Chapter 2
Formation of Korean "Modernities"

Abstract Inconsistency between ethnic and national boundaries is reaction of Korean society to the pressure of modernization. At least since second half of 19th century growing influence of modern European nations and Japan forced political activists, intellectuals and peasants to try to shift from traditional hierarchically stratified society to absolutely different form of social organization as nation-state. It meant introduction of new principles of national and ethnic boundaries reproduction in form of recursive self-reproduction. It meant that social contradictions become major source of motivation to effectively exploit political and economic potential of Korean society. In this sense, political actions of each social group in Korea made nation-building process more dependent on disappointments and self-criticism because it increases contingency and thus create more possibilities to draw distinctions as a new source of motivation to modernize Korean society as nation. This helped political activists to return disappointed expectations into national discourse as political ideologies that permitted to preserve government's legitimacy, legitimacy of idea of nation/ethnicity and motivate society to continue nation-building process. However, all social groups that pursued national unity faced lack of resources to implement the political and economic purposes of modernization. This forced them to rely on transnational resources whether as foreign assistance to promote further modernization inside Korea or emigration to other nations to implement expectations cultivated by modernizations outside Korea as ethnic minority.

Keywords Nationalism · Modernization · Korean diaspora · Capitalism · Socialism

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self-reproduction. It meant that social contradictions become major source of motivation to effectively exploit political and economic potential of Korean society. In this sense, political actions of each social group in Korea made nation-building process more dependent on disappointments and self-criticism because it increases contingency and thus create more possibilities to draw distinctions as a new source of motivation to modernize Korean society as nation. This helped political activists to return disappointed expectations into national discourse as political ideologies that permitted to preserve government's legitimacy, legitimacy of idea of nation/ethnicity and motivate society to continue nation-building process. However, all social groups that pursued national unity faced lack of resources to implement the political and economic purposes of modernization. This forced them to rely on transnational resources whether as foreign assistance to promote further modernization inside Korea or emigration to other nations to implement expectations cultivated by modernizations outside Korea as ethnic minority.

Logic of modernity demanded construction of contradiction-centered form of social organization in Kingdom of Chosŏn. Political activists in the late 19th century developed two opposite strategies of social modernization that would help to provide political independence as nation state.[1] Both exploited the main social distinction available in traditional social hierarchy that distinguished upper from lower classes.[2] This changed political order of Chosŏn dynasty from a source of stability to a source of contingency that forced both sides of political hierarchy whether to accept or resist modernization. For instance, the upper class saw its role in enlightening of lower classes in a new modern way as well as in elimination of factions in the upper class that they thought represented "traditional" Korea and thus were enemies of modernization. The proponents of this program of modernization believed that they introduced authentic western institutions[3] in their original forms different from traditional "outdated" Korean institutions.[4] Peasants introduced modernity into Korean society from the opposite side of social hierarchy believing that they preserve authentic Korean culture and resist foreign influence. It should also be noted that political violence against rigid bureaucratic structure of Chosŏn Kingdom in case of pro-Western intellectual and aristocrats[5] or against

[1]Kim Han Sik, "Silhak kwa tonghak ŭi pyŏnhyŏk sasang" [A View on Change in Silhak and Donghak], *Tonghak Studies Review*, Vol. 9 (1), 2005, 55–104.

[2]Niklas Luhmann, "Interaktion in Oberschichten: zur Transformation ihrer Semantik im 17 und 18 Jahrhundert" *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980): 72–162.

[3]Park Choong-Seok, *Han'gukchŏngch'I sasangsa esŏŭi pop'yŏnsŏn ggwa kaebyŏlsŏng* [Universality and Particularity in the History of Korean Political Thoughts], *The National Academy of Science, Republic of Korea Collection of Works* (Social Studies series, Vol. 53 (2), 2014, 67–116).

[4]Lee Jae Seok, *Han'guk chŏngch'i sasangsa* [Political History of Korea] (Seoul: Jipmoon Press, 2002), 418.

