CIVIL WAR, POLITICIDE, AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY
IN SOUTH KOREA, 1948-1961

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the history and memory of three incidents of massacres committed by South Korean government forces during the Korean civil war (1948-1953) against alleged "communists"—the Cheju Incident, the National Guidance League Incident, and the Kŏch'ang Incident. These three episodes were part of a broader "politicide" that was organized and facilitated by the nascent South Korean National Security State. Drawing from sources unearthed by the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Committee for the Investigation of the Truth about the Cheju 4.3 Incident, and various bereaved family associations, this dissertation demonstrates that this politicide was rooted in processes of anticomunist ideological consolidation and state building that were predicated upon the obliteration of the "communist" other, in the context of a fratricidal civil war.

From 1953 to 1960, in the aftermath of this period of mass violence, survivors and bereaved families were subjected to legal, economic, and social discrimination from the state, which threatened these families with "social death". Most profoundly, state prohibitions on the burial and mourning of "communists" engendered a social crises within these communities. However, some families were granted the right to mourn, and through the construction of mass graves honouring the victims, these families articulated an alternative identity than that imposed by the anticomunist state: one that was rooted in the notion of a unified bereaved subject. In 1960, the authoritarian First Republic collapsed, leading to a brief period of liberation. In this context, victims formed Bereaved Family Associations. Through petitions, advertisements, private and public mourning practices, and the establishment of "truth" committees, the Bereaved Family Associations offered a radical rethinking of the Korean War past. The lynchpin of this strategy was an alternative nationalist narrative in which the alleged "communists" were reconceived as patriotic martyrs for a not-yet-authored unified democratic state. However, in the wake of the military coup of May 16, 1961, these efforts were brutally repressed, as the military junta arrested and tortured the Bereaved Family Associations' leadership, destroyed monuments dedicated the atrocities' victims, and desecrated the mass graves built to honour the spirits of the dead.
Preface

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Introduction: A History of Violence Casts its Shadow

In December 2014, South Korea's Constitutional Court ordered the full disbanding of the United Progressive Party (T'ongap Chinpodan) in an 8 to 1 ruling. At the heart of the court's decision was the allegation that the United Progressive Party was effectively under the control of the "Revolutionary Organization", led by Lee Sŏk-ki. Lee had been convicted in February of the same year for allegedly plotting a rebellion (naeran ŭmmo), through a clandestine network of 130 individuals with "Pro-North" (chongbuk) sympathies. The primary evidence for Lee's conviction and the UPP's disbanding came from a transcript of a secretly recorded assembly held in May 2013. Obtained through a recording given to the National Intelligence Service (NIS) by an disgruntled member of the Revolutionary Organization, Lee is alleged to have announced to his followers that the Revolutionary Organization should "prepare for war".

The verdict was the first time since South Korea's 1987 democratization that a political party had been disbanded by the judiciary. It ignited a political firestorm, with debate predictably polarized. An editorial in the conservative Chosun Ilbo applauded the verdict, noting that Lee and his "Pro-North" comrades represented a clear and present danger to the national security of South Korea. Conservative activists in the street, meanwhile, were less circumspect. Outside the courthouse in Suwŏn where Lee was convicted, supporters of the ruling were heard chanting "let's exterminate the Chongbuk!" and held mock executions of Lee. The progressive Hankyŏrye, on the other hand, questioned the verdict on the grounds that clear evidence was not offered against Lee that he had the means to incite the overthrow of the government, and that banning the UPP set a dangerous precedent for democracy. The series of incidents garnered
international attention as well, with publications such as the *New York Times* and *The Guardian* covering the story. *The Guardian*'s Justin McCurry referred to the ruling as "echoes of Pyongyang" and compared the government of Park Gun-Hye's (*Pak Kŭn-hye*) with its oppressive neighbour to the north. *Amnesty International*, meanwhile, framed the ruling as another sign of the "shrinking space for freedom of expression" in South Korea. Independent analysts likewise questioned the neutrality and timing of the investigations and rulings. Hyun Lee of the Korea Policy Institute noted that the NIS transcript was littered with translation errors and distortions which exaggerated the level of subversion advocated by Lee. In Hyun Lee's reading, the use of the National Security State for ideological warfare echoed the dictator Park Chung-Hee's (*Pak Chŏng-hui*) authoritarian tendencies. Furthermore, Gregory Elich demonstrated that the well-publicized arrests conveniently transpired while the NIS was embroiled in a series of scandals which included interfering in a recent election. According to Elich, Pak's ruling New Frontier Party (*Senuridang*), was engaged in a dangerous political game that threatened to destroy the nation's "hard-fought victory" for democracy.1

