“TODAY IS THE DAY TO SHOUT MANSEI”:
THE CULTURE OF RESISTANCE IN KOREA DURING THE
JAPANESE IMPERIAL PERIOD, 1905-1945

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THESIS ABSTRACT:

The traditional framework in which resistance to is understood and discussed is limited largely to clear and pointed acts of resistance undertaken by organized groups. In the work of historian James C. Scott, particularly the book *Domination of the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, one finds an enormous diversity in the ways a subordinate population—and the individuals therein—can resist a dominant power. These ways of resisting extend outside the forms of resistance limited to organized group activity and acts of violence against the dominant group. The history of Japanese imperial rule in Korea [1905-1945] has not been characterized by consistent or widespread resistance under the traditional framework. However, as shown in this thesis, by adopting an alternative framework based off of Scott’s work, and utilizing it to examine acts of resistance in the experiences and lives of Koreans who lived during the Japanese colonial period of Korean history, there is enough evidence to support the collective social existence of a Korean culture of resistance.
The land is no longer our own. 
Does spring come even to the stolen fields?

Along a paddy path like a part in the hair, 
I walk, sun-drenched, as if in a dream, 
Toward where a blue sky and green fields meet,

Sky and fields with closed lips! 
I don’t feel I came out on my own. 
Have you enticed me or has someone else called?

Winds whisper, 
Shaking my coat’s hem to urge me forward. 
A lark laughs in the clouds like a girl singing behind the hedge.

O bountifully ripening barley fields, 
You washed your long thick hair in a fine rain 
That fell past midnight—I too feel buoyant.

Alone I will walk 
On the good ditch around the dry paddy, 
My shoulders dancing, I sing a lullaby.

Butterflies and swallows, don’t be so boisterous 
But green cockscombs and wild hemp flowers. 
I want to see the fields where girls with castor-oiled hair weeded.

I want a scythe in my hands, 
I want to stamp on this soil, soft as a plump breast, 
Until my ankle aches and I stream with sweat.

What are you looking for? My soul, 
Endlessly darting like children at play by the river, 
How amusing, answer me: where are you going?

Filled with the color of grass, compounded 
Of green laughter and green sorrow, 
Limping along, I walk all day as if possessed by the spring devil;

But now these are stolen fields, 
And even our spring will be taken.

-“Does Spring Come to the Stolen Fields?” by Yi Sang-Hwa

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I. INTRODUCTION

The conventional method of discussing resistance has led to a narrow understanding of what constitutes an act of resistance or a resistance movement. The traditional understanding of an act of resistance is an intentional act of clear and open defiance against a dominant group; acts that exist in what historian James C. Scott refers to as the “public transcript.”² Though some of the commonly discussed actions may be done secret, they are still overt in their intention. Often, the focus is placed on acts that are violent or destructive, such as assassination, combat, or sabotage. They also include public, non-violent acts of protest, such as marches or sit-ins. These acts are further segregated into “active resistance” and “passive resistance,” respectively. The conventional framework of resistance also revolves around groups and organization. When discussing African slavery, the focus has traditionally been placed on white-dominated antislavery movements, whereas little attention is afforded to the often subtle but widespread resistance of African American slaves.³ When discussing la Résistance in World War II France it is the acts of underground escape lines and maquis guerrilla fighters that traditionally dominate the discourse, not the defiance against the Nazis by average French peasants, or French Jews in concentration camps. Historian Matthew Cobb makes this clear in his overview of the la Résistance, saying, “‘Resistance’ was used above all to describe organized actions against the Nazis and Vichy.”⁴

As Scott demonstrates in his book, Domination and the Arts of Resistance, much of the resistance of subordinate people is subtle; often hidden, veiled, or disguised, so as to prevent

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reprisal. He states that “most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between the two polar opposites.”\(^5\) The sorts of acts he describes exist on what he refers to as the “hidden transcript.”\(^6\) A framework of resistance that only includes public acts of resistance ignores the many defiant acts utilized by subordinate groups. He also demonstrates that many acts of resistance lay in the realm of the individual. The focus on organized groups of resisters ignores the resistance of the individual. The conventional framework also focuses on those who act to expressly and pointedly resist and subvert the dominant group, ignoring those whose acts, intended to serve other objectives, additionally serve as acts of resistance.

Certainly, as exemplified by James C. Scott and his contemporaries, unconventional acts of resistance have been examined by historians, but even so such acts are not necessarily viewed as being part of a larger resistance movement. As discussed, a resistance movement is traditionally understood as being carried out by organized groups of subordinate people in openly defiance of the dominant group, often utilizing violent and destructive acts. Acts that are not violent or destructive are considered acts of “passive resistance.” These acts are done with the primary intention of subverting the dominant group. But this definition of a resistance movement is limited, and delegitimizes acts of resistance that do not fully fit the definition. As Scott states, “much of the political life of subordinate groups has been ignored because it takes place at a level we rarely recognize as political.” This leads to certain groups being historically examined only as passive victims, with little to no agency. Works by scholars such as Scott show that resistance exists far beyond this framework; that many subordinate groups who do not fit the framework still exert political agency and resistance to the dominant group. Therefore a

\(^6\) Scott, *Domination*, 4.
resistance movement should rightly encompass this wider understanding of resistance. An act of resistance should be understood as any act by any person belonging to a member of a subordinate group that subverts or defies the will of a dominant group. Thus, acts that are not related to an organized group and exist in the hidden transcripts should be included equally in the framework of resistance. Furthermore, acts that are non-violent still constitute action and thus the distinction between “active” and “passive” should be eliminated. The definition of a resistance movement should not be a narrow one, but one that incorporates the broader social existence of resistance, or a culture of resistance.

To support the concept of a resistance culture, I will examine the case of Korea under Japanese Imperial rule, from 1905 to 1945. While historians like Scott have discussed an alternative understanding of resistance, Korea’s experience has not been closely examined as such. Most of the Korean resistance to Japanese rule was not overt or organized. While Korea did experience some overt organized acts of resistance and rebellion, they were short lived and easily put down by the Japanese. The Koreans were unable to effectively support a lasting organized resistance due to a lack of resources, outside support, technology, and military training. Therefore, under the conventional framework, it could be said that there was no lasting Korean Resistance. But the evidence indicates that there was widespread resistance to the Japanese in many forms. Thus I will examine Korean resistance to the Japanese Empire, and will use the evidence to support the existence of a Korean culture of resistance that persisted alongside Japanese rule.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Throughout the nineteenth century, East Asia experienced significant imperialist incursions by foreign powers. However, the Kingdom of Korea, known pejoratively as the
“hermit kingdom” for its isolationist attitude, managed to avoid the influence of “the western barbarians.” After the “opening” of Japan by the United States, the similarly isolationist Tokugawa Shogunate was toppled and replaced by the reformist Meiji government in 1868. The Meiji government envied the modernity they saw in the Western powers, and believed the road to national prosperity was to emulate them. They consolidated the Japanese mainland, increased colonization of the northern island of Hokkaidō, annexed the southern Ryūkyū Islands (now Okinawa prefecture), and engaged in significant reforms to industry and infrastructure.

The Korean peninsula was seen as a place of great strategic significance to Japan, with its proximity to the Japanese archipelago and its connection to the Asian mainland. Looking to flex their newfound imperialist muscles, Japan’s navy instigated a brief conflict on the Korean island of Ganghwa. Following these acts of aggression, the two countries signed the Treaty of Ganghwa in 1876. Among its provisions were that Korea was to be regarded as a sovereign nation equal to Japan (as opposed to the tributary state to the Chinese Empire that it had prior considered itself to be), that Japanese ships could reside in certain Korean ports, and that Japanese people in Korea would have extraterritoriality, which means that they would still be subject to Japanese laws and courts even while in Korea. A later agreement furthered Japanese trade privileges in Korea. Thus Japan had put its first foot in Korea’s door.

The next significant incident with the Japanese occurred in 1884, in an event known as the Gapsin Coup. A group of Korean reformists, known as the Enlightenment Party, sought to

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8 Ibid., 232.
11 Bruce Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 101-102.
12 Seth, A History of Korea, 233.
modernize Korea, hoping to emulate the model of Meiji Japan. However, the royal consort, Queen Min, who dominated the court, pursued a conservative and pro-Chinese policy. Enlightenment Party conspirators planned to orchestrate a coup d’état in Seoul, with the aid of the local Japanese minister as well as Japanese officers, soldiers, and guards from the Japanese legation. During a banquet for the inauguration of a new post office, the conspirators took control of the Changdeok Palace, had the King and Queen “protected” by Japanese legation guards, and killed several top Korean officials. The conspirators instituted a new government which lasted four days until fifteen hundred Chinese troops led by the rising Chinese military commander Yuan Shikai, clashed with the Japanese soldiers and liberated the royal family.

In 1894, a peasant rebellion, led by a religious movement influenced by anti-Japanese and anti-Western sentiments called Tonghak, proved to be too much for the Korean government to handle alone. Alarmed, King Gojong contacted China for aid, who in turn informed Japan as per an agreement between the two nations signed in the wake of the Gapsin coup. Both nations sent a large number of troops to Korea. But by the time they arrived, the government in Seoul had negotiated a truce with the Tonghak rebels. The King requested that the foreign troops leave. China proposed a mutual withdrawal but, Japan, seeing an opportunity to enact change in the Korean government more favorable to them, refused to leave. They attacked the Chinese warships, inciting the First Sino-Japanese War. The Japanese were wholly victorious in the war with China. Japan occupied Taiwan and part of Manchuria and, most important to Korea, the

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15 Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 113.
18 Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 119.
20 Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 119.
historic tie between Korea and China was severed, and Korea was declared a fully independent state.  

Under increased Japanese influence, a series of laws known as the Gabo reforms, aimed at modernizing Korea, were passed. They included the abolition of class distinctions, tax and coinage reforms, and the abolition of the nobi system (essentially a slave system resembling serfdom). In 1895, in the midst of these reforms, Queen Min was assassinated in Gyeongbok Palace by Japanese agents. The thugs were under the orders of the Japanese minister in Seoul, Miura Gorō, who wanted to eliminate her for her status as a rallying point for anti-Japanese officials. Her death became a source of public outrage, outrage that was furthered when the reform program instituted a law in which Korean men would have to cut off their topknots in favor of short, western style haircuts. The topknot was an old custom and a source of pride for Koreans. This act combined with the Queen’s assassination led to a burst of armed uprisings and riots across the country. In the midst of this, King Gojong and his son dressed as women and escaped to the Russian legation. During his refuge he fired his pro-Japanese cabinet. Upon returning, he declared himself the Emperor of Korea, in order to increase his status with the leaders of Japan, China, and Russia.

In 1904 the Russo-Japanese war began over imperial influence in Manchuria and Korea. In 1905, Japan defeated Russia, much to the shock of the international community. In a treaty mediated by Theodore Roosevelt, Russia withdrew from Manchuria and agreed to recognize Japanese interests in Korea. Furthermore Japan and the United States negotiated a secret

21 Seth, A History of Korea, 246.  
22 Rhee, Doomed Empire, 28.  
23 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 121.  
24 Ibid., 122.  
25 Rhee, Doomed Empire, 30.  
26 Seth, A History of Korea, 252-253.  
27 Ibid., 253.
agreement in which America would recognize Japanese interests in Korea in exchange for Japan recognizing US interests in the Philippines. With the addition of a similar agreement Japan had made with Great Britain, Korea’s fate had been sealed. In 1905 Korea reluctantly signed a treaty that made Korea a protectorate of Japan.

