



# THE DPRK THROUGH THE FAMINE

Modern Korean Society

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# North Korean has had historical change

- 1948 “Soviet” Constitution
- 1972 “Kim Il Sung” Constitution
- 1998 “Military First” Constitution
- **Sorensen Periodization**
  - 1945-8 Soviet Occupation
  - 1948-1966 “Regular Communist Country”
    - 1956 failure of de-Stalinization and rejection of peaceful coexistence
  - 1966-1994 “Kim Il Sung System”—personality cult, nationalism, autonomy/autarky (chuch’e), beginning of “theater state”
  - 1994-2011 “Kim Jong Il System”—“theater state,” deterioration of party system, famine, and beginning of marketization
  - **2011-present “Kim Jong Un System”—rebuilding of party system, continued marketization, accelerated nuclear program**

# End of WWII in Asia

- **Yalta Conference (February 1945)**
  - Stalin had agreed to attack Japan 90 days after the defeat of Germany
  - Germany was defeated May 8, 1945 so the Soviet Union attacked Manchukuo and North Korea August 9, 1945
  - US nuclear bombing of Hiroshima August 6, 1945—Nagasaki August 8, 1945, Japan surrender August 15, 1945
    - Battle for Saipan June 13-July 9, 1944 (2,949 US dead, 29,000 Japanese military dead, 1000+ civilians commit suicide) Okinawa April 1-June 22 (14,000 US dead, 77,000 Japanese military dead, 42-150,000 civilian deaths) influenced US ideas of what an invasion of Japan would be like
    - On August 10, 1945 Dean Rusk of the Pentagon proposed dividing Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel into USSR and USA occupation zones—USSR accepted
- USSR occupied most of Korea north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel by August 27, 1945
  - August 25<sup>th</sup> Russians declared Korea liberated with “their fate in their own hands”
- USA troops arrived in Seoul September 7, 1945
  - General Hodge set up military government announcing everything to be under US control in its occupation zone

# Meanwhile in the Japanese Colony of Chōsen

- Governor General and his Superintendent received warning of impending Japanese surrender by August 10<sup>th</sup> and then tried to figure out how to maintain order in
  - Asked conservative Song Chinu to form government on August 12 (refused)
  - Ask leftist Lyuh Woonhyung who accepted with conditions on August 14<sup>th</sup>
- **Korean People's Republic**
  - People's Committees organized nationwide
  - Desire to present a *fait accompli* before US arrived on September 7<sup>th</sup>, but US refused to recognize KPR and USAMGIK set up instead
  - Russians, on the other hand, used People's Committees of KPR as civilian local government, but added communists to each committee to make a majority
- US and Soviet Union had originally meant to cooperate in governing Korea, but after US refused to recognize KPR the Soviets organized the separate Five Provinces Administrative Bureau in the north

# Soviet Civil Administration in north

- Soviet Red Army kept order
  - No Korean partisans participated in occupation of North Korea until September 19<sup>th</sup> when Kim Il Sung and 88 partisans were brought to Wŏnsan by ship
- Local P'yŏngyang People's Committee headed by Christian Cho Man-sik initially accepted by USSR with 15 additional communist members
- Soviet Civil Administration set up October 1945 under Soviet political commissars
  - This was behind the scenes, however, so that the People's Committees were the public face of the government
- Kim Il Sung introduced to P'yŏngyang October 14, 1945
- A North Korean Communist Party separate from Seoul-based Korean Communist Party headquarters was organized October 1945
- December 1945 Moscow Accords (between US and Soviet Union) collapsed
  - Cho Mansik was then arrested and Kim Il Sung became head of the North Korean People's Committee

