

Imperial Lessons: Discourses of Domination and Dissent in the 1929 Kwangju Student  
Protests

by

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## List of Abbreviations

- KKGJS Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku. *Kōshū kōnichi gakusei jiken shiryō* [Kwangju anti-Japanese student incident documents], repr. Nagoya, Japan: 1979. This document collection consists of documents collected by the Government-General in Korea's Police Bureau and includes documents originally produced by the Academic Affairs Bureau, the department responsible for setting and enforcing curriculum standards and addressing school-related problems that arose on the Korean peninsula. Also included in this collection are reports related to the rise of Communist activity on the Korean peninsula in this period and its relationship to student protest, although the agency responsible for producing these documents is unknown. The documents contained in this volume were produced between 1929 and 1931, and report on activities from 1925-1930. The documents were compiled and printed as a collection in 1979.
- NKSSS [Chōsen Sōtokufu]. *Nihon shokuminchi kyōiku seisaku shiryō shūsei (Chōsen hen)* [Japanese colonial educational policy historical document collection, Korean edition], repr., Tokyo: Ryūkei Shosha, 1987-1991. This is a 69-volume set of documents covering a wide range of educational policy documents, policy debates, curriculum directives, etc., throughout Japanese colonization of Korea. It includes reprints of education laws drafted for the Korean peninsula.
- ZNK Chōsen Sōtokufu Gakumukyoku. *Zenra Nandō Kōshū ni okeru naisenjin seito tōsō jiken no shinsō narabi ni kore ga sennai sho gakkō ni oyobashitaru eikyō* [The Incident of Japanese and Korean Student Conflict in Kwangju, Southern Chōlla Province, and its Effects on Various Schools within Korea], Chōsen Sōtokufu Gakumukyoku [Keijo]: 1930. This was a confidential report prepared and circulated within the Government-General of Korea Academic Affairs Bureau Office in January 1930, assessing the state of Korean student unrest on the Korean peninsula. Contains a number of detailed reports of the initial student protests of November 1929.

- KMHU Chosen Sōtokufu. *Kankoku minzoku kaihō undō shiryō shoshō*, Volume 10. This volume contains police records compiled by the Chōsen Sōtokufu Police Bureau, documenting the arrests, interrogations, and later court sentences of activists arrested in the early 1930s for anti-Japanese activity. The majority of the cases contained in this volume are related to other types of anti-Japanese unrest. One detainee, however, was arrested based for Kwangju-student-protest-related activism, and I have used the police transcripts of her interrogation in Chapter Three.
- KHTU Yi Ki-hong, and An Chong-ch'ōl. *Kwangju haksang tongnip undong ūn chōn'guk haksang tongnip undong iōtta* [The Kwangju Student Independence Movement was a nationwide independence movement] Kwangju, Korea: Hyangjisa, 1997. This book contains both extensive oral interviews with Yi Ki-hong, a 1929 Kwangju student protest participant and also commentary and secondary research by An Chong-ch'ōl. Therefore, I have treated portions of it as a primary source, and portions of it as a secondary source.
- SMP Yokoyama Yoshiko, *Pyonyan kensō arugamama: ai wa minzoku o koete* [Spring memories of Py'ōngyang: Love transcends ethnicity]. Tokyo: Kindai Bungeisha, 1994. This is a memoir written about a Japanese teacher's experiences moving to P'yongyang in 1929 and includes first-hand accounts of Kwangju student movement activity.
- KKSILP *Kwangju Kobo/Sōjung/ Ilgo Palshimnyōnsa 1920-2003* [Kwangju Higher Normal/ Western Middle/ First High School 80-Year History 1920-2003], Kwangju, Korea: Kwangju First High School, 2003. This is a school history that was produced by the school itself whose staff gave me a copy in 2006. It includes charts of school administrators, and a full history of both the school and the commemorative ceremonies held each year to honor participants in the both the 1929-1930 and 1943 Kwangju student movements.

## Introduction

### The 1929 Kwangju Student Protests

On the afternoon of October 30, 1929, on a train carrying students home from school in Kwangju to the nearby town of Naju in southwestern Korea, a fight broke out. According to Korean historian Pak Ch'an-sŭng's account, the fight started when two male Japanese middle school students, Fukuda Shūzō and Matsuyoshi Katsunori, along with some of their friends, began harassing female Korean student Pak Ki-ok inside the train.<sup>1</sup> Police records, newspaper articles, and eye-witness accounts concur that over the next several days, fights between Korean and Japanese students broke out every day on the trains to and from schools in the city of Kwangju, and in the train stations.

When only Korean students were arrested and prosecuted by police for their involvement in the train and train-station brawls, local student groups organized a Kwangju-wide city protest on November 3, 1929. Korean students marched through the streets of Kwangju, fought with Japanese students and police, distributed anti-Japanese handbills, and, in certain instances, destroyed public property. Despite attempts by the Japanese colonial government to keep the protests from spreading, they were echoed by sympathetic protests in other schools in the region surrounding Kwangju and in other regions and lasted until March of the following year. Historians now estimate that over the course of the next several months, approximately 54,000 students from a total of 194

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<sup>1</sup> Pak Ch'an-sŭng, *Chōnnam chibang ūi sam-il undong kwa Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undong* [The Southern Chōlla region's March First Movement and the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], *Chōnnam sahak* [Southern Chōlla Sociology], 9:0 (1995): 395- 396.

schools across the Korean peninsula participated in anti-Japanese student protests, resulting in prison terms for more than 180 students in Kwangju alone.<sup>2</sup> The student uprisings that began in Kwangju became the second-largest peninsula-wide anti-Japanese protests of the colonial period, second only to the March First Movement, which began ten years earlier on March 1, 1919.

In this dissertation, I combine memoir and oral history with colonial-era documentation, such as Japanese government records and newspaper articles, to explicate the ways in which colonial Korean public protest was undertaken, narrated, and remembered by differently-positioned participants and observers. First of all, I connect tensions on the ground in southwestern Korea to larger trends in the Japanese empire as a whole, such as the emerging popularity of Marxist thought, and increased empire-wide mobility between the colonies and the metropole. The ways in which student groups formed and met in secret, the circumstances in which the initial fights broke out and the mechanisms by which protests triggered by a small scuffle between students on a train expanded into a nationwide movement, for example, all reflected the enormous transformation in public space in Korea created by new Japanese colonial practices. These practices, such as new and modern city planning, road building, school construction, and the laying of train tracks, profoundly influenced the face of public protest on the Korean peninsula. At the same time, the appropriation of public space that was central to the Kwangju student movement forced Japanese settlers and officials alike to confront and renegotiate the limits of their spheres of colonial social control.

Second of all, I focus on how the Kwangju students themselves, through their own writings and in oral interviews, conceived of their identities both as Koreans and as

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 405.

Japanese colonial subjects. By 1929, the school system had begun to produce a large number of elite, highly-qualified graduates who were unable to find jobs commensurate with their skills and education level, who found themselves caught in the contradictions of a newly emerging colonial modernity. These graduates, especially those who had traveled to and spent significant time in Japan, were thus returning to their hometowns in places like Kwangju alienated and eager to organize students to rebel against what they saw as a fundamentally discriminatory system. The content of student protest manifestoes and other extant documentation reveals that the independent Korea that protesting students were fighting for was at times a fluid entity, a goal that was flexible enough to accommodate within it a range of subjectivities, ideas and objectives.

I analyze the discursive metaphors by which student protesters chose to articulate calls for solidarity in independence activism, and argue that students explicitly wrote and distributed manifestoes as an attempt to counter Japanese colonial hegemony by inscribing their own meanings onto their acts of public protest. In their writings, students continually called for solidarity along the lines of the Korean *minjok* (J. *minzoku*), a term which I translate as “nation” or “people.” Some of students’ rhetorical choices in constructing the identity of the *minjok* were inspired by Korean historical writing, others were direct inversions of Japanese colonial discourse, and still others were drawn from the Marxist language of anti-capitalist struggle. Throughout these different iterations, the concept of the *minjok* (and in particular, its boundaries and limitations) remained salient for a wide range of differently-positioned actors. In a similar vein, I leave the protest call issued by the students, “*manse*,” in the original Korean when it appears by itself, and translate it as “long live” when it appears preceding a noun. My aim is to highlight how



vague its' concrete meanings indeed were and how diversely it was applied by protesting students.

Third of all, I analyze the gendered tensions that accompanied the emergence of female students into colonial Korean public space in large numbers in the 1920s. The reports of the harassment on the train and the calls to protest clearly had lasting resonance with female students in particular. A large number of girls' school students, and at times these students' female teachers, staged sympathetic protests well into 1930. I compare and contrast organization and protest by female students with that of their male counterparts to reveal how women's political agency was not only denied by the Japanese colonial state but also by post-colonial scholarship, in different ways, by South Korean protest memorial museums. These post-colonial reexaminations, through either removing mention of female protest activity altogether or through characterizing it as minor and insignificant, have inadvertently represented colonial-era Kwangju student activity as unambiguously gendered male.

In addition to the well-known student protests of 1929-1930, I continue to trace these themes of public space, identity, and gender throughout a second, less successful student movement that also began in Kwangju. This latter movement emerged in 1943 at the height of the Pacific War but failed to become a national resistance movement. I also critically account for post-liberation commemorations of colonial-period Kwangju student activism, as found in museums, archives, architectural preservations, etc. By reading public colonial period documents against classified police interrogation records of incarcerated students and post-liberation memoirs and oral interviews, I focus on how

these remembered narratives of dissent and conflict—Korean and Japanese, colonial-era and post-colonial—echo, expand, and continue to inform the present day.

### Sources and Methodology

I use a variety of contemporaneous sources in *Imperial Lessons*, as well as those produced in Korea and Japan after the colonial period ended. In order to reconstruct the narratives of both colonial domination and of student protest from 1929 and 1930, I examine Korean-language newspapers, such as the *Chosŏn ilbo* and the *Tonga ilbo*, as well as a number of different internal reports produced by the Government-General of Korea's Academic Affairs Bureau, which oversaw Korean schools, and as such, paid close attention to incidents of student unrest. I interviewed both witnesses to and participants in Kwangju-related student protest and also utilize post-colonial personal memoirs, biographies, and auto-biographies published in Japan and Korea. While Korean scholars have explored the Kwangju Student Movement from a variety of angles, here I specifically aim to trace the ways in which narratives and memories of public resistance and its consequences echo throughout the colonial period and beyond, as heard in the voices of student protest participants themselves, colonial officials and other observers, and the narratives presented at post-colonial commemorative sites.

In contrast to other primary sources (such as colonial-era police reports, government documents, and newspaper articles), students' recollections of their involvement in the protests only emerged with the end of Japanese colonialism in 1945, when student protest participants began to tell their stories in ways that had been impossible under Japanese rule. These narratives, however, do not cease to be politically

inflected simply because the colonial period has drawn to a close. Instead, I was repeatedly and powerfully struck by the ways in which interviewees all seemed to have some element of their stories which they felt contradicted not only colonial-era public discourses but also public discourses about the colonial period that have emerged within post-colonial South Korea as well. These students' stories have been told, retold, commemorated, and taught in schools in a number of different iterations from 1945 to the present. In this dissertation, I focus on how those who witnessed or participated in these events tell their stories, as well as how these stories have been silenced or sanctioned by the South Korean state.

This type of retroactive reconstruction of events poses a number of historiographical challenges which are certainly not unique to the Kwangju student protests in colonial Korea—there is a vast literature on the historiography of memory, ranging from works on the Holocaust to memories of recent African genocides, not to mention an on-going dialogue about the role of memory and narrative in daily life and popular culture.<sup>3</sup> In relation to Japanese colonialism in particular, a great deal has been

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<sup>3</sup> The most well-known literature on the historiography of memory can be found in writings on World War Two in Europe, and the Holocaust in particular, is remembered. For some representative examples of this historiography, see Stephen C. Feinstein, ed., *Absence/Presence: Critical Essays on the Artistic Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 2005); David Cesarani, ed., *After Eichman: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961* (Routledge: London; New York, 2005); Madeline Fox, Kayhan Irani, and Rickie Solinger, eds., *Telling Stories to Change the World: Global Voices on the Power of Narrative to Build Community and Make Social Justice Claims*, (Routledge: New York, NY, 2008); and Alon Confino "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102: 5 (December 1997): 1386-1403. In addition, this issue of how memory relates to both cultural production and sense of identities is certainly not limited to the field of history. For example, in his work *Stumbling on Happiness*, Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert discusses how memory functions to fill in "gaps" in our cognition, and to weave stories that make sense to us as individuals on a number of levels, biological, cultural, and otherwise. Daniel Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, NY, 2006). In his *New York Times* article reviewing trends in recent Holocaust movies, A.O. Scott points to the dangers of "domesticating" the Holocaust through an increasingly streamlined and simplified narrative that stands in for complex personal memories, and which, in turn, dictate only one acceptable response to the consumption of this narrative. A. O. Scott, "Never Forget. You're Reminded," *New York Times*, November 21, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/23/movies/23scot.html\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=never%20forget%20you%27re%20reminded&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/23/movies/23scot.html_r=1&scp=1&sq=never%20forget%20you%27re%20reminded&st=cse).

written about the oral testimonies of former “comfort women,” and both the possibilities and the limitations of oral history as a form of representing the past. As Carol Gluck has noted, those who had served as comfort women required the creation of a social space in which they could speak and be heard before they could share their stories.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, feminist scholar Chizuko Ueno points out that comfort women narratives shift depending on the audience and that there can be many different tellings of the same story. Ueno notes that these shifts highlight an inconsistency that is often masked, yet still present, in documentary history. With documentary history, Ueno asserts, documents themselves are produced by discrete individuals, intended for specific audiences, and archived in active ways, and yet are often regarded as the only legitimate form of historical documentation.<sup>5</sup> Spoken accounts of remembered events, on the other hand, unlike written documents, can be continually rewritten and re-imagined in new ways, especially as individual narratives are either upheld or obscured by the nation-state.

In direct contrast to the narratives of former “comfort women,” participants in the Kwangju student protests of 1929 have been celebrated by the post-colonial South Korean state in ways that highlight their commitment to Korean nationalism above all else and serve to obscure the complexity of individual student experiences and the ways in which their protests were shaped by additional factors beyond the desire for an

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Related to Japan, a number of historians have written about the role of memory in relation to the construction of history, most commonly in relation to how the Pacific War is remembered and commemorated. For example, see Julia A. Thomas, “Photography, National Identity, and the ‘Cataract of Times’: Wartime Images and the Case of Japan,” *The American Historical Review*, 103:5 (Dec., 1998): 1475-1501 and Sabine Fruhstuck, *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory, and Popular Culture in the Japanese Army* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Chizuko Ueno, *Nationalism and Gender*; trans. Beverley Yamamoto (Melbourne, AU: Trans Pacific Press, 2004), 204-205.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

independent Korean nation. Throughout Asia and the world in World War Two historian Carol Gluck tells us, “the nation-state was the subject of war, and its subjects were twice mobilized, first for national sacrifice, and then for national memory, in which all war stories were melded monolithically into a single national narrative.”<sup>6</sup> In the case of former student protest participants, we see in the documents at the time of the protests and the ways in which the protesters’ stories have been told in the post-war era reveal that the dual mobilization that Carol Gluck notes with World War II was even more complicated in colonial Korea because of the simultaneous and overlapping mobilizations of empire and nation-state.

In using post-1945 memoirs, published oral interviews, and interviews with former activists and observers, I face not only challenges of historical memory, but also that challenge of utilizing oral history in a meaningful way, which is another historiographically rich field of inquiry across historical fields. Italian historian Luisa Passerini argues that while oral histories may be shifting and by nature partial, they tell us a great deal about the subjectivity of the speaker, both at the time of the remembered event, and at the time of the interview.<sup>7</sup> In the words of historian Alessandro Portelli, “the...thing that makes oral history different...is that it tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*.”<sup>8</sup> Even more radically, Australian historian Alistair Thompson argues that:

Oral histories can help us understand how and why national mythologies work (and don’t work) for individuals, and in our society generally. It can

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<sup>6</sup> Carol Gluck, “Operations of Memory: ‘Comfort Women’ and the World,” *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*, ed. Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Rana Mitter (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 48.

<sup>7</sup> Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 53-62.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

also reveal the possibilities, and difficulties, of developing and sustaining oppositional memories, these understandings can enable us to participate more effectively as historians and in collective struggle for more democratic and radical versions of our past and of what we can become.<sup>9</sup>

With this in mind, I examine colonial-era Kwangju student activism as a series of moments in which a number of complex factors come into play, beyond (and in addition to) nationalism and the socialist thought that was inspired by the reading material that students studied in secret. I use oral interviews, memoirs, and other types of narratives to uncover how students understood their own actions at the time, and how their actions have subsequently come to be understood.

I used several different methods to locate interviewees for this project. First, I was introduced to my first interviewee, Kan So-mi, through Professor Komagome Takeshi at Kyoto University as part of an oral history project in which I participated while doing fieldwork at Institute for Research in Humanities there. Conducting this and several other oral interviews as part of this project convinced me of the importance of locating more oral interviewees for my own research. With the assistance of Sungyun Lim, a fellow graduate student who was also studying at Kyoto University, I contacted memorial museums in Kwangju to locate the names of former student protest participants. I was further assisted when Pae Chong-guk, then the head of an association of former Kwangju student protest participants and one of my interviewees, enthusiastically took up my cause and began to contact potential interviewees on my behalf. Third, I began calling former Japanese students of schools on the Korean peninsula whose names were listed in alumni directories. Finally, I also included excerpts in the dissertation from a series of oral interviews of a 1929 Kwangju student protest participant, Yi Ki-hong, which were

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 310.

included in the book *Kwangju haksaeng tongnip undong ũn chŏn'guk haksaeng tongnip undong iŏtta* [The Kwangju student independence movement was a nationwide independence movement]. In this work, scholar and co-author An Chong-ch'ŏl, interviewed Yi Ki-hong extensively and reprinted the interviews along with commentary and charts of written sources related to Yi's narrative, such as contemporaneous newspaper articles addressing events Yi described.

### Issues of Language

Language is a central issue throughout this dissertation on a number of levels. When conducting oral interviews, I always asked each interviewee to choose the language in which they preferred to conduct the interview. There were certainly times when their choices surprised me. Both Kan So-mi and Kuk Sŏng-jun, for example, chose to be interviewed in Japanese, although Korean was their native language, but expressed very different reasons for doing so. Kan emigrated from Korea to Japan in 1946 and has lived there ever since. (The Romanization of her name used in this dissertation is based on the Japanese pronunciation she has selected.) She chose to be interviewed in Japanese because she said she was very used to using it on a daily basis. Conversely, Kuk, despite his anti-Japanese activism during the colonial period and his criticisms of Japanese rule, explained to me that he had always found learning the Japanese language itself to be easy and fun. He opted to be interviewed in Japanese, since he said that he hadn't had a chance to speak Japanese since the colonial period ended. Still other interviewees chose to be interviewed in their native languages. These linguistic choices on the part of the

interviewees were not incidental. Instead, they reveal how intimately issues of language were interwoven with the experiences of colonialism, war and their aftermaths.

Another way in which language issues emerge at the research level are in the form of the extant documentation surrounding the 1929-1930 and 1943 Kwangju student movements. Protesting students wrote their protest manifestoes in Korean, although there were occasionally exceptions, such as when they aimed to address Japanese officials directly. For the most part, however, every one of the large volume of manifestoes produced during colonial-era Kwangju-related student activism was originally written in Korean. Japanese colonial officials, in the course of trying to route Korean student protest, collected, translated, and documented these manifestoes. There were cases in which Japanese officials included copies of the original Korean-language manifestoes in their records (such as when trying to identify the range of representations of Korean flags used in the student manifestoes, which required image-based evidence in addition to text), but otherwise, all manifestoes were translated at the time of documentation. Because the Japanese records generally provide the only extant access to these manifestoes, I used the Japanese translations as source material for this dissertation. I also used a number of colonial-era documents that recorded direct quotations from Korean detained by Japanese police, reports from teachers about student unrest in which they restated students' words, and other documents which recorded Korean students' words in Japanese. Throughout the dissertation, whenever Korean students are quoted as speaking in Japanese, it is because they either chose to be interviewed in Japanese in an oral interview, or because their words were recorded in Japanese by colonial officials or other Japanese speakers.



These issues, again, are not incidental or secondary to the history of colonial Korean. Instead, they are directly interwoven with the ways in which language and power operated in mutually reinforcing ways throughout the Japanese colonization of the Korean peninsula. From the beginning of Japanese rule, Japanese was instituted as the *lingua franca* of colonial Korea and used in all official contexts. Conversely, student activists repeatedly invoked speaking Korean and learning Korean in schools as both a protest demand and as a marker of identity. In the second series of protests in 1943, by which point using Korean in schools and other public places had been forbidden, using Korean took on an even more subversive cast and the required use of Japanese language was repeatedly targeted in students' critiques of colonial rule. At the same time, the fact that student protesters in 1943 were criticized by their fellow students as resisting speaking Japanese because they were unskilled at it also reveals the degree to which the use of Japanese served as both a class marker and as a mark of intimacy with ruling authorities in colonial Korea. This was not to say, however, that Japanese language ability could not be utilized for subversive means as well, as we see in the 1929-1930 Kwangju student movement, in which students drew much of their knowledge of Marxist ideology from Japanese works.

### Language, Newspapers, and Nationalism

In his famous work, *Imagined Communities*, historian Benedict Anderson connects the rise of modern nationalism to the emergence of print capitalism, and in particular, to the rise of the newspaper.<sup>10</sup> In discussing Anderson's work in relation to the

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<sup>10</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 1-9.

turn of the century on Korean peninsula, historian Andre Schmid tells us that not only the format and the language used but also the content of Korean newspapers was expressly nationalist. In Schmid's words:

The cacophony of a daily newspaper...captured the many voices claiming to speak on behalf of the nation and the diverse ways in which the nation could be invoked by these writers...What is striking about the media of the era is the rather paradoxical juxtaposition of the sheer volume of national knowledge offered to readers at the same time as editors bemoaned the lack of information about the nation...The fifteen years between 1895 and 1910 were variously described as a time of change, an era of reform, a period of transition, and, most of all, a time of crisis.<sup>11</sup>

The centrality of language in the discourse of nationalism was one that had existed prior to the colonial period as well. In the period between 1896 and 1898, for example, Korean leftist intellectuals formed an organization called "The Independence Club" to debate national issues.<sup>12</sup> The Club's publication, entitled the *Tongnip sinmun* or "The Independent," is often seen as Korea's first modern newspaper. According to historian Michael Robinson:

The newspaper deliberately used the vernacular script, *han'gul*, to make it accessible to the Korean masses. Although *han'gul* had been invented in 1443, classical Chinese had continued as the official court written language as well as the literary language of the yangban. From the beginning, the vernacular script itself was controversial, opposed by conservative officials as vulgar and demeaning. Its use by Buddhists, novelists, and women sustained its development until the Independence Club embraced vernacular use as a patriotic issue.<sup>13</sup>

Robinson also tells us the Independence Club and some of the issues addressed in its publication triggered several large street rallies, meaning that connections between written language, especially written vernacular, and street protest was a practice that

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<sup>11</sup> Andre Schmid *Korea between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 26-27.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

predated the Japanese colonization of the Korean peninsula. In general, publications fell under Japanese censorship more and more during the protectorate period, with strict publication laws introduced by the Japanese in 1907, 1908 and 1909. With Japanese colonization, Korean-language newspapers were censored altogether, a ban that was not removed until the implementation of *bunka seiji* policies post-1919. In 1920, two newspaper licenses were granted to Korean vernacular newspapers, the *Tonga ilbo* and the *Chosŏn ilbo* and a number of magazines and journals began publication in Korean at this time as well. Newspaper reporting was considered an honorable career for male Korean intellectuals in this period, and was a crucial site of rigorous (albeit censored) debate about the Korean nation and its discontents.<sup>14</sup> As we will see, Korean vernacular newspapers also played a large role in the spread of 1929-1930 Kwangju-related student activism. This was a role that was feared by Japanese authorities to the degree that the Government-General ordered an official news embargo on news related to student protest which lasted from November 12-December 28, 1929, fearing that reported incidents of student strife would trigger more anti-Japanese protest activity among Korean students in the colony.<sup>15</sup>

#### Governmentality and Japanese Official Documentation of Unrest

Historians have long noted the degree to which Japanese control of the Korean peninsula relied on the obsessive collection and analysis of statistical data as a form of justifying colonial domination, monitoring Koreans in a variety of settings, and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> On November 11<sup>th</sup>, both the *Chosŏn ilbo* and the *Tonga ilbo* ran announcements of the Government-General ban on Kwangju student protest-related news. *Chosŏn ilbo*, November 11, 1929, 2; *Tonga ilbo*, November 11, 1929, 2.

documenting the efficacy of a wide range of colonial reform, from agricultural improvements to eugenics and reproductive advances to the degree of loyalty exhibited by Koreans in relation to the Japanese empire.<sup>16</sup> Less has been said, however, about the narrative commentary that also served as a mainstay of Japanese colonial practice. In Japan, extensive documentation about the loyalty, political leanings, and daily activities of citizens reached its peak during the Pacific War.<sup>17</sup> In the Kwangju student protests, a number of Japanese colonial government agencies, most notably the colonial police and the Academic Affairs Bureau, kept extensive reports about the nature of the student protests. These reports noted the names of students who participated, the types of language and behavior exhibited by students, the interventions of teachers, and the measures taken by local officials to keep the protests from spreading. At the same time, despite the extensive and often repetitive nature of Japanese documentation of Korean resistance, which clearly aimed to domesticate unrest by recording it in writing and framing it within officially sanctioned narratives, the vast number of documents that repeat similar stories are also notable for the elements that they elide: namely, the violence that undergirded Japanese official discourse naturalizing documentation. Even now, for example, statistics related to the exact number of casualties resulting from Japanese violence towards protesters in the March First Movement vary.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, it is extremely difficult to determine from Japanese documentation how many Korean students were injured and killed due to their participation in Kwangju-related protest

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Chul-Woo Lee, "Modernity, Legality, and Power in Korea Under Japanese Rule," *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 36-38.

<sup>17</sup> John Dower extensively documents these types of wartime government reports in "Sensational Rumors, Seditious Graffiti, and the Nightmares of the Thought Police," *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New York: New Press, 1993), 101-140.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the conflicting reports of participants in and injuries resulting from March First, see Michael Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea*, 44-45.

activity, even as we can determine through student actions that they deeply feared Japanese authorities, especially Japanese police.

### Chapter Outline

This dissertation consists of a total of four body chapters and an epilogue. Chapter One, “‘An Extremely Small Incident of Hurt Feelings’: The Initial Kwangju Student Protests,” argues that the initial Korean protest participants, as well as Japanese students and authorities, narrated incidents of public violence in ways that reveal key facets of how they understood their role in public life in late 1920s colonial Korea, as well as their positions within the Japanese empire as a whole. Here, I study the immediate background of the first 1929 Kwangju student protests and analyze the impact of recent colonial education reforms on student life. I demonstrate how late 1920s economic hardships affected the student population in particular and the larger social dynamics of the Korean peninsula in general while highlighting the importance of Korean student participation in secret reading groups in 1929 and before.

In Chapter Two, “‘Let This Be the Catalyst for Our Independence’: The Spread throughout Korea,” I posit that student protests continued as long as they did despite repression by colonial authorities because of covert Korean social activist networks in addition to the power of rumor and hearsay. Each stage of the protests included consistent calls for independence and colonial education reform but also produced a diversity of local demands often seemingly at odds with the movement’s larger goals. Focusing on the regional specificity of the movement’s spread, I critique these goals to illustrate how students used the framework of the larger protest movement to forward personal concerns,

concerns which highlight their views of the colonial Korean education system and their place within it.

Chapter Three, “Gender, Nationalism, and Protest,” traces how both the Japanese colonial education system and the student protest movement were gendered in complex ways. I argue that first incident of conflict between Korean and Japanese students on the train resonated differently with Korean female students than it did with their male counterparts. Japanese police and other authorities, eye witnesses, and male protest participants interpreted female protest participation as emblematic of a new type of colonial modernity in Korea, which in turn colored interpretations of the protest movement itself and the responses it invoked.

Chapter Four, “1943 and Its Discontents,” addresses a second, smaller student protest that was staged in Kwangju in 1943. By 1943, the issues raised related to social class, education, and the war effort were dramatically different than those in 1929 and reveal a fracturing of social identity among Korean students themselves. These protests show not only the level to which Japanese efforts to assimilate elite Koreans had succeeded by the late colonial period but also give us insight into which students continued to resist Japanese colonization, and why.

In the dissertation epilogue, “The Kwangju Student Protests in Post-Liberation Public Memory,” I demonstrate how public commemorations of colonial period student activism streamline the stories of colonial period resistance, celebrating certain elements of student protest and obscuring others. I examine a variety of sites in which the colonial-era 1929 Kwangju student protests are commemorated and explore how and to what end

the colonial-era Kwangju student protests have been remembered, and what this tells us about how the colonial period itself is understood in South Korea.

## Chapter One

### **“An Extremely Small Problem of Hurt Feelings”: The Initial Outbreak of Street Protests in 1929 Kwangju**

#### Introduction

On the afternoon of October 30, 1929, a fight started between Japanese and Korean students on a train home from school in Southern Chōlla Province. Takabe Kin'ichi, the Japanese official serving as the Chief of the Academic Affairs Bureau of the Government-General at the time, later reported that the fight had begun entirely innocently. Two Japanese middle school students on their way home from school, Takabe wrote in his government report, had been playing around in front of the ticket gate as they left Naju Station when they had to move to dodge a small child, at which point they accidentally stepped in front of a female Korean student who was also returning from school. Her brother who was with her, the report went on to note, exchanged words with the Japanese students, demanded to know why they were “displaying such contemptuous behavior and running back and forth in front of a female student,” and started a fight with them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Kōshū Chūgakkō seito tai Kōshū Kōto Futsū Gakkō seito tōsō jiken no taiyō* [A summary of the incident of conflict between Kwangju middle school students and Kwangju Higher Normal School Students], [Keijō: 1929] in Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku, *Kōshū kōnichi gakusei jiken shiryō* [Kwangju anti-Japanese student incident documents], repr., (Nagoya, Japan: 1979), 42 (hereafter cited in text as *KKGJS*).

In this document collection, Takabe is only referred to by his title, but his name appears in a number of contemporaneous government documents which note that he took office on October 9, 1929 and served until June 27, 1931. For a complete listing of Academic Affairs Bureau positions, policies, and other education-related information for colonial Korea, see *Saishi to kyōiku* [Rites and education] in Chōsen Sotokufu, *Zōho Chōsen Sōtokufu sanjūnen shi* [Expanded Government-General 30-Year history], [Keijo: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1935], repr., (Tokyo: Kuresu Shuppan, 1999), 2:583-588.



According to Korean historian Pak Ch'an-sŭng's account, however, the Korean students present described what had happened in entirely different terms. The cause of the fight, they later recounted, began earlier, when the two male Japanese middle school students, Fukuda Shūzō and Matsuyoshi Katsunori, along with some of their friends, began harassing female Korean student Pak Ki-ok and pulled her braids inside the train. As the students disembarked from the train, Pak Ki-ok's brother, Pak Chun-chae, a second-year student at Kwangju Higher Common School (*Kōshū Kōtō Futsū Gakkō*), confronted Fukuda, who dismissed him as a "*senjin*," a derogatory word for Koreans during the colonial period. As soon as the words left Fukuda's mouth, Pak Chun-chae punched him. Immediately a mêlée began between approximately 30 Korean students and 50 Japanese students who were on their way home from school, and passing through Naju Station. A Japanese policeman making his rounds heard the commotion and came running, and upon hearing that Pak Chun-chae had thrown the first punch, began to beat him indiscriminately. When the Korean students present objected, the officer forcibly dispersed the crowds.<sup>2</sup>

Over the next several days, fights between Korean and Japanese students broke out every day on the trains to and from schools in the city of Kwangju and in the train

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<sup>2</sup> Pak Ch'an-sŭng, *Chōnnam chibang ūi sam-il undong kwa Kwangju haksae tongnip undong* [The Southern Chōlla region's March First Movement and the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], *Chōnnam sahak* [Southern Chōlla Sociology], 9:0 (1995): 395- 396. It is noteworthy here that this version of events is by far the most commonly known in South Korea today. However, recent historians, such as Pak Ch'an-sŭng have argued that while it is verifiable that a fight between these students inside the train sparked the larger student movement, the detail about Pak Ki-ok's braids being pulled was in fact added to the historical record much later and does not appear in original records of the incident, or in interviews with survivors that have since been published. Pak Ch'an-sŭng, et al., *Kwangju haksae tongnip undong kwa Naju* [Naju and the Kwangju Student Independence Movement] (Seoul, Korea: Kyōngin Munhwasa, 2001), 87. Kashima Setsuko claims that Fukuda and his friends pulled the ribbon at the top of Pak Ki Ok's *changori*, or traditional Korean clothing, rather than her braids, but does not cite her source for this claim. Kashima also asserts that the *senjin* insult was hurled towards Pak Ki-ok and not towards her brother. Kashima Setsuko, *Kaisetsu: Kōshū gakusei undō* [Commentary: The Kwangju Student Movement] in *Shokuminchika Chōsen: Kōshyū gakusei undō no kenkyū* [Colonial Korea: Studies of the Kwangju Student Movement] (Kobe, Japan: Mukuge no kai, 1990), 9.

stations. Finally, tensions openly erupted on November 3, 1929, a day which coincided with the Japanese anniversary of the Meiji emperor's birthday.<sup>3</sup> On that day, Korean students marched through the streets of Kwangju, fought with Japanese students and police, and, in certain instances, targeted and destroyed public property. Despite attempts by the Japanese colonial government to keep the protests from spreading, they were echoed by sympathetic protests which lasted until March of the following year in the region surrounding Kwangju and throughout other regions of the Korean peninsula as well. Historians now estimate that over the course of the next several months, approximately 54,000 students from a total of 194 schools across the Korean peninsula participated in anti-Japanese student protests, resulting in prison terms for more than 180 students in Kwangju alone.<sup>4</sup> The student uprisings that began in Kwangju became the second-largest peninsula-wide anti-Japanese protest of the colonial period, second only to the March First Movement, which began ten years earlier on March 1, 1919.

As we can see from the discrepancies that emerge when comparing the accounts of eye witnesses, participants, and those who subsequently wrote about this initial fight in the train station, public space in colonial Korea was experienced (and subsequently remembered) in divergent ways by those who shared it. In this chapter, I focus on the processes by which a single fight on a train among teenage students in a small city in Korea triggered a nationwide anti-Japanese protest movement. By exploring the political realities of Japanese colonialism at this time, I show how larger trends that were

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<sup>3</sup> Although secondary sources often note this day also coincided with Korean National Foundation Day according to the lunar calendar and make much of the convergence of these two events, I have not encountered any mention of this in contemporaneous documents nor while conducting oral interviews with protest participants. Although this holiday had been established prior to the colonial period, it was not well-known and well-publicized among Koreans until after 1945.

<sup>4</sup> Pak Ch'an-sŭng, *Chōnnam chibang ūi sam-il undong kwa kwangju haksae tongnip undong* [The Southern Chōlla region's March First Movement and the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], 405.

occurring on an empire-wide level caused tensions between Japanese and Korean students to escalate. At the same time, these spaces also gave Korean students new physical spaces and new vocabularies by which to voice their discontent with the Japanese colonial regime. The student protests that began in Kwangju were very much linked to larger social shifts of the 1920s, such as the educational policy changes in Korea that immediately preceded these protests. Also, the physical transformations of Kwangju (which were part of similar physical transformations happening throughout Korea, and throughout the Japanese empire as whole) caused a concentration of tensions which, once they broke out, proved impossible to contain. In addition to the ways in which colonial policies transformed public space and the experience of moving through it, Korean students were also affected by larger economic issues which affected the future that could envision for themselves once they completed school. The rise in popularity of contraband socialist literature circulated among Korean students also helped to structure the reading groups they formed to discuss this literature and to ultimately create the networks necessary to effectively mobilize student activism in Kwangju. By reading former student protest participants' own words against the larger context of rapid physical, social, and economic change in the Japanese empire, I argue that the initial tensions and protests in Naju and Kwangju<sup>5</sup> were triggered by the intersections of two unintended outcomes of colonial educational policy changes in the 1920s. First, the rapid increase in schools

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<sup>5</sup> These protests are generally referred to in South Korea as the “Kwangju Student Movement” (*Kwangju haksæng undong*) or as the “Kwangju Student Independence Movement” (*Kwangju haksæng tongnip undong*) to distinguish them from later student activism in Kwangju. There are a number of Korean books that utilize this wording in their titles. I follow this nomenclature because this is the most common way these protests are referred to in both Japanese and Korean scholarship (and in scholarship that references these protests in English). However, Pak Ch'an-sung and others have compellingly argued that this name is to some degree a misnomer, because students in and around the town of Naju who commuted daily on the trains played a more central role in the initial tensions and protests than did students who actually lived within the city limits of Kwangju. Pak Ch'an-sung, et al., *Kwangju haksæng tongnip undong kwa Naju* [The Kwangju student independence movement and Naju], 14-17.

produced by Japanese colonial education reform on the Korean peninsula in the early 1920s paired with the sharp economic downturn throughout the Japanese empire overproduced educated Korean students. By the end of the same decade, these students became increasingly aware that their elite Japanese education was no guarantee of a secure future, economically or socially. Second, as students were experiencing these frustrations, the expansion of educational opportunities for Koreans gave them access to concrete skills and frameworks which they could use to plan for, initiate, and sustain anti-Japanese protests.

### Education on the Korean Peninsula

Using education as an expressly political tool was a central goal of the Korean Government-General from the beginning of Japanese colonization. In April 1911, the year following annexation, Director Usami Katsuo of the Government-General of Korea's Internal Affairs Bureau addressed an assembly of principals of normal schools (the elementary schools on the Korean peninsula which were established expressly for Korean students) by saying:

The Government-General regards the public common schools as one of the most important factors in attaining success in the administration of Chōsen, and...your responsibility and duty is thus heavy and great... You must never forget that the aim of a common school is not the giving of a preparatory education to children but [rather]...making...them into good and loyal citizens.<sup>6</sup>

In a second, similar speech to Japanese teachers, Director Usami again stressed, “You cannot be said to have succeeded in your work [as educators] by merely enabling your

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<sup>6</sup> Governor General of Chosen, *Manual of Education in Chosen 1920* [Original translation, Chōsen Sōtokufu: 1920] in *Nihon shokuminchi kyōiku seisaku shiryōshū (Chōsen hen)*, [Japanese Colonial Education Document Collection, Korean Edition], repr., Tokyo: Ryūkei Shosha, 1987-1991, 2: 31-32.

