

## **CHAPTER 1 INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIOLOGY IN KOREA**

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### **Introduction**

Sociology was introduced to Korea as a system of western thought at the beginning of 20th century. However, it was not academically institutionalized until after Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. Since that time, Korean sociology has sustained impressive development both as an academic discipline and as a starting ground for critical social participation. Sociology is now taught at almost every university and college. There are 37 departments of sociology in the country and more than five hundred professors, researchers, and practitioners are members of the Korean Sociological Association. The popularity and influence of sociology is not merely confined to academia, can be seen across various social and political domains.

### **State Formation and Institutionalization within the University System: 1945-1960**

After liberation, the most important problem was to build a new nation state based on legitimate political power, however the colonial legacy and the super power's involvement in Korean politics hindered its process. Harsh ideological conflicts among intellectuals exerted a long-lasting impact on society and social sciences in Korea.

Despite the ideological differences, the stabilization and expansion of the formal school system was developed and paved the way for more systematic education and research. In the South Korea, Seoul National University (SNU) was founded in 1946 as a national center for higher learning and professional research with the first department of sociology. At the same time in North Korea plans for Kim Il-sung University were declared, but the curriculum did not include a sociology department. To date sociology has only been developed in the academia of the South.

The first chair of the department of sociology, SNU was Professor Lee Sang-Baek, a renowned scholar, politician and sportsman (IOC member). He understood sociology as a central social scientific discipline in the age of civil society. He argued that the sociology of A. Comte and Saint Simon set out an

indispensable mission for the "reorganisation of society" and the "creation of a new concept of society". (Lee 1950) He anticipated that Korean sociology could do the same in developing civil society in Korea. With the strong influence of American social sciences, efforts were made for scientization and/or professionalization of sociology as set out by American sociologists. In 1957, the Korean Sociological Association(KSA hereafter) as an institutional base of the academic activities, was established.

### Industrialization and the Influence of American Sociology: 1961-1979

With the industrialization under the authoritarian regime, the social sciences were gradually differentiated from political ideology and normative thoughts on social issues. There were two common characteristics in most of the social sciences in this period. First, there was the strong influence of modernization theory. It stressed the universal characteristics in the modernization process and considered the Western experience as a crucial reference for the future of Korean society. The influence of structural-functionalism reinforced this type of world view. Secondly, social survey methods were applied to various types of social issues. Survey methods were often applied to propositions of modernization theory concerning cultural values and attitudes, rural-to-urban migration, and family structure. The official journal of KSA, Korea Journal of Sociology (KJS hereafter) which began in 1964 was an important mechanism for building the academic self identity of Korean sociology.

In the 1970s, Korean sociology confronted the issue of "relevance". It came from within, as well as from outside. During the 1960's, several "new" and "structural" social problems arose such as labor exploitation, urban problems, and the oppression of the civil sphere. However, academic sociology, dominated by structural-functionalism, was not ready to properly deal with these issues of conflict and change.

Some sociologists began to raise the question whether Western sociology could explain Korean society without severely distorting its historical realities. Some scholars argued that the "indigenization" of social sciences was no less important than the accommodation of Western social theory. This argument became the main subject of discussion at the Annual Meetings of the KSA in the early 1970s. Responding to this impasse, a few scholars proposed "sociology for the oppressed peoples". (Han 1979) It was in this context that some new concepts such as "dependency", "underdevelopment", "paraxis" and "world system" were introduced through book translations. Tension also arose between American-trained teachers of sociology and inward-looking radical students and young scholars, which continued throughout the 1980s.

Along with attention to the issues of relevance and indigenization, sociological studies in the 1970s began to cover a much wider range of social

issues than in the 1960s. Particularly popular were issues concerning urban problems, stratification and social mobility, cultural anomalies, and social development. However social relevance of the sociological research remained relatively unsatisfactory even though its subject was concrete phenomena.

### Democratization, Social Tensions and Sub-Division of Academic Activities: 1980-1989

The period of the 1980s was one of conflict and development in Korean sociology as well as in Korean society. With the experience of military oppression and the rediscovery of the civil movement, sociological perspectives expanded their influence across almost every branch of social sciences. During the 1980s, some sociologists began to form academic circles along various theoretical and practical lines. The strongest stream came from those who suggested "political economy" as an alternative paradigm. Marxian concepts such as class struggle, social formation, exploitation and revolution were upheld as scientific tools for analyzing and predicting Korean social change. They established their own arenas for research, seminar, and publication. The journal, *Study of the Industrial Society* (today entitled *Economy and Society*), was published, and several books and papers by the Marxian sociologists were translated into Korean by this group.

Another stream stemmed from those who suggested the social historical approach in social sciences. According to their studies, structural-functionalism, as well as Marxism, reflected the West's particular historical experiences. (Shin 1983) They placed emphasis on the real research approach from a historical perspective. The *Journal of Korean Social History* (now entitled *Society and History*) was published by this group in which historians and anthropologists as well as sociologists wrote papers mainly based on the analysis of historical documents.

Even though the above two streams were strong during the 1980's, most established sociologists still regarded the theoretical framework and methodological techniques of western sociology as necessary tools in producing sociological knowledge. They agreed that the problem of the "irrelevance of Korean sociology" existed, but they could not agree upon paradigms that diverged from the established one. Some efforts were made to incorporate Marxist and historical perspectives into formal institutions of research and professional cooperation.