# Revolutionary North Korea Policies 1946-7

- February 1946 Kim Il Sung chairman of North Korean Provisional People's Committee
  - **March 1946 land reform (uncompensated expropriation, free distribution)**
  - **May 1946 25% tax-in-kind announced**
  - **October 1946 nationalization of large-scale industry**
- August 1946 Korean Worker's Party established with merger of the Korean Communist Party and the New People's Party, and the absorption of youth groups and labor unions
  - Theory: "alliance of workers and peasants along with nationalist bourgeoisie and intellectuals"—but actually it was centrally controlled
- November 1946 People's Committee "elections"
  - One candidate per constituency, and separate boxes for yes and no
- February 1947 "People's Assembly of North Korea" elected
  - PC's made permanent and mass organizations controlled by the authorities set up
  - KWP only effective political party

# Separate Regimes

- November 1947 draft DPRK constitution discussed in 3<sup>rd</sup> NK People's Assembly session
- November 1947 UNTCOK (UN Temporary Commission on Korea) set up to supervise nationwide elections
  - Not recognized in the north
- May 10, 1948 UNTCOK supervised elections in south
- **Republic of Korea set up August 15, 1948**
- **DPRK formally set up September 9, 1948**
  - SPA with Presidium
  - Cabinet under nominal supervision of Presidium (Kim Il Söng Premier)
  - People's Committees under control of cabinet
  - Everything supervised and directed by Central Committee of KWP
  - **Official capital: Seoul**

# Kim Il Sŏng's Power

- Initially came from his control of the government as Premier
- Korean Workers Party initially was dominated by other factions
- Factions in North Korea:
  - Domestic communists—those who had stayed in Korea throughout the Japanese colonial period
    - many of these had been arrested and become compromised because of this
    - others had been members of the communist party in Japan and could be intellectual Marxists
  - Yanan communists—Koreans who had joined the Chinese revolution on the theory that only world revolution would overthrow imperialism
    - This group overall probably had the most sophisticated knowledge of Marxism
  - Soviet communists—ethnic Koreans who were born and raised in the Soviet Union and members of the Soviet Communist Party
    - Bilingual, and had been brought in by the Red Army and the CPSU to help govern North Korea
  - Kapsan guerillas—group of about seventy guerillas who had fought with KIS in Manchuria and fled with him to the Soviet Union before returning to North Korea beginning in October 1945
    - Most were firmly and personally loyal to Kim Il Sung

# Up until 1966, the DPRK was a “regular” communist society with its ‘Soviet’ Constitution

- The Korean Workers Party was the ruling party
  - No other parties allowed (except the token Ch’ŏndogyo Tongudang”)
  - Most powerful person was the General Secretary of the KWP
  - **Central Committee of the KWP supreme policy making organ**
    - Standing Committee and Political Committee (Politburo) most important within KWP
- The government administration’s role was to carry out the policies decided on by the KWP Central Committee
- KWP not mentioned in the constitution, however
  - Supreme People’s Assembly “highest organ of state power” elected every four years and supposed to meet twice a year
    - **Presidium** (standing committee of SPA) exercises power when SPA not in session
  - **Cabinet with a Premier runs the country** (how Premier is selected is not explicitly stated in the constitution)
    - Ministers serve under the cabinet
  - People’s committees are the “local organs of state power”

