy from the idea of citizenship from this period, the USAMG introduced political rights to vote and run for public offices and promoted gender equality, particularly in education. While this introduction of political rights was in itself a progressive departure from the authoritarian view of citizenship, it was deeply flawed in the absence of basic civil rights as discussed above. When citizens were not free to choose their political ideology, express their views in various media, and organize themselves, the exercise of universal suffrage and right to run for offices is easily reduced to formal trappings of procedural democracy. Regarding gender equality, although some nationalist reformers addressed this issue to strengthen the nation, the USAMG promoted gender equality as an element of democratic society (Yi 2008: 508). This ideal was put into practice in the areas of election and education. As a result, women participated as voters and candidates in the Constituent National Assembly (*chehŏngukhoe*) election in May, 1948, but not a single woman candidate was elected (Ibid: 448, 449). While it was a positive step to expand mandatory education – which had been severely limited during the colonial period – and introduce gender equality in education, specific aspects of education assumed gender hierarchy that naturalized women’s roles as mothers and wives (Ibid: 417). In a nutshell, although this line of positive change undermined the elitist view of citizenship with popularizing political rights and promoting gender equality, it was more cosmetic than substantial. The methods of ruling used by the USAMG not only perpetuated the authoritarian view of citizenship, but also provided the model for the subsequent authoritarian regimes in Korea that promoted economic agency but curtailed the political agency of its own citizens.

2.5 Anti-communist and Productive Citizenship During Authoritarian Rule (1948–1987)

The establishment of the formally sovereign Korean state generated an impetus to integrate two existing ideologies, anticommunism and nationalism, so as to make Koreans into *kungmin*. Inheriting the legacies of colonial rule and USAMG rule, the Korean state officially adopted anticommunism as its ideology and maintained its fiercely anticommunist identity throughout its authoritarian rule and beyond. Especially after the internecine Korean War, anticommunism became synonymous with “liberal democracy”, and being a citizen of the Korean state meant being an anticommunist. Building on the methods of ruling left by the USAMG, Syngman Rhee’s civilian regime (1948–1960) supported right-wing organizations and activities and suppressed already weakened left-wing activities and organizations. In particular, Park Chung Hee’s military regime (1961–1979) deployed the amalgamation of Foucauldian discipline and physical violence to remold its people into useful and docile *kungmin*. Compared with Rhee’s regime, this combination became far more systematic because Park’s regime extensively adopted modern instrumental rationality for effective ruling. On the one hand, it institutionalized such new disciplinary techniques as the “resident registration system” for effective surveillance over, and mobilization of, its people; it also introduced the ubiquitous display of anticommunist posters to exhort them to ferret out communists in their surroundings. On the other hand, the regime honed existing techniques such as using the administered mass organizations, education system, and the mass media to maximize its monitoring and indoctrination. Those who refused to fit into this anticommunist citizenship were punished under the National Security Law and the Anticommunism Law. These laws justified drastic curtailment of basic civil rights and political rights in the name of national security in the officially “democratic republic” (*minjugonghwaguk*). Throughout the authoritarian rule by civilian and military regimes, numerous political dissidents including labor activists and student activists as well as North Korean spies and their collaborators were persecuted and prosecuted for being communists or subversive “impure” elements (Moon 2005: 27–39).

Since it accentuated the anti-communist bent in the authoritarian mold of citizenship inherited from the past, the Korean state heightened the powerful ideology of nationalism to appeal to Koreans to be useful and loyal members of the nation. While this nationalist call was largely confined to becoming an anticommunist *kungmin* during Rhee’s regime, Park’s regime infused it with the economic duty for diligence and hard work. As discussed above, this collectivist call for productive citizenship was initially articulated in the *Independent Newspaper*, but its contemporary version came with the Korean state’s actual power to transform its people into productive workers and managers and to build an industrial nation. The industrializing state mobilized its citizens on a massive scale to implement its industrial policies and carry out related campaigns. This economic duty was intricately coupled with military service for men and with fertility control

and “rational” household management for women. This pattern of mass mobilization for economic growth continued during Chun Doo Hwan’s regime (1980–1987), but the emergence of a consumer society in the 1980s began to undermine the power of the nationalist call for productive and diligent citizenship (Moon 2005: Chaps. 2 and 3).

Challenges to anticommunist and productive citizenship have existed since the beginning of the 1960s. College students, factory workers, and intellectuals (including scholars, writers, religious leaders, journalists and politicians) kept up dissident social movements against the dominant idea and practices of citizenship. Under the rubric of “democratization movements” (*minjuhwaundong*), these diverse groups of activists struggled to democratize citizenship directly and indirectly. As students and intellectuals protested against corrupted elections, the absence of elections, and violence against dissidents, workers and their intellectual supporters protested to obtain humane and fair treatment by their employers and government, who denied them decent wages, safe working conditions, and independent labor unions. Although these dissidents did not use the language of citizenship explicitly, their collective struggle demanded basic civil rights, political rights, and social rights, and their persistent demand for a humane and just society conveyed that they refused to become docile *kungmin* to be mobilized for the state’s project with little personal entitlement (Moon 2005: 98–103).

