

## **(6.) The Korean War and Changes in South Korean Society**

### **South Korean society in the aftermath of World War II**

In 1945, Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule. After the end of the war, the men of my village who had been conscripted into service as laborers or soldiers returned home. We put on a welcoming party in my house for my cousin who had returned from a coal mine in Hiroshima. Next door there was a young man who had evacuated from the South Pacific islands. He told me some memorable tales about his experiences during the war, such as the air raids by B-29 bombers. Those who returned home never said a word about "war responsibility" or "reparations". It appeared to me that they just considered themselves rather lucky for having safely survived to tell the tale.

It didn't seem like the villagers felt any great sense of liberation from Japanese rule. They were able to get a few close encounters with a foreign culture from the English language labels printed on American sugar and candies distributed to them free of charge, but otherwise it did not appear that the power of the United States Army Military Government extended very far into the countryside. In spite of the convulsions gripping the country, the remote rural villages preserved the same traditional society they had always had.

The people in my village and in my household continued to use a considerable amount of Japanese vocabulary, just as we had before the war, including *hontate* (bookshelf), *baketsu* (bucket), *nawatobi* (jump rope), *jankenpon* (rock-paper-scissors), *okusan* (wife), and *manma* (rice). We also sometimes referred to each other with Japanese-style names, not limited to adding "*ko*" onto the end of feminine names as is done in Japan. For instance, we pronounced the name Myeongja in Japanese style as Akiko.

When I entered elementary school the year after the war ended, almost nothing had changed from the days of Japanese colonial rule. The school textbooks were mostly direct translations of the Japanese language ones. When we played "shoulder wars" games during our school athletic meets in autumn, we likewise cheered on the rival teams in Japanese, shouting "*aka ganbare*" (Go red team!) and "*shiro ganbare*" (Go blue team!). Even when we were receiving our diplomas, we tearfully sang out the nostalgic Japanese graduation song, "Glow of a Firefly," just as Koreans had during the colonial period. In other words, education in the immediate postwar era was run by different people, but mimicked the prewar model. Anti-Japanese sentiment had not yet taken root there.

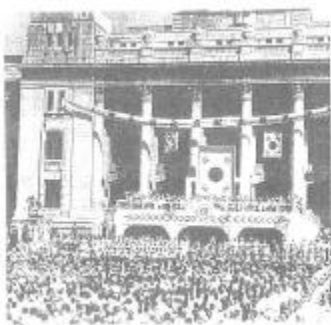
In that case, what was it that transformed South Korea after the end of Japanese rule? The major factors included the Korean War, the land reform, the introduction of Western ideologies, education, and mass media. We know the importance of the economic and social lifestyles and the population shifts which started through exposure to foreign culture during the Korean War. Korean society underwent an especially dramatic change as a result of rural youth rethinking their traditional culture following their service in the army.

On June 15, 1948 at the Central Government Building, which was known as the Korean General Government Building during Japanese rule, Rhee Syngman ended the US occupation and declared the foundation of the Republic of Korea as an independent nation. Rhee, a charismatic man regarded as a Korean national hero and savior, became the first president of South Korea.

Independence brought major changes to life in South Korea. The introduction of the ideas of liberal democracy by the US occupational government, the social chaos resulting from the collapse of the Japanese planned economy, the management of former Japanese-held lands by the New Korea Corporation and subsequent land reform, the in-fighting between left-wing and right-wing factions, the advent of guerrillas in some rural areas, the implementation of compulsory education, and the Korean War were all significant events for Korean society.

At the end of World War II, Korea was divided along the thirty-eighth parallel into a northern and southern zone, but the villagers felt little of the tension that existed between North and South Korea. The village where I was born was at the mid-point of the thirty-eighth parallel, just on the southern side of it. Before the Korean War, villagers were able to cross back and forth across the thirty-eighth parallel if they needed to attend a funeral, wedding, or other ceremonial occasion. My father also often crossed into North Korea and back to do business. Refugees came across the thirty-eighth parallel at night under cover of darkness.

One day, a whole family of my relatives came as refugees from a place called Jeongok in North Korea. They stayed at our home for a while and then settled in the house next door. Some refugees and families divided by the thirty-eighth parallel reunited with their loved ones in this manner during the war. In addition, there was also population transfer based on ideology. Those who sympathized with communism went north and those who favored liberal democracy came south.



The national ceremony marking the foundation of the Republic of Korea (South Korea), August 15, 1948.

Basically, in the immediate aftermath of the war, we did not think of the thirty-eighth parallel as being a national border with a foreign country, but rather as a temporary dividing line. Because of this, we did not even feel much hostility towards communism. It was only

after the Korean War, when the thirty-eighth parallel became the ceasefire line, that the strong polarization between north and south began.

### **Society after the Korean War**

As General Matthew Ridgeway put it, "The attack began at dawn on a rainy summer morning, June 25, 1950, with heavy artillery fire in the various attack zones." The North Korean Army had launched a heavily-armed invasion of the south and the Korean War had begun. Artillery shells coming from the north soared through the sky above my house and exploded with a terrible boom. Over the span of three years, the war took a terrible toll on the lives of Koreans before finally ending in a ceasefire on July 27, 1953.

Many men of the UN Army sacrificed their lives to bring peace to Korea, but there were other soldiers who behaved like demons. Though the army was fighting to defend Korea, morality does not necessarily mean anything to a man facing death. Indeed, expecting a sense of morality to exist on the battlefield at all is hardly realistic. Soldiers might behave unlike themselves when placed on a battlefield, but that should more appropriately be judged as a problem tied to war itself rather than to those soldiers in particular. In times of war, some soldiers might feel not just fear, but also a desire to use their weapons to achieve extreme forms of unrestrained freedom and gratification.

