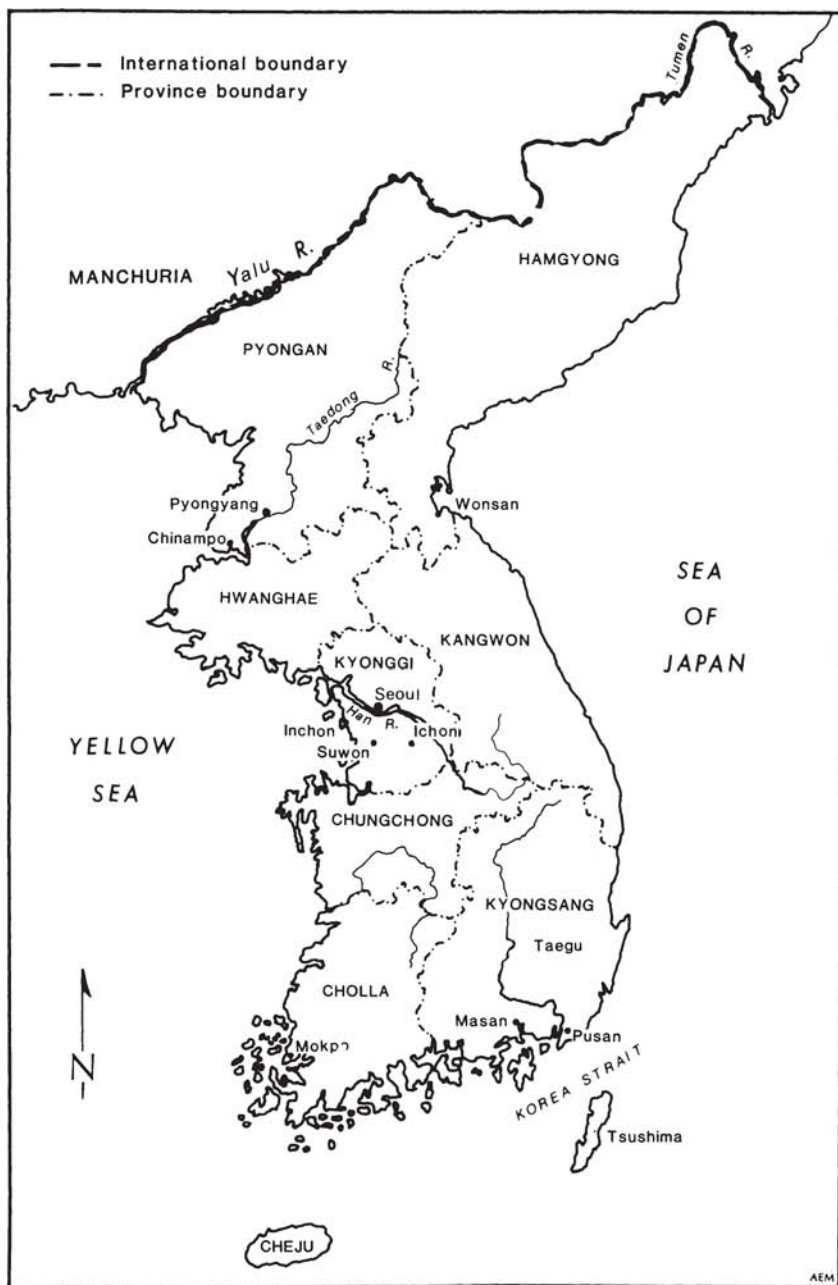


INTRODUCTION

Mary Paik Lee was born in Korea in 1905 and was baptized by an American Presbyterian missionary. When she was five years old, she emigrated with her family to Hawaii; a year and a half later, they moved to California. Her national origins, her religion, her minority status in the United States, and her gender have together defined her identity. A brief review of Korea's long tradition of fending off invaders, how it became a pawn in the struggle among imperialist powers, how Christianity served as a counterweight to Japanese colonialism, and how the lives of Korean women were changed by Christianity and the anti-Japanese struggle will elucidate why religion and politics — along with efforts to earn a living — absorbed so many Korean immigrants in the United States. This was as true of female immigrants as it was of male, because Korean women who settled in America made crucial contributions not only to the survival of their families but also to the nationalist struggle. Such responsibilities elevated their position in the immigrant community and transformed their consciousness. By discussing the major social and political forces that affected the lives of Korean immigrants in the early decades of this century, I hope to place Mary Paik Lee's life history in its global context.

Koreans, almost without exception, are extremely proud of their long history, which they claim dates back four millennia to a mythical ruler. The country's peninsular setting has shaped this history. Contiguous to the northeastern corner of China and surrounded by Russia, China, and Japan, Korea has served historically as a conduit for people, artifacts, and ideas, but it maintained ongoing intercourse with only one nation, China, until the nineteenth century. Its strategic location, however, has repeatedly subjected Korea to invasion by its neighbors. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a Japanese feudal lord, invaded the country in 1592 with 150,000 men — an action that caused China to send troops to the peninsula



Korea at the beginning of the twentieth century.

to maintain its suzerainty there. After two years of fighting, both sides withdrew, but when a peace settlement was not reached by 1597, Japanese and Chinese troops fought again on Korean soil, devastating much of the south. A quarter century later, invading Manchu armies ravaged northwestern Korea. In response to these fearsome events, Korea sealed itself off from the outside world for the next two and a half centuries, which led Westerners to dub it the Hermit Kingdom.

Revolts have also disrupted life within the country itself. The largest revolt was the Tonghak Rebellion of the early 1890s. *Tonghak* (Eastern learning) was a syncretist religion that first appeared in the 1860s. Even though the government had captured and executed its founder in 1864, the sect expanded greatly in the late 1880s, when poverty became widespread and disgruntled farmers joined its ranks. When the first uprising occurred in 1892, the government tried to suppress it, but that only caused the revolt to spread like wildfire. Unable to put down the rebellion with his own troops, King Kojong appealed to the Chinese for help in 1894. By so doing, he unwittingly opened the door to forces that ultimately dismembered his kingdom.

The chain of events that set modern Korean history on its tragic course began some two decades before the Tonghak Rebellion. For centuries, despite repeated invasions, Korea had managed to fend off complete domination by foreign powers. Western ships began to appear in Korean waters in the 1860s, but Korean shore batteries drove off seven French warships in 1866, five American vessels in 1871, and one Japanese ship in 1875. The following year, however, the Japanese returned to demand reparations; the result was the Treaty of Kanghwa (1876), Korea's first modern treaty with a foreign nation. Modeled after the documents that Western nations had imposed on China and Japan, the Treaty of Kanghwa required Korea to open, in addition to Pusan in the south (where Korean and Japanese merchants had traded with each other sporadically since the fifteenth century), two more ports to foreign trade. These were Chemulpo (Inchon) on the west coast and Wonsan on the east coast. The treaty also allowed Japan to survey the Korean coast and granted Japanese citizens extraterritoriality, vir-

tual monopolistic control of the import-export trade in Korea, and the right to lend money and to open pawn shops. Most important, to undermine traditional Chinese suzerainty, the Japanese insisted that Korea declare itself an independent state. Japan established a permanent diplomatic mission in Korea in 1880, and thereafter its sway over the peninsula increased.

The United States was the second nation to secure a treaty with Korea in 1882, with the connivance and aid of Li Hung-chang, governor-general of the Chinese province of Chihli and for decades the key figure in Chinese diplomacy. Li, concerned with the decline of Chinese control over Korea, urged it to sign a treaty with the United States in order to counter growing Japanese influence. Next came treaties with Great Britain and Germany (1883), Russia and Italy (1884), and France (1886). Each gave the signatory power the right to trade and to import goods into Korea at low tariff rates, to operate under conditions of extraterritoriality, and to enjoy most-favored-nation status. Upon the heels of the treaties came merchants, missionaries, and diplomats, all of whom not only vied with one another for power and influence but also quickly became involved in domestic Korean politics.

As was the case in China and Japan, the entry of foreigners and the concessions they wrested led to intense factional struggles within Korea's ruling class. King Kojong, who had ascended the throne in 1864 at the tender age of twelve and who ruled until he was forced to abdicate in 1907, had to contend with both his father, the former regent, who was called the *Taewongun* (Prince of the Great Court), and his own wife, the clever and willful Queen Min, each of whom headed a faction. Throughout his reign, Kojong tried to balance the contending forces around him, but he did not always succeed.