Korean pupils to read and write, unless you make of them good and loyal citizens of the Empire.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1919, the March First Movement, the largest protest movement of the colonial period, swept through the Korean peninsula. Historian E. Patricia Tsurumi tells us that “viciously and unhesitatingly the Japanese stamped out the [March First] rebellion, but they could not help noticing that public as well as private school students took a very active part in it.”<sup>8</sup> Political scientist Chong-shik Lee notes that:

In the early stages of the movement, only the students of middle school level and higher were involved, but pupils in the elementary schools participated later. Japanese government statistics indicate that out of a student population of 133,557 there were 11,113 who took part.<sup>9</sup>

As a response to the March First Movement, the Japanese colonial government began a series of wide-ranging colonial educational reforms in the early 1920s. In 1922, a new Colonial Education Law (*Chosen kyōiku rei*) was issued, and a massive Government-General-initiated wave of school construction and expansion was undertaken throughout Korea.<sup>10</sup> After hastily-revised textbooks were rushed into Korean classrooms immediately after March First, the Japanese Government-General issued new, carefully reworked textbooks into Korean schools in 1923,<sup>11</sup> which supposedly reflected the new outlook of the Japanese government towards Korea in the aftermath of March First: that

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>8</sup> E. Patricia Tsurumi, “Colonial Education in Taiwan and Korea,” in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 302.

<sup>9</sup> As quoted in Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Sasaki Michio, *Nijūnendai no Chōsen shokuminchi kyōiku* [1920s Colonial Korean education] in *Shokuminchika Chōsen: Kōshū gakusei undō no kenkyū* [Colonial Korea: Studies of the Kwangju Student Movement] (Kobe, Japan: Muge no kai, 1990), 113.

<sup>11</sup> 1923, notably, was also the year of the Great Kanto Earthquake, after which anti-Korean hysteria within the Japanese islands reached a crescendo. For more on how these tensions played out within Japan, see Joshua Hammer, *Yokohama Burning: the Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire that Helped Forge the Path to World War II* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2006), and Michael Weiner, *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan* (London, England; New York, NY: Routledge, 1994).

of *isshi dōjin* or, as translated by Mark Peattie in *The Japanese Colonial Empire*, “impartiality and equal favor.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1920, the year after the March First Movement, a pamphlet published by the Government-General asserted that while many Koreans were initially distrustful of the Japanese-run common schools erected after annexation in 1910, “the earnest endeavors and good work...done by the common school directors, school authorities, and local officials, however, gradually secured their confidence,” and the numbers of “Korean children desiring admittance to public common schools dramatically increased.”<sup>13</sup> In fact, the pamphlet went on to claim:

The value of these...public common schools [graduates] gradually became known to members of their [own families] as well as to [outsiders] ...and they act as a connecting link between the officials and the people. In this way, they have been successfully instrumental in directly making known to their elders and neighbors what the new education is, ...in making themselves a nucleus for promoting friendly relations between the Japanese and Koreans and [acting] as forerunners for effecting the assimilation of the two peoples.<sup>14</sup>

In these types of public iterations, both before and after the new education reforms, we see how the Government-General upheld Korean elementary education not simply as a way of transforming Korean children into loyal Japanese imperial subjects, but also as a means by which the benefits brought by participating in the Japanese colonial enterprise could be influentially demonstrated throughout larger Korean communities. Especially in a place like Kwangju and the surrounding areas, which had a notably sparse Japanese

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<sup>12</sup> Mark R. Peattie, Introduction, *The Japanese Colonial Empire*, 41.

<sup>13</sup> Governor General of Chosen, *Manual of Education in Chosen*, 2:50.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

population,<sup>15</sup> the first direct encounter many Koreans had with the workings of the Japanese state would have been through their education.

It is ironic, then, that some of the steps that Japanese colonial officials took in the wake of the March First Movement to offset future Korean activism inadvertently contributed to the tensions which culminated in the 1929 Kwangju student movement. In 1922, the Japanese Government-General in Korea issued a revised Korean Educational Law (*Chōsen kyōiku rei*), which, while theoretically formed as part of the Japanese colonial policy emphasizing “*isshi dōjin*,” in actuality reflected and reinforced many of the social divisions and inequalities that manifested themselves later in the Kwangju student protests. This new educational law’s most striking feature was that it covered “education in Korea,” (*chōsen ni okeru kyōiku*), meaning it included schools for Japanese as well as for Korean students under its auspices. This was a significant departure from the initial education law promulgated in 1911, just after the annexation of Korea, which only covered education for Korean students (*chōsenjin no kyōiku*) specifically. Similarly, in distinguishing schools primarily aimed at Japanese students as opposed to those intended for Korean students, the law did not specify students’ nationality, and instead classified Korean schools as providing instruction “for those who do not regularly use the national language” (*kokugo o jōyō sezaruru mono ni*).<sup>16</sup> By “national language,” colonial

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<sup>15</sup> Pak Ch’an-sung notes this, arguing that is one of the reasons for the comparatively minor activism in Kwangju surrounding the March First Movement. Pak suggests that at this juncture, contact between Japanese and Koreans in the region was still minimal enough to not induce major tensions. Other scholars, however, have suggested that cities with less of a Japanese presence had more March First activity, whereas cities with the largest proportional Japanese populations (most notably Pusan), tended to have lower rates, primarily because for the Japanese settlers, larger numbers reduced the threat they faced from Korean unrest. For an in-depth analysis of March First Movement across Korea, see Frank P. Baldwin, “The March First Movement: Korean Challenge and Japanese Response” (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> *Chōsen kyōiku rei* [Korean Education Law], 1922, reprinted in *Nihon shokuminchi kyōiku seisaku shiryōshū* (*Chōsenhen*), [Japanese Colonial Education Document Collection, Korean Edition] 16: 10.

officials meant not Korean but Japanese, which they stressed was the *lingua franca* of the empire. By stating that the separation of schools was purely a matter of linguistic expedience, rather than one of nationality-based discrimination, the newly promulgated education law sought to diminish the impression that the Government-General offered preferential treatment to Japanese students attending schools on the Korean peninsula.

Despite these clear attempts to ameliorate, at least officially, fixed social distinctions between Korean and Japanese students, there are other ways in which the law inadvertently reinforced different social divisions. For example, male and female students were to be educated separately, and female students, unlike their male peers, were specifically to be trained to be “mindful of cultivating their female morality” (*futoku no kan'yō ni ryūi shite*) as one element of receiving “training [to develop] their characters as national citizens” (*kokumintaru seikaku o yōsei shi*)<sup>17</sup> according to the new law.

Another element of the policies promulgated in the 1920s as part of what the Government-General called *bunka seiji*, or “cultural rule,” that contributed to the conditions surrounding the outbreak of student activism in Kwangju was the dramatic increase in the sheer number of schools, and thus in the number of students commuting back and forth to these schools, throughout the 1920s. The number of public normal schools for Korean students alone on the Korean peninsula jumped from 450 in 1919 to 1,189 by 1925, and 1,776 by 1931.<sup>18</sup> However, historian Ki-baek Lee points out that when we examine Japanese colonial school records from the 1920s carefully, particularly in terms of the ratio of Japanese to Korean students at each level of education, we see a pattern of educational institutions that further cemented social inequities between

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Sasaki Michio, *Nijūnendai no Chōsen shokuminchi kyōiku* [1920s Colonial Korean education], 113.



Japanese and Korean students rather than ameliorating them. For example, despite the highly disparate population of Korean and Japanese-school age children, Lee notes that:

Even on the elementary school level the proportion of Korean children attending school was no more than one-sixth that of Japanese. This disparity [between the percentage of Korean students and of Japanese students] became progressively greater at the higher levels of education. In the colleges, the ratio was 1:26, and at the university level well over 1:100.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, while Korean students were being schooled in unprecedented numbers throughout the 1920s, they were also increasingly exposed to the inequities inherent in the Japanese colonial education system, which in turn mirrored the inequities inherent in colonial life.

In Kwangju, just like in other regions of Korea, Korean students were concentrated in new and unprecedented ways with local Japanese populations in the 1920s. Where the Kwangju train station stood in 1929, it was surrounded by five schools—a middle school for Japanese students, and a higher common school which was the equivalent of a Japanese middle school, an agriculture school, a teacher training school, and a girls' higher common school, all of which served Korean students. All of these schools had been built within the 19 years following annexation, most within the early 1920s, and the trains which carried students to and from school had also been a recent colonial edition, established in 1914.<sup>20</sup> Because of their role in daily commutes, then, trains and train stations in Kwangju and the surrounding areas became places in which students who had been administratively separated into divided schools (those for native and non-native Japanese speakers, those for male and female students, those who

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<sup>19</sup> Ki-baek Lee. *A New History of Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 367.

<sup>20</sup> Pak Ch'an-sōng, et al., *Kwangju haksang tongnip undong kwa naju* [Naju and the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], 14.

planned to become farmers or teachers, etc.) mixed repeatedly unsupervised, in large numbers, and in confined spaces.

By 1929, then, not only had new public spaces been created and heavily populated with both Japanese and Koreans on the move, but the ways in which tensions between Koreans and Japanese residents emerged in these spaces and were interpreted and narrated by different actors began to take on a familiar form as well. The incident on the train that sparked the Kwangju student protests, for example, was not the first fight on the train in which tensions between Japanese and Korean students had been expressed in explicitly ethnic terms. In June 1929, Japanese middle school students commuting from school in Kwangju came upon Korean students who had killed a dog in the area near the station. The Japanese students called the Koreans “barbarous” (*yaban*), and a fight ensued.<sup>21</sup> Although this fight was comparatively minor, and was effectively contained by father of one of the Japanese students was a member of the local police force, it became well-known among the commuting students, and raised tension level within the trains carrying commuting students to and from different schools.<sup>22</sup>

The interactions and implications of this incident, small as it was, mirror what we see in the later fight and in other arenas in Kwangju at the time. As we saw, Takabe Kin’ichi, the Chief of the Academic Affairs Bureau of the Government-General, described the Japanese students who triggered the initial late October 1929 fight as acting entirely innocently and instead located the blame for the fight on the train with the male Korean student who reacted violently to a perceived gender-related insult (he supposedly

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<sup>21</sup> Kashima Setsuko, *Kaisetsu: Kōshū gakusei undō* [Commentary: The Kwangju Student Movement], 11.

<sup>22</sup> Yi Ki-hong and An Chong-ch’ol. *Kwangju haksæng tongnip undong ūn chōn’guk haksæng tongnip undong iōtta* [The Kwangju Student Independence Movement was a nationwide independence movement] (Kwangju, Korea: Kwangju Kwangyōk-si: Hyangjisa), 1997, 93-95.

responded to seeing the Japanese students blocking his sister's path and "displaying... contemptuous behavior and running back and forth in front of a female student.") The Korean students involved, on the other hand, narrated the experience of the fight as not only triggered by overt harassment of Pak Ki-ok, the female Korean student, far beyond what the Japanese officials acknowledged, but even more importantly, as a response to being addressed derogatorily as "*senjin*." In other words, Japanese officials perceived the scenes of the June and the October fights between Japanese and Korean students as situations in which where Japanese students innocently transgressed culturally-determined boundaries of which they had been unaware, and were immediately met by explosions of unexpected Korean wrath. In this way, in the Japanese telling, the Korean response was characterized as rash, illogical, unpredictable, and dangerous. For the Koreans, however, these fights are retold as moments in which the Japanese they encountered insulted them in ways that fundamentally impugned their fundamental ethnic identity, and implied that their very Korean-ness (as identified with the term *senjin*) marked them as uncivilized, lowly, or barbarous (*yaban*). This pattern was not limited to student unrest. For example, historian Jun Uchida tells us that:

In January 1928... a long-standing tension between Korean and Japanese members of the South Chōlla Provincial Council [the province in which Kwangju is located] reached the boiling point, when one Japanese member made a discriminatory remark that it was futile to discuss the expansion of Korean educational facilities given the low level of Korean economic power. The Korean members of the provincial council took this Japanese comment as an insult against the Korean people, and the heated argument that ensued turned the floor into "almost a scene of carnage."<sup>23</sup>

In other words, the tensions between Korean and Japanese students that occurred on the trains, in the train stations, and on the streets of Kwangju by 1929 had not only begun to

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<sup>23</sup> Uchida, Jun, "Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1910-1937," 341.

take on a specific form, but it was a form that paralleled tensions between similarly elite adult Koreans and Japanese residents of the Korean peninsula in other public forums as well.

### Colonial Korean Education and the Economics of the Empire

In addition to Japanese colonial policies which transformed the Korean landscape prior to the Kwangju student movement, and other ways in which local conflicts between Korean and Japanese residents had begun to emerge in public spaces, there were also important economic and ideological factors that framed the initial student protests in 1929, factors that came to be key in how students perceived of themselves, their futures, and their positions within the Japanese empire. The late 1920s saw great economic upheaval in both Korea and Japan (and indeed, within the world at large), which created a significant increase in transnational migration throughout the various urban spaces of the empire, as job applicants searched farther and farther afield for employment. As work became scarce for Japanese job-seekers in within Japan itself, more and more sought employment on the Korean peninsula and other colonial spaces.<sup>24</sup> Economic historian Mitsuhiro Kimura argues that the labor market on the Korean peninsula at this time was favorable to Japanese workers for four primary reasons: emerging colonial commercialization provided many opportunities for profit; Japanese workers were more skilled than Korean workers in terms of factory or office work; the colonial government gave more authorizations and subsidies to Japanese businesses in Korea than to those run

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<sup>24</sup>Kimura notes that among other factors enticing Japanese employees to Korea was the enormous differential in pay they could expect, noting that “Japanese workers earned 732 yen per head in Korea compared with 367 yen per head at home.” Kimura, Mitsuhiro, “The Economics of Japanese Imperialism in Korea, 1910-1930,” *The Economic History Review*, 48: 3 (August 1995): 566.

by Koreans; and Japanese employees tended to be hired by both private and public employers at a higher level and with a much higher salary in Korea than the same employee would be able to receive in Japan.<sup>25</sup> This phenomenon included teachers as well as other forms of skilled labor. For example, Yokoyama Yoshiko, a Japanese teacher who moved from Japan to P'yŏngyang in 1929, remembers:

I graduated in February of Showa 4 [1929] from Nara National Women's University, and during the period of Showa 4-7 (1929-1932), of course Japan was also in a period of unprecedented, international stagnation. In a typical year, when you graduated, you were given a position [within Japan], and without complaining, without saying a place was remote, or that it was a backwater, you had to shoulder your responsibility, and follow the instructions given to you by the Ministry of Education.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, Yokoyama asserts, "No matter what subject you taught, there was always an eagerness about your employment."<sup>27</sup> However, by the late 1920s, the Japanese economy was so bad that there were no new positions, not even for public school teachers. As Yokoyama explains:

[In 1929,] we waited until April, without even one job offer coming in for anyone. [Finally], the university said we would have to look for jobs individually, and there was nothing for us to do except each try to do our best through busily scrambling (*honsō*) to find a job through someone we knew. [Without any of the usual government-provided teaching positions available], though, it was even more difficult to find a job on our own.<sup>28</sup>

Because of this, despite the fact that Yokoyama initially had no interest in going to Korea, it was ultimately the only place where she could secure a job, so she moved to P'yŏngyang with great trepidation. Many Japanese teachers, even from the most elite

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<sup>25</sup> Kimura, Mitsuhiro, "The Economics of Japanese Imperialism in Korea, 1910-1930," 566-567.

<sup>26</sup> Yokoyama Yoshiko, *Pyonyan kensō arugamama: ai wa minzoku o koete* [Spring memories of P'yŏngyang: Love transcends ethnicity] (Tokyo: Kindai Bungeisha, 1994), 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

teacher-training programs in Japan, found themselves in similar situations by the summer of 1929.

The economic situation in Korea was no better at this time, and thus economic need also increased migration from Korea to Japan as well, but the majority of Koreans who found work in Japan were those who were willing to do jobs that Japanese workers were not. “Lacking training and skills,” Mitsuhiko Kimura tells us:

[The Korean workers who sought employment in Japan] worked as low-wage manual laborers mainly in small factories or on roads and building sites. In 1930, nearly 30 per cent of the labor force on roads and railways in Osaka were Koreans.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, while economic hard times were felt in throughout the Japanese empire, and economic necessity created heightened migration throughout all regions of colonial space, these labor migration patterns affected Korean and Japanese workers in profoundly different ways. While skilled Japanese workers moved farther and farther afield, they were, ultimately, able to find lucrative work in the colonies. Only unskilled Koreans (or at least those willing to work as unskilled laborers), however, benefitted from traveling to the metropole to find work: elite, educated Koreans found themselves facing increasingly bleaker job prospects as the economy throughout the empire worsened. Many Korean students who had been studying abroad in the metropole had return home (or to move elsewhere) to look for work, and became embittered at their diminished circumstances.

For educated Koreans, the stark realities awaiting them when they completed school became painfully apparent as the 1920s progressed. For example, the short story “A Ready-Made Life,” originally published in 1934 by Ch’ae Man-shik (an author originally from Northern Chōlla, the province next to that where Kwangju is located),

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<sup>29</sup> Kimura Mitsuhiko, “The Economics of Japanese Imperialism in Korea, 1910-1930,” 564-565.

captures the despair felt by those who had graduated from school and found themselves to looking for work in any field in which they were qualified. The characters in the short story find themselves unable to eat, pay their rent, purchase clothes, or find jobs, and subsist entirely by pawning the vestiges of their education, such as their books.

The short story opens with P, the protagonist, begging for yet another job at a newspaper, only to be turned away with vague, untenable suggestions that he return to the countryside and try to find work there. Aimlessly wandering the streets afterwards, P ponders his fate, and traces in his mind the developments that led him and other young similarly qualified young men to find themselves without any hope for the future. P remembers the initial excitement that Koreans had felt towards the expansion of the Japanese education system, a rare example of how, P explains, “the government and the people of Korea acted in harmony.”<sup>30</sup> P explains that “Under the banner of his Cultural Policy, Japanese governor-general Saito established more public schools.”<sup>31</sup> Enthusiasm for learning was contagious, P tells us:

Grade school principals donned their leggings and struck out for the hinterlands to enroll pupils....The students received free textbooks and school supplies, not to mention tuition waivers...Farsighted citizens put up money for schools. A private university was planned. Night schools were organized by youth associations... Self-supporting students enjoyed the respect of the public.<sup>32</sup>

Soon, however, the real-world limitations of being an educated Korean became all too clear. P tells us that quickly, “All the petit-bourgeois places of employment became saturated; no more did their numbers increase.”<sup>33</sup> Instead, he says:

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<sup>30</sup> *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*. Selected and translated by Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 61-62.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

It was as if the intellectuals were lured into climbing the ladder of success, only to have it pulled out from under them. There was no demand for these people. If they hadn't been intellectuals, they could have become laborers. But since they were intellectuals, 99 percent who tried to join the blue-collar ranks couldn't fit in and had to drop out. These rejects were dispirited and jobless, a powerless, cultured, reserve force, and they heaved great sighs. They were like dogs who had lost their masters and become unwanted.<sup>34</sup>

P's criticism, then, is not of the Japanese colonial government's intensive expansion of schools throughout the Korean peninsula in the 1920s, nor is it, as we find in the Kwangju student movement, a criticism of Japanese-centered education that actively sought to erase the Korean identity of the students it educated. Rather, P is critical of education here because it gives the colonized false hopes—there are simply no jobs available anywhere for the new generation of intellectual young Korean men that P and his friends represent, and participating in the Japanese colonial education system has robbed them of the job possibilities that would have been otherwise open to them. In “A Ready-Made Life,” ultimately P makes a heart-breaking decision to apprentice his son to a printmaker to learn a trade, rather than even attempt to have him educated, so that he can avoid the fate of his destitute father.

### Secret Student Groups and Public Activism

As we turn to the environment that engendered the first Kwangju student protest activity in 1929, we see how important this sense of disenfranchisement with Japanese education was for students at the time. In the several years prior to the street protests, Korean students formed a secret group called the *Sōngjinhoe*, which held its first meeting

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



in student Ch'oe Ku-ch'ang's room at a Kwangju boarding house 1926. More than fourteen students gathered, and created a secret society based on the following three tenets:

- 1) We will fight for Korean independence from under Japanese rule
- 2) We are absolutely opposed to Japanese colonial slave education
- 3) We demand freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom to form organizations.<sup>35</sup>

Not only would these demands recur repeatedly throughout the protests of 1929 and early 1930, but the degree of organization to this group, even in its earliest inception, is striking. At the first meeting, the students assigned those present to positions of accountant, clerk, and general affairs manager, determined that the club would meet on the first and third Saturday of each month, and set the monthly membership fee at 10 *chŏn*. The students present decided that their main activities would be to pursue their goals with utmost solemnity, to work towards expanding the membership base, and to maintain secrecy.<sup>36</sup>

This secret society met regularly throughout the remainder of 1926 and 1927, and disbanded in February of 1928 because one of the members was discovered to have a blood relative on the Kwangju police force, and the group feared detection.<sup>37</sup> Once the initial group disbanded, students organized a second set of secret societies at each school, which they called reading groups. It was through communication between these reading groups that students were able to organize the large-scale coordinated school walk-outs and large-scale protests that we see as a central feature of the Kwangju student movement.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Pak Ch'an-sŭng, *Chŏnnam chibang ūi sam-il undong kwa Kwangju haksae tongnip undong* [The Southern Chŏlla region's March First Movement and the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], 393.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 393-394.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

In addition, a Korean Communist Party formed in 1925, but repeated pressure from Japanese police in the period between 1925 and 1928 successfully obliterated it by July 1928.<sup>39</sup> In many cases, because an official communist party was no longer functioning by 1929, the intermediary figures who provided students with the Marxist readings that formed the backbone of the movement's ideology were graduates from schools in the Kwangju area who had spent significant time away (often in Japan, sometimes in China, and also in Seoul and other cities with Korea), but had realized that despite their high level of education, like P, the protagonist of "A Ready-Made Life," there was no possibility for them to find gainful employment. Instead, they ended up using their Japanese education to read primarily Japanese socialist works, and most importantly, used their school connections to contact and organize the students at their alma maters, distribute reading material to them, and encourage them to consider other possible visions of Korea's future than those which were provided for Korean students in Japanese schools.

### Voices from Initial Protest Participants

In this section, I introduce the voices of some of the students who participated in the first November protests in Kwangju. The first individual student whose stories I explore is Yi Ki-hong, a student at Kwangju Higher Normal School who was ultimately expelled following his activism in 1929 and 1930. Yi was born in a small village several hours outside of Kwangju. His father had studied Japanese before the Japanese

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<sup>39</sup> For more details on this, see *Himitsu kessha Chōsen Kyōsantō jiken* [Korean Communist Party secret organization incident] reprinted in *KKGJS*, 386-423.

annexation of Korea in 1910.<sup>40</sup> According to Yi, however, his father said that “he felt disillusioned when he saw the conduct of the bureaucrats who became tools of the Japanese empire and devoted themselves to betraying their country.”<sup>41</sup> Because of this, Yi’s father turned down a clerkship at a court in Taegu, and returned to his home town to take up farming. During Yi’s lifetime, his father repeatedly turned down requests to interpret for Japanese officials, saying that it inevitably involved witnessing and ultimately aiding the harsh interrogation techniques used against by the Japanese against Korean prisoners. After his father returned to his hometown and began farming, Yi was born there in 1912.<sup>42</sup>

How Yi Ki-hong came to be involved in pro-independence activism even before 1929 mirrors several national and local trends, and gives us even further insight into how students were radicalized even before the 1929 protests first started. When the March First Movement ten years before the 1929 student protests, Yi was only eight years old but he clearly remembers watching his relatives prepare for a pro-independence demonstration. He says:

I can remember the sight of them in my father’s cousin’s back room, making Korean flags. I was young, but my friends and I ran errands for them like buying dye and paper. My father’s cousin prepared really wisely. Because we could easily be suspected if we bought a large amount of paper from one place, he told us to buy a little paper at a time from three different places... three of [my relatives] worked together, and within a short time they had made several hundred flags. One person traced the shapes, the second person applied dye with a shoe brush, and the third person would paste the edge of the flag... onto a large stick.

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<sup>40</sup> According to Jun Uchida, this places him within a larger “Japanese boom” that took place just before annexation, as the demand for Japanese interpreters on the Korean peninsula increased. Jun Uchida, “Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1910-1937” (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 2005), 72-73.

<sup>41</sup> Yi Ki-hong and An Chong-ch’öl. *Kwangju haksaeung tongnip undong ūn chŏn’guk haksaeung tongnip undong iŏtta* [The Kwangju Student Independence Movement was a Nationwide Independence Movement] 170-171.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

For me, I just remember feeling that this [flag-making] was somehow an amazing and impressive thing.<sup>43</sup>

The flags that Yi watched his family make were later used in a protest in which residents from the small town where he lived gathered at the top of a local mountain to wave flags, and shout “long live independence” (*tongnip manse.*) They narrowly missed being arrested by a group of Japanese police who began climbing the mountain after they heard the cries. In this account, protest participants clearly anticipated potential police surveillance during the planning phases, and were careful to cover their tracks, but were able to avoid detection until they began to stage the actual protests.

This pattern of limited police surveillance prior to the March First Movement holds true not only in Kwangju, but on a peninsula-wide level as well, and is remarkable when contrasted to the role of the police immediately prior to, during, and after the 1929 student protests. In the months leading up to March First protests, Japanese police paid comparatively little attention to the networks of activists both inside and outside the Korean peninsula, who would go on to organize the largest peninsula-side protest in colonial Korean history. While activists themselves took care to avoid detection, often traveling in disguise, meeting in secret, and laundering money used to finance the movement, they did not meet with any type of significant, on-going surveillance from police. They did, however, quickly learn that large public gatherings would be broken up by Japanese police, and thus began to conduct their meetings in secret. When activists crossing borders into Korea were detained by police, they were questioned and let go, as

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<sup>43</sup> Yi Ki-hong and An, Chong-ch'öl. *Kwangju haksæng tongnip undong ün chôn'guk haksæng tongnip undong iotta* [The Kwangju Student Independence Movement was a Nationwide Independence Movement], 172-173.

the police apparently lacked any larger intelligence that would allow them to connections between various groups or individuals agitating for Korean independence.<sup>44</sup>

While Yi Ki-hong's descriptions of his family's first interactions with police during their March First-related activities matches accounts in other regions at this time, social activism was far less pronounced in Kwangju and the surrounding areas than in other areas of the Korean peninsula in 1919, a fact which makes the large-scale student activism of 1929 all the more striking. In Southern Chōlla, the province in which Kwangju is located, a total of 246 people were sent to prison due to their participation in March First-related protest activities, which represented 3% of the national total, and which would rank Southern Chōlla tenth of thirteen provinces in terms of March First participation.<sup>45</sup> Despite this comparatively low level of activism, however, like elsewhere, interaction between police and activists tended to occur as the protests had already begun, rather than as a result of preemptive police action. Even more so than in other regions, protests were quite sporadic and tended to be spontaneous, or involve minimal planning. Unlike elsewhere on the Korean peninsula in 1919, in the months following the outbreak of the March First Movement, spontaneous demonstrations at marketplaces on market day were frequent, as were nighttime fireworks set off in protest in the mountains surrounding Kwangju. Protest leaders tended to vary depending on area; in towns and cities in Southern Chōlla, they were most likely to be Korean school teachers or students,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 52-78.

<sup>45</sup> Pak Ch'an-sŭng, *Chōnnam chibangŭi sam-il undong kwa kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undong* [The Southern Chōlla Region's March First Movement and the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], 390.

and in the countryside, protests tended to be led by either farmers or local religious leaders.<sup>46</sup>

In this sense, then, Yi Ki-hong's family followed a pattern of activism that was quite typical for the region surrounding his home. His relatives who led the protests were in rural Southern Chōlla Province were farmers, and while they did, indeed, invest significant planning in creating the flags to be used in the protests, they ultimately chose to stage their protest in a place that was removed from the town in which they lived, and which was calculated to involve minimal confrontation with Japanese police. In addition, the fact that the relatives Yi Ki-hong watched make the flags were of the same generation reflects a trend that would only grow more pronounced in the Kwangju student protests ten years later: both police records and newspaper accounts of participants of the protests in Kwangju in 1929 reveal that a significant number of those who participated were sets of brothers.

As Yi Ki-hong became more directly active in protest movements, he comes into increasing contact with Japanese authorities, again mirroring a trend in colonial Korea in the 1920s. Yi tells us that he was first directly involved in a protest in 1926:

I was contacted by some sixth year students, and we gathered secretly. When about ten sixth-year students had gathered, Chōng Hak-kyun and Hwang Tong-yōn [students at his school] passed out Korean flags they'd already made. We hid them in advance late that night in the neighborhood near our school. The next day, Korean flags were passed out to mainly fifth and sixth-year students, and we were directed to yell "Long live independence!" [*tongnip manse*]...I heard that the police were coming, and I hid my Korean flag in my pants. A sixth-year saw me and told me that hiding the flag in pants was no good. I didn't know what to do, so I hesitated, and then threw it into a local barley field."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 389-392.

<sup>47</sup> Yi Ki-hong and An Chong-ch'öl, *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undong ūn chōn'guk haksaeŋ tongnip undong iōtta* [The Kwangju Student Independence Movement was a nationwide independence movement], 174.

The police arrived at Yi's rural school, and searched the classrooms and the students looking for evidence of a demonstration. It turned out that one of the students who planned the demonstration with Yi had mentioned something in the presence of another student, who informed the Japanese police. When the police were unable to find Korean flags or other evidence of protest preparations, they severely beat the student who had reported the incident as a punishment for lying.<sup>48</sup>

This incident happened three years before the Kwangju student protests broke out in 1929, and reveals, among other things, the degree to which Japanese surveillance techniques had improved since the March First Movement. Although the police were unable to detect evidence of the actual protests, students had been trained to report anti-Japanese activity directly to the Japanese authorities, and the police, by the mid-1920s, were not above entering schools, searching students, and halting classes when they suspected anti-Japanese protest activity.

Yi Ki-hong says that because of his family's history of grassroots independence activism, he was invited by a fellow student to participate in his first reading group meeting atop Mt. Mudŭng, a mountain which had served as a frequent site for nighttime fireworks protests during the March First Movement. At this meeting, there were two graduates of Kwangju Higher Common School, and approximately nine second-year students (of which Yi was one.) Chang Chae-sŏng [a student who had studied abroad in Japan and recently returned to Kwangju], explained the purpose of the group, and the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

students who had gathered practiced agitation techniques before descending from the mountain.<sup>49</sup>

From this time onward, Yi says the reading group met regularly, mostly reading materials gathered by another returning student, Kim Sang-hwang, who would assign short sections to each of the younger students, who would then present the section they'd read at the groups next meeting. The meetings were conducted in utmost secrecy, Yi maintains, saying, "We would gather at places like the bakery Chang Chae-sŏng managed. We changed our meeting place frequently, going from places like a newlywed couple's room to the backroom of a house which was in mourning [*sinhon bubu pang yina sangachip ũi kolbang*]."<sup>50</sup> The format of the reading group was highly structured, provided participants with concrete insight into how to apply their ideas to the world around them, and helped to provide them with ideological cohesion. According to Yi, at the meetings:

After we presented the portion of the reading for which we were responsible, we were always expected to connect it to real life, and then we'd open criticism and debate. We would be told to come to the next meeting having carefully studied any of the parts of the reading that we'd been unable to settle in the current meeting. At the next meeting, we would mostly settle any unclear issues. Because we all debated and critiqued [the material] for a fixed amount of time each meeting while we studied, ideologically there was very little difference between us.<sup>51</sup>

Yi describes the reading materials as consisting not only of Marx, but also of Japanese Marxist philosophers such as Sakai Toshihiko, Korean writer Tae Sam-yŏng, and others.

As we examine Yi's account, we can see how the *bunka seiji* policies of both increased schools and of intensive pressure on Korean students to attend them directly

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



affected the structure of these reading groups in a number of ways. First of all, the content of Japanese education appears to have been close to universally reviled by Korean students, and the direct source of much of their discontent. In the various manifestoes that the students printed up in the days and weeks following the initial protests, education-related demands were always central. Students repeatedly referred to the Japanese education system as “Japanese colonial education,” (*ilche noye kyoyuk*) and demanded, in addition to the release of those Korean students arrested in connection with the uprisings, an end to Japanese police investigations and arrests of students at schools, and the establishment of a Korean-centered education system.<sup>52</sup> Second of all, and possibly more significantly, the Japanese school system gave student activists a built-in structure around which to organize: even after the *sŏngjinhoe* ceased to meet due to security concerns, secret student “reading groups” formed at each school in the Kwangju area. Yi Ki-hong notes when he describes how students were chosen to participate in the reading groups that, while it was not a hard-and-fast rule, in general one student per row of desks in each classroom was chosen, presumably to avoid arousing suspicion.<sup>53</sup> In this way, then, we see that even the structure of the Japanese classroom itself served as a means by which the students organized themselves to protest. In addition, from November 3<sup>rd</sup> onward, students used school facilities to meet, and used the school’s built-in student notification systems to organize students by printing up fliers urging students to walk out at a certain time, and posting them on the central school bulletin boards on

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<sup>52</sup>Kashima Setsuko, *Kaisetsu: Kōshū gakusei undō* [Commentary: The Kwangju Student Movement], 12-13.

<sup>53</sup> Yi Ki-hong and An Chong-ch’öl, *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undong ūn chŏn’guk haksaeŋ tongnip undong iōtta* [The Kwangju Student Independence Movement was a nationwide independence movement], 178-179.

the day of the walk out.<sup>54</sup> Also, students read a large number of their readings in Japanese, which they could read only because they were educated, and received these readings through networks of former students from their alma maters.

By 1929, Yi Ki-hong had moved from his small town into a dormitory in Kwangju, and was a second-year student at Kwangju Common School. “On November 3<sup>rd</sup>,” Yi tells us, “when I went to the dorm after the festival events ended, I didn’t sense any of the particular subtleties that were going on that day.”<sup>55</sup> He was in changing his clothes when he suddenly heard someone ride by on a bicycle, shouting that “[Japanese] middle school students were beating Kwangju Common School students to death in front of the station.” Yi says:

When I heard the voice shouting I ran down to the station to see, but I couldn’t see a single student. Someone told me the students had gone towards Tongmun Bridge. When I got there, students from both schools were in the middle of facing off at the bridge, and teachers from each school were trying to protect the other students and me, and also trying to allow carts to pass. Firefighters had been mobilized, and there were police there too. At that point, I heard the geography

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 399-402. In addition, the Japanese education system, both in the pre-and post-war periods, has always utilized a model of student self-government and self-management of the classroom. This was very different from the Confucian education model that Japanese education replaced in Korea, which emphasized individual memorization and recitation of classic texts. Instead, the Japanese education model breaks students into four-person groups, called “han,” and has each group work together to master educational content. In particular, the “han” system is employed particularly regularly in classrooms with a high student-to-teacher ratio, meaning that in the frequently overcrowded and understaffed Korean schools of the Japanese colonial period, we can presume it would have been utilized extensively. In addition, students are required to form committees to oversee classroom management, such as the taking of attendance, cleaning and in the case of elementary schools, feeding and caring for classroom pets and plants. For more on this in the postwar era, see Catherine C. Lewis, *Educating Hearts and Minds: Reflections on Japanese Preschool and Elementary Education*. I conducted several interviews with elderly Koreans educated in three different regions of the peninsula during the colonial period, and all confirmed their schools used these types of “han” divisions, as well as other typical Japanese classroom organizational techniques, even when their teachers were Korean. While the content of Japanese education may have proved quite repugnant for Korean students, the organizational skills that they learned in Japanese classrooms no doubt helped students in forming and maintaining elaborate secret student organizations.

<sup>58</sup> Yi Ki-hong and An Chong-ch’öl, *Kwangju haksæng tongnip undong ūn chŏng’guk haksæng tongnip undong iŏtta* [The Kwangju Student Independence Movement was a nationwide independence movement], 185-186.

teacher, Mr. Pokchung [sic. — Japanese reading Fukunaka] from Kwangju Common School shouting to disperse the crowd: “Middle School students: RIGHT! Kwangju Common School students: LEFT!” When the geography teacher barked these commands, the Japanese students began to go home and the Korean students started to disperse too...but then [student] Chang Che Song suggested we regroup back at school.<sup>56</sup>

The students gathered back at one of the buildings at school, and Yi remembers the fervor with which the leaders of the secret student groups encouraged the crowds. The street fights of November 3<sup>rd</sup>, they argued, should not be allowed to die down. One student took to the stage and shouted “Let’s use this as a base to continually protest and continue the anti-Japanese struggle (*hangil t’ujaeng*)!”<sup>57</sup>

It was this meeting at the school auditorium that Yi asserts was a key step in changing the street fighting into a full-fledged student movement, one in which students began to organize open, carefully planned protests on the streets of Kwangju. Yi tells us that after the meeting at school:

The students who passed through the school gates and spread out into the streets walked to the front of the provincial office shouting things like ‘No Colonial Rule of Korea! [*Chosŏn singminji t’ongch’i pandae!*] and ‘No Slave Education!’ [*Noye kyoyuk pandae!*]’ ...<sup>58</sup>

Yi also recalls passing by the Kwangju Girl’s Higher Common School, and hearing a strange sound. Looking up, he realized that the female students living in the on-campus dormitory were attempting to join in the street protests, and that the sound he heard was that of their teachers nailing the dormitory windows shut, so that the students couldn’t climb through them and join in marching through the streets. Soon, he recalls:

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 186-188.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Japanese police rode up...and blocked the road the students were taking, and ordered us repeatedly to disperse. At the order to disperse, the three or four hundred students began to retreat. Luckily, there wasn't a single person arrested...but then...the police covered us with chalk, the students who were for the most part in our black school uniforms, so that we would easily stand out. This was so they could easily tell who had participated in the protests...I shouted slogans so hard my throat was hoarse."<sup>59</sup>

At the same time as Yi and other students were directly clashing with mounted police in front of the Japanese colonial provincial office, other students marched to the police station and to the prison where arrested students were being held. Yet another group of students stormed the offices of the *Kwangju ilbo*, a local Japanese newspaper, and which had run accounts of the initial student clashes at Naju Station that were sympathetic to the Japanese students and Japanese state, and poured sand into the printing presses.<sup>60</sup>

A second oral account from another student, Kuk Söng-jun, reinforces many of these same themes. Kuk Söng-jun was born on September 3, 1916, to an extremely wealthy land-owning family<sup>61</sup> Like Yi, he was a second-year student at Kwangju Higher Common School in 1929. He remembers that student activism was triggered not only by larger themes, such as a desire for Korean independence, but also by a sense of resentment towards individual teachers who treated Korean students poorly. Even remembering years later his experience of attending Kwangju Higher Common School, Kuk says:

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Pak Ch'an-söng, *Chönnam chibang üi sam-il undong kwa Kwangju haksöeng tongnip undong* [The Southern Chölla region's March First Movement and the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], 397.

