

Entering the Modern World: Japan, Korea, and Thailand

Min Shu

Waseda University

Outline of the Lecture

- East Asia in the second half of the 19th century
- Entering the modern world: rationale, challenges, and risks
- Japan's path towards a modern state/empire
- Thailand's struggle to maintain independence
- Korea's response to the changing international order in East Asia
- The modern world: past and present

East Asia in the second half of the 19th century

- Western powers' growing pressures on East Asia
 - Britain fought the second Anglo-Burmese war in 1852
 - Perry's black ships arrived in Japan in 1853
 - The second opium war against Qing China (1856 -1860)
 - France led the Cochinchina Campaign against Vietnam in 1858
- East Asian countries in retreat
 - Thailand concluded the Bowring Treaty with Britain (1855)
 - Qing signed the Tianjin Treaties (1858), the Beijing Convention (1860)
 - Japan agreed to the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the US (1858)



Entering the modern world: rationale

- Opening to international trade
 - Opening domestic market for foreign goods + exporting local goods
 - However, the (sovereign) right to regulate trade (esp. tariff) was lost
- Adopting the Western approaches to diplomacy and law
 - Practical needs to deal with the Western powers
 - Imposed extraterritoriality necessitated a Westernized legal system
- Active learning of Western economy, politics and public governance
 - The West as a model and a source of inspiration
 - Learning from the West for self-strengthening
 - Using the Western model to compete with domestic opponent(s)

Entering the modern world: challenges

- From traditional to modern state
 - Restructuring domestic political power and economic policy
 - Re-positioning in the emerging international system of East Asia
- Domestic opposition to opening-up
 - Losers in the opening-up and modernization process
 - Ideational opposition: nationalism, conservatism, and anti-Western sentiment
- The influences of/on neighboring countries
 - Pro-reformist vs. anti-reformist neighbor(s)
 - Tributary suzerainty (non-interference) vs. imperial intervention

Entering the modern world: risks

- State-building or empire building?
 - State-building: bureaucratic government, constitutional and legal order, modern industries, national army, public infrastructure, universal education...
 - Empire-building: territorial expansion, outward migration, transborder economy, colonial identities, imperial competition...
- Sovereign equality or colonial hierarchy?
 - 'Sovereign equality' never automatically extended to non-Western countries
 - Instead, non-Western countries were subject to colonial hierarchy
- International law: impartial or biased?
 - Impartial: legalizing the international order; regulating international relations; managing inter-state conflicts
 - Biased: standards of civilization, rules of 'socialization', tools of discrimination and privilege-making

Japan's path towards a modern state/empire

- Perry's Black Ships arrived (1853)
- The Harris Treaty (1858)
- From Tokugawa Bakufu to imperial restoration (1868)
- Reforms and struggles during the Meiji Restoration (1868~1912)
- The Meiji Constitution (1889/1890)
- Renegotiating the unequal treaties (1890s)
- First Sino-Japanese war (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese war (1904-05)
- Japan colonialized the Korean peninsular (1910)



The Meiji Restoration

- An era of major political, economic, and social changes that led to the modernization and Westernization of Japan
- Key Meiji reforms
 - The centralization of state power, with the feudal domains abolished and replaced by a prefecture system
 - Feudal class privileges were abolished (yet, *Kazoku* 華族 remained in 1869~1947)
 - A national army, based on universal conscription, was formed
 - Unifying the monetary and tax systems, with the land-owners being the basic source of government taxation
 - Promoting universal education extending gradually to the whole population
- Main objectives: Enriching the state, strengthening the military (富国強兵)

The Meiji Restoration: key events

- The Meiji Restoration started in 1868, and ended with the Meiji Constitution in 1889 or with the death of the Meiji emperor in 1912
 - The Boshin War (戊辰戦争、1868-1869)
 - The Meiji governments: young leaders, pragmatic policies, and political instability
 - Official missions (e.g., Iwakura Tomomi, 1871-1873) sent to the West
 - The Satsuma Rebellion (西南戦争、1877)
 - The Freedom and People's Rights Movement (自由民権運動) esp. in 1880s
 - The Meiji Constitution (1889): sovereignty by the emperor, a weak bicameral parliament (partially elected), a strong cabinet, and the emperor-appointed prime minister
 - 1890s and 1900s: Internal reforms, external expansion and the revision of unequal treaties