Besides scheming royal relatives and courtiers, Kojong also had to deal with members of the Independence Club — reform-minded politicians who favored the Japanese path to modernity. The group attempted a coup on the evening of December 4, 1884, with the goal of removing the pro-Chinese faction of Queen Min. Several high-ranking officials were killed, but Horace N. Allen, an American medical missionary summoned to the scene, saved the

life of Min Yong-ik, the queen's cousin and the most influential member of her clique. The conspirators placed the royal couple under Japanese "protective custody" and proclaimed a new government, but it fell within three days, when Yuan Shih-kai, the Chinese resident-general in Korea, stormed the royal palace with 1,500 Chinese troops and restored Kojong and his ministers to power. Two of the plotters died, and the rest escaped to Japan. This incident – called the "Kapsin Coup" by Korean historians and the "émeute of 1884" by Western writers – was settled by two treaties signed in 1885. The Treaty of Seoul required Korea to pay an indemnity and other reparations to Japan for the loss of Japanese lives and property. The Treaty of Tianjin required China and Japan to withdraw their soldiers from the peninsula, to refrain from supporting the Korean army, and to give each other prior notice should either country deem it necessary to send troops to Korea in the future. During the next few years, the Chinese and Queen Min's faction were paramount in palace politics.

The outbreak of the Tonghak Rebellion gave China and Japan a pretext to renew their contest for the control of Korea. In response to King Kojong's appeal for help in 1894, China eagerly sent troops to the peninsula. Japan reacted by sending an even larger contingent, even though Korea had not requested its aid. At midnight on July 23, 1894, Japanese soldiers broke into the palace, took King Kojong hostage, and demanded that he recall his father to power. Open hostilities broke out between Chinese and Japanese troops stationed on Korean soil two days later, marking the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War. The Japanese swiftly routed the Chinese, and while the war was still in progress, they forced Korea to sign agreements that opened all southern Korean ports to them and gave them many other rights. Dismayed by the unexpected turn of events, Tonghak leaders led hundreds of thousands of farmers in yet another uprising, this time against the Japanese, but the latter soon overpowered them. Japanese soldiers massacred Tonghak rebels everywhere. They also defeated the remaining Chinese forces, driving them completely out of Korea.

The war ended in April 1895 with the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which awarded to Japan the Liaodong peninsula and Weihaiwei on

the Shandong peninsula (both on the Chinese mainland) and the island of Taiwan. Russia, France, and Germany, however, jointly protested the terms of the settlement and forced Japan to relinquish the Liaodong peninsula. The three nations then proceeded to acquire for themselves what they had denied to Japan: Russia leased Port Arthur and Dairen at the tip of the Liaodong peninsula in 1897; Germany moved into Shandong the same year; and France obtained rights in Henan in 1896 and leased Guangzhouwan along the South China coast in 1899. Cheated out of the fruits of its victory, Japan smoldered with resentment.

Meanwhile, Japan tightened its control over hapless Korea by promulgating new laws, changing the administrative and judicial systems, abolishing the old Korean class structure, building railroads and telegraph lines, and introducing capitalist features into the Korean economy. Viewing Queen Min as the chief obstacle to their plans, they instigated a clash between some soldiers and the palace guards to create a cover under which they forced their way into the royal chambers on the night of October 8, 1895. They wounded the queen, poured kerosene on her, and set her afire. The king escaped, disguised as a female servant. The heavy-handed actions of the Japanese led to armed uprisings all over the country.

Then, in February 1896, the Russians entered the fray. They spirited King Kojong to the Russian legation and offered him sanctuary, which he gladly accepted. He lived in the Russian legation for more than a year. When he felt sufficiently safe to leave, he returned, not to the palace where he had lived formerly, but to another one near the compounds of the foreign diplomatic corps. During this period of turmoil, several Americans whom he trusted took turns staying overnight with him and bringing him food to make sure he would not be poisoned. While under the protection of the Russians, he issued decrees that disbanded the pro-Japanese government and installed a pro-Russian one in its place. Following Russian advice, he also changed his own title from “king” to “emperor” in 1897, in order to assert his equality with the rulers of China and Japan, who, as the Russians pointed out, were emperors and not kings.

In the midst of these power struggles, foreigners scrambled to gain numerous concessions to exploit Korea's natural resources; to build roads, railroads, telegraph lines, power plants, and oil storage facilities; and to establish banks and to process loans. When some of the investments did not prove particularly lucrative to their American and European investors, the Japanese bought them up, as part of their efforts to exercise greater political and economic control over Korea. Some former members of the Independence Club, concerned over the exploitation of their country, led mass rallies to demand that the natural resources be returned to Korean control. But instead of listening to them, the government arrested them—imprisoning some and deporting others—and banned their organization.

Events in China soon brought Russian-Japanese rivalry to a head in Northeast Asia. In 1900, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, France, Austria, Italy, the United States, and Japan jointly sent forces to China to quell the Boxer Rebellion. Using this expedition as a pretext, the Russians occupied Manchuria, from whence they refused to withdraw after the troubles in China proper were over. By 1903, they had moved into northern Korea, buying up land, cutting timber, and building roads. Japan, meanwhile, had concluded an alliance with Great Britain the year before. Bolstered by this treaty, the Japanese demanded that the Russians withdraw from Manchuria. When the latter did not comply, Japanese warships struck the Russian fleet at Port Arthur without warning in February 1904.

This was the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War. Though Korea immediately declared its neutrality, Japanese troops landed at Inchon and marched to Seoul. They forced Emperor Kojong to let them traverse Korean territory unhindered. As Japan won one victory after another, it expropriated all the concessions Russia had gained in Korea. The important city of Mukden in Manchuria fell to Japanese forces in March 1905, while the Russian Baltic fleet (which had to sail around the Cape of Good Hope because the British, as allies of the Japanese, denied the ships passage through the Suez Canal) was sunk by the Japanese navy virtually upon its arrival in the Korea Strait. The war ended in July 1905

with the Treaty of Portsmouth. U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, greatly impressed by Japan's new military prowess, played a broker's role during the peace negotiations. Japan took over all the Russian interests in Manchuria; Russia also ceded the southern half of Sakhalin island to the victor. To ensure that the other powers would not interfere this time, Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Taro reached an understanding with U.S. Secretary of War William Howard Taft, whereby the United States agreed to honor Japan's hegemony in the Korean peninsula in return for Japan's noninterference in American interests in the Philippines — a Spanish colony that the United States had acquired at the close of the Spanish-American War a few years earlier.

To signal to the world its newly won preeminence in Korea, Japan declared a protectorate over the country, though Korea remained technically independent and Kojong continued to sit on his throne. But Ito Hirobumi, the Japanese resident-general in Korea, became the country's *de facto* ruler. Additional changes were made in the legal and monetary systems to facilitate Japanese land purchases and Japanese import-export trade. For the first time, Japanese began to settle in Korea in large numbers. Japan's farmers arrived as agricultural colonists; its businessmen bought up more firms, mines, and timberland; its fishermen laid claim to more and more fishing grounds; and its investors won concessions to build public works. The new administration also disbanded the Korean army, restricted the number of weapons — including kitchen knives — that Koreans could possess, and limited the size of public gatherings. When Emperor Kojong sent three emissaries in 1907 to the Second International Peace Conference at The Hague to plead Korea's cause, the Japanese, with the aid of pro-Japanese members of the Korean cabinet, forced him to abdicate and placed his son on the throne.

Thereafter, the Japanese took over every aspect of internal administration. In 1910, they gave up all pretense and annexed Korea, which remained a Japanese colony until 1945. In the post-1910 period, countless Koreans lost their landholdings, lived in constant fear of the Japanese secret police, and seethed with repressed anger and resentment against their alien overlords. To

undermine Korean culture and to suppress nationalism, Japan sent thousands of Japanese to replace Korean teachers and made the Japanese language the medium of instruction in Korean schools. The rules against public gatherings were further tightened so that assemblies of more than three persons became illegal. The Japanese also closed down newspapers and passed laws to control Buddhist temples and Christian churches, lest they become centers of resistance.

Such draconian measures notwithstanding, Koreans did resist, both inside and outside of their colonized country. After forty centuries of sovereignty, they would not accept their subjugation without protest. A number of individuals were so fired with hatred against their oppressors that they took drastic steps. In March 1908, in San Francisco, Chang In-hwan assassinated Durham W. Stevens, an American whom the Japanese had foisted on the Korean government as an advisor in diplomatic affairs and who had publicly stated that he thought Japanese rule was for the Koreans' own good. In October of the same year, in Seoul, Yi Chae-myung, who had worked in Hawaii and California before returning to his native land in 1906, stabbed and seriously wounded the pro-Japanese Korean prime minister, Yi Wan-yong. The following year, in Harbin, Manchuria, An Chung-gun assassinated Resident-General Ito Hirobumi. All three assailants have since been honored as Korean national heroes.

Far more significant than these acts of violence by individuals was the March First (1919) Movement, also called the *Samil* ("three-one," for the month and day it began) or the *Mansei* (ten thousand years, i.e., "long live") Uprising. At the end of World War I, Koreans, like people from other subjugated nations, looked to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson for deliverance. One of Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points" had concerned the reestablishment of independent nations in colonized lands. Expatriate Koreans sent delegates to the Paris Peace Conference to argue Korea's case, but their petition was rebuffed because Japan, which had fought on the side of the Allies, strenuously objected to any consideration of the Korean question. (Irish and Indian nationalists were similarly disappointed, because the United States also re-

fused to interfere with how Great Britain, its chief ally during the war, chose to deal with its colonies.) Apparently Wilson intended national self-determination only for the former colonies of the defeated Austro-Hungarian and German empires. Before Wilson's stance became clear, however, Koreans secretly planned massive, nonviolent demonstrations to call the world's attention to their plight. The death of former Emperor Kojong in January 1919 gave them the occasion they needed.

