

THE AMBIGUITY OF VIOLENCE: IDEOLOGY, STATE, AND RELIGION IN THE LATE
CHOSŎN DYNASTY

by

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Abstract

My dissertation focuses on the violence associated with two Korean Catholics from the late Chosŏn dynasty. My first subject, Alexius Hwang Sayŏng, wrote a letter during the anti-Catholic suppression of 1801 to the bishop of Beijing proposing that a Western armada invade Korea to force the Chosŏn state to tolerate Catholicism, only to be arrested and executed for treason. In 1909, my second subject, Thomas An Chunggŭn, assassinated Itō Hirobumi, the first resident-general of Korea, in hopes that his death would lead to the restoration of Korean independence. Through the study of their writings, interrogation reports, court records, public pronouncements, newspapers, missionary letters and journals, I reveal the different types of violence they sought to justify, suffered, and were reacting to.

While Hwang and Neo-Confucian officials both believed that violence could be legitimately deployed in order to actualize the worldviews mandated by their respective religions, the centrality of religion had largely been eclipsed by the secular ideologies of nationalism, Social-Darwinism, and Pan-Asianism, by An's time. This situation led to a struggle within and between An and foreign missionaries over the proper relationship between nation, state, and religion, and eventually to An's decision to kill Itō for both religious and secular reasons, even as the Catholic Church forbade violent resistance to Japan's colonial project.

Through a comparison of the violence associated with Hwang and An, I show that religion can both encourage and discourage violence at the same time, and that its influence can be shaped, magnified, or diminished by secular worldviews, proving the difficulty in simply labeling violence as "religious" or "secular," and the essentially ambiguous nature of violence. I therefore propose that, in contravention to scholars who argue that religion is somehow more violent than secular ideologies, it is not so much whether a type of violence can be labeled as secular or religious, but the contents of that worldview, its relationship with other worldviews within an individual, and the historical context in which it is actualized, that is more important in determining its propensity for violence.

Preface

Chapter 2 contains some material published in my article, “Wicked Officials and Virtuous Martyrs: an Analysis of the Martyr Biographies in Alexius Hwang Sayŏng’s *Silk Letter*.”

Kyohoesa yŏn’gu [Research Journal of Korean Church History], no. 32 (July 2009): 5-30.

Chapters 5 and 6 contain material published in my article, “Chonggyo wa p’ongnyŏk chŏngdangsŏng [Religion and the Justification of Violence].” In *An Chunggŭn yŏn’gu ŭi sŏnggwa wa kwaje* [Issues in the Study of An Chunggŭn], edited by An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe, 207-31. Seoul: Ch’aeryun, 2010. Chapters 7 and 8 contain material published in my article, “Saving Knowledge: Catholic Educational Policy in the late Chosŏn Dynasty.” *Acta Koreana* 11, no. 3 (December 2008): 47-85.

I translated Hwang Sayŏng’s *Silk Letter*, as well as some sections from his interrogation records, in collaboration with Professor Don Baker. I also translated selections from An Chunggŭn’s autobiography and *A Treatise on Peace in the East* in collaboration with Jieun Han. Our translation of *A Treatise on Peace in the East* has been published online at the University of Toronto Centre for the Study of Korea’s website (<http://www.utoronto.ca/csk/prize.html>) and as “A Treatise on Peace in the East.” *Asia* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 48-75. My co-translators and I are currently in the process of preparing both of these translations for publication. Translations of these sources appearing in this dissertation are the ones I undertook with Don Baker and Jieun Han.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Dedication.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
1 Hwang Sayŏng, the Chosŏn Dynasty, and Catholicism in Korea.....	33
2 Violence and the <i>Silk Letter</i>	66
3 Hwang Sayŏng, the <i>Silk Letter</i> , and the Chosŏn State's Persecution of Catholicism....	94
4 Transitions.....	128
5 World Reactions to the Assassination of Itō Hirobumi.....	154
6 The Trial and Execution of An Chunggŭn.....	191
7 An Chunggŭn Tells His Story.....	232
8 An Chunggŭn, Religion, and Violence.....	275
9 Conclusion.....	309
Bibliography.....	319

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the people it treats, in hopes that in some small way, it might help bring something good from the suffering they endured. God grant them rest and peace.

Introduction

Violence is by nature ambiguous. There is something grotesque in the shedding of blood, the breaking of bones, and the destruction of bodies that demands explanation from the highest of moral authorities, such as religion, ideology, and the state, in order for it to be accepted as legitimate. To further our understanding of the relationship between violence and these three sources of moral authority, both in general and in the history of East Asia, this dissertation will take as its subject the lives and times of two Korean Catholics who lived during the latter half of the late Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910). Specifically, I will examine how they justified violence, how violence was justified against them, and how their stories were used in narratives to legitimize the authority of the states that executed them.

This study's first subject, Alexius Hwang Sayŏng (1775-1801), wrote a letter to the Bishop of Beijing during the great anti-Catholic suppression of 1801 asking for help. In his letter, Hwang proposed several plans that he hoped would win tolerance for the Catholic Church in Korea, including inviting a Western armada to invade Korea and threaten the life of the king. Hwang justified his actions by appealing to the authority of the "Lord of Heaven" and his representative on earth, the pope, as well as to the spiritual salvation and earthly benefits Catholicism would make available were it tolerated in Korea. Unfortunately for Hwang, he was informed on, arrested, and the letter was seized. The government justified his execution, and that of his fellow Catholics, by pointing to the threat they posed to the state and to the Confucian morality upon which it rested, and portrayed the foiling of his designs as a great victory, illustrating the government's devotion to Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and legitimizing its rule.

A century later, Thomas An Chunggŭn (1879-1910) found himself in a situation very different from that of Alexius Hwang Sayŏng. He faced, not a sustained persecution of the Catholic Church, but the destruction of his country's independence by the Japanese Empire. An hoped that the Catholic Church would aid him as he pursued non-violent means to build up Korea's strength and secure true autonomy, but his efforts were rebuffed. Though he kept the faith, he found himself increasingly alienated from the French missionaries who led the church in Korea. As Japanese power on the peninsula grew, An turned to violent means, joining a guerilla army and then assassinating Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), the first resident-general of Korea. An hoped that by killing him he would draw attention to the damage he believed Itō was doing to Korea and the region. He believed that once they knew the real situation on the peninsula, either the Japanese emperor would change his country's policy in Korea or the Western empires would intervene on its behalf. In public, An justified his actions by arguing that he was a member of a Korean army who killed Itō in order to win back his country's independence and safeguard peace in East Asia. Privately, he believed that God approved of and directed his actions. However, An failed to even gain a sympathetic hearing for his ideas from Japan or the Western empires, let alone policy reform or intervention.

An Chunggŭn was born more than three quarters of a century after Hwang Sayŏng was executed into a very different Korea. How then is it possible to make a meaningful comparison between them? In fact, it is precisely this chronological gap that promises to make for a fruitful study, as an examination of the violence surrounding the lives of these two men will illustrate the constants and changes in the moral authorities of religion, ideology, and the state in the latter half of the late Chosŏn dynasty. In particular, it is during this time that religious modes of thought, dominant in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Korea, declined in favor of secular

ideology.¹ This transformation is of great importance to this study, as it goes to one of its central theoretical questions of whether there is a difference between the type and intensity of violence justified by religious sources of authority as opposed to secular ones in the Korean context of this time.

The cases of Hwang and An are ideal for comparison because, despite the different times in which they lived, they both faced similar situations that led to the production of neatly parallel sorts of historical records. Both men produced, in their own writings, some of the clearest statements justifying violence to be found in the late Chosŏn dynasty. Likewise, both Hwang and An were interrogated by the very states that they had sought to oppose with violence, and the representatives of these states used the violence Hwang and An justified to legitimize their executions and construct narratives that justified state authority, leaving behind similar historical records that can be examined comparatively. Such parallel records reflecting their similar cases, as well as Hwang and An's common faith, enable a meaningful comparison, while differences, the fact, for instance, that they opposed two different states, a native Korean one in the case of Hwang and a Japanese colonial government in that of An, will make the comparison fruitful, sharpening contrasts and revealing similarities that the apparent differences obscure.

Theoretical Considerations

In order to carry out a comparative study it is necessary to define terms clearly. This is especially true when discussing religion, as there are sharp differences among scholars over what religion is and whether or not there even exists such a category that possesses a single essence

¹ For an overview of the changes experienced by the Catholic community in Korea see Don Baker, "From Pottery to Politics: The Transformation of Korean Catholicism," in *Religion and Society in Korea*, ed. Lewis Lancaster and Richard Payne (Berkeley: Institute for East Asian Studies, University of California, 1998), 127-168.

that would enable the formulation of a universal definition applicable to all times and places.

One thoughtful attempt at creating such an essentialist, universal definition of religion was that of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who described religion as:

1) a system of symbols (2) which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men (3) by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.²

This definition, while certainly deepening our understanding of religion when carefully used, contains, as Talal Asad has argued, serious problems intrinsic to its claim to accurately define religion as a universal category. As Asad shows, this understanding of religion as primarily being about meaning and belief arose during the West's transition into modernity and is founded on its historical experience with Christianity, a religion that places great importance on creeds that define orthodoxy. Therefore, the very idea of "religion" as a category arose out of a specific historical context and in connection to a particular "religion," and to apply that label universally to other times and places that lack the characteristics of that context, or worldviews that emphasize aspects other than metaphysical doctrine, such as ritual or ethics, might lead to inaccuracies and misunderstandings.³ For instance, the focus of popular Japanese religion on obtaining practical benefits through prayer might be categorized as simply a degenerate form of Buddhism mixed with native Shintō practices, leading easily to its dismissal as superstition, or at best, its acceptance as a lesser religion, obscuring its true meaning and importance in the religious life of Japanese people.⁴

² Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 90.

³ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27-54.

⁴ For an excellent study of popular Japanese religion, see Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe, Jr., *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998).

William Cavanaugh, in *The Myth of Religious Violence*, builds on Asad's insights, relating them to the study of religion and violence. Cavanaugh points out that, on one side, there are many scholars like Asad who argue that there is no essentialist category of religion and that the concept of "religion" grew out of the unique historical context of post-Reformation Europe and therefore cannot simply be applied *in toto* to the experiences of other places and times. On the other side, there are scholars who argue that because religion is absolutist, divisive, and irrational, it has a special propensity towards violence. Problematically, such scholars frequently treat religion as an essentialist category that is fundamentally the same in all times and places without actually providing a definition of what they mean by religion, or if a definition of religion is provided, it typically does not adequately differentiate religious and non-religious worldviews. For example, the definition of religion put forward might be broad enough to include nationalism. Despite this, nationalism itself will be excluded because it is "secular," but when it becomes overly absolutist, divisive, irrational, that is to say, illegitimately violent, it will be classified as a religion. Thus, what is meant to be proven is assumed from the outset.⁵

In order then to study the connection between religion and violence I need to show that the concept of religion is a useful analytical tool and provide a definition of religion that differentiates it clearly from other worldviews. I agree with Cavanaugh's and Asad's critique that there exists no reliable essentialist definition of religion. However, positing a working definition of religion is not necessarily essentialist. For instance, William Alston has provided a list of characteristics that scholars have normally associated with religion and contends that when enough of them are present, making that worldview closer to a religion than some other category,

⁵ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-56.

we can speak of it as a religion for the purposes of comparison and study.⁶ In a similar vein, John Hick has applied philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblance" to the study of religion. In explaining this concept, Wittgenstein pointed out that, while what we call "games" lack a single essential feature that identify them as belonging to one specific category and not another, we can still think meaningfully of such a category because what we refer to as "games" share an overlapping network of similar characteristics that allow us to conceptualize them all as the same sort of thing. Hick argues that we can think of religion in the same way.⁷ Thus, as long as we are clear about what we mean by religion, the term itself serves as a useful tool that helps us better understand our subject of study and to compare it to other worldviews

I will therefore develop a working definition of religion in accordance with the questions my dissertation asks. Central to my work is the question: "How have religions and other sources of moral authority been used to justify violence in the Korean context of the latter half of the late Chosŏn dynasty, both in terms of the arguments themselves, as well as how they are put forward and shaped by the particular circumstances of the person or people advancing them?" My second question flows from the first, "Is there a difference in the kind and intensity of violence justified by appeals to religious sources of authority as opposed to non-religious ones in the Korean context of the latter half of the late Chosŏn dynasty?"

To answer these questions it is necessary to make clear what I mean when I label a worldview as religious or non-religious, that is, secular. Since my focus is on the question of

⁶ The characteristics given by Alston can be summarized as follows: (1) belief in a supernatural being, (2) distinguishing between the sacred and the profane, (3) ritual acts focused on sacred objects, (4) moral code sanctioned by the gods, (5) religious feelings connected to rituals and/or the gods, (6) prayer, (7) worldview in which there is a purpose and an individual has a place, (8) an organized way of life connected to this worldview, (9) and a social group bound to it. See William P. Alston, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Company & the Free Press, 1964), s.v. "Religion."

⁷ John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 3-5.

whether or not specific acts of violence are legitimate, I will define what I mean by religious and secular worldviews based on morality. By morality I mean what are considered ideals that are good and worth pursuing for their own sake and the rules that state what ought and ought not to be done in order to achieve them.⁸ I will therefore define what constitutes a religious worldview as opposed to a secular one based on the type of moral authority a worldview recognizes and how the nature of that moral authority determines the content of the morality the adherent of a religion or secular ideology is expected to follow.

According to my definition, in a religion, the content of morality is determined by a moral authority that is taken to be the ultimate ground of reality. Because this moral authority constitutes the ultimate ground of reality, the morality derived from it is understood to transcend time and place and therefore to be always true, that is applicable, always and everywhere. I will refer to non-religious (secular) worldviews as ideologies, which I define as a worldview in which moral authority arises from the human community, with the content of that morality being fundamentally determined within the context of that community without necessarily referring to the ultimate ground of reality. What a person ought and ought not to do is based on whether those actions contribute to the realization by the human community of the ideal called for by the ideology.

My definition of religion might be criticized as one-sided and inadequate because it focuses on the issue of morality even though religions are often understood to include other characteristics, such as ritual and prayer. However, I have chosen to focus on the issue of morality because it is closely connected to my question about the differences in the kind and intensity of violence justified by appeals to religious sources of moral authority as opposed to

⁸ See Patrick H. Nowell-Smith, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Company & the Free Press, 1964), s.v. "Religion and Morality."

secular ones. As previously noted, religion is often understood to be more conducive to violence than other, secular worldviews because it is considered to be absolute, divisive, and irrational. I have therefore framed my definition of religion and ideology in such a way as to emphasize these characteristics in the worldviews I label religions so that I may test this hypothesis in the Korean context of the late Chosŏn dynasty.

In order to show that this moral approach to defining religion is appropriate for my subject, I shall briefly expand on the various points that are made to support the argument that religion is particularly violent because it is absolutist, divisive, and irrational. First, it is claimed that, since religions base morality on the ultimate ground of authority, an absolute, which by its very nature transcends time and place, the morality derived from it cannot change. Religion is therefore inherently conservative—it cannot move with the times. Therefore, when the historical context in which religious people live transforms and threatens their religious views, they are more likely to lash out with violence in their efforts to bring the world back into line with them. In contrast, because ideologies base their morality on the human community their moralities can change as the community does. In addition, because of the absolute nature of religious morality, those who are deemed to violate it are judged more harshly than they are if they transgress the demands of a secular ideology, which, because its morality is relative, is more tolerant towards deviations and has more realistic expectations of human behavior.

Second, some insist that religion also encourages violence because it is divisive. Adherents to a religion understand themselves as being absolutely right and those who disagree with them as being absolutely wrong. This division between the angelic self and the demonic other makes violence easier to justify and to appear all the more necessary. Moreover, in a struggle against the demonic other, religious adherents might see no need to follow moral norms

in how they treat their opponents. For example, they are more likely to justify violence against innocent civilians or to take an approach that the ends justify the means. In contrast, because ideologies focus on the human community, even when their adherents are involved in violent conflict, since they do not base their morality on an absolute ultimate reality, they are less likely to see the other as demonic and themselves as angelic, or at least not to the same degree as religious adherents, and therefore the violence they use will be less intense. Moreover, because ideologies focus on a human community, they are more likely to emphasize a shared humanity, and therefore to treat their opponents in accordance with moral norms, for instance, by following the civilized rules of warfare.

Finally, it is argued that religions are fundamentally irrational because they, and the claims they make, cannot be empirically proven and are therefore impossible to verify.⁹ Therefore, religious adherents are willing to continue fighting battles that they cannot possibly win for goals that, if they focus on this world, they will likely never obtain, or, if on the next, cannot be verified. In contrast, ideologies, because they focus on the human community and are realized in the here and now, can be measured empirically and, if they do not bring the results that they promise, discarded. In addition, because religious adherents focus on a non-empirically provable ultimate reality for their absolute morality, they are unable to rationally engage and compromise with those they disagree with to the same degree as those following secular ideologies. In fact, because religious adherents focus on the non-empirical, they think very differently from normal human beings, leading them to act irrationally.¹⁰

⁹ Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2005), 17-20.

¹⁰ Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2008), 44.

An example of such thinking that combines all three of these factors can be seen in Mark Juergensmeyer's theory of "cosmic war."¹¹ Juergensmeyer argues that concepts of cosmic war develop when human beings understand themselves to be locked into metaphysical conflicts between good and evil. All religions contain this concept, which comes to the fore and leads to real violence when the historical context is right. While Juergensmeyer seems to view secular worldviews as also having the possibility of producing narratives of cosmic war, he understands the concept as playing a greater role in religion, writing that "What makes religious violence particularly savage and relentless is that its perpetrators have placed such religious images of divine struggle—cosmic war—in the service of worldly political battles."¹²

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According to Juergensmeyer, because religious adherents can link political struggles with the concept of cosmic war, elevating them to a transcendent, metaphysic level, they easily come

¹¹ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 148-218.

¹² Juergensmeyer, 149-50.

¹³ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 148-218.

¹⁴ Juergensmeyer, 149-50.

to see themselves in a conflict of good versus evil, making it difficult for them to compromise with their opponents. The very otherness and cosmic wrongness of their enemies also allows religious adherents to ignore ordinary rules of morality, thus making it easier for them to see innocent civilians as legitimate targets. Moreover, Juergensmeyer contends that those who accept a scenario of cosmic war and use terror to achieve their goals often engage in symbolic acts that, while making themselves feel powerful, do not actually help them obtain the results they desire. These acts are therefore fundamentally irrational. Thus, while Juergensmeyer sees a positive role for religion, as it can be useful because it “gives spirit to public life and provides a beacon for moral order,” it first “needs the temper of rationality and fair play that Enlightenment values give to civil society.”¹⁵ Religion is therefore dangerously emotional, that is, irrational, until it is properly tamed by secular ideology.

Having defined religion and ideology, I will now classify the worldviews this study will be examining into one of the two categories. According my definition, Catholicism is clearly a religion, but what about Neo-Confucianism? In response I must make clear that in this dissertation, by Neo-Confucianism I mean only that form of the tradition that state officials drew upon to justify the suppression of Catholicism in the late Chosŏn dynasty. In this form of Neo-Confucianism, the state was understood to have the duty to actualize the workings of the cosmic pattern (*li*/理) within the geographic borders it ruled. This immaterial cosmic pattern formed the universal ground of reality, governing everything from proper human relationships to natural phenomena, such as the movement of the moon and stars. In fact, the two were connected: when human beings behaved poorly (that is, against the cosmic pattern), weather patterns would change and natural disasters would strike. And, as we shall see, one of the main reasons the

¹⁵ Juergensmeyer, 248-49.

Chosŏn state sought to suppress Catholicism was because Catholics violated moral norms that arose, not from the human community, but from this cosmic pattern that gave birth to the universe and determined its proper workings.¹⁶ Thus, according to my definitions, Neo-Confucianism is closer to a religion than an ideology, and therefore will be classified as the former.

The secular ideologies I will examine will consist primarily of civilization and enlightenment thought, social-Darwinism, pan-Asianism, and nationalism. I will discuss the first three in greater detail in chapter four, but for now will note that in referring to nationalism, I will utilize Anthony Smith's definition of it "as an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation,'" and nation "as a named human population occupying a historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a public culture, and common laws and customs for all members."¹⁷ I will also use Max Weber's definition of the state as, "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."¹⁸

By violence I will mean the purposeful infliction of bodily harm on an individual against that person's will. Thus, according to my definition, cutting off a man's arm to save his life by stopping an infection from spreading is not violent, but cutting it off as punishment for a crime, providing he does not will it, is. Moreover, I must stress that in using the term "violence" to refer to various acts, I am not making a value judgment. My use of that word should be taken as

¹⁶ See Don Baker, *Korean Spirituality* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 47-54, 65, 95, and 113; Keum Jang-tae, *Confucianism and Korean Thoughts* (Seoul: Jimoondang Publishing Company, 2000), 3-10.

¹⁷ Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24-25.

¹⁸ Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation,"

http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/lecture/politics_vocation.html (accessed August 12, 2010).

morally neutral, with the adjectives, illegitimate, legitimate, justified, and unjustified marking whether it is “good” or “bad” violence from the perspective of the subjects of this study. Thus, I will examine how Hwang and An argued that the violence they proposed was justified and that inflicted on their communities was illegitimate, and how the states they opposed argued the opposite, and not whether such violence was truly legitimate or not.

Having established definitions that clearly differentiate religion from ideology, I will, after presenting the data in the intervening chapters, argue in my conclusion that the classification of a worldview as religious or secular, at least in the Korean context, does not appreciably help us to differentiate the intensity or kind of violence being legitimized. Instead, as we shall see in the Korean context of the late Chosŏn dynasty, secular, religious, and other factors, such as various understandings of the role of the state and the relationship its members should have with it, shaped, along with historical context, how violence was justified, and together formed the kind of violence that was utilized and determined its intensity. I will then suggest, looking at the similarities in how different people justified violence in the Korean context, ways that we can better understand violence in other contexts. In particular, I will argue that central to understanding violence is recognizing the rationality of those who justify it, in particular, as revealed in the stories they tell that explain why they believe violence is necessary.

Violence and Korean History

Hwang Sayŏng and the Suppression of 1801

In the hundred and fifty years after Hwang wrote the *Silk Letter*, he was heavily criticized by Confucian elites, who edited and circulated their own editions of his missive, as well as by Paul Chŏng Hasang (1795-1839), a devout Catholic and Hwang's kinsmen. Charles Dallet (1829-1878), the compiler of *The History of the Catholic Church in Korea*, and Bishop Gustave Mutel (1854-1933), the head of the Catholic Church in Korea in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while stating that Hwang's intent was good, criticized him as reckless, immature, and unrealistic. During the colonial period, a Japanese Catholic priest argued that Catholicism in Japan was superior to its counterpart in Korea because during the time of anti-Catholic persecutions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Japanese Catholics did not invite a Western armada to invade their country. Similarly, the work of the Japanese historian Yamaguchi Masayuki, who was active during the colonial period (1905-1945), saw in the *Silk Letter* incident proof that Korean factionalism had destroyed effective government and only an outside force, such as the Japanese colonial state, could reform the country.¹⁹

More recently, North Korean scholars have been very critical of Hwang and Catholicism. For example, one publication described Hwang's missive as a "secret letter that sold out the country" and the Chinese priest Father Zhou Wenmo (1752-1801) as the "vanguard of French capitalism" who wrote to the French (actually Portuguese) Bishop of Beijing (referred to as *nom*, a derisive term meaning "low-class person") to ask that an invasion force be sent to obtain

¹⁹ Yŏ Chinch'ŏn, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn'gu: wŏnbon kwa ibon pigyo kŏmt'o* [The *Silk Letter* of Hwang Sayŏng: a comparative investigation of the original and alternate versions] (Seoul: Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, 2009), 19-25.

religious “freedom” (quotes are in the original and likely denote sarcasm). This was presented as evidence that Catholics had always sought to invade Korea.²⁰ South Korean historians, while not being as harsh in their criticism, have similarly attacked Hwang from a nationalist standpoint and accused him of committing treason.²¹

Many Protestant scholars also criticize Hwang in a similar way, asserting that their own Christian tradition has better nationalist credentials than Catholicism.²² However, not all take this position. Some, while not justifying Hwang’s actions, attempt to explain the difficulties he faced and his attempt to save the “church” (*kyohoe*).²³ One Protestant, Yi Chŏngnin, even praised Hwang as a martyr who sought to open the eyes of the masses (*minjung*) to faith so that they would know God and be freed from superstition. Moreover, Yi argued that had Hwang’s hoped-for armada actually arrived then Korea would have been opened to Western influence in 1801, giving it a head-start on Japan and providing the country with adequate time to modernize, preventing both its colonization and division. Hwang’s actions were therefore not only justified, they were a prophetic act of faith aimed at saving the nation.²⁴

Korean Catholic understandings of the Hwang and the *Silk Letter* have changed over time. The Korean Catholic historian Yu Hongnyŏl treated the *Silk Letter* in 1949, and again in 1962. While seemingly defending Hwang’s actions by stressing the difficult situation he faced as he

²⁰ See Sahoe Kwahak Ch’ulp’ansa, *Ryŏksa sajŏn* [Historical Dictionary] (P’yŏngyang: Sahoe Kwahakwŏn Ryŏksa Yŏn’guso, 1971), 2:1101, quoted in Hŏ Tonghyŏn, “Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ-e taehan kŭnhyŏndae hakkye ŭi p’yŏngga [Evaluations of Hwang Sayŏng’s *Silk Letter* in modern and contemporary scholarship],” in *Sinyu pakhae wa Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ sakkŏn* [The 1801 Persecution and the Hwang Sayŏng *Silk Letter* incident], ed. Ch’oe Ch’anghwa (Seoul: Han’guk Sun’gyoja Hyŏnyang Wiwŏnhoe, 2003), 216-17. For a general overview of North Korean perspectives on the *Silk Letter*, see the same article, 172-77.

²¹ See Hŏ Tonghyŏn, 163-171.

²² For examples, see George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea* (1927; repr., Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1980), 38; Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea: A History of Christianity and Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 7.

²³ See Kim Sŏngjung, *Han’guk Kidokkyosa* [History of Christianity in Korea] (Seoul: H’anguk Kyohoe Kyoyuk Yŏn’guso, 1980), 36, quoted in Hŏ Tonghyŏn, 206.

²⁴ Yi Chŏngnin, *Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ yŏn’gu* [A study of Hwang Sayŏng’s *Silk Letter*] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1999), iii-iv, 4-8, and 229-33.

wrote the *Silk Letter*, Yu spent little time on Hwang's proposals, instead using the incident to criticize the Chosŏn dynasty for the "toadyism" (*sadae sasang*/事大思想) it displayed towards Qing China in resolving the incident. This same work also praised the *Silk Letter* as being of great historical importance as it revealed the thought of the Catholic Church and Chosŏn dynasty Koreans of the time.²⁵

The preface to the 1959 translation of the *Silk Letter* by Kim Ikchin, serialized in a journal for Catholic youth, emphasized that Hwang was seeking religious freedom (*chonggyo ŭi chayu*) so that the Gospel could be spread without fear. The author drew upon anti-Communism to justify Hwang's actions, comparing Hwang's attempt to obtain military help to stop the murder of Christians by a "tyrannical dictatorship" to the UN's intervention on behalf of the Republic of Korea in order to repulse the Communists and the violent tyranny they sought to spread. At the same time, the author still showed some discomfort with Hwang's views, pointing out that they were simply his private opinion, arose in part because he was a reckless youth, and that he had only sought to use the threat of violence, not violence itself.²⁶

Increasing nationalism in the 70s and 80s meant that it was no longer possible to deflect criticism of the *Silk Letter* by appealing to anti-Communism or criticizing the Chosŏn dynasty. Of special importance was the rise of *Minjung* (a word meaning "the masses" or "the common people") ideology, which saw the masses as the primary movers of Korean history and the repository of true Korean identity, was highly critical of any sort of foreign intervention in Korea,

²⁵ Yu Hongnyŏl, *Chosŏn Ch'ŏnjugyohoesa* [The history of the Catholic Church in the Chosŏn dynasty] (Seoul: Chosŏn Ch'ŏnjugyohoe Sun'gyoja Hyŏnyanghoe, 1949), 1:182-187 and (*Chŭngpo*) *Han'guk Ch'ŏnjugyohoesa* [(Expanded) History of the Korean Catholic Church] (Seoul: Kat'ollik Ch'ulp'ansa, 1962), 1:164-68. Both are cited in Hŏ Tonghyŏn, 185-87.

²⁶ See Kim Ikchin, trans. "Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ," *Kat'ollik ch'ŏngnyŏn* [Catholic youth] 13, no. 1-11 (January-November 1959).

and sought massive social reform.²⁷ Historians writing from such a perspective were not favorable to Hwang's attempt to invite a Western armada into Korea. One response to such criticism can be seen in a 1977 article written by the Catholic Professor Cho Kwang of Korea University. Cho argued that Hwang, like the minjung of the Chosŏn dynasty, was looking for a social revolution, which he believed would take place through the propagation of Catholicism. Because of the anti-Catholic persecution, Hwang lamentably turned to military force in order to obtain religious freedom. While Hwang was wrong to do so, he only took such actions because, like the minjung, he suffered oppression. Thus, despite Hwang's error, Catholics, by virtue of their suffering, essentially stood with the minjung on the right side of history.²⁸

Around the time of Cho's article, other Catholics were publishing similar defenses of Hwang for popular audiences. While rejecting Hwang's actions, they sought to emphasize the difficult situation that the church was in and that Hwang was sincerely looking for freedom of religion and not political power. Such treatments stressed that Hwang was a martyr who had rejected worldly ambitions to serve the church and had kept the faith despite horrible torture. Thus, Hwang was mistaken, but not a bad person. Catholics honored him because he was a martyr, not because of the *Silk Letter*.²⁹

Work by Catholic scholars on Hwang and the *Silk Letter* made a major leap forward with a conference held in 1998 in preparation for the two-hundredth anniversary of the 1801

²⁷ For an overview of the Minjung movement, see Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). For a brief summary of a Minjung historical perspective, see Gregg Brazinsky, *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans and the Making of a Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 184-85.

²⁸ Cho Kwang, "Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ ūi sahoe wa sasangiŏk paegyŏng [The social and intellectual background of Hwang Sayŏng's *Silk Letter*]," in *Sinyu pakhae wa Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ sakkŏn*, ed. Ch'oe Ch'anghwa (Seoul: Han'guk Sun'gyoja Hyŏnyang Wiwŏnhoe, 2003), 257-93.

²⁹ For examples, see Pak Tosik, *Sun'gyoadŭl ūi sinang* [The faith of martyrs] (1978; repr., Seoul: Paoro Ttal, 2004), 23-26 and Han'guk Ch'ŏnjugyohoe 200-chunyŏn Kinyŏm Saŏp Wiwŏnhoe Sibok Sisŏng Ch'ujinbu, ed., *Sinang ūi sŏnjodŭl* [Pioneers of faith], (Seoul: Han'guk Chŏnjugyohoe Ibaek Chunyŏn Kinyŏm Saŏp Wiwŏnhoe, 1984), 65-74. This section, entitled "Hwang Sayŏng Aleksantel (1775-1801) [Hwang Sayŏng Alexander (1775-1801)]," was written by Yi Wŏnsun.

suppression of Catholicism, the proceedings of which were published in the journal of the Institute of Korean Church History (*Han'guk Kyohoe Yŏn'guso*). The main subject of this conference was the controversy surrounding Catholic attempts to bring Western ships into Korea, including Hwang's.³⁰ While not justifying his actions, some presenters tried to place Hwang in his historical context in order to better explain his actions. For example, Pang Sanggŭn, a researcher at the Institute of Korean Church History, argued that it would be anachronistic to judge Hwang in accordance with modern-day concepts of national consciousness, which did not exist in the Korea of his time.³¹

The presentation given by a professor at Suwŏn Catholic University, Ha Sŏngnae, is worth examining in detail as it provided the most explicit defense of Hwang. Ha portrayed Hwang in a positive light, noting that he bravely endured torture and forcefully confessed the Catholic faith. Ha also stressed that Hwang felt duty-bound to protect the church, and that other Catholics refused to inform on him in a large part because they shared this concern. The key question for Ha is against whom was Hwang's "treason" directed? Ha argued that Hwang's actions were not directed against the royal house or the nation as a whole, but were aimed at the powerful and corrupt Old Doctrine faction (*Norŏnp'a*), which, because of its stubborn devotion to Neo-Confucianism, prevented Korea from opening to the world and developing. Hwang, in contrast, believed that Catholicism would morally transform the country and open it to the outside world, bringing progress. Thus, Hwang was something of a prophet. Moreover, because he was acting on behalf of religious freedom and did not possess treasonous motives, he could not be defined as a traitor. Ha's main criticism is that Hwang put too much confidence in Westerners. Ha leaves the question of whether Hwang's invasion proposal was legitimate or not

³⁰ These presentations were published as articles in *Kyohoesa yŏn'gu* [Studies of Church History] 13 (July 1998).

³¹ Pang Sanggŭn, "Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> wa punsŏkchŏk ihae [An analysis of Hwang Sayŏng's *Silk Letter*]," *Kyohoesa yŏn'gu* 13 (July 1998): 170-74.

open, only asking rhetorically whether or not Hwang's actions would have been judge differently if he would have been successful and Korea opened to the West, allowing its early modernization.³²

The increased interest in Hwang by Catholics arose in part because the *Silk Letter* is one of the few historical sources covering the 1801 persecution written from a Catholic perspective and is therefore of key importance in the efforts to have those executed at that time canonized. It was this that led the Korean Catholic Martyr Exaltation Society (*Han'guk Sun'gyoja Hyönyang Wiwönhoe*) to issue a collection of articles on the *Silk Letter* incident in 2003, many of which sought to defend Hwang in new and creative ways. For example, Hwang was presented as an intellectual revolutionary who sought to bring human rights and religious freedom to Korea.³³ Similarly, the charges of treason were reversed: it was the persecutors of the Catholics, Queen Chöngsun (the regent for the minor king Sunjo, 1745-1805) and the Old Doctrine faction, who were the true traitors to the nation, as they governed in accordance with their own selfish interests rather than the good of the people. Hwang, a Confucian as well as a Catholic, understood the principle recognized by Mencius that the will of the people was the will of heaven, enabling them to legitimately act against the state for the good of the nation.³⁴

2003 also saw the publication of another work which treated Hwang Sayöng and the *Silk Letter*, Wönn Chaeyönn's *Chosön wangcho üi pöpp kwa kurisüdogyo* (*Chosön Dynasty Law and Christianity*). Wönn examined the *Silk Letter* incident in one of the chapters of this book. He

³² Ha Söngnae, "Hwang Sayöng üi kyohoe hwaldong kwa sun'gyo-e taehan yön'gu [A study of Hwang Sayöng's church activities and martyrdom]," *Kyohoesa yön'gu* 13 (July 1998): 73-144.

³³ Ch'oe Wan'gi, "Hwang Sayöng Paeksö chaksöng üi sasangjök paegyöng [The intellectual background of the composition of Hwang Sayöng's *Silk Letter*]," in *Sinyu pakhae wa Hwang Sayöng Paeksö sakkön*, ed. Ch'oe Ch'anghwa (Seoul: Han'guk Sun'gyoja Hyönyang Wiwönhoe, 2003), 77-102.

³⁴ Kim Chinso, "Sinyu pakhae tangsi söyang sönbak chöngwönn üi t'üksöng [The particular characteristics of the invitation of a Western ship during the time of the 1801 persecution]," in *Sinyu pakhae wa Hwang Sayöng Paeksö sakkön*, ed. Ch'oe Ch'anghwa (Seoul: Han'guk Sun'gyoja Hyönyang Wiwönhoe, 2003), 103-37.

framed his discussion by asking the question of whether national sovereignty or human rights are more important, and, throughout his work, emphasized that the latter takes priority, grounding his argument in such documents as the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Wŏn contended that Hwang was a proponent of human rights, specifically, freedom of religion. Furthermore, Wŏn defined Catholics as a minority group persecuted unjustly for their religious beliefs by a tyrannical and corrupt government. Like Cho, Wŏn linked the suffering of Catholics with those of other Koreans, as the persecutions were only one aspect of the injustice committed against the common people by their government. Similar to the preface of the 1959 translation of the *Silk Letter*, Wŏn looked to international organizations, particularly the UN, as a source of moral authority. While asserting that an actual invasion of Korea would have been illegitimate as it would have led to human rights abuses, Wŏn contended that the mere threat of violence, so long as it was not actualized, would have been legitimate.³⁵

In 2008, the head of the Korean Church History Institute, Yi Changwu, published an article in which he sought to reexamine Hwang, coming to conclusions very similar to that of Yi Chŏngnin.³⁶ In his study of Hwang, Yi Changwu argued that the Old Doctrine's strict adherence to Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and attempts to maintain a monopoly on power led to national destruction. Against this background, Hwang attempted, by inviting a Western armada and attempting to obtain freedom of religion, to set up a new social order. He was not acting against the king or the royal family and only sought, through the conversion of Korea to Christianity, to bring positive change to the country. After Korea was opened by Japan, Protestant and Catholic Christianity became the foundation for the spread of modern ideas of reform and freedom, which

³⁵Wŏn Chaeyŏn, *Chosŏn wangcho ūi pŏp kwa Kurisŭdokyo* [Chosŏn dynasty law and Christianity] (Seoul: Handŭl Ch'ulp'ansa, 2003), 327-58.

³⁶Yi Changwu, "Hwang Sayŏng kwa Chosŏn hugi ūi sahoe pyŏnhwa [Hwang Sayŏng and social change in the late Chosŏn dynasty]," *Kyohoesa yŏn'gu* 31 (December, 2008): 79-108.

would have led eventually to democracy and modernity, had Korea not been colonized. If Hwang had succeeded in opening the country, this would not have happened and Hwang would not have been viewed as a traitor, nor would Catholicism have been open to criticism. Thus, Hwang was a martyr, for God and democracy, and a pioneer of modernity in Korea. For these reasons, Yi argued that his tomb should be recognized as a holy place.

The most comprehensive work available on Hwang Sayŏng is a book published by Father Yŏ Chinch'ŏn, director of the Paeron Holy Site (*sŏngji*) where Hwang actually wrote the *Silk Letter*. This work not only includes important biographical information on Hwang, and a detailed study of the original *Silk Letter*, but an in-depth comparison of all the copies of the letter made by government officials and scholars during the nineteenth century. By comparing these different versions, Yŏ shows how the *Silk Letter* was creatively copied in accordance with the political views of its copyists. The purpose of the book is not so much to act as a defense of Hwang, though there are some elements of that present, but to show that the study of Catholicism in Korea can make a general contribution to Korean history by showing how it was connected to important political issues and shaped by factional concerns, proving its importance in the life of the nation.³⁷

Most recent treatments of Hwang Sayŏng have focused on defending him, and by association, Catholicism, from nationalist critiques by arguing that Hwang had good motives and, while still essentially accepting the argument that the violence he called for was illegitimate, contending that had he been successful in his goal of opening Korea, it would have benefited the country by allowing it access to modern civilization, enabling it to become an independent nation-state that would have escaped the fate of colonization and division. This approach, while interesting, focuses on the idea of a different history leading to a different present, rather than on

³⁷ Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn'gu*, 19-25.

what Hwang himself thought and saw himself as trying to achieve. By examining the *Silk Letter* and how Hwang sought to justify violence, I will explore his thought within his historical context, showing that he was deeply influenced by the times in which he lived, and that while hoping that Catholicism would bring positive this-worldly changes to Korea, he did not call for social revolution, but rather for a good and moral government. He therefore sought not so much modernity, but the realization of the promises made by the proponents of Neo-Confucianism that their Way would make Korea into a sage kingdom. Where Hwang departed from their vision was not the result of modern ideas, but rather, the search for spiritual salvation in an afterlife that he grafted onto a Confucian emphasis on this world. Similarly, Hwang was not looking for religious freedom, but rather a limited tolerance for Catholicism, which, ideally, would one day come to replace Neo-Confucianism as state orthodoxy.

As we have seen, there is a tendency to emphasize factionalism and the narrow devotion of Korean scholar-officials to Neo-Confucianism as the primary causes of the 1801 suppression of Catholicism, a view shared by Hwang.³⁸ This interpretation reinforces a general tendency to view the Chosŏn state of the nineteenth century in the worst of terms. Frequently, state officials and the royal in-law families who exercised power are treated as ineffective, corrupt and selfish, and as putting their own petty interests ahead of the good of the Korean people. Similarly, Neo-Confucianism has been portrayed as a pretext for elite dominance or as an outmoded and inflexible system of thought that prevented reform.

In order to correct the imbalance of this approach, some scholars have called for a more nuanced understanding of the Chosŏn state. For instance, Anders Karlsson has argued that

³⁸ *Silk Letter*, lines, 112-13. Such an interpretation might have a theological, apologetic aspect to it, as it can lead to the argument that Christians suffered violent suppression in Korea, not because Christianity was in any way incompatible with Korean culture, but because of the narrow-mindedness of elites. For an example of this view, see Tai-sik Jung, "Religion and Politics: Persecution of Catholics in the Late Chosŏn Dynasty Korea" (Phd Diss., University of California: Berkeley, 2001), 169-70.

nineteenth-century Chosŏn officials at times responded quickly and effectively to the needs of the common people when they were affected by natural disasters.³⁹ An examination of how the Chosŏn state justified violence against Hwang Sayŏng and other Catholics, and how the *Silk Letter* incident was incorporated into such efforts, will build on such work by showing the importance of religion in the suppression, in particular, how Neo-Confucian ideals, while at the same time justifying the torture and execution of Catholics, limited violence against Catholics in important ways. I will therefore argue that while factionalism did play a role, Hwang misjudged the situation, and the suppression arose in a large part because the very different religious worldviews of Catholicism and Neo-Confucianism led Chosŏn officials to see Catholics as truly representing a danger to the highest ideals of elite Koreans, a threat that was confirmed in their view by the discovery of the *Silk Letter*.

An Chunggŭn

An Chunggŭn has been remembered very differently from Hwang Sayŏng. In the immediate aftermath of his assassination of Itō, Chinese newspapers carried editorials praising him and Korean expatriates in Vladivostok and Hawaii raised money to hire him a lawyer.⁴⁰ After his execution, sympathetic Koreans met in secret and held memorial services for him.⁴¹ Korean and Chinese anti-Japanese resistance fighters carried his picture as they went into battle. Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, and anti-Communists have all extolled his virtues, and he is

³⁹ Anders Karlsson, "Royal Compassion and Disaster Relief in Chosŏn Korea," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 20, no. 1 (June 2007): 71-98.

⁴⁰ Sin Unyong, "An Chunggŭn ŭigŏ-e taehan kugoe ŭi insik kwa panŭng: chaeoe hanin ŭl chungsim-ŭro [The consciousness of and reaction to An Chunggŭn's righteous act outside the country: focusing on overseas Koreans]," in *An Chunggŭn yŏn'gu ŭi kich'o* [Foundations for the study of An Chunggŭn], ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 188-220.

⁴¹ "The Assassin," *Seoul Press*, April 2, 1910.

considered a hero in both North and South Korea. There are even several books written by Japanese people in praise of An, including one by a Buddhist priest.⁴²

Despite a high level of interest in An, the lack of historical records related to him made it difficult to conduct scholarly research on his life. This began to change in the 1970's when copies of his autobiography, *The History of An Ŭngch'il* (*An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*) and his unfinished essay, *A Treatise on Peace in the East* (*Tongyang p'yŏnghwaron*), long thought lost, were discovered in Japan.⁴³ Then, in 1976, the Ministry of Veteran's Affairs (*Kukka pohunch'ŏ*) published Korean translations of An Chunggŭn's interrogation and trial transcripts, followed in 1978 with the publication of a compilation of Japanese Foreign Ministry documents translated into Korean.⁴⁴ Both of these volumes have become mainstays of An Chunggŭn studies and led to an explosion in books and articles that take him as their subject.⁴⁵ Recently, the *An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe* (An Chunggŭn Memorial Association) has started to publish revised translations of An's interrogation and trial records, as well as the Japanese originals.

For the most part, Korean treatments of An Chunggŭn have been hagiographical in nature, holding him up as an exemplar of nationalism and as proof that Koreans were willing, and able, to resist Japanese imperialism. Korean Catholics have taken a special interest in An. During the colonial period, the leaders of the Catholic Church in Korea officially accepted the legitimacy of Japan's colonial project on the peninsula, and, to a great degree, prevented Catholics from

⁴² For the Korean translation of his book, see Sait'o T'aik'en (Saito Taiken), *Nae maum ŭi An Chunggŭn* [The An Chunggŭn of my heart], trans. Chang Yŏngsun (Seoul: Injidang, 1994).

⁴³ Yun Pyŏngsŏk, ed., *An Chunggŭn chŏn'gi chŏnjip* [The collected biographies of An Chunggŭn] (Seoul: Kukka Pohunch'ŏ, 1999), 36-37.

⁴⁴ Han Sanggwŏn and Kim Hyŏnyŏng, "An Chunggŭn kongp'an kirok kwallyŏn charyo-e taehayŏ [Documents related to An Chunggŭn's trial]," in *An Chunggŭn yŏn'gu ŭi kich'o*, ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 3-34.

⁴⁵ Cho Kwang, *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndae Ch'ŏnjugyosa yŏn'gu* [A study of modern Korean Catholicism] (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2010), 3-72. This is a revised version of an article that first appeared under the same title in *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndaesa yŏn'gu* [Modern Korean History] 12 (2000): 180-222.

becoming involved in the nationalist movement.⁴⁶ Korean Catholics are therefore quite proud of An and see him as proof that one could be both a devout Catholic and a patriot at the same time.⁴⁷

However, in order to claim An and his impeccable nationalist credentials for the Catholic Church, it was necessary to justify his use of violence in Catholic terms, as he had been publicly criticized by the leaders of the church for the assassination of Itō, and to show that his Catholic faith was an integral part of his nationalism. This was accomplished through a symposium dedicated to him in 1993 held by the Institute of Korean Church History. Three university professors and one priest, the head of the institute, made presentations. Hong Sunho, a professor at Ehwa University, gave a paper on An's *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, praising it as a prophetic work that was still relevant today and arguing that it could not be properly understood without considering An's Catholicism.⁴⁸ Cho Kwang and No Kilmyōng, professors at Korea University, both argued in their presentations that An was a devout Catholic and that his faith heavily shaped his participation in independence activities, for example, making him a nationalist who was deeply concerned with ethics. No praised him in especially high terms as working for the realization of "God's love, peace, and justice."⁴⁹

In addition to praising An as a devoted nationalist and a devout Catholic, presenters critiqued the official response of the Catholic Church to his assassination of Itō. Cho was critical

⁴⁶ See Yun Sōnja, *Ilche ūi chonggyo chōngch'aek kwa Ch'ōnjugyohoe* [The Japanese empire's policy towards religion and Catholicism] (Seoul: Kyōngin Munhwasa, 2002).

⁴⁷ For an overview of how Catholic perspectives on An have changed, see Yun Sōnja, "An Chunggūn ūigō-e taehan Ch'ōnjugyohoe ūi insik [Catholic understandings of An Chunggūn's righteous act]," in *An Chunggūn yōn'gu ūi kich'o*, ed. An Chunggūn Ūisa Kinyōm Saōphoe (Seoul: Kyōngin Munhwasa, 2009), 221-52.

⁴⁸ Hong Sunho, "An Chunggūn ūi 'Tongyang p'yōnghwaron [An Chunggūn's *A Treatise on Peace in the East*]" *Kyohoesa yōn'gu* 9 (November, 1994): 37-60.

⁴⁹ See Cho Kwang, "An Chunggūn ūi aeguk kyemong undong kwa tongnip chōnjaeng [An Chunggūn's patriotic enlightenment movement activities and the war for independence]," *Kyohoesa yōn'gu* 9 (November, 1994): 65-96; No Kilmyōng, "An Chunggūn ūi Kat'ollik sinang [An Chunggūn's Catholic faith]," *Kyohoesa yōn'gu* 9 (November, 1994): 5-30.

of Catholic leaders for following too strict of a policy of separation of church and state that prevented them from speaking out against the Japanese colonial regime. No traced the condemnation of An by the French missionaries, who led the church, as arising from their ethnocentrism. Moreover, he argued that conflict was unavoidable as An was a pioneer of Catholic thought far ahead of his time. Father Ch'oe Sögu's presentation, which focused on the Catholic Church's reaction to An's nationalist activities and his killing of Itō, elaborated on and deepened this criticism, calling for the church to re-evaluate An.⁵⁰

The primary purpose of these presentations was to show that An's Catholic faith was intrinsic to his nationalist as well as his modernizing activities, in other words, that An was not simply a nationalist, but a Catholic nationalist. Thus, his life and thought could not be adequately understood without taking his Catholicism into account. Little attention was paid by the presenters to the explicit justification of An's violence and the only theological argument was made by Father Ch'oe who contended that the fifth commandment against murder did not prohibit An's use of violence. Instead, theological comment was left to Cardinal Stephen Kim Suhwan (1922-2009), the head of the Archdiocese of Seoul, to make during his homily at a Mass following the symposium.

In his homily, Kim stressed how hard it was as a Korean to understand why the “institutional church” had taken an essentially pro-Japanese stance.⁵¹ In fact, as a representative of the Catholic Church, this made him sick at heart. Kim stressed that not only was it necessary to apologize and atone for the poor treatment of An, the facts had to be set straight. The Cardinal then quoted from the beatitudes, stating that the ones referring to the “poor in spirit,” those who

⁵⁰ Ch'oe Sögu, “An Chunggün ŭigö wa kyohoe ŭi panŭng [An Chunggün's righteous act and the church's reaction],” *Kyohoesa yŏn'gu* 9 (November, 1994): 97-119.

⁵¹ Cardinal Kim's homily can be found in “An Chunggün ŭisa ŭi saenge wa aeguksim [An Chunggün's life and patriotism],” *Kat'ollik sinmun* [Catholic news], August 29, 1993.

“thirst for righteousness” and the “peacemakers” could all be applied to An.⁵² Kim stated that through the presentations, he could see that An was a model Christian (*Kūrisūdogyoin*) who had devoted his life to the evangelization of Korea, the establishment of the Kingdom of God, the restoration of national sovereignty, the realization of love of neighbor and justice, and peace not only in the East, but in the entire world.

Cardinal Kim next turned to the question of whether An’s use of violence was justified. He first stressed the difficulty of the times, noting that the people (*minjung*) were threatened both by corrupt officials and imperialism. The Japanese Empire had denied Koreans freedom of speech and freedom of the press. There was therefore nothing An and other patriotic Koreans could do but flee the country and fight against Japan. As An was a soldier in a Korean “righteous army” (*ūibyōng*) and Itō was the leader of Japanese efforts to colonize Korea, his assassination was a legitimate act of war. Kim contended that Catholic teaching supported An’s actions, referring to section 79 of the *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*), promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1965 as part of the Second Vatican Council, which reads:

Contemplating this melancholy state of humanity, the council wishes, above all things else, to recall the permanent binding force of universal natural law and its all-embracing principles. Man's conscience itself gives ever more emphatic voice to these principles. Therefore, actions which deliberately conflict with these same principles, as well as orders commanding such actions are criminal, and blind obedience cannot excuse those who yield to them. The most infamous among these are actions designed for the methodical extermination of an entire people, nation or ethnic minority. Such actions must be vehemently condemned as horrendous crimes. The courage of those who fearlessly and openly resist those who issue such commands merits supreme commendation.⁵³

⁵² This is a reference to the beatitudes Jesus proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:2-10 and Luke 6:20-26).

⁵³ Second Vatican Council, “Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World,” accessed online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed May 10, 2010).

Kim, after quoting selections from this paragraph, stated that it immediately brought to mind Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, and the attempt to exterminate Jews and other ethnic groups. Because An used violence to prevent Koreans from suffering such genocide, his actions were justified. Just as it would have been legitimate to assassinate Hitler, so too was it just to kill Itō.

The scholarly presentations on An and Cardinal Kim's homily were published in Catholic media and have filtered down to the average Catholic, becoming the official Korean Church narrative. Moreover, there is even an effort to have An Chunggŭn canonized a saint. In 1997 Father Ch'oe Sōgu presented a paper that compared An Chunggŭn to Saint Joan of Arc at an Institute of Korean Church History public lecture series. He drew this comparison as part of an argument that just as France could have a soldier as a patron saint, so too could Korea. This then led to another conference sponsored by the Institute of Korean Church History in 2000 dedicated to An.⁵⁴

The 1993 An Chunggŭn conference had sought to show that An was a devout Catholic whose religious beliefs deeply shaped his thought and independence activities. As such, most of the presenters were history professors. The one exception, Father Ch'oe Sōgu, had historical training and headed the Korean Church History institute. In contrast, the 2000 conference was addressed chiefly to a Catholic audience in order to promote An's canonization and therefore featured more priests and theologians as presenters. This led to the further development of Catholic justifications for An's use of violence. For example, An's struggle against Japanese colonialism was compared to that of Judas Maccabeus, who led Jewish resistance against the Seleucid kings who persecuted them and sought to destroy their culture.⁵⁵ Likewise, Pope John

⁵⁴ "An Chunggŭn ūisa yōngsōng ūl ch'atcha [Let's find An Chunggŭn's spirituality]," *Kat'ollik sinmun*, October 19, 1997.

⁵⁵ See the introduction to the first chapter of First Maccabees found in the New American Bible. This introduction can be found online at <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1maccabees/intro.htm> (accessed May 10, 2010).

Paul XXIII's encyclical *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)* was cited to show that it was right to actively resist sinful policies, even if they were instituted by the government, and because Japanese imperial policy qualified as such, it was legitimate to fight against it.⁵⁶ Similarly it was asserted that An's actions met the criteria for a just war.⁵⁷

October 26, 2009 and March 26, 2010 marked respectively the one-hundredth anniversaries of An's killing of Itō and his own execution. This has led to a renewed interest in An among Catholics, including the movement for canonization, which had not progressed much since the 2000 conference.⁵⁸ Similarly, there has been a spate of new books and conferences dedicated to An. While most still examine his life from a hagiographic perspective, there has been a shift to try and use the historical sources connected to An to learn not only about him, but the historical context in which he lived.⁵⁹ In other words, typically Korean history has been used to illuminate An's life, but recently, there is a greater emphasis to see what An can tell us about Korean history.

I hope that, through a critical study of An, which has not been undertaken in English, I will be able to continue this trend. I plan to do this in two ways. First, by taking a critical, rather than hagiographical approach, I will explore, by studying An's justification and use of violence, the ambiguities inherent in his life and thought that have heretofore been neglected. In particular, I will show that the relationship between An's nationalism and his Catholicism is far more

⁵⁶ Chōn Taryu, "An Chunggūn Tomasū ūi sinang kwa tōkhaeng [Thomas An Chunggūn's faith and virtue]," *Kyohoesa yōn'gu* 14 (June, 2001): 57-82.

⁵⁷ These criteria are (1) "the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain," (2) "all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective" (3) "there must be serious prospects of success," (4) "the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated." See paragraph 2309 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

⁵⁸ Nam Chōngryul, "An Chunggūn ūisa sibok ch'uchin [The movement for An Chunggūn's canonization]," *P'yōnghwa sinmun* [Peace news], June 13, 2010.

⁵⁹ For an example, see Cho Hyōnbōm, "An Chunggūn ūisa wa Pillem sinbu: kijon saryo ūi chaegōmt'o rūl chungsim-ūro [An Chunggūn and Father Wilhelm: a reexamination of the basic sources]," in *An Chunggūn yōn'gu ūi sōnggwa wa kwaje* [Issues in the Study of An Chunggūn], ed. An Chunggūn ūisa Kinyōm Saōphoe (Seoul: Ch'aeryun, 2010), 349-78.

complex than has previously been understood, answering Kenneth Wells call for Korean history to be written from perspectives that consider not only nationalism, but religion and human universals such as death.⁶⁰ Second, in addition to the traditional sources on An's life, I will also include English- and Japanese-language newspaper coverage of the assassination and his subsequent trial and execution. Thus far, these sources, which raise and answer important questions about how his use of violence was perceived, have not been adequately utilized in studies on An Chunggŭn. For example, newspaper accounts show that the people An sought to win over by his act of violence reacted negatively to his assassination of Itō, contrary to his expectations, raising the question of how An misjudged their reactions so completely. This question will then be answered by showing, using these sources and An's own writings, how he and the members of the Western and Japanese empires had radically different understandings of what constituted legitimate violence.

By explicitly including religion I hope to add to the insights of Andre Schmid from his book *Korea between Empires*. In this work, Schmid shows how nationalism and civilization and enlightenment thought were "consciously globalizing" discourses that shaped how Koreans saw themselves and their place in the world.⁶¹ I plan to build on Schmid's thesis by showing what role Catholicism, another "globalizing discourse," played in the relationship between these two ideologies in the thought and life of An Chunggŭn, and thereby to further include religion, particularly Catholicism, into the complex dynamic that constituted elite Korean worldviews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly, I will seek to advance the work

⁶⁰ Kenneth Wells, "The Failings of Success: The Problem of Religious Meaning in Modern Korean Historiography," *Korean Histories* 1, no. 1 (2009): 60-80.

⁶¹ Andre Schmid, *Korea between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 4-5.

begun by Alexis Dudden in her book, *The Japanese Colonization of Korea*.⁶² In this study, Dudden examines, in part through court cases and newspaper coverage, how Japan used law to justify its empire in Korea in the international arena and successfully muted Korean dissent. I will follow a similar approach, and hope to build upon her insight that colonizers define themselves against the colonized and in so doing justify imperialism by looking at how the proponents of the Japanese colonial project in Korea utilized religion and Korean violence to justify Japan's empire in Korea, and how An unsuccessfully sought to oppose colonization on those same grounds.

Plan of Dissertation

In chapter one I will discuss the life of Hwang Sayŏng and the historical context in which he lived, focusing on Chosŏn state policy towards religion in general and Catholicism in particular. I will examine how Hwang Sayŏng justified the use of violence in the *Silk Letter*, showing that he was influenced not only by Catholicism but by understandings of what constituted legitimate violence and the state that already existed in Korea in chapter two. Moreover, we will also see in that chapter that he sought, not religious freedom, but tolerance for Catholicism, which he hoped would lead to the realization of both spiritual salvation in the next world for the people of Chosŏn Korea and the good government in this world that Neo-Confucianism had promised to bring. In chapter three I will examine how the Chosŏn state carried out the suppression of 1801, justified the use of violence against Catholics, and used the *Silk Letter* incident to strengthen its own legitimacy, as well as how its commitment to Neo-

⁶² Alexis Dudden. *Japan's Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 74-89.

Confucian ideals shaped these efforts. My fourth chapter will act as a transition, describing the fate of the Catholic community in Korea following the suppression of 1801 and giving the background information necessary to understand An Chunggŭn's life and times.

In my fifth chapter I will begin with An's assassination of Itō, showing, through an examination of public reactions to the incident, how and why his hopes that his use of violence would win Korean independence failed to materialize. In chapter six I will examine An's interrogation, trial, and execution, showing not only how the proponents of the Japanese colonial project thwarted his attempts to challenge Japan's image as an enlightened nation undertaking a legitimate civilizing mission on the peninsula, but actually turned his use of violence into one more justification for it. My seventh chapter will describe An's attempts, in his own prison writings, to justify his use of violence, both through rational arguments, and through the telling of his own life story in his autobiography. Finally, in my eighth chapter, I will examine the role Catholicism, which An did not directly and publicly appeal to in order to justify his use of violence, played in convincing him that violence was a practical and legitimate means to overcome the problems he faced. In particular, I will focus on An's relationship with church authorities and the role they played in his decision to utilize violent means. My conclusion will compare and contrast how Hwang, An, and their adversaries justified violence, and by locating their differences and commonalities, will build a basic model of how their violence was justified which will help us to better understand Korean history and will also hopefully be exportable to other times and places for further comparative work.

Chapter 1: Alexius Hwang Sayŏng, the Chosŏn Dynasty, and Catholicism

It is necessary to examine the historical context in which Alexius Hwang Sayŏng and representatives of the Chosŏn state lived in order to understand how they justified violence. Therefore, in this chapter, we will first look at the life of Hwang, his conversion to Catholicism, and what he believed as a Catholic. We will then examine the Chosŏn state's policy towards religion, the general difficulties the government faced, and the challenges Catholicism posed. Finally, we will survey the history of Catholicism in Korea, with a focus on state suppression of the religion from 1785 to 1801.

Alexius Hwang Sayŏng

Alexius Hwang Sayŏng was born in 1775 in Ahyŏn (located in modern-day Seoul), the child of Hwang Sŏkpŏm (1747-1775) and Yi Yunhye (nd).¹ Sŏkpŏm had been posthumously adopted by Hwang Sayŏng's great uncle, Hwang Chaejung (1717-1740), who had died without a son. Chaejung's father (Sŏkpŏm's uncle) Hwang Chun (1694-1782) passed the highest civil-service exam (*munkwa*) in his 70's and was made minister of public works, though this appears to have merely been an honorific posting owing to his advanced age.² Sŏkpŏm showed promise as an official, first holding a post in the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence (*Sŭngmunwŏn*)

¹ Though it is not clear when Hwang's mother died, the fact that she was exiled for her son's crimes proves that she was alive at the time of the *Silk Letter* incident. See *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* [Daily records of the royal secretariat], vol. 98, 23 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 11. 7. *kyŏngsul*).

² According to the court records he was assigned an assistant, who likely did the real work of the post. See *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* [Veritable records of the Chosŏn dynasty], vol. 45, 326 (*Chŏngjo sillok* [Veritable records of King Chŏngjo], yr. 6, 8. 18. *imin*). Hwang Chun in fact passed a special exam for the elderly. See *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, vol. 44, 326 (*Yongjo sillok*, yr. 45, 5. 28. *kich'uk*).

and then serving as a court diarist. However, like his adopted father, he died an untimely death.³ Hwang Sayŏng would continue this family tradition of dying young: he was executed in 1801 at the age of 27.⁴

As a young scholar, Hwang Sayŏng showed great promise. He passed the first exam needed for an official career in 1790, earning his *chinsa* (licentiate) degree at the young age of sixteen. Not only did he receive the brushes, ink, and paper customarily bestowed on successful candidates, it was said that Hwang so impressed King Chŏngjo (r. 1776-1800) that the monarch told him to come back when he was twenty and he would give him an official post. Supposedly the king even took him by the hand, an exceptional honor, which Hwang commemorated by tying a red silk thread around his right wrist.⁵ Whether this actually happened, the fact that Hwang was a gifted scholar, was a member of a family that was part of the capital elite with a tradition of office holding, and belonged to the Southerner (*Namin*) faction that enjoyed the favor of the king, who turned to them as part of his “magnificent harmony” policy to balance the powerful Old Doctrine faction (*Noron*), seemed to promise him success in an official career.⁶

Shortly after Hwang passed the exam he married into another Southerner family, a common practice among those with factional allegiances. His bride was Chŏng Myŏngnyŏn (nd), the third daughter of Chŏng Yakhyŏn (1751-1821) by his first wife. This marriage was to have an important influence on his life for it connected him to many of the first Korean Catholics.

³ For biographical information on Alexius Hwang Sayŏng see Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn’gu* [A study of Hwang Sayŏng’s *Silk Letter*], 37-39, as well as the introductions to the translation of the *Silk Letter* by Kim Yŏngsu in Hwang Sayŏng, *Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ* [The *Silk Letter* of Hwang Sayŏng] (Seoul: Sŏng Hwang Sŏktu Luga Sŏwŏn, 1998), 10-19.

⁴ Traditionally Koreans were considered one-year old when they were born and to age one year on the first day of the New Year. Thus, a child born the day before the year changed would be two years old on the first day of the New Year. Unless otherwise noted, all ages will be given following the Korean style of counting.

⁵ The remains of a piece of red silk thread were found in a pot in Hwang’s tomb, seeming to give some credence to this story. See Ha, 80-82; “Hwang Sayŏng chonghab t’oron [Comprehensive discussion on Hwang Sayŏng],” *Kyohoesa yŏn’gu* 13 (July, 1998): 203-12.

⁶ For a comprehensive study of this policy, instituted by Chŏngjo’s father, Yongjo, see JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2001), 117-65.

Yakhyŏn's three younger brothers, Yakchŏn (1758-1816), Yagyong (1762-1836), and Yakchong (1760-1801), were all at one time Catholics, though only Yakchong, who had been baptized with the name Augustine, was active in the faith when Hwang married into the family. Moreover, Myŏngnyŏn's mother was an older sister of Yi Pyŏk (1754-1786), who played a key role in the initial spread of Catholicism. Peter Yi Sŭnghun (1756-1801), whose baptism in 1784 is traditionally taken as the beginning of the Catholic Church in Korea, married Yagyong's elder sister.⁷ While Peter Yi Sŭnghun left and rejoined the Catholic Church several times, limiting his possible influence, Hwang did identify Peter as providing him with Catholic books.⁸ Considering his continued role in the Catholic Church, family relationship, and Hwang's praise of him in the *Silk Letter*, it must have been Augustine Chŏng Yakchong who encouraged him the most to convert.⁹

Hwang would later say under interrogation in 1801 that he had converted to Catholicism eleven years previously, and that the year after that, King Chŏngjo strictly forbade the religion, meaning that he became a Catholic in 1790, just before the Chinsan incident of 1791.¹⁰ He was so devoted to his new faith that though he continued to take the official exams, he only handed in

⁷ The very first Korean Catholics were likely babies baptized by Japanese Catholic soldiers during Hideyoshi's invasion in the 1590's and Koreans who had been taken back to Japan as slaves. See Juan Ruize-de-Medina, *The Catholic Church in Korea: Its Origins, 1566-1784*, trans. John Bridges (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 1991).

⁸ The original version of Hwang's interrogation reports has been reprinted in Sŏ Chongt'ae and Han Kŏn, ed., *Ch'ŏnjugyo sinja chaep'an kirok* [The interrogation records of Catholic believers], vol. 1 (Seoul: Kukhak Charyowŏn, 2004). A modern Korean translation can be found in Pae Ŭnsa ed., *Yŏksa ŭi ttang, paeum ŭi ttang: Paeron* [Land of history, land of learning: Paeron] (Seoul: Paoro Ttal, 2002). When citing Hwang Sayŏng's and his companions' interrogation records I will first give the name or names of the people being interrogated, the date on which the interrogation took place, and the page numbers for the original records and then those for the modern Korean translation. For this reference see Hwang Sayŏng's interrogation record for 1801-10-11, 749/267.

⁹ For the family backgrounds of the Chŏngs, Yi Pyŏk, and Yi Sŭnghun, see Jai-Keun Choi, *The Origins of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea: An Examination of Popular and Governmental Responses to Catholic Missions in the Late Chosŏn Dynasty* (Norfolk: The Hermit Kingdom Press, 2006) 73-81. For more on Chŏng Yagyong's departure from Catholicism see Don Baker, "Tasan between Catholicism and Confucianism: A Decade under Suspicion, 1791-1801," *Tasanhak*, no. 5 (2004): 55-86. For Hwang's connection with the Chŏng family, see Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn'gu*, 39-45.

¹⁰ See Hwang Sayŏng's interrogation record for 1801-10-10, 728-729/254-55.

blank sheets of paper, choosing religious devotion over an official career.¹¹ His intelligence and scholarship made him an effective teacher. He often lectured on Catholic doctrine, even over meals at his own house, and supported himself by teaching the children of believers.¹² He was a skilled missionary, and despite early family opposition, converted two of his uncles and three of his brothers-in law to Catholicism.¹³ He also proved himself a capable leader and was made the head of a cell in the *Myōngdohoe* (Society for Illuminating the Way), an organization for the most active Catholics devoted to worship, mutual exhortation, and missionary work.¹⁴ His high position in the church put him in frequent contact with figures such as Father James Zhou Wenmo, the only priest in Korea, Augustine Yu Hanggöm (1756-1801), an important church leader in Chōlla province with whom Hwang had sought to bring a Western ship to Korea before the *Silk Letter* incident, and Columba Kang Wansuk (1760-1801), who also held a position of authority in the Catholic community and was responsible for the safety of Father Zhou and the guidance of a community of perpetual virgins.¹⁵

The Shape of Catholic Doctrine in Korea

Alexius Hwang Sayōng was a zealous Catholic and an able leader in the Korean church. But when Hwang converted, Catholics had been active on the peninsula only since 1784, or for just about six years. How much about Catholicism was he able to learn? What was the shape of

¹¹ See Kim Yōngsu's introduction to his translation of Hwang Sayōng's *Silk Letter*, 11-13.

¹² Cho Kwang, *Chosōn hugi Ch'ōnjugyosa yōn'gu* [A study of the history of the Catholic Church in the late Chosōn dynasty] (Seoul: Kodae Minjok Munhwa Yōn'guso, 1988), 35-44.

¹³ Ha, 86 and Ch'oe Sōgu, "Sahak chingūi rūl t'onghaesō pon ch'ogi Ch'ōnjugyohoesa [History of the early Catholic Church as seen through the *Sahak chingūi*]," *Kyohoesa yōn'gu* 2 (April 1979): 41-45.

¹⁴ For more on the *Myōngdohoe*, see Pang Sanggūn, "Ch'ogi kyohoe-e issōsō Myōngdohoe ūi kusōng kwa sōnggyōk [The composition and characteristics of the Myōngdohoe in the early church]" *Kyohoesa yōn'gu* 11 (December 1996): 213-26.

¹⁵ For information on the leadership of the early Catholic Church in Korea see Cho, *Chosōn hugi*, 64-82.

his Catholic faith? These questions are worth asking because the willingness of Koreans to risk torture and death for the new religion did not mean that they understood everything about its doctrines. For instance, in 1787 the leaders of the Korean Catholic Church, realizing that they needed to partake in the Mass and the sacrament of confession, elected their own bishop and priests who then began performing these rituals. This was a clear violation of Catholic teaching, as only bishops with apostolic succession can ordain other bishops and priests.¹⁶

Chinese Roots

In order to discern the shape of Hwang's Catholicism we must first examine how the new religion came to Korea. Jesuit missionaries began to arrive in China in the late sixteenth century. Realizing the importance of Confucianism and the pride Chinese had in their culture, they sought to accommodate as much as they could within the bounds of Catholic orthodoxy. Jesuits dressed as scholars and wrote books in Classical Chinese that were designed to appeal to a Confucian audience. Many Catholic missionaries were educated in the sciences and sought to use such knowledge as part of their evangelistic efforts. For instance, Jesuits hoped that their skill in astronomy and knowledge of the heavens would convince the Chinese that they were also right about the existence of "The Lord of Heaven" (*ch'ŏnju*/天主), the name they used for God. Their mastery of astronomy won them positions at court, as such knowledge was necessary for the production of an accurate calendar and prediction of eclipses and comets, which were taken as proof that the dynasty was in harmony with the cosmos and therefore still possessed the Mandate

¹⁶ For more on the false hierarchy see Jai-Keun Choi, 36-41.

of Heaven.¹⁷ Service at court provided important government support and prestige, allowing the mission to expand, even if it gained few converts directly.¹⁸

Jesuit missionaries also drew upon Confucian philosophy to make a case for the Catholic faith. For example, they took the descriptions of an anthropomorphic Heaven that appeared in the ancient Classics to argue that originally Confucians had been theists. This allowed them to assert that Neo-Confucianism, with its non-theistic cosmology that understood such passages to be symbolic, had actually departed from the true Confucian way, and that Catholicism was therefore the fulfillment of Confucianism.¹⁹ Matteo Ricci pioneered this approach in his *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, first published in 1603. In this work, Ricci quoted the Confucian Classics to argue that a true Confucian ought to be a Catholic. He also, out of consideration for his Confucian audience, focused on morality and played down the more supernatural aspects of the religion. Thus, while Ricci sought to prove from reason that God and an eternal soul existed, he scarcely mentioned the doctrine of the Trinity, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, or the nature and importance of the sacraments. This was because *The True Meaning* was intended as an introductory text only.²⁰ Ricci wanted to show that the foundations of Catholicism accorded with human reason and Confucian ethics before discussing those

¹⁷ I will capitalize “Heaven” when the meaning of the word is something similar to “God” and use the lower-case form, “heaven,” when it refers more to something like the sky.