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If the language of the debate mainly pivoted around normative notions of security on the one hand, versus freedom of association on the other, casting its shadow over the proceedings was a much larger and unresolved social conflict over the legacies of the nation's violent division. Choe Sang-Hun at the *New York Times* presciently noted that the sordid episode revealed "an ideological conflict rooted in fear of the Communist North" that showed "no sign of easing more than 60 years after the end of the Korean War in 1953". Indeed, Lee's case opened wider wounds within the still-divided national imaginary, bringing with it conflicts over the limits of dissent, the place of leftist thought in the anticommunist society, the hidden but still-formidable capacity of the National Security State, and the often authoritarian lineages of the political elite. Almost lost within the cacophony of the national security/freedom of expression debate, however, was any precise accounting for the specific historical memory allegedly fueling Lee's "preparations for war". In a press conference in which he attempted to exonerate himself, Lee invoked the history of the National Guidance League (*Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng*)—a group of self-confessed "communists" who were killed en mass following outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953). Lee argued that he was "not preparing for war, (but) preparing for survival". Lee implored his fellow countrymen to "look at how Yi Sŏng-man's government dealt with the National Guidance League incident. Approximately 200,000 innocent people were killed. Should we sit by and watch a similar incident happen again?" Like an ominous spectre, the atrocities of the Korean War past hung over Lee and his comrades' future. To Lee, if another war broke out, Martial Law would be declared and "the modern version of the National Guidance League incident could be repeated. Defiantly, Lee declared that "We should not sit by and watch".²

² Kang Insik, "[not'ubuk ül yölmýo] Yi Sŏkki wa Podo Yŏnmaeng che-2 Int'ōnaesyŏnŏl" (Open Notebook: Yi Sŏkki
Cynics may dismiss Lee's laments as mere propaganda. However, his case demonstrated that the often repressed memory of the nation's history of large-scale anticommunist violence was capable of resurfacing in ways which energized activities deemed subversive by the state. But it was not the first time that this particular episode from Korea's civil war past fused with a politics of the present and a portentous future to produce a radical conflict between agents within the National Security State and members of South Korean society. Indeed, political conflicts arising from the memory of the National Guidance League Incident and other episodes of state-authorized slaughter during the Korean civil war have a long historical pedigree. In 1960-1961, for example, survivors and families of these killings filled the streets of Taegu, Kyŏngju, Cheju City and other regions throughout the country demanding restitution for the previous decade's atrocities. These calls were not merely appeals for atonement or historical justice. Rather, they opened up a probing debate concerning the nation's civil war past, its future direction, and the place of state-sanctioned massacres and their victims and perpetrators within this teleology.

Indeed, as both episodes reveal, the phenomenon of civil war-era massacres and their displaced position within the nation's mnemonic landscape raise a host questions and themes that resonate throughout the divided nation. They also form the core analytic concerns of this dissertation. Why were wide-scale atrocities carried out during Korean War, and what is their broader historical significance? What is the relationship between anticommunist ideology and this period of violence? Were these massacres of a systematic and organized character, or were they simply the tragic bi-products of a brutal internecine conflict? Who were the victims and perpetrators, and what does this relationship tell us about the social, ideological, and political conflicts of the nation's post-liberation period (1945-1948)? What role, if any, did the United

States of America play in legitimizing or preventing these mass killings? In the wake of these catastrophes, how did survivors and bereaved families reconstruct their communities? What avenues existed for them in these endeavours? How were practices of bereavement, mourning, and truth seeking related to broader questions of ideology, state legitimacy, and the victims’ place in the nation? What role did anticomunism, and its position as the official ideology of the South Korean state play in shaping these struggles?