Fearing a complete erosion of Korea’s independence, Emperor Gojong sent three envoys to the Second Hague Peace Convention, to petition for aid in Korea’s plight. The convention rejected the petition and refused to recognize the delegation. When news of this reached Japan, the Japanese muscled Gojong out of power and replaced him with his son Sunjong. As part of a campaign to promote unity, the Japanese sent Sunjong on a tour of the provinces, which largely served to spark anti-Japanese resentment and protest. On August 16, 1910, the Japanese resident general drafted a treaty of annexation, which the pro Japanese prime-minister, I Wan-Yong, signed. On August 29, 1910, Sunjong abdicated and Korea officially became part of the Japanese Empire.

During the protectorate period, 1905 to 1910, guerilla resistance movements formed throughout Korea to fight the Japanese. These groups were called uibyeong, which means “righteous armies.” The Japanese responded with major military force. The uibyeong, disparate, uncoordinated, and poorly armed and trained, were quickly crushed. By annexation in 1910 most of the insurgency had been defeated or had fled into Manchuria, and such a guerilla

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28 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 142.
29 Seth, A History of Korea, 252.
30 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 143.
31 Ibid., 145.
34 Seth, A History of Korea, 255.
resistance never again gained a foothold in the peninsula. Because of this initial aggression, the first decade of Japanese rule was characterized by budan seiji, or “military policy.” A Japanese government-general administrated Korea, and every governor-general was a military man; a huge army was stationed on the Korean mainland; black-coated police became a pervasive presence; even teachers carried swords in the classrooms. The Japanese also began an industrialization and modernization campaign, that laid railways and roads, built factories and ports, and bolstered agricultural production.

Between 1910 and 1919, various independence-minded movements began to form. One such group was an underground resistance group of sorts that, inspired by Woodrow Wilson’s calls for national self-determination at the Versailles Peace Conference, began circulating a list of grievances against the Japanese, and compiled the Korean Declaration of Independence. On March 1, 1919, a group of thirty-three Korean nationalists, the core members of the group, read the Declaration aloud in public, and petitioned for independence from Japan. This act touched off a series of mass protests and demonstrations against Japanese rule that lasted for two months. The Japanese responded swiftly and brutally. Japanese officials counted 553 killed and 12,000 arrested, while Korean sources put the numbers at 7,500 killed and 45,000 arrested. Embarrassed by the incident, Japan moved to change their policy in Korea to bunka seiji, or “cultural policy.” Under the new program the ban on Korean newspapers was lifted; there was increased tolerance towards Korean cultural activity; and organized activity became

35 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 146. It was from these resistance groups in Manchuria, where they later fought against the Japanese alongside Chinese communist rebels during World War II, that Kim Il-Sung, the infamous first leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), rose to prominence.
36 Ibid., 152.
37 Ibid., 148.
38 Ibid., 154.
39 Seth, A History of Korea, 268.
40 Cuming, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 155.
41 Seth, A History of Korea, 269-270.
less restricted. However the police presence became even more pervasive, particularly with the introduction of the Japanese secret police, the Kōtō Keisatsu, or High Police.

Through the 1920s and 1930s Japan increased industrial mobilization in Korea. With the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War in North China in 1937, Korean life was reorganized to serve the Japanese war effort. By the time the Pacific War began, Korean labor was entirely conscripted and drafted. Koreans were also conscripted into the military, largely as foot soldiers, although some Koreans became officers, some even reaching high ranks. More Koreans entered colonial administrative positions as well. Indeed, as in most formerly occupied or colonized nations, the legacy of collaboration is a bitter pill to swallow for modern day Korea, and its legacy has weighed heavily on the native historiography of the period and South Korean governance.

The war period is considered the harshest for Korea. After the Pearl Harbor bombings, labor conscriptions ramped up even more. One of the legacies remembered with the most bitterness during the period was the conscription of up to 200,000 Korean women to serve as sex slaves for the Japanese military. They were known by the euphemism “comfort women.” The new Japanese policy in 1938 became that of naisen ittai, “Japan and Korea are one” or “one body.” This policy was part of a comprehensive assimilation policy intended to eradicate Korean culture altogether. Koreans were forced to take Japanese names and the Korean language

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42 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 156-157.
43 Seth, A History of Korea, 271.
44 Ibid., 294.
45 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 176.
47 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 177.
49 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 176.
was banned in favor of Japanese; Koreans were even forced to worship at Shintō shrines, even though Shintō is inextricably tied to Japan and its people. In August, 1945, the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were obliterated by atomic bombs dropped by the United States, resulting in the surrender of the Japanese to the allied forces, ending World War Two in Asia and Japanese colonial rule in China and Korea. The atomic blasts in the two cities killed at least 10,000 forced Korean laborers.

III. RESISTANCE OF IDENTITY

One key method of resistance is to assert and express one’s ethnic and cultural identity. This mode of resistance is prevalent in situations where the dominant group seeks the assimilation of the subordinate group. In the case of Korea, Japan had a longstanding policy of assimilation, attempting to construct Koreans as ethnically related to the Japanese, practically constituting one race of people. This assimilationist rhetoric is evident in Japanese administrative documents, such as this one circulated in 1928, saying

It is evident…that they are closed [sic] allied to the Japanese… It would appear that the prehistoric inhabitants of the peninsula, from whom the present day Koreans are descended, were of the same race as those then dwelling in the western half of Japan. In language… [Korean] is more akin to Japanese than any other tongue. Its sentence and grammatical construction are said to be almost identical to Japanese… From these and other evidences, combined with the beautiful traditions common to both, it will be seen that the Koreans and Japanese are no strangers to each other but have been intimately associated from very remote days. So the recent union of the two nations may well be regarded as the reunion of two brothers long separated by untoward circumstances.

The rationale for this rhetoric, and the policies that sprang from it, was to justify Japan’s annexation of Korea. As it says in the above quotation, it was presented as the reunion of two

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50 Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 182.
51 Ibid., 183.
brothers. It also operates to suppress resistance overtime; if the Koreans were made to believe they and the Japanese are of one people, they would have no reason to resist. This intention is illustrated through the widespread use of assimilation rhetoric in Japanese controlled print media in Korea immediately following the annexation in 1910. By establishing a connected identity early on, Japan hoped to rationalize colonization and suppress resistance against Japanese rule.\(^{53}\) However, the Koreans resisted the Japanese assimilation policies throughout the period of colonial rule by promoting a culture of resistance via the assertion of their own cultural and ethnic identities.

In the 1930’s Kang Byung-ju went to the Suwon College of Agriculture in Suwon, Korea, which was attended by Japanese and Korean students. In his third year he recounts that the Japanese administrators decided to act out *naisen ittai*, “Japan and Korean are one,” in his dormitory. The school officials said that each room would be occupied by two or three Japanese students and one Korean student. The Korean students angrily protested, to which the officials responded by having the rooms contain one nationality each, side by side. The Koreans continued to protest and the officials further relented, choosing to instead alternate each hall by nationality. The Koreans and Japanese would still have to share the same library and bathing area, which they had not prior.\(^{54}\) If the decision on the part of the school officials to forcibly mix the dorms was a practical expression of assimilation rhetoric, then the act of protest by the Korean university students is an expression of resistance to assimilation policy. Kang and his


fellow students successfully asserted their unwillingness to be conflated with the Japanese and their desire to be seen as having a separate identity.

Kim Soon-ok recalls that his father, a frame-backpack carrier, wore a topknot through Japanese rule until his death. The topknot was worn by Koreans in the Joseon dynasty to indicate being married. Under Japanese influenced reform programs leading up to annexation, Koreans were told to cut off their topknots in order to appear more modern. Even the King, Gojong, removed his.\(^{55}\) Therefore by keeping his topknot, Kim’s father was maintaining an expression of his cultural identity as a Korean, in defiance of Japanese policy.

One 1939 policy that engendered considerable vitriol amongst Koreans was a campaign to get Koreans to change their family and given names to Japanese. The campaign was not founded in law but was purely a bureaucratic campaign.\(^ {56}\) But, without a Japanese name one could often not enter school, get a job, acquire ration cards, or have postage delivered.\(^{57}\) The reason there was no law was so that the Japanese could claim that the Koreans, the majority of whom did change their names, had done so voluntarily. M. J. Rhee characterizes this as the “symbolic murder of the Korean identity” and that it “implied the symbolic death of the concepts of descent and kinship.”\(^{58}\) Yang Sung-deok, an electrical engineer at the time, described it as meant “to make us sound Japanese, so that the younger generation would know nothing but the new names, and their thinking and their attitudes would become Japanese. This was all part of their long range plan to eliminate any vestige of Korean consciousness.”\(^ {59}\)

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\(^{55}\) Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun, 122.


\(^{57}\) Kang, Black Umbrella, 117.

\(^{58}\) Rhee, Doomed Empire, 74-75.

\(^{59}\) Kang, Black Umbrella, 119.
One way to resist the name change policy was to simply refuse to change one’s name. Pak Sung-pil resisted changing his name for a long time, even though he was beaten by Japanese for it.\(^{60}\) Chu Bong-ye never changed her name, and her husband refused to have the family name changed either.\(^{61}\) Yang Sung-deok’s older brother, a rice dealer, refused to change his name, as he mostly only dealt with Koreans anyway and did not have to worry about his job.\(^{62}\) Refusing the name change, even in the face of damaging consequences, represents explicit defiance of *naisen ittai*, and a form of resistance through maintaining ethnic and cultural identity as well as personal identity.

Most Koreans did obey the name change, but still found ways to express their ethnic, cultural, and personal identity through their choices in Japanese names. When Pak Sung-pil relented and changed his name to avoid the persecution he was experiencing, he changed it to Otake. The Japanese *O* syllable in Chinese characters is the Korean syllable *Dae*, the first syllable of his place of birth, Taebyeon. *Take* is the Japanese word for bamboo, meant to represent the bamboo grove outside the house he grew up in.\(^{63}\) Chu Bong-ye’s son changed his name to Parku Toshio, choosing a family name that sounded similar to his Korean one, Pak.\(^{64}\) Koreans with the family name Kim, which uses the Chinese character for gold, often changed their name to a Japanese name with *kane*, the Japanese word for gold, in it. Some examples are Kanekuni, Kanezawa, Kaneshiro, or Kaneda.\(^{65}\) Some Koreans with the last name Pak, which uses the character for tree, changed their names to a Japanese name with the word for tree in

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\(^{60}\) Kang, *Black Umbrella*, 66.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 118. To clarify, Korean women do not change their name upon marriage, but instead retain their original family name. The children of the marriage inherit the father’s family name.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 119.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 118. Chinese characters were once used as a written lingua franca between Korea, Japan, China, and others, and thus the sounds in these languages usually have an equivalent in Chinese characters.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 118.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 120.
Japanese, *ki*, such as Kido or Masaki. One Korean family with the family name Yi changed their name to Matsumoto, meaning “pine origin,” because their family’s ancestral family was from the city of Gyeongju, in which there are pine trees. Another, with the family name Kang changed their name to Nobukawa, because it shared the same Chinese characters as their clan’s ancestral seat of Sinchon. Similarly, another named Kang changed their name to Oyama, which has the same Chinese characters as Taesan, a mountain in their clan’s ancestral seat. Another, with the family name Song, chose the name Matsumoto, “pine origin,” because the Chinese character used for Song and the character used for “pine” is pronounced the same in Korean. Therefore his name, though meaning “pine origin,” sounded like “Song origin.” This evidence shows that Koreans, even when forced to change their name to Japanese, retained a sense of heritage and identity by choosing Japanese names that were somehow based on their original surnames. By doing this, these Koreans found a way to preserve a sense of their cultural and personal identity, thus adding to the culture of resistance by subverting the narrative of assimilation.

