



THE ESTABLISHMENT OF KIM IL SUNGISM

Modern Korean Society

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North Korean Constitutions

- 1948 “Soviet” Constitution
- 1972 “Kim Il Sung” Constitution
- 1998 “Military First” Constitution
- **Everard Periodization**
 - 1945-1953 “Regular Communist Country”
 - 1953-1994 “Personality cult combined with fascist-like nationalism”
 - 1994-present “People aware of failures of the regime”
- **Sorensen Periodization**
 - 1945-8 Soviet Occupation
 - 1948-1966 “Regular Communist Country”
 - 1966-1994 “Kim Il Sung System”—personality cult, nationalism, autonomy/autarky (chuch’e)
 - 1994-2011 “Kim Jong Il System”—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 defeated May 8, 1945—Soviet Union attacked Manchukuo and North Korea August 8, 1945
 - US nuclear bombing of Hiroshima August 6, 1945—Nagasaki August 8, 1945, Japan surrender August 15, 1945
 - Battle for Okinawa April 1-June 22 (14,000 US dead, 77,000 Japanese military dead, 42-150,000 civilian deaths)
 - August 10th 1945 Dean Rusk of Pentagon proposed dividing Korea at the 38th parallel into USSR and USA occupation zones—USSR accepted
- USSR occupied most of Korea north of the 38th parallel by August 27, 1945
 - August 25th Russians declared Korea liberated with “their fate in their own hands”
- USA troops arrived in Seoul September 7th 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 10th 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 14th
- **Korean People's Republic**
 - People's Committees organized nationwide
 - Desire to present a *fait accompli* before US arrived on September 7th, 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, only adding communists to make a majority
- US and Soviet Union had 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 19th when Kim Il Sung and 88 partisans were brought to Wŏnsan
- 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, and Cho Mansik arrested, and Kim Il Sung becomes head of the North Korean People's Committee

Quick North Korea Reforms 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"
- 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, mass organizations controlled by the authorities set up
 - KWP only effective political party

Separate Regimes

- November 1947 draft DPRK constitution discussed in 3rd 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 Söng'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
 - Yanan communists—Koreans who had joined the Chinese revolution on the theory that only world revolution would overthrow imperialism
 - This group 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 in October, 1945
 - Most were firmly loyal to Kim Il Sung as a person

Up until 1966, the DPRK was a “regular” communist society in its Soviet Constitution

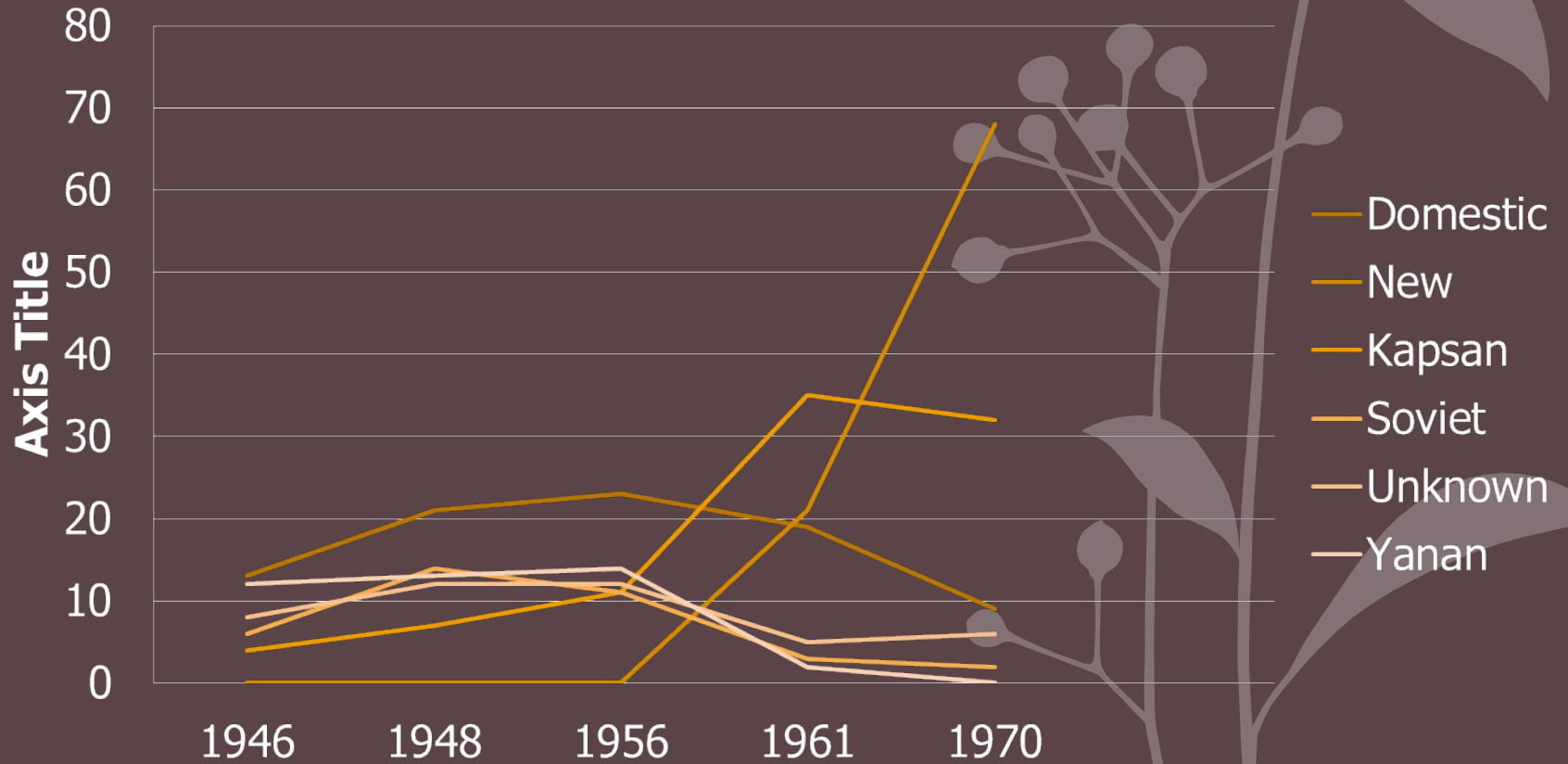
- The Korean Workers Party was the ruling party
 - No other parties allowed (except the token Ch’ōndogyo Tongudang”)
 - Most powerful person the General Secretary of the KWP
 - **Central Committee of the KWP supreme policy making organ**
 - Standing Committee and Political Committee most important within 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
 - 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”

Political Events After Korean War

- **Kim Il Sung started purging his most powerful rivals**
 - Used and absorbed Yanan group, and destroyed nationalists
 - Absorbed large number of 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**
 - **Destalinization=end of personality cult, establishment of “socialist legality”, and loosening controls on artists**
 - Destalinization in the Soviet Union from February 1956 (Polish and Hungarian uprisings October)
 - DPRK clashes in August/September plenums of the KCP Central Committee
 - Russian Koreans (Pak Ch’ang-ok) and Yanan Faction purged as a result of their failure to dislodge Kim Il Sung

Changes in factional power over time

Chart Title



Socioeconomic Events after 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

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 5th 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
- Ch’ŏngsalli Spirit, Ch’ŏllima Movement, Tae’an 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 socialist man

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)

Types of authority (Weber)

- Traditional--“it has always been that way”
 - This begins in the patriarchal household, and when this expands to a polity in which offices evolve out of the household you have “patrimonialism”
 - The 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, Kim Il Sung but also Roosevelt, Churchill

Problems with charisma (according to Kwon)

- 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
- 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