

MILITARIZED MODERNITY AND GENDERED CITIZENSHIP

Clark W. Sorensen

October 23, 2018

Modern Korean Society

SEUNGSOOK MOON'S BOOK 2005

- ▶ *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea*. Duke University Press (2005)
- ▶ About the politics of membership in the modern Korean nation
 - ▶ Main point: the terms of membership in the modern South Korean nation are different for males and females because of the militarization of the modern South Korean state
 - ▶ Terms of membership means “rights and responsibilities” to the nation
 - ▶ Hypothesis that this membership in the nation influences all aspects of one’s life, and is not thus just a political footnote

MODERNITY

- ▶ **IMPORTANT POINT**—the term “modern” (현대) or “modernity” (현대성) is a keyword in Korean culture
 - ▶ It is not just a descriptive term, but is considered something that is “good” and “necessary” for the survival of the Korean people
 - ▶ If you’re modern you are advanced, up-to-date, and not to be looked down upon, thus seeking modernity has been an important national goal
- ▶ **Kŭnse, kŭndae, hyŏndae** (近世, 近代, 現代)
 - ▶ In European history, kŭnse (“near age”) is the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment, kŭndae (“near generation”) refers to the Industrial Revolution up to WWI, and hyŏndae (“present generation”) refers to after WWI
 - ▶ In Korean history kŭnse begins with the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392) and ends with the Opening of the Ports (kaehang 개항) in 1876, kŭndae goes from 1876 to 1945, and hyŏndae refers to the period after 1945

WHAT IS MODERNITY?

- ▶ “objective definition”—a list of cultural, technological, and institutional traits and values drawn from recent experience in the West (“modernization theory”)
- ▶ Moon’s definition— “an array of local and global claims, commitments and knowledge whose specific meanings are determined in the context of asymmetrical power relations among (national) societies and (intra-national) social groups”
- ▶ Not an ‘empty sign’ because history and power relations limit the meanings that may be assigned to “modernity”
- ▶ Questions:
 - ▶ who imagines what constitutes modernity and under what sociopolitical conditions?
 - ▶ How are Western notions of modernity interpreted and reinvented by local actors?
 - ▶ To what extent is the modernity appropriated by the developmental state accepted, contested, or subverted by those mobilized in the name of modernity?

GENDER AND MODERNITY

- ▶ Notion of modernity combined with “hegemonic” notions of the proper place of females and males in nation
- ▶ CULTURAL HEGEMONY (Antonio Gramsci)—the moral and intellectual leadership through which dominant groups control society (often to the extent that members of society cannot conceive of alternatives)
- ▶ Hegemonic notions of gender:
 - ▶ Man = protector and provider (that requires men to engage in military service and be the primary labor force)
 - ▶ Woman = reproducer of children and daily life (marginalized as labor force, and assigned “birth control” and “rational management of the family” as their contribution to modernity)

PROCEDURAL DEMOCRACY AND MASS MOBILIZATION

▶ Mobilization

- ▶ Originally meant “assembling and making troops and supplies ready for war”
- ▶ Mass mobilization = gathering people for collective action through mass meetings, marches, parades, processions, demonstrations, the mass media, mass organizations and so forth
 - ▶ Often the participants in mass mobilization campaigns are willing, but they are followers rather than decision-makers

▶ Procedural democracy

- ▶ Refers to the fact of having competitive elections and representative institutions

▶ Substantive democracy

- ▶ Involves more than just democratic procedures—access to power, participation in decision-making, substantive equality and justice, etc.

MOON'S VIEW

- ▶ Initial South Korean state involved mobilization of men for military service, and later for labor
- ▶ As demands for democratic participation increased in the 1980s, South Korea moved into a period in which new types of political membership appeared
 - ▶ from “dutiful nationals” (kungmin 국민) to “participating citizens” (simin 시민)
 - ▶ The college educated middle classes organized citizens groups (NGOs)
 - ▶ The workers used democratic unions
- ▶ This process can be seen through the development of universal male military service (국민개병제) into allowing conscripts to be used as workers or researchers after 1973 (HCI Industrialization)