Although not all Koreans loved Kojong, whom many blamed for the loss of their country's independence, he nevertheless had remained the most nostalgic symbol of Korean national identity. It was expected that millions would pour into Seoul to pay him last respects. The date for his funeral was set for March 3, 1919. Planners of the national demonstration decided to proclaim Korea's independence on March 1. Thirty-three individuals from all walks of life, sixteen (some accounts say fifteen) of them Christians, signed a document modeled after the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The organizers then printed thousands of copies of this declaration and sewed thousands of (banned) Korean flags, which couriers distributed to towns and villages throughout the country. Christian leaders—such as the Reverend Hyun Soon, national superintendent of Methodist Sunday Schools in Korea—under cover of their religious responsibilities, traveled far and wide to organize the event. Members of the *Chondogyo* (the name the Tonghaks had given their sect after their 1894 rebellion), who were deeply entrenched in the countryside, likewise played a crucial role in spreading the word and coordinating plans. The *Chondogyo* also bore the major financial burden for the undertaking. All the planning took place under such utter secrecy that the Japanese police, vigilant though they were, got no wind of it.

On the fateful day, masses of people streaming into Seoul for Kojong's funeral gathered at Pagoda Park in front of one of the royal palaces. As a young man began to read the declaration of independence, the crowds thundered: "*Mansei! Mansei!*" ("Long live Korea! Long live Korea!") The Japanese police, totally unprepared, evidenced no coordinated reaction. March 2 was a Sunday. The Christians insisted that the sabbath be observed, so no dem-

onstrations took place. March 3 was devoted to Kojong's funeral. But on March 4 large groups of people, including many schoolboys and girls, started marching through the streets again. This time, the police were ready. They fired into the crowds, while mounted marines summoned to the scene charged into the throng, standing in their stirrups as they swung their sabers right and left, felling all those in their path. Such harsh reaction galvanized Koreans everywhere. By April, an estimated one million people — five percent of the country's total population — became involved in the movement.

During March and April, demonstrators participated in more than eight hundred disturbances in over six hundred localities, during which they attacked and damaged forty-seven township offices, three military police stations, twenty-eight regular police stations, and seventy-one other public buildings, including post offices, schools, and customs houses. The Japanese retaliated with brutality and seemed to single out Korean Christians for punishment. In one village, the Japanese authorities told Christians to gather in their church, and as soon as they had all entered, the police bolted shut the doors and set the building on fire. They shot dead all those who tried to rush out. Everyone who remained inside the church was consumed by the flames. In the cities, the police and the military searched neighborhoods, rounded up people, and killed many on sight. Even conservative Japanese sources have admitted that several thousand Koreans perished. Two hundred Japanese also died. Almost 20,000 persons, including some 500 women, were arrested. Some 10,000 — 186 women among them — were prosecuted. The captors inflicted incredible torture on their prisoners, kicking and beating men and women, old and young alike, occasionally tearing limbs from their sockets, slicing flesh with knives, jabbing all parts of the body with bayonets, and suspending people by their thumbs. Thousands who survived the torture were summarily executed. What outraged Koreans most of all was that women captives were often stripped and raped. In this manner, what began as a peaceful, nonviolent demonstration was crushed.

Though the movement failed, the fire of nationalism was not

extinguished. It burned on, ever more fiercely. Korean expatriates formed a provisional government-in-exile in Shanghai at the end of April 1919 to carry on the struggle. Meanwhile, the Japanese realized that physical coercion was not the most effective means to govern. Under the glare of international criticism, Japanese Premier Hara Kei installed a new governor-general, Saito Makoto, in Korea and admitted that the Japanese police had abused its powers. The new colonial administration was instructed to use more cultural forms of domination.

The fact that Christians played such a prominent role in the March First Movement was not a coincidence, because in Korea the spread of Christianity converged with the emergence of modern nationalism. Not only did missionary schools introduce the idea of democracy, but since one of Korea's *Asian* neighbors, Japan, rather than a European power, became its colonizer, Koreans did not equate Christianity with Western imperialism — a connection that hindered missionary efforts in other lands. Despite the fact that the Protestant missions, as institutions, maintained neutrality vis-à-vis the Japanese colonial administration, during the harshest years of Japanese rule individual American missionaries were among the few foreigners who spoke out against the regime. They also harbored anti-Japanese activists and on occasion even protected the king. When the Japanese authorities singled out Christians for retribution during the March First Movement, some missionaries felt compelled to send eyewitness reports to their church headquarters in the United States to tell the world about the horrors they had seen. (They managed to evade Japanese censorship by using the diplomatic pouch.) Some of their reports were read into the U.S. *Congressional Record*.

American missionaries were in every part of Korea to witness the events of 1919. This was because, compared with the Catholic priests who preceded them, as well as with missionaries elsewhere, the Protestant proselytizers who entered Korea from 1884 onward were enormously successful in their efforts — so much so that, for a century now, Korea has been called the best mission field in Asia and perhaps even in the world. But Korea had not always been hospitable to Christianity. Catholicism came to Korea via China.

The first Korean to become a Catholic was the son of a *yang-ban* (aristocrat). He was baptized in 1783 while in China on a tributary mission. Upon his return, he converted several hundred people, but they, along with a Chinese Catholic missionary who had entered Korea in 1795, were executed by government officials in 1801. French priests began slipping into the country in the 1830s, but some of them also were executed. The largest number of Catholics were persecuted in 1839 and 1866. An estimated two thousand believers perished during the latter year.

In contrast to the sorry fate of the French priests and their Korean followers, American Protestant missionaries had a relatively easy time. The Methodists were the first denomination to consider opening a mission in Korea, but before they could send anyone, Horace N. Allen, a Presbyterian and a medical doctor, entered the country in 1884. Allen had first gone to China, but, unable to get along with his peers there, he had requested a transfer to Korea. Allen secured entry not as a missionary but as physician to the American legation, which had been established in Seoul in 1883. By an unexpected turn of events three months after his arrival, Allen gained the confidence of King Kojong and Queen Min when he saved the life of Min Yong-ik. In gratitude, King Kojong conferred a royal title on Allen, which allowed him to visit the palace without prior summons—a privilege accorded only the most important courtiers—while Queen Min showered lavish gifts upon Mrs. Allen. By February 1885 Allen had opened a hospital under His Majesty's patronage, and Koreans, as well as members of the various foreign embassies, flocked there for medical treatment.

Two months later, Horace G. Underwood joined Allen as the second Presbyterian missionary in Korea. On the same boat that brought Underwood were the Methodist missionaries Reverend and Mrs. Henry G. Appenzeller. Next came Methodists William F. Scranton, M.D., his wife, and his mother, Mary F. Scranton—the latter was the first woman appointed by the Women's Missionary Society to serve in Korea. Another medical missionary, John W. Heron, M.D., and his wife arrived in June. After Presbyterians and Methodists "opened" Korea, Baptists and other denominations

soon sent representatives. In the 1890s, missionaries supported by British, Australian, and Canadian churches also appeared, but Americans continued to dominate until Korean Christians took over all of their own churches.

Since the prohibition against Christian proselytization was still in effect in the mid-1880s, the first missionaries could not openly preach the gospel, having to work, instead, as doctors and teachers. From the beginning, the Methodists and the Presbyterians competed with each other for influence. The Methodists set up the first schools, while the Presbyterians focused on providing medical services. With King Kojong's approval, Appenzeller established the Paechae Haktang, a Methodist school for boys, while the older Mrs. Scranton opened the Ewha Haktang, a Methodist school for girls. The Presbyterians, meanwhile, brought the first women medical personnel to the country, in the belief that a nurse or woman doctor might gain access to Queen Min, whose patronage would help them reach out to Korean women. Annie Ellers, a nurse, arrived in July 1886 and established such good rapport with Her Majesty that the latter began summoning her to the palace even when she did not require medical attention. Then, in 1888, Lillias Horton, M.D., came as the first woman doctor. Within the year, she married Horace G. Underwood.

The question of whether they should preach openly became a point of contention among the pioneer missionaries. Allen was opposed to evangelizing (except indirectly), whereas Underwood, who had no profession other than the ministry, argued that preaching the gospel and winning converts, rather than healing people or teaching them modern academic subjects, should be their main activities. Despite the disagreements among themselves, the Protestants made considerable headway in carrying out their mission. Clearly, royal favor helped. Quite apart from the useful services they provided, King Kojong had his own reasons not to hinder their efforts. To break free from Chinese control and to counter the growing Japanese influence, he repeatedly requested American advisors, but the U.S. State Department never sent any. So Kojong began to rely on the American missionaries in

Korea for informal advice, even on issues quite unrelated to their own expertise.