In this period the number of sociology departments increased rapidly from 11 in 1979 to 28 in 1983. Among 77 social science institutes in universities, 50 were established in the 1980s. The number of Ph.Ds in sociology increased, too. As a result, in the late 1980s, several academic meetings on specialized

social concerns were formalized not only within sociology but in more wider interdisciplinary activities.

### Globalization and the Search for a New Identity for Sociology: 1990-

Political change in the early 1990s had a profound impact on Korean society. The end of the Cold War, democratization, and globalization are the social phenomena which fundamentally changed the socio-political conditions social scientists studied previously. There is a tendency for division concerning academic activities within special fields. For example, there are special journals on demography, rural society, the family, women's studies, and social history. Within these divisions, there are also interdisciplinary cooperations under established academic boundaries. Differences in theoretical implications are openly in an effort to gain an adequate diagnosis of social reality.

With the development of globalization, European scholars such as Habermas, Giddens, and Foucault have enjoyed an increasing influence in Korea. However, this new intellectual influence has not been successful in evaluating whether, how much, or what aspects of Korean society can be explained by these theories. Nevertheless, under this theoretical influence, modernity is now conceptualized in a much more complex and subtle way that may illuminate the Korean way of becoming modern. In addition, issues of new social movements such as ecological concerns, gender discrimination, consumer rights and even foreign workers' human rights have already become serious concerns in Korean society.

The 1990s represents a unique period in the relationship between Korean sociology and Western thought. On the one hand, the West has come to be considered not only a source of theoretical insights but also an object of empirical scrutiny under an active program of overseas area studies. On the other hand, there has been an explosive growth in scholarly interests in Korean studies in Europe and the United States. Western scholars' keen attention to Korean society began with the observation of Korea's exceptional economic performance in recent decades. Accordingly, in the *KJS*, papers on comparative study of development are increasing.

The new social changes of the 1990s provide Korean sociologists with both opportunities and problems at the same time. They are now facing new situations which cannot be explained only through conventional approaches and concepts. Social sciences are considered a practical and constructive body of knowledge as well as a theoretical and critical one. Furthermore, social scientists in Korea should prepare for the unknown future of the Korean Peninsula as developments between the North and South arise. In Korean sociology we can find a strong tendency trying to create a flexible approach to

the changing realities while not excluding academism. Today, Korean sociology is well on the way to building a new academic research and discussion.

### Conclusion

The first half-century of Korean sociology between 1945-1996 was a history of constant exposure and accommodation to and criticism of Western social thought. After Korea's integration into the capitalist economic order and the Cold War political order under a heavy American influence, Koreans have somehow been able to achieve various elements of Western-style modernization, e.g. urbanization, industrialization, economic growth, class restructuring, individualization, and democratization. Thus, sociological knowledge borrowed from Western societies did have some utility in facilitating various aspects of social change. However, there was a fast-growing awareness that the historical conditions, processes, and outcomes of social, economic, and political modernization in Korea were not and could not be the same as those of Western societies. In fact, an increasing number of Western scholars have tried to remind Koreans of this fact. While there has not been a certain direction set collectively in establishing a uniquely Korean paradigm of sociology, the social experience of Koreans appears a fertile ground for creating innovative sociological theories and perspectives. As many other developing countries have recently joined the path to rapid economic and social change, there is hope that the experience and sociological explanations of Korea may provide a valuable reference point for sociological studies in other countries.

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## CHAPTER 2 INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIOLOGY IN JAPAN (1)

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### Sociology in Prewar Japan (2)

#### *Introduction of Sociology as Theory of Social Organism*

Sociology was introduced in Japan in the early Meiji period by Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853-1908) who gave sociological lectures as a basis of his political science at the Tokyo Imperial University in 1878. Three years later sociology was adopted as one of the regular courses and was taught by the same person.

From that year on TOYAMA Masakazu (1848-1900), then the dean of the faculty of the letters, also began to teach sociology as a basis of his historical studies. Insisting that sociology is indispensable for historical studies Toyama taught some parts of Herbert Spencer's sociological system and became the first professor in charge of sociology when it was established as one of the official chairs in 1893. He actually commenced positivistic sociological studies through historical studies of Japanese traditional ideas, morals and myths.

On the other hand ARIGA Nagao (1860-1920), one of the disciples of Fenollosa, initiated some theoretical sociology insisting that society is a kind of intellectual organism. He published in 1883-84 three books "On Social Evolution", "On Religious Evolution" and "On Kinship Evolution" as volumes I, II and III of his sociological system in six volumes following Spencer's "Principles of Sociology." In these books he not only took quite a lot from Spencer as well as some from Louis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) and John Furguson McLennan (1827-1881) but also developed some of his own ideas referring to examples in Japanese, Chinese and Korean history.

Sociology thus initiated by Toyama and Ariga was quite practical in that they contended it should be a guide for the government which had been trying to establish a way of modernizing Japan. But we must not miss its basically conservative character since it was trying to orient the government officials to build a state as a kind of social organism against the early Liberal Democratic Movements. KATO Hiroyuki (1836-1916) was typical in this sense because he changed to Social Darwinism following the later face of Spencer although he had been one of the eager supporters of the basic human rights in his earlier stage following rather the early face of Spencer.