Another policy that Japan promoted under *naisen ittai* was one in which Koreans would have to worship at Shintō shrines. Shintō is the indigenous religion of Japan. The practice and rituals of Shintō are meant to connect the present of Japan to its past through the worship of Kami, the spirits or deities of Shintō. Shintō is an ethnic religion; it is specifically tied to the Japanese ethnicity. Therefore, forcing Koreans to worship Shintō is meant to further the concept that Koreans are ethnically tied to the Japanese, as per assimilation policy. In defiance of

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66 Kang, *Black Umbrella*, 121. Many Koreans have the same family name. Around 54% of South Koreans have 1 of the 5 family names: Kim, Yi (Rhee, Lee), Pak (Park, Bak), Choi (Choe), or Jeong (Chung, Cheong, Jung.) The family name Kim alone comprises 40% of that group. The concept of ancestral seats and clans, or *bon-gwan*, is meant to distinguish between different lineages that have the same family name. Clan indicates the different lineage and the ancestral seat is where said lineage is from.

67 Ibid., 122.

this disregard for Korean ethnic heritage and culture, Koreans found ways to resist the Shintō worship policy.

Pak Chun-gi was secretly a Christian in 1930 during the Shintō worship policy. She met in secret with other Christians, with service being held on Wednesdays to avoid discovery. She remembers many people she knew being arrested for practicing Christianity, as they were supposed to be practicing Shintō. Kang Sang-wook also recalls Christians being persecuted for refusing to bow at the shrines. Song Sok-chi and his father refused to go to the Shintō shrines. Song was able to avoid enforcement of the rule as he did not work for a public entity but was instead a businessman. Chong Tae-ik also refused to go the shrines, despite urging, and was able to avoid persecution because he lived on a remote lumberyard. Yi Ok-hyeon’s husband had been to prison and was watched by the police, so he had to go to the shrines. But when he was at the shrines, he muttered curse words under his breath. By undermining the policy forcing Koreans to worship Shintō, whether it be by practicing an alternative religion like Christianity, refusing to practice it in general, or secretly uttering profanities during worship to express disdain, Koreans asserted their own identity in defiance of this assimilation policy.

The Korean New Year is celebrated on the day of the second new moon after the winter solstice, similar to the timing in China. Kim P. recalls that the Japanese would often take students on trips, which would often consist of manual labor, on the lunar holiday, to prevent them from celebrating it (it was celebrated on January 1 in Japan.) Kang Sang-wook, however,

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70 Ibid., 112.  
71 Ibid., 114-115.  
72 Ibid., 114.  
lived far north. Therefore he would still celebrate the lunar New Year.\textsuperscript{74} Celebrating the lunar New Year, contrary to the desires of the Japanese, was another way that Koreans could assert their cultural identity and resist assimilation policy.

Singing Korean songs was another form of cultural resistance. Former comfort woman Yi Yeong-sook, while waiting in line at the comfort station and feeling poorly, sang a Korean folk song in Guangdong for comfort. She had been told to not speak Korea, and the camp proprietor beat her for the act.\textsuperscript{75} Another, occurrence of this is the singing of the song “Bongsunhwa,” which Yang Sung-deok recalls singing in high school. The song refers to flowers springing up into new life, and was sung as an independence song, leading to it being banned by the Japanese.\textsuperscript{76} Singing music that is rooted in Korean culture and or have, or are ascribed, nationalistic or independence undertones can be a way to assert cultural identity.

Another prevalent way to resist Japanese assimilation policies was through the use of the Korean language. This was because the Japanese policy was to assert and maintain the speaking Japanese in favor of Korea. Their introduction and encouraged use of Japanese in colonial Korea was part of their plan to assimilate Korea into the Japanese Empire and erase the Korean identity.\textsuperscript{77} While Japan’s attitude towards the Korean language fluctuated in tolerance throughout colonial rule, Koreans were always encouraged to learn and speak Japanese, usually in favor of Korean. Once the policy of naisen ittai was adopted, Koreans were banned from speaking Korean and were only supposed to speak Japanese. Korean ceased to be taught in Korean schools and instead Japanese became the only language of instruction. Therefore, speaking Korean,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Kang, \textit{Black Umbrella}, 116-117.
  \item Howard, \textit{True Stories}, 51-52.
  \item Kang, \textit{Black Umbrella}, 100-101.
  \item Rhee, \textit{Doomed Empire}, 51-52.
\end{itemize}
before and after naisen ittai, was a way that Koreans could assert their cultural identity in the
face of Japanese assimilationism.

The signing of the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905, which effectively made Korea a
protectorate of the Japanese Empire, inspired a wave of nationalist activity among Korea’s
intelligentsia. One of these thinkers was Ju Si-gyeong. In 1907, two years after the protectorate
treaty, Ju penned Essay on Korean Language and Letters. In the essay, Ju criticized the state of
Korea’s education as being poor, because Korean education focused almost exclusively on
learning to write in Chinese characters. Due to the immense difficulty of learning Chinese
characters and how they matched with the Korean language, other subjects were disregarded. Ju
went on to agree with many other critics, that a more comprehensive education was necessary.
However he criticized them for suggesting that the language of instruction should be changed to
be in English or Japanese. Ju pointed to the Joseon King Sejong who, frustrated that Korea,
unlike other countries, was without its own written language, oversaw the development of an
alphabet for the Korean language. The script, which Ju called Hangul, corresponded to the
sounds of Korean words instead of an abstract conversion of Korean to Chinese logograms. Ju
insisted that the Korean language be studied alongside the Hangul alphabet so that “the people of
the entire country shall all value, love, and use our language and script as the basic and primary
language of our country.” In this way, Ju demonstrates how the Korean language can be used to
represent Korean ethnic and cultural solidarity and as a tool of resistance to imperialism.

January 1907, in Sourcebook of Korean Civilization Volume II: From the Seventeenth Century to the Modern
inspiring a literary movement written in native Korean, and is considered one of the founders of modern Korean
linguistics. The term he coined for the name of alphabet, Hangul (한글), is the term still in use in modern day South
Korea. In North Korea it is called Joseongeul.
Following off of the work of Ju Si-gyeong were thinkers like Yi Yun-jae. Yi was an editor of a magazine titled *Hangul*, which was briefly published in 1927 and then again in 1932. In the magazine Yi continued to advocate for the widespread adoption of Hangul. The magazine was intended to further this goal. In the magazine he appealed to Koreans to “be united in our determination and join our strength in making our speech and letters shine brighter.” Yi’s publication came out at a time when Japan’s assimilation policies were becoming more severe, culminating in the adoption of *naisen ittai* in 1938. Yi was arrested in 1942 for his association with the Korean Language Association, and died in prison the following year.

Choi Kil-Ssng provides another example of language as resistance. Choi worked as a teacher at a school in Uijeongbu, a city northeast of Seoul. He was demoted to a remote school in Ansung because he told his Japanese colleagues that there were words in Korean that did not have an equivalent in Japanese. This is, of course, true, but the Japanese were promoting that Japanese and Korean were closely related, so his superiors were angered and punished him. Choi asserted his distinct cultural and ethnic identity by stating that Korean and Japanese had distinct vocabularies to his Japanese colleagues.

Dai Sil Kim-Gibson demonstrated earlier how resistance through language can occur amongst children in schools, as she recounts playing a playground game in Korean and being

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81 Kang, *Black Umbrella*, 73. The exact relation between Korean and Japanese has been a subject of some debate amongst linguists. There are similarities between the two languages, which led early linguists to theorize that they were related. A later theory proposed an Altaic language family connecting Japanese, Korean, Turkish, and Mongolian. The Altaic theory has been largely discredited. What similarities there are between Japanese and Korean have been proposed to be due to linguistic borrowing born out of centuries of contact between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago. Most modern linguists consider Korean to be a linguistic isolate due to its unique grammatical structure and distinct native vocabulary and numbering system.
caught by a teacher, to whom she acted defiantly towards and was punished.\textsuperscript{82} Kim Sun-ok chastised his neighborhood peers for speaking Japanese in front of him.\textsuperscript{83} Jeong Tae-ik says that despite the language policy in the 1930s, he never spoke a word of Japanese.\textsuperscript{84} Louise Yim hated learning Japanese in school, and would refuse to speak anything but the barest minimum needed to pass the class.\textsuperscript{85} Former comfort woman Yi Yeong-sook spoke Korean in the comfort station when she could, despite rules forbidding it.\textsuperscript{86} By speaking the Korean language, Koreans under colonial rule were able to defy assimilation policy and assert their own ethnic and cultural identity.

M. J. Rhee characterizes Japanese historians and scholars of the imperial period as constructing a narrative of Korean history that justified their imperial machinations. The Japanese interpretation of Korean history characterized them as “uncivilized, divided, and naturally dependent people.”\textsuperscript{87} Such historians were also those that tied Korea’s history to Japan’s. Faced with this, Korean historians like Sin Chae-ho had to construct a counter-narrative that asserted Korea’s distinct historical identity. In a series of newspaper articles that began publishing in 1908, three years after the signing of the Japan-Korea protectorate treaty and two years before annexation, Sin Chae-ho made a case for a new way of examining the history of Korea. He examined past Korean historiography as constructing the Korean ethnicity as part of neighboring ethnic groups, such as Chinese, Xianbei, Mongol, Jurchen, or Japanese. The latter literature is where the Japanese idea that Japan and Korea were historically tied was based. Sin Chae-ho argued that Korean history should be examined through the lens of Koreans as a distinct

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{83} Kang, \textit{Black Umbrella}, 62.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 115.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Louise Yim, \textit{My Forty Year Fight for Korea} (Seoul: Chungang University, 1951), 55.
\item \textsuperscript{86} Howard, \textit{True Stories}, 51-52.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Rhee, \textit{Doomed Empire}, 34-35.
\end{itemize}
ethnic group. He believed this would foster ethnic unity and solidarity, and would work as a way to instill national identity. Sin promoted this way of studying history throughout colonial rule, in direct contrast to the Japanese assimilation policies indicating Korea and Japan to have a shared history. Thus in this way the study and promotion of Korean history was resistance, as Sin Chae-ho asserted the existence of the distinct cultural, ethnic, and national identity of the Korean people in contrast to the narrative propagated by the Japanese Empire.

IV. RESISTANCE ON THE PLAYGROUND

An often overlooked area of history, especially of resistance, is the history of children and adolescents. This is in part because children and adolescents do not leave behind many primary sources of their own. It is also because children and adolescents are consistently some of the most controlled demographics in any population. Decisions about the lives of children are made by policy makers, police, educators, and parents/parental guardians. Because of their highly supervised nature comparatively little attention is paid to children and adolescents’ capacity to assert agency. Therefore, children and adolescents are often overlooked in the scholarship as possible resisters. Through examining stories of Korean children and adolescents living under Japanese rule, it becomes clear that, despite assumptions, children and adolescents can and do exert their own agency as resisters.