Other factors also account for the Protestant success in Korea. Church historians tend to credit the approach used by the missionaries themselves—their zeal, the “purity” of the gospel they preached, and their tireless travels to spread the Word. Such writers also claim that adoption of the Nevius Plan, developed by John N. Nevius, a missionary in China—which stressed self-support, self-government, and self-propagation in the churches and missions so established, as well as systematic Bible study—was responsible for the early achievements. No doubt, “indigenizing” their efforts was most helpful, for the Koreans could more easily identify with and cherish institutions that “belonged” to them. The Nevius Plan, however, was also used in China and Japan, but without the same results. Conditions peculiar to Korea must therefore be given considerable weight. These include the simultaneous growth of Christianity and Japanese imperialism in Korea (as discussed above), the simplicity of the Korean alphabet, and the impact of conversion to Christianity on the status of Korean women.

The first missionaries decided to translate and print the Bible in *hangul*, a script that King Sejong (reign 1418–50) had tried to propagate in the fifteenth century, but which was despised by the *yangban*. This proved to be a most fortuitous choice. *Hangul*, one of the world’s simplest systems of writing, can be learned speedily, and since translations of the Scriptures were among the first written materials to be distributed widely among the common people, studying the Bible became synonymous with acquiring literacy—a skill that hitherto only the *yangban* and the *chungin* (middle people—professionals such as scribes, astrologers, and herbalists) had possessed. Learning the Scriptures thus gave the common people a privilege they had never enjoyed before.

Christian teachings appealed particularly to Korean women, who, to this day, have remained the most stalwart members of churches, both within their country and abroad. Some scholars have argued that Korean women found Christianity emotionally

appealing because it resonated with certain features of indigenous shamanistic beliefs and practices. But a social factor was also at work: becoming Christians gave female converts a measure of freedom they had never known, and this, I think, helps to account for the fervor of female converts who, in turn, influenced their husbands and children.

During the Yi dynasty (1392–1910) Korean women led extremely secluded lives. By the late seventeenth century, the rulers had fully incorporated Confucian precepts into both their statecraft and the organization of society. Confucianism was most succinctly expressed in five sets of ideal social relationships, four of which were hierarchical: subjects, sons, younger brothers, and wives were to obey and serve their emperor, fathers, older brothers, and husbands, respectively, while the latter were to give the former benevolent protection. Only the fifth relationship – that between male peers – contained any hint of egalitarianism: men of the same age and socioeconomic standing could be affectionate and comradely towards one another.

The family and society at large were structured according to patrilineal principles. Though females were included in genealogies, only the barest information about them was written down. From birth, girls were considered outsiders, reared only to be given away in marriage. Married women kept their own names, but they were cut off from contact with their natal families, having become members of their husbands' lineages. Women could not inherit property, while widows were forbidden to remarry. The unequal value accorded men and women was expressed in the saying: *namjon; yobi* (men are honored; women are abased).

The primary duties of married women were to serve their mothers-in-law and to bear sons for their husbands. Women who bore only daughters might as well have been childless – they had no social standing whatsoever. Men whose first wives produced no male heirs took concubines; if the latter also failed to give birth to boys, the families resorted to adopting sons, because only men were allowed to perform the rituals of ancestor worship. The filial daughter, the chaste woman, the obedient wife, and the devoted mother were the models of feminine virtue.

Even architectural design reflected the subordinate status of women. The ideal Korean house contained two wings shaped like an L: the outer wing was reserved for men and the inner one for women. Poor peasants who lived in tiny thatched huts nevertheless still kept an *anbang* (inner room) for their women. Men continued to sleep in the male quarters after they were married, visiting their wives only in the dark of night, and, in some cases, only with their parents' permission.

Women were not allowed outdoors in the daytime: they could travel outside their gates, with heavy veils, only after the evening bell had tolled, signifying the beginning of a curfew for men. Slaves and outcastes who did housekeeping work such as washing clothes by the river or by the village well, were the only women who could show their faces in public. Female shamans, known as *mudang*, who performed both divination and healing, and professional female entertainers, called *kisaeng*, also had greater freedom of movement, though the status of both was very low indeed. Paradoxically, *kisaeng* were the only women allowed some education, apart from a handful of *yangban* women taught by private tutors within the confines of their homes. Because *kisaeng* had to be witty and accomplished in order to amuse men, they learned to sing, to play musical instruments, and to compose and recite poetry and the classics.

Recent scholarship has shown that the status of Korean women had not always been so abject. Unlike the situation during the middle and late Yi dynasty, during the Silla (688–935), Koryo (935–1392), and early Yi dynasties women could inherit property — which was equally divided among all the children, regardless of sex, upon a father's death — could participate in ancestor worship, and could continue to relate to their natal families. Before the mid-seventeenth century, male adoption was rare. Widows could remarry, because the patrilineage was not then the basic unit of society. Therefore, what has been called the “traditional” status of Korean women was, in fact, a cultural borrowing, and a relatively late one at that.

War and the coming of missionaries greatly affected the lives of Korean women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth cen-

turies. Invading armies, wherever they march in the world, have always abused women. The armies in Korea were no exception. Korean women who were raped — or worse, gang-raped — usually committed suicide. But the presence of would-be conquerors also allowed women to take part in resistance movements: they hid men with prices on their heads, acted as secret couriers, and succored their own troops by offering them food, washing and mending their clothes, making their sandals, and tending the injured and the sick. It can be argued that, during such periods, Korean women fleetingly entered the public realm.

The changes introduced by the Protestant missionaries had an even more profound impact. Women missionaries and wives of male missionaries made the first efforts to educate and convert Korean women — not so much for the sake of liberating them, but because they thought women held the key to the conversion of Korean families. The women missionaries conducted Bible classes in their own homes, which more and more Korean women began to visit as time passed. The first three female converts were baptized in 1888. Because they had to overcome so many obstacles before they could adopt Christianity — a religion that directly challenged some of the fundamental tenets of Confucianism — those women who became Christians were ardent believers.

The women missionaries also provided new role models for their female converts, some of whom became “Bible women,” who not only visited their neighbors but also on occasion traveled outside of their hometowns or villages to proselytize the new faith — a hitherto unheard-of activity for Korean women. Many of the Bible women were widows from lower-class families who welcomed the wages they earned, meager though they were. Perhaps even more important, widows, who were accorded no rights whatsoever in Yi dynasty society, found Christianity appealing because it gave them a place in the new community of believers. Working within the church allowed formerly secluded women to learn to read, to get out of their household prisons, to organize themselves for good works, to travel in the cause of evangelism, and to become valued public persons.

The missionary schools produced the first women professionals

and leaders in twentieth-century Korea. This was especially true of girls educated at Ewha Haktang. Esther Pak (née Kim Chom-dong), a graduate of Ewha, was the first Korean woman to obtain an M.D. (in 1900) from an American medical school. Upon returning to her native land, she worked tirelessly for eleven years before dying at age thirty-three. Helen Kim, another graduate of Ewha, earned a Ph.D. from Columbia University—the first Korean woman to receive a Ph.D. anywhere—and became the first Korean president of Ewha Woman's University (which grew out of the girls' school). Louise Yim, a fighter for Korean independence, and Induk Pakk, an indefatigable “traveling secretary” for the World Student Christian Movement, were also graduates of Ewha. These four were but the most illustrious among many modern Korean Christian women leaders. According to Mary Paik Lee, her paternal grandmother, Sin Duk Bok, also dedicated her life to educating women after she had become a Christian.

The American presence also had an unintended consequence: Korean emigration to the Western hemisphere. By the turn of the century, several hundred thousand Koreans lived abroad, the majority of them on the Asian mainland—in the maritime provinces of Russia, in Manchuria, and in China proper, south of the Great Wall. These people had sought no government approval for their departure, having simply drifted across the border and settled wherever they found means of livelihood. In addition, a small number of Koreans had gone to Japan as students and workers. Then, between December 1902 and May 1905, more than 7,000 were recruited to work in the sugar plantations of Hawaii, while about 1,000 were spirited out of Korea in May 1905 to labor in the henequen plantations of Mexico.

The emigrants to Hawaii were the first Koreans whose departure was officially sanctioned. As in so many other developments in this period of Korean history, Horace N. Allen had a hand in this endeavor. Unable to get along with his fellow missionaries, Allen had resigned from the Presbyterian Mission in 1887. For the next two years, he served the Korean government as its foreign secretary in the Korean Legation in Washington, D.C. Finding diplomatic work to his liking, he aspired to become the American

minister in Seoul, but he realized that being an employee of the Korean government hindered his chances of being chosen. So he left King Kojong's service in 1889, reenlisted as a missionary, and returned to Korea, where he served in Pusan and Inchon for a year.