2.6 The Emergence of Democratic Citizenship in Post-military Rule Korea

While the legacy of authoritarian citizenship is deeply ingrained in Korean society, the political transition to procedural democracy in 1988 and then the restoration of civilian administration in 1993 have permitted the development of some positive change in the hegemonic idea and practices of citizenship. With the restoration of political rights, Koreans have again voted to elect public officials at various branches and levels of the state. They have also experienced the expansion of civil rights to include the freedom of thought, expression and assembly. In particular, voluntary associations known as “citizens’ organizations” emerged and became the agent of grassroots social movements to bring about “progressive” social change. These organizations popularized the term “citizens” (*simin*) as “masters” (*chuin*) of Korea who would monitor the state and other powerful institutions in society and demand their rights and justice. Using political and civil rights, different citizens’ organizations have fought for social rights to guarantee minimum standards for wages, economic justice and a healthy environment free of pollution. In a nutshell, these organizations re-envision citizenship as a democratic relationship to the state (Moon 2005: 109–121). In the idea and practice of monitoring and ordering citizens, these organizations have undermined the essence of “Confucian governance” that authoritarian regimes in Korea, particularly Park Chung Hee’s

regime, evoked to culturally justify their authoritarianism (Moon 2003). They have challenged the Confucian views of politics as a moral exercise by rulers and the people's duty to follow, and introduced accountability for rulers through monitoring and checking by those governed.

These citizens' organizations, however, have been dominated by educated urban middle-class men, a relatively privileged social group among grassroots men and women. First, this class and gender cleavage has been apparent in the general membership and particularly the leadership of such major citizens' organizations as the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) and People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD). This largely male-dominated and middle-class aspect can be read as a telling commentary on the centrality of socioeconomic power in the emergence of the political subjectivity of the democratic citizen. It is noteworthy that while the Korean Women's Associations United (KWAU), an umbrella organization of autonomous women's associations, has used the gender-specific term *women* (of different social strata) to identify the subject of its movement, the CCEJ has used the apparently gender-neutral term *citizen* as its subject. While middle-class women cannot but see themselves as gendered beings in the public sphere, middle-class men can see themselves there as gender-neutral citizens. Similarly, college-educated middle-class women tend to dominate the new type of women's organization. It is useful here to consider an insight from the postmodern critique of power and universalism, which highlights the following dynamic; it is often a dominant social group that attaches the mantle of universalism to its specific experiences, reducing subordinate groups' experiences to "special" ones.²⁹ Within this logic, a social movement organization dominated by men can claim the mantle of a gender-neutral citizens' organization, while a social movement organization dominated by women remains a women's organization. Equally, while a middle-class dominated organization can forget about its class, a working-class organization like a labor union cannot. Hence, some feminists reject the notion of citizen altogether as a masculinist category. Yet autonomous women's associations have fought for gender equality, including women's right to paid work for a lifetime and the elimination of the patriarchal family law. In practice, the term *women* as the agent of the social movement envisioned by the KWAU connotes the subjectivity of democratic citizens, who are equal to others and struggle to obtain and protect their rights (Moon 2005: Chap. 6; Moon 2002).

Second, the class and gender cleavage is also visible in the lingering division between autonomous labor union movements and the citizens' movements, and men's dominance in the labor movements. Some working-class men and their advocates reject the language of citizenship as a "bourgeois" notion because it has been embraced by the largely middle-class movements. Yet labor movements in Korea have strived to transform exploited and oppressed male workers into "masters" of their destiny who would enjoy the rights of democratic citizenship. At the same time, despite the recent history of the women workers' labor movement in the 1970s and 1980s, women workers have been marginalized in labor union movements dominated by male workers employed in high-paying heavy industry (Moon 2005: 130–143; Koo 2001: Chap. 4). The recurrence of class and gender

cleavage confirms that social groups in more privileged positions in social stratification have better access to citizenship when there is a political opening.