# Korean War

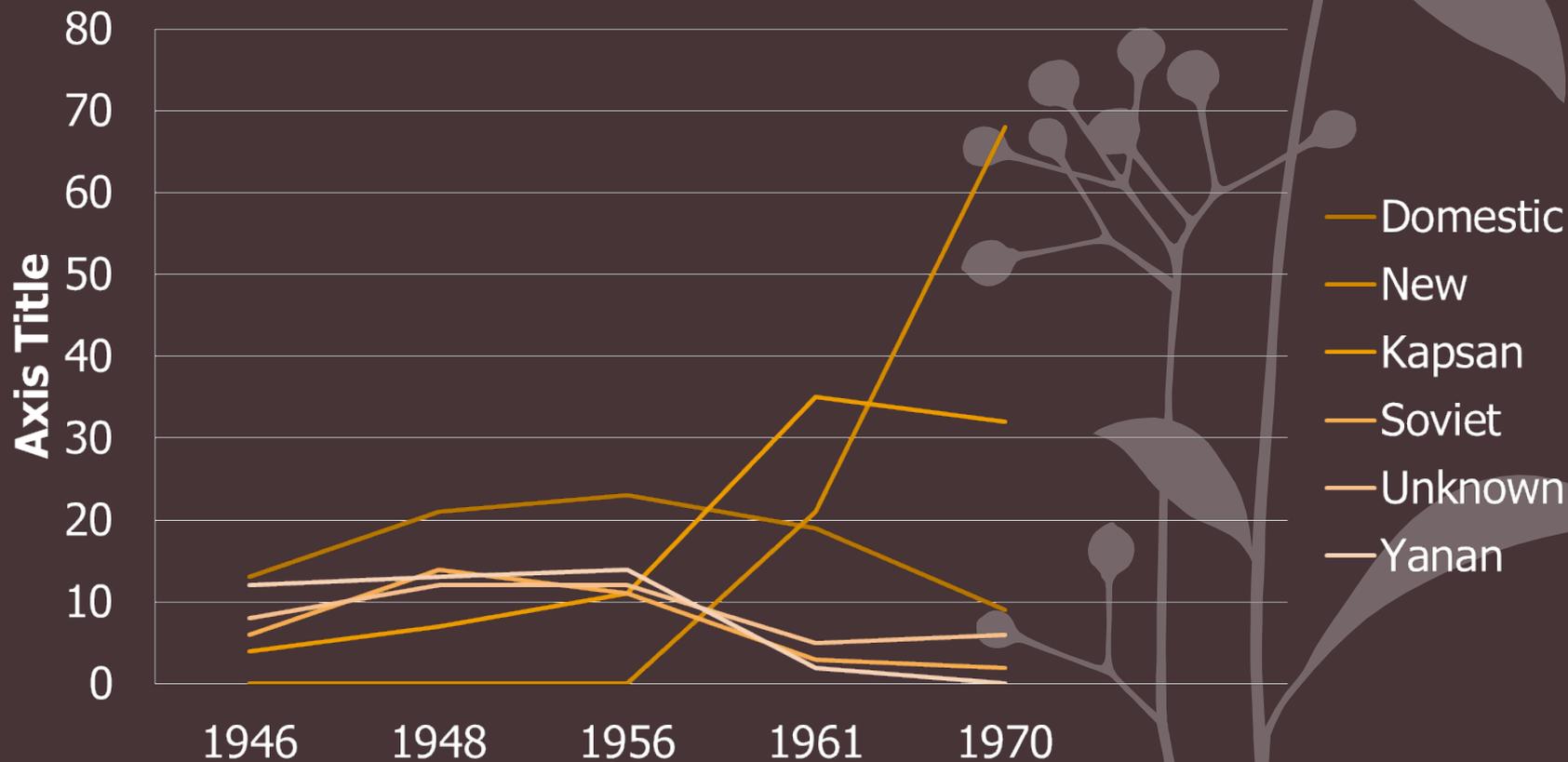
- By 1950 both Soviet and US forces had withdrawn from the Korean Peninsula, but North and South Korea had clashed along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel leading up to war
- Full-scale North Korean attack began June 5, 1950
  - Kim Il Sung had conferred with Stalin and Mao and had eventually received permission from Stalin for unification by force with Mao agreeing to help
  - By then the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons and the Chinese Revolution had succeeded
- June 27<sup>th</sup> US got UN to urge military assistance to ROK and President Truman order US military to help ROK
  - UNSCR 84 created unified UN Command (that still exists)
  - US patrols Taiwan straits
- North Korea occupied most of South Korea except Taegu and Pusan until September 15<sup>th</sup> Inch'ŏn landing
  - UN troops entered North Korea in October until Chinese intervention drove them back south of Seoul in December 1950
  - Stalemate near present DMZ and Armistice July 27, 1953