Koreans who were children during the demonstrations of the March First Movement made their voices heard. Many of them remember joining the cries of “manseoi,” which generally translates to “may Korea live for ten thousand years.” Kim Sun-ok, then ten years old, describes

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joining the yelling crowds, marching from Mapo village to Seoul, before being repulsed by Japanese military police.\textsuperscript{89} Kim Yeo-Seong remembers climbing on top of a hill with members of her village to shout “Independence for Korea!”\textsuperscript{90} Pak Jeong-gi climbed to the top of a persimmon tree in her yard and shouted “manseoi!” over the wall with her grandmother.\textsuperscript{91} Yi Chae-im recalls the story of Ryu Gwan-sun, a sixteen year old student at Ewha Women’s University who was captured by the Japanese for leading one of the demonstrations. For this act she was tortured and, ultimately, killed while in prison. Yi describes her as a martyr whose death became a rallying cry for the demonstrators.\textsuperscript{92} Yi Ok-hyeon recalls being arrested after taking to the streets with a group of her friends from the girls’ school she attended, shouting “manseoi” as a show of solidarity with a short lived uprising of students in the city of Gwangju.\textsuperscript{93} What these stories reflect is that children and adolescents were major participants in protest movements. Their participation in the March First Movement and other instances of collective action shows that children and adolescents played a significant part in the culture of resistance. However one of the most significant places of resistance for children was in the schools.

As is the case with many colonial regimes, education was a major focus of Japan’s colonization efforts. It was a major tool in their policy of assimilation aimed at turning Koreans into loyal subject of Japan.\textsuperscript{94} Seeing the current Korean education system as incompetent and limited, the Japanese implemented a system of their own.\textsuperscript{95} Many of the instructors in Korean schools were Japanese; by 1915, 30\% of all teachers in Korean primary schools and 60\% of

\textsuperscript{89} Kang, \textit{Black Umbrella}, 18.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{94} Government-General of Chosen, \textit{Administration of Chosen 1926-27}, 84.
teachers in Korean secondary schools were Japanese.\textsuperscript{96} The methods and policies in education varied with the times—such as inconsistent policies on the use and instruction of the Korean language—but Japan was nevertheless a dominating presence in Korean schooling.

As the Japanese sought to exert control in Korean schools, Korean students pushed back with various methods of resistance. In some parts of Korea Japanese students did not have their own schools, so Japanese children attended school with the Korean children. Yang Sung-deok recalls that the Korean children, in protest of Japanese rule, would not make friends with the Japanese children. Were a Korean to attempt to befriend any Japanese children, they would be branded as pro-Japanese and ostracized. This shows that Korean adolescents expressed resistance to the Japanese presence through the use of schoolyard social politics.\textsuperscript{97}

Kim T. explains that he and his peers struck as a manifestation of their anger towards the Japanese school. Their school did not have Japanese teachers and was even founded by the anti-Japanese activist Cho Man-sik, but the children still struck, needing a safe outlet to express their anger against Japan. These strikes weren’t overtly anti-Japanese; they varied from protesting certain teachers, cutting class, or protesting a rule forbidding student marriages.\textsuperscript{98} While not overt, such acts, done with the intent of showing anger over Japanese rule and control, certainly exist within a hidden transcript of anti-Japanese sentiment and protest. At the same school, Yi Ha-jeon remembers reading and learning about the independence activist An Chang-ho, after the announcement of An’s death in a Japanese prison. The work of An inspired Yi to resist the Japanese. Yi and six fellow students formed a group that met in secret to read about Korean history and famous Koreans, works he says were hard to come by under Japanese rule. The

\textsuperscript{97} Kang, \textit{Black Umbrella}, 45.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 46.
group also raised funds to educate people, and even learned of the provisional government in exile in Shanghai, knowledge that was suppressed by the Japanese.\textsuperscript{99} Yi Ha-jeon’s group shows that there were many adolescents who were political actors that participated in the resistance movement and nurtured the culture of resistance.

One of the ways that Japan attempted to insert Japanese culture into Korea was teaching the Japanese language and encouraging its use in schools. While lifting weights with neighborhood boys, Kim Sun-ok, fifteen at the time, describes the anger he felt towards them as they were speaking Japanese. He yelled at them, saying, “Do you like the Japanese? How could you? Don’t speak Japanese in front of me.”\textsuperscript{100} Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, author of \textit{Silence Broken}, an oral history of Korean comfort women, recalls in her book an incident in 1945 involving language. She was playing a game called gong-ki with her friends in the schoolyard. She and her friends were speaking Korean, which by 1945 had been entirely illegalized. A Japanese teacher caught them, grabbing Kim-Gibson’s arm and yelling “You are speaking Korean!” to which she retorted “Of course!” For speaking Korean and for her defiant attitude, the teacher had her hold her arms in the air for hours.\textsuperscript{101} As speaking Korean was not permitted by the Japanese, a fact these children were well aware of, and speaking it would thus be in defiance of Japan’s rule, these children were very much acting as resisters. Furthermore, Kim-Gibson’s defiance proclamation of “Of course!” is a further act of resistance. This is clear as her punishment is directly related to standing by the act of speaking Korean and not the act itself. This indicates that her standing by the act is in itself resistance.

\textsuperscript{99} Kang, \textit{Black Umbrella}, 88-89.\hfill
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 62. \hfill
\textsuperscript{101} Kim-Gibson, \textit{Silence Broken}, 1-2.
Another way children expressed resistance was through pranks and practical jokes. Yang Seong-deok recalls playing practical jokes on the Japanese in his hometown of Ganggyeong. One prank involved him and his friends digging holes outside the front entrances of the homes of local Japanese people. They filled the holes with excrement from the outhouses and then covered them with loose soil. When the victims walked outside of their houses, they would step in the holes filled with excrement. Another prank involved throwing chicken droppings onto the Japanese people’s clothing that was hanging out to dry.102 As previously discussed, Yang also remembers singing the song “Bongsunhwa” in high school, which was sung as an independence song because it was about flowers springing to new life, leading to it being banned by the Japanese.103 Former comfort woman Yun Doo-Ri also remembers rebelling against the Japanese. She recalls that a Japanese teacher hit her for talking. She asked the teacher why she was hitting her. The teacher said she had poor manners and hit her harder. Yun responded by biting the teacher’s hand and was sent to detention.104

Kang Sang-wook was a child in school in the 1930s and 1940s, during the period of naisen ittai, or “one body,” policy. On certain occasions, such as December 8 after the Pearl Harbor bombings, or a holiday in April celebrating education, speeches given by the Japanese Emperor Hirohito were read aloud from a scroll, with much ceremony. As the words of the Emperor were considered sacred, the children were supposed to avert their eyes from them by bowing. However, Kang says that he and other kids would break the rule and peek at the scroll. Later the kids would play a game that mocked the ceremony and the speech. Two would face each other with arms crossed, appearing very serious, and one would imitate the speech. At one

102 Kang, Black Umbrella, 100.
103 Ibid.,100-101.
104 Kim-Gibson, Silence Broken, 183.
point in the speech the child speaking opened their arms dramatically, at which point the other
would tickle them under the arms, and they would both laugh.\textsuperscript{105} By subverting the sacred nature
of these speeches both by peeking at the words on the scroll and later by making a game that
mocks it, Kang and his schoolmates acted as resisters through subverting \textit{naisen ittai} policy by
making mockery out of a sacred Japanese ceremony.

An excellent example of children and adolescents as resisters comes from Louise Yim, a
longtime Korean independence activist. In her memoir, \textit{My Forty Year Fight for Korea}, Yim
covers her life as a child and adolescent in colonial Korea. Yim went to an all-girls Christian
school. Inspired by stories of historical figures like Abraham Lincoln and Joan of Arc, Yim and
several of her friends decided to form a group they dubbed the “Suicide Squad” to fight the
Japanese.\textsuperscript{106} Their first act of defiance as the Suicide Squad was to protest a new rule that
required the students to sing the Japanese national anthem and bow to pictures of the Japanese
Emperor. When the time came, they refused to bow or sing. This frustrated the Japanese
teachers, but eventually they gave up trying to enforce the rule and the students were no longer
required to sing and bow. Their second act, in another example of practical jokes as resistance,
was a prank in which they used sharp pencils to put holes into the eyes of the portraits of the
Japanese Emperor that hung in every classroom. When asked who committed the crime, all the
girls claimed responsibility. They repeated this until the inquiry was abandoned and the pictures
were removed for the duration of Yim’s time at the school.\textsuperscript{107} Testimonies like Yim’s show that
children and adolescents contributed to the culture of resistance in Korea during Japanese rule.

\textsuperscript{105} Kang, \textit{Black Umbrella}, 115-116.
\textsuperscript{106} Yim, \textit{Forty Year Fight}, 66-67.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 66-68.
Furthermore this evidence validates the existence of the political space inhabited by children and adolescents, especially in their capacity to act as resisters.

V. RESISTANCE IN THE SCHOOLROOM

A significant aspect of Japan’s imperial policy was to control Korea’s education system. During colonial rule, Japan opened a number of public schools at the secondary and high school level. Additionally they opened some higher education institutions, but these were more for Japanese living in Korea than Koreans—although Koreans could still be admitted. Japan made its influence very clear in these schools, such as by having students listen to the Emperor’s speeches; regularly pledge loyalty to the Emperor and Japan; and through mandatory instruction in the Japanese language. The Japanese also included in the curriculum concepts that perpetuated the notion that Korea and Japan were a single ethnic group, particularly by altering the history curriculum to reflect this. But, there was significant resistance to these practices. Just as the Japanese used education as a pervasive tool for imperialism, assimilation, and domination, so did the Koreans utilize education as a powerful tool of resistance.

Japanese attitudes towards teaching Korean history fluctuated through the history of Japanese colonial rule, so it is not fair to say that their policy was universal suppression. But, such was often the case. Louise Yim recalls that in 1910, the year of annexation, the Japanese confiscated the Korean history textbooks at her school and burned them. Korean history ceased to be taught afterwards. Given the suppression of Korean history Yim experienced, she and fellow classmates made an effort to self-educate. Yim pleaded with the local pastor, Kim In-

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108 Government-General of Chosen, Reforms and Progress in Chosen (1921-1922), 84-87.
109 Kang, Black Umbrella, 53-54.
110 Ibid., 115; Yim, Forty Year Fight, 55, 66; Government-General of Chosen, Administration of Chosen 1926-27, 105-106.
chun, to give her a Korean history book. Reluctantly, given the consequences she might face if caught, he lent her a copy of a book called *Dong-guk Yuk-sa* [East Asian History.] Despite the title, it was primarily about Korea. The group met nightly to read the books, absorbing as much information about the history of Korea as they could. They did this until the Japanese teachers at their school began to suspect something, at which point they buried the books and waited for their next opportunity to rebel.\(^\text{111}\) Yim and her friends used education, in this case self-education, as a tool of resistance. By reading about Korea’s history they subverted the Japanese desire to suppress such knowledge, and thus acted as resisters through self-education.