When he received an appointment as secretary of the United States Legation in Seoul, he resigned once again from the Presbyterian Mission in 1890. Allen remained legation secretary for seven years, all the while acting as a conduit between the American and Korean governments, as well as between American private citizens and Korean authorities. During this period, he successfully obtained several lucrative concessions, including the Unsan gold mines—the most productive mines ever worked in Korea—and various franchises for his friends. Finally, in 1897, Allen secured the post he had most desired, and he served as American minister to Korea for the next eight years.

While in this post, Allen visited the United States in 1902. On his way back to Korea, he stopped in Honolulu, where he met with representatives of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HSPA) at their request. These men were interested in recruiting Koreans because, by then, Japanese workers, who comprised two-thirds of the total plantation labor force in the islands, had become militant and were engaging in work stoppages and spontaneous strikes. The planters wanted to import other ethnic groups to offset what they called the Japanese “labor monopoly.” Allen agreed to help the HSPA, although he arranged to communicate with them thereafter only through intermediaries, in order not to compromise his official status.

One reason Allen was willing to play a clandestine role in the undertaking was that he thought doing so might help him repay a favor. George Nash, governor of Ohio and a friend of President William McKinley, had lobbied on Allen's behalf for the ministerial post. Nash had a stepson, David W. Deshler, who operated a number of enterprises in Japan and in Korea and whom Allen knew. Nash was fond of his stepson, and Allen thought the latter would appreciate the opportunity to expand his business dealings by recruiting laborers for the HSPA.

As soon as he arrived back in Seoul, Allen went to see Emperor Kojong and persuaded him that it would be desirable to allow his subjects to emigrate. Kojong agreed to set up an emigration bureau, partly because famine had stalked in several northern provinces the year before, but also because Allen's argument—that the desire of American employers to hire Korean workers, at a time when they did not welcome Japanese, would give Korea international prestige—appealed to His Majesty. Allen then asked Kojong to grant the “emigration franchise” to his friend David Deshler.

Royal approval having been received, Deshler set up the mechanisms for his venture. He first hired a number of interpreters and assistants to post announcements to attract applicants. Next he opened a bank, in which the HSPA was the sole depositor, to lend money to aspiring emigrants for their passage and for the “show money” they had to have in their possession upon arrival in Hawaii. When Hawaii was annexed by the United States in 1900, American laws became applicable in the islands, including one that prohibited the importation of contract laborers. Recruited Korean laborers had to “prove” they were free immigrants by having money on their persons. The borrowed funds from Deshler served this purpose.

Few Koreans responded to the recruitment efforts, however, until the Reverend George Heber Jones, pastor of the Methodist Mission in Inchon, persuaded members of his congregation that life for them as Christians would be more pleasant in Hawaii, a Christian land. About half of the first shipment that left in December 1902 were members of Jones's church. Other missionaries gave similar advice. As a result of the missionaries' active role, an estimated 40 percent of the emigrants were Christian converts. Not all the missionaries aided the emigration scheme, however. Some, in fact, tried to prevent their followers from leaving, because each one who departed meant the “loss” of a convert.

Unlike Chinese and Japanese emigrants to America, who came from only a limited number of localities, Korean emigrants hailed from many places—particularly from the port cities of Inchon, Mokpo, Pusan, Masan, Wonsan, and Chinampo, as well as from

the two largest cities in the country, Seoul and Pyongyang. As for their socioeconomic origins, according to Wayne Patterson and Hyung June Moon, most were laborers, former soldiers, artisans, peasants, and unemployed men. There were also some students and professionals, however, such as Mary Paik Lee's father, who left for political reasons: towards the close of the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese had commandeered the Paik family's house, along with the houses of their neighbors, for quartering soldiers; uncertain of the future, the Paik family decided that some of their members should leave, in order to ensure the survival of at least one branch of the family. One of the sons, Paik Sin Koo, and his nuclear family were chosen to go.

The emigrants traveled on ships owned by Deshler to Kobe, Japan, where they were medically examined before proceeding to Hawaii. The fact that almost 10 percent of the emigrants were women and about 8 percent were children indicates that quite a number intended to settle overseas. This is corroborated by the fact that only one-seventh of them eventually returned to Korea — a much lower percentage of return migrants than among the Chinese and Japanese. Japan's ever-tightening grip over Korea no doubt also reduced the return migration rate. Between 1903 and 1907, more than a thousand of the Koreans in Hawaii sailed to the continental United States to join the several dozen ginseng merchants and students who had gone there directly.

Emigration ended suddenly in 1905 for two reasons. First, news drifted back to Korea that the workers who had gone to Mexico were being badly mistreated, so the Korean government halted emigration not only to that country but also to Hawaii. Second, Japan pressured Korea to close the emigration office in order to cut off the supply of Korean laborers to the islands, because the sugar plantation owners were using them as scabs against striking Japanese plantation workers. The secondary migration from Hawaii to the mainland also ended when, on March 14, 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt issued Executive Order 589 to prohibit such movement. This was done to mollify anti-Japanese groups in California, which were demanding an end to Japanese immigration.

Though Koreans were not the primary target of the curb, they were nevertheless affected by this order.

Under Japanese colonial rule, which lasted until 1945, the only Koreans allowed to leave legally for the United States were approximately one thousand picture brides, nine-tenths of whom joined husbands in Hawaii, with the rest going to the Pacific Coast. About five hundred students, many of them anti-Japanese activists, also managed to land in the United States without passports. Their entry was first made possible by the efforts of the Reverend David Lee (Yi Tae-wi), a graduate of the missionary-founded Sung Sil Academy in Pyongyang, who had come in 1905 to study in Berkeley, California. He served as minister of the Korean Methodist Church in San Francisco from 1910 until 1928, when he died of tuberculosis. (This is the same man who performed Mary Paik Lee's wedding.) One day, the Reverend Lee heard that thirteen Koreans were being held in the detention barracks of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service on Angel Island and were forbidden to land. He sent a telegram on their behalf to U.S. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, arguing that the students should not be sent back to Korea because the Japanese authorities were sure to execute them. Nor, said he, could they be returned to China, from whence they had sailed, because they were not Chinese citizens. Bryan granted the reverend's petition, thus setting a precedent for the admission of Korean refugee students. After the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, however, which greatly reduced the number of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe and virtually barred all Asian immigrants, Korean students were no longer allowed to remain in the United States after they had completed their studies.

Almost all the Koreans who went to Hawaii initially worked in the sugar plantations, because that was what they had been recruited to do. Starting in 1835, when the first sugar plantation was established, sugar production expanded until it became the very foundation of the Hawaiian economy. The 375 tons produced in 1850 increased to over 9,000 tons in 1870; almost 32,000 tons in 1880; 130,000 tons in 1890; 300,000 tons in 1900; and over half

a million tons in 1910. In the latter year, some 44,000 workers labored in the fields, about 10 percent of them Koreans. But plantation labor was onerous, so as soon as some of the workers finished their terms, they moved to Honolulu to open small stores, bathhouses, or boardinghouses.

On the mainland, the early immigrants lived primarily in California, but small numbers were also found in other western states. In the beginning, most toiled in the fields, as they had done in Hawaii. This was not because, as was often assumed, they came from peasant societies and found agricultural work “natural,” but because no other work was to be had. Long before any Koreans set foot on American soil, white Americans on the Pacific Coast had already subjugated the native American Indians, the Mexicans, and the Chinese politically, socially, and economically, forcing them onto remote reservations or segregated ghettos, relegating them to the most undesirable and lowest-paid jobs. Around the time that Koreans started entering, some vociferous “anti-Oriental” groups had already begun to look for ways to stop the influx of Japanese, even as other whites — primarily those with land to be cleared and planted — desired their presence as farm laborers.

As in Hawaii, income from agriculture became the basis of California’s prosperity. Beginning in the 1870s, landowners in the state turned increasingly from cereal cultivation to the growth of specialty crops — fruits, nuts, and vegetables — which brought far larger returns. Between 1895 and 1945, deciduous fruit and grape production increased eightfold, while nut and citrus output expanded more than twenty times. But specialty crops required irrigation; an efficient, refrigerated transportation system; marketing cooperatives to deal with the complexities of a national — indeed, world — market; and an enormous amount of “stoop-back” hand labor to cultivate, harvest, pack, and ship. Growers could not find enough white workers to do such work at the wages they were willing to pay. Their solution was to import nonwhite workers who did not have the same rights as whites. Korean immigrants, including well-educated people like Mary Paik Lee’s father, found seasonal farmwork to be one of the few available occupations. If they wished to remain in America, they had to accept such work

to support themselves and their families. Virtually all of them, at one time or another, labored in the fields, orchards, and citrus groves of the western United States—sleeping on the ground in shacks and bunkhouses, cooking their meals over open fires, and moving from one harvest to another.