[5]Sin Yon Ha, Kapsinjŏngbyŏn ŭi chŏn'gae [History of Gapsin coup], *National Institute of Korean History review* Vol. 38, 1999, 375–433.

rapidly growing foreign influence by Korean peasants was an attempt to compensate inability to provide national unity of modernized Korean society.[6]

Modernization and nation building from above eventually increased foreign influence. On one hand, the upper class activists who represented themselves as adherents of modernization did not have enough economic and political resources to reach social consensus with lower classes and subjugate resistance of political opponents to turn Chosŏn Kingdom into modern nation state.[7] Traditional reliance on gradual changes through reforms[8] and political violence[9] that did not endanger existing political order[10] only increased contingency because they could no longer rely on resources of political hierarchy that was losing its legitimacy. Although intellectuals viewed education as one of the important of modernization[11] they still relied on hierarchical elitarian forms that distinguished themselves not only from traditional aristocratic Confucian schools but also from uneducated Korean peasants whom they saw as representatives of traditional Korean culture. The less their program met understanding among lower classes the more disappointments it produced and thus the stronger was the pressure to compensate their inability to mobilize society for modernization with reliance on the assistance of foreign countries. For example, in order to justify participation of other nations in internal life a number of political activists tried to replace traditional Chinese-centered international order of Chosŏn diplomacy with new one with modern developed nations at the center.[12]

Lower classes were another source of modernization from the opposite side of social hierarchy. Second half of 19th century marked mobilization of Korean

[6]Bae, Hang Seop, *Chosŏnhugi minjung undong gwa tonghak nongmin jŏnjaengŭi palbal* [Democratic Movement During Late Choson Period and Donghak Peasant Rebelion] (Seoul: Kyungin Publishing, 2002), 108–109.

[7]Sin Bong Yong and Kim Yong Deok, *Soh Jaipil kwa kŭsidae* [Soh Jaipil and His Era] (Seoul: The Philip Jaisohn Memorial Foundation, 2003), 180, 200.

[8]See for example attempt of land reforms as an attempt to shift from central state to more democratic forms of land ownership purposed by one of the central figure of Silhak movement Jeong Yak Yong known as Dasan: Lee Dog Il, *Chŏng Yag Yong gwa kŭŭi hyŏngjedŭl 2*: idŭri kkumkkun sesang [Jeong Yak Yong and His Two Brothers: Their Dreams about World] (Seoul: Dasanch'odang, 2012), 311–316.

[9]For example, Korean literary purges (*sahwa*) in 15–16 centuries was a part of the process of formation absolute monarchy in form of resistance between Choson kings and aristocracy. For details see Kim Mankyu, *Hankuk ŭi chŏngch'i sa* [Korean Political History] (Seoul: Hyunmoon, 1999), 129–130.

[10]See for example on necessity of democratization of politics proposed by Silhak movement activists in Kim Hea Seung, "Hankuk minchok chuŭi: palsaeng yangsik kwa chŏnkae kwachŏng" [A Study on the Origination and Development of Korean Nationalism] *Korean Political Science Review*, Vol. 31 (3), 1997, 213–217.

[11]Han Cheol Ho, *Hankuk kŭntae kaehwap'a wa t'ongch'i kiku yŏnku* [A Study of The Enlightenment Party and Governance of the Joseon] (Seoul: Sŏnin, 2009), 23–24.

[12]Chu Chino, "19 seki mal chosŏnŭi chachu wa toklip" [Independence and Self-Governance of Choson Kingdom during late 19th century] *Korean and Japanese History Review*, Vol. 4 (2), 2010, 24–27.

peasantry to become an important political force that relied with the help of religious discourse attempted to promote nationalism and modernity in Chosŏn Kingdom. The modernity of peasant rebellions like Donghak movement originated from the way they constructed their ideologies that exploited distinction between religious dimension of Western or Japanese culture from Korean one to justify integration of modern elements of the former dimension of Korean culture as the source of motivation to mobilize Korean people for European modernization.[13] This permitted to integrate modern influence by representing it as traditional Korean that helped not only to cultivate trust towards their ideology inside Chosŏn Kingdom but also empowered Donghak activists to justify demands of political independency as a nation among other nations. They adopted religious discourse that previously used to legitimize social inequality in feudal Korea but in opposite way namely to integrate growing social disappointments back into political discourse as religious justification of unjust character of existing political order of Chosŏn Kingdom as well as unjust politics towards their country from other nations. In other words, Donghak ideology operated with social distinctions in a modern way as a source of political mobilization to cultivate national solidarity, economic, political and gender equality both inside and outside national boundaries.[14]