While the citizens' organizations have contributed to the democratization of authoritarian citizenship conveyed for long by the term *kungmin*, ironically their practices have perpetuated the idea of grassroots citizens as objects of mobilization, rather than autonomous actors and decision makers. This problem is related to their organizational structures and focal activities; in this type of organisation, professional activist staff manages the daily routine and officers who are not usually elected by lay members make important decisions about short-term and long-term objectives (Kim 2006). As a result, lay members' voluntary participation in this type of citizens' organization is generally reduced to paying dues and supporting activities and events initiated by its officers and staff (Moon 2010b). In the Korean political context, where political parties have failed to identify and articulate the interests of different social groups,³⁰ the activities and events of the citizens' organizations tend to focus on monitoring and protesting against the state's policies and devising policy alternatives to fill the gap. Although these are extremely critical tasks, this quasi political party role relying on professional activists has stalled further democratization of citizenship. The phenomenon of the *Nosamo* movement deserves our attention for breaking with this pattern and raising a new possibility for a loose gathering of autonomous individual citizens who pursue their own interests in democratizing the political system in Korea.

Nosamo is an abbreviation of the "gathering of people who love Roh Moo Hyun," a former human-rights lawyer who was elected to be the 16th president of South Korea in December 2002. It began as a sort of fan club for the unusual politician, who ran for, and lost, in April 2000, the National Assembly election in a Pusan district. This was audacious behavior for a professional politician because he would easily have won if he had run for his original district in Seoul. He chose Pusan to prove that regionalism in Korean politics could be undermined. Although he lost, this experiment strengthened his appeal as a refreshingly different type of politician among certain voters who were deeply disaffected and repulsed by institutionalized politics in general, and elections in particular (No et al. 2002: 7–13). Because he had obtained his reputation as a courageous and conscientious politician over a decade,³¹ the group of *netizens* posted their condolences and encouragement for Mr. Roh. This communication soon developed into an idea to create a cyber community to support him. Employing him as their totemic figure, this internet community rapidly expanded among individuals who hoped to bring about positive change in the established way of doing politics. By June 2002 its membership multiplied to 47,000, with some 200 local branches and 36 branches overseas (Ibid: 151).³² Unlike existing major citizens' organizations, the *Nosamo* did not have a formal hierarchy and bylaws; instead, it was a loose gathering of individuals who shared diverse but overlapping interests in ending regionalism in Korean politics, just as Mr. Roh challenged in his own practice. In the cyber community, individual members are equal to one another in their right to cast Internet votes and in their responsibility for free and respectful discussion to form public opinion about issues raised by its members. As they got involved in Internet

communication, members also organized regular off-line meetings for discussions and to socialize in person (Ibid: 96, 100, 249–250). During the 2002 presidential election, unlike other election campaign groups created by political parties and individual politicians, the *Nosamo* engaged in Mr. Roh's campaign without getting paid or using social connections based on hometown, school ties and kinship. Instead, its members volunteered for his campaign because they genuinely hoped to see a good politician like him succeed, and were excited about such potential. Indeed, the *Nosamo* played a crucial role in initiating the novel idea of selecting a presidential candidate of a political party through national elections (*kungminkyōngsōn*), making him the candidate of the Democratic Party in April, 2002, and in finally electing him to the presidency in December (Ibid: 123). According to self-descriptions and scholarly observations of the *Nosamo*, this success stems from the energy and dynamism of individuals who are transformed from “spectators” and “objects of mobilization” into “sovereign citizens” and “subjects with their own ideas” who can choose an egalitarian and communicative leader (Ibid: 61–62, 72). While the *Nosamo* has incorporated a continuing diversity of ideas and more elaborate bylaws since 2006, it has maintained its original spirit of being a loose community of ordinary individuals who choose to participate in realizing the ideal of sovereign citizens through mutual learning and engagement.³³

Ever since he was catapulted to the pinnacle of power, primarily by a younger generation of voters who are looking for a principled and uncorrupted leader, Roh Moo Hyun himself made a far-reaching contribution toward the democratization of citizenship in Korea. During his “participatory government” (*ch'amyōjōngbu*; February 2003–January 2008), he took extraordinary steps in eliminating authoritarian conventions in the way the government dealt with its citizens, employees and business leaders. For example, he refused to use the repressive state apparatuses, including the police, intelligence agencies, and the prosecution, to monitor and check dissidents and his political competitors, which has been a very deeply entrenched practice in Korean politics. He also reduced the imperial power of the Korean presidency by replacing presidential appointments of high-ranking government officers with a system of open applications. He tried to end the insidious practice of extracting election campaign funds from big business firms. As repeatedly expressed in his own words and deeds, he worked as a president who served his *kungmins* as his “masters”.³⁴ He communicated directly with ordinary citizens via the Internet and made government policy reports available to them. He also spread the culture of discussion and debate in the rigidly hierarchical circle of government officers.

However, his leadership with democratic intentions received far more criticism and even ridicule than praise and appreciation during his presidency. Such negative reactions came not only from powerful conservative forces in Korean society, but even from his own supporters who were critical of or disappointed by his policy decisions and mistakes. In a sense, these negative responses allude to various types of obstacles stacked against the democratization of citizenship and the enduring power of authoritarian citizenship in Korea.