When I think about war, I realize just how restrained people are in normal circumstances. On the battlefield, an explosion of sex accompanies the explosion of bombs. War is not just about killing. It unleashes all mankind's basest desires. The mental state war brings about is like a sort of hedonism. During the war, even the UN Army committed many horrible acts, and there were American soldiers who would use tombstones as target practice or chop down the pine trees which were symbols of the village.

However, what was worst of all were the rapes perpetrated against the women of the village. I was an observer at the time the UN soldiers came, and it appeared to me that the rapes, commercialization of sex, fights, and murders that took place were like a reversion to an era before human civilization, or else like the darkest elements of modern-day society had suddenly taken over. War not only disgraced the soldiers but also exposed the dark nature of society itself. This poses disturbing questions about the fundamental contradictions of the Korean War.

The people of my home village invited in prostitutes in the hopes of protecting the chastity of our own women, and ultimately we became a "prostitution village". As I have noted a number of times already, this is an example of how war changed the ethics and values that our village had once held dear. Although the village had originally frowned upon commercial business in general, and especially business by women, now there were a number of villagers, including women, going about army bases accosting soldiers in broken English and trying to sell them things.

Still, the US Army units did not stay in our village for long, and soon they relocated to the nearby town of Dongducheon. The obscure town of Dongducheon had been the site of fierce fighting during the war, and now the presence of US troops would make it well-known across Korea as a "camptown". The truce that had ended the war had split the Korean peninsula into a northern and southern half, each bitterly hostile towards the other. The situation seemed symbolic of the broader confrontation of East and West during the Cold War between the USA and USSR. The term "cold war" refers to international hostility on political and economic levels without involving direct, armed warfare.

The three-year Korean War caused tremendous human and material devastation to Korean society. North Korea lost 2,720,000 people, 28.4 percent of its prewar population, as war dead or refugees. South Korea lost 1,330,000 people, mostly war dead. One million Chinese and about 63,000 Americans were either killed or missing in action. The war's other legacies included disabled veterans, families separated between north and south, orphans, and children of mixed race. After the war, soldiers who had been injured roamed through Korean villages like beggars. They often acted in an unruly manner, justifying their conduct on the grounds that they had been wounded fighting for their country. Most people were terrified of them.

The tragic symbol of the war was the "ten million separated families," which became a popular rallying cry for the cause of Korean reunification. Reunification had been the stated objective of the Korean War, and yet ironically, the war had actually resulted in the world's most hostile relationship between two countries of the same ethnicity. The ceasefire line created by the Korean War became a tragic borderline, even more tense than the thirty-eighth parallel had been. On the South Korean side, all 155 miles of the ceasefire line is heavily militarized and studded with fences and landmines. The situation remains extremely volatile.



Panmunjom

One symbol of the conflict and tension between the north and south is Panmunjom, the sole window between North and South Korea. Sightseeing tours to Panmunjom have become a fixture war industry, but for Koreans, the partition of the country was a national tragedy, and even more so for the separated families. According to news reports, it is common for South Koreans to walk close to the ceasefire line and carry out ceremonial rites here for their ancestors while facing north. It's like a Korean version of Hong Kong's Amah Rock, where the wife of a fisherman who was missing at sea was said to have come every day in the hopes of spotting her husband on his way home.

South Koreans still feel fear and resentment towards North Korea.

Families of my home village whose young men had gone north were gripped with fear that they might return as spies. It was rumored that one young woman who had gone missing during the war was living in North Korea. On the other hand, there were also many cases of families unable to cross the border before the war who were reunited amidst the chaos of war.

But even the separated families which were reunited sometimes met tragic fates. There were cases where the spouse who was separated had already remarried another person, and other cases where the reunions proved difficult due to changes in the structure or beliefs of the families.

In what ways did the Korean War change South Korea? Of course, murderous acts took place openly during the war, and a great amount of lives and property were lost, but South Koreans came out of the war with a stronger sense of patriotism and a greater appreciation for peace. In war, the structure of the population shifts due to migration and due to deaths in battle and from disease. People develop a sense of values which emphasizes survival through adapting biologically and environmentally to these changes. Furthermore, acculturation takes place through exposure to the guns and horses of war, and new organizations and products have an impact on the unification, dismantlement, and stratification of parts of society. Hatred of the enemy gives rise to ethnocentrism, government centralization causes the military to gain power, and a national consciousness comes into being. These effects naturally have both negative and positive aspects, and among some scholars there is even a tendency to focus on the positives. In addition, the military system is also said to contribute to social stratification.

In the past, books about the Korean War have concentrated mainly on its origins and causes. The war itself was wrong, but it did bring about changes to Korean society. The major significance of the Korean War lies in the ways that it fundamentally transformed Korean society. Recently, an increasing amount of research has been done on the political and military influence that the war had on the Cold War-era political and economic scene in East Asia. The Korean War ought to be analyzed from diverse angles.

War is a major topic for discussion among scholarly associations of anthropologists in the United States. They have held conferences and seminars on the subject every year and have published their findings. Conflicts in small-scale societies can result from a variety of situations or designs, including accumulation of wealth, hostility incurred by aggressive attitudes, or a desire for territorial expansion. Ultimately the pre-civilizational warfare usually discussed by anthropologists is of a different nature from warfare in civilized societies.

However, if we were to look at the Korean War from an anthropological perspective, the north and the south were of the same culture, society, and ethnicity, but the war was not a spontaneous upheaval splitting apart a homogenous race. Rather, this was a "war of

unification" seeking to put an end to the partition of Korea, which was itself a tragic byproduct of a war that engulfed the entire world.

Though the United States did not gain anything economically from the Korean War, they did secure popular support for their participation in the war thanks to the collective security provisions of the UN Charter. Japan was able to escape from its postwar economic ordeal thanks to "special procurements" of war supplies during the Korean War. Japan ended up profiting from its neighbor's misfortune.