However, modernization from beneath of social hierarchy also resulted in strengthening of foreign nations influence. The Donghak movement was much more successful in mobilization of large groups of population and had strong democratic basis[15] that permitted to fight against Chosŏn aristocracy and could be destroyed only with the help of Japanese intervention.[16] The main reason of its failure however was its inability to establish stable national institutions that would take advantage of modernity[17] that was impossible without resources of upper class. Modernization demanded creation of national bureaucracy responsible for urbanization, development of national economy based on the national legal system as well as integration into international division of as independent nation guaranteed by international law.[18] However, while members of Donghak movement perceived

[13]On description of anti-feudal and anti-interventionist character of Donghak movement Kim Jeongui, *Hankuk munmyŏng ŭi saengmyŏnglyŏk* [Vitality of Korean Civilization] (Seoul: Hyean, 2002), 119–126.

[14]See for example on idea of "Great Justice" (*taechong chŏngŭi*), Hwang Seon Hui, *Tonghak ch'ŏntokyo yŏksaŭi chaechomyŏng* [History of Donghak and Cheondoism Revisited] (Seoul: Mosinsaram, 2009), 83.

[15]Yun Chol Sang, *Tonghaknongmin hyŏkmyŏng ŭi yŏksa chŏkŭimi, sahoewayŏntae* [Historical Meaning of Donghak Peasant Revolution] (Seoul: Society and Modern History Publishing, 2003), 74.

[16]Sin Won Seon, *Tonghak hŭikok ŭi chae chomyŏng*, [Drama of Donghak Movement Revisited] (Seoul: Korean Research 2005), 185.

[17]Sin Yong Ha, *Tonghak nongmin hyŏkmyŏng untong ŭi sahoesa* [Social History of Donghak Peasant Movement] (Seoul: Jisik Sanop Publications, 2005), 218–219.

[18]Jang Yeong Min, *Tonghak ŭi chŏngch'i sahoe untong* [Donghak as Socio-Political Movement] (Seoul: Kyungin Publishing, 2004), 587–589.

bureaucrats and pro-western intellectuals as their opponents[19] they were unable to take full power in Chosŏn Kingdom.

Eventually, foreign intervention was reaction to inability to provide national unity neither from above nor from beneath of social hierarchy. Local resistance that culminated in March 1st Movement (March 1, 1919) did not only reveal huge inconsistency between growing national expectations and lack of internal resources of their implementation but also marked radical transition to reliance on foreign resources. Japan took full advantage of this inconsistency to impose stronger control over Korean modernization within Japanese Empire. Korean independence movement too had to move abroad to deploy their activities in China, Russia and the United States.[20] In order to justify governance and exploitation[21] of Korea, Japan adopted Pan-Asianism[22] that depicted Empire as reliable, well-organized source of political will and economic resources enough to "assist" Korean people to overcome their "backwardness".[23] In other words, Japanese Empire represented itself as substitution of consensus between Korean upper and lower classes to provide what they could not provide by themselves[24] for instance, modern bureaucracy, education or legal system and mobilize Korean labor force for industrialization. Besides, official ideology described membership of Korean people in Japanese Empire not as an annexation but as a part of common struggle of people of Asia against "western intervention".[25]

Further struggle for national independence developed within different patterns of modernizations. The Decree on Peace written by Vladimir Lenin November 8, 1917 and Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points in January 8, 1918 supplied Korean political activists with two alternative images about the ways of Korean modernization and nationalism. Both were attempts to find the solution to existing contradictions within capitalism that sharpened during WWI (1914–1918) where

[19]Lee Hyeonhui, Tonghaklan, tonghak hyŏkmyŏng nongmin chŏnchaeng [The War of Donghak Peasant Revolution] in *Tonghak, untong inka hyŏkmyŏng inka* [Donghak, Revolt of Revolution] (Seoul: Sinsŏwŏn, 2002), 53.