This dissertation explores these themes through an analysis of the phenomenon of Republic of Korea (Taehan min'guk) commissioned massacres of South Korean civilians during the civil war period (1948-1953), and the subsequent politics of memory through to the inception of the Park Chung-Hee military government in 1961. More specifically, this work focuses on three infamous "incidents" (sakkŏn)—the Cheju Incident (Cheju Sakkŏn), the National Guidance League Incident (Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn), and the Kŏch'ang Incident (Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn)—and the struggles over their meaning in early Cold War Korea. Central to this inquiry will be the linkages between the establishment of the anticommunist Cold War state in the context of civil war violence and the reframing of the memories of this violence at both the state and local level in the aftermath of these atrocities.

The passage of time, social repression, and ideological engineering have led to the silencing, fragmentation, and warping of memories of these incidents. The result is that few in South Korea agree upon how to define—let alone makes sense of—these atrocities. Once framed as a communist revolt, the Cheju Incident is now officially recognized as a series of massacres that transpired from March 1 1947 until September 21 1954 as part of a war between left-wing guerrillas and counter insurgency forces—the bulk occurring during the winter of 1948-1949 at the hands of the ROK suppression forces. At least 30,000 are estimated to have
perished during this episode. Though now recognized as a brutal state-atrocity, nagging questions persist regarding how to define "victimhood", the role of communist ideology on the island at the time, and the motivations of the agents behind the uprising and its suppression. In the case of the National Guidance League, societal memory is arguably more tortured and opaque. Created in 1949 as a reformist institution, the National Guidance League was set up to convert self-confessed "communists". In exchange for joining the group, recruits were offered clemency and a pathway to citizenship under the condition that they confessed to previous communist affiliations and identify their former comrades. However, when North Korea invaded the South on June 25 1950, its members were immediately rounded up and executed from late June to early September, leading to the deaths of tens of thousands civilians. Because League members were self-confessed "communists" survivors and their families have understandably been reluctant to speak out about this grim past, and in official histories regarding the Korean War, the episode remains a black-hole. Meanwhile, the Kŏch'ang Incident transpired in the winter of 1951 when ROK counter insurgency forces went on a four-day killing spree in the mountainous hamlet of Sinwŏn. Over 700 civilians, the majority of whom were woman, children, and the elderly, were wiped out in this operation. Dissimilar from the other two episodes, recognition of the episode was immediate and resulted in a military trial against the perpetrators. However, government efforts to cover-up the atrocity and anticommunist ideology have long-structured the parameters of discussion regarding the incident, and have even distorted bereaved families' understanding of this mass-killing.

Structurally, there are two components of this dissertation, each of which explores one side of the history/memory equation regarding these three atrocities. The first half traces the causes and lived history of this violence. Though the principle focus is on the three incidents
described above, the analysis of these events is anchored within a wider narrative arc which focuses on the top-down, systematic political logic that gave rise to these episodes of civilian slaughter. More to the point, I argue that these apparently disparate events were wedded to a larger pattern of a sustained and programmatic set of policies that I deem to be a "politicide". According to genocide studies scholar Barbara Harff, politicides consist of "the promotion, execution, and/or implied consent of sustained policies by governing elites or their agents—or in the case of civil war either of the contending authorities—that are intended to destroy in whole or in part, a communal, political, or politicized ethnic group". The broader pattern of civil war violence to which the Cheju Incident, the National Guidance League Incident, and the Kŏch'ang Incident belonged is consistent with this definition. In the first two-chapters, I demonstrate and chronicle the violent obliteration of the indigenous South Korean political "left", principally through the 1948-1952 period. Specifically, I narrate the liquidation of real, imagined, armed, and unarmed "communists" during these years, and the nascent National Security State's role in organizing, facilitating, and sustaining the policies and practices that enabled these mass killings.

