

Abstract

A study on the antagonism of Honam against Yeongnam

Kim Jin Hyuk
Department of Sociology
The graduate school
Yonsei University

This thesis aims to explain one aspect of regional conflict in Korea, i.e., the antagonism of Honam (southwest province) people against Yeongnam (southeast province) people. Three steps are taken to draw a causal explanation for the antagonism.

First, nation-wide inequality structure measured by education, occupational prestige, employment status, and income is analyzed to find regional variations. It is found that not only Honam people but also Chungcheong (midwest) and Gangwon (mideast) people are equally disadvantaged.

Second, since social inequality structure shows no unique differences for Honam compared with Chungchung and Gangwon, there must be other factors contributing to the antagonism of Honam against Yeongnam. Culturally determined prejudice

pattern among Korean people shows that Honam people are psychologically disliked by all the other regioners.

Third, though there exists structural inequality and nation-wide prejudice, we still need to point out why the object of antagonism of Honam should be Yeongnam. I argue to introduce political dimensions to explain the problem. Election campaigns taken by opposition as well as ruling parties are found to be responsible for the articulation of the antagonism. This phenomena is attributable to the fact that Yeongnam franchised party has been in power for the last half century. Especially the 1980 Kwangju Uprising stands for the symbol of political struggle of Honam people against Yeongnam people. This is why Honam people have more progressive and critical attitudes on political issues, and have higher attendance on social movements to reform existing social structure.

Honam people who have negative self image due to a nation-wide discrimination show three alternatives of action. They are first, to exit from in-group identity (e.g., to change registered origin of region); second, to show in-group loyalty (e.g., ingroup favoritism in election); and third, to voice loudly (e.g., attendance on radical social movement).