# Political Events After Korean War

- **Kim Il Sung started purging his most powerful rivals**
  - Used and absorbed the Yanan group but destroyed the nationalists
  - Absorbed large number of poor peasants into KWP (his supporters) as opposed to workers or committed Marxists
  - Used Soviet faction to purge NK domestic communists
    - South Korean domestic communists discredited through failure of unification
- **Failure of Destalinization in 1956 (See Andre Lankov for book)**
  - **Destalinization=end of personality cult, establishment of “socialist legality”, and loosened controls on artists and intellectuals**
  - Destalinization in the Soviet Union from February 1956 (Polish and Hungarian uprisings in October slowed it down)
  - DPRK clashes in August/September plenums of the KCP Central Committee
  - Russian Koreans (Pak Ch’ang-ok) and parts of Yanan Faction purged as a result of their failure to dislodge Kim Il Sung—some fled to the PRC or Soviet Union

# Changes in factional power over time

Chart Title



# Transition to Socialism after the Korean War

- **Collectivization of agriculture (1954-58)**
- **Socialization of remaining private business (1954-58)**
  - ¼ of remaining private businesses turned into state enterprises (directly managed by the state)
  - ¾ of remaining private businesses turned into industrial cooperatives
- **Full centrally planned economy**
  - No private productive property (but could have personal property)
  - State determines investment, production quotas, and prices of goods
  - All people's work life organized into work teams (chagöppan) to which one is assigned by the state
- **Development of Chuch'e Thought from 1956**
  - Nationalism and autarchy 자주성
  - Legitimized Kim Il Sung as a theorist
  - "Indigenized" (Confucianized) communism
  - Leader as fatherly figure 아버지 수령
  - Consciousness and education elevated as causes of behavior rather than material causality (as in orthodox Marxism)
  - Emphasis on spiritual rather than material incentives

# Kim Jong Il's Rising Presence

- 1967 Kim Jong Il becomes Section Head in the Party's Propaganda and Agitation Department
- 1967 Paektusan Creation Group formed to create revolutionary movies of the anti-Japanese struggle
  - Most important of these *Sea of Blood* 피바다 that became the model of “revolutionary opera” 혁명가극 staged by the P'yŏngyang Institute of Cinema
  - From 1971 until 1987 revolutionary opera replaced spoken drama in P'yongyang
- Themes of Sea of Blood style revolutionary opera
  - KIS is founder of the national essence and state patriarch
  - Party becomes mother 어머니 당 KIS the “parent leader” 어버이 수령, people become children to the state patriarch
  - Models of ideal behavior presented in the role of Kim Il Sung's partisans
  - Know who your enemies are (Japanese and American imperialists)

# New Constitutions North and South in 1972

- Hotline established between Seoul and P'yŏngyang
- 1972.10.16 Martial Law in ROK
  - National Assembly dissolved, universities closed
  - 1972.10.27 New State Council
  - 1972.11.21 Yusin Constitution adopted by referendum
- 1972.12.28 First Session of 5<sup>th</sup> SPA adopts new “Socialist Constitution”
  - Had been discussed in KWP Central Committee in October so that in December the SPA could rubber stamp it

# Content of 1972 Socialist Constitution

- Kim Il Song made “President” (chusŏk)
- DPRK defined as “independent socialist state” guided by “chuch’e\*” and “democratic centralism”
  - \*the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of our country
- Mobilizational industrialization
  - To get more output, exploit more land, labor, and material
  - Ch’ŏngsalli Spirit, Ch’ŏllima Movement, Taean Work Method, state-led central planning all mentioned
- Means of production owned by state or cooperatives, but people have personal property (including produce of private plots)
- Chuch’e in literature and science will transform people into true socialist men and women

# Structure of 1972 Socialist Constitution

- SPA “highest organ of state” that selects president
- CPC “highest leadership organ of state”
  - Draws up domestic and foreign policies
  - Directs work of peoples assemblies and committees and administration
  - Directs judicial, prosecutorial, and military issues
  - Appoints and removes cabinet
- Administrative council = cabinet under CPC
- Local people’ s committees
- Courts and Procurator’ s Office
- Capital P’ yŏngyang (had been Seoul)