¹⁸ See Andrew Ross, *A Vision Betrayed* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994); Arnold Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin*, (New York, Russel and Russel, 1966); Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁹ No Kilmyŏng, *Kat’ollik kwa Chosŏn hugi sahoe pyŏndong* [Catholicism and social change in the late Chosŏn dynasty] (Seoul: Kodae Minjok Munhwa Yŏn’guso, 1988), 56-61.

²⁰ For information on this division see Cho Hangŏn, “<Chyugyo yoji> wa hanyŏk sŏhaksŏ wa ūi kwan’gye [The relationship between the *Chyugyo yoji* and Western books in Chinese translation],” *Kyohoesa yŏn’gu* 26 (June, 2006): 8-11.

supernatural elements of the faith based on Christian revelation that would have been more difficult for Confucian scholars to accept.²¹

A different approach, seeking to interest people in Catholicism by promising help in moral cultivation, ideally the primary occupation of a Confucian gentleman, can be seen in the *Seven Victories* (*Ch'ilgŭk*/七克), written in 1614 by Father Didace de Pantoja, a Spanish Jesuit.²² Pantoja described how seven virtues could be used to overcome the seven deadly sins and gave practical advice on moral self-improvement. He differed from Ricci in that he did not shy away from the supernatural. For example, the section on “chastity conquering lust” contains a story in which Saint Cecilia convinced her husband through the help of an angel that they should live together as perpetual virgins.²³ In another story, a man, who had married to please his parents but lived with his wife as a perpetual virgin, went to a monastery where his mere presence drove out a demon that a holy monk was unable to exorcize.²⁴ Such tales of the supernatural would have been anathema to the more rationalistic literati and the emphasis on male virginity would have seemed bizarre and immoral to Confucians who saw the primary purpose of marriage as the production of sons and the continuance of the patriline. However, de Pantoja's stories would have encouraged Confucians who found that they could not live up to their strict moral ideals by their own power to turn to Catholicism and the supernatural help it offered.

²¹ For an English translation, see Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, trans. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, ed. Edward J. Malatesta (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985).

²² Park Hee-bong, *Chol Du San Martyr's Shrine* (Seoul: Catholic Press, 1987), 71.

²³ Didace de Pantoja, *Ch'ilgŭk: ilgŭk kaji sŭngni ūi kil* [The seven conquests: seven roads to victory], trans. Kim Chinso, Kim Hyŏnung, and Pak Wansik (Ch'ŏnju: Ch'ŏnju Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'an, 1996), 252-54.

²⁴ See de Pantoja, 235-36.

Catholicism Comes to Korea

The Jesuit mission in China produced a large number of books in Classical Chinese, a language that elite Koreans could read. These books began to trickle into Korea in the seventeenth century through the various tribute missions to Beijing. While many Koreans, like their Chinese counterparts, admired the Western science contained in these books, they overwhelmingly rejected Catholicism itself.²⁵ At the same time, developments in Korean Neo-Confucianism, such as the 4-7 debate and the consequent elucidation of T'oegye Yi Hwang's (1501-1570) understanding of moral self-cultivation, eventually led a handful of scholars to take the new religion seriously. T'oegye's thought could play such a role because it emphasized human moral frailty and the consequent difficulty in becoming a virtuous person, which he attributed to ki's obstruction of the working of li. Thus, he tended to elevate immaterial li and denigrate material ki, leading him to view the body as an obstacle to moral self-cultivation. His views were therefore not too dissimilar from the Catholic understanding of human moral frailty.²⁶

T'oegye's moral philosophy heavily influenced members of the Southerner faction, including Sŏngho Yi Ik (1681-1763). As a practical learning (*sirhak*/實學) scholar, Sŏngho was interested in acquiring new techniques for cultivating virtue, even if it meant turning to sources outside the Neo-Confucian tradition, such as Buddhist monks.²⁷ This led Sŏngho to take

²⁵ Donald Baker, "Confucians Confront Catholicism in Eighteenth-century Korea" (Phd. diss., University of Washington, 1983), 27-72.

²⁶ See Don Baker, "Danger within: Guilt and Moral Frailty in Korean Religion" in *Acta Koreana* 4 (July 2001); Don Baker, "Sinyuhak ŭi todŏk kwa hyŏngisanghak [Morality and metaphysics in Korean Neo-Confucianism]," in *Chosŏn hugi yugyo wa Ch'ŏnjugyo ŭi taerip* [The confrontation between Confucianism and Catholicism in the late Chosŏn] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1997).

²⁷ For the relationship between sirhak and Catholicism see Don Baker, "The Use and Abuse of the Sirhak Label: A New Look at Sin Hu-dam and his Sŏhak Pyŏn," *Kyohoesa yŏn'gu*, no. 3 (1981): 183-254; Cho Kwang, "Sirhak ŭi

seriously the writings of foreign missionaries rather than dismissing them out of hand. Thus, while criticizing the supernatural aspects of the *Seven Victories*, he praised the techniques it provided for moral self-cultivation. Part of Sŏngho's openness to such ideas was connected to his own understanding of Confucianism. Sŏngho, influenced by T'oegye, was more pessimistic about the ability of human beings to act virtuously than other Confucians, and blaming this tendency on the body, emphasized asceticism and self-denial in order to master it and act morally. Thus he taught that people should end their meals while they were still a bit hungry, and that they should abstain from sex after having produced heirs.²⁸

These developments in Neo-Confucianism prepared the way for some of Sŏngho's disciples, who desperately wanted to become sages but were frustrated by their inability to do so, to convert to Catholicism. T'oegye's and Sŏngho's explanation for their difficulties, which placed much of the blame on the physical body and looked towards ascetic practices to tame it, was not too far from Catholicism, which encouraged self-mortification, identifying the "flesh" (along with the world and the devil), as an enemy of virtue. Catholicism also contained the doctrine of original sin, which helped to further explain why it was so difficult to be good.²⁹ Moreover, unlike Neo-Confucianism, Catholicism promised help in overcoming these moral difficulties in the form of God's grace. Thus, to some scholars, the new religion seemed to accurately explain the difficulties they found in trying to live out their own worldview in a way that resonated with it, while at the same time, offering a novel solution to those problems, encouraging them to accept this new teaching.

palchŏn [The development of sirhak],” in *Han 'guksa* [Korean history], ed. Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe (Seoul: Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 1998), 35: 207-71.

²⁸ Baker, “Confucians Confront,” 286-88.

²⁹ Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 65.

Sŏngho's willingness to take ideas outside of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy seriously led some of those influenced by his thought to do the same and to challenge accepted interpretations of the Classics.³⁰ For instance, Tasan Chŏng Yagyong read references to an anthropomorphic Heaven, not symbolically as impersonal li, as in traditional Neo-Confucianism, but literally as referring to a personal God.³¹ Tasan might have been influenced by another Southerner Neo-Confucian philosopher, Yun Hyu (1617-1680). Yun emphasized the anthropomorphic qualities of Heaven as personified in the "Lord-on-High" (*Sangje*/上帝) who, "responded with joy or anger to the affairs of human society."³² He also believed that li had not always existed but instead had been created by Heaven, which he also identified as the source of morality. While this was not quite the Catholic concept of God—Yun revered Heaven and stood in awe of it, but does not seem to have worshipped it—his ideas represented a trajectory of thought among Southerner Neo-Confucians that likely played a role in making some open to Catholicism.³³

Not all of those influenced by T'oegye, Yun Hyu, and Sŏngho became Catholics; many in fact were serious critics of the new religion. However, it was those whose thought was shaped by their scholarship who would first embrace Catholicism. One of these scholars was Yi Pyŏk. In 1784, when he heard that Yi Sŭnghun would travel to Beijing on a tribute mission, Yi Pyŏk urged him to visit the Catholic missionaries there, receive baptism, and obtain Catholic books.³⁴

³⁰ Donald Baker, "Confucians Confront," 286-301 and Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 64-65.

³¹ Don Baker, "A Different Thread: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian World," in *Culture and State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, ed. JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 215-16.

³² JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Constructing the Center: The Ritual Controversy and the Search for a New Identity in Seventeenth-century Korea," in *Culture and State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, eds. JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 79.

³³ Mirua Kunio, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Seventeenth-century Korea: Song Siyŏl and Yun Hyu," in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, eds. Wm Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 430-31.

³⁴ See Hwang Sayŏng's *Silk Letter*, lines 43-44.

When Yi, now with the baptismal name Peter, returned to Korea later that year he began to baptize others, establishing an active Catholic community.³⁵

The Ancestor Rites Controversy

By 1790, there were approximately 4,000 Catholics in Korea. That same year they learned that the Catholic Church forbade them from conducting ancestor rites, rituals in which people bowed and offered food and wine to wooden tablets representing their forbears. Ostensibly the ancestors came into the tablets and partook of the spiritual nature of the meal offered them while their descendents ate the material part when the ritual was complete. It was not required to actually believe this—some Confucians explicitly stated that they did not. Such skepticism was not a problem because it was the social function of ancestor rites, which expressed and encouraged filial piety and familial solidarity, that Confucians were concerned about, and the rites performed these functions regardless of whether ancestral spirits existed or not.³⁶ The state had an interest in encouraging the proper performance of such rituals, not only because filial piety was important in its own right, but because it was connected to the virtue of loyalty to the monarch (*ch'ung*/忠). A filial son or daughter was also likely to be a loyal subject, and an unfilial child, a disloyal one.

The prohibition of ancestor rites led those who had converted to Catholicism primarily to become better Confucians to abandon the religion. Others chose to remain within the Catholic Church. One of these, Paul Yun Chich'ŭng (1759-1791), a yangban from southwestern Korea, went beyond the ban on the performance of the rites and burned the ancestor tablets in his

³⁵ Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 20-82.

³⁶ Boundewijn Walraven, "Popular Religion in a Confucianized Society," in *Culture and State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, edited by JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 163-67.

possession. When his mother died in 1791 the tablets were therefore conspicuously absent during the funerary rites. Reports reached the government of this and Paul, along with his maternal cousin James Kwŏn Sangyŏn (1751-1791), was arrested.³⁷ After attempts to induce them to abandon the practice of Catholicism failed, they were executed in what is known as the Chinsan Incident, named after the area where they lived.³⁸

Paul and James contended that because ancestral spirits could not partake in the food and wine offered to them it was irrational to perform such rituals. This argument made no sense to their interrogators, who insisted that they perform the rituals regardless of what they believed, emphasizing their moral value. This reflects a fundamental difference between Catholicism and Neo-Confucianism. The former prioritized metaphysical truth and based its morality upon it. The latter was willing to tolerate some metaphysical deviation so long as proper morality was observed. Moreover, the Catholic rejection of ancestor rites pointed to another foundational difference between the two religions. Catholics put their relationship with God as known through the church over that of their relationship with other human beings, as determined by the Confucian state in accordance with li, the ultimate reality, inadvertently posing a serious challenge to the state and the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy it defended. Therefore, the fact that Hwang converted to Catholicism and chose to remain a Catholic, despite his church's teachings on ancestor rites, indicates his willingness to radically turn away from Neo-Confucian tradition, and to risk torture and death for the new religion.³⁹

³⁷ Choi, *Origins*, 97-103; Jung, 188-95.

³⁸ For a more detailed account of these issues see Baker, "A Different Thread" 217-220; Don Baker, "The Martyrdom of Paul Yun: Western Religion and Eastern Ritual in 18th Century Korea," *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society* 54 (1979): 33-58.

³⁹ Baker, "A Different Thread," 217-20.

The Catechism of Augustine Chŏng Yakchong

Augustine Chŏng Yakchong greatly influenced Hwang, who clearly admired him, as seen in his praise of his uncle in the *Silk Letter*. While also a leader in the Catholic Church and a member of the Myŏngdohoe, he was remembered most by Hwang as a teacher of doctrine.⁴⁰ Because the Catholic books that came from China were in Classical Chinese, a language that women and lower-class men generally could not read, Augustine Chŏng realized that a vernacular catechism was needed and consequently produced the *Chugyo yoji* (*Essentials of Catholicism*). This work, though not strictly a translation, drew heavily on various Chinese books. Augustine rearranged and edited this material and made his own additions in order to make their contents more intelligible to a Korean audience.⁴¹ The catechism, most likely written in the late 1790s, won the approval of Father James Zhou Wenmo, appeared on a list of books confiscated and burnt during the 1801 suppression, and was copied and printed into the twentieth century, showing that its contents were known to Catholics in Korea and were considered an orthodox statement of Catholic belief. Because Hwang was close to Chŏng and Father Zhou, looking up to them as his teachers, and repeated Father Zhou's praise of the catechism in the *Silk Letter*, he was undoubtedly both familiar and in agreement with its contents.⁴² Thus, by examining this work, we can understand something of what Hwang believed.

The *Essentials of Catholicism* is divided into two sections. The first, like Matteo Ricci's *True Meaning*, focused on proving the existence of the soul and God through reason. Similarly, Chŏng sought in the same way to show that God was the all good, omnipotent, omniscient,

⁴⁰ *Silk Letter*, lines 35-39.

⁴¹ Cho Hangŏn, 15-20.

⁴² Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 86-93; *Silk Letter*, lines 35-37; Hwang Sayŏng's interrogation report for 1801-10-10, 728-29/254-55.

omnipresent creator and redeemer of humanity. As such, people owed him a great debt similar to, but above, the loyalty and filial piety owed to king and parents. Augustine also departed from Ricci's approach by describing the Trinity, using metaphors to make this rather complex doctrine more readily comprehensible.⁴³

The second section of the *Essentials of Catholicism* focused on telling the grand narrative of Christianity. It began with the story of Creation, Original Sin, and how God reconciled fallen humanity to himself by becoming incarnate as the man Jesus of Nazareth and dying on the cross, and subsequently rising from the dead so human beings might have eternal life.⁴⁴ Augustine's descriptions are vivid, drawing bold pictures of the agony of Christ's Passion and the glory of his resurrection. This same vividness appears in Augustine's description of the Second Coming, the Last judgment, and the destruction of the world. Judgment is connected with justice—the good will be taken into heaven and the evil cast into hell. One therefore must repent and do good deeds now since death could come at any time.⁴⁵ We can see then from Augustine's catechism that Hwang was exposed to the central truths of Catholicism that, while containing a Confucian emphasis on morality, also included a sense of moral urgency, as well as explanations of the more difficult theological and supernatural teachings of the faith.

The Appeal of Catholicism

Through Hwang's leadership and teaching activities on behalf of the Catholic Church, and the fact that he would vigorously defend Catholicism while under interrogation, we know

⁴³ Chŏng Yakchong, *Chugyo yoji* [The essentials of Catholicism], ed. Ha Sŏngnae (Seoul: Sŏng Hwang Sŏktu Luga Sŏwŏn, 1997), 11-21.

⁴⁴ Chŏng Yakchong, 55-89.

⁴⁵ Chŏng Yakchong, 39-42, 78-80, and 100-3.

that he was a zealous believer. Despite the fact that he did not leave a detailed account of what he believed, by reflecting on the character of Catholicism during his time and the story of his life, as well as by examining what he wrote in the *Silk Letter* and said under interrogation, we can reconstruct a reasonably accurate portrait of his faith and why he became a Catholic. Since he earned his licentiate degree, Hwang must have been well-versed in Neo-Confucian philosophy and would have understood the arguments made in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, which he is known to have read. His connection to the thought of T'oegye and Sŏngho would have led him to take seriously the Confucian-based arguments made by Catholic apologists, as well as the explanation that Original Sin accounted for the difficulty of human moral frailty and the promise that grace could help people to overcome it. He might also have, like Yun Hyu and Tasan, been open to a more literalist reading of the Classics that would have led him to accept Ricci's arguments for the existence of God and the soul that drew from them.

Hwang does not seem to have had much of an interest in Western science, but like T'oegye and Sŏngho, and those who were influenced by them, he took moral self-cultivation very seriously. He was known to have read the *Seven Conquests* and appears to have performed acts of self-mortification beyond those required by the church.⁴⁶ His Confucian interest in virtue, and the belief that morality would bring concrete this-worldly benefits, can be seen in his statement in the *Silk Letter* that, "Once Catholicism is tolerated, the benefits of peace and good governance, which are enjoyed by all the countries of the West because they worship the true Lord, will extend to every country in the East."⁴⁷ Similarly, Hwang asserted when he was being interrogated that Catholicism was the "orthodox way (*chŏngdo*/正道)" and argued that its

⁴⁶ For Hwang reading the *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* see Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 86. In the *Silk Letter*, Hwang asks the bishop for a dispensation for an unnamed Catholic to give up the extra fasts he had promised to keep because continuing that discipline might identify him as a Catholic. This unnamed Catholic was likely Hwang himself. See the *Silk Letter*, lines 120-121.

⁴⁷ *Silk Letter*, line 112.

teachings were in line with Confucian morality. He also stated that, despite criticism from friends and family, he had determined that Catholicism was “good medicine for saving the world.”⁴⁸

Hwang, though radically departing from Neo-Confucianism in some ways, understood Catholicism in Confucian terms—as a way of bringing concrete this-worldly benefits through helping people to become more moral. In fact, it was likely in part this focus on the present world that helped convince Hwang to write the *Silk Letter* in the first place. If the Catholic Church was destroyed in Korea, it could not possibly carry out its function of bringing moral improvement and good government there. At the same time, Hwang’s statement about Catholicism “saving the world” included an otherworldly aspect. Catholicism not only brought benefits in this world, but spiritual salvation in the next, as seen in the fears he expressed in the *Silk Letter* that the death of the only priest in Korea, and consequent loss of the sacraments, would make it difficult for souls to be saved.⁴⁹

Hwang must also have found the arguments in Catholic works such as *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* and *The Essentials of Catholicism* that there really was a God whom he owed worship convincing. Likely of particular interest to Hwang was Augustine Chŏng’s argument in the latter book that a person could know that there is a God by observing the world and seeing that it could not exist without a creator, and that therefore for someone to deny this seemingly self-evident fact was like a *yubokja*, a child whose father dies after he is conceived but before he is born, denying that he has a father. As a *yubokja* himself, this argument, and the doctrine of a loving Father-God behind it, would have appealed to Hwang both intellectually and

⁴⁸ See Hwang Sayŏng’s interrogation records for 1801-10-9 and 1801-10-10, 645 and 729/234 and 255.

⁴⁹ *Silk Letter*, line 86.

emotionally.⁵⁰ Thus, Hwang was willing to give up an official career and devote himself to Catholicism, even at the risk of his own life, because he found in it a worldview that seemed true, was fulfilling on both intellectual and emotional levels, offered solutions to the problems he faced in this world, and promised eternal happiness in the next.

The Confucian Reaction

State Policy towards Religion

The Neo-Confucianism of the great synthesizer Zhu Xi (1130-1200) held sway as the official orthodoxy of Chosŏn Korea, offering a vision of the universe in which human moral perfection and the sagely rule realized by the ancient Chinese kings was attainable through reading Confucian books and implementing the moral principles and guidelines for statecraft they contained, performing correct rituals, which had the power to engender virtue and encourage moral behavior, and by maintaining proper human relations.⁵¹ What constituted appropriate social relationships did not arise from the human community itself, but from li, the cosmic pattern that constituted ultimate reality and governed the operation of the universe.

It was the duty of the Confucian state to encourage the actualization of proper morality, derived from li, in the human community under its authority. Because not everyone could read or had access to the materials needed for proper rituals, the elite, primarily through the state, were expected to morally transform (*kyohwa*/教化) society. This moral transformation was

⁵⁰ Chŏng Yakchong, 40.

⁵¹ Martina Deuchler, "Despoilers of the Way—Insulters of the Sages: Controversies over the Classics," in *Culture and State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, eds. JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 92.

understood to be a sort of civilizing process, as proper morality was the mark of a true civilization. Thus, government officials were to be the shepherds and teachers of the common people. State concern with morality and ritual allowed it to claim the right and duty to involve itself in a wide variety of areas. For instance, when the Chosŏn dynasty rose to power, reformist Neo-Confucian officials sought to radically alter Korean practices of marriage and inheritance as well as the general place of women in Korean society. Similarly, the state was able to require that elites follow Confucian rather than Buddhist funerary and ancestor rites.⁵² Don Baker has termed the state's claim to have the right to decide who could and should perform rituals and when they could do so as "ritual hegemony."⁵³

That the state should possess ritual hegemony was widely accepted in Korea, even among those whose interests suffered when it was exercised. During the first half of the Chosŏn dynasty, the government removed tax-exempt status from land owned by monasteries, defrocked monks, banned, with a few exceptions, public Buddhism in the capitol, and forced the amalgamation of the many Buddhist sects into two.⁵⁴ Remarkably, the monks accepted these changes without much resistance. Rather than rising up in rebellion, some sought to convince the state to restore their lost rights and privileges through written appeals that defended Buddhism against Neo-Confucian criticism.⁵⁵ It was thus widely accepted that it was the Chosŏn

⁵² See Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁵³ Don Baker, "The Religious Revolution in Modern Korean History: from Ethics to Theology and from Ritual Hegemony to Religious Freedom," *The Review of Korean Studies* 9 (September 2006): 262.

⁵⁴ See Han U-gun, "Policies toward Buddhism in Late Koryŏ and Early Chosŏn" in *Buddhism in the Early Chosŏn: Suppression and Transformation*, eds. Lewis R. Lancaster and Chai-Shin Yu (Fremont: Asian Humanities Press, 2002); Kwon Kee-jong, "Buddhism undergoes Hardships: Buddhism in the Chosŏn Dynasty" in *History and Culture of Buddhism in Korea*, ed. Korean Buddhist Research Institute (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1995), 181-83.

⁵⁵ See Robert Buswell, "Buddhism under Confucian Domination: The Synthetic Vision of Sŏsan Hyujŏng," in *Culture and State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, eds. JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

government that had the right, based on its claims to ritual hegemony, to exercise control over rituals and those connected to them.

Issues Challenging the Confucian State

Many Koreans took pride in seeing their country as a “little China” where orthodox Neo-Confucian flourished. Though the ancient kingdoms were gone and the Ming dynasty did not always live up to their high standards, for elite Koreans, China was the center of the civilized world, and because it was ruled by the Son of Heaven, the universe itself. Thus, the fall of the Ming dynasty and the declaration of the Qing in 1644 by the Manchus, a people Koreans saw as barbarians, was cataclysmic. Korean elites reacted to this shock with increased devotion to Zhu Xi Neo-Confucianism, concluding that only greater adherence to the orthodox way would preserve Korea, the last center of civilization on earth, from falling into barbarism.

In order to adhere more closely to orthodoxy, it was necessary to define what it was. At the same time, orthodoxy was deeply connected with orthopraxy, particularly with the proper performance of ritual. For example, ambiguity over how certain members of the royal family should mourn the king led to sharp and long-lasting debates, in part because the different positions officials held on these matters all said something very different about Korean identity and its relationship with Confucian civilization and the Qing Empire. Such issues were important because proper ritual was necessary if the Confucian state was to carry out its civilizing mission. Incorrect ritual could lead to the weakening and even the destruction of the Confucian civilization that Korean elites struggled to protect.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ See JaHyun Kim Haboush, “Constructing the Center.”

The importance of orthodoxy and orthopraxy led to bitter struggles within the state as political factions sought to advance their own visions of the true way, giving Korean factionalism a sharp edge that made compromise and cooperation very difficult. Disputes were envisioned in black and white terms and divergence in views was not seen as the product of honest disagreement, but as evidence that one's political opponents were immoral.⁵⁷ Factional struggles were further exacerbated by the fact that such ties ran very deep. People married and socialized mostly within their own factions and were often not exposed to the scholarship of other parties.⁵⁸ Moreover, issues of orthodoxy were sometimes used as pretext to seize political power by driving officials of an enemy faction from their posts, which were then filled with one's allies.

In his *Silk Letter*, Hwang Sayŏng stated that there were four major factions known as the four colors (*sasaek*): the Southerners, Old Doctrine, Young Doctrine, and Little Northerners. These factions had also been divided by the controversy over whether King Yongjo (r. 1724-1776) was right in having his son, Crown Prince Sado (1735-1762), the father of King Chŏngjo, killed. This led to a further split that cut across already established party lines into the "flexible faction" (*sip'a*), which thought Yongjo was wrong, and the "intransigent faction" (*pyŏkp'a*), which thought he was right. Many Southerners were also part of the flexible faction, and consequently were favored by King Chŏngjo. Hwang also stated that Catholicism had also split the Southerner faction into Catholic and anti-Catholic parties.⁵⁹

Factional struggles over ritual, national identity, and government posts made it difficult for the state to deal with the serious social and economic problems it faced in the latter half of

⁵⁷ Deuchler, "Despoilers," 92-93 and 128-29.

⁵⁸ Yŏng-ho Ch'oe, "Private Academies and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea," in *Culture and State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, eds. JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 41-46.

⁵⁹ *Silk Letter*, lines 17-18.

the Chosŏn dynasty. It had taken a century for the economy to recover from Hideyoshi's invasions in the 1590's and from the two Manchu invasions of 1627 and 1636, in part thanks to new agricultural technologies and land reclamation projects that ended up bringing their own problems. Only those who had the resources and ability to use the new technologies or reclaim land, such as rich yangban and chungin, as well as the wealthier and more industrious peasants, were able to profit from them. Their counterparts who were not so fortunate found themselves slipping further into poverty. Tenancy increased as peasants lost their land. Moreover, status distinctions were confused; a wealthy peasant could afford the trappings of yangban culture and might even buy the status itself while a yangban with a respected pedigree and a tradition of Confucian scholarship might be reduced to working in the fields.⁶⁰

Excessive taxation and corruption in the tax system led to increasing frustration at the government and its officials. Such corrupt practices as demanding military cloth taxes on children, the elderly, and even the deceased led to the abandonment of land as peasants fled to become slash-and-burn agriculturalists.⁶¹ These long simmering grievances at times led to uprisings in which religion could play an important role.⁶² Even though Korea did not suffer from the massive religiously-inspired rebellions that China did at this time, government officials were aware that such things had happened there, and were wary of the possibility that they might one day face such a threat themselves.⁶³

The fall of the Ming and the rise of the Qing, along with social and economic problems, led many people in the late Chosŏn dynasty to feel that something was deeply wrong, not only

⁶⁰ No, *Sahoe*, 43-49.

⁶¹ Ch'oe Wan'gi, 86-98

⁶² Ch'oe Wan'gi, 98-100.

⁶³ For examples see, Don Baker, trans., "A Buddhist Rebellion" and "An Chŏngbok: A Buddha Incarnate," in *Sources of Korean Tradition*, ed. Peter H. Lee and Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University, 1997), 2:174-77; James H. Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 137-38.

with Korea, but with the world itself. For those elites troubled by this situation, there were essentially three possible ways they could respond: 1) reaffirming Neo-Confucianism, 2) renewing Confucianism by bringing in new ideas, and 3) giving up on Neo-Confucianism and embracing another worldview.⁶⁴ Elite Koreans who converted to Catholicism before 1791 tended to embrace option two, while those who remained within the church despite the prohibition of ancestor rites or who converted later chose option three. The state, however, was governed by kings and officials who chose the first option and sought through ritual to strengthen the Korean state and the civilization it preserved. Their passion for orthodoxy and orthopraxy had led them to harshly criticize fellow Confucians. They were even more severe in their treatment of Catholicism.

Criticism of Catholicism

While some Southerners were attracted to Catholicism, members of that faction, such as An Chŏngbok (1712-1791), Ch'ae Chegong (1720-1799), and Sin Hudam (1702-1761), criticized the foreign religion in no uncertain terms, as did other Korean scholars.⁶⁵ Catholic doctrines, such as the Fall, the Incarnation, and the Atonement, even the belief in a God that created *ex nihil*, were considered absurd. Catholics were also criticized as being immoral. Like Buddhists, they scared people into doing good by playing on their selfishness, promising heaven

⁶⁴ These divisions are a modified form of those found in No, *Sahoe*, 68-75.

⁶⁵ Don Baker, tr., "An Chŏngbok: A Conversation on Catholicism," in *Sources of Korean Tradition*, ed. Peter H. Lee and Wm. Theodore De Bary (New York: Columbia University, 1997), 2:130-133; Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 197-236; Baker, "Use and Abuse."

for the righteous and hell for the wicked, rather than encouraging them to do good for its own sake.⁶⁶

The greater danger Catholicism posed to Confucian civilization than Buddhism and Shamanism became more apparent once Catholics began to appear in Korea. Catholics formed a tight-knit organization and consequently were very different from monks and shamans, who had a clientele, but typically no congregations. Furthermore, monks at least wore special clothing that marked them out as different. Catholics looked just like everyone else. In fact, they could be anyone else: yangban, chungin, commoner, low-born, man, or woman. Because Catholicism embraced all segments of society and Catholic loyalty went beyond their king to God and his representatives, the pope and the bishop of Beijing, it bound people together into an illegal secret society that could theoretically launch a rebellion, directly threatening the state. Moreover, such a rebellion would not simply overthrow the dynasty and replace it with another Neo-Confucian one, but, by bringing “evil learning” into power, destroy the civilization the Chosŏn state sought to protect. The fact that Catholics broke the law by distributing forbidden books, belonging to an illegal and secretive religious organization, and communicating with foreigners, even bringing in a Chinese priest, made them appear all the more threatening.

Even if they did not rebel, Catholics were dangerous, as they ate away at the very moral foundations of the state. For example, traditionally, elite men had tended to follow Neo-Confucianism and women Buddhism and Shamanism, leading to very different forms of religious practice and beliefs. However, Catholicism brought men and women together in the same room for prayer. This led to criticism of Catholicism as lewd and indecent. Such suspicions were strengthened when it was found that Father Zhou had been hidden in the home

⁶⁶ For an overview of doctrinal and philosophical criticisms of Catholicism see, Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 155-77; Kŭm Chang-t’ae, “The Doctrinal Dispute between Confucianism and Western Thought in the Late Chosŏn Period,” in *The Founding of Catholic Tradition in Korea*, ed. Chai-shin Yu (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 7-44.

of Columba Kang.⁶⁷ Similarly, some young men and women who converted to Catholicism even disobeyed their parents when commanded to abandon the religion.⁶⁸

Of special importance was the refusal of Catholics to perform ancestor rites, taken by the critics of Catholicism as further proof that the religion destroyed filial piety, which was itself linked with the virtue of loyalty, substantiating the charge that Catholics had “no father and no king” (*mubu mugun*/無父無君). Catholicism, by rejecting ancestor rites, prioritized the relationship between God and the individual over the individual’s relationship with parents and king, subverting the two cardinal virtues of loyalty and filial piety and denying the state’s claim to ritual hegemony. Catholicism thus directly challenged the Neo-Confucian civilization that the Chosŏn state was bound to protect by threatening to make the people of Korea into “birds and beasts,” wild animals with no morals.

The Suppression of Catholicism, 1785-1801

To understand the historical context in which both Hwang Sayŏng and the Chosŏn state sought to justify violence, it is necessary to briefly survey the suppression of Catholicism in Korea. From the time the Chosŏn state became aware that there were Catholics on the peninsula, it sought to suppress the new religion. Peter Yi Sŭnghun began to spread the religion after he returned to Korea from Beijing in 1784, and in just a short time the Catholic community grew to approximately 1,000. Yangban believers often met together at the house of Thomas Kim Pŏmu (?-1786), a chungin translator. Meetings had gone on at the house for several months when, in

⁶⁷ See Gary Ledyard, “Kollumba Kang Wansuk, an Early Catholic Activist and Martyr,” *Christianity in Korea*, ed. Robert Buswell Jr. and Timothy S. Lee (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 38-71.

⁶⁸ For the conflict Catholicism caused within families, see Ch’oe Sŏnhye, “Chosŏn hugi kajong ūi Ch’ŏnjugyoin pakhae wa in’gan’gwan ūi pyŏnhwa [Persecution of Catholics in late Chosŏn families and changes in the view of humanity],” *Kyohoesa yŏn’gu* 25 (December, 2005): 317-38.

the spring of 1785, an officer of the board of punishments, thinking that drinking and gambling were going on inside, entered to find the Catholics engaged in prayer. They were all arrested. While the yangban were simply admonished and released, Kim Pŏmu was tortured. Refusing to abandon Catholicism, he was banished, but died from his ordeal before reaching his place of exile. Even though the yangban escaped physical punishment, their families put heavy pressure on them to abandon Catholicism. One of the early leaders, Yi Pyŏk, did so when his father threatened suicide. Even Peter Yi forsook Catholicism, though he would soon return to the community.⁶⁹

In the wake of this incident, government officials called on King Chŏngjo to take action. In 1785 an order, restated in 1787, was given to ban Catholic books, which were also taken from a state library and burned.⁷⁰ Under continued bureaucratic pressure from his officials to take stronger action against Catholicism, King Chŏngjo commanded the governors to deal with the religion in their provinces in 1788.⁷¹ Chŏngjo's comparative reluctance to move against Catholicism was in part connected to factionalism. The king relied on Southerners, such as his councilor, the anti-Catholic Ch'ae Chegong, to balance the powerful Old Doctrine faction. He likely feared that the suppression of Catholicism would become a pretext for factional attacks against his allies, as most elite Catholics belonged to that faction, including favorites like Chŏng Yagyong.⁷² Therefore, instead of actively suppressing Catholicism, Chŏngjo proclaimed that if the Confucian Way were properly illuminated, and were state officials to actually follow its

⁶⁹ Choi Jai-keun, *Origins*, 92-95.

⁷⁰ Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 179-85.

⁷¹ Tai-sik Jung, 169-170.

⁷² Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 212-15.

teachings correctly, no one would become a Catholic and those who had already converted would leave the religion of their own accord.⁷³

These half measures did little to stop the spread of Catholicism, which continued to grow. Catholics even began to communicate with Bishop Alexandre de Gouvea (1731-1808) in Beijing to learn more about their new faith and to request a priest.⁷⁴ Peter Yi became involved in the Catholic community again and was a part of these efforts, in 1789 writing a letter to the bishop in which he stated that many Catholics had been put in prison and over ten had died for their faith.⁷⁵ Yi gives no names, and as there is no corroborating evidence for these deaths, he might have simply been reporting an unsubstantiated rumor. If Catholics had in fact died at the hands of the state, they had probably done so as part of the local suppressions carried out by the governors after the king's order of 1788.⁷⁶

It would be Bishop Gouvea's response to another of Peter Yi's letters in 1790, in which the Catholic ban on ancestor rites was made known, that would cause many Koreans to leave the church and set into motion the events that would lead to the execution of Paul Yun and James Kwŏn the following year.⁷⁷ Not only government officials, but even local elites were incensed by what Paul and James had done and called for stricter measures against Catholicism.⁷⁸ Peter Yi was dismissed from office, but his second abandonment of Catholicism saved him from

⁷³ Tai-sik Jung, 107-35.

⁷⁴ Choi Jai-keun, 36-44.

⁷⁵ Yun Migun, trans., *Han'guk ch'ogi kyohoe-e kwanhan Kyohwangch'ŏng charyo mŏnjib* [Collection of Vatican documents related to the early Korean Church] (Kat'ollik Ch'ulp'ansa: Seoul, 2001), 37.

⁷⁶ At the time no one was to be executed without the king's approval so there should have been some record if these Catholics had been. However, they could have died under interrogation, which would explain why none exist. See William Shaw, *Legal Norms in a Confucian State* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies/Center for Korean Studies, 1981), 61.

⁷⁷ Joseph Ch'ang-mun Kim and John Jae-sun Chung, *Catholic Korea: Yesterday and Today* (Seoul: St. Joseph Publishing Co., 1984), 29.

⁷⁸ Don Baker, "A Different Thread," 220.

further punishment.⁷⁹ While at least one Catholic, Francis Xavier Kwŏn Ilsin (1751-1791), also a Southerner, died from torture, no one save Paul and James was purposefully executed.⁸⁰ This was in part because of Chŏngjo's resistance to the use of more violence, and because many of the early Catholic leaders who were interrogated agreed to abandon Catholicism, though some would later become active again in the church.⁸¹

Only a handful of Catholics died at the hands of the government between 1791 and 1796. Peter Wŏn Sijang's (1732-1793) zeal for spreading his new faith led to his arrest in 1793. He was tortured for several months in an effort to force him to abandon Catholicism. Only after he continually refused to do so was he finally executed.⁸² Three other Catholics were beaten to death in 1795 in an attempt to force them to confess the whereabouts of Father James Zhou Wenmo, who had snuck into Korea the previous year.⁸³ During this time, the state, while willing to execute Catholics, was hesitant to actually do so. When Catholics were executed, it typically was not simply because they were Catholic, but because they had committed some other crime.

The continued failure to capture Father Zhou led Chŏngjo to order a secret search for the priest and to authorize the violent suppression of Catholicism in Ch'ungch'ŏng province, where he was believed to be hiding. The decision to authorize the local suppression of Catholicism in Ch'ungch'ŏng province, mentioned briefly by Hwang in the *Silk Letter*, led to a sharp increase in the number of Catholics executed for practicing their religion.⁸⁴ While it has been stated that between 1797 and 1800 upwards of one hundred Catholics died during this suppression, we only have detailed information on the lives of eight Catholics, all of whom were men. These

⁷⁹ See Jung Tai-Sik, *Origins*, 196-97.

⁸⁰ He initially refused to abandon Catholicism but gave an ambiguous statement of submission to the king when he was told his mother was sick and that if he issued such a statement he would be sent into exile near her. He died before he reached his place of exile. Joseph Kim and John Chung, 40-41.

⁸¹ Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 64-72 and 188-90.

⁸² Joseph Kim and John Chung, 41-44.

⁸³ Choi Jai-keun, 44-45 and 103-7.

⁸⁴ *Silk Letter*, line 6.

Catholics were tortured over an extended period of time, one for more than two years, not to force them to abjure their faith because they could not longer handle the pain, but in order to convince them to abandon Catholicism by awakening them from their errors.⁸⁵ Two died from this treatment while the other six were eventually executed after they repeatedly refused to abandon Catholicism. Of these eight men, six were either leaders of the Catholic community already known to the government, or related to other people who had been arrested. None possessed strong factional connections. Moreover, despite the fact that their families contained Catholics, some of whom visited them in prison, they were largely left alone. There are no extant records of Catholic women being executed or dying in prison during this period.⁸⁶

As the number of Catholics continued to expand, so too did the suppression of Catholicism, which spilled into Kyŏnggi province, where the capitol was located, in 1800. Hwang was aware of this, and recorded details of it in the *Silk Letter*, reporting that Peter Cho Yongsam (?-1801) was arrested with his father in the fourth month of 1800.⁸⁷ He also described how a large group of Catholics, led by Martin Yi Chungbae (?-1801), were arrested after an unfriendly neighbor saw them boisterously celebrating Easter and reported them to government officials.⁸⁸ In the sixth month of 1800, while they were in prison, being tortured in an attempt to make them abandon Catholicism, Chŏngjo died and his son, Sunjo, ascended the throne. As he was a minor, Queen Dowager Chŏngsun (1745-1805), a former consort of Chŏngjo's grandfather and a member of an Old Doctrine family, became regent. She was concerned that the young

⁸⁵ For an example of this logic, see Jung, 210.

⁸⁶ The information on these eight men was culled from Joseph Kim and John Chung, 49-51 and Han'guk Ch'ŏnjukyo Chugyohoe ūi Sibok Sisŏng Chugyo T'ŭkpyŏl Wiwŏnhoe, *'Hanūnim ūi chong' Yun Chich'ŭng Paolo wa tongryo sun'gyoja 123wi* [‘Servants of God’ Paul Yun Chich’ung and 123 other martyrs] (Seoul: Taekyo K’ŏmyunik’eisyūn, 2003). See also Dallet, 1:399-410 and Joseph Kim, 48-49. More than these eight were probably killed, but as these are the only ones I have been able to locate information on thus far, it is likely the case that the number of one hundred is too high. For a reference to that number see Kim Chinso, “Sinyu pakhae tangsi sŏyang sŏnbak chŏngwŏn ūi tŭksŏng,” 118-21.

⁸⁷ *Silk Letter*, line 71.

⁸⁸ *Silk Letter*, lines 9-11.

king lacked a strong power base.⁸⁹ This, combined with her dislike of Chǒngjo, who had punished members of her family, and his Southerner allies, led her to look to the Old Doctrine Faction for support, insuring its dominance in the government.⁹⁰

The arrest of Catholics continued after the five-month mourning period for King Chǒngjo had ended. On the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of 1800, Thomas Ch'oe P'ilgong (1769-1801), a former government functionary who had abandoned Catholicism in 1791, but later relapsed, was apprehended. Two days later, Peter Ch'oe P'ilche (1770-1801), a cousin of Thomas Ch'oe, was arrested after a constable stumbled upon a Catholic prayer meeting in his pharmacy. On the ninth day of the first month of 1801, John Ch'oe Ch'anghyŏn (1754-1801), a relative of one of the three Catholics killed in connection to the Father Zhou incident and an important Catholic leader, was informed upon and arrested.⁹¹ The following day the Queen Dowager, noting that Chǒngjo's policy of illuminating the way had failed to stop the spread of Catholicism, issued a proclamation that called for the suppression of the religion and stated that those followers of "evil learning" who did not abandon the cult would be treated as rebels.⁹² This edict would begin a suppression of Catholicism that would take between 100 and 300 lives.⁹³

Alexius Hwang wrote that after John Ch'oe's arrest a large number of Catholics, including women, were thrown into prison and soon filled up the state jails. Early in the second

⁸⁹ Jung Tai-Sik, 217-23.

⁹⁰ See Pyŏn Chusŭng, "Sinyu pakhae ŭi chǒngjijŏk paegyŏng-e kwanhan yŏn'gu [A study of the political background of the 1801 Persecution]" and Yi Yŏngch'un, "Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ sakkŏn-e kwanhan yŏksa sinhakchŏk sŏngch'al [A historical-theological reflection on the Hwang Sayŏng *Silk Letter* incident]," in *Sinyu pakhae wa Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ sakkŏn*, ed. Ch'oe Ch'anghwa (Seoul: Han'guk Sun'gyoja Hyŏnyang Wiwŏnhoe, 2003), 35-54 and 231-56; Jung Tai-sik, 216-30.

⁹¹ Joseph Kim and John Chung, 52-59; *Silk Letter*, lines 22-23.

⁹² *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 287-89 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 1. 10. *chǒnghae*).

⁹³ According to a letter sent by Korean Catholics to the pope in 1811, over one hundred people died in the suppression and four hundred were sent into exile (for a Korean translation of the letter see Yun Migun, 211). Hwang reported that he had heard that three hundred had been killed in the capital alone, but was not sure if he could believe it (*Silk Letter*, lines 74-75). It is probable that more than one hundred, but less than three hundred died.

month a new chief of police ordered that those who had forsaken Catholicism be released. He was reassigned to a different position and the police were ordered to recapture those Catholics he had let go. Previously, those who had abandoned Catholicism had been allowed to go free, but now they were to be punished with exile, indicating that the state would take a stronger stance against the religion. Furthermore, Catholic commoners were transferred to the state tribunal (*ũigũmbu*), which was reserved only for yangban and non-yangban rebels. This indicated that the state was taking seriously the proclamation's threat that refusing to abandon Catholicism was tantamount to rebellion.⁹⁴

Torture was still used to try and wake up Catholics to their errors so that they would abandon their faith. For instance, Peter Cho died on the fourteenth day of the second month from the beatings he had received in an effort to make him recant.⁹⁵ Then, on the second month of the twenty-fourth day, John Ch'oe, Peter Ch'oe and Thomas Ch'oe, as well as Peter Yi Sũnghun, Augustine Chõng Yakchong, Paul Hong Nangmin (a Southerner and relapsed Catholic, 1751-1801), were all executed by decapitation, the punishment for rebellion.⁹⁶ Yi Kahwan (1742-1801), a former Southerner official and Catholic who had abandoned Catholicism, died around this time from the torture he had endured, as did Ambrose Kwõn Ch'õlsin (1736-1801), who had been sentenced to be executed with the others.⁹⁷ Of the eight who died, all but John Ch'oe had some factional connection to the Southerners, either directly or through their families. None had been in government custody for long, the three Ch'oes being arrested in either the twelfth month of 1800 or the first month of 1801, and the other five from early in the second

⁹⁴ *Silk Letter*, lines 24 and 28-30.

⁹⁵ *Silk Letter*, lines 70-72.

⁹⁶ It is not clear what Peter Yi Sũnghun believed when he died. See Cho Kwang, *Chosõn hugi*, 64-67.

⁹⁷ See *Silk Letter*, line 39; Chõng Tuhoe, "Sinyu pakhae ũi chõn'gae kwajõng [The course of the 1801 persecution]," in *Sinyu pakhae wa Hwang Sayõng Paeksõ sakkõn*, ed. Ch'oe Ch'anghwa (Seoul: Han'guk Sun'gyoja Hyõnyang Wiwõnhoe, 2003), 57-60.

month of 1801. Thus, while it appears that an effort had been made to reform the Ch'oes, Peter Yi, Augustine Chŏng, and Paul Hong were killed right away. As the latter three were all Southerners, factional animosity likely played a part in this, but the inclusion of people not directly connected to any of the parties indicates that factionalism was not the sole, or necessarily even the primary cause of the suppression.⁹⁸

Had Catholicism been merely an issue of factionalism, the government suppression of the religion could have ended there. However, instead of diminishing in intensity it expanded, beginning to include women for the first time. It appears that the first female Catholics to be arrested in the 1801 suppression were Columba Kang and the Catholic women she lived with.⁹⁹ After her arrest, she was tortured numerous times and then executed on the twenty-third day of the fifth month. Moreover, Columba was not the first female Catholic to die. Two princesses, Maria Song and Maria Sin, who had lived in exile because male relatives had been implicated in a anti-government plot, were given poison when it was discovered that they were Catholics, dying on the thirteenth day of the third month.¹⁰⁰ On the same day the two Marys took poison, Martin Yi, and his companions who had been arrested while celebrating Easter, were beheaded. They did not have any factional affiliation save for Martin, and he was a member of the Disciples faction (Sorŏn), not a Southerner.¹⁰¹ Similar executions would continue sporadically until the end of the suppression in late 1801.

From 1785 to 1801, the Chosŏn state gradually broadened the scope of the suppression of Catholicism and its use of violence to that end. While factionalism and the rise of the Old Doctrine party played a role in this, the primary reason the state intensified its use of violence

⁹⁸ *Silk Letter*, line 30-54. Hwang dwelt at length on these deaths in the *Silk Letter* and seems to have been deeply affected by them.

⁹⁹ *Silk Letter*, line 21; Ledyard, 39-57.

¹⁰⁰ *Silk Letter*, line 69-70.

¹⁰¹ *Silk Letter*, line 9.

was because more lenient and passive policies failed to halt the spread of Catholicism, which was seen as a threat to the Chosŏn state and the Neo-Confucian civilization it guarded. Evidence of this threat could be seen in the fact that Catholics burned ancestor tablets, met together secretly, and had smuggled in a Chinese priest. Much of the government violence directed against Catholics during this time was in fact directly connected to these acts.

While most Catholics reacted to state suppression by trying to stay hidden and practicing their faith in secret, others responded to the increasing use of state violence against their community more actively. The near arrest of Father Zhou in 1795, and the deaths of the three Catholics who sought to protect him, convinced Catholic leaders that they needed to somehow obtain official toleration for their faith. Thus, in 1796, a group of Catholics, including Hwang Sayŏng, sent a letter to the bishop Beijing requesting that a Western ship be sent to them.¹⁰² They had heard that Catholicism had initially suffered violent suppression in China, but that a Western country had dispatched a great ship loaded with treasures, and through a combination of diplomacy and gifts to the court, won tolerance for their religion, enabling Catholics to practice their faith publicly and even build churches. Korean Catholics wondered if a similar plan might work in their country. It even seems that Yu Kwan'gŏm (?-1801), the younger brother of Augustine Yu Hanggŏm (1756-1801), an important Church leader in Chŏlla Province, was open to the use of force for this end if peaceful measures failed. Under interrogation, the Catholic Yi Wujib (1761-1801), who had acted as a messenger for the Catholics, stated that Kwan'gŏm had said that if gifts and diplomacy did not work, force could be used to settle the issue.¹⁰³

¹⁰² For more on these efforts, see Kim Chinso, "Sinyu pakhae tangsi" and Cho Kwang, "Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ ūi sahoe sasangjŏk paegyŏng [The social thought behind Hwang Sayŏng's *Silk Letter*]," in *Sinyu pakhae wa Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ sakkŏn*, ed. Ch'oe Ch'anghwa (Seoul: Han'guk Sun'gyoja Hyŏnyang Wiwŏnhoe, 2003).

¹⁰³ Ch'a Kijin, "Chosŏn hugi Ch'ŏnjugyo sinjadŭl ūi sŏngjikcha yŏngip kwa yangban ch'ŏngnae-e taehan yŏn'gu [A study of the bringing in of priests by Catholics and the invitation of a Western ship in the late Chosŏn]," *Kyohoesa yŏn'gu* 13 (July, 1998): 21-27.

Alexius Hwang faced an even more difficult situation in 1801 than he and other Catholics did in 1796. Hwang was well aware of the increasingly violent suppression of Catholicism, recording details of many of the above executions of Catholics in the *Silk Letter*. Hwang knew that much of the leadership of the Catholic Church was dead, the suppression of Catholicism was expanding in intensity, and the only priest in Korea had been executed. To Hwang, who had been forced to abandon his wife and two year-old son and flee from his home, and who was close to many of those who had been killed, the situation must have seemed especially dire. While Hwang knew that the last request for a ship had been rejected—the bishop of Beijing had said it was impossible—he wondered if now the situation had changed and help could be sent.¹⁰⁴ It seemed to Hwang that something had to be done or otherwise the Catholic community in Korea would be wiped out. Consequently, he decided to write the *Silk Letter*, proposing that a Western armada invade Korea and force the Chosŏn state to accept a priest and tolerate the Catholic Church.

¹⁰⁴ Ch'a, "Chosŏn hugi," 52-54.

Chapter 2: Violence and the *Silk Letter*

In the second month of 1801, when Hwang Sayŏng learned that his arrest had been ordered, he fled Seoul, leaving behind his wife and son. Other Catholics, including Columba Kang Wansuk, helped him escape. Eventually he made his way to Paeron, a potter's village, where, from the end of the second month to the last days of the ninth, he made his home in a man-made cave. Though he was a wanted fugitive, and despite the ongoing suppression of Catholicism, Hwang managed to convert several people there, attesting to his skill as a missionary.¹ Shortly after his arrival, he heard news of the execution of his uncle Augustine Chŏng. Sometime between then and the twenty-sixth day of the eighth month, when Hwang Sim visited him and confirmed what he had already heard, that Father Zhou had been executed four months previously, Alexius Hwang began to write the *Silk Letter*.

The *Silk Letter* was composed of 13,384 characters in 122 lines printed neatly on a piece of silk sixty-two centimeters wide and thirty-eight centimeters tall. It was meant to be sewn inside the lining of a jacket, which is how Catholics had sent messages to missionaries in China previously.² This method was very effective, as none of those letters had been intercepted. Hwang's missive was meant for Bishop Gouvea, though Hwang did not mention the bishop's name. Similarly, Alexius Hwang did not use his name, but instead signed the letter "Thomas," the baptismal name of Hwang Sim, who, unlike Alexius Hwang, was known to the missionaries.

In the *Silk Letter*, Hwang described the course of the suppression and its causes and provided detailed descriptions of the lives of the Catholics who had died. He tried to be as

¹ Pang, "Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> wa punsŏkchŏk ihae," 151-53.

² For information on Hwang's flight and an analysis of the physical properties of the *Silk Letter* and its divisions see Ha, 100-6; Hwang Sayŏng, *Nuga*, 9-22; Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn'gu*, 45-58 and 82-89.

accurate as possible, noting when he was not sure if what he was reporting was true. Hwang also pleaded with Bishop Gouvea to do what he could to obtain a new priest and tolerance for the Catholic Church, through violent means if need be. He did so both by direct appeals, and more indirectly, through how he framed his hagiographies and description of the suppression of Catholicism. In this chapter, we will examine the arguments he used, as well as the hagiographical narrative that he constructed, to justify violence. And in doing so, we will see how the story he told blinded Hwang to the wide chasm dividing Catholicism and Neo-Confucianism and the consequent challenge the former posed the latter, making violence appear to be a more promising means of obtaining tolerance than it really was.

Rebuilding the Korean Catholic Church

Obtaining a New Priest

Hwang believed that, if the Catholic community in Korea were to survive, it was absolutely necessary to obtain a new priest, explaining in the *Silk Letter* that “Even though the persecutions that occurred in the West in the past were worse than this, some priests survived and the sacraments were still available. That’s how our sacred teachings managed to survive and how souls could still be saved.”³ As the Catholics lacked a priest, and therefore the sacraments, they were worse off than a sheep that had lost its shepherd, for it was still “able to find some

³ The sacraments are of great importance in Catholicism as they are believed to be the normal means through which God communicates grace and forgives sins. Without them, it is difficult, according to Catholic doctrine, to lead a normal Christian life and achieve salvation. Hwang argued that the early Christians were able to endure violent suppression because they had the divine help available through the sacraments. Since Korean Catholics did not have access to the sacraments as they had no priest to perform them (save for baptism which can be performed by laypeople), Hwang thought they could not endure persecution for much longer. For a summary of the importance of the sacraments for Catholics in Korea at this time see Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 65-66.

grass to eat to keep alive” or even a “newborn baby” who “loses the mother that was nursing her.”⁴

Bringing in a priest required the money necessary to cover the expenses of guides to escort the cleric into the country and for the preparation of safe houses in which he could hide.⁵ But, as Hwang explained, Korea was the poorest of countries and the Catholics had been made poorer still by government suppression. According to Hwang, it was this poverty, along with a lack of experience, which had led to Father Zhou’s near arrest and the deaths of three Catholics in 1795. Hwang was frustrated by this situation, writing that, “Never in our wildest dreams did we expect that the survival of Catholicism in Korea and our very lives would depend on filthy mammon.”⁶ If it is only because of a lack of money that we are dying and Catholicism is disappearing in Korea, how can our grief at the injustices we have suffered be alleviated?” He then appealed to Bishop Gouvea to go to the countries of the “Great West” and ask them to send money to Korea. Hwang promised that they would be careful and would not repeat their previous mistakes. If Bishop Gouvea sent a priest, he would be well taken care of.⁷

Hwang went on to explain the difficulties they would face in smuggling a priest into Korea. The state had set up a system in which groups of five families were mutually responsible for making sure that there were no Catholics among them. However, because there had been little Catholic activity in the provinces of Hwanghae and P’yŏngan, the latter of which bordered China, the system was not strictly enforced there, which meant that Catholics could safely settle in those places. If a Chinese Catholic could set up a store near the Willow Palisade, a series of ditches and willow trees that separated Manchu, Chinese, Mongolian, and Korean territory, they

⁴ *Silk Letter*, line 87.

⁵ See Hwang Sayŏng’s interrogation records for 1801-10-10, 737-742/261-64.

⁶ Mammon is a derogatory word for money. See Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13.

⁷ See *Silk Letter*, lines 91-97; Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn’gu*, 129-31.

could easily communicate with each other, facilitating the dispatch of a priest. Furthermore, Hwang suggested that a Korean sneak into China in order to teach some young men, presumably seminarians, the Korean language.⁸ This was because, despite Father Zhou's devotion to his flock, his Korean was very poor. Columba Kang frequently had to interpret for him when he preached or taught Catholic doctrine, and when he surrendered himself to the government, the officials could not understand his Korean, necessitating that he had to write down what he was trying to say in Chinese.⁹

Hwang thought that the preparations for sending another priest could begin right away. This was because he ascribed the primary causes of the persecution to the "hateful jealousy" the Old Doctrine faction held for the Southerners and King Chǒngjo's desire to arrest Father Zhou. Now that the Old Doctrine faction was in power and Father Zhou was dead, the persecution might end within a few months.¹⁰ Hwang did not see the suppression of Catholicism as arising from the challenge it posed to the Chosŏn state and its Neo-Confucian foundation, but rather to the character flaws and desires of individual actors, and was consequently rather optimistic about the possibility that the suppression of Catholicism would soon die out now that state officials had achieved their goals, enabling plans to send a priest to go forward. He could not have known that it would be nearly three decades before another cleric would enter the country.¹¹

⁸ *Silk Letter*, line 98.

⁹ See *Sŭngjǒngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 463-64 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 3. 15. *sinmyo*); Ledyard, 52.

¹⁰ *Silk Letter*, line 93.

¹¹ A Chinese priest, Father Pacificus Yu Hengde, would enter Korea in 1834 and work there until 1836, the same year the first French missionaries entered. See Ch'oe Sŏnhye, "Kihae pakhae [The 1839 Persecution]," in *Han'guk kyohoesa 3* [Korean church history, volume 3], ed. Han'guk Kyohoesa (Seoul: Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, 2010), 15-20.

Obtaining Tolerance

Hwang realized that without tolerance for Catholicism it would be impossible to guarantee the safety of the priest, for Korean Catholics to live without fear of persecution, or to spread the Catholic faith. However, he knew that the Chosŏn state would not willingly tolerate Catholicism. In fact, Hwang feared that the Korean government hoped to imitate Japan in its seemingly successful campaign to stamp out the religion.¹² Therefore he proposed several plans in his *Silk Letter* that he believed could obtain tolerance for the Catholic Church in Korea. In the first, he requested Bishop Gouvea to ask the pope to write a letter to the emperor of China expressing a desire to spread Catholicism in Korea, and asking him to order the kingdom, “to welcome missionaries from the West, who will teach the people to be loyal and respectful. The people will then repay with the utmost loyalty the kindness Your Highness (the emperor of China) has shown them.”¹³ Hwang believed that Catholic missionaries enjoyed the respect of the Qing and that the emperor would be willing to help in gratitude for the loyal service they had given him.¹⁴

However, Hwang realized that if the emperor would not intervene in Korea out of gratitude, he might be willing to out of concerns for his own safety. Hwang wrote, referring to the Miao rebellion of 1795-1798 and the White Lotus rising of 1796-1801, that, “We have heard that bandits are running rampant in the west, that the Chinese military has suffered numerous

¹² *Silk Letter*, line 87. Hwang believed that Catholicism had been completely destroyed in Japan. However, some Catholics continued to practice their faith in secret, staying hidden for over two hundred years before revealing themselves to French missionaries in the middle of the nineteenth century. See Ann Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1993).

¹³ *Silk Letter*, line 101.

¹⁴ For the situation of Catholics in China during this time, see Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 116-53.

defeats, and that the empire is losing territory.”¹⁵ Hwang then explained that if the bishop knew someone whom he could trust who had access to the throne, he could have that person propose that the emperor assert his authority over Korea. Hwang believed this might work because the emperor, facing serious threats to Chinese security, might fear being driven out of Beijing. If that happened, should he control Korea, he could retreat there and use it as a base to regain his empire. Hwang argued that Korea was ideal for this purpose. It was nearby, its lands were fertile, it had plenty of timber, fish, salt, and ginseng, and most importantly, possessed strong horses and men who could be made into good soldiers. In order to gain control over the country, the emperor could establish an “Office for Pacifying the People” (*anmusa*/按撫使)¹⁶ between Anju and P’yŏngyang and assign one of his relatives to head it. Not knowing that Korea’s king already had a bride, Hwang also suggested that the emperor have him marry an imperial princess. This would make him the emperor’s son-in-law, ensuring his, and his successors, continued loyalty to the Qing imperial house.¹⁷

The emperor, however, had to justify his usurpation of Korean sovereignty. In order to provide him with a pretext, Hwang contended that Korea was ruled poorly. The Queen Dowager controlled the government and high officials abused their power, earning the resentment of the common people. Hwang also pointed out that Korea had minted its own coins and produced its own calendar, violations of its status as a vassal state. It would therefore be legitimate for the Emperor to establish more direct rule over Korea. Hwang argued that this would not harm the common people. In fact, it would help the dynasty, as intervention would destroy the power of the “wicked officials” (*kansin*/奸臣) who looked upon the king with disdain. The loss of

¹⁵ See *Silk Letter*, lines 103-108; Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn’gu*, 138-47.

¹⁶ In the *Silk Letter*, Hwang reversed the two characters “*an*” (按) and “*mu*” (撫) and left out the “*sa*” (使), and so wrote, “*muan*” (撫按).

¹⁷ This was exactly what the Mongols had done to Koryŏ Korea during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368).

sovereignty would therefore actually strengthen the royal house. Most importantly for Hwang's purposes, because Korean Catholics had experience in dealing with China, they would, along with their Chinese counterparts, act as intermediaries between the two countries. The Qing emperor would reward their loyal service with protection and then the number of Catholics would grow so large that the church could not be destroyed. Thus, Hwang's plan would "not only bring peace and stability to the church in Korea, but would also be a blessing for the country."

If the Chinese emperor could not help then it would be necessary to turn to the "Great West" for assistance. Previously Korean Catholics had asked for a single warship to come to their country in an effort to obtain tolerance for the Catholic Church. Hwang now requested an armada:

[W]e can use military power to force Korea to leave Catholics alone. This can be done if we obtain several hundred warships loaded with fifty or sixty thousand elite troops, large cannons, and other dangerous weapons, along with three or four clever Chinese scholars who can write well. Put them ashore in Korea and have them deliver a letter to the King that says, "We have come to spread Catholicism. We are not here to seize your women or your wealth but have come out of obedience to the command of His Holiness the Pope, who desires the salvation of your people's souls. If your honorable country accepts even just one Catholic missionary, we will not make further demands and will not fire one shell nor shoot one arrow nor even disturb one speck of dust or one blade of grass in your kingdom."¹⁸

While Hwang conjured up a fearsome image of the armada, he did not believe that the lethal weaponry he described would actually need to be utilized, writing that "Fearing destruction and desiring peace, they (Chosŏn officials) will give in to our demands."¹⁹ This was a rather

¹⁸ *Silk Letter*, lines 109-112.

¹⁹ *Silk Letter*, line, 114. Hwang confirmed this under interrogation, stating that it was an empty threat and that he thought that the armada would be so intimidating that the Chosŏn state would capitulate and agree to tolerate Catholicism without a fight. See Hwang Sayŏng's interrogation records for 1801-10-9, 650-51/239. Hwang also saw fear as the reason the state delayed executing Father Zhou, writing that "the court was afraid his execution might spark a mass uprising" and that "only after the officials realized that we could not launch an uprising did they

ambiguous position to take, arguing that violence was justified but need not be actualized, and point to an internal conflict within Hwang, between his identity as a Catholic influenced by Confucianism, and as a Korean yangban who considered himself loyal to the throne, as seen in his assertion that the threat of violence, “would be used only to awe the government into allowing Catholicism to be preached and practiced openly. It would not harm the people or lead to the seizure of their property and so would be a benevolent and righteous use of force.”²⁰ Like the officials of the Chosŏn dynasty, who sought to frighten Catholics into realizing their errors and abandoning their religion, Hwang believed in the power of fear to move hearts.²¹

Loyalty, Truth, and Violence

Hwang, despite inviting a foreign armada to invade his country, suggested that the letter the Chinese scholars were to deliver to the king should end with the statement that “Because Catholicism seeks to make people loyal, filial, and benevolent, if Your Highness’s entire country respects its teachings, then your kingdom will enjoy boundless fortune.” However, in spite of Hwang’s protestations of loyalty, the Chosŏn state sentenced him to death as a rebel. Hwang and government officials clearly understood loyalty in different ways. The Chosŏn state saw loyalty to the king as an axiomatic virtue. This loyalty essentially meant *obedience*. To be loyal was to follow the commands of the state. The state’s understanding of loyalty was closely intertwined with the concept of ritual hegemony: good subjects directed their loyalty towards the person of the king and accepted him as ritual hegemon. Loyalty to the king was primary and unconditional,

have the courage to murder him.” As we shall see in chapter 3, Hwang was wrong about this. It was concerns over how China might react that caused the Chosŏn state to hesitate over executing the priest.

²⁰ *Silk Letter*, line 117.

²¹ For a study of fear and the *Silk Letter* see, Franklin Rausch, “Wicked Officials and Virtuous Martyrs: An Analysis of the Martyr Biographies in Alexius Hwang Sayŏng’s *Silk Letter*,” *Kyohoesa yŏn ’gu* 32 (July 2009): 5-30.

that to spirits and gods secondary and conditional. In contrast, Hwang believed in a God who reigned above secular powers and expected human beings to put their relationship with him above all others. Thus, Hwang only gave conditional loyalty to the king. If his commands contradicted God's law, they need not be followed, and could even be actively resisted.²²

Individuals, rather than abstract ideas such as the nation, were the objects of loyalty. Thus, Hwang was not concerned that the extension of Qing power over Korea would mean that Koreans would come under the rule of foreigners—anathema to a nationalist. In fact, Hwang did not have a word that could be used to name Korea as a modern-nation state. He usually referred to Korea as “home country” (*pon'guk*/本國), “Eastern Country” (*Tongguk*/東國), or by the name of the ruling dynasty, Chosŏn (朝鮮).²³ In order to set Korea apart as a distinct entity from another country, Hwang had to refer to its location in reference to China or by its dynastic name. To Hwang, Korea was a country demarcated by geography whose people were bound together by loyalty to their king. Thus, while he was not bothered by the loss of state sovereignty to foreigners, he was concerned about the fate of the royal house and the king, to whom he owed loyalty, as well as the “people” (*paeksŏng*/百姓) whom the monarch reigned over. Moreover, Hwang's concern for the common people had more to do with their shared loyalty to the king and to his Confucian sense of duty towards them than a common ethnicity.

Possibly it was this continued Confucian concept of loyalty that led Hwang Sayŏng to take seriously Hwang Sim's argument that an invasion would reflect badly on Catholicism when he told him of his plan.²⁴ Sayŏng countered by saying that if Korean Catholics were to rise in

²² Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 66-68.

²³ See *Silk Letter*, lines 37, 56, 98, 100-101, and 104.

²⁴ *Silk Letter*, line 116.

rebellion, that would harm the image of Catholicism, but an invasion would not. Sayŏng's refusal to countenance rebellion is important as it shows that he did not believe that the ends justified the means. There were certain things Catholics could not do to end the persecution. Unfortunately Hwang does not explicitly explain why he thought this way, but considering his understanding of loyalty as a virtue directly linked to individuals in authority, he likely saw rebellion as illegitimate as it would involve Korean Catholics, who were to be loyal to the king, directly taking up arms against the state. However, in Hwang's proposed invasion, the Western forces would be acting under the authority of the pope, who held a position higher than the king. To Hwang, it was acceptable to appeal directly to a higher authority to utilize violence against the Chosŏn state but not to take matters directly into one's own hands. The pope, and the God he spoke for, had displaced the king as the object of primary earthly loyalty, and had taken a position similar to that of the emperor of China in his relationship to Korea.

Hwang believed in the primacy of God, but did not claim to speak on behalf of the Deity. Instead, he accepted the authority of the pope to do so, and directed his loyalty towards him. The respect he accorded the pope can be seen in the characters used to describe him, *kyohwang* (教皇), which shared with the word used for emperor, *hwangje* (皇帝), the character *hwang*, meaning ruler, and was preceded by the word, *kyo*, meaning "teaching." The pope, as a "teaching emperor," and thereby a quasi-state official could, on behalf of the truth of God, legitimately authorize violence to be used to obtain tolerance and to punish those who prohibited missionary work and persecuted the church.

Hwang therefore believed that the pope's authorization justified acts of violence, advising that the letter he asked the pope to have presented to the king say, "If you do not accept this one

servant of God into your country then we will visit the Lord's punishment upon you."²⁵ This word "punishment" (*pŏl*/罰) signified the legitimate use of violence by a higher authority, and by using it, Hwang was placing the Chosŏn dynasty under the authority of the pope. Hwang argued that this punishment was justified, writing that:

Many Catholics have been killed in Korea over the last ten years, including our priest as well as some top officials in the government. The evil gang slandered them as traitors and they were executed, although there did not exist the slightest bit of evidence that they had been disloyal. The fact that such good people were unfairly condemned is widely known.²⁶

Hwang emphasized the impudence of such actions, noting that Catholicism had spread to many countries from Europe but that Korea, a "tiny little country...has not only refused to accept Catholicism, it has gone so far as to block its civilizing influence (*chŏn'gyo*/傳教), fiercely persecuting the church and murdering our priest." Hwang contended that Korea's guilt was magnified by the fact that in the two hundred-year history of Catholicism in East Asia, such a persecution of the church and frustration of mission work and the moral transformation it brought had never occurred.²⁷ Hwang also looked back to Biblical history to justify violence:

If an armed force were raised in Europe to punish those responsible for these crimes, how could anyone possibly object? Jesus taught that the sin of refusing to allow the good news of the Gospel to be preached (*chŏn'gyo*/傳教) was greater than the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. If God could destroy those two cities, then how could it harm the image of Catholicism were force brought to bear against Korea?²⁸

Hwang understood missionary work as the teaching of true, that is, Catholic, civilization and morality (*chŏn'gyo*), an idea similar to the Neo-Confucian concept of civilizing influence

²⁵ *Silk Letter*, line 111.

²⁶ *Silk Letter*, line 115.

²⁷ Hwang is ignoring the suppression of Catholicism that began in Japan in the 1600s and continued to his day as well as the intermittent suppression of the religion in Qing China.

²⁸ *Silk Letter*, lines 115-116.

(*kyohwa*), and linked by the common character, “kyo.” And just as the Chosŏn state maintained that violence in defense of its civilizing mission was justified, Hwang’s reference to Matthew 10:11-16, in which Jesus states that towns who refuse to hear the Gospel will suffer more than Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day, shows that he saw the use of force to enable Catholic missionary work and thereby realize the true civilization and morality it would bring as legitimate.²⁹

Hwang promised that tolerance of Catholicism would bring “the benefits of peace and good governance,” which Western countries enjoyed because they followed the true religion.³⁰ Moreover, it would provide spiritual salvation. The letter that Hwang suggested be presented to the king of Korea included the line, “We are not here to seize your women or your wealth, but have come out of obedience to the command of His Holiness the Pope, who desires the salvation of your people’s souls.”³¹ By prohibiting the civilizing influence of missionary work, the Chosŏn state prevented the Korean people from enjoying the fruits of Catholicism—spiritual salvation through the sacraments it provided and a better life in this world. It was therefore legitimate to use violence against those who persecuted the church in order to bring tolerance, and consequently, salvation and true civilization.

Hwang’s emphasis on spiritual salvation and this-worldly benefits challenged the Confucian foundation of the Chosŏn state in two ways. First, by declaring that Catholicism would bring “peace” and “good governance,” Hwang was implicitly stating that Neo-Confucianism had failed to do so. Second, by emphasizing spiritual salvation, Hwang was rejecting the Confucian emphasis on this world and putting the priority on a goal, individual

²⁹ According to the 1801 anti-Catholic edict, Catholicism interfered with Korea’s civilizing mission (*kyohwa*). See *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 287-289 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 1. 10. *chŏnghae*). For Qing usage, see Menegon, 8-9.

³⁰ *Silk Letter*, line 112.

³¹ *Silk Letter*, line 110.

spiritual salvation, which Confucians saw as selfish. Thus, Hwang set up Catholicism both as a competitor with Confucianism over which was the real source of civilization, and what civilization truly was. Therefore, Hwang's acceptance of Catholic truth claims led him to reject Korea's identity as the center of Confucian civilization, putting him further in opposition to the Chosŏn Confucian state. At the same time, his re-definition of values like loyalty and continued Confucian concerns prevented him from seeing just how far he had departed from Neo-Confucianism, as well as the challenge Catholicism posed to the Chosŏn state.

Hwang's departure from the elite understanding of Korean identity as the center of true civilization arose from his redefinition of loyalty and shift in priority from king to the pope, and the God whom he represented. This in turn grew out of his understanding of religious truth. How one related to God was determined by him, through his church, not through the king. Hwang therefore privileged Catholicism over Neo-Confucianism. In the *Silk Letter*, Hwang referred to Catholicism as the "Teaching of the Lord of Heaven ("Ch'ŏnjugyo"/天主教), "Sacred Teaching" (Sŏnggyo/聖教), or simply as "the Way" (To/道).³² The latter two were terms used by the state to refer to Confucianism. However, Hwang reserved them for Catholicism, designating the Confucianism practiced in Korea as Song Confucianism. (Songyu/宋儒).³³ Moreover, when he wrote of Buddhism, he used the character *pŭl* (佛) as an adjective in reference to Buddhist books (*pŭlsŏ*/佛書) but not with the character "teaching" (*kyo*/教).³⁴ Similarly, he did not refer to Daoism, but instead made references to books by Lao-

³² For examples see, *Silk Letter*, lines 3, 38, 41, 65, and 70.

