



Modern state formation and land management in South Korea: 1945–1960

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ABSTRACT

Land management is one of the important elements of state formation. State formation is influenced by politics, economy, society, and international relations, and land management also seems to be affected by these factors. In particular, international relations could affect not only state formation but also land management in states that have been independent from other states, like Korea. In this regard, this study reviews the relationship between state formation and land management, and analyzes how land reform influenced the formation of the modern state in South Korea between 1945 and 1960. Conceptually, land management can be linked with ancient as well as modern state formation in terms of politics, economy, society, and international relations. In South Korea, land management was associated with modern state formation mainly in terms of international relations under the U.S. military government (1945–1948) and politics under the first South Korean government (1948–1960). The change of relationships between land management and state formation tends to be in line with national context and international situations. There are differences in the role of land management in ancient and modern states from the four perspectives mentioned, which seems to lead into land reform in the process of modern state formation.

1. Introduction

There are several theories about the origins of ancient state formation, including social contract theory, the divine right theory, the force theory, and the evolutionary theory (Carneiro, 1977; Wright, 1977; Subramanian et al., 2005; Shaopera, 2015). In terms of modern state formation, force, economy, and management seem to be the most important factors (Spruyt, 2002; Poggi, 2012; Blanco, 2013; Overbeek, 2014). The force theory overlaps considerations of the origins of both ancient and modern state formation, implying that the force factor has been vital in state formation both in ancient and modern times. In this discipline, Tilly (1975), one of the key representative scholars, emphasizes the strong linkage between state and war (Spruyt, 2002: 137; Poggi, 2012: 100; Blanco, 2013: 178; Overbeek, 2014: 15). He also points out that sufficient resources were required to maintain a strong force, and in line with this, land was registered and managed for taxes (Rambaud and Vincienne, 1964: 11, cited in Tilly, 1992: 98).

As for the origin of land management, there are also several theories, including the taxation theory, the flood control theory, the rule theory, and the invasion theory (Kim et al., 2012). Among these, the taxation theory, which considers that land management was developed to enact taxation, seems to be widely accepted (Luciani, 1978; General Tax Directorate, 1991; Kim et al., 2012). In light of the above, the origin

of land management appears to be closely linked with the origins of ancient state formation by way of taxation, resources, and force.

It seems that land management was closely related with not only ancient but also modern state formation. Even though the period of modern state formation was different in Europe and Asia (Fritz and Menocal, 2007: 51; Poggi, 2012), land reform was carried out in the process of modern state formation in countries such as France, England, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan (Amsden, 1979; Levin et al., 2007; Lee, 2012; Encyclopedia Britannica homepage, 2018). Such a series of land reforms in these states presages a relationship between land management and modern state formation.

This study reviews the relationship between state formation and land management, and analyzes how land reform influenced modern state formation in South Korea and for what reasons in particular. The main research questions are: (1) how is land management related with state formation conceptually? and (2) how did land reform affect the process of modern state formation in South Korea and why? The scope of analysis is limited to land reform under the U.S. military government (1945–1948) and the first South Korean government (1948–1960). Views on the period of South Korean modern state formation are divided depending on political, social, or economic perspectives. However, according to Weber (1922, 1978), the League of Nations (1936), and Caplan (2005), a state should not only be considered as a

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political entity for the monopoly of legitimate law-making and physical force but also as ‘a permanent population, a defined territory, government, and capacity to enter into relations with the other states’ (Blanco, 2013: 170). After liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the situation in Korea was unstable in terms of politics, physical force, territory, government, and international relations. To make matters worse, the Korean War broke out in 1950. However, in the 1960s South Korea began to achieve dramatic economic development based on the successful state formation process between 1945 and 1960 without any influence from international politics. In other words, variables such as politics, economy, society, and international relations were fundamentally different in the 1960s. This study argues that the formation of the modern South Korean state was achieved between 1945 and 1960, and thus the period after the 1960s is not the main target in this research.

This research uses a case study design, focusing on modern state formation in South Korea.¹ In terms of research method, several techniques are employed such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, and review of documents (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992; De Vaus, 2001; Kumar, 2014; Punch, 2014; Bryman, 2016). This study focuses on a review of existing documents because it would have been difficult to adapt other skills in the research. Through the literature review, the conceptual relationship between state formation and land management is studied and the South Korean case is analyzed in terms of the conceptual relationship. Ethical considerations would normally be one of the key elements but it was not a serious issue in this case because this research is based on secondary data.

The first part intends to focus on reviewing not only the origins of state formation and land management but also the relationship between them conceptually. The study then moves on to examine the formation of the South Korean modern state and analyzes the influence of land reform in the process of the formation of the South Korean modern state under the U.S. military government and the first South Korean government.