2.7 Conclusions

The idea and practices of citizenship in Korea from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century reveal certain recurring patterns in the power politics of citizenship. First, the enlightenment nationalists, the colonial authorities, the USAMG, and authoritarian regimes in Korea, all promoted collectivist and largely elitist versions of citizenship with relatively minor differences. In their total disregard for, or selective recognition of, basic civil, political and social rights, these social and political elites did not consider citizens as autonomous and free individuals, but as a collective resource to be tapped or an instrument to be employed in order to obtain their own objectives. In their emphasis on enlightenment and education, or the denial of education altogether, these elites treated citizens as ignorant or inferior, and therefore underscored their duty to follow the leadership of the elites themselves. Second, these social and political elites were far more ready to accept citizens' economic agency to be productive and accumulate wealth than to accept their political agency to think critically and act collectively. This capitalistic and authoritarian undercurrent in the collectivist and elitist versions of citizenship commonly resulted in de-politicization of citizenship in Korea. While the Constitution of South Korea has contained the modern rhetoric of the sovereignty of the people, in practice the de-politicization of citizenship makes political sovereignty the sole preserve of rulers and elites. This trend is not conducive to the growth of democratic citizenship that requires the popularization of the civic republican ideal of the citizen as a free and propertied political actor. Third, grassroots (leftist) movements have challenged the hegemonic idea and practices of authoritarian citizenship and reframed the collectivist orientation since the colonial era. Instead of highlighting the citizens' duty to contribute to, or even sacrifice for the collectivity of a nation, these popular movements have promoted the collective rights of downtrodden social groups. That is, in contrast to liberalism that anointed the individual as a free and isolated being entitled foremost to civil rights, these popular movements promoted the social rights of the collectivity of social groups such as the working class, peasants and women. When this type of movement is in its early stage and desperately needs mass support, it tends to display the idealistic balance between individual civil rights and collective rights; as the movement becomes more centralized or ideologically rigid, individual rights tend to be ignored as a "bourgeois" trait. It is in this sense that the leftist-leaning *minjung* movement in contemporary Korea maintained an authoritarian strand in its populist orientation. Fourth, as the limitation of citizens' organizations that have pursued grassroots social movements in contemporary Korea suggests, democratic citizenship requires the liberal recognition of the individual in conjunction with the recognition of the collective rights of vulnerable social groups who cannot afford to be autonomous and free individuals.³⁵ Yet without specific leverage to win in actual power politics, grassroots men and women cannot enjoy democratic citizenship with full political liberty, civil rights and social rights as a lived reality.

If we accept democratic citizenship as an essential ingredient for making a good society, progressive movements and organizations need to accept the primacy of the family in Korean society, both as a powerful rhetorical metaphor and as a social unit in actual governance. The powerful symbol of the family as the prototype of the relationship between the state and its people stems from the enduring appeal of ethnic nationalism. This sense of nationalism views the Korean nation as a homogeneous family, and postcolonial sensibilities tend to embrace Korean “tradition” as a positive source of cultural identity. Because this seemingly unchanging tradition or culture can assuage uncertainty and anxiety caused by an extremely rapid pace of social change in the society, the state has expediently adopted policies of reinventing Confucian and other traditions, not only during military rule but also in the era of procedural democracy. As I discussed elsewhere regarding the notion of Confucian governance, democratization in Korea has largely been conservative in preserving this revived Confucian thought as the hegemonic framework for interpreting the relationship between ruler and ruled in terms of the family virtues of filial piety and respect for elders (Moon 2003).³⁶ In the democratization of Korea, the patriarchal family rather than the individual has been the actual unit of governance until recently. After several revisions of the family law since the 1950s, women’s organizations in collaboration with other social movement organizations succeeded in eliminating the “household master system” (*hojujedo*) that reflected patrilineage in the Korean kinship system. In February 2005, the Constitutional Court ruled that this system was incompatible with the constitutional principle of gender equality. The obsolete system was replaced by the “family relations registration law” (*kajokkwangyedũngnogbŏp*) in April 2007, which became effective on 1 January 2008. In contrast to the household master system, this new personal status law treats individuals as independent and equal entities. Now every individual has her or his own basic identification card containing just her or his dates of birth and death. Yet the basic card is supplemented by four related certificates which contain parental information, spousal information, adoption information, and biological and adoptive parent–child relations, respectively. These certificates show the continuing significance of the familial self in Korean society. It remains to be seen how Korean individuals situated in their familial relations will continue to develop their democratic citizenship.³⁷