Only a small number managed to sustain themselves by non-agricultural work as domestic servants, cooks, common laborers, and railroad section hands. But these occupations, like farm work, also required a migratory existence. Those who desired a more settled existence found only two avenues available: tenant farming in the countryside, and selling fresh produce and ethnic merchandise in the towns and cities. The tenant farmers and merchants soon became the most well-off members of the immigrant community, but the educated individuals and political leaders received the most respect.

Like the Chinese and Japanese who had arrived before them, the Koreans engaged in three kinds of tenant farming: truck gardening, fruit growing, and cereal cultivation. Extant records in county offices in California indicate that Asian tenant farmers preferred to pay cash rent, although a small number did become sharecroppers. In a few instances, tenants not only paid a cash rent but also gave the landlords a share of the harvest. Farming is an uncertain source of income, since weather and market conditions are beyond the control of individual farmers. In spite of this, many an Asian immigrant family has been sustained by agriculture, even during very bleak years when others have starved, because they could grow most of the food they needed for family use—a form of “insurance” that urban dwellers did not possess.

Vegetables and small fruits were usually grown on family farms of ten to eighty acres. As described by Mrs. Lee, family members usually performed all the work, except during planting and harvesting seasons, when even very small farms had to hire temporary help. The Paiks and Lees employed Korean men, Sikh men (from India), and Mexican women. (See Appendix B for a description of how the Lees ran their family farm.) Unlike vegetables, which are annual crops, deciduous (tree) fruit does not require yearly planting. The best-known Korean fruit growers were Charles Kim

(Kim Ho) and Harry Kim (Kim Hyung-soon). In 1921 they established the Kim Brothers Company in Reedley, in the San Joaquin Valley of California, where they managed six farms totaling 500 acres. They developed several varieties of hybrid fruit, including a nectarine, with saplings they imported from Korea. They had their own packing sheds, where every harvest season they employed as many as 200 workers. The tenant farmers leasing the largest acreages grew rice in Colusa, Glenn, Butte, Yuba, and Sutter Counties in the northern Sacramento Valley, from the mid-1910s to the early 1920s. Mrs. Lee's father and her husband both partook of the rice boom during World War I. Kim Chong-lim, who leased thousands of acres, was known as "the Korean Rice King." (See Appendix C for a history of Korean rice cultivation in the Sacramento Valley.)

The success enjoyed by Korean immigrant farmers was extraordinary in light of the laws enacted to hinder their efforts. In 1913 California passed an Alien Land Law to prevent persons "ineligible to [*sic*] citizenship" from buying agricultural land and from leasing it for more than three years. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Asian Indian immigrants, however, quickly learned to bypass this law by leasing land through their American-born children and relatives or through white friends. The Lees, for example, rented tracts in southern California in the name of Stanford Paik, Mrs. Lee's American-born younger brother. The law had little effect, partly because county and state officials did not enforce it strenuously and partly because landowners benefited from the good crops raised by Asian tenants. Then, too, the need for increased food production during World War I gave Asian tenant farmers a breathing spell.

After the war was over, however, farm prices declined, and efforts were renewed to eliminate or at least severely limit Asian competition. To plug up the loopholes in the 1913 law, an initiative was placed on the ballot during the 1920 election. It passed by an overwhelming margin, denying "aliens ineligible to citizenship" any rights with respect to real property in California, other than those secured to them by "now existing" treaties between their country and the United States. Both the 1882 treaty between

Korea and the United States and the 1911 treaty between Japan and the United States explicitly granted subjects of the signatories the right to acquire real estate for “domicile” and “business,” but no mention was made of agriculture. Omission was thus interpreted as prohibition.

An amendment passed in 1923 made it illegal for Asian tenant farmers to enter into cropping contracts (though such agreements technically conferred no legal interest in the land itself), forbade any corporations in which they owned more than half of the stocks to engage in agriculture, and provided for the escheat of any holdings illegally acquired. The last condition was made retroactive to the date of acquisition, so that even though an original purchaser could bequeath a plot to someone else, the title received by the transferee was invalid.

Arizona in 1917; Washington and Louisiana in 1921; New Mexico in 1922; Idaho, Montana, and Oregon in 1923; and Kansas in 1925 passed similar laws. Two decades later, while World War II was in progress, Utah, Wyoming, and Arkansas also enacted such legislation, fearing that Japanese released from the internment camps might reenter farming in a big way. Since, during this entire period, Koreans were colonial subjects of Japan, whatever obstacles were placed in the way of Japanese immigrants also affected them. But they managed to farm — as Mrs. Lee’s family did — by resorting to oral agreements.

To take care of themselves in the new land, Korean immigrants quickly and effectively organized themselves. On the Hawaiian plantations, almost immediately upon their arrival, they formed *tong-boe* (village councils) in each locality with ten or more Korean families. Every year, the adult males selected a *tong-jang* (head of the council), a sergeant-at-arms, and a few policemen to enforce the rules they had established for their own governance. Koreans in Honolulu created the *Sinmin-boe* (New People Society) in 1903 to protest Japanese interference in their homeland. In 1907, the various *tong-boe* united to form the *Hanin Hapsong Hyop-boe* (United Korean Society), with headquarters in Honolulu. Two years later, that organization joined the *Kongnip Hyop-boe* (Mutual Assistance Association) of San Francisco, which had been estab-

lished in 1905, to become the *Taehan Kookmin-boe* (Korean National Association, or KNA), which thereafter became the most important body representing Koreans throughout North America. The KNA even had chapters in Manchuria and Siberia. Its aims were to promote education, social welfare, and economic development among Koreans abroad, to train them to work together in equality and freedom, and to restore national independence. To disseminate these ideas, the KNA started publishing a weekly newspaper, the *Sinhan Minpo* (*New Korea*), in 1919.

Because so many of the immigrants were Christians who had left their homeland in the wake of Japanese encroachment, churches and political organizations best served their needs. Within half a year of their arrival in Hawaii, they held the first Korean-language church service and set up the Korean Evangelical Society. Although Presbyterians outnumbered Methodists in Korea, the latter denomination became more active among immigrants in the islands, mainly because George Heber Jones, who had encouraged members of his congregation to emigrate, was a Methodist. He had given some of the first emigrants letters of introduction to John Wadman, superintendent of Methodist Missions in Hawaii, who helped the Koreans rent a house for their worship services. Other Korean Christians in the islands formed the Korean Episcopal Church in 1905, holding their dedication ceremony in the St. Andrew Episcopal Church in Honolulu, which rented a classroom in an elementary school for the group's use. A secessionist independent Korean Christian Church under the leadership of Syngman Rhee appeared in 1917. By 1918, there were thirty-three Korean Protestant churches in Hawaii.

On the mainland, Korean Christians started worshipping together at a mission school in Los Angeles in 1904; the following year, individuals in San Francisco established the Korean Methodist Church. The first Korean Presbyterian Church was founded in Los Angeles in 1906 and was supported by the Presbyterian Missionary Extension Board. This group worshipped in a rented house in the Bunker Hill district. The churches were popular because they served more than religious needs. They were the centers of social life among Korean immigrants. People like Mrs. Lee

and her husband financially supported the Korean Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles for years, even though, as farmers, they were always too busy on Sundays to attend services. Even non-Christians went to the functions held at the churches. Furthermore, since a number of the Korean pastors were vocal leaders in the nationalist struggle, some immigrant churches served as institutional bases for political activities.

Not only did the church dominate Korean immigrant life generally, but being Christian also affected the way individual Korean immigrants responded to discrimination by white Americans. Paik Sin Koo, upon the family's arrival in San Francisco, urged his young daughter not to worry about the unfriendly reception shown the disembarking Asian passengers. He told her that the first missionaries in Korea had *also* been mistreated, but *they* had overcome the initial hostility, going on to achieve great things. So, said he, must she. It is likely that at least some of the other Christian immigrants shared Paik's attitude, perceiving Americans as benefactors rather than persecutors. Besides, they could not worry too much about discrimination when they had a far larger concern: freeing their homeland from colonial rule.

That homeland politics mattered more to Korean immigrants than did their treatment by American whites can be seen by what most aroused their ire. Because of their small numbers on the mainland, Koreans were never subjected to a separate, organized anti-Korean movement, like the movements against the Chinese and Japanese. Most of the time they were simply lumped together with the other Asians. After 1905, especially, whatever affected the Japanese also affected them. This fact made Koreans more angry than did anything else. The so-called Hemet incident is a case in point. When Korean farmworkers were ousted from that small town in Riverside County in 1913, the southern California branch of the Japanese Association of America reported the incident to the Japanese Consulate in San Francisco, which, in turn, informed the Japanese Embassy in Washington, D.C. After instructing the acting consul-general in San Francisco to investigate the occurrence, the Japanese ambassador filed a protest with the U.S. State Department. Even before he received the formal com-

plaint, however, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan had already asked the U.S. Department of Justice to make inquiries into the matter. But the concern shown by the Japanese infuriated the Koreans. The Reverend David Lee, who at that time was serving as president of the Korean National Association, sent a telegram to Bryan (the text of which was reprinted in the *Sinban Minpo* of July 4, 1919), declaring: "... We, the Koreans in America, are not Japanese subjects, ... we will never submit to her as long as the sun remains in the heavens. The intervention of the Japanese Consulate-General in Korean matters is illegal, so I have the honor of requesting you to discontinue the discussion of this case with the Japanese government representatives. ... We will settle it without Japanese interference." Bryan did not respond directly to the telegram, but he told the Associated Press that the investigation would be "discontinued" and that the United States would henceforth deal directly with the Korean National Association on all matters concerning Koreans.