<sup>61</sup> Kuk Söng-jun (1929 Kwangju student protest participant), oral interview, Tamyang, Korea: March 2008. Kuk was one of two Korean interviewees who chose to be interviewed in Japanese rather than in Korean, which is why quotations are in Japanese rather than Korean when the original quotation appears.

The principle at the time was Shirai Kiichi.<sup>62</sup> He was short in stature, but continually oppressed the Korean students. Because of that, the students resisted more and more, and became united... The Japanese were extremely cruel. The most hated teacher was that principal, Shirai Kiichi. He was the most hated. [In general], the Japanese teachers didn't stand out to me, but in particular that principal was the worst. The worst.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the fact that only the principal, Shirai Kiichi, stands out in Kuk Sŏng-jun's memory in terms of an individual Japanese presence, he remembers the colonial policies implicit in the curriculum well, saying:

In terms of our names, we lost our Korean names, and had to adopt Japanese names. [The teachers] wouldn't let us speak Korean, and they made us use Japanese as our daily language... I had to completely adopt the lifestyle of a Japanese person. This is the type of story I can talk about now [that the colonial period has ended], but at the time, the whole atmosphere inside the school was extremely bad...<sup>64</sup>

In school, according to Kuk, "We learned Japanese history... We didn't learn Korean history... They wouldn't teach it to us... Of course we wanted to learn it, but because they wouldn't teach it to us, there was nothing that could be done." There were only two Korean teachers, Kuk recalls, and one of whom, the math teacher, he classifies "*kanzen ni shinnichi, nihonjin ni chikai hito*"<sup>65</sup> or completely sympathetic and close to the Japanese. The other, a Korean-language teacher who could not speak Japanese, however, was a favorite of the students, and his bust, cast in bronze, remains on display on the school grounds even now.<sup>66</sup> Kuk recalls his classes:

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<sup>62</sup> School records show that Shirai Kiichi was principal of Kwangju Higher Normal School from 1926 to 1930. *Kwangju kobo/sŏjung/ ilgo palshimnyŏnsa 1920-2003* [Kwangju Higher Normal/ Western Middle/ First High School 80-year history], (Kwangju, Korea: Kwangju First High School, 2003), 10.

<sup>63</sup> Kuk Sŏng-jun, oral interview, March 2008

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> *Kwangju kobo/ sŏjung / ilgo palshimnyŏnsa 1920-2003* [Kwangju Higher Normal/ Western Middle/ First High School 80-year history], (Kwangju, Korea: Kwangju First High School, 2003), 2.

He taught us Korean language, but mainly he taught us Chinese characters. He couldn't talk openly [in the classroom about Korean history and culture], but he used to hint at it just a tiny little bit at a time. It was [only] to that degree. He was always being watched, so he couldn't speak freely.<sup>67</sup>

However, despite the limits of what could be discussed in the classroom, students felt a strong attachment to this teacher. Kuk explains this by saying:

That teacher, he was an old man, and he didn't wear Western-style clothes, he wore [traditional] Korean clothing...He was always telling us 'You guys! Be careful! [*Omaetachi! Chūi shiro!*] The Bureau of Academic Affairs is watching you, [and knows when you make trouble]...so you have to be appropriately careful.' He was always warning us. We felt an extreme sense of closeness (*shinmitsukan*) with him.<sup>68</sup>

Kuk Sŏng-jun's description here mirrors that of Yi Ki-hong's in that they both were able to feel positively towards teachers who discouraged them from engaging in fights with Japanese students, or other forms of protest against the Japanese colonial presence, as long as they sensed that the teachers were fundamentally motivated by concern for their safety and well-being, rather than because they wished to further the Japanese colonial agenda. That was not the only reason, of course, why students felt close to or got along with individual teachers. There were also factors that transcended the colonial period, and its fraught human relations. Kuk recalls that the Korean language teacher "used to teach us all these Chinese characters, but then he would always tell us in advance all the answers to the test questions. That was really helpful!"<sup>69</sup>

Like Yi, Kuk also participated in a secret reading group that was organized around students in his specific classroom. "We did it all underground," Kuk says:

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<sup>67</sup> Kuk Sŏng-jun, oral interview, March 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

We would read a book, and the next day allow it to be passed along to the next person to be read, things like that... The name of the leader was carefully guarded—you could never say it. It was all secret. Because of that, I didn't know who the next person [to receive the reading] was. That was how we did it. We strictly protected the secrecy of the organization. Anyway, we read... all about socialism... I thought 'Of course, in this world, organizations shouldn't be hierarchical—we have to make things horizontal,' [reading the socialist readings] gave me that feeling. Things shouldn't only be organized from the top down—we have to become a society where things move from side to side (*yoko kara yoko ni*). That's how it felt.<sup>70</sup>

While the content of the readings led Kuk to conclude that society in general should be structured less hierarchically, neither Kuk Sōng-jun nor Yi Ki-hong note any disjunction between the fact that while the readings circulated within the secret reading groups argued for a more equal world, the structure of the reading groups themselves that allowed them to maintain their secrecy and function effectively was intensely hierarchical, and often based directly on hierarchies which first emerged in the classroom. What Kuk does say is that it was a simple and obvious leap to go from reading general socialist texts to thinking about the issue of becoming free from Japanese colonialism. Reading these texts, Kuk says, "We thought 'We have to quickly release [ourselves] from Japan's constraints. (*Watashitachi wa Nihon no sokubaku kara hayaku hōmen shinai to naranai.*) We have to become independent from Japan!'"<sup>71</sup> Kuk Sōng-jun was invited to join the reading group, like Yi Ki-hong, by another student, a student whom Kuk describes by saying:

He studied *really* hard. He was very smart. Of course, [only] very smart students were involved in the reading groups. The students who were even a little out-of-it (*sukoshi demo bōtto shite iru*), they couldn't understand [the socialist content of the readings]!<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Instead, Kuk asserts, the strongest students in each class were the most likely to be meeting in secret and exchanging contraband socialist readings, some written by Russian and Korean Marxists, but the majority written by Japanese Marxist thinkers.<sup>73</sup> Kuk describes how first, his friend gave him a reading, saying, “‘Read this one thing’ (*Kore o hitotsu, ichido yonde kure to iu*)...he said ‘Read this,’ and so I read it too. Once I started reading it, of course, I started thinking it was interesting,” and that is how he became involved in the group.

Like Yi Ki-hong, who came from a family who had long been involved in agitating for Korean independence, Kuk Sŏng-jun also had family members who were interested in socialist principles. “Among my relatives, there were many of them who dabbled in socialism (*Watashi no shinseki no naka de, shakaishugi ni ashi o funda hito ga takusan imashita.*)”<sup>74</sup> However, unlike Yi Ki-hong, who witnessed and participated in anti-Japanese activism at home, Kuk’s family was divided along ideologically between those who favored socialism, and those who favored ethnic nationalism (*minzokushugi*), and this led to divisions within his household. Despite the fact that Kuk suspected a number of his relatives were driven by the same ideological leanings as he was, it was not something that could be discussed openly at home. “My grandfather was a major land holder, owning 10,000 *koku* of land,” he recalls, “so we couldn’t talk about [socialism at home]—that kind of talk didn’t fit!” In addition, he says, “I kept it secret [that I was in a reading group that studied socialist ideology at school.] Of course, if my grandfather had

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<sup>73</sup> According to Yi Ki-hong’s account, all the texts the students read were originally in Japanese, although some were translated into Korean by older students before they circulated in the reading groups.

<sup>74</sup> Kuk Sŏng-jun, oral interview, March 2008.



known about it, he would have made me quit school.”<sup>75</sup> In other words, it was the socialist content of the anti-Japanese movement that Kuk Sōng-jun was part of that would have been the biggest issue for his grandfather, the patriarch of his family, rather than its anti-Japanese content.

Kuk remembers hearing about the fight on the train, as well the initial outbreak of the street protests:

Pak Chun-chaе [the student who threw the first punch in the fight at the train station on October 30] sat at the same desk with me at school. [The Japanese students] ridiculed his sister [on the train.] That was the trigger, the spark that set off this whole movement, that behavior that was improper [*reigi ni awanai kōdō*] by the Japanese students. Then, a Japanese reporter wrote a one-sided article about [the fight] and that was a further catalyst.”<sup>76</sup>

He and other students were aware of Pak’s absence from school, and he clearly remembers the morning of November 3<sup>rd</sup>. “While the schools were closed [in an attempt to stem tensions between Korean and Japanese students], it became November 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was [the anniversary of] the Meiji Emperor’s birthday, and we were supposed to celebrate it.”<sup>77</sup> On the way back from the shrine visit, however:

All Korean students received an order to gather at the station, and I, too, went running there. There, Korean students and Japanese students were fighting, and that again became a trigger [for the movement] After that, all Korean students staged a demonstration...I don’t know the exact numbers, but there were at least a few hundred students. Then the police came, and they suppressed it all.”<sup>78</sup>

Like Yi, Kuk also returned to the school auditorium in between the fights in the street and the second public demonstration by Korean students, and distinctly remembers the fervor of the students present:

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

A *senpai* [a student ahead of me in school] stood up and said “our students [the students from this school] are all being held in prison...Let’s attack the prison!” It was exactly at the time when they were constructing a straight 200 meter track on the school playing field...and so there were a lot of shovels and hoes and things like that. We took them out...[and we went] to *Honmachi*—in those days, you called it *Honmachi* [the Japanese term for the central section of a city] ... We attacked the prison. And then, of course, all the students who attacked the prison ended up in prison themselves! At that point, I was also sent to prison.<sup>79</sup>

Despite Yi’s memories of the lengths that teachers were going to to prevent female students from participating in the street protests, Kuk distinctly remembers the presence of many female students, in addition to male Korean students from other schools in Kwangju, on the streets, participating in the demonstration as Kwangju Higher Common School students marched through the streets, carrying tools they had found on school grounds. Kuk recalls, “The girls from Kwangju Women’s Higher Common School, those girls were really extremely [passionate] about [staging] a people’s movement. (*minzoku undō*).” Kuk explained that he had little contact with students from the girls’ school under ordinary circumstances, and didn’t know if, like Kwangju Higher Common School students, they received socialist texts from students who had graduated, and read them in secret. What he knew for sure was that “With the riot at the station, and the incident of the fight serving as a catalyst, those female students came and joined us as we were staging a demonstration in the streets.” It was then, Kuk says, that he realized the common ground that they shared:

I suddenly clearly understood [that at the girl’s school, they had the same concerns that we did, and wanted to protest.]...The Japanese police formed a pack and as we were demonstrating, they marked us with chalk. The students [male and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

female], we were all brushing the chalk off of ourselves...»<sup>80</sup>

Kuk Sŏng-jun was arrested and imprisoned, and was only released after his grandfather advocated repeatedly for him:

I was the grandchild of a landholder. My grandfather owned 10,000 *koku* of land ... So after 20 days or so of living a life of confinement in prison, I was released, and I returned home. On that day, though, I was [officially] expelled from school. After that, I tried to go to school in what is now Seoul and what was then Keijō, and I passed the entrance exam, but by the order of the Government-General, I was forbidden from going to school for three years. Because of that, all of my schooling was extremely delayed. Afterward, I [eventually] went and studied abroad in Japan... When I think back on that time now, I feel filled with deep emotion [*kangai bukai*].<sup>81</sup>

In trying to make sense, in retrospect, of how so many Korean students all over the Korean peninsula came to participate in sympathetic protests despite the obvious risks they faced in doing so, Kuk Sŏng-jun makes historical parallels:

It was just like the beginning of World War One. Of course, the background was complicated but what kind of lit the fuse was that when the crown prince of Austria was in Serbia, in Serbia he was shot with a gun, with a revolver, and he died there. That directly lit the fuse, became the catalyst [for the war.] This was also just like that.<sup>82</sup>

In other words, Kuk's interpretation of the beginnings of the Kwangju student movement in 1929 are that while the incident on the train was small, and seemingly insignificant, it set off a much larger series of events.

In the report that he submitted to the Government-General, Takabe Kin'ichi, Japanese official serving as the Chief of the Academic Affairs Bureau describes the students' day on November 3<sup>rd</sup> in great detail. In addition to outlining the fight from

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

October 30<sup>th</sup>, the tensions on the trains in the days leading up to November, and the morning shrine visit, he painstakingly reconstructs their afternoon, saying:

For a time, students from the higher common school retreated to school, and gathered in the auditorium. There, they made turbulent speeches and became agitated. Some students formed ranks and burst forth; others went and took the locks from the door of the room that held the farming tools, and got rakes, hoes, etc...[Still] others cut the lock on the door of the kendo room, and went to special trouble to take out similar things, like bamboo practice swords. Around 2 p.m., they formed a group and left through the school gates and went in the direction of the train station.<sup>83</sup>

He goes on to note that the students not only went through the middle of town, they also made sure they “went through the North Gate, taking a road with many businesses run by Japanese people on it. Finally, they got as far as the hospital...then they doubled back through the park, and returned to school.”<sup>84</sup> The report goes on to explain that:

The police, and teachers from the different schools, had to halt this demonstration movement. Even though they interceded, and remonstrated [the students], the students turned a deaf ear, and proceeded through the streets loudly singing protest songs.<sup>85</sup>

It was at this moment, when the students retreated from hand-to-hand combat with Japanese students and teachers, retreated to their schools, and took to the streets again singing and brandishing weapons, that the Kwangju student movement began to take shape as a Korean protest movement against Japanese colonialism.

### The Immediate Aftermath of the First Protests

On the following day (November 4, 1929), all the major national newspapers in Korea ran articles about the fight, arrests, and subsequent protests. The *Chosŏn ilbo* ran a

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<sup>83</sup> *Kōshū Chūgakkō seito tai Kōshū Kōtō Futsū Gakkō seito tōsō jiken no taiyō* [A summary of the incident of conflict between Kwangju middle school students and Kwangju Higher Normal School Students], [Keijō: 1929], reprinted in *KKGJS*, 42-48.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

story on Page Two proclaiming “Conflict between Kwangju Higher Common School Students and Junior High Students” (a headline which, due to the division of schools in this era, would have immediately alerted readers that the fight was between Korean and Japanese students.) “Twenty Injuries, Ranging from Minor to Severe. The Fight Raged with Knives and Other Weapons. Police and Firefighters Deployed.”<sup>86</sup> “Japanese Junior High School Students Harass a Korean Female Student,” the *Maeil shinbo* reported, also on Page Two, “Kwangju Junior High School Students and Higher Common School Students in Major Skirmish—The Cause of the Large Demonstrations in front of Kwangju Station was an Extremely Small Problem of [Hurt] Feelings.”<sup>87</sup> Both papers, as well as the *Tonga ilbo*,<sup>88</sup> noted that area schools would be closed for several days while local authorities tried to regain control over the situation. In addition, the *Chosŏn ilbo* article went on to include a particularly damning indictment of the Japanese students’ and teachers’ conduct, saying that the real cause of the explosion of tensions had been that in the middle of the day on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, a Japanese judo teacher from the Japanese school had led his students to the Kwangju station, where they lay in wait for Korean students returning from the shrine festivities, so that they could attack them.<sup>89</sup>

Takabe Kin’ichi, the Chief of the Academic Affairs Bureau of the Government-General travelled to Kwangju, and filed his series of first-hand reports, some of which were sent to Seoul, and others of which were sent to local Japanese officials throughout Korea. In these reports, Takabe meticulously documented what he learned about the beginnings of the protests, and what steps were being taken to curb their spread.

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<sup>86</sup> *Chosun ilbo* [Korean Daily], November 4, 1929, 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Maeil shinbo*, [Daily News], November 4, 1929, 2.

<sup>88</sup> *Tonga ilbo*, [Far-East Daily], November 4, 1929, 2.

<sup>89</sup> *Chosŏn ilbo* [Korean Daily], November 4, 1929, 2.

In describing the measures that the schools put into place immediately following the protests, Takabe states:

We closed both the middle school and the higher common school for three days, and while trying to assuage students' feelings, we carefully investigated the situation to make certain that the protests did not spread.<sup>90</sup>

In addition, school officials made use of the three days with no school to write letters to parents of students from both schools, make home visits in person, and “allay parents’ feelings while admonishing them to avoid rash action.”<sup>91</sup> In addition, “parents were given advice about concrete topics related to how they could control their children,” and were also asked to be patient while schools “dedicated all of their strength to quickly solving this issue.”<sup>92</sup> In an attempt to prevent further tensions between students in and around the train station, police planned to prosecute all detained students (who, by this point, were only Korean) to the fullest extent possible. Still, because they determined that the cause of the initial strife in the train station had been tensions between Japanese and Korean students, which could easily erupt again, the internal report states that “while we plan to give heavy sentences to those in police custody, we are going to delay prosecution procedures” in an effort to allow tensions between non-incarcerated students in the greater Kwangju area to dissipate.<sup>93</sup>

After a total of six days without school, students returned to school on November 11, 1929. The Japanese junior high school students “attended school and took classes as

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<sup>90</sup> *Kōshū Chūgakkō seito tai Kōshū Kōtō Futsū Gakkō seito tōsō jiken no taiyō* [A summary of the incident of conflict between Kwangju middle school students and Kwangju Higher Normal School Students], [Keijō: 1929], reprinted in *KKGJS*, 42-48.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

usual, without anything at all different,”<sup>94</sup> but this was not so with the Korean students. According to officials, “the air ran thick with the suspicion that a slow-down [was afoot], and there was an undercurrent of disturbance.” As a response to the sense that although there were not outright problems, something was not quite right, homeroom teachers and the school principles attempted to “admonish [the students] from the heart, in a way they could understand.” In addition, teachers “were certain not to neglect to keep a close watch” on the students, to assure that they behaved appropriately, and did not cause trouble. Just in case “Agricultural School students, Girls’ Higher Common School students, and Teachers’ School students had united, and planned [another] large street demonstration, close secret communications were maintained among [the staff at] all the relevant schools.” Ultimately, however, according to Takabe’s detailed reports which he submitted to the Government-General, November 11<sup>th</sup> ultimately “passed without incident.”<sup>95</sup>

The following day, however, was not as smooth. At Kwangju Higher Common School, classes began as planned, but after morning assembly, a student began scattering pamphlets that officials describe as having “ugly words on them.”<sup>96</sup> The short pamphlets proclaimed “Let us fight to the death! Let us recover those who are incarcerated!”<sup>97</sup> As soon as they were scattered, like a sign, “all students began breaking windows, and flooding through the school gate”<sup>98</sup> onto the streets, just as they had on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Within 15 minutes, a group of students from the girls’ school had seen them and joined in,

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

and “a street demonstration began.”<sup>99</sup> The police rushed in, and in order to prevent further disturbances, arrested all the participating students. The following day, despite being “strongly admonished by province officials, parents, and the principal of the school to avoid utterly rash behavior,” it was determined that female students were planning to collectively boycott school, and thus 20 female students were suspended indefinitely, and school was once again temporarily closed.<sup>100</sup> Fearing that newspaper articles would encourage other, similar protests, colonial authorities issued an official ban to newspapers to hold all reports related to student unrest in Kwangju, and to not publish anything further until December 28, 1929.<sup>101</sup>

Witnessing these events, the Chief of the Academic Affairs Bureau recommended that deeper investigation be undertaken, and that the Government-General assume more direct responsibility in off-setting future protests. Soon, however, Takabe found himself confronting another problem. On the morning of November 16<sup>th</sup>, he noted:

After the outbreak of the incidents [of student protest], Japanese people in this area, especially the parents of junior high school students, felt extremely unsafe. At the same time, the Japanese felt that, related to the Koreans, their sense of superiority was being severely infringed upon.<sup>102</sup>

With that in mind, he warned his superiors:

They have exaggerated the reality of the situation here to the Government-General and the Department of Military Affairs, they have sent a telegram petitioning for the army to be dispatched, and they have formed a parents' association, which has done things like petitioning the provincial governor and the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>101</sup> Nobunaga Seigi, *Kōshū gakusei undō to Shinkankai* [The Kwangju Student Movement and the *Sin'ganhoe*] in Mukuge no kai, *Shokuminchika Chōsen: Kōshū gakusei undō no kenkyū* [Korea under colonialism: Studies of the Kwangju Student Movement] (Kobe, Japan: Mukuge no kai, 1990), 23.

<sup>102</sup> *Kōshū Chūgakkō seito tai Kōshū Kōtō Futsū Gakkō seito tōsō jiken no taiyō* [A summary of the incident of conflict between Kwangju middle school students and Kwangju Higher Normal School Students], [Keijō: 1929], reprinted in *KKGJS*, 45-46.



chief of police for full use of police power. In comparison to the [current] calmness on the Korean side, [the Japanese residents in the area] have worked themselves into a state of agitation.<sup>103</sup>

This is an extremely telling passage for a number of reasons. First of all, it clearly reveals that Japanese residents in Kwangju felt that maintaining a sense of superiority (*yūetsukan*) relation to Koreans was not only their natural right, but it was also a right that the Government-General should be centrally concerned with maintaining. Second of all, this shows one of the common side effects of unrest on the Korean peninsula, which was that the Government-General often had to mediate (usually without full success) between the demands of the Japanese residents, and the demands of the Koreans themselves.

This precarious balance between the Japanese Government-General in Korea, local Japanese settlers, and Korean social unrest was certainly not new in 1929. We see the Government-General caught in a similar position in the wake of the March First Movement ten years earlier, when groups of Japanese citizens repeatedly petitioned for the Government-General to take far harsher actions against March First protesters. The Japanese settlers argued that their fundamental safety was at stake, and that the primary purpose of the government in Korea should be to protect the well-being of its Japanese residents. Often, however, the Government-General in turn viewed Japanese settlers as inherently destabilizing forces within individual regions of the Korean peninsula because they (in the eyes of the Government-General) tended to antagonize the Koreans surrounding them with no concern for the consequences, and had no desire to maintain positive relations with Korean communities. Again in 1929, throughout the initial

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

protests, the Government-General once again found itself attempting to negotiate between multiple sets of untenable demands. It would no sooner intervene and send full police power to Kwangju (and risk provoking even wider-ranging protests) to appease the threatened Japanese residents there than it would to consider granting the Korean students who were marching in the streets what they continually asked for—independence from Japanese colonialism.

### Conclusion

While the initial protests that sparked the Kwangju student movement may have been spontaneous to some degree, they were also deeply connected to a number of social realities at the time. The contemporaneous economic realities of the Japanese empire, which caused many school graduates to return from afar to their hometown of Kwangju, bringing socialist literature with them, contributed in a number of ways to radicalizing Kwangju-area students. The rise of local student participation in secret reading groups where socialist thought was studied, in turn, sensitized these students to issues related to colonization on a larger, more theoretical scale. In other ways, the very structure of the Japanese education system, as it manifested itself in the city of Kwangju and the surrounding areas, made tensions and subsequently protests, once they broke out, extremely difficult to contain. Likewise, the initial protests highlighted the different positioning of the Korean students commuting to and from school every day from their Japanese counterparts, as we can see in the very different responses that each had to the initial fights and street demonstrations, as well as in how Japanese police, school officials, and the Government-General responded to these students.

In subsequent chapters, I will continue to trace these same themes as I explore how the initial student protests which began in Kwangju began to move outward, first to surrounding towns in the region, then to Seoul, and ultimately throughout the entire Korean peninsula and beyond. In addition, I will examine the trials of the protest participants, the anti-social protest measures the Government-General implemented throughout the 1930s, and also a second, less successful student protest movement that again began in Kwangju but this time in 1943, in the midst of the Pacific War.

## Chapter Two

### **Rumors and Manifestoes: The Spread of the 1929 Movement**

#### Introduction

In the aftermath of the November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1929 student protests in Kwangju, students who had been meeting in secret in different “reading groups” coordinated a plan to create a larger and more sustained protest movement. Student organizers were determined to include manifestoes (or *gekibun*, they were called when recorded in Government-General records) of their goals and aims in as many protests as possible, despite the fact that the practice of putting their demands in writing increased the danger in which they placed themselves. The manifestoes they compiled were complicated to produce and distribute, and they positioned any individual student who possessed them at a much higher risk of being considered a protest “instigator” by colonial police. Student organizers saw the inclusion of written demands to be an essential part of anti-Japanese protest; colonial officials, too, saw these manifestoes as highly dangerous and powerful objects and obsessively documenting every instance in which protest manifestoes were discovered or distributed. Even as Japanese colonial officials collected, kept, and translated into Japanese every manifesto they acquired, they sought to isolate and repress student activism rather than engage with students’ demands.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These demands ranged from the immediate (such as allowing a student representative at staff meetings, for example, and reducing school fees), to the unlikely (such as immediately releasing those arrested in relation to the first incident of protest in Kwangju in November), to the inconceivable, at least for Japanese authorities (namely, granting Korea independence from Japanese imperial rule, and with it “colonial slave education,” as the students frequently called it).

Despite the diligence with which students (and the national networks with which they cooperated) documented their claims in writing and the diligence with which Japanese authorities collected and archived their words, the actual communication between colonial authorities and student protesters took place primarily in the form of either very public protest-related clashes between police and protesters, or in mediated exchanges between students, their parents, their teachers, and the Japanese colonial police. In examining how authorities described student protesters, and how these descriptions were often at odds with the demands made by the protesting students, we see not only how student protesters and colonial authorities communicated at cross-purposes, but also just how inescapably linked protesting students were to the colonial education system at every turn.

As the Kwangju student protests expanded to become a peninsula-wide movement, both Japanese colonial authorities and protesting Korean students intensified their respective strategies. For student activists, this meant producing greater and greater numbers of manifestoes. These manifestoes expanded in scope, from addressing the internal flaws of the Japanese colonial education system to critiquing Japanese colonial rule in general. In addition, they also shifted in form, from serving as a means of communication between protesting students themselves to forming a platform from which they attempted to address Japanese authorities directly.<sup>2</sup> Protesters advocated for colonial education reform and an end to Japanese rule of the Korean peninsula, but also used student activism as a forum within which to appropriate the production and

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<sup>2</sup> As I noted in the dissertation introduction, most, though not all, of the manifestoes written during the 1929-1930 Kwangju student movement were written in Korean and then collected, translated into Japanese, and recorded by colonial authorities. The Japanese translations are, in general, the only versions of these documents that have survived the colonial period.

distribution of the written word as a means of articulating their own rights, identities, and visions for the future in ways that were outside the scope of, and in direct opposition to, the Japanese colonial state. For colonial officials, intent on putting an end to Korean student activism and to the networks that allowed manifestoes to be distributed and protests to be organized, this meant intensifying surveillance, interrogation, and detainment of those suspected of anti-Japanese activism.

### The Spread of Student Protest Activity

The student protests that began in Kwangju spread first throughout the greater Kwangju area, then to major cities within the Korean peninsula. Student activism then expanded into smaller rural areas and finally, in its last stages, to Korean communities overseas, in locales as far-reaching as China, Japan, Manchuria, and the United States, before being completely suppressed by Japanese colonial authorities as of March 1930. Korean scholars have generally broken down the outbreak and spread of the Kwangju movement into three distinct stages. The initial outbreak in Kwangju and the surrounding areas which happened in late October and early November of 1929 is considered the first phase. The second phase, in which the Kwangju student movement spread to Seoul, P'yŏngyang, Hamhŭng, etc., took place from mid-November until the following January, during which time student participation increased dramatically, and the types of demands students put forth both broadened and became increasingly socialist in orientation. The third phase lasted into March 1930, during which time protests were undertaken in more

rural regions of Korea, in addition to within Korean communities outside of the Korean peninsula.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout this evolution, the student movement retained two key discursive elements of the original activism that began in Kwangju— consistent and powerful rejections of Japanese colonial education policies and practices, and repeated calls for more freedom both within the school system and within society as a whole. At the same time, as the protests expanded, student demands began to explicitly link injustice perceived within school grounds to larger critiques of the injustices inherent in Japanese colonial rule. In addition, students employed socialist language in their manifestoes to elevate the struggles of Korean students initially arrested for fighting with Japanese students in a train station into an incident of both national and international concern. Through these written manifestoes, students began to articulate their own utopic version of a future Korea, in which Koreans were very much connected through ethnic bonds but were freed from both the colonial and the capitalist hierarchies inherent in Japanese rule.

In the fear that reported incidents of student strife would trigger more anti-Japanese protest activity among Korean students in the colony, the Government-General ordered an official news embargo on news related to student protest which lasted from November 12-December 28, 1929.<sup>4</sup> However, between news articles that were printed on

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<sup>3</sup> For example, this periodization is used in all three of the following works on Kwangju student movement: Han'guk Yōksa Yōn'guhoe, *Kwangju haksaeung undong yōn'gu*, [Studies of the Kwangju student movement] (Seoul, Korea: Asea Munhwasa, 2000); *Kwangju haksaeung tongnip undongsa* [The history of the Kwangju student independence movement and Naju], 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Kwangju, Korea: Kwangju Haksaeung Tongnip Undong Tongjihoe, 2006); Pak Ch'an Sūng, et al., *Kwangju haksaeung tongnip undong kwa Naju* [The Kwangju student independence movement] (Seoul, Korea: Kyōngin Munhwasa, 2001).

<sup>4</sup>On November 11<sup>th</sup>, both the *Chosōn ilbo* and the *Tonga ilbo* ran announcements of the Government-General ban on Kwangju student protest-related news. (*Chosōn ilbo*, November 11, 1929, 2; *Tonga ilbo*, November 11, 1929, 2.) It is fascinating that while both Korean national newspapers were banned from printing news of student unrest, they were allowed to publicly announce the Government-General's order to keep this type of news out of the papers.

related issues and the internal records maintained by the Academic Affairs Bureau, as well as other branches of the colonial government, it is possible to trace the major protests of the next several months as they spread throughout the Korean peninsula. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, there were protests in Kwangju involving students at all four major Korean schools—Kwangju Higher Normal School, Kwangju Agriculture School, Kwangju Women’s Higher Normal School, and Kwangju Teacher’s School.<sup>5</sup> The *Chosŏn ilbo* reported that on November 17<sup>th</sup> about 500 second, third, and fourth-year students in Seoul held a farewell ceremony for students expelled for participating in boycotts, and that on November 19<sup>th</sup>, there were street protests and manifestoes distributed at Kiura Industrial School, a joint Korean and Japanese school in Southern Chŏlla Province (where the city of Kwangju is located.)<sup>6</sup> Similarly, on November 27<sup>th</sup>, the *Chosŏn ilbo* reported that there was a series of arrests of students and leading socialists (who were suspected of working together to further the student movement.)<sup>7</sup> Reports of student suspensions, expulsions, the distribution of manifestoes, and the arrests of related activists considered to be “conspirators” continued to emerge in newspapers throughout the period of the embargo on direct student protest news. On November 29<sup>th</sup>, the *Chosŏn ilbo* reported that four student boycott leaders in Seoul were expelled and 29 students suspended.<sup>8</sup> The *Chosŏn ilbo* continued to report about incidents of student unrest in Seoul and elsewhere, noting that manifestoes related to the Kwangju movement were distributed widely on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, and that school boycotts in Seoul resulted in the

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<sup>5</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ichi (Showa 4-nen 12-gatsu)* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, part one (December 1929)] reprinted in *Kōshū kōnichi gakusei jiken shiryō* [Kwangju anti-Japanese student incident documents] (Nagoya, Japan: 1979), 156 (hereafter cited in text as *KKGJS*).

<sup>6</sup> *Chosŏn ilbo* [Korea Daily], November 17, 1929, quoted in Yi, Ki-hong and An, Chong-ch’ŏl. *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undong ūn chŏn ’guk haksaeŋ tongnip undong iōtta* [The Kwangju student independence movement was a nationwide independence movement] (Kwangju, Korea: Hyangjisa: 1997), 35,38.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>8</sup> *Chosŏn ilbo* [Korean Daily], November 29, 1929, 2.



expulsion of nine students, and the suspension of an additional fourteen.<sup>9</sup> It was risky even for the newspapers themselves to report these incidents, as the Government-General was not above arresting reporters suspected of sympathizing with protesting students.<sup>10</sup>

Within the city of Seoul, Government-General officials chronicled some type of unrest every day at one if not more schools from December 1, 1929, until December 25, 1929, the day when schools were closed for winter vacation.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, colonial officials noted similar patterns in other major regions of the Korean peninsula: student unrest occurred in a variety of forms (the “scattering of manifestoes,” (*gekibun no sanpu*), “carrying out of [school] boycotts,” etc. in addition to street protests, recurred repeatedly throughout the month of December, and was especially intense around the middle of the month, although it didn’t end entirely until regional schools closed for winter vacation, which many schools chose to do early, to offset further incidents of unrest.<sup>12</sup> Korean newspaper articles, even when retroactively reporting on activities that occurred several weeks before, carried particularly dramatic accounts of the scale of student unrest in December. The *Tonga ilbo* reported that by December 5<sup>th</sup>, four different types of manifestoes had been found in desks in every [Korean] school in Seoul without exception, and 127 had suspects been arrested on suspicion being part of part of secret student groups.<sup>13</sup> On December 28, 1929, the *Chosŏn Ilbo* reported that on December 10<sup>th</sup> and

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<sup>9</sup> *Chosŏn ilbo* [Korean Daily], December 12, 1929, 2.

<sup>10</sup> For example, on January 16, 1930, the branch editor and two other reporters of the *Chosŏn ilbo* offices near a school in which students staged a school boycott were arrested for suspected collusion with protesting students. *Kōshū oyobi Keijō sono hoka kakuchi ni okeru gakusei jiken no gaiyō (Showa 5-nen 1-gatsu)* [A summary of student incidents in Kwangju, Keijō, and other areas (January 1930)], reprinted in *KKGJS*, 87.

<sup>11</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ichi (Showa 4-nen 12-gatsu)* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, part one (December 1929)], reprinted in *KKGJS*. See 130-141 for narrative descriptions and 141- 145 for numerical charts of unrest.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-153.

<sup>13</sup> *Tonga ilbo*, [Far-East Daily], December 5, 1929, 2.

11<sup>th</sup>, students from schools throughout the city of Seoul had staged street protests, causing more than 2,400 police to commandeer cars throughout the city, and arrest more than 4,000 students protesting in the streets.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the December 29, 1929 edition of the *Tonga ilbo* asserted that on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, beginning with Keijō Imperial University, every school within Seoul at the middle school level and above had engaged in some form of protest, and more than 23,000 pamphlets were scattered in the streets, a large number of which were impounded by police.<sup>15</sup>

Korean scholar Chang Sōng-nyōng classifies the peak of the second stage of the Kwangju student movement as beginning with a series of large-scale protests in Seoul on December 4, 1929, which continued until December 13, 1929. In this phase, Chang tells us, students received advice from Communist Party members who had avoided arrest, thanks to which each school was able to form its own *t'ujaeng chidobu*, or “struggle leadership division,” an evolution of the “reading group” model that had operated in the past.<sup>16</sup> By December 13<sup>th</sup>, 12,000 students had participated in protest activity.<sup>17</sup> During this stage of protests, a total of approximately ten different types of manifestoes were produced, all of which, Chang tells us, shared several central themes in common. Each of the manifestoes established support for the students in Kwangju, demanded the abolition of “colonial slave education under the banner of Japanese imperialism.” They also called for the Peace Preservation Law and other “bad laws” to be promptly rescinded, and

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<sup>14</sup> *Chosōn ilbo* [Korean Daily], December 28, 1929, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Tonga ilbo*, [The Far-East Daily], November 4, 1929, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Chang Sōng-nyōng, *Kwangju hakseong undong ui kuknaeoe hwaksan kwa ku sōngkyōk* [The domestic and international spread and character of the Kwangju student movement], *Kwangju haksae undong yōn'gu*, [Studies of the Kwangju student movement], Han'guk Yōksa Yōn'guhoe (Seoul, Korea: Asea Munhwasa, 2000), 139.