### **Anti-communism and the military coup d'état**

As I described above, the thirty-eighth parallel was the product of Japan's defeat in World War II, but the Korean War, which was North Korea's attempt to erase this line and reunify the country, only served to establish the wartime ceasefire line as the rigid dividing line between north and south. The prewar thirty-eighth parallel had been a remarkably flexible border, but by contrast the postwar ceasefire line was a line of death exceedingly dangerous to cross. The Korean War had been fought to make the border between north and south disappear, but ironically that border would instead be entrenched more solidly than ever before.

The devastation wrought through South Korea's war with an external enemy may have strengthened South Korea's sense of national consciousness following the end of the war. This manifested itself especially in the form of strong antipathy towards communism.

After the end of World War II, the two pillars animating South Korea are said to have been anti-Japanese sentiment following the liberation from Japanese colonialism, and anti-communist sentiment following the partition of the country into north and south. But though there was some popular anti-Japanese sentiment prior to the Korean War, the anti-communism advocated by South Korean politicians had little impact and failed to persuade the masses. It was only after the end of the Korean War that anti-communism became widespread.

The South Korean government used North Korea's provocations as an opportunity to bolster its power by making patriotic appeals for "total unity", *chonghwa dangyeol* in Korean, and enforcing anti-communist education in schools.

1953 was the year that I entered middle school. My schoolhouse had been destroyed during the war, so for a while I took classes at the schoolhouse of a nearby elementary school. Apart from taking classes, I was also mobilized to help clear away the rubble of destroyed buildings. Soon after, a temporary building was set up on the main school grounds, so I transferred there to continue my education. There were placards hanging on both sides of the blackboard which said, in red letters, "Down with Japan" and "Down with communism". Almost every day at school we sang "The Song of June 25" and "The Song of Unification". The former was full of violent threats against the enemy whereas the latter expressed hope

that the country would reunite under one shining flag. Even now I remember some of their lyrics.

"The Song of June 25

We shall never forget that day  
when the enemy set foot into the fatherland.

On that day we repelled the enemy with our own blood and bare fists  
and stamped our feet with anger.

(Refrain) Now we shall have vengeance on our enemy of June 25.

We will scatter and strike down the fleeing enemy hordes  
until not one of them is left standing,  
we the people of this glorious nation."

"Song of Unification

Unification is what I long for  
Unification is what I wish for even in my dreams  
For unification I will devote my heart and soul  
We shall achieve unification  
Only unification will revive our countrymen  
Unification is what our nation seeks and desires  
May the day of unification come soon  
May the country be united."

The government was attempting to bring the people together under the twin banners of anti-communist and anti-Japanese sentiment. At the time, it was often said that, "The Korean people's sense of unity is weak," and elementary school textbooks reprinted the old Japanese fable about Mori Motonari teaching his sons that one arrow can be broken easily but that three arrows bound together could not be. The Rhee Syngman regime appealed for unity under the slogan, "united we stand, divided we fall."

President Rhee Syngman attempted to create an anti-communist union to protect the country from the threat of North Korea, and anti-communism ended up becoming synonymous with pro-Americanism. Following the end of the Korean War, anti-communism established itself as the state ideology and this intense hatred of communism gave rise to a military government.

Student protests brought down President Rhee, but when Korean society fell into chaos people feared that North Korea might invade once again. Park Chung-hee took advantage of the apprehensions of the people to launch a coup d'état on May 16, 1961. Park became the new president and immediately sought to stabilize his regime by politically exploiting the danger from North Korea. Park made talk about reunification taboo, and instead solidified anti-communism through promotion of political nationalism. Park perpetuated his military regime by emphasizing anti-communism over anti-Japanese sentiment and

strengthened his dictatorship by insisting to those who opposed him that the country had to remain united to resist the threat from North Korea.

In accordance with Park Chung-hee's policy of cooperation with the United States, about 400,000 South Korean soldiers served in Vietnam at American request between February 1965 and 1973. Of these, 4,400 died in combat. As was the case in many new nations following the end of World War II, the South Korean military provided impetus for societal modernization. The South Korean government felt gratitude for the protection it had received from the United Nations during the Korean War, and so pledged in return to demonstrate its army's strength internationally. However, the popular slogan was, "America provides the bullets and Korea provides the blood." Because Korean lives were being lost fighting for the United States, some anti-war sentiment also developed within Korea. As a result of such circumstances, the government ramped up its propaganda, encouraging its men to believe that if they returned safely from Vietnam they would lead affluent lives.

It was in this context that the hero named Gang Jae-gu was created. Gang was a South Korean soldier attached to the Tiger Division as a company commander from October 1965. While undergoing training and preparation for deployment in Vietnam, one of his subordinates accidentally dropped his grenade. Gang did not hesitate to throw his own body over the live grenade and perished to save the lives of his one hundred men. The government of Park Chung-hee held Gang up as the model of a patriotic soldier, erecting a monument in his honor and promoting his story by inserting it into textbooks. The government used this opportunity to have military education adopted into the school curricula. Later, the Republic of Korea Homeland Reserve Forces was established and South Korea became more and more militaristic.

The atrocities committed by the South Korean Army during the Vietnam War were discussed widely among international groups and journalists. I had seen such tragedies first-hand during the Korean War, and even though they were then happening in far-off Vietnam, I feared that Korea might soon enough experience the same thing again.

### **Sexual torture and the Democracy Movement**

As I described in Chapter One, my hometown transformed into a "prostitution village" or "camptown" following incidents of sexual violence by the UN Army. Nevertheless, South Koreans have never been told the truth about the cruel sexual assaults perpetrated by UN, especially American, soldiers. The South Korean government should have made loud protests to the United Nations and the United States at the same time that it had admitted and accepted responsibility for crimes committed against its own people.

The origins of the US Army's comfort women can be found in the sexual violence during the Korean War perpetrated by the UN Army against Koreans, as well as the sexual violence during that war perpetrated by South Korean soldiers against their own countrywomen. Furthermore, I should also mention the human rights scandals involving sexual assault on Korean women which sparked the "Democracy Movement" in South



Korea. One of them was the sexual torture of Gwon In-suk by South Korean police in 1986 when South Korea was governed by the military dictatorship of Chun Doo-hwan.