³³ *Silk Letter*, lines 61-62 and 113.

³⁴ *Silk Letter*, line 35.

tzu (*Noja*/老子). Only Catholicism was truly a “teaching,” with Neo-Confucianism being demoted from the standard used to judge, to something to be judged itself, like Buddhism and Daoism.³⁵

Thus, we can see that Hwang did not think in terms of “religion,” that is, of a single category in which all members of that category equally partook of that essence. In fact, there was no such term in Chosŏn dynasty Korea.³⁶ Instead, he ranked what we might refer to as different “religions” in terms of how they accorded with truth. Buddhism and Daoism were quite low and so he was explicitly critical of them, for example stating that her realization of the absurdities of chanting the name of Buddha Amitabha led Columba Kang to abandon that practice before her conversion to Catholicism.³⁷ He described Augustine Chŏng Yakchong’s rejection of the Daoist vision of the end of the world in the same way.³⁸ While Hwang shied away from direct criticism of Neo-Confucianism and sought to show that Catholicism was in full accordance with the virtues of filial piety and loyalty, the fact that he used the terms “The Way” and “Sacred Teaching” to describe Catholicism shows that in his mind, the Catholic faith had replaced Confucianism as the true religion that the Chosŏn state should follow and utilize to civilize the people. This is further borne out by the fact that in the *Silk Letter* Hwang left a space in front of the characters for God, pope, and priest, as a way of showing respect, without doing the same when referring to the emperor of China or the king of Korea, as was customary.³⁹

³⁵ *Silk Letter*, lines 35 and 55.

³⁶ The modern word for religion in Korean, *chonggyo* (宗教) is a neologism that traces its way back to Japan. See Hsi-yuan Chen, “Confucianism Encounters Religion: The Formation of Religious Discourse and the Confucian Movement in Modern China” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1999), 54-56.

³⁷ *Silk Letter*, line 65.

³⁸ *Silk Letter*, line 35.

³⁹ Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn ’gu*, 215.

Hwang therefore essentially wanted to replace Confucianism with Catholicism as the state orthodoxy, because the latter was true and the former was not. Thus, his appeal for help in the *Silk Letter* does not include a principled argument for tolerance. It is not based, for example, on a concept of the “rights of conscience,” or the idea that all religions, as such, deserved freedom. Instead, it was a pragmatic attempt to obtain tolerance so that Catholicism could spread. It is therefore unclear in the *Silk Letter* how Hwang thought Catholicism should treat other religions in Korea if it did become state orthodoxy, but it likely would have been rather different from the modern concept of religious freedom as Hwang found, neither in the Catholic books he read, nor in the Confucian tradition which he was a part of, principled reasons for religious tolerance. Instead, Hwang, and the Confucian state understood a single religion as true and then ranked others in accordance with how much they agreed with and conflicted with that orthodoxy, basing their respective treatment of a religion on that ranking and political and social considerations. Hwang did not argue that the state should not be a teacher of truth. He contended that the truth it taught was wrong. Nor, as we shall see, did he argue that it was wrong to use force against Catholics because religiously-inspired violence was illegitimate, but because Catholicism was true and Catholics were innocent and virtuous people.

Because Catholicism did not hold sway in Korea, Hwang could write, “We wretched sinners were born in a part of the world that has long been in darkness.”⁴⁰ He further emphasized in another passage that Korea was not a bastion of true civilization, but a country in need of enlightenment:

It is not because Koreans are cruel by nature that they persecute Catholicism....Our people can be compared to a little child who was born in an isolated village and grew up spending almost all his time inside a room without seeing strangers. If he should accidentally meet a stranger one day he would be greatly surprised and begin to cry. This is exactly what we are like. We are

⁴⁰ *Silk Letter*, line 87.

fearful and suspicious and we have no match when it comes to ignorance and weakness.⁴¹

Instead of proud defenders of a great civilization, Koreans were ignorant and cowardly children who needed to be rescued from their errors. Not only did this challenge the Chosŏn state and the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy which justified its rule, it also led Hwang to see the suppression of Catholicism as driven, not by a deep and sincere dedication to a different worldview, but out of parochial, even childish, ignorance. Thus Hwang wrote that, “[T]he ruling scholar class has little experience or knowledge of the outside world beyond Korea. Korean scholars only know Song learning. If a school of thought diverges from it even the slightest bit, they take it to be very strange and make any difference between the two to be as great as the distance between heaven and earth.”⁴² Fear arising from the threat of violence would be enough to awaken Chosŏn officials from their ignorance, bringing toleration, which would in turn expose them to the wider world and the truth of Catholicism, consequently leading to their conversion and the realization in Korea of the this-worldly and otherworldly benefits the religion would bring, thereby justifying violence. Like the Chosŏn state, Hwang believed that the fear of violence could serve a didactic function, waking people from their ignorance and leading them to the true way.

Wicked Officials and Virtuous Martyrs

In the first two-thirds of the *Silk Letter*, Hwang Sayŏng described how the suppression of Catholicism began and told the stories of those Catholics who died for their faith. In addition to his explicit arguments that appeared in the proposal section of the *Silk Letter*, Hwang utilized this narrative of persecution and martyrdom to justify foreign intervention in Korea by portraying

⁴¹ *Silk Letter*, lines 113-114.

⁴² *Silk Letter*, line 113.

Catholics as innocent and virtuous people who were unjustly persecuted by wicked officials. For instance, he depicted the suppression as arising not from the Catholic challenge to the Confucian state, but the evil designs of those who controlled it. He explained that while King Chǒngjo favored the Southerners from the Catholic party, “They were deeply hated by the Intransigent faction, which wanted to harm them,” with even those like Yi Kahwan, who had abandoned the religion, being targeted for attack.⁴³ Hwang then described how the situation became even more dire once Chǒngjo died and Queen Dowager Chǒngsun rose to power:

Her natal family had been kept from political power by King Chǒngjo and therefore as the years went by her resentment of him grew but she was unable to vent her anger.⁴⁴ Then suddenly she found herself in control of the government. She locked arms with the Intransigent faction and begin spreading her poison. In the eleventh month of 1800, as soon as King Chǒngjo's funeral was over, she expelled members of the Flexible faction from the government and, in the process, emptied half of the court. The evil gang that had long attacked Catholicism had close links with the Intransigent faction. Seeing that the times had changed, they rose up with a roar and caused a great disturbance.⁴⁵

Hwang thus traced the persecution of Catholics, not to any crime on their part, or because of the challenge the religion posed to the Chosŏn state, but as the result of factional infighting motivated by selfish interests and driven by negative emotions.

Hwang portrayed government officials in this negative light throughout the *Silk Letter*, contrasting them with the virtuous Catholics whom they persecuted. For instance, in describing how the persecution began, Hwang told the story of Thomas Ch’oe P’ilkong, who had abandoned Catholicism in 1791 but later returned to the faith. Rumors of his relapse must have reached the ears of the king and he was summoned to the Ministry of Punishments in 1799 and asked if he was once again a follower “evil learning.” Hwang described his response thusly:

⁴³ *Silk Letter*, lines 18-19.

⁴⁴ Her brother, Kim Kwiju (?-1786), and her cousin Kim Kwanju (1743-1806), were both banished during King Chǒngjo’s reign. See JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyŏng: The Autobiographical Writings of a Crown Princess of Eighteenth-century Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 45.

⁴⁵ *Silk Letter*, lines 17-20.

This gave Thomas the chance he had been waiting for. Knowing that it would cost him his life, he didn't equivocate but spoke out about how Catholicism taught loyalty and filial piety. This lifted the burden of guilt from his heart. He spoke so clearly and powerfully that all who heard him were moved by his words. However, the officials in the Ministry of Punishments were alarmed and angry at what he said and sent a report to the king saying that Thomas should be executed.⁴⁶

However, not all representatives of the state were portrayed so negatively, as seen in Hwang's description of Martin Yi's life in prison. While there, Martin gained a reputation as a great healer. Hwang attributed this not to his skill, but to the fact that he prayed to God for help. Such was Martin's fame that people flocked to the prison and even the officials came to him.

Moreover:

One prison official, impressed by his success, asked to look at his book of prescriptions. He answered "I don't have any medical manuals. The secret of my healing power is in love and devotion to God. If you want to study medicine, you ought to believe in the Lord." The jailer said "All your books have already been burned so how can I study?" Martin smiled and said "The book I have in my heart was not burnt and it is enough to teach you to receive the faith."⁴⁷

Catholicism brought practical benefits which led to conversion and, implicitly, moral transformation. Hwang highlighted this consequence of belief in Catholicism in his hagiography of Peter Cho Yongsam, who was described as a very poor man who struggled to make a living with his father, a widower. According to Hwang, Peter, "did not have a very strong constitution and was frequently ill. Moreover, his overall physical appearance did not leave a very good impression. On top of that, he did not seem very bright. He was the laughing stock of his village. No one thought very much of him." The one exception was Augustine Chŏng, who became his teacher and praised him for his faith.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Silk Letter*, line 7.

⁴⁷ *Silk Letter*, line 10.

⁴⁸ *Silk Letter*, lines 70-72.

Eventually, Peter was arrested. He refused an official's order to abandon Catholicism. The official, enraged, began to have Peter's father beaten in front of him. Peter gave in, agreed to abandon Catholicism, and was released from prison. On the way out, he was told by Martin and his companions that what he had done was wrong and they encouraged him to return and repudiate his rejection of Catholicism, which he did. This made the official angry and Peter was thrown back into prison where he was severely tortured:

[E]very time the Catholics in that prison were interrogated, though the others were beaten no more than the law allowed, Peter received extra strokes, and those blows had more force behind them. The people working in that prison had thought of Peter as a weakling who would easily give in but when they discovered to their surprise how stubbornly he clung to his faith, their hatred for him grew and they wanted to kill him.

Hwang went on to describe how in the second month of 1801, Peter was again harshly interrogated and commanded to abandon Catholicism. According to Hwang, Peter responded, "There are not two Lords in heaven above, nor can a human being have two different hearts. I have nothing more to say to you, except through my death." He was then put back into his cell and died several days later.

In his hagiography of Peter Cho, Hwang draws a striking contrast between the wicked official who acts savagely and out of anger—breaking the law by beating Peter too many times and cynically manipulating filial piety in order to force Peter to abandon Catholicism—and Peter himself, a virtuous man. Certainly, Neo-Confucianism had failed to morally transform the official. In contrast, Catholicism transformed Peter from a weakling and a laughing-stock into a martyr who successfully resisted unto death state attempts to force him to abandon Catholicism, his one stumble arising not from his own moral failings, but out of filial piety for his father.

This challenge Catholicism posed to the Chosŏn state in the hagiographies of the *Silk Letter* is clearest in Hwang's retelling of the martyrdom of his uncle, Augustine

Chŏng. After narrating Augustine's arrest, Hwang described his interrogation:

An official rebuked him for violating the king's commands. Augustine responded by unequivocally laying out for him the principles of the true Way of Catholicism. He made it clear that he did not think it should be forbidden. The official was greatly angered that Augustine was challenging the King's orders and declared him to be a great traitor against the Way.⁴⁹

Augustine's bold rejection of royal power in favor of the "true Way of Catholicism" was further highlighted by his heroic martyrdom, which he faced with such bravery that he not only had the presence of mind to call on onlookers to repent, but to make the sign of the cross and lay his head back down when the first slice of the sword failed to decapitate him. Catholicism thus brought about a moral transformation that overcame the fear and awe that the Chosŏn state used to rule.⁵⁰

Hwang's hagiography reached its climax in his description of the martyrdom of Father Zhou. Hwang began this section with a description of how the priest surrendered himself to the government saying, "I, too, am a Catholic. I've heard now that the Chosŏn government has issued strict orders outlawing Catholicism. A lot of innocent people have been killed because of this. My staying alive won't help them at all. Therefore I have come to die with them."⁵¹

According to Hwang, Father Zhou was interrogated and then sentenced to death. He was to be decapitated and his head put on display. However, the first military official ordered to carry out the sentence pretended to be sick. After several days another official was appointed.

⁴⁹ *Silk Letter*, lines 39-40.

⁵⁰ Because the Chosŏn state used fear to rule, Hwang Sayŏng emphasized the ability of martyrs to overcome it. See, Franklin Rausch, "Wicked Officials and Virtuous Martyrs."

⁵¹ For Hwang's description of the execution of Father Zhou, see *Silk Letter*, lines 79-86.

This new official carried out his orders. He first had Father Zhou's shins flogged thirty times. The priest, watched by a crowd of people, was then carried through the streets of Seoul and outside the city. At one point Father Zhou said he was thirsty and asked for a cup of wine, which was given to him. After arriving at the execution ground, he listened calmly to the reading of his "crimes." He was then decapitated. Hwang, noting that this occurred on the afternoon of the feast day of the Holy Trinity, wrote that, "As soon as his head was cut off, a wind as strong as a typhoon suddenly blew across the execution ground, black clouds filled the sky and blocked the sun, deafening thunder roared and blinding lightening flashed. Everyone who was there at the time was startled, and frightened." Hwang Sayŏng, despite being in hiding far from Seoul, reported that he also had "felt that strange wind and heard that thunder," as did Hwang Sim.

Hwang then went on to describe the fate of Father Zhou's corpse. The priest's head was put on display for five days. It was then buried and a guard was posted as state officials knew that the Catholics would try and recover it. One "wicked official" (*akkwan*/惡官), arguing that a criminal such as Zhou should not have the honor of being buried, requested that the head be exhumed and put back on display. The Queen Dowager agreed to this and ordered it to be done, but the military official who had carried out the execution protested. In the meantime the guards, who hated their duty of watching over the burial place of the head, secretly reburied it where the Catholics could not find it.

Hwang clearly used the Gospel accounts of the execution of Jesus as his pattern for describing Father Zhou's death. Just as Jesus did not resist his arrest, Father Zhou surrendered himself. Like Pilate, the military official initially ordered to carry out the execution was hesitant to do so. Like Jesus, Father Zhou was beaten before his death and led outside the city to be

executed while watched by a crowd. Father Zhou and Jesus both said they were thirsty and were given wine. Both were executed under false charges but did not defend themselves. God marked their deaths with strange weather. Jesus, through his death, brought salvation. Hwang told his fellow Catholics that Father Zhou was now in heaven, where he could do more for them than he could on earth. The most significant difference is that a disciple of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, recovered his body and gave it a proper burial, while the Korean Catholics were unable to do the same for Father Zhou.⁵²

Hwang likely described Father Zhou in these terms because of the obvious parallels between his execution and the Passion of Jesus. Father Zhou could be compared to Jesus as the “good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep,” and so it made sense for Hwang as a Catholic to portray him in this way.⁵³ At the same time, however, his depiction of Father Zhou, as well as that of the martyrdom of other Catholics, furthered strengthened his narrative of wicked officials persecuting innocent Catholics. If Father Zhou was like Christ, then Chosŏn government officials were as wicked as those who killed him. Thus, Hwang’s narratives asserted that the Catholics in Korea were innocent and virtuous people who bravely suffered martyrdom. They deserved to be saved. They were in such a pitiful situation that they could not even give their beloved priest a proper burial. They needed to be saved. In the face of such cruel and unjust violence, violent means were justified.

Hwang also held up Father Zhou as a model missionary whose example he hoped Bishop Gouvea would follow. After proposing the establishment of a store by a Chinese Catholic at the Willow Palisade, Hwang wrote that, “The lives of those of us who live in this small country in the East are in danger, but it should not be too difficult to save us. If you have the same concern

⁵² This narrative is also very similar to that which appears in the *Essentials of Catholicism*. See Chŏng Yakchong, 72-74.

⁵³ See John 10:11.

for our country that Father Zhou had, then you will be happy to do this for us.”⁵⁴ The love of Father Zhou, displayed in his surrendering himself to the state out of a concern for Catholics and in his martyrdom for the faith, is an example that Bishop Gouvea should imitate. Just as Father Zhou gave his life for the Catholics of Korea, the bishop must do what he can to obtain tolerance for them, even if meant helping to arrange an invasion of the country.

Hwang Sayōng and World Catholicism

Considering what we know of the situation in China and in Europe, it seems unrealistic and naïve for Hwang to believe that the Chinese emperor would intervene on the behalf of Catholics or that Europeans, led by the pope, would assemble and dispatch a massive armada to Korea and then simply leave once the Chosŏn state agreed to tolerate Catholicism, without attempting to profit from the situation.⁵⁵ However, what is important in judging the rationality of Hwang’s plan is not what we know, but what he would have known. For instance, despite having been close to Father Zhou, Hwang appears to have been largely unfamiliar with the situation in China. He subsequently overestimated the strength of the Catholic Church there, apparently not realizing that it had been officially proscribed since 1746 and had suffered intermittent suppression.

At the same time, Hwang realized that the Catholic Church in China’s position was not unassailable, writing that, “We sinners were both shocked and saddened when we learned that

⁵⁴ *Silk Letter*, lines 100-101.

⁵⁵ Yŏ Chinch’ŏn, “Chosŏn hugi Ch’ŏnjugyoindŭl ŭi kyohoe chaegŏn kwa sinang chayu hoehtŭk pangan-e kwanhan yŏn’gu: Paeksŏ wa sŏyang sŏnbak yoch’ŏng sakkŏn ŭl chungshim-ŭro (1780-1801-yŏn) [A study of the means by which Catholics in the late Chosŏn dynasty sought to rebuild the church and obtain religious freedom: focusing on the *Silk Letter* and the incidents of requesting western ships (1780-1801),” in *Han’guk Ch’ŏnjugyohoesa ŭi sŏngch’al kwa chŏnmang: Han’guk Ch’ŏnjugyohoesa-e kwanhan taehŭinyŏn simp’ojiŏm charyojib* [Reflections and observations on the history of the Catholic Church in Korea: proceedings from the Jubilee-Year symposium on the history of the Catholic Church in Korea] (Seoul: Han’guk Ch’ŏnjugyo Chungang Hyŏbŭihoe, 2000), 9-50.

Father Zhou had surrendered himself to the government. We fear that if his activities and execution are reported to the Chinese court, then the Church in China will be implicated and suffer persecution. If that happens, then there will be no hope for the faith in our country.”⁵⁶ Hwang also thought that the once thriving Catholic community in Japan had been completely destroyed.⁵⁷ In contrast to the difficulties Catholics faced in East Asia, Hwang believed that the religion was thriving in the West, writing that “[F]or two thousand years, Europe has served as a base for Catholicism, and it is from its base in Europe that Catholicism has spread to so many countries. There is no corner of the world that has not felt Catholicism’s transforming influence.”⁵⁸ He also noted that a single European merchant ship would be a match for one hundred Korean ones.⁵⁹ Hwang thus saw Europe as a powerful champion of the Catholic faith that, united around the pope, had spread the religion throughout the entire world. He did not know that in 1800 Pope Pius VI died a prisoner of Napoleon, nor that his successor, Pius VII, was forced to concentrate on European problems caused by the French Revolution (1789-1799). Moreover, Hwang does not seem to have been aware that there were rivals to Catholicism, such as Islam or Protestant Christianity. He therefore overestimated Catholic power.

Hwang thought he could trust the Europeans. After all, they had long enjoyed the civilizing influence of Catholicism, making them into virtuous people. They had sent missionaries, who had left behind family and friends to come to a faraway land, motivated by nothing else but a desire to preach the Gospel. An echo of this view can be seen in the *Silk Letter* where Hwang, in describing Yi Kahwan’s initial conversion to Catholicism, quoted him contending that, “If what they preach were not true, those Westerners would not cross the ocean

⁵⁶ *Silk Letter*, line 90.

⁵⁷ *Silk Letter*, line 87.

⁵⁸ *Silk Letter*, line 116.

⁵⁹ *Silk Letter*, line 112.

to share their teachings with us.”⁶⁰ This was similar to an argument used in the *Essentials of Catholicism*.⁶¹ Hwang, having never met a Westerner and knowing nothing of European history save what had been learned second-hand, likely accepted such prevailing views of Europeans as good people who would act unselfishly to spread the Gospel by helping the Catholics in Korea.

Hwang thus saw a Europe united by loyalty to the pope and motivated by a pure desire to evangelize, not one bitterly divided and warring against itself and others. Considering this, and the fact that Catholic correspondence had never previously been intercepted, his decision to send the letter was a rational gamble. Hwang likely believed that it would never be read by anyone but the bishop, and that the worst that would happen would be that he would reject Hwang’s proposals. He did not foresee that he would be arrested before he could send the letter, enabling the Chosŏn government to seize it and learn of his plans.

Despair in Action

What made Hwang’s gamble seem rational to him was not just his belief in the strength of the West, but his despair over the fate of the Catholic Church in Korea and the difficult circumstances under which he wrote the *Silk Letter*. Hwang had been forced to abandon his family and flee for his life. In order to remain hidden, he spent most of his time in a cave. What news came from outside was uniformly bad. He learned of the death of family, friends, and of his beloved pastor, Father Zhou. Knowing what had happened in Japan, Hwang was anxious over the fate of the Catholic Church in Korea. Likewise, he must have wondered what would

⁶⁰ *Silk Letter*, line 48.

⁶¹ Chŏng Yakchong, 95-98.

happen to him and to his own family. His son was only two years old—would he have the chance to ever really know his father? Or would he be like Hwang himself?

Considering Hwang's situation, it is not surprising that the overall atmosphere of the *Silk Letter* is one of despair, a mood that was likely emphasized in part out of a hope that it would move Bishop Gouvea to act on behalf of the Catholics. Near the beginning of his missive, Hwang wrote that unless God granted a special grace, "[T]he Holy Name of Jesus will forever disappear from Korea."⁶² Continuing this theme, Hwang later wrote:

[T]here are not many Catholics who have the knowledge or courage to lead us. We are only a few thousand ignorant commoner men, women, and children. There is no one here who can lead us out of this morass. There is no way to rouse our people from their feelings of hopelessness. If things continue like this, we will not be able to go on for much longer. Even if the government does not launch another persecution, in ten years the Catholic Church in Korea will disappear on its own. Alas, how it pains me! How can I endure seeing the complete extinction of the Catholic faith in our country while I am still alive...? In the midst of our sorrow, who will have pity on us and console us? We only want to tell our tale of woe in front of your merciful throne and appeal to you for help. But rivers and mountainous terrain separate us from Your Excellency. We look up hopefully but cannot reach you. We are frustrated and anxious. How can we go on like this?⁶³

As we have seen, Hwang blamed the suppression of Catholicism on the wickedness of the officials who controlled the government. But he would also portray it as a just punishment for Catholic ingratitude to the graces God had shown the church in Korea, writing that:

The Lord's grace arrived in Korea in an extraordinary way. No missionaries came to start the Catholic Church. Instead, the Lord himself implanted Catholicism in Korea. After that, He bestowed His grace upon us through the sacraments and so we have enjoyed more special blessings than we could ever count. The punishment we have suffered this year from persecution is because of our ingratitude for these graces. However, because the Lord is good, our community has not been completely destroyed. Though we are in the midst of a great persecution, He has kept a path to safety open for us, showing clearly His desire to save Korea. Since the Lord desires to help, if all those in China and the West who serve the Lord put their minds together and concentrate on coming up

⁶² *Silk Letter*, line 4.

⁶³ *Silk Letter*, lines 88-89.

with a plan to rescue us, then how will it not be possible to save our tiny country and so turn our suffering into joy?⁶⁴

Korean Catholics had not responded appropriately to God's graces earlier, resulting in the persecution. Hwang was therefore acting rightly in responding to the opportunity God had presented to save the church there by writing his *Silk Letter*. If he did not respond as he ought, with action, then God might allow the annihilation of the Catholic community in Korea. Bishop Gouvea should also act, lest he and the flock he led also suffer from not following God's promptings.

While in part Hwang emphasized the difficult situation in which the Korean Catholic community found itself in order to urge the bishop to act, that does not mean that this despair was not deeply felt, as seen in Hwang's reaction to the loss of Father Zhou. Hwang described how the Catholics were heartbroken over the death of their priest and were in danger of losing hope, as "the pillar they had relied on to support them in both life and death has gone."⁶⁵ As we have seen, in order to comfort his fellow believers, Hwang told them that their beloved pastor would be more of a help to them in heaven than he had been on earth. Though Hwang played the role of comforter, he expressed his fears to the bishop of Beijing.⁶⁶ It was the availability of priests and the sacraments that had enabled Catholics to endure persecutions at other places and times and so it was doubtful whether the Catholic Church in Korea, bereft of its priest, could survive without help. He seems to have difficulty in believing his own words of comfort, that Father Zhou could do more in heaven than on earth, and therefore was tempted to take direct, even violent action.

⁶⁴ *Silk Letter*, line 102.

⁶⁵ *Silk Letter*, line 85.

⁶⁶ *Silk Letter*, line 85-86.

The depth of Hwang's despair over the loss of Father Zhou can be seen in his subsequent reference in the *Silk Letter* to Tertullian's (160-220) famous dictum that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of new believers"⁶⁷ only to doubt it, describing how the hearts of the Catholics in Korea were chilled with fear as they thought that they might suffer the same fate as their brothers and sisters in Japan. Hwang thus wrote, "[W]e cannot accept things the way they are now and simply sit and wait to die. We have to do something."⁶⁸ Despair, mixed with hope, moved Hwang to act. And on account of this turbulent emotional state, and Hwang's continued adherence to Confucian values, he could not bring himself to admit the deep chasm between Catholicism and Neo-Confucianism, and the consequent challenge which his faith posed the Chosŏn government, leading him to construct a narrative which could not take seriously official commitment to Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, and therefore to see violence, or rather, only its threat, as an effective means for obtaining tolerance. As we shall see in the next chapter, while Chosŏn officials did recognize the chasm that separated Neo-Confucianism from Catholicism, like Hwang, they could not see in their opponents anything but the most negative of motivations, producing an image of Catholics that made it easier to justify violence against them, while at the same time, obscuring the true nature of the threat Catholicism posed to the state.

⁶⁷ See Tertullian's (160-220) *Apologeticus*.

⁶⁸ *Silk Letter*, line 96.

Chapter 3: Hwang Sayŏng, the *Silk Letter*, and the Chosŏn State's

Suppression of Catholicism

Despite the best efforts of the government, the Catholic Church in Korea was expanding, numbering around 1,000 in 1791, 4,000 in 1794, and 10,000 in 1801.¹ Catholics were so numerous that government officials were stumbling upon them by accident, and in the wake of King Chŏngjo's death, were not sure what to do with them. The Chosŏn state responded to this situation by establishing a policy that intensified the use of violence and expanded its scope to include as targets people who had previously been largely ignored, such as women. How did the Chosŏn state, which understood itself as the teacher and protector of the people, justify this? In order to answer this question, we will first examine the suppression edict of 1801 and court debates over how to implement it, focusing especially on how Neo-Confucianism and practical problems of government shaped the suppression and the narrative used to justify it. We will then examine how the arrest of Hwang Sayŏng and the discovery of the *Silk Letter* created new problems for the Chosŏn state, how the government dealt with those issues, and how it developed a narrative which used the *Silk Letter* to justify violence and legitimate its rule.

The Suppression Edict of 1801

Our investigation will begin with the edict that officially began the suppression of 1801. Issued on the tenth day of the first month of that year, it put forth the basic narrative that justified the increasing use of violence against Catholics:

¹ Cho Kwang, *Chosŏn hugi*, 21-31.

The former king always said that if orthodox learning was illuminated then evil learning (*sahak*/邪學) would disappear on its own. But, as we have heard, this so-called evil learning, which is the same as it always has been, has spread from the capitol to the provinces of Kyōnggi and Honam and its adherents grow daily in number. As for a person being a person, it is a matter of morality (*illyun*/人倫). As for a country being a country, it is a matter of civilization (*kyohwa*/教化). This so-called evil learning is without father and king, destroys morality, interferes with the spread of civilization (*kyohwa*), and causes people to degenerate into barbarians, birds, and beasts. And so the foolish people are infected with these errors and led astray. If a child fell into a well, how could we not take pity on it and be heartbroken?² Local officials, carefully admonish your people. Those who are followers of evil learning will reform in an instant and those who are not will fearfully rectify their lives. In this way, the abundant merit built up by our former king will not be diminished. If, now that evil learning has been strictly forbidden, there is still a gang of people who do not mend their ways, then it is right to treat them as rebels.³

The edict then went on to mandate the establishment of the five-family system of mutual surveillance in order to discover Catholics and prevent the further spread of the religion.⁴

We can see, through this edict, the basic justification for the use of violence against Catholics. First, Catholics were a threat to morality and civilization, challenging the very reason for the state's existence and threatening to transform the common people into beasts and barbarians. Second, because Catholics were without "father and king," that is, they did not act with filial piety towards their parents nor with loyalty to their king, they were akin to rebels and therefore should be executed as such. Third, it followed that, since Catholicism transformed people into barbarians and beasts, Catholics who refused to abandon the cult were less than human and therefore it was as acceptable to kill them as one would any dangerous animal. In fact, the threat they posed made it a duty to kill them. Finally, the state itself was virtuous and

² The reference to a child falling down the well is drawn from the sixth chapter of *The Mencius*. Mencius contended that human beings were basically good and as proof, argued that should even a very evil person see a child about to fall into a well, without even thinking, he would save that child. The state is the adult, and the child is the common people who are about to fall into the well of "evil learning."

³ *Sūngjōngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 287-89 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 1. 10. *chōnghae*)

⁴ Hwang himself included a summary of this edict in the *Silk Letter*. He mentioned Chōngjo's policy towards Catholicism, and the establishment of the five-family surveillance groups, as well as the state's decision to treat Catholics as rebels. However, he left out much of the language critical of Catholicism and the threat it was said to have constituted to morality. See *Silk Letter*, lines 24-25.

moderate in its use of violence. King Chǒngjo first sought to bring Catholics back by “illuminating the way.” The increasing need to use violence against Catholics was merely the result of their irrational stubbornness. They had been amply warned by the state and were given an opportunity to abandon the practice of Catholicism before they were killed. The violence they suffered was therefore their own fault.

Accompanying the edict was an explanation clarifying that the “evil learning” referred to was Catholicism. Further justifying the violent suppression of Catholicism, it described how, “Before it came to Korea, the so-called ‘Learning of the Lord of Heaven Jesus’ existed in the West, where it bewitched the people with theories of heaven and hell, taught them not to respect their parents, led them to act out of harmony with the cosmic pattern (*li*/理), and threw principle into disorder. This strange teaching is completely without morality.” This statement is interesting in that while noting that Catholicism came from the West, it does not explicitly criticize the religion for its foreign origin. Moreover, the threat Catholicism poses is essentially moral, not military. Catholics are understood to be like rebels, but are not accused of actually plotting rebellion.

The Conduct of the Suppression of 1801

Despite the fact that the edict was clear that recalcitrant Catholics should be treated as rebellious subjects, officials were still not quite sure how to deal with the followers of “evil learning.” For instance, those Catholics who had been arrested under the chief of police Yi Yugyǒng (1747-?) and agreed to abandon Catholicism were released by his successor, Sin

Taehyŏn (1737-1812), who was appointed early in the second month of 1801.⁵ Sin's actions led to Catholic hopes that the suppression would not last long. However, a series of memorials from the officials Pak Changsŏl (1720-?), Yi Sŏgu (1754-1825), and Ch'oe Hyŏnjung (1745-?), of the Little Northerner, Old Doctrine, and Southerner factions respectively, criticized Catholicism, requested that Catholics be treated as rebels, and asked that Sin Taehyŏn be punished for being too lenient. The enraged Queen Dowager had Sin transferred and ordered that four Catholics who had not been released, the chungin Thomas Ch'oe P'ilgong (1744-1801), Peter Ch'oe P'iljae (1770-1801), and John Ch'oe Ch'anghyŏn (1754-1801), as well as a servant of Chŏng Yakchong, Thomas Im Taein (1773-?), be transferred to the state tribunal. As the state tribunal only dealt with non-yangban in cases of rebellion, this meant that recalcitrant Catholics would indeed be treated as rebels.⁶

The decision to fully carry out the suppression edict was made in a discussion at court that occurred on the fifth day of the second month of 1801.⁷ It began with a request by the Minister of the Board of Punishments, Yi Ŭip'il (1738-1808). Yi stated that "evil learning" was even more harmful to morality and in greater opposition to the cosmic pattern (*li*/理) than the teachings of Lao Tzu, the Buddha, Mozi (470-391 BC) and Yang Zhu (370-319 BC).⁸ It was therefore fortunate that it had been proscribed. However, Yi was unsure of how to deal with the Catholics like the leader Ch'oe P'ilgong, who, because he refused to be morally reformed, was "more stupid than a pig or fish."

⁵ *Silk Letter*, lines 26-29.

⁶ *Silk Letter*, line 29.

⁷ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 353-355 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 2. 5. *sinhae*).

⁸ The philosophical schools of Mozi and Yang Zhu competed with that of Confucius and were explicitly criticized by Mencius and later Confucians, Mozi for his universalism and Yang Zhu for his egoism. See Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 15-17.

Chief state councilor Sim Hwanji (1730-1802) responded first. He echoed many of Yi's points, and, after noting that the followers of evil learning had "no father and no king," and that it destroyed the fundamental patterns governing human relations, throwing those moral principles into disorder (*myŏl li nan sang*/滅理亂常), discussed the policy of King Chŏngjo. He stated that, because the king virtuously cherished life, he had sought to transform Catholics into true people by illuminating the way. However, despite the king's generous treatment and their initial agreements to abandon Catholicism, Catholics like Ch'oe P'ilgong had failed to truly reform. It was a difficult decision to sentence even one person to death, but, considering the danger of Catholicism and the foolish stubbornness of such Catholics, continued adherence to the religion had to be treated as a capital crime. If it were not, it would become impossible to govern the country.

The Queen Dowager then asked Sim how many Catholic leaders there were. He responded that he did not know, but that there were many members of the nobility (*sajok*/士族) among those who were captured who were able to bewitch (*hok*/惑) the common people. The Queen Dowager responded that she had heard that these Catholics were so deluded that they did not fear death and would rather die than repent of their errors. Noting that Catholicism had primarily been spread through books, she asserted that if those books were burnt and Catholics punished in accordance with the gravity of their crimes, Catholicism could be suppressed. At the same time, she urged caution, telling the officials not to act too rashly and to formulate a sound policy for dealing with the Catholic problem. After a little more discussion, she stated that since those Catholics who, like Ch'oe P'ilgong, had lied to the king when they claimed that they would abandon Catholicism, it was right to treat them as rebels. Sim agreed, saying that swift

punishment of such Catholics in this way would strengthen the government's penal administration and calm the people.

Later in the discussion, the Third Royal Secretary, Ch'oe Hŏnjung (nd), presented his ideas. Ch'oe stated that Catholicism was more dangerous to human moral principles than Buddhism and profaned the way of Heaven more than Shamans. Mozi and Yang Zhu's teachings did not treat father and king properly, but they had remained mere words. Catholicism, in contrast, was actively causing people to live out these misguided principles. Catholics had bewitched the world and deluded the people, hoping to use their magic (*sul*/術) to transform it in line with their depraved morality. They were not simply like rebels, but in fact, called people together in the middle of the night to plot rebellion. King Chŏngjo loved life and did not want to kill people so he tried to civilize everyone. His efforts were such that they would even move stones and wood to tears of gratitude and touch the hearts of fish and pigs. However, Catholics, having the nature of treacherous foxes, together protected their demonic law (*kwibŏp*/鬼法), hid themselves, and infected others with their perverse ideas. Such rebels could not be tolerated in heaven or on earth. Echoing the language of the suppression edict, he explicitly identified the "pitiful and foolish commoners" with the child about to fall into a well. Those Catholic scholars who had deluded them and put them in such a dangerous position had committed a crime for which they should die 10,000 times. If such people were simply released, they would not reform and would continue to spread Catholicism. Then the people of Korea would cease being human beings and the country would no longer be a country.

Ch'oe went on to state his admiration for King Chŏngjo's virtue, as was his policy of dealing with the Catholic menace by illuminating the true way. However, as Catholicism was growing like a blazing fire, there was not enough time for it to work. Moreover, the Catholic

refusal to perform proper rites was a threat to the state. Decisive action had to be taken to put the conflagration out. In the work of morally transforming the people, a balance between illuminating the way and using punishment had to be struck. Ch'oe disagreed with the assertion that Catholics saw death as glorious and did not fear law or punishment. It was natural for people to love life and hate death, thus, they would respond to the threat of capital punishment. However, even if there were some people who did not fear death, though their punishment might not lead them to reform, it would discipline the common people and prevent them from becoming Catholics. Punishment was a form of education that would save the people, making it virtuous and benevolent.

Based on these arguments, Ch'oe contended that P'ilgong and people like him should be punished as rebels. However, Ch'oe did not want to punish all Catholics in this way. He thought that they should be treated in accordance with the gravity of their crimes. The problem was that Catholics pretended to abandon their religion when they in fact still adhered to it, making it difficult to tell just what punishment they deserved. This was dangerous because it would allow Catholics to escape death and give them the opportunity to continue to spread their errors. Ch'oe therefore suggested that tattooing be used against those who forsook Catholicism. This would allow Catholics to be differentiated from the rest of the population, who, seeing how Catholics were punished, would be too ashamed and fearful of the law to enter the cult. This, in combination with the strengthening of the five-family surveillance system, would aid in the moral transformation of the people. While surveillance was generally supported by the state, the king rejected Ch'oe's proposal to use tattooing, one of the flesh punishments that had been

banned during the Western Han (206 BC-9 AD), as too harsh.⁹ Adopting it would have challenged the Chosŏn state's identity as a merciful Neo-Confucian teacher of the people.

Though it was now clear that Catholics were to be treated as rebels, there were still disagreements over the conduct of the suppression, as seen in the argument over how quickly to execute Chŏng Yakchong, Ch'oe P'ilgong, and other recalcitrant Catholics, which occurred on the twelfth day of the second month, a week after the above debate.¹⁰ Officials were requesting that they be killed immediately because of the enormity of their crimes, while the Queen Dowager wanted to wait so that they could be interrogated further to find out more about the Catholic threat. Those who favored immediate execution pointed out that Chŏng had already said under interrogation that he would rather die than change his ways, signifying that he was not afraid of torture and death and that further interrogation would probably not obtain any useful information. Furthermore, Catholics lied under interrogation anyway, so even if he did talk, what he said could not be trusted. Thus, there was no reason to wait. Moreover, if the interrogators tried to obtain more information from Chŏng and his companions, they might die under torture, or the spirits (*kwi*/鬼) might become so angry that they could kill the offenders themselves. Such deaths would prevent the state from carrying out the executions itself, harming its ability to govern and failing to appease the "anger of the spirits and the people" (*sin in chi pun*/神人之憤). In the end, Augustine Chŏng was interrogated two more times, and then he, Ch'oe P'ilgong, and several others were beheaded on the twenty-sixth day of the second month.

Government officials did not want to simply kill Catholics. They wanted to reform them, as befit representatives of a Neo-Confucian teaching-state. This tension between punishment

⁹ Han Sanggwŏn, "Sejongdae ch'idoron kwa 'taemyŏngnyul': chŏlto sambŏmja ch'ŏbŏl ūl tullŏssan nonbyŏn ūl chungsim-ūro [Discussion over punishing bandits during the reign of King Sejong: focusing on the discussion surrounding the punishment of those who repeatedly committed banditry and theft]," *Yŏksa wa hyŏnsil*, no. 65 (September 2007): 40-47.

¹⁰ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 372-74 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 2. 12. *muo*).

and reform appears elsewhere in the court records. For example, Yi Pyŏngmo (1742-1806) submitted a memorial that argued that because the nature of human beings was fundamentally good, if people acted in accordance with it, every day they would become better.¹¹ Contrarily, if they acted against their nature, they would become progressively worse. Thus, in order to morally transform the people it was necessary to simply encourage them to follow their good nature. Another official responded by applying Yi's words to the Catholic menace to encourage the king to emphasize reform over punishment, stating that it was the principle of heaven and earth (*ch'ŏnji chi li*/天地之理) to give forth and nurture life. It followed from such a positive view of human nature expounded by Yi that if Catholics realized and repented their errors or if a person was accused of Catholicism but evidence was lacking, it would not do any harm to treat them leniently. Still, it was necessary to investigate matters thoroughly when charges were brought against someone.

However, the problems posed by relapsed Catholics like Ch'oe P'ilgong and Ch'oe Ch'anghyŏn, as well as those who refused to abandon the faith in the first place, made applying such high-minded principles difficult. Because Catholics lied, it was difficult to tell whether or not they had really reformed. If they were just released, as they had been previously, they might go on to contaminate others with their errors. Therefore, it was decided to exile Catholics who agreed to abandon their faith rather than simply to release them. However, there were still fears that this would give them the opportunity to spread their pernicious religion to others, like infected people spreading a disease.¹² As a possible solution to this problem, the Queen Dowager favored isolating former Catholics on a couple of islands where they could be closely monitored and would not be able to spread their errors to the wider population. Sim Hwanji

¹¹ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 457-58 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 3. 13. *kich'uk*).

¹² *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 442-47 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 3. 10. *pyŏngsul*).

supported this policy, stating that it might even allow them the opportunity to reform. However, in the end, this proposal was rejected as concentrating Catholics together on lightly defended islands where they could come into contact with foreigners was deemed to be more dangerous than banishing them inland.¹³

Despite such tensions, the suppression of Catholicism met with initial success—by the middle of the third month of 1801, every major Catholic leader, save Hwang, was either in custody or dead. At this time, the government could have ceased active suppression of Catholicism while continuing to keep an eye out for Hwang. Instead, the state continued to arrest and execute Catholics, and to focus its attention on capturing him, illustrating the threat he, and by extension Catholicism, was believed to pose. In fact, the Queen Dowager had frequently asked why Hwang had not been arrested and threatened to punish officials for their continued failure to apprehend him.¹⁴ This pressure was likely the direct cause of an incident in which another man named Hwang Sayŏng was arrested. He admitted under severe torture that he was the Hwang Sayŏng the government had been looking for when in fact he was not.¹⁵ There were other, similar problems stemming from the suppression. On the sixteenth day of the third month, it was reported at court that suspected Catholics were treated poorly, that officials were too ready to interrogate, and that their underlings were causing unrest because they used Catholicism as a pretext for theft and extortion.¹⁶ On the twenty-seventh of that month there were reports that local clerks (*hyŏngni*/刑吏) were accusing innocent people of being Catholics, presumably to

¹³ *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, vol. 47, 379 (*Sunjo sillok*, yr. 1, 4. 5. *sinhae*).

¹⁴ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 442-47 (*Sunjo*, yr. 1, 3. 10. *pyŏngsul*).

¹⁵ See *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 542-43 (*Sunjo*, yr. 1, 4. 16. *imsul*) and *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 676 (*Sunjo*, yr. 1, 6. 11. *pyŏngjin*).

¹⁶ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 468-69 (*Sunjo*, yr. 1, 3. 16. *imjin*).

extort bribes from them.¹⁷ On the third day of the fourth month an edict was issued ordering that local officials who were using the suppression to enrich themselves be punished.¹⁸

These problems, and the resulting resentment they could breed among the people, bothered at least some government officials, as seen in a memorial submitted by the censor Song Munsŏl (nd) on the tenth day of the fifth month.¹⁹ The memorial began with the observation that it had not yet rained and that if it did not soon, the crops would suffer and it would be a bad year. The censor then noted that the best method for obtaining a response from Heaven was through sincerity and achieving harmony. Song thus implied that something was not right in the kingdom and that was what was causing the drought. The censor argued that one of the sources of the problem could be found in the effort to suppress Catholicism. The constabulary and the officials in the provinces had arrested many people and were actively interrogating them, but failed to accurately determine who was guilty and who was innocent, and who should be executed and who should not. Interrogation, with its accompanying torture, and the harsh conditions of prison life killed many innocent people. The situation had to be rectified. If only one person resented the unfair treatment they had suffered, sagely rule could not be said to exist.

A few days later, officials from the Board of Punishments, angered at Song's allegations, defended themselves, arguing that, just as a doctor would not hesitate to remove a growth from a person's body so that it would not grow larger or a farmer fail to weed out harmful plants from a neighbor's field lest they come into his own, it was right to vigorously suppress Catholicism to stop it from spreading. The abuses that Song pointed to were the unfortunate, but unavoidable results of a policy that was absolutely necessary for the continued safety of the Chosŏn state and

¹⁷ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 7, 490-94 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 3. 27. *kyemyo*).

¹⁸ *Sunjo sillok*, vol. 30, 193 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 4. 3. *kiyu*).

¹⁹ *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, vol. 47, 388 (*Sunjo sillok*, yr. 1, 5. 10. *ŭlyu*).

the people it sought to protect and civilize.²⁰ The metaphors employed signify the belief that in such crisis situations it was necessary to act quickly and decisively in order to protect the collective, implying that the risk of harming the innocent or failing to reform recalcitrant Catholics was one that had to be taken for the greater good of the community.

The Queen Dowager complained that the suppression was taking up so much time and energy that the court was not able to look into the other problems facing the people. Then, when she asked for memorials on how to resolve those difficulties, officials used her invitation as an opportunity to attack each other.²¹ Her complaint indicates that she saw some using the suppression of Catholicism as a pretext for attacking their factional enemies. For example, as we have seen, the former Southerner official Yi Kahwan was labeled a Catholic, as was Ch'ae Chegong, who had served as a high minister under King Chǒngjo and had been dead for several years. While Yi had at one time been interested in Catholicism, and many female members of his household, including his wife and concubine, were Catholic, he had cut ties to the religion, vigorously suppressed Catholicism as a government official, and denied he was a Catholic when he was interrogated.²² Yet he was still executed. Ch'ae Chegong had never been a Catholic and had been highly critical of Catholicism. However, as a Southerner he had tried to prevent King Chǒngjo from suppressing Catholicism too severely in order to protect his faction. While factionalism cannot account for all the criticism leveled against them, the facts that Yi was punished with execution when his clear rejection of Catholicism called for exile and that Chae was pursued so relentlessly as a supposed Catholic leader even though he was dead and had

²⁰ *Sŭngjǒngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 602 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 5. 13. *muja*).

²¹ *Sŭngjǒngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 664 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 6. 5. *kyǒngsul*).

²² *Silk Letter*, lines 46-51; Yi Kahwan's interrogation records for the tenth day of the second month of 1801 in Sŏ Chongt'ae and Han Kŏn, ed., *Ch'ŏnjugyo sinja chaep'an kirok* (Seoul: Kukhak Charyowŏn, 2004), 1:68-73.

criticized Catholicism shows that factionalism at least played some part in the suppression, indicating that there was something to the Queen Dowager's concerns.²³

The suppression of Catholicism strained the state's resources. Hwang wrote that in the latter third of the second month that he had heard that "the State Tribunal, both of the jails of the police court, and the jail of the Board of Punishments, were so full that there was no room for any more prisoners."²⁴ This problem seems to have continued, as the court noted a bit over a month later that the Board of Punishments was overwhelmed by the large number of people who needed to be interrogated.²⁵ The strain was so severe that despite the fact that Augustine Yu Hanggŏm and his companions were arrested in the third month, it was not until the fifteenth of the fifth month that they were ordered to be transferred to the State Tribunal. This order was not acted on so their transfer was again requested on the fifth day of the eighth month. There was such a backlog of cases that their interrogation at the State Tribunal did not begin until the eleventh day of the ninth month. What is most striking is that interrogations conducted in the provinces in the third and fourth months had revealed that Yu and other Catholics had been in communication with the bishop of Beijing and had sought to bring a Western warship to Korea before the 1801 suppression. That such an important case was delayed is indicative of the strain the suppression caused the Chosŏn state.²⁶

Despite such problems, there were still certain boundaries the Neo-Confucian Chosŏn state would not cross, illustrated by the way it treated Hwang's wife, Myŏngnyŏn. When their house was searched, a jar filled with Catholic books and devotional objects was discovered

²³ For an example of a memorial attacking Yi Kahwan, see *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 364-65 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 2. 9. *ŭlmyo*). For an example of the criticism of Ch'ae Chegong, see *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 32 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 11. 11. *kabin*).

²⁴ *Silk Letter*, line 30.

²⁵ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 515-17 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 4. 5. *imin*). Hwang notes this as well. See *Silk Letter*, lines 24-25.

²⁶ See Cho Kwang, *Sahak*; Ch'a, "Chosŏn hugi," 21-27.

buried in the earth. Thus, it was suspected that Hwang's wife was also a Catholic. However, since she was an elite yangban woman she could not simply be arrested and interrogated based on that evidence. A special order from the king was needed, which does not appear to have been given.²⁷ While women were targets of the suppression, it seems that it took a great deal of evidence in order to actually move against a yangban woman who was not an active leader, even one married to one of the nation's most wanted criminals. Moreover, it is striking that a government official tortured Peter Cho's father in front of him to convince him to forsake Catholicism, but no one seems to have suggested interrogating Hwang's wife to find out where he might have gone or to take her and their son hostage in order to force Hwang to turn himself in. There were different rules for poor people like Peter Cho and his father and yangban women like Hwang's wife that were observed even when it prevented the state from using methods that might have enabled it to capture Hwang.

In the end, after initially being unsure how to proceed, the Chosŏn government decided to treat recalcitrant Catholics as rebels. This decision was made after debates that utilized the language of the 1801 suppression edict that dehumanized Catholics and portrayed them as dangers to the Chosŏn state and Korean civilization, while at the same time expanding on the threat Catholics posed by portraying them, not as being like rebels, but as people actively plotting rebellion. At the same time, though it was deemed necessary to overcome the Catholic threat by applying one of the harshest penalties the law had to offer, execution by decapitation, the Chosŏn state still sought to act in accordance with Neo-Confucian principles, refusing to restore the inexpensive and practical punishment of tattooing, which was considered barbaric. Moreover, the simple and effective method of simply making Catholicism a capital crime,

²⁷ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 489 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 3. 27. *kyemyo*). While it was determined that future discussion was needed, it does not appear that the issue was ever reopened or that Hwang's wife was ever interrogated.

without giving the opportunity to abandon it, did not even come up. Such measures would have violated the officials' understanding of what a civilized Neo-Confucian state should do, as evidenced by concerns over their duty to reform rather than punish whenever possible. While the threat Catholicism was deemed to present was so great that some officials were willing to push government resources to the breaking point, cause resentment among the people, and challenge the emphasis on reform over punishment, Neo-Confucian morality still placed important limits on what means could be used in the suppression.

The Arrest and Interrogation of Hwang Sayŏng

The discovery of Hwang and his letter would present the Chosŏn state with new difficulties, give credence to its worst fears, and lead to the further development of the narrative used to justify the violent suppression of Catholicism. It was information provided by Hwang Sayŏng's messenger, Thomas Hwang Sim, which led to his arrest. Hwang Sim had agreed to meet him at the end of the ninth month, take the letter, and give it to John Ok Ch'ŏnhŭi, who would then deliver it to Bishop Gouvea. However, Hwang Sim was arrested on the fifteenth of that month, and confessed where Hwang Sayŏng was hiding on the twenty-sixth. He stated under interrogation that he had done so after seeing all the people who were suffering on account of Sayŏng.²⁸ Government officials acted quickly, arresting Hwang on the twenty-ninth of that month and confiscating the *Silk Letter*. He was transferred to the State Tribunal on the third day of the tenth month, and after a careful study of the *Silk Letter*, his interrogation began on the ninth.

²⁸ See Hwang Sim's interrogation records for 1801-10-9, 713-14/243-44.

The interrogation itself must have been an impressive affair. There were present at any one time up to eleven civil officials, six interrogators (several of whom held military rank), two officials from the Board of Punishments, and two secretaries to record the proceedings. Counted among the officials were Yi Pyŏngmo, who held the rank of first minister without portfolio (*chŏngjung ch'ubusa*) and chief state councilor (*yŏngŭijong*) Sim Hwanji.²⁹ Sim and Yi were both from the Old Doctrine Faction, with Sim also being connected to the Party of Principle (*pyŏkp'a*). While most of the officials who were present at the interrogation, including the highest ranking, were from the Old Doctrine, there was also a Northerner, a Southerner, and a member of the Young Doctrine faction who belonged to the Party of Expediency (*sip'a*). There were probably also guards whose names were not mentioned in the interrogation roles. Such a display of state power must have been unsettling to Hwang and was probably meant to frighten him.³⁰

Hwang was interrogated each day from the ninth of the tenth month until the thirteenth, and then again on the fifteenth. However, interrogation records only exist for the ninth, tenth, and eleventh. Probably nothing of interest to the government was learned on the other days so the records were not preserved. During his interrogation, Hwang continually asserted that the *Silk Letter* was his idea alone and that no one else beyond those who had already been arrested was involved. The officials did not believe him and so after the session on the tenth, permission was obtained to torture him. Hwang was flogged fifteen times on the eleventh, seven times on the twelfth, and eleven times on the thirteenth.³¹ The number of times he was beaten was varied so that the torture would not accidentally kill him.

²⁹ For a sample roster see Hwang Sayŏng's interrogation records for 1801-10-9, 642-44/232.

³⁰ Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn'gu*, 53-55.

³¹ See *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 921 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 10. 11. *kapin*); vol. 97, 923 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 10. 12. *ŭlmyo*); vol. 97, 932 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 10. 13. *pyŏngjin*).

In the extant records there was only the most perfunctory attempt to make Hwang Sayŏng or those implicated with him abandon Catholicism. The primary purpose of the interrogations was to gain information. Thus, Hwang Sim was executed only just a little over a week after the interrogations finished, dying on the twenty-fourth day of the tenth month, while Hwang Sayŏng was kept alive so that he could be interrogated with others who were believed to have assisted him. He was questioned with two suspected Catholics on the second day of the eleventh month, flogged ten times on the fourth, and then executed on the fifth as a “great traitor against the way” (*taeyŏk pudo*/大逆不道) by decapitation and then dismembered.³² Hwang’s mother and wife were enslaved and sent into exile. His son normally would have been executed by strangulation, but because he was only two years old, was only banished and enslaved. One of Hwang’s paternal uncles and the husband of one of his slaves who did not inform on him were exiled. Finally, Hwang’s property was confiscated, including his slaves, and it was ordered that his house be made into a pond.³³ His household was thus completely destroyed.

The Interrogation

Each interrogation began with a statement by the interrogator that contained the basic questions which were to be asked, setting the general tone of the session. The statement that began Hwang’s interrogation on the ninth laid out his crimes in the starkest of terms:

You demon! You worm! You owl! You beast!³⁴ The followers of the evil learning from the West behave as if they have no king or father and act like birds,

³² Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn’gu*, 66-69.

³³ See *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 20 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 11. 6. *kimyo*) and Cho Kwang, *Sahak*, 273-75.

³⁴ To refer to someone as a “demon” and a “worm” in this way emphasized that they were a treacherous and malicious person. See R.H. Mathews, *Mathew’s Chinese-English Dictionary* (1931; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), entry 7680. An owl was believed to eat its mother and the beast mentioned here, a kind of tiger, to eat its father (see entry 2589). Referring to Hwang in these terms implied that he was unfilial.

beasts, and barbarians. You were baptized by the likes of Yi Kahwan and Yi Sŭnghun and made such strange people as Ch'oe Ch'anghyŏn and Chŏng Yakchong your teachers. Together with them you formed a gang whose members were willing to die for each other. You demolished your family shrine and so destroyed the moral laws governing family relationships. You sullied both town and village, threw human ethics into disorder, sought to annihilate Confucianism, and have had a noxious influence on the common people. Moreover when it came to light what your gang was up to they were immediately arrested but you dared to escape and hide yourself, disobeying the will of the king. It is the king's will that all criminals whose crimes cannot be forgiven by heaven and earth be punished in accordance with the law. Though you are worthy only of contempt, are of little account, and are very cruel and wicked, you still belong to the category of those things to be morally transformed and nurtured. If you had a heart that grasped the law in the slightest, could you have trespassed against Heaven and Earth in this way?

This statement contained virtually all the elements the Chosŏn state had used to justify violence and directed them at Hwang. He lacked the cardinal virtues of loyalty and filial piety, was dangerous like a wild animal or monster, threatened rebellion, sought to destroy Confucian civilization, had thrown sexual morality into chaos, and was spreading these ideas to others. It was thus made clear that Hwang deserved whatever violence was inflicted upon him.³⁵

We cannot know how Hwang felt during his interrogation, but it must have been terrifying to have to confront the highest officials in the land of the state he sought to threaten with violence. Similarly, it must have been insulting to be accused of violating loyalty and filial piety, virtues he treasured even though he had re-interpreted them, to have his teachers criticized, and to be accused of sexual immorality. While he did not attempt to justify his appeal to violent means to secure tolerance for Catholicism, Hwang did seek to defend his own virtue and his faith. He stated that "I truly believe that Western learning is the orthodox Way. It is not true that it teaches people to act as if they did not have a father or a king." While he admitted that Catholicism did forbid ancestor rites and his family therefore did not conduct them, he denied having destroyed his family shrine, as he never had one. Against charges of sexual immorality

³⁵ For this exchange see Hwang Sayŏng's interrogation records for 1801-10-9, 642-49/233-37.

he explained that “among the Ten Commandments the sixth forbids engaging in depraved acts with, and the ninth desiring someone else’s wife.” He also asserted that Catholicism taught that “we should serve the king like we were serving Heaven” and that as a member of the yangban, he could not possibly think of disobeying the will of the king. However, his father had died before he was born, leaving him to take care of his elderly mother. He explained that “If I were arrested and tortured it would hurt her. I love her and could not bear for her to suffer so I fled.” Hwang was loyal, but as a filial son, he had no choice but to go into hiding.

Hwang, after making his defense, was interrogated about his flight. He answered the questions put to him, but left out information on those Catholics who had helped him but had not yet been captured. The rest of the interrogation session was spent confirming the meaning of various passages within the *Silk Letter*, and other similar details. Hwang claimed that no one else save those who had already been arrested were involved in the plot. State officials could not believe that the letter was “the product of just one person working for a single day” and that there must have been others who helped it beyond his messengers who had already been captured. In another interrogation session Hwang was browbeaten in an attempt to force him to provide this information, the interrogator saying, “You dared to look to foreign countries for power so that you could spread your cult. Throughout all of history there is no wickedness to match that of attempting to secretly bringing a foreign invasion force to our country!”³⁶ Hwang was also accused of being fundamentally insincere, using, “evil learning as a pretext” to achieve his “true ambitions,” presumably power.

Hwang responded to these charges by stressing that he had no ulterior motives for believing in Catholicism, explaining that, “My friends and family criticized me but I thought about it 100 times and determined that Catholicism was good medicine to save the world and so

³⁶ See Hwang Sayōng’s interrogation records for 1801-10-10, 728-29/254-55.

believed in it sincerely.” Hwang then described how he had admired Father Zhou and deeply regretted his failure to protect the priest. Desiring to escape the world, his one wish was to go to “an isolated mountain village and ponder day and night about nothing other than how to spread Western learning.” Hwang claimed to be a sincere Catholic, not a rebel using religion as a pretext.

Nowhere in the interrogation records did Hwang attempt to justify the threat of violence he proposed in the *Silk Letter*. In response to an interrogator who questioned him on this very point, saying, “In this evil document you talk about sending an army and say that there would be nothing wrong with that. That is something that should neither be heard nor spoken. How could you think of something so evil? How could you write it?” Hwang responded, “I have committed a crime for which I should die.”³⁷ It is difficult to tell exactly what Hwang meant here, as interrogation reports typically manipulated the speech of the person being questioned to make him appear guilty. Confronted with his failures and the power of the state, Hwang might have come to believe that he was wrong to seek to use violent means to obtain tolerance for Catholicism, or he might simply have recognized that, from the perspective of the state, he had committed a crime that would be punished by death. In either case, Hwang did not seek to justify the use of violence, showing his own ambiguous stance towards it.

Hwang might have questioned what he wrote in the *Silk Letter*, but he still maintained his faith and loyalty to the Catholic community. While he did in the end give the names of Catholics, they were all people who either had already been arrested or executed. He refused to inform on anyone who was still in hiding. This was noted in the report on the interrogation submitted to the Queen Dowager, in which Hwang was described as “shamelessly” admitting that he sought to bring in Westerners in order to build up “evil learning” in Korea. It went on to explain, “He

³⁷ See Hwang Sayōng’s interrogation records for 1801-10-10, 737/261.

really is a wicked person. He confessed that he should die for what he had written, but he still did not show the slightest bit of fear.” The fact that Hwang did not show fear was taken as defiance of the state, as was his refusal to confess who the true ringleader was or provide the names of the others involved in the conspiracy. Thus, permission was asked, and received, to interrogate Hwang under torture.³⁸

But even under continuing torture, Hwang Sayŏng stuck to his story that the *Silk Letter* was his idea and that no one else was involved beyond those who had already been arrested. Hwang was in fact telling the truth—he really was the mastermind behind the whole thing. But it was a truth that state officials had a hard time believing. After all, Catholics routinely lied and refused to give information that might implicate others. It seemed hard to believe that a young man like Hwang could have done this all himself. There was therefore a good chance that there still remained Catholics who were a part of the plot and who, should the government drop its guard, launch a revolt. Thus, officials requested that former Catholics, such as the brothers Chŏng Yakchŏn and Yagyong, be interrogated again.³⁹ Permission was granted, leading to a consequent flare-up in the persecution. For instance, these two men were recalled from banishment and further interrogated under torture. However, nothing new was learned. It was clear now that Hwang had been telling the truth. Despite this, Yakchŏn and Yagyong were sent into harsher exile.

³⁸ See Hwang Sayŏng’s interrogation records for 1801-10-10, 742-45/264-66. This reference to “poems” included one Hwang had written comparing Chosŏn Korea to Qin China (221-206 BC) and the Catholics to the Confucians who had been persecuted by its emperor, which was criticized as a twisting of ancient history that showed the resentment Hwang felt towards the state.

³⁹ For an example see *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, vol. 47, 408 (*Sunjo sillok*, yr. 1, 10. 13. *pyŏngjin*).

China and the Silk Letter

Father Zhou, the lone priest in Korea, who had surrendered himself to authorities on the fourteenth day of the third month, posed a serious problem to the Chosŏn state. Because he was a Chinese subject who had lived in Korea for several years, he knew a lot about the country and was therefore a security risk. Similarly, it was learned through his interrogations that a Catholic, Joseph Kim Kŏnsun (1776-1801), expressed to Zhou a desire to have revenge on the Qing dynasty for the 1636 invasion of Korea. If the Chinese government were to learn that such resentment still existed in Korea, it might cause problems.⁴⁰ However, killing Zhou would have been a violation of the terms of Korea's status as a vassal state of China. On the other hand, informing China of his capture might lead to a demand for extradition, potentially enabling the Qing to learn things about Korea the Chosŏn state would have preferred to have remained secret. Thus it was decided to execute him without informing China. In case the truth was found out, the Chosŏn state would claim that because Zhou dressed like a Korean and was fluent in the language he was thought to be one and was executed by mistake.

The discovery of the *Silk Letter* forced Chosŏn officials to rethink their plan. First, it was clear from the letter and from the interrogation records, not only of Hwang and his co-conspirators, but of Yu Hanggŏm and those connected with him, that Catholics had maintained regular contact with China. Therefore it seemed much more likely than before that the Chinese government would find out what happened. In fact, in the *Silk Letter*, Hwang explained how the threat of revealing to China that Chosŏn had executed Zhou could be used, in conjunction with the proposed invasion of Korea, to blackmail the Korean state into tolerating Catholicism.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 467 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 3. 16. *imjin*) and vol. 97, 490-494 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 3. 27. *kyemyo*).

⁴¹ *Silk Letter*, lines 117-118.

In light of this new information, it was decided that it was necessary to inform China of what had happened by handing over a heavily edited version of the *Silk Letter*⁴² and sending a letter of explanation with the winter tribute mission.⁴³

The version of the *Silk Letter* that the Chosŏn court planned to present to the Chinese government was considerably shortened, reduced from its original 122 lines to 16. The martyr stories and the description of how the suppression began were completely removed. The only proposals for help that were left in were that of establishing a store in the Willow Palisade in order to facilitate communication and the plan for a Western invasion. Those parts about the Qing extending its power into Korea and of Sunjo marrying a Chinese princess were removed, likely so as not to give China any ideas. However, as the Chinese government found the explanations contained in the letter they carried from the Chosŏn state satisfactory, the false *Silk Letter* was never delivered.

The explanatory letter that was submitted to the Chinese emperor presents the first full-blown narrative of the suppression of Catholicism that sought to justify the use of violence against adherents to the religion.⁴⁴ It began by stating that, as a loyal vassal of China, the Chosŏn state was reporting the terrible events that had recently taken place. But before giving the report, the letter affirmed Korea's Confucian identity, noting how, since the time of Kija, 3000 years earlier, Koreans had adhered to the principles of righteousness, loyalty, and obedience. They followed Confucianism with their whole hearts, refusing to tolerate any departure from its principles. Such was the devotion of Koreans to orthodox learning that even the women and children in the countryside followed the five relationships and adhered to the three bonds.

⁴² See Yŏ Chinch'ŏn, *Hwang Sayŏng Paeksŏ wa ibon* [*Hwang Sayŏng's Silk Letter and alternate versions*] (Seoul: Kukhak Charyowŏn, 2005), 16-19 and Yŏ, *Hwang Sayŏng <Paeksŏ> yŏn'gu*, 211-46.

⁴³ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 97, 434-438 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 10. 15. *muo*) and vol. 97, 972-74 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 10. 27. *kyŏngo*).

⁴⁴ For the letter see *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, vol. 47, 410 (*Sunjo sillok*, yr. 1, 10. 27. *kyŏngo*).

Despite this firm Confucian foundation, there suddenly appeared followers of Western learning who, “profaned Heaven, despised the sages, were rebels against the king and looked with contempt upon their fathers....ceased performing ancestor rites and did away with their household shrines and ancestral tablets...bewitched the foolish people with talk of heaven and hell...and by means of baptism assembled an evil gang.” They also gathered many women together and did “bestly things” and, like the Yellow Turbans and the White Lotus sectarians, sought to stir up the people into rebellion. They took advantage of the death of King Chǒngjo and the succession of his young son to spread their faith so that their numbers grew “like a flood or a raging fire.”

The letter dated the beginning of the suppression, not with the edict of the first month of 1801, but in the third month with the discovery of the letters and Catholic books of Chǒng Yakchong. This led to the exposure of a band of hundreds of evil cultists, made up of “nobles, base people, and the sons of concubines,” who had been gathered together by the likes of Yi Kahwan, their leader, and Chǒng Yakchong and Yagyong. The cultists refused to tell where one of their leaders, the one they called “priest” was, preferring to die rather than inform on him. Faced with such evil, Korea was in great danger, “Looking back on this situation, it can be seen in what desperate straits we were in. The evil cult had to be torn out at its roots. There was no time to spare.”

Eventually the priest and other Catholics were captured and executed. One Catholic leader, Hwang Sayǒng, had escaped, but was finally captured in the tenth month.⁴⁵ Discovered in a letter written by Hwang was the proposal that the “Great West” invade Korea. The situation Korea faced was dire. The followers of evil learning pressed upon the country “like a vicious

⁴⁵ Hwang was actually captured at the end of the ninth month, but he was not transferred to the State Tribunal until the tenth month.

beast,” having “invited bandits to cross the ocean and plotted to open the doors of our country and offer it up to them.” As if this were not enough, Catholics were also raising money to finance a rebellion.

Having now stated the danger that Korea faced, the author then thanked the emperor for his generosity and stressed that Korea was acting obediently as a vassal state by truthfully reporting these events. After requesting that if any Korean Catholics were captured in China they be sent to Korea, the author confessed that “We have overstepped our authority so greatly that we cannot stop trembling with fear” since, because Father Zhou looked, dressed, and spoke like a Korean, he was taken to be such and executed. The letter then claimed, falsely, that the Chosŏn state only learned that Zhou might have been Chinese when Hwang was captured, after the priest had been executed. But even then, since Hwang Sayŏng was a follower of evil learning, and therefore a liar, they were not sure if what he said was “true or false, but because our country acts as a feudatory should, we did not dare to remain silent, but have included it in our report.” The letter then asked for pardon for what, if Zhou really was Chinese, was a serious violation of its vassal relationship with China. By presenting the execution of Zhou as an honest mistake made in a life-or-death struggle with the Catholic menace, the author of the letter asked for, and received forgiveness.

Ending the Suppression

With the arrest of Hwang, the last major Catholic leader had been captured. His plot had been thwarted, and all those involved in it arrested. The threat from China was being dealt with. This might seem to have been a good time to end the active suppression of Catholicism, but the

day Hwang was executed, two memorials were submitted requesting that the people connected with him be interrogated again, despite the fact that previous interrogations of Hwang's friends, acquaintances, and relatives found nothing new.⁴⁶ Similar memorials were submitted on the sixth and seventh as well.⁴⁷ They contained the old arguments that the *Silk Letter* incident represented a plot that was too intricate to have been the brainchild of just Hwang. The facts that previous interrogations had found no further connections and that Hwang had consistently stated, even under torture, that the *Silk Letter* was his plan alone, were explained away by pointing out that Catholics were liars. The king, likely acting under the orders of the Queen Dowager, rejected these memorials. It was clear to her that they were attacks motivated by factional interests.

The Queen Dowager was convinced that all those responsible for the *Silk Letter* had been arrested and executed and that continuing the suppression promised little and, as previously noted, cost much. Thus, on the eighth day of the eleventh month, she raised the issue of whether or not a report should be made to the royal ancestors of the suppression of Catholicism, an act that would effectively put an end to the active search for, and punishment of, Catholics.⁴⁸ Sim Hwanji responded by saying that the officials could not do anything without authorization from the Ministry of Rites. The Queen Dowager then pointed to the serious danger posed by Hwang Sayōng's plot, which was fortunately foiled thanks to the silent help of Heaven and the protection of the royal ancestors. The people were no longer in danger of being infected with barbarous customs and the good fortune of the country would continue forever. This was indeed a happy occasion that should be celebrated. Yi Pyōngmo agreed, but then pointed out that in ten or twenty years the remaining Catholics might start trouble again so the state had to remain on its

⁴⁶ *Sūngjōngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 17 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 11. 5. *muin*) and vol. 98, 17-18 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 11. 5. *muin*).

⁴⁷ *Sūngjōngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 20-21 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 11. 6. *kimyo*) and vol. 98, 23 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 11. 7. *kyōngsul*).

⁴⁸ *Sūngjōngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 25-27 (Sunjo, year 1, 11. 8. *sinhae*).

guard. The Queen Dowager responded that no one could know what was in store for the future, but for now, the ancestors needed to be informed of the defeat of Hwang's plot.

The topic then shifted to the discussion of the future policy towards Catholicism. Sim stated that Yao and Shun had devoted themselves to protecting the people, and that Mencius had taught this as well. Thus, the state should be guided by that principle. The Queen Dowager agreed, and while noting that the state needed to remain vigilant, for now, the king should soothe the people by displaying concern for them.⁴⁹ Sim concurred, and noting that though the “den of rebels” had been destroyed, some remnants still remained. He therefore urged that, in order to protect the state and discipline the people, the five-family surveillance system should be strengthened. The Queen agreed, and asserted that the principle guiding the state should be “protect the people” (*pomin*/保民).

The next day the Queen Dowager ordered that the royal ancestors be formally informed on the twenty-seventh day of the eleventh month that the dynasty had overcome the Catholic menace.⁵⁰ Everything appeared to be going smoothly with preparations for this ritual.⁵¹ However, when the appointed day arrived, for reasons unclear, the ceremony was delayed.⁵² The postponement allowed for the submission of further memorials asking that Ch'ae Chegong be punished and that people like Chŏng Yakchŏn be interrogated again. As the former was dead and the latter had rejected Catholicism, and had not been active in the faith for over ten years, it was questionable how much of a danger they posed to the state or Confucian civilization. Instead, such attacks were motivated in a large part by factional interests, which were likely

⁴⁹ This is probably referring to a pardon, which was later announced in the proclamation. See *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, vol. 47, 417 (*Sunjo sillok*, yr. 1, 12. 11. *sinhae*).