<sup>17</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ichi (Showa 4-nen 12-gatsu)* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, part one], 142-143.

registered opposition to Japanese immigrants in addition to Japanese authorities, as well as to the military police and government by the Government-General.<sup>18</sup>

The largest numbers of students participated in protest activity within the city of Seoul in this period but by the end of December, 1929, Korean student protests had been launched in other major cities throughout Korea as well. In Hamhŭng, for example, beginning on December 15<sup>th</sup> and lasting until December 18<sup>th</sup>, two middle schools and nine other schools participated in public protest.<sup>19</sup> From December 1<sup>st</sup> onward, there were sustained protests documented throughout the Korean peninsula. Chang tells us that of the three major types of protest activities—school boycotts (where students all stayed home from school at the same time); “white paper incidents,” where students attended schools during exams but coordinated to submit their tests blank to the teachers; and street demonstrations, in which students marched in the streets— school boycotts were the most common.<sup>20</sup> We find frequent examples of school boycotts reported in the Korean news throughout December. For example, the December 29<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Tonga ilbo* reported that within the city limits of P’yŏngyang, out of a total of twenty schools at middle school level and above, nine reported disturbances from December 6<sup>th</sup> onward, frequently in the form of successive boycotts, of which one to two were staged per day until December 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>21</sup>

Also, colonial officials documented the fact that both in Seoul and in other regions on the Korean peninsula, Korean public school students were not the only ones to enthusiastically and repeatedly engage in anti-Japanese protest activity. By January,

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<sup>18</sup>Chang Sŏng-nyŏng, *Kwangju hakseong undong ui kuknaeoe hwaksan kwa ku sŏnggyŏk* [The domestic and international spread and character of the Kwangju student movement], 145-146.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 149-150.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>*Tonga ilbo*, [Far-East Daily], November 4, 1929, 2.

enough private schools within Keijō-fu had reported “disturbances” (*dōyō*) that Academic Affairs officials saw fit to document their unrest in a separate series of charts. In one of the largest documented “disturbances” at a single school, on January 15, 1930, approximately 650 students at a Seoul private school met in the schoolyard following a test, and “there was the noise of the raising of battle cries” and students “were going to leave school grounds” when teachers tried to stop them, at which point the students “broke down the fence boards and escaped.”<sup>22</sup> Once beyond school grounds, they unfurled “two red cotton flags, on which ‘Withdraw the slave education institution, we are in sympathy with the arrested, recover [the arrested],’ and other incendiary slogans were written.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, students engaged in such actions as “violence and swearing, throwing building tiles (*kawara*) and small stones (*koishi*) at police officers, and chanting ‘manse’ loudly” in the streets.” As a result, according to Japanese authorities, “One hundred and sixty-five people who engaged in disturbing behavior (*fuon kōdōsha*) were arrested, and [the protests] were put down (*chinsei seshimu.*)”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, two days later at another private school in Seoul, second and third-year students “gathered in the schoolyard, and made noise, [and were thus] stopped [by teachers], and made to go into the classrooms.” Officials went on to record, however, that:

Still, some fifth-year students cut their fingers, and wrote in blood on handkerchiefs “With red-blooded sincerity, in unified solidarity, destroy all obstacles, long live our demonstrations,” and other such disturbing text...[They] waived [the handkerchiefs], and chanting “*banzai*,” [k. *manse*] they escaped from school grounds, and were arrested.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ni (Showa 5-nen 1-gatsu): Shingakki kaishi go ni okeru gakusei jiken uramen sakudō no jōkyō* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, part two (January 1930): The state of student incident behind-the-scenes schemes after the beginning of the new term], reprinted in *KKGJS*,175.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*,173.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

This description reminds us just how central a role the creation and display of so-called “disturbing texts” playing in student protest, and how committed students were to utilizing their own writings in public spaces as part of their protests, even when doing so caused them, as we see here, not only arrest, but bodily injury.

### Networks

The Japanese colonial police worked closely with school authorities and other colonial officials to attempt to establish how student protests were being organized across schools and regions within Korea. Through questioning protesters, police surmised that students had formed connections with older students who returned to Kwangju and other areas after being radicalized overseas. In addition, police noted that students had contact with remaining members of leftist organizations who had survived the Japanese arrests and purges of communist thinkers following the organization of a Korean Communist Party in 1925.<sup>26</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, the shape and outcome of colonial Korean education in the late 1920s was intimately tied to larger economic trends, not only within the Korean peninsula, but throughout the Japanese empire (and indeed the world) as a whole at the time. Thus, many educated Korean exchange students (as well as other overseas Koreans) returned home as their financial possibilities grew increasingly dim abroad. In addition, the framing, urgency, and salience of the Kwangju student movement was similarly embedded in larger political trends as well, trends which themselves were interconnected with economic issues.

As sociologist Gi-wook Shin carefully details in *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy*, there has been no moment in modern Korean history in

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 169-170.

which nationalism, national movements, or even definitions of what constitutes the nation itself have been stable, unfragmented, and uncontested.<sup>27</sup> This was certainly true in 1920s colonial Korea, where, according to scholar Dae-sook Suh, from the fall of 1927 onward in particular, “Factionalism [among activists] in Korea was at its height.”<sup>28</sup> The most dramatic political shift emerged within 1920s Korean nationalism was the rise of Marxist thought. Korean students and other activists powerful came to see Marxism and socialist thought in general to be a philosophical form powerful enough to counter Japanese imperialism and ultimately to produce an entirely new Korean nation. While the Kwangju student movement of 1929 contained certain elements which mirrored previous March First Movement activism (such as a rejection of Japanese imperial rule, demands for an independent and autonomous Korean nation voiced in numerous street demonstrations and other form of public protest, and overseas Koreans returning to Korea from abroad playing a key role in the organization of protests), communist ideology was notably absent in 1919.<sup>29</sup>

By the 1920s, however, overseas Koreans had become more and more involved in both international communist party politics and in the reading and debating of Marx and neo-Marxist philosophy, which they in turn brought with them into Korea itself when returning from abroad. Initially, in the years from 1920 to 1922, formal Korean communist activity happened virtually entirely outside of the Korean peninsula itself:

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<sup>27</sup> Gi-wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 4-8.

<sup>28</sup> Dae-Sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 100.

<sup>29</sup> Instead, the rhetoric of Western-style democracy and calls for Wilsonian self-determination formed the backbone of the political discourse present in March First. For more on this, see Frank P. Baldwin, “The March First Movement: Korean Challenge and Japanese Response” Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1969.

primarily in China; the Soviet Union; Manchuria; and Japan.<sup>30</sup> Following the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1905, Japanese troops were stationed in Vladivostok, and had been perceived by Russians to pose a significant threat to Siberia.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, a treaty agreement was reached between Japan and the Soviet Union in 1925, and that year the Korean Communist Party officially formed and held its first meeting within Korea, with the full support of the Soviet Union. However, the Korean Communist Movement, or more accurately, activism by those who were inspired by Marxist thought and literature, was divided into three major factions: those affiliated with the Communist party in the Soviet Union (the Irkust Faction); those affiliated with communist activity in China (the Shanghai Faction); and Korean students returning from having been radicalized in Japan, who were extremely familiar with Marxist thought and in particular with Japanese Marxist philosophers but were entirely unfamiliar with the politics of the larger regional communist movement.<sup>32</sup>

Despite this profound fragmentation, the first official meeting of the Korean Communist Party was held in Seoul on April 17, 1925. However, Japanese authorities had effectively gathered intelligence about communist activity and by November 15<sup>th</sup> of the same year, the party was disbanded by colonial intervention. With an official communist party rendered impotent to deliver the sustained organization required for a March First-type nationalist movement, Korean nationalists shifted tactics. Instead of a communist party per se, activists formed a loose organization of liberal nationalist Koreans, this time with explicit Japanese approval. The new group, the *Sing'anhoe* (the

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<sup>30</sup> Chong-sik Lee and Robert A. Scalapino, *Communism in Korea* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1972), 4-20.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Dae-Sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948*, 45.

“New Korea Society”), was not an explicitly Marxist organization (in fact, to gain Japanese approval, it had presented itself to authorities as expressly NON-Marxist), but it became home to many of the radicalized students who were returning from Japan, who were highly versed in Communist ideology but not necessarily in the practical, intimate politics of Communist ties to the Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup>

The *Sin'ganhoe* was established on January 19, 1927, and held its inauguration ceremony with the approval of Japanese authorities on February 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>34</sup> Taking advantage of the vacuum left by the erosion of Korean Communist Party leadership and the number of other nationalist organizations seeking to join larger peninsula-wide networks, the *Sin'ganhoe* expanded rapidly. Within a year of its foundation, had more than 100 branches throughout Korea and a membership of over 10,000 people.<sup>35</sup> Although the *Sin'ganhoe* had been formed as an expressly non-Marxist organization, it ultimately cooperated with and absorbed much of the remaining KCP membership. At the same time, most of the regional leadership of both the *Sin'ganhoe* and the KCP in this period, according to scholar Robert Scalapino, “came heavily from the ranks of those who had received some higher education,”<sup>36</sup> meaning that the patterns of reading group organization that we saw behind the scenes in Kwangju prior to the outbreak of the initial street protests fit in directly with patterns occurring throughout the Korean peninsula.

As the initial street protests of the early November 1929 failed to die out despite extensive interventions by Japanese authorities at every level, police and school officials began to rightfully suspect that not only was the student movement more tenacious than

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<sup>33</sup> Chong-sik Lee and Robert A. Scalapino, *Communism in Korea*, 60.

<sup>34</sup> According to Suh, this occurred January 14, 1927. Dae-Sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 88.

<sup>35</sup> Chong-sik Lee and Robert A. Scalapino, *Communism in Korea*, 113-144.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.



they had initially hoped. In addition, they began to see that the protests at various schools were connected and were being organized in more complex ways behind the scenes in ways than they had initially suspected. In a sub-section in the Academic Affairs Bureau's confidential documents entitled "Schemes behind the Current Incidents," officials reported that they had learned that Korean students in Kwangju had been receiving guidance from members of the Korean Communist Party from 1926 onward, and "had formed secret [reading group] organizations as part of their training to become real militants (*jissai tōshi*), who must bring about autocratic rule by those without property, and the realization of a communist society."<sup>37</sup> Within these reading groups, officials asserted, students were encouraged to make explicit links between socialism and nationalism, and were told by those who helped to organize the reading groups that, "Right now... the Korean people are experiencing a dual weight of exploitative oppression—one in which we [are being oppressed by] class (*kaikyūteki ni*), and one in which we [are being oppressed] as a people (*minzokuteki ni*)."<sup>38</sup> As such, students were encouraged to work together to "liberate the Korean people" (*chōsen minzoku o kaihō suru*).<sup>39</sup> The Korean Communist Party members whom Japanese police suspected of initially working with students in Kwangju (and elsewhere on the Korean peninsula) to form reading groups at individual schools and establish communications between these groups had largely all been imprisoned as part of large-scale arrests of communists on the Korean peninsula that took place from 1925 onward, thus leaving the bulk of the behind-

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<sup>37</sup> Chōsen Sōtokufu Gakumukyoku, *Zenra Nandō Kōshū ni okeru naisenjin seito tōsō jiken no shinsō narabi ni kore ga sennai shogakkō ni oyobashitaru ekkyō* [The incident of Japanese and Korean student conflict in Kwangju, Southern Chōlla Province, and its effects on various schools within Korea], [Keijō: 1929], 18-19 (hereafter cited in text as ZNK).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

the-scenes organizing work to be done by students themselves. Also, students often met with graduates from Kwangju-area schools such as Chang Chae-sŏng, who was a graduate of Kwangju Higher Normal School and who had returned to Kwangju from being a university exchange student in Japan. According to internal colonial documents, while there, he had “become absorbed in social science research, and deeply learned in the economic teachings of Marx.”<sup>40</sup> Police noted that it was these returning students, in Kwangju and elsewhere on the Korean peninsula, who not only served as links between larger leftist organizations in Korea and groups of students at each school, but also, by means of spreading socialist literature and organizing the study of contraband materials, encouraged students to consider the links between Marxist thought and the possibility of Korean liberation from Japanese rule.

Japanese internal documents indicate that the head of the Academic Affairs Bureau traveled to Kwangju on November 8<sup>th</sup> to conduct a first-hand investigation of the situation on the ground. Kwangju-area activists and nationalist networks were also mobilizing at the same time, Scalapino tells us that immediately after the November 3<sup>rd</sup> protests, Kwangju *Sin'ganhoe* members contacted their counterparts at the Seoul headquarters, several of whose members traveled to Kwangju from Seoul just after the first 1929 protests to assess the situation there, and then decided to do what they could to help the launch of nationwide protest activity.<sup>41</sup> According to Kwangju court records, Japanese colonial officials suspected that from November 4<sup>th</sup> to November 11<sup>th</sup>, members

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<sup>40</sup> ZNK, 20

<sup>41</sup> Chong-sik Lee and Robert A. Scalapino, *Communism in Korea*, 115-116.

of a number of underground organizations prepared to organize the student movement on a national scale.<sup>42</sup>

While it is clear that both the remains of the Korean Communist Party and the *Sin'ganhoe* played active roles in mobilizing students and assisting them in turning a local protest movement into a national one, it is also important to note that there are gaps and biases in the existing documentation that obscure how, exactly, these networks operated and to what degree they actively mobilized, or simply merely assisted, protesting students to achieve their goals. First of all, in the first part of the movement, Japanese authorities—unwilling or unable to assign student protesters their own agency and thus acknowledge how wide-spread dissatisfaction with Japanese rule was—often overstated the connections between various individuals and groups to better support a picture of a small number of “outside agitators” working to mobilize otherwise docile Korean students.<sup>43</sup> Second of all, and possibly more importantly, covert social networks were so complex and frequently so diffuse that Japanese authorities themselves could not create a single, unified picture of how they functioned, despite their best efforts. While Japanese authorities believed that *Sin'ganhoe* played a large role in helping to create and distribute manifestoes, they also confessed that it was difficult to assess how and to what degree outside organizers were contributing to it. In January 1930, two months after the

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<sup>42</sup> As cited in Yi Ki-hong and An Chong-ch'öl. *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undong ūn ch'ŏn 'guk haksaeŋ tongnip undong i'ŏtta* [The Kwangju Student Independence Movement was a Nationwide Independence Movement], 225.

<sup>43</sup> Throughout the five months of the movement, the Japanese colonial government official response to the protests also shifted from asserting that students were being directly influenced by outside agitators, to seeing the protests as the result of the activism of a few “bad elements” (*furyō bunshi*) who unduly influenced their fellow students, to believing that any student caught protesting or being connected in any way to seditious thought should be heavily punished. With this transition, we see the sentencing and prison terms for arrested students increase dramatically as the movement continued.

movement had begun, Japanese official attempted to assess these networks and how they were functioning:

The incident of student strife that took place in Kwangju, Southern Chōlla Province, was intentionally used by communists to agitate, and to infect Keijō. They encouraged students to hold school boycotts, and they caused carrying out of demonstration movements, and these [in turn] served as the fuse that triggered the increase of violent activity within Korea and the largest, most serious disturbances.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, Japanese authorities were certain that the student movement was triggered by the events in Kwangju, but did not arise organically from these incidents; rather, they believed that behind-the-scenes, communist agitators not only organized the movement but also encouraged students to behave in far more violent and confrontational ways than they would have otherwise. At the same time, however, authorities were not able to concretely trace how these activist networks functioned, and to what degree they held control, noting in frustration that:

In every region, beginning with P'yōngyang and Hamhŭng, student disturbances came from a nationalist standpoint (*minzokuteki tachiba*) and were entirely triggered by the incidents in Kwangju and in Keijō. However [it is unclear what] level of control these behind-the-scenes plotters (*uramen sakudōsha*) had... and in addition, in the provinces, it is also difficult to measure whether there are [other] local ideologues who are intervening [in addition to communists.]<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, the degree to which students themselves continually and repeatedly protested throughout this period, even in the face of greater and greater punishments, suggests that they themselves were more personally committed to participating in the student movement and resisting Japanese colonial rule than officials at the time acknowledged, even if they did, as Japanese authorities suspected, consult with outside activists, such as

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<sup>44</sup> *Kōshū oyobi Keijō sono hoka kakuchi ni okeru gakusei jiken no gaiyō (Showa 5-nen 1-gatsu)* [A summary of student incidents in Kwangju, Keijō, and other areas (January 1930)], reprinted in *KKGJS*, 56.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

KCP members and members of the *Sin'ganhoe*. Because the connections responsible for helping students to coordinate protests in different cities were often oblique, the writings which students produced and distributed in the course of their protests become all the more important as an object of analysis; they provide an important window into how students themselves were envisioning their protests, articulating their dissatisfactions, and imagining themselves in dialogue with the colonial state.

### Hidden Transcripts, Public Acts

What happened behind the scenes, out of public view, and under the radar of colonial authorities prior to the initial Kwangju student protests paralleled processes going on in other parts of Korea as well. As the movement spread in the months of November and December, 1929, and January 1930, the Academic Affairs Bureau and the colonial police began to understand even more thoroughly how often students had been secretly meeting in small groups to discuss socialist literature, their dissatisfactions with their educational experiences, and the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule. In addition, officials began to see how these practices formed networks that could then be mobilized to incite and sustain student unrest.

As we saw in the previous chapter, by the time of the initial outbreak of tensions in Kwangju in 1929, the ways in which conflict between Japanese and Korean residents of colonial Korea in public space was narrated had been codified for both sides. As the protests continued, we once again find Japanese narratives of Korean violence and unrest taking on a familiar cast: students were described as uncontrollable; wild; operating in groups; ignoring commands to halt by teachers and police; and in general, engaging in

“rash” and “imprudent” action. Although the motives of the student protesters are difficult to glean from the extant documentation the ways in which they utilized manifestoes in their protests are highly suggestive.<sup>46</sup> Korean student protesters by the late 1920 were sophisticated consumers of Japanese colonial education and Marxist theory. In addition, they were familiar with how narratives of modernity were articulated by Japanese government officials and the ways in which the colonial state worked to naturalize Japanese rule of the Korean peninsula. We can assume that student protesters understood how their actions would be described and written off by colonial authorities. Therefore, producing manifestoes and distributing them at protest sites can be seen as an attempt by student activists not only to mobilize and unite larger numbers of protesters but also as a means of inscribing their own voices and meanings onto public protest activity which, they knew from Japanese responses to the March First Movement and other resistance activity within their lifetimes, would be not only violently suppressed, but also interpreted in reductive and unfavorable ways by the colonial state.

As student manifestoes spread and diversified throughout the movement, students adeptly composed counter-narratives to Japanese colonial rhetoric by utilizing rights-based language about access to education and other social rights which drew heavily on Japanese narratives of modernity; they used Marxist thought to connect immediate, education-based issues to larger colonial and even global issues, adopting and inverting

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<sup>46</sup> One of the largest historiographical issues in terms of assessing how students organized themselves, cooperated with national networks and produced manifestoes is that the only documentation that remains from this period is that which was produced by Japanese authorities to assess students’ motivations. Therefore, the majority of scholarship focusing on these protests has utilized Japanese accounts of the spread. My approach of reading the student manifestoes as one possible in-road to understanding student protesters’ subjectivity is not unique—Korean scholar Yi Jun-shik, for example, utilizes student manifestoes to infer the scope and progression of the influence of socialist thought on student protesters’ resistance strategies. See Yi Jun-shik, *Kwangju hakseong undong kwa minjok undong seryŏk* [The Kwangju student movement and the power of the nationalist movement], *Kwangju haksae undong yŏn’gu*, [Studies of the Kwangju student movement], Han’guk Yŏksa Yŏn’guhoe (Seoul, Korea: Asea Munhwasa) 168-200.

the imagery of the Japanese state to describe Japanese people, rather than Koreans, with the now familiar tropes of angry mobs and rabid beasts. The manifestoes served as a way to delineate increasingly wide-reaching visions of a future post-colonial Korean nation.

A central part of this student movement, therefore, was this trajectory from private conversations in hidden rooms, mountain sides, and other private and liminal “Korean” spaces to the very public performance of dialogues that had been introduced, expanded and rehearsed offstage. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, anthropologist James Scott defines the “public transcript” of human social interaction as “a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate.”<sup>47</sup> According to Scott, for every agreed upon, publicly performed public transcript, there is at least one (if not multiple) hidden transcripts, in which people, both the dominating and the dominated, speak their minds in a way that is not possible in the midst of the public performances required when public space is occupied by those of unequal power. These “hidden transcripts,” Scott argues, take place off stage, and consist of “those off-stage speeches, gestures, and practices that contradict, or inflect, what appears in the public transcript.”<sup>48</sup> In certain instances, these “hidden transcripts” break through, and take center stage. Scott tells us that:

The first open statement of a hidden transcript, a declaration that breaches the etiquette of power relations, that breaks the apparently calm surface of silence and consent, carries with it the force of a declaration of war.<sup>49</sup>

In many ways, the “public transcript” in 1920s colonial Korea, one that we see Japanese colonial officials, teachers, and parents alike struggling to reinforce against the

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<sup>47</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

groundswell of Korean student protest, was that Japanese colonialism was natural and just and the hierarchy that it imposed on Korean civil society was neither contestable nor contested. Japanese colonial education was presented as a benevolent gift from the Japanese emperor and his administrators to the Korean peninsula, providing elite Korean students with access to a modern education, one that could not be provided by indigenous means and one that opened many doors for them as subjects of the Japanese colonial empire.

The Kwangju student protests, as they began in late 1929, were not the “first open statement” of students’ “hidden transcripts;” the discussions that students had had with their like-minded peers in spaces out of earshot of colonial authorities, teachers, or parents. In fact, as we saw in the last chapter, the tensions that broke out in Kwangju emerged along already determined lines, and mimicked other moments of recent tension between Japanese and Korean residents of the area. At the same time, however, in the secret reading groups and other activities that students were undertaking prior to the outbreak of public tensions in Kwangju in 1929, the “hidden transcripts” of the Korean students involved were being formed, reiterated, and unified with increasing clarity. These “transcripts” rejected Japanese colonialism and demanded the removal of Japanese oppression in the classroom and invoked a future in which Korea was an independent nation.

#### Official Japanese Narratives of Korean Student Unrest—Student Protesters as Uncontrollable Groups

Just how threatening Japanese colonial officials saw these public protests to be comes through clearly in colonial accounts. Reading confidential reports of the Academic



Affairs Bureau of the Government-General against their public statements reveals that Japanese authorities had their own “hidden” and “public” transcripts of domination. In public, they very much emphasized the measures being taken to quell the unrest and the level of social control they had achieved. In confidential documents, however, they expressed a sense of alarm and urgency. With palpable concern, internal documents traced violent, rioting Korean students scattering “disturbing” pamphlets, rushing school gates, and thwarting teacher and then police attempts to stop them.

After the first series of protests on November 3, 1929, the Academic Affairs Bureau issued communiqués primarily to Japanese school authorities (such as school principals) in the affected regions. At the same time, they also began to keep an on-going and extremely detailed series of internal reports, which were not to be shared even with local Japanese authorities. From the very first incidents of student unrest in Kwangju, the information that the Academic Affairs Bureau released, even to local Japanese administrators in colonial Korea, diverged from internal records kept by the Bureau to assess of what officials referred to most often as “disturbing behavior,” or *fuon kōdō*. These internal classified documents differed substantially from the Government-General’s “public transcripts” of domination. In public, officials presented themselves as concerned about challenges to Japanese rule but appeared consistently confident in their ability to not only understand and control Korean student unrest, but also contain the threat to both individual Japanese subjects and to colonial rule as a whole.

On November 16, 1929, Takabe Kin’ichi, the Chief of the Academic Affairs Bureau, sent out a telegram to provincial authorities throughout the peninsula. The telegram noted that “a trivial problem of emotions based on a [difference in] customs

between Japan and Korea” (*naisen fūshū jō no kanjō mondai*) had caused unrest in Kwangju, and there were “also rumors that [students] had harangued and cheered” in the streets (*geki o tobashite, seien o motometaru ya no fūbun mo ari*).<sup>50</sup> The general tone of the telegram was reassuring rather than alarmist, however, and simply asserted that school principals and other officials were to be on special alert so that problems of this kind “related to the relationship between Japanese people and Koreans” (*naisenjin kankei ni kakari*) did not occur elsewhere.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, a second telegram, sent out on November 13<sup>th</sup>, one day after yet another incidence of major unrest in Kwangju, insisted that both the Academic Affairs Bureau and local Southern Chōlla provincial officials were taking “a firm attitude [towards protesters] and punishing [them] for this [activity],” (*kyōkō naru taidō o motte, kore ni sho seshimeru.*) At the same time, the Academic Affairs Bureau acknowledged that they believed that the street protests were caused by the “agitation of those with disturbing thoughts” (*fuon shisōsha no sendō*), and thus “the risk was not entirely absent” that this type of unrest could “gradually spread to schools in other areas.”<sup>52</sup> Should this unlikelyhood happen, Takabe explained, provincial officials were to themselves to “take the utmost firm attitude [possible],” (*danzen kyōkō naru taidō o motte*), and to respond to the unrest with “appropriate measures, without ignoring the cause [of the unrest]”<sup>53</sup> At the central government level, colonial officials acknowledged that there was underlying resentment to Japanese rule that could, if channeled, trigger further student protest, but indicated that provincial officials could be counted on to

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<sup>50</sup> *Kōshū Chūgakkō seito tai Kōshū Kōtō Futsū Gakkō seito tōsō jiken no taiyō* [A summary of the incident of conflict between Kwangju middle school students and Kwangju Higher Normal School students], [Keijō: 1929] reprinted in *KKGJS*, 52.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

assess individual incidents as they occurred, and were perfectly able to effectively determine what would be “appropriate measures” to counter any public protest. In other words, this second communiqué sought to inform regional authorities of what had happened in Kwangju, and to alert them that an extremely “firm attitude” was appropriate should they witness anything similar within their jurisdiction; on the other hand, it did not indicate in any way that the protests being undertaken by Korean students posed a significant threat to Japanese rule, or that, should they break out elsewhere, provincial officials would be unequipped to contain them using their own basic judgment about what actions would most effectively off-set Korean student unrest.

The tone adopted in the external communiqués sent by the Academic Affairs Bureau to regional authorities was at odds with that struck within confidential documents kept during this same period, however, and this disparity reveals important elements of the “hidden transcripts” of Japanese domination. The confidential documents provide us with a window into the anxieties felt by the Japanese officials in charge of charting colonial policy, especially in relationship to education, in the face of the mounting and seemingly uncontrollable Korean student movement as it continued to expand throughout the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930, spreading from Kwangju and its immediate environs to large cities such as Seoul, P’yŏngyang, Hamhŭng, Pusan, and Kaesang, and then from there to smaller cities and more rural areas of the Korean peninsula. As Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper tell us in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, “the most basic tension of empire lies in what has become a central, if now obvious, point of recent colonial scholarship: namely, that the otherness of colonized persons was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be defined and

maintained.”<sup>54</sup> It is precisely this point to which the gap between the “hidden” and “public” transcripts of the Government-General attests; namely, that colonial officials had to continually work to naturalize Japanese rule of the Korean peninsula. Student protests, with both their physical defiance of Japanese control and their commitment to countering the dominant narratives of empire, destabilized fragile colonial claims to legitimacy.

This helps to explain why student protesters repeatedly used detailed written manifestoes to organize the student movement and to imbue their school boycotts and street protests with specific and immediate political meaning, and also why, as Japanese authorities grew increasingly alarmed and unnerved by the unrest, they at no point attempted to address any of the issues articulated within students’ writings. In the confidential assessments of the first several months of student activism written by the Government-General’s Academic Affairs Bureau, colonial officials emphasized that Korean students were willful, uncontrollable, spontaneously violent and impervious to reason; more specifically, they were impervious to attempts by Japanese authority figures to halt already-unfolding street protest. Although Koreans were clearly writing for their fellow students in this phase of the protests, as pamphlets are written in Korean and distributed to Korean students in and around schools,<sup>55</sup> Japanese police and government officials carefully collected, translated, and documented all flyers distributed in relation

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<sup>54</sup> Fredrick Cooper and Ann Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>55</sup> Later in the movement, students begin writing letters directly to Japanese authority figures, but not until the protests had continued for two more months beyond mid-November. My personal favorite of these latter documents is an anonymous letter sent to the Japanese Chief of Police in Kaesang which arrived shortly after a major protest there. It was written in Japanese, and read “Dear Honorable Chief of Police: Long Live an Independent Korea!” *Kōshū oyobi Keijō sono hoka kakuchi ni okeru gakusei jiken no gaiyō* (*Showa 5-nen 1-gatsu*) [A summary of student incidents in Kwangju, Keijō, and other areas (January 1930)], reprinted in *KKGJS*, 238.

to student protest, but no dialogue was ever possible between the protesters and the colonial authority figures: suspended, expelled, and arrested student protesters found themselves embedded in a triangle between Japanese police, teachers, and their parents, where they were continually being talked to and about, but are not given the authority to directly speak for themselves.

We can see three patterns in the official response to these protests: student protesters characterized as violent, acting in unison and impervious to authority; manifestoes treated as dangerous objects whose content would be ignored; and student agency being continually mediated through parents, teachers, and authorities. This holds true in how authorities investigated and assessed student actions and the measures required to suppress student activism within the province of Southern Chōlla and beyond. In the aftermath of the first student protests in Kwangju, students returned to school on November 11, 1929 after a total of six days without school. The Japanese junior high school students “attended school and took classes as usual, without anything at all different,” but this was not so with the Korean students. According to officials, “the air ran thick with the suspicion that a slow-down [was afoot], and there was an undercurrent of disturbance.”<sup>56</sup> As a response to the sense that, although there were not outright problems, something was not quite right, homeroom teachers and the school principles attempted to “admonish [the students] from the heart, in a way they could understand.”<sup>57</sup> In addition, teachers “were certain not to neglect keeping a close watch” on the students, to assure that they behaved appropriately, and did not cause trouble. Just in case

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<sup>56</sup>*Kōshū Chūgakkō seito tai Kōshū Kōtō Futsū Gakkō seito tōsō jiken no taiyō* [A summary of the incident of conflict between Kwangju middle school students and Kwangju Higher Normal School Students], [Keijō: 1929] reprinted in *KKGJS*, 51-53.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

“Agricultural School students, Girls’ Higher Normal School students, and Teachers’ School students had united, and planned [another] large street demonstration, close secret communications were maintained among [the staff at] all the relevant schools.”<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, however, according to Academic Affairs Bureau’s detailed reports, November 11<sup>th</sup> “passed without incident.”<sup>59</sup> The following day, November 12, 1929, however, was not as smooth, according to both the public and internal government documents.<sup>60</sup> According to confidential documents written by the Academic Affairs Bureau, at Kwangju Higher Normal School, classes began as planned, but after morning assembly ended, “a fifth-year student entered the classrooms, and as soon as he issued a command of ‘*deyo*’ (leave),” the students began another round of protests. According to the confidential report:

Without acknowledging teachers’ attempts to restrain them, first the fifth-year students ran out of the classroom, and then, without the exception of even one student, all of the students went running noisily from every classroom and out of the school building. The students who went running from school grounds... scattered disturbing writings (*fuon bunsho o sanpu shi*), took the road that runs in front of the train station, from there, headed to the Kwangju Higher Girls’ Normal School, raised [their voices] shouting, dropped disturbing writings [in the streets] once again and then flooded (*sattō seri*) in front of the Teachers’ School gates.<sup>61</sup>

Authorities were particularly sensitive to the fact that student unrest was rarely limited to one individual school, noting that “previously in Kwangju, when a school boycott was carried out, there were many examples of other schools [in the area] plotting school boycotts in sympathy.”<sup>62</sup> They documented each incident of unrest on November 12<sup>th</sup> in

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 62-63; ZNK, 9.

<sup>61</sup> ZNK, 10-11.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 12.

Kwangju separately. At Kwangju Agriculture School, for example, Academic Affairs Bureau officials noted:

[Authorities] have been on sufficient alert since the outbreak of the incident of strife between the students from Kwangju Public Middle School and Kwangju Public Higher Normal School on November 3rd. They had been constantly aware of rumors about plans for [more] unrest, but had not seen [protest activities] actually materialize.<sup>63</sup>

Authorities paid close attention to the atmosphere at the schools, the attitudes of the students, and any hints that something subversive could be in the works. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, at Kwangju Agricultural School, students once again protested publicly:

At 9:15 in the morning, after morning assembly, each grade entered their [respective] classrooms, and class began, but suddenly three third-year students [names] called out something, and first the third year students went running out of the classroom, next first- and second-year students and one portion of the fourth-year students joined in, formed a band, and sprinted out of the school gates.<sup>64</sup>

The school principal interceded, and thanks to his intervention, “only a single fifth-year student participated, and it was possible for the other [fifth-year students] to be stopped.”<sup>65</sup> Once they had burst through the gate, authorities noted,

More than one hundred and forty students formed a single group, and without listening to [commands to] halt issued by the police officers they encountered along the way, they passed in front of Kwangju Higher Normal School, went through Sukiya-chō [a central Japanese district of Kwangju], passed by the train station, took [the road to] the side of Kwangju Women’s Higher Normal School, and flooded in front of the Teacher’s School. There they joined a group of Kwangju Higher Normal School Students who came sprinting up, continued to raise battle cries (*issei o agetsutsuari*), until, like the Higher Normal School students, more than 60 students were at last arrested by the police.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 12.

As we can see from these descriptions, the ways in which Japanese officials narrated student protest is highly revealing both in terms of the student organizing strategies that they inadvertently delineate, but also in terms of how systematically Japanese interpretations attempt to deny protesting students voice and agency. It is clear in these descriptions that students had planned these protests in advance: representative students entered classrooms at roughly the same time at different schools; gave a signal to the students; and took to the streets. They distributed prepared, pre-printed “disturbing writings,” and moved along a protest route that passed multiple sites of key importance: Kwangju Station, where fights had first broken out on November 3<sup>rd</sup>; the Japanese shopping district which was also targeted in the November 3<sup>rd</sup> protests; and all of the other schools in Kwangju which were attended by Korean students. Despite this, the Japanese descriptions repeatedly depict students as wild mobs, running through the streets, forming large groups, flooding across gates and other obstacles, failing to heed the interventions of Japanese teachers and police, and raising “battle cries.”

The palpable fear teachers and officials had of Korean students protesting in the streets comes through in the Academic Affairs Bureau’s internal documents at a number of junctures, and manifests itself in a tension whereby students are shown as both spontaneous and given to sudden, unpredictable (yet ominously foreshadowed) outbreaks of violence, but also acting in unison, in roving groups that are impervious to colonial police and teachers’ attempts to control them. For example, before the Agriculture School students left school grounds, the teachers understood that the students “rushing through the school gates were going to stage a street protest within the city,” and thus members of the teaching staff “leapt onto bicycles, chased after [the protesters], and “midway through,



stopped more than 50 students and brought them back to school, but were unable to exert their strength over the others.”<sup>67</sup> Because of this, despite sustained efforts to deter them, “students were allowed to achieve their [protest] objectives.”<sup>68</sup> Likewise, when those students who could not be rounded up and returned to school continued to protest, authorities go on to note “about thirty students invaded the school... crowding into... [the Teacher’s School], and screamed ‘Hurry up and leave!’ (*hayaku deyo*) in unison [to the Teacher’s School students.]”<sup>69</sup> Once again, students are shown as breaching barriers by “rushing through gates,” “invading” and “crowding into” the school, and “screaming... in unison.” In general, Korean student protesters are described as a single, indistinguishable, and dangerous mob.

Authorities were also sensitive to students from different schools working together, and worried about connections between the students that extended beyond the classroom. “With the students from Kwangju Women’s... Higher School,” we find out, “in this incident, [they] were thought to have friends from both [Kwangju Higher Normal and Kwangju Agriculture] schools who were central to this uprising.”<sup>70</sup> Academic Affairs Bureau authorities commented that, “along with disturbances at both the Higher Normal School and the Agriculture School, at this school too, there was a [certain] color to the disturbances [*dōkō mo dōyō no iro ari*].”<sup>71</sup> At Kwangju Women’s Higher Normal School, it is noted:

After first period, suddenly, outside the gates, the battle cries of the Higher Normal School students could be heard and the [Women’s School] students, all at once, attempted to run out of the school gates. Without

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> ZNK, 13.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

listening to school staff's commands to halt, the students then escaped from the classrooms, but when the students saw the figure of a police man, who came running when he heard the emergency, they were not able to run out of the school gates, and all gathered in the schoolyard, maintaining a considerably ominous state.<sup>72</sup>

In this description, a second important element of the early stages of the Kwangju student movement comes into play: namely, that the role that Japanese teachers and police assigned to female students in their narrative descriptions of protest activities differs from how male students are described. On multiple occasions, individual male students were named as agents of agitation, and seen as actively enlisting other students into activism. With female students, however, the reporting authorities described the students as being minor actors in the protests (which they believed to be masterminded by male students from the Higher Normal School and the Agriculture School), simply responding to immediate outside provocation, and far more easily contained than their male counterparts. While male agriculture school students were described as ignoring the interventions of police in the streets, female students were described as being deterred by the figures of Japanese police even when seen from a distance. That said, however, it is clear from these descriptions that female students were able to be confined to school grounds during the second street protests on November 12<sup>th</sup> in ways that were not possible with male students from other Korean schools.

Female students continued to seek other forms of protest, however, a trend that we will see accelerating as the protests continued into 1930. Even after their first attempts at protest participation in Kwangju were thwarted, colonial documents note that:

Kwangju Women's Higher School students were sympathetic to male students who had been arrested, and there were signs of a [pending] protest. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, not a single [female student] attended school,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

and that same night, in the dormitory, sixteen third-year students became ring-leaders, and sang independence songs together, uttered insults to the house master, and broke the glass window of the house master's room into two pieces. Teachers attempted to stop this violent behavior, but once again, on the night of the fifteenth, students sang independence songs together, and engaged in disturbing behavior (*fuon no kōdō*).<sup>73</sup>

Here again we see that even though female students were described as mobilizing in smaller numbers, and in less confrontational ways (at night, and within school grounds), they are still depicted as violent, destructive, vocal, and acting in unison.

### “Disturbing Writings”

As we have saw in Chapter One, one of the first steps that students at Kwangju Higher Normal School took in the wake of the initial unrest was to meet and plan to write out a series of manifestoes to assert their protest aims. On the one hand, these manifestoes were risky, because they increased the chances that individual students could be directly linked to anti-Japanese activity. On the other hand, however, from the very beginning of the student movement, they provided students with a means by which to control the articulation of their issues, cement a sense of solidarity among the protesters, and communicate with both fellow students and colonial authorities alike.

Despite certain consistencies, such as the fact that they always called for an end to colonial “slave” education, the content of student manifestoes was far from static as the protests continued and expanded in scope both temporally and regionally. As we trace the distribution of the manifestoes within the first waves of protests, and authorities’ reactions to them, we see how important these writings were for communicating a range of diverse goals within the student movement, and how dangerous their existence and

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<sup>73</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ichi (Showa 4-nen 12-gatsu)* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, one (December 1929)], 134.

distribution was perceived to be by the Japanese authorities who were attempting to block the spread of anti-Japanese student protest.

The first student manifestoes the Japanese Bureau of Academic Affairs officials recorded were those distributed by Kwangju Higher Normal School students as part of their protests on the morning of November 12, 1929. These were the first protests to be staged after the re-opening of schools in the Kwangju area following the unrest of November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Subsequent court records estimated that around 400 Kwangju Higher Normal School students and 150 Agricultural students had been involved in the November 12<sup>th</sup> street protests, in which between four and five thousand flyers were distributed before protesters were ultimately surrounded by all the Japanese colonial law enforcement in Kwangju: police reinforcements; fire fighters; and mobilized members of the Japanese military.<sup>74</sup> The first manifesto that authorities collected from that day asserts:

Glorious Student Masses! Support our slogans until the end! And rise up, fight, battle mightily!