With the hindsight of observing an array of serious problems in society based on liberal individualism, we need to recognize the individual as the basic unit of democratic governance that can reduce arbitrary abuse of power and increase the possibility of treating people fairly, regardless of powerful social connections, such as those based on school, kinship and home town. This individual does not have to be the isolated and abstract individual of liberalism, but one who is situated in, and related to, other people in the family and beyond. At the same time the family does not have to be the only legitimate source of one’s identity and relation to other people. Despite its affective appeal, the family metaphor often fails to accept that citizenship is predicated upon equality among members of the state, and glosses over the differences and conflicts that always exist among equal members. In line with Fred Dallmayr, here I would argue that the rapid transformation of East Asia,

characterized by the rise of the impersonal market economy and the centralized modern state, requires us to build philosophical underpinnings that guide relationships among individuals as equal citizens in the public sphere of state politics, market economy and civil society. Dallmayr critically assesses that the Orientalist readings of the Confucian principles of the “five mainstays of human relationships” are merely static and hierarchical, and argues that ceremony and ritual, as well as the emphasis on the virtue of humaneness (*jen*), rechannel and temper such apparently asymmetrical human relations into ones based on reciprocity. Yet Confucian thought needs to develop an additional relation to the five mainstays of human relationships that are primarily concerned with familial relations, ruler-minister dyad, and friendship (Dallmayr 2004: 49–52). Certainly, there is serious tension between the social structural need to adopt democratic citizenship as an additional relationship among individuals (connected through the state), and the enduring emotional appeal of the family metaphor and its political expediency as the interpretive framework for all human relations in Korea. Here I wish to quote at length an interesting effort to interpret Confucian cultural underpinnings for the individual self that is commonly construed as the “Western” notion.

One still hears, all too often, statements by supposedly educated persons, and even prominent intellectuals that the dignity of the individual is a peculiarly Western or Judeo-Christian idea and that people who do not recognize it cannot be expected to respect human rights. Conversely, those who claim to speak for Asian communitarian ideals charge concepts of human rights with being too individualistic, too Western, and too heedless of the claims that the community or state may make on the individual. In reality most Asian religions and philosophies, from the dawn of civilizations, have exhibited a self-awareness and a consciousness of individual responsibility predicated on a high evaluation of the human potential – variously expressed in languages that affirm this value in relation to the different ends of life that might be served by, or serve, individuals. In Confucian terms this could be the concept of personhood – the realizing through self-cultivation of a fully formed and developed person. (de Bary 2004: 231)

In conjunction with the philosophical underpinnings of equal human relationship, there are certain practical conditions required for the development of democratic citizenship. As I mentioned earlier, the autonomous individual is not a given but a product of enabling socioeconomic and political conditions. Economic independence or security is an essential precondition for democratic citizenship. The authoritarian versions of citizenship discussed above seem to touch upon this concern in their emphasis on economic agency, but this is different from actual efforts to ensure economic security for all citizens. Yet the economic conditions in Korea (and elsewhere) since the post-Asian financial crisis (1997–1998), have been very discouraging. The Korean economy has witnessed a drastic increase in irregular and temporary employment that has profoundly undermined economic security and independence among all of the working population, particularly for people in their twenties. Korea has the highest ratio of irregular or temporary workers in the world, and there were over eight million temporary workers in 2007 (Wu and Pak 2007: 21). The manufacturing economy of mass production and mass consumption was replaced by the information economy of flexible production for niche-market

consumption. Despite this structural shift, the Korean economy has been unable to move radically away from the old model and embrace an education system that promotes individual creativity and independent thinking (Wu and Pak 2007). A neo-liberal economic regime and minimization of government regulation has accelerated a downward spiral for the majority of the population. It remains to be seen if this dire problem will galvanize a grassroots social movement that will contribute to the strengthening of democratic citizenship.

Endnotes

¹For the rest of this chapter, Korea refers to South Korea unless noted otherwise.

²In my earlier work on citizenship in contemporary Korea (Moon 2005), I defined citizenship as membership in the democratic polity and traced its development in conjunction with social movements that challenged the authoritarian notion of *kungmin* (dutiful nationals). Although this relatively narrow definition was useful for my critical analysis of the gendered and classed trajectory of political membership in contemporary Korea, a broader definition used in this chapter allows us to recognize various paths in citizenship trajectories without making them as “aberrations”.

³This usage of *simin* is similar to the Chinese word, *shimin*, whose meaning also changed over time (Zhiping 2004: 172).

⁴The current Constitution of the Republic of Korea still refers the members of Korean state as *kungmin*. Some equate *kungmin* with citizen and suggest that *kungmin*, as a specific category of *simin*, highlights the political membership of a nation, as opposed to other types of political communities (Cho 2009). However, given the history of citizenship in Korea discussed in this essay, this equation is problematic.

⁵I have observed these practices even among grassroots men and women who were involved in various types of citizens’ organizations during my field work from 2004 to 2005 and in the fall of 2009.

