Introduction
Reconstruction of Intimate and Public Spheres in Asian Modernity

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There have been fundamental social changes worldwide since the 1970s. These changes were initially considered the essence of “post modernity,” but eventually they came to be considered a new aspect of modernity; hence, a number of concepts were formed to express these changes adequately. These included Ulrich Beck’s “Second Modernity,” Beck, Lash and Giddens’ “reflexive modernity,” Zygmunt Bauman’s “liquid modernity,” and Anthony Giddens’ “transformation of intimacy.” It is not easy to summarize in a few words the nature of this social change. However, one shared claim among those participating in the debate is that while the basic principles of modernity remain, a number of characteristics have appeared within society, distinguishing it from what Beck called the “First Modernity,” which was characterized by the nation-state and industrial capitalism. As Beck shows, with globalization and individualization as its characteristics, this social change has, while concurrently dealing with macro-level changes such as globalization and the relativization of nation-states, been a phenomenon that also includes changes on micro-level scales connected to individual lives and the family. We are living in the middle of a comprehensive, fundamental social change that could be termed a “reconstruction of intimate and public spheres.”

However, we would like to raise a question here: Is this social change happening in the same way everywhere in the world—including, for example, contemporary Asia? Conceptualizations related to new aspects of modernity are largely based on the experiences in Western Europe since the 1970s. Most Asian societies experienced modernization later than did those of Western Europe or North America. As a result, even now, topics such as the formation of Asian civil society, the rise in nationalism, the construction of a welfare state, and other topics related to First Modernity are often debated as fundamental social science themes in this region. On the other hand, many Asian societies now have “ultra low fertility” (Straughan et al. 2008), which is even lower than that of Second Modernity societies in Western Europe or North America. The increased prevalence of events such as cross-border marriages and the employment of foreign domestic workers mean that the effects of globalization are penetrating the farthest corners of the Asian lifestyle.

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While it may be that the “reconstruction of intimate and public spheres” is happening in Asia, is it undergoing the same changes as present-day Western Europe and North America, and in what ways are Asian changes different? In what ways can social science theorize about the social changes of contemporary Asia? Each of these are direct and obvious questions, and yet they have no clear answers. However, to clarify the issues contemporary Asia faces and to determine what direction policy design should take, these are questions we must urgently find answers to.

This volume looks at a number of the key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and topics that are required if we are to use social science approaches to the issue of the “Reconstruction of the Intimate and Public Spheres” in contemporary Asia. This chapter, which serves as the introduction to this volume, as well as to the whole series on “The Intimate and the Public in Asian and Global Perspectives” of which this book forms a part, lays out the theoretical framework for reconsidering “First Modernity” and “Second Modernity” from the perspective of “Reconstruction of the Intimate and Public Spheres.” In particular, it clarifies the issues that must be taken up explicitly within the Asian context, and the theoretical threads that bind together all of the chapters that follow, as well as the rest of this book series.

1 “First Modernity” and “Second Modernity”—A Redefinition Focusing on Demography and Gender

1.1 The Rise of First Modernity
In order to build a framework that locates First Modernity and Second Modernity within the context of the “reconstruction of intimate and public spheres,” we start with Hegel, the father of modern social philosophy. Hegel’s Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (1821) divides the three levels of “moral community” (Sitte): the family, civil society, and the state. The family is unified by love, and by marriage men and women abandon their individual character and form a single body and character. Civil society is formed by individuals, with the family as background; each individual acts to seek his or her own happiness and fulfill his or her desires. From there, relationships with other people are created; rights and laws are gestated, and the public sphere known as the state is created to systematically ensure them (Hegel 1821). This type of view of the society—that all individuals have a family and are citizens of a specific state—was typical and taken for granted in First Modernity. Fig. 0.1 shows a model of this on the left.

Looking at the socio-historical background of his philosophy, we can say that Hegel attempted to conceptualize the structure of the modern society that was