Miss Gwon was a student at Seoul University, later expelled during her fourth year at the Faculty of Clothing and Textiles. While still taking classes she made a forgery of another person's residency registration card to work at a company in Bucheon where she planned on engaging in human rights activism. At around 9:00 on the night of June 4, 1986, she was taken to the Bucheon Police Station where she was interrogated until 3:00 the next day in order to make her reveal the hiding places of her colleagues. However, the police were not satisfied with the results of the interrogation and so a police detective named Mun Gwi-dong of the Bucheon Police Station took charge of the case. He is said to have handcuffed and raped her as sexual torture on two occasions on June 6 and June 7.

Gwon managed to get her story out and expose her tormenter when her parents gave an interview to the media, but in spite of this the police brushed off the allegations by saying, "The police detective Mun was merely overzealous in his investigation and lightly touched her chest by accident."

In response, the Women's Alliance Countermeasures Committee Against Sexual Torture was formed as an association of organizations, including religious groups, and then a defense team of historically unprecedented scale was constituted under the declaration that, "Human sex is a symbol of life and to abuse it as a form of torture is a violation of human dignity." A defense team of seven lawyers reported the police detective to the public prosecutor on the grounds that he had "interrogated her for about one hour in the investigation room with the door locked, the lights turned off, and her hands handcuffed behind her back."

This incident became a major social issue and, in combination with the death of Bak Jong-cheol, who was suffocated through water torture by other policemen also attached to the Security Office, it became the driving force behind the Democracy Movement of 1986-87.

### **The growth of Christianity in South Korea**

South Korean society following the end of Japanese colonial rule still maintained its traditional value system based on shamanism and Confucianism. Most Koreans had no interest in Christianity and would turn up their noses at any priest or missionary who entered their village.

However, the Korean War brought drastic change to the culture and state of mind of the Korean people and overturned Korea's traditional value system. When a communist state was put in place in North Korea, freedom of religion was restricted, causing an exodus of North Korean Christians to the south. As a result, churches grew rapidly. One representative example is Yeongnak Presbyterian Church in Seoul. This church was like a community of refugees who had all fled communist persecution. Of the same race and speaking the same language, many had been killed without knowing the difference between

their enemies and their allies. Their graves were marked with crosses, which earned them the protection of the US Army. Anti-communism served to popularize Christianity in South Korea.

While South Korea was recovering from the ravages of war it relied on American assistance. American culture became all pervasive and American relief aid was distributed to churches and orphanages. The United States Army Military Government had designated Christmas as a national holiday and Christian culture flourished.

President Rhee Syngman may not have emulated the policies of the Japanese colonial regime, but he did leave intact its anti-superstition campaign which deemed shamanism to be "superstitious". He also held negative views towards Confucianism, though he did not take any proactive steps to suppress it.

Even in the region where my village was located, which had held on to its traditional beliefs, the influence of Christianity began to be felt. Soon after the end of the Korean War, a thatched-roof civilian home in a neighboring village, where the town hall was located, was lent out for use as a Christian church. The third son of the Choi family, which was the head household of my clan, became a Christian and went to work as a deacon. He was a true believer who was admitted into Pierson Missionary School in Seoul with the recommendation of his minister.

Because he was cross-eyed and had a history of mental illness since childhood, his family at first did not interfere with his choice of religion, though they did object to his refusal to participate in ancestral rites even when he was back at home for the traditional holidays. When he suffered a seizure due to his mental illness his parents blamed it on his Christian faith and undertook a shamanistic purification ritual.

In spite of his family, his faith never wavered. In 1960, at a time when I was seriously ill, he convinced me to attend his church. I studied there and on Christmas of that year I was baptized at the mother church, Yeongnak Presbyterian Church.

Under the military regime of Park Chung-hee, Christian churches became strongholds of opposition to the dictatorship, including, notably, the support and cooperation given to Kim Dae-jung by Christian groups like the Catholic Priests Association for Justice. Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam, two Christians who led the democracy movement, called upon their Christian brethren to join the real-life struggle against the dictatorship.

Christianity experienced some schisms amidst the poverty and the social and political uncertainty of the postwar years, and new Christian-based religious movements were founded. The Unification Church made anti-communism its dogma, criticized the established churches, spread its teachings, and expanded its influence. However, because the Unification Church adhered to a special theology based on pre-war mysticism, it was condemned as heretical.

It was not just the Unification Church which was anti-communist. Rather, Korean Christians in general had turned anti-communist as a result of the persecution by the North Korean communists which they had experienced during the Korean War. During the war, the churches even preached from the pulpit that it was "a war against the anti-Christian movement" and urged young men to join the fight.

Furthermore, the charismatic mysticism movement within Korean Protestantism absorbed shamanism, which had been generally hated and shunned, into its mysticism. This shamanist mysticism met the demands of the times and sparked rapid growth in the churches. The hallmarks of "holy spirit mysticism" include mass prayer chanting (*tongseonggido*), the holy presence (*seongnyeongimjae*), speaking in tongues (*bangeon*), the threefold blessing (*sambakjachukbok*), faith healing (*chibyeong*), laying on hands (*ansu*), blood sharing (*pigareum*), spiritual possession (*jeopsin*), and communication with god (*gangsingeuk*). Such new religious and holy spirit movements have existed not only in South Korea, but have cropped up in Korean communities throughout the world.

In Korea's Christian churches, shamanism and Christianity came to intermingle or else to coexist side-by-side. Many Christians who believe shamanism to be superstitious are blissfully unaware that shamanism is deeply embedded within their own religious practices. It is believed that the key to the triumph of Korean Protestantism was the spiritual revival meetings which were rooted in the religious fervency they had inherited from Korean shamanism.