⁶These events included the Kabo peasant rebellion (1894), the Sino-Japanese war (1895) triggered by this rebellion that resulted in the shocking defeat of Q’ing China, and the flight of Kojong (1852–1919), the *de facto* last monarch of the Chosŏn dynasty, into the Russian embassy (1896).

⁷In fact, the Chosŏn government noticed the political utility of newspapers before nationalist reformers and thinkers. It published *Hansŏngsunbo*, the first government newspaper printed entirely in Chinese characters (1883–1884) and *Hansŏngjubo*, a government newspaper in a mixture of Chinese characters and Korean alphabets (1886–1889), which succeeded *Hansŏngsunbo*. Later, old-fashioned intellectuals educated in Confucian classics published *Hwangsŏngsinmun* (September 1898–August 1910). Son, Pyŏng-hŭi, the third leader of Chŏndogyo, a nationalist religion, published *Mansebo* (later renamed *Taehanilbo*), a daily printed in Chinese characters and Korean alphabets (June 1906–June 1907). Yang, Ki-t’ak, a national

independence activist, founded *Taehanmaeilsinbo* (July 1904–August 1910) in collaboration with Bethel, an Englishman, which was later turned into *Maeilsinbo*, the house organ of the Japanese colonial government in Korea.

⁸With the use of full vernacular Korean not only for articles but also for commercials, the newspaper consciously set a broad boundary for its readership, including even rural residents and women. Initially, it published roughly 300 copies but soon its run rose to 3,000. More importantly, it was a newspaper that was read collectively. Readers commonly circulated it amongst their families, friends and neighbors. Literate people read it out to groups of illiterates in the era when ordinary Koreans showed great desires for new knowledge and information. It is estimated that each copy of the newspaper was read by 200–300 people (Chŏn 2004: 445–446).

⁹*Paeksŏng* was the most frequently used and its frequency steadily increased over time, whereas *inmin*'s frequency fluctuated. A far less frequently used term for the Korean people was *tongp'o* (those who share umbilical cords) as well as *kungmin* (national or state's people).

¹⁰Chu-wŏn Pak uses *kaein* (the individual) interchangeably with *chagi* (2004: 131, 146, 152). But this is misleading because the term *kaein* was not actually used in the newspaper and the term *chagi* does not necessarily mean *kaein*, the autonomous and isolated individual that liberalism promoted. Rather, in the context of late Chosŏn society, it is more likely to indicate the relational self that was embedded in the social network of family and kinship.

¹¹This collectivist view of citizenship was quite dominant in East Asia during the era of high imperialism. In his *Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (1875), Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), a Japanese thinker and educator who significantly influenced Korean reformers, introduced a new idea of citizenship to Japan, but highlighted the collectivity of the nation as the subject of civilization, and subsumed individual members to it. He maintained that it is the spirit of an entire nation (rather than individual knowledge and cultivation) that determines the level of civilization (de Bary 2004: Chap. 8). Although there were some Japanese thinkers who embraced Western liberalism or saw its common ground with Confucianism, the political context of the Meiji government (1868–1911) resulted in the state-centered authoritarian interpretation of Confucian philosophy. In particular, it underscored the notion of self-sacrificing loyalty to the state. This was far more authoritarian than the nuanced notion of the loyal minister, who would be willing to risk death in remonstrating with the ruler, as Mencius advocated (Ibid: 181). Liang Qichao (1873–1929), a Chinese thinker who introduced modern ideas and concepts to East Asian societies through Chinese translation, took up the question of how Zhu Hsi's notion of “renewing the people” could be modified to create a new citizenry that would be active agents in a new Chinese nation. In his article, “Renewing the People”, he argued that the Qing dynasty declined because it had only slaves, rather than people who were the subjects of a nation. Yet, like Yukichi, he also prioritized organic unity and order over individual freedom and equality (Chŏn 2007: 404, 408–409). For the English translation of “Renewing the People”, see de Bary and Lufrano (2000: 289–291).

¹²This elitist view of citizenship is certainly not unique to Korean nationalists at the turn of the twentieth century. Yoshino Sakuzo (1878–1933), a Christian politician and educator, embraced many tenets of Western democracy and parliamentarianism. Yet he insisted on the following two prerequisites: the leadership of an educated (but not necessarily social) elite, and the leader’s ability to embody public virtues and inculcate them in the people (de Bary 2004: 186). Even in the USA, popularly known for its mass democracy, the founding fathers were suspicious of the popularization of political liberty and rights and devised the system of the electoral college to control the outcome of universal (white male) suffrage. This legacy was conveniently forgotten in the U.S. until 2000, when the presidential election between George W. Bush and Al Gore was contested.