⁵⁰ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 28 (*Sunjo*, yr. 1, 11. 9. *muo*).

⁵¹ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 48 (*Sunjo*, yr. 1, 11. 25. *musul*).

⁵² *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 49 (*Sunjo*, yr. 1, 11. 27. *kyŏngja*).

responsible for the delay, as can be seen in the fact that a new date for the ceremony was settled upon only once the order was given to posthumously strip Ch'ae Chegong of office.⁵³

The Proclamation against Treason

The edict officially ending the suppression, entitled “A Proclamation against Treason” (*t'oyŏk pan kyomun*/討逆頒教文) was finally issued on the twenty-second day of the twelfth month.⁵⁴ Written from the perspective of the king, it began by expressing gratitude for the silent help of heaven and the royal ancestors that enabled the state to overcome the Catholic menace. After declaring that the king would inform the ancestral spirits of the royal shrine what had occurred, and calling for the attention of the officials and common people, the edict asserted Korea's Confucian identity, noting that Koreans had enjoyed the “peace and happiness” that resulted from adhering to moral principles for ten thousand generations, and that the people were divided properly into the four classes of “scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants,” who followed the examples and teachings of “Yao, Shun, Yu, Shang, Wen, Wu, Confucius, Mencius, Zhu Xi, and the Cheng brothers.” Moreover, Koreans followed the true arts of civilization, “poetry, writing, etiquette and music,” which cultivated proper relationships “between ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friends.” Korean monarchs had spread civilization and carefully maintained Neo-Confucianism, “Our glorious former kings, shining like the sun and the moon, thought only of orthodox learning. They venerated scholars and revered the way, paying reverence to the works of Master Zhu.”

⁵³ See Chŏng Tuhoe, “Sinyu pakhae ŭi chŏn'gae kwajŏng,” 70-75 and *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 86 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 12. 18. *kyŏngsin*).

⁵⁴ For the “Proclamation against Treason,” see *Sunjo sillok*, vol. 47, 419 (*Sunjo sillok*, yr. 1, 12. 22. *kapcha*).

The civilization and right morality that Korea enjoyed because of its adherence to Neo-Confucianism was contrasted with the deficiencies of the West, sullied by the absurdity of Catholic doctrines. The edict asked, “What intention could the people of the cold and gloomy far West have in seeking to invade our little China, our country of propriety and righteousness?” Catholics had planned to befoul Korea with their teachings of a deity who was like a snake god or ox spirit. They had bewitched almost half the world with their talk of heaven and hell and therefore led people from the true Way. They had forsaken proper human relationships, giving the priests and bishops they followed greater reverence than their ancestral tablets, and, rejecting their ancestors, became like hungry ghosts. They engaged in superstitious magical acts, such as chanting the Ten Commandments. And though it is human nature to love life and hate death, Catholics saw the implements of execution as a comfortable place to sleep, showing how far they had strayed from Heaven’s cosmic pattern. The cult consisted of, “A number of the low born, the shiftless, and people who resented our state who together formed a gang to obtain power and fame. They gathered together ruffians from the marketplace, farmers, and young low-class women and mixed with them, sullyng good customs and right morals.” They plotted evil and stirred up the people. They did not observe proper rites and so threatened to transform Korea into a nation of barbarians. They were particularly threatening because Korea, being a small country, could not raise an army quickly to put down the rebellion they planned.

The followers of evil learning were denigrated as sub-humans. Zhou Wenmo had snuck into Korea like an “insect hiding in someone’s sleeve,” and other Catholics were described as barbarians, hiding in Seoul like a worm hides in the sand. Hwang Sayŏng was singled out for especially harsh criticism:

He had the heart of a wolf and the face of a fox. Outside the capitol's gate he chose auspicious days and wrote charms for a living. When the sun set, he sought

to save his life by escaping into the wilderness. He wrote a letter on a piece of silk, elucidating three wicked schemes. Unbearably, he opened up the gates to this land of three hundred districts and offered it to bandits, calling boats from ninety thousand *li* away and setting a date to violate our borders. He is one hundred times worse than that hateful traitor Chŏng Yakchong. He was of one heart with his messenger, that bandit Hwang Sim.

Special condemnation was also reserved for two non-Catholics, showing the factional influence on the proclamation. The “Catholic” leader, Yi Kahwan, was described as someone who “received abundant graces from two courts (those of King Yongjo and Chŏngjo) and was raised to high government rank. However, his learning was shallow and his seal of office was engraved with a cockroach. In the end, he returned to his biased views and wicked ways. It was impossible for him, with his bug-like eyes and wolf-like howls, to hide his wicked nature.” Ch’ae Chegong was also criticized as a criminal who had pretended to be obedient to the king and was so interested in fulfilling his own selfish desires that he gave no thought to the country. His posthumous punishment was necessary in order to “uproot the evil completely.”

The Catholics were described as rebels, and the rebellion they sought to launch was worse than anything in Korean history. Therefore, the king, in driving back this wicked cult, had performed a deed so glorious that he could be compared to Sage-Emperor Yao. His violent suppression of the Catholics had educated the people and his use of punishment had “illuminated the principles of righteousness for the future generations of the world.” While properly punishing Catholics meant that many had been killed, including “women, children, and base people,” Catholicism was so evil that it could make such apparently harmless people dangerous, necessitating their execution. The danger they posed was so great that “Were it not for the spirits of heaven, earth, and the royal ancestors,” the country might have been destroyed.

The edict then affirmed the truth and reasonableness of the Confucian order of the universe against the lies and falsehoods of Catholicism, which had simply been cobbled together

from the dregs of Buddhism and Taoism and created only sorrow and treachery in its wake. Catholic books had “deluded the world and deceived the people; the disturbances they created threatened to destroy the five relationships and three bonds.” In the time of the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang, and Zhou, 2100 BC- 256 BC), these books simply would have been destroyed and that would have been enough for the common people to understand and stay clear of their contents. However, people had degenerated, and the cult was too dangerous. Destroying the books themselves was not enough. Human beings had to be punished. This was unfortunate, but the violence that the cultists suffered was not the fault of the state, it was simply punishment meted out in direct proportion to the “evil in their hearts.” The sectarians were particularly dangerous as they used their cult as a cover under which to plot rebellion against the king, whom they hated just as they hated their own fathers. If the state had not acted promptly, then it would have suffered a great disaster.

Even as the cultists, through their own fault, were punished mercilessly, the state still sought for a way to morally transform the people. The king, out of love, taught them, “Ministers, think only of loyalty; children, think only of filial piety. Respect your king and protect the people. Women, devote yourself to sewing; men, devote yourself to plowing. At home, remember it is proper to love your parents and respect your elders.” The king went on to emphasize the importance of propriety and good customs. He praised scholars for differentiating between what food was right for domestic animals and what food was appropriate for people, showing what it meant to be truly human, and admonished them, “Do not lose the original virtue bestowed by heaven. Do not depart from the right principles of daily life.” He then explained that, in contrast to the time of the early Confucians, people in his day were fascinated by “new customs” and therefore, “good customs” were in decay. This decline in dedication to the Confucian way was

in fact what led to the spread of evil learning. Therefore, there must be a renewal in Confucian learning, spread through books on proper relationships and village compacts. Therefore, “By illuminating Heavenly principle, we can put the will of the people back on the right track. By elucidating sage learning, we will restore respect for the king and moral principles.”

The king then announced a pardon for all criminals who had been sentenced to punishment below the death penalty for crimes committed before daybreak of the twenty-second of the twelfth month.⁵⁵ Through this amnesty, the king sought to give the people a fresh start. Any cultists who did not mend their ways, however, would be “utterly annihilated.” The king then ordered that the edict be posted publicly. The successful destruction of Catholicism as an active threat marked a transition, the time of disaster was waning and that of good governance was waxing, the fortunes of the dynasty were renewed and the security of the country guaranteed. While calls for continuation of the suppression continued, they were largely ignored by the king.⁵⁶

The private debates at the Chosŏn court, and the public rhetoric as seen in the anti-Catholic edict of the first month of 1801, the letter to Beijing, and the “Proclamation against Treason,” depicted Catholics as dangerous and inhuman. This image of the Catholic threat developed over time—Catholics were first to be punished as offenders against morality, but later were portrayed as actively plotting rebellion. Accusations of illicit sexual activity were also included. Thus, through debates and public edicts, representatives of the Chosŏn state formulated a narrative in which they justified the violent suppression of Catholicism as necessary for the defense of Neo-Confucian civilization and morality against a threat that was portrayed as growing increasingly dangerous. The contents of the *Silk Letter* were conclusive evidence of the

⁵⁵ This amnesty does not seem to have applied to people already serving their sentences, but to those who had been given sentences which had not yet been carried out. Thus, Chŏng Yagyong remained in exile.

⁵⁶ For an example, see *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 193-95 (Sunjo, yr. 2, 1. 18. *kyŏnin*).

extent of this danger and therefore offered an *ex post facto* justification for the extreme measures used to overcome the Catholic menace.

In its fully developed form, the state's narrative told of how a virtuous king, who inherited the glory of his orthodox ancestors and was equal to the great Confucian heroes of the past, with the help of the gods of heaven and earth and the ancestral spirits, defeated the Catholic menace, led by such evil and cunning men as Hwang Sayŏng. Against the errors and evils of Catholicism, embodied in the wicked plots of the *Silk Letter*, the rightness of the Confucian order, the identity of the Chosŏn state, the virtue of King Sunjo, and the present-day duties of the Korean people were proclaimed. Thus the power of the Chosŏn ruling order allowed it, through the rational justification of violence against Catholics, to assert its own legitimacy and to call people to return to the true Neo-Confucian way.

The similarity of the way Catholics were portrayed, as posing a serious and immediate danger to the state and the civilization it guarded, both in private court debates and public edicts, indicates that such depictions were probably truly believed in by state officials. Factionalism, while certainly important in shaping the suppression, was far less important than religion as a cause. But sincerely believed in or not, these portrayals represented a fundamental misunderstanding of Catholics and the threat they posed. While Catholics certainly did communicate with foreigners, there is no evidence that they plotted rebellion. Hwang Sayŏng rejected it out of hand both in his *Silk Letter* and while under interrogation. Yet Hwang's interrogator accused him of using Catholicism as a cover for revolt and the threat of Catholic rebellion was repeated in both the letter to Beijing and the "Proclamation against Treason."

The inability to see Catholics as sincere believers who were willing to risk torture and death for religious reasons and who, in many ways, still accepted cardinal virtues of the Chosŏn

state and wanted to remain loyal, helped lead to such misunderstandings and to a tendency to view Catholicism as a greater immediate threat than it really was, further justifying violence. Moreover, Chosŏn officials could not see the part they played in creating the *Silk Letter*, and that it was only in reaction to the violent suppression of Catholicism that Catholics had turned, however ambiguously, to violent means to obtain tolerance. Similarly, state officials could not see that Catholics who agreed to abandon their religion under torture and then relapsed might not simply have been liars, but rather people who could not withstand the pain of torture or who had sincerely regretted what they had done, as in the case of Peter Cho Yongsam.

However, when we look from the Chosŏn state's perspective and consider the secretive nature of the Catholics and their willingness to break the law when their religion demanded it, we can see the apparent reasonableness of such charges. To Confucian officials "evil learning," with its emphasis on spiritual salvation and privileging of, what was to them, a non-existent God over parents and king, was irrational, and, when combined with the Catholic willingness to defy moral norms and join an illegal organization, made it easy for them to see Catholics as either being bewitched, or as rebels. Who after all, other than stupid or wicked people could believe such nonsense and act so strangely? And once Catholicism was determined to be a threat, in a sense, government officials had to see Catholics in the most negative way, as representing the greatest evil. To view them in any other way, to acknowledge any good in them, would have made it difficult or impossible to carry out the violence deemed necessary to defend the Chosŏn state and the Neo-Confucian civilization it guarded.

Chapter 4: Transitions

Having examined the violence surrounding Alexius Hwang Sayŏng, we will now turn to that of Thomas An Chunggŭn's era. As An was born nearly eighty years after Hwang died, into a very different Korea, it is necessary to discuss the massive transformations that occurred during that time. In particular, we will look at the history of the Korean Catholic Church, the importation of new ideologies into Korea, and the rise of Japanese power on the peninsula. Special attention will be paid to Japan's attempts to justify its colonial project in Korea by portraying it as a mission of civilization undertaken for the good of the Korean people and for peace in the East. This is necessary as in the following chapter I will show how An's assassination of Itō challenged the legitimacy of Japan's colonization of Korea, and how the proponents of the Japanese colonial project successfully transformed this challenge into one more justification for its control of the peninsula.

The suppression of 1801 devastated the Catholic Church in Korea. Many had died or abandoned the faith. The old leaders were gone and the faithful had been scattered. But Catholicism had not been destroyed. New leaders, including the son of Augustine Chŏng, Paul Hasang, rose up and, by 1811, had re-established contact with the diocese of Beijing and requested that new priests be sent to Korea. They set to work rebuilding the church, and it grew large enough, and strong enough, to endure localized suppressions in 1815 and 1827. In response to the continued entreaties of Paul and other Korean Catholics, Korea was detached from the diocese of Beijing and established as a vicariate apostolic in 1831 by Pope Gregory XVI (r. 1831-1846) and entrusted to the French *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris*

(MEP).¹ The MEP had a long and difficult history; established in 1658, suppressed in 1791, re-established in 1805, suppressed again in 1809, and finally restored in 1815. However, thanks to a renewal of Catholic fervor in France after the Napoleonic Wars and an increased interest in missions, the MEP was thriving by the time of Pope Gregory's call and able to provide workers for the Korean field.²

The first MEP missionary to arrive safely in Korea did so in 1836, and was joined shortly thereafter by another priest and a bishop. From 1836 to 1839 the Catholic Church grew from 6,000 to 9,000 believers. As there had been 10,000 in 1801, we can see just how devastating the suppression of that year had been. However, the growth of the religion, the presence of foreign missionaries, and the rise to power of elements within the government who saw Catholicism as a serious threat, led to a major suppression in 1839 that devastated the Catholic community and left it without any priests. Paul Chŏng, unlike his father's nephew Hwang Sayŏng, sought to win tolerance for Catholicism by a peaceful appeal to the Chosŏn state, but failed and was martyred.³ French missionaries again snuck into the country in 1845 under the guidance of the first Korean priest, Andrew Kim Taegŏn (1821-1846). The following year he was discovered scouting out other routes for bringing in French clerics and was executed, leading to the short but sharp suppression of 1846. However, two French missionaries remained in the country, and as the Catholic Church enjoyed relative tolerance under the reign of King Ch'ŏljong (r. 1850-1863), many more followed.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the information for this narrative of Catholic history from 1831 to 1886 is taken from Joseph Ch'ang-mun Kim and John Jae-sun Chung, *Catholic Korea: Yesterday and Today* (Seoul: St. Joseph Publishing Co., 1984). The original edition of this work was published in 1964, and covered the history of Catholicism in Korea to that year. The edition cited here is an abridged version that only covers the history of the Catholic Church in Korea to 1901.

² J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 33-38.

³ For an English translation of Paul Chŏng's appeal, see Chong Paul Ha-sang, "Sang-jaesang-seo," trans. Won Jae-Hur and ed. Jae-Hyun Kim, *KIATS Theological Journal* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 133-47.

By 1866, the Catholic Church in Korea had grown to 23,000 members served by two bishops and ten priests. It even had its own printing press. However, the death of King Ch'öljong in 1863 led to the ascent of King Kojong (r. 1864-1907). As he was a minor, his father, Yi Haŭng (1820-1898), took the title *Taewŏn'gun* (prince regent) and became the true power behind the throne. The Taewŏn'gun wanted to strengthen the monarchy against the aristocracy and was also concerned about reports of Russian ships in Korean waters. Korean Catholics and the Taewŏn'gun entered into talks about the possibility of Catholics arranging an alliance with France to check the Russians. The departure of the Russian ships removed that threat, and subsequently the Taewŏn'gun decided to suppress Catholicism and maintain a policy of active resistance to any Western efforts to “open” Korea.⁴ These policies proved immensely popular and helped him, at least for a time, in his attempt to expand the power of the throne at the expense of the yangban elite.⁵

The 1866 suppression claimed the lives of as many as 8,000 Catholics and would continue intermittently until 1871, with spasms of anti-Catholic violence typically following Western military incursions. It was so thorough that all the French missionaries were either killed or driven away. One priest, Father Ridel (1830-1884), managed to escape thanks to the help and skill of Korean Catholic sailors. Ridel described how, when they were on their way to China, these men saw a French ship and said, “Father, are they Christians? If this ship were to come to our country everyone would run away; she [*sic*] could conquer our country, and force the king to grant freedom of worship.”⁶ Violent suppression led them, like Hwang Sayŏng, to hope that military power would win tolerance. Though Ridel would eventually come back with

⁴ Pang Sanggŭn, “Pyŏngin pakhae [The 1866 Persecution],” *Han'guk Ch'ŏnjugyohoesa*, ed. Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso (Seoul: Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso), 249-57.

⁵ James Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University East Asia Center, 1991), 177-79 and 272-88.

⁶ See, Joseph Ch'ang-mun Kim and John Jae-sun Chung, 269.

the hoped-for warships, Korean resistance, including the repulse of an infantry column, would prove to be more stubborn than the Catholics and the French foresaw, leading in part to the latter's withdrawal from the peninsula. This allowed the Taewŏn'gun to declare victory for his anti-Western policy and led to an increase in the intensity of the anti-Catholic suppression. Despite numerous attempts to return to Korea, no French missionaries would successfully enter the country until 1876.⁷

The Taewŏn'gun's continued efforts to strengthen the throne led to elite resistance, despite the popularity of his anti-Western policies, and in 1874, as his son, Kojong, was no longer a minor, he was forced to give up power. The young monarch faced a difficult situation. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 had led to efforts by the Japanese to form a modern state, which included seeking to revise Japanese-Korean relations in line with Western-style international law, in part through claiming equality with China by using the same characters to describe its emperor as were traditionally only used to designate China's. Korean resistance to such attempts to overturn the Sino-centric diplomatic system led a powerful minority in the Japanese government to call for the invasion of Korea in 1873. Though they lost out, in 1875, a Japanese naval force, ordered to provoke an incident, intruded into Korean waters and was fired on by coastal defense batteries after the flotilla ignored warnings to withdraw. In response, Japanese forces stormed the Korean fort and took it. The Japanese government then formally protested and demanded reparations and a modern treaty. King Kojong was concerned that Japan actually would use force if it was not mollified and believed that a more open and flexible diplomatic posture would suit Korean needs better than the Taewŏn'gun's isolationist policy. In addition, China encouraged Kojong to sign the treaty with Japan and to go on and sign other treaties with the

⁷ Chang Tongha, *Han'guk kŭndaesa wa Ch'ŏnjugyohoe* [Modern Korean history and Catholicism] (Seoul: Kat'ollik Ch'ulp'ansa, 2006), 139-80.

Western powers, as they would each prevent one single country from dominating Korea. Thus, in 1876, Kojong signed a modern treaty with Japan, opening his country to new political, intellectual, economic, and social forces.⁸

The rise of King Kojong to power and the signing of the treaty also meant a change in the treatment of Catholics. In 1876, two French missionaries snuck into Korea, the first in the country since 1866. They were followed by Ridel, now a bishop, in 1877. In 1878, Ridel was arrested by the Korean government. But, unlike his predecessors he was not tortured or killed, but simply kicked out of the country. While there was a change in the treatment of Korean Catholics, it is hard to see it as much of an improvement—those who were arrested with Ridel were allowed to starve to death in prison rather than being executed. However, the discovery of the bishop did not lead to a massive suppression as had happened in the past. Instead, in 1880, two new priests were able to join the Korean mission, Nicolas Liouville (1855-1898) and Gustave Mutel, the future eighth bishop of Korea and the first to live past the age of 50. Liouville was sent to work in Hwanghae province, which, though not a traditional stronghold of the faith, did have some Catholics. He was arrested in 1881 by a magistrate, but then released and tacitly allowed to continue his work, though the Korean Catholics arrested with him suffered the same fate as those taken with Ridel.

In 1881, under the pressure of officials who believed that the comparatively lenient policy the state had adopted towards Catholicism was a mistake, King Kojong issued an edict in which he decried Catholicism as “evil learning” and as having “deluded the world and bewitched the people.” He noted, however, that harsh measures had failed to completely destroy the

⁸ For the opening of Korea see Martina Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys: The Opening of Korea, 1875-1885* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977). For more from Japan’s point of view of these same events, see Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 29-65.

Catholic menace. Thus it was necessary for Korea to return to its Confucian roots. Only by following right customs and the true way could the Catholics be brought back to the Confucian fold. This edict, though critical of Catholicism, thus represented an official retreat from active suppression.⁹

Thanks to a slackening in government pressure against Catholicism it was possible to reorganize the devastated Catholic community. Catholic villages had been decimated and their inhabitants scattered, so missionaries and Korean leaders worked together to gather believers back into such communities and set up a system of fixed and traveling catechists. Thanks to these measures, by 1889 the 8,000 Catholics the missionaries found after their return to Korea in 1876 had increased to over 14,000.¹⁰ This recovery was likely spurred on by the increasing tolerance Catholicism enjoyed in Korea, brought on in part by the treaty it signed with France in 1886. While the French failed to obtain an explicit recognition of religious freedom in Korea, there was an article in the treaty which gave them the right to travel within Korea and “teach,” which they interpreted to include missionary work. Because of the relative strength of France in comparison with Korea, the French understanding won out. Moreover, the treaty accorded extraterritorial rights to French citizens, meaning that they were to be tried by their consul and not the Korean government. When combined with the general willingness of the French diplomats to support missionaries in Korea, this gave them a level of power unprecedented in the history of the mission.¹¹

⁹ *Kojong sillok* [Veritable records of King Kojong], book 22, vol. 18, 20A (yr. 7, 15. 5. *sinsa*).

¹⁰ Chang Tongha, *Kaehanggi Han 'guk sahoe wa Ch'ŏnjugyohoe* [Korean society in the open-port period and Catholicism] (Seoul: Kat'ollik Ch'ulpan'sa, 2005), 26-27.

¹¹ Chang Tongha, *Kaehanggi*, 135-213.

The Political Situation, 1882-1897

While the Catholic Church in Korea recovered, the Chosŏn state struggled to maintain its sovereignty as China and Japan competed for dominance in the peninsula. Japan enjoyed influence among the “progressive party” (*kaehwap’a*), who wanted to radically reform Korea, and had furnished an instructor to train Koreans in the modern ways of war. However, in 1882, soldiers in the old-style units, who had not been paid for several months, rioted and killed the Japanese instructor of the units that were being paid. The Taewŏn’gun and pro-Chinese elements within the Korean government, particularly the Min clan, who possessed great influence as they were the family of King Kojong’s wife, used this incident to push the progressives out of power. In 1884, the progressives struck back in a bloody coup that enjoyed the support of the Japanese consul. They seized control of the state, but only managed to stay in power for several days before being driven out by a large Chinese force.¹² Itō Hirobumi, representing Japan, and Li Hongzhang, representing China, agreed to withdraw their armies, and that if one country should dispatch troops to Korea in the future, it would notify the other, which would have the right to send troops as well.

Despite the parity of this agreement, the pro-Chinese Min still held power, meaning that China enjoyed dominance over the peninsula, which it expanded through such modern means of imperialism as obtaining trading privileges and developing (and controlling) Korea’s nascent telegraph network.¹³ During this time, though officially carrying out Chinese-style self-strengthening reforms, the government accomplished very little, in a large part because of a lack

¹² For a comprehensive treatment of the coup, see Harold F. Cook, *Korea’s 1884 Incident: Its Background and Kim Ok-kyun’s Elusive Dream* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korean Branch, 1982).

¹³ See Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008).

of funds and because of resistance to reform by those who were still convinced of the superiority of Neo-Confucian civilization, as well as those who would lose power or status should they be enacted.

This state of affairs continued until 1894, with the rise of the Tonghak (Eastern Learning) rebellion.¹⁴ This new religion was established by a man named Suun Ch'oe Cheu (1824-1864) in 1860. Ch'oe, in part because he was a *sōŏl*, the son of a yangban father and a widow who had violated the prohibition against remarriage, and therefore was unable to take the exams for government service, found it difficult to find a place in society. Moreover, he was deeply disturbed by the problems faced by rural Koreans and fearful of the inroads made by Western empires into East Asia. These concerns led him to study various religious traditions, including Catholicism. Eventually, he had a profound mystical experience in which he believed he met God, who gave him the task of spreading the true Way and saving the people. He subsequently founded the Tonghak faith, which took its name to show its opposition to Catholicism (also known as Western learning, or *Sōhak*), even though it adopted Catholic monotheism, including the Catholic name for God, *Ch'ōnju* (Lord of Heaven).¹⁵

Suun began to spread his religion, and met with some success, but was arrested in 1863. In 1864 the Chosŏn state declared Tonghak to be illegal. Suun was executed, twelve others in leadership positions were sent into exile, and a dozen or so other believers were turned over to their local magistrates for punishment. Women were left alone in this suppression and the state did not appear interested in pursuing the matter further. However, like Catholicism, Tonghak continued to exist in secret until it would appear again publicly in 1892. In that year, Haewŏl

¹⁴ See George Lawrence Kallander, "Finding the Heavenly Way: Ch'oe Che-u, Tonghak and Religion in Late Chosŏn Korea" (PhD. Diss., Columbia University, 2006); Paul Beirne, *Su-un and His World of Symbols* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

¹⁵ Kallander, 65-73 and 152.

Ch'oe Sihyŏng (1827-1898), the successor to Suun, sent believers with petitions to the governors of the provinces of Ch'ungch'ŏng and Chŏlla requesting that the state reverse its judgment on Suun. This approach failed to achieve the hoped for results and in 1893 a Tonghak delegation was sent by Haewŏl to appeal directly to the king, again, to no avail.¹⁶

Tonghak believers had no friendly foreign power, such as the Catholics had in France, to protect them, and now that they had become publicly active, they were targeted by local government officials and elites for punishment and extortion. Such treatment, along with the wrenching changes integration into the world rice market brought, made for a powder keg of unrest, which was touched off by the actions of a single corrupt official in 1894, leading to a large-scale peasant rebellion headed by the Tonghak leader Chŏn Pongjun (1854-1895). While not all who rose up were Tonghak believers, the religion provided many leaders and the organization necessary to defeat the government troops sent against them. Eventually, Chŏn managed to negotiate terms with the Chosŏn state and disbanded his army. However, the leader of the government army asked that the King request troops from China, which he did. China complied and sent forces, as did Japan, in accordance with the 1884 agreement.¹⁷

The Tonghak then rose up again, but the rebellion was eventually put down by Japanese and Chosŏn troops. However, Chinese and Japanese soldiers remained in Korea. China proposed that both countries withdraw their forces, as that would allow it to maintain its dominant position in the peninsula. Japan, hoping to displace China, suggested that the two countries work together to reform Korea, believing that the Chinese government would reject those terms, providing a pretext for Japan to act. China did as Japan expected, and relations between the two countries broke down, leading to the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). While

¹⁶ Kallander, 71 and 179-80.

¹⁷ Kallander, 180-84.

China was at first the heavy favorite, Japan won victory after victory, on land and sea, crushing the Chinese army and its northern fleet. So great was China's defeat that the Treaty of Shimonoseki, ending the war, awarded Japan a large indemnity. Moreover, China was to cede control over the Liaodong peninsula, an area of great strategic importance, just northwest of Korea. However, Russia, along with France and Germany, demanded, in the so-called "Triple Intervention," that Japan refrain from taking it. Realizing it could not oppose these three countries, Japan relented, and contented itself with seizing Taiwan instead. Russia would lease the peninsula itself a few years later, causing much resentment in Japan.¹⁸

Victory in the war gave Japan brief dominance in Korea and brought the progressives back into power. This led to a serious but short-lived effort at modernizing Korea known as the *Kabo* reforms (1895-1896). Heavy handed Japanese tactics to overcome conservative opposition, most infamously the killing of Queen Min (1851-1895) by a gang of Japanese and Korean toughs under the leadership of the Japanese consul, led King Kojong, with the aid of Protestant missionaries, to flee to the Russian consulate in 1896. This severely damaged Japanese influence in Korea and its reputation, making Russia the dominant power on the peninsula. However, blunders by the Russian consul, coupled with the Russian government's desire to avoid overextending itself in Korea, allowed King Kojong to leave the consulate in 1897. Korea would then enjoy a short period of independence with no one power able to dominate it completely.¹⁹

¹⁸ S.C.M. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Duus, 103-33.

New Intellectual Currents

The opening of the country brought Koreans into contact with numerous new ideologies. One of the most powerful was nationalism, and the international system of law governing the relationship between different nation-states and other polities that came with it. The goal of nationalism was to create a nation-state in which the people of a country would closely identify with their nation. The nation was to rule itself, and so domination by foreigners, those not of one's nation, was anathema. In the case of Korea, this would mean departure from the hallowed tradition of honoring China as a suzerain and elder brother state.²⁰

While nationalists often claim that the nation is a primordial entity that has always existed, in fact, it is often something that must be created, at least in its modern sense. For example, French nationalists had to convince peasants within the territory their state had sovereignty over that they were French, should speak the Parisian dialect rather than that of their region, and give their ultimate loyalty to the nation-state rather than their families, their communities, or the Catholic Church.²¹ Similarly, the Meiji reformers had to unite what were essentially the over two hundred separate states of the Tokugawa order, in which almost mutually unintelligible dialects were spoken, into a single nation-state.²² To do so, they created new traditions about the emperor in order to unify the people.²³ Korea would have to undertake a similar task, for, as we have seen in the previous chapters, while there were strong concepts of loyalty to the sovereign and the state, there was not much consciousness of a Korean nation. For

²⁰ Schmid, 56-101.

²¹ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

²² Hiraku Shimoda, "Tongues-Tied: The Making of a 'National Language' and the Discovery of Dialects in Meiji Japan," *The American Historical Review* 115 (June 2010): 714-31.

²³ Fujitani Takashi, *Splendid Monarchy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

example, Anthony Smith's definition of nation, discussed in the introduction, describes how in a modern-style nation, all people share the same laws and customs. However, as we have seen, in Korea, these varied widely in accordance with whether one was yangban or commoner, man or woman. Similarly the elite wrote in one language, Classical Chinese, while those commoners who could write largely did so in vernacular *han 'gul*.

Key to the construction of this sense of nation and the successful development of a nation-state was the existence of a strong centralized government. Institutions, most notably public schools (compulsory whenever possible), the army, and the press, helped to spread the idea that there was a national community to which one owed primary allegiance, as well as what the proper behavior of that community's members was.²⁴ This is why in countries with strong and independent non-governmental organizations, such as the Catholic Church in France, there were struggles between private and public schools, as both sought to make their own sponsors the object of ultimate allegiance among their students. The success of these measures created a population that was expected, and to a significant degree willing, to support and participate in the activities of the state which held sovereignty over them. This in turn allowed centralized nation-states to extract resources from their populations and mobilize them to an extent previously unheard of in the pursuit of its goals, enabling such governments to concentrate and project power not only within their own borders, but across those of their weaker neighbors, even half-way across the world.²⁵

Nationalism thus made the massive empires of the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries possible. In fact, because nation-states, through the Western system of international law, were

²⁴ Though the press could at the same time be critical of the efforts of the nation-state, it was often under heavy government control. Moreover, the fact that a national press existed help establish a sense of national identity within its readership. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

²⁵ Norman Rich, *Age of Nationalism and Reform* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1977), 22-76.

understood to be the only true sovereign actors in the world, it was legal for them to impose their rule over territories whose polities did not, in their view, measure up to its standards. In other words, imperialism was perfectly within the law, and empires legitimized their acquisitions in legal terms. Nation-states justified colonialism for a variety of other reasons as well. Security interests, that is, claims of self-defense were of great importance, as holding strategic regions, such as Gibraltar or the Panama Canal, was believed necessary in order to protect one's nation-state. Commerce was also connected to imperialism as nation-states sought, through projecting their power into other, less-developed, countries, to obtain trading privileges and access to important raw materials. In fact, strategic and commercial interests were often connected: trade needed the security brought by a strong military, and through enriching the country, made that military possible. Success at empire building displayed a nation-state's strength and so could be justified as necessary for its well-being and protection. To be perceived as weak was to invite conflict, war, and defeat by other powers.

The idea of the nation-state was closely connected to the concept of "civilization and enlightenment" thought (J. *bunmei kaika*, K. *munmyōng kaehwa*/文明開化), a term coined by the Japanese intellectual, educator, and reformer Fukuzawa Yukichi. This body of thought, neither the product of a single individual or school, is defined by the notion of progress—that such things as knowledge, the arts, culture, and government advance through hierarchical stages, from inferior to superior. Thus, the nation-state stood above, and was better than, the pre-modern state, and far beyond the tribal confederacy. The progress of knowledge was closely associated with the great advances made in science and technology that made it possible for the members of more advanced societies to control their environment, promising greater prosperity, comfort, and

happiness in the future.²⁶ Industrial output, average lifespan, and rates of disease could all be measured empirically and compared, providing scientific proof of which countries were more advanced than others. Similarly, one of the highest marks of civilization was to bring the fruits of modernity to a country that had not been able to progress on its own, enabling nation-states to justify colonization as either an act of altruism or enlightened self-interest.²⁷

Undertaking a mission of civilization frequently necessitated the projection of power, often in the form of violence, in order to acquire colonies and maintain them against rebellions by recalcitrant natives. This in turn required that a government have at its disposal an army equipped with advanced military hardware that could operate in distant lands, and the modern economy necessary to support it. Taking and holding colonies proved that a state had mastered civilized knowledge and technology and was therefore enlightened. Victory in a full-fledged war with another state could do the same. Thus, Japan's defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War, made possible by its mastery of modern military tactics, technology, and logistics, proved it to be the more civilized of the two. Civilization and enlightenment was thus closely connected to power, and therefore, to violence as well.²⁸

There were questions over what had enabled Western countries to become civilized first. Some argued that it was race, that white people were inherently superior and that enabled them to develop the high levels of civilization that they did. Others contended that all people were essentially equal and that differences in levels of civilization were essentially a matter of historical circumstances, and that through contact with enlightened knowledge, any who were

²⁶ Albert M. Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment: The Early Thought of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 33-41.

²⁷ Dudden, 8-9; Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 199-270.

²⁸ Adas, 185-87

willing could become civilized.²⁹ The latter view was popular among the Japanese while the second view, prevalent among many in the West, placed the Japanese in a situation where their status as a civilized people was always ready to be called in to question. Sometimes these two visions could even be joined, so that there was a fear that Asians could successfully adopt Western science and technology while still remaining a fearsome other, a “yellow peril” that could destroy true civilization.³⁰

There also existed a racial double standard. For instance, when Japanese troops did not act in accordance with the civilized standards of war, such as in the massacre of Chinese at Lüshun during the Sino-Japanese War, critics could argue that the Japanese were not truly civilized.³¹ On the other hand, when white troops violated those same standards, they were excused on the grounds that the uncivilized tactics of their barbarous and racially inferior enemy demanded that they do so, such as when American soldiers massacred Filipinos when putting down their “insurrection.”³² Thus, many Japanese, including the Japanese government, were very sensitive about the image they presented to the rest of the world, and hoped to portray their country as enlightened, and though strong enough to defend itself and its interests, as supporting, rather than threatening, the international order and the hegemony of “universal” (that is to say, Western) civilization.

Issues of race figured prominently in Social Darwinism, the application of Charles Darwin’s and Herbert Spencer’s ideas about natural selection to human society. While civilization and enlightenment promised a glorious future of infinite progress, Social Darwinism saw the world as an arena where vicious struggles for survival between various nations and races

²⁹ Adas, 271-342

³⁰ Adas, 357-65

³¹ Paine, 211-14.

³² See Paul Alexander Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 87-158.

took place. Though different, the two ideologies were also complementary. Civilization and enlightenment showed what a people could achieve should they prove worthy, while Social Darwinism illustrated what would happen to them should they fail. The dominant view in Asia of Social-Darwinism was that the “strong eat and the weak are meat,” (*yakyuk kangsik*/弱肉强食) which led to a transformation in ethics amongst those who subscribed strictly to this ideology. Morality was no longer religiously built on the foundation of moral authority taken to be the ultimate ground of reality, as it had been in Neo-Confucianism and Catholicism, but was based rather on gaining the power necessary for a specific human community to survive. Morality did not demand that the weak be protected. In fact, it was their fault, their inability to adapt and become strong that led them to fall victim to stronger powers, which could be not be morally blamed for their aggression, as they were simply following the scientific laws of the universe.³³

One reaction to Social-Darwinist visions of a world locked in eternal and bloody struggle was Pan-Asianism. According to this ideology, the people of Asia needed to unite to defend themselves against Western imperialism. Japan was often assigned a special place as a leader and educator of other Asian countries, as it was the first one to successfully establish a modern nation-state. Chinese and Koreans who ascribed to Pan-Asianism hoped that Japan would act as a benevolent leader of Asia and help them modernize without infringing on their sovereignty. In practice, Japan would often use Pan-Asianist ideals to justify taking increasing control over its neighbors in a way little different from that of the white empires. However, such was the strength of these ideals that many Koreans welcomed Japanese influence in their country as a

³³ For a study of Social Darwinism in Korea, see Vladimir Tikhonov, *Social Darwinism and Nationalism in Korea: The Beginnings (1880s-1910s), Survival as an Ideology of Korean Modernity* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010).

way of staving off Western imperialism, which they were sure would represent the heavier yoke, and bringing reform that would enable Korea to one day enjoy true independence.³⁴

Korean reacted to and incorporated these ideas in varying ways. From 1897 to 1904, the Chosŏn state sought to actively reform. For example, in order to break away from the Sino-centric diplomatic order and assert its own independence, King Kojong was transformed into the Kwangmu Emperor, officially making him the equal of his Chinese and Japanese counterparts. Similarly, the old gate which had been used to welcome Chinese embassies was torn down and an “Independence Gate” erected in its place. Such changes were not simply cosmetic. They contained within them deep shifts in how more and more Koreans saw their country—no longer as a vassal of China, but as an independent nation-state.³⁵ Similarly, there were major reforms in the government, and many Kabo-era projects begun when Korea was briefly under Japanese dominance, such as the cadastral survey and the household registry, were continued. The state also proved its willingness to actively support industry and the economic development of the country, a major change from previous Confucian-driven neglect.³⁶

There were, however, numerous factors working against the Chosŏn government’s transformation into a modern nation-state. As James Palais has shown, the Chosŏn dynasty was able to endure for so long (over 500 years) because it effectively worked out a balance of power between the throne and the yangban elite that served both their needs.³⁷ The stability this brought, however, made it impossible for either the monarch or officialdom to gain the strength

³⁴ For a study of Pan-Asianism in Japan see Dongju Ham “Meiji Discourse on Asia: A Study of Asianism” (PhD. diss., University of Chicago, 1993). For the intellectual difficulties facing Korean Pan-Asianists, see Schmid, 87-101; Ch’oe Kiyŏng, *Han’guk kŭndae kyemong sasang yŏn’gu* [A study of modern Korean enlightenment thought] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 2003), 104-13.

³⁵ See Michael Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 23-32

³⁶ Kyung Moon Hwang, “Government Growth in the Taehan Empire Era: Origins of the Modern Korean State,” in *Reform and Modernity in the Korean Empire*, eds. Kim Dong-no, John B. Duncan, and Kim Do-hyung (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006), 171-74.

³⁷ Palais, 4-19.

necessary to establish the centralized institutions needed to transform Korea into a modern nation-state capable of defending itself from foreign empires, overcome opposition to reforms, or to even agree over what reforms needed to be taken. Moreover, the weakness of the state itself meant that it was perpetually cash-starved and there proved to be insufficient time for its limited program of reforms to bear fruit before Korea's independence fell victim to great power politics.

The issues new ideologies also raised about Korean identity made reform difficult, in particular because of differences of opinion regarding the relationship between the Chosŏn dynasty and the Korean nation-state. Those who saw the two as inseparable, such as the royal family and those officials whose worldview and position were dependent upon them, would not enact reforms that might harm the interests of the dynasty. While self-interest could certainly play a role in this, as we have seen, the amoral standards of behavior and iconoclasm that could be drawn from Social Darwinism and civilization and enlightenment thought of some nationalists could be profoundly disturbing to Confucian moralists who could not imagine a Korea without a Confucian king or any change not justified by appeals to the Classics.³⁸

This question of the nation-state and its connection to the dynasty led to an ambiguous relationship between the state and non-governmental actors in the growing public sphere. For example, in 1896, there arose an organization known as the Independence Club. Dominated by pro-American proponents of civilization and enlightenment thought, it published its own Korean-vernacular and English-language newspaper and sponsored public speeches, meetings, and debates. Moreover, it was particularly effective at mobilizing public support, and so played an important role in the return of the King from the Russian consulate, his crowning as emperor, the establishment of the Independence Gate, and in resistance to the spread of Russian influence.

³⁸ The reformer Yu Kiljun was so concerned about Confucian reactions to Social-Darwinism that in his works he tried to show that it accorded with Confucian morality. See Tikhonov, 24-30.

However, when the club was no longer deemed useful by the state and had, by working for the establishment of a legislature that would have real power and be filled with many members of the club, become a threat to the old order, it was violently suppressed. Establishing a legislature and working with the club would have helped to create the linkage between the people and the government necessary for building an independent nation-state. However, it would also have weakened the power of the monarch and the officials dependent on him for their power. It was therefore disbanded, illustrating the limits of reform during the Kwangmu era.³⁹

Despite the crushing of the Independence Club, many Koreans were still willing to work to transform their country into an enlightened nation-state in the growing public sphere as private citizens. In part, this was because civilization and enlightenment thought closely connected the progress of individuals with the advancement of their nations, encouraging non-officials to take an active role in national affairs.⁴⁰ Private efforts would accelerate after the rise of Japanese power in Korea following its victory over Russia in 1905. However, Korean activists disagreed over what should be done. Some believed that Japan would benevolently help Korea to modernize and become a truly independent state and so supported its increasing influence on the peninsula. The leadership of the *Ilchinhoe*, a large and powerful populist organization, was particularly welcoming, and even petitioned Japan to annex Korea.⁴¹ In contrast, other Koreans, fearful of Japan's growing power on the peninsula, formed a movement to repay the debt Korea owed that country and established schools which they hoped would produce enlightened leaders for the nation. But even those who wanted to resist Japan disagreed over the best way to do so.

³⁹ See Vipin Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance and Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies University of California, 1988).

⁴⁰ Schmid, 24.

⁴¹ Yumi Moon, "The Populist Contest: The Ilchinhoe Movement and the Japanese Colonization of Korea, 1896-1910," (PhD. diss., Harvard: 2005), 280-87.

Some accepted only non-violent means as legitimate and practical, while others took up arms and actively resisted the Japanese colonial state.

In trying to determine the course their nation should take, Koreans found themselves facing conflicting demands from the powerful new ideologies they were encountering. For example, nationalists frequently criticized Korea for its failure to live up to enlightened standards in order to spur their fellow Koreans to take action. And yet, these same criticisms could be utilized to justify Japan's increasing control of Korea. Thus, Koreans were forced to make a choice: accept civilization as paramount and actively cooperate with Japan, or place greater emphasis on independence and resist, either violently or peacefully.⁴² Further complicating matters was the question of whether Japan could be trusted. Would racial affinity lead Japan to altruistically help Korea, or was Pan-Asianism simply propaganda meant to hide a desire for empire no different from that of the white powers? How should Koreans view the fate of nations that had already fallen to imperial ambitions? Should empire be condemned as immoral, or was it simply the working out of the natural law of survival of the fittest?⁴³

The Rise of Japan and the Fall of an Independent Korea

From the perspective of Koreans during this time and the subsequent colonial period, Japan must have appeared to have been extremely powerful. However, internationally speaking, though Japan was considered one of the powers, it was the weakest among them. Peter Duus has described its expansion as "paranoid," as much of it was driven by concerns over its own

⁴² For further discussion of this dilemma, see Schmid, 101-38.

⁴³ For an example of this struggle and how the Protestant proponents of nationalism and civilization and enlightenment thought sought to deal with it, see Kenneth M. Wells' treatment of Yun Ch'ihō (1864-1945) in *New God, New Nation: Protestants and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 48-70. For more on Yun Ch'ihō's Social-Darwinist views, see Tikhonov, 35-52

security, seizing territory not so much necessarily for its own sake, but out of a fear that a Western empire might obtain it.⁴⁴ This is what in fact led to the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). Fearful that Russian expansion into Manchuria would spill into Korea and threaten Japan itself, and frustrated over the seeming inability of Russia to take its concerns seriously, the island empire launched devastating surprise naval attacks against its enemy at Lüshun and Inch'ŏn.⁴⁵

In attacking Russia, Japan was taking a desperate gamble. The Russian empire was wealthier and had a larger army and navy than Japan did. Japan also had another disadvantage in that it was a “yellow,” “pagan” empire fighting a “white,” “Christian” one. Considering Western fears over the “yellow peril,” how could it gain the international support necessary to win the war? The defenders of Japan and its interests, however, proved equal to this challenge. The war was long in coming, giving time for Kan'ichi Asakawa to write *The Russo-Japanese Conflict* and have it published in the fall of 1904, before hostilities began. In this book, Asakawa portrayed Japan as a civilized nation struggling to defend itself, Korean independence, the open door in Manchuria, and peace in the East, against the autocratic Russian Empire, which fought only for its own selfish interests.⁴⁶ Pro-Japanese westerners also did their part, arguing that the Japanese were truly “white” while the Russians were representatives of the yellow “tartars” who had repeatedly threatened Western civilization. Similarly, they contended that Japan, because of its advanced civilization, was much closer to true Christianity than the Russians. Such an argument transformed Christianity from a religion defined as a doctrine which demanded intellectual assent to certain truths (such as God being a Trinity of three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), which the Russians were unquestionably believers in, to one in which Christianity,

⁴⁴ Duus, 1-25.

⁴⁵ David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, “The Immediate Origins of the War,” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, eds. John W. Steinberg, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1:23-43.

⁴⁶ Kato Yoko, “Japan Justifies War by the ‘Open Door,’” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, eds. John W. Steinberg, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1:465-83.

or rather, its morality or spirit, was a measure identical with the standards of enlightenment and progress. Being a Christian did not mean believing certain things about God, but in having achieved a certain level of civilization.⁴⁷ And on these grounds, the Japanese, with their constitutional government, which made them look more like the white, Christian West, could claim superiority over the autocratic Russians.

During the conflict, the Japanese state took great pains to show that it adhered to civilized standards of warfare, such as the international norms governing the treatment of prisoners of war. In fact, prisoners were often put on display and even became the subjects of picture postcards to publicize just how civilized Japan was.⁴⁸ Such efforts continued during the peace talks in Portsmouth that ended the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. The meetings were moderated by American President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) and so the Japanese government dispatched Baron Kentaro Kaneko (1853-1942), a former Harvard classmate of the president's, to try and win his support. Roosevelt was provided with books on Japan, and deliberate efforts were made to cultivate his already pro-Japanese attitude.⁴⁹ The Japanese state did not limit itself to such gentle means—it also took steps to prevent foreign reporters from coming too close to the battlefield, in an effort to prevent them reporting embarrassing incidents.⁵⁰

These efforts at cultivating a positive public image of Japan as a civilized nation met with success and contributed materially to Japan's war efforts and its achievements at the peace talks.

⁴⁷ Joseph M. Henning, "White Mongols?: The War and American Discourse on Race and Religion," in *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War*, ed. Rotem Kowner (New York: Routledge, 2007), 153-60.

⁴⁸ Naoko Shimazu, *Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory and the Russo-Japanese War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 157-96.

⁴⁹ Eugene P. Trani, *The Treaty of Portsmouth* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1969), 18-19, 30-34, and 90-95; Norman E. Saul, "The Kittery Peace," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, eds. John W. Steinberg, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1:485-507; Tosh Minohara, "'The Rat Minister': Komura Juntarō and US-Japan Relations," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, eds. David Wolff, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2:551-69.

⁵⁰ David Jones, "Military Observers, Eurocentrism and World War Zero," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, eds. David Wolff, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2:151-53.

For example, both Japan and Russia competed for international loans in order to fund the war. The ability of Japan to raise the necessary loans was dependent on whether or not people believed that it would win. Japan had to show that it was more civilized, and thus more powerful, than Russia if it hoped to obtain the needed money. However, at first, even Japan's ally, Britain, refused to loan the necessary funds. But then, a chance encounter between a Japanese official and an American banker who looked upon Japan as an enlightened country and was stridently anti-Russian, in a large part because of government support of anti-Jewish pogroms, arranged massive loans that proved indispensable to Japan's war effort.⁵¹ Likewise, while Roosevelt had strategic reasons for favoring Japan, efforts made to cultivate his generally pro-Japanese attitudes helped to cement this support and likely played a role in the favorable attitude he showed the Japanese peace delegation.⁵² Japan's reputation as a civilized nation was thus central to its victory in the Russo-Japanese war.

This victory in turn allowed Japan to force Korea into accepting a protectorate treaty in 1905, with Itō Hirobumi as its first resident-general. Itō was one of the most important political figures in Meiji Japan. Among his many accomplishments, he framed the Japanese constitution of 1889, played an important role in the formation of the Japanese banking system, and served as Prime Minister multiple times, including during Japan's decisive victory in the Sino-Japanese War. Though publicly criticized as a womanizer, he was also praised as a patriot and a reformer, as well as for his refusal to use his position to enrich himself through dishonest means.⁵³

⁵¹ Edward S. Miller, "Japan's Other Victory: Overseas Financing of the Russo-Japanese War," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, eds. John W. Steinberg, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1:465-83.

⁵² Kim, Ki-jung, "The War and US-Korean Relations," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, eds. David Wolff, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2:467-89.

⁵³ Yoshitake Oka, *Five Political Leaders of Modern Japan: Itō Hirobumi, Ōkuma Shigenobu, Hara Takashi, Inukai Tsuyoshi, and Saionji Kimmochi*, trans. Andrew Fraser and Patricia Murray (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1986), 3-43.

As resident-general, Itō, unlike many of his cohorts in the Japanese government, did not take a racist view towards Koreans, instead believing that with proper support, guidance, and a bit of cajoling, they could reform themselves as the Japanese did. This would help Korea, strengthen Japanese security, and contribute to peace in the East. He initially thought that Japan's interests did not demand the total destruction of Korean independence and opposed annexation. At the same time, Itō was still an imperialist and put Japanese interests before those of Koreans, and as time went on, took more and more power in Korea, essentially establishing a puppet government there that looked independent, allowing him to simultaneously control the Chosŏn state while claiming that Japan respected its independence and was simply acting to help its wayward neighbor. This led to conflicts with those Koreans who saw reform as something that should immediately strengthen independence and feared that Japan was using it as a pretext to destroy Korean autonomy. Thus, as the Japanese colonial government tightened its grip in Korea in order to enact reform, Korean opposition increased, leading to increasingly forceful methods by the Japanese, and subsequently to even more resistance by the Koreans.⁵⁴

Matters came to a head in 1907 when the Korean Emperor secretly dispatched representatives to the peace talks being held at The Hague. As Korea had been forced to sign away its right to diplomatic representation in the 1905 protectorate treaty, Itō used this act as a pretext to force the abdication of Kojong, leading to the ascension of his much more pliable son Sunjong (1874-1926). He in turn signed another treaty giving Japan even more power. In addition, Itō had what remained of the Korean army disbanded. This turned out to be a mistake, as the now unemployed soldiers took their arms and fled, forming guerilla armies (*ũibyŏng*) to violently oppose Japan. Their continuous attacks led Japan to undertake a brutal pacification campaign, which was reported on and criticized by the journalist F.A. McKenzie (1869-1931) in

⁵⁴ Duus, 201-41.

his book, *The Tragedy of Korea*.⁵⁵ Thousands, mostly Koreans, including soldiers and civilians, perished in the fighting.⁵⁶

Korea was supposed to serve as a showcase for Japan's ability to civilize unenlightened peoples and promote regional peace, proving its own status as a civilized nation-state. Instead, its efforts to bring order and reform had sparked armed opposition, threatening to harm its international image. Making matters worse was that victory in the Russo-Japanese War had brought new security concerns: fears over a Russian war of revenge and the need to administer and defend an expanding empire which now included southern Manchuria and the Liaotung peninsula. These new commitments strained the Japanese economy, already burdened by an expensive war which, unlike that fought the previous decade with China, did not end with a massive indemnity. Furthermore, because Japan had promised to follow an open door policy in Manchuria in order to obtain international support in its struggle with Russia, its turn to monopolistic practices to recover the expenses of defending and administering its new territory led to international criticism, particularly from the United States, further injuring Japan's international reputation and even leading to talk of war.⁵⁷

Itō, realizing the threat to Japan's international reputation that problems in Korea posed, sought to put forward the best image of the Japanese colonial project on the peninsula he could. He invited George Trumbull Ladd (1842-1921), a former Yale professor of philosophy and psychology from a highly respected family, to tour Korea with him, leading the scholar to write, *In Korea with Marquis Itō*, a glowing account of Japan's success in bringing true civilization to the peninsula that placed the blame for all its problems squarely on the Koreans and meddling

⁵⁵ F.A. McKenzie, *The Tragedy of Korea* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908).

⁵⁶ Robinson, 34-35.

⁵⁷ Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria* (Cambridge: Harvard University East Asian Center, 2001), 60-148.

Westerners.⁵⁸ Similarly, the Residency-General published annual reports, complete with charts and carefully collected statistics, intended to empirically show the success of its colonial project. For example, these reports depicted the enlightened reform of Korean judicial practices, which morally transformed Korean criminals, proving Japan's status as an enlightened nation capable of civilizing its backwards neighbor.⁵⁹

Despite his skillful use of propaganda, Itō realized that the protectorate policy was a failure. His policy had not won the necessary support for Japan from Koreans and the reforms it sponsored were proving, in a large part due to violent Korean opposition, to be just as expensive as direct rule without the advantages. He resigned his position in 1909 and was succeeded by Sone Arasuke (1849-1910). In July of that year, in a secret government meeting, high Japanese officials decided that it was necessary to annex Korea at an opportune time. Itō made no objection.⁶⁰ At the same time, the situation in Manchuria deteriorated as calls for Japan to honor its promises of the open-door increased. Realizing the need to settle differences with Russia in order to work together to maintain their respective spheres of influence in Manchuria from other countries, Itō was sent on a trip to Manchuria in the Fall to discuss matters with the Russians, and with the Chinese government, which officially held sovereignty over Manchuria.⁶¹ On the morning of October 26, his train pulled into the railroad station at Harbin, Manchuria, where he met the Russian financial minister. He disembarked to greet a crowd that had come to welcome him. Suddenly, at 9:30 am, Thomas An Chunggūn stepped out and shot him multiple times. Itō died twenty minutes later.⁶²

⁵⁸ George Trumbull Ladd, *In Korea With Marquis Ito* (1908; repr., Seoul: Han'guk Kidokkyosa Yŏn'guhoe, 1985).

⁵⁹ Dudden, 113.

⁶⁰ Duus, 235-41.

⁶¹ Sin Unyong, *An Chunggūn kwa Han'guk kūndaesa* [An Chunggūn and modern Korean history] (Seoul: Ch'aeryun, 2009), 431-63.

⁶² Three other men, Itō's private secretary, Mori Taijiro; the Harbin consul general, Kawakami Toshihiko; and the director of the South Manchuria Railway, Tanaka Seitaro, were wounded in the attack but survived.

Chapter 5: World Reactions to the Assassination of Itō Hirobumi

An Chunggūn hoped that by assassinating Itō Hirobumi he could either convince Japan to change its policy in Korea or obtain Western intervention.¹ Therefore, in this chapter we will examine newspaper reports and editorials to see why he failed not only to obtain what he hoped for, but even serious consideration for his cause. We will begin with Western English-language coverage of the incident from newspapers in Canada, Great Britain, and the United States. Because of their power, and the fact that they were recognized as “civilized” countries, they set the terms for the discussion and judgment of the assassination. As we shall see, while they condemned An’s use of violence as unjustified, and did not seriously consider supporting the cause of Korean independence, they did critique Japanese foreign policy, its colonial project in Korea, and its own progress towards civilization. We shall therefore then turn to the *Seoul Press*, an English-language newspaper that was essentially an organ of the Japanese Residency-General, to examine how the proponents of Japan’s civilizing mission in Korea answered these challenges. We will find that in doing so, they rhetorically utilized the assassination to strengthen the legitimacy of the colonial project. Subsequently, we will survey a Japanese-language newspaper, published in Korea, the *Keijō shimpō* (The Seoul Gazette), and see that, while members of the Japanese public viewed the assassination differently from the Residency-General, they still condemned it in no uncertain terms, showing that An also failed to win their sympathy.

¹ We will examine in greater detail what An hoped to accomplish by assassinating Itō in chapter seven.

An Chunggŭn left no manifesto or document explaining why he had killed Itō, save for a Classical Chinese poem.² It was therefore left to his Korean supporters to make his case. Through a survey of Korean reactions to the assassination, appearing in both Korean and English-language newspapers, we will see that while a significant portion of Koreans supported An, and saw his use of violence as justified, they were unable to argue persuasively on his behalf in the English-language public sphere. There were therefore no significant obstacles to the portrayal of the assassination by the proponents of the Japanese colonial project into one more reason why Korea should be the object of its civilizing mission. The success of these efforts, and the failure of Korean defenses of An, illustrate the massive differences in how violence was understood by the colonizing powers and the colonized, illustrating the dominance of the civilizing imperial nation-state as determining what was, and what was not, legitimate violence.

Western English-language Newspapers

Western English-language newspapers accurately reported the basic facts about the incident—that a Korean had shot and killed Itō Hirobumi and wounded three other Japanese at the Harbin railway station.³ Itō's death was considered so important that it was reported upon

² See An Chunggŭn's autobiography (*An Ŭngch'il yŏksa/The history of An Ŭngch'il*) in Yun Pyong Suk [Yun Pyŏngsŏk], ed. and trans., *An Chunggŭn chŏn'gi chŏnjip* [The collected autobiographies of An Chunggŭn] (Seoul: Kukka Pohunch'ŏ, 1999), 171-72. There are many editions of An's autobiography and *A Treatise on Peace in the East* (*Tongyang p'yŏnghwaron*), which is also included in Yun's collection. Yun's edition is the most comprehensive, as it contains not only the Classical Chinese versions, as well as Korean translations, of those texts, but also other, later biographies of An. When referring to either An's autobiography or the *Treatise* I will cite Yun's edition, giving his name, the name of the document cited in Korean, and the page number for the Korean translations. All quotes from these two documents are from the Classical Chinese and were translated by Jieun Han and me.

³ For example, see "Prince Ito assassinated," *New York Times*, October 26, 1909; "The murder of Prince Ito," *Times* (London), October 27, 1909. Early on there were mistaken reports that Itō had been stabbed to death at a hotel, but they were quickly corrected. See "Ito falls to assassin," *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, October 26, 1909.

immediately, the first articles appearing in papers on October 26 or 27.⁴ The shooting itself was often front page news and in some cases considerable space was given over to the descriptions of Japanese mourning and Itō's funeral.⁵ Similarly, expressions of condolence by various governments, including representatives of the United States, Russia, and even Korea, were also printed.⁶ Except for some Korean and Chinese voices, to be examined below, the newspapers presented an image of universal grief over the death of Itō and condemned the assassination in no uncertain terms. There was no question that An was wrong to kill Itō and the question of Western intervention on behalf of Korea was not seriously entertained, or even registered in most articles.⁷ This level of unanimity is remarkable—the assassination of William McKinley less than a decade before found some public support among Americans.⁸

We can begin to see why the assassination of Itō was so universally condemned by examining how he and An were portrayed in newspapers in the wake of the incident. Much of the coverage included retrospectives of Itō that focused on his political career. Such articles were typically positive in tone, treating him as an elder statesman who had died tragically. For example, the *New York Times* praised Itō, stating that “the great expansion and progress [of Japan] shown in every line of activity during the last two decades has been accomplished largely through his efforts.” It continued on to say that “The achievement above all others with which Prince Ito's name has been associated in the minds of Occidentals was the framing of the

⁴ Because of the time difference between Japan and the United States it was possible for Western newspapers to publish the news on the same calendar day as the assassination.

⁵ See “Japs still morn dead statesman,” *Washington Times*, November 5, 1909; “Ito's funeral an affair of pomp,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, November 5, 1909.

⁶ For an example, see “Europe mourns Ito,” *New York Tribune*, October 27, 1909.

⁷ For example, one article reported that “A decided feeling of unrest pervades Corea [*sic*], and it is feared that the assassination will be followed up by an active movement looking to a general uprising, in the hope of intercession by the United States or some other power to prevent the further absorption of Corea's sovereignty by Japan.” Such reports were rare and I could not find any that even seriously considered the possibility of any Western intervention in Korea. See “Corea is seething,” *New York Tribune*, October 29, 1909.

⁸ Eric Rauchway, *Murdering McKinley* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 170-75.

imperial constitution by virtue of which Japan took her place for the first time in the rank of modern civilized states.”⁹ Similarly, an article that appeared in the *San Francisco Call*, described Itō as the “the man who introduced western civilization into Japan.” It went on to note that Itō, “inspired by patriotism and by the desire to learn the secrets of occidental supremacy,” had traveled to England, a “trip which was to prove so beneficial to his native land.”¹⁰

Itō was also given credit for seeking to spread the blessings of civilization to Korea. For example, the *Toronto Globe* interviewed W.T.R. Preston, a former Canadian Trade Minister to Japan. Preston recalled that Itō said “that Japan had to bring about a better state of government [in Korea] in the interest of the peace of the world, and that as soon as that was accomplished Japan was ready to withdraw any protectorate or interference with the government of the country.” After a description of Itō’s vision of a reformed Korea under the future leadership of the Korean crown prince, whose education he was directing, the article went on to state that Itō was favorable to the “utmost clemency being shown to the insurgents, and his policy was that only those caught engaged in actual murder should be punished with the extreme penalty of the law, and that their associates should only be subjected to moderate terms of imprisonment. Many Koreans owe their lives to Ito’s personal intervention.” Thus, the enlightened rule and restrained use of violence of Itō, a man who desired most to die “shedding his blood in the cause of peace” and was “always willing to lay down his life for the sake of the progress and prosperity of Koreans,” compared favorably to the Koreans, who, by killing him, had killed their “best friend.”¹¹

This positive portrayal of Itō’s career was echoed by the statements of government officials, further de-legitimizing the assassination. For example, the *Washington Post* quoted

⁹ “Prince Ito assassinated,” *New York Times*, October 26, 1909.

¹⁰ “Prince Ito’s death,” *San Francisco Call*, November 13, 1909.

¹¹ “Emperor forbids change,” *Globe* (Toronto), October 28, 1909.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge (1862-1927) of Indiana praising Itō for helping to make Japan into a modern nation with a constitution and for revolutionizing “the customs and habits of thought of ages into modern ways and scientific ideas.”¹² Similarly, President William Howard Taft’s (1857-1930) remembrances of his warm acquaintance with Itō and message of condolence to the emperor were also reported.¹³ Russian expressions of sympathy, which praised Itō for playing an important role in the “peaceful development of the far east [*sic*]” were also published.¹⁴

The portrayal of An Chunggūn was the polar opposite of Itō’s. Almost nothing was said about him as an individual save for the erroneous report that he was an editor of a newspaper in Seoul.¹⁵ In fact, his name was typically not even mentioned. Instead, much of the coverage of the assassination focused, not on his identity, but on his motive. For example, an October 27 article that appeared in the *Globe* quoted the “assassin” (An’s name was not given) as saying “I came to Harbin for the sole purpose of assassinating Prince Ito to avenge my country.” Under the subheading “A Private Grudge Also” the article continued, “The assassin, while claiming to have been inspired by a patriotic motive and to believe that Japan’s wrongs to Koreans justified his act, admitted, under examination, that he had a personal grudge against the Japanese statesman, who, while Resident-General in Korea, caused the execution of several of the murderer’s friends.”¹⁶ The *Globe*’s article was based on an Associated Press dispatch and so, with some minor variations, appeared in many other newspapers.¹⁷

¹² “Japan mourns Ito,” *Washington Post*, October 27, 1909.

¹³ “Taft sends message of sorrow to the emperor,” *Los Angeles Herald*, October 30, 1909.

¹⁴ “Russia regrets the untimely death of a great statesman,” *San Francisco Call*, October 27, 1909.

¹⁵ “Assassin an editor,” *New York Daily Tribune*, October 29, 1909.

¹⁶ “Korean assassin shot Prince Ito,” *Globe* (Toronto), October 27, 1909. I could find no reference in any of An’s own writings or his interrogation reports that An was motivated to kill Itō out of a desire to avenge friends executed by him.

¹⁷ For an example, see “Slew Ito to avenge conquest of Korea,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1909.

As almost nothing was known about An as an individual, conjectures about his motive based themselves on his identity as a Korean. For instance, The *New York Tribune* questioned his patriotism, stating that assassination of Itō was not surprising owing to the Korean national character, editorializing that:

The incorrigible venom of some Corean [*sic*] fanatics, miscalled “patriots,” has long been notorious. They are those whose “patriotism” consists in clinging to the savage remains of barbarism, in betraying their country for foreign gold whenever opportunity offers, and in debasing and debauching its politics, its government and its administration of justice into a welter of vileness.¹⁸

The London *Times* editorialized similarly, noting that “Assassination has long been a familiar practice in the domestic politics of Korea.” The author of this report also wondered whether the trial would show that An was a “political fanatic,” or “a villain of a cooler and more calculating sort.”¹⁹ For this editorialist, An’s use of the means of assassination meant that he could not be considered a true patriot. A report from the *New York Times* connected An’s motives to both nation and class:

It is well known that Korea, under its former Government, was infested by corruption, favoritism, and oppression of the mass to an extent difficult for Occidental minds to grasp. Much of the opposition to Japan was undoubtedly due to the stern suppression of abuses by which the favored class grew rich and the people were exploited. That the method and the manner of the Japanese were severe and even cruel is generally reported, though not undisputed. It may very well be that the assassin of Prince Ito belonged to the privileged class.²⁰

An’s motives for killing Itō were thus either a result of political fanaticism, a desire for revenge, a false patriotism, or narrow self-interest, which, arising from his status as a Korean of the ruling class, justified the Japanese colonial government in Korea, as it showed how uncivilized and dangerous Korea was. The Japanese presence on the peninsula was further legitimized by reports that “the best element among the Koreans and a vast majority of the people are still loyal

¹⁸ “Ito,” *New York Daily Tribune*, October 27, 1909.

¹⁹ “The murder of Prince Ito,” *Times* (London), October 27, 1909.

²⁰ “The murder of Prince Ito,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1909.

to the memory of Prince Ito.”²¹ This view was bolstered by reports that the crown prince of Korea was devastated by the death of Itō, his tutor, and that “The ex-Emperor is prostrated with grief and consternation.”²² Such reports isolated An from other Koreans, whose loyalty and grief de-legitimized his use of violence, and who represented the correct attitude towards the progress and civilization that Itō sought to bring to their country.

An had hoped that the assassination might lead to Western intervention, but it seems to have brought greater solidarity rather than division in the ranks of the empires. For instance, one editorialist in the *San Francisco Call*, described the threat of “political assassination,” as a widespread danger which called for “the most severe methods of suppression within the law,” as it represented “one of the gravest problems of modern civilization,” necessitating that “all nations everywhere to unite in measures of self-defense.”²³ The author then went on to state that:

The difficulty of this problem is enhanced by the fact that the assassins are usually fanatics of the mentally irresponsible sort. They regard murder as a form of warfare justified by real or fancied wrongs, and are not amenable to the ordinary considerations that move the masses of mankind. They are few and far between, but the danger lies in the fact that one half crazed man with a pistol may work incalculable injury.

Violent resistance to colonialism was essentially irrational, and therefore illegitimate, rendering unnecessary any attempts to actually understand the motives for the assassination, and justifying the use of force to suppress any such threats to the civilizing imperial nation-state and its representatives. Japan was one of these nation-states, and as a modernizing colonizer, its use of violence in defense of its civilizing mission was justified. Korean violence in opposition to its project, as being against progress and civilization, was not. Therefore, while An had succeeded in gaining attention, his actions reinforced the empires’ shared identity as civilized countries and

²¹ “Uprising in Korea may follow murder,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1909.

²² “The murder of Prince Ito,” *Globe* (Toronto), October 28, 1909.

²³ “The assassination of Prince Ito,” *San Francisco Call*, October 27, 1909.

Korea's categorization as a dangerous, backwards one, justifying its colonization. The outpouring of Western grief and solidarity with Japan is particularly striking considering the current problems in Manchuria and fears over the yellow peril and general racial prejudice against Japanese people, especially in the United States.²⁴

Korean Supporters of An Chunggŭn in Western English-language Newspapers

An, thinking that his deed would speak for itself, left no manifesto explaining why he had killed Itō and what he had hoped to achieve by doing so. Now, locked away in prison, he could not publicly defend his actions or raise the issue of Japanese policy in Korea. It would fall on other Koreans to do that. Shortly after the assassination, the Korean Patriotic League of Hawaii issued a circular that was printed in numerous papers, justifying the assassination in nationalistic terms. It accused Itō of making Koreans the slaves of Japan and portrayed his death as a “fitting reward” for his “selfishness,” “trickery,” and for what he had done to Korea, and praised “the Korean who shot Itō” as “an example of self-sacrificing patriotism” whose “name will be written with honor in our history forever.”²⁵ In most of the papers surveyed, Korean voices that criticized Itō and praised An were limited to printings of this circular. The one exception was Hawaii, where, likely because of the relatively large Korean community, how Koreans thought about the issue was considered newsworthy. For example, one article noted that Koreans “openly exult in the success which attended the murderous assault of one of their race upon the

²⁴ For the connection between Japan and the “yellow peril” in the United States, see Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). For an example of how race became an issue in a similar incident, see Brandon Palmer, “American Media Coverage of the Assassination of Durham White Stevens,” *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (April 2009): 63-77.

²⁵ “Praises Ito's slayer,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1909; “Emperor forbids change,” *Globe* (Toronto), October 28, 1909.

former resident-general of Korea.”²⁶ The author of the story went on to report that “the general Korean community here is inclined to the belief that Prince Ito courted his fate and only got what was coming.”

The article then quoted Reverend C. Ming, a clergymen involved in the Korean mission, who stated that “While I could not for a moment attempt to condone the action of the assassin who killed Ito, I am willing to state that the Koreans have been badly treated by the Japanese and by Ito in particular....The Koreans have not had a chance in their own country. The Japanese have taken away their land from them and they are in a most deplorable condition of servitude and poverty.” After noting Itō’s broken promises to the Koreans, Reverend Ming went on to express fear of a Korean uprising “if the Japanese continue their methods of oppression.”

A few days later, the *Hawaiian Gazette* printed a letter from the Korean National Association.²⁷ It began by comparing the contemporary Korean situation to that of the United States in 1776, noting that the victory of the colonists transformed “them from rebels into patriots and heroes,” and was part of a world-wide movement towards governments that would protect the rights of the people, which, however, was not being realized in Korea because, “Japan broke her promise [to protect Korean independence] and forced herself upon Korea under the guise of a protector. When Korea resented this perfidious conduct, Ito surrounded the palace of the Korean Emperor with three thousand Japanese soldiers and compelled the Emperor to sign the treaty, as also some of the ministers, depriving her of sovereignty.”

²⁶ “Koreans here pleased at murder,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, October 29, 1909.

²⁷ “Where local Koreans stand,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, November 2, 1909. The “Korean National Association” (Kungminhoe) was a coalition of Korean organizations in the United States. It was officially inaugurated on February first, 1909 in the aftermath of the assassination of D.W. Stevens (1851-1908). See the introduction found in the compilation of the *Sinhan kukbo*, entitled *Sinhan kukbo · Kungminpo* [*New Korean National Reporter · Citizen Reporter*], that was published by the Tongnip Kinyōmgwan Han’guk Tongnip Undongsa Yōn’guso as the eleventh volume of its *Han’guk Tongnip Undongsa Charyo Ch’ongsō* [Collected documents of the history of the Korean independence movement], in 1997.