- a) Use our strength to immediately return those arrested [to freedom]
- b) Immediately release those arrested
- c) Put an absolute end to the right of police to invade our schools
- d) Allow us the right to self-govern the School Friendship Society (the *kōyūkai*)
- e) Allow freedom of speech, gathering, association, and publication
- f) Allow a student representative to attend staff meetings
- g) Establish a Korean-centered education system
- h) Abolish the colonial slave education system (*shokuminchi dorei kyōiku seido o teppai seyo*)
- i) Allow us to freely [access] social science [aka socialist] research
- j) Open a national assembly of student representatives.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Yi Ki-hong, and An Chong-ch'öl. *Kwangju haksæng tongnip undong ūn chŏn'guk haksæng tongnip undong iŏtta* [The Kwangju student independence movement was a nationwide independence movement], 230.

<sup>75</sup> ZNK, 9-10.

A second protest manifesto recorded by Japanese officials extrapolated on the same themes, saying:

- Korean Masses! Rise up
- Youth Masses! Rise up and fight to the death!!
- Immediately release those arrested!!
- Turn over those arrested [to us]
- We are absolutely opposed to the emergency summoning of reservist soldiers [brought in to control the protests]
- Stop the brutality of [Japanese] Kwangju Middle School Students!
- Immediately loosen the ropes of the “emergency alert” [underway in Kwangju]
- Dissolve the fire-fighters and the youth brigade
- Smash the existing school parent association!
- Call a [new] mass-meeting of school parents!
- Give us freedom of speech, assembly, organization, and publication!<sup>76</sup>

As we can see in these first manifestoes, there were certain demands that students asserted from the very beginning of the 1929 protest movement. These manifestoes reveal a number of thematic and linguistic elements that would be consistently reflected in future manifestoes as the protests spread: the centrality of education reforms to student demands; the use of rights-based language to demand administrative reforms; and, notably, repeated calls for the right to study, assemble, and participate in forums currently closed to students. Even in the very first distributed manifesto, students called for an abolition of “colonial slave education,” a phrase that would appear repeatedly throughout the movement. At the same time, however, the demands put forth in these first manifestoes did not mention an end to Japanese rule of the Korean peninsula, or expressly equate the struggles of the arrested students in Kwangju with other global political struggles. Instead, the educational demands asserted here were local and immediate; they did not seek necessarily to dismantle the current education system, only to reorient it from a “colonial slave education system” to a “Korean-centered” one.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 10-11.

Likewise, other demands, such as the call for a student representative to be present at staff meetings, the self-governing of the “school friendship society,” and a restructuring of the parents’ association all indicate an acceptance of the framework, if not the content, of the existing Japanese education system as a given.

Also, students repeatedly asserted their demands in terms of rights that should either be extended by the state (the freedom to study socialism, the freedom of speech and assembly, etc.), and retracted by the state (such as in the above case of the sanctioned “police invasions” of schools.) From the second protests in Kwangju, students demanded the right to study, write, and gather, which is notable because we can see how important education and learning was to the students, and how, from the very beginning of the student movement, the right to an education and the right to a voice in society in terms of freedom of expression were inextricably linked.

Combined with the discourse on education, these types of manifestoes give us insight into both students’ values, and their expectations of their relationship with the state. Access to education, and the freedom to study, read, write, and assemble were clearly of primary importance to student protesters, by implication because of their positioning as modern citizens, albeit of a colonial state. Despite the fact that school boycotts (where students chose not to attend school en masse) and so-called “white paper incidents” (in which students all turned in blank exams as a form of protest) were protest strategies, education was always presented as a priority and one of the basic inalienable rights of a modern citizen throughout the student movement. Conversely, much of the outrage within the manifestoes tended to center on the perception that elements of the Japanese education system, such as restrictions on freedom of speech, discrimination by

Japanese teachers, and Japan-centered curricular material, all served to prevent Korean students from attaining full educational access. Throughout the protests, the manifestoes addressed a wide range of purported audiences (“student masses,” “Korean masses,” “youth masses,” etc.), but in every case, the right to freedom of expression, not simply in the form of speech but expressly in the form of writing and publication as well, was put forth as an unalienable one. Although students attempted to expand the audience they were addressing (or, at the very least, to call on different sympathies from their readers) by addressing them in their manifestoes as “Korean masses,” and “youth masses,” they did not address Japanese colonialism as a whole, and were still primarily concerned with school-related issues: the lightening of Japanese in-school surveillance; the release of arrested students; and the disbanding of existing school associations, only to insist that they be replaced with other organizations, presumably which would be more sympathetic to Korean students.

It not take long, however, before student manifestoes began to address larger and more complex political issues, framing the struggles of the arrested students in Kwangju within a larger political tableau of Japanese oppression of Koreans, as well as capitalist imperialist domination over the powerless. For example, on November 19, 1929, Japanese authorities collected four different manifestoes written in Korean, and distributed during still further acts of “disturbing behavior.” This time the unrest was by Korean students at Kiura Industrial School, another school within the province of Southern Chōlla. Rather than address issues related to parent organization membership or curriculum reform, these manifestoes were addressed to “the oppressed masses” (*hiappaku minshū shokun*), and struck a far more dramatic tone than the first manifestoes,

addressing in more concrete terms the indignities and injustices suffered by those arrested, but also equating them with larger global struggles. “More than ten male and female students in Kwangju, who love our homeland, have received serious, near-fatal wounds, and 200 young students, suffering in iron cells, have been unlawfully arrested.” The first flyer went on to state:

We marched in the streets for the purpose of justice. Along with demanding the release of the Kwangju students, we, who have been bitten by the venomous fangs of the rabid dogs of the ruling class (*shihai kaikyū no kyōken no dokuga ni kakatta wareware*), protest in the street with our precious blood and tears.<sup>77</sup>

Not only was the language of this manifesto far more confrontational and dramatic than those which had preceded it by a week, this manifesto established several new and important interpretations of the violence in Kwangju. Those arrested, by nature of having been arrested in the course of ethnically-driven student protest, are held up as martyrs “who love our homeland,” and who, by extension, were suffering in direct relation to their crime of being vocal and Korean in a Japanese colonial state. In other words, the injustice of the violence and arrests in the first protests in Kwangju was quickly being recast as an important moment in which Koreans are pitted against Japanese on a much larger stage than simply the train stations, streets, and schoolyards of Kwangju.

In addition, not only were explicit links being drawn between the unrest in Kwangju and the injustice of Japanese rule on the Korean peninsula as a whole, but for the first time, the Japanese were described using tropes of fanged and rabid dogs. While students could have been drawing this imagery from Marxist language, the metaphor of Japanese rulers as not only animalistic, but as dangerous and insatiable beasts resonated

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<sup>77</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ichi (Showa 4-nen 12-gatsu)* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, one], 156.



all the more strongly because of how frequently Koreans had been described as dangerous and beast-like in Japanese narrations of incidents of public violence between Japanese residents and Koreans in 1929 and before. However, in this case, the trope was invoked in a much different way than it had been in past incidents. When Japanese residents had described Koreans as “beasts”<sup>78</sup> they did so to invoke a primitive state and lack of cultural sophistication of the so-called “*hikui mindo*,” or low level of the Korean populace. Japanese residents and bureaucrats often invoked this notion of a “low level of the people” both as a complaint about Koreans, but also as a justification for Japanese rule. When Koreans protesters began to invoke images of the Japanese as animalistic, however, it was not simply as crude and uncivilized, but rather as dangerous, predatory, and victimizing.

As the protests continued, it was not only the imagery that evolved, but also the demands and positions that the protesters themselves adopted, such as in this list collected by Japanese authorities on November 19, 1929:

- Recover students who have been detained and who are suffering.
- We are absolutely opposed to the violent oppression of the Government-General’s rule.
- We are opposed to police interference in education.
- Abolish the Peace Preservation Law<sup>79</sup>
- Support the Chinese Revolution
- Support Red Russia
- We are absolutely opposed to imperialist war.
- Long live colonial liberation.

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<sup>78</sup> For example, in the previous chapter, we saw how Japanese students who came upon Korean students who had killed a dog and were roasting it by the side of the road called the Korean students “beasts” for their behavior.

<sup>79</sup> The Peace Preservation Law, enacted in Japan in 1925 was utilized in both the Japanese islands and the colonies to arrest and detain those suspected of “dangerous thoughts,” or other forms of political dissidents. For an overview of the creation and application of this 1925 law in the Japanese islands, see Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, Second Edition (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 170. For a more in-depth study of the social and political climate of unrest that the law sought to offset, see Andrew Gordon’s full-length monograph, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

--Long live the revolution of the propertyless class.<sup>80</sup>

Not only has the language in this manifesto grown more dramatic, the issues presented have also diversified. While some of the basic issues raised in Kwangju on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> were still front and center (expressions of solidarity with the arrested students, opposition to police presence in the schools, etc.), protesters had begun to bring in a long list of accompanying issues to their protests. First of all, they started to use street protests, which began as a call to release those unjustly arrested, as a platform from which to oppose Japanese imperialism as a whole. Second of all, they had begun to include more abstract and more expressly communist ideals into their protests, from the demands that communist Russia and China be supported to the calls for supporting “the revolution of the propertyless class,” to which families of matriculated Korean students in the colonial period did not generally belong. All four of the different types of manifestoes collected by Japanese authorities following the Kiura Industrial School protests reiterated these themes. Still, however, the Kwangju students were held up as emblematic, as the following manifesto demonstrates: “We have come to cruelly suffer oppression and contempt. Look—now, once again, the true nature of the oppressors’ inhuman violently repressive tyranny has been revealed.” (*Miyo, asseisha no hiningenteki bōatsu sensei seiji no shōtai ga ima mata bakuro shita*).<sup>81</sup>

This dramatic language and the casting of Koreans as abject victims of Japanese colonization intensified in another manifesto, this time collected and translated by colonial authorities in Seoul on December 3, 1929. Here, not only were the dynamics of the colony called into question, Japanese treatment of Koreans in the Japanese islands

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<sup>80</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ichi (Shōwa 4-nen 12-gatsu)* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, one (December 1929)], 156.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

was critiqued as well, making the case that Japanese colonial relations had profoundly negative implications for Koreans regardless of what physical space they occupied within the empire. The manifesto begins by listing incidents of anti-Korean violence, seamlessly weaving together incidents from the metropole and the colony, describing “Japanese imperialism’s violently oppressive tyranny” as “without exception” causing great suffering to “the oppressed Korean masses.”<sup>82</sup> The manifesto goes on to explain:

Beginning with the March First incident of nationwide slaughter, [various incidents of Japanese violence such as] the large-scale massacre of 3,000 Koreans at the time of the Great Earthquake in Tokyo, and the large-scale massacre in Shiga Prefecture [in Japan] do nothing more than concretely illustrate the incomparable viciousness of Japanese imperialism, which, like a fierce wild animal (*mōjū no gotoki*) [displays] a villainous lack of reason.<sup>83</sup>

In these types of writings, students, in their manifestoes, not only expanded the scope of the political issues which they addressed, but have also begun to confront and subvert the types of metaphors used by Japanese colonial authorities to describe their actions. Once again, Japanese imperialism was evoked not only as a vicious practice, but also as animalistic (and thus base and uncivilized). In addition, incidents of public, and in fact murderous, violence were narrated as directed not by Koreans towards Japanese people and property, but rather as a systematic practice directed by Japanese residents towards Koreans, not only in the colony, but in the metropole as well. Unlike the Korean students, who are described by Japanese authorities as failing to heed teachers and other authority figures, and running through the streets in uncontrollable mobs, here it was the Japanese who are characterized as constituting angry mobs, and it is Japanese imperialism itself that suffers from a “villainous lack of reason.”

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 162

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

### Increased Alerts, Full Mobilization, and Repeated Admonishments

Korean students were clearly not the only ones who perceived these manifestoes to be both powerful and paramount to the presentation of their struggles. Japanese authorities closely monitored these flyers and were also deeply concerned about their corrosive effects on other Korean students. For example, when the Kwangju Higher Normal School students approached Kwangju Women's Higher Normal School on the morning of November 12<sup>th</sup>, the confidential educational documents note that a group of protesting students "scattered turbulent writings in front of the school as they were passing by, but luckily, because they were [quickly] collected by members of the teaching staff, they did not fall into the hands of students."<sup>84</sup> In many ways, colonial authorities saw student protest as a contagion and the manifestoes as a primary means by which it was spreading.

However, as both teachers and police strove to collect and examine the distributed flyers, they were not interested in discussing their content with those arrested beyond attempting to trace the genealogy of the writings and thereby the organizational structure of the protests. Instead, school officials' first step following the initial protests was to heavily recruit the sympathies of the students' parents as a means of off-setting further protest. At Kwangju Women's Higher Normal School, school officials' first approach was to "try to remonstrate with the students, to strictly supervise them, and to keep in even more close contact with their parents."<sup>85</sup> Teachers did everything they could to appeal to parents' sensibilities, "to the extent possible visiting [students'] homes, and

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<sup>84</sup> ZNK, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

having ‘informal chats’ [with their parents] in an effort to try to have them understand.”

When admonishing students and continually contacting parents proved insufficient, school officials focused on isolating the students responsible for the protests (and any outside agitators who could be uncovered) from the general student population. For example, at Kwangju Higher Normal School, when students’ “disturbing behavior once again emerged,” (*sara ni fuon kōdō ni idetaru*), “regardless of the fact that school principals and homeroom teachers had done their utmost to admonish students to avoid rash action,” school officials decided that “under a policy of decisive punishments,” all students who were either absent from school during the protests or had been known to participate in the protests would all be suspended from school indefinitely. Because more than 300 students from Kwangju Higher Normal School ended up on indefinite suspension, however, “from the thirteenth onward, because it was not possible to hold class, there was nothing to be done but to temporarily close the school.”<sup>86</sup> Likewise, at Kwangju Women’s Higher Normal School, “when once again urging... students’ parents to reconsider the situation proved ineffective, fifteen bad students (*furyō seito*) were given sentences of indefinite suspension from school from the 17<sup>th</sup> of November onward.”<sup>87</sup> This approach backfired, however, when the students still attending school “were sympathetic to those arrested, and the atmosphere ran thick with signs of a [pending] school boycott that would cause considerable disturbance” within the school. At that juncture, the parent representative was invited to school “persuade the students of right and wrong, and to try to calm [the rebelling students] as much as possible.” Even with this, however, “by the nineteenth, the number of students attending school had

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

dropped to the point where, besides the dormitory students, [the number of] those attending school did not exceed thirteen, and it became clear that a state of school boycott had been reached, and from the nineteenth onward, [school authorities] had no choice but to indefinitely suspend 64 students who had been absent without an excuse, and to temporarily close the school.”<sup>88</sup>

Another key element that emerged in these protests, and one that became more central as the movement spread and progressed, was the central role played by teachers, both at the moment when students were first took to the streets, and throughout the aftermath of the punishment process. The Japanese teachers who witnessed the first and second phases of the student movement not only physically intervened, but also often served as the intermediaries between students, their families, and the police. For example, students suspected of unrest, even if they were not caught with incriminating flyers, or directly participating in street protests, were often handed over to police by their teachers.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, Kwangju students who were arrested in the last weeks of November, when released, were not allowed to return home directly. Instead:

[Arrested Korean students] were gradually handed over to school staff, who heartily admonished them [about their actions], and then explained the situation to their parents, whom they exhorted about methods of managing their children, and [then ultimately] handed the students over into the hands of their parents.<sup>90</sup>

In other words, despite the fact that students had produced and distributed large numbers of “disturbing writings,” they were presumed to incapable of speaking or reasoning for themselves, and were instead spoken for and about by their teachers and the police to their parents.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

Throughout the first months of the Kwangju Student Movement, Japanese colonial authorities narrated Korean student protest very differently from how the Korean student protesters themselves described their goals, actions, and visions for the future. As the Kwangju Student Movement spread throughout Korea during the months of November and December, 1929, colonial authorities did everything they could to suppress student activism, and, in particular, limit the spread of what they considered to be subversive ideas that were dangerous to the colonial Korean public peace and directly challenging to Japanese rule. Japanese officials combined sustained surveillance, interrogation, and detainment of so-called “*furyō bunshi*,” or bad elements, in Korean society, and ultimately ended Korean student unrest on a national scale, not only in 1930, but for the rest of the colonial era, all without ever engaging students’ “disturbing writings” which demanded an end to the “colonial slave education system,” an end to Japanese violence against Koreans, and, ultimately, an end to Japanese rule of the Korean peninsula.

At the same time, however, by putting their claims in writing, Korean student protesters achieved several lasting successes. First, they were able to mount a significant challenge to Japanese colonial control, and coordinate and mobilize a large number of students to continue engaging in a variety of acts of anti-Japanese protest for months on end, despite continual colonial repression. Second, their writings allowed them to be successful in another way as well. Despite the fact that colonial officials refused to engage with the content of student protesters’ writings, their obsessive collection and

transcription of the manifestoes distributed in 1929 and 1930 did allow uncensored Korean voices, articulation of identity, and demands for both rights and freedoms to be entered into the official records of the colonial period in ways that, even today, can be read and re-read as a source of counter-narrative to the rhetoric of Japanese colonial rule.



## Chapter Three

### **Intersections of Gender, Nationalism, and Protest**

#### Introduction

In “Begetting the Nation: The Androcentric Discourse of National History and Tradition in South Korea,” scholar Seungsook Moon argues that official discourses of nationalism in post-war South Korea have gendered nationalism in ways that entirely negate women’s active participation; instead have depicted women as passive agents who merely enable men to take center stage in creating, supporting, and speaking for the nation.<sup>1</sup> We see similar processes at work when examining women’s participation in the 1929 and 1930 Kwangju student protests. Although female students participated in large numbers throughout the Kwangju student movement, the ways in which their participation was recorded, both by a sympathetic Korean press and by a hostile colonial state has made it difficult, in retrospect, to understand how women understood and articulated their own relationship to the nation and to nationalist social protest. Similarly, post-colonial secondary work in Korean has generally acknowledged women’s participation without analysis and has represented the Kwangju student protests as a primarily male-driven movement. Even in her full-length work, *Hanguk yŏsŏng hang’il undongsa yŏngu* [Research on the history of Korean women’s anti-Japanese movements],

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<sup>1</sup> Seungsook Moon, “Begetting the Nation: The Androcentric Discourse of National History and Tradition in South Korea” in *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism* ed. Chungmoo Choi and Elaine H. Kim (Routledge: New York, NY, 1998), 33-37.

for example, scholar Pak Yong-ok only mentions women's participation in the Kwangju student movement in passing.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, I examine the role of female protesters in the Kwangju student movement, the ways in which worked they together with male protesters, and how their actions were interpreted by Japanese school authorities and colonial officials. In general, Japanese colonial teachers and officials viewed female student protesters as less politically motivated and as posing less of a threat to the existing social order than that presented by protesting male students. At the same time, through complex relationships between gender, colonialism, and nationalism, there were times when individual female Korean student protesters were able to evoke sympathy from their female Japanese teachers in ways in which male students were not. From the first incidence of student protest in Kwangju in early November, 1929, both male and female Korean students participated in public protests, whether by staging simultaneous protests at separate schools or by joining together in the streets. From January 1930 onward, however, the gender dynamics of the student movement shifted. Protests at women's schools began to outnumber those staged at men's schools and female students protested in larger and larger numbers throughout January and February 1930. Moreover, Japanese authorities began to suspect that female activists and women's groups, rather than the male-dominated Communist movement and the *Sin'ganhoe*, were playing an increasingly central role in organizing and sustaining the student protest movement. Instead of men, women had begun acting as the "behind-the-scenes schemers" (*uramen no sakudōsha*)

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<sup>2</sup> Pak Yong-ok, *Han'guk yōsōng hangil undongsa yōn'gu* [Research on the history of Korean women's anti-Japanese movements] (Seoul: Chisik Sanōpsa, 1996), 244-246.

that Japanese authorities had so adamantly hoped to eradicate in order to prevent the spread of independence activism.

The rise of women's protest participation as well as the ways it was documented and reported reveal some of the complexities of female students' relationship to both the student movement and to the colonial state. On the one hand, by analyzing police records, newspaper articles, Academic Affairs Bureau documents, and memoir, I reveal the ways in which not only did women's participation increase throughout the movement, female protesters themselves articulated their own nationalist goals and utopic visions of a future Korean nation in ways that reveal their commitment to activist participation. On the other hand, however, despite the fact that it was women's participation and leadership that allowed the movement to continue as long as it did, Japanese police, colonial officials, and teachers took female students even less seriously as active political agents than their male counterparts and did not see female protesters as capable of significantly destabilizing colonial rule.

### Women's Participation in the Public Sphere

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the role of women in relation to public life transformed dramatically in Korea. There were unprecedented educational opportunities for elite women and significant increases in female employment outside of the home in a variety of positions. The first women's school was opened in Seoul by Mary Fitch Scranton, an American missionary, in 1886 with one enrolled student. By 1899, the school had 47 students, and by 1909, the total number had risen to 174

students.<sup>3</sup> With the establishment of a universal education system on the Korean peninsula, Japanese colonial administrators sought to educate Korean female students as well as male students.<sup>4</sup> The Japanese colonization of Korea brought about a rise in educational opportunities for female students, marked by what M. J. Rhee calls “both a qualitative and a quantitative expansion of schools for girls.”<sup>5</sup> Even so, the number of Korean women educated within the Japanese colonial system remained far lower than the number of Korean men. By 1933, only 1.2 percent of the female population attended school at any level.<sup>6</sup> Still, the expansion of women’s schools, both public and private, continued throughout the colonial period. In *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor and Health, 1910-1945*, historian Theodore Jun Yoo asserts that general popular support for the education of women expanded as well during the 1920s. Yoo notes, for example, that “one writer urged compatriots in 1924 to act like responsible parents...by enrolling their eight- or nine-year-old daughters in common schools instead of wasting their lives on chores like carrying siblings on their backs or fetching water.”<sup>7</sup>

Within these new schools, the curriculum for the small number of Korean women who were positioned to receive it was heavily gendered in ways that sought to both shape and limit women’s participation in public life. Schools aimed to bolster female students’ standing within the family and their loyalty to the Japanese colonial state. Theodore Yoo

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<sup>3</sup> Yung-chung Kim, ed., *Women of Korea: A History from Ancient Times to 1945* (Seoul, Korea: Ewha Womans University Press, 1979), 218-219.

<sup>4</sup> E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan, 1895-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 165.

<sup>5</sup> M.J. Rhee, *The Doomed Empire: Japan in Colonial Korea* (Aldershot; Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 122. In contrast, Theodore Yoo notes that the percentage of Korean children of both sexes who attended primary school in 1919, shortly before major educational expansion was undertaken by the colonial state, was 3.7 percent of all eligible Korean children. Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 64.

<sup>6</sup> M.J. Rhee, *The Doomed Empire*, 122.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea*, 65.

argues that the introduction of new curriculum guidelines for Korean women's education by the Government-General "aimed to make 'the education of girls as useful as possible for their practical daily life.'"<sup>8</sup> In addition, much of the language used paralleled curriculum standards in Japan, which sought to encourage "feminine virtues and to instruct [girls] in the knowledge and art that would be useful to make a livelihood, especially to cultivate their moral character and to become equipped to be good housekeepers."<sup>9</sup> Likewise, Yoo details the ways in which male Korean intellectuals, such as Chu Yo-sŭp and Yi Kwang-su, were more easily moved to support education that cultivated domestic skills and prepared women to be wives and mothers, rather than a curriculum that was heavy in subjects such as literature, science, or language.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever the opinions of male colonial officials and Korean public intellectuals as to what the content of women's education should be and how it should be put to use, the students who actually enrolled in school for girls had access to new knowledge and a wider breadth of experience than had been previously available to them. Given the small number of female students attending school at any level and the limited access to higher institutions that even these women had in the 1920s, female students in general, not to mention female student protest participants specifically, represented a tiny percentage of the Korean female population and were on the forefront of experiencing new social roles. For example, Pak Ki Ok, the female student on train whose attack provided the first catalyst for the student movement, occupied an entirely new type of social space. Even before female students engaged in protest activity, they had already entered new and uncharted waters. In the 1920s, Korean women enrolled in higher institutions also had

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<sup>8</sup> Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea*, 70.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 72-75.

access the same types of Marxist literature and education abroad opportunities as their male counterparts. They were also similarly able to envision themselves as active participants in a future Korean state. As we have seen in previous chapters, while the expanded education system of the 1920s was envisioned by the Japanese state as a forum whereby to cultivate docile and loyal citizens of the empire, the scope of the student movement in 1929 and 1930 revealed that colonial authorities had less control than they had hoped over how well enrolled students interpreted and utilized the new knowledge and skills they attained at school. This was as true for Korean women's education as it was for education aimed at the male Korean school-aged population.

The expansion of educational opportunities for women was only one of the ways in which women in 1920s colonial Korea became increasingly visible in public space. From 1920 to 1940, for example, the *Tonga ilbo* and the *Chosŏn ilbo* ran more than 230 editorials on the "woman question," i.e., where writers debated what constituted appropriate social roles for women in relation to nation, empire, society, and family.<sup>11</sup> Like in Japan, in colonial Korea "the New Woman phenomenon was not a media-produced illusion but the result of social change in a period of modernization."<sup>12</sup> Many of these debates related to women's education, women's role within the family, and women's employment outside of the home were occurring in Japan at the same time. In addition, much of the discourse in both places drew on shared rhetoric, as well as on international language and trends. Women also read and engaged in these debates in the 1920s in unprecedented numbers, and Theodore Yoo tells us that in colonial Korea:

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<sup>11</sup> As quoted in Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea*, 58.

<sup>12</sup> Muta Kazue, "The New Woman in Japan: Radicalism and Ambivalence towards Sex and Love," in *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism and International Consumer Culture, 1880-1930* ed. Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 217.

The new woman posed a threat to male hegemony. In contrast to the past, when women remained silent in public debate ... Korean women...sought to articulate their sense of spatial location and establish a woman's public sphere. By pushing the boundaries between the prescribed traditional woman's sphere and this new space of modernity, a coterie of women sought to redefine, through their writings, the nature of public and private.<sup>13</sup>

Despite Yoo's arguments that women were becoming increasingly outspoken through literary debates, however, the surge in newspaper publishing as a forum for discussing the nation and its possibilities (even under heavy censorship) constituted primarily a resurgence in male discussions of the nation and its discontents, especially after such discussions had been silenced by the repressive press laws of the first ten years of Japanese colonization. While there were female contributors to the Korean newspapers of the 1920s, they were primarily staffed by young male Korean intellectuals.<sup>14</sup> In addition, women faced significant obstacles finding and retaining a reading audience for their publications. Within a general boom in publishing in this period, even as the number of publications by women surged during this period, they often were forced to discontinue due to lack of readership.<sup>15</sup>

### Women's Participation in the Kwangju Student Protests

Japanese colonial Academic Affairs Bureau officials noted in their internal documents that closing schools for winter vacation in December 1929 had temporarily stemmed incidents of student protest, but that, unfortunately, this respite proved to be

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<sup>13</sup> Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea*, 80.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 345.

<sup>15</sup> Pak Yong-ok, *Han'guk yōsōng hangil undongsa yōn'gu* [Research on the history of Korean women's anti-Japanese movements], 270.

short-lived. In January, authorities documented that “an extremely small lull was reached, but in Keijō, [anti-Japanese student activism] flared up again with the start of the new school term.”<sup>16</sup> Historian Chang Sōng-nyōng classifies the wave of protests that happened in Keijō in January to be the second half of the second phase of the movement, and, in many ways, the most protest-intensive period of the five months that Kwangju-related student protest.<sup>17</sup> According to Chang, the Keijō protests reached their crescendo in the period from January 15 to January 20, 1930. Within this five-day period, Korean students from 30 schools participated in demonstrations, including a large number of female students. During this second half of the Seoul-centered phase of the Kwangju student movement, student protests increased in scale and intensity even beyond where they had ended in December; for example, on January 15<sup>th</sup> alone, 5,000 people participated in protests.<sup>18</sup>

On the morning of January 15, 1930, the *Chosŏn ilbo* produced a special (and clearly, from the number of printing errors, somewhat rushed) “extra” in addition to its regular morning edition, detailing the latest news of student unrest in Keijō. The extra carried two student-protest-related articles, the first proclaiming in bold headlines “Simultaneous ‘Manse’ Demonstrations at 12 Men’s and Women’s Schools within the City [of Keijō].” In a smaller headline, the newspaper followed up by saying “[Street] Procession Plans Exposed; Police Officers Stationed at Each School.” The article goes to

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<sup>16</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ni (Showa 5-nen 1-gatsu): Shingakki kaishi go ni okeru gakusei jiken uramen sakudō no jōkyō* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, part two (January 1930): The state of student incident behind-the-scenes schemes after the beginning of the new term], reprinted in *Kōshū kōnichi gakusei jiken shiryō* [Kwangju anti-Japanese student incident documents], (Nagoya, Japan: 1979), 168 (hereafter cited in text as *KKGJS*).

<sup>17</sup> Chang Sōng-nyōng, *Kwangju hakseng undong ūi kuknaeoe hwaksan kwa kŭ sōngkyōk* [The domestic and international spread and character of the Kwangju student movement], *Kwangju hakseng undong yōn’gu*, [Studies of the Kwangju student movement], Han’guk Yōksa Yōn’guhoe (Seoul, Korea: Asea Munhwasa, 2000), 148.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.



explain that on January 15<sup>th</sup>, “Suddenly ‘manse’ demonstrations [broke out] at every men’s and women’s school within [Keijō] province.” The scope of the demonstrations was extensive, according to the paper:

On the morning of this day, all 300 students at Kūnhwa Women’s School, all 300 students at Tongdōk Women’s Higher Normal School, all 200 students at Paehwa Women’s Higher Normal School, 60 students at Silch’ōn Women’s School, all 300 hundred students at Chōngsin Women’s School, 300 students at Kyōngsin School, 300 students at Ehwa Women’s School, 700 students at Paejae School, more than 800 students at Chungdong School, 400 students at Yangjōng Higher Normal School, 400 students at Hwimun Higher Normal School, and several hundred students at Posōng Specialty School each gathered at their own schools at 9:30 a.m., and while chanting “manse” loudly in unison, went thronging towards town.<sup>19</sup>

According to the paper, the students soon clashed with police, who had become more adept at gathering information about pending protests and had devoted an increasing amount of manpower to offsetting public unrest. The *Chosōn ilbo* went on to explain:

Each police station that had jurisdiction over the schools had acquired the information in advance that there would be men’s and women’s school demonstrations on this day, and [so] they had stationed a number of officers in advance at each school. When this incident began, they immediately used all of their might to stop the students who were flooding into the streets, arrested a number of students, and took them in cars to each police station, where they were interned.<sup>20</sup>

The second article in the *Chosōn ilbo* extra addressed these arrested students, starting with the headline “70 Male and Female Students Roaming in the Center of Town Simultaneously Arrested at One Time, Reportedly on Suspicion of [Planning] a Protest March. Police Force Active throughout the Entire City.”<sup>21</sup> According to the paper, police were not only stationed at schools, but were on the lookout for wayward students. “The police force,” the second article noted “in anticipation of the occurrence of this type of

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<sup>19</sup> *Chosōn ilbo* [Korean Daily], January 15, 1930. Extra.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

incident, dispersed in groups of twos and threes throughout the whole city, and [looked for] students who were suspected of planning a demonstration. The male and female students were, of course, [found], and detained. It was reported that at 11:10 a.m., approximately seventy students from four schools— Hwimun, Silch’ön, Kŭnhwa, and Yōja Misul (Women’s Art School)—were arrested.”<sup>22</sup>

The story told in this extra, and the details it revealed, were indicative of a number of student protest-related trends that had emerged by January 1930. First, in the initial protests of the student movement, police tended to encounter student unrest by accident in the course of their regular patrols, or they were called by teachers once unrest had already begun. By January 1930, in contrast, police throughout colonial Korea were deeply committed to tracing information passed among students, identifying where protests were to be held, and arresting protesting students as quickly as possible. Second, the language that the *Chosŏn ilbo* used is remarkably similar to that used by the colonial authorities— once again, students are portrayed as acting in unison, and “thronging” and “flooding” into the streets. At the same time, however, the structure of both articles in the extra (namely, listing the large numbers of students in extremely close statistical detail before commenting on the actions taken by colonial authorities) as well as their content clearly foregrounded student protest activities above those of the police. In addition, by claiming that the police had walked the streets looking for student protesters to arrest implied that colonial police procedures for containing student unrest were both oppressive and arbitrary. Third, while women had participated in protests from the very beginning of the Kwangju student movement, by January 1930, they had begun to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

dominate public protest activity in ways that newspaper reporters highlighted when reporting on student activity.

This upswing in women's protest activity and its press coverage was not limited to protests staged within Keijō itself. In the regular edition of the *Chosŏn ilbo* published on January 15<sup>th</sup>, student activism in other regions was also covered in detail. At Kwangju Women's Higher Normal School on January 8th, the paper reported, a female student initiated an incident of mass test refusal, tearfully demanding the release of detained and arrested students.<sup>23</sup> Several days before, as well, the January 12<sup>th</sup>, the *Chosŏn ilbo* had reported that male and female students staged a "manse" demonstration headed by women's higher school students, working together across several women's and men's schools. Passersby who had witnessed the protests also joined in, according to the paper, spontaneously shouting "manse" along with the protesting students.<sup>24</sup>

In mid-January, the *Tonga ilbo*, too, carried numerous reports of protests, especially by female students, in regions all over Korea. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, the paper reported that protest manifestoes were found in the desk drawers of students in every single classroom, at every grade level at Pusan Industrial School, and that manifestoes were also distributed at public women's schools in Pusan as well.<sup>25</sup> On January 15<sup>th</sup>, the *Tonga ilbo*, like the *Chosŏn ilbo*, dedicated much of its news reporting to incidents of student protest throughout the Korean peninsula, including significant activism by female students. A *Tonga ilbo* headline announced that "Hamhŭng Public Industrial School Students Distribute Manifestoes and Chant 'Manse' Loudly. Protest Procession Attempts

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<sup>23</sup> *Chosŏn ilbo* [Korean Daily], January 15, 1930, 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Chosŏn ilbo* [Korean Daily], January 12, 1930, 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Tonga ilbo*, Far-East Daily, January 11, 1930, 2.

to Advance to the Center of Town, More than 20 Students Arrested Overall.”<sup>26</sup> The paper also reported that all fifth-year students involved in a school boycott at a rural industrial school had been suspended, reprinted a letter from school officials to the parents of students at a higher normal school in Kaesang related to activism there, and reported on the expulsion of Kwangju Women’s Higher Normal School students, among others.<sup>27</sup> In fact, there seemed to be so much breaking news related to student protest that sections of the January 15<sup>th</sup> *Tonga ilbo* included numerous hand-corrections obviously added in once that type had been set, and an entire hand-written article on Page Two.<sup>28</sup>

Scholar Chang Sǒng-nyǒng notes that the 1930 protests, unlike those in 1929, increasingly involved joint demonstrations among students at different schools, such as those in different regions on January 9<sup>th</sup>, January 17<sup>th</sup>, January 21<sup>st</sup>, and January 25, 1930.<sup>29</sup> Joint protests tended to mean larger numbers of participants, as in the protest in January in P’yǒngyang in which 3,000 students protested, as well as a number of other protests in other regions that involved around 1,000 people each. Even in smaller cities and towns, protests involving 500 people became standard.<sup>30</sup> In addition, January and especially February marked an upswing in rural protests, which most commonly broke out at normal schools, and tended to happen on market days, in keeping with prior March 1<sup>st</sup> activism.<sup>31</sup> In other words, January and February 1930 saw intensive protest activity on all areas of the Korean peninsula, within which women played a far larger role than they had previously.

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<sup>26</sup> *Tonga ilbo*, [Far-East Daily], January 15, 1930, 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Chang Sǒng-nyǒng, *Kwangju hakseng undong ūi kuknaeoe hwaksan kwa kǔ sǒngkyǒk* [The domestic and international character and spread of the Kwangju student movement], 155-156.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-157.

It took several months of sustained police activity in 1930 to finally suppress Korean student protest activity that had begun the previous November. Ultimately, Japanese colonial authorities' strategy of increased police alert throughout the Korean peninsula, tracking and incarcerating anyone suspected of playing a leadership role in protest activity, pairing pre-emptive arrests of student protesters at the first sign of unrest with violent interventions in street protests, and sentencing those arrested to heavier and heavier sentences brought an end to the Kwangju student protest movement by early March 1930. From mid-January to mid-March, however, overseas communities of Koreans staged supportive protests in which they produced radical manifestoes, and repeatedly proclaimed their sympathy with the students arrested for protest activity on the Korean peninsula.<sup>32</sup>

### Women in Protest Leadership Roles

As the protest movement continued to expand into its final months, Japanese authorities noted that a women's organization seemed to be responsible for much of the unrest in January. According to their investigations, the Academic Affairs Bureau asserted, "The atmosphere of disturbance that had been triggered in the students by the incidents [of previous unrest in November and December, 1929] did not subside easily."<sup>33</sup> Instead, officials asserted, "The background to this indiscriminate activity... was plotting by the remains of the student boycott vanguard who were arrested last winter, and also the *Kūnuhoe*, which is... a sister [organization] to the *Sin'ganhoe*."<sup>34</sup> The *Kūnuhoe*

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>33</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ni* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, part two], 168.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 169.

(translated by Kenneth Wells as “The Friends of the Rose of Sharon”),<sup>35</sup> like the *Sin'ganhoe*, formed in 1927 and disbanded in 1931.<sup>36</sup> Despite its short-lived existence, it was the largest female organization to exist in Korea during the colonial period.<sup>37</sup> In the 1920s, there were a variety of women’s organizations on the Korean peninsula, which, like those organized and led by men, became increasingly factionalized. As with the *Sin'ganhoe*, the *Kūnuhoe* served as an umbrella organization under which women activists from a number of different groups, from early feminists to Christian organization members to socialists, could join together when other avenues for activism began to break down in the latter half of the decade.<sup>38</sup> As more and more members of the *Sin'ganhoe* were arrested on suspicion of assisting student activists, *Kūnuhoe* members rose in their place to occupy increasingly visible leadership roles.

The *Kūnuhoe* focused primarily on issues related to improving social conditions for women on the Korean peninsula. In July 1927, they produced a manifesto of their primary goals, which they listed as:

1. Complete abolition of all social and legal discrimination against women.
2. Eradication of all feudal customs and superstitions regarding women.
3. Abolition of early marriage and the institution of free marriage.
4. Abolition of female slavery and licensed prostitution.
5. Amelioration of the economy of rural women.
6. Abolition of wage discrimination and the institution of paid maternity leave.
7. Abolition of dangerous labor and nightwork for women and boys.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Wells, “The Price of Legitimacy: Women and the *Kūnuhoe* Movement 1927-1931,” 205.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Wells, “The Price of Legitimacy,” 205-208.