[20]Byung Yool Ban, The Rise of The Korean Socialist Movement: *Nationalist Activities in Russia and China*, 1905–1912. Seoul: Hanul Academy, 2016, vii–xxii.

[21]Nak Nyeon Kim, *Nippon teikoku shugi ka no chōsen keizai* [Korean Economy under Japanese Imperial Rule] (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2002), 59.

[22]Suzuki Takeo, *Chōsen keizai no shin kōsō* [New Concept of Korean Economy], (Keijo: Toyokeizai Publishing, 1942), 54.

[23]Moriya Katsumi, "Kyū rai no Chōsen nō gyō shakai ni tsuite no kenkyū no tame ni," [A Study on Traditional Korean Agriculture] in *Keijō teikoku daigaku hobun gakkai: Chōsen shakai keizaishi kenkyu* [Keijo Imperial University Review. Korean History and Society Series] (Tokyo: Tōkō Shoin, 1933), 297–520.

[24]As famous political activist Yun Chi-ho noted after failure of First of March Movement that Korean national independence eventually depends on "strong nations". See for instance, Yu Yong Yeol, *Kaehwagi ŭi Yun Ch'i-ho yŏn'gu* [A Study on Yun Chi Ho's Theory of Civilization] (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1985), 247.

[25]Saito Yoshie, *Kinsei tōyō gaikō shi josetsu* [Introduction to Early Modern Diplomatic History of East Asia], (Tokyo: Iwamatsudo, 1927), 284–297.

Woodrow Wilson offered introduction more democratic and anti-imperialist modifications into capitalism while Vladimir Lenin and The October Revolution in Russia in 1917 offered alternative form of modernization without private property. The difference between two paradigms was in how in they related to the problem of social inequality as a source of motivation to mobilize society for modernization as nation state. For instance, Korean nationalists viewed modernization as process of reproduction of social inequalities that would permit to exploit economic potential of society in the process of capital accumulation both within and outside national boundaries. Korean socialists on the opposite viewed modernization as the process of elimination of social inequalities in form of national and international class struggle.

Capitalist modernization uses social inequalities to exploit economic potential of Korean society inside and outside national boundaries. On one hand, social inequality cultivated expectation of upper social mobility to mobilize individuals to participate in market economy but on the other, cultivated expectations could not be satisfied within national boundaries that pressure Korean people to look for better economic opportunities in other nations. For example, during colonial period Japanese recruiters exploited economic pressure to encourage Korean people to move to Japan as labor force.[26] Eventually, capitalist modernization produced three large waves of Korean migration to the United States under ideological construct of "American dream". Each wave referred to different manifestations of social inequality between Korean and the United States. The first wave in early 20th century of Korean laborers in Hawaii marked disadvantaged condition of Korean agriculture in comparison with American[27]; the second wave that started after Korean War (1950–1953) marked distinction between war destroyed Korean families and economic stability of American households[28]; and third wave since the implementation of new The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 marked difference between entrepreneurial opportunities for small business in South Korea and the United States.[29]

Socialist modernization used social inequalities to exploit political potential of Korean society inside and outside national boundaries. Nationalist discourse of Korean socialists depicted the problem of social inequality not as a source of economic motivation but as a source of motivation to mobilize Korean people for class struggle to eliminate all inequalities. However, lack of political and economic resources against their opponents forced Korean socialists rely on international

[26]Takasaki Soji, *Shokuminchi chōsen no nipponjin* [Japanese People in Colonial Korea] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shōten, 2002), 111.

[27]Sin Seong Ryeo. *Hawai imin ryaksa: Inmaek ŭl t'onghae pon sarm ŭi hyŏnjanggi* [Concise History of Immigration in Hawaii: Through the Eyes of Contemporaries] (Korea University Ethnic Culture Research Center Press, 1988), 79.