¹³Although popularly understood as a “legacy” of Confucianism in contemporary Asia and beyond, the idea of loyalty to ruler and the state did not exist in the original texts by Zhu Hsi (1130–1200), the founder of Neo-Confucianism. Rather, this idea was incorporated into the Meiji government’s “Imperial Rescript on Education” (1890) and this innovation became a model for other Asian states that were desperately modernizing themselves (de Bary 2004: 179–180).

¹⁴For example, *Independent Newspaper* occasionally used it throughout its duration. The ratios of *paeksŏng* to *kungmin* in its articles were 447:24 (1896), 453:23 (1897), 762:39 (1898), and 814:12 (1899) (Ryu 2004: 41). It frequently appeared in the learned society newspapers that proliferated in the mid-1900s. It was used in the name of an organization (Kungminkyoyukhoe) founded in 1904 to promote national education, and the aforementioned *Hwangŏngsinmun* also emphasized the distribution of national textbooks (*kungminkyokwasŏ*) (Kim 2004: 197).

¹⁵For example, Chi-yŏn Chang published the *Patriotic Woman’s Biography* (aegugbuinjŏn) in 1907, an adaptation of Joan of Arc (Jeanne d’Arc). Ch’ae-ho Sin published *Ŭljimundŏk* (name of a famous general who defended Koguryŏ kingdom from Chinese invaders) in 1908, and *Yi Sun-sin’s biography* (the name of a famous general who protected the Chosŏn Dynasty from Japanese invasions) in 1909. Ki-sŏn U published *Kanggamch’an’s biography* (the name of a famous scholar-general of Koryŏ dynasty) in 1908 (Kwŏn 2003: 91).

¹⁶The notion of *kungmin* resembles that of *min* (people) in pre-modern China. First, it conveyed a contradictory duality between common people who are “private” entities (as opposed to government officials), and simultaneously public entities, in relation to the idea of territory under heaven, which is geographically larger, and morally higher, than the state. In China, the public has always been morally superior and prior to private in its value system, but the boundary between the two is relative and shifting. For example, a clan is private in relation to the state, but public in relation to its individual members. Second, the notion of *min* is open to two completely different evaluations: people as the source of the public, and the foundation of the state’s legitimacy. At the same time, as individuals and individual groups acting in the concrete world, *min* is no more than an object of rule. Only after the establishment of the Republic (1911) new terms such as “*gongmin*” (public people) were coined to capture new citizenship in modern Chinese society (Zhiping 2004: 172).

¹⁷Its initial rightist orientation was expressed by its repeated emphasis on “remaking” (*kaejo*) Korea by achieving “enlightenment” (*kaehwa*) and “civilization” (*munmyōng*). This cultural movement inherited the discourse of national reform during the period of Korean Enlightenment. Soon after, the colonial authorities permitted the publication of current affairs in November 1922. However, the magazine declared its solidarity with *minjung* (the down-trodden people or grassroots population) and published articles and editorials with a socialist orientation from 1923. Yet there was only one Leftist intellectual in its editorship throughout its existence, and the magazine became critical of both the right and the left in favor of cosmopolitan humanism in order to overcome selfish nationalism (Kim 2007: 240, 251, 257, 258).

¹⁸As the major Korean magazine during the decade, it published an average of 8,000 copies per month without missing a single issue, until it was forcefully closed by the colonial authorities. Although its main readership consisted of educated young men in the Seoul area, this record is significant in a society where almost 90 % of the population was illiterate and national readership of daily newspapers and monthly magazines barely reached 100,000. Its success is attributable to solid financial support from the Chōndogyo church and its steadfast engagement with sociopolitical issues of the era (Kim 2007: 235).

¹⁹Yun-sik Kim was a renowned scholar of Chinese writing and government official of the Chosŏn Dynasty who became a moderate reformer during the Korean Enlightenment period and was involved in nationalist movements after colonization. His funeral was politicized in early 1922 by right-wing and left-wing thinkers who debated whether the ceremony should be made public or not.

²⁰The issue of “local autonomy” for Koreans has a convoluted history under colonial rule. Initially, the local autonomy movement was promoted by the Kungminhyōphoe (People’s Association), a blatantly pro-Japanese organization, in order to demand Korean participation in the Japanese Parliament right after the March First Movement. The focus of the movement shifted to the formation of a core political force aimed at gaining political rights for Koreans under colonial rule after the *Dong-a Daily* published editorials articulating this necessity in 1922 and 1923. This topic became highly controversial, drawing support among the right and opposition among the left (Yun 2007: 281, 282).

²¹See Suh (1967) for a discussion of Korean communism in the 1930s.