2. State formation and land management

2.1. State formation

There are several theories about the origins of ancient state formation, as shown in Table 1. Some of the theories, such as the divine right theory, seem to be less persuasive, but the force theory and the evolutionary theory appear to be worthy of consideration. Elements of the other theories seem to have influence in the process of ancient state formation, but they do not appear to play a pivotal role. Meanwhile, in terms of modern state formation, three elements – namely force, economy, and management – tend to be considered important (Spruyt, 2002; Poggi, 2012; Blanco, 2013; Overbeek, 2014). Given that the force theory has been consistently evident in not only ancient but also modern state formation, it could be claimed that it is one of the most influential theories in this discipline.

With regards to the force theory, Tilly (1975: 42), who is considered one of the key representative scholars in the field, argues that ‘war made the state, and the state made war’ (Spruyt, 2002: 137; Poggi, 2012: 100; Blanco, 2013: 178; Overbeek, 2014: 15). According to his theory, ‘concentration’ and ‘accumulation’ of coercive means leads to state formation, and states fought wars and conquered neighboring states continuously (Tilly, 1992: 19–21). In this context, he also refers to extraction of resources. In order to make war continuously and maintain strong coercive power, a constant supply of resources such as

men, weapons, and food must be maintained. There were various means for the securing of such resources, one of which was land registration and management for taxation (Rambaud and Vincienne, 1964: 11, cited in Tilly, 1992: 98). Taking this into consideration, it seems that state formation is associated with land management to a substantial extent.

Warmaking and statemaking reinforced each other ... Warmaking frequently involved European states in the production of arms and extraction in the production of goods ... In the course of extracting resources and pacifying the population, every European state eventually created new administrative structure ... the quest for funds drove the new king to innovate: ... second a census to determine who was taxable ... The tax forced adjacent communities to delineate their boundaries precisely, which drew them into preparing cadasters and creating officials to administer them (Rambaud and Vincienne, 1964: 11). (Tilly, 1992: 97–98)

2.2. Land management

The origins of land management can be traced back to the dawn of civilization. According to Luciani (1978:17–18), some insist that the origin of the measurement of land can be traced to Ancient Egyptian civilization and was prompted by the flooding of the River Nile, while others claim that Babylonian civilization (Mesopotamia) had already established methods of land measurement prior to the Nile flooding. Taxation is also identified as one of the key origins of land systems:

From the very origin of societies, land has formed the essential basis of individual wealth. To meet their needs, the new communities created a levy on the products of this natural wealth, thereby creating property tax. (General Tax Directorate, 1991: 1)

Kim et al. (2012) refer to the four possible origins of land management, which are the taxation theory, the flood control theory, the rule theory, and the invasion theory, in terms of cadaster, as shown in Table 2. They contend that the taxation theory is based on a microscopic perspective and the rule theory is interpreted from a macroscopic perspective. As for the invasion theory, they argue that there are limitations for its acceptance as one of the key origins.

Given the origins of land management listed above, the taxation theory appears to be the most persuasive. According to many scholars, the taxation theory and the flood control theory tend to overlap. However, it seems that states may have recorded and managed land for taxation before flooding occurred, and they may have restored land records for taxation after flooding. Without the purpose of taxation, states may not have made much effort in terms of the restoration of damaged land. In light of this, the taxation theory appears to be more persuasive than the flood control theory. This suggests that the origins of land management and state formation seem to be closely inter-related.

The concept of land management can be explained as shown in Table 3. It seems that it is difficult to define and explain land management simply and the concept could be reviewed and interpreted diversely depending on perspectives. Meanwhile, Siqueira et al. (2017: 16) refer to the term ‘the nation-state’ from the traditional perspective, which might imply that land management is related with ancient state formation to some extent.

According to Enemark et al. (2005: 53), the land management paradigm consists of five factors, as shown in Fig. 1 (Burns et al., 2006; Williamson and Wallace, 2007; Williamson et al., 2010; INTOSAI, 2013). As for the paradigm, Burns et al. (2006: 7) highlight land administration function and Williamson et al. (2010: 4–5) review the paradigm in terms of land administration systems. Meanwhile, INTOSAI (2013: 12–13) interprets the paradigm, focusing on sustainable development. It seems that land administration function is of paramount importance in land management but the degree of the importance could

¹ The range of common research designs are widely classified into the categories of experimental design, case study design, longitudinal design, comparative design, and cross-sectional study design (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992; Bouma and Atkinson, 1995; Kumar, 2014; Punch, 2014; Bryman, 2016).

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