# Kim Jong Il Successor

- 1973 KJI personally directs the **Three Revolutions Work Team Movement**
  - Ideological, technological, and cultural revolutions led by young educated cadres
- 1974 KJI began being called the “party center” 당 중앙
  - He had been named successor by the Central Committee, but this was not publicly announced yet
- **Kim Jong Il publicly named Kim Il Sung’s successor in the 6<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1980**
- In the 1980’s Kim Il Sung went into semi-retirement and no longer tended to day-to-day governance
  - (He would have been 60 in 1982, a traditional Korean retirement date)

# Types of authority (Weber)

- Traditional--“it has always been that way”
  - Begins in the patriarchal household, and when patriarchal authority expands to a polity in which offices evolve out of the household you have “patrimonialism”
  - The Confucian idea that the state is just the family writ large is an example of this
- Rational-legalistic—law of the nation-state implemented through bureaucracy
- Charismatic--"resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him."
  - In English charisma means:
    - (1) compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others
    - (2) a divinely conferred power or talent
      - It comes from the Greek *kharisma* that means “gift of grace”
  - Examples: Hitler, Stalin, and Kim Il Sung but also to a degree Roosevelt and Churchill

# Problems with charisma

- This section follows the argument of Heonik Kwon and Chung Byung-ho in *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics* (Roman and Littlefield, 2014)
- Weberian idea of charisma—that “divinely” ordained ability to inspire devotion and loyalty, and ability to make “everything change”
- This charisma cannot be long-lasting
- The problem for North Korea (as defined by Kwon) is that this kind of charisma cannot be sustained over the long term
  - It’s like electricity, and the battery cannot last forever
- Main problem—how do you sustain charisma when the full transformation (unified Korea under communism) was unattainable during the lifetime of the charismatic leader (Kim Il Sung)
- Answer: you figure out a way to “routinize” charisma
  - -Kwon and Chung argue that the North Korean “theater state” is an attempt to routinize Kim Il Sung’s charisma

# Lack of attention to agency in Kwon

- Classic case of “theater state” (Geertz’s Negara in Bali) was already in place when Geertz made his analysis, so he didn’t have to ask where it came from
  - i.e. synchronic rather than diachronic analysis was fine
- In North Korea, however, we know the DPRK didn’t start out as a theater state in 1948, so the issue of agency in its creation is crucial
  - It is not adequate to say “North Korea” created the “theater state”
  - Kim Il Sung did not create it either
- The theater state was created by Kim Jong Il
  - In order to justify his succession to his father, Kim Jong Il promulgated an aesthetic of revolutionary family charisma that must be continued by himself
  - This didn’t “just happen” but was a conscious decision by Kim Jong Il in order to assure his succession to his father—revolutionary operas and movies and writings established and perpetuated this mythology (along with art and mass games)
- Kim Jong Il’s attempts to secure his succession to his father introduced (with his father’s condoning) special, or “distorted”, or uniquely North Korean (depending on your point of view) aspects into North Korean society

# Economic Stress & Changing Foreign Relations

- Second 7-year plan 1978-1984 fails
  - Self-reliance, modernization, scientification
  - Stopped paying foreign debt in 1984, declared in default in 1987 making external financing impossible to get except from Soviet Union or China
- 1978 China begins market-based reform
- 1991 Soviet Union collapses (now Russian Federation)
- **1991 Russian Federation recognizes the Republic of Korea, and Kim Jong Il responds by threatening to develop nuclear weapons**
- 1991 China informs DPRK that it will no longer oppose ROK admission to the UN (DPRK quickly also applies for membership)
- 1992 PRC recognizes the Republic of Korea (that breaks relations with Taiwan)

# Slow Economic Collapse in the 1990s

- 1991 Russian Federation demands payment for resources in hard currency
  - DPRK unable to pay, and trade with Russia (most important trade partner) and economy begins to contract as factories shut down for lack of raw materials and parts
- 1992 China, too, asks for hard currency
- Between 1991 and 1999 the economy contracts 40%
- Agriculture in slow decline beginning in the 1980s
  - Peaked in 1984, but down 20% by 1993
  - Inherent inefficiencies of collective farms?
  - Natural disaster?
  - Loss of trade with Soviet block?
  - Environmental degradation? (overchemicalization and deforestation?)