The Meiji Restoration: achievements

- Major achievements of the Meiji Restoration
 - A highly centralized, bureaucratic government
 - A constitution with (partially) elected parliament
 - A modern transportation and communication system
 - An educated population without feudal class restrictions
 - A modern and rapidly growing industrial sector
 - A competent army and navy
- The legacy of the Meiji Restoration
 - Marching towards modernity
 - The rise of (imperial) nationalism
 - Growing influences of the military fractions

Thailand's position in pre-modern East Asia

- Thailand was one of the most powerful kingdom in mainland Southeast Asia
 - The Chakri Dynasty, established in 1782, benefited from the Qing-Burmese conflict (1765-1769)
 - Using King Taksin's (鄭昭) surname to communicate with the Qing court under the China-centered tributary system
 - Meanwhile, Siam expanded to other Thai kingdoms and subjected neighboring kingdoms and sultanates under its controls
- Thailand also pursued active diplomacy with European powers from an early stage
 - Ayutthaya embassy to France (Louis XIV) in 1686
 - European advisors often appointed to assist with diplomacy, trade and military affairs



Thailand's struggle to maintain independence

- King Mongkut (Rama IV) enthroned in 1851
 - Thailand suspended its tribute to Qing China in 1853
 - Bowring Treaty with Britain in 1855, allowing external tariff controls, the most-favored-nation principle, and judicial extraterritoriality
 - Similar treaties with other Western powers, including the US, France, Belgium, Italy, Norway and Sweden
- Rama IV's reforms
 - Changing court customs to allow easy contacts with foreigners
 - Appointing Western advisers
 - Constructing roads and canals, introducing printing press and shipbuilding, laying foundation for education, healthcare, and public welfare



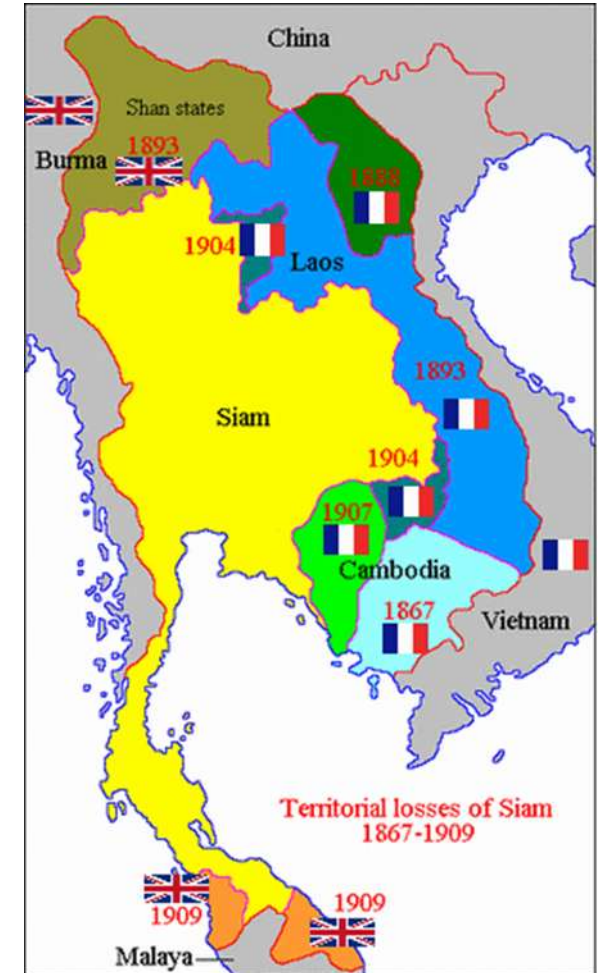
Thailand's struggle to maintain independence

- King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) enthroned in 1868
 - A series of modernization reforms were introduced after 1873
 - abolition of slavery, the improvement of judicial and financial institutions, and the institution of appointed legislative councils
 - Later reforms included the creation of 12 offices of ministries (dealing with provincial administration, defense, foreign affairs, justice, education, and public works); ending the autonomy of outlying provinces; developing the Thai legal system and instituting the rule of law; and introducing compulsory primary education and universal military conscription



Thailand's struggle to maintain independence

- Shrinking Thailand under European imperialism
 - Under French pressures, Thailand gave up suzerainty over Cambodia in 1867
 - The suzerainty over the Laos was renounced in 1893
- France and Britain agreed in 1896 (Declaration of London) on the integrity and neutralization of “the basins of the Petcha Bouri, Meiklong, Menam and Bang Pa Kong (Petriou) Rivers and their respective tributaries”
- Still, to renegotiate the unequal treaties (esp. judicial extraterritoriality), several some bordering territories were ceded to France and Britain in the 1900s
 - Two Cambodian provinces given to France in 1904 and 1907
 - Four northern Malay states ceded to Britain in 1909



Korea's response to the changing international order in East Asia: status in a changing regional hierarchy

- Unlike Japan and Thailand, Chosŏn Korea did not face the immediate pressures from the Western powers until the late 19th century
 - Small-scale expeditions by France (1866) and the US (1871) ended in failure
- However, China and Japan signed the Treaty of Amity (1871), equalizing the relationship between the two countries – leaving the Chosŏn Kingdom in a diplomatic dilemma
- Japan's effort to open Korea
 - The Ganghwa Island incident ended with Treaty of Ganghwa (1876): declaring Chosŏn as an independent state, three ports opened for trade, plus legal extraterritoriality to Japanese citizens in Korea



Korea's response to the changing international order in East Asia: competing influences in Korea

- China's effort to bring Korea into the treaty system
 - Li Hongzhang's 'treaty strategy' to balance Japan and Russia's threat to Korea
 - Under the heavy influences of the Qing court, Korean signed treaties with the US, Britain, and Germany in 1882
- However, the Solider riots in 1882 led to Qing's military intervention and Japan's military presence
- The first Sino-Japanese war in 1894-95
 - Japan's victory over China consolidated its power in East Asia
 - Qing recognized the complete independence and autonomy of the Chosŏn Kingdom under the Treaty of Shimonoseki



The Gwangmu Reform (1897-1907)

- King Gojong proclaimed the Empire of Korea in 1897, and declared himself emperor under the reign name of *Gwangmu*
- The Gwangmu Reform: major policies
 - Abolishing the status system
 - A modern army based on conscription (Russian support)
 - Monetary reforms to facilitate international trade, and a modern currency system (Japanese support)
 - Land-based tax system (US support)
 - Infrastructure: The establishment of the Railway Bureau which oversaw the building and management of railroads; 38 postal stations and 341 temporary stations were established nationwide by 1900
 - Introducing modern public education



Korea's response to the changing international order in East Asia: the path towards annexation

- The Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05
 - Japan won the battles against Russian army and navy
 - The secret Taft-Katsura Agreement in 1905
 - Russia and Japan concluded the Portsmouth Treaty, under the US mediation
- Under the Japan–Korea Treaty of 1905, Korea was deprived of its diplomatic sovereignty and became a Japanese protectorate
- King Gojong's failed attempt to appeal to the Second Hague Peace Conference in 1907
 - Gojong was forced to abdicate in favor of his son, Sunjong
 - Under the Japan–Korea Treaty of 1907, Korea should act under the guidance of a Japanese resident general
- Korea was integrated into the Japanese Empire under the Japan–Korea Annexation Treaty in 1910



The modern world: past and present

- Entering the modern world in the past
 - A region-wide strategy to deal with the challenges of Western colonialism in the late 19th century
 - From tradition to modern: both a project of state building and modernization and a process of imperial competition and colonialization
 - Reconsidering modernity, sovereign equality, and international law
- The modern world today
 - Between embracing and rejecting globalization
 - Rewriting the rules of international trade, finance, and development
 - Nation-state being challenged and continuously redefined