The situation only became worse when The Hague incident was used as a pretext for signing another treaty. Itō “followed up this outrage by introducing his own people into Korea, and they murdered the poor natives, robbed them of their land, violating their wives and daughters, and committing wholesale murder among them....Millions are today suffering for want of food, and the few Koreans in this community hope that the world has eyes bright enough to see to what extent they have been wronged, and will eventually right this wrong.” Japanese wickedness extended not only into Korea, but to Hawaii as well, where the Japanese had “shown the cloven foot” by setting up “a lawless government for themselves, having for its object murder” and by attempting “to ruin the sugar industry.” It was hoped then that “the great American nation” would join Koreans in their “struggle for freedom from these ruthless oppressors.”

What is especially striking about this letter is that though it criticized Itō, and the Japanese people generally, it condemned his assassination, the authors declaring that “the better class of the Koreans in this community, while they can not mourn over the death of Ito, do not believe in acts of individual violence.” The letter then emphasized that such acts would not “alleviate their burdens” nor end the “cruel wrongs” they endured, and were instead more likely to “strengthen the rigor of their persecutions.” After declaring their willingness to “sacrifice our lives...for the independence of the country” the authors stated that they did not “advocate assassination,” disapproved of that act, and wished that it had not been a Korean who had carried it out. As we shall see later, the Korean version of this letter did not include this statement, but rather, contended that Itō’s death was justified, raising questions as to how sincere such criticism

of the assassination was.²⁸ Other reports noted also that Koreans, as well as Chinese, strongly approved of the assassination, and saw it as legitimate.²⁹

The case of the editor of a Chinese newspaper, Lo Sun, shows why Koreans might condemn the assassination in public while approving of it in private. Lo printed an editorial that not only praised An for killing Itō, but also advocated the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the killing of Chinese officials, stating that, “One Ito is dead; there are a lot of more Itos.”³⁰ Lo’s editorial was translated into English and handed over to federal authorities who began procedures to deport him.³¹ The *Hawaiian Gazette* reported that Koreans might be investigated, as there was a law that those who had been in the country for less than three years could be deported if they “express or publish sentiments as favoring the assassination of officials.”³² Koreans could not therefore publicly defend An’s actions as justified without putting themselves in danger of deportation. There also seems to have been social pressure that prevented Koreans from speaking freely. For example, Syngman Rhee wrote in the notes for his autobiography that in the wake of the assassination, “Newspapers were full of stories to the effect that the Koreans are murderous, blood thirsty and ignorant.” He also described how some of his fellow students at Princeton were afraid to talk to him, and that his “history professor was so scared that he mailed my thesis back to me and refused to see me before going away.”³³ Koreans therefore faced significant pressures that made it difficult for them to attempt to defend, or even explain

²⁸ It is likely the case that the identities of the members of the “Korean Patriotic League,” which issued the circular celebrating Itō’s assassination, were kept secret, allowing them to openly justify violence. In contrast, the “Korean National Association” was a public organization.

²⁹ “Sidelights,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, November 2, 1909; “Organized assassins,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, February 11, 1910.

³⁰ “Lo Sun very violent man,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, November 2, 1909.

³¹ “Ask warrant for Lo Sun,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, November 2, 1909.

³² “Lo Sun very violent man,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, November 2, 1909.

³³ Cited in Chong-Sik Lee, *Syngman Rhee: The Prison Years of a Young Radical* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2001), 177.

An's actions, hindering their ability to challenge the predominant narrative that portrayed the assassination of Itō as unjustified and the colonial project in Korea as legitimate.

The Challenge to Japan

An and his fellow Koreans had failed to obtain Western intervention on behalf of Korea, or even a sympathetic hearing. In fact, judging by newspaper coverage, they seem to have had even less support than did Filipinos who were fighting against American troops several years before.³⁴ Yet, the coverage of the assassination of Itō was at times problematic from Japan's point of view. For instance, the *Call* reported that in the Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the Russo-Japanese War, both countries agreed to recognize Korea as independent. However, a "few months after this document had been duly signed Japan began the absorption of the country. The process has been described in this country as the 'murder of a nation.'"³⁵ Similarly, the *Sun* while generally friendly to Itō, described the establishment of the protectorate as his attempt to make Korea "...a Japanese province without seeming to do so." The article then went on to describe the signing of the treaty, with Itō speaking to a "cowering Korean Emperor" and his ministers, of literal saber-rattling, and of a Korean government minister who sought to escape the building where they were meeting only to find that it was surrounded by infantrymen, the "glitter of bayonets" visible under the night sky. The article then reported the rumor that on Itō's orders, Japanese seized the seal of state and Itō himself pressed it to the treaty.³⁶

³⁴ Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 104-28.

³⁵ "Itō slain by Korean in Harbin," *San Francisco Call*, October 26, 1909.

³⁶ "Strong Man of Japan," *Sun* (New York), October 27, 1909.

One editorial in the *Globe* was more direct in its criticism of Itō, implying that the “masterful and merciless policy” by which Korea had been “blotted out of existence,” and not Korean barbarism alone, had led to the assassination. The editorialist also rejected the comparison between Lord Cromer, who had established a British protectorate in Egypt, and Itō Hirobumi’s activities in Korea, which was frequently made by proponents of the Japanese colonial project, stating that “No Egyptian apparently ever thought of assassinating lord Cromer by way of repaying him for lightening the burden of taxation while developing the greatest system of internal public works in any country of the area and population of Egypt.”³⁷

Such criticism of the Japanese colonial project in Korea never led to the declaration that it was illegitimate or that violent Korean resistance was justified. In fact, the assassination was portrayed as fundamentally mistaken in part because it was impractical—it would not bring the changes that An and other Koreans hoped for.³⁸ Moreover, it was thought to be counter-productive, as Itō was probably Korea’s “best friend,” “did not believe in unnecessary harshness to the Koreans,” and “was more tolerant than many of his countrymen wanted him to be.” Now that he was gone, Korea was “likely to feel the iron hand in earnest.”³⁹ The assassination of Itō, described as “one of the few Japanese statesmen in whom a distinct trace of humanitarianism was visible,” was predicted to bring to Korea a man who would have as his duty avenging the death of Itō, and he would not “take life for life, but many lives for one.”⁴⁰

The loss of Itō was therefore understood to have removed an important force for civilization from Japan that would lead to a more violent, and less enlightened policy in Korea. There were also concerns that Japan would use the incident to expand its power on the peninsula.

³⁷ “Tragedy and the Problem,” *Globe* (Toronto), October 27, 1909.

³⁸ Untitled, *Los Angeles Herald*, October 29, 1909.

³⁹ “Itō’s death a loss to this country,” *Washington Times*, October 27, 1909.

⁴⁰ “Price of empire,” *Los Angeles Herald*, October 27, 1909.

In response, the London *Times*, which generally provided favorable coverage of Japan, expressed its “faith” in the “self restraint of the Japanese” to continue Itō’s policy. The “noblest tribute” they could pay to him, and “the highest proof” that they shared “his virtues,” would be to continue his path of moderation and enlightened reform.⁴¹

A more aggressive stance was taken by the *New York Times*, which, while recognizing that the “action of the Japanese in Korea has tended toward the material welfare of the general population of the kingdom, as our own has tended in like direction in the Philippines,” noted that “that Japanese methods have been harsher than ours and have not aimed, as ours do, toward the education of the people for and in self-government.” However, if “the spirit of Prince Ito” was followed, then “the Koreans will gain in prosperity and all that modern ideas of civilization involve as they could not have gained under the rule of their weak monarch and the greedy oligarchy of which he was the nominal head and the instrument.”⁴² While recognizing Japan as more civilized than Korea, and capable of civilizing that country, the editorialist implied that departure from Itō’s policy would mean regression, indicating that how Japan treated Korea would determine whether it would advance towards a level of civilization more like that of the United States, or degenerate into something more like Korea itself. It was therefore implied that Japanese progress was rather shallow, as it was easily affected by the loss of one man. Itō was civilized, and capable of civilizing others, but his death might bring to power men that would undo all the advances he had made for his country.

The Japanese government was quick to try and assuage these anxieties. Several official statements were issued which declared that Japan would not deviate from Itō’s policy. For example, on October 28 the *New York Times* printed an article, entitled “Attitude of Japan to

⁴¹ “The murder of Prince Ito,” *Times* (London), October 27, 1909.

⁴² “The Korean patriots,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1909.

Korea Unchanged,” which contained a summary of a statement released by the Japanese Foreign Ministry that said that Japan would not annex Korea in response to calls by “sensational” Japanese newspapers. The article went on to note that the politicians of Japan were “determined to pursue peaceful development” and that Japan would probably hold more closely to Itō’s policy in death than it had in life.⁴³ Itō’s son made a similar statement, as did unnamed friends of the slain official.⁴⁴ Similarly, a Japanese official was reported as stating that Itō had not gone to Manchuria on official business, but in a private capacity, implying that there was no need to fear Russian-Japanese collusion against the open door in Manchuria, while another appealed to the press to correct such “false impressions” about the purposes of Itō’s visit.⁴⁵ Other articles treated his trip to Harbin in a similar fashion.⁴⁶

While An did not obtain the intervention he hoped for, or a change in Japanese policy, his assassination of Itō still caused problems for Japan. It brought unwanted attention to the empire’s activities in Manchuria and forced Japan to issue statements that it would not annex Korea, though its leaders had already decided in July of 1909 to do so at an opportune time.⁴⁷ Moreover, it also gave a space for Koreans to air their grievances against Japan and to criticize the empire’s own use of violence. Finally, the assassination allowed the international reputation of Japan as an enlightened country and its level of civilization to be questioned. In the next section, we will examine how the Japanese government reacted to the assassination of Itō and responded to these challenges to its image through the *Seoul Press*.

⁴³ “Attitude of Japan to Korea unchanged,” *New York Times*, October 28, 1909.

⁴⁴ See “Son of Prince Ito says murder will strengthen ideals,” *Los Angeles Herald*, October 28, 1909; “Prince of Japan greatest commoner of modern nation,” *San Francisco Call*, October 27, 1909.

⁴⁵ “Explains Ito’s visit,” *Los Angeles Herald*, October 28, 1909.

⁴⁶ “Japan will not change its policies in Korea,” *Los Angeles Herald*, December 25, 1909.

⁴⁷ Duus, 237.

The Assassination in the *Seoul Press*

Representatives of the Japanese colonial project produced their own narrative of the assassination through the pages of the *Seoul Press*, an English-language newspaper in Korea essentially operated by the Japanese Residency-General.⁴⁸ These ties with the government meant that the *Seoul Press* consistently supported the Residency-General. I could find no instance where it was critical of Japanese government policy and its editorials always followed government policy. The Residency-General hoped that through the paper, the Western missionaries, merchants, and officials who made up its audience would be convinced to support the Japanese colonial project in Korea and would persuade their friends at home, especially policy-makers, to do the same.⁴⁹

The *Seoul Press* provided extensive coverage on the assassination. It first reported the incident on October 27 and confirmed that Itō was dead the following day. From that time until November 9, the *Seoul Press* would devote much of its coverage to articles on Itō, An, and the aftermath of the assassination, and from then until the trial, not more than a few days would pass before another related article would appear. The coverage of the incident was very similar to that which appeared in the Western press in terms of the bare facts of the assassination, the major difference being that there were more reports in the *Seoul Press*, and that they were longer and gave more details than their Western counterparts.

⁴⁸ Chin-Sok Chong, *The Korean Problem in Anglo-Japanese Relations: 1904-1910* (Seoul: Nanam Publishing Co., 1987), 163-70; Mark E. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 241n10.

⁴⁹ Asea munhwasa published an eight volume set of reproductions of the *Seoul Press* from 1907 to 1910 in 1986. An introductory article at the beginning of each volume by Chong Chin-sok contains a detailed history of that paper, including this information.

In order to see the continuities shared by Western English-language newspapers and the *Seoul Press*, as well as the differences between them, we will briefly examine an editorial from that newspaper which appeared on October 28. It began by stating that the “greatest of our statesmen and the best friend of Korea and her people died a martyr to the cause of humanity and civilization in a foreign land.” The loss of Itō was a great calamity, as he was “the veritable edifice of peace in these parts of the world and his removal at the very time when the situation in the Far East needs so much his great wisdom and ripe experience to maintain peace and order, cannot but shake the very foundations of the world’s peace and disastrously affect the welfare and interest of all nations both politically and economically.”⁵⁰ The editorial went on to say that Itō loved Korea “with the love of a father” and had also “befriended the Koreans to such an extent that he was very frequently denounced by his own countrymen as having the welfare of the Koreans more at heart than that of the Japanese.” The editorial also urged restraint, that the “great love” Itō had for Koreans always be remembered, and that Japanese should continue to follow his “enlightened policy” of treating them with “kindness and justice,” so that by abandoning “all idea of vengeance by force,” they could “avenge the cruel death of the departed statesmen by winning over all Koreans to our side with love.” This was “the best way to console the spirit of Prince Ito, who died for Koreans at the hands of a Korean.” At the same time, differing from Western editorials, the author warned that “If unfortunately the Korean people have to feel Japanese rule more uncomfortably they will have no one to blame but their compatriot who took away the life of their best friend,” preemptively justifying any tightening of control over the country.

Therefore, as in Western English-language newspapers, Itō was described as a proponent of civilization and peace and as the “best friend” of Koreans. While the praise in the editorial is

⁵⁰ “The assassination of Prince Ito,” *Seoul Press*, October 28, 1909.

more effusive than what appeared in its counterparts in the West, the basic content is the same. Not only was its coverage similar to that appearing in Western papers, the *Seoul Press* also reprinted their articles, showing that praise for Itō was not limited only to the Japanese. For example, a long letter written to the *Toronto Globe* by W.T.R. Preston, similar in tone to his interview given in that same paper, provided a litany of the various civilizing reforms Itō brought to Korea.⁵¹

The *Seoul Press* also published material from an article George Kennan (1845-1924) wrote for *Outlook* magazine.⁵² In the version reprinted by the *Seoul Press*, Kennan recalled how in a previous interview, Itō had explained that Japan had to “assume control in the peninsula in order to preserve our own independence,” but that his country “aimed to educate the Koreans and help them to a freer national life rather than to oppress them and exploit them for our own benefit.” Itō then explained to Kennan that he should understand, as Japan was trying to do in Korea what the United States was attempting in the Philippines, and stressed that Japan would not exploit Korea “without regard to the welfare of its inhabitants.” Instead, he emphasized that while Japan would likely profit from its control over Korea, it would do so by improving the lives of the Koreans. Kennan seems to have agreed with Itō, noting at the end of his article that “the distinguished worker (Itō) has been murdered by one of the people whom he so earnestly tried to help. It is one of the tragic facts of history that ignorant and misguided patriots often kill the very men to whom their country is most indebted and from whom it has the most to expect.”

In addition to Kennan’s positive comparison of Japanese efforts in Korea with those of the United States in the Philippines, the *Seoul Press* printed no less than three times the praise

⁵¹ W.T.R. Preston, “What Japan has done in Korea” *Seoul Press*, November 9, 1909.

⁵² George Kennan, “Prince Ito and Korea,” *Seoul Press*, January 1, 1910.

given to Itō and his work in Korea by the former viceroy of India, Lord Curzon (1851-1925).⁵³ His comparison of Japan's activity in Korea with that of Lord Cromer (1841-1917) in Egypt was also printed.⁵⁴ Like its Western counterparts the *Seoul Press* published reports of government representatives expressing their condolences on Itō's death.⁵⁵ An entire article was even devoted to ex-President Theodore Roosevelt's condolences, as they had been sent while he was big-game hunting in Africa.⁵⁶

Korean official reactions to the assassination were also reported, again, with greater and more detailed coverage than in Western newspapers. One article stated that upon "receipt of the sad news concerning Prince Ito at Harbin H.M. the Korean Emperor burst into tears of deep grief and took but little food on the day the accident took place."⁵⁷ It was reported that the court sent delegates to Itō's funeral in Japan and held its own services for him in Korea.⁵⁸ Likewise, schools were closed for three days and no public musical performances were allowed as a mark of respect. There were detailed descriptions of Itō's funeral, both those conducted in Korea and in Japan.⁵⁹ The Korean court's gift of 100,000 yen to Itō's widow was also reported.⁶⁰ The Korean Emperor's rescript, which praised Itō for the services he had offered to Korea and his work for peace while criticizing An as "mad and misled," was also printed.⁶¹ Moreover, the

⁵³ See the *Seoul Press* articles "Lord Curzon," October 30, 1909; "Ito's assassination," October 31, 1909; "Korea and India," November 11, 1909. Lord Curzon had served as viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905.

⁵⁴ "The late Prince Ito: Lord Curzon's appreciation," *Seoul Press*, November 21, 1909.

⁵⁵ For examples see the *Seoul Press* articles "Europe," October 29, 1909; "America," October 29, 1909; "China," October 30, 1909; "Russian Tsar's Sympathy," October 30, 1909.

⁵⁶ "From darkest Africa to Japan," *Seoul Press*, December 23, 1909.

⁵⁷ "The Korean Imperial Court in grief," *Seoul Press*, October 29, 1909.

⁵⁸ "The memorial service by Koreans," *Seoul Press*, November 6, 1909; "Funeral of the late Prince Ito," *Seoul Press*, November 11, 1909.

⁵⁹ "Korean government's expression of regret," *Seoul Press*, October 29, 1909.

⁶⁰ "The late Prince Ito," *Seoul Press*, November 11, 1909. Initially Itō's widow refused the 100,000 yen the Korean court offered, accepting only a separate gift of 30,000 yen to cover the cost of offerings. It appears that all of the money was eventually accepted. For the initial refusal see "The Korean Court and Prince Ito," *Seoul Press*, November 7, 1909.

⁶¹ "An Imperial Rescript," *Seoul Press*, November 7, 1909.

Seoul Press reported on unofficial Korean mourning at the news of Itō's death, publishing articles on Koreans taking up subscriptions to build a bronze statue of Itō and attempts to send a delegation to Japan to offer an apology.⁶² There was little reporting on negative reactions by Koreans, and nothing to the detail provided by the *Hawaiian Gazette*.⁶³ Thus, the Korean state, and a significant section of the Korean population, were presented as being fully behind Itō and the Japanese colonial project.

Just as in the Western press, very few biographical details were provided about An and some of those were incorrect. For example, one article claimed that An's father had been executed for "some crime" by the T'aewŏngun.⁶⁴ Similarly, An, by killing Itō, a symbol of enlightenment, was portrayed as an enemy of civilization and progress and was ascribed selfish and base motives, both in original articles produced by the *Seoul Press*, and in reprints of Western editorials and reports.⁶⁵ Therefore, while differing from Western newspapers in the amount of coverage given to the assassination, the basic contrast of the civilized and virtuous Itō with the barbaric and villainous An remained the same.

The *Seoul Press* and Religion

Religion was little mentioned in the coverage of Itō's assassination in Western language newspapers. For example, a Western reader would only have known that An was a Catholic by

⁶² "Propose bronze statue to Prince Ito," *Seoul Press*, November 9, 1909.

⁶³ One of the articles that treated Korean reactions to the Residency-General was an interview with a pro-Japanese Korean who had gone to Tokyo as part of a delegation to apologize for the assassination of Itō. He asserted that Korea needed the protection of Japan and that pro-Japanese sentiment had grown, as had anti-Japanese feelings. The interviewee suggested that the latter could be reduced if the Japanese would adopt a more conciliatory policy towards Korean "insurgents." See "A Korean view of the situation," *Seoul Press*, November 7, 1909.

⁶⁴ "The Korean assassin," *Seoul Press*, October 31, 1909.

⁶⁵ "After the storm," *Seoul Press*, November 2, 1909; "The late Prince Ito," *Seoul Press*, November 25, 1909. The latter contains material from the "The murder of Prince Ito," *Times* (London), October 27, 1909, cited above.

reading the report in the *Hawaiian Gazette* that he had confessed his sins to a priest before execution.⁶⁶ In stark contrast, the *Seoul Press* focused a great deal of attention on religion. For example, it reported that An was a Catholic and that he had crossed himself after he learned that Itō was dead.⁶⁷ The *Seoul Press* also frequently quoted foreign missionaries praising Itō. For example, Bishop M.C. Harris, who held a position of authority in the Methodist Churches of both Japan and Korea, stated in a letter printed by that paper that all missionary bodies had sent representatives to the memorial services held for Itō.⁶⁸ Furthermore, a letter of consolation he wrote, which stated that both Catholics and Protestants loved and trusted Itō and that they “shed grateful tears for all he did for them and the native Christians as well as the Korean people,” was also printed in the *Seoul Press*. In that same letter, Harris recounted a story told to him by Itō of how he, with the help of the emperor, had overcome conservative Japanese officials and included an article in the Meiji constitution guaranteeing religious liberty. Harris then credited that article with leading not only to the full protection of religious freedom, but also for enabling the cooperation of people of different religions for the good of the nation.⁶⁹ Thus, in focusing on the religious freedom granted by the Japanese constitution, a symbol of civilization, Itō was portrayed as the friend and protector of Christianity.

Even non-missionaries drew on religious themes to portray Itō as the friend of the Korean people and of Christian work in Korea. For example, the letter published in the *Toronto Globe* by W.T.R. Preston that was reprinted in the *Seoul Press* praised not only the material progress the Japanese had brought to Korea, but the spiritual advancement of the Korean people, as evidenced by the rapid growth of Christianity. Preston credited this to the partnership between

⁶⁶ “Last days of Ito’s assassin,” *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette*, March 29, 1910.

⁶⁷ “The Korean assassin,” *Seoul Press*, November 14, 1909.

⁶⁸ “Christianity in Korea and the assassination,” *Seoul Press*, November 20, 1909.

⁶⁹ M.C. Harris, “Prince Ito,” *Seoul Press*, November 7, 1909.

Japanese colonial authorities and Christian missionaries. In fact, Preston argued, the reforms carried out by the Residency-General would be ineffectual without the spiritual regeneration offered by Christianity.⁷⁰ He noted that the development of the Korean YMCA, an important symbol of Western Protestant Christian civilization, had received the support, not only of the Korean Emperor and Crown Prince, but of Itō as well.⁷¹

The *Seoul Press* also sought to portray Itō as a man of religious virtue. The fact that he did not actively practice any religion was no obstacle. In one article it was reported that Itō had prayed only three times in his life: when the Crown Prince of Japan was sick, when the war with Russia broke out, and when the Crown Prince went to Korea.⁷² The paucity of Itō's prayers proved their sincerity. Similarly, Itō's death was frequently portrayed as martyrdom and he was even treated as a Christ-like figure. In a poem published by the *Seoul Press*, he was described as a savior, who was killed senselessly and unjustly by one of those he sought to save.⁷³ He was a sacrifice, whose "blood...dyes the altar," a reference to Jesus as the lamb of God whose blood washes away sins.⁷⁴ Though both died unjustly, their deaths would bring blessing: Jesus, forgiveness from sin, and Itō, blessings for Korea. Bold parallels were thus drawn in this poem between Itō and his mission to "civilize" Korea and Jesus' mission to save humanity. The poem also implied that An was similar to Judas.

George T. Ladd, who, as described in chapter four, had written a book praising the Japanese colonial project in Korea, wrote in a piece published by the *Seoul Press* that "A number of my colleagues here have remarked upon the likeness of the deed to the assassination of our

⁷⁰ W.T.R. Preston, "What Japan has done in Korea," *Seoul Press*, November 11, 1909.

⁷¹ For the importance of the YMCA as a representative of Western Protestant Christian civilization and its role in Japan during this time, see Jon Thares Davidann, *World of Crisis and Progress: Christianity, National Identity, and the American YMCA in Japan, 1890-1930* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1998).

⁷² "Prayed only three times in life," *Seoul Press*, November 3, 1909.

⁷³ L.B.C. "To Prince Ito," *Seoul Press*, November 6, 1909.

⁷⁴ See John 1:29 and Revelations 1:5 and 12:11.

beloved President Abraham Lincoln, who died a martyr at the hands of those whom he had especially befriended.” Ladd went on to describe how, from the perspective of Japanese religion, Itō’s martyrdom was an apotheosis that transformed him into a benevolent spirit who would remain in helpful proximity to the living.⁷⁵ The use of religious vocabulary was meant to appeal especially to missionaries, as was the concept of martyrdom, particularly that of Abraham Lincoln, as most Protestant missionaries were Americans.

Ladd used religious language and concepts to call on missionaries to reflect on their own role in the assassination, explaining that “no student of social science, and no believer in one of the cardinal truths of all the world’s greatest religions—especially of Biblical religion,—can fail to recognize the doctrine of ‘corporate responsibility.’” He then declared that the “wretched men who planned and executed this fearful crime, are not the only ones who are responsible for it. On the contrary, all of us who have anything to do with Korean affairs during these recent years should strictly examine ourselves to see what is our share looked at from the divine point of view, in their corporate responsibility.” While he criticized those Japanese who had failed to live up to the ideas of Itō, he focused on the Western missionaries and Koreans, especially Christians, who had “fostered the spirit of race-hatred and revenge, out of which the deed, naturally and almost inevitably grew.” He argued that it was insufficient to not encourage assassination, but rather necessary to actively discourage it, “and all the sad and unwise and wicked ideas and sentiments, out of which such an assassination as that of Prince Ito so surely, and almost logically, issued[.]” It was the duty of a “teacher of morals, or the minister of the religion of Jesus or of any other religion...to lift up the prophetic voice, to ‘cry aloud and spare not’ in the interests of righteousness and good-will to all men.” Thus, Ladd sought, using religious language, to convince missionaries to support the Japanese colonial government more

⁷⁵ “The assassination of Prince Ito,” *Seoul Press*, December 8, 1909.

strongly and to encourage their flocks to do the same. The prophetic voice was not intended for Japan's civilizing mission in Korea, but rather, for those who opposed, or did not sufficiently support it.

The Assassination, Power, and Legitimacy

Violent resistance against Japanese rule, whether it be by individual assassination or the activity of guerilla armies, had as its purpose forcing Japan to depart from its existing policy in Korea. In order to continue this policy and protect its citizens in Korea, Japan had to utilize force and show that it was determined to maintain its colonial project in Korea despite resistance. At the same time, in order to portray itself as a civilized nation, Japan could not openly exact revenge or follow the iron-fisted policy in Korea predicted by Western editorialists. The *Seoul Press* affirmed Japan's willingness to stay the course by frequently publishing articles declaring that it would not annex Korea and would continue to follow Itō's moderate and enlightened policy. At the same time that it emphasized restraint, it warned that its "generous" policy must not be taken as a sign of weakness.⁷⁶

While Japanese government statements reported in Western newspapers remained short, and the journalists themselves were able to choose what and how they reported, the *Seoul Press* gave the proponents of the Japanese colonial project much more freedom in justifying the empire's use of violence, and de-legitimizing Korean resistance. For instance, an editorial in the *Seoul Press*, commenting on the establishment of a Korean association that intended to drive Japanese influence out of the peninsula, stated that in order for that to happen, the Korean

⁷⁶ See the *Seoul Press* articles "After the storm," November 2, 1909; "The suggested annexation of Korea," November 23, 1909; "Suggested annexation of Korea," December 5, 1909.

founders of that association, “must first make their countrymen at least equal to the Japanese people in every branch of human activity,—in government, finance, commerce, education, art, navy and army and so forth.”⁷⁷ While admitting that Japan did not claim to be the equal of, “Occidental nations in civilization” and that they had “very much to learn from the Occident before they may justly be entitled to the distinction of being among civilized nations of the first rank,” they were, “in comparison with the Koreans...far ahead of them in all points of modern civilization.” And so, if the Koreans desired to drive themselves out of the peninsula, “they must first make themselves competent enough to accomplish the deed.”

The editorialist went on then to stress that only Korean “superiority in civilization” and not violent resistance would drive Japan out, declaring, “Let a thousand An Chung Keums [*sic*] come and kill a thousand Itos, it will prove of no advantage to Korea, for thousands of Itos will appear one after another to pursue the same policy. Let ten thousand insurgents rise in arms, burn Japanese homes and kill the inmates by hundreds. It will not help Korea one whit, for hundreds of thousands of immigrants will continue to cross over to the country from the island Empire to settle it.” Korean violence, which assassinated statesmen and slaughtered civilians, was barbaric, and therefore illegitimate and ineffective, while Japanese violence in opposition to it, invisible in this article but implied, was civilized, and therefore, legitimate and effective. Moreover, the barbarism of Korean violence offered proof of the need and justification for Japan’s civilizing mission in Korea. Thus the concept of civilization legitimized imperialism while its reality provided the power necessary for its practice. To be civilized gave one the right to use the power it granted against those who lacked it, while their own use of violence was by definition uncivilized and therefore illegitimate.

⁷⁷ “The real anti-Japanese movement,” *Seoul Press*, January 8, 1910.

Key to de-legitimizing violent Korean opposition was the issue of motives. For example, a *Seoul Press* article that summarized a statement of Resident-General Sone traced the causes of the “insurrection” to economics and the Korean national character, not to any principled reasons, the article explaining that “many people have to choose between starvation and insurrection.” It was therefore necessary to develop communication and transportation networks in order to provide Koreans with a livelihood. Similarly, there were “many Koreans who regard violence and assassination as lightly as they regard eating a meal.” It was therefore “by no means an easy matter to educate among them a law-abiding sense.”⁷⁸ Poverty and the Korean propensity for violence were the causes of assassination and insurgency, not Japanese colonialism, which was in fact the cure. As in Western newspapers, violent Korean resistance to imperialism was presented as one more justification for its practice.

The *Keijō shimpō*

Having seen how representatives of the Japanese colonial project portrayed the assassination in the *Seoul Press*, we will now examine a Japanese-language newspaper published in Seoul, the *Keijō shimpō*, to see if An’s actions were understood more sympathetically by Japanese in Korea than by their government. At times, issues of this paper had been seized by officials of the resident-general for making statements the government considered inflammatory. Therefore, it has the promise of offering a perspective different from that of the Japanese state and can provide a window into how Japanese discussed the incident among themselves.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ “Viscount Sone of Korea,” *Seoul Press*, January 11, 1910.

⁷⁹ Facsimiles of the articles from the *Keijō shimpō* dealing with An Chunggŭn can be found in Kim Tohyŏng, ed., *Taehan kugin An Chunggŭn charyojip* (Seoul: Sŏnin, 2008). I have used that edition for my research. For an analysis of the *Keijō shimpō*, see that work, pages 19-22.

On October 26, 1909, the *Keijō shimpō* reported that Itō Hirobumi had suffered a disaster (遭亂, J. sōnan) at Harbin.⁸⁰ On the twenty-seventh, another article was published which stated that he had been assassinated, mistakenly reporting that he had been attacked by multiple Koreans.⁸¹ On the twenty-eighth, the *Keijō shimpō* published an editorial on the assassination, which it referred to as an event that “shook Asia” and “astounded the world.” Far from being critical of Itō and his policy in Korea, it described him as a great statesman, the “personification of humanitarianism” and as the protector of the East. Similarly, it criticized those who had killed him, reporting that Itō’s life had been taken by the “poisonous hands” of a “gang of Korean scoundrels.” The theme of peace was especially important, as the editorialist stated that the world knew of the “prince’s tireless efforts for peace in the East” and that the blood he had shed was for that purpose. Though Itō might be dead, his spirit of peace remained.⁸²

No mention was made of Itō’s role in civilizing Japan in the editorial, and while a series of articles on Itō’s life was printed, which included tales of his trip to England, the focus was not on his bringing Western civilization to Japan, but on his adventures as a young man.⁸³ Moreover, I could find no mention of his role in establishing the constitution. The process of civilization only came up in regards to Korea. For example, on October 29, the *Keijō shimpō* published an editorial urging the construction of a bronze statue in *Tongdaemun* (East Gate) district in Seoul. The editorialist noted that for thousands of years, the Korean government had been corrupt. Because of this, Itō was forced to reform the government, including the legal system. While it was impossible to completely root out this tradition of corruption, Itō managed to run a just and

⁸⁰ *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 26, 1909.

⁸¹ “Itō kōsyaku ansatsu saru [Prince Itō assassinated],” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 27, 1909.

⁸² “Tsutsushimite aitō no i o arawasu [Respectfully expressing our anguish],” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 28, 1909.

⁸³ “! Itō kōsyaku, [Alas! Prince Itō]” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 28, 29, and 30, 1909.

honest government in Korea. The installation of a statue to him would inspire the Koreans who saw it to imitate him and his honesty. This would continue his work of reform and help advance peace and humanitarian principles. The editorialist suggested that both Koreans and Japanese could pay for the statue.⁸⁴

The *Keijō shimpō* showed a greater willingness to include calls for specific political action than the *Seoul Press*. For example, the *Seoul Press* merely printed Japanese public demands that the Korean emperor go to Japan to apologize to the Japanese emperor without taking a position.⁸⁵ In contrast, the *Keijō shimpō* wrote directly against it, urging that instead the Korean emperor should hold a funeral for Itō as a way of preventing any “misunderstanding” that the Korean government approved of the “villainous act” of assassinating Itō. The editorialist was willing to use some rhetorical pressure, stating that the future happiness of the people of Korea depended on whether or not the Korean emperor held a funeral.⁸⁶

I could not find any similar examples of editorials in the *Seoul Press* that urged the Korean emperor to take a specific action. It was likely felt that, considering the connection between the Residency-General and the paper, doing so would have emphasized the weakness of the Korean emperor in the face of Japanese officials, something which would have conflicted with the benevolent image of the protectorate the representatives of the Japanese colonial project wished to convey. Similarly, the *Keijō shimpō* also editorialized that the assassination was proof that Japanese rule had not been accepted by all Koreans and that it was therefore necessary to

⁸⁴ “Futatabi Itō kōsyaku dōzō kensetsu no gi [Discussions resume over the erection of a bronze statue of Itō],” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 29, 1909.

⁸⁵ “Harbin tragedy and Japanese journalists,” *Seoul Press*, October 29, 1909.

⁸⁶ “Kankō no kaisō [The funeral of the Korean emperor],” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 29, 1909.

take a stronger policy to ensure security on the peninsula.⁸⁷ The *Seoul Press*, in contrast, while arguing that such measures could be justified, did not call for them directly.

Coverage of Korean and Western Reactions to the Assassination

Like the *Seoul Press*, the *Keijō shimpō* also included reports on Korean official reactions to the assassination. For example, it reported on the proclamation by the minister of education which ordered Korean schools to close for three days so that students could mourn Prince Itō, who had died at the “poisonous hands of a villain.” The proclamation went on to state that Koreans, “both high and low,” as well as the emperor were shocked at the assassination and lamented Itō’s death deeply. It expressed thanks to Itō for guiding the country and working for the benefit of its people, and for his service as tutor for the Korean crown prince.⁸⁸ Similarly, when the hoped for Korean funeral was held, the *Keijō shimpō* gave it a great deal of coverage, reporting on both the Korean emperor’s rescript, which also appeared in the *Seoul Press*, and Resident-General Sone Arasuke’s funeral address.⁸⁹

The primary difference between the *Seoul Press* and the *Keijō shimpō* is that the latter was more willing to print reports that showed rough spots in Korean-Japanese relations. For example, the *Keijō shimpō* reported how students of Ehwa, because of their religious beliefs, did not bow in salutations to the spirit of Itō, noting with displeasure that no other students had such qualms.⁹⁰ Similarly, in the immediate wake of the assassination, it was reported that both Korean

⁸⁷ “Kongo no taikan hōshin [Future measures toward Korea],” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), November 17, 1909.

⁸⁸ “Gakubu daijin no kunrei [Proclamation by the minister of education],” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 30, 1909.

⁸⁹ See “Kokusō kantei shōchoku [The state funeral and the Korean emperor’s rescript]”; “Sone tōkan no saimon [Resident-General Sone’s funeral address],” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), November 5, 1909

⁹⁰ “Gakudō rehai o kyozeisu [Schoolchildren refuse to worship],” *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul) November 5, 1909.

Confucian scholars and students at modern schools inwardly rejoiced at Itō's death.⁹¹ The *Keijō shimpō* also ran an article on several Korean officials who were suspected of being complicit in the assassination.⁹² And while the *Seoul Press* merely reported that an anti-Japanese newspaper run by a Chinese subject in Shanghai had been shut down, in a similar case involving a Korean in China the *Keijō shimpō* actually reported on the contents of the offending article itself.⁹³

While the *Seoul Press* covered Western reactions to the assassination in great detail, I could only find one short article in the *Keijō shimpō* on that subject. This one article focused on how Americans reacted and reported that they were shocked by reports of the assassination, that newspapers issued extras and wrote admiringly of Itō, and that President Taft had offered his condolences.⁹⁴ It would seem then that the *Seoul Press* printed Western reactions in order to convince its readership that, just like their governments, they should reject the assassination of Itō as illegitimate. The *Keijō Shimpō*, publishing for a Japanese audience, had no such interest, and likely included the article on American reactions, as opposed to other countries, because of the tension between the two nations over Manchuria.

An Chunggūn in the *Keijō shimpō*

The *Keijō Shimpō*'s coverage on An, like that in the *Seoul Press* and Western newspapers, focused on his motive. It reported on October 28 and November 18 that An had killed Itō purely

⁹¹ "Itō kō sōnan to ki hankyō [After effects of the Itō disaster]," *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 29, 1909.

⁹² "Ansatsu renrui no kengi [Suspected of connection to the assassination]," *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), December 3, 1909.

⁹³ For the comparative treatments of such incidents, see "Shanghai notes," *Seoul Press*, December 1, 1909; "Hai-Nichi shimbun no fungai [Resentment of an anti-Japanese newspaper]," *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), November 12, 1909. In one article, the *Seoul Press* did present some criticism of Itō from a Shanghai newspaper. However, it was included with quotations from many other newspapers from the same city that praised Itō and condemned the assassination. See "Shanghai notes," *Seoul Press*, November 7, 1909.

⁹⁴ "Kyōhen to Beikoku kammin [The assassination and the American people and government]," *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), October 30, 1909.

out of a private grudge.⁹⁵ However, on November 20, the *Keijō shimpō*, unlike its counterparts, printed the list of fifteen reasons An had for assassinating Itō that he provided during his interrogation.⁹⁶ While somewhat different in phrasing than his original list, to be examined in chapter seven, the essential accusations, that Itō had been responsible for the deaths of many people, including former Japanese Emperor Kōmei (1831-1867), threatened peace in the East, was destroying Korean independence, and had prevented true civilized reforms from being enacted in Korea, were all still there.⁹⁷ Thus, it would have been clear to a Japanese audience that An was a nationalist and a proponent of civilization and enlightenment thought rather than a member of the old political order who had killed Itō out of opposition to his enlightened reforms. Printing the reasons would have challenged the *Seoul Press*'s portrayal of An as an enemy of civilization and so they were left out. However, the willingness of the *Keijō shimpō* to print them arose not out of sympathy, but in order to explain to curious Japanese exactly why An had acted as he did.

The *Keijō shimpō* also provided a great deal of coverage on the life of An and his father in a series of three articles published in December.⁹⁸ According to these articles, An Chunggūn's father, An T'aehun, was born into a merchant family and was a sinister character who loved trouble. Under the pretext of assembling a militia to fight against the Tonghak, he and his men robbed, murdered and raped. Since he was protected by a powerful official, the government was unable to punish him. Later T'aehun converted to Catholicism and used the religion to continue

⁹⁵ See "Itō kōsyaku sōnan shōpō [Report of the Prince Itō disaster]," October 28, 1909; "Kyōkō no sha shuchō konnan [Difficulties in the interrogation of the assassin]," *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul); November 18, 1909.

⁹⁶ "Kyōkan yoshin shūketsu [Conclusion of the preliminary interrogation of the villain]," *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), November 20, 1909.

⁹⁷ The key difference was the use of "事" (J. *ji*, K. *sa*) meaning matter, rather than "罪" (J. *zai*, K. *choe*) meaning crime, which softened the impact of his statement. For example, "The crime of disbanding the Korean army" became "The matter of disbanding the Korean army" in the *Keijō shimpō* article.

⁹⁸ "Kyōkan no fu An Taikun [An T'aehun, the father of the villain]," *Keijō shimpō* (Seoul), December 1, 3, and 4, 1909.

his criminal career. His son, An Chunggŭn, was described as an excellent marksman and a hunting fanatic. He used those skills to track down and shoot a peddler who had insulted his father. Later, through a Catholic priest allied with An T'aehun, he was introduced to contacts in the Korean resistance in North Kando, a disputed border area between China and Korea. He went on to join a guerilla army that plundered and robbed. He also ordered his lackeys to assassinate the Korean editor of a pro-Japanese newspaper. The article noted that even though An's wife came from a family with money, because he was just like his father he was a robber and went on to kill Itō, Korea's benefactor. Such a negative portrayal of An shows his failure to win Japanese sympathy. Curiously, the *Seoul Press* did not publish such articles. This was likely in part due to the fact that they showed the Catholic Church in a negative light and so might alienate the missionaries whose opinion the paper was courting.

The *Keijō shimpō*, though willing to depart from the government line, did not show any sympathy for An or interest in agitating for a more restrained policy in Japan. In fact, in many ways, its coverage of the incident was even more negative than that which appeared in the *Seoul Press*, as seen in its detailed biographies of An and his father. Like that paper, the *Keijō shimpō* praised Itō for his peace and humanitarianism and avoided treating him simply as a hero of Japan or as bringing civilized reform to that country. However, the *Keijō shimpō* did not speak of such reform in regards to Japan, but only in terms of Korea. In other words, it would seem that Japanese, when speaking to Japanese, tended to view their nation as enlightened, accepting only a lower place on the ladder of civilization in front of a Western audience. And so, the idea that Japan was civilized and was bringing that civilization to Korea was even stronger in the *Keijō shimpō* than the *Seoul Press*. Korean resistance to that process needed to be overcome by a stronger policy, overcoming misunderstandings, and teaching Koreans to treasure honesty,

humanitarianism, and peace, qualities embodied in Itō. That the *Keijō shimpō*, like the *Seoul Press*, unequivocally condemned Itō's assassination, going so far as to call for Japan to take a stronger policy towards Korea, stands as evidence that An had not only failed to convince the Japanese government to change its policy in Korea, but also to win Japanese popular support.

Korean Reactions to the Assassination

Having seen that An failed to obtain either Western intervention or a change in Japanese policy, we will now examine how a weekly Korean-language newspaper (written almost purely in *han'gul*, the Korean vernacular), the *Sinhan kukbo* (*New Korean National Reporter*), portrayed the assassination. As this paper was printed in Hawaii, it allowed Koreans to air their own opinions with a freedom unavailable in Korea itself, as the Japanese colonial government carefully censored newspapers.⁹⁹ Moreover, by examining a Hawaiian paper, we can compare how Korean portrayals of the assassination in English and Korean differed from one another.¹⁰⁰

The *Sinhan kukbo* first made reference to the assassination in the edition published on November 2, 1909. One article, entitled “The Slaughter of the Bandit Itō who stole Korea,” joyously reported the death of the former resident-general.¹⁰¹ Though the identity of the “hero” who killed Itō was unknown, he was declared to be one of the long lines of patriots who had offered their lives to repay the grace they had received from their country. By killing Itō, this hero inflicted Heaven's just punishment on him, blotted out the resentment felt by the Korean people, and prevented the destruction of their country. Itō deserved death, as he had tricked the

⁹⁹ Schmid, 53-54.

¹⁰⁰ I am working from the facsimiles of the *Sinhan kukbo* published by the Tongnip Kinyōmgwan Han'guk Tongnip Undongsa Yōn'guso. See above, n. 27.

¹⁰¹ “Kuhanjōk Idūng chi suryuk [The slaughter of that bandit Itō who stole Korea],” *Sinhan kukbo* (Honolulu), November 2, 1909.

whole world into believing he had come to help Korea by awing everyone with Japan's civilizing reforms and deceiving them with lies, enabling him to threaten the destruction of the nation and peace in East Asia. Itō was then mocked as someone who, having sought to steal someone else's country, had in death become a wandering ghost. The article ended by exhorting Koreans to rouse their spirits and restore Korea's independence.¹⁰² This issue also carried an article discussing the shooter's motive, stating that after the assassination, he had identified himself as a Korean who had killed Itō because he had used "evil means to invade" Korea and to "console the spirits" of the "loyal patriots" who were "martyred for their country."¹⁰³

The following week's issue, published on November 9, included a Korean version of the same letter to the editor printed in the *Hawaiian Gazette* on November 2.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the narrative of the Japanese invasion of Korea led by Itō remained largely the same whether it was intended for Korean or non-Korean audiences. What was different is that the paragraphs condemning assassination that were part of the letter printed in the *Hawaiian Gazette* were not included in the *Sinhan kukbo* article. In fact, that newspaper's version justified the killing of Itō by stating that it avenged the wrongs Itō had inflicted on Koreans and had been undertaken for the "public interest." While it did not call directly for further violence it did allude to its possibility, editorializing that "Generally independence and freedom are not obtained through peaceful means."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² The Japanese government kept watch over Korean newspaper articles on An, summarizing this, and other articles in a report. See, Kuksa pyōnch'an wiwōnhoe, "Hunghaeja kūp hyōmūija chosasō [Investigation into the villain and suspects]," *Han'guk tongnip undongsa* [History of the Korean independence movement] (Seoul: Kuksa pyōnch'an wiwōnhoe, 1978) 7:314-15. This volume of the *Han'guk tongnip undongsa* series is devoted entirely to An Chunggūn, and consists mostly of newspaper accounts from the *Taehan maeil sinpo* and Japanese government records that have been translated into Korean.

¹⁰³ "Yōlsa chi yonggaeō [The patriotic martyr's words of righteous wrath]," *Sinhan kukbo* (Honolulu), November 2, 1909.

¹⁰⁴ The letter published by the *Honolulu Hawaiian Gazette* was from the Korean National Association, which was also connected to the *Sinhan kukbo*. See Tongnip Kinyōmgwan, iii-x.

¹⁰⁵ "T'oil noso [Words conquering Japan]," *Sinhan kukbo* (Honolulu), November 9, 1909.

In the following week's edition, the editorialist seemed to take great delight in Japanese mourning. Under the sub-headline, "Did you hope for some luck?" the editorial described how after Japanese people learned that Itō had been shot, but before news had been released that he was dead, they were not sure what to do, pulling their hair and licking their lips to overcome the dry mouth which now assailed them. The editorialist then went on to describe the assassination once again, reporting that the "Korean patriot" had killed "that old thief" Itō to avenge his country and on behalf of all the patriots—not out of a personal grudge.¹⁰⁶ The editorialist then went on to describe various reactions to Itō's death. The British were concerned with the issue of Manchuria, which Itō had lied about and schemed over so that Japan could seize it, and diplomats all said that Itō was wicked and that it was not surprising he had been killed by an infuriated Korean. However, Korean hopes that the assassination would lead to intervention were not fulfilled because Itō had tricked the other powers into believing that he had helped Korea, and they were therefore sympathetic towards him and Japan. There was still hope as there was a rumor that an "eminent Korean" was encouraging the Korean people to rise up so that they could gain international attention and sympathy.

Reactions to the assassination by the newspapers of other expatriate Korean communities, such as the *Sinhan minbo* (*The New Korean Gazette*), published in San Francisco, and the *Taedong kongpo* (*Great East Reporter*) published in Vladivostok, were similar to those of the *Singuk kukpo*.¹⁰⁷ The reaction of Korean language newspapers in Korea was more complex, as censorship and the threat of punishment prevented them from publishing freely. The *Hwangsōng sinmun* (*Capitol Gazette*) and the *Chaeguk sinmun* (*Empire Gazette*) both publicly treated Itō's

¹⁰⁶ "Idŭng p'isal sangjōng [Details on the slaying of Itō]," *Sinhan kukbo* (Honolulu), November 16, 1909.

¹⁰⁷ Han Sanggwŏn, "An Chunggŭn ŭigŏ-e taehan chaemi tongp'o ŭi panŭng: Sinhan minpo rŭl chungsim-ŭro [Overseas reactions to An Chunggŭn's righteous act: concentrating on the *New Korean Gazette*]," in *An Chunggŭn yŏn'gu ŭi kich'o*, ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 253-80.

death as illegitimate and sent representatives to his funeral in Japan. The *Taehan maeil sinbo* (*Korean Daily Mail*) took a rather different approach, its staff in fact celebrating Itō's demise. It had, however, to be more careful in its public voice and so its reporting on the assassination and its aftermath was more subdued than that of Korean newspapers published overseas.¹⁰⁸ Thus, while coercion did stifle public displays of support for An in Korea, the fact that some were willing to push the boundaries of censorship, while others were not, indicates that there were Koreans who genuinely believed the assassination was wrong, or at least mistaken.¹⁰⁹

While overseas Koreans applauded the assassination of Itō Hirobumi, which gained the worldwide attention An Chunggŭn desired, it failed not only to obtain the intervention or policy change he hoped for, but to even provoke serious discussion on the issues of Korean independence, peace in the East, and the suffering endured by Koreans under the Residency-General. This was in a large part because his means, the assassination of a government official, particularly one as popular and well-respected as Itō, were rejected out of hand as illegitimate by those whose opinion he courted, and as he was understood as being driven by selfish and irrational motives, his ends were not deemed worthy of consideration. It was the nationalistic and imperial civilized and civilizing nation-state that possessed the monopoly on the discourse of enlightenment thought, which trumped the nationalism of uncivilized nations and had the power to determine what constituted legitimate violence and to enforce its judgments. These empires, and the journalists who spoke for them, chose to hang together.

¹⁰⁸ Sin Unyong, "An Chunggŭn-e kwanhan sinmun charyo ūi yŏn'gu: 'Manju ilil sinmun' ūl chungsim-ŭro [A study of newspapers connected to An Chunggŭn: focusing on the *Manchuria Daily News*], in *An Chunggŭn yŏn'gu ūi kich'o*, ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 35-75. While the *Taehan maeil sinbo* did manage to print the fifteen reasons An had for killing Itō, its use of "matter" rather than "crime," like the *Keijō shimpo*, minimized their impact, though it did make known to Koreans who could not read Japanese why An had acted as he did. See "Iyu sib-o-cho [Fifteen reasons]," *Taehan maeil sinbo*, November 21, 1909.

¹⁰⁹ For more on those Koreans who saw the assassination as illegitimate see Sin Unyong, "An Chunggŭn ūigŏ-e taehan kugoe ūi insik kwa panŭng: chaeoe Hanin ūl chungsim-ŭro [Understandings of and reactions to An Chunggŭn's righteous act outside of Korea: focusing on overseas Koreans]," in *An Chunggŭn yŏn'gu ūi kich'o*, ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 181-220.

However, while there was no danger of the Western countries intervening in Korea, Japan faced other difficulties. An's assassination of Itō had opened up a space in which Westerners challenged Japan's level of civilization, threatening its power and prestige on an international level, as well as bringing light to bear on uncomfortable issues, such as its activities in Korea and Manchuria. The representatives of the Japanese colonial project sought to deal with this challenge through the *Seoul Press*, asserting their country's power and civilized status through images of An and Itō that were starker and more polarized than those appearing in Western newspaper articles. In so doing, they portrayed An and the assassination as evidence of the need to civilize Korea, and even justified the use of harsher measures in the colony, should they be required, in order to pacify it. And so, Koreans were essentially portrayed in two ways in connection to An's violence. An, and those like him, proved Korea was barbarically, that is, illegitimately, violent, and needed the Japanese civilizing project, while other Koreans, including their monarch, were presented as rejecting that violence and welcoming Itō and the progress he brought, to the same effect. Despite Korean opposition, during An's trial and its aftermath, this narrative of a wicked and barbaric Korean who unjustly murdered a great statesman and paragon of peace would be developed further, rhetorically strengthening the legitimacy of the Japanese colonial project in Korea.

Chapter 6: The Trial and Execution of An Chunggŭn

An, a Korean subject, killed Itō, a Japanese subject and a well-known statesman, while Itō was on a controversial visit with a Russian representative to discuss the Manchurian issue, on Chinese territory controlled by Russia. The assassination therefore had an inherently international dimension and attracted world-wide attention, making it necessary for Japan to give An a public, and at least apparently, fair trial. Failure to do so would harm Japan's image as an enlightened country, as one of the most important indicators of a country's level of civilization was the quality of its court system. For instance, the fact that the Western empires had given up extraterritoriality in Japan was recognition that the nation had achieved such a high a level of civilization that it could be trusted to administer justice in an enlightened manner, raising its prestige, and hence its power, on the world stage.¹

The Japanese government hoped that Western countries would also surrender extraterritorial rights in Korea, as the Residency-General had assumed control of the country's justice system on November 1, 1909. Doing so would further signify that Japan was not only a civilized nation-state, but a civilizing empire.² In contrast, the refusal to do so, and criticism of the Japanese-run courts in Korea, brought into question the efficacy of Japan's civilizing mission in the country.³ Causing further problems was the fact that Korean Christians frequently relied on the extraterritorial rights of foreign missionaries, limiting the power of the Japanese colonial state.⁴ It was therefore necessary for Japan to show that it, and its colonial judiciary, was

¹ See Dan Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 198.

² "Judicial administration in Korea," *Seoul Press*, November 3, 1909.

³ "Mr. Hulbert on the Korean situation," *Seoul Press*, November 25, 1909.

⁴ "Extraterritoriality in Korea," *Seoul Press*, November 18, 1909.

civilized. It would do so by meeting Western expectations and giving An Chunggŭn, the slayer of one of its greatest statesman, a public trial.

While An hoped to use the trial as an opportunity to make his case, there was no chance that he would bring intervention on behalf of Korea or induce a change in Japanese policy. However, he could harm Japan's international image as an enlightened country and inspire Korean resistance to Japanese rule. At the same time, Japan's treatment of An could lend credence to the image of an enlightened Japan and an uncivilized Korea, legitimizing the empire. As we trace the story of An's trial and its aftermath, we will see that it was this narrative of the proponents of the Japanese colonial project that achieved dominance, enabling them to rhetorically transform An into one more justification for Japan's civilizing mission on the peninsula.

Pre-trial Interrogation

Before An could be tried he was interrogated in order to determine how deep the plot to kill Itō went and to collect evidence for the coming trial. Interrogating An was not easy. He did not willingly give information on his compatriots, claiming he could not remember the names of people he was connected with.⁵ He even refused to answer questions on at least one occasion.⁶

⁵ For example, An claimed that he could not remember Father Le Gac's name, though he was a priest he was very close to. See the second session of An Chunggŭn's interrogation, November 14, 1909, 215-17. There are multiple editions of An Chunggŭn's interrogation transcripts (all of which include versions of the trial transcripts), which were originally written by hand in Japanese and then printed. Printed copies of the transcripts can be found in Ichikawa Masaaki ed., *An Jūkon to Nikkan kankeishi* [An Chunggŭn and Japanese and Korean relations] (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1979). There are also four comprehensive Korean translations of the transcripts: Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Han'guk tongnip undongsa* [History of the Korean independence movement], vol. 7 (Seoul: Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 1978); Sin Yongha, ed., *An Chunggŭn yugojip* [A collection of An Chunggŭn's writings] (Seoul: Yŏnminsa, 1995); Yi Kiung tr., *An Chunggŭn chŏnjaeng kkŭnnajianatta* [An Chunggŭn's war has not ended] (Seoul: Yŏrhwadang, 2000); Sin Unyong, trans., *An Chunggŭn sinmun kirok* [The interrogation records of An Chunggŭn] (Seoul: Ch'aeryun, 2010). Sin Unyong's volume includes, in addition to a Korean translation, copies

Moreover, An frequently lied, for instance, claiming at first that both of his parents were dead (his mother was in fact still living), that he did not know Wu Töksun (one of the participants in the plot to kill Itō) and that not only had he not been baptized by a foreign priest, he had not even ever heard one preach.⁷ An probably sought to deceive the interrogators in order to protect his family, compatriots, and the Catholic Church.

Despite these difficulties, and Japanese practice in Korea, An was not tortured.⁸ In fact, he recorded in his autobiography that he was treated with exceptional care, receiving “high-quality cigarettes from various countries with lots of western sweets and tea,” three meals a day, “all with high quality white rice,” new underclothes and an ample supply of cotton blankets, and an assortment of fruits. His interpreter provided him with a bottle of milk everyday and the prosecutor who interrogated him would buy him chicken. He therefore found it “difficult to describe all the kind things they did for me and impossible to thank them enough.”⁹ It is unlikely that the prison officials were particularly fond of the man who had assassinated one of their leading statesmen, and the feelings of the constable who boarded An’s prison train and proceeded to beat him probably reflected their true emotions.¹⁰ Instead, such treatment of An was meant to show that Japan followed civilized standards regarding prisoners, and was therefore dutifully printed in the *Seoul Press*.¹¹

of the original handwritten transcripts and the printed Japanese transcription. When referring to An Chunggŭn’s interrogation records, I will give the session number and the date so that the reference can be found in any of these sources, as well as the page numbers of the printed Japanese from Sin’s edition. In conducting my research, I focused on the Korean translations and referred to the Japanese originals when necessary.

⁶ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 178-79.

⁷ First session of An Chunggŭn’s interrogation, October 30, 1909, 204-13.

⁸ Japan did use torture on those who resisted its colonial project in Korea when there was little risk of attracting media attention. For example, Hŏ Wi, a guerilla army general, was tortured, dying in jail from such treatment. See Dudden, 76-81.

⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 176-77.

¹⁰ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 175.

¹¹ See the *Seoul Press* articles “The trial of Prince Ito’s assassin,” December 17, 1909; “Examination of the assassin of Prince Ito,” January 1, 1910. The first article mentions a “Mr. Michaeloff,” a Russian, but only describes Douglas as visiting. The second article mentions two “foreigners” visiting but does not state the name or nationality

An's exemplary treatment in prison was intended to influence him as well. In addition to encouraging him to talk, it was also meant to convert him, to convince him to repudiate his assassination of Itō.¹² For him to do so would have denied the legitimacy of resistance to Japan's colonial project and justified its rule in Korea, which could reform even a violent assassin.¹³ An extended attempt at such a conversion can be seen in An's eighth interrogation session, which took place on December 20, 1909.¹⁴ The prosecutor, Mizobuchi Takao, began by stating that for the last seven years England and Japan had worked together to maintain Korea's territorial integrity and independence, and that Japan had promised to protect the dignity of Korea's royal house.¹⁵ Itō Hirobumi had made these intentions clear during his tour of Korea with Emperor Sunjong.¹⁶ Mizobuchi then quoted from speeches in which Itō explained that he had come to help guide Korea so that it could develop culturally and materially, not to destroy it. It was the "insurgents" (J. *bōto*) themselves who, because of their violent resistance to Japan's efforts to reform their country, threatened Korea's annihilation. An responded that he thought Itō was lying. Mizobuchi then tried to convince An that Japan was actually promoting Korea's development by informing him that it had made up for shortfalls in the Korean budget. An was unmoved, however, taking this as proof that Japan was infringing on Korea's internal affairs.

of either. In fact, both Douglas and Michaeloff visited An. See Kuksa Pyōnch'an Wiwōnhoe, "Hōn'gi che ichōn-yukpaek-samsip-sa-ho [Legal report number 2634]," 7:250-51.

¹² An, while moved by the treatment he received, was also suspicious about the true motives of the prison staff. See Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yōksa*, 176.

¹³ This bears a certain resemblance to *tenkō* (political conversion), which was utilized by Japanese authorities against "thought-criminals," such as Marxists, especially in the 1930's. For a brief comparison of *tenkō* as applied by Japanese authorities in Japan and Korea during the colonial period, see Chulwoo Lee, "Modernity, Legality, and Power in Korea under Japanese Rule," in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, eds. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 47-48.

¹⁴ Eighth session of An Chunggūn's interrogation, December 20, 1909, 307-21.

¹⁵ This is apparently a reference to the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902.

¹⁶ To see how Itō used his tour with Emperor Sunjong to legitimate Japan's colonial project in Korea, see Christine Kim, "Politics and Pageantry in Protectorate Korea (1905-10): The Imperial Progresses of Sunjong," *Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 3 (August 2009): 835-59.

Mizobuchi then asked An a series of questions, such as whether Korean kings had been invested by Chinese emperors or not, designed to show that Korea had never been truly independent. An was forced to answer “yes” to each one, acknowledging that Korea had not thrown off the last vestiges of ceremonial dependence on China until the declaration of the “Great Han Empire” in 1897. Even then, the country had not be able to function as a truly independence state—Japan had to fight Russia in order to protect Korean independence. Mizobuchi then continued his history lesson with a discussion of the Treaty of Kanghwa of 1876. According to the prosecutor, Japan had sought a friendly relationship with Korea but Koreans had fired shore batteries on their navy. The Japanese pro-war faction wanted to attack Korea, and Itō, though he did not have power at the time, disagreed. In the end, Itō’s side prevailed, and since then, he had always sought to help Korea maintain its independence. If only An understood the history of his country, he would have realized that Itō was the friend of Korea.¹⁷

The prosecutor then went on to argue that misgovernment by the Chosŏn state, especially the problem of factionalism, had prevented the enlightenment of the Korean people and the development of the country’s national strength, which was necessary for independence. Korea was now so weak it could not put down the insurgents, manage its internal affairs, see that justice was done in its courts, defend its people or their property, or stop officials from selling offices and collecting taxes as they saw fit. However, Japan could help Korea obtain true independence by reforming its government, building schools where students could learn of civilization, and establishing transportation and communication networks.

¹⁷ Mizobuchi seems to be combining two incidents. The first was the “conquer Korea” debate of 1873, when there was a discussion over whether or not to invade Korea because it refused to accept the changes Japan wished to bring to the diplomatic protocol that governed how the two countries related. This was related to, but still separate from the incursion that provoked Korean shore batteries into firing on Japanese warships in 1875, which led eventually to the signing of the Kanghwa treaty in 1876. See Duus, 38-49 and Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 23-33.

Though An acknowledged that there was some truth in Mizobuchi's statements, he questioned Japan's motives and registered his disagreement with some of the prosecutor's arguments. Mizobuchi asked An how he could think he was right when he did not know either the current situation of his country or its history and had learned everything solely through newspapers. An insisted that his views were based on solid evidence. Mizobuchi responded by pointing to the imperial rescript issued by Emperor Sunjong in which he said that An's evil deed had done great harm to the country.¹⁸ An stated that in the future it would be seen who was right and wrong and that he had to fight for his country. An then implied that, since the rescript passed through the resident-general's hands, it might not actually reflect the emperor's true thoughts.

Mizobuchi then switched tactics again, asking An if he thought that, if he assassinated Itō, it would nullify the protectorate treaty. An said no, that he killed Itō in order to announce to the world that he had been responsible for the deaths of many people, including those who died in the chaos around the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868), as well as the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars. Mizobuchi disagreed and said that one person could not be blamed for the wars. An agreed, but contended that Itō had called for wars against China and Japan and so could not be blameless. Mizobuchi then argued that Itō did not execute Korean insurgents indiscriminately, and paid compensation to the families of innocents who were accidentally killed. An responded sarcastically that Itō had killed people on behalf of Korea and that he had killed him for the same purpose. Their aims and means were therefore the same. Apparently angry, Mizobuchi said that An's arguments proceeded from his "warped thinking" and that he was "ignorant." An responded that people thought differently, and that though his way of

¹⁸ An English translation of the rescript was printed in the *Seoul Press*. See "An Imperial Rescript," November 7, 1909. A Japanese translation was printed in the *Keijō shimpō*, see "Kokusō Kantei shōchoku [The Korean emperor's funeral rescript]," November 5, 1909.

thinking was not the same as Mizobuchi's, that did not make it "warped" or a "ignorant." Itō had thought the means utilized by the insurgents were illegitimate, so he killed them. An had done the same to Itō.

Mizobuchi then asked An if he differentiated between the acts of a government official and an individual. An responded that he had not simply killed Itō as an individual, but as a representative of the Korean people on behalf of their country and for peace in the East. Moreover, An asserted that Itō, despite being a government official, was still an individual, implying that he was still morally responsible for his actions. Mizobuchi responded that there were situations where government officials had to carefully weigh a situation and then act, even in the face of minority opposition. He again insulted An, saying that his thinking was shallow and he was narrow-minded. An refused to be brow-beaten, arguing that he knew that he was right and that Itō had forced the Korean government to accept the protectorate treaty. Mizobuchi contended that Itō had done no such thing. He pointed out that, while France had forced Vietnam and Tunisia to sign protectorate treaties, the historical record was clear that Japan had not. At the same time, Mizobuchi admitted that Korea faced a situation in which it did not have any choice but to accept the treaty, implicitly admitting some element of coercion. Again, in a difficult position, he was forced to turn to insults, calling An stubborn. An would not be cowed and continued to assert that Korea had been forced into signing the treaties. At last, realizing he was not getting anywhere, the prosecutor gave up and changed the subject.

Such attempts to convince An that he was wrong failed. Moreover, they also showed the danger he posed to Japanese prestige and image as a civilized nation in an open courtroom, as he baldly questioned Japanese honesty, and the good intentions of Itō and the Japanese empire. Moreover, he challenged the axiomatic principle that state officials were inviolable and above

personal morality. In doing so, An put Mizobuchi on the defensive, forcing him to rely on insults rather than evidence to defend his position. While it was doubtful that the great empires could be swayed to An's side, he could harm Japan's image and, if he proved to be sympathetic in court, gain some support for the cause of Korean independence, potentially harming the legitimacy and implementation of Japan's colonial project. An in fact hoped to do just that, writing in his autobiography that, though he believed he would not receive a fair trial and the prosecution would try and "twist the truth," he would be able to show that he was in the right.¹⁹

The Trial of An Chunggŭn

Characteristics of the Trial

An Chunggŭn was tried, along with his three fellow defendants, Wu Töksun (1876-1950), Cho Tosŏn (1879-?), and Yu Tongha (1892-1918), in a Japanese court in Lüshun (then referred to as Port Arthur by Westerners), a part of the Kwantung Government-General.²⁰ While there was some attempt to determine the degree of guilt of An's co-defendants, most of the trial focused on him. The trial stretched over six sessions, beginning on February 7, 1910, and ending on February 14 of that year. The first three sessions were dedicated to going over the facts of the case, though the defendants were also given the chance to make statements during the third session. The prosecutor, Mizobuchi, and An's two Japanese defense lawyers, made their cases in the fourth and fifth sessions respectively. During the latter session, the defendants, including An,

¹⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 177.

²⁰ For a general overview of the characteristics of the trial, see Han Sanggwŏn, "An Chunggŭn ŭi Haŏlbin kŏsa wa kongp'an t'ujaeng (1): kŏmch'algwān kwa ŭi nonchaeng ŭl chungsim-ŭro [An Chunggŭn's resort to arms at Harbin and the battle during the trial (1): focusing on his battle with the prosecutor]," *Yŏksa wa hyŏnsil* [History and reality] 54 (December 2004), 287-320.

were allowed to make a final statement. The verdict and sentencing were announced during the sixth and final session on the fourteenth.²¹

The trial was conducted in Japanese, with only limited Korean interpretation. An was frustrated by this, as well as by the composition of his defense team. Just before the trial began, an English lawyer named Douglas, as well as the Russian Constantine Michaeloff, hired to defend An, applied to represent him but were rejected by the court.²² A Korean lawyer named An Pyŏngch'an was likewise refused permission to defend him.²³ Japanese law did not allow non-Japanese citizens to appear as lawyers in Japanese courts.²⁴ However, though the court was not required by law to do so, it would appoint two Japanese lawyers for the defense.²⁵ This was

²¹ Resident-General Sone had in fact received instructions that the trial was to be completed as quickly as possible while minimizing the opportunity for the defendants to speak. See Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, "Chŏnbo che samsip-p'al-ho (ŭmho) [Telegram number 38 (secret)]," 7:479-80. While, as we shall see, some Western commentators did not see the trial as unduly short, Father Wilhelm would later criticize Bishop Mutel for "making judgments faster than a Japanese court." See Wilhelm's 1910-1911 annual report to Mutel, a Korean translation of which can be found in An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe, ed., *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa* [The history of An Chunggŭn] (Seoul: An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe), 2009, 166.

²² Constantine Michaeloff had served as a scout for the Russian army during the Russo-Japanese War and had stayed on in Vladivostok where he, apparently because of his Korean language skills, took cases from Korean clients. He was understood to still be under orders from the Russian government and so would have been particularly unacceptable as a lawyer for An from the Japanese point of view. Kuksa Wiwŏnhoe, "Kobibal che sip-ku-ho [Top secret dispatch number 19]," 7:522-23.

²³ He was considered to be anti-Japanese by the colonial state and had submitted a memorial to the Korean government protesting the 1905 protectorate treaty. Kuksa Wiwŏnhoe, "Chŏnbo che sip-ho [Telegram number 10]," 7:468-69.

²⁴ See, "The trial of Prince Ito's assassin," *Seoul Press*, February 20, 1910. For a copy of the rejection see Yi Kiung, 201.

²⁵ See "The Assassin of Prince Ito," *Seoul Press*, February 18, 1910 and the fifth Session of An Chunggŭn's trial, February 12, 1910, 303-5. There are essentially two sources recording what was said at trial: the official government transcripts and the stenographic notes of a Japanese journalist who observed the trial directly. Summaries of his transcriptions were subsequently published in the *Manshū nichinichi shimpō* [Manchuria daily news], and the transcriptions themselves were published on March 28, 1910 as a book entitled *An Jūkon jiken kōhan sokkiroku* [Stenographic records of the trial of the An Chunggŭn incident] by that same paper (See Kim Tohyŏng, ed., *Taehan kugin An Chunggŭn charyojip* (Seoul: Sŏnin, 2008), 18-19). The citations for the various collections of documents related to An that include trial transcripts are given above in footnote 5. The editions of Ichikawa Masaaki and Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe contain the original Japanese and a Korean translation of the official government transcripts respectively, while those of Sin Yongha and Yi Kiung translate from the book published by the *Manshū nichinichi shimpō*. Sin Unyong, director of the An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe, recently published editions of both sources that include the original handwritten Japanese, the printed Japanese, and Korean translations. For the official government records, see Sin Unyong, trans., *An Chunggŭn-Wu Tōksun-Cho Tosŏn-Yu Tongha kongp'an kirok: An Chunggŭn sakkŏn kongp'an kirok sinmun kirok* [The trial records of An Chunggŭn, Wu Tōksun, Cho Tosŏn, Yu Tongha: the trial records of the An Chunggŭn incident] (Seoul: Ch'aeryun, 2010). For the stenographic records taken by the Japanese journalist, see Sin Unyong, trans., *An Chunggŭn-Wu Tōksun-Cho*

fortunate for Japan as having non-Japanese lawyers would have meant providing English or Russian interpretation, or more Korean interpretation than was actually given, making its proceedings more accessible to Western and Korean journalists, who might use them to portray Japan in an unflattering light or widely report any embarrassing incidents.²⁶ Moreover, by providing the defense it would make sure that An would be represented by men who would not challenge the legitimacy of the Japanese colonial project.

The Case against An Chunggŭn

The first three days of the trial were dedicated to determining the basic facts of the case. Then, on February 10, in the fourth session of the trial, Mizobuchi made his case against the defendants.²⁷ As there was no question that An had killed Itō, Mizobuchi's argument centered around deflecting An's challenge to the Japanese colonial project and in ensuring that An would be seen in the most negative of terms, preventing any sympathy to his cause. He thus began to argue that An's assassination of Itō essentially arose from a misunderstanding of his country's situation, Itō's character, and international law and relations, leading him to blindly follow anti-Japanese newspapers and activists. These misunderstandings caused him to see Itō, who

Tosŏn·Yu Tongha kongp'an kirok: An Chunggŭn sakkŏn kongp'an sokkirok [The trial records of An Chunggŭn, Wu Tŏksun, Cho Tosŏn, Yu Tongha: the stenographic trial records of the An Chunggŭn incident] (Seoul: Ch'aeryun, 2010). As with the interrogation records I will give the date and session number being referred to and the page numbers of the original printed Japanese found in Sin Unyong's edition of the government records. Where the stenographic records provide information that was left out of the government transcripts, I will cite them specifically. In conducting my research I focused on the Korean translations and referred to the Japanese originals when necessary.

²⁶ An English lawyer wrote a letter to Japanese officials warning them that allowing an "English barrister" to defend An would enable him to make his case to an English-speaking audience. He offered his services to counter this threat. His letter can be found in Kim Ch'angsu, ed., *Haeoe ūi tongnip undong saryo* [Historical records of the overseas independence movement] (Seoul: Kukka Pohunch'ŏ, 1995), 13:364-66.