# Vicious Cycle of Agricultural Decline

- Lack of petroleum (imported from Soviet Union at “friendship prices”)
  - Lack of coal because no fuel for mining machines
  - Lack of electricity due to lack of coal
  - Lack of irrigation due to lack of electricity
  - Lack of fertilizer and fuel for mechanized farm machinery
- Deterioration of agricultural infrastructure
  - Deforestation exacerbated damage from heavy rain producing devastating floods that damaged roads and irrigation infrastructure
  - Agricultural research stations unable to produce and distribute seed and other inputs
  - Fall in natural soil productivity due to over chemicalization and lack of humus in the soil
- 1994-7 flood and/or drought

# Famine Develops

- Public Distribution System for good begins to break down
  - After 1987 when Soviet aid stopped rations cut by 10%
  - 1991 “Let’s eat two meals a day” campaign
  - 1992 further 10% cut in rations and PDS food distributions begin to get erratic
  - 1994 almost 64% of people reported erratic distributions and were getting less than half of their food from the PDS
- The word “famine” could not be used, erratic food distributions were not uncommon, so most people didn’t know of the famine until it happened to them
  - P’yŏngyang preserved for the most part, but the Northeast hard it (15% death rate)
  - Barbara Demick’s book is about Ch’ŏngjin in one of the hardest hit areas in North Korea