Christianity tried to convert shamanists on the grounds that their beliefs were superstitious. Shamanist practices which had stagnated in the rural areas revived around the cities as they were incorporated into Christian churches. As a religious creed they became especially popular with women.

During the 1950s, the average Christian church in South Korea increased its membership by 16.5 percent.

### **The modernization of South Korea and the "New Community Movement"**

The Korean War had made Koreans painfully aware of how poor and weak their own country really was, and they became self-critical of their own nation and traditional society. After the end of World War II, Korean society especially turned against the Confucian, male-dominated patriarchy, widespread male chauvinism, clanism, and the *yangban* class system. The division of Korea dictated by the great powers and the tragedy of the Korean War left deep psychological scars on the Korean people.

Even so, the war was not purely destructive. It also gave rise to a new mentality that Korea would have to reflect on its own faults in order to become stronger. This attitude of self-criticism at times became almost masochistic. The cultural policies of the United States Army Military Government following the end of Japanese colonial rule and especially the

US Army's military culture which became prevalent after the Korean War both played important roles in Korea's transition from clanism, authoritarianism, and collectivism towards the value system of Western civilization. When most Koreans today think about American culture, what they are actually thinking about is the military culture of the US Army.

American culture had a tremendous impact on Korean society, and the American cultural traits which made especially significant contributions to the modernization of Korean society were pragmatism, individualism, and a notion of universal values.

The Korean War changed the structure of the population ratio in both North and South Korea and triggered mass migrations of refugees. There were also migrations in rural areas. Farmers increasingly began to abandon agriculture, which had been the traditional bedrock of the Korean economy, and focused their attention on the cities so that their children could get a better education. Because of this, the wealth disparity between cities and rural villages widened dramatically. More and more people left their impoverished villages and moved into the slums which were springing up along the periphery of urban areas. In addition, women who lived in the countryside often travelled to Seoul where they worked as maids or were sold to brothels.

In 1970, President Park Chung-hee launched the New Community Movement, a government-led rural revitalization campaign under the slogan of "diligence, self-reliance, and cooperation". The goal of the program was to promote the modernization of Korea's rural villages, which were struggling with poverty and continuing to suffer from an outflow of talented people. Under the New Community Movement, things like road improvements, roof repairs, and the construction of storehouses were undertaken collaboratively by the villagers, and impressive results were achieved.

The movement also spread to the cities where it fused with campaigns to improve productivity and, thus, contributed to South Korea's industrial development. South Korea's economic development was truly the product of those who labored in these campaigns.



President Park  
Chung-hee

And yet, President Park's highly successful policies seemed to be a continuation of the "rural revitalization campaign" originally promoted by Governor-General Ugaki Kazushige during the period of Japanese colonial rule. The very guiding principles of the campaign were the same as those advocated by the Japanese agricultural reformer Yamazaki Nobuyoshi, "the spirit of public service, the spirit of cooperation, and the spirit of self-help." Ugaki's policies may not have reached their full potential while he was still in office in the 1930s, but the young leaders who were educated in that era would be at the peak of their careers when Park Chung-hee was president.

Certainly, they played an active role in the success of the New Community Movement.

In Park Chung-hee's sayings and writings, Japanese-style expressions like "rural revitalization" (*nongchon jinheung* in Korean and *noson shinko* in Japanese), "restoration" (*yusin* in Korean and *ishin* in Japanese), and "self-improvement" (*jaryeok gaengsaeng* in Korean and *jiryoku kosei* in Japanese) are seen very often. Notably, the word "*gaengsaeng*" is used in Korean only in reference to the social rehabilitation of criminals or medical patients, but Park's avid use of this term seems to reflect its broader Japanese usage.

President Park, who had seized power in the name of achieving stability in the face of the North Korean threat, embarked on a "five-year economic development plan" in January 1962, inspiring his countrymen to believe that South Korea could become a wealthy nation. Park plotted out a course of economic growth by keeping the people in constant fear of the threat of war with North Korea and demanding national unity. The South Korean economy expanded through this model of state-led modernization. The New Community Movement is just one representative example of such state-guided policies.

It was at this time that the propaganda film, "The Land of Korea," was broadcast nationwide. In the film, an elderly couple living in Seoul received invitations from children across South Korea, so they go on a sightseeing tour of the nation. They are introduced to all manner of sites of historic and scenic interest, and everywhere they go they see a Korea which has overcome the tragedy of the war and shows remarkable economic development. They also get to hear fine music like the popular work, "Tears of Mokpo".

The Koreans who left for the cities still returned to their home villages for the traditional holidays. Traditional annual events became important functions. The New Community Movement wiped out Korea's vast economic disparities, but it was also a spiritual revolution which breathed new humanity into people who had become robotic profit-seekers and thus re-invented Korea's traditional life philosophy.

### **Is war just or unjust?**

I once wrote a short essay, sorrowful in tone, based on my experiences in the Korean War. It was all written in line with the highly naive anti-war paradigm of yearning for peace by rejecting war. Still, I was not making an appeal to society in the manner of a pacifist or anti-war campaign, and I will not deny that recently I have had occasion to even praise war, while still holding a generally negative view of it.

A taboo exists in discussions of war. What is needed is for politicians and citizens to directly and openly debate the hard morality of war. Up to now we have not asked the question of whether or not war is just, though war ought to be examined from both a positive and negative angle or else from a variety of different perspectives. It seems that war is gradually being recognized as the most universally agreed upon "evil force" in human society, but the fundamental question is still worth pursuing; is war just or unjust?

Noam Chomsky has warned that it is dangerous to entrust the question of war and peace entirely to military strategists and politicians. Chomsky has adopted an anti-war standpoint while commenting on the moral dilemma of intervening militarily in foreign nations, but he has not really touched upon the just or unjust nature of war.

Alvin and Heidi Toffler have weighed the merits of "war and anti-war", and according to them, the human need to "fight," whether for one's life or one's family, or even against something like sickness, is ubiquitous. They see a sort of dichotomous harmony between "war and anti-war".