Given their strong sense of nationalism, Korean immigrants founded many political organizations through which they made far larger financial contributions to the anti-Japanese movement than their numbers warranted. Though their wages were very low by American standards, they were still better off than were their compatriots at home or in Asian mainland settlements. Just as important, political activists in America could not be reached by the Japanese military police, whose agents operated not only in Korea but also on the Asian mainland.

Outside of the western hemisphere, the only sanctuary Koreans found was the French Concession in Shanghai—an area that the Chinese government leased to the French. There were two foreign settlements in Shanghai where extraterritoriality prevailed: the International Settlement, shared by the British, the Americans, and other foreign nationals; and the French Concession occupied exclusively by the French. Korean political leaders were not safe in the International Settlement because the British, who were allies of the Japanese by virtue of the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Treaty, did not hesitate to apprehend Korean agitators and turn them over to the Japanese police. The French, on the other hand, refused to

let the Japanese into their enclave. Thus, when Korean expatriates decided to set up a provisional government-in-exile in the aftermath of the 1919 March First Movement, they located themselves in the French Concession in Shanghai. But the leaders confined in that small area had no means of supporting themselves and had to depend on patriots elsewhere — primarily those in Hawaii and the continental United States — to channel funds to them through the international political network set up by Koreans around the world.

The four best-known political leaders within the Korean immigrant community in the United States were So Chae-pil, more commonly known as Philip Jaisohn (1866–1951), Ahn Chang-ho (1878–1938), Park Yong-man (1881–1928), and Syngman Rhee (1875–1965). Each proposed a different strategy to achieve the common end they all desired: Korean independence. Scion of a wealthy *yangban* family, Philip Jaisohn fled Korea after the failure of the 1884 Kapsin Coup, in which he had participated. He went first to Japan and then to the United States, where he worked as a delivery boy in San Francisco before enrolling at a small private college and then at Johns Hopkins Medical School. He became the first Korean to obtain an M.D. degree. He also acquired U.S. citizenship (in the days when it was still possible to do so) and married an American woman. He returned to Korea after the Sino-Japanese War, became an advisor to King Kojong, established a newspaper, the *Independent*, and raised funds to build Independence Arch in Seoul, as a symbol of his aspirations for his country. But when Kojong, at the behest of conservative politicians, disbanded the Independence Club in 1898 and ordered its members arrested, Jaisohn fled again. After returning to the United States, he assumed an elder statesman's role among the immigrants. He convened a Liberty Congress in Independence Hall in Philadelphia in April 1919 to publicize the March First Movement, because, in his words, he wanted "America to realize that Korea is a victim of Japan." From then on, he carried out public relations work on behalf of Korean independence. At the end of World War II, the commander of the American occupation forces in Korea asked Jaisohn to return to Korea to serve as an advisor.

He stayed there until 1948. Three years after coming back to the United States, he died at age eighty-five.

Ahn Chang-ho came to San Francisco in 1899, where he set up the *Chinmok-hoe* (Friendship Society), the first social organization among Koreans in California. He believed that the Korean people had first to “regenerate” themselves before they could regain independence, so he encouraged his fellow immigrants to clean and beautify their homes — as an outward symbol of their moral rectitude — and to engage in honorable labor. Ahn also organized the *Kongnip Hyop-hoe*, which drew all members of the *Chinmok-hoe* into its circle. The new association, headquartered in San Francisco, had branches in Los Angeles and Riverside. It published a newspaper called *Kongnip Sinpo* (*Kongnip News*).

In 1913, Ahn founded the *Hungsa-dan* (Corps for the Advancement of Individuals, also known as the Young Korean Academy), which had a more cultural and ethical focus than the groups he had organized earlier. When the Korean provisional government was set up in Shanghai, he went there to serve as secretary of the interior and then as secretary of labor. He was arrested by the Japanese secret police in 1935 and died in 1938, shortly after he was released from jail, from the effects of the torture he had received. His followers, however, kept the *Hungsa-dan* active long after his death. The organization still exists under the same name today.

Park Yong-man, in yet another approach, thought that military means were necessary to liberate Korea. He had served a prison term before coming to the United States in 1904. According to one source, there were about 700 ex-soldiers among the immigrants, and Park became their leader. After graduating from the University of Nebraska in 1909, he set up a Korean Youth Military Academy in Nebraska, where he trained some two dozen cadets. He next established four other military academies in California, Kansas, and Wyoming, as well as an airplane-pilot training program in Willows, California — the last endeavor financed by Kim Chong-lim, the Korean Rice King. In 1912, the different groups of cadets were consolidated into a single Korean National Brigade, with over three hundred members commanded by Park and

headquartered at the Ahumanu Plantation on the island of Oahu in Hawaii.

Right after the outbreak of the March First Movement, Park formed the *Tokenip-dan* (Korean Independence Corps) to raise funds for organizing and training an army of liberation. Two months later, he, too, traveled to Shanghai, where he served briefly as minister of foreign affairs. He resigned when Syngman Rhee, with whom he had strong disagreements, arrived to become “chief of executive” of the provisional government. Upon leaving Shanghai, Park went to Manchuria to train Korean exiles there. He believed that the Manchurian Koreans, given their location and numerical strength, should play the key role in the independence movement, with the financial support of those in North America. Park was assassinated in 1928. After his death, his military corps disintegrated, though large numbers of Korean Communist partisans remained active in Manchuria until the end of World War II.

The most long-lived and controversial Korean expatriate leader was Syngman Rhee. Rhee attended the Paechae Methodist School for Boys in Seoul for a number of years and was a member of Philip Jaisohn’s Independence Club. In 1898, when the government disbanded the club, Rhee took refuge in the American Methodist Hospital. One day, when he ventured outside, he was arrested. He spent the next seven years in prison. He read the Bible in jail, decided to become a Christian, and requested baptism after his release. He came to the United States in 1905, obtained a B.A. from George Washington University in 1907, an M.A. from Harvard in 1908, and a Ph.D. from Princeton in 1910—the first Korean to hold a doctorate from an American university. His education was largely financed by contributions from Korean immigrants.

Rhee believed the best course to follow was to cultivate American public opinion and to influence the powerful nations to exert pressure on Japan. In 1919, he went to Washington, D.C., in an effort to obtain American recognition for the provisional government in Shanghai, but he failed in his mission. Then he journeyed to Shanghai in November of the same year to assume the post of “chief of executive.” Rhee stayed in Shanghai only seventeen months. After his return to the United States in 1921, he started

calling himself “president” of the provisional government. When his comrades in Shanghai chastised him for taking such a title unilaterally, he argued that he needed a title Westerners could understand and respect if he were to be effective in his propaganda efforts. The other members of the provisional government grudgingly acquiesced. But soon they found another reason to object: Rhee issued \$250,000 worth of bonds in the name of the provisional government without consulting its other members or the Korean National Association (KNA). Along with the bonds, he circulated a “presidential directive” to all the immigrants in North America, urging them to subscribe to the bonds. He asked them to send their contributions directly to the Korean Commission, which he controlled, rather than to the Korean National Association. Many innocent immigrants bought these bonds, with the understanding they would be redeemed upon the attainment of Korean independence, but this never happened. Rhee’s fund-raising campaign was not completely successful, however, because of KNA opposition.

Unable to control the whole nationalist movement, Rhee put his energy into several more personal instruments of power that he had established before he became “president.” He had founded the Korean Christian Church, the *Tongji-boe* (Comrade Society), and a magazine, the *Pacific Weekly*, in Hawaii to advance his own viewpoint in 1919; on these he now depended. He did have many ardent supporters, whose contributions kept him and his projects going for several decades. Rhee lobbied various American and European leaders whenever he could; he traveled to Geneva and to Moscow in 1932 to plead his country’s cause. He gave lectures, published articles, and wrote two books to promote American sympathy for Korean independence. During most of this period he lived in Hawaii, but in 1939 he moved to Washington, D.C., to intensify his lobbying efforts when developments in East Asia signaled a change in the international balance of power. After World War II ended, he returned to Korea, where he won the 1948 elections to become the first president of the Republic of Korea. He held office until he was ousted by student demonstrators in 1960, whereupon he retired to Hawaii. He died there in 1965.