Another instance of self-education as resistance is the case of Lee Ha-jeon. On March 10, the independence activist An Chang-ho died. Lee came to his home in Pyongyang to find his mother weeping over An’s death. Lee, guilty that he did not know who An Chang-ho was, did all he could to learn about him. He read An’s works and was inspired by his patriotic stance. Thus he began self-educating by reading Korean literature and writings, such as those of An, or Yi Gwang-su, which had patriotic themes. Lee gathered a group of his friends and they studied Korean literature, history, and folklore. They invited Ham Seok-heon, an independence activist, to speak at some of their meetings, which he did. The group also raised funds to help educate others. They did this all under the guise of a Bible study.\(^\text{112}\) Lee and his group used self-education as a tool of resistance. Ham Seok-heon used education as resistance as well by instructing them further. This shows how education added to the culture of Korean resistance.

While working as a schoolteacher in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Louise Yim actively used education as a tool of resistance. As *naisen ittai* was in full effect, she was prohibited from teaching the Korean language. To circumvent this law she made use of religious classes to teach

\(^{111}\) Yim, *Forty Year Fight*, 60-62.

the Korean language. Additionally, she used education to spread nationalist propaganda advocating for a free Korea by sending her students to certain Sunday schools, where she would also send women posing as Sunday school teachers who spread these messages.\(^{113}\) She also refused to close her school even under orders from the Japanese to vacate and further threats to force her to do so.\(^ {114}\) Such examples show how education contributed to the culture of resistance.

Another example of education as resistance is the school attended by Kim T. As mentioned prior, Kim T. attended Sungin Commercial High School in Pyongyang, a Christian private school started by the prominent anti-Japanese activist Cho Man-sik.\(^ {115}\) After the protectorate treaty there was strong interest in education as a way of asserting and preserving national identity. Evidence of this can be found in writings of the time, such as an essay penned by nationalist journalist Pak Eun-sik in which he said “in a word, we cannot survive in today’s world without promoting education. Our fellow countrymen must rise up, encourage one another, and be of one mind in promoting education for our children.”\(^ {116}\) When the Japanese curtailed efforts to establish compulsory education, there was a major upsurge in newly established private schools, which often were started by Korean patriotic groups.\(^ {117}\) The school Kim T. attended was likely one of the schools. He says of the school that it “heightened our awareness of and pride in being Korean and fostered a sense of active resistance against the Japanese.” Lee Ha-jeon also attended the school, and said that it “fostered a sense of Korean

\(^{113}\) Yim, *Forty Year Fight*, 207.

\(^{114}\) Ibid., 210. Yim was never sure as to why the Japanese never acted on this threat. A company of Japanese troopers came to the school and postured, but left after she said that they would have to bayonet her to close the school.


identity, quite different from public (Japanese-run) schools." Cho Man-sik’s school provides an example of using education as resistance by taking advantage of the private school setting to inculcate a spirit of Korean national identity and foster anti-Japanese sentiment.

Kang Byung-ju and Yi Ok-hyeon recall another example of using education as resistance. Kang and Yi’s husband, Kim Chan-do, attended the Suwon College of Agriculture. Three years prior to Kang’s attendance, there was an uproar caused when the Japanese High Police discovered that some of the Korean students had been teaching farm children. One of these students was Kim Chan-do. The Korean students were supposed to go to farms and teach them how to improve production. However the students instead taught the farmers and their children agriculture, how to read and write, and Korean history. They also introduced to them anti-Japanese ideas. They said that the farmers would be better off if not exploited by the Japanese. They had the children write compositions, some of which indicated a desire for Korean independence. The Japanese High Police received word of this and sought to punish the students. Kim Chan-do was arrested for the act. Again it is shown that education was a tool of resistance as it could be used to inculcate anti-Japanese sentiment and instill national identity.

VI. RESISTANCE OF ESCAPE AND EVASION

One of the simplest ways that a subjugated population can subvert the will of the dominant population is by escaping from and evading it. This can occur in a variety of contexts. It can manifest in fleeing from or hiding from capture after committing an illegal act, fleeing from forced conscription into labor or servitude, or deserting a military or labor force. During the Japanese rule of Korea, many Koreans worked with the Japanese willingly. However, that was

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118 Kang, Black Umbrella, 88.
119 Ibid., 54, 78.
not enough for the goals of Japan, so many Koreans were conscripted into labor. A way to resist Japan was to escape from one of these conscripted jobs, or to evade conscription outright. This is also the case with comfort women. Escape was another way comfort women acted as resisters. As escape is such a prevalent resistance tool, the use of it by comfort women will be discussed in this section rather than in the section focused on them.

The underground group that Louise Yim worked for in the 1930s primarily dealt in aiding Koreans in escaping to Russia, China, and the United States.120 Chin Myeong-hui’s grandfather fled from Korea to Manchuria, and then further to Russia, after engaging anti-Japanese activities.121 Jeong Tae-ik’s grandfather fled to a remote farming community in the mountains when several of his comrades, with whom he had fought alongside in an uibyeong in Gyeongsang province, were caught and executed by the Japanese.122 In 1944, Jeong Jae-soo was drafted to work in the shipyards in the port city of Kobe, Japan. He wished to flee outright but his brother insisted he stay, lest the family be harassed by the Japanese. Due to allied bombings of the shipyards, Jeong decided to leave Kobe, hoping to escape through a Korean spy network of which he had heard rumor. On July 24, 1945, Jeong and a group of other workers reported sick and fled the shipyards. They learned from a Korean in Hamamatsu that they could find a ship in Senzaki. There they stowed away aboard a fishing boat with a Korean captain. They stowed away below deck with the fish for twenty hours until the boat reached a village near Ulsan on the Korean coast.123 As these examples demonstrate, escape was an important means by which Koreans could resist the Japanese, undermining their will in a number of circumstances.

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120 Yim, Forty-Year Fight, 187.
121 Kang, Black Umbrella, 13.
122 Ibid., 13-14.
123 Ibid., 123-129
Hong Eul-soo was a business man, shipping cotton from Busan, Korea, to Osaka, Japan. He formed a group called the “Thirty-sixers,” whose goal was to secretly educate the Korean public about Japanese oppression. As a businessman, he valued connections, and thus befriended a Japanese police officer who was eventually promoted to a detective in the High Police, whose job it was to investigate anti-Japanese agitators. At the start of World War II, his friend warned him that he was on a blacklist of educated Koreans and anti-Japanese activists that would soon be arrested and executed. He advised him to flee. Hong listened to the man and purchased an apple orchard in Gyeongsan, where he moved his family. Hong used forward thinking and connections to evade capture, thwarting the Japanese attempts to put an end to his life for his other resistant acts. Thus, by preventing the Japanese from eliminating resisters, the evasion itself becomes an act of resistance.

Jeong Keum-jae tells a particularly outrageous story of escape. While working at a restaurant in Hwanghae province, he was asked to get rid of a cat that was stealing meat from the store. So he and a friend caught the cat one night and killed it. The next day the local Japanese police chief took him in for questioning. He asked him if he had killed a cat the previous night, to which Jeong answered affirmatively. The chief said that the cat was his favorite cat and for that he would kill Jeong. The chief had him kneel and was holding his samurai sword above Jeong’s head when Jeong kicked the police chief in the chest, and then again in the head and eyes. He fled to Pyongyang, future capital of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (or North Korea.) It took him four days to reach the city, avoiding highways by traveling through the mountains. When he reached the city he took up work as a day laborer. When he returned years later, he learned that he had blinded the police chief who was then recalled to Japan. As the

125 Ibid., 104-106.
unjust execution that was to be committed constitutes a form of oppression and domination, Jeong’s unwillingness to submit to injustice and thus escape said fate is a form of resistance to oppression. Jeong’s story of escape is further evidences how escape and evasion add to the culture of resistance.

Former comfort woman Kim Hak-soon escaped the comfort station when a Korean coin-peddler came to her comfort house in China. He used the comfort house in the same way the soldiers did. When he was leaving, she tried to convince him to help smuggle her. He initially did not wish to do so, but she threatened to scream, and he relented. They were able to escape unnoticed as most soldiers were out on an expedition. They escaped to Shanghai and she eventually made her way back to Korea in 1946. 126 Mun Ok-chu became close with one of the officers at her comfort station in Manchuria. She flirted with him, made garters for him, and cooked for him. The officer asked her to set up in his home outside the comfort station. She used this to her advantage, and told him that her mother was very sick, and if he would let her go see her mother, she would soon return and continue to live with him. He agreed, and was able to secure her a travel permit. 127 Escape was therefore a tool of resistance also utilized by the comfort women. This not only furthers the place of comfort woman in the Korean resistance culture, but also the use of escape as a powerful form of resistance.

Yun Doo-ri, another former comfort woman, did not manage to escape but did attempt to do so. One day, a Korean born in Japan came to the comfort station hoping to find a way to help. He could not figure out a way to smuggle her out, but did give her ten yen, a significant sum at the

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127 Ibid., 107-108. Though Mun did make it to Korea she was unfortunately tricked into going back to the comfort houses when a friend told her the she had secured a job in a restaurant in Busan. The restaurant turned out to be a comfort station run by Koreans collaborating with the Japanese. From there, she was sent to a comfort station in Burma where she remained until the end of World War II.
time. With the money in hand she enlisted two friends in her escape plot. The three women convinced the cook to buy them several bottles of wine. They used them to get a couple of station guards drunk, while pouring out their wine in a bowl under the table. Once the guards were asleep, the women fled. Eager to escape, it did not occur to them that they should take the darkened back streets. They instead opted to take a streetcar and were soon apprehended. Even though their escape attempt failed, these women still acted as resisters. The will of their Japanese captors was, of course, for them to remain captive at the comfort house. Even in attempting to escape, the women subverted the will of their captors and thus contributed to the culture of resistance and defiance.

Pak Sung-pil relates another story of escape and evasion. He tells the story of his aunt, Pak Sun-cheon, a schoolteacher from Masan. She was asked by one of the thirty-three signers of the Korean Declaration of Independence to distribute copies of the declaration and lead a demonstration in Masan. She did so, which led to her arrest by the Japanese. One of her student’s parents knew the warden of the prison, and she was able to escape as he turned a blind eye. The same student’s Grandfather found her a hiding place in the village of Suncheon. One evasion tactic she used was hiding her identity; she changed her name from Pak Myeong-yeol to Pak Sun-cheon. She later escaped to Tokyo to hide. Though it was a risky place to hide, she wished to get a higher education. Her ploy failed and she was arrested again, but was released after a year and a half and was able to get an education in Tokyo. Pak’s escape from custody and her attempts to hide show how acts of escape and evasion enhanced the culture of resistance and disrupted the narrative of obedience.

Another mode of resistance in this framework was the evasion of the Japanese labor and service drafts. Japan, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, forcibly drafted Koreans for labor, military service, and women for the comfort houses (typically under the pretense of a factory labor draft.) Many Koreans did what they could to avoid these programs.\textsuperscript{130} Louise Yim recounts that when World War Two began and the Japanese called for Korean youth to enlist in labor battalions, most refused. Thus the Japanese followed by ordering a nationwide conscription. Koreans resisted these efforts by resisting through self-injury. Some would mutilate themselves by removing fingers, and others would starve themselves.\textsuperscript{131} When word reached Yi Soon-ok’s village that Korean girls were being offered to the Japanese government by local Japanese authorities as comfort women, a plan was devised to prevent Yi from suffering the same fate. Her father and uncle registered her for marriage with her uncle’s friend Mr. Pak. This would remain on record until she actually married, at which point the registration would be withdrawn.\textsuperscript{132} Acts like these deprived the Japanese of labor and service that they desired to facilitate their war effort. Therefore such acts of evasion, by subverting the desires of Japan and impairing their war effort, add to the culture of anti-Japanese resistance.