The Tofflers predict that, although the risk of all-out nuclear war between the two superpowers is diminishing, smaller scale conflicts between nations and ethnic groups will probably heat up and increase in number. In other words, diverse military conflicts can result from economic competition for resources, political demagoguery, religious fanaticism, or infringements on the sovereignty of nation-states. According to the Tofflers, there will be a need for us to devise a new approach to war and peace in order to counter these trends. The dominant form of warfare will likely involve intelligent strategies seeking to neutralize the enemy army without killing anyone or else using high-tech weaponry like robots, aerial drones, omniscient surveillance satellites, and sound systems.

He also discusses the struggle against war, in other words preventative measures for peace involving the transmission of news and sharing of information and technology to halt the proliferation of weaponry.

What are the moral criteria for judging the justice or injustice of war?

The most fundamental moral justification for war is to protect human rights and human lives from massacres and atrocities. However, a contradiction exists here because humans fight amongst themselves expecting death and ready to give their lives. One must take into account that wars in fact take human lives in great number.

Is it really possible, as the Tofflers have said, that wars of the future will focus on destroying weapons and facilities without killing humans? Even if we go to war with the aim of protecting peace and human rights, is it really true that soldiers risking their own lives on the battlefield can become angels of peace carrying out all their duties with perfect moral rectitude?

That is to say, in the structure of war, peace is the superstructure and war is the substructure. This means that "War and Peace" is not just the title of a novel, but is also the actual mechanism of war itself.

In comparison to other evils like colonialism or aggressive war and occupation, it doesn't seem so bad to intervene in a foreign war with a humanitarian agenda. Nevertheless, I think that any system of universal morality would collapse if it were to accept war itself as being

just, and imagining a war game scenario in which the rules of international society are upheld by an umpire, like international police and judges, is probably a fantasy. The very argument that "just wars" are normally possible is difficult to accept without qualification, and the same is true of the morality not only of war, but also theft or assault. And yet, at some points in the past it was acceptable for the poor to steal from wealthy families, and even now one is not likely to be legally charged with a theft that takes place among family members or close relatives. In Korean textbooks, the man who went to China and came back with stolen cotton seeds is treated as a hero. In Greek mythology as well, there is a story about a man who stole fire from the gods.

It is not true that war or theft have no positive outcomes. For example, there might be secondary effects like when a new city rises from the ashes after a fire. Could it be that it is even possible to justify robbery?

War against a nation that has violated human rights or basic humanity seems to have a theoretical basis as a form of punishment like the death penalty. However, in an era where even the death penalty is being abolished, we can't simply accept a war which will put many lives at risk. Could it be that a just war is one that abides by the rule "thou shalt not kill"?

And even if we are against war, there will always be a need for nation-states to have armies just in case a war does happen. Communities have armies in order to protect themselves from war, and such armies exist not solely as a deterrent force. Defensive wars are also necessary, in the same way that the right of self-defense can be employed in cases of assault. Armies are also, in a sense, a form of life insurance. Sometimes even a preemptive strike will be necessary, though this is the worst sort of defensive war.

Concerning America's military intervention in Libya, on March 26, 2011, President Obama declared that, "A humanitarian catastrophe has been averted and countless civilian lives have been saved." He stated that "Military operations are progressing well," and he appealed to the American people for support. Meanwhile, members of Congress were calling into question his justifications for the air raids on Libya.

What really is a "justification for war"? Whenever I listen to a speech announcing a state of war, I can't help but feel mistrust towards the way wars are legitimized.

The "Imperial Declaration of War Against Qing China" was a written declaration of war, running in at just over 800 Japanese characters, which was released by Japan's Meiji government at the start of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894. This declaration uses the word "peace" six times, such as in the phrase, "for the sake of peace in East Asia". The word "peace" is very often appropriated for the purpose of justifying war. It may be that American-led wars have simply swapped the word "humanitarian" for the word "peace".

The scholar Michael Walzer has published several masterpieces on the morality of war including "Just and Unjust Wars" and "Arguing About War."

Walzer, who grew up during World War II, makes a rational argument for differentiating "just war" from "unjust war". He contends that a military intervention against acts of atrocity or aggression, in other words Nazi or Rwanda-style massacres, is legitimate on humanitarian grounds. Among the specific points that he outlines are as follows.

"War is the continuation of politics by other means."

"Politics is the continuation of war by other means."

"War is sometimes justifiable and that the conduct of war is always subject to moral criticism."

"All's fair in love and war."

"Some wars and some acts of war will turn out to be 'just'. How can that be, when war is so terrible?"

There have been plenty of individuals in human history who have waged aggressive and destructive wars in the name of peace, and the slogans of all invaders are either "peace" or "humanity". Walzer takes a close look at this and focuses on the controversial issues. He says that wars started to defend the cause of peace are usually wars for the cause of national self-interest. In other words, Walzer criticizes the fact that the standard conventional framework for evaluating war was based not on justice but on self-gain. He shows no faith in the arguments for just war put forward by religious scholars and theologians in particular, and instead argues that war should be carefully examined from a true moral framework. His moral framework is "human rights".

According to Walzer, if we look at war from the perspective of human rights and humanitarianism, then wars in which there are atrocities and massacres of civilians and noncombatants, like the Vietnam War and the Boer War in South Africa, are not "just wars". He then introduces the precepts that "we should not fight wars about whose justice we are doubtful" and that "war is properly a war of armies, a combat between combatants." Some conclude from this that any killing of a civilian is murder, that any war in which civilians are killed is unjust, and that therefore all wars are unjust. Nevertheless, Walzer views the US invasion of Afghanistan as a necessary war.

Furthermore, one must not only win the war justly, but also win the peace justly. At the end of the war one has to reconstruct the country to its prewar state. Especially in cases of humanitarian intervention, it is essential to have the war end properly. In the aftermath of a success, one must continue to succeed in the postwar phases. This, I suppose, is the price of



success. Included in this description are things like a legitimate occupation, a change of regime, and the institution of a protectorate.