As charismatic leaders, men like Ahn, Park, and Rhee inspired strong loyalties. But conflict among them also led to intense factionalism within Korean immigrant communities in North America and, indeed, around the world. The provisional government in Shanghai virtually fell apart from sectarian struggles in the early 1920s, and it was kept alive only by the efforts of Kim Ku, chairman of the provisional government and founder of the right-wing Korean Independence Party. Political developments in China also had an impact on the Korean nationalist movement. When Chiang Kai-shek turned against his Communist comrades in 1927, he fractured the so-called United Front between the Chinese Nationalist party and the Chinese Communist party. Since some expatriate Koreans worked within these parties, their relationships with one another also soured. From the late 1920s until the end of World War II, the Korean nationalist movement survived in several settings. Leftists worked primarily within the Chinese Communist party. When the Communists set themselves up in northeastern China after 1936, Koreans in that part of the country, particularly those in Manchuria, gained prominence in the Korean nationalist movement. Then, as the Chinese Nationalists retreated inland to Chungking when the Japanese took over the eastern part of China, Kim Ku went to Chungking with them and set up the new headquarters of the Korean provisional government. A third faction operated underground in Seoul, while a fourth, pro-American faction existed under Rhee's leadership.

Not only did these political conflicts divide the Korean community in America, but they also imposed heavy financial burdens on its members. Bong-Youn Choy has calculated that, for decades, virtually every Korean in America gave the equivalent of one month's wages every year to support the nationalist struggle, despite the fact that many immigrants, like Mary Paik Lee's parents, were working themselves to utter exhaustion and living from hand to mouth through countless lean years. Yet they contributed willingly, because they felt a special responsibility to do so, living as they did in "freedom" away from their colonized homeland. Though the Japanese censored all news coming out of Korea, and though emigration to the United States had long

ceased, the immigrants who were already here remained aware of the situation at home because, from time to time, a few refugee students did slip in. Their presence, along with the exhortations of expatriate leaders, helped to keep nationalism alive among the immigrants. Despite the political differences that existed, Koreans in North America had a true community. It was, by and large, endogamous. Sociologist Romanzo Adams found that as late as 1937 in Hawaii, only 104 Koreans had married non-Koreans. In Mary Paik Lee's family, the majority of her siblings who married had *somehow* found Korean spouses.

While all Koreans in America were weighed down with multiple responsibilities, women immigrants bore the heaviest burden of all. They not only did all the housework, and bore and raised the children, but nearly every one of them worked to help provide for their families and to raise funds for the nationalist cause. Their social adaptations were even more mind boggling: imagine the shock of moving from a world where women were confined to "inner rooms" and were forbidden to go outdoors during the day to a situation where, more often than not, only a piece of cloth separated the living quarters of married women from those occupied by dozens of rowdy young bachelors.

The women who came before 1910 and the picture brides who followed them between 1910 and 1924 lived strenuous lives. On the plantations of Hawaii and on the farms of the western United States, Korean women cooked, washed, and cleaned not only for their own families but often also — for a fee — for bachelors or married men who had come without their wives. In many families, such supplemental earnings made the difference between starvation and survival. Those who fed unattached men had to arise several hours before dawn, often at 3 or 4 A.M., to cook breakfast for as many as forty persons and to pack an equal number of lunch boxes in primitive kitchens with no modern conveniences, not even running water. Those with children then had to dress them for school. Others who worked in the fields for wages spent a full day under the sun, sometimes with babies strapped to their backs, before returning home to fix supper. In the evenings, they washed, ironed, and mended until midnight. Women who did laundry for

a fee had to lug water from the well or the outdoor faucet, scrub the clothes on washboards, hang them out on lines to dry, and iron them with irons heated on stoves. For years on end, many of the immigrant women survived with no more than four hours of sleep a night. Those who bore children did all this work even while pregnant.

The life of Mary Paik Lee's mother was typical: though Song Kuang Do did not work in the fields in Hawaii—as many other Korean and Japanese women did—after the Paik family arrived on the mainland, her cooking for thirty men sustained her family for the first four years they were in California. From the day she set foot on American soil until her old age, she worked day in and day out alongside her husband to eke out a living. Mary Paik Lee herself began helping out with chores at the age of six and obtained her first paying job through her own efforts when she was eleven. She did not stop working until she was eighty-five. Mrs. Lee, however, unlike many of the women who moved to urban settings, said in retrospect that she had preferred working with the clean earth to cleaning up other people's filth.

Given such a hard life on the plantations and on the farms, it is not surprising that many women exerted great pressure on their spouses to move to the cities. This was especially true among picture brides—many of whom were from more economically secure backgrounds and were better educated than their husbands. Those who did move opened bathhouses, boardinghouses, restaurants, small stores, and produce stands in Honolulu, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other urban centers. Such work did not necessarily pay better, but it allowed them, through self-exploitation, to work without supervision and to accumulate some capital.

In spite of their arduous labor, some women found time to work for their churches and for secular women's associations. The percentage of Christians among Korean immigrant women increased after they settled in the United States, because those who had already accepted the faith before they left their homeland converted others. In time, women members exceeded men in numbers, though they still are not given leadership positions.

The first women's organization formed outside of the church

was the *Hankuk Puin-boe* (Korean Women's Association), established in San Francisco in 1908. The *Taehanin Puin-boe* (Great Korean Women's Association) was set up in Honolulu in 1913. In the wake of the March First Movement, the *Taehan Puin Kuje-boe* (Korean Women's Relief Society) was organized, with branches in Hawaii and California, to support the Korean independence movement. To inaugurate it, the members put on traditional Korean clothing and marched through the streets of downtown Honolulu, singing patriotic songs. They raised money by selling food and copies of the Korean Declaration of Independence, as well as by working overtime and scrimping at home. They sent the funds they raised to the provisional government in Shanghai, the Korean Commission in Washington, D.C., the Korean Independence Army in Manchuria and China, and to the family members of the thirty-three signers of the Korean Declaration of Independence who had been arrested, imprisoned, or killed. A second organization that grew out of the March First Movement was the *Taehan Yoja Aikuk-dan* (Korean Women's Patriotic Society), with branches in California towns and cities with sizeable Korean populations: Willows, Sacramento, San Francisco, Dinuba, Reedley, and Los Angeles. There were also two branches outside of the United States — in Merida, Mexico, and in Havana, Cuba. These women's political organizations, like the ones formed by the men, became less active in the 1920s as a result of disunity in the Korean nationalist movement, but they revived after 1937 when Japan and China went to war. Women of Korean ancestry — immigrant and American-born alike — eagerly joined their Chinese sisters in America to protest the loading of scrap iron on ships destined for Japan, in an attempt to prevent American resources from benefiting Japan's armament industry.

The kind of life that Korean immigrant women and their American-born daughters led was a far cry from the secluded existence that had bound women in Korea. Even female Christians in the homeland did not have the same freedom of movement and the opportunities for social interaction that immigrant women found in America. To be sure, public exposure was thrust upon them by virtue of what they had to do to ensure family survival,

but the fact is, they rose to the challenge and found meaning in so doing. Daughters like Mary Paik Lee had no choice but to help their mothers. In the process, they, too, learned to fend for themselves and to endure. And endurance mattered. Mrs. Lee, for example, admired the fact that her mother, her husband, and her youngest son — each of whom suffered bouts of ill health — “never complained.”

Though Korean women in America could function in the public sphere, their lives were isolated in another sense: they seldom interacted with the larger society. Even their American-born children, who spoke English fluently and who went to public schools, lived in a world apart. Korean children did not have to attend segregated schools — as did Chinese children in San Francisco and in some other California localities — but they did not mix much with white children. Mary Paik Lee’s first day at school in Riverside was frightening: the other children danced around her and “chopped” her head off. In Colusa in 1911, she and her older brother had to help their parents wash other people’s laundry for meager pay; in addition, she found herself a job as a servant girl, working before and after school and on weekends. While her family lived in the mining town of Idria, she earned money cleaning the schoolhouse; during her first year in high school in Hollister, she earned her keep again as a live-in domestic. She obviously had no time for any social life. Even if she did, few white youngsters were willing to be her friend. In her entire autobiography, she recalls only one white schoolmate who was nice to her.

Unlike their parents, for whom Christianity and nationalism were consuming passions — concerns that had inured them somewhat to the cruelties of life in America — the second generation felt keenly the sting of discrimination. Whereas the immigrant generation had no alternative but to cherish their churches and political organizations, because these served as the most visible symbols of their desire for personal salvation and national liberation, the American-born generation could not find solace in the same institutions. Paradoxically, however, Korean American youngsters like Mary Paik Lee seem not to have shared the desperate desire of Chinese and Japanese American children — such as

Pardee Lowe, Jade Snow Wong, or Monica Sone — to “prove” how American they were. Perhaps this was so because their Korean heritage was an embattled one — one that had to be kept alive and treasured, not resented or discarded. Perhaps this enabled Mary Paik Lee to be a true Korean American: she begins and ends her tale by citing Korean history, but, in between, she shares with us what it was like to have grown up poor, Asian, and female in the shadow of the American dream.