²²From the 1920 to 1945, there were 793 recorded “citizens’ mass rallies” (*simindaehoe*), indicating rallies for residents of administrative units such as village (*li*), township (*myōn*), county (*kun*), and province (*to*) (Kim 2007: 214). However, most of these rallies were organized by government officials and local elites in collaboration, and grassroots residents were merely mobilized. Mass rallies were commonly an integral part of handling public grievances by officials in collusion with local elites; when a petition was filed, a leader of a given local residents’ organization formally or informally met with the government officials in charge and hammered out pseudo public opinion. Then both sides collaborated to form an association to carry out their plan (*kisōnghoe*) or call a rally. In the next stage, the

local leader submitted a petition and bribed high-ranking officials with money and entertainment (Chi 2007: 370–371).

²³What is noteworthy about Sŏngbuk-dong is that due to its beautiful natural environment, it drew a large number of educated intellectuals, artists, and the rich, and became an area with a nice cultural atmosphere (Kim 2007: 233). When the socialist youth movement weakened in this town in the late 1920s, the official resident organization led by the local elite became a central force in dealing with problems of everyday life in the 1930s (Ibid: 235, 237).

²⁴See Fraenkel (361–362): re-quoted in Yi (2008: 127).

²⁵For a more detailed discussion on such a perception, see Moon (2010a).

²⁶Within a few days of Korean independence (15 August 1945), provincial people's committees were established in the 13 provinces and by the end of August, 145 local people's committees were set up throughout the country (Yi 2008: 108).

²⁷The USAMG conducted a public poll in September 1946 to assess the political orientation among Koreans, including their preferences for societies based on capitalism, socialism and communism. According to this poll, 70 % of some 8,000 respondents answered that they prefer socialism, only 13 % chose capitalism, and only 10 % chose communism (Yi 2008: 110).

²⁸More specifically, in early 1946 the USAMG revived the Agricultural Association (*nonghoe*) that the colonial state had created, controlling it on the basis of related colonial laws and expanding its organizational network to lower administrative units. In 1946, it established the Adult Education Associations (*sŏnginkyoyu-khyŏphoe*) under the Ministry of Education. Although this was formally a non-governmental organization, it had a national network based on the administrative hierarchy stretching from the government to city, province, county, town and village, for effectively reaching out to people and mobilizing them if need be (Yi 2008: 174, 180).

²⁹A parallel can be made with different types of social minorities. For instance, people of color in the United States cannot forget their race because of their daily and personal experiences of racism, whereas it is easy for white people to forget their race because it rarely affects them negatively. Similarly, while it is convenient for heterosexuals to claim that sexuality is a private issue and to remain apparently neutral in public because their sexuality rarely affects them negatively in public, homosexuals cannot be oblivious to their sexuality as soon as it is known to other people.

³⁰This major problem stems from the following factor: organizationally, political parties in Korea have functioned and been formed around a personal leader, and therefore lacked a rationalized system for representing interests of different social groups. This tendency has been further accentuated by pervasive anti-communism that has delegitimized an array of ideological views on various social issues.

³¹Since Roh Moo Hyun became a first-time legislator in 1988, he has shown this sort of exceptional behavior guided by his own principles, rather than expediently calculating his professional interest in getting elected. For detailed records of his activities as a human rights lawyer and then politician, see Kim, Yong-chŏl (1992),

Planning Committee (2002), Those Who Are With No Mu-hyŏn (2002), and Oh (2008).

³²As of January 2010, its membership was approximately 110,000. See <http://nosamo.org>.

³³See Nosamo's homepage at http://no174.nosamo.org/into/into_main.asp.

³⁴For his own writings, see Roh (1989, 2001, 2009).

³⁵As Georg Simmel argues in his essays on individuality, to be a free and autonomous individual is to obtain a position of power in society. Mainstream society tends to see a member of a minority social group as a representative of his or her collectivity rather than a unique individual; as a minority group gains more power in society, its members can move away from this imposing perception (Simmel 1971: 217–226). In addition, the free and autonomous individual is a product of specific social conditions and power politics, rather than a natural entity as liberalism assumes. It is a subject position that requires not only civil rights but also social rights including economic security, which can be achieved only through struggle.

³⁶A telling example of the enduring power of the family metaphor in politics is a message that President Roh Moo Hyun (2003–2007) sent out to the Korean people on 8 May 2003. In this message, it is noteworthy that he reverses the metaphor of ruler-parents and the ruled-children and conveys that the people are like *his* parents because they enabled him to become President. This twist reflects his democratic sentiments as an exceptional politician who tried to live up to the democratic principle of people's sovereignty. See Yu et al. (2009: 11–15).

³⁷The politics of family law reform shows the extent to which individual citizens, especially women, are treated as members of families, rather than autonomous individuals. Women's organizations with growing coalitions with other social groups led the Family Law reform movement from the late 1950s to the 2000s in order to create gender equality in actual family life. See Moon (2007) and Moon (2006).

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