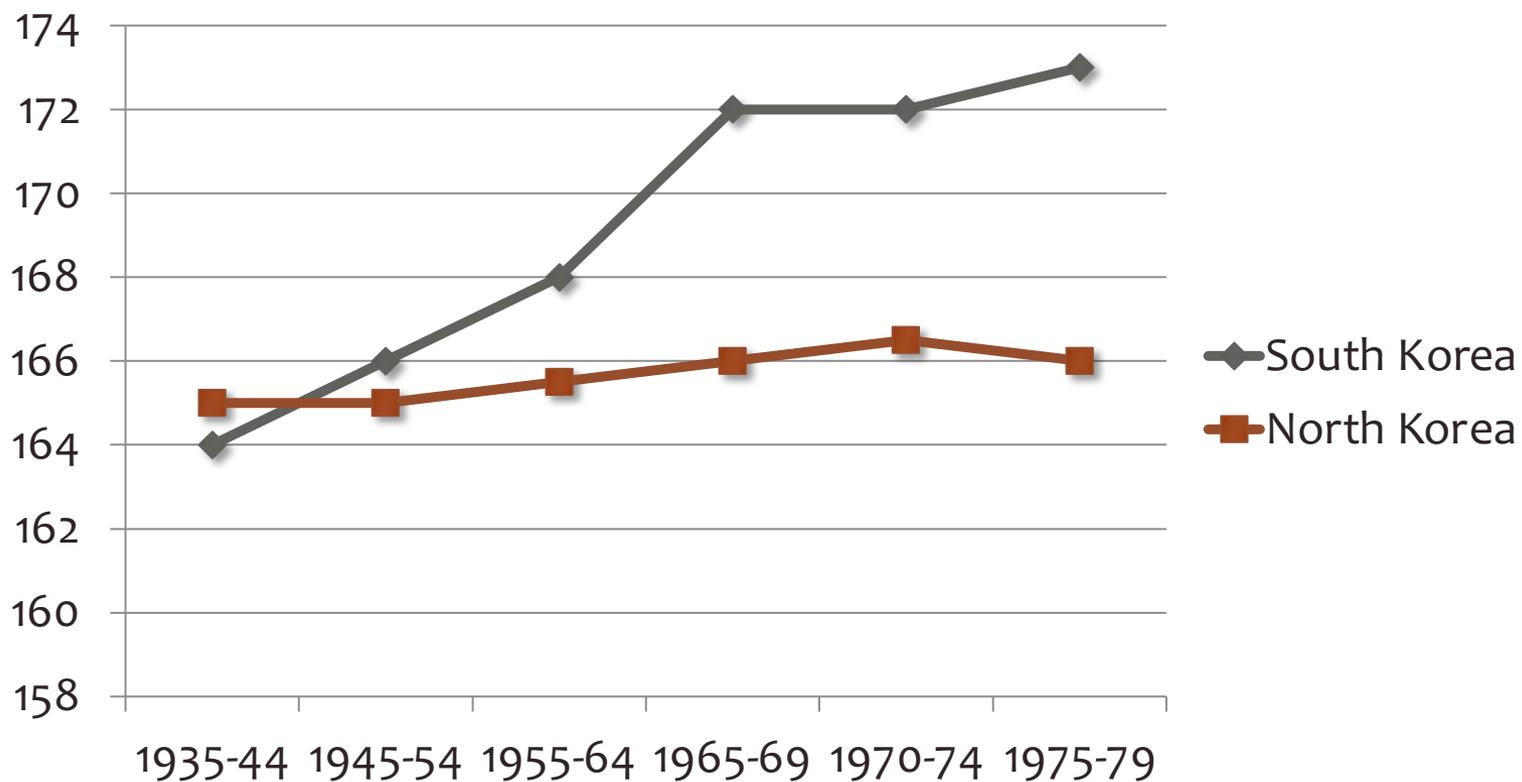
# Experiencing the Famine

- Mrs. Song and the PDS (Public Distribution System)—Demick pp68-72
- Visited PDS twice a month
  - Presented ration card, small amount of money, and work certification
  - Got 700gr per day for adults, 500 for children, 400 for retirees
  - *Mrs. Song can't remember exactly when it began* but her bag started becoming lighter—cooking oil became unavailable, gradually no rice, only corn and barley
  - Eventually began buying food on the market, visiting farms
- Government explanation?
  - Stockpiling food for South Korea, US boycott
  - Reiterated story of Kim Il Sung's *arduous march* in 1938-9
  - Intensified surveillance (Mrs. Song and inminban)

# Government Response and Survival Strategies

- Government response
  - Strengthen ideological messages of solidarity (official name of period is *Hardship March* referring to a period of KIS's guerilla activities)
  - Promote hillside farming and foraging, and allow travel to purchase food direct from collective farms
  - Punish unorthodox economic and social behavior with imprisonment or death (discourage buying, selling, or trading in markets; treat defecting to China or South Korea and/or stealing as treason)
  - Request for foreign assistance December 1995 (two years into the famine), but did not use foreign exchange to buy food abroad (unlike China after Great Leap Forward)—massive foreign aid 1995-2008
- People's coping strategies
  - Steal goods from factories for trade, sell household goods (and house) to buy food on the market
  - Cut down trees to grow corn, or cultivate a secret plot (illegal)
  - Buy direct from collective farms
  - Trade in “grasshopper markets” 메뚜기 시장 (illegal but tolerated for old ladies)

# Nutrition and Stature



# Death Rates (reliably researched)

- Highest among urban workers in Northeast (who were most dependent on the PDS)
- Goodkind and West (2001) *Population and Development Review* 27: 219-38
  - Based on WFP nutritional surveys and calibrations based on China's Great Leap Forward
  - Deaths 1995-2000 approximately 600,000
- K. S. Park (2012) *Study on Unification Policy* 21: 127-56
  - Based on 1993 and 2008 population censuses
  - 1993-2008 missing 880,000 expected people
    - 490,000 died of starvation and excess disease
    - 290,000 because of decreased fertility
    - 100,000 migrated (mostly to China)