²⁷ Fourth session of An Chunggŭn's trial, February 10, 1909, 207-208. The government records of the trial only include Mizobuchi's argument that Japan should have jurisdiction and apply Japanese law, as well as what statutes should be applied to punish the defendants. For Mizobuchi's full remarks cited here, see Sin Unyong, trans., *An Chunggŭn·Wu Tŏksun·Cho Tosŏn·Yu Tongha kongp'an kirok* (Seoul: Ch'aeryun, 2010), 382-95.

Mizobuchi referred to as “Korea’s savior,” as an enemy and to kill him out of revenge for his Korean policy. The prosecutor then attacked An’s character, pointing out that though he portrayed himself as a hero and a patriot, he had committed robbery in order to obtain travel funds so he could assassinate Itō. Mizobuchi then questioned how someone like him could claim to be the representative of the Korean people, and categorized An’s killing of Itō as one more lamentable event in Korea’s sad and frustrating history.

Mizobuchi then turned to clearing up An’s misunderstandings by narrating what he contended was the true history between the two countries, and by explaining Japan’s true intentions towards the peninsula. He began with the Kanghwa Treaty of 1876, which declared that Japan would respect Korea’s independence. Similarly, in the August 1894 agreement between the two countries, Japan had promised to bring domestic reforms to Korea and maintain its independence. In the following years, in talks with Russia and those connected with the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, Japan had consistently referred to Korea as an independent nation. Unfortunately, the relationship between Japan and Russia had broken down, leading to the Russo-Japanese War. Shortly after hostilities commenced, the Japan-Korean Protocol of February 23, 1904 stated that Korea would follow Japan’s advice. And it was upon this advice, and not military pressure, that the protectorate treaty was signed in 1905.²⁸ Thus, the Korean state had freely entered into its unequal relationship with Japan and explicitly accepted its civilizing mission.

Prince Itō, one of the great men who helped establish the modern Japanese nation, then went to Korea as resident-general, sincerely devoting himself to the betterment of the country. In order to clear up Korean misunderstandings of Japanese policy, he went on a tour of the country with Emperor Sunjong and gave speeches explaining Japan’s true intentions. Mizobuchi

²⁸ For the text of the treaty see F.A. McKenzie, 305-6.

then cited these addresses in which Itō spoke of his love for Korea and his country's intention to protect its neighbor and help it to develop its national strength. Itō next turned to the insurgency. While noting that he and Korean guerillas shared the same desire for a free and independent Korea, the means they pursued were very different. And it was their stubborn, violent resistance in the face of the international situation and Korea's own need for reform, and not the actions of the Japanese, that threatened the future of Korea. Itō pointed out that because Japan was educating the Korean people, developing its industries, and assisting its emperor, it was clear that it was not trying to take over the country. Such was Itō's devotion to Korea that he later declared that if he could devote his strength to work for both countries, he could die at peace. An Chunggūn was the polar opposite of Itō. He had long harbored murderous intent towards the prince and abandoned his family to carry out his designs. Though he had claimed to kill Itō for Korean independence and peace in the East, he had in fact done so out of a personal grudge. His ignorance about Korea and its relationship with Japan was laughable and his opposition to its policy had disturbed the same peace he claimed to safeguard.

Having established a narrative utilizing the history of the relationship between Korea and Japan and the motives and characters of An and Itō to justify the Japanese colonial project in Korea, Mizobuchi turned to the issue of jurisdiction. Because An had killed Itō on Chinese territory controlled by the Russians, there was a question over whether or not Japan actually had the authority to try An. Mizobuchi asserted Japan's jurisdiction by pointing out that both Japan and Korea enjoyed extraterritorial rights in China. Therefore the Chinese clearly did not have the right to try the case. He then pointed out that a Japanese law of 1899 gave jurisdiction over Japanese subjects in Harbin to the consul. This was again confirmed in 1900. Mizobuchi then argued that, since the 1905 treaty signed with Korea stated that it was under Japanese protection,

authority over Koreans abroad naturally fell to Japan and the consul. This principle had already been recognized by the Japanese Foreign Ministry in 1908. Then, on October 27, 1909, one day after the assassination of Itō, jurisdiction was transferred from the Japanese consul to the Kwantung judiciary by the same ministry. Thus, legally, the Japanese court in Kwantung had jurisdiction over the case.²⁹

Mizobuchi then turned to the question of which law should be applied: Korean or Japanese. Someone could argue that since Koreans enjoyed extraterritorial rights in China, Korean law should be applied. However, Mizobuchi contended that because Korea was under the protection of Japan, Korean laws should be brought into conformity with their Japanese counterparts. Therefore, Japanese law should be applied. Moreover, since Japan followed the principle of equality before the law, in exercising its jurisdiction over Koreans it could not apply different laws to different nationalities. The unspoken premise here was that Korea was a protected country and as such, its laws were not as civilized as those of Japan. Therefore the more enlightened Japanese statutes should be applied.³⁰

Having shown that Japan had the authority to punish An and what law should be applied, Mizobuchi turned to the question of how severe his punishment should be. The prosecutor first noted that murder harmed humanity as a whole and damaged public peace and order. Moreover, human life had an objective value, and so those who took it should be treated the same way, regardless of motive. Because murder was such a serious crime, An had to be punished with death. A lighter penalty would cheapen human life and destroy morality. However, because his

²⁹ Mizobuchi gave little attention to the possibility of Russian jurisdiction. This was likely because Russia had already basically ceded Japan the right to exercise jurisdiction over Koreans in Manchuria in previous cases. See Sin Unyong, “Ilche ūi kugoe Hanin-e taehan sabōpkwōn ch’imt’al kwa An Chunggūn chaep’an [The Japanese Empire’s seizure of jurisdiction regarding Koreans overseas and An Chunggūn’s trial],” *Han’guksa yŏn’gu* [Studies on Korean history], no. 146 (September 2009): 207-44.

³⁰ Mizobuchi’s argument over equality matches the advice given by the Foreign Ministry. See Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, “Chōnbo che sam-ho [Telegram number 3],” 7:475.

argument that motive should not be considered in determining sentence might not be accepted, Mizobuchi then turned to that issue. He argued that despite An's statements to the contrary, he had really killed Itō out of a personal desire for revenge. Proof that An's crime was personal rather than political in nature could be seen in the fact that Itō was no longer resident-general and that his death would not cancel the protectorate treaty nor lead to concrete political gains for Korea. Mizobuchi then developed an alternative theory to explain why An had killed Itō. He pointed out that An had never held steady work, that he had failed as an educator, and that his righteous army had been defeated. His attempt to run a business, a coal mine, had likewise failed, forcing him to flee Korea.³¹ He therefore killed Itō in order to regain his lost honor and to make everyone forget about his many failures.

Mizobuchi then sought to connect An to Korea's past and future. He noted that in pre-modern Korean politics, factions had killed each other in order both to gain power and to eliminate their enemies once they had seized it. They justified their actions by claiming that it was for the country, and therefore not murder. This had continued into the modern period, with Sō Chaep'il (Philip Jaisohn, 1864-1951) and his accomplices attempting to kill Min Yōngik (1860-1914) in 1884 and Hong Chongu (1850-1913) assassinating Kim Okkyun (1851-1894) in 1894. And just two years previously, in 1908, Chang Inhwan (1875-1930) had assassinated Durham White Stevens (1851-1908).³² The fact that none of these people had been severely punished led An to believe that not only would he escape punishment, but that he might even be

³¹ In An's narrative of events it was not the failure of the coal mine but the events of 1907, specifically the forced abdication of Kojong, the signing of a new treaty, and the disbanding of the Korean army, that convinced him to leave Korea. See Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yōksa*, 157. Mizobuchi's argument seems to be based on the findings of a Japanese report which connected An's leaving Korea to the failure of the coal mine. See Kuksa Pyōnch'an Wiwōnhoe, "Hōn'gi che ichōn-ibaek-samsip-sam-ho [Legal report number 2233]," 7:204.

³² Durham White Stevens was an American who technically worked for the Korean government but, in reality, acted as the employee of the Japanese colonial state. One of his duties was to build a positive image of Japan's protectorate among English-speaking Westerners and to encourage them to accept it as legitimate. He was assassinated by Chang Inhwan (1875-1930) and Chōn Myōngun (1884-1947). See Dudden, 81-89.

given a reward, adding further incentive for him to kill Itō. If An were not punished severely, other Koreans would continue this scandalous history of killing talented people. An had in fact already inspired Yi Chaemyōng (1890-1910) to attack the prime minister of Korea Yi Wanyong (1857-1926) the previous December. Koreans were violent, and only the execution of An would teach them the value of human life.

The Defense

In the third trial session, after the facts of the case had been given, An Chunggūn and the other defendants were given a chance to make statements. An freely admitted to killing Itō, and by way of defense, argued that he was an evil man and that the policy he had pursued, and which the Japanese state continued to pursue, on the peninsula was unjust and harmful to its interests and those of Korea. An hoped that through his argument he could convince Japan to change its policy or another empire to intervene on Korea's behalf. Thus, he began his statement by explaining that he had killed Itō in order to show to the world the truth of his criminal activities in Korea. He then pointed out that the emperor of Japan had stated that his country was fighting to preserve Korean independence and peace in the East in his declaration of war against Russia in 1904. An then argued that Itō had forced the signing of the 1905 and 1907 treaties, dethroned the Korean emperor, and disbanded the army. He had also ordered the assassination of Queen Min.³³ By betraying both the Korean and Japanese emperors he had committed treason and threatened peace in the East. Koreans responded to Itō's villainy by rising up in "righteous

³³ Itō was not directly connected to the assassination of Queen Min. However, because he was prime minister at the time and those responsible went unpunished, An seems to have believed that he had ordered it. For a description of the assassination, see Duus, 108-12. For the acquittal of those implicated in it, see Fred Harvey Harrington, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 287.

armies” to defend their country, and it was as a lieutenant-general in one of those armies that An had killed Itō. Therefore, An argued that he should be treated as a prisoner-of-war rather than a criminal and tried in an international court.³⁴

An then charged that Itō had assassinated the Kōmei Emperor, the father of Meiji (1852-1912). At this point, the judge, concerned that such accusations might harm public order, cleared the courtroom. He told An that he could continue to talk, but An responded that there was no point without an audience. He and the judge argued for a short time, and then An decided to continue. He restated his case against Itō saying that “Itō killed Korean people, forced the former emperor to abdicate, and treated the current emperor like his own servant, so I killed him like a person swats a fly.” An then described himself as a hero who gave his life for the country, thereby teaching others the meaning of loyalty. In comparison, An contended that Itō thought that “killing whoever he liked made him a hero.” If Itō had followed the will of the Japanese emperor, An contended, then Korea, Japan, and China could have formed an alliance that would spread peace and enlightenment throughout the world. An then ended his statement by saying that he had killed Itō because the official had deluded the Japanese emperor and people about the true situation in Korea.

³⁴ An did not develop this argument during the trial and did not cite any specific laws in his defense. A Japanese government telegram reported that An made an argument, based on the clause 76 of the old criminal code of Japan that, since he was acting on the orders of a superior (a certain Kim Tose), he should be found to be innocent of any crime. See Kuksa Pyōnch’an Wiwōnhoe, “Chōnbo [Telegram],” 7:485-86. An had probably learned of this clause from a law book that An Pyōngch’an had given him. See “Yōsun T’ongsin (i) [Lüshun Correspondence],” *Taehan Maeil Sinbo*, February 2, 1910. For a modern translation of this article, see Yun Hyōngdu, ed., *An Chunggūn ūisa chasōjōn* [An Chunggūn’s autobiography] (Seoul: Pōmusa, 2007), 154-55. It does not seem that An had much of a case, according to international law, to be designated a prisoner of war. Hisakazu Fujita notes that at the time prisoner of war status was usually only recognized in conflicts between “civilized” countries, with indigenous people fighting colonial powers not being counted as such. An also does not appear to have fit any of the four categories that were stipulated in the 1899 Geneva Convention as having prisoner of war status should they be captured. See Hisakazu Fujita, “POWs and International Law,” in *Japanese Prisoners of War*, eds. Philip Towle, Margaret Kosuge, and Yōichi Kibata (London: Hambledon Press, 2000), 87-102. For the argument that An deserved prisoner of war status, see Yi Changhoe, “An Chunggūn chaep’an-e taehan kukchebōpchōk p’yōngga [An evaluation of An Chunggūn’s trial from the standpoint of international law],” (paper presented at An Chunggūn ūisa sun’guk 99-chugi ch’umosik [Commemoration of the ninety-ninth anniversary of An Chunggūn’s patriotic martyrdom], Seoul, South Korea, March 25, 2009), 38-47.

After the prosecutor rested, the state-appointed defense made their case in the fifth session of the trial. As An had admitted to killing Itō, they focused on the issue of punishment. The first Japanese defense lawyer, Kamada Shōji, while accepting that Japan had the right to try An, argued that as the protector of Korea it acted as its representative. Therefore, out of respect for Korean authority, it should apply Korean law. However, since Korea had no appropriate law, An and the other defendants could not be punished.³⁵ An's other lawyer, Mizuno Kichitarō, agreed with his colleague's defense of An. However, he said that the judge might not, and so he concentrated on trying to obtain a light sentence, asking that An receive only three years in prison. To this end, Mizuno argued that An had acted out of ignorance. He was not a bad man—his motives, like those displayed by the patriots of the Meiji Restoration, were unselfish. If he had been born in another country and received a good education, he would not have killed Itō. Therefore he should be shown mercy. Though these defenses could be said to be competent, they were not what An wanted, as they essentially accepted Japan's colonial project in Korea as legitimate, and in the case of Mizuno, supported the contention that his assassination of Itō arose from a misunderstanding and not from a true perception of the situation.

After An's defense rested, he was given the opportunity to make a final statement. Before he was allowed to do so, the judge told him he should be brief and to the point, as he had a tendency to repeat himself.³⁶ An began by first questioning the trial itself. He expressed his frustration that he had not been allowed a Korean lawyer as he would have liked, and that all the participants in the trial, save for the defendants, were Japanese. Moreover, he complained that

³⁵ Fifth session of An Chunggŭn's trial, February 12, 1910, 209-10. The official trial records only contain a summary of the defense lawyer's arguments. A fuller version appears in the stenographic notes found in Sin Unyong, trans., *An Chunggŭn·Wu Tōksun·Cho Tosŏn·Yu Tongha kongp'an kirok*, 397-424.

³⁶ Fifth session of An Chunggŭn's trial, February 12, 1910, 210-14.

the trial had been conducted in Japanese and had only been partially interpreted. An then warned that because of this, the trial would be criticized as unfair.

An proceeded to dispute the prosecutor's charge that he had misunderstood Korea's situation by providing what he believed to be the correct history of Itō's actions on the peninsula. After repeating his accusation of treachery against Itō following the Russo-Japanese war, An described the resident-general's actions in the wake of The Hague incident of 1907 and their consequences in particularly vivid language, describing how "in the middle of the night Prince Itō³⁷ drew his sword and threatened the emperor, forcing the signing of the Seven-Article Treaty, the abdication of the emperor, and the sending of a mission of apology to Japan." Koreans were so angered by this that some committed suicide while others rose up in guerrilla bands, supported by an edict issued by the Korean emperor. Ten thousand Koreans had been "slaughtered" in the fighting. This would continue, because Itō's policy was "such that if he kills one man, then ten will arise, and if he kills ten, then one hundred will stand up." If this policy were not changed, the war between Korea and Japan would never end. An then described Itō as a traitorous official who had falsely claimed that he was civilizing Koreans and had used newspapers to trick the Japanese into believing that his rule was bringing harmony and peace to the country.

However, according to An, Japanese in Korea knew the reality of the situation, and consequently shared his hatred of Itō. An described how he had met a soldier who, because of fighting in Korea, had to leave his home in Japan and family to do garrison duty on the peninsula. A farmer told An that he had heard that the farming was good in Korea and so had immigrated. However, the insurgents made it impossible for him to continue his work and he could not return home as taxes to fund the war were so high in Japan that he could no longer make a living there.

³⁷ An did not refer to Itō Hirobumi as prince during the trial, though that title appears in the transcripts. It was likely added to remove the disrespect towards him that An wished to express. See "The recent trial at Port Arthur," *Seoul Press*, February 22, 1910.

A merchant An spoke to was in the same difficulty because the insurgency had disrupted trade. Even a Japanese missionary was critical of Itō and his policy. Both the soldier and the merchant told An that if they could, they would kill Itō. Thus, not only did Koreans hate Itō, “who killed their family members and friends,” so too did the Japanese. The people of both countries longed for peace, and so An, “in the capacity of a righteous army officer,” killed Itō in hopes that “relations between Korea and Japan will become closer and peace in the East will reign as an example to the rest of the world.”

At this point, the judge asked An if he had much else to say. An responded that he did not and was allowed to continue. He explained that he did not kill Itō over a misunderstanding, but “as an opportunity for me to realize my goal,” and that “if the Japanese emperor now understands that Prince Itō’s policy was bad, then I will be given a reward.” An then expressed his hope that “in accordance with the Japanese emperor’s wishes,” Japan’s policy in Korea would be reformed, enabling Korea and Japan to enjoy peace. An then rejected Kamada’s defense as “foolish,” stating that “today all people live under the law. If people who killed others were not punished, it would not be possible to live.” An then asserted that he ought to be treated as a prisoner-of-war and tried in accordance with international law.

After these final statements, court was adjourned for a day, meeting again on February 14 for judgment. All the defendants were found guilty. An was sentenced to death, Wu Tōksun to three years in prison, and Cho Tosōn and Yu Tongha to one and a half years.³⁸ An was critical of these sentences, as they were exactly what the prosecutor had asked for.³⁹ In fact, a guilty verdict and the sentences had been decided upon by the Japanese government before the trial

³⁸ Sixth session of An Chunggūn’s trial, February 14, 1910, 221-23.

³⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yōksa*, 180.

even began.⁴⁰ However, this was not publicly known, and it is questionable whether in the end it would have affected the verdict or the sentences.

Reactions to the Trial

Western English-language newspapers spent very little time on the trial, and in the papers surveyed in this study, no mention was even made of the explanations An gave for killing Itō. In several newspapers, the same story, with the exact same words and with only a change in title, was printed, which read “Inchan Angan [*sic*], the Korean who assassinated Prince Ito, former Japanese resident general of Korea at Harbin, October 26, 1909, was convicted today and sentenced to death. Angan was formerly an editor and was alleged to be a member of a secret Korean organization, the object of which was the assassination of Prince Ito.” While this terse statement just reported the bare facts without openly endorsing either side, considering the previous views expressed about the assassination, it is safe to assume that in this case silence meant assent to the view that An was a murderer who was justly sentenced to death.⁴¹

The one extant exception to this coverage of the trial among Western English-language sources appeared in the British monthly, *The Graphic*, in its April 16, 1910 issue, several weeks after An’s execution. The article began with an accurate description of the international situation,

⁴⁰ The director of political affairs in Kwantung sent a telegram to the Foreign Minister to find out what sentence the home government desired. The foreign ministry replied that it wanted the death penalty for An and a sentence of attempted murder for Wu. It had no interest in what happened to Cho and Yu. A panicked telegram soon followed from Kwantung saying that there was resistance from young lawyers in the judiciary to what they saw as Foreign Ministry interference. Two days later, another telegram to the Foreign Ministry stated that the problem had been solved. If the results were not what the foreign ministry had asked for, the case would be appealed to a higher court and its judge would grant the desired sentences. See, Kuksa Wiwŏnhoe, “Chŏnbo che samsip-sa-ho (kŭkpi) [Telegram number 34 (top secret)],” 7:476-77, “Chŏnbo [telegram],” 7:477, “Chŏnbo che samsip-ch’il-ho [Telegram number 37],” 7:477-78, and “Chŏnbo che samsip-ku-ho (kŭkpi) [Telegram number 39 (top secret)],” 7:478.

⁴¹ For examples, see “Slayer of Ito sentenced to death,” *Ogden Standard*, February 15, 1910; “Slayer of Prince Ito sentenced to death,” *San Francisco Call*, February 15, 1910; “Ito’s assassin sentenced,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1910.

stating that “the Japanese, when they tried Prince Ito’s murderer, stood in a blaze of light—all eyes fixed on them. They knew it perfectly well. The case proved even more than a *cause célèbre*; it proved a test case—and Japan’s modern civilization was as much on trial as any of the prisoners.”⁴²

The author was clear in his opinion that Japan met the standards of enlightened nations in its treatment of An, reporting that the Japanese acted with proper restraint, “There was a searching preliminary examination conducted soon after the tragedy—and conducted with such calmness and impartiality as to show how strong Japanese official self control [*sic*] must be to resist the greatest stress of natural excitement.” Moreover, “The prisoner had every possible advantage which law allowed; he was warmly housed, decently fed; humanely treated, in spite of certain scurrilous newspaper hints as to the application of knouts and thumbscrews.” In contrast, An’s character was portrayed in a negative light, the article describing how when Douglas came to interview him in prison, An’s first words were “give my friends my deepest salutations and thanks. Until now I thought they had forgotten me,” which, rather than being understood as an expression of gratitude for sending a lawyer by a man who had been held incommunicado in prison for weeks, were taken as evidence that the “greatest dread” of An, which was, “like all anarchists and political assassins, who rise for five minutes to a world-wide celebrity...to sink into obscurity—to slip out of the people’s mind.”

The article described how throughout the trial An desired to speak, and when given the opportunity, “unconscious of surroundings, careless of the effect his words might produce upon his audience, he told how Korea had been oppressed, and Prince Ito was the man who had oppressed her.” An blamed Itō, not the Japanese as a whole, for everything, portraying him as

⁴² “A Japanese ‘Cause Celebre,’” *The Graphic*, April 16, 1910. A copy of this article can be found in Yun Pyōngsōk, ed., *Taehan kugin An Chunggūn: sajin kwa yumuk* [The Korean An Chunggūn: pictures and calligraphy] (Seoul: An Chunggūn Ŭisa Sungmohoe, 2001), 128.

“an unscrupulous tyrant destroying the liberties of Korea.” Thus, while capturing An’s patriotic motives, the summary did not include his concerns over peace in the East or his argument that he was a soldier and should be tried in accordance with international law. The article went on to note that, despite the great amount of respect Japanese felt for Itō, the judge allowed An to continue his criticism of the statesman, until, despite warnings, he went too far, at which point the judge cleared the courtroom. The *Graphic* saw this level of freedom given to An in making his defense positively, commenting that “as far as possible, the Authorities desired to have everything open and above board—no closed doors unless absolute necessity demanded it.”

Considering the criticism of An and the praise of Japan’s actions, the article ended with something of a twist, “He (An Chunggūn) was ready for martyrdom, ready, nay, eager, to ‘give up the dear habit of living.’ He had the hero’s crown almost within his grasp, and he left the Court proudly. Has this *cause célèbre*, so beautifully conducted, so wisely judged, ended as a score for the murderer and his misguided fellow patriots after all?” The answer to this rhetorical question would have to be no. An’s goal was not his own death, but independence for Korea and peace in the East. And it was the Japanese state’s goal to prove that An was a murderer and that it was an enlightened nation able to conduct a trial in accordance with civilized standards. The author of the *Graphic*’s article accepted that Japan had done just that and that An’s patriotism was “misguided.”

The English-reading audience in the West does not then appear to have had ready access to An’s explanation for his assassination of Itō at trial. It could be argued then that, had they read An’s defense, they would have been more sympathetic. However, the same could not be said of the English-reading audience in East Asia, as the *Seoul Press* printed English summaries of the trial, taken from the *Japan Chronicle*, which had translated them from the *Asahi shimbun*

(*Morning sun news*). With the exception of having An refer to his killing of Itō as “murder,” which he did not do, these summaries are remarkably similar to what was actually said in trial, and provided a fair rendering of An’s defense.

Various English-language newspapers based in East Asia were therefore able to comment on the trial. For instance, the *Seoul Press* reprinted an editorial on the trial from *The Japan Chronicle*, a paper recognized as having a commitment to freedom of the press and journalist integrity that led it at times to be critical of Japanese culture, society, and government.⁴³ The editorial began by noting that had An and his co-defendants been “tried for a similar offense under the laws which prevailed in Korea until the Japanese occupation,” they would have been tortured and executed in a grisly manner.⁴⁴ The editorialist even asserted that “had the prisoners been left in the hands of the Russian authorities who arrested them, they would in all probability have received very different treatment and a much shorter shrift” and that according to English law, all of them could have been executed. Japanese law was thus enlightened and properly restrained.

Like the *Graphic*, the editorialist praised the trial for giving the defendants “full liberty of speech” which An and Wu used to “impeach the Japanese administration and procedure in Korea and justify the crime on the ground of patriotism.” The judge and prosecutor were also praised for their objective and careful treatment of the case. Though somewhat critical of the fact that an English lawyer was not allowed to defend An, the editorialist recognized that the decision was simply a part of Japanese law. Expressing satisfaction that a patriotic motive was not accepted as a defense, the editorial ended with a reflection on political assassination, noting that such

⁴³ Kakegawa Tomiko, “The Japan Chronicle and its Editors: Reflecting Japan to the Press and the People, 1891-1940,” *Japan Forum* 13, no 1 (2001): 27-40.

⁴⁴ “The trial of Prince Ito’s assassin,” *Seoul Press*, February 20, 1910.

efforts were doomed to failure, in this case only leading to calls for the annexation of Korea and the loss of public sympathy for the country.

The *Seoul Press* also reprinted other editorials from English-language newspapers based in East Asia. The *Kobe Herald* praised Japan for its restraint in the face of popular demands for annexation in the wake of the assassination and An's own arrogant behavior, and how it "calmly proceeded" to give a fair trial that was "conducted throughout in a very lenient, even kindly, way" that compared favorably to Western courts.⁴⁵ Even the lawyers that had been hired to defend An but had been prevented from doing so by the court expressed "their entire satisfaction with the conduct of the case and with the result." Japan therefore deserved "congratulations upon having set such an excellent example of judicial integrity" that would convince Koreans that they could trust Japanese courts on the peninsula and might even persuade the Western powers to surrender their extraterritorial rights in Korea.

An editorial in the *North China Herald* praised the trial in much the same way as the *Kobe Herald*. While noting that there were some real problems with the Residency-General, the editorial stated that what "Koreans must recognize sooner or later is that the outer world admits the necessity of the Japanese protectorate and will take no steps to interfere with it." And while recommending that "Japan should do her utmost to make the protectorate as light as possible" the editorialist reminded the reader that "the world does not lack examples of small states, too weak to stand by themselves, that have found peace and prosperity, after chaos and anarchy, beneath the aegis of a stronger [*sic*]: and in the long run the Koreans must learn that their salvation depends upon themselves and that patriotism is as little be upheld by idle complaint as by the use of bombs and daggers."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ "The recent trial at Port Arthur," *Seoul Press*, February 22, 1910.

⁴⁶ "The trial at Port Arthur," *North China Herald* (Shanghai), February 25, 1910.

In light of these newspaper reports and editorials, it can be seen that it was the Japanese state's interpretation of the assassination as well as the situation in Korea, and not An Chunggŭn's, that was accepted by Westerners. The best An seems to have been able to do was to convince one Western editorialist writing in the *Shanghai Times* that the Japanese might be somewhat sympathetic with An because of his patriotic motives.⁴⁷ There was still no possibility of intervention on Korea's behalf from the West. Moreover, the acceptance by Western observers of the treatment of An, including his trial and sentence of execution, as meeting civilized standards, likely helped give the Japanese government the confidence to declare the end to extraterritoriality in Korea shortly after its annexation in August of 1910 without protest from the great powers.⁴⁸

An had also hoped to convince the Japanese Emperor, and the Japanese people as well, of the righteousness of his cause, which is why he sought to portray Itō as a traitor who even fellow Japanese hated and wanted to kill. He failed in this as well. While the *Keijō shimpō* provided an accurate summary of the defense An himself gave, it praised the prosecutor in the highest of terms, describing how he had corrected the "villain's" flawed account of events.⁴⁹ The *Keijō shimpō* also proudly reported that An's lawyers and brothers, as well as newspaper articles, all praised the trial as carefully conducted and fair, and that the Japanese officials treated the defendants kindly, both in prison and in court.⁵⁰ An Pyŏngch'an was even quoted as stating that

⁴⁷ "The trial at Port Arthur," *Seoul Press*, March 3, 1910.

⁴⁸ Though no protest was made, Japan's declaration was not accepted formally by the powers until 1913. See Dudden, 120-27.

⁴⁹ See the *Keijō shimpō* articles, "Kyōkan saishū no kōhan [The villains and the prosecutor's argument]," February 13, 1910; "Kyōkan saishū no kōhan [The last session of the villains' trial]," February 15, 1910.

⁵⁰ It should be noted that both of An's brothers went on to become Korean independence activists, making it doubtful that they actually praised the trial, or if they did, if they truly meant it. For an overview of their lives and independence activities, see O Yŏngsŏp's "An Konggŭn ūi hangil tongnip undong, [An Konggŭn's anti-Japanese independence activities]," and "Ilche sigi An Chŏnggŭn ūi hangil tongnip undong [An Chŏnggŭn's anti-Japanese independence activities during the Japanese colonial period]," in *An Chunggŭn kwa kŭ sidae* [An Chunggŭn and his times], ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 115-56 and 177-232.

under the old system of Korean justice, the three co-defendants would also have been killed. For them to receive sentences of three years or less was thus an act of pure grace by the Japanese.⁵¹ The *Keijō shimpō* also reported that English and American newspapers praised the trial as fair.⁵² In one article, responding to Korean criticism that An should not be executed, the paper pointed out that according to Korean tradition, not only the suspects but those connected to them would have been interrogated and punished severely. Moreover, by assigning An defense lawyers, the Japanese state had shown its justice system to be fairer than its Korean counterpart.⁵³ The *Keijō shimpō* reflected the Japanese public's acceptance that the verdict against An was just and that the trial, and world reactions to it, were proof of Japan's own progress.

Korean newspapers in the United States saw the trial quite differently. The *Sinhan kukbo* hardly mentioned either the prosecutor's case against An or that of the Japanese defense on his behalf. Instead, it focused on his own explanation of the assassination, that he killed Itō as a soldier in order to restore Korean independence and maintain peace in the East.⁵⁴ While the *Sinhan kukbo* said little about the trial itself, its San Francisco counterpart, the *Sinhan minbo*, was critical of it. The paper argued that the trial was unfair, that Japan did not in fact have jurisdiction, and that An should have been allowed to have a defense of his own choosing.⁵⁵

The *Taehan maeil sinpo* was sympathetic to An, but, as before, had to be careful in how it treated the trial. Thus, without openly declaring support for An or directly criticizing his trial, it did give more attention to his defense than the summary printed in the *Seoul Press*. For example,

⁵¹ "Kyōkan kōhan no hihan [Evaluations of the villains' trials]," *Keijō shimpō*, February 16, 1910.

⁵² "Kyōkan hanketsu to seron [The villains' verdicts and the world]," *Keijō shimpō*, February 20, 1910.

⁵³ "Kyōkan hanketsu to Kanjin [The villains' verdicts and Koreans]," *Keijō shimpō*, February 20, 1910.

⁵⁴ See "An Chunggūn Ssi kongp'an che il-po [The first session of An Chunggūn's trial]; "An Chunggūn Ssi ūi che i-po [The second session of An Chunggūn's trial]; "An Chunggūn Ssi ūi ch'oehu kongp'an [The last session of An Chunggūn's trial]," *Sinhan kukbo*, March 8, 1910.

⁵⁵ See Han Sangwŏn, "An Chunggūn ūigŏ-e taehan chaemi tongp'o ūi panūng: Sinhan minpo rŭl chungsim-ūro [Reactions of Koreans in America to An Chunggūn's righteous act: concentrating on *The New Korean Gazette*]," in *An Chunggūn yŏn'gu ūi kich'o*, ed. An Chunggūn Ūisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 265-69.

the paper printed the speeches An and Wu gave during the trial in more detail.⁵⁶ Similarly, an article reporting the sentencing stated that “it was wondered on that day what sentence would be pronounced on this criminal who had gained public attention as a patriot anxious about his country, gambling his life on the two words “independence” (*tongnip*/獨立) and “autonomy” (*chaju*/自主).”⁵⁷

The *Taehan maeil sinbo* included the human element of An’s story to a degree not present in the other sources examined here. For example, the paper reported how An laughed when he received his death sentence and asked if Japan did not have a heavier punishment to inflict on him.⁵⁸ One article described how An’s mother had hired An Pyŏngch’an to be his lawyer, because though she was sure he would be executed, human nature being what it was, it was something she had to do.⁵⁹ Similarly, the paper also described how An’s wife and brothers had wept when the prosecutor asked that he receive the death sentence.⁶⁰ In addition, the *Taehan maeil sinbo* published articles that indirectly criticized An’s trial. One described how An Pyŏngch’an, apparently frustrated because he had been refused permission to defend An, became so agitated that he fainted.⁶¹ Similarly, just before the trial began, he was reported as criticizing

⁵⁶ See “An, Wu yang Ssi ūi taehan chinsul ūi sangbo (sok) [Report on the testimony of Mr. An and Wu (continued)],” *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 24, 1910; “An, Wu yang Ssi ūi taehan chinsul ūi sangbo [Report on the testimony of Mr. An and Wu],” *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 23, 1910. For modern translations, see Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:508-12.

⁵⁷ “An Chunggŭn ūi kongp’an (che yuk-il) [An Chunggŭn’s trial (The sixth day)],” *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 22, 1910. For a modern Korean translation see Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:507-8.

⁵⁸ “An, Wu yang Ssi ūi taehan chinsul ūi sangbo [Report on the testimony of Mr. An and Wu],” *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 26. For a modern Korean translation, see Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:512-13.

⁵⁹ “Yŏsun t’ongsin (il) [Report from Lüshun (1)],” *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 8, 1910. For a modern translation see Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:526.

⁶⁰ “An Ssi kongp’an ch’oehu [The last session of Mr. An’s trial],” *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 13, 1910. For a modern Korean translation see Yun Hyŏngdu, 159.

⁶¹ “Yŏsun t’ongsin (i) [Report from Lüshun (2)],” *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 9, 1910. Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:480-82.

the fact that Japan would not allow An to choose his own defense, regardless of citizenship.⁶² Douglas' raising of the issue of jurisdiction and his criticism of An's state appointed lawyers were also reported.⁶³ Thus, the *Taehan maeil sinbo* and the *Seoul Press* presented very different reactions to the trial by An's lawyers.

In the end, An failed to earn appreciable sympathy for Korea's plight or support for his call for a change in Japan's policy in Korea, either from the English-speaking West or the Japanese. As in the immediate aftermath of the assassination, An had explicit support only from overseas Koreans. And again, both his supporters and An himself were not able to argue their case in a way that would challenge the dominance of the imperial civilizing nation-state in determining what constituted legitimate violence. Those who might have been able to bring about a change in policy in Korea who heard An's arguments rejected them categorically. All that was left for An to do was to write his autobiography and *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, to be examined in the following chapter, and hope that after his death the justness of his cause would be recognized and appropriate action taken. However, while he wrote these documents, the proponents of the Japanese colonial project in Korea would continue to use their narrative of the assassination to justify Japan's civilizing mission on the peninsula.

⁶² "Yōsun t'ongsin (il) [Report from Lüshun (1)]," *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 8, 1910. For a modern translation see Kuksa Pyōnch'an Wiwōnhoe, 7:526.

⁶³ "Kwanhal munje [The issue of jurisdiction]," *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 15, 1910. For a modern translation see Kuksa Pyōnch'an Wiwōnhoe, 7:528.

From the Verdict to the Execution of An Chunggŏn

Civilization, Enlightenment, and Reform

The *Seoul Press* continued to publish articles on An and his co-defendants while they were in prison. One reported that “An continues to be in good health, but his manner is rapidly losing that arrogance and swaggering air which characterised him until the late trial.” The same article also mentioned his prison writings, “He is writing a diary and wretch as he is, his writings moved the correspondent greatly. His view of human life was scribbled down in notes in the journal, which contained many sad and pathetic words.” In contrast, An’s co-defendants were “rather joyously, if it ever could be so, serving their sentences.” It was reported that Cho and Wu were “sewing European clothes” and Yu was “making paper cigarette cases” and that “they are fairly industrious and are reported to have declared that on their return to the world they will strive to make a livelihood of the occupations they have adopted in prison.”⁶⁴

An article that described a visit by Mizobuchi and Sonoki to the prison on March 3 had a similar tone. It was reported that when they met Yu, they found him at work and he explained to them that “I mean to work hard” and “behave myself like a good boy, just to please the Warden. He is so good to me that I have come to look up to him as a great friend of mine.” Yu was bothered, however, by the fact that he could not speak to his fellow prisoners and so asked for a book on conversational Japanese. Mizobuchi and Sonoki promised to obtain one for him. They next spoke to Wu and Cho, “Both were grateful to the Warden, for his fair and considerate treatment of them, acknowledging that they felt much more contented and at ease than before the trial.” They were also promised help in learning conversational Japanese. In contrast An

⁶⁴ “An Chungkeun in prison,” *Seoul Press*, March 4, 1909.

seemed “in rather low spirits and had very little to say except a word of appreciation for the manner in which he was being treated.”⁶⁵

These articles were intended to show how Japan, through its enlightened treatment of the members of the plot to assassinate Itō, was transforming them from violent Koreans into happy and productive colonial subjects. This metamorphosis stood as evidence Japan could carry out the civilizing mission it claimed, success justifying its existence. However, while apparently confident enough in the responses of Wu, Cho, and Yu to such treatment to claim their reform, the proponents of the Japanese colonial project did not feel that they could do the same for An, as he had not said or done anything that could be seen as evidence of repentance and a desire to be reformed by the Japanese civilizing mission.

There was however, outside of good treatment in prison, another avenue through which to attempt to secure An’s repentance: his Catholic faith. In an interrogation session two days after the failed attempt to convert An described above, Mizobuchi asked him if it was not a sin according to Catholicism to kill someone. An explained that, according to Catholic doctrine and the scriptures, there were instances when killing was acceptable, saying, “If someone is seizing control of someone else’s country and killing people, sitting and doing nothing is an even greater sin. I simply removed that sin.” Mizobuchi responded, “When your trusted priest, Father Hong (Joseph Wilhelm, 1860-1938, a priest close to An), heard of your crime, he sighed and said that it was a pity that someone he had baptized had committed it. Don’t you think what you did is against human morality and the teachings of religion?” An, uncharacteristically, gave no answer in response.⁶⁶ He could not bring himself to openly disagree with Wilhelm. It was here that there was a chance to convert him.

⁶⁵ “The Korean prisoners at Port Arthur,” *Seoul Press*, March 12, 1910.

⁶⁶ Tenth session of An Chunggūn’s interrogation, December 22, 1909, 370-71.

Shortly before An Chunggŭn went to trial, he requested that a priest be sent to him and his brothers entreated Father Wilhelm to come. Nothing came of these requests at that time, but later Mizobuchi contacted both Wilhelm and Mutel, asking that the priest be sent to An.⁶⁷ The fact that Wilhelm had convinced guerillas to surrender to Japanese forces, which earned him praise from a high Japanese military officer as “leading the Koreans to light and righteousness,” held promise that he might obtain similar results with An. Bishop Mutel refused to give his permission, but Father Wilhelm decided to disobey him and pay a visit to Lüshun prison.⁶⁸

As the *Seoul Press* followed Wilhelm’s trip to Lüshun, it reported that the priest had stated that Mutel had approved of his visit. In that same article, Wilhelm was quoted as giving three reasons why it was wrong for An to kill Itō: (1) Christianity forbade murder, (2) killing Itō actually harmed Korea, and (3) Itō was a “benefactor of Korea.” The article then quoted Wilhelm’s praise for how Japan had treated An, “I wish to offer my profound thanks to the judges and public procurator of the Supreme Court here who passed a fair and equitable judgment on the criminals.” The article then ended with the statement that An had in fact repudiated his killing of Itō and that the *Seoul Press* would provide details as soon as possible.⁶⁹

A week later the *Seoul Press* printed an article describing An’s confession and repentance.⁷⁰ According to this report, Wilhelm exhorted An:

⁶⁷ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 177; Yun Sŏnja, “An Chunggŭn ŭigŏ-e taehan Ch’ŏnjugyohoe ŭi insik [Catholic understandings of An Chunggŭn’s righteous act],” in *An Chunggŭn yŏn’gu ŭi kich’o*, ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 224-26.

⁶⁸ “Father Wilhelm at Port Arthur,” *Seoul Press*, March 15, 1910. This incident is also described in Mutel’s 1908 annual report that appeared in the *Compte Rendu* [Reports], an MEP journal that took as its readership members of that order throughout the world. See the Korean translation Han’guk Kyohoesa Yŏn’guso, ed., *Sŏul kyogu yŏnbo* [Yearly reports of the diocese of Seoul] (Seoul: Han’guk Kyohoesa Yŏn’guso, 1987), 2:61. Volume 1, covering the reports from 1878 to 1903 was published in 1984 and volume 2, covering the reports from 1904-1938 was published in 1987. For a description of the *Compte Rendu*, see the introduction in either volume. When citing the *Compte Rendu*, I will give the year of the report and the volume and page numbers for the Korean translation.

⁶⁹ “Spiritual teacher of An Chungkeun,” *Seoul Press*, March 10, 1910.

⁷⁰ “The repentance of the assassin,” *Seoul Press*, March 18, 1910.

The assassination of Prince Ito was a most dastardly crime committed without the slightest provocation or justification. The Japanese Government which you have thereby deprived of its greatest and best servant has given you every chance for a fair trial, has treated you with exceptional consideration and has now permitted you to take the Lord's Supper at my hand. I believe that the Japanese Government has done by you more generously than you really deserve. Now, I charge you in the name of the On High to tell me how you take it yourself.

An replied:

I have now brought myself to agree with you in your condemnation of me and also in the appreciation for the special favours done me by the Japanese Government which I have wronged so irrecoverably. What I have done I repent thereof but is beyond recall. The only thing left for me to do is to pay with my own life the wages of my crime. The Lord will hearken to my humble prayer to forgive and save my soul. This is my faith, and to this faith I will hold on as the last and only hope for my salvation.

According to this article, not only did the Catholic Church, through Wilhelm, condemn violence against the representatives of the Japanese colonial project as unjustified, An recognized the criminal nature of his killing of Itō and the goodness of the Japanese government. In doing so, he declared his own use of violence to be illegitimate, and by extension, that the violent resistance against the Japanese colonial state was unjustified, legitimizing the violence used to suppress the Korean guerilla movement. Moreover, it was possible to interpret his repudiation of Itō's assassination to mean that he no longer believed that the former resident-general's policy in Korea was immoral, and was in fact, justified.

An's repentance was presented as transforming him into a good colonial subject, as afterwards, "he retained nothing of the defiant and stubborn air which he had worn throughout," moving the observers and melting their hearts in sympathy. The qualities that led him to resist the legitimate rule of the Japanese colonial state in Korea were now gone and that state, in partnership with religion, had shown that it could reform even its most violent opponent, adding further legitimacy to its civilizing project in Korea, and to the violence that made it possible.

However, as we shall see in chapter seven, the *Seoul Press* accounts of An are problematic as they do not adequately reflect the ambiguity of his actual statements.

Wilhelm's visit to Korea did not receive much attention in Korean newspapers, either on the peninsula or overseas.⁷¹ Save for one brief reference to a visit by a priest in the *Hawaiian Gazette*, it was not covered in Western English-language newspapers. The *Keijō shimpō*, however, did provide extensive coverage. It described how An wept and was grief-stricken before Wilhelm came to him, wondering how he could go to heaven without a priest. He beseeched his brothers to convince Wilhelm to visit him, and at Chōnggūn's behest, the priest agreed to do so.⁷² Like the *Seoul Press*, the *Keijō shimpō* reported Wilhelm's three reasons for going to visit An.⁷³

In its description on the actual meeting, the paper described how Wilhelm rebuked An for assassinating Itō, a "great man" and proponent of "world peace," and urged him to repent so he could go to heaven. An, weeping, repented, and said he had done what he did out of a private grudge and for his country.⁷⁴ He expressed gratitude that despite his having killed Itō, "the pillar of the nation," Japanese authorities treated him with "the utmost kindness." After describing the significance of Holy Communion, the meaning of which likely would not have been understood by the largely non-Christian audience of the paper, the paper reported that An stated that the Japanese may think of the Koreans as cowards but that there were many that shared the same ideas as himself. Thus, the *Keijō shimpō*'s treatment of the confession contained a sense of foreboding not present in the more confident account given by the *Seoul Press*. Moreover, it

⁷¹ For example, see "An Ssi chiphaeng sŏl [Report on the execution of Mr. An]," *Taehan maeil sinbo*, February 27, 1910. For a modern translation, see Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:514.

⁷² "Kō shimpū Ryojun kō [Father Wilhelm's trip to Lüshun]," *Keijō shimpō*, March 4, 1910.

⁷³ See the *Keijō shimpō* articles "Kyōkan ian to kunkai [Consolation and admonishment for the villain]," March 9, 1910; "Kō shimpū saishū no kitō [Father Wilhelm's last prayer]," March 12, 1910.

⁷⁴ What I have translated as "for his country" is literally rendered as "kukka chōk kwannyōm" (國家的觀念) in the article.

lacked the sense that An's conversion had led to a change in his character. Both, however, recognized Japan as an enlightened nation that treated the assassin of a great statesman in accordance with civilized standards, even offering him the opportunity for repentance and heaven.⁷⁵

The Execution

Symbolism complicated setting the date for An Chunggŭn's execution. When An met with Judge Hiraishi to discuss his appeal, once he had been told he had no grounds for one, he requested that he be executed on March 25, as it was a holy day for Catholics.⁷⁶ This day was in fact Good Friday, on which Christians commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus. The execution of An on that day would draw a parallel between him and Christ, as well as Japan and the Roman authorities, which would have made An's execution into a kind of martyrdom. At least one missionary in Japan realized this and wrote to Japan's Foreign Ministry urging that the date be changed.⁷⁷ It was, to the twenty-sixth, though not ostensibly for religious reasons, but because the Korean emperor's birthday was on the twenty-fifth.⁷⁸ It should be noted that An had shot Itō at 9:30 in the morning on October 26 and that he himself was executed at the same time on March 26, indicating another symbolic meaning for his execution on that day.

In addition to portraying An as having accepted his execution as the just punishment for his crime, the *Seoul Press* used a visit a Japanese journalist paid to the home of An's mother to

⁷⁵ "An Jūkon no zangedan [An Chunggŭn's confession]," *Keijō shimpō*, March 15, 1910.

⁷⁶ An expressed this desire to be executed on Good Friday during his meeting with a Japanese judge after the trial in order to discuss the possibility of an appeal. A Korean translation of these handwritten notes, which I worked from, as well as the Japanese originals, can be found in Kukka Pohunch'ŏ, ed., *21 segye wa Tongyang p'yŏnghwaron* [The 21st Century and A Treatise on Peace in the East] (Seoul: Kukka Pohunch'ŏ, 1996), 51-71. An's request can be found on page 57.

⁷⁷ See Kim Ch'angsu, 13:732-34.

⁷⁸ Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, "Chŏnbo che paek-sip-sa-ho (ŭmho) [Telegram number 114]," 7:514-15.

justify the execution and Japan's colonial project. When asked if she knew that An was treated well, she said that she had just received a letter from her other two sons saying he was, much to her relief. The journalist then pointed out that had An killed a high Korean official in "former times" not only would he "have been subjected to cruel torture" but his family "would have been unable to live in peace, as they are now living." An's mother agreed. The reporter then asked if An's daughter was living there. His mother said she was and brought her out, "a little girl of comely appearance about nine years of age." The journalist gave her a box of sweets, and told her that "there are a few bad Japanese in this country, but there are also many who are friends of Koreans. Your hair is black, so is mine, your eyes are black, so are mine. You see we are brothers and sisters. Do not think that we are your enemies." He then reported that An's mother "appeared to be deeply touched at these words."⁷⁹

This article shows both a desire to assert Japan's civilized status and to avoid criticism that An should not have been punished with death, the same penalty which the Chosŏn state's oft criticized justice system would have approved.⁸⁰ In order to differentiate Japan and Korea, and their contrasting levels of civilization, the Korean traditional practice of group punishment was emphasized. The enlightened treatment of An and his family showed that Japan was capable of living up to civilized standards and appears to have been meant to dispel any qualms over Japan's decision to exact the ultimate penalty on An—a civilized nation that treated criminals according to enlightened standards would also punish them in the same way. The legitimacy of the Japanese colonial project in Korea was further justified by the racial similarity between the

⁷⁹ "An interview with the mother of An Chungkeun," *Seoul Press*, March 17, 1910.

⁸⁰ Douglas and Michaeloff had told An during their meeting before the trial that An would not receive the death penalty because Chang Inhwon had only been punished with twenty-five years for killing D.W. Stevens and would be condemned internationally if it treated An more severely. While this prediction did not come true, the Japanese government did make note of their statements. See Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, "Hŏn'gi che ichŏn-yukpaek-samsip-sa-ho," 7:250-51.

two peoples and by the symbolic act of the male-adult Japanese giving the female-child Korean candy, proving that there was substance to the promise of friendship and that no revenge would be taken while reinforcing the hierarchy between the civilized colonizer and the uncivilized colonial subject.

Coverage of the actual execution was sparse. As with the trials, Western English-language newspapers printed articles that, except for the title, were worded in the same way, “Inchan Angan [*sic*], the Korean who assassinated Prince Ito, former Japanese Resident-General of Korea, in this city on Oct. 26 last was executed at Port Arthur this morning.”⁸¹ The *Seoul Press* provided more reports, announcing the impending execution with the words, “An Chungun [*sic*] will be executed to-day. The event seems keenly to revive the sorrows of all the citizens in whose memory the disaster at Harbin just five months ago is still fresh. The late Prince Ito fell at the venomous hands of An on the 26th of October last.”⁸² The report of his actual execution was just as terse, “An Chungkeun was executed at Port Arthur on Saturday morning. His remains were buried in the cemetery of Port Arthur Prison the same afternoon.”⁸³ The coverage of the *North China Herald* coverage was also short, but it did include the note, not elsewhere mentioned in English, that just before he was executed An asked “all legal representatives and officials present to work for the peace of the Orient.”⁸⁴

The *Keijō shimpo* provided slightly more information on the execution, reporting in an article entitled “Execution of the villain” that the prosecutor and warden were in attendance, that a prison chaplain (likely a Buddhist priest) gave an exhortation before An was executed, and that

⁸¹ For example, see “Ito’s murderer executed,” *New York Tribune*, March 26, 1910; “Ito’s assassin executed,” *New York Times*, March 26, 1910. The *Hawaiian Gazette* provided more details, including noting that An had confessed to a priest and seemed relieved after doing so. See “Last days of Ito’s assassin,” *Hawaiian Gazette*, March 29, 1910.

⁸² “Execution of An Chung-keun,” *Seoul Press*, March 27, 1910.

⁸³ “An Chungkeun,” *Seoul Press*, March 29, 1910.

⁸⁴ “Prince Ito’s assassin,” *North-China Herald* (Shanghai), April 1, 1910.

it took ten minutes after An was hung for him to expire.⁸⁵ It also described the effect of the execution on those close to An, noting that Wilhelm was grief-stricken as he waited for it to be carried out, and that on the morning of the twenty-sixth, he rose early and gathered with An's family and the other Catholics in the area. Wilhelm told them of "the villain's" last words and then they offered up their prayers of lamentation together. Moreover, it was reported that Wilhelm gave a "stern instruction" to the Catholics. Though the paper did not report what he said, the Japanese audience would likely have assumed that they were words of warning that Koreans ought not to oppose the Japanese colonial state.⁸⁶

The *Taehan maeil sinpo* also provided a rather terse description of the execution.⁸⁷ Unlike the other papers' coverage, it printed An's final testament, given to An Pyŏngch'an, in which he stated that, though he would die without having fulfilled his goals of restoring Korean independence and peace in the East, if his countrymen and women devoted themselves to developing education and industry and so achieved their hopes, he could do so without regret.⁸⁸ The *Sinhan kukbo* was able to freely offer a sympathetic view of An. After noting that life was transient, "like straw," An was praised for doing his duty as a citizen, as one who was willing to die to achieve virtue and give himself and his family for the nation. Drawing on religious concepts, the paper went on to compare him to a burnt offering that had been transformed into something akin to a tutelary spirit who would continue to help the nation.⁸⁹ However, while overseas Koreans might deny the legitimacy of An's trial and implicitly criticize his execution by

⁸⁵ "Kyōkan no shikei shikkō [The execution of the villain]," *Keijō shimpō*, March 27, 1910.

⁸⁶ "An no shikei to Kō shimpū [Father Wilhelm and the execution of An]," *Keijō shimpō*, March 27, 1910.

⁸⁷ "An Ssi ch'wihyōng [The execution of Mr. An]," *Taehan maeil sinpo*, March 26, 1910. For a modern translation, see Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:517.

⁸⁸ "An Ssi kyōlgo [Mr. An's parting words]," *Taehan maeil sinbo*, March 25, 1910. For a modern translation, see Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:543.

⁸⁹ "Kok An ūisa [The late patriot An]," *Sinhan kukbo*, March 29, 1910.

portraying him as a patriotic martyr, An's death sentence was accepted by the people he was trying to appeal to as just punishment for his crimes.⁹⁰

An Chunggŭn and Superstition

An's assassination of Itō was utilized to justify the Japanese colonial project in Korea even after his death, as seen in the 1909-1910 edition of the Japanese government's annual report on Korea, which used religious concepts to transform An into a symbol of what was wrong with the country.⁹¹ The report stated that "in the extremity of violence, a Korean inspired by short-sighted superstition and mistaken patriotism, assassinated Prince Ito, President of the Privy Council of Japan, who had filled the office of Resident General in Korea till June 1909, when he was on a visit to North China in October."⁹² The use of the word "superstition" here is very interesting because An did not publicly appeal to any sort of religious justification for his actions. Why would the Japanese state make religion an issue and label An in this way?

An article in the *Seoul Press*, published only months before An Chunggŭn killed Itō Hirobumi, provides us with a clue as to what was meant by labeling an action "superstitious." This article, entitled, "Korean superstitions," tells of how a man was convinced by a "quack physician" that the cause of his brother's mental illness was an evil spirit that inhabited his body. In order to drive out the spirit, the doctor beat the man's brother with a heavy stick while a blind fortune teller (*pansu*) prayed over him. This treatment killed the mentally ill man and led to the arrest of the doctor and the *pansu*.⁹³ What made this a superstitious act? Was it prayer? As we

⁹⁰ See Sin Unyong, "An Chunggŭn ŭigŏ-e taehan kugoe," 188-220.

⁹¹ Dudden, 20-21.

⁹² *The Third Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Korea* (1909-1910) (Seoul: H.I.J.M's Residency General, 1910), 2-3.

⁹³ "Korean superstitions," *Seoul Press*, July 29, 1909.

saw previously, Itō Hirobumi's act of praying for the health of the crown prince was presented as praiseworthy. Likewise, the *Seoul Press* did not refer to the prayers of Christian missionaries as superstitious.⁹⁴ In fact, missionaries were recognized as spreading enlightened ideas that led to the elimination of superstitions.⁹⁵

What differentiated the actions of the “quack” doctor and the pansu from Itō was that the latter did not put forth a supernatural cause for illness nor did his prayers replace modern medicine. Itō's prayers would not have been hailed as the cause of the prince's recovery, as those of the pansu would have had the patient recovered. Likewise, when the Christian missionaries prayed publicly, their petitions were rather vague and general. They did not ask for God to intervene in an immediate way with visible effects nor did they blame demons as the cause of illness. Religion become superstition when it crossed outside of the space designated for it by civilization and enlightenment thought into another sphere, such as when it was used to replace modern medicine, or when it posited a universe in which the supernatural played an active and visible role. Finally, the effects were different. The prayers of Christian missionaries and Itō did no harm. Moreover, they expressed support and consideration for the object of their prayers. On the other hand, the prayers of the pansu and the actions of the doctor, based on a superstitious belief that the supernatural would actively intervene in this world, led to the death of their patient.⁹⁶

Having established the negative meaning of superstition, we can now turn to answering the question of why this definition was applied to An by examining another *Seoul Press* article, a translation from a “local Japanese paper,” which itself claimed to be based on the report of

⁹⁴ For an example, see “World's Student Christian Federation,” *Seoul Press*, April 9, 1907.

⁹⁵ For an example, see “The comet and superstitious Koreans,” *Seoul Press*, May 19, 1910.

⁹⁶ This understanding of the difference between religion and superstition is identical to that found in Japanese school textbooks of the time. See Jason Josephson, “Taming Demons: The Anti-Superstition Campaign and the Invention of Religion in Japan” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2006), 132-43.

Sonoki, An's Japanese interpreter. According to the article, when An met with Father Wilhelm in prison, he told him of how he had a strange dream he had the first night after he joined his guerilla band. He dreamt that he saw "a great rainbow in the heavens." The Virgin Mary descended from the rainbow, and coming near to him, "placed a Bible in his bosom" and told him "that he might be at ease." She then disappeared. An, waking up, "took this dream for some unknown holy hint and had never forgotten it." An also "confessed that he was given a stimulant by some impudent paper in committing his late fatal crime," as while in Vladivostok, he saw an American newspaper that "contained a cartoon representing a Korean beauty with a Japanese officer by her side trying to deprive her of her treasures. Behind them stood a Korean giant leveling a pistol at the back of the Japanese officer." An took this "nefarious picture" as a "good omen for the success of his plot," supposing "that God was giving him guidance" through it. The article then ended by criticizing An for his ignorance and cautioning people who came in frequent contact with the Koreans (namely, missionaries) to be careful about what they taught such credulous people.⁹⁷

By describing An Chunggŭn as taking a dream and a cartoon as divine signs, this article portrayed him as superstitious. Just as the pansu with his prayers, and the "quack physician" with his talk of evils spirits, had strayed into the medical sphere and killed their patient, so had An infringed on the state's monopoly of violence by assassinating Itō Hirobumi. By labeling An's actions as superstitious, he was portrayed as essentially irrational. This deflected the challenge An intended his use of violence to be to the Japanese colonial project and, by treating him as a symbol of Korean superstition and backwardness, aided in his transformation into one more reason for the need of Japan's civilizing mission in Korea, which, because of the superstitions of its people, was a danger to itself and others.

⁹⁷ "An Chungkeun," *Seoul Press*, April 8, 1910.

An, having little contact with the outside world after his trial, was likely unaware of such attempts to portray him as superstitious. What he did know was that he had been convicted of murder and would be executed. Yet, he still held out hope that he would be remembered as a hero and could convince the world that his means were legitimate and his cause was just, leading to the restoration of Korean independence and peace in the East. His means would be the written word. Unhindered by language, time constraints, or court rules, he could compose his *apologia* as he saw fit. And so he spent his days before his execution writing, producing his autobiography, and completing part of an essay entitled *A Treatise on Peace in the East*. It will be to those works, and how An justified violence within them, that we will now turn.

Chapter 7: An Chunggŭn Tells His Story

On December 13, 1909, as he languished in prison, An Chunggŭn began to write his autobiography, *The History of An Ŭngch'il* (*An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*), finishing it on March 15, 1910. He also started to write an essay entitled, *A Treatise on Peace in the East* (*Tongyang p'yŏnghwaron*), but was executed on March 26, before he could complete it. It was of such importance to him that he asked for a stay of execution in order to finish.¹ While An likely hoped that Koreans and Chinese would read his writings, the fact that he expanded on the argument he made at court—that the Japanese colonial project not only harmed Korea, but Japan as well, and did not reflect the will of the Japanese emperor—indicates that he was primarily writing for a Japanese audience, seeking to convince them that not only was he right to kill Itō, but that it was necessary to reform his mistaken policy for the good of all of East Asia, including Japan.²

Therefore, in reading An's prison writings, it is important to remember that he was not seeking to write objective history, but to persuade. Thus, An's *Treatise on Peace in the East* presents a reading of history and current events in the region through a perspective heavily colored by Social Darwinism and Pan-Asianism quietly subordinated to An's nationalist goal of restoring Korean independence. He drew on Social Darwinism and Pan-Asianism in order to convince Japanese people that their country should work with China and Korea, in a way that respected their sovereignty, to oppose Western imperialism. Similarly, An arranged his autobiography, selectively choosing the events of his life, in order to construct a narrative and a

¹ See "An Chungkeun," *Seoul Press*, October 24, 1910; Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 181.

² An's writings were thought lost. However, a Japanese translation of his autobiography and *A Treatise on Peace in the East* (*Tongyang p'yŏnghwaron*) was discovered in 1969 and copies of the Classical Chinese originals were found in 1979. See Yun Pyong Suk, 37. All translations from these two works appearing in this dissertation are from printed transcriptions of the original Chinese undertaken by Jieun Han and me.

heroic image of himself that would justify his use of violence and advance the cause of Korean independence, and which he hoped would be passed down to posterity. As we have only An's account for many of the events he describes in his autobiography, in those cases, we will focus on how he portrayed himself and the story he was trying to tell. When there exist other sources that might challenge these depictions, we will compare them to An's account, illustrating how he selectively remembered, exaggerated, or left out details in order to create the narrative and image he desired.

At the same time, we will see that, perhaps out of a sense of nostalgia as he looked back on his life, An occasionally included other events that do not fit neatly into his story, and that could run counter to the image he otherwise wished to portray of himself, providing us with further insight into reasons he thought that his use of violence was legitimate that he preferred to play down in public. Through this reconstruction of An's narrative and self-portrait, we will see how his understanding of the secular ideologies of nationalism, Social Darwinism, Pan-Asianism, and civilization and enlightenment thought, as well as his views on religion, the role of the state, and other factors, led to a worldview superficially similar, but essentially at odds with, that dominant among the Western and Japanese empires, explaining why he failed to anticipate the depth and intensity of their rejection of him and his use of violence, as seen in the previous two chapters.

The Story of An Ŭngch'il

Ancestry and Childhood

An Chunggŭn began his autobiography with his birth in the town of Haeju, Hwanghae province in 1879. He was given the childhood name Ŭngch'il (應七) because he had seven moles on his chest, and, when he came of age, the adult name Chunggŭn (重根), meaning heavy root or firm foundation, in order to counteract his rash personality. An then described his grandfather, An Insu, as a generous man, known for his philanthropy, who had served as the magistrate of Chinhae.³ Insu's third son, An's father, was named T'aehun (1862-1905). According to An, he won a *chinsa* (a lower-level civil service exam degree), though he never held office.⁴ An thus presented himself as coming from a respectable family which was a member of the local elite.

An, in describing his father, emphasized his literary talent, noting that he had mastered the *Four Books* and the *Three Classics* before he was ten years old and performed amazing feats

³ Though An Chunggŭn does not note it, An Insu held this honorary appointment without having earned a degree, seemingly acquiring it through his wealth and influence. It is a little odd that he was named a magistrate, since he had not earned the appropriate civil service exam degree. Especially curious is the fact that he did not earn one despite the fact that many of his relatives had passed the military exams and even been given low-ranking official military posts. See O Yŏngsŏp, "Ŭlsa choyak ijŏn An T'aehun ŭi saeng wa hwal-dong [An T'aehun's life and activities before the 1905 treaty]," in *An Chunggŭn kwa kŭ sidae* ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 79-89. An almost identical version of this article appears as a chapter in O Yŏngsŏp, *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndaesa rŭl sunoŭn inmultŭl (I)* [People woven into Korea's modern history] (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2007).

⁴ It would have been rare for the son of a military official to earn a civilian degree. In fact, there is no actual record of An T'aehun earning the degree, but there is one of his younger brother, An T'aegŏn, obtaining one. O Yŏngsŏp believes that An T'aehun had used his brother's name when he took the exam since he himself was connected to Pak Yŏnghyo, who had been a key player in the 1884 coup and so was officially an enemy of the state. See O, "Ŭlsa choyak," 88-89. In his journal, Bishop Gustave Mutel referred to An T'aehun as a *chinsa*. See Mutel's journal November 27 to December 1, 1897, 2:233-35 (All volume and page numbers in reference to Mutel's journals refer to the modern Korean translation, *Mwit'el chugyo ilgi* [Bishop Mutel's journals], published and translated by the Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso). A Japanese report on An Chunggŭn compiled after the assassination also refers to An's father as a *chinsa*. See Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, "Hyunghaengja kŭp hyŏmŭija chosasŏ [Investigation into the villain and suspects]," 7:275.

of memorization that earned him a local reputation as a child prodigy. In addition to his command of Confucian texts, T'aehun was also interested in modern knowledge. According to An Chunggŭn, his father was selected in 1884, when he was 23, by the progressive reformer Pak Yŏnghyo to be one of seventy students to study in Japan. However, "A faction of evil officials in the government falsely accused Pak of being a traitor. When they sent soldiers to arrest him, he fled to Japan."⁵ Some of Pak's students were killed and others banished, so T'aehun fled back to his home. Declaring that things were becoming worse for the country, and that "pursuing wealth and honors will not help matters," he moved his whole family to the isolated mountain village of Chŏnggye in Hwanghae Province, where he believed they would be safe.⁶ An thus portrayed his father as a patriotic and enlightened intellectual connected to the pro-Japanese reformer Pak Yŏnghyo, showing that his own family was on the side of civilization and was willing to cooperate with Japan.⁷

An Chunggŭn then described himself, stating that as a student he preferred hunting to studying. When his schoolmates asked him why he wanted to be an ignoramus when his father was a scholar, An responded that "In the days of yore Great-King Xiang Yu of Chu said, 'It is enough to be able to write one's name.' From of old he has been a hero of great renown. I also will make a name for myself that will continue down through the ages. But I don't want it to be as a scholar. I will be a man like him."⁸ By taking Xiang Yu (232-202 BC), a soldier from the

⁵ Pak actually helped plan and execute a Japanese-backed coup against the conservative and pro-Chinese Min clan in which several officials were killed, an act the government of that time, not surprisingly, saw as treason. For an in-depth study of the coup, see Cook.

⁶ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 132.

⁷ For Pak Yŏnghyo's reformist leanings, see Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*. While Pak often worked with the Japanese government, their relationship could be quite stormy. See Duus, 98-101 and 209-10.

⁸ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 132-33.

Warring States period who rose to be a general and then king before his eventual downfall, as his model, An claimed for himself the image of a heroic, politically-active soldier.⁹

An's autobiography is marked by the sense that his life was being preserved so that he could accomplish some great deed. This theme first appears in An's childhood in the story of how he and some schoolmates went up into the mountains. An saw some flowers on a cliff and climbed up in order to pick them. However, he slipped and rolled down the cliff, almost toppling over the side of the mountain. He managed to grab hold of some vegetation but was unable to climb back up. Fortunately, his friends lowered a rope and pulled him to safety. They thanked Heaven for his rescue and returned home. An ended the story with the comment that this was "the first time that I escaped death."¹⁰

The Tonghak Rebellion

Following this scrape with death, after briefly noting that in 1894, at the age of sixteen, he married "a woman of the Kim clan" (Kim Aryŏ, nd) who would bear him two sons and a daughter, An described his participation in a battle against Tonghak "bandits," who, under the pretext of driving the foreigners out of Korea, killed government officials and robbed the common people, leading eventually to the Sino-Japanese War.¹¹ In a parenthetical note, he

⁹ For the story of Xiang Yu see Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, tr. Burton Watson (Columbia: Columbia University Press), 17-48.

¹⁰ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 133.

¹¹ For an overview of the Tonghak rising in Hwanghae province, see Song Ch'ansŏp, "Hwanghaedo chibang ŭi nongmin chŏnjaeng ŭi chŏn'gae wa sŏnggyŏk [The development and character of the peasant war in rural Hwanghae Province]," in *Tonghak nongmin hyŏngmyŏng ŭi chiyŏkchŏk chŏn'gae wa sahoe pyŏndong* [The regional development and social changes of the Tonghak peasant revolution], ed. Tonghak Nongmin Hyŏngmyŏng Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Tonghak Nongmin Hyŏngmyŏng Kinyŏm Saŏphoe, 1995), 227-62.

stated that the pro-Japanese Ilchinhoe drew its membership from the Tonghak.¹² According to An's narrative of the uprising, his father, T'aehun, sent out letters calling on people to join him in resisting the "deprivations" of the rebels.¹³ T'aehun managed to raise a force of seventy hunters, but they opposed an army of more than 20,000 led by the Tonghak general Wŏn Yongil. Fortunately for T'aehun, a thunderstorm forced Wŏn to delay his attack and set up camp for the night near his home in Chŏnggye. Seeing an opportunity, T'aehun planned to launch a surprise assault on Wŏn's forces in the early morning. An Chunggŭn led some of his friends to volunteer to scout out the Tonghak positions so T'aehun sent them out ahead of the main army.

An's scouting party was able to sneak so close to the Tonghak camp that they could see their commander. An, astounded by the enemy's lack of discipline and readiness, convinced his comrades that they should launch the attack themselves. They began their assault "with a great shout," the sound of their guns shaking "heaven and earth like thunder" and their bullets raining down like "hail." Panicking, many member of the Tonghak army fled, abandoning their armor and weapons and trampling each other as they retreated.¹⁴ However, An's success was short lived. Once the day became bright enough for the Tonghak army to see how few their attackers were, they quickly surrounded An and his friends. But, just as it appeared that there was no escape, the rest of T'aehun's army attacked, rescuing the scouting party. Together, they then drove the Tonghak away in a complete rout. An described a complete victory, "Among the spoils of war that we collected were ten loads of weapons and ammunition, horses without

¹² Many members of the Tonghak did in fact join the Ilchinhoe, attracted by its calls for reforms and successful organization of tax resistance, which promised to ameliorate the difficult conditions faced by peasants and laborers in the late Chosŏn dynasty. The Ilchinhoe looked to Japan as an ally in these efforts, and its leaders even petitioned Japan to annex Korea, a move that proved to be very unpopular among its members. See Yumi Moon, "The Populist Contest." The leadership of the Tonghak faith, later renamed Ch'ŏndogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way), would eventually cut formal ties with the Ilchinhoe, purge its members from its organization, and become active in the Korean independence movement. See Weems, 61-86.

¹³ T'aehun might have been reacting to the call of the provincial governor for local elites to raise militias. See Song, 247-51.

¹⁴ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 134-35.

number, and about a thousand sacks of rice. There were scores of dead and wounded among the enemy, but among our righteous army no one was even hurt. This was thanks to the grace of Heaven.”¹⁵ Following the battle, An T’aehun’s army returned to Chŏnggye and reported their victory to the governor of Hwanghae. In addition, a Japanese officer named Suzuki marched his troops past T’aehun’s forces and sent a letter congratulating him. An then stated that they did not hear of any more battles being fought and that the rebellion died away after this, implying that his father’s victory was central to its suppression.¹⁶

An’s portrayal of the battle is inaccurate on at least two counts. First, the numbers involved were much different than An related. T’aehun faced an army that probably numbered between 1,700 and 2,000 men, and he had another 100 men in addition to his hunters, making for odds of approximately 10 to 1, not 100 to 1.¹⁷ Second, the victory did not play a significant role in the suppression of the Tonghak rebellion. In fact, both Wŏn Yongil and An T’aehun continued to lead troops into battle.¹⁸ However, by emphasizing the seemingly impossible odds

¹⁵ According to Hwanghae Governor Chŏng Hyŏnsŏk’s report, three Tonghak officers were killed in the fighting. There was no mention of how many Tonghak soldiers had been killed. This information can be found in Governor Chŏng’s report in the *Tonghangnan kirok* [Records of the Tonghak rebellion], which was published by the Kuksa P’yŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe in 1971. See volume 2, 733-34. This section of the *Tonghangnan kirok* is also available online at the Han’guksa Teit’ŏbesŭ under the heading “Kabo haeyŏng piyo chŏnmal [The complete military report of the revolt in Hwanghae Province]” at http://db.history.go.kr/url.jsp?ID=sa_010 (accessed June 11, 2010). Tonghak forces tended to scatter when met with superior forces and then to reassemble later. Thus, their armies were relatively easy to defeat, but hard to destroy, making it very difficult to actually put down the rebellion. This is why, even by An’s estimation, there were so few killed in this battle. See Song, 242-46.