PROSPEROUS NATION STRONG ARMY

- ▶ Puguk kangbyong 富國強兵
 - ▶ Slogan (like Yusin 維新 itself) from Meiji Restoration (J. fukoku kyōhei)
- ▶ Similarities to pre-war Japanese fascism
 - ▶ Authoritarian regime preparing for and waging war (i.e. South Korea confronting North Korea and communism)
 - ▶ Mass mobilization of the population through administered mass organizations AMOS
 - ▶ 반상회, 부인회, 어용노조, 주민등록, 새마을 지도자
 - ▶ Late comer's urgency to match advanced Western nations
 - ▶ colonization by Japan created even more urgency—modernize or be eaten by more powerful neighbors
 - ▶ post-colonial ambivalence
 - ▶ Want the technology and institutions of modernity
 - ▶ Worry about losing one's cultural essence

EASTERN WAY WESTERN MACHINES

- ▶ Tongdo sŏgi 東道西機
 - ▶ Attributed to Pak Kyusu (1807-1877)
 - ▶ Grandson of Pak Chiwŏn, influenced by Qing's yangwu 洋务 movement (of military-led modernization 1861-1895)
 - ▶ Accept Western technology (especially the military part), but reject democracy
 - ▶ Before 1894 Chinese modernizing influence was predominant (Tsunqli Yamen, Tianjin arsenal)
 - ▶ After 1894 Japanese influence was stronger than Chinese, as the Japanese defeated China in the Sino-Japanese War and curtailed Chinese influence in Korea
 - ▶ Great Han Empire after 1897 under Kojong introduced electricity, street cars, telephone lines, a telegraph system, and railroads (Korea no longer tributary to China)
 - ▶ Similar to what Partha Chatterjee (*The Nation and Its Fragments*) found for Bengal

INTRODUCTION OF MODERN CULTURE

- ▶ Yu Kil-chun's "What I Saw and Heard in the West" 西遊見聞 (1890s)
 - ▶ Imagined members of the Korean national body as dutiful nationals subject to continuous mobilization and control, whose education and improvement were to be undertaken for the purpose of enriching and strengthening the nation (very Confucian view of state's leadership).
- ▶ *Hwangsŏng Sinmun* (1898-1910) distinguished *kungmin* from *minjok* by noting the military service of the former
- ▶ This old form of modernity was adopted by elites after liberation in 1945

COLONIAL LEGACIES

- ▶ After 1945 in South Korea (but not North Korea) there was considerable continuity in institutions and personnel from the colonial to the post-colonial period
 - ▶ USAMGIK kept institutions and personnel in place (including National Police) and promoted existing Koreans to higher positions, and this was inherited by ROK
 - ▶ Many refugees who came down from North Korea were former landlords, Christians, or educated people who had worked closely with the Japanese
- ▶ ROK defines itself as the heir to the Great Han Empire through the Provisional Government, so the colonial period is often termed the “Japanese occupation” Ilkangtchǒmgi (일강점기) rather than the “Japanese colonial period” (일제식민기)
 - ▶ Purging of “pro-Japanese elements”(ch’inilp’a) was not considered necessary by US and/or Syngman Rhee (though it probably would have been popular)

COLONIAL LEGACIES (2)

- ▶ South Korea inherited a “highly articulated, disciplined, and penetrating bureaucracy” (more than one would expect of a country of Korea’s level of development) (Eckert)
 - ▶ Police did not just do repression, but were the “discipline of modernity”—hygiene, dress (colored rather than white clothing), short hair, frugality
 - ▶ Mental control through “conversion” (K. chŏnhyang = J. tenkō)
 - ▶ Originally used by the colonial regime against communists and nationalists
 - ▶ Continued to be used against communists after liberation
 - ▶ Administered mass organizations (AMOs)—colonial Rural Revitalization Programs to Yusin New Village Movement drum up support for government-approved modernization
- ▶ Colonial legacies I contrasts with North Korea that was a revolutionary regime that purged all rightists and “collaborators” (unless the were Communist), and thus provides an example of an alternative modernity (keeping the issues in view), while both North and South share II

MILITARIZED MODERNITY

- ▶ South Korea an “anticommunist Self at war with a communist Other”
- ▶ The anticommunist body politic can be constituted through discipline and physical force
- ▶ Military service and the industrial economy are intertwined
- ▶ 진짜 사나이 한국군가
- ▶ 이등병의 편지 (JSA 2000 Kim Kwangsŏk)