Walzer affirms that "innocent human beings can never be intentionally attacked," including any murder of innocent civilians or terrorist acts aimed at cowering people through fear. In other words, innocence is inviolable, and targeting innocent civilians is a violation of just war theory. In spite of what Walzer states, I think that the killing of innocent civilians by soldiers is something likely to happen given that soldiers at war are under constant threat of death. Like policemen, firefighters, and sailors, soldiers are expected to put their own lives on the line to protect the well-being of the innocent people of a community. This means that we must always recognize both the evil deeds we are fighting against and the evil deeds we ourselves might actually commit, in order to guard against both as far as that is possible. According to Walzer's theory, we cannot respond to terrorists who kill innocent civilians by seeking complete victory and domination over them, and we cannot suppress cruel, dehumanizing violence with military force alone.

So what is the "just war" to which Walzer refers? This is the fundamental question. Walzer says that war is undertaken as a necessary evil which we must accept as being a last-resort act of violence to prevent human tragedies from happening. If I were to rephrase Walzer's words about aggression, military intervention, just causes, self-defense, protection of noncombatants, POWs, double effects, terrorism, and war crimes, I would interpret it to mean that war is legitimate for the goal of protecting "human rights". As Walzer indicates, if we view war from the standpoint of human rights, then wars characterized by atrocities and the massacre of civilians and noncombatants, including the Vietnam War and the Boer War, are not just wars.

Although rape and the use of prostitutes by soldiers are typical phenomena, the way in which they occur can vary. I have learned that these circumstances will differ depending on factors like the policies of a nation's army and the attitudes of the country affected by it. During the Korean War, the US Army was our benevolent ally, and the American forces which remained stationed on the Korean peninsula were symbols of America's security guarantee to Korea. Prostitution flourished around US Army military bases in South Korea to a greater extent than around its bases in Japan. People have said that these differences have occurred due to, and have been defined by, the US-Korea diplomatic relationship.

The Korean War left significant influences, both positive and negative, on Korean society. Mutual enmity between North and South Korea prevented the Korean people from reunifying, but anti-communist sentiment did permit the people of South Korea to come together as one. That, however, in turn led to the military coup d'état and a long period of military dictatorship. Religious groups, including Christian ones, shifted towards anti-communism and Christianity in particular became widespread in South Korean society, which caused Korea's traditional Confucian sense of values to change. This and the modern frame of consciousness that accompanied it became the basis for the modernization of South Korea.

Photo Caption: Two participants in the Second Sino-Japanese War, photographed in front of a "comfort room" in Xiaguan, China, by the late Leading Private Koyama.

The Korean War began in the 1950's while Korean society was still in turmoil in the aftermath of the liberation, and it took time for society to recover. Then the military dictatorship appeared with the aim of stabilizing the political system and promoting rapid modernization. These, however, were not phenomena that suddenly came into being from the 1960s and onwards. Rather, they were a continuation of earlier periods. In other words, there were past trends which continued through the hostile relationship between North and South Korea, the rise of anticommunism, and the military dictatorship.

On the other hand, as North Korea was rebuilding after the war, it too had formulated a "revolutionary tradition," which integrated the story of North Korea's founding with the Korean partisan war against the Japanese, and used it to unify its own citizens. This in turn was part and parcel to the solidification of Kim Il-sung's absolute rule. Thus, both North and South Korea had adopted policies of exploiting their mutual enmity for one another in order to unify their own citizenry behind them.

### **Conclusion**

Even while Korean society was in a dramatic state of flux, Korea's Confucian-based sexual norms and the concept of chastity remained firmly in place. This, in turn, would have a major impact on the current political situation in Korea, specifically the postwar Korean government's corresponding policies towards sex. In reality though, rather than saying that it had an impact, it would be better to note that the Korean government has always been exploiting sex and sexual morality for political ends, and today's ongoing controversy over the comfort women is merely another instance of this.

In this book, I covered in great detail the controversies of both the Japanese Army's and the US Army's comfort women and I was able to trace back their origins over a broad span of history. They did not burst into the scene out of nowhere and they were not products of Korea-Japan relations, but rather they are purely rooted in Korean traditions.

Thus, I wrote this book in order to better understand Korean society, where sex and politics are deeply intertwined in the manner I have described.

In war, soldiers demand sex in order to distract themselves from their fear of combat, or conversely out of the euphoria and sense of liberation they feel from having survived a battle. I have given many examples of this throughout this book. In my own home village, the villagers were subjected to sexual violence by the UN Army and so accepted prostitution to defend themselves against it. Consequently, I personally witnessed how my village, which was steeped in the traditional Confucian concept of sexual chastity, transformed overnight into a village of prostitutes and comfort women.

In South Korea, there are laws concerning chastity and sections of the criminal code prohibiting adultery. Viewed from the perspective of Confucian morality, one would normally expect that it would not be permissible for a village to hire prostitutes. And yet, the irony was that the village accepted prostitution in order to defend chastity. However, we shouldn't call this a contradiction because in reality prostitution has a moral side that coexists with the side that people call "immoral". In the end, the prostitutes were found to be dutiful to their parents and devoted to their families, and the villagers admired them for that.

Taking the example of my own village, I would like to reflect on the economic and diplomatic policies of South Korea. In South Korea, women like prostitutes who failed to protect their chastity normally were ashamed of themselves for it, and the best thing they could do was hide it. Women who had lost their chastity were discriminated against, and almost never made appearances in the political scene. But in spite of this, these women were also praised for patriotic acts, in the context of those women who had defended their chastity from foreign invaders, and people even began to call them patriots who sacrificed their chastity, rather than their lives, for the sake of the country.