The charge of political genocide is of course a weighty one. This can partially be attributed to the fact that when discussing atrocities, political mass murder, or genocide, questions of legal and moral responsibility take precedent within the inquiry. For historians, this poses a dilemma. Reflecting on the value of genocide as an analytic category, historian Mark Mazower posits that, "as its significance in international law becomes greater, its legal connotations start to complicate its historical usefulness". Added to this issue is the shadow that the Holocaust casts over debates both in academia and the international arena. As Mazower and

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numerous others have pointed out, the tendency to subsume large-scale political massacres under the rubric of genocide necessarily involves an implicit or explicit reckoning with the Shoah. There are legal and moral stakes in this, but it is the historiographical implications that are most pertinent to the present discussion. As the archetypical expression of state-organized genocide, the Holocaust has turned into a paradigm of sorts for understanding modern violence. This has important implications for how we study and register episodes of mass violence. Most notably, the centrality of the Holocaust to broader discussions of mass-violence has led to an emphasis on the omnipotent, ostensibly efficient, and deeply organized state as the central culprit for the facilitation of genocidal violence. Yet, acts of mass violence of the twentieth century were often less efficient, differently organized, and narrower in scope and scale than the Nazi regime’s destruction of the Jews. Indeed, as Mazower notes, more common in the case of mass-organized violence were situations "in which a weak state vied to preserve its existence in the face of a threat of organized mass violence from armed insurgents". Korea, as we shall see, hued more closely to this latter pattern.

Further enriching and complicating inquiries into mass-violence have been recent theoretical shifts in genocides studies. Though certainly not abandoning the lessons of the Holocaust, recent work has widened the framework to include the roles played by non-state actors, contingency, and civil war in the perpetuation of mass violence. Meanwhile, a more nuanced analysis of the state has brought with it a more sophisticated reading of state organization, collapse, and ideology, while also addressing the inherent grey issues pertaining to the agency and intentions of the perpetrators. Curiously, despite the ubiquity of atrocities carried out by all sides of the conflict, the Korean War has attracted little attention within the growing field of genocide studies. For example, in 2003 Barbara Harff compiled a list of thirty cases of
post-World War Two politicides or genocides, but the Korean civil war atrocities were not included.⁵ Nor, in my reading, does it often appear in the plethora of books and journals dedicated to researching the subjects of mass violence, genocide, and ethnic cleansing. The index to the Oxford Handbook of Genocide contains not a single entry for Korea, despite carrying an article by Robert Cribb titled, "Political Genocides in Postcolonial Asia".⁶ The same applies for the premier journal Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Others have gone further and explicitly pointed to the Korean War as an example of a conflict where genocide did not occur. For example, in his consideration on the relationship between war and genocide, Paul Bartrop cites the conflict as an episode that was "extremely violent and destructive", but lacked genocidal characteristics. Though Bartrop raises a valid (if obvious) point that we should not equate wars with genocide, he regrettably does not pursue a wider discussion as to why the types of violence on display in the Korean War do not qualify as genocidal.⁷ The Journal of Genocide Research, meanwhile, has a single submission from Kim Dong Choon, in which Dr Kim tellingly frames ROK-commissioned atrocities as "forgotten massacres".⁸

The near-absence of the Korean civil war from broader academic discussions regarding mass violence and genocide may be attributed to a number of intersecting causes. Firstly, there is a paucity of scholarship available to English readers. A few authors, however, have broached the issue of political genocide. In her discussion of the Cheju Incident, Kim Seong-Nae has used the term "Red genocide" to describe the violence that transpired on the island between 1948 and

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⁵ Harff, "No Lessons Learned", 60.
1954 against innocent islanders. However, Kim's analysis is isolated to the violence at Cheju and does not engage with other acts of mass killings which transpired during or after the Cheju episode. Kim Dong-Choon has likