



Shinminhwe and Idea of Progress in Korea

Afriadi^(✉) and Linda Sunarti

History Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
afriadi325113@gmail.com

Abstract. This research focused on a Korean independence movement organization named *Shinminhwe* (New People's Association). *Shinminhwe* is a secret organization that was formed in 1907 and moved for 4 years. During its movement *Shinminhwe* managed to bring the idea of progress into Korea. This idea of progress influenced the formation of modern Korean identity in the early 20th century. This research aims to further explore *Shinminhwe*'s influence on the formation of a modern Korean identity through the thoughts and movements of its three main figures. The three figures are Ahn Chang Ho, Kim Gu and Lee Seung Hoon. This study uses Lloyd structuralism methodology as a model in interpreting the thoughts of these three figures towards the formation of a modern Korean identity.

Keywords: *Shinminhwe* · New People's Association · Ahn Chang Ho · Kim Gu · Lee Seung Hoon · Idea of Progress

1 Introduction

K-Pop, Black Pink, BTS, K-Drama, Samsung, Hyundai, maybe these words come to mind when we hear 'Korea'. Korea has become a global concern for at least two decades. The progress is very rapid in the fields of technology, science and education. As reported by the World Top 20 Project [1] Korea has entered the list of 20 countries with the best education system in the world. In fact, less than a century ago the country was still closed, Korean society in the late 19th century was still divided into social classes and its feudalism system.

Before being colonized by Japan, Korea was a monarchy named Joseon (1392–1910). The Joseon society was one in the yangban (aristocracy) wielded tremendous power. The role of women in this society was strongly influenced by the group class attempts to establish a patriarchal family order and a Confucian-based society [2].

As stated in Korean high school history book, the late Joseon Dynasty was ready to become a modern society after the appearance of an equal society destroyed the traditional system and freed people from oppression by a ruling class. The establishment of a capitalist society meant anyone could freely participate in productive activities and the plentiful financial and professional business ideas that followed the increase of production. In modern society, democracy, industry, rationality and science are pursued [3].

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The end of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century became a critical period as well as a decisive period for the formation of a modern identity of Korean. In Korean school books, the end of Joseon Dynasty period and anti-Japanese independence movements period (1910–1945) was presented as the crucial period of change from ‘tradition’ to ‘modernity’. It is considered by most, if not all, Koreans to mark the ‘true’ beginning of Korean national identity and ‘the spirit of national unity’ [3].

In the process of modernizing social identity in Korea, there was an independence organization that played an important role named *Shinminhwe*. In 1907, after Japan succeeded in making Korea as its protectorate, the Japanese government issued a regulation limiting the movements of Korean people. Starting from the dissolution of the Great Han Empire’s (Korea monarchy name that time) army, regulations regarding newspapers to restrictions on progress movements and independence organizations. In the midst of Japanese government pressure, *Shinminhwe* emerged as a secret underground organization formed in April 1907. *Shinminhwe* consisted of various elements of society ranging from businessmen, intellectuals to religious leaders. The main purpose of *Shinminhwe* is to fight Japanese Colonization. But at that time, Korean was experiencing an identity crisis phase after the fall of Monarchy. For that reason, *Shinminhwe* first mission is make the Korean people aware of their national identity through education and culture [4].

Although the movement of this organization tends to be short (1907–1911), this organization has built the foundation of Korea’s modern identity through the ideas of progress it introduced. This study tries to examine the track record of *Shinminhwe* in bringing the progress idea and shaping the modern identity of Korea in the early 20th century through the thoughts and activities of *Shinminhwe* main figures. Those figures are Ahn Chang Ho, Kim Gu and Lee Seung Hoon. So, the research problem raised in this paper is how the idea of progress was introduced by these three *Shinminhwe* figures. This study will also discuss the relevance of *Shinminhwe*’s organization with the thoughts of these three figures. Through discussion of the problem, this study aims to provide an overview of the formation of the Korean modern identity. This study also tried to prove that a secret organization named *Shinminhwe* that moved for no more than 4 years had a major influence on the history of the Korean nation.

So far there have been many studies discussing the movements of *Shinminhwe*. Shin Yong Ha [5] in his writing titled *Shinminhwe Changgeongwa Geu Gukga Hwe-bok Undong ‘Shinminhwe Establishment and the Movement for the Restoration of State Power’* focuses on the mission of returning state power to the hands of the people that *Shinminhwe* inflated at the beginning of his establishment. Cho Yeong Jin [4] in his book entitled *Hangil Mujang Dongnib Thujengsa I ‘The History of the Korean Independence War Against Japan I’*, also discussed the *Shinminhwe* movement in general. The latest writing from Han Min Seok [6] entitled *Baekbeom Kimgueui An-ak Shinminhwe Sigi Gyeoyook Hwaldong ‘Baekbeom Kimgu Education Activities during An-ak and Shinminhwe’* enriched the study of *Shinminhwe*. However, none of these three writings have discussed the spirit of Korean modernization introduced by *Shinminhwe*. This paper is here to complement previous studies by linking the thoughts of the three *Shinminhwe* figures in the context of the modernization of Korea in the early 20th century especially in the field of education.

This study was conducted with historical methods in process of collecting data. The data collected includes a diary and speeches of the three figures both in the form of primary and secondary sources. These data will be interpreted through a structurism approach introduced by Christopher Lloyd. In his book Lloyd [7] said that a central theme recurring in the work of structurist historians and theorists is the role of human agency in social structuring processes. Furthermore, he explained that Agency in general has two related meanings. First, it is the relatively autonomous power that an entity or part of a system has to produce an effect, that is, to be an agent of change or phenomenon. Second, it is the power that person has to act on behalf of another, according to certain remit or instruction, to try to bring about a result or outcome desired by the principal.

The concept of 'social agency' combines elements from these two definitions so that it means, first, the power that persons in general have to be active, change inducing, relatively autonomous component within social structures that existed before each individual or group. All complex systems that are characterized by evolutionary or historical forces, such as ecosystems, insect and animal societies, and human societies, have agent for change within them. Second, it means that people individually and collectively are agents on behalf of 'social principals' that take the form of pre-existing structures, norms, institution and so on, which require actively to be reproduce if they are to survive [7].

Thus 'social agency' implies the ability of persons to choose course of action and acting upon their choices to bring about certain structural changes because of their capacity to do so. Choice is clearly not unconstrained, and neither is action and its consequences. The constraints upon choice and action are the structural boundaries (ideological, cultural, social, political) of consciousness and action [7]. In this case the three figures can be categorized as agents of change because they have the power to change, choose to change and succeed in changing the identity of the Korean nation. This will be discussed further below.

2 The Establishment and Movement of *Shiminhwe*

In contrast to similar independence organizations in this period, *Shinminhwe* is a secret organization that moves secretly [8]. In the period of its movement which was calculated to be short, around 4 years (1907–1911), this organization had laid the foundations of modernity for the Korean nation. However, because of its secret movements, there are not many records regarding the formation and activity of this organization [9].

In late 1906 to early 1907, Ahn Chang Ho, Lee Gang, Yim Jun Gi and Korean immigrants in California formed an organization called *Daehan Shinminhwe*. This organization was formed to oppose the Eulsa Treaty and try to restore Korea's sovereignty as a sovereign state. To develop its movement in Korea Ahn Chang Ho returned to Korea in early 1907. In April 1907, Ahn Chang Ho joined Yang Gi Thak, Jeon Deok Gi, Lee Dong Hwi, Lee Dong Nyeong, Lee Gab and Yoo Dong Ryeol formed an organization called *Shinminhwe* (New People's Association) [8].

In its 4 years of movement many Korean independence figures joined the association. Each member moved in his field with one common goal, namely, to make Koreans aware of their national identity. This goal will certainly lead to the spirit of fighting for Korean independence. To make this happen, *Shinminhwe's* movement was divided into 5 fields.

In the mass media, Yang Gi Thak, Shin Chae Ho, Park Eun Sik, Jang Ji Yeon, Yim Chi Jeong, Ok Gwan Bin and Jeong Do Beon lead the Daehan Maeil Shinbo newspaper and Hwangseong newspaper. In education, Ahn Chang Ho, Yoon Chi Ho, Lee Jeong Ho, Lee Seung Hoon, Kim Gu, Choi Gwang Wook, Lee Dong Nyeong, Ahn Tae Guk, Jeon Deok Gi lead schools that educated the Korean people [8, 10].

Shinminhwe members also carried out the independence movement by inviting Christians leaders in Korea. The movement led by Yoon Chi Ho, Jeon Deok Gi, Lee Sang Jae, Lee Dong Nyeong, Lee Jun, Cho Seong Hwan, Choi Byeong Heon, Kim Jeong Sik and Kim Gu. They established The Christian Youth Association (*Gideokgyo Cheongnyeonhwe*), Sangdong Church (*Sangdong Gyeohwe*) and Sangdong Christian Youth School (*Sangdong Cheongnyeon Hakwon*) [8, 10].

Lee Seung Hoon, Ahn Tae Guk, Lee Jong Ho, Choi Yong Doo, and Yang Joon Myeong carried out propaganda among entrepreneurs in Hwanghae Province and Pyeongan Province. Whereas Lee Dong Hwi, Lee Gab, Yoo Dong Ryeol, No Baek Rin, Cho Seong Hwan, Kim Hee Seon who have military backgrounds also helped developed Korean people's military power [8, 10].

There are four main doctrines of *Shinminhwe* namely: 1) making people aware of the concept of Korean nationality, 2) uniting fighters as a force for independence, 3) advancing the country's economy by supporting industry and commerce, 4) establishing schools and expanding education for Korean youth [6].

Yoon Gyeong No [10] explained that one of the biggest impacts of the formation of this organization was the emergence and spread of new educational understandings (*Shingyoyuk*). Through this modern education it is hoped that the Korean people will soon become aware of their national identity and begin to firmly oppose Japanese occupation. Yoon revealed among modern schools in Korea was most established by *Shinminhwe*. Not only formal schools, *Shinminhwe* also established martial arts school (*Mugwan Hakkyo*). The idea of establishing a martial arts school was founded around August 1907, 4 months after its formation. The martial arts school is projected to be a place to house ex-soldiers who have been disbanded, as well as to form an army regeneration that is ready to be used against Japan in open war [4].

In the spring of 1909 secret meeting held in Yang Gi Thak's home. There was serious discussion about the formation of a martial arts school. In addition, this secret meeting also decided the selection of members who would move abroad [4]. *Shinminhwe* and its members agreed that their resistance to Japan could not be carried out recklessly and in the near future. To prepare for everything they need time, war resources and funding. For this reason, in March 1910, at an emergency meeting of *Shinminhwe* officials (*Gingeub Ganbu Hweeui*) an agreement was titled "Independence War Strategy". The points of the strategy include [4]:

1. The base of the Korean independence movement will be concentrated in Manchuria, China which has not been reached by Japan. The domestic movement base will be decided later on by considering the right area.
2. After the area has been established, the land will be purchased by the acquisition of *Shinminhwe* organization in the country secretly. Immigrants will also hold a portion of this fund.

3. On the land that has been purchased it will be made a village 'New Korea Nation' (*Shin Han Min Chon*). The members and youth will be transferred to this area in order to plan the Korean independence movement.
4. After the 'New Korea Nation' (*Shin Han Min Chon*) village is formed, a martial arts school (*Mugwan Hakkyo*) must be established which teaches martial arts and science skills simultaneously. This is to support the formation of Korean independence soldiers.
5. The Korean independence army must be strong with a focus on military and youth officers.
6. After the Korean independence army was formed the independence war was ready to be waged.

From the strategy, it is clear that the direction of the organization's movement is towards forming a new Korean national identity. This hope can only be fulfilled by replacing old resources and old-fashioned ideologies with new resources, young people and modern understandings. For this reason, the movement of members of *Shinminhwe* even after its dissolution remained focused on creating a quality young generation. The main instrument that can shape it is certainly education. Procurement of schools, both public schools and martial arts schools, continues to target young people. The church movement also focuses on youth.

3 The 105 Man Incident

The 105 man incident were tragedies designed by Japan to detain and suppress the movements of Korean independence fighters. At the beginning of his reign, Japan accused the Korean independence fighters of carrying out the murder of Governor General Terauchi Masatake. For this reason, Japan arrested 700 people accused of being suspects. Among the 700 suspects, 123 were taken to court. 105 of them were found guilty of prison sentences ranging from 5–10 years. Most of the defendants were members of *Shinminhwe*. This trap was indeed designed to stop the movements of *Shinminhwe* as a big secret organization that mobilized Korean independence fighters [10].

Japanese occupation in Korea are divided into three phases. First, the phase of military control (*Mudan Tongchi Sidae*) from 1910–1919. Second, the phase of cultural control (*Munhwa Tongchi Sidae*) from 1920 after the Samil Movement (*Samil Undong*) until 1929. Third, the phase of people control (*Minjok Malsal Tongchi Sidae*) from 1930 to the Second World War and the defeat of Japan [11]. In the first phase Japan acted aggressively by suppressing all elements opposing colonial rule. This 105 man incident is one of the Japanese ways to pressure Koreans. The Japanese target wanted to dissolve *Shinminhwe* who was the leader at that time. However, because *Shinminhwe* was a secret organization, Japan had no formal reason to dissolve it. The only way to suppress their movements is to capture all of their members so that the organization is paralyzed [10].

4 Ahn Chang Ho and Modern Spirit

Ahn Chang Ho was born on November 9, 1878 on an island called Doryeong in the lower Daedong river (now part of North Korea). He was born the third child of Ahn Heung Guk. At the age of 17 he left to Seoul and entered the Save World School. He

later converted to Christianity and became an admirer of the ideology of equality. In this period, Japan, China and Russia are competing to dominate Korea. In addition, Korean political conditions were weakened due to internal intrigue. In 1896, Seo Jae Phil founded *Dongnib Hyeobhwe* (Independence Club), and a year after, Ahn Chang Ho joined the movement. After that he founded a school called Jeomjin School and continued to educate Korean children with modern understanding [12].

In 1902, at the age of 25 he left for the United States to study. There he saw the condition of Korean immigrants who lived in poverty and were divided between fellow Koreans. From this moment, Ahn Chang Ho was called to change the fate of his people. One thing that is needed by the Korean people is power. The power to unite them into a nation. For that, Korean children need a spirit of modern nationality. Koreans need a spirit of unity. In America he had formed an association called *Daehan Shinminhwe* (New Korean People's Association). In 1907 he returned to Korea and joined other fighters to establish the secret organization Shinminhwe [12, 13] (Fig. 1).

Furthermore, in his diary Kim Gu told that Ahn Chang Ho upon his arrival in Korea from America immediately established a school called Daeseong School in Pyongyang and focused on the education of young people. Over 400 fighters participating inside there. One of them is Kim Gu. After Japan took control of Korea in 1910, Ahn Chang Ho was sent to prison. Lee Jong Ho, Lee Gab and Yoo Thong Yeol left Korea. Remaining in Hanseong (Seoul now) Yang Gi Thak. He led the secret meeting was limited and Kim Gu took the last time there before he left Hanseong [15].

The idea brought by Ahn Chang Ho from America was then stated in the general guidelines of *Shinminhwe* (*Shinminhwe Tongyong Jangjeong*). In this general guideline, it was explained that the main purpose of the establishment of the *Shinminhwe* was to reform the dilapidated old ideology of Korea, reform the declining economy, form a democratic republic with a new society [13]. Park In Joo [13] added that this goal is in line with all programs implemented by *Shinminhwe*. *Shinminhwe* publishes newspapers and magazines to enlighten people's insights. They also established schools to produce qualified human resources, to provide consultation to entrepreneurs in carrying out their



Fig. 1. Ahn Chang Ho [14]

economic activities. Until its dissolution many schools were established by *Shinminhwe* to spread modern ideology to the Korean people.

In their research, Park In Joo and Cho Kyu Yeon [13] analyzed that there were five main characters of education introduced by Ahn Chang Ho during his lifetime. First, education based on national optimism. For him, there is nothing more important even his life than independence for his people. Second, freedom and democracy. Third, the strength of the nation and independence. Fourth, reform. The reformation referred to by Ahn Chang Ho was a fundamental change in all types of old thought into modern thinking. So, reform education in the sense of Ahn Chang Ho is an education that can give students a modern national awareness and make it a new person. The last character Ahn Chang Ho introduced was “Daegongjuyi”. The term itself is a new term created and used by Ahn Chang Ho in 1927. This term refers to Ahn’s thought that every individual must fight and offer the blood of his flesh to his people, for the common good.

Ahn Chang Ho (1878–1938) was a Korean freedom fighter who during his lifetime had been involved in the movements of various independence organizations. Some of them are, *Haninchinmohwe*, *Shinminhwe*, *Cheongnyeon Hakwoohwe*, *Daehanin Gukminhwe*, *Heungsadan*, *Gukmin Daepyeohwe*, *Suyang Dongwoohwe*, *Dongwoo Gurakbu*, *Daedokribdang*, and others [13]. In his struggle, Ahn Chang Ho can be categorized as an agent of change that brings the spirit of progress in Korea. This enthusiasm was inseparable from the background of his youth who had studied west and embraced Christianity. Ahn Chang Ho is aware that old Korean values such as Confucianism, Feudalism and the form of monarchy government are no longer suitable for Korea.

In an effort to introduce modernization and the idea of progress in Korea, Ahn Chang Ho has established three schools namely, Cheomjin School (*Cheomjin Hakkyo*), Dae-seong School, and Dongmyong School (*Dongmyong Hakwon*). One of the most important schools in Korean history is the Daeseong school founded by Ahn Chang Ho. Dae-sung School was established in 1908 in Pyongyang and closed down in 1913. The establishment of this school tends to be short, only around 5 years. However, this school has inspired the establishment of many other modern schools. Including Osan School, Jinmyung women’s school in Pyongyang, Gyeongseong secondary school, Yangsil School in Yeosu, and Yangsan school in An-ak [16]. One of this school’s famous graduates named Seo Wal Bo. He is the first pilot in Korea. After graduated, Seo Wal Bo with Ahn Chang Ho and Lee Gab went to Siberia to establish a martial arts school there [17].

He is also involved in various educational organizations such as *Shinminhwe*, *Cheongnyeon Hakwoohwe*, *Heungsadan* and *Taegeuk Seogwan*. He also actively supports media activities such as the Independence Newspaper (*Dongnib Sinmun*), Kongnib Newspaper (*Kongnib Sinmun*), Shinhan Newspaper (*Shinhan Ilbo*) and *Donggwang*.

5 Kim Gu the Teacher

Kim Gu, often known by the pen name Baek Beom, is a Korean freedom fighter and politician who once served as president of the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai. In addition, he is also an activist in the field of education who has established many schools in Korea. He was born on August 29, 1876 and first learned to read and write at the age of 12 years. Until 1949, 3 months before he was killed at the age of 74, Kim Gu was still busy planning school establishment [6, 15].

After the death of his father in 1901, he helped his uncle farm. A year after, he began focusing on education and began studying Christianity. In the spring of 1903 he officially became a Christian and began studying the Bible. In 1904 he founded a school at Oh In Hyeong's home and began teaching there. In 1906, he moved to Gwangjin school and in 1907 he joined *Shinminhwe*. After that he moved to Yangsan School (*Yangsan Hakkyo*) [6].

In 1907, Kim Hyo Young his grandchild Hong Ryang set up the Yangsan Elementary School and Kim Gu was inaugurated as principal. Hearing Kim Gu, who was the head of the school, around 400 students from Hwanghae and surrounding provinces gathered to study here. The motto of this school is "send your child so that the almost destroyed country will rise again." Hearing this news, Ahn Chang Ho had said "if in every village in Korea a school emerges like the one established by Kim Gu, then in 10 years Korea will be able to equate Japan" [18] (Fig. 2).

Not long after, in 1908 he was appointed as education coordinator of *Shinminhwe* in Hwanghae Province. Kim Gu was directly involved in the process of forming schools and participated in teaching in these schools. These times also helped shape Kim Gu's ideology of the direction of education that must be applied in Korea [6].

After *Shinminhwe* was dissolved, Kim Gu was arrested for his involvement. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison and added 2 years to 17 years. Prison times affect his thinking and perspective on the future of the Korean nation [6]. One of the most important is about education. As stated in his diary [15] that education is the beginning of good governance. Good governance is a government that moves based on the voice of the people. To go to a government that can respect people's opinion must be started from education. Education is not only limited to teaching techniques for life. Moreover, education is a philosophy of human life and politics.

In his diary, he related his involvement in *Shinminhwe*. *Shinminhwe* described as follows [15]:

"The country is on the brink of destruction. Among the people there are still people who are not aware of this. For this reason, a secret movement emerged that tried to make Koreans and Korean immigrants aware of it and try to save the country. The secret movement is *Shinminhwe*.



Fig. 2. Kim Gu [19]

6 Lee Seung Hoon and Osan School

Lee Seung Hoon or often known by the pen name Namgang was born in 1864 in Cheongju, Korea. At the age of 10 he lost his parents. Lee Seung Hoon developed into a big businessman later on. However, his business fell sharply due to the Russo-Japanese war. Afterwards, Korea fell into the Japanese protectorate in 1905. These events made Lee Seung Hoon pay more attention to his people [20].

In the early days of *Shinminhwe*'s formation, Lee Seung Hoon entered and became core member. In December 1907, he founded the Osan School inspired by Ahn Chang Ho, in his hometown Osan. The motto of this school is Love, Sincerity and Respect. Lee Seung Hoon through Osan School is trying to create human resources that are not only smart, but also must be able to fight for the nation and the country [16].

Osan School still exists today. Through the ideas of progress brought by Lee Seung Hoon, many great figures have graduated from this school. Among them are freedom fighters Kim Hong Il, Politicians Kim Tae Soo and Kang Yeong Hoon, even top Korean artists Now named Haha (Ha Dong Hoon) [21] (Fig. 3).

Until the end of his life on May 9, 1930, for 24 years he continued to work on Korean independence. Amid the pressure of the Japanese colonial government, he did not think of escaping outside Korea, and still in his aim to educate the Korean people to be aware of their national identity. When he founded the Osan School in 1907 he gave an opening speech. In the speech contained his statement about the purpose of establishing Osan school as follows [20]:

“The condition of the country is getting worse and worse. We can't just stand by. We must not just give away the beautiful land that our ancestors handed down to the enemy. Someone has to lift a gun and a knife. But there is something more urgent that is to make our people aware and wake up. Even though by establishing this school it only provided small assistance, but I wanted to be useful for this country. Today there were only 7 students present, but one day there will definitely be a day where 70 people to 700 people come here. I beg that we can unite into an independent people.”



Fig. 3. Lee Seung Hoon [22]

From this statement it is clear that Lee Seung Hoon was aware of the important role of education for the Korean people. Instead of taking up arms and fighting against Japan, what Korea needs is a people who are aware of their national identity first. The Korean nation must advance in education and then be able to fight Japan. To realize this, education must be improved first. In February 1915, after the dissolution of *Shinminhwe* he advised the Osan graduate release speech as follows [20]:

“Our task is to retake the colonized country. After that, we must make this country a dignified country. To make this happen, people who go overseas need an army trained outside to invade. We also need to make the world aware and help us. However, all these efforts will be in vain if our people are unaware of this. As the saying goes, 10 years of illness can be treated with 7 years of hay if the grass is not there we have to look for it now (to make medicine, it takes time to dry the grass, before the disease gets worse we start looking for grass and drying it so the disease can be cured before severe). I hope, all graduates of this school can spread to every corner to make our people aware/enlightened. With their strength we can seek our independence again.”

From the two speeches above, we can conclude that the figure of Lee Seung Hoon not only wanted to introduce a modern education system in Korea. However, he also aspires to awaken the Korean people to their national identity. With that power, independence can be achieved and filled with the hands of the Korean people themselves. It is no exaggeration if Lee Seung Hoon is called the agent of change that brought the idea of progress in Korea in the early 20th century.

7 Conclusion

This research concludes that the three main characters of *Shinminhwe* discussed above have contributed to introducing the idea of progress in Korea in the early 20th century. The Daeseong School built by Ahn Chang Ho, the Yangsan School led by Kim Gu and the Osan school built by Lee Seung Hoon has graduated many useful human resources for Korea. This also proves that these three figures are agents of change who bring ideas of progress in Korea through their activities in the field of education.

The agent of change as stated above also can be proven from the facts of the mentality in the form of speeches and diaries of these three figures. ‘Mentality’ as defined by Lloyd [7] is a term that means how people understand themselves and the world, and how they express themselves through religion, rituals, dress, music, and so on, in short, the external manifestation of mental life. Diaries and speeches are a form of mentality that manifests their mental life. Furthermore, Lloyd stated that ‘mentality’ sense it cannot neatly or even messily be separated from economic, social, and political life; or at least, the onus is on those who wish to use such abstraction to show the explanatory significance of doing so. The main points conveyed by these three figures are in line with *Shinminhwe*’s main doctrine as explained in chapter II.

As explained in the introduction, a person or group of people can be categorized as agents of change if they have the power, choose and carry out their choices to change. In this context, the three figures are agents who choose and bring change in forming a

new identity for the Korean nation. Their efforts in introduced the idea of progress, built schools and introduced modern Korean identity have shaped Korean society today. A society that is well aware of the importance of education from 35 years of colonized experience. Korea has now become a country in the top 20 countries with the best education system in the world [1].

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