 VII. RESISTANCE ON PAPER

Another form of resistance was resistance on paper; that is, resistance that was expressed through written or printed material. This could be anything that could be put to paper, such as press material or literature. One example of resistance on paper is through circulated publications such as newspapers or magazines. On November 20, 1905, two days after it was announced that

\textsuperscript{130} Brandon Palmer, “Imperial Japan's Preparations to Conscript Koreans as Soldiers, 1942-1945,” \textit{Korean Studies} 31 (2007): 63-78. http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy2.library.arizona.edu/stable/23720161; Howard, \textit{True Stories}, 11-20.\textsuperscript{131} Yim, \textit{Forty Year Fight}, 211.\textsuperscript{132} Howard, \textit{True Stories}, 116. This ruse was kept up until Yi’s uncle died, thus losing contact with Mr. Pak. They moved, and Yi was ultimately deceived into becoming a comfort women under the pretense of factory work.
the Korean-Japanese Treaty had been signed, Jang Ji-yeon released an editorial that appeared in the *Hwangseong Sinmun* [Imperial Capital News] titled “We Wail Today.” In it he decried Japan and the Korean government for allowing Korea to become “slaves to foreigners.” Louise Yim recalls that the creation of two Korean language newspapers, the *Chosun Ilbo* [Korea Daily] and the *Dong-a Ilbo* [East Asia Daily] as being an inspiration to Korean nationalists. The publication of these newspapers occurred under the *bunka sieji*, or “cultural policy,” that Japan instituted in response to the March First Movement. Despite their being censored by the Japanese, for Koreans like Yim it was enough that they represented a reflection of Korean identity and culture through the Korean language. In 1931 the *Chosun Ilbo* published chapters of Sin Chae-ho’s *Ancient History*, which had nationalistic undercurrents and constructed Korean history and people as having a distinct identity, contrary to Japanese sources that conflated Korean and Japanese history and heritage.

Another example of a Korean language publication was *Hangul* magazine, which was published in 1927 and then again in 1932. The editor, Yi Yun-jae, was a nationalist and his work on the magazine reflected this mindset and his desire to distinguish the Korean identity through language. In these ways written publications, such as newspapers and magazines, and the articles within them, assert a distinct Korean identity through language and content, defying Japanese assimilationism and contributing to the culture of resistance.

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134 Yim, *Forty Year Fight*
136 Yim, *Forty Year Fight*
Resistance can also be expressed on paper through pamphlets or fliers, particularly as they are easy to covertly distribute. One prominent instance of this was during the March First Movement. The Movement was touched off when thirty-three Korean nationalists and intellectuals signed the Korean Declaration of Independence, and then gathered in a restaurant in Seoul on March 1 to read it aloud to an eager crowd, touching off the demonstrations that followed.\textsuperscript{139} The Declaration called for an end to Japanese rule and the right to self-determine.\textsuperscript{140} The Declaration was spread through couriers carrying pamphlets with the text of the Declaration written on them in Korean. Pak Sung-pil relates that one such courier was Mr. Yi Gap-seong, who brought a copy of the declaration to the hands of his aunt, Pak Sun-cheon. Pak made copies of the Declaration and distributed them at demonstrations in Masan.\textsuperscript{141} Louise Yim similarly received a copy of the Declaration from a courier while she was teaching school. This was the one that had fooled the police office that could not read Korean. She was told by another courier to hand out copies of the Declaration in Jeonju, which she did.\textsuperscript{142} The fliers and pamphlets containing the Declaration played a major role in inciting the March First Movement. In this way, pamphlets and fliers operated as tools to subvert the will of the dominant class through the spread of messages and information.

Another way of expressing written resistance was through literature. One author worth examining is Yi Gwang-su. Yi courts controversy because of his collaboration with the Japanese in the latter portion of his career. He was targeted by the Japanese as part of their assimilation campaign due to his literary fame. Despite this, Yi was an independence activist around the time

\begin{footnotes}
\item[139] Seth, A History of Korea, 268.
\item[141] Kang, Black Umbrella, 22.
\item[142] Yim, Forty Year Fight,
\end{footnotes}
of the March First Movement and worked with the Korean government in exile in Shanghai.\footnote{Lee, \textit{Sourcebook of Korean Civilization}, 490.} Yi’s written works have notable overtones of nationalism, such as in his novel, \textit{The Heartless}, published in 1917. The main character of \textit{Heartless}, a man named Hyeong-sik, aspires to become an educator. He wishes to do so that he can help strengthen his nation and his people by increasing their knowledge.\footnote{Yi Gwang-su, \textit{The Heartless}, published in \textit{Maeil Sinbo} [Daily News] in 1917, excerpted in \textit{Modern Korean Literature: An Anthology}, ed. Peter H. Lee (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 2-15} The themes of nationalism and Koreans strengthening Koreans disrupts the Japanese narrative of Korea as part of and dependent on Japan. Despite his contentious legacy as a collaborator, Yi’s work still contributed to the culture of resistance.

Poetry is another form of literature that can act as a tool of resistance. One example of resistance poetry is a piece by the writer Sim Hun. Sim took part in the March First Movement when he was a high school student, landing him in jail for four months.\footnote{Peter H. Lee, ed., \textit{Modern Korean Literature: An Anthology} (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 75.} In 1932, Sim Hun attempted to publish a collection of poems titled “When That Day Comes.” The Japanese censors prevented the collection from being published.\footnote{Lee, \textit{Sourcebook of Korean Civilization}, 491.} The titular poem of the collection expresses Sim’s anxious anticipation for a future Korea liberated from Japanese rule:

\begin{quote}
When that day comes
Mount Samgak will rise and dance,
The waters of Han will rise up.

If that day comes before I perish,
I will soar like a crow at night
and pound the Chongno bell with my head.
The bones of my skull
will scatter, but I shall die in joy.

When that day comes at last
I’ll roll and leap and shout on the boulevard
and if joy still stifles within my breast
I’ll take a knife
\end{quote}
and skin my body and make
a magical drum and march with it
in the vanguard. O procession!
Let me once hear that thundering shout,
my eyes can close then.\textsuperscript{147}

Sim’s poem, expressing anticipatory elation over prospective Korean liberation contributes to the culture of resistance with its nationalistic imagery and anti-colonial messages, which were enough for the Japanese to prevent its circulation.

Another resistance poet was Yi Sang-hwa. He published the poem “Does Spring Come to Stolen Fields?” in 1926. The poem serves as the epigraph for this paper. Yi’s poem expresses agony over colonial rule, lamenting that “the land is no longer our own.” In the poem he expresses a desire to inhabit land and experience the springtime, but grieves as he cannot, for the land and the spring have been stolen.\textsuperscript{148} Symbolically this represents a desire for Korea to be free from Japanese rule, which he would find joyous. Yi’s emotional piece is another example of the contributions poetry made towards the culture of Korean resistance.

In the work of Kim So-weol is another example of poetry as resistance. Kim’s poems are permeated by a sense of regret and longing.\textsuperscript{149} The palpable sorrow of his poem “Azaleas” invokes the remorse felt by Koreans over the subjugation of the country and people.\textsuperscript{150}

\begin{quote}
When you leave,
weary of me,
without a word I shall gently let you go.

From Mount Yak
in Yeongbyeon,
I shall gather armfuls of azaleas
and scatter them on your way.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{149} Lee, \textit{Korean Literature}, 25.

\textsuperscript{150} Lee, \textit{Sourcebook of Korean Civilization}, 491.
Step by step
on the flowers placed before you
tread lightly, softly as you go.

When you leave,
weary of me,
though I die, I’ll not let one tear fall.\(^{151}\)

By using poetry to lament Korea’s domination by Japan, Kim’s work also added to the culture of resistance by means of literary art.

**VIII. RESISTANCE ELSEWHERE**

Because we are dealing with resistance that is not organized, brought on mostly by individuals with differing agendas and circumstances, it stands to reason that not every act of resistance fits into a category of its own. This section details other acts of resistance; ones that do not fit into any specific section. This illustrates the complexity of resistance, in that it manifests in many different ways and places. This furthers the notion that examining resistance in narrow terms limits the dissection of the resistance concept. If resistance is only examined through the frame of organization, only certain types or resistance that can be accomplished by an organized group, usually with specific political motives, are accounted for. Remove this frame, and resistance manifests in many forms, all of which contribute to a culture of existence that exists on a social level.

One such method of resistance is the use of coded language. Kim T., who struck with his classmates over school rules as an expression of anti-Japanese feelings, experienced this. As previously mentioned, the school he attended was founded by a notable anti-Japanese activist

Cho Man-sik, Cho would often come to the school to give talks. Although he was unable to openly advocate resistance, or criticize the Japanese presence, he was able to communicate so through code. Cho selected specific sermons from the Christian Bible to make his messages known. Though he did not explicitly speak against Japan and encourage resistance, Kim T. explains that they “did not mistake his message.” It was messages like these that were part of what encouraged Kim T. and his classmates to strike. Louise Yim recounts another story of using coded messages. She too utilized the bible to send her messages. In her case it was by performing in a play at her school. She played the role of the Queen Esther, pleading with the King Ahasuerus to save the Jews. To her, the lines were a thinly veiled reference to Korea’s plight, a fact that was not lost on the audience. The use of coded language, as it exists on the hidden transcript, is refutable if observed. Yet messages that encourage resistance and defiance are still sent and received, and thus actors like Cho Man-sik and Louise Yim can contribute to the culture of resistance with little fear of reprisal.

Another form of resistance was the use of rumor and slander to perpetuate anti-Japanese sentiment. Kang Byung-ju explains that the Japanese established public schools in larger towns and cities. He remembers hearing rumors that the Japanese teachers were very strict and severe, and would punish children by beating them with whips made from acacia branches. He also heard that the Japanese teachers would put nails through boards and roll children over them. The stories, he says, were not true, but lies spread by loyal Koreans attempting to discourage attendance to the public schools and foster anti-Japanese sentiment. Slander and rumor can be used by the subordinate class to defame, discredit, and villainize the dominant class. In this way,

[153] Yim, *Forty Year Fight*, 55-56
Koreans were able to foster the culture of resistance by perpetuating slanderous rumors of cruelty and brutality. Similar to slander and rumor, another method of resistance comes in the form of insults. Louise Yim recalls that they used to refer to the Japanese as *waenom*, which she translates as “Island Savages.” Insults also serve to defame their targets and contributed to the culture of resistance by perpetuating anti-Japanese sentiment.

Another form resistance took was criminal activity. Song Seok-chi owned a leather store in Gyeonggi province. When the Second World War came, the Japanese banned the use of leather, instead manufacturing imitation leather made of compacted layers of newspaper. Struggling to bypass this, she used the black market to secure genuine leather. Eventually this led to her being arrested by the Japanese for economic crimes, though she was able to leave with the help of her brother. Crime constitutes resistance because it, just as any other act of resistance, subverts the will of the ruling authority, who seek to prevent such acts. Because crime undermines the will of the dominant class, it is an act of resistance when committed by the subordinate class against them.