[28]Ji Yeon Yuh, *Kichich'on ŭi kŭnŭl ŭl nŏmŏ: mikuk ŭlo kŏnnŏ kan hankukin kunin anaetŭl iyaki* [Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America] (Seoul: Samin, 2007), 18.

[29]Kim Taegi and others, *Chaemi hanin sahoe ŭi kyŏngche hwankyŏng* [Korean American Social and Economic Environment] (Seoul: Jipmoon Press, 2005), 79–80.

socialist movement in struggle for national independence or participate in socialist building in other nations in Soviet Union and China. From socialist perspective political unity of Korean society as nation or as diaspora was possible in form constantly reproduced contradiction of labor against capital where one group of Korean people represented labor and other represented capital.[30]

It meant that adherents of socialist and capitalist modernization in Korea could no longer rely on their own resources to obtain national independence. Liberation of Korea in the year of 1945 marked the end of WWII (1939–1945) but at the same time, it marked involvement of Korean peninsula into new international order shaped by contradiction between socialist and capitalist camps known as Cold War. On the local level, it culminated as "hot" Korean War (1950–1953) that fixed political division of Koran peninsula according to the boundaries defined by this contradiction.[31] Integration of Korea into new international reality of Cold War significantly decreased opportunity for national consensus between different political and social groups. New world order opened up access to large political, economic, ideological and military resources for adherents of socialism and capitalism to force opposite side to accept their view of future national modernization. International political legitimacy of Soviet Union and the United States as well as legitimacy of their Korean allies depended on how efficient they can provide those resources and how efficient they can accept this support.

Difference between socialist and capitalist modernizations put Korean nations and Korean diaspora in state of contingency produced by inconsistency between ethnic and national boundaries. Involvement into global politics of the Cold War during post-1945 period fixed not only political division of Korean society according to participation whether socialist or capitalist pattern of modernization but also created pressure to maintain national as well as ethnic boundaries and inability to do so. On one hand, North and South Korea have to justify their political legitimacy as nation of Korean people in spite of the fact they do not include Korean population of the opposite nation as well as large population of overseas Koreans. The overseas Koreans face similar state of contingency in opposite manner they have to justify their membership in a non-Korean nation in spite of their ethnic ties with Korean nations.[32]

However, Korean society integrated this inconsistency as crucial source of motivation to mobilize people for modernization both as nations and as diaspora. Inconsistency between ethnic and nationals boundaries re-appears in national discourses of North and South Korea as well as national discourses of the Korean

[30]Han Sangdo, *Chungkuk hyŏkmyŏng sok ŭi hankuk toklip untong* [Korean Independence Movement and Chinese Revolution] (Seoul: Jipmoon Press, 2004), 159–162.

[31]Pak Sun Seong, *Pukhan kyŏngche wa hanpantot'ongil* [North Korean Economy and Unification of Korean Peninsula] (Seoul: Pulpit, 2003), 246.

[32]For instance, famous researcher on CIS Koreans Khan Valery proposed an idea of Korean Diaspora as "meta-nation": Khan Valery, "Koreyskoye mezhdunarodnoye soobshestvo: *utopia ili perspectiva*" [Korean Global Community: Utopia or Perspective], *International Journal of Central Asian Studies*. Vol. 6. Seoul: IACD, 2001, 90–105.

Diaspora's host nations in form contradiction between pressure to overcome this inconsistency and inability to do so. This permits to internalize disappointed expectations about national unity and social equality back into political discourse as ideologies that motivate people to pursue further nation building process and permit to exploit political and economic potential of society. It is possible to describe this process at least in two dimensions: national dimension that covers relationships between Korean minority and non-Korean majority within national boundaries of host nation and transnational ethnic dimension that covers relationships between North and South Korean nations and overseas Korean population. Both dimensions include (post) socialist nations that react to this inconsistency by distribution of political power between state and capitalist nations that react by reproduction of social inequality to regulate reproduction of ethnic/nationals boundaries.

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