SURVEILLANCE

- ▶ Residential registration (chumin tŭngnok) introduced in 1962 by SCNR
 - ▶ Each person given a unique number at birth that is used for military service, taxation, criminal investigation, and the provision of social services
 - ▶ From 1968 each person supposed to carry their National Registration Card with them at all times (so North Korean spies can be ferreted out)
 - ▶ This was the year of the North Korean commando raid on the Blue House
- ▶ Prevasive use of slogans 멸공방첩 (滅工防諜) smash communism, prevent spying)
- ▶ Lifestyle crimes (long hair, elaborate weddings)
- ▶ Administered mass organizations
 - ▶ 반상회 neighborhood meeting; öyong nojo (company-run unions), puin hoe, 4-H

ACTUAL TREE WHERE COMMANDOS STRUCK



PLAQUE NEXT TO TREE

▶ 1.21 Situation Pine Tree

- ▶ On January 21, 1968 Kim Sin-jo and 30 members of North Korea's 124th Regiment infiltrated with the goal of attacking the Blue House, and in front of today's Ch'öngun Silver Town (Ch'öngun-dong) after engaging with the police they fled into the Pugak Mountain and Inwang Mountain Areas. On this pine tree the scars of fifteen bullets remain from the violent engagement with our military and police, and since then this pine tree has been called the 1.21 Situation Pine Tree.
- ▶ The party of armed communists were perfectly familiar with the Blue House and neighboring facilities of that time, and carried out their provocation preparing carefully by wearing South Korean army uniforms and civilian clothes during their infiltration, and camouflaging themselves as drunks.
- ▶ After the January 21st engagement the results of 14 days of fighting were that of the 31 infiltrators one escaped, 29 were killed, and one was captured alive (Kim Sin-jo).
- ▶ On account of this incident the Home Reserve Army was established (April 1, 1968).

NORMALIZATION OF ANTICOMMUNISM

- ▶ Distinguish legitimate members of the nation-state from others (i.e. communists)
- ▶ Education
 - ▶ 반공도덕, 승공, 바른 생활, 국민윤리, 국사, 통일교육
 - ▶ School writing letters or sending gifts to soldiers 위문편지/품
- ▶ All out national security posture (총력안보), total solidarity (총화단결)
 - ▶ Monthly civil defense drills from 1971, 1975 Yulgok tax for modernization of the military
 - ▶ Thought conversion reinstated 1956, and thought criminals locked up

MILITARIZED ECONOMY

- ▶ Military service a requirement for many jobs thus indirectly reserving those jobs for men
- ▶ Military service was recognized as work experience, thus giving men seniority that led to better pay and faster promotions
- ▶ 1961-1999 the “military points system” gave veterans an advantage in certain kinds of tests and interviews
- ▶ Large corporations imbued with military practices (especially 1970s)
 - ▶ Rigid hierarchy based on rank
 - ▶ Command mode of one-way communication
 - ▶ Collective ethos
 - ▶ Even white collar workers given “endurance training”



CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN SOUTH KOREA

- ▶ Summer 2013 UN report revealed that 9 out of 10 worldwide jailed objectors to military service are South Korean
- ▶ Proposed 2007 program of alternative civil service was postponed indefinitely once President Lee Myōng-bak took office
- ▶ Largest group of South Korean conscientious objectors are Jehovah's Witnesses
- ▶ Visible minorities only allowed to join the military since 2012
- ▶ Ban on sexual minorities in military found unconstitutional in 2010



THE DECLINE OF MILITARIZED MODERNITY?

- ▶ *Minjung* activists criticized militarized modernity in 1980s, without rejecting “modernity” entirely (wanted a more humane and just society)
- ▶ As “citizen’s movement”/citizen’s groups (시민 단체) formed post-1987, class polarization arose between these and “people’s movement” (민중 운동)
- ▶ 1990s: changing attitudes towards North Korea, despite continued overall support for the National Security Law
- ▶ Civil society group membership still largely male-centric, middle-class
- ▶ Under militarized modernity: mass mobilization for state
- ▶ Under civil society: citizens monitor the state’s actions and negotiate

FOUR MAJOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGS

- ▶ Korean Women's Associations United (KWAU) 한국여성단체연합
- ▶ Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) 경제정의실천시민연합
- ▶ Korean Federation for Environmental Movements (KFEM) 환경운동연합
- ▶ People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) 참여연대





THE DECLINE IN FITS AND STARTS

- ▶ Financial crisis of 1997 meant that major reform of *chaebŏl* that had been in the works was scaled back
- ▶ President Kim Dae Jung's platform (1998-2003): democratic market economy, productive welfare, and balance between economic growth and social welfare
- ▶ Social welfare still reparative rather than preventative
- ▶ While men and women both bear burden of militarized modernity, women also face patriarchal social institutions within the family