Louise Yim recalls another instance in which the Korean language worked as a tool of resistance. Shortly before the March First demonstrations, Yim was teaching in her class when she was given, by a courier, a copy of the Korean Declaration of Independence and instructions for to be copied and distributed amongst the populace on March 1. Shortly thereafter, a police officer came to the classroom inquiring after the messenger’s purpose. She told him the man was just a beggar and that he was of no consequence. To cover, she asked one of her students to read the Ten Commandments aloud, and handed him the copy of the Declaration. The student examined the paper, understood, and began to recite the Ten Commandments from memory, as

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156 Ibid., 72.
the police office scrutinized the paper but ultimately did nothing. What occurred did not initially register to Yim, but she soon realized that the police officer was unable to read Korean, and thus fell for the ruse.\textsuperscript{157} Therefore the Korean language could operate in a resistance capacity not just as an expression of ethnic and cultural identity but also as a tool of deceit.

Another place where resistance could occur was within prison or jail. Louise Yim, along with ten other girls, was arrested in 1919 in Jeonju by the Japanese in connection to the March First independence demonstrations. When there, she and the other prisoners were fed food of which she said “It was the color of vomit and it smelled like vomit.” When given the food, Yim refused. The other girls joined her. The group went on a four day hunger strike until a doctor told the guards they would have to feed the girls better or else they could not get confessions. After that, the guards brought them food that had been brought to the jail by their families.\textsuperscript{158} During interrogations the guards subjected the girls to tortures such as simulated drowning and beatings. The girls did not tell the Japanese anything. Every thirty days they were brought to trial and asked to plead guilty, to which they refused and were thus brought back to prison for more torture. This went on until public outcry at their imprisonment led to the posting of a bond for their release.\textsuperscript{159} The acts of Yim and the other ten girls demonstrate how prison can be a place of resistance. By engaging in a hunger strike, and refusing to admit guilt, the group defied the will of the Japanese who hoped to make an example of them to other resisters. By asserting their agency and preventing the Japanese from achieving their goals in constructing a narrative of guilt, Yim and the other girls further expanded the culture of resistance. As Yim describes it, “during all this time we had never stopped fighting the Japanese.”\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{157} Yim, \textit{Forty Year Fight}, 104-105.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 119-120.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 121-124.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 124.
IX. Resistance in the Comfort House

Between 1930 and 1945 the Japanese military forcibly drafted thousands of women for the purpose of becoming military sex slaves, euphemistically referred to by the Japanese as ianfu, or “comfort women.” Most of these women were Koreans, the number of which is estimated at upwards of 200,000 women. Most of these women were taken to “comfort stations” across East Asia and the Pacific, where they were forced to sexually service the Japanese military. The reasons for this were to increase morale amongst the Japanese troops, avoid venereal infections from local brothels, and to discourage Japanese soldiers from raping the inhabitants of invaded territories which could incur anti-Japanese sentiment. To draft these women, the Japanese used tactics varying from deceitful claims of paid employment in Japan, to outright forceful abduction. Being in extremely confining circumstances, the world of the comfort women is not readily regarded as a place of resistance. However, just as James Scott shows in the case of American slaves, highly restricted conditions do not preclude resistance. Indeed the comfort women, utilizing what tools were available to them, were able to exert agency and thwart their Japanese captors, thus contributing significantly to the culture of Korean resistance.

One way comfort women resisted was by committing acts of violence against their captors. Hwang Geum-joo relates a story in which one of the comfort women bit one of the soldier’s penises after he demanded fellatio. This act of resistance led to the woman being beaten and shot to death. This violent punishment demonstrates how important it was to the Japanese to maintain obedience and submission amongst the comfort women. While the punishment was

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162 Ibid., 11.
163 Ibid., 13-14
164 Ibid., 18-19.
meant to show the futility of defiance, this woman’s act and its public acknowledgement does th contrary, serving to disrupt the narrative of compliance the Japanese were attempting to construct, which therefore added to the culture of resistance that they were trying to quell.

Yi Yeong-sook relates another act of violence in which she beat up the wife of the comfort station’s Japanese proprietor for calling her a “Korean bitch.” Yun Doo-ri recounts a particularly striking incident the first time a soldier visited her. When he pulled her forward, she throttled him. He pushed her away and the two began struggling. When he attempted to remove her clothing she kicked him in the chest, sending him into the wall. When he returned she began biting him until he took her outside and began to beat her. She managed to kick him the testicles, at which point he was incapacitated and she was left alone for a few days. Soon after she was brought to another officer. When he began to rape her she bit off part of his cheek. Both the stories of Yi and Yun further illustrate the resistance of violence towards captors, and how this defied the Japanese attempts to maintain submission and passivity among the comfort women.

Another way the comfort women exerted agency and resisted was by voicing protest. Jeong Seo-woon recalls refusing to obey the Japanese, which led to her being cut with their swords. Ha Soon-nyeo remembers that younger girls brought to the camp were more likely to refuse and were thus sent away to other camps in Shanghai. Choi Myeong-soon, in addition to refusing, protested by wearing her skirt over her face when soldiers were with her. Yi Sang-ok recalls being frequently abused and beaten because of resistant acts such as refusing the demands of soldiers, treating them coldly, and fleeing from them. Such acts of protest and refusal are

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166 Howard, True Stories, 55.
167 Kim-Gibson, Silence Broken, 185-186.
168 Ibid., 52.
169 Howard, True Stories, 61.
170 Ibid., 173.
171 Ibid., 128-129.
another way in which comfort women asserted their agency, contributing to the culture of resistance by further disrupting the compliance narrative.

Hwang Geum-joo was tricked into becoming a comfort woman under the pretense of a Japanese factory labor draft. After the first night in captivity, she was taken to an officers quarters where he demanded she have sex with him. She refused, and when he threatened her life, she insisted she “would rather die.” On a later night, when an officer demanded fellatio from her, she again insisted that she would rather die and further that she was “not a dog.” While Hwang did not succeed in preventing the soldier’s assault, her acts of protest are still clearly acts of resistance. Just because a soldier is killed in battle does not mean that he is seen as not having fought. Hwang describes another time in which her womb was injured and bleeding and she refused one of the soldiers. In return he demanded fellatio, to which she responded by saying, “I’d rather eat your shit than suck you.” For this he beat her into a three day coma. By voicing protest, even under threat of physical reprisal and no hope that her defiance would stave off her attacker, Hwang asserted her agency and defied the will of her captors, who expected silent acquiescence. By defying the will of the Japanese and, disrupting the narrative of compliance, her protest and refusal strengthened to the culture of resistance.

Due to the Japanese attitudes towards the Korean language, language became another tool of resistance used by comfort women. Yi Yeong-sook relates her experience in which, en route to a comfort station in Guangdong, China, she was told she was not allowed to speak Korean. Though she spoke Japanese, she still communicated in Korean to those who could not, in spite of the rule. Later, at the comfort station, again in spite of the rule, Yi began to sing a

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173 Ibid., 23.
174 Howard, *True Stories*, 76.
Korean folk song. She was beaten by the proprietor for the act, as he feared the soldiers might think she was insulting them.\textsuperscript{175} Choe Myeong-soon also recalls being beaten for speaking Korean instead of Japanese.\textsuperscript{176} Yoon Tu-ri swore in Korean at soldiers, knowing they couldn’t understand.\textsuperscript{177} This shows that the use of the Korean language was another way to disrupt Japanese domination and another contribution to the culture of resistance.

Another story told by Yi Yeong-sook gives an example of resistance through deceit. Yi explains that in the comfort station the women received regular medical check-ups. Before these check-ups they were supposed to bathe with salt-water. Yi fooled the doctors by not bathing before examination, as a way to feign illness and thus be hospitalized. She did this to avoid servicing the soldiers for a time, and to decrease the number of injuries she received from the constant assaults. In this way Yi asserted her agency through charade, exploiting the medical standards of the comfort station doctors to avoid servicing soldiers, surreptitiously contributing to the culture of resistance.\textsuperscript{178} Similar to Yi’s strategy, Yoon Tu-ri used delaying tactics to resist the Japanese. She insisted on washing after each soldier, and intentionally prolonged her washing sessions to avoid servicing as many soldiers as she would have to otherwise.\textsuperscript{179}

Another example of deceit is relayed by Yi Sang-ok. She describes being led away from a comfort station in Palau by her captors due to American bombing. An American plane flew over the fleeing group, strewing leaflets through the jungle. The leaflets said, in Korean, that Koreans should exit the jungle with their hands up. One of the soldiers asked her what the leaflets said. In secret defiance, she claimed she was unable to read it as she was illiterate.\textsuperscript{180} They were soon

\textsuperscript{175} Howard, \textit{True Stories}, 51-52.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 173.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 189.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 188.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 132.
rescued by American troops. Yi presents another example of utilizing deceit to defy the Japanese.

While violence against their captors was one form of a resistance utilized by comfort women, another method of violence they used was self-violence. Yi Teong-nam attempted suicide by drinking hair-dye, while a fellow comfort woman tried to kill herself by taking drugs. Yi Yong-nyeo recalls a woman killing herself by drinking saké mixed with opium. One comfort woman, anonymous, remembers multiple instances of suicide at her comfort station. Suicide constitutes a major act of resistance because it subverts the will of the captors. It was the will of the Japanese captors that the women remain alive so that they could be used by the soldiers. This is made clear by the prominence of medical support at the comfort station, with examinations and treatments regularly administered to the women. Therefore, committing suicide was in defiance of the Japanese will. Even attempted suicide was a defiant act that constitutes resistance. Depriving the Japanese of their sexual slaves through suicide is another way in which comfort women were able to assert their will in defiance of the Japanese, thus contributing to the culture of Korean resistance to Japan.

X. CONCLUSION: RESISTANCE IN MEMORY

One issue must be acknowledged before proceeding, and it is that of source veracity. Stories of subjugation, tragedy, and colonization are inevitably going to be colored by emotion and could conceivably contain bias or exaggeration. Furthermore, as many of the sources on the Korean experience during colonial rule are stories told after the fact, there exists the issue of

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181 Howard, True Stories, 140.
182 Ibid., 146.
183 Kim-Gibson, Silence Broken, 141.
184 Howard, True Stories, 22-23.
accurate memory. Moreover it is possible that some sources may adjust their accounts to better make political statements, especially if their accounts involve an issue that is currently under public scrutiny, such as the comfort women issue. While it is impossible to fully assess the reliability of the sources there is no reason to discount them. For one, these accounts are representative of the overall collective memory of colonial rule, and thus perpetuate the memory of colonial rule. Secondly, in the case of potential alteration to better suit political goals, it’s worth considering this as its own form of resistance. Fitting the description of events to make a more salient statement about Japanese domination or atrocity perpetuates the culture of resistance to Japan and would thus remain a valid source in this regard even if given a question of veracity.  