¹⁶ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 135.

¹⁷ According to the report of the governor of Hwanghae province, Chŏng Hyŏnsŏk, An T’aehun had 70 men with firearms under his command, as well as another 100 men, who were likely not so well armed. Wŏn Yongil probably had between 1,700 to 2,000 men. Governor Chŏng praised T’aehun for his skill and recommended that he be given a reward. He even repeated this request on December 2, 1894. For an analysis of these numbers, see O, 91-92. In understanding the reasons for his victory, it should be noted that T’aehun held several advantages. First, his men were fighting on their home ground and so knew the lay of the land better and were likely more highly motivated than the Tonghak army. Second, much of his force consisted of hunters who would have likely been better shots than the Tonghak, who were primarily farmers, laborers, miners, and merchants (Song, 232-41). These advantages, when combined with T’aehun’s acknowledged competency as a military leader and the shock of a surprise attack when Tonghak forces were expecting an easy victory, show that while remarkable, T’aehun’s victory was certainly not impossible.

¹⁸ After this battle, which took place on November 14, An T’aehun took his army away from Chŏnggye, and in joint operations with a Japanese army, between November 23 and 27, won several victories over Tonghak forces. He

that An T'aehun fought against, and the decisiveness of his victory, An showed that Heaven favored the righteous—his and his father's army fighting in defense of their home—against the wicked Tonghak “bandits.” Moreover, An portrayed himself as a brave soldier and leader of men who had helped win this great victory. In addition, An, by connecting his father's army with the Japanese officer Suzuki, showed that he and his family were willing to cooperate with Japan in order to put down the “anti-foreign” (and by extension, anti-civilization and enlightenment) Tonghak rising, which he connected to the Ilchinhoe, an organization that competed with An in claiming to speak for the Korean nation. Finally, An presented the violence utilized by private parties in defense of the Korean state as legitimate.

Conversion to Catholicism

According to An Chunggŭn, the defeat of the Tonghak army did not end his father's troubles. In the summer of 1896, two men visited An T'aehun and claimed that the rice that he had seized after the battle actually belonged to Minister of Finance Ŏ Yujung (1848-1896), and a former senior official of the Tribute Bureau, Min Yŏngjun (1852-1935), and that T'aehun needed to pay them back. He refused.¹⁹ Later, according to An Chunggŭn, his father received a letter from his patron Kim Chonghan (1844-1932), a moderate reformer and former high government official, which said that Ŏ and Min had submitted a “slandorous memorial” accusing T'aehun of stealing rice that was a part of government stores and of raising an army of several

returned with his army to Chŏnggye when Wŏn Yongil again threatened it. Later, on account of his reputation, Kim Ku (1876-1949), the local Tonghak commander, responded positively to a truce he suggested. See O, Ŭlsa choyak,” 90-96.

¹⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 135.

thousand men in order to launch a rebellion.²⁰ T'aehun went to Seoul in order to clear his name, but despite numerous appeals, failed to do so. Kim also sought to help him, submitting a memorial that asserted that T'aehun was innocent and should in fact be recognized for the "great service he has done for our country by putting down the rebellion."

According to An, Ŏ continued to demand payment for the rice, but was stoned to death in a riot following the assassination of Queen Min.²¹ However, Min Yŏngjun still remained and put so much pressure on T'aehun that he was forced to seek shelter in a Catholic Church in Seoul, where he received the protection of a French priest.²² While there, An T'aehun listened to homilies and read Catholic books, eventually deciding to convert to Catholicism. It is not clear how the rice incident was resolved, but there is a good chance that the Catholic Church was somehow involved. Bishop Gustave Mutel, the head of the church in Korea, had interceded in the past on Min Yŏngjun's behalf and Min might have decided that it was not worth pursuing the matter at the cost of possibly harming a useful relationship.²³ In any case, by late 1896, T'aehun was able to return home, bringing with him a catechist named Paul Yi and a large number of Catholic books.²⁴ Together, they conducted missionary work in Chŏnggye and the surrounding area and made a large number of converts. Such was their success that a French missionary, Father Joseph Wilhelm (1860-1938), established a mission station, and later a parish, in

²⁰The rice incident was more complex than as portrayed in An's autobiography. An T'aehun did not simply take the rice from the Tonghak forces as spoils of war. He also drew rice from government stores while on campaign. Moreover, he, like many other elites who raised militias, did not immediately demobilize his soldiers, and used them to strengthen his position in local society. So while the charges were exaggerated, they were not completely baseless. For an examination of these charges, see O, "Ŭlsa choyak," 90-96.

²¹ While it is true that Ŏ died in this way, Kim Chonghan had actually convinced him to drop the matter over the rice before his death. See O, "Ŭlsa choyak," 96-98.

²² The church where An T'aehun took shelter would eventually become Myŏngdong Cathedral. This incident shows how Catholic priests were able to use their extraterritorial status to claim not only protection for themselves from Korean law, but to extend it to Koreans by applying it to their churches and homes.

²³ After requests by the King Kojong's birth-mother and others, Mutel wrote a letter to the Russian consul, where the king was then residing, to ask that Min Yŏngjun, who had been arrested, be released. After several days, Min was given his freedom, though it is not clear if Mutel's intercession was an important factor. See Mutel's journal, November 7 and November 10, 1895, 408-10.

²⁴ For an analysis of these books and their influence on An's family, see Ch'a, "An Chunggŭn," 9-32.

Chŏnggye.²⁵ T'aehun's family also converted, including An Chunggŭn. An described how, after he was baptized by Wilhelm, he studied Catholicism, and that "over a number of months my faith grew firmer until I had no doubts, and so I worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ."²⁶

An traveled together with Father Wilhelm doing missionary work, frequently giving public speeches in which he urged people to convert to Catholicism. He included in his autobiography an idealized version of such a speech. To obtain the crowd's attention he would tell them he knew the secret for eternal life. He then sought to prove the existence of God and an eternal soul, drawing on the words of Confucius and the reputed sayings of the Sage-emperor Yao, as well as logical arguments similar to those used in Hwang Sayŏng's time. An devoted a great deal of attention to the afterlife, stressing the justice of God and that in the end, the good would be rewarded by him with eternal happiness and the evil punished with everlasting torment. He also gave a detailed account of the Incarnation, ministry, Passion, and Resurrection of Jesus. He did not shy away from the miraculous, emphasizing the Virgin Birth and Jesus' miracles of healing. As a Catholic he stressed that Christ had founded the Catholic Church, that he had appointed Peter as the first pope, and that his successors continued to govern it.²⁷

An did not just focus on the next world. Like Hwang Sayŏng, he connected civilization and religion, noting in his speech that, "Today, in the civilized countries of the world, among the gentlemen of great learning, there is not one who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Similarly, he saw conversion to the true religion as promising to bring both this-worldly and otherworldly benefits, ending his speech with the words, "I hope that many of our Korean people will reflect on their lives and come bravely forward, repent of their sins of former days, and

²⁵ Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, ed., *Hwanghaedo Ch'ŏnjugyo kyohoesa* [The history of the Catholic Church in Hwanghae Province] (Seoul: Hwanghaedo Ch'ŏnjugyo Kyohoesa Kanhaeng Saŏphoe, 1984), 188-93.

²⁶ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 137.

²⁷ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 140.

become righteous children of the Lord of Heaven. We can make today a virtuous age and enjoy great peace together. Then after we die we will ascend to heaven and there receive eternal joy without end.”²⁸

An was influenced in his belief that Catholicism could both save souls and help modernize Korea by Father Wilhelm, who was teaching him French and with whom he discussed “various matters.” Around the year 1900, An said to Father Wilhelm that “currently many Korean believers are ignorant and not well educated. This does no little harm to our missionary efforts. We can easily guess how much more damage it will do to the future of our country (*kukka*).” An then suggested that they ask Bishop Mutel to bring a missionary order to Korea to establish a university.²⁹ Wilhelm agreed with An, and together they went to see Bishop Mutel. However, Mutel rejected the proposal, stating that a modern education would cause Catholics to become indifferent to their faith.³⁰ Despite An’s protestations, Mutel would not budge. Angry, An returned home, declaring that despite believing in Catholicism, he could no longer trust foreigners. He also gave up learning French, contending that learning the language would make him a slave to the French.³¹

The difficulties An had with the leaders of the Church did not end there. Later, sometime in 1904, he and other Catholics were discussing what to do about Wilhelm, who in their opinion was abusing his power.³² Unfortunately, An does not say what specifically the Korean Catholics

²⁸ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 141.

²⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 141-42.

³⁰ See Franklin Rausch, “Saving Knowledge: Catholic Educational Policy in the late Chosŏn Dynasty,” *Acta Koreana* 11, no. 3 (December 2008): 69-76.

³¹ At the time, Koreans preparing to serve the church generally studied Latin, the universal language of the church. French, was at best, an elective. By studying French, An was preparing to acquire secular, not religious, knowledge. See Rausch, “Saving Knowledge,” 65.

³² Wilhelm could be a rather prickly character and often found himself at odds with other priests. For example, in an August 9, 1902 letter to Bishop Mutel, he criticized a Korean priest as a coward and attacked another Catholic missionary for being too strict in what he required of Koreans to be baptized. The Korean translation of this letter can be found in Han’guk Kyohoesa Yŏn’guso, *Hwanghaedo*, 613-18.

were upset about, though he does note that he proposed appealing to Bishop Mutel and even the pope if necessary. Wilhelm, hearing about this, became infuriated with An and proceeded to insult and hit him, but An refused to fight back, patiently enduring the abuse. Eventually, Wilhelm approached An seeking reconciliation and An agreed. An thus depicted himself as patient, refusing to respond to violence in kind, and willing to reconcile despite past wrongs.

Catholicism and Conflict in Hwanghae Province

An not only described the conflicts that arose within the Catholic community, but also those that broke out between it and other groups in Hwanghae society. For example, right after An described the university proposal in his autobiography, he told the story of how he was selected by Korean Catholics to go and speak to the supervisor of a mine who had been “slandering” Catholicism. An claimed that during their interview, “several hundred” angry miners, carrying rocks and wielding clubs, came at him. He drew a dagger and grabbed ahold of the mine’s supervisor, taking him hostage, and threatening to kill him if the miners did not allow An to leave. An then dragged his unhappy captive for several kilometers before letting him go free. An justified threatening violence here as self-defense, stating that it was a case of “the law being far but fists being near.”³³

Having the “law” close by was not necessarily helpful, as seen in An’s description of two incidents in which he acted as the head of a small delegation of Catholics sent to obtain redress for their grievances. The first involved accusations that a former high-official, Kim Chunghwan, had stolen a large sum of money from the Catholics. An and the other members of the delegation went to Seoul and visited Kim’s house, where he was having a party. There An

³³ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 142.

confronted Kim in front of his guests. Kim said he did not have the money to pay them back but An pointed out that, seeing how beautifully the house was furnished, his excuse was hard to accept. At this point, Chŏng Myŏngsŏp, an inspector in the Capitol City Ministry, came to Kim's defense, asking An who he thought he was to speak to a former government official in that way. An responded that Chŏng was not familiar with "the ancient books" and with a strongly Confucian argument:

From of old until now it has been known that wise kings and good ministers consider the people as heaven whereas evil kings and greedy officials view the people as food. If the people are wealthy, then the country is wealthy. If the people are weak, then the country is weak. However, at a critical time like this, you officials do not follow the august will of the emperor and abuse the people.³⁴

According to An, Chŏng was not able to respond to his words and Kim, in order to restore peace, promised to pay the money back later. An reluctantly agreed.³⁵

The other incident involved Han Wŏn'gyo, a military officer who was accused of seducing the wife of a Catholic, Yi Kyŏngju, and stealing his property. When Yi attempted to retrieve his wife and goods, he was beaten severely by soldiers under Han's command. Yi appealed his case to a military court (*yukkun pobwŏn*) and Han was stripped of his office, but because of his powerful family, was able to keep Yi's wife and property. In order to appeal again, An and Yi broke into Han's house in an attempt to bring him and Yi's wife to court (*pŏpsa*). The couple caught sight of them and fled.³⁶ In retribution, Han charged Yi with beating his elderly mother. Yi was arrested and An was called as a witness.

³⁴ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 146.

³⁵ An does not record whether or not the money was ever paid back. Since he notes that he was reluctant to delay repayment, there is a good chance it was not.

³⁶ It seems that Yi's wife actually preferred to stay with Han. It is also interesting to note that An often links Yi's wife with his property, indicating that he likely shared traditional Korea's view of women as second-class human beings.

Unfortunately for An, the person in charge of the trial was the same Chŏng Myŏngsŏp whom he had argued with at Kim Chunghwan's house. After another hostile exchange with Chŏng, An wrote that he realized that Han was in the court and said, "A soldier is entrusted with grave responsibilities. It is his duty to cultivate a loyal heart, chastise foreign foes, defend the country, and give peace and security to the people. How much more an officer like yourself? However, you remorselessly abused your power and stole the wife and property of one of the good people you are supposed to protect."³⁷ An continued his harangue, until he was interrupted by Chŏng, who was offended when An referred to the "dirty thieves" living in Seoul. Chŏng then ordered Yi Kyŏngju to be put in jail and threatened to throw An in as well. According to An, he responded that he had been called as a witness, not as a suspect, and that throwing him in jail would be enforcing a "barbarous law," which was unthinkable "in this civilized age." An then strode out of the courtroom, the inspector rendered speechless. But despite An's efforts, Yi was sentenced to prison for three years. According to An, he was released after one, but Han, with the help of two other men, murdered him. Yi's wife and Han's co-conspirators were arrested, tried, and executed, but Han himself escaped punishment.³⁸

An did not see the suffering of his friend Yi as an isolated incident but connected it to the wider problems facing Korea at that time. As he passed Independence Gate, he wondered how his friend, locked up in prison though innocent, could endure the cold winter. He then asked himself, "When will this wicked government be cast down and reformed, and the thieving and traitorous officials swept away, so that a civilized and independent country could be established

³⁷ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 147.

³⁸ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 148.

in which the people would have their rights and freedoms?” An was so deeply upset that he “wept tears of blood.”³⁹

Shortly after these incidents, in 1903, An described how officials who “indiscriminately oppressed the people, treating them as though they were just food to be devoured” were angry that Catholics resisted “their repressive orders and their attempts at extortion.” These officials used the fact that some criminals pretended to be Catholics in order to defraud people to slander the faithful, leading to the dispatch of special inspector Yi Ŭngik to the government office in Haeju.⁴⁰ After that:

policemen and soldiers were sent to each village to arrest the Catholic leaders. Whether guilty or not, they were arrested. This caused a great deal of suffering and confusion in the Church. Police and soldiers were also sent to capture my father several times but we resisted (*hanggŏ*/抗拒)⁴¹ and they were unable to arrest him.⁴² He escaped to another place... Meanwhile, because of the protection of the French missionaries, things eventually quieted down for the Catholic Church.⁴³

As we shall see in the following chapter, Catholics were not blameless, and the conflict An described, the *Haesŏ* incident, was far more complicated. What is important to note is that An justified resistance, which likely at least included the implicit threat of violence, against state officials, on the grounds that they were corrupt, that is, they behaved immorally. Thus, in his autobiography, An consistently depicted officials as failing to meet the standards of both Confucianism and civilization and enlightenment thought, which he presented himself as

³⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 148.

⁴⁰ Yi Ŭngik's report criticizing An T'aehun and other Catholics can be found in Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, *Hwanghaedo*, 659-61.

⁴¹ Unfortunately An is not clear what forms such resistance took, or how Catholics “resisted” attempts to arrest his father. Perhaps it was similar to that used to protect An's uncle T'aegŏn. When government forces were sent to Chŏnggye to apprehend him, they found about 100 Catholics and Father Wilhelm waiting for them in the village. Apparently feeling threatened, they decided not to press matters and left, empty-handed. Thus, it would not be unreasonable to surmise that at the very least, by resistance, An meant a show of intimidating force that implicitly threatened violence. See O, “Ŭlsa choyak,” 108-10.

⁴² As late as August 1903 the Chosŏn government still sought his arrest. See *Kojong sillok* [The veritable records of King Kojong], book 47, vol. 43, 34B (year 40, 21. 8. *kyemyo*). He was never apprehended.

⁴³ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 150.

understanding and following, and as either unwilling or unable to protect the Korean nation or the Catholic community, or, in the latter case even using violent means to actively cause harm, justifying his own use of violence as acts of self- and communal-defense. Essentially, An portrayed violence taken on behalf of moral causes as legitimate, without reference to state authorization, and even in oppositions to its representatives.

An Chunggŭn and the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement

Up to this point in his narrative, An's primary focus was on his family, his province, and those matters directly concerning him or his fellow Catholics, with only some limited concern for the fate of the Korea. He fixes the events of 1904, and a conversation with Father Wilhelm, as the point in which he began to devote himself to primarily national affairs. An wrote that at the "sound of Russian and Japanese guns" that began the Russo-Japanese War, Father Wilhelm sighed and said "Korea is in great danger." When An asked why, Wilhelm responded, "If Russia wins, it will take over Korea. If Japan wins, it will want to control it. So either way, Korea is in peril."⁴⁴

Wilhelm's predictions proved to be right, as, according to An, "after the peace treaty ending the war between Russia and Japan was signed, Itō Hirobumi came to Korea and threatened the court, forcing it to sign the Five-Article treaty." An's father, indignant at the fate of his country, fell ill. An spoke to him, saying that when the war began, Japan declared "it was fighting to maintain peace in the East and to strengthen Korean independence." However, Japan had not lived up to those "noble aspirations" because of Itō Hirobumi. Having forced Korea to sign the treaty, An predicted that he would now "destroy people who think like us and then he

⁴⁴ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 152.

will gobble our country up....If we don't do something quickly, then all will be lost. Can we just sit here and wait to die?⁴⁵ They then decided that An would go to China where other Koreans had already fled and scout out a place where they could work for Korean independence.

While in Shanghai, An tried to meet with the Korean official Min Yongik.⁴⁶ However, according to An, Min refused to give him an interview because he would not see Koreans (*Hanin*). Unable to obtain an audience, An says he shouted at him from outside the gate, admonishing Min that though he was “an official who received a salary from the state for many years,” he did not “care about the people,” lazing about as Korea faced destruction. An further criticizing him, saying that Korea faced danger “because of the crimes of you high officials and not because of any fault of our people,” and charged that it was on account of that failure that Min was too ashamed to see him.⁴⁷

An then went to meet the Korean merchant Sŏ Sanggun to win his support for the cause of Korean independence and enlightenment. Sŏ, however, was not interested, saying, “Don't speak to me about the affairs of our country. I am just a merchant. Powerful officials stole hundreds of thousands of wŏn from me. That is why I fled the country. What do politics and the people have to do with each other?” An disagreed saying, “Korea is not the country of a few officials but belongs to the twenty-million of our people. But if we, the people of this nation, don't do our duty as such, then how can we, the Korean people, obtain our rights and freedoms? We live in a world of different ethnic groups (*minjok segye*/民族世界). How can we Koreans be the only ones who just lie down like a fish on a carving board and wait to be eaten?” However,

⁴⁵ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 152-53.

⁴⁶ Min Yongik was a member of the Min clan from which King Kojong had taken his wife. They supported a moderate self-strengthening program and looked to China for advice and protection. See Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 152-56). Yongik was severely wounded in the coup of 1884 but was nursed back to health by Dr. Horace Allen, which won the doctor, and Protestant missionaries, the court's undying gratitude. See Harrington. Yongik had spent many years in Shanghai previously. See Michael Finch, *Min Yŏng-hwan: a Political Biography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 150.

⁴⁷ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 153.

Sŏ refused to budge. After their meeting, An sighed and said to himself, “If Koreans are all like this, then I can easily imagine what is in store for our country.”⁴⁸

Later, while still in Shanghai, An went to a Catholic Church, and after praying, unexpectedly met with the French missionary Father Le Gac. Le Gac had worked in Hwanghae province and was well known to An. Their conversation turned almost immediately to the fate of Korea. An explained that he had left his homeland to work for Korean independence and had hoped to build support for his cause among foreign countries. Le Gac, torn, told him that as a missionary he should not speak on political matters, but that if An wanted to hear his advice, he would give it. An expressed interest in hearing what he had to say and Le Gac then told him of how in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, Prussia had won control over the two French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. The French wanted them back, but many of the inhabitants who desired reunion with France had fled, making their recovery all the more difficult. Korea was in a similar situation and therefore leaving the country would not help restore its independence. In addition, Le Gac pointed out that while foreign countries might give An a sympathetic ear, in the end they would not assist Korea unless it furthered their own interests. Instead, the priest told An to return to Korea and devote himself to building up Korea’s internal strength through civilization and enlightenment activities, such as education.

An agreed and returned home. But sad news waited for him in Korea: his father had passed away while he was abroad. Now head of the household as the oldest son, he moved his family from the relatively isolated village of Chŏnggye to the port town of Chinnamp’o where he would be better able to devote himself to reform. There he followed Le Gac’s advice and helped establish Samhŭng night school, which offered English classes in a private home and was also sponsored by another Catholic. He also served as principal of Tŏnui academy, which was a

⁴⁸ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 153-54.

primary school attached to a Catholic parish church.⁴⁹ In order to raise funds for such endeavors and to develop Korea's economy, An invested in a coal mine. The enterprise failed, according to An, because of unspecified Japanese "obstruction."⁵⁰

An also participated in the debt repayment movement, started in Taegu by another Catholic, Sŏ Sangdon (1851-1913).⁵¹ The goal of this campaign was to raise money to repay the debt the Korean state owed Japan so that it could not serve as a pretext for the expansion of Japanese power in the peninsula.⁵² According to An, a Japanese policeman came to their meeting to question them. When he asked An how much money they had raised and how many members were in their club, An responded, "We have twenty million members and we will collect thirteen million wŏn and then pay back our debt."⁵³ The policeman doubted that Koreans would be able to do this, as they were "an inferior people." An responded that it was expected that people who borrow money pay it back. The policeman, apparently insulted by An's response, attacked him. An, fought back, thinking, "If I just sit back and let myself be insulted unreasonably, how can the twenty-million Korean people escape oppression in the future? How can I accept this disgrace to our nation?" Such was their fury that it took all the strength of some

⁴⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 156; Sin Unyong, "An Chunggŭn ŭi min'gwŏn • minjok ŭisik kwa kyemong undong [An Chunggun's concept of human rights and national consciousness and the enlightenment movement]," in *An Chunggŭn kwa kŭ sidae*, ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 20-27; Rausch, "Saving Knowledge," 78.

⁵⁰ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 157; Sin Unyong, "An Chunggŭn ŭi min'gwŏn," 28-31. Unfortunately An does not explain what form this "obstruction" took. The failure of the coal mine was also noted by a November 18, 1909 Japanese report, though the reason for its failure was not given. See Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, "Kimil t'ongbal che paek-kusip-p'al-ho, [Secret dispatch number 198]," 7:201 and 204.

⁵¹ Choi Suk-Woo (Ch'oe Sŏgu), "Korean Catholicism: Yesterday and Today," *Korea Journal* 23, no. 8 (August 1984): 10-11.

⁵² Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, trans. Edward Wagner and Edward Schultz (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 328.

⁵³ An often referred to Korea as a country of twenty million people and so was saying that all Koreans were members of the debt repayment movement. Thirteen million wŏn was the amount of the debt owed by the Korean state and so An meant that they were going to pay it all back.

bystanders to pull them apart.⁵⁴ An thus put himself forward as the representative, and defender, of the Korean nation.

Through his participation in patriotic enlightenment activities, and his resistance in the face of Japanese obstruction to the same, An asserted that he had a greater commitment to nationalism and an independent Korea than Chosŏn officials, whose corruption alienated Koreans, like the merchant Sŏ, from the state. Furthermore, their failure to protect Korea's independence from Itō forced An to engage in civilization and enlightenment-inspired activities in order to build up national strength. Japanese interference, however, prevented these movements from bearing the necessary fruit, and in the face of such violent obstruction, An would present his own use of violence as justified.

The “Righteous Army” Movement

Immediately after relating his fight with the Japanese policeman, An described how in 1907, following the Hague incident, Itō Hirobumi, “forced the signing of the Seven-Article Treaty, dethroned the Kwangmu Emperor, and disbanded the Korean army.” His actions “disturbed the twenty million people of our nation,” leading them to form “righteous armies” everywhere. An responded to these events by gathering up his belongings and leaving his family to join this guerilla movement.⁵⁵ By depicting the formation of “righteous armies” as a reaction to the disbanding of the Korean state's army, An presented them as its successors and a legitimate reaction to Itō's crimes, justifying their use of violence.

⁵⁴ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 157.

⁵⁵ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 157.

An traveled to Kando in hopes of joining a guerilla army there.⁵⁶ However, the Japanese military presence in the region was increasing and An decided it was necessary to go to Vladivostok to work for Korean independence. There, he joined a youth organization and was given a position as temporary inspector. When someone spoke out of turn and An called him on it, the man slapped him in the face, injuring his ear. An refused to fight back, instead explaining that Koreans needed to stay unified and should not quarrel among themselves. This resulted in reconciliation between him and his assailant.⁵⁷ Again, An portrayed himself as restrained in the face of violence and as willing to forgive and forget.

Immediately following this incident, An went to speak to Yi Pömyun (1856-1940), a former official from northern Kando, who had contested control of the region with China and engaged in battle with Qing troops.⁵⁸ During the Russo-Japanese war he had worked with the Russians and after their defeat went to live in Russian-controlled territory. An argued that in fighting against the Japanese, “who nobly wanted to maintain peace in the East and strengthen Korea’s sovereignty,” and so were “obedient to Heaven” (順天), on the side of Russia, he had opposed the will of Heaven. However, because now Itō Hirobumi, who “trusts only in power, behaves recklessly, and does not respect others,” and was “deceiving the [Japanese] emperor and indiscriminately killing people,” thereby destroying Japan’s relationships with its neighbors and forfeiting the trust of the world,” was in charge, Japanese policy was now against Heaven, and it was therefore not only legitimate, but necessary to resist violently.⁵⁹ According to An, Yi agreed with him but said they needed money and weapons. An responded that they could acquire them if they responded “to the will of Heaven” and followed “the desires of the people.”

⁵⁶ The Kando is a region in Northeastern China where many ethnic Koreans live. It is pronounced Jiandao in Chinese and Kantō in Japanese.

⁵⁷ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 157-58.

⁵⁸ Schmid, 216.

⁵⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 158-59.

The exchange with Yi is important for several reasons. First, An justified violent resistance by arguing for the moral righteousness of their cause in Confucian terms. In addition, he equated success with whether or not one acted morally. Right made might and success proved that one was right. Second, An's arguments presented here were likely shaped in order to appeal to the Japanese he hoped would read his autobiography. Japan had won its victory with Russia because it was fighting on the side of right. Since Itō had departed from that policy, and the will of Heaven, if Japan did not reform it, the country would eventually face defeat.

An wrote that after his meeting with Yi, he and his friends traveled throughout the Korean communities in Russian-controlled territory in order to obtain the men, money, and guns needed to form an army. In his autobiography, An provided an idealized sample of the speech he would give to gain support for his army. It began with the story of a young man who left his parents for a foreign land and prospered there. However, when bandits in his home country attacked his family and his brother came and asked him for help, enjoying his comfortable life too much, he refused. An stated that such a person was a beast and that the people that he now lives among, seeing how he had treated his own family, would turn against him. An then compared him to expatriate Koreans who would not help their homeland in its time of need.⁶⁰

In his speech, as recorded in his autobiography, An vividly described the cruelties Koreans had already suffered at the hands of Japanese forces, and argued that if they lost control of their country, they would suffer further brutality and slaughter. He traced the cause of this oppression to “that old thief, Itō Hirobumi,” who, by claiming that Koreans wanted Japanese protection and by saying that the cause of peace was advancing each day, had tricked the Japanese emperor and the great powers. Therefore, An declared that “if we do not eliminate this

⁶⁰ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 159-61.

bandit, then Korea will certainly perish and the East will eventually be destroyed.”⁶¹ However, this emphasis on Itō seems to have arisen from his attempt to persuade his current Japanese audience, as when he gave this speech he was trying to convince Koreans to fight against Japan, not assassinate Itō.

Such was the danger that they faced that “Koreans, whether at home or abroad, whether man or woman or old or young, must take up guns and swords and rise up without considering victory or defeat.” Such violence was legitimate, for though “Japanese bandits” might refer to Korean guerillas as “insurgents,” Japanese violence, which involved stealing land and killing innocent people, was illegitimate, making them the true insurgents, while that of the “righteous armies” was justified, as they were “protecting their country by defending it against foreign bandits.” Moreover, by fighting back, not only would Koreans “escape being laughed at with scorn by the future generations of all nations,” but the “great powers of the world” would develop “a good opinion of us.” By impressing the empires, and building up their internal strength, Koreans would be able to retake their independence once Japan found itself at war with China, Russia, and the United States, a conflict that would begin within the next five years. If Koreans did not fight back and show that they could stand on their own, even if Japan were driven out, Korea would just fall under the power of another country.⁶²

An’s activities bore fruit—a guerilla army was established and he was given the rank of lieutenant-general.⁶³ In 1908 An’s army crossed the Tumen river into Korean’s Hamgyōng Province and engaged with Japanese forces, taking a number of soldiers and merchants

⁶¹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yōksa*, 160.

⁶² Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yōksa*, 159-61.

⁶³ This is a rather high rank considering that their army consisted of only a few hundred men. However, such ranks were probably given so that the Koreans could claim parity with the Japanese they were fighting.

prisoner.⁶⁴ An described how he questioned them in his autobiography, asking, why as subjects of Japan, they did not obey the emperor's will, as made known in his declaration of war against Russia that stated that Japan was fighting to maintain Korean independence and peace in the East, but instead were "invading" and "plundering" Korea. According to An, the prisoners responded that they had been forced to act as they did by Itō Hirobumi, who in disobeying the Japanese emperor's will, had caused "many Japanese and Koreans" to "lose their precious lives while he enjoys good fortune and ease." Because of Itō they had no hope for peace in the East or the future of their own country.⁶⁵ Having listened to their response, An declared them to be "loyal and righteous" men. He then released them, charging them to drive those Japanese politicians who talked of invading their neighbors from power. He even returned their weapons.

According to An, his fellow officers disagreed with his actions. They wanted to execute the prisoners out of revenge for the Koreans Japanese soldiers had killed. An responded that such acts were against international law. They still disagreed and so An admonished them, "If we act savagely towards the enemy it will infuriate God and other people. Do you want to act like barbarians? Is it your plan to restore our country's sovereignty by killing all forty million Japanese people?" He explained that because the Koreans were weak and the Japanese were strong, they could not win such a "vicious war," but "by acting virtuously we will publicly criticize the evil deeds of Itō and show our virtue to the whole world and obtain the sympathy of the great powers. Then we can wash away our grievances and restore our rights. This is how the

⁶⁴ According to Sin Unyong's reconstruction based on Russian, Japanese, and Korean documents, the guerilla army An was a part of crossed into Korea in early July 1908 in two divisions. An's division captured a few Japanese merchants, as well as a several Japanese soldiers sent out as scouts to investigate reports regarding the guerilla army. This appears to be the extent of An's victory. The only major battle he fought with the Japanese ended in his defeat. Forces under his command had completely disintegrated by the middle of July. See Sin Unyong, "An Chunggŭn ŭi ŭibyŏng t'ujaeng kwa hwal-dong [An Chunggŭn's righteous army struggle and activities]," in *An Chunggŭn kwa kŭsidae*, ed. An Chunggŭn Ŭisa Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2009), 62-67.

⁶⁵ This exchange can be found in Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 162-63.

weak can defeat the strong, by treating our wicked enemies well.”⁶⁶ While An confessed that many found his argument unpersuasive and some even deserted the unit he commanded, he had managed to portray himself as following the civilized rules of warfare and implicitly criticized the Japanese state, which was, just as it had killed other Korean prisoners-of-war, going to unjustly execute him, an illegitimate act of violence of the sort that he himself had refused to permit.

After this incident, An’s army again clashed with Japanese forces and was completely defeated.⁶⁷ Despite his best attempts to rally his scattered men, he soon found himself with only a few of his comrades. They discussed what they should do next. Eventually An decided that, in order to do his duty “as a Korean,” he would launch an attack on a Japanese camp alone. However, one of his comrades urged him against it, arguing that he needed to stay alive in order to continue the fight for Korean independence. An agreed with him, noting that Xiang Yu had killed himself out of shame and anger, and that having done so, “there have been no more Xiang Yus” in the world. If An were to die now, “there would be no more An Ŭngch’ils in the world.” Therefore, he resolved to live, explaining that “A hero must be able to act in accordance with circumstances and endure hardships in order to accomplish his goals.”⁶⁸

An and his comrades traveled together for several weeks in an effort to escape Korea for Russian-controlled territory. This small band became even smaller when they were separated from each other one stormy night as they snuck past a Japanese encampment, leaving An with only two companions. They suffered a great deal from cold and hunger, and, after another brush with Japanese forces, completely exhausted, An collapsed. He looked up to heaven and

⁶⁶ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 163-64.

⁶⁷ It is likely that the Japanese An released reported the position of his army, helping make possible this decisive defeat. See Cho Kwang, “An Chunggŭn ŭi aeguk kyemong undong kwa tongnip chŏnjaeng [An Chunggŭn’s patriotic enlightenment movement and independence war],” *Kyohoesa yŏn’gu* 9 (November, 1994): 83-88.

⁶⁸ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 164-65.

earnestly prayed, “If we are to die, let us die quickly, if we are to live, then quickly save us!” Once An finished praying, he and his companions found a stream, and drinking their fill, they spent the night under some trees.⁶⁹ The following day, An’s companions were complaining about the difficulties they faced, but he encouraged them to trust Heaven, telling them that, in order to accomplish a great deed, they had to undergo terrible suffering. An then recorded how he found inspiration in American history, remembering that George Washington, who “in all of history...has never had an equal,” had to suffer for seven or eight years before obtaining independence. An then resolved that if he fulfilled his duty to the country, he would “go to the United States and pay my respects to Washington, who had the same desire for independence as me.”⁷⁰

Despite receiving help from some Koreans living in the mountains, their suffering continued. On several occasions they were almost captured or killed by Japanese or pro-Japanese forces. Through this ordeal, An portrayed himself as a faithful Catholic, urging his companions to trust in Jesus so that they would have eternal life. Noting the danger they were in, he reminded them of Confucius’ dictum that “If we learn the way in the morning, we can die in the evening.”⁷¹ They accepted An’s teaching and he baptized them. Right after administering the sacrament, they met a kindly old Korean man who gave them food and taught them the way to Russian-controlled territory. Eventually they made it back, but An had lost so much weight that his friends did not recognize him. Reflecting on his suffering he wrote, “If it was not the will of Heaven, how could I have survived?”⁷²

⁶⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 166.

⁷⁰ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 166.

⁷¹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 167. An is quoting Confucius. See the *Analects of Confucius*, 4:8.

⁷² Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 168.

The Assassination of Itō Hirobumi

After An Chunggŭn returned to Russian-controlled territory and recovered from his ordeal in the wilderness, he began to travel around, engaging in educational work and helping to establish various pro-independence organizations among Korean expatriates. Once, while traveling through a mountain valley, he and his friends were set upon by a gang of men, who An identified as members of the pro-Japanese Ilchinhoe. According to An, they shouted “We have caught the righteous army general!” His comrades fled but An stood his ground. As the men came at An, they said, “How dare you disobey the orders of the government and fight in a righteous army?” An responded, “The so-called Korean government is a government in name only. In reality, Itō is in charge. Koreans who obey the government's orders are really obeying Itō.” They captured An, but as they were about to beat him to death, he shouted that, if they killed him, his comrades would come back for revenge. They then took him back to a house in the mountains, but released him shortly after. An went on to note that he spent the winter at a friend’s home, recovering from his wounds. In his autobiography he described this as another time that he had managed to escape death.⁷³

After his recovery, in the beginning of 1909, An met with several of his compatriots to form a new pro-independence organization that was meant to act as the nucleus of a guerilla army. Each of the men cut off their ring finger above the knuckle and wrote “Korean Independence” on a flag in their own blood and swore to work towards that end. Such self-inflicted violence was intended to show courage and

⁷³ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 168-69.

sincerity of purpose.⁷⁴ However, the hoped for army did not materialize and An continued to devote himself to educational work and reading newspapers.

An tried to enter Korea in the spring and summer of that year but, because of a lack of money, failed in his purpose, writing that “we spent our time without accomplishing anything.” He was then seized by “an overwhelming sense of anxiety” that he could not overcome and declared that he was going to go to Vladivostok. When his friends asked why he was going as he had no business there, he explained that he did not know. And when they asked when he would return, he “blurted out without thinking, ‘I do not want to come back.’” An wrote that his friends must have thought his reaction was very strange, and that he did not understand it either. Once he arrived in Vladivostok, he discovered that Itō would come to Harbin. He recorded that he “was secretly overjoyed” at this and thought “after all these years I will finally be able to accomplish my goal. That old thief’s life is in my hands.”⁷⁵ An thus portrayed himself as being led mysteriously to Vladivostok, implying divine guidance.⁷⁶

According to his autobiography, An did not have the money to travel to Harbin so he visited his old guerilla army comrade, Yi Sōksan, to borrow 100 won for traveling expenses. Yi said he would not loan An the money without knowing more about what he was going to do with it, and An, not sure if he could trust him, drew his pistol and robbed Yi at gunpoint.⁷⁷ An then contacted another like-minded Korean, Wu Tōksun, and they decided to work together to kill

⁷⁴ Sin Unyong, *An Chunggŭn kwa Han’guk kŭndaesa*, 163-70. While in prison, An became known for his calligraphy and would stamp his distinctive handprint, with its ring finger and pinky being approximately the same length, on each piece.

⁷⁵ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yōksa*, 169-70.

⁷⁶ An stated that he had decided to kill Itō three years earlier, which would have been around 1906 or 1907. See the first session of An Chunggŭn’s interrogation, October 30, 1909, 207-8.

⁷⁷ It is possible that Yi voluntarily helped An but that he made up this story to protect him. However, it seems that An could have come up with a story that would have shown himself in a more favorable light. I am therefore inclined to believe that An is accurately reporting what he did.

Itō.⁷⁸ Because neither An nor Wu spoke Russian they approached Yu Tongha to see if he was interested in accompanying them to Harbin, under the pretext that An was going to meet his family, and acting as their interpreter.⁷⁹ Yu agreed, since he wanted to purchase some medicine in Harbin for his father's pharmacy. He would act as their interpreter for a while, but later, as he wanted to return home, An would ask Cho Tosŏn to accompany him and Wu to interpret for them, again saying that he was traveling to meet his family.⁸⁰ Cho, interested in scouting out the possibility of opening a laundry, agreed.⁸¹

While they were in Harbin and Yu was still part of the group, An asked him to try and borrow some money from an acquaintance, Kim Sŏngbaek. An wrote how, while Yu was gone, he was unable to suppress his "righteous anger" and penned a poem in Classical Chinese.⁸² Entitled the "Song of the Hero," he included it in his autobiography. In this poem he referred to himself as "a great man" with "lofty intentions." Explaining that "the times make the hero and the hero makes the times," that his "righteousness" was burning, and that he was "full of anger

⁷⁸ Wu Tōksun had left his home, along with his wife and parents, four years before the killing of Itō for Russian territory, where he sold tobacco. He had a traditional Confucian education but later, through a Protestant missionary, became an active Christian, though he was never baptized. However, after he left Korea his faith cooled. He read Korean newspapers and seems to have developed a political consciousness and came to regard Itō Hirobumi as the main enemy of Korean independence (Second session of An Chunggŭn's trial, February 8, 1910, 149-53).

⁷⁹ Yu Tongha's family lived in Russian territory. His father ran a pharmacy and wanted Tongha to go to Harbin to buy medicine. However, since he did not want his son, who though married was still quite young, to travel alone, when An asked Tongha to accompany him to see his family and act as a Russian translator, Yu's father gave his permission. Yu denied knowledge of the plot to kill Itō. However, at sentencing the judge reasoned that since he had run errands for An and Wu he would have known of the plot (Third session of An Chunggŭn's trial, February 9, 1910, 181-92).

⁸⁰ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 170-72.

⁸¹ Cho Tosŏn had left Korea for Russian territory fifteen years before Itō was killed. He worked first as an agricultural laborer and then as a gold miner. He saved enough money to engage in trade and even began his own laundry business. For a time he even managed a team of construction laborers. He was married to a Russian woman and could speak but not read Russian. He had no formal education and possessed only a rudimentary literacy in the Korean vernacular and was unable to read Chinese. He denied knowing that An and Wu were going to try and kill Itō (Second session of An Chunggŭn's trial, February 8, 1910, 172-180), but at sentencing the judge pointed to a statement made by Cho before the trial when he was under interrogation that he had known of the plan to kill him.

⁸² An, in writing a poem describing his "righteous anger," was following a hallowed Confucian tradition. See Tikhonov, 176-180.

and bitterness,” he would accomplish his goal, killing that “rat thief Itō.”⁸³ He then called on Koreans to work for independence. An sent this poem to the *Great East Reporter* (*Taedong kongpo*), a newspaper based in Vladivostok, to which he had contributed an article in 1908.⁸⁴ This poem, in which An depicted himself as a nationalist hero, was the only document he wrote before he was incarcerated in which he explained why he wanted to kill Itō.

In addition to the poem, he also included a letter to the newspaper in which he asked that it pay back the money he had asked Yu to borrow. He called this his “shameful plan,” apparently because he had sought a loan which he knew he would not be able to repay. The day after An wrote the poem, he, Wu, and Cho left Yu in Harbin and went to the village of Caijiagou. There An had Cho speak to a railway station clerk and from him learned that Itō would arrive in the morning. An feared that because of the early hour Itō might not disembark from the train, or if he did, the day might not be bright enough to identify him. Therefore, in order to maximize their chances of assassinating him, An and Wu decided to split up: Wu remained in Caijiagou while An went to Harbin.⁸⁵

An spent the night in Harbin. The next day, the morning of October 26, 1909, he changed from his Korean clothes into Western ones, picked up his pistol, and left for the train station. Harbin, though officially Chinese territory, was under the control of the Russians, who

⁸³ In the original poem sent to the newspaper, two blanks were left where Itō’s name would have been. See the third session of An Chunggūn’s interrogation, November 15, 1909, 241-42.

⁸⁴ The *Great East Reporter* was originally known as the *Haejo sinmun* (*The Tide*), and was only published from November 18, 1908 to August 1, 1910. Editorially it was pro-Russian and anti-Japanese. It was published twice a week, with about 1,000 copies per edition. The *Great East Reporter* treated An positively in its coverage of the assassination and trial and helped hire a Russian lawyer for him. There are some accusations that members of the paper played a role in the plot to kill Itō, but there does not appear to be conclusive evidence for this and it was not a factor in his trial or even mentioned in the newspapers surveyed for this study. See Kuksa Pyōnch’an Wiwōnhoe, “Kimil t’ongbal che paek-sip-il-ho [Secret dispatch number 111],” 7:263-65 and Pak Hwan, “Rōsia Yōnhaeju esō ūi An Chunggūn [An Chunggūn in the Russian region of Yōnhaeju],” in *An Chunggūn kwa Hanin minjok undong* [An Chunggūn and the Korean national movement], ed. Han’guk Minjok Undongsa Hakhoe (Seoul: Kukhak Charyowōn, 2002), 80-84.

⁸⁵ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yōksa*, 172-73.

had wanted to allow only people with invitations to welcome Itō. However, the Japanese consul asked that Japanese be given unrestricted access, and his request was granted. Because An wore Western clothing, it was likely assumed that he was Japanese and so he was allowed in.⁸⁶ He waited at a shop, drinking tea until Itō's train arrived. An described the scene:

A little while later Itō disembarked from the train. All the soldiers saluted him. The sound of a military band filled the air. At that moment I was filled with anger and a burning desire for retribution raged in my heart and I thought, "How can the world be so unjust? How sad! This man who has plundered a neighboring country and harmed its people is able to go about as happy as can be without any problems while without cause the kind and gentle Korean people are suffering like this." I jumped up and strode boldly behind the lines of the soldiers where I could see what was happening. The Russian officials were walking in front of the soldiers. In front of them was an elderly little man with a yellow face and a white beard. How can this old man dare to go around so brazenly? Believing that it was certainly that old thief Itō, I drew my pistol and, facing to the right, quickly fired four shots. But then I became worried that I made a mistake since I did not know what Itō looked like. Such an error would be a major disaster. So I looked at the people behind Ito. Among the Japanese there, the most dignified looking one was walking in the front, so I made him my target and quickly fired three times. Then I stopped and thought, "If I mistakenly injured an innocent person it would certainly be disgraceful." While I was thinking that, the Russian guards came and arrested me. It was half past nine in the morning, the thirteenth day of the ninth month of the lunar calendar, in the year 1909.⁸⁷

Following the attack, before he was taken away, An shouted "Ura K'orea," making his national identity clear and implying that it was because of Itō's Korean policy and previous service as resident-general that he had been attacked.⁸⁸

After his arrest, An was interrogated by Russian officials. When he learned that Itō had succumbed to his wounds, he crossed himself and thanked God, a detail he would affirm under

⁸⁶ "Slew to avenge conquest of Korea," *New York Times*, October 27, 1909.

⁸⁷ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 173-74.

⁸⁸ In his autobiography, An wrote that he shouted "Taehan mansei" three times. During his interrogation, he stated that he shouted, "Ura K'orea" (Hurray for Korea). He probably shouted the latter phrase so that he would be understood but then recorded it as "Taehan mansei" when he wrote his autobiography. See the tenth session of An Chunggŭn's interrogation, December 22, 1909, 367-68.

interrogation, later deny, and fail to mention in his autobiography.⁸⁹ Shortly thereafter, An was transferred to the custody of the Japanese consul and interrogated by the prosecutor, Mizobuchi. When he was asked why he had assassinated Itō, An responded with a list of “crimes”⁹⁰ (*ch’oe*) he accused the former resident-general of committing: the killing of Queen Min, forcing the Korean emperor to abdicate, forcing the conclusion of the 1905 and 1907 treaties, slaughtering innocent Koreans, seizing political power, railroads, mines, and land, forcing Korea to use paper money issued by a Japanese bank, disbanding the army, obstructing education in Korea and preventing Koreans from obtaining an education overseas, confiscating and burning textbooks,⁹¹ deceiving the Japanese emperor and the world about what was really happening in Korea, destroying peace in the East, and assassinating Emperor Kōmei.⁹² An therefore presented Itō as an enemy of peace, progress, and the Korean nation, and as a traitor to his emperor.

According to An, having given his reasons for assassinating Itō, the prosecutor declared him to be a “righteous hero of the East” and that he therefore need not fear the death penalty. An responded by asking the prosecutor to “quickly inform His Majesty the Emperor of what I have said. It is my hope that Itō’s evil policy can be rectified and East Asia rescued from its precarious position.”⁹³ An thus portrayed himself as a hero, caring nothing for his life but only

⁸⁹ An affirmed that he had thanked God after learning that he had killed Itō in his second interrogation session on November 14, 1909, but denied it in his tenth interrogation session on December 20, 1909. See pages 240 and 369-70 respectively.

⁹⁰ See Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yōksa*, 174-75. An gave these same reasons at the first session of his interrogation, October 30, 1909, 201-2. The contents are essentially the same in both versions, though the order is somewhat different.

⁹¹ An seems here to be referring to the increasing regulatory power the Residency-General exerted over education in Korea, such as the registration of private schools and censorship of textbooks. See George Paik, 391-94; Yoonmi Lee, “Modern Education, Textbooks, and the Image of the Nation: Politics of Modernization and Nationalism in Korean Education, 1880-1910” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison), 147-51.

⁹² An learned of the accusation that Itō had killed Emperor Kōmei from a Japanese book (Session eight of An Chunggūn’s interrogation, December 20, 1909, 316-17). Emperor Kōmei died unexpectedly at a young age after a short illness, which was declared to be smallpox. However, there have been some who have argued that he was in fact poisoned. For these accusations see Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852-1912* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2002), 94-97.

⁹³ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yōksa*, 175.

about the fate of East Asia and for peace. His killing of Itō was therefore a sincere act of remonstrance that even the prosecutor recognized. An elaborated on this image later in his autobiography when he wrote that “From ancient times, there have been many loyal and righteous patriots who sacrificed themselves in order to remonstrate and the future has always proved them right. I was fearful for peace in the East and, with complete sincerity, offered up my life in an attempt to obtain it.”⁹⁴

A Treatise on Peace in the East

An justified his assassination of Itō by claiming that it was an act of corporate defense taken on behalf of Korea, and the whole East Asian region, and a just punishment for Itō’s crimes. An thus portrayed himself as both the defender of Korean independence and peace in the East. While his autobiography is weighted much more towards the former than the latter, the other major document he wrote, *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, takes peace in the region as its central subject. In what he was able to finish of this essay, the preface and the first chapter, An told a story justifying his assassination of Itō by showing how the former resident-general’s actions endangered all of East Asia. Moreover, An also described his own vision of the foundation on which a peaceful and secure East Asian regional order could be built, giving explicit content to the act of remonstrance that he portrayed his assassination of Itō to be, and which he hoped that Japan would act upon.

An began his essay by reflecting that “it is an ancient and unchanging principle that in union there is success and in division there is failure.” According to An, the world was divided into East and West and the “different races struggle with each other.” Such conflict spoiled the

⁹⁴ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 180.

fruits of civilization and enlightenment, giving rise to “new inventions like machine guns, airplanes, and submarines” that had as their purpose “the destruction of life and property,” and leading young people to go to off to war where “so many of their precious lives are sacrificed that there are rivers of blood and mountains of corpses.”⁹⁵ However, An’s call for unity was not aimed at the “East” and the “West” but towards the “yellow race,” which had to unite and defend itself against the violence of the immoral white empires. An’s worldview was therefore shaped by the ideology of Pan-Asianism within a Social Darwinist understanding of the world as a place of vicious competition. However, An rejected the view prevalent among many Social Darwinists that the laws of survival demanded that nation-states should behave amorally.⁹⁶ In fact, he blamed the current horrific state of the world on the ethical departure of European nations, writing that they “completely forgot about morality,” turned to “military power,” and cultivated “contentious and unscrupulous hearts.” It was their lust for power that led to the competition between races which perverted civilization and enlightenment thought.

An wrote how that at first it seemed as if Japan would provide the leadership and locus of unity that East Asia required in order to defend itself from Western imperialism. In the Russo-Japanese war, it had defeated Russia, which An described as the most powerful, and worst, of the European nations. An contended that Russia’s actions were so wicked that it had angered both “God and man” (*sin in*/神人), and so Heaven favored Japan, which acted in accordance with its will. But this was not the only source of Japan’s success, as Korea and China could have used the war as an opportunity to obtain revenge against Japan for its past misdeeds, in which case, Japan would have been

⁹⁵ Yun Pyong Suk, *Tongyang p’yŏnghwaron*, 192. An English translation by Jieun Han and Franklin Rausch can be found on the website of the University of Toronto’s Centre for the Study of Korea at the following address: <http://www.utoronto.ca/csk/prize.html>.

⁹⁶ Tikhonov, 200-10.

defeated. However, as the Koreans and Chinese saw the war as one between the white and yellow races, they actively supported Japan, enabling its victory.

An argued that these two principles of acting in accordance with Heaven and racial solidarity were fundamental natural laws. If followed, they led to success; if violated, failure. Japan had acted in accordance with these laws, and so was victorious against Russia. However, it later betrayed China and Korea, oppressing the latter and expanding its power in Manchuria at the expense of the former. This led to resistance among Chinese and Koreans, including the “righteous army” risings. Such infighting would exhaust the East, making it possible for the empires of the West to conquer it. Since Itō Hirobumi was the primary architect behind this departure from natural law, and thus the author of the terrible consequences it would bring, An killed him, depicting the assassination as the “declaration of a righteous war at Harbin for peace in the East.”⁹⁷

The first chapter of his essay, “Mirror of the Past,” began with the problems facing East Asia and the “yellow race” at the time of the Sino-Japanese War. An traced the cause of the conflict to the dispatch of troops by both China and Japan to suppress the rebellion started by “those thieving rats, the Tonghak bandits.” He attributed the Japanese victory to morality, arguing that Japan won because China was arrogant, looking down on other countries, and disunited, with the great families seizing control over the state and using their power selfishly, turning the Chinese people against each other, while the Japanese, despite conflict, would unite to form “one patriotic party” whenever there was a problem.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Yun Pyong Suk, *Tongyang p'yŏnghwaron*, 194.

⁹⁸ Yun Pyong Suk, *Tongyang p'yŏnghwaron*, 195.

Because Japan violated the natural principle of racial solidarity by fighting China, its victory only led to more problems. Russia, France, and Germany, through the “Triple Intervention,” forced Japan to return one of its prizes, the Liaodong peninsula, to China. And now that Russia was well aware of Chinese and Japanese weakness, it increasingly interfered in East Asia, seeking a warm-water port, which caused the Boxer Rebellion and the death of “millions.” Its subsequent expansion into Manchuria led to the Russo-Japanese War, and An contended that Japan was victorious because China and Korea had held to the principle of racial solidarity and supported Japan, arguing that if these two countries had sought revenge at that time, a great war, which would have likely ended in the subjugation of East Asia to the Western empires, would have broken out. Despite this, Japan still did not properly understand the principle of racial solidarity, and so sought a peace treaty in which it won recognition as having a “paramount position in Korea,” betraying its “neighbors of the same race.” An further underlined Japan’s folly by pointing out that the mediator of the treaty, Theodore Roosevelt, had favored the white Russians, leading to a treaty which did not adequately recognize Japan’s victories by failing to make Russia pay an indemnity.⁹⁹ If Japan continued to flaunt the principle of racial solidarity, it would be disastrous not only for Japan, but the whole of the East.¹⁰⁰

As An’s essay is incomplete, we must rely on the notes, taken during a meeting with a judge over An’s appeal following his trial, to gain a deeper understanding of his vision of how to obtain peace in the East. He explained to the judge that “if Itō would

⁹⁹ An appears made this accusation based on the fact that Japan had asked a white person to become involved in an Asian issue and his belief that Roosevelt would favor the Russians as they were also white. An did not realize that Japan would have had difficulty in continuing the war for much longer and so was forced into seeking negotiations. Moreover, despite declaring neutrality, Roosevelt actually favored the Japanese. See Kim Ki-jung, “The War and US-Korea Relations,” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, eds. David Wolff, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2:468-75.

¹⁰⁰ Yun Pyong Suk, *Tongyang p’yŏnghwaron*, 194-99.

have been allowed to live, it would only have harmed peace in the East. As part of the East, I believed it was my duty to remove this evil so I killed Itō.”¹⁰¹ Now that Itō was out of the way and An had the attention he needed, he could explain what needed to be done. According to the notes, An proposed the establishment of a peace association, the membership fees of which would be used to establish a bank with branches open throughout East Asia. This arrangement would facilitate trade, help ease Japan’s economic difficulties that were driving its imperialism, and provide capital for Korea and China’s development.¹⁰² An also proposed that young people from the three countries meet together, study each other’s languages, and form military units for the joint defense of the region.

While An believed China, Japan, and Korea should be equal partners, he was willing to grant Japan a certain leadership position in this organization as well, since its guidance would be necessary for Chinese and Korean development. An also hoped that one day the association would expand to include such countries as India, Thailand, and Vietnam. He even found a place for Catholicism, suggesting that the emperors of China, Korea, and Japan be crowned by the pope, as such an act would obtain international prestige for the association, win popular support from the majority of the world (An stated during the meeting that Catholics represented two-thirds of the earth’s population), and bind the three countries more closely together. Thus, An proposed a sort of confederation whose members were united by race, but whose ethnic differences necessitated locating full sovereignty within each individual nation-state.

¹⁰¹ Kukka Pohunch’ō, 52.

¹⁰² An usually located the origins of Japanese policy in Korea as arising out of Itō’s own moral failings, with this being the only exception.

Through his narrative of how peace in the East was threatened and how it could be secured, An justified his assassination of Itō by appealing to the will of Heaven and the principle of racial solidarity, which the former resident-general had violated. Thus An portrayed himself, not simply as a nationalist concerned with the fate of Korea, but as a visionary proponent of peace in East Asia and advocate of the yellow race who had risked his life to remove the primary enemy of peace in the region and formulated the policy Japan had to follow for its own good, and that of all of the East. His concern over this issue was made especially manifest as An approached death. Minutes before he was hung, he asked to cheer for peace in East Asia with the prison officials accompanying him, but was denied permission by the warden.¹⁰³

An Chunggŭn, Violence, and Honor

In his autobiography, An described incidents of violence that are not directly related to his guerilla army activities or the assassination of Itō. However, they do provide insight into why he turned to violent means in the pursuit of Korean independence and peace in the East and reveal a picture of An that conflicts with the image he sought to present of himself in his prison writings as a modern nationalist who had internalized civilization and enlightenment thought and was restrained in his use of violence. For example, An described how he would go to visit a *kisaeng* house and say to the women there “If, with your beautiful looks you took a man as your lover and grew old together, wouldn’t that be wonderful?”¹⁰⁴ However, he then criticized them

¹⁰³ An’s request was refused. See Sonoki Tsueyohshi’s report, which can be found in Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., “An Chunggŭn sahyŏng silhaeng sanghwang pogo kŏn [Report on the particulars of An Chunggŭn’s execution],” *T’onggambu munsŏ* [Documents of the Residency General] (Seoul: Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, 1999), document number 365. This document can be found online at <http://db.history.go.kr>. For a partial Korean translation, see Kim Samung, *An Chunggŭn p’yŏngjŏn* [Critical biography of An Chunggŭn] (Seoul: Sidae Ŭi Ch’ang, 2009), 454-56.

¹⁰⁴ Kisaeng were female entertainers who sang and danced for, and drank with, men.

for how they “salivate and go crazy with greed” when they “hear the sound of money” leading them to move from man to man, shamelessly behaving like animals. If the kisaeng responded with “hateful looks” or were disrespectful to An, he “would pour scorn upon them and even hit them,” earning him the nickname, “Thunder-mouth.”¹⁰⁵ An was thus willing to use violence in defense of his own honor, even against unarmed women whom he thought had insulted him when he criticized their failure to live up to his moral code. Such behavior that conflicted with his portrayal of himself as civilized and enlightened.

An also put his own sense of honor and reputation ahead of his personal safety, as seen when he served as president of a lottery club, sometime around 1900.¹⁰⁶ A large crowd had gathered on the appointed day to obtain tickets, but the machine that printed them malfunctioned, leading the people to believe that An and the other club members were trying to cheat them. The crowd degenerated into an angry mob, whose stone-throwing drove away the other club members. Hearing them call for his death, An later recalled in his autobiography that it occurred to him that if he, the president of the association, were to run away, it would destroy its reputation as well as his own. He therefore resolved to stand his ground, taking control of the situation by drawing a pistol and threatening the crowd.¹⁰⁷ Eventually, An was able to talk his way out of the situation, and, with the help of an ally in the crowd, complete the lottery draw successfully. An’s concern for his own honor led him to risk his life and, in the process, to threaten to use lethal violence.

Perhaps more telling of the violence that was such a part of An’s life, and his commitment to honor, is an incident involving a Chinese doctor that occurred in 1904. According to An’s autobiography, he went to visit his friend Yi Ch’angsun. Yi told An that his

¹⁰⁵ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 136.

¹⁰⁶ For more on the lottery, see O, *Han’guk kŭnhyŏndaesa*, 257.

¹⁰⁷ An’s description of the lottery incident can be found in Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 142-44.

father T'aehun had been attacked and injured for no apparent reason by a Chinese doctor named Shu, from whom he had sought medical treatment. When staff at the inn they were staying at appeared and prepared to beat the doctor, T'aehun prevented them from doing so. Though An was impressed by his father's restraint, he was so angered by his rough treatment that he and Yi went to find Shu so they could take him to court. (An and Yi tried to press charges but, because Shu was a Qing subject, the Korean court was not able to help them.)¹⁰⁸ However, Shu reported his side of the story to a Chinese court and Chinese and Korean patrolmen were sent to arrest An. They ended up deciding to break into Yi's house in the middle of the night and seized and beat his father. Yi charged out, firing his pistol, and they fled. An went then to appeal to the Foreign Ministry and eventually was able to go to court where he says he was exonerated and Shu found to be in the wrong. Later, through the intervention of another Chinese, Shu and An were reconciled.

However, through his research, O Yöngsöp has found evidence that tells a rather different story. According to government records, An and a group of other men sought out the Chinese doctor and beat him after learning of what happened to T'aehun. Later, An and Yi were arrested but were soon freed by a group of unknown men. In the struggle to free them, a patrolman was shot in the face and seriously wounded.¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to harmonize these two accounts. What is important to note is that, even in An's own version of events, he believed it was appropriate to avenge his father's treatment. On the other hand, if the government records are accurate, then it seems that An believed it was justified to exact violent revenge for the suffering endured by his father. An thus saw violence as a legitimate response to direct threats not only against his own bodily safety, but insults to his honor, and likely that of his family as well. It is probable

¹⁰⁸ Chinese subjects enjoyed extraterritorial rights in Korea and Koreans enjoyed the same privilege in China. See Larsen, 250-51.

¹⁰⁹ O, "Ülsa choyak," 110-11.

therefore that the assassination was motivated and justified, in An's mind if not explicitly in his autobiography, by a desire for revenge against Itō for the suffering and shame he had inflicted on the Korean people. However, An had seen at trial how he was accused of illegitimately killing Itō out of a "private grudge" and so likely tried to play down a desire for revenge, as it would compromise the image he sought to depict of himself, and the violence it was meant to justify.

While such issues complicate the image An sought to project of himself, they do not completely obscure it. An's basic narrative, in which he portrayed himself as a sincere martial hero who wielded legitimate violence, like Xiang Yu and George Washington, and as a proponent of civilization and enlightenment thought willing to work with Japanese of good will, who killed Itō, a villain who stood against peace, progress, and Korean independence, as punishment for his past crimes and as an act of corporate-defense in order to prevent him from perpetrating new ones, comes through. An faced a singular difficulty, though, in that his nation did have a state, one that had publicly accepted the protectorate, a problem he sought to overcome by presenting himself as an officer in a Korean army that was a legitimate successor of the one disbanded by Itō, and by portraying Korean officials as too corrupt or weak to carry out their duty of protecting the nation, and the Korean government as merely Itō's unwilling puppet, necessitating that An wield violence in the nation's defense.

While An's narrative contains exaggerations, selective accounts of events, and perhaps, in the case of Shu, fabrications, An really did believe that, by assassinating Itō and portraying his actions as just, both through explicit argument and by presenting himself as a civilized nationalist who had sincerely risked his life to kill a dangerous criminal, both for his nation and peace in the East, he would be able to convince the Japanese government to change its policy in Korea. He did not realize that his means, the assassination of an important statesman, would

poison his ends in the minds of the people he was appealing to and make it impossible for them to see him as civilized. Moreover, while treating Itō as a scapegoat who had deceived the world, including the Japanese emperor, enabled An to construct a narrative that would theoretically allow Japan to change its policy in Korea with a minimum loss of face and justified his own violent resistance against that country as a guerilla soldier, this same narrative largely blinded An to the fact that there was more to Japan's policy in Korea than the will of one man, and that Itō had in fact enjoyed the support of the emperor and was criticized by other Japanese, not for being too harsh in Korea, but for being too lenient. Therefore An—believing in the narrative he constructed, convinced that there was not enough time for non-violent means to work, having successfully used violence in the past, and only having a very partial picture of the world situation at the time—came to believe that the assassination of Itō would be an effective means of solving the problems Korea and East Asia faced, a gamble that certainly seemed rational to him, but in the end, did not lead to the results he hoped for.

One other detail that does not quite fit into An's attempt to present himself as an enlightened thinker are his religious views, in particular, his belief that God, referred to as Heaven in his autobiography, had preserved his life and made his assassination of Itō possible. At the same time, since An was not shy about declaring his Catholic faith, his decision not to publicly use Catholicism to justify his use of violence, for example, by citing his dream of Mary in his autobiography, is curious, especially since an appeal to a shared Christianity would have been an ideal argument to make to Western empires in order to convince them to intervene on Korea's behalf against a "pagan" Japan. In the following chapter, as we examine Catholicism's ambiguous influence on An's use of violence, we will see that he refrained from making this argument in a large part because the authorities of his church opposed his use of force, while at

the same time, their own actions pushed him towards the very same means that they condemned and helped convince An of their legitimacy.

Chapter 8: An Chunggŭn, Religion, and Violence

In the image and narrative An Chunggŭn constructed, he clearly justified his use of violence, both as a soldier in a guerilla army and in his assassination of Itō Hirobumi, by appealing to secular ideology, particularly nationalism, and by presenting the Korean state as unable to effectively utilize violence to defend the nation, necessitating that he do so. In contrast, An was much more ambiguous in his appeals to religion to this same end, and he avoided using any particularly Catholic concepts publicly. What role then did Catholicism have in shaping An's use of violence? What was its relationship with secular ideology and the state in An's worldview? In order to answer these questions, we will examine An's understanding of Catholicism and his lived experience as a Catholic, tracing his changing relationship with the church over time, revealing the ambiguity of that relationship, most clearly seen in the fact that despite attempts by Catholic authorities to restrain An, his experience of Catholicism in the Korean context played an important role in convincing him that the use of violence in a guerilla army, and later the assassination of Itō, was justified.

An Chunggŭn's Catholic Faith and Violence

In his autobiography, after recording his conversion to Catholicism, which took place in 1897, An described his missionary work in Hwanghae province and provided an example of the kind of speech he would give urging people to convert to his faith.¹ This sample speech touches upon those doctrines of Catholicism that An thought were important enough to explain to people

¹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 137-40.

who likely only had a cursory knowledge of the religion at best, and that were on his mind as he awaited trial and, later, execution. Therefore, an examination of this speech can help us reconstruct his understanding of Catholicism and determine what role Catholic doctrine played in his understanding of violence.

First, as seen in the fact that he gave such speeches, An believed that he could persuade people to change their beliefs through reason. For instance, he argued that it was possible to know that there was a God because the existence of “the sun, moon, and stars in the vast heavens” required a creator to bring them into being and some power to manage their orderly movements, contending that “as for being able to believe or not believe in something, it does not depend on seeing or not seeing, but on whether it is logical or not.” Moreover, An, in urging people to believe in God and join the Catholic Church, was asking them to make a difficult decision. To become a Catholic was to join an unpopular, minority religious community that until recently had suffered violent suppression at the hands of the Chosŏn state. Moreover, it entailed rejecting important cultural and religious traditions. For instance, Catholic converts at this time were prohibited from performing ancestor rites.² Thus An thought that people, upon seeing what was true, would act on it, despite the difficulties involved. This same conviction influenced An’s decision to use violence, as he believed that once he assassinated Itō, the world would know how Koreans really thought about the protectorate, and would be moved by their knowledge of the truth to take action on Korea’s behalf. When that failed to happen, he turned to explicit arguments in an attempt to persuade his audience, first in court, and then in his prison writings.³

The God that An sought to convince people to believe in had set down a moral law, and it was fundamentally how one responded to that moral law that would determine one’s fate in the

² Han’guk Kyohoesa Yŏn’gu, *Hwanghaedo*, 188-93.

³ It should however be noted that though An believed in the power of conversion, he chose to kill Itō rather than to attempt to convince him to change his ways.

afterlife. An spent a significant amount of time explaining how God enforced this moral law with the rewards of heaven and the pains of hell. For instance, An contended that in the case of a person who killed many people, the demands of justice would not be satisfied if that person were simply executed, since he could only be killed once—it was necessary for him to suffer eternally in hell. Similarly, it would be impossible in the case of someone who saved the lives of many people “to repay his merit with the glory of this transitory world.”⁴ Justice demanded that such a person enjoy eternal happiness in heaven. But eternal punishment did not negate the need to punish people in this life, as An based his argument that it was just for God to punish people in the next life on the grounds that it was legitimate for the king to punish people in this one. In fact, as seen in An’s interrogation, An thought it would have been a sin not to assassinate, that is, punish Itō. Therefore, An likely believed that not only was he required to kill Itō, a villain who deserved both death and eternal punishment in hell, but that failure to do so might cost him heaven and the reward of someone who saves the lives of many. Moreover, as a Catholic, An believed that he would still be able to work for Korean independence in Heaven, and might have even thought that he would have been able to work more effectively there, than on earth.⁵

An also emphasized that God intervened in the world to accomplish his will. For instance, he described how Jesus, as God incarnate, “performed many miracles: he made the blind see, the mute speak, the deaf hear, and the lame walk.”⁶ An believed such intervention continued. He stated while being interrogated that he had been ill when he was baptized and that the sacrament had cured him.⁷ Moreover, he credited divine intervention channeled through the

⁴ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 138-39.

⁵ For this statement, see Sin Yongha, 323.

⁶ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch’il yŏksa*, 140.

⁷ First session of An Chunggŭn’s interrogation, October 30, 1909, 204.

Catholic Church for the recovery of his second son from a serious illness.⁸ God did not act on his own in such circumstances—he responded to the prayers of the faithful and to their actions. For example, as seen in the previous chapter, An explained to Yi Pömyun that if Koreans cooperated with Heaven by working for independence, they would be able to obtain the money and weapons they needed. He therefore accepted what he took to be God’s continued intervention to save his life, his dream about Mary, the newspaper comic, and the mysterious feeling that led him to Vladivostok, where he learned of Itō’s trip to Manchuria, as divine promptings, and accepted the successful assassination as proof of God’s approval, seen in the fact that he crossed himself and thanked God when he learned that Itō was dead. Moreover, one piece of calligraphy he produced while he was incarcerated stated that, “If you do not accept what Heaven gives, you will be punished,” indicating what he thought lay in store if he had rejected God’s guidance and refused to kill Itō.⁹

An chose to assassinate Itō in a way that maximized his chance of success while preventing any possibility of escape. Moreover, by all accounts, An faced life in prison and his own death bravely. His decision to use such means and to risk his life in this way was connected to his belief in the afterlife, as seen above. At the same time, he was also likely encouraged by the fact that as a Christian, An believed in the story of a righteous savior who, though suffering

⁸ See Sonoki Tsueyoshi’s prison report for March 25, 1910, 540. When referencing this document, I will give the date of the particular interview I am referring to as well as the page number of the Korean translation found in Kuksa Pyöñch’an Wiwönhoe, “Pogosö [Report],” *Han’guk tongnip undongsa* [History of the Korean independence movement] (Seoul: Kuksa Pyöñch’an Wiwönhoe, 1978), 7:533-43. The Korean translation includes Sonoki’s reports from March 8 through March 11 and March 25. The original Japanese of the reports for the first four days can be found in the seventh volume of the collected documents of the Residency-General, Kuksa Pyöñch’an Wiwönhoe, ed., “Hong Sinbu üi An Chunggün chöpkýön naeyong pogogön [Report on the contents of Father Wilhelm’s interview with An Chunggün],” *T’onggambu munsö* [Documents of the Residency General], (Seoul: Kuksa Pyöñch’an Wiwönhoe, 1999), document number 363. The report for the twenty-fifth can be found in document number 367, “An Chunggün silchedül kwa üi ch’oejong chöpkýön naeyong [The contents of An Chunggün’s final interview with his brothers],” in the same volume.

⁹ The Chinese on this piece of calligraphy reads, “天與不受 反受其殃耳.” A photo of it can be found in Kim Hoil, ed., *Taehan üi yöngüñg An Chunggün üisa* [Hero of Korea An Chunggün] (Seoul: An Chunggün Üisa Sungmohoe, 2008), 98.

unjustly, was vindicated in the end by being raised to new life. Thus, An did not see suffering and death as representing final defeat, but rather as steps toward eventual victory. In fact, he likely hoped that his own death would lead to the resurrection of the Korean nation. This can be seen in his request, examined in chapter six, to be executed on Good Friday. By tying himself to Christ's Passion in this way, he was also connecting himself to the Resurrection. The symbolic importance of Good Friday shows that An sought to portray, and likely saw himself, as a Christ-like figure who died for his country.