THE TRAJECTORY OF MEN'S CITIZENSHIP

- ▶ Military mobilization constrained citizenship, while economic mobilization enabled citizenship
- ▶ Military service creates hierarchy among men:
 - ▶ In the mid-1990s “the undereducated, felons, orphans, and ‘those of mixed blood’” were not allowed to serve
 - ▶ Middle-class men sometimes find ways out of regular military service, while lower-class men have trouble finding alternatives

REAL MEN (찐자 사나이)



TWO PATHS TO “CITIZENSHIP” FOR MEN

- ▶ For working class men, labor union movement
 - ▶ Fought against paternalistic *kongdori* (female equivalent: *kongsuni*) terminology
 - ▶ Name taken from popular song of the 1930s Kaptori and Kapsuni about two young villagers who fell in love but married other people because in those times it was forbidden for young people to express love before marriage (incident supposedly happened in 1870s)
 - ▶ Distinctions between *nodongja*, *kulloja* and *sanŏp yŏkkun*
- ▶ For middle class men, citizen’s movement (civil society groups)
- ▶ 1970s- labor movement apart from democracy movement (people’s movement)
- ▶ 1980s- labor movement and democracy movement combined forces
- ▶ 1990s- class division between labor movement and citizens’ movement, which aims for more gradual institutional change


THE TRAJECTORY OF WOMEN'S CITIZENSHIP

- ▶ More interclass coalition than men's trajectory, but still often led by middle-class women
- ▶ Two paths:
 - ▶ Women workers' labor movement in manufacturing industries
 - ▶ Autonomous women's movement working for equal employment post-1987
- ▶ Fought for protections from forced early retirement, child care and maternity leave; abolishment of military points system
- ▶ In the 1990s the phenomenon of "laid-off family head" (실직된 가장) became a social issue



외환위기는 가진 거라고는 노동력밖에 없는 저임금 노동자들에게 더 큰 고통이었다. 사진은 1998년 12월25일 성탄절날 서울 용산역 광장에서 실직자들이 음식을 배급받으려고 줄지어 서 있는 모습이다 한겨레

EVOLVING NOTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP IN SOUTH KOREA

- ▶ Liberal individualized subject
 - ▶ Marxist uniformly collective citizen
 - ▶ “Intersubjectivity of citizens situated in the web of social relations” (Moon, p. 167)
 - ▶ Pregnancy, childbirth, and child care as public rather than private concerns
 - ▶ Equality does not require sameness
- 

MOON'S CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ “Modernity” as a keyword in South Korean society
- ▶ Individual rights in the law books didn't mean citizenship in practice
- ▶ Procedural democracy can't become substantive in the face of socially structured inequalities
- ▶ Women's continued economic marginalization prevents their full citizenship
- ▶ Women's conforming to masculine norms should not be the standard for equality
- ▶ Military service (male-only conscription) “incompatible with citizenship as the democratic form of membership in the body politic” (179)

MOON'S CONCLUSIONS (2)

- ▶ The process of globalization and global capitalism has led to “contradictory conditions to promote and undermine women’s access to, and practices of, citizenship” (180) → particularly working-class women

JESOOK SONG: FAMILY BREAKDOWN AND INVISIBLE HOMELESS WOMEN

- ▶ Social governance of homelessness and welfare during IMF crisis illustrates workings of neoliberalism in South Korea
- ▶ Despite advances to women's rights and practices of citizenship in the 1990s, the financial crisis ushered in conservative ideology in regards to marriage and family
- ▶ Distinction between "IMF homeless" and "regular homeless" (*purangin*), deserving and undeserving welfare subjects
- ▶ Moralistic maternalism: "needy" not good enough; must also be "productive"

HAPPY END, CHI-UH CHÖNG, 1999



GENDER ISSUES IN SOUTH KOREA IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

- ▶ End of *hojŏk* (household registration system) and *hojuje* (family head system)
- ▶ Childcare, education system, education costs
- ▶ More women are irregular workers; unemployment insecurity
- ▶ *Toenjangnyŏ* discourse (“bean-paste girls”), gender wars

THE UNFORGIVEN (용서받지 못한 자), 2005
(YOON JONG-BIN)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do rigid gender roles and standards of “masculinity” and “femininity” oppress both women AND men?
- ▶ What suggestions might you have for moving South Korea out of “militarized modernity” and towards substantive and diverse civil participation?