A final important facet of resistance to imperialism is resistance through memory. By keeping the memory of the Japanese colonization, and Japan’s actions therein, alive, Koreans continue to resist Japanese imperialism into the present. Resistance through memory is particularly important in the case of Korea because of the forces stacked against the memory of colonial rule. For one, the Japanese are often reluctant to address wrongs committed during the colonial period. Under the administration of the current Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzō Abe, efforts have been made to rewrite Japanese history to be less apologetic and focus forward by ignoring the wrongs of the past. Furthermore, South Korea’s own government has, at times, avoided addressing Japan’s actions for fear of destabilizing economic ties, especially during the

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185 Significantly, most of the sources corroborate well with the known history of colonial rule. The only questions of veracity found for this work seemed to occur in the case of some former comfort women accusing others of exaggerating or lying. For instance, some say that there were certain things women would have been killed for; thus, if they say they did so they must be lying. Or, some say that stories in which pregnancy occurred can’t be accurate. It is impossible to precisely account for whether or not every claim is true, but it is clear that not every comfort station was created equal and that not every woman received the same treatment, so differences in severity would, in my opinion, be more likely attributed to these discrepancies than to outright fabrication.

controversial presidency of Park Chung-hee.\footnote{Hundt and Bleiker, “Reconciling Colonial Memories,” \textit{Asian Perspective}, 68-69.} However, maintaining the memory of the violence and traumas associated with the colonial past is necessary in order to understand modern cultural and diplomatic tensions—tensions that could be further exacerbated if the memory were to fall by the wayside.\footnote{Ibid., 66.} Therefore resistance through memory is all the more important in the face of such these external threats.

Resistance through collective memory is of particular importance when such memories are under threat of loss or alteration. Such is the case with Korea’s experience under colonial rule. Such threats might include political or economic pressures to ignore the past; such as the Prime Minister of Singapore urging countries to forget the events of World War II (especially the issue of comfort women) for the sake of regional unity; or China and South Korea avoiding addressing issues to avoid alienating Japan as an economic partner;\footnote{David Brunnstrom, “Japan, Neighbors Must Put World War Two Behind Them: Singapore PM,” \textit{Reuters}, June 24, 2014; Kim-Gibson, \textit{Silence Broken}, 6, 99.} From 1961 until his assassination in 1979, South Korean military strongman Park Chung-hee made substantial efforts to increase South Korea and Japan’s economic ties while avoiding any discussion of reconciliation between the two nations over the colonial past.\footnote{Hundt and Bleiker, “Reconciling Colonial Memories,” \textit{Asian Perspective}, 68-69.} There is also the concern of historical revisionism, engaged in by parties seeking to alter the portrayal of historical facts motivated by politics and/or ideology. This has been a significant issue in Japan in recent years, under the conservative administration of current Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzō Abe. Abe’s administration has made an effort to “pursue a more openly nationalistic agenda,” which includes the revision of Japanese middle and high school textbooks to reflect a more patriotic view of Japanese history. Edits to the textbooks include removing references to the comfort women as
being forced into service; downplaying or removing reference to the infamous Nanjing Massacre, or Rape of Nanjing, in which the Japanese military killed and raped thousands of unarmed Chinese civilian; and generally softening the discussion of Japanese aggression during and prior to World War II.¹⁹¹ There are even some on the Japanese far-right who suggest that the comfort women were merely prostitutes and deny the very occurrence of the Rape of Nanjing. Such assertions are refuted by nearly all in the scholarly community.¹⁹² Abe’s government has also expressed intentions to revise two statements made by the Japanese: the 1993 “Kono statement,” an apology made by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono after a Japanese government study concluded that the comfort women had been coerced and forced into servitude; and the 1995 “Muruyama statement,” in which the then Prime Minister of Japan, Tomiichi Muruyama, apologized for the victims of Japanese imperialism and military aggression during and prior to World War II.¹⁹³ These statements are already considered by some to not go far enough as admissions of guilt, which makes the revisionist positions held by Abe’s administration all the more troubling.¹⁹⁴

Koreans telling the stories of their lives during colonial rule is one form of resisting through memory. Many of the sources used in this paper fit this mold. Korean independence activist Louise Yim tells the story of her life throughout occupation and into the fifties. She recounts her resentment of the Japanese and provides many examples of the ways in which she felt she and her people were mistreated by them.¹⁹⁵ The interviewees in Under the

¹⁹⁴ Kim-Gibson, Silence Broken, 103-104.
¹⁹⁵ Yim, Forty Year Fight, 17-313.
Black Umbrella, an oral history of the occupation compiled by Hildi Kang, also resist through memory. Many recount injustices they—or their relatives—faced from the Japanese, the anger they felt towards them, and ways they resisted. Others simply describe their lives during the colonial period. Both of them resist by ensuring that the story of Korea under colonial rule will be preserved in collective memory and not be lost to time or revision.

Other ways of perpetuating the memory of colonial rule can even be found in popular media. Media’s place in collective memory is important because it is both able reach a mass audience and utilizes narrative forms that are characteristically emotional, which appeals to said audience. Accounts of the colonial period do not seem to be widespread in Korean popular entertainment, possibly due to a sense of shame felt by Koreans over the occupation. However exceptions do exist, as in the case of two Korean television serials. One of these is a thirty-seven episode serial drama called Eye of the Dawn. The series, which depicts events from the Japanese colonial period to the Korean War, deals with Korean resistance to Japanese rule. It also contains scenes depicting the rounding up of women to work at the comfort stations, and a central character who is a former comfort woman. Another is a twenty-eight episode television serial drama called Gaksital [Bridal Mask]. Broadcast in 2012, the drama tells the story of Lee Kang-to, a Korean police officer working for the Japanese colonial government in 1930s Seoul. He becomes a vigilante that dons a traditional Korean bridal mask to secretly fight against the Japanese and liberate Korea. By reproducing stories of colonial rule in popular culture, pieces

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196 Kang, Black Umbrella, 1-147.
of entertainment like *Gaksital* and *Eye of the Dawn*, serve to perpetuate the culture of resistance through memory.

Important figures in the memory of Japanese colonial rule as resistance are the former comfort women, survivors of Japan’s extensive military sexual slavery program. The issue of Korean comfort women has long been a taboo subject, swept under the rug for a number of social and political reasons. For one, comfort women in Korea felt strong pressure to hide their stories. Korea has had a longstanding cultural adherence to Confucian moral codes, and is affected by longstanding gender biases. Chastity was seen as an extremely important aspect of a Korean woman’s life. Sexual violation was associated strongly with sexual promiscuity. Therefore former comfort women were often seen as bringing shame to their families and their people. While some felt this shame, some did not. However they did not report because they did not wish to hurt their families or because their families pressured or even threatened them into not reporting. While these values are experiencing significant shifts due to the onset of rapid economic transformation and increasingly educated younger generations, their influence is still prevalent. The issue of comfort women has also been suppressed by both the Japanese and South Korean governments. The Japanese have long avoided the issue, preferring not to confront their own wartime aggression. Attempts have been made in Japan to soften the issue, including the Abe administration’s alteration of textbooks which included the removal of a drawing of a woman being taken away and the addition of the line “no proof of forced abduction has been

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201 Howard, *True Stories*, vi.
found.” As mentioned, the South Korean government has avoided the issue much in part so as
not to disturb their vital economic partnership with Japan.

In 1991 Kim Hak-soon gave the first public testimony of a former comfort woman. Since
then, many more former comfort women have made their stories known. Many of these stories
have been collected in interviews, oral histories, and documentaries, such as: The Korean
Comfort Women Who Were Coercively Dragged Away for the Military, a Korean text compiled
by the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, and the
English translation of the stories within it called True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women; and
Silence Broken, the title of the oral history compiled by Dai Sil Kim-Gibson as well as its
accompanying documentary of the same name.

Many of the former comfort women also regularly attend the so called “Wednesday
Demonstrations,” in which protesters gather every Wednesday at noon in front of the Japanese
Embassy in Seoul. They began on January 8, 1992, and continue to today, making them “the
longest running weekly demonstration in South Korea.” On December 14, 2011, the one
thousandth Wednesday of protest, a statue of a young Korean girl, representing the comfort
women, was erected outside the embassy as a further reminder of the tragedy. A similar statue
has been erected in Glendale, California. Some former comfort women, and those working on
their behalf, engage in activism beyond the protests. For example, after Kim Hak-soon gave her

207 Ibid., 101.
210 Donald Kirk, “Island Dispute, ‘Comfort Women’ Statue Put Edge on Japan-South Korea Ties,” The Christian
comfort-woman-statue-put-edge-on-Japan-South-Korea-ties.
testimony, she and two other comfort women launched a lawsuit against the Japanese government demanding reparations. They were joined by many more.\textsuperscript{212} The survivors of the comfort women system, and those working on their behalf, have become prominent figures in advocacy against sexual violence the exploitation of women worldwide.\textsuperscript{213} By shining a light on the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery through testimony, protest, and other activism, the former comfort women and those that work on their behalf perpetuate the culture of Korean resistance through memory.

By drawing from the concepts put forth in James C. Scott’s work on resistance, particularly the book \textit{Domination of the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts}, one finds an enormous diversity in the ways a subordinate population—and the individuals therein—can resist the dominant power. These ways of resisting extend outside the forms of resistance limited to organized group activity and acts of violence against the dominant group. By utilizing this framework to examine acts resistance in the experiences of children, educators, escapers, evaders, writers, poets, comfort women, and others that lived during the Japanese colonial period of Korean history, there is enough evidence to support the collective existence of a Korean resistance culture. Resistance through memory extends the life of the culture of resistance into the modern day. By reproducing through memory, the Korean resistance culture has the capacity to inform and influence modern-day and future international relations, politics, diplomacy, human rights activism, and culture within the East Asian subregion and worldwide.

\textsuperscript{212} Kim-Gibson, \textit{Silence Broken}, 101.
\textsuperscript{213} Moon, “South Korean Movements,” 310-327.
Bibliography


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지금은 남의 땅.
떼앗긴 들에도 봄은 오는가?

나는 온몸에 햇살을 받고,
푸른 햇살 푸른 들이 맞붙은 곳으로,
가르마 같은 논길을 따라 풀 속을 가듯 걸어간 간다.

입술을 다문 하늘아, 들아,
내 맘에는 나 혼자 온 것 같지를 않구나!
내가 끝었느냐, 누가 부르느냐. 담담워. 말을 해 다오.

바람은 내 귀에 속삭이며,
한 자국도 섞지 마라, 옥자락을 흔들고.
종다리는 올타리 너머 아씨같이 구름 뒤에서 반갑다 웃네.

고맙게 잘 자란 보리밭아,
간밤 잔그림이 닳아 내린 고운 밤
너는 삼단 같은 머리를 감았구나. 내 머리조차 가득하다. 희망의 문화

혼자라도 가쁘게나 가자.
마른 눈을 안고 도는 착한 도장이
것먹이 닦래는 노래를 하고, 제 혼자 여계출만 추고 가네.

나비, 제비야, 감치지 마라.
만드라마, 들마꽃에도 인사를 해야지.
아주까리기름을 바른 이가 지심 때던 그 들이라 다 보고 싶다.

내 손에 호미를 쥐어 다오.
삶진 것가슴과 같은 부드러운 이 풀을
발목이 사료도 밖아도 보고, 좋은 꽃조차 풀리고 싶다.

강가에 나온 아이와 같이,
짧도 모르고 끝도 없이 맡는 내 혼아.
무엇을 찾느냐, 어디로 가느냐, 웃어حماية, 담을 하러무나.

나는 온몸에 꽃잎을 떠고,
푸른 옷술, 푸른 설움이 어우러진 사이로.
다리를 져며 하루를 걷는다. 아마도 봄 신령이 지}$/a과 보다.

그러나 지금은,
들을 빼앗겨 꽃조차 빼앗기겠네.