I have clearly described how, during the time of the Goryeo and Joseon Dynasties, the women who protected their chastity and virginity were transformed into the idealized picture of the "heroic woman". Throughout the South Korean countryside, you can come across shrines and monuments dedicated to these "heroic women". The humiliation of women losing their virginity to Japanese or Mongol invaders was emphasized as a means of promoting a Korean racial identity. One notable example is the cliff face known as the "rock of righteousness," where legend has it that the *kisaeng* named Nogae embraced a Japanese general at the time of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea and then hurled him and herself off to their deaths. This is now a famous tourist site where female tourists get to try on traditional Korean costumes. Korea's spacious national parks are also full of monuments to patriotism and loyalty, but all the new ones which have been built deal with events of Korea's distant past. I felt like Korea has been inventing and fabricating an artificial version of its own traditional culture.

At one museum, the guide spoke to me in Japanese about South Korean patriotism and Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion, and the aforementioned legend of Nogae continues to be taught and promoted in South Korea. I believe that we should likewise view the comfort women problem as a direct continuation and extension of this. However, I cannot overlook the fact that this attempt by South Korea to use sex to create a national identity has laid bare a number of serious inconsistencies.

Armed combat is an extreme situation where people kill one another and where, as I have seen myself, concepts like morality do not exist. I saw soldiers who had been driven virtually insane, and it was not just soldiers but also ordinary people who were like that. We have had discussions over whether war is sane or insane. The definition and scope of the word "war" is broad, and though I may not be able to say that war as a whole is intrinsically

insane, soldiers on the battlefield or in a war-torn area where killing was taking place were desperate to protect their own lives and at very least in these circumstances I cannot say that their states of mind were particularly sane.

As soon as the battle began, sexual violence began. Naturally only some soldiers participated in it, but in order to understand war we should be careful to not judge rights or wrongs based on moral concepts alone.

Brave warriors and victims emerge from every war, and from them heroes and patriots are born. In Korea, female victims were often called "heroic women". The theft by Japanese soldiers of the chastity of Korean women was seen as the ultimate humiliation, and the anger of the nation would elevate the comfort women to the status of patriots. In this context it is understandable how the comfort women came to be regarded as heroes in Korea-Japan relations. One could say that Korea's government and leadership devised its policy towards the comfort women in full knowledge of how strong the Korean fascination with female chastity is.

From this same context one can also understand the situation of the Korean prostitutes serving the US Army. These women are called both "*yang galbo*" and "*yang gongju*," and while both of these words are pejoratives, the former means "Western whore" whereas the latter means "Western princess". This shows the de-facto dichotomy between approval and disapproval of prostitution existing in Korean society. Depending on the circumstances, the prostitutes might be scorned as whores or hailed as heroes.

This is the reason why war produces so many prostitutes. Even though sex is the foundation of marriage, society, and the family, morally deviant sexual acts might fall within the definition of "prostitution". Thus sex has both formal cultural and social elements as well as elements which are suppressed or kept hidden. When a society falls into disarray due to a war or another catastrophe, a dynamic interplay between these elements begins. This is the explanation of why my village invited in prostitutes and actively used them as a source of income. Thus, prostitution may have been regarded as sexually deviant, but on the other hand it was tacitly permitted as an excellent way of acquiring foreign currency.

Even now in South Korea, prostitution is tolerated within a sort of de-facto licensed prostitution system. Even half a century after the end of the Korean War, prostitution continues to thrive around US army bases. "Peace" and "war" are thus not neatly divisible, because they are like the light and the darkness that coexist in every society. The number of people who work full-time as camptown prostitutes in South Korea is said to be currently in the hundreds of thousands.

But there is one important point that we must not overlook concerning this phenomena of "sexual deviancy", and that is the fact that one of the goals of the prostitutes themselves is to use prostitution as a path to an international marriage. Korean society puts a high value on chastity and those who lose it are thought of as "fallen women". Women who lose their

chastity, including prostitutes, have a hard time getting married, and, ironically in a way, they thus have to prostitute themselves in the hopes of finding a foreign partner to marry. Furthermore, this does not apply only to camptown prostitutes, but rather, as I have made clear in this book, it is the exact same situation for coffeehouse prostitutes as well. From a macrosociological perspective, these aspects of society are often ignored, but on a microsociological level it is very important to pay due attention to the lowest rungs of society.

The scholar Kim Hyun Sook analyzed South Korean novels and concluded that the sole wish of those women who had experienced rape, divorce, or work in prostitution, was to go to the United States.

Another scholar, Andrew P. Killick, has also noted, based on the experiences of people who have coupled with Korean women, that "sexual careerwomen" in Korea like prostitutes see American men as objects of envy for potential marriages. Conversely, he says that Western men tend to worry about falling into the "trap" of marrying that sort of Korean woman.

Oh Seon-hwa has revealed how Korean women who have lost their chastity seek marriage whether through the means of prostitution, love, or noncommittal relationships. Most of these women marry foreigners such as Americans or Japanese, and there is also a tendency for them to prostitute themselves overseas.

Yang Hyunah has put at issue the discrepancy between Korean nationalist discourse and the confessions of so-called "prostitutes". That is to say, under normal political circumstances women who lose their chastity are despised, but particularly when the country is attacking an external enemy they suddenly become "victims" or "patriots", described as "the daughter of a poor family, our nation's daughter" or "good women victimized by beastly GIs." Like I noted earlier, prostitutes are also commended for their filial piety and devotion to their families.

In one study, Yoo Chul-In introduces the life story of a woman named Sunhi who became a prostitute in order to pay for the tuition of her siblings, and then ended up marrying an American. Yoo also explains the process through which she justified her own acts to herself.

It is known that acts of sexual violence like rapes were perpetrated during war, a fact very much at variance with the moral idea that wars are fought to bring peace. If war is fought to bring peace, then soldiers on the front lines must be the angels of peace. In what way should we understand the fact that these soldiers actually committed large numbers of murders and rapes both in their own countries and in enemy territories? There is a need for us to, once again, reflect deeply on the meaning of war. For me this remains one more of the big unanswered questions.

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