<sup>37</sup> Janice C.H. Kim, *To Live to Work: Factory Women in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 9.

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Wells, “The Price of Legitimacy,” 198-201.

<sup>39</sup> As quoted in *Ibid.*, 206-207.

In addition, the manifesto noted that women activists were putting aside their differences and joining together in order to fight both “feudal legacies” and “modern contradictions.”<sup>40</sup>

On the surface, it may seem strange that an organization like the *Kūnuhoe* began working together with student activists to help them continue their protests, especially because their inaugural manifesto was so dissimilar to the types of manifestoes produced by student protesters. All of the issues put forth by the *Kūnuhoe* in their initial manifesto (with the possible exception of the mention of “boys” in the seventh item) were explicitly and exclusively targeted towards women, and were framed as criticisms. While student protesters too may have used manifestoes to a call for abolition of Japanese colonialism, and with it, so-called “colonial slave education,” they also frequently used them for positive ends as well, unlike the *Kūnuhoe*. For student protesters, manifestoes went beyond a critique of the present to serve as a forum in which they could evoke a utopic Korean future, one which included positive attributes such as independence and freedom, rather than simply the removal of the unfavorable conditions of the colonized present.

An even more dramatic divergence between the *Kūnuhoe* founding manifesto and the types of manifestoes distributed by student protesters was the absence in the *Kūnuhoe* document of a discussion either of Korea as a nation or of the presence of Japanese imperialism and its impact on women’s rights. The fact that Japan and Japanese imperialism were not mentioned directly was something that the *Kūnuhoe*’s manifesto shared with that of the *Sin’ganhoe*.<sup>41</sup> As such, we can see it as related to the fact the

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<sup>40</sup> Kenneth Wells, “The Price of Legitimacy,” 206.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Kenneth Wells notes that the platforms of neither the *Sin’ganhoe* nor the *Kūnuhoe* mentioned Japan or Japanese rule but notes that “Unlike the *Sin’ganhoe*, the issue of modernity was raised [by the *Kūnuhoe* in their founding manifesto] as a specific area for attention.”

*Kūnuhoe*, like the *Sin'ganhoe* and unlike student protesters, sought official permission to exist, and was thus compelled to present itself as non-antagonistic towards the Japanese colonial state.

In addition, unlike manifestoes typically produced as part of the Korean student activism of 1929-1930, the *Kūnuhoe*'s founding manifesto, as part of their campaign on behalf of women's rights, criticized restrictive Korean traditions of the past in addition to the contemporary oppression of Korean women. For the student protesters, however, the past was generally only invoked in manifestoes in idealized form, to contrast it favorably against the Japanese colonial present. In other words, for student activists, the past was the site of an idyllic and autonomous Korean nation, which pre-ordained the type of utopic future Korean nation that could exist once Japanese colonialism had been abolished. In contrast, the image of the past evoked in the *Kūnuhoe* manifesto is of a Korean nation which itself included flawed traditions, traditions which systematically disenfranchised its female population. Again, these divergences in how the Korean nation of a different time was represented could also be somewhat strategic on the parts of both groups. For the *Kūnuhoe*, intent on cooperating, at least on the surface, with the colonial state, criticizing the Korean past as "feudal" and oppressive to women would certainly be a stance the Japanese colonial government could support, because it was in line with their justifications of Japanese control of the Korean peninsula. Student protesters, on the other hand, seeking to build solidarity among fellow Koreans, would have been much better served by evoking positive images of the Korean past which allowed them to further highlight the injustice of Japanese colonial rule.



When we examine the membership of the *Kūnuhoe* more closely, however, it becomes clearer how *Kūnuhoe* members were able to find common ground with student protest participants. By 1929, the *Kūnuhoe* claimed 2,970 female members, including 260 who lived overseas, primarily in Tokyo.<sup>42</sup> Historian Kenneth Wells asserts that “the relatively large Japan-based contingent accounts for the growth of the influence of socialist women by 1929, and suggests familiarity with Japanese feminist ideas.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, like their male activist counterparts, *Kūnuhoe* members, too, were part of a porous imperial system, in which they regularly traveled between the colony and the metropole, and accessed a variety of new ideology that helped them to frame their protests and articulate the goals for Korea’s future.

Kenneth Wells argues that women activists in colonial Korea were positioned very differently than men vis-à-vis both nationalism and colonialism.<sup>44</sup> In order to be considered “nationalist” by male activists, women had to subscribe to a conception of the nation that subverted women’s attempts at gaining rights within its boundaries. According to Wells, in the 1920s, “movements to reorganize in earnest the power relations between men and women seem irrelevant [to male nationalists], or worse, a violation of the priority that will weaken the national project.”<sup>45</sup> Likewise, Wells points out that “the normal male reluctance to surrender traditional prerogatives over women was exacerbated by the perception—or reality—that under the colonial system women, unlike men, stood to gain from social change.”<sup>46</sup> Despite Wells’ claims that 1920s male nationalists felt that working with women would reduce the efficacy of colonial

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<sup>42</sup> Kenneth Wells, “The Price of Legitimacy,” 207.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 201-203.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 204.

resistance or that Japanese colonialism somehow favored Korean women, however, when we examine Kwangju student activism in 1929 and 1930, we see no evidence that male and female students were unable to work together, nor that male protesters resisted following female leaders.

While it may be true that many women in leadership positions within the *Kūnuhoe* had to sacrifice the furthering of women's issues in order to participate in the larger nationalist movement, the same certainly cannot be said for the rank and file, nor for the female student activists with whom the *Kūnuhoe* worked, who had never positioned themselves as primarily crusading for women's rights. Instead, the rhetoric of the future Korean nation evoked in student manifestoes was flexible enough that female students, just like male students, could imagine a place for themselves within it.

#### Student Protesters and the *Kūnuhoe*

A clear example of how *Kūnuhoe* members cooperated with female students to further explicitly nationalist causes can be found in an incident of unrest that occurred on February 24, 1930, towards the end of the student movement. According to Academic Affairs Bureau documents, a member of the main branch of the *Kūnuhoe* met with female student Hō Chōng-ja and several other students in both December 1929 and January 1930. In their meetings, the *Kūnuhoe* member “instigated plans for female student unrest” at four women's schools within the city of Keijō, serving as “the person who provided guidance as to [various protest] methods and so on.”<sup>47</sup> When she then had to return unexpectedly to her hometown due to illness, she was rumored to have attempted to

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<sup>47</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono kaku chi hakyū jōkyō tekiroku* [Summary of the Kwangju student incident and the state of its spread through each region], reprinted in *KKGJS*, 107.

agitate female students at the school from which she had graduated.<sup>48</sup> She was arrested, an investigation was conducted, and she was released from custody, but was subsequently indicted for instigating unrest shortly thereafter, according to a report filed by regional officials.

In Japanese colonial documents, this incident is presented as an obvious case in which an outside instigator encouraged students, both in Keijō and in the countryside, who otherwise would have had limited political consciousness and desire for Korean independence, to protest. Even in this telling, we can see how similar this *Kūnuhoe* member's methods were to those utilized by the male protest organizers who appeared in the reports of the Academic Affairs Bureau. In the government report, she is portrayed as influencing younger students and encouraging them to create protest networks not only within their own schools, but also with students from other schools as well. Upon traveling to her hometown, she is described as returning to her alma mater to organize students there, presumably drawing on her position as an older graduate to influence younger students, which we frequently find among male protest organizers as well. In other words, in this instance, the way in which the *Kūnuhoe* member worked with and mobilized followers, as reported by the Japanese authorities, was in no way different from the activities of male protest organizers.

This picture is further complicated, however, when we examine the police interrogation records of Hō Chōng-ja, one of the students suspected of working with the *Kūnuhoe* to organize student unrest. In the interrogation that followed her arrest for serving as a protest leader, Hō subverted the Academic Affairs Bureau's narrative on a number of levels, all of which closely follow patterns that emerged with among male

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

student protesters as well. Hō explained to the police, according to their transcripts, that she had spent time abroad, both in the United States and in Japan, and became interested in the works of a number of foreign philosophers, including Marx and Hegel. Upon returning to Korea, she sought out members of the *Kūnuhoe* for two different reasons. She explained that she had heard that they helped students organize independence protests, and also, she was looking for guidance as to how to best assess the political situation in Korea in accordance with the philosophy she had been reading. Police were particularly interested in determining why she had been moved by the plight of the students arrested in Kwangju, asking Hō, “Why would a female student riot (*sawagu*) in sympathy with...male students?” to which Hō Chōng-ja replied “I believe there is no distinction between men and women.”<sup>49</sup>

In the interrogation, Hō is shown a protest manifesto and asked to confirm that she helped to create it. The manifesto, which she admits to co-authoring, lays out demands identical to those created by male students, including expressing sympathy for the students arrested in Kwangju and demanding their immediate release, asking that students suspended as part of earlier Keijō activism be allowed to return to each school, calling on students to “oppose school invasions by police,” and insisting on a complete rejection of all “colonial educational policy.” If anything, some of the language in the manifesto is slightly softer than in the manifestoes collected by police in November and December (notably, for example, the Japanese education system is not referred to as “colonial slave education,” and in the Japanese translation included in the interrogation

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<sup>49</sup> Kōto hōin kenjikyoku shisōbu, *Keijō shinai jogakusei banzai sōjō jiken* [Female student ‘mansei’ disturbance incidents within the city of Keijō], [Keijō: 1930, originally classified as top secret], reprinted in *Kankoku minzoku kaihō undō shi shiryōshū*, [Korean people’s liberation movement historical document collection], 10:407.

records, the volitional ending of –shiyō is used repeatedly), but the manifesto content presents identical concerns to those voiced by male students. When asked why she and several other female students felt it was necessary to create a manifesto for distribution, Hō Chōng-ja explained that she had learned from others (presumably *Kūnuhoe* members and/or students who had participated in prior protests) that creating and distributing manifestoes was an essential part of student protest, so that the cause of the protest would be clearly understood. The actual production of manifestoes had taken place in another student's dorm room at school, Hō Chōng-ja went on to detail, and explained that in addition to aiding in their creation, she also helped to distribute the manifestoes once the protest began. Despite her repeating meetings with the *Kūnuhoe* to determine the best possible protest strategies, Hō explained that the demonstration had not gone exactly as planned, saying:

We were trying to go from inside the school to outside the school, but we were stopped by the police. Because we couldn't go out into the street, we went to a place [inside school grounds] where we could see the [neighboring] school, and we all shouted 'manse.'<sup>50</sup>

Once again, we find an incidence of female students, unlike their male counterparts, being prevented from engaging in protest beyond school grounds. However, this was not because of any major differences in protest strategy—the female protesters involved in this incident, just as in other reported male student protests, framed their demands in ideological language, met in secret to plan their protests, produced and distributed manifestoes, and forged connections to both students at other schools and to larger national networks.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 409.

## Official Assessments of Women's Protest Activity

The members of the Government-General's Academic Affairs Bureau who carefully noted the shift from male to female leadership themselves presumed women leaders would be less capable of summoning nationalist resources and that they were resented by their male counterparts. Dismissive of nationalist demonstrations in general, colonial officials were particularly ready to write off protest activity when it was led by or primarily made up of women. In their internal documents on January 1930, Academic Affairs Bureau officials noted that "the male students were motivated by" the increase in female activism, "and engaged in indiscriminate behavior to show that they were not inferior to the women [who were protesting.]" Officials went on to note that:

This led, once again, to acts of disturbance (*fuon kōdō*) by students in every region occurring in succession. In the midst of this, there was also 'manse' chanting at a number of individual Korean primary schools. Needless to say, the agitators used this momentum to spread the movement to the general masses (*ippan minshū*). We now know that [the agitators] tried to lure [the general masses] into an all-Korea people's movement (*zensenteki minzoku undō*).<sup>51</sup>

Despite the fact that Academic Affairs Bureau officials presumed that male student activists would feel competitive with their female counterparts, and in particular with female leadership, they inadvertently documented a number of instances in which women organizers successfully worked to agitate across gender lines. For example, on February 10, 1930, Academic Affairs Bureau documents note that:

After the start of the new term, 91 people were [discovered to have] plotted the indiscriminate student activity in Keijō, including Hō Chōng-suk and other members of the Kūnuh'oe administration, as well as various related students. Of these, 34 had been sent to the authorities on the 30<sup>th</sup> of last month, and today, with the exception of two non-students and six

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<sup>51</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ni* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, part two], 168.

female students, all [those remaining in custody] were sentenced to deferred indictment.<sup>52</sup>

Even in situations in which female leaders only mobilized other women, they were much more likely to raise concerns that crossed gender lines. For example, Japanese officials noted that “Yun Sŏn-hŭi . . . who was a leader in the *Kunuh’oe*, was staying at her sister’s home in Chonjin, when she lured her sister and 16 Korean students from the local women’s public school there into deciding that they must stage a protest demonstration.” In this case, authorities not only arrested the participants, but also confiscated protest materials:

[The protest plans] were discovered by authorities, who arrested everyone related [to planning]. 81 disturbing flyers were confiscated which said things like “The student uprising incidents all over Korea are the tearful voices of the weak. We struggle to acquire bread and clothing and freedom. Rise up, our white-clothed brothers. Let’s call out ‘*manse*.’” 174 . . . flags made from calligraphy paper were also confiscated.<sup>53</sup>

Here, even though official documents note that there were only women involved in the planning (Yun Sŏn-hŭi, her sister, and the female students), their manifestoes explicitly include a call for their “white-clothed brothers” to rise up, evoking traditional Korean dress and cross-gender cooperation simultaneously. Also, while other manifestoes distributed by students had certainly characterized the protesters, those arrested, and Koreans in general as sacrificial victims locked in an anti-imperial struggle, they generally called upon Korean strength, rather than weakness, as a point of solidarity. Unlike other manifestoes earlier in the movement, the manifestoes confiscated here attempted to delegitimize the existing state by criticizing its failure to provide both material necessities (i.e. bread and clothing), in addition to more abstract rights, (i.e.

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<sup>52</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono kaku chi hakyū jokyo tekiroku*, [Summary of the Kwangju student incident and the state of its spread through each region], 105.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

freedom.) In other words, the ideal Korean state evoked by implication in these confiscated manifestoes was more concrete and paternalistic than had appeared in earlier manifestoes. Here, the female protesters imagined that a future Korea would not simply be free of hierarchies, it would also be one in which the state explicitly provided its members with both ideological and material sustenance.

### Evolving Relationships between Teachers and Students

As the protests progressed in January and February 1930, Academic Affairs Bureau officials continued to suppress student activism wherever they encountered it. At the same time, they also publicly dismissed the student protests as a whole as a movement of followers, led by those who themselves were insufficiently committed to Korean independence to mount a serious threat to the colonial state. By January 1930, Academic Affairs Bureau documents note that:

From the very beginning [of the movement, the organizers] tried to keep the number of [those] sacrificed to the bare minimum, and thus their ability to resist (*kōsōryoku*) was comparatively weak. They copied manifesto-like documents, but they [just] made copies [of existing manifestoes], without penning their own. In the countryside, people rarely chanted *banzai* loudly as a cry for Korean independence, and of those who did, the majority [of these people] didn't exceed just raising battle cries and making noise. This was not a serious movement, in which [participants] pushed forward, and [considered this] a sincere matter of life and death.<sup>54</sup>

In other words, as frightening as colonial authorities may have found united bands of (male) students taking to the streets to be, by questioning the commitment of both protesters and organizers, they were able to dismiss by extension to dismiss the legitimacy of the claims put forth by the protesters themselves.

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<sup>54</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono eikyō, sono ni* [The Kwangju student incident and its effects, part two], 168.



The Academic Affairs Bureau, however, continued to keep a running log of incidents related to student unrest, no matter how small or disparate they may have been. In many cases, these incidents contain fascinating anecdotes that provide windows into the growing paranoia of colonial officials, and glimmers of evidence of new types of tensions and alliances between teachers and students. When no participants were arrested and newspapers contain no reports of the unrest, however, Academic Affairs Bureau documents provide the only extant accounts, making it difficult to glean any information about individual participants beyond what was recorded by officials at the time. One such incident occurred at a rural private men's high school in January 1930, where officials noted that "32 students, who were made up of a portion of first-, second-, and third-year students, staged a school boycott from the 24<sup>th</sup> onward."<sup>55</sup> School officials conducted an investigation, and reported that:

Fourth-year student, Sŏng Yong-wŏn, said that the school boycott had begun when a Korean teacher ignored the regulation about removing one's shoes [inside] the school building, and [wore his outside] shoes regularly [inside the school]. When the student questioned him about it, both the Korean teacher and the vice principal of the school treated this incident unfavorably, and beat him.<sup>56</sup>

This incident shows not only the diversity of incidents noted in the Japanese colonial records as falling under Kwangju-related student activism, but also how conflicts (and similarly, co-operations) between teachers and students could not always be divided neatly along colonial lines, especially as the movement progressed. Whereas the first students who had begun protesting in Kwangju, as we have seen, felt a solidarity with their Korean language teacher and generally resented the Japanese teachers and

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *Kōshū gakusei jiken oyobi sono kaku chi hakyū jokyo tekiroku*, [Summary of the Kwangju student incident and the state of its spread through each region], 121-122.

administers, in this incident, the central conflict resulting in a student boycott was one between an individual male Korean student, and an individual male Korean teacher, who was then backed by the school's other staff. Despite the fact that this incident seems to be a localized moment of isolated student-teacher conflict, Japanese officials, upon hearing a student boycott was under way, once again immediately began searching for connections to networks of "behind-the-scenes schemers" (*uramen no sakudōsha*) intent on bringing down the Japanese colonial state. Officials' paranoia of anti-Japanese Korean student activism becomes clear in the documents which recorded this incident, which noted, without apparent irony, that "Other motivations behind the unrest or third-party interventions have not been confirmed." Instead, "the school has held a parents' meeting, and is busily trying to come to a satisfactory resolution of this incident."<sup>57</sup>

Although in this incident, Japanese and Korean teachers are reported to have worked together to discipline a (minimally, it seems) transgressive Korean student, there are other incidents in which Japanese teachers are recorded as having acted in solidarity with their Korean students. On January 21, 1930, for example, Academic Affairs Bureau documents note that:

27 [female Japanese] teachers at middle and high schools in Keijō-fu who were members of the *Shinwakai* organization gathered at the Tsuji Women's School, and decided that they must form a commission to petition [the authorities] to release the students who had been arrested.<sup>58</sup>

For the first time, teachers are represented as beginning to intervene with the authorities on behalf of the student, and position themselves in solidarity with their protesting female students instead of with the colonial state. Again, it is impossible to know why these teachers acted as they did, and if, for example, they felt solidarity with their students

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 80.

because of shared gender concerns. What the reports do reveal that not all Japanese teachers agreed with the type of assessments made by the Academic Affairs Bureau about how deserving student protesters were of harsh punishment.

### Gender and Colonial Divisions

In the spring of 1929, Nara Women's School graduate Yokoyama Yoshiko moved from Japan to P'yŏngyang to accept a teaching position there. Her memoir, *Pyonyan kensō arugamama: ai wa minzoku o koete* [Spring Memories of P'yŏngyang: Love transcends ethnicity], which was published in 1994, seven decades after she returned to Japan and is heavily inflected with nostalgia for the three years she spent on the Korean peninsula, living in a dormitory along with the female students she taught. In her memoir, Yokoyama remembers P'yŏngyang as a multi-cultural and to some degree egalitarian colonial city. "The center of town," she says, "was a mix of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean residents, with the Koreans being centered to the east, and the Japanese residents dominating the west side of town, running shops along the main streets, and living in houses located behind these shops."<sup>59</sup> While provincial in comparison to Keijō, Yokoyama tells us that in 1929 P'yŏngyang:

Colleges and specialty schools, high schools and elementary schools dotted the center of each neighborhood. To begin with, it was safe, peaceful, and had an air of internationalism about it. It was bright and open, it had character (*aji no aru*), and it was a city that was comfortable to live in... There were hospitals and clinics, entertainment facilities like cinemas and theaters... and even more than the present, there was no distinction between Japanese and Koreans. In companies, banks, education,

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<sup>59</sup> Yokoyama Yoshiko, *Pyonyan kensō arugamama: ai wa minzoku o koete* [Spring memories of P'yŏngyang: Love transcends ethnicity], (Tokyo: Kindai Bungeisha, 1994), 96- 97 (hereafter cited in text as *PKA*).

etc., there were many Koreans who working doing important jobs.  
(*Jūshoku ni tsuite iru hito.*)<sup>60</sup>

Yokoyama also sensed no tension between herself and her Korean students. Instead, she says, “Among the large number of students, there were probably those who were uninterested in me, but the fact that I can swear there was not even one oppositional student is, for me, wonderful, and I still think is something of which to be proud.”<sup>61</sup>

The idyllic and harmonious world that Yokoyama describes, a world of different languages and ethnic alliances co-mingling without tension is not limited to the classroom. Yokoyama describes going ice skating with her students and fellow teachers, explaining:

Here [in the skating rink], there were no borders, there was no racial discrimination (*jinshū sabetsu mo naku*), there was no separation by [type of employment], no discrimination towards male or female, young or old [*rōnyaku nannyō no sabetsu mo naku*].<sup>62</sup>

Even within Yokoyama’s evocations of the public space of colonial P’yŏngyang as diverse and egalitarian, however, there are glimpses of violence and authoritarianism. She describes, for example, her delight at overhearing the Osaka dialect spoken by many of the large numbers of deployed Japanese soldiers she sees at the local movie theater on Sundays.

Even as her general descriptions of P’yŏngyang are calibrated to evoke a peaceful regional capital, however, Yokoyama’s memoir is bookmarked with two dramatic incidences of violence, which she witnesses and reacts to very differently. These encounters not only reveal the ways in which Yokoyama was increasingly socialized to derive a sense of authority from her position as a Japanese resident in colonial Korea, but

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

they also demonstrate how her sense of solidarity with her students was interconnected with both gender concerns and colonialism.

The first incident of public violence, with which the book begins, is a series of anti-Chinese attacks by Korean residents, Yokoyama is later told by a Korean colleague, occurred in response to tensions between Korean and Chinese residents of Manchuria. Yokoyama's perception of the incident, along with the perceptions of those around her, was riddled with fear and confusion, misunderstandings and partial comprehension. In the course of attempting to draw out what had happened, she clearly lays out the power relations, first, of the colonial school, and, second, of the colonial streets of P'yŏngyang.

The understanding that something was awry on the day of the anti-Chinese violence came to her as she prepared for her classes in her dormitory room. First, Yokoyama says:

In the hallway, there is some kind of noise and rushing around. There is a loud convulsion of student voices. As soon as I notice [the voices], there is the sound of loud footsteps running by in front of my room. I carefully and cautiously opened the door to my room, and went into the hallway to ask [what was happening.] There was nothing unusual, so I left the hallway and went and looked down at the school yard from the window. From what I could see from this window, students from our school...were hanging around in groups of four and five, and standing and talking.<sup>63</sup>

As Yokoyama begins to walk outside to investigate, she encounters a fellow Japanese female teacher who quickly reports to her that school has been cancelled, before running off without answering further questions. Yokoyama then encounters one of her students. The student, Yokoyama discovered, had come especially to warn her of the unrest, saying: "Sensei, we're not allowed to leave today, [another] teacher advised us against it,

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

saying that it's dangerous. I came to tell you. Definitely don't go outside, Sensei." The student also didn't give her any more information, but instead rushed back outside.

Here, Yokoyama describes the relationship she has with her students in much warmer terms than we have previously encountered during the Kwangju student movement descriptions either by police, school officials, or Academic Affairs Bureau employees.<sup>64</sup> When warned her not to leave the dormitory, Yokoyama explains:

This student was somehow attached [to me,] and was always especially kind to me. Sometimes she would tell me rumors that were circulating among the teachers, and she would also tell me things that were happenings among the students who were her friends. There were also times when she brought Korean sweets wrapped in paper that had been sent to her by her family, and secretly gave them to me. She and one of her friends... would come and clean my room together too.<sup>65</sup>

Here, we see Yokoyama describing her relationship with this student as both heavily gendered, and also as occurring primarily outside the classroom. The student is shown as providing gossip, food items, and cleaning as gestures of kindness, many of which take place within the dormitory. In this way, living among her students, who themselves were far from home, provided Yokoyama a number of ways to bond with them that were not bounded by the classroom itself, and by the problematic or contested elements of the Japanese colonial curriculum. This sense of connection to her students may have been especially heightened for Yokoyama by the fact that in Japan as well as Korea, the number of women who received higher education was still relatively small. For example, in 1929, when Yokoyama Yoshiko graduated from Nara Women's College, it was one of three such colleges in Japan that trained women specifically to be school teachers, with

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<sup>64</sup> Although in the initial descriptions of the outbreak of unrest in Kwangju, several students explain feeling close to individual Japanese and Korean teachers, even while seeing Japanese educational institutions in general as hostile spaces for Korean students.

<sup>65</sup> *PKA*, 23-24.

the other two being in Tokyo and in Hiroshima.<sup>66</sup> Yokoyama's descriptions contrast to how male students involved in the 1929 protests in Kwangju described their interactions with their favorite male teachers—in those cases, it was how the teacher represented themselves in the classroom (such as the Korean language teacher at Kwangju Higher Normal school who discussed Korean history and culture in tiny increments amid Japanese colonial censorship), or how the teacher intervened on their behalf in moments of student protest (as with the Japanese teacher who was described as entreating the students not to engage in protest activities, lest the consequences for them be severe).

In this first experience of public violence, Yokohama attempts to uncover what is going on by first entering the teachers' room, and then walking into town to look for herself. "In the teachers' room" Yokoyama tells us, "only [two Korean teachers] were there, and I couldn't see a single Japanese teacher... My curiosity was aroused. There is unmistakably a cause to this, I thought."<sup>67</sup> She decided, against the schools' orders (and her student's advice), to walk into town on her own to find the source of the unrest. There she was startled to find that the train tracks have been strewn with blankets, futon, and pottery, which she was forced to walk on in order to reach the center of town. Upon arriving in the city center, she encountered multiple scenes of ethnic violence on all sides.

First, she saw a house being ransacked:

That house was a Chinese person's house, and the sign at the entrance which read "Chinese Inn" (*Chūka hanten*) had been thrown outside and smashed. Three Koreans were inside the house, and were throwing all of

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<sup>66</sup> Scholar Ronald Anderson notes that "In 1937, there were a total of 50 women's colleges [in Japan]—8 of them Government-supported and 42 private, of which 12 were Christian mission schools. They were generally liberal arts institutions stressing language and literature, homemaking, and teacher training. A few women (210 in 1937) were admitted to the imperial universities of Tohoku, Hokkaido, and Kyushu, although none was accepted into the preferred institutions, Tokyo and Kyoto." Ronald S. Anderson, *Education in Japan: A Century of Modern Development* (Washington: U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1975), 55-56.

<sup>67</sup> *PKA*, 23-24.

the household effects and implements out [into the street.] Of course, in that situation, you didn't see a single Chinese person... From a distance, there was the sound of a bang. It was unmistakably a gunshot. On the far side of the sidewalk and on my side of the sidewalk, all of the stores had been ravaged in the same way. But not even a single pane of glass had been broken in any of the stores. It was eerie (*kikai*).<sup>68</sup>

She continued onward, inquiring at a Japanese-run store what is happening, where she is again advised to be careful, because "It's dangerous for a woman to walk alone."<sup>69</sup>

Yokoyama then entered an area that was under strict surveillance:

Suddenly, I looked up the street and saw, ten meters in front of me, someone who looked like a mounted soldier facing towards the middle of the street, in an unmoving stance (*fudō no shisei*.) From his clothes, he didn't look like an army soldier, but like a Japanese gendarme. He carried a rifle on his back, the barrel of the pistol in his hand was pointed at the sky, and his stance was one in which he could fire even in an instant. Mounted gendarmes were positioned 150 meter intervals, and it looked like they were stationed this way far into the distance along *Hondōri*. Of the people walking on the devastated roadway or on the sidewalks heaped with cloth, of course, there were very few Koreans, and Japanese people stood out.<sup>70</sup>

Again, Yokoyama inadvertently highlights the fact that moments of public violence were experienced differently in shared space by members of different nationalities. In the teachers' room at school, it was the Japanese teachers who had vanished from sight, whereas in the streets of central P'yōngyang, it was the Koreans who have largely vanished. Again, Yokoyama notes:

There was the sound of another bang somewhere, like a pistol. ... When I looked again, two young men in navy blue jackets with stand-up collars were running hard towards the south. They looked like they were Chinese. More than ten Koreans were chasing them, carrying clubs that could have conceivably been two meters long. (*Ni meitōru mo arō ka to omowareru konbō o motte*).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 31.



As she continues walking, she sees another incident of violence:

In front of my eyes, three young Chinese people wearing navy blue clothing crossed in front of me and went running like rabbits. (*datto no gotoku yokugitte, kakete itta*). One Korean chased after them holding a long stick, just as I had seen before. The mounted gendarmes remained in their motionless positions, as before. At that time, two large trucks crossed the intersection towards the south. The people riding packed tightly into the trucks were entirely the injured Chinese, people with their heads, their chests wrapped in bandages, people soaked in blood. I think without realizing it, the hair on my body stood on end.<sup>72</sup>

Ultimately, Yokoyama is asked for help two separate times by wounded Chinese people, one elderly and non-Japanese-speaking, and the other young and capable of communicating with her in Japanese. She takes each of them in turn to Japanese-run hospitals to receive treatment, and afterwards expresses her fear of the armed police in the streets:

I thought if the gendarmes see me now, wouldn't I be reproached for my behavior [i.e. intervening in the violence, and assisting the Chinese wounded]? My body stiffened. I tried defending myself [in my mind], and thought, no, I helped someone, that's benevolent, and finally the beating [of my heart] settled down.<sup>73</sup>

In other words, although she was Japanese, Yokoyama feared the armed colonial police in the streets. She later inquired again to a Japanese acquaintance, "No matter what, don't you think it's incomprehensible that the military police saw [what was happening] but pretended they hadn't?"<sup>74</sup> In answer to this, her Japanese acquaintance, presumably much more familiar with life in the colonies, replied, "In order to preserve the peace, [the Japanese gendarmes are] just suppressing the spread of the incident; Japan [is operating]

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

from the standpoint of a third party, and aggressive action wouldn't be forgiven, right?"<sup>75</sup>

Here, we see Japanese rule represented as benevolent, systematic, and sensitive to international law, taking a non-interventionist stance towards violence between Koreans and Chinese, as long as Japanese residents and/ or the colonial state are not the target of the violence. By contrast, Koreans are represented (again) as mobs attacking the weak, whereas the Chinese are shown as abject victims—unable to defend themselves or fight back, but also unable to effectively lobby for help from the colonial state, or to even receive medical treatment without the intervention of a Japanese by-stander.

Many of these depictions shift rapidly, however, in the descriptions presented towards the end of the book, where it is Yokoyama's own students who were engaged in public, violent clashes with the Japanese police. Again, Yokoyama's awareness that something was wrong came to her slowly, through the behavior of her students. She explains:

It was the end of November, in the middle of class... The inside of the classroom began to buzz and hum with noise. A large number of students were doing things like standing up, looking out the window, etc., and they had serious faces. While talking in Korean, sometimes [someone] would utter something in a loud voice and stand up. This state gradually escalated until it was completely impossible to hold class.<sup>76</sup>

Yokoyama's descriptions of student behavior parallel to some degree the descriptions in the Academic Affairs Bureau documents, in which teachers and officials had described the atmosphere before student protest began as having an "undercurrent of disturbance." From here onward, however, Yokoyama's account differs in significant ways from how unrest was reported by the Korean press, or described by Japanese officials in their internal documentation. In Yokoyama's description, students were extremely respectful

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 117-118.

to her, even as they prepared to protest. Before protesting, one student ran up to her, Yokoyama recounts, and said “Sensei, please stop class. We may have to leave the campus.” (*Kōgai ni dete iku koto ni naru kamo wakarimasen.*)<sup>77</sup> In this account, the student spoke to her with deference, and seemed to be trying to mitigate the level of disrespect that the outbreak of a student protest might inadvertently convey to her. Then more dramatically, “students left the classroom like an avalanche through both exits, and went into the schoolyard” the moment the appointed student stopped speaking.<sup>78</sup>

Unlike the “firm attitude” teachers were urged to take by the Academic Affairs Bureau, in this instance, Yokoyama reports that there was surprising level of indifference among the teachers towards student protest activity. In the teachers’ room after the students had left the school building, Yokoyama was startled to find that “the teachers were all calmly and silently facing their desks, doing their own various work.”<sup>79</sup> When asked about what was happening, she was told that last year, also, there was a protest movement led by university students and high school students, in which people loudly shouted “Independence! Manse!” (*Dokuritsu! Banzai!*) and that the students had also wanted to take part then as well. Yokoyama was not entirely unsympathetic to the students, saying “After the explanation, I realized for the first time, of course, they [are holding] an independence movement; it’s not like I don’t understand that sentiment (*sono kimochi ga wakaranai demo nai*).”<sup>80</sup> The teacher explaining the protest to Yokoyama made light of the student activity as if it was primarily social, rather than political, however. “This time, too, [various students from other schools] are doing a large-scale

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 119-120.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 119.

protest in town, and [our] students want to join in.” This sensation was highlighted when Yokoyama expressed concern about future tensions within that classroom, asking, “The day after this kind of anti-Japanese protest movement, both the teachers and the students must feel bad, and it must be difficult to hold class, right?” *Konna hannichi undō no atta yokujitsu no jyūgyō wa, sensei no hō mo seitotachi mo sōhō kimazukute jyūgyō shinikui deshō.*” Here, Yokoyama’s fellow Japanese teacher insisted that this was simply a momentary and meaningless activity for students, a stark contrast to the “considerably ominous state” that the Academic Affairs Bureau had described pervading a Kwangju women’s school in the aftermath of a thwarted protest attempt. Rather than resenting the outcome of their protests, the colleague insisted, after a protest the students returned to school the following day “calmly, and easily attend class as if nothing has happened, so there is no need to worry.” (*Kanōjotachi wa heisei ni kaette assari kerotto site jyūgyō ukemasu kara shinpai wa irimasen yo*).<sup>81</sup> When Yokoyama later tried to find out more information about the protests, as in the previous incident of violence, she was largely reduced to relying on hearsay from other teachers, or colonial residents:

I wanted to know more details about the activities and the history [of the Korean protest movement.] Unfortunately, at that time, I had no means [of accessing information]. I was able to learn about the nature of the movement, even though it was just a tiny bit, from simple articles from magazines that happened to be there.<sup>82</sup>

The rumors she heard caused her to have more sympathy for the Korean protesters, whom she saw as outmatched in their clashes with Japanese police. Here she reports one of the rumors she had heard:

For the demonstrating groups, there is no mistaking the fact that Japanese police officers and gendarmes were just like demons. A number of police

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 124.

officers put on Korean clothing, concealed the fact that they were police, and joined the ranks of the demonstrators. They would walk around marking in color on the backs of the white clothes of the people who seemed like ringleaders in the group of demonstrators. Afterwards, they would arrest everyone at the same time who had a mark on them. I heard that they used that kind of contemptible method [to arrest the protesters.]<sup>83</sup>

Meanwhile, from the teachers' room, Yokoyama hearing a noise from the schoolyard, saw two police officers chase down three or four protesting students and attempt to drag them into custody. When other students tried to intervene, the police attempted to arrest them as well. Through the window Yokoyama could see that:

Two police officers and ten students were jostling in place. The screams of the students standing around them became much more intense, and the police officers forcibly dragged the students' legs and pulled on their skirts in a wrestling match that once again began to escalate further. I couldn't bear to see this wretched and cruel scene, and without thinking went flying into the schoolyard myself.<sup>84</sup>

Unlike in previous encounters we have seen between police, Japanese teachers, and protesting Korean students, Yokoyama was not attempting to assist the police in their arrests. Instead, she confronted them, recognizing them as the neighborhood patrol officers, and tried to appeal to their sympathies:

What kind of terrible thing (*akuji*) are you saying these girls did? They raised their voices loudly, but this place is within the school, and isn't it inexcusable that you [would come in here] and try to forcibly arrest them without stating a reason?...These are my precious students. (*Watashi no taisetsu na seitotachi desu.*) All they did was call out 'manse.' Even that was within school grounds...surely that isn't a [justifiable] reason [to arrest them.] They didn't even particularly disturb the peace. It's absurd to think this kind of thing [arresting these girls] will be seen as an accomplishment? Release their hands please.<sup>85</sup>

Yokoyama's defense of the students differed from that which we see reported in Academic Affairs Bureau documents. First of all, she used her status as a Japanese

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 122.

resident and teacher to appeal to the policemen (who know her from their rounds) to release the protesters on the grounds that “they are my precious students.” Second of all, she downplayed the rebellious intent of students’ actions, while simultaneously invoking the school grounds as an area expressly outside the direct control of colonial police authority. In terms of reducing the seriousness of the students’ protest activity, she claimed that “all they did was call out ‘manse’” i.e. simply calling out ‘manse’ was in and of itself harmless, and “did not particularly disturb the peace.” This is in direct contrast to the ways in which Japanese authorities had been investigating every instance of student unrest, no matter how small. Second of all, she questioned whether arresting student protesters was within the jurisdiction of the police in general, since it would seem, in her characterization, an unfair abuse of the weak and harmless. In addition, she also questioned the authority of the police to intervene in an incident that took place on school grounds. This is particularly striking, since we have seen over and over that police regularly entered schools to arrest students or search their classrooms for subversive materials, and teachers witnessing student protest were not above calling the police themselves or delivering unruly students into police custody. It is difficult to know in Yokoyama’s case why she was the only teacher who intervened. Certainly, in writing her own memoir, she casts herself as the heroine, the defender of the students; but one wonders if her fellow teachers, who were much more likely to have been born, raised, and educated on the Korean peninsula, not only did not share her horror at witnessing the police violently arresting the students, but also felt that the boundary between school grounds and public space was far more porous than Yokoyama herself perceived it to be.

When the Japanese police officers are unwilling to release the students, Yokoyama physically inserts herself into the scuffle, which has gotten more heated:

I once again invested all of my strength and pushed the arm of the police officers who were dragging the students' legs...The two police officers finally removed their hands from the students, saying "Take responsibility, OK?" *Sekinin totte kudasai yo*. They retreated while repeating this once more.<sup>86</sup>

In other words, the colonial police eventually agree to let the protesters go not because of a presumption of their innocence, but because they were willing to allow Yokoyama to take responsibility for controlling their behavior rather than the police.

Yokoyama continued her role as benevolent agent on behalf of the Japanese colonial state even after the officers depart. She was immediately called upon to intervene again, because, she says, "The students had been watching the situation with the policemen," but as soon as the policemen began to leave, "Once again, [the students] began their overbearing (*itakedaka ni*) chants of 'manse'."<sup>87</sup> At this point, Yokoyama intervened again, saying to the students:

At this point, I raised my voice to its [utmost] limit "Everyone be quiet! Today I want you to end this here. Because I'm asking you. If even one among you young ladies (*kijyō*) gets taken away, no matter why, it will be unavoidably difficult and painful for all of you. (*zentai ni tsurai nigai omoi shinakeraba narimasen.*) If the gendarmes had come, it would definitely not have ended like this. Go back to the classroom quickly."<sup>88</sup>

Here, Yokoyama was evoking her authority as a teacher in an entirely different way. By criticizing the students' behavior and emphasizing their elite status as "young ladies," she urged them to obey colonial authority. By implication, protesting for independence was

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

not an appropriate activity for “young ladies.” She expressed great relief when the students finally followed her instructions, even though they did it reluctantly:

The students all talked [amongst among themselves], saying something in Korean in loud voices while returning to the classroom with heavy-seeming feet. Without thinking, I took a huge breath. At last, I thought. The students from [the] women’s school next door, as before, continued screaming... [The students] think that they have a responsibility to themselves to participate in the independence protest movement, so they are trying to take part.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout this entire interaction, we see the ways in which gender and colonial status intersected in a number of complex ways; ways which caused Yokoyama at times to intervene directly against the application of state violence, and yet, at other times, caused her to mimic the assessments and assertions of the colonial state. She seems to be compelled to act in particular when she sees the police dragging the students, and more specifically, pulling “on their skirts in a wrestling match that once again began to escalate further.” At the same time, however, she was the only teacher, Japanese or Korean, who has that reaction—she had already described how her colleagues appeared to be unconcerned about the protests. Like the colonial state, Yokoyama, also (along with her fellow teachers) dismissed female student protest activity as being far less threatening to the social order than protest by male students. In addition, she and her fellow teachers interpreted activism by their students as a blind act of following larger social trends, rather than a calculated act of rebellion in which the students were critically invested. In attempting to halt the protests, she reminded the female students of behavior appropriate to their social class and gender and appealed to the Japanese colonial police officers based on her own known status as a Japanese teacher.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



## Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, women's participation in and interpretations of independence activism in colonial Korea was far from monolithic. Korean women emerged as protesters in unprecedented numbers in 1929 and 1930. They produced a variety of writings which both paralleled manifestoes written by male protesters and introduced new language and new frameworks into the movement as well. Like their male counterparts, female student protesters too were subject to violent interventions by the colonial state. However, through analyzing the last months of the Kwangju student protests, we see the degree to which Japanese officials did not perceive activism by women as nearly as threatening to colonial power structures as they did male protest activity and were especially dismissive of women's political claims. Additionally, even bonds that seemed on the surface to be beneficial to female protesters, such as with their Japanese female teachers, did not ultimately allow them to further their protest goals in any way.

This interpretation that women were not true political actors and were not invested in the cause of Korean independence to the same degree that men were has continued long past the end of the Japanese colonial period. Specific to the Kwangju student movement, much Korean scholarship either omits significant analysis of women as protesters altogether, or else relegates female protesters to a separate sphere, in which they are only studied in the context of women's activism in general during the colonial period.<sup>90</sup> In this way, post-liberation South Korean scholarship has inadvertently tended to repeat the biases of the colonial state, and of Japanese residents of the colonies such as

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<sup>90</sup> This is also a criticism Theodore Yoo makes in relationship to the historiography related to women in colonial Korea. See Theodore Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea*, 6-8.

Yokoyama Yoshiko, who saw female student activism as a more of a whimsical social trend rather than as an act of political involvement. Likewise, post-liberation museums dedicated to the Kwangju student movement have presented colonial-period student protest as a male-gendered activity and disproportionately represented female Korean students (such as Pak Ki Ok, the student on the train) as passive victims of colonial violence. While female student protesters did at times encounter colonial violence, their protest participation was diverse and often involved leadership roles. Ultimately, women's participation played a central role in not only sustaining the student movement but also in articulating new visions of what an ideal post-colonial Korean nation would entail.

## Chapter Four

### 1943 and Its Discontents

#### Introduction

By March 1930, when the Japanese colonial government finally suppressed all activity related to the Kwangju student movement, 2,330 students throughout the Korean peninsula had been suspended indefinitely, 582 students had been expelled from school, and a total of 1,642 people had been arrested as part of their participation in the student activism of 1929 and 1930.<sup>1</sup> The investment made by the colonial government into tracing and destroying nationalist networks of all types as a primary goal of prosecuting the student protests devastated informal networks and critically weakened the *Sin'ganhoe* and its sister organization, the *Kūnuhoe*, both of which formally dissolved the following year.<sup>2</sup> The suppression of the Kwangju student movement of 1929 and 1930 significantly heightened colonial intolerance of subversive activity in all forms on the Korean peninsula. In addition, it also coincided with an era of increasing militarization in general, in which Japanese administrative goals and visions for the future of colonial Korea became increasingly intertwined with imperialist expansion and ultimately full-fledged war.

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<sup>1</sup> Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea* Cambridge (MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 364-365.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth M. Wells, "The Price of Legitimacy Women and the Kūnuhoe Movement, 1927-1931," *Colonial Modernity in Korea* ed. Michael Robinson and Gi-Wook Shin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 205.

In this chapter, I focus on a second, smaller series of protests which also began in Kwangju, this time in May 1943. The last years of Japanese rule of Korea were marked by militarization accompanied by accelerated assimilation policies aimed at encouraging Koreans, especially elite Koreans, to identify as closely as possible with the Japanese imperial state. In this chapter, by analyzing how the 1943 student movement in Kwangju was both similar to and different from the student movement of 1929-1930, I demonstrate how policies of war time militarization and increasingly intensified assimilation practices affected Korean students. In addition, by examining manifestoes produced in 1943 against those produced in 1929 and 1930, I argue that students' vision of a utopic, post-colonial Korea had evolved as well, even as the demand for an independent Korea remained unchanged. The rhetoric used in 1929 and 1930 student activism subverted the dominant rhetoric of the colonial state by re-appropriating its language and its metaphors but with an increasingly socialist emphasis. In 1943, the rhetoric of student protest used new tropes of violence, total warfare, and military strategy as the dominant idioms of articulating independence demands. By analyzing how Korean students in 1943 articulated their identities as Koreans and as Japanese imperial subjects, I argue that comparing and contrasting these two student movements provides us with important insight into how the colonial education system increasingly served to facilitate assimilation as the colonial period progressed and this is reflected in the different ways in which these two student movements progressed. In addition, I argue that one of the most pronounced differences between the 1929 and 1943 student movements was the degree to which students understood the colonial state's capacity for violence.

Scholars such as Carter Eckert have argued that the Japanese colonial state successfully implemented a “class over nation” policy in relation to colonial elites, and encouraged them to choose elite status over identification with their Korean identities.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I provide a contravention to this theory. While the colonization of Manchuria and the subsequent benefits it provided certainly assisted in making cooperation with and assimilation into the colonial state attractive to many elite Koreans, this can be seen as the “carrot” of colonial assimilation policy. Examining student protest in this period exposes the flip side of these elite-targeted assimilation policies. The “stick” of these policies was the threat of colonial violence and of sustained disenfranchisement from the benefits of elite imperial, which served as a major deterrent for those at the student level who considered advocating for Korean independence. By 1943, the colonial period had continued long enough that for students in the Kwangju area, the long-term effects of defying the Japanese colonial state had become well known. Therefore, by 1943, the only students left who were willing to engage in student protest activities were those, ironically, who underestimated how violent the response of the colonial state to unrest would be.

#### Imperial Expansion, War, and Changes in Colonial Policy, 1930-1943

The final suppression of Kwangju student movement-related protest activity and the dissolution of the *Sin'ganhoe* and the *Kūnuhoe* in 1931 was followed by a period of intense change on the Korean peninsula. On September 18, 1931, near Mukden, the staged explosion along the main line of the South Manchurian Railway offered a pretext

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<sup>3</sup> Carter Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 1991), 232-235.

for Japan's invasion of Manchuria.<sup>4</sup> During the period between 1931 and 1937, when Japan began full-scale hostilities with China, Korea operated under what historians have termed a "semi-wartime economy," whereby economic output and industrialization increased at a highly accelerated rate.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Japanese colonial state began to see Korean loyalty to the empire as an essential facet of the war effort. Historian Michael Robinson notes that "by the mid-1930s, Japanese authorities were demanding active Korean participation in Shinto ceremonies, stepping up pressure within the education system to spread Japanese language use and trying to eliminate the last differences in legal and administrative practices that distinguished the Japanese *naichi* (inner lands) from the colonial *gaichi* (outer lands)."<sup>6</sup> On October 2, 1937, the Government-General of Korea required all Koreans to recite the *kōkoku shinmin no seishi*, (translated by Wan-yao Chou as "the Oath as Subjects of the Imperial Nation,"<sup>7</sup>) which read:

1. We are the subjects of the imperial nation; we will repay His Majesty as well as the country with loyalty and sincerity.
2. We the subjects of the imperial nation shall trust, love, and help one another so that we can strengthen our unity.
3. We the subjects of the imperial nation shall endure hardship, train ourselves, and cultivate strength so that we can exalt the imperial way.<sup>8</sup>

In Chou's assessment, what is particularly noticeable when comparing this oath to policies of the same period in Japanese-ruled Taiwan was that while both places stressed *kominka* during this period (a term historian Todd Henry has translated as "Imperial

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<sup>4</sup> Saburō Ienaga, *The Pacific War: World War II and the Japanese, 1931-1945* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), 37.

<sup>5</sup> Carter Eckert, "Total War, Industrialization, and Social Change in Late Colonial Korea," *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*, ed. Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 22-24.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 77.

<sup>7</sup> Wan-yao Chou, "The *Kōminka* Movement in Taiwan and Korea: Comparisons and Interpretations," *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*, ed. Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 42-43.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

Subjectification),” there was no oath required in Taiwan. Chou notes that “the nation” (in this case, Japan) is clearly the emphasis in the oath, and that requiring Koreans to recite it repeatedly was clearly aimed at both undermining Korean nationalism and enforcing a sense of belonging to the larger Japanese empire.

In December 1941, Japan entered into war with the United States, further solidifying campaigns to assimilate Koreans as quickly as possible into the Japanese empire to provide more man-power for the war. With the beginning of total war on all fronts, the demand for Korean resources in the form of labor, raw materials, and manufactured goods all reached critical levels. Ienaga Saburo notes that “a large scale forced transport of Koreans to Japan was carried out after 1941.”<sup>9</sup> According to Ienaga’s estimates, roughly 187,000 soldiers and over 22,000 sailors came from colonial Korea, and if forced laborers were included in the figures, the number of Koreans involved in the Japanese war effort reached a total of 370,000 by 1945.<sup>10</sup> As we can see, the increasing militarism of the 1930s and the escalation into total war was never without intimate connections with, and immediate and long-term consequences for Koreans.

### An Overview of Key Education-Related Legislation

The larger political shifts in colonial policy from 1931 onward brought about a number of changes related to education and Korean student life as well. This was especially true as schools were essential in training the Koreans who would go on to serve in the Japanese army.<sup>11</sup> There were three changes brought about by the steady

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<sup>9</sup> Saburō Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, 158.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 158-159.

<sup>11</sup> Carter Eckert, “Late Colonial Korea,” 31-32; Wa- yao Chou, “The *Kōminka* Movement in Taiwan and Korea,” 44.

march towards total war that directly affected Korean students: first, the shift to Japanese-language-only policies within schools; second, the introduction of military training into school curriculums; and third, the creation of a student “volunteer corps,” which sent Korean students to serve the armed forces in a variety of capacities.<sup>12</sup> In addition, as we shall see, the legislation introduced on February 11, 1940, requiring all Koreans to adopt Japanese names was also one that caused tensions in Korean schools.<sup>13</sup> Because schools played a key role in assigning and enforcing newly acquired Japanese names, the assimilation pressures exerted by the colonial state during wartime often manifested themselves in tensions between Japanese teachers and the Korean students onto whom these assimilation policies were visited.

In 1938, the Government-General once again issued a revised colonial education law (*Chōsen kyōiku rei*). This would be the third and final peninsula-wide revision of colonial educational guidelines, and the first since 1922, when colonial educational policy shifted focus following the March First Movement. The 1922 legislation was intended to introduce educational policy that did not appear to be discriminatory toward Korean students. As such, the 1922 law, as we saw in Chapter One, separated Koreans from Japanese students (according to the letter of the law) based solely on their Japanese

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<sup>12</sup> The “volunteer corps” has received much attention in historical hindsight, because it has become well-known as a vehicle by which, as we will see later in the chapter, many Korean women became pressed into service as so-called “comfort women.”

<sup>13</sup> Prior to 1940, it was optional for Koreans to adopt Japanese names. However, as Mizuno Naoki has pointed out, the colonial state policies towards the optional adoption of Japanese names differed significantly from subsequent policies when name-changes became mandatory. As Mizuno has shown, those who changed their names earlier were encouraged to take Japanese names that included characters from their original Korean names, thereby effectively marking them as Korean in the eyes of the colonial state. However, the goal of the 1940 legislation was expressly to subsume Koreans into the Japanese empire in ways in which, in theory, they could not be distinguished from Japanese. Mizuno Naoki, *Sōshi kaimei: Nihon no Chōsen shihai no naka de* [Name Changes: Amidst Japanese Rule of Korea] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2008), 10-15.



language abilities. With this in mind, schools were expanded and subjects such as history added to the curriculum in an effort to effectively socialize Koreans as Japanese imperial subjects but without erasing so much of their Korean identity that they would forget their position within colonial society. In 1938, however, the goals of the Japanese colonial state's educational policies were geared towards achieving far more immediate results: the third revision of the Korean Education Law focused on the intertwined themes of accelerated assimilation and wartime mobilization of Korean students. The colonial government, which had long promoted the use of Japanese language in colonial schools, took further steps to insure Japanese was used at all times by forbidding the use of Korean. In 1937, the Government-General made speaking Korean in government offices illegal; in 1938 (as part of the newly issued educational law revisions) students were banned from using Korean in schools; and in 1939, private vernacular publications were outlawed.<sup>14</sup> In addition, in 1934, for the first time, military training courses were added in all higher middle schools on the Korean peninsula.<sup>15</sup> In 1938, as part of the wide ranging changes implemented in schools on the Korean peninsula, these military training courses expanded significantly, consuming more than five hours per week of Korean students' schedules, the most of any individual subject save Japanese language classes.<sup>16</sup> Also in 1938, Koreans were allowed to voluntarily participate in the regular Japanese army,<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 67.

<sup>15</sup> Carter Eckert, "Late Colonial Korea," 28-29.

<sup>16</sup> Hŭng, Sŏng-nyul, *Cheich'a Kwangju hanseng undong ui minjok undongsajok uimi* [The meaning of the second Kwangju student movement for national movement history] *Kwangju haksae undong yŏn'gu*, [Studies of the Kwangju student movement] Han'guk Yŏksa Yŏn'guhoe (Seoul, Korea: Aseu Munhwasa, 2000), 315.

<sup>17</sup> This is described as voluntary by Carter Eckert, and as essentially a draft by Wan-yao Chou. Carter Eckert, "Late Colonial Korea," 36-39; Wan-yao Chou, "The *Kōminka* Movement in Taiwan and Korea," 59.

followed by a policy of general conscription five years later.<sup>18</sup> By 1941, military training courses began to be formally offered as classes (as opposed to required extra-curricular activities) in schools, and students were given the option of choosing them as electives to replace other academic classes in their daily schedules.<sup>19</sup>

School-based assimilation and militarization programs were essential for the burgeoning Japanese war effort. In February, 1938, following the “Special Volunteer Rescript,” Koreans began joining the Japanese army. The requirements for Korean volunteers were that they were at least 17 years of age, and that they had completed primary school. The education-based requirement, as scholar Hŭng, Sŏng-nyul points out, was expressly to ensure that recruits were properly trained before entering the Japanese army. Graduates of primary school in colonial Korea, Hung argues, would have been taught how to speak Japanese and already exposed to the “imperial subjectification” campaigns that were an essential part of educational policy in this period, both of which would be seen as essential for transforming them into soldiers for the Japanese empire.<sup>20</sup>

The introduction of military training in schools, the increasing militarism of society in general, and the newly-created path for joining the army were received in different ways by Korean students. As Chou notes, “a commonly held view asserts that young people were forced to apply; such a view is to some extent valid.”<sup>21</sup> As coercive as colonial recruitment tactics may have been, Korean students also used this new military opportunity to their own ends. On the one hand, there were Koreans who took advantage of the new opportunities for upward mobility that the Japanese military extended during

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<sup>18</sup> Carter Eckert, “Late Colonial Korea,” 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> Hŭng, Sŏng-nyul, *Cheich'a Kwangju hanseng undong ui minjok undongsajok uimi* [The meaning of the second Kwangju student movement for national movement history], 315.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 319-320.

<sup>21</sup> Wan-yao Chou, “The *Kōminka* Movement in Taiwan and Korea,” 65.

war time. Carter Eckert demonstrates that for colonial Korean elites, the creation of a “volunteer corps” and the possibility of testing into colonial military training academies opened up unprecedented opportunities for upward social mobility. In addition to Eckert’s point, however, the increased militarization within schools gave students a new vocabulary with which to mount an independence campaign: a vocabulary that included sophisticated strategic assessments of the level of military might that could be summoned on the Korean peninsula and new ways of assessing Japan as a military enemy. In 1943, unlike in 1929 and 1930, students articulated their protests demands using new metaphors of battles, strategic strikes, and military conflict.

#### Student Activism and the *Mudŏnghoe*

Student activism declined on the Korean peninsula with the end of the Kwangju student movement in 1930. With the outbreak of the Pacific War, however, scholar Hŭng Sŏk-nul documents a small but significant resurgence of student protest activity, especially in the late 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>22</sup> Although it is unclear to what degree students were aware of the larger progress of the war, Hŭng speculates that even as elites receiving education, Korean students during this period were not likely to have had significantly greater access to foreign newspapers and foreign radio broadcasts received via shortwave radio than other, less advantaged Koreans. In addition, the Japanese colonial state at this time was fearful of the impact of negative news about the war on Japan’s capacity to rule the Korean peninsula. By the 1940s, Japanese colonial authorities had begun to enforce the law that spreading wild rumors about the war was punishable by

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<sup>22</sup> Hŭng, Sŏng-nyul, *Cheich’a Kwangju hanseng undong ui minjok undongsajok uimi* [The meaning of the second Kwangju student movement for national movement history], 316.

up to five years in prison.<sup>23</sup> In 1938, the new colonial education law renamed Korean schools with names that paralleled school names in Japan and which also further emphasized the ties between Korean students, colonial education, and the Japanese empire as a whole. New names included specific designations were explicitly uniform throughout the empire, such as *kōritsu gakkō*, public school, or even more commonly, *kokumin gakkō*, or “school for the national people.” Just as with the Oath of Imperial Subjects, here the “nation” in question unambiguously meant Japan and not Korea. Like many other policies in this period, the focus on unifying nomenclature throughout the imperial education system sought to downplay differences between Japanese and Koreans in much more aggressive ways than previous policies had, thus in theory increasing Koreans’ sense of enfranchisement which was crucial to the war effort.

The schools in the Kwangju area where the 1929 student unrest had begun were also renamed, and thus the school from which the initial 1929 protests had originated, *Kōshū Futsū Kōtō Gakkō* in Japanese (K. Kwangju Kodŭng Pot’ong Hakkyo), or Kwangju Higher Normal School), was instead renamed *Kōshū Nishi Kōristu Chūgakkō* (K. Kwangju Sŏ Kongnip Chunghakkyo) or Kwangju Public Western Middle School.<sup>24</sup> In May of the same year, students at this school once again formed a secret reading group.<sup>25</sup> This group, which went by a number of names throughout its early years, aimed at reviving the tradition of the 1929 student movement and working with other Korean

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 315.

<sup>24</sup> According to the school’s commemorative history, the school has undergone a total of four different name-changes since its founding in 1920. The current name, Kwangju Cheil Kodung Hakyo, was officially instituted on April 10, 1953, as the Korean War was drawing to a close. The repeated name-changes the school underwent in its first 33 years of existence are indicative of the frequency with which educational policy changes were introduced during the colonial period, as well as the political instability of the first years after the end of Japanese rule.

<sup>25</sup> Hŭng, Sŏk-nul, *Cheich’a Kwangju hanseng undong ui minjok undongsajok uimi* [The meaning of the second Kwangju student movement for national movement history], 314.

students to resist Japanese colonial rule. Unlike in 1929 and 1930, there were no longer any nationwide networks from whose members students could receive advice as to how to plan their movement or utilize to establish connections with students at other schools. Moreover, the significant increases in censorship and surveillance of the late colonial period meant that students had even more limited access to texts around which to base their movement than their predecessors did.

Between March 1940 and January 1942, there were several incidents in which individual members of the reading group were punished either by school authorities or by colonial officials for their role in spreading pro-Korean rhetoric, although not through means of organized, large-scale student protest. For example, one member of the secret reading group, Yu Mong-nyong, was expelled from Kwangju Western Middle School for discussing issues related to Korean nationalism. Another secret reading group student in this period was suspended from school shortly thereafter for writing out his “seditious” impressions of the time he spent studying abroad in Japan. In January 1942, one of the founding members of the secret reading group who had already graduated and was himself working as a teacher was arrested for preaching “ethnic consciousness” to the other Korean members of the teaching staff. Several of his friends from Kwangju West were arrested and questioned but the existence of the secret reading group was not discovered by Japanese police.<sup>26</sup>

As we have seen with the Japanese renaming of the public schools, there was great political weight to the act of naming in colonial Korea. As such, the evolution of the secret reading group’s name tells us a great deal about how its members envisioned their

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<sup>26</sup> *Kwangju haksæng tongnip undongsa* [The history of the Kwangju student independence movement], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Kwangju: Kwangju Haksæng Tongnip Undong Tongjihoe, 1996), 234-236.

activities. Because of the police attention focused on the founders of the group, its younger members took over leadership positions, replacing the older students who had been the original founding members. While the first members had considered a number of names, including “The Gandhi Group” in order to align themselves with political movements in other colonized regions, the new student leaders opted to for a name with both expressly local and historic meaning. Upon taking over the group, the new student leaders decided to name it the *Mudŭnghoe*. This name, which can be directly translated as “The Classless Society,” had multiple meanings. The students were signaling the fact that regardless of grade, class, or other distinctions, they were committed to working together to advocate for Korean independence. In addition, this name can be seen as drawing on the Marxist rhetoric of a propertyless and classless society that students had repeatedly invoked in 1929 and 1930. At the same time, however, the *Mudŭnghoe*’s name was a play on words, because the most prominent mountain in Kwangju, Mudŭngsan, was a liminal space outside the reaches of colonial authority where, from the March First Movement onward, independence activists had frequently gathered. During March First, it was regularly the site of fireworks demonstrations and so-called “manse undong” (where protestors would gather on Mudŭngsan and shout “manse” and it could be heard in the town below). Also, prior to the 1929 Kwangju student movement as well, secret reading group members often met on Mudŭngsan to discuss Marxist philosophy and strategies for staging an independence movement. In addition, the mountain of Mudŭngsan was such a fundamental part of Kwangju identity that the first verse of the Kwangju Western Middle School song at the time began with the phrase “On the southern tip of the Korean peninsula, at the base of Mudŭngsan” (*pando namdan*

*mudŭngsannok*). Mudŭngsan was also the site of Kwangju's (pre-colonial) mountain shrine, the guardian spirit of Kwangju reputedly dwelled.<sup>27</sup>

In evoking Mudŭngsan, students were, consciously or otherwise, fully in keeping with the spatial politics of protest during the colonial period. In general, throughout the Kwangju student movement of 1929 and 1930 and again in 1943, there were two very different types of spaces which were key for protesting students. The first type of space in which the students protested was explicitly Japanese-dominated colonial space—when students marched in the streets, for example, in Kwangju and elsewhere, they targeted Japanese neighborhoods, businesses, police stations, newspaper offices, train stations, and similar spaces and they did so expressly to register their discontent with Japanese colonization. Schools, additionally, were clearly spaces which were dominated and structured by Japanese authority and even as students covertly appropriated places within school grounds in which to secretly meet, their decision to march out of schools and into the streets was clearly one that was calculated directly to defy colonial authority.

The second type of space which was key for colonial period protest drew on both spatial and temporal distance from the colonial state. A place like Mudŭngsan was popular as a protest site for the exact opposite reasons that the streets of central Kwangju would have been: it was a liminal space in relation to colonial power, outside the reach of the colonial state, and had the additional advantage of not only being steeped in pre-colonial Korean history in general, but also as playing a central role in social protest not only before the 1929 Kwangju student movement, but also before the colonial period as well. Similarly, when students chose to stage protests in rural areas on market days, they

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<sup>27</sup> *Kwangju kobo/sŏjung/ ilgo palshimnyŏnsa1920-2003* [Kwangju Higher Normal/ Western Middle/ First High School 80-year history], (Kwangju, Korea: Kwangju First High School, 2003), 318-319.

were also targeting this second type of expressly “Korean” space, in which Koreans gathered together with minimal interference by colonial authorities and in which social protests had been staged not only during the first decades of the colonial period, but also prior to Japanese colonization. The different types of spaces reveal the ways in which the two goals of student protest (anti-Japanese resistance and calls for an independent Korea) were interlinked but not entirely overlapping. Street protests which targeted Japanese neighborhoods, businesses, and authorities can be seen as attempting to voice discontent primarily to the Japanese colonizers themselves, while market-day protests and gatherings on mountain-tops can be seen as more of a means for Korean protesters to speak directly to each other and to an expressly Korean audience. Of course, there were practical concerns as well—protests that were staged beyond the direct purview of colonial authorities were, by their very nature, far less risky undertakings than directly confronting the colonial state would have been. “Korean” spaces were where “hidden transcripts” could be discussed more freely.

Thus, the *Mudŏnghoe* was named in ways that referenced a number of facets of the student movement. *Mudŏnghoe* members referenced their predecessors, the student protesters of the late 1920s and early 1930s, by not only forming and naming their secret reading group but also by giving it a name which emphasized equal access and egalitarianism. At the same time, they evoked both local and national consciousness by naming their group in honor of a local mountain which had played a significant role in both pre-colonial Korean historical writing and also in previous anti-Japanese protest movements during the colonial period. And finally, by referencing their own school song, they drew on their identities as students, grounding their movement very much in the idea



that their first step as student activists (as we will see) was to attempt to organize their fellow students in the tradition of their predecessors in 1929 and 1930.

The newly reorganized *Mudŭnghoe* became a cohesive organization in October 1941, and was fully active by December of that year. Hŭng Sŏng-nyu notes that in this period, there were a number of secret reading groups formed at different schools throughout Korea, but they mainly had five to ten members, represented a tiny minority of the students at any given school, and lasted on average only one to two years before dissolving. With this in mind, then, Hung argues that the *Mudŭnghoe*, which had almost 30 members, and was active in some form for six years total, was among the largest and most successful of the student groups in colonial Korea during this period. (There were only three other student groups on the Korean peninsula which rivaled the *Mudŭnghoe* in this period in terms of size and scope—two in the city of Taegu, and one in the city of Hamhŭng, both of which had been the sites of significant student activism during the 1929 and 1930 Kwangju student movement.<sup>28</sup> The *Mudŭnghoe* created a manifesto, which listed the aims of its activism as follows:

- 1) We arm ourselves with the spirit of Western Middle [*Sŏjunghon uro mujang hago*] to inculcate the students of the whole school with the spirit of our heroic predecessors [*sonbaetul*].
- 2) We restore youthful [vigor] to the struggle against Japanese colonial policy.
- 3) We are developing a reading movement [*toksŏ undong*] to cultivate our objectivity.
- 4) We regard our lives as worthless [*ch'ogae*] [in comparison to the worth of] the lives of our comrades, and the public peace. [*poan*].<sup>29</sup>

Like the manifestoes distributed as part of protests in 1929 and 1930, this manifesto too stressed solidarity and sacrifice. In addition, as we see throughout the colonial period, education not only was a central concern for students, but also, in this case, developing a

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 318-319.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

“reading movement” was deemed essential to best assess how to resist Japanese colonial, and effectively advocate for independence. However, the largest difference between this manifesto and the types of manifestoes we saw emerge as part of 1929 and 1930 student is that in this case, there is no mention of Koreans as a distinct people, nor of a Korean nation. This is especially conspicuous because it corresponds so closely to the moment when Koreans were publicly required to swear oaths as members of “the imperial nation,” i.e. Japan, and not Korea. Instead of a national or ethnic identity, the primary identity evoked here is that of identification with the school from which previous protests had been launched. Likewise, although the students stated in their manifesto that they aimed to “restore youthful [vigor] to the struggle against Japanese colonial policy,” the language of 1929 and 1930, which described all Japanese education as “colonial slave education,” and which characterized the Japanese empire as driven by dangerous and predatory beasts was conspicuously absent. At the same time, however, the students utilized other compelling tropes for the period to communicate their message. For example, the Japanese colonial state often punished student activists on the grounds that they were disturbing the “public peace,” but in the *Mudŏnghoe*’s founding manifesto, students re-appropriated this term, and instead used it to imply that it is Japanese colonialism, rather than student protest, that is disruptive to the public peace of Korea. In this way, then, the elevation of “public peace” as something worth fighting and dying for becomes a justification for student protest rather than a justification for continued Japanese rule.

#### Voices of *Mudŏnghoe* Members

Pae Chong-guk, one of the members who ascended to *Mudŏnghoe* leadership after the original members were arrested and/ or placed under surveillance in the early 1940s, was born on January 3, 1924, according to the Western calendar and raised in Naju, the town of many original student activists involved in the 1929 student movement and where the fight on the train that sparked the initial street demonstrations in 1929 ultimately culminated.<sup>30</sup> Pae was not only the first in his family to attend Japanese schools, he was also the only one from his neighborhood in Naju who commuted daily to Kwangju for school.<sup>31</sup> He was just beginning his fifth year of school in the spring of 1943 when the student protests at Kwangju Western Middle School began, but he had participated in secret organized anti-Japanese student group since he was a second-year student, which seems to have been typical of the younger members of the *Mudŏnghoe*. The group contained a range of students, from those younger than he was to students who had already graduated from Western ahead of him. “We’d study hard during the week,” Pae says:

Then on the weekends, when we had free time, usually on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, we’d get together, and go to someone’s house where it was easy to gather, and we’d talk. We didn’t think it was an independence movement at first. We just thought, “These Japanese, they really have to change the colonial system.” We thought, “We as Koreans are really being oppressed. How can we make the Japanese grasp that?” We talk about all this, and then we’d go to a makŏri-chip [a drinking house in which makŏri, a type of Korean grain alcohol, is served], and as we drank makŏri we’d keep talking about it. We’d sing Korean songs. And this concept of independence, it spread among us one person at a time. One by one, we all began to feel it.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Pak Ch’an Sŏng, et al., *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undong kwa naju* [Naju and the Kwangju student independence movement] (Seoul, Korea: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2001), 2-10, for more about this.

<sup>31</sup> Pae Chong-guk (former student protest participant), oral interview, Seoul, Korea, March 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

In general, however, students' opinions, especially in the absence of subversive texts and access to unofficial accounts of the war, tended to rely largely on rumor and hearsay. For example, when Pae describes how he became driven to protest Japanese imperialism, he describes a sense of political legacy brought on by the knowledge of the activism of those before him:

We all knew all about the March First Movement, and we all knew all about the 1929 Student Movement. Of course, we didn't know all of the details, but we knew how it had started on a train from Kwangju to Mokpo, stopping in Naju...At that time, every student in school had already heard about the 1929 student movement that had started at our school. We [in the *Mudŭnghoe*] thought to ourselves, if the students ahead of us could do it, we have to do it too.

Just as in 1929, the quality of the teachers, along with the educational material itself, in addition to the directive to use only Japanese while at school, was also a source of student discontent. "There were hardly any Korean teachers...Even in junior high, even though there were two classes in each grade, and five grades altogether, there were only a few Korean teachers: one, maybe two." Pae tells us. In addition, the differential in teaching level between schools for Japanese and Korean students was clear. The colonial policy of sending the best teachers to Japanese schools and the worst teachers to Korean schools did not go unnoticed among the students. "[It] was a commonly-known fact—we all, everyone, knew it," according to Pae. Also, he says "There was never any attention paid to teaching method, how to best teach the content of what they were teaching... There were many teachers who were not serious about what they were teaching and they would speak cruelly to the students, and hit them. It happened all the time." Again, just as in 1929 and 1930, in many ways the discriminatory practices utilized in colonial education often drove Korean students to meet in secret, and discuss the possibility of resistance.

Even though Pae and his friends called themselves a secret “reading group,” or *toksŏhoe*, just as students had in the 1920s, they no longer had access to any kind of subversive texts. In Pae’s words, “We didn’t have any books we could read at the *toksŏhoe*—we didn’t have any books about Korean history—if we’d been found with books about Korean history, that would have been a BIG problem!” Instead, they did what they could in the absence of reading material to find common ground in the meetings:

We couldn’t really get our hands on any books, so we used to sing songs. We knew all these sad songs, so we sang sad songs in Korean, and that’s how we communicated our feelings. There weren’t any books about “independence movements” that we could get our hands on. There were Marxist books in the 1929 movement, but there were none in the 1943.<sup>33</sup>

Here, in Pae’s assessments, we can find many similarities to how students in Kwangju in the late 1920s became involved in student activism. Once again, it was meeting in secret to discuss the dissatisfactions of colonial life that led students, “one by one,” to want to form a resistance movement. In May of 1942, more than twenty members of the *Mudŏnghoe* met, and discussed what their vision for moving their protest activities beyond secret student meetings, and into more public acts of protest. At the time, another leading member of the *Mudŏnghoe*, Ki Yŏng-do, produced a series of writings articulating why he believed the time was right to push for Korean independence from Japan. According to Ki:

Through the Great Asian War, (*taetonga chŏnjaeng*), as a war of imperial aggression, the empire is the enemy of the East (*tongyang ũi chŏk*). The empire’s military strength is superior, but in terms of munitions, materials, and scientific strength, it cannot possibly oppose the United States, Britain,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

and the Soviet Union. If there is a protracted war, defeat is inevitable, and then, precisely, it will be the right time for Korean independence (*chosŏn tongnip ũi chŏrho sigi ida.*)<sup>34</sup>

Ki's assertions are particularly fascinating in comparison to student manifestoes of 1929 and 1930. On the one hand, he too sees Korean independence as a primary goal, just as students had in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Here, however, Ki provides a strikingly prescient assessment of the fate of the Japanese empire, and advocates for Korean independence on strategic grounds in relation to the war effort, rather than based on philosophically or historically driven arguments. Ki goes on to note:

If we use the opportunity [presented by Japan's defeat], and we, of the same people, (*tongjok*) all rise up simultaneously, we can easily achieve our goal of independence. When we become independent, if we mobilize every middle school student above the third-year level who has received some sort of military training, we can achieve the military strength of about 350,000 or 360,000 people.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike the examples cited by Carter Eckert where individual Koreans were able to utilize opportunities for personal advancement that opened up to them through the heightened war effort, here Ki Yŏng-do is assessing Japanese military training for Koreans in a different light. For Ki, the training provided by the Japanese as part of the post-1938 curriculum could be put to use to topple colonial rule on the peninsula rather than to support it. Likewise, Ki's calculations of the military power of students that could be harnessed to fight for Korean independence is clearly an inversion of Japanese wartime logic. Ki directly rejects the war effort and the increased assimilation policies that accompanied it by using the word "*tongjok*" in the place of the word "*minjok*," which was often invoked in earlier protests. By emphasizing the *tong-* (same), rather than invoking

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<sup>34</sup> *Kwangju haksæng tongnip undongsa* [The History of the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], 239.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 222.

the more abstract *minjok*, Ki is deliberately resisting Japanese imperial claims that Japanese and Koreans were of the same ethnic stock.

These rejections of Japanese rule based on predictions of Japan's inevitable defeat in war were not shared by all members of the *Mudŭnghoe*, however. Pae Chong-guk instead says, "The war really didn't have anything to do with us. We knew there was a war, and we heard about it, but we didn't feel any connection to it, or any sense of urgency about it." By 1942, the *Mudŭnghoe* members began to initiate acts of targeted, if juvenile, defiance against the school, and against the Japanese state. Student Cho Pyong-dae purportedly placed earthworms into the picture frame which held the photograph of the Japanese emperor and his wife in the classroom shrine, and, for good measure, placed a bag of human excrement in the desk drawer of a Japanese teacher who was particularly militaristic and treated Korean students in a discriminatory fashion.<sup>36</sup> In addition, other members created posters advocating Korean independence, and covertly placed them in different locations throughout Kwangju.<sup>37</sup> Fourth-year *Mudŭnghoe* member Sin Sam-yong was ultimately arrested for drawing a cartoon image of the Japanese principal of Kwangju Western Middle as a poisonous snake with the words written under it "Let's use Korean regularly" (*Chosŏno rur sangyong haja*), a play on words of the Japanese daily use campaign implemented by the colonial state.<sup>38</sup>

By the following April, however, the *Mudŭnghoe* members decided that it was time to organize a student movement in the mold of 1929. As their predecessors had done,

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<sup>36</sup> *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undongsa* [The history of the Kwangju student independence movement], 217.

<sup>37</sup> Hŭng, Sŏk-nul, *Cheich'a Kwangju hanseng undong ui minjok undongsajok uimi* [The meaning of the second Kwangju student movement for national movement history], 321-322.

<sup>38</sup> *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undongsa* [The history of the Kwangju student independence movement], 217.

they began to utilize breaks between classes and other lulls in the school schedule. Pae Chong-guk explains:

At our gatherings, we'd talk about how we could use the time in homeroom class in the morning—there's part of homeroom where the teacher leaves the class, right? We started talking about how we could use that time to try to talk effectively about Korean independence. We wanted to say 'We are made to suffer by the Japanese. We have to use Korean. We have a long history of suffering.'<sup>39</sup>

In this way, we see how for Pae, being forbidden to use Korean was intertwined with the suffering that had been historical inflicted on Koreans. He describes how members of the Mudŏnghoe appealed to other students' sense of Korean identity, beginning with this issue of language. Pae explains that in the spring of 1943:

Starting from the first day of school, we started saying to students in the lower classes: "Don't use Japanese! We have to become independent. Among us, we have to use Korean. We're Koreans—we have to know Korean and to use it.' We always started from that point.<sup>40</sup>

Soon, however, tensions erupted between the fifth-year students, who had been encouraging their fellow students to join them in protest and some of the younger students, who questioned mounting an anti-Japanese movement. On May 10, 1943, fourth-year students, lead by their class representative, publicly criticized the fifth-year students, and told them that they spoke poor Japanese and were insufficiently loyal to the Japanese regime.<sup>41</sup> As Pae explains:

We started trying to tell the younger students how we felt. We told them, "We can't trust our teachers. We should speak Korean, not Japanese. We should express to the Japanese how we are suffering. We're Korean, not Japanese." They were much more serious and close to the Japanese than we were, and they said "No we're not! We're Japanese! We're Japanese

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<sup>39</sup> Pae Chong-guk, oral interview, Seoul, Korea, March 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



colonial subjects!” Then we got into a big fight with them, led by the *panjang* (class representative) of the lower class.<sup>42</sup>

After school, the students confronted each other in a barley field on school property, and a large-scale fight broke out.<sup>43</sup> The Japanese police, who made arrests following these fights, issued a statement asserting that “we are conducting an extensive investigation of the background here... because we see this as something which hints at a dark undercurrent of turbulent thoughts which oppose the political rule of the Japanese Government General.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, just as in 1929, this movement for Korean independence involved fights between students, Japanese intervention, and a subsequent long-term investigation by Japanese authorities, who could not allow rumors of Korean independence unrest to go unchecked.

At the same time, however, the major and most striking difference between the 1929-1930 movement and that of 1943 was that the 1929 conflict which sparked the first Kwangju student movement began as a conflict between Japanese and Korean students at different schools between whom tensions had arisen as they shared newly-created areas of colonial public space. In 1943, however, there were students who identified strongly enough with the Japanese regime to actively work to block a Korean independence movement from taking place, something we saw no evidence of whatsoever in 1929 and 1930. This shift speaks powerfully to the effectiveness of late colonial period assimilation campaigns and the effectiveness of schools as sites of that assimilation, in which Koreans,

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Just as with other spaces of conflict, the fact that this fight takes place in a barley field on school grounds is resonant on a number of levels. This barley field, according to Pae Chong-guk, was the place where students were taught basic farming skills as part of the school curriculum, and therefore was part of the process by which even elite Koreans were taught expressly manual skills which were considered appropriate to their colonial status. At the same time, it also served as the most space within school grounds farthest away from Japanese teachers and other colonial figures.

<sup>44</sup> Mukuge no kai, ed. *Shokuminchika chōsen: kōshyū gakusei undō no kenkyū* [Colonial Korea: Studies of the Kwangju student movement] Kobe, Japan: Mugenokai, 1990, 104-105.

more strongly than ever, were encouraged to think of themselves first and foremost as Japanese colonial subjects.

As the conflict escalated, students at Kwangju Western Middle School staged a school boycott, in which they distributed manifestoes which read:

- 1) We oppose [being required to make] regular use of Japanese language.
- 2) We oppose the legislation requiring Koreans to adopt Japanese names.
- 3) We oppose *naesŏn ilch'e* (J. *naisen ittai*) the policy of “Japan and Korea as One Body.”<sup>45</sup>
- 4) Boycott Japanese goods.
- 5) We are against discriminatory education
- 6) Long live Korean independence (*Chosŏn tongnip manse*)

Again, there are a number of important similarities and differences between this type of manifesto, and those produced in 1929 and 1930. First of all, by 1943, the most immediate and oppressive issue expressed by the students was the new colonial requirement that they speak Japanese at all times. In their resistance manifesto, students notably refer to Japanese as *irŏ* (the language of Japan), thereby highlighting that they did not consider it to be their national language, despite its classification as such by the colonial state at the time.<sup>46</sup> Second of all, and in an opposite vein, unlike in 1929 and 1930, student no longer referred to the education system as “Japanese colonial slave education,” and instead advocated for an end to “discriminatory” education practices. Third of all, as the end of the colonial period drew near, evocations of an idealized Korean nation, united in a sense of ethnic solidarity and undivided by other distinctions,

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<sup>45</sup>This slogan was put forth towards the end of Japanese rule of colonial Korea as part of the campaign for accelerated integration of Koreans into the Japanese empire.

<sup>46</sup>*Ilŏ* was not an accepted designation of Japanese by the Government-General, and Japanese colonial officials were particularly sensitive to how “Japan” and “Japanese” were referred to in the colonies, because it indicated how the speaker viewed colonial space in relation to the Japanese Islands. Scholar Wan-yao Chou notes that the official designation of Japanese language in Korea changed over time, from *nichigo* (Japanese) in 1891, to *gaikokugo* (foreign language) in 1895, to *nihongo* (Japanese) in 1909, to *kukugo* (national language) from 1910-1045. Wan-yao Chou, “The *Kōminka* Movement in Taiwan and Korea,” 49.

disappeared from the students' language. Instead, students presented manifestoes that were primarily rejections of Japanese rule, without specifying what they envisioned taking its place. By 1943, students presented manifestoes with issues that addressed a much narrower scope. This could have been because of the fact that this student group operated entirely in isolation, both without philosophical texts to read and without guidance from members of nationalist networks who were familiar with more sophisticated organizing methods. This also helps to explain why some of their acts of defiance straddle the line between acts of defiance and juvenile practical jokes.

In addition, the breakdown of national networks and cooperation between students at different schools had also led to the end of the type of organizing across gender lines we saw as a regular feature of the 1929 and 1930 student protests. When we consider the manifestoes in comparison to the strategic assessments made by Mudŭnghoe member Ki Yŏng-do, however, we can imagine that there may be additional reasons for the transition from evoking utopic images of post-colonial Korea in student writings to focusing on a narrower range of potentially achievable goals. By 1943, it is possible that Korean students had begun to sense on some level that the colonial period would not end in a purely idyllic way, and would instead involve to some degree the type of chaos, violence, and civil breakdown that was beginning to occur with the end of the war. It is possible that the types of practical, strategic goals expressed by student protesters in 1943 were not only related to the breakdown of ideological networks to assist and expand student protest, but also an anticipation of the power vacuum that would be left in colonial Korea by Japan's wartime defeat, and the need to envision strategic, rather than utopic, ways in which to achieve and maintain independence for Korea.

### Assimilation within the Education System

In addition, the isolation that Pae and other Mudŏnghoe members experienced in relation to larger resistance movements may have also reinforced their naiveté when mounting a protest movement, especially when we see how much resistance they faced from the other students within their own school. An oral interview with another student in Kwangju at the time, Kan So-mi, reveals just how diverse understandings of the Japanese state were at the time. Kan, who was born in 1929, was also a student in Kwangju in 1943, at Kwangju National Women's School, (*Kōshū Joshi Kokumin Gakkō* formerly Kwangju Women's Higher Normal School, also renamed in the new educational legislation of 1938). Unlike Pae Chong-guk, and the students from Kwangju Western Public Junior High School, Kan was not originally from Cholla Namdo province, but instead grew up on Cheju-do, and came to Kwangju to attend the then-equivalent of middle school. Although she was the first woman in her family to receive a formal education, all of her male relatives were highly educated and spoke fluent Japanese, including both of her grandfathers. In fact, Kan's grandfather on her father's side served for many years as the head of the small village where the family lived. "It's not like he was the mayor of Osaka," she says, "but with that much authority [required by the position], if he hadn't cooperated with the Japanese government and Japanese imperialism on all fronts, he wouldn't have been made village head." She goes on to explain her grandfather had a "kind of extreme belief, extreme trust in Japanese imperialism," but that "At that time, of course, if you didn't speak Japanese, and study

about Japan, you couldn't work as a village head for Japan [in other words, the Japanese colonial state].”

Just as we saw in the oral interview with interviewee Kuk Söng-jun, a participant in the initial unrest in Kwangju in 1929, not only was Kan So-mi's family extremely elite, but she also articulated their claims to elite status via the two means of measuring wealth and educational level available to Koreans during much of the colonial period—land and language skills. Despite the high level of education and the local status of her family members, however, Kan says, going on to a higher level of education “was definitely not a given in the environment [where I came from.] I didn't meet any of the given conditions. Zero.”<sup>47</sup> By this, Kan is referring to the fact that not only was she female, but also that her father had died very young of tuberculosis, and her mother moved to Japan and remarried, leaving Kan to be raised by relatives in rural Korea. The turning point in Kan herself wanting to attend a higher school came when a local Japanese principal, who was a friend of her grandfather's, suggested that she go, after which she threw herself into convincing her family members that she should be allowed to apply to and attend school in Kwangju, because there was no local girls school on Cheju-do.

As she was preparing to go away to school, Kan was acutely aware of the fact that what allowed her to go was her financial status. Her mother and step-father sent money from Japan regularly, and Kan says:

My grandfather and uncle were not struggling in their daily lives, and it wasn't like if they didn't use that money they couldn't get by or something, so they saved it for me [in a savings account] in my name. I think it was in order to pay for my wedding expenses when I got married... They took what was mine and saved it under my name, and they

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<sup>47</sup> Kan So-mi (relative of 1929 student protest participant), oral interview, Osaka, Japan, March 2007.

told me about it all the time. Not only that, but my mother had bought a field as my claim, right near my grandfather's house. My grandmother on my mother's side would always say it to me like a lullaby, 'You understand, right here, just right near here, there's your field...' [She took me there] to weed and things like that, and I would go with her and play and so on, there in that field."<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, when Kan began attending school in Kwangju, she did so with an extreme sense of gratitude—she felt very lucky that her family had been willing to spend her wedding savings to send her to school, despite the fact that she was female. After the Japanese principal suggested she go away to school, Kan says. "More and more, I let this feeling [of enthusiasm about going away to school] swell up inside me. I thought to myself 'If I'm going to become an upstanding Japanese person (*rippana nipponjin*), I have to go away to girls' school.'" Unlike Pae, Kan expressly approached her education as an opportunity to become more assimilated to the Japanese regime.

Her sense of gratitude at being able to receive an education was clearly particularly gendered, because even in 1943, it was not a given that the daughters of elite families would attend school, especially at the higher levels. Kan, just like the female Korean students we encountered in Yokoyama Yoshiko's memoir, lived in an all-female dormitory with other students, and her life at school was very much focused within the confines of the school grounds. Pae Chong-guk, too, noted that not only were there few opportunities to forge alliances with male Korean students at other schools, there were even fewer chances to interact with female students, and no means of organizing any type of joint protest. According to Pae, his experience with the student movement was highly gendered. "We *never* had a chance to be around female students. I had a few female

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

friends [in my neighborhood],” he says, “but they weren’t friends to the degree that we could talk about this kind of thing.” Pae goes on to say:

There were some people who would socialize more with girls, but talk of independence movements wasn’t something that we would engaged in. That kind of talk was for secret reading groups and other meetings, not for mixed gatherings of female and male students.<sup>49</sup>

Even so, Pae was aware of anti-Japanese activities occurring at other schools, including girls’ schools, again primarily through hearsay.

There were rumors that there were Korean female students who participated in demonstrations. I heard that at the Korean girls’ school, which was separate from the Japanese girls’ school, there were the same or similar incidents that there were at our school. There was a lot of dissatisfaction with the teachers, and with the school system. There were protests and “white paper boycotts,” where the students in a class, when they were taking a test, would turn in their papers blank as a group, in protest... The female students couldn’t coordinate the whole school, so they’d have to do [these kind of “white paper boycotts”] one class at a time.<sup>50</sup>

Ultimately, in Pae’s assessment, both the protests at the girls’ school in Kwangju and at Kwangju Western Junior High School were ineffectual, and did not have the impact he and his friends had envisioned when meeting secretly. “When I think about it now, all of these kinds of protests were small, and really not much, but we could not even imagine going against the Japanese more directly and having a protest outside, on the street leading to school. It wasn’t even talked about.”

Unlike Pae, Kan arrived in Kwangju with direct insight into the consequences of anti-Japanese activity. When Kan decided that she wanted to apply to school in Kwangju, her uncle (who was the son of the village head, and the brother of her father who had

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<sup>49</sup> Pae Chong-guk, oral interview, March 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

died), said “You can’t go there!” According to Kan, he took her a separate room and said to her: “I’m telling you this because of the circumstances.” Kan recalls her uncle’s words:

He told me about his history [that he was expelled from school and imprisoned for anti-Japanese activity in Kwangju in 1929.] Until that time, that was absolutely something that I had no reason to know, right?...Even with his father’s background, he was in prison for about three years! If it hadn’t been for [his father’s Japanese connections], he would have been killed [for resisting the Japanese]!”<sup>51</sup>

During the colonial period, Kan says, anti-Japanese activity was something that you hid, and kept as secret as possible. “In those days,” she says, “more than saying ‘I did it!’ [yatta!] there was a sense of shame. [My uncle] had a very guilty conscience about it.”

Kan was also able to view the damage that her uncle’s anti-Japanese activities bore on his life. Not only was he expelled from school and imprisoned, and her aunt, her uncle’s wife, also expelled from school at the time simply because the Japanese authorities discovered she was his fiancée, his job prospects were significantly narrowed:

After he had been [someone]...who had resisted the country of Japan, even with his father’s background and everything, his qualifications as a public servant for the state had been completely plundered. It was as if he no longer had those [educational] qualifications.”<sup>52</sup>

In an effort to clear her name despite her family history and not let her uncle’s activities ruin her chances of being admitted to school, Kan asked her grandfather for a portion of her savings (100 yen, which at the time was the equivalent of two months of a teacher’s salary), put it in a box and tied it with a ribbon, and brought it to the Japanese principal

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<sup>51</sup> What Kan means here is not necessarily that he would have been sentenced to execution for resisting the Japanese, but that death was the de facto result of long imprisonment in Japanese prisons, both due to regular torture and due to health hazards associated with poor prison conditions.

<sup>52</sup> Kan So-mi, oral interview, March 2007.



who had recommended she go away to school, asking him to donate it to the war effort. “I thought to myself, ‘It’s important for me to prove somehow that I’m a patriotic daughter of the Japanese garrison state, a patriotic daughter of Japan (*Nippon no gunkoku shojō, nippon no aikoku shojō*).”<sup>53</sup>

Once Kan arrived in Kwangju, she began to witness the consequences of anti-Japanese activity first-hand. One of the teachers at her school disappeared, and there were rumors he’d been guilty of anti-Japanese thought. “He didn’t come to school at all, and just as we were saying ‘What happened to him?,’ he came back to school wearing a big mask, and [it was clear] he’d ended up meeting with torture at the hands of the Japanese.” In addition, and even more dramatically, an older student who Kan admired and who was [grade] representative of the fourth-year female students also suddenly disappeared one day. According to Kan, “Everyone knew why she’d disappeared, and because she gave the commands to the whole school [during school gymnastics], everyone knew at the same time that she’d disappeared.”<sup>54</sup> When she returned, Kan remembers:

She’d been completely dropped in her role [as a school leader,] and even though her house was right there in Kwangju, she was put in the dorm with us. Once they put her in the dorm, she wasn’t allowed to go to school...the story was that they’d give her a graduation certificate only if once she graduated, she joined the volunteer corps.<sup>55</sup>

With the rumor that this student was going to join the volunteer corps, Kan says, “There was a ‘*teishintai* boom.’ Because that *senpai* went to the *teishintai*, other third year class leaders volunteered. This was definitely a state secret, so I don’t know the truth, but there were those kinds of rumors and talk.” Like Pae, Kan relied primarily on hearsay for most

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

of her information, because her teachers and other school officials would not discuss these issues with the students. Even talk among the students themselves was discouraged.

Kan says:

Even though going to the *teishintai* was a big deal, they really wouldn't let us talk about it. There was some hidden part to it. It wasn't that you'd say in a loud voice 'I'm going to the *teishintai*, I'm going to volunteer!' It was a secret... We couldn't go see them off or anything, but around these things there were rumors. In the dorm, what you'd hear would be a tiny portion [of the big picture.]... Now, I'm thinking she [the class representative] was definitely made to be a comfort woman.<sup>56</sup>

At the time, other students did not feel sorry for the class representative for being confined to the dorm and not allowed to attend school, even though no one was certain exactly what type of protest activities she had engaged in that resulted in her punishment.

Kan says:

It's frightening, but people really didn't feel sympathy for the class representative. Because, well, if you did something like that, that's how you're going to end up, right? If you had negative thoughts, and resisted Japan, this is what it would come to, right? It was common knowledge... Because my uncle had done that, I definitely understood that if you resisted Japan, you would meet with this fate... I couldn't help but think that people who pushed and [engaged in anti-Japanese activities], were kind of idiots maybe, because why would you do such a thing?<sup>57</sup>

Like Pae, Kan also felt that the war was something that was happening elsewhere, and did not directly affect her. She traveled to Osaka to visit her mother, saw war preparations, rationing lines, etc. first-hand, and thought that it was a completely different world from Korea. She says:

People stood in long lines to receive rations, and you even had to buy clothes with tickets. There were things you knew you couldn't buy even if you presented your

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. This may not, in fact, be true—there were more women drafted into the *teishintai* than only those that became comfort women, but this is a common discourse in South Korea.

<sup>57</sup> Kan So-mi, oral interview, March 2007.

tickets! Japan was filled with a sense of danger, like it could become a battlefield at any minute.<sup>58</sup>

For her, this stood as a stark contrast to her experiences in Korea. “On Cheju-do,” she says, “to be honest, we led our lives without anything to do with the war.”

Despite the disconnection with the war itself that both Pae and Kan expressed, Kan also experienced being required to speak only Japanese as a stressful experience. “From our first year, we were already made to recite “The Oath of Imperial Subjects,” and it was Japanese Japanese Japanese. To be able to speak Japanese well provided so much of a superiority complex!” At the same time, unlike the students in the movement that Pae was involved in, Kan could not imagine that the Japanese empire was vulnerable. “I could only think that Japanese imperialism would continue forever.” She and her friends at school knew Japan was struggling in the war, but couldn’t believe that Japan would ultimately be defeated:

We [my friends at school and I] had no idea that Japan would lose. No matter what happened, I thought a divine wind would blow, or something like that... I knew there was torture, and all kinds of bad things [under Japanese rule], and I know that led some people to have anti-Japanese sentiment, but not me. Maybe because I was so naïve and single-minded, but I thought ‘We have to become Japanese as quickly as possible, so these things don’t continue to happen to us.’<sup>59</sup>

As we can see through these interviews, both Kan and Pae experienced the same type of tensions within the colonial education system of 1943, but came to very different conclusions as to how best to respond to the intense pressures of accelerated assimilation policies and heightened militarism within the school system. In many ways, Pae Chong-guk and Kan So-mi’s very different responses lay not only in where they perceived the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Japanese empire to be headed, but also in how they assessed the consequences for anti-Japanese activities. Although both of them relied largely on rumors and hearsay, Pae and his friends saw the Japanese state as vulnerable and did not anticipate the harsh response that would result from their attempts to encourage the Korean students around them to embrace their Korean identities and reject the Japan-centered ideology of their school curriculum. Kan So-mi, on the other hand, was familiar with both the long-standing damage that anti-Japanese activism could wreak, because of her uncle and the marginalization he faced in the wake of his student protest participation, and also because she saw the evidence of and heard rumors about both a teacher and a student at her school being tortured and prevented from attending school, respectively, because of their supposedly seditious thoughts. In light of this, Kan So-mi saw assimilation as the only possible option, not only for herself, but for Koreans in general.

### The Consequences of the 1943 Student Unrest

At Kwangju Western Middle School, once *Mudŭnghoe* members began to mobilize anti-Japanese activism, teachers left school grounds to look for students and attempt to persuade students to attend school in an attempt to offset the school boycott. Colonial police began to track down the leaders of the school boycott.<sup>60</sup> Several days after the school boycott had begun, there was a second series of fights between students. This time, however, Kwangju Western students attended a model airplane exhibition being held at another Korean school in Kwangju, where they started a fight with Japanese students who were also in attendance. With this, police began arresting all involved

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<sup>60</sup> *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undongsa* [The History of the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], 1996, 302.

Korean students, and soon, upon interrogating them, discovered the existence of the *Mudŭnghoe*. Police then began a long-term investigation, and over the course of four months arrested a total of 350 students.<sup>61</sup> Former *Mudŭnghoe* members were extradited to Kwangju from as far away as Manchuria, Seoul and P'yongyang<sup>62</sup> (which in itself testifies to the incredible mobility of students in this period.) While students were initially allowed to go home for the day, police immediately began to conduct a wide-reaching investigation, and began arresting students the following day. Pae says about his arrest:

At the same time [as we were passionate about student activism,] we didn't really think what we were doing was that bad, and we never imagined we'd get arrested. I'm not sure how many people were arrested, but the rumor at the time was that the Cholla Namdo prison was filled up with us—not just us, but our *sonbae* (older students), etc...I think about 300 of us.<sup>63</sup>

Pae and thirteen other students ultimately received lengthy sentences at their hearings. Some of the students arrested on charges of student activism, however, did not survive until the trial, due to the conditions in which they were held. In Pae's words:

We were tortured severely from the beginning. I was also tortured, of course. Among those who were tortured, in there in the holding cells, before prison or the trial even, four of my *sonbae* (older students) died. Four of them. That's how bad it was...I still feel terrible when I think of them. Even now, and I feel terribly guilty when I think of those poor *sonbae*...We didn't think that what we were doing was so big, but when I think of the consequences, I feel terrible.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undongsa* [The history of the Kwangju student independence movement], 1996, 303-305.

<sup>62</sup> Hŭng, Sŏk-nul, *Cheich'a Kwangju hanseng undong ui minjok undongsajok uimi* [The meaning of the second Kwangju student movement for national movement history] 318-319.

<sup>63</sup> Pae Chong-guk, oral interview, March 2008.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

For Pae, then, his participation in activism was informed not only by his commitment to Korean independence and rejection of Japanese colonialism, but also to some degree by a naiveté when it came to anticipating the violence of the response of the Japanese colonial state to Korean student protest of any kind.

### Conclusion

By the end of the colonial period, the public space occupied by students had changed significantly, as had the political climate of colonial Korea. The progression of the 1943 activism reveals just how pronounced the division between students had become, and just how fractured identities, loyalties, and conceptions of the state had become. Examining late colonial-period student activism and its consequences gives us insight into both larger historical changes, and also into how the process of intensified assimilation policies was experienced by Korean students. The sheer oppressiveness and invasiveness of wartime colonial policy meant that students did not have the space meet, discuss, and envision a future Korean nation in the same ways as their predecessors. The discursive field available to students had shrunk dramatically with the crackdown on activist networks, stricter and stricter bans on importing “subversive” literature, and, even more fundamentally, by the official outlawing of a vernacular press by which Koreans could communicate, even in heavily censored ways. Without these outlets, and facing possible conscription into a massive war, students began to foreground much more immediate and concrete protest demands than their predecessors.

In addition, examining student protest in 1943 against that of 1929 and 1930 allows us to see just how effectively the increased assimilation policies of the colonial state had been implemented. For the first time, we find students who identify more

strongly as Japanese than as Korean, and who actively intercede to prevent their fellow students from protesting. At the same time, however, we find examples of students such as Kan So-mi, who was intimately familiar from her own family history with student activism of the colonial state's capacity for violence and for ostracizing those it deemed undesirable. Introducing Kan's perspective allows us to consider some of the long-range effects of sustained colonial violence and oppression on students' sense of identity, especially in contrast to student activists such as Pae, who did not realize the full consequences of their actions. There were certainly students, as we have seen with military conscription practices, who were willing to take advantage of the new opportunities afforded to Koreans with the expansion of the war effort. By 1943, however, for students such as Kan who understood the long-term consequences of Korean independence activism, assimilation seemed to provide the clearest escape from the powerful violence of the colonial state.

## Epilogue

### Public Monuments, Social Memory and the Kwangju Student Movement

On August 15, 1945, Japan's defeat in the Pacific War brought an end to the Japanese colonization of Korea, a process which had formally begun with the "annexation" of Korea to Japan in 1910.<sup>1</sup> From 1945 onward, the meanings and legacies of Japanese rule of the Korean peninsula began to be narrated anew, only to become increasingly solidified over time. In Japan, the post-war era meant not only the loss of Korea and other colonies, but also the establishment of a newly defined nation-state with significantly reduced borders where, very rapidly, the existence of a colonial past became obscured in public discourse, and was replaced instead with claims that Japan was and always had been a "homogenous" nation, rather than a "multi-ethnic empire."<sup>2</sup> The new retellings of Japan's birth as a modern nation with the existence of colonies such as Korea has dramatic consequences for a number of sub-groups within the Japanese islands, such as Japanese-born Koreans who have faced a large number of hurdles on all fronts related to their identity, citizenship, and political rights.<sup>3</sup> In addition, this type of post-war

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<sup>1</sup> Annexation is a translation of the Japanese term *heigō* which was used to naturalize incorporating Korea into the Japanese empire.

<sup>2</sup> For more on this, see Oguma Eiji, *Nihonjin no kyōkai: Okinawa Ainu Taiwan Chōsen shokuminchi shihai kara fukki undō made* [The boundaries of the Japanese ], Tōkyō : Shin'yōsha, 1998, Michael Weiner and John Lie, editors, *Japan's Minorities: the Illusion of Homogeneity*, London; New York: Routledge, 2009, and John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Sonia Ryang, editor, *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin*, London ; New York : Routledge, 2000, 193.



erasure of the colonial period has also meant that the voices of Japanese citizens who were either born and raised in the colonies, or who spent significant time there had nowhere to discuss their experiences. In essence, the absence of a social space in which to tell stories of the colonial past has served as yet another way in which narratives of the colonial period, and its lasting repercussions, were erased from the Japanese present.<sup>4</sup>

This erasure of the colonial past was not only a feature of discourse within the Japanese islands. As historian Andre Schmid notes, English-language works on Japanese history from the Meiji period onward have largely erased the presence of colonial Korea, and treated Japan's imperial past as tangential to the creation and solidification of a modern nation-state.<sup>5</sup>

In South Korea, historical memory in relation to the colonial period has evolved along dramatically different lines. Unlike post-war Japan, in which colonial narratives were silenced, South Korea systematically built a post-liberation narrative of the colonial period as a time of abject repression by Japanese colonizers, in which Koreans were abjectly victimized in ways that posit a uniformity of colonial period experience, one that can and should be repeated and retold. A profound example of this can be found in the South Korean museum erected to honor Yun Pong-il, the Korean nationalist who detonated a bomb which killed or wounded a number of high-ranking Japanese officials in Shanghai in 1932 as a protest against the Japanese colonization of Korea. Near the entrance to the museum, visitors are greeted by a life-size figure of Yun with a large

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<sup>4</sup> Gluck, Carol "Operations of Memory: 'Comfort Women' and the World," in *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*. Gluck talks about, as I've cited elsewhere, the fact that for marginalized narratives to emerge, there must be both the will to speak and the space in which to be heard.

<sup>5</sup> Andre Schmid. "Colonialism and the 'Korea Problem' in the Historiography of Modern Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 59: 4 (November, 2000): 952-954.

opening in the place of his face. Visitors can stand behind the figure and place their own face within the opening, and by implication imagine themselves as a colonial-era Korean, resisting the oppressive Japanese regime.

Once again, as with Japan, this is not a trend which is limited only to discourses within South Korea itself. English-language writings on the colonial period have often overemphasized the uniformity of both colonial oppression, and of Korean resistance towards Japanese rule. For example, in his novel *Lost Names*, Richard Kim tells the story of a family of elite Koreans during the colonial period.<sup>6</sup> While his title is a reference to the legislation in 1938 that legally required Koreans to take Japanese names, Kim presents us with a picture of colonized Korea in which class, gender, and regional divisions among Koreans are a non-issue. Instead, Kim presents us with a number of characters whose status is static throughout the book. His father is an unwaveringly anti-Japanese intellectual who is well-respected by his Korean equals, by his inferiors, such as the farmer who tills his land, and even by members of the Japanese colonial government themselves, who grudgingly (and secretly) admit that colonial rule is unjust. Likewise, within Kim's family, his grandmother is shown as deriving great satisfaction from cooking for and serving food to the men of the house, and as having no needs of her own. Possibly in an attempt to emphasize the experience of "lost names," Kim gives none of the members of the extended Korean family at the center of the book names of their own. This, combined with the broad strokes with which the characters are drawn, reifies several post-liberation myths about the colonial period. Social hierarchies that existed among Koreans themselves (especially, for example, between landowners and peasants,

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<sup>6</sup> Richard E. Kim, *Lost names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 195 .

and between educated and uneducated Koreans) are represented as unproblematic and unquestioned for all involved. Also, Kim presents family dynamics during the colonial period, too, as naturalized and free of tension between grandparents, parents and children, and male and female members of the family.

### Historical Representations of the Kwangju Student Movement

In July 2006, I traveled to Kwangju and Naju to explore how the student protests that began there had been commemorated. I had been to Kwangju multiple times in past stages of my dissertation research, to meet with the archivist at the Kwangju school museum to examine their archival collections and displays, to visit Southern Chōlla Provincial University Library, and to interview former participants in the Kwangju student movement. This time, however, I had different objectives in mind. I planned to not only visit the newly-reopened museum dedicated to the Kwangju student movement, but also visit Naju, where the initial fights between students that sparked the student movement first broke out.

In Naju, several sites from the 1929-1930 student movement have been preserved, all of which have been integrated somewhat seamlessly into the daily lives of the residents there. The childhood home of Pak Ch'un-chaе, the student who threw the first punch on the train in 1929, has been maintained in its original state, and is commemorated with a large plaque describing his role in the student movement. It is extremely large, and consists of multiple wooden buildings and a large garden, highlighting how elite Pak's family had been during the colonial period. It is currently open and unoccupied, and children from the child care center next door happily run in

and out of its front gate. The police station where the first arrested students were taken in 1929 still stands as well, and the entire two-story building, including the former holding cells, has been converted into office space, especially for non-profit organizations. The current main Naju police station is located directly across the street. In July 2001, the Naju Railway Station was closed for train service. The original building was left standing, and was briefly considered by a Korean developer as the site of a theme park in 2003.<sup>7</sup> When I visited in 2006, the train station building had been sitting empty for five years, and peering through the windows, I could see the original benches, one of which was topped by a single, empty soda can.<sup>8</sup>

On the same trip, I visited the commemorative museum at the school in Kwangju where the first protests began, which has constructed a museum to the student protestors on campus grounds. The museum was much the same as I remembered it from two years earlier—it is housed in a two-story building, it is set slightly apart from the rest of the campus, and marked by a large pillar in front that has been erected to commemorate the students who participated in the first protests. Possibly because there are so few symbols that can be called up to evoke the Kwangju student protests, the image of this post-liberation commemorative pillar has become shorthand for the Kwangju student protests, their meanings, and their implications for how the history of the colonial period is understood and remembered in South Korea after liberation.<sup>9</sup> Inside the museum, there re

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<sup>7</sup> *Chosŏn ilbo*, June 21, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> According to subsequent newspaper articles, a memorial museum was ultimately indeed erected there, and held an opening ceremony on July 25, 2008. The article does not include any information about the museum's content, only that the completed museum is two stories high. *Chosŏn ilbo*, July 25, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> A number of books on the Kwangju student protests included the Kwangju school memorial on their covers as shorthand representation of their subject matter. See, for example, *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undongsa* [The History of the Kwangju Student Independence Movement], 1974, and Yi, Ki-hong, and An, Chon-ch'ŏl. *Kwangju haksaeŋ tongnip undong ūn chŏnguk haksaeŋ tongnip undong iŏtta* [The Kwangju

contemporaneous documents related to the Kwangju student movement, objects that evoke the period in which the protests occurred, photographs of student participants, and a display case in which books related to this movement are displayed under glass. (At the time of my visit, almost all the books were written in Korean; only book was written in Japanese.) Interpretations of the Kwangju student protests are kept to a relative minimum, but the displayed items communicated a clear narrative of repression, violence, and heroism by the student protestors. In addition, the museum contains many pictures of post-1945 reunion gatherings of former student protestors, visits by Korean politicians (most notably Kim Dae-Jung), and foreign dignitaries.

In addition, one of the most striking things about the museum is its second half, which commemorates the other thing that this school is famous for—a Japanese colonial period import, baseball. Since the end of the colonial period, this school in Kwangju has produced a large number of professional Korean baseball players, and thus, the school museum is neatly divided in half. Half of the museum contains memorials to the Kwangju students in 1929, and 1943, and the other half is dedicated to post-1945 baseball victories by former Kwangju students, along with baseball trophies, photographs, game-related memorabilia, etc.

The great (and presumably intentional ) irony here is this: as I have attempted to argue in this dissertation, in colonial Korean society, despite clear, unequal power dynamics and the continual renewal and reinforcement of divisions between colonizer and colonized, both Korean and Japanese subjects shared certain types of language during the colonial period. Key concepts such as modernity, public space, education, elite

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Student Independence Movement was a Nationwide Independence Movement] Kwangju, Korea: Kwangju Kwangyŏk-si: Hyangjisa, 1997.

status, and even socialist thought were continually circulated and re-circulated among a diversity of actors with vastly different relations to power, but nonetheless communicated using a number of mutually constituted and reinforced vocabularies. In the post-colonial period, student resistance gets remembered, as we see in the Kwangju museum, as a moment of clear and straight-forward resistance to Japanese domination that elides the ways in which even this resistance was formulated using the Japanese educational skills students had learned in schools, utilizing the structures of the school and the classroom, and articulated in ways that very much resonated with larger debates within colonial society. While the museum seeks (justifiably, in my eyes) to exalt the students' bravery in their resistance to colonial oppression, it flattens out the complexities of students social positions by attempting to present them in isolation from a larger web of colonial social dynamics that very much informed their actions, tactics, and most certainly, the response of Japanese authorities (and Korean by-standers at the time as well.) This said, the representation of post-liberation glory through baseball, then, in juxtaposition with colonial period glory through resistance to Japanese rule, ironically highlights the fact that the world of colonial Korea and the impact of Japanese colonization on Korean lives (not to mention Japanese lives, of course), is not something that lends itself as easily to the type of heroic post-colonial binaries the Kwangju student museum (and many others like it) employ.

In addition to the museum located at the school, there is a second museum dedicated to commemorating Kwangju student activism during the colonial period. This museum moved locations in 2005, citing the need for more space and a newer building. In its newest incarnation, it presents quotations from students and contemporaneous

photographs depicting the protests, along with an interactive, light-up map of the students' first protest route, and looping footage from a 1954 Korean film about the 1929 and 1930 Kwangju student movement. Outside the museum, a large monument has been erected to commemorate colonial-era Kwangju student activism. The pathway to the monument contains exactly 1,103 steps, to commemorate the fact that the first public student protest occurred in Kwangju on November 3, 1929. This type of construction also implicitly links celebration of colonial-period student protestors to the commemorations within the city of Kwangju to a major pro-democracy uprising that occurred there in 1980. Kwangju City Hall was reconstructed into two buildings, one five stories, and one eighteen stories, to commemorate the fact that the 1980 uprising began on May 18th. In this way, these two sites work together to reinforce conceptions of the city of Kwangju as a city of resistance.<sup>10</sup> At the top of the 1,103 stairs is a large bronze statue to the 1929 and 1930 student protesters. This statue is acutely abstract and a-historical in its representation, and consists of male figures with identical features wrapped in toga-like clothing and performing a type of ritualistic dance to freedom. Here, student protesters are presented as male, as uniform, and as transcending the boundaries of time and space to participate in a type of universal struggle against totalitarianism.

As time has passed, the preservation of actual historical sites related to the Kwangju student protest and the diverse voices incorporated therein, has been gradually replaced with an ever-more-seamless representation of an archetypal Korean student

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<sup>10</sup> A number of histories, memoirs, and other works have been dedicated to the 1980 Kwangju Uprisings. For example, see Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jae Eui, editors, *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea's Tiananmen*, Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2000. Donald N. Clark, editor, *The Kwangju Uprising: Shadows over the Regime in South Korea*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1988. Linda S. Lewis, *Laying Claim to the Memory of May: A Look Back at the 1980 Kwangju Uprising*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, University of Hawai'i, 2002, and Lee Jae-eui, *Kwangju Diary: Beyond Death, Beyond the Darkness of the Age*, Los Angeles, Calif. : UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 1999.

protester who is unfailingly brave, nationalistic, and always gendered male. In this dissertation, I have aimed to use students' words and voices, along with the voices of Japanese residents and colonial officials, to capture some of the diversity and complexity of student protest during the colonial period. I have carefully analyzed how students who protested during the colonial period articulated their own identities, and envisioned their own diverse and often fluid versions of a post-colonial Korean nation. In *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, historian Prasenjit Duara argues that the entity of the nation-state, through crafting and reinforcing historical narratives that naturalize its existence, inevitably suppresses historical details which do not fit neatly within its framework.<sup>11</sup> Duara asserts that as historians, it is crucial that we stage an intervention, one that effectively "rescues" history from the nation, and instead allows more complex histories to be told. Part of my goal in this dissertation has been to bring out the diversity of colonial-period student protesters' visions for a utopic future Korean nation, even as the nation that ultimately emerged has retro-actively represented these visions in its own image.

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<sup>11</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1995, 14.



## Appendix

### Oral Interviews, Place and Date

Kan So-mi	Relative of 1929 Kwangju student protest participant. Interviewed in 2006 and 2007 in Osaka, Japan. Originally interviewed with Komagome Takeshi, et. al., as part of an oral interview project. (This interview transcript has not been published.) Subsequently interviewed with Hiura Satoko, a member of the interview project, the following year.
Kuk Söng-jun	1929 Kwangju student protest participant. Interviewed March 7, 2008, Tamyang, South Korea.
Pae Chong-guk	1943 Kwangju student protest participant. Interviewed March 3 and 4, 2008, Seoul, South Korea.

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