An Chungŭn, Catholic Authorities, and the University Proposal

As we saw in the previous chapter, An connected Catholicism with this-worldly change along civilization and enlightenment lines in his speech encouraging others to convert to Catholicism. However, this view that Catholicism and enlightenment were united was shattered by Mutel's rejection of An's university proposal. At first glance, this is somewhat surprising, as Protestant missionaries, though having some reservations, were willing to provide their flocks with Christian-inspired modern educations.¹⁰ While the Catholic Church was far too poor at this time in Korea to establish a university, Mutel could have arranged for An to study in France, or to provide some other means of obtaining modern knowledge from a Catholic perspective.¹¹ Instead, he absolutely rejected An's proposal, condemning modern education as dangerous to faith.

Central to understanding why Mutel acted in this way is the situation in contemporary France. The France Mutel knew was beset by conflict between conservative supporters of the

¹⁰ Rausch, "Saving Knowledge," 76-78.

¹¹ Rausch, "Saving Knowledge," 61-62.

Catholic Church and Republican anti-clericals. The latter frequently used the fruits of civilization and enlightenment thought, such as modern science and higher textual criticism of the Bible, to attack Catholic doctrine. Secular educators and priests often found themselves at odds with one another, as their schools sought to imbue their students with very different visions of France and whether it was to the secular French Republic, or the Catholic Church, to whom their primary loyalty lay. And it was a battle that the Catholic Church was progressively losing.¹² Even Catholic universities were not considered safe by conservative believers, as many professors took positions on divine revelation that challenged long-cherished truths and the authority of the church hierarchy.¹³ Thus, unlike their English-speaking Protestant counterparts, French missionaries were unable to develop the notion of a modern Christian civilization, and were more likely to look back to the glory days of the past than forward to progress. Indeed, modernity was a danger that could lead people away from the spiritual salvation Catholic missionaries saw themselves as bringing.

Even Wilhelm, who had supported An's interest in establishing a university, had an ambiguous relationship with modernity, as seen in his annual report in which, after recounting several entertaining stories arising from pious misunderstandings among Koreans, he expressed his hope "that the so called new-civilization, drenched in the arrogance of Protestants and the thoughtlessness of the Japanese, will not change the Korean people."¹⁴ As Wilhelm had at times been assigned to teach at various seminaries but much preferred pastoral work, and developed close relationships with the members of his flock, he therefore was more willing to support An in his aspirations because of their closeness, not because he held as high a view of Western

¹² See Eugen Weber, 357-76 and Sarah Ann Curtis, *Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-century France* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

¹³ Darrel Jodock, ed., *Catholicism Contending with Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ See the annual report for 1903, Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, *Sŏul kyogu yŏnbo*, 1:304-5.

civilization as An.¹⁵ Moreover, as Wilhelm was from Lorraine and maintained loyalty to France despite his home province being a part of the German Empire, which was conducting a policy of assimilation there, he might have been more sympathetic to An's anti-colonial goals.¹⁶

Mutel was also concerned that modern education could lead to political conflict. The bishop believed firmly that the state and religion had different roles and sought to avoid intervention in political matters, so long as the state respected the church's mission.¹⁷ Thus, while the Catholic Church was more powerful than it had ever been in its history in Korea, as MEP missionaries were French citizens, enjoying extraterritorial rights and the backing of a French Foreign Ministry willing to utilize gunboat diplomacy, bribes, and gifts to further their interests, Mutel and his priests were generally unwilling to become involved in anything that they saw as political.¹⁸ Since modern education was closely connected to reform of the country, as seen in An's own proposal for the university, it could not help crossing into the sphere of politics, and therefore was seen as dangerous by Mutel.¹⁹

¹⁵For biographical information on Wilhelm, see Yun Sŏnja, "'Hanil happyŏng' chŏnhu Hwanghaedo Ch'ŏnjugyohoe wa Pillem Sinbu [The Catholic Church in Hwanghae Province and Father Wilhelm before and after annexation]," *Han'guk kūn hyŏndaesa yŏn'gu* [Studies in modern and contemporary Korean history] 4 (May 1996): 107-31; Chang Tongha, "Pillem (Wilhelm, Hong Sŏkku) Sinbu ūi hwal-dong kwa taehan insik, 1883-nyŏn put'ŏ 1895-nyŏn kkaji [The activities and perception of Korea of Father Wilhelm (Wilhelm, Hong Sŏkku) from 1883 to 1895]," *In'gan yŏn'gu* [Human studies], no. 13 (Winter 2007): 254-88.

¹⁶For a general overview of the situation in Alsace-Lorraine during this period, see, Michael E. Nolan, *The Inverted Mirror: Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany, 1898-1914* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005); Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (Northern Dekalb: Illinois University Press, 1998). For assimilation in Alsace and Lorraine, see Caprio, 33-38.

¹⁷For an overview of Mutel's views on church-state relations, as well as those of his predecessors, see Na Chŏngwŏn, "Hanil happang ichŏn Han'guk Kat'ollik chidojadŭl ūi kukkagwan yŏn'gu [A study of leaders of the Catholic Church's view on the country before annexation]," in *Han'guk kūn hyŏndae 100-nyŏn sok ūi Kat'ollik kyohoe* [100 years of the Catholic Church in modern Korea], eds. Kang Hŭigyŏng and Kim Yongsuk (Seoul: Kat'ollik Ch'ulp'ansa, 2002), 1:284-96.

¹⁸Chang, *Kaehanggi*, 125-213.

¹⁹For instance, the Independence Club, begun in 1896 by pro-American Korean progressives, started as an association for bringing enlightened knowledge to Korea, but quickly became a political lobbying group, and it was those activities that helped lead to its violent suppression in 1898. Mutel was very critical of the organization, which he saw as dangerous because of its connection with modernity, violence, and in the case of a funeral for one of its members killed in street fighting, "superstitious and idolatrous ceremonies" (See Mutel's journal, December 1, 1898, 2:339). For more on Mutel's view, see Rausch, "Saving Knowledge," 73. For an excellent study on the club itself, see Chandra.

Mutel's attempts to avoid political entanglement should not be understood as arising from a basic weakness of character or a desire to avoid all conflict. When he believed the religious rights of the church were at stake, he could take a strong stance. For example, Mutel refused, despite Korean protests and the opposition of his own government, to cease construction of Myōngdong Cathedral, which, because it was perched high on a hill, would overlook a palace, challenging royal authority. However, that location was of great importance to Catholics, as on it had once stood the house of Thomas Kim Pōmu, where some of the first Catholics had met to pray and study the faith. Though Mutel's actions led to a brief state ban on mission work in Korea and fears of a persecution, he refused to budge.²⁰ The Chosŏn state eventually gave in, and essentially recognized his victory, and its own weakness, when its officials later joined in the celebration held for the opening of the cathedral.²¹ Similarly, Mutel broke Korean law by sneaking into a palace twice, once in order to baptize the Taewŏn'gun's wife (the biological mother of King Kojong), Maria Min (1818-1898), and the second time in order to provide her with confession and Holy Communion. After her death he risked the king's ire by informing him that she was a Catholic, a fact that had been kept secret.²² Thus, had Mutel believed that modern education would have served religious interests, he would have supported An in his quest for enlightenment.

An had hoped that Catholicism would bring not only spiritual salvation, but national regeneration as well, linking Catholicism with the two ideologies of nationalism and civilization and enlightenment thought, as he saw them as mutually supporting, rather than conflicting, worldviews. Mutel's rejection of the university proposal, and the modernity that accompanied it,

²⁰ See Chang, *Kaehanggi*, 217-49 and Ryu Dae Young, "Treaties, Extraterritorial Rights, and American Protestant Missions in Late Joseon Korea," *Korea Journal* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 194-95.

²¹ Mutel's journal, May 29, 1898, 2:288-93.

²² See Mutel's journal, October 11, 1896, 2:200; January 9, 1898, 2:254; January 15-16, 1898, 2:258.

shattered this worldview and created a division of authority in An's mind: foreign priests could not be trusted in affairs of the nation, though the religion they brought was true. There thus opened a space in which secular ideology could, without being transformed by Catholic standards, enter into An's worldview, and then, when the nation seemed threatened, trump the religious authority of the church hierarchy, enabling An to choose to utilize violent means as a legitimate option in his pursuit for Korean independence. However, the fact that at the time of the proposal, An did not perceive any immediate threat to Korean sovereignty, combined with the shared difficulties of the Haesŏ incident, to be examined next, temporarily papered over these divisions.

Breakdown of State and Ecclesial Authority: the Haesŏ Incident

There were 555 Catholics in Hwanghae province in 1897. That number shot up to 7,000 by 1902.²³ This mass conversion to Catholicism, made possible in part by An T'aehun and Chunggŭn, led both to praise for the efforts of Father Wilhelm, and criticisms that people were converting for baser reasons.²⁴ Whatever the motives of new converts, the rise of the Catholic Church in the province, made powerful through the presence of foreign missionaries with extra-territoriality and its own internal solidarity, led to conflict between Catholics and non-Catholics, government officials, as well as Protestant converts and missionaries, as all sought to defend what they saw as their rights, obtain justice, or simply to expand their power. Local officials found themselves unable to contain these conflicts, and even became the targets of violence. This series of clashes, which ranged from lawsuits to violent confrontations, only ended with the

²³ O Yŏngsŏp, "Ŭlsa choyak," 102.

²⁴ For criticism of Wilhelm and his defense, see the annual report for 1902, Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, ed., *Sŏul kyogu yŏnbo*, 1:297-309.

intervention of the central Chosŏn government in 1903, and is collectively known as the *Haesŏ* incident.²⁵

During this incident, Catholics proved to be especially distrustful of the state and preferred to look to their own power to obtain justice or fulfill their ambitions, leading the Presbyterian missionary Horace G. Underwood (1858-1916) to write that the Catholic Church in Hwanghae Province was acting as an “Imperium in imperio” (a state within a state), that the Catholics refused “to acknowledge all Korean authorities,” and that they had established “their own courts and prisons.”²⁶ The central government inspector sent out to deal with the incident, Yi Ŭngik, similarly reported that Father Wilhelm “judged cases” and punished people physically, using forms of torture, such as leg screws, typically utilized by the government.²⁷ Underwood corroborated this report writing that:

Father Wilhelm called on my yesterday and acknowledged that he has hindered and stopped arrests; that he has ordered the arrest of others than Christians (R.C.)²⁸ of police officials etc. etc. and that he has administered punishment such as flogging, imprisonment etc.. he [*sic*] excuses it all on the ground that he was fighting with the Governor here for official recog’n [*sic*].²⁹

²⁵ For a recent, detailed study of the Haesŏ incident, see Pak Ch’ansik, *Han’guk kŭndae Ch’ŏnjugyohoe wa hyangch’on sahoe* [The modern Korean Catholic Church and local society] (Seoul: Han’guk Kyohoesa Yŏn’guso, 2007), 175-210. For brief English accounts, see Yumi Moon, “From Periphery to a Transnational Frontier: Popular Movements in the Northwestern Provinces, 1896-1904,” in *The Northern Region of Korea: History, Identity, and Culture*, ed. Sun Joo Kim (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 188-95; see also Yun Kyŏng-no, “The Relationship between Korean Catholics and Protestants in the Early Mission Period,” in *Korea and Christianity*, ed. Chai-Shin Yu, trans. Yun Sun-ja (Seoul: Korean Scholar Press, 1996), 12-21.

²⁶ See H.G. Underwood, “Annual Report, June, 1903,” *The Korea Field* (August 1903), 122-23. Reprinted in Yi Manyŏl and Ok Sŏngdŭk, ed. and tr., *Ŏndŏudŭ charyojip* [Collection of Underwood’s documents] (Seoul: Yonsei University, 1995), 3:495-96.

²⁷ Kojong sillok, book 47, vol. 43, 34B (year 40, 8. 21. *kyemyo*).

²⁸ R.C. probably stands for “Roman Catholic.”

²⁹ H.G. Underwood to H.N. Allen, Haiju (Haeju), February 10, 1903. Reprinted in Yi Manyŏl and Ok Sŏngdŭk, 3:350-52.

Considering that Wilhelm would strike An after this incident, that Catholic priests had a long history of judging disputes among Catholics, and that the Korean state had difficulties in controlling the private use of violence, such accusations are credible.³⁰

Wilhelm and other Catholics thus challenged the state's claim to have a monopoly on violence. An must have been aware of this, especially as his own father also used violence in this way. For example, in 1897, T'aehun, who played a role in the collection of taxes, declared a levy on water and used his personal army, who seem to have also become Catholics, and his connections with other believers, to extract the revenue. This was illegal and a serious challenge to state power. A magistrate subsequently arrested, interrogated, and likely beat some of the men who served T'aehun. In response, T'aehun and his followers kidnapped a local official, bound him, and beat him, holding him for several days. T'aehun also threatened the magistrate, who fled to report the incident to the governor. That official then resigned his post, apparently out of fear. Despite such brazen actions, T'aehun escaped punishment.³¹

Because of such conflicts, Yi Ŭngik had sought to have An T'aehun, as well as An T'aegŏn, arrested and punished.³² However, Wilhelm protected them and refused government demands to turn them over. At one point, when patrolmen were sent to arrest An T'aegŏn at Chŏnggye, they gave up upon seeing that Father Wilhelm and a hundred Catholic men had gathered, promising resistance should the constables try and carry out their orders.³³ Similarly, Wilhelm was accused of arresting patrolmen who had been sent to capture the brothers and

³⁰ For priests acting as judges, see No Kilmyŏng, *Kat'ollik kwa Chosŏn hugi sahoe pyŏndong* (Seoul: Kodae Minjok Munhwa Yŏn'guso, 1988), 142-49. For the difficulty the Chosŏn dynasty had controlling private violence, see, William Shaw, *Legal Norms in a Confucian State* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies/Center for Korean Studies, 1981), 97-99.

³¹ O, "Ŭlsa Choyak," 103-11 and Pak Ch'ansik, *Han'guk kŭndae*, 138-39.

³² Kojong sillok, book 47, vol. 43, 34B (year 40, 8. 21. *kyemyo*).

³³ Ch'oe Sŏgu, "Haesŏ kyoan ŭi yŏn'gu [A Study of the Haesŏ incident]," in *Han'guk Kyohoesa ŭi t'amgu* [Investigations in the history of the church in Korea], ed. Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso (Seoul: Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, 1991), 445-46 and O, "Ŭlsa choyak," 108-9.

having them beaten.³⁴ Mutel was deeply disturbed by reports of these events and feared that they might lead to intervention by the American government on behalf of Protestant missionaries or that there might even be a repeat of the mass killing of Catholics that occurred on Cheju Island in 1901 under similar circumstances.³⁵ He ordered Wilhelm to comply with the government several times, but the priest refused to hand over T'aehun and T'aegŏn.³⁶ Similarly, Mutel had to repeatedly order Wilhelm to come to Seoul to face the charges against him before he finally did so.³⁷ Despite defying his bishop, resisting the Chosŏn state, and facing calls of government officials to punish him, Wilhelm escaped official sanction for his actions. While he was forced to leave Hwanghae province, arriving in Seoul in April of 1903, he was able to return to Chŏnggye in November of that year.³⁸ An T'aehun and T'aegŏn likewise escaped official punishment. An Chunggŭn was thus shown that violence could be legitimately and effectively used by individuals and communities, including his own family and parish priest, provided that they believed they were in the right, even when the targets were representatives of the state.

The Drift from Church Authority

Despite conflict between An Chunggŭn and foreign missionaries over the university proposal, their shared religious beliefs and struggle during the Haesŏ incident continued to bind them closely together. However, the breakdown of the relations between Japan and Russia in

³⁴ For an example see Homer Hulbert, "Editorial Comment," *The Korea Review* (March 1903), 115-21.

³⁵ See Mutel's journal for 1903, March 1, 6, 11, 12, 19, and April 3, 8: 233-37 and 3:243-44; Pak Ch'ansik, "Cheju kyoan ihu Cheju chiyŏk Ch'ŏnjugyohoe ŭi tonghyang: 1901-1910-nyŏn ŭl chungsim-ŭro [Trends in the Catholic Church in Cheju following the religious incident there: focusing on the years 1901 to 1910]," in *Minjok wa kyohoesa* [The nation and Catholic History], ed. Kim Such'ang (Seoul: Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, 2000), 423-60; Boudewijn Walraven, "Cheju Island 1901: Records, Memories, and Current Concerns," *Korean Histories* 1, no. 1 (2009): 3-24; Mutel's journal, April 8, 1903, 3:243-44.

³⁶ See Mutel's journal, February 13 and 16, 1903, 2:228-29.

³⁷ See Mutel's journal, March 22 and 23, 3:238-40, as well as April 7, 3:243.

³⁸ Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'gu, *Hwanghaedo*, 109-11.

1903, and subsequent war in 1904, destroyed the balance of power that had preserved Korea's fragile autonomy. It was at this point that An realized, through Father Wilhelm's statement that whoever would win the war would dominate Korea, the danger that his country was in, leading him to read newspapers and books, where he deepened his knowledge of the ideologies of nationalism, civilization and enlightenment thought, Social Darwinism, and Pan-Asianism.³⁹

Though it is unclear whether he meant to use violent or peaceful means in his struggle for independence when he left Korea after the signing of the protectorate treaty in 1905, his meeting with Father Le Gac in Shanghai convinced him to utilize the latter.⁴⁰ Though at first glance, it seems that this incident proves the continued influence of Catholicism, even priestly authority, on An, it should be noted that there was nothing distinctly Catholic about the advice Le Gac gave, which was completely secular and based primarily on the example of France's loss of Alsace-Lorraine. In fact, Le Gac's hesitance to speak on politics, because he was a missionary, likely contributed to the division in An's mind between the religious and the secular. An followed Le Gac's advice because it resonated with his own understanding of nationalism, civilization and enlightenment thought, and a Social-Darwinist view of a world locked in fierce competition, not because it was particularly Catholic.

³⁹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 152. An mostly read the *Taehan maeil sinmun* and *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, but also read the *Cheguk sinmun*, the *Kongnip sinbo* (published in San Francisco) and the *Taedong kongbo* (published in Vladivostok). See An Chunggŭn's first interrogation session, October 30, 1909, 203-4. An also read books, including the four books and the five classics, *Man'guk yŏksa* ("History of the World"), and *Chosŏn yŏksa* (History of Korea). He also said he had read the "*T'onggam* (通鑑)," which could refer either to the *Tongguk T'onggam* ("Comprehensive Mirror of the Eastern Kingdom," a book on Korean history) or the *T'onggam Kangmok* (Tongjian gangmu in Chinese) of Zhu Xi. An was probably referring to the former. See An Chunggŭn's second interrogation session, November 14, 1909, 216. For a detailed study of the various ideologies that influenced An, see Ch'oe Kiyŏng, *Han'guk kŭndae kyemong sasang yŏn'gu* [A study of enlightenment thought in modern Korea] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 2003), 93-113.

⁴⁰ A Japanese report states that An had thought of assassinating the Japanese consul in Korea in 1905. Because it contains many errors, its statements are of questionable value. See Kuksa Pyŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, "Hŏn'gi che ichŏn-yukpaek-samsip-sa-ho [Legal report number 2634]," 7:240-51. See also Sin Unyong, *An Chunggŭn kwa Han'guk Kŭndaesa*, 157-58.

On Le Gac's advice, from 1905 to 1907, An participated in peaceful movements designed to build Korea's national strength, helping to found and manage schools and taking part in the debt repayment movement. Though he was not particularly active, he also joined the "Northwest Study Association" (*Sōbuk hakhoe*), and through it had some limited contact with the Protestant nationalist An Ch'angho (1878-1938).⁴¹ An also read books on Korean and world history as well as newspapers. Through them, he learned more about the world outside of Korea and deepened his commitment to, and knowledge of, various secular ideologies. However, his experience of life under the Japanese protectorate, such as when the Japanese official investigating the debt repayment movement insulted and fought with him, seems to have encouraged him to consider turning to violent means. Thus, in the spring of 1907, when an unnamed friend of his father came to visit him and told him that he should leave Korea and take up arms to resist Japan, An agreed, though he took no immediate action.⁴²

Around this time, An had another fight with Wilhelm. Sometime in 1906, the priest, worried that An was becoming too politically active, told him that if he did not change his ways, he would have to leave Chōnggye. An accepted the ultimatum and moved to Chinnamp'o where he would help establish and manage schools, one of which was connected to a Catholic parish.⁴³ Later, when Wilhelm met An in prison after he had killed Itō, he reminded him of how, worried that he was heading down a path towards violence and ruin, he had encouraged him to engage in peaceful activities to strengthen the nation. In response, according to Wilhelm's recollection, An

⁴¹ Cho Kwang, "An Chunggūn ūi aeguk kyemong undong kwa tongnip chōnjaeng," 75-83.

⁴² Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yōksa*, 156-57.

⁴³ This information can be found in a letter written by Joseph Wilhelm on March 19, 1912 from Chōnggye, Korea (Tchyen-Kyei-tong, Corée le 19 mars 1912). Dr. Cho Hyōnbōm of the Institute of Korean Church History graciously supplied me with a Korean translation of the relevant selections from the French original, which can be found in the MEP archives in box H-51 of the documents related to Korea. Hereafter, this letter will be referenced as Wilhelm's March 19, 1912 letter. As seen in the previous chapter, An does not mention this reason for his move from Chōnggye to Chinnamp'o.

stated that “religion (*chonggyo*) does not go before the country (*kukka*).”⁴⁴ It is unclear whether Wilhelm was here referring to the events of 1906 or to another altercation between them. In either case, Wilhelm had likely hoped that his ultimatum and his arguments would convince An to moderate his activities. However, they only pushed him further outside the church’s influence. Wilhelm later explained in a letter that he believed that An thought that he had authority over religion but not over matters related to “patriotism.”⁴⁵

The crises of the summer of 1907—the forced abdication of the emperor, the signing of a new treaty giving what little remained of Korea’s sovereignty to Japan, and the dissolution of Korea’s army—convinced An at last to turn to violent means. He would later state under interrogation that he had decided to kill Itō at this time.⁴⁶ But, likely realizing that he would not have the opportunity to do so in the foreseeable future, he fled Korea to join one of the guerilla armies fighting against Japan. On the way out of the country, he attended Mass, but was refused communion by the French priest because of his political activities, on the basis of Father Wilhelm’s advice. The refusal of communion is one of the most extreme measures of discipline available to the Catholic Church, just short of excommunication, and was intended to convince An that what he was doing was wrong. An, however, seems to have rejected this act of discipline as illegitimate, as it represented an intrusion of the religious upon the national by foreign priests who failed to sympathize with Korea’s difficult situation. While maintaining his prayer life, beyond staying for a short time in a Korean Catholic village in Kando, An appears to

⁴⁴ See Sonoki Tsueyoshi’s prison report for March 8, 1910, 533-36. It is worth noting that An nowhere uses the term “religion” in his own writings.

⁴⁵ See Wilhelm’s March 19, 1912 letter.

⁴⁶ See the first session of An Chunggūn’s trial, February 7, 1910, 125.

have little to do with Catholic organizations and to have ceased receiving the sacraments.⁴⁷

Again, an attempt to discipline An had pushed him further outside the church's authority.

An eventually reached Vladivostok, which would act as his base as he helped establish a guerilla army. During that time he also participated in educational activities and even wrote an article for a pro-Korean independence newspaper, *The Great East Reporter*, entitled "A Discourse on Uniting Human Hearts." This article shows the eclectic mix of beliefs that formed An's worldview, centered around a clear devotion to Korean autonomy and ethnic nationalism. At the same time, the Catholic book, the "Seven Conquests," in which the way seven virtues can be used to conquer seven vices is elucidated, appears to have influenced An, as he traced the factionalism within the Korean community as being the result of "pride" (*kyoman*) which could be overcome with "humility" (*kyōmson*)⁴⁸ An also included Confucian ideas, stating that human beings are important because they know about the "three bonds and five relationships."⁴⁹ However, he recast Confucianism in accordance with nationalism, for example, reworking *The Great Learning*, an important book in the Confucian canon, to say that one had the duty to cultivate oneself, then to order the family, and finally to protect the country, rather than to govern it, as the original text asserted.

This article, while illustrating the influence of Confucianism, and possibly of Catholicism, on An's thought, indicates that they were recast in the service of nationalism, just as he had subordinated Social Darwinism and Pan-Asianism to that ideology in *A Treatise on Peace in the*

⁴⁷ See Sin Unyong, "An Chunggūn ūi ūibyōng t'ujaeng kwa hwaldong," 41-45.

⁴⁸ An Chunggūn contributed this article, printed on March 21, 1908, to the *Haejo sinmun*, which later changed its name to the *Taedong Kongbo*. It has been reprinted in Sin Yongha, *An Chunggūn yugojip*, 309-11.

⁴⁹ An, in the speech he gave to convert people to Catholicism, emphasized that it was the fact that human beings had a "spiritual soul" that made them special. See Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yōksa*, 137-38.

East.⁵⁰ Similarly, An even went so far as to criticize how civilization and enlightenment thought was utilized to justify colonialism, telling his jailors that:

Supposedly, in a civilized age, Westerner and Easterner, handsome and ugly, man and woman, old and young, all have a nature bequeathed by heaven, esteem virtue, and have no desire to fight as they live in their homelands peacefully, happily pursuing their livelihoods and so enjoy great peace together. But our age is not like that. The greatest people of the highest societies use such talk only as an excuse to kill other people. And so there is no day on the six continents of the world in which cannons do not smoke and bullets do not rain down. Is this not deplorable?

However, nowhere in An's writings does he criticize nationalism or recognize its connection to imperialism, thereby illustrating its dominance in his thought.

Had An been killed in battle in 1908, it could have been said that he was simply a nationalist, and that he had allowed his Catholic faith, which did not advance that cause, to fall by the wayside, and that Catholicism had little role in justifying his use of violence. However, An lived long enough to kill Itō, to cross himself and thank God after he learned he was dead, and to tell the story of how he believed that God had intervened in his life to make the assassination possible. Complicating matters further was An's desire to receive the sacraments of confession and communion, and the ambiguous statement of repentance he gave in order to do so, which was used to portray him as having repudiated the assassination of Itō as illegitimate. Thus, Catholicism was important enough to An to risk his nationalist goals in order to receive the sacraments before his execution. At the same time, as we shall see, An would use the opportunity provided by his meeting with Wilhelm to try and justify his assassination of Itō to the priest.

⁵⁰ One reason An was so concerned with factionalism was because he was a member of the Tongŭihoe, a nationalist organization that was being torn apart by it at the time he was writing this article. Eventually, these conflicts were resolved and the association formed the army in which An was given the rank of lieutenant general. Sin Unyong, "An Chunggŭn ŭi ŭibyŏng t'ujaeng kwa hwal-dong," 53-57.

The Catholic Church and the Assassination

The day Mutel learned that Itō had been killed, he went to the office of the Residency-General to offer his condolences.⁵¹ Around this time, Japanese newspapers stated that An was a Catholic and used that fact to criticize the Catholic Church, leading the Bishop of Yokohama to telegraph Mutel and ask if these reports were true. Mutel said they were not and the next day, October 29, he wrote a letter to the *Seoul Press* stating the same. On October 30 he read a report about the killer and wondered if it might be An Chunggŭn, but as the assassin's name was given as Ŭngch'il, Mutel remained doubtful. However, on November 1, it was reported that the killer also went by the name "Thomas An," making Mutel wonder if it was not Chunggŭn after all. While he eventually learned that it was indeed An who had killed Itō Hirobumi, he did not make any public statements recognizing that a Catholic had killed Itō. Later, he and other priests attended Itō's funeral and Catholic nuns sent a large floral wreath that was clearly labeled as coming from the church. He was happy that it was prominently displayed at the funeral.⁵² The local French-language Catholic newspaper, *Le Seoul Bulletin*, carried articles critical of An and his actions. While the Catholic *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, published in the Korean vernacular, was also critical of An, it failed to mention his Catholic faith.⁵³

Father Wilhelm condemned the assassination, preaching a homily on the commandment "thou shall not kill" the Sunday after he confirmed that it was indeed An who had killed Itō, declaring that what An had done was wrong. However, despite the fact that both Mutel and

⁵¹ For overviews of the Catholic Church's response to An's assassination of Itō Hirobumi see Yun Sŏnja, "An Chunggŭn"; Yi Chunggi, "Sinangin An Chunggŭn kwa kŭ ŭi ŭigŏ-e taehan kyohoe ŭi haesŏk [How the Church understood An Chunggŭn and his noble undertaking]" (Master's thesis., Pusan Kat'ollik Taehakyo, 1998); Ch'oe Sŏgu, "An Chunggŭn ŭigŏ wa kyohoe ŭi panŭng [An Chunggŭn's righteous deed and the reaction of the church]," *Kyohoesa yŏn'gu* 9 (October 1994): 96-119.

⁵² See Mutel's journal, October 28-November 4, 1909, 4:414-46.

⁵³ Ch'oe Sŏgu, "An Chunggŭn ŭigŏ," 108-13.

Wilhelm condemned the assassination, they differed over how they should treat An. Before the trial, An asked for a priest to be sent to him and the local bishop notified Mutel that he would allow a cleric to come into his diocese for that purpose, but Mutel denied the request. An's brothers sent a telegram on February 14, the day An was sentenced to death, requesting that Wilhelm come to see An, but Mutel refused to let Wilhelm visit him in prison. On the sixteenth, the Japanese court sent a telegram to Mutel and Wilhelm giving permission for a priest to be sent. In Mutel's response he thanked the court but said he could not send a priest.⁵⁴ On the twenty-first, James An Myōnggūn, An's cousin, visited Mutel in person and argued so forcefully that Wilhelm be sent to visit An that Mutel complained of his rudeness in his journal.⁵⁵ On March 4, Mutel received a letter from Wilhelm asking for permission to visit An. The bishop refused on the grounds that An had not given any evidence that he had repented of his actions. Wilhelm, apparently fearing that An might soon be executed, left without waiting for permission.⁵⁶ Mutel punished him by prohibiting him from saying Mass for two months.⁵⁷

The Confession of An Chunggūn

Wilhelm, having arrived in Lüshun, met An at the prison there once each day from March 8 to March 11, 1910. There are three extant eyewitness accounts of these meetings. The most detailed is the report prepared by Sonoki Tsueyoshi, An's interpreter. According to the report, after greeting An when they first met on March 8, Wilhelm explained that he had been moved by the earnest appeals that he come to see him and had only spiritual, rather than political,

⁵⁴ Mutel's journal, February 14-16, 1909, 4:447-48.

⁵⁵ Mutel's journal, February 21, 1909, 4:448-49.

⁵⁶ Mutel's journal, March 4-5, 1909, 4:450-51.

⁵⁷ Mutel's journal, March 15, 1909, 4:452.

motivations for doing so. Since An was his “beloved spiritual child,” Wilhelm needed to guide him, as he had “committed a great sin,” an “evil act” that had arisen “completely from a misunderstanding,” necessitating that Wilhelm rebuke him for his sin and exhort him to repent. His fellow Korean Catholics, including his mother, knowing that An would not be able to escape execution, desired Wilhelm to go to him so that he could “die with a pure soul.” Wilhelm then recalled how, three years previously, An was “resentful” and saying that he “had to do something great for the country...left for Vladivostok.” Wilhelm, knowing “what sort of person” An was becoming, and fearing “that this day would arrive” urged An to devote himself “to educational work” so that he would be “a good Catholic and a faithful subject,” and admonished him that his “resentment” would make him “reckless,” leading him to “interfere in state matters” which would not only destroy An but endanger all of Korea. Despite Wilhelm’s warning and the fact that An had previously listened to the priest, he rejected Wilhelm’s teaching. After Wilhelm described how An’s cousin James An Myōnggūn had come to him, thanking him for steering him away from An Chunggūn’s path and a similar fate, the priest asked An how he felt.⁵⁸

An remained silent and he and Wilhelm were eventually offered tea and cigarettes. Wilhelm expressed his amazement at such generous treatment. It was only then that An began to speak, telling the priest about how he had been treated exceedingly well all throughout his time in Japanese custody. Wilhelm was surprised, stating that he realized that the Japanese were civilized, but did not know that they were to this extent. Wilhelm then expressed his gratitude to the officials and said that he would tell the Catholics about this and that they would be moved to tears by such magnanimity. He then told An that this was a “special grace” that could not be

⁵⁸ For Sonoki’s account of this interview, see his prison report for March 8, 1910, 533-36. Considering that James An became an independence activist and would later go to prison for attempting to raise money and obtain arms to resist Japan, this description might not be wholly accurate. For his life and career see, Yi Tongŏn, “An Myōnggūn ūi saengae wa tongnip undong [The life and independence activism of An Myōnggūn],” in *An Chunggūn kwa kŭ sidae*, ed. An Chunggūn Ūisa Kinyōm Saōphoe (Seoul: Kyōngin Munhwasa, 2009), 157-76.

found anywhere else, showing how civilized Japan was, and proving “that its protectorate over Korea is likewise fair and just,” which contrasted with the case of Korea, where, just a few years ago, not only An but his parents and brothers would have been punished with death. Wilhelm then told An that he would like to give him his blessing, but he would have to “throw away all worldly and political fantasies” about his crime and “awaken to the truth and repent.”

According to the report, An responded to Wilhelm’s appeal by saying, “Oh, please forgive me Father. Your child has erred and committed this great sin (*daizaiaku*/大罪惡). Not even my death can atone (*shō*/償) for my crime (*zai*/罪). What can I do?” Wilhelm, in reply, said, “Good! How wonderful your words are! If you have truly repented of what you have done, then I will obtain permission to hear your confession. As soon as you confess all your sins, you will become a good Catholic again and God will forgive you your sin (*zaiaku*/罪惡).”⁵⁹ The meeting then ended. Sonoki described Wilhelm as treating An in a warm but stern way, like an affectionate mother would her child. He also reported that, “An was also very serious. Throughout the interview he showed his respect and admiration for the priest, silently listening to everything he told him, head bowed.”

The next day, March 9, An whispered his confession to Wilhelm in front of the guards and prison staff, as they were not allowed to meet alone.⁶⁰ Following the sacrament An:

told of a strange dream he had on the night he joined the righteous army. He was in his room in his old house at Chinnamp’o when suddenly a brilliant rainbow came down from heaven and began to slowly stretch towards him. At the moment it reached his head, Holy Mother Mary appeared and reached out her delicate hand. Touching his chest, she said, “Don’t be afraid. You must not be worried. She then disappeared in a flash of light. An was enraptured, and felt such a great spiritual pain that he awoke and realized that it had just been a dream.

⁵⁹ The character “罪” can mean both sin or crime. I have translated it using both terms in order to give a feel for the ambiguity of its meaning. I have given the Japanese pronunciations as that is the language that the interrogation report was written in.

⁶⁰ See Sonoki Tsueyoshi’s prison report for March 9, 1910, 536-37.

Sonoki stated that Father Wilhelm meditated deeply on An's words and then said that he thought it was an omen of something to come and had arisen from An's faith. Sonoki then described how Wilhelm told An repeatedly that he had misunderstood Itō and his policy. In response, "An again acknowledged the special treatment he had received and stated that he had completely repented and that there was nothing left to repent of." Sonoki went on to note that, "An's attitude was different from usual. He was circumspect in what he said and did. The light of repentance shown on his face."

The next day, Wilhelm came to the prison to say Mass.⁶¹ An assisted him and received Holy Communion reverently. Sonoki devoted a significant amount of space in his report to describing the mass itself and explaining its significance.⁶² Sonoki also recorded what Wilhelm said to An after he received communion, "Now that you have received Holy Communion, you are no longer a person of this world. If your mind is still darkened with worldly thoughts, then root them out and throw them away. Fast every morning and seek the Holy Lord's grace with your whole heart until you die." Sonoki went on to say that Wilhelm "continuously repeated that even though it was possible that God had cleansed him completely from his sins, he had misunderstood Prince Itō, a great man, and had killed him. In so doing he had committed a grave crime and could not escape death."

On the eleventh, Wilhelm, accompanied by An's two brothers, came to bid him a final farewell.⁶³ Wilhelm told An that, having done his duty by hearing his confession and giving him Holy Communion, he would now return to Korea. Once he arrived, he would immediately go to

⁶¹ See Sonoki Tsueyoshi's prison report for March 10, 1910, 537-38.

⁶² Sonoki specifically pointed to John 6:53, "So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you,'" (translation from the interrogation report) and explained that Catholics believe that the wine and bread eaten during Holy Communion were transformed into the blood and flesh of Jesus by the Mass and that by partaking of them, they could obtain eternal life.

⁶³ Sonoki Tsueyoshi's prison report for March 11, 1910, 538-40.

An's mother and report to her that he was being treated well. He then asked if An had anything else to say. An said he did not, and so Wilhelm asked him what he had done in the years since he had left Korea. An, "happy and thankful to have the opportunity to speak," provided him with a detailed account. After hearing him out, Wilhelm sighed and said, "Ah, if you were worried about national affairs this much, why didn't you talk to me or another priest before you committed this evil deed (*kyōkō*/凶行)?" During this meeting An also asked Wilhelm to deliver a message to his fellow Catholics in which he said he looked forward to them bringing him the good news of Korean independence. After Wilhelm repeated his admonitions, they then prayed together and said goodbye.

As An was to be executed on the morning of March 26, 1910, on the 25th, he met with several Japanese officials, including his defense lawyers, and his two brothers, Konggūn and Chōnggūn.⁶⁴ According to Sonoki's report, An asked his brothers to tell his mother he was sorry for being such an unfilial son and for the trouble he had caused with his "evil deed."⁶⁵ He also instructed his brother Chōnggūn to devote himself to industry and reforestation for the economic development of Korea and the good of their family. Then, after asking his brothers about how various countries' newspapers responded to the assassination, An told them of how he had seen the newspaper cartoon that he took as a sign from God that he should kill Itō.⁶⁶

After discussing a few other matters, An's defense attorney, Mizuno, stated, "I cannot sympathize with you enough, considering your situation. Your intent will be transmitted

⁶⁴ Sonoki Tsueyoshi's prison report for March 25, 1910, 540-43.

⁶⁵ Just as the transcripts from An's trial changed his words to be more respectful to Itō and used unflattering terms to describe himself, it is likely the case that he did not refer to the assassination as an "evil deed."

⁶⁶ This comic originally appeared in the August 15, 1909 edition of the *Sinhan minbo*. A report from the Japanese Foreign Ministry to the Resident-General of Korea stated that a Russian investigator had found that the comic had made it to Vladivostok. This report also includes a detailed analysis of the comic. See Kuksa Pyōnch'an Wiwōnhoe, "Kimilsong che sam-ho [Secret dispatch number 3]," 7:139-42. This comic has been reprinted in Sinmun Pangmulgwan Hakkye Yōn'gut'im, ed., *Han'guk ūi sinmun manhwa 100-nyōn* [100 years of Korean newspaper comics] (Seoul: Sinmun Pangmulgwan Presseum, 2004), 7.

throughout eternity. I will work to make it known as much as I can. I hope your death will purify you so that you will quickly ascend to heaven. In heaven, there will be no language barrier. When I go there one day, we will clasp hands and converse there at our ease.” An thanked him for his sympathy, but then explained that if he wanted to go to heaven, he needed to become a Catholic. Kamada then stated that he had the same feelings as Mizuno, and An expressed his gratitude. An and his brothers then spoke for a while before they prayed and said their final farewells.

An gave his brothers several short letters to deliver. In his notes to his mother and his wife, he expressed his desire to see them again in heaven, and his request that his first son become a priest. He wrote Wilhelm thanking him for coming and asking for his prayers. Apparently believing that Mutel had permitted the meeting, An also wrote him, thanking him, and asked not only for his prayers so that he could go to heaven, but for the forgiveness of his “sin.” He also expressed his hope that many Protestants would convert to Catholicism. Similarly, in a letter to one of his Catholic uncles he asked him to urge his non-Catholic uncle to convert and stated that he hoped that all of Korea would become a Catholic country.⁶⁷ He did not explicitly refer to the assassination in any of his letters.

Father Wilhelm provided his own, albeit less detailed, account of events in a letter to friends in Lorraine written in 1912, two years after Korea’s annexation.⁶⁸ Wilhelm’s primary concern was that, just as the Japanese colonial state was taking measures to suppress any sort of political opposition to its rule, it would also infringe on the religious freedom of Christians. It is from this perspective that Wilhelm recalled his meeting with An. He described how it was a

⁶⁷ The original letters appear to have been lost. Japanese translations, made at the time, can be found in Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., “An Chunggŭn sahyŏng silhaeng sanghwang pogogŏn [Report on the particulars of An Chunggŭn’s execution],” in *T’onggambu munsŏ*, document number 365. Modern Korean translations of these Japanese documents can be found in Kuksa Pyŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe, 7:529-31 and Sin Yongha, 314-21.

⁶⁸ See Wilhelm’s March 19, 1912 letter.

message from Mizobuchi asking that Wilhelm come out of respect for An's "freedom of conscience" that convinced him to make the visit as it would be understood, not as a political act, but a religious one to see to the spiritual needs of a condemned man. Wilhelm's description of events, written as part of a discussion of religious freedom under Japanese rule, is similar to Sonoki's in several important areas, and confirms An's reception of the sacraments and the general atmosphere of the meetings. It differs though in that, whereas Sonoki describes how An was convinced to repent and gives his exact words of repentance, Wilhelm provides few details. He does not state explicitly that An was sorry for killing Itō and does not record An's exact words of "repentance," only reporting that he asked for confession, received forgiveness, and had shown evidence of moral transformation.

Wilhelm did record one detail not mentioned by Sonoki. He described how An told him that, during his time as a guerilla army officer, he maintained he was criticized and even threatened by the men under his command because he severely punished those guilty of looting or rape.⁶⁹ He also mentioned that he continued to pray the rosary during this time. Just as An connected religion and civilization in his autobiography by stating that killing prisoners of war would make both God and human beings angry, he likewise here connected religion and his attempt to restrain his men from committing illegitimately violent acts. While it must be recognized that such statements were utilized to portray a certain image, Wilhelm seems to have accepted what An told him at face value, and it is likely the case that they reflected a mixing of civilization and enlightenment ideals with Catholicism, which together restrained An from using violence that other nationalists might have allowed, even at risk to himself.

⁶⁹ See Wilhelm's March 19, 1912 letter.

There is one last eyewitness account of their meeting. An's autobiography, finished on March 15, 1910, just a few days after he met with Wilhelm, ends with a description of the priest's visit so short that it can be quoted in full:

Father Hong (Wilhelm) spoke to me of Catholic doctrine. The following day he heard my confession. The day after that he came to the prison to say mass. I partook in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist. How can I possibly thank the Lord of Heaven for this special grace? The officials at the jail came and participated in the mass. The following day, at about two in the afternoon, he came again and spoke to me saying, "I will leave for Korea today so I came here to say goodbye." We spoke for several hours and then shook hands and said goodbye. He said to me, "The benevolent Lord of Heaven will not forsake you. He will take care of you. Do not worry. Be at peace. He raised up his arms and gave me his blessing and then left."⁷⁰

An's account makes no mention of repentance, only stating the bare facts that he received the sacraments, which he considered to be a special grace from God.

As seen from these accounts, the description of An's confession that appeared in the *Seoul Press* exaggerated the degree of An's repentance without acknowledging its ambiguity. Unfortunately, the only one who recorded An's exact words was Sonoki. This is problematic in that he seems to have been writing with an eye towards pleasing his superiors. For example, he presents An's repentance as arising out of gratitude for his kind and enlightened treatment by Japan. This is difficult to accept as An would have been much more likely to respond to religious concerns over the afterlife. Moreover, as seen in his autobiography, he was well aware that he was receiving exceptional treatment before he met with Wilhelm, but expressed his gratitude, not to Japan as a whole, but to the kindness of individual Japanese.⁷¹ It would seem then that Sonoki likely exaggerated this aspect in order to provide evidence to his superiors that Japan's civilized treatment of Koreans could reform them and obtain their support. However, while Sonoki likely tailored his report to please his superiors, there is a high probability that

⁷⁰ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 181-82.

⁷¹ Yun Pyong Suk, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa*, 176-77.

when he quoted An as saying, “Oh, please forgive me Father. Your child has erred and committed this great sin. Not even my death can atone for my crime. What can I do?” he was doing so accurately. If Sonoki was going to put words into An’s mouth to show that he had repented he would have made the statement much clearer so that his report would appear more like the account given in the *Seoul Press*.

Sonoki’s report of what An said then is likely largely true. However, it is ambiguous as, though An recognized he had committed a “great sin” and that not even his “death” could atone for his “crime,” he did not clearly identify what his crime and sin were, nor did he ever explicitly say that he was wrong to kill Itō. In fact, right after An’s confession, Wilhelm attempted to convince him to condemn his actions more clearly but An refused, stating that he had already repented and had nothing else to repent of. An seems to have been purposefully ambiguous in his statement. One could read it to mean that he had repented and now believed he was wrong to kill Itō. At the same time, An could have been referring to many of the other sins he committed, such as his robbery of Yi Sōksan or his shooting of innocent men, or simply the problems he caused the church. The same ambiguity exists in other cases where An refers to his “sin” or “crime,” such as in his letter to Mutel.

An’s other statements during his interview, such as his expressions of desire for Korean independence and his brothers to work towards it, indicates that he was far from supporting the Japanese colonial project, despite what Sonoki’s report implies. An also sought to justify his actions indirectly. Immediately following his confession, An told Mutel about his dream of the Virgin Mary, which occurred right after he joined a guerilla army. An appears to have been trying to argue that Mary’s statements that he need not worry and that everything would be all right represented approval for his turning to violent means in his struggle for Korean

independence. And since An justified his killing of Itō by pointing to his status as an officer in a “righteous army,” he implied here that he had divine sanction for the assassination, since Mary had approved of him joining that movement. The fact that, after hearing the story, Wilhelm encouraged An to explicitly criticize his previous actions and accept the legitimacy of the Japanese colonial project supports this interpretation, as it shows Wilhelm questioned the depth of An’s repentance and sought to elicit a clearer statement from him. Similarly, An’s expression of joy when Wilhelm asked him what had happened after he had left Korea likely arose from his hopes that he could convince Wilhelm, as he had sought to convince the Japanese and the Western empires, of the rightness of his cause. This is supported by the fact that Sonoki chose to omit his description of events from the report on the grounds that it was substantially the same as the unrepentant An’s narrative given during interrogation, which as we have seen in chapter six, was a defense of his actions and a criticism of Itō’s.

Moreover, had An truly repented of his killing of Itō, he likely would have revised his autobiography, or at least added a note of his repentance in his description of their meeting. Instead, as we saw in the previous chapter, it remained a defense of his actions. Similarly, in his preface to *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, likely finished on March 18, about a week after his confession, he referred to his assassination of Itō as the declaration of a “righteous war.”⁷² Likewise, in his final statements he gave no indication that he believed his actions were wrong or that the protectorate was just. Instead, in one he called on Koreans to devote themselves to study and developing Korea’s industrial capacity, proclaiming that “If you restore freedom and independence, the causes I devoted myself to, then I can die without any regrets.”⁷³ Similarly, in another statement, he said, “Though I will be in heaven, I will still work for our country’s

⁷² Yun Pyong Suk, *Tongyang p’yŏnghwaron*, 194.

⁷³ Sin Yongha, *An Chunggŭn yugojip*, 322.

independence....When the sound of Korean independence rises up to heaven, I will dance and shout out *mansei!*”⁷⁴

An gave an ambiguous statement of repentance when he requested the sacrament of confession.⁷⁵ He then avoided making statements that could be taken to indicate that he now saw the Japanese colonial project in Korea or Itō’s policy as legitimate. In fact, he avoided even explicitly stating that he had been wrong to kill Itō. Moreover, An went so far as to try, through his dream of Mary and his recounting of events after leaving Korea, to convince Wilhelm that his use of violence had been justified. At the same time, An’s respect for Wilhelm and desire for the sacraments prevented him from attempting to justify his actions more directly. Thus An found himself in the ambiguous position in which he thought that his actions were fully in line with Catholic doctrine, indeed were mandated by God directly, while at the same time, in order to have access to the religious rituals he believed were necessary for his salvation in accordance with that same body of doctrine, he had to make an ambiguous statement which could be understood to mean that the very act he believed that God had approved and made possible was wrong, and which would be used to argue that he had repudiated his own actions as illegitimate.

⁷⁴ Sin Yongha, *An Chunggŭn yugojip*, 323.

⁷⁵ Wilhelm had believed that An was not confessing as he should, then he would have denied him absolution and not provided him with Holy Communion. Since Wilhelm did not do that there are before us two possibilities. One is that An confessed that he had been wrong to kill Itō. The other possibility is more complex. During the nineteenth century, French Catholicism came increasingly under the influence of the moral theology of the Italian Redemptorist priest Alphonsus Marie de Liguori (1696-1787). Liguori encouraged a more lenient attitude in the confessional. For example, he taught that when there was a question of whether an act that was not intrinsically wrong was a sin or not, a priest, even if he personally thought it was a sin, could grant absolution if the penitent believed the action was not a sin and so did not confess it, and if the penitent’s interpretation had some backing in Church teaching. Liguori’s views proved popular and became even more so after he was canonized in 1839 and declared a “Doctor of the Church” in 1871. It is therefore likely that Wilhelm was influenced by him. Since An seems to have believed he was right to kill Itō, and because no less a Catholic luminary than Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) saw the assassination of a tyrant as a legitimate use of violence, regardless of his own view that the killing of Itō was unjustified, Wilhelm could still grant An absolution. See Ralph Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism, 1789-1914* (London: Routledge, 1989), 260-65; Robert P. George, “Kelsen and Aquinas on the Natural Law Doctrine,” in *St. Thomas Aquinas and the Natural Law Tradition: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. John Goyette, Mark Latkovic, and Richard S. Myers (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 257-59.

The Aftermath of An Chunggŭn's Execution

Despite reports that An had repented in Japanese and English language newspapers in terms that Wilhelm, and likely Mutel, knew were false, no public statements were made by Catholics challenging them. In fact, there seems to have been no official Catholic reaction to An's execution. However, Catholics did express grief at his death. For example, according to Father Wilhelm, he received a telegram on March 27 that informed him that An had been executed the previous day. He had the church bells rung to announce his death and Catholics streamed into the parish to pray for his soul.⁷⁶

Korean Catholic support of An seems to have raised concerns among the Resident General. The *Seoul Press* reported that, "According to vernacular papers, the Roman Catholic Church here has collected about 2,000 yen for the relief of the family of the late An Chungkeun [sic]. We publish this curious piece of news for what it may be worth."⁷⁷ The *Seoul Press* also printed more direct statements, often by high officials in the Residency-General, reminding the missionaries to keep a close watch over their converts. Typically the officials expressed gratitude for the good work done by missionaries in the reform of Korea. What problems that existed were blamed on politically-motivated Koreans who used Christianity as a cover for their activities, not the missionaries. Thus, when Japanese newspapers attacked foreign missionaries with the accusation that they encouraged anti-Japanese resistance, the Japanese colonial state

⁷⁶ Because of the Catholic belief in purgatory, it is customary to offer prayers for the dead whether they are thought to have led a good or a bad life.

⁷⁷ "The assassin," *Seoul Press*, April 2, 1910.

publicly defended them as cooperating with the government. However, the missionaries were firmly, but politely, told that they needed to take steps to control their converts.⁷⁸

Though such warnings were couched politely, they had teeth. For example, Christian missionaries depended heavily on institutions, such as schools and hospitals, to carry out the work of evangelization, but the state could legitimately claim to regulate such institutions. The Japanese colonial government had shut down many private non-religious schools in Korea by requiring registration and approval for them to operate, but had favored mission schools by allowing them to remain open even if they did not register.⁷⁹ However, the threat of closure or other sanctions should the missionaries displease the state still remained, especially, as within Japan itself, regulations passed regarding religious schools in 1899 hampered Christian mission work there.⁸⁰ This would have been threatening not only to the Protestants, with their highly developed education system, but Catholics as well, since after the Russo-Japanese War Mutel acknowledged the importance of a limited modern education for missionary work and had sought to build up Catholic primary schools.⁸¹ Moreover, French missionaries knew that in 1903 Itō had appealed to the pope to remove them from Korea because he feared they were too pro-Russian.⁸²

⁷⁸ For examples, see the *Seoul Press* articles, “Evangelical work in Korea,” April 10, 1910; “The Residency General and Christian missions,” May 22, 1910.

⁷⁹ See “Christian missionaries and political questions,” *Seoul Press*, November 12, 1909; Yun Sŏnja, *Ilche ūi chonggyo chŏngch’aek kwa Ch’ŏnjugyohoe*, 40-42.

⁸⁰ For example, starting in 1899, schools that taught religious doctrine were not allowed to grant draft deferments or accredited diplomas in Japan. See Timothy McKenzie, 85-102.

⁸¹ See the 1906 annual report, Han’guk Kyohoesa Yŏn’guso, *Sŏul kyogu yŏnbo*, 2:40-41. The Catholic Church’s focus was on primary education, though a vocational school was established in 1911. See Rausch, “Saving Knowledge,” 68-69.

⁸² *Le Seoul Bulletin*, December 26, 1909. For the modern Korean translation cited here see Ch’ŏnjugyo Chŏngŭi Kuhyŏn Chŏn’guk Sajedan, ed., *An Chunggŭn (Toma) ūisa ch’umo charyo* [Collection of documents in commemoration of (Thomas) An Chunggŭn] (Seoul: Ch’ŏnjugyo Chŏngŭi Kuhyŏn Chŏn’guk Sajedan, 1990), 178-79.

Mutel responded to the colonial government's offer of continued tolerance for missionary support of the colonial project at a farewell party for Methodist Bishop Harris. There, a representative of the resident-general expressed respect for the missionaries and their work and proposed a toast in thanksgiving for the protection given to them by the colonial government. Harris responded that the missionaries would teach the Koreans to respect the state and its laws and thereby spiritually cooperate in the work of enlightenment. When it came time for Mutel to speak, he simply expressed his agreement with Harris' words, and stated that he had nothing more to add to them.⁸³ Though he did so reluctantly, Mutel accepted the Japanese colonial project in Korea as legitimate in order to obtain the tolerance he believed was necessary to continue the work of the church and the salvation of souls.

While the relationship between the Japanese colonial state and the Catholic Church remained positive despite the assassination, the one between Mutel and Wilhelm deteriorated. Angry at how Mutel had acted, Wilhelm criticized him in his 1910-1911 annual report, declaring that he had been quicker to judge An than the Japanese had been at his trial.⁸⁴ Moreover, Wilhelm appealed his punishment to the Vatican, which found that he was in the right and that Mutel had erred in not sending a priest to see An, as concerns for his salvation were of paramount importance.⁸⁵ However, Wilhelm would stay on in Korea conducting missionary work for several more years, even writing to friends in Lorraine to raise money to rebuild Korean Catholic homes destroyed in a flood.⁸⁶ But Wilhelm also found himself in conflict with other missionaries and a letter was circulated among them asking that he be removed from Korea.

⁸³ Mutel's journal, May 17, 1910, 4:463-64.

⁸⁴ For a Korean translation of this report, see Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, *Hwanghaedo*, 199-203.

⁸⁵ Ch'oe, "An Chunggŭn ūi ūigŏ," 116-17; Yun Sŏnja, "Hanil happyŏng," 126-29.

⁸⁶ See annual reports for 1911 and 1912, Han'guk Kyohoesa Yŏn'guso, *Sŏul kyogu yŏnbo*, 2:101-2 and 106 and Wilhelm's March 19, 1912 letter.

Their request was granted and he was forced to go back to Lorraine in 1914. Despite numerous attempts, he was never able to return.⁸⁷

Central to the conflict between Mutel and Wilhelm, on the one hand, and An, on the other, was the drawing of religious boundaries. Mutel had the strictest view of separation, attempting to prevent anything that seemed political or might lead to such activity. Wilhelm's view was broader, allowing him to intervene directly to help Catholics even when religious issues were tangential, and to provide support for the university proposal. Both were willing to fight hard when they believed a religious principle was at stake, but did not see the suffering and injustice that An identified as the product of Itō's policy as a religious issue, and so accepted the Japanese colonial project as legitimate, receiving tolerance for their missionary work in exchange for their support of the regime.

An's own view is more ambiguous. He believed that it was necessary to take political action because of his commitment to secular ideology, defying missionary attempts to restrain him despite recognizing clerical authority over religious matters because he did not believe they, as white foreigners, were adequately sympathetic to the nation. Thus, on one side, since he recognized the church as holding authority in the religious sphere, he saw any efforts by priests to prevent him from engaging in political activities as illegitimate. At the same time, he believed that God had sanctioned his use of force for political purposes, a justification for violence that clearly belonged to the religious sphere over which An ostensibly believed the church had authority over. An's dedication to nationalism therefore caused him to blur the lines between the political and the religious, and consequently to implicitly challenge clerical authority.

An, however, could not directly challenge church leaders. During his interrogation, when he tried to assert that Itō's policy and the fate of the Korean nation and East Asian region were

⁸⁷ See Ch'oe Sōgu, "An Chunggūn ūigō," 114-18.

essentially religious issues, and justify his assassination of Itō in Catholic terms, he was silenced when his interrogator pointed out that Wilhelm had condemned his actions. An could not hope to dispute the authority of the hierarchy in public, and, because an attempt to do so might threaten his beloved church, which he credited with the healing of his second son from a serious illness, he remained silent. Nothing could be gained and much could be lost by pressing the issue. This left the field open for the proponents of Japan's colonial project, with the cooperation of Catholic leaders, to utilize religion to de-legitimize An's actions, religiously justifying the violence carried out by the avowedly secular Japanese state. Thus, while An justified his use of violence in primarily secular terms publicly, religion played a role in convincing him that it was morally legitimate to use violent means, just as it was also used by those who did not agree with what he had done to condemn him.

These conflicts led to the incongruous situation in which, though An believed God had guided him, approved, and made possible the assassination of Itō, he gave an ambiguous statement of repentance in order to receive the rituals that his religious beliefs, the same ones that told him he was right to turn to violence, stated were necessary for his salvation. An's attempt to stay loyal both to the Catholic Church and to the Korean nation led to internal conflict in which the boundaries between them were confused, causing An to act, speak, and think in ambiguous terms, evidence of the deep conflict within him as he sought to live both as a Catholic and a nationalist. Thus, in his last letter to his uncle, he stated that he hoped Korea would become a Catholic country, but, unlike Protestant nationalist thinkers, he never worked out exactly what that would mean in terms of nation, state, and modernity.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

In the first of our two case studies we saw how Hwang Sayŏng, deeply shaped by the historical context in which he was born, sought to justify violence by appealing to Catholicism, and to the principle that the government could justify violence on behalf of religious truth, an understanding he had in common with the officials who served the Chosŏn state, in order, not to obtain religious freedom for all but to win tolerance for Catholicism, so that Korea could enjoy the this-worldly and otherworldly benefits the religion would bring. Similarly, we found that while factionalism shaped the 1801 suppression of Catholicism, it was, for the most part, driven by a concern to protect the state and advance its religious mission of bringing civilization and moral transformation to the people it ruled.

In our second case study, we saw that the relationship between An Chunggŭn and his Catholic faith, as well as between religion and ideology in his worldview, was complex and fraught with ambiguities. We also found that the avowedly secular Japanese colonial state was able to create a situation that encouraged religious leaders to use religion to de-legitimize the violence directed against its representatives, and to justify its own rule on the peninsula. Moreover, by examining heretofore underused resources, in particular, English and Japanese-language newspapers, and comparing them to An's writings and testimony, we found that though An attempted to speak the language of the civilizing empires, his worldview was actually quite different, explaining how he misjudged their reactions to the assassination of Itō.

By bringing these two case studies together, we can see that ideology replaced religion as the dominant source of moral authority used to justify violence in the Korean context, and how this change shaped the violence of state and non-state actors. The Chosŏn state, guided by

religion, directly targeted Catholics, openly torturing and executing them for their belief in the foreign religion and membership in the Catholic community, regardless of their sex, age, or role in the Catholic Church, because of the threat they posed, simply by virtue of their adherence to Catholicism, to state security and the Neo-Confucian civilization and moral order that the government was committed to defending. In contrast, the Japanese colonial government, guided by ideology, did not care about religious allegiance and only directly targeted for violence those who actively resisted it, principally young or middle-aged men, punishing only An for his crimes, not his family, unlike the way the Chosŏn state dealt with Hwang. Moreover, An Chunggŭn suffered no torture, and was, in his own opinion, treated very well.

Thus, the rise of the Japanese colonial state in Korea, which looked in particular to concepts of civilization and enlightenment thought to justify its rule on the peninsula, led to the rejection of certain forms of violence that the Chosŏn state, which legitimized its rule religiously, had found acceptable. Central to this transformation was the actual content of this ideology. According to enlightened thinking, torture and bloody executions were wrong, and so were either not carried out, or enacted secretly. Similarly, civilized states were expected to protect religious freedom. Therefore the Japanese colonial government did not punish people based on what their religious beliefs might make them do, but rather, what they actually did, restricting the scope of violence. Moreover, by offering religious freedom, the secular Japanese colonial state was able to win support from missionaries, such as Mutel and Wilhelm, who would use their religious authority to de-legitimize violence against Japanese rule, which they accepted as legitimate, and an even deeper commitment from religious leaders, such as Harris and Ladd, who shared the colonial state's dedication to enlightened progress.

And yet, while the kind of violence changed, the idea of the civilizing mission, along with nationalism, Pan-Asianism, and Social-Darwinism, and the technological advances that accompanied these ideologies, justified and made possible a war that killed more people than all of the anti-Catholic suppressions launched by the Chosŏn state combined. Only a few hundred Catholics died in the 1801 suppression, and it is estimated that about 10,000 Catholics died in the suppressions from 1784 to 1876. In contrast, according to official Japanese government statistics, over 14,000 Korean combatants were killed between 1907 and 1912, the height of the “righteous army” movement.⁷⁵⁵ That number only counts those Koreans who were actively resisting and therefore officially targeted for violence. It does not include Japanese soldiers, or the Korean and Japanese civilians who were caught up in the violence and died.

While civilization and enlightenment thought was key to justifying the violence employed by the Japanese empire, had its restraining influence been removed from the equation, leaving nationalism and Social-Darwinism as the primary ideologies guiding the state, then the imposition of colonial rule would likely have been much bloodier, as those two ideologies could justify violence that civilization and enlightenment thought rejected. Similarly, historical context was important. The numbers of dead could have been higher had Japan not been concerned with how it would be judged by the other empires, and torture might have been used more often and more publicly were not Japan jealous of its international reputation. Conversely, had the Chosŏn state been more powerful, it might have established a full-fledged institutional solution to the Catholic problem, like the Japanese *danka* system of registering individuals with Buddhist temples to combat the religion, possibly leading to more deaths.⁷⁵⁶ But even if it had, since the

⁷⁵⁵ Michael Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth Century Odyssey*, 32-35.

⁷⁵⁶ For a detailed study of this system, see Nam-lin Hur, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

Chosŏn state was not particularly concerned about individual salvation, and could ignore the Catholic community for long periods of time, such as between the years 1846 and 1866, it likely would not have had the intensity of a European inquisition, in which concern was not limited to social order but extended to the soul of the individual heretic. Historical context and the individual content of religions and ideologies therefore played an important role in the intensity and kind of violence that these different states enacted.

We see a similar shift from religion to ideology in the lives of Hwang Sayŏng and An Chunggŭn. Hwang's clash with the Chosŏn state was primarily religious in nature, and religion was clearly dominant in his mind, as he redefined Confucian values in Catholic terms and was even willing to surrender Korean autonomy for the good of the church. In contrast, An allowed nationalism to trump religion (at least as understood by church leaders) at every turn, until the end, when he risked his nationalist goals by giving an ambiguous statement of repentance in order to receive the sacraments. Likewise, in terms of how he justified violence, at least publicly, ideology was dominant, and though religion was not lacking, it was much more subdued and not particularly Catholic. That does not mean that religion was not a factor. An's Catholicism, combined with his dedication to civilization and enlightenment morality, led him to restrain violence that could have been justified if only nationalism was in play, as when he insisted on releasing the prisoners-of-war rather than executing them. Further highlighting the ambiguous relationship between religion, ideology, and violence in An was the fact that he utilized the same ideologies used to legitimize the Japanese colonial project in Korea, and Catholicism, despite the condemnation of Catholic missionaries, to justify assassinating Itō.

At first glance, An's ideological justifications of violence seem to have enabled him to legitimize a more intense kind of violence, and actually carry out a violent act in comparison to

Hwang, who thought that the mere threat of violence would be sufficient to obtain tolerance for Catholicism. However, considering the bloody results of the 1866 expedition, it is difficult to imagine things turning out as Hwang planned had the armada actually appeared. In fact, if the hoped-for invasion had come off, it likely would have had similar results to the French-Spanish joint expedition in Vietnam in the 1870s, which led to the deaths of thousands, including Catholics, and was an important step in the colonization of the country.⁷⁵⁷ Moreover, while An might not have publicly said much about religion, it is clear that he thought that his use of violence was in accordance with Catholic doctrine. In fact, had An not believed that it was God's will for him to kill Itō, and that he would be rewarded in the afterlife for doing so, he might not have even attempted assassinating him, or might not have done so in the way he did, maximizing his success by shooting Itō in a public place at short range, preventing any chance of escape.

At the beginning of this study, we noted that some scholars argue that religion is fundamentally more violent than non-religious worldviews because it is absolutist, divisive, and irrational. This relationship does appear at first glance to hold true when we compare the Chosŏn state to that of the Japanese colonial government, as the former utilized religion to dehumanize Catholics as animals, leading to a violence that was more brutal and that targeted a broader range of people than that utilized by the latter which can be attributed to the absolutism and divisiveness of a state Neo-Confucianism that saw itself locked, to use Juergensmeyer's term, in a cosmic war of good and evil with Catholics. In contrast, An, and other Koreans were not portrayed as non-humans by the proponents of the Japanese colonial project, nor was the language of cosmic war adopted, and consequently, the violence utilized by Japan was much

⁷⁵⁷ Jacob Ramsay, *Mandarins and Martyrs: The Church and the Nguyen Dynasty in Early Nineteenth-Century Vietnam* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

more restricted, in terms of targets and allowable means, than that of the Chosŏn state. And yet, the Japanese colonial state killed more people in a shorter amount of time than its Chosŏn counterpart, and used brutal means of torture when it was believed that such acts could be kept secret. Similarly, in the thought of An, nationalism was sufficient to dehumanize Itō as a “rat-thief” in an absolutist and divisive way, without the use of religious language.

It has also been argued that religion is fundamentally irrational, basing its premises on non-empirically provable claims, preventing it from changing to meet different circumstances and entering into dialogue and compromise with people who think differently, as well as encouraging believers to continue to fight for causes that are clearly lost, making it particularly violent. However, as we have seen, the Chosŏn state ended its suppression of Catholics in 1801 despite knowing that some still remained, since, having decapitated the church by killing its leadership, the Catholic threat was believed to have been adequately dealt with, and continuing the suppression would have been too costly. Similarly, religion was not static—Catholicism changed in accordance with the transformations taking place in Korea, as evidenced by the very different understandings of that religion displayed by Hwang and An. Moreover, all the subjects of our studies held positions on some issues, be it Korean independence or the continued maintenance of ritual hegemony, that were non-negotiable, leading to limits on compromise that do not appear to be significantly different whether those commitments were based on religion or ideology.

This emphasis on religion and its supposed irrationality has led to a tendency to neglect the reasons people give for why they commit violence. As we have seen in the reconstruction of the various narratives this study has examined that justify violence, considering the limitations of knowledge and human moral frailty, they are largely rational. In each case, the people involved

had legitimate fears, and each posed to the other a real threat. All, in choosing to use violence, made rational gambles that they hoped would pay off. Moreover, there also appears a clear logical connection between the violent means they chose, and the story they told to justify violence. Hwang, hoping to convert Korea to Catholicism and to present himself as loyal, placed all the blame on a “wicked” faction, and portrayed Korean officials as persecuting the church out of a combination of fear and ignorance, and therefore argued that the threat of violence would be enough to obtain tolerance. An blamed Itō as solely responsible for the destruction of Korean independence and the disturbance of peace in the East, and so killed him.

It is in these narratives themselves that we see the ambiguity of violence, that it is not so much how something can be defined as a religious or ideological worldview, but the content of particular worldviews, their relationship with each other, the characteristics of the individual or group that hold those worldviews, and the historical context in which they are actualized, that determines the kind and intensity of violence. In the Korean context, religious influence, while potentially important, is not the only element, or even necessarily the most important in determining the shape violence takes. Therefore, when violence is studied, it must be with due consideration to other factors as well. I believe that this is true in the case of violence in other contexts outside of Korea as well, though further research is needed to bear this out.

In order to understand violence, it is therefore necessary to reconstruct and examine the narratives people deploy to justify it. While, in the cases examined here, these stories were selectively arranged, shaped by concerns for audience, and in some instances, portions were either based on erroneous data or even fabricated, they, at least in their broad outlines, were believed by their narrators and therefore give us an accurate picture of their teller’s worldview. We have seen in those narratives, and the worldviews they represent, an inability to take one’s

opponents seriously or to recognize any virtue in them, and a tendency to divide the world into heroes and villains, with the narrator standing clearly with the former in opposition to the latter. In fact, it seems that, in order to justify violence, we need to create such stories. It is hard to kill when we think our opponent is sincere but mistaken, and much easier to do so when we think he is an archfiend bent on doing evil for its own sake. Likewise, it is difficult to utilize violence if we see ourselves as murderers rather than heroes. Thus, these stories, and the worldviews from which they sprung, led to a misapprehension of reality that made violence appear to be a more effective means than it really was, resulting in consequences very different from what was expected. The discovery of the *Silk Letter* did not bring the tolerance Hwang hoped for, but a flare-up in the persecution, and gave substance to the portrayal of Catholics as dangerous, inhuman rebels, leading to a memory of Catholic treachery that made it all the easier to justify violence against them in the future. An's assassination of Itō did not restore Korean independence or peace in the East, but instead gave the proponents of the Japanese colonial project the opportunity to rhetorically strengthen the legitimacy of Japanese power in Korea, and likely contributed to Western acceptance of annexation when it did come.

From the perspective of the Chosŏn dynasty, violence seemed to work, at least initially. However, despite numerous violent suppressions, the Catholic Church in Korea survived. The Chosŏn state officials' own belief in its narrative that Catholics were either sub-humans too stupid and stubborn to follow the true way, or rebels who used religion as a pretext for their treasonous plots, led it to miss the fact that Catholics like Hwang were essentially motivated by a sincere desire for heaven, and believed that martyrdom would take them there. Violence, instead of pushing them away from their religion, drove them to oppose their government, leading people like Hwang, and the Korean Catholics who guided the French armada in 1866, to look to

the West for help. The Chosŏn state therefore failed to see that its use of violence helped create the security threat that violence was supposed to overcome. Even when Catholics received tolerance following the signing of treaties with Japan and the West, the decades of violent suppression could not be easily forgotten, helping lead to conflicts like the Haesŏ incident and alienating Catholics from the government just as it needed their support in building a strong and unified Korean nation-state, and so helped create a nationalist like An Chunggŭn, who could kill in the name of the Korean nation and the emperor, while being incredibly hostile to the Chosŏn state itself.

The proponents of the Japanese colonial project, in much the same way as the Western English-language media, presented An as a selfish, barbaric, and violent villain. By ignoring his critique of the Japanese colonial project, and failing to acknowledge that he was reacting to Japanese violence, they were able to portray Itō, and by extension Japan, as an innocent victim, and Japan's civilizing mission in Korea as necessary and right. This inability to recognize in An the fact that at least some Koreans were opposed to the Japanese colonial project for principled reasons, and were willing to kill and die for the cause of Korean independence, blinded officials and the Japanese public to the extent of opposition to colonization and the resistance, violent or otherwise, that project would continue to provoke, leading to the suffering of the colonial period in Korea, further Japanese expansion into Asia, and the subsequent war with China and the Western allies, the fire and atomic bombing of Japan, the destruction of its empire, and subsequent occupation of the islands by American forces.

The tragic irony here is that the violence that was supposed to save instead played a role in the actualization of the fears that drove it. The lesson for us today then is to be wary of the stories we tell, and to be willing to reflect on them and ourselves, lest we blind ourselves to

reality by constructing narratives that justify our desires without giving due attention to the arguments and perspectives of people with whom we disagree. Moreover, we must not simply be concerned with whether an act of violence is legitimate or not, but to remember that, even if it should appear to be justified, its use might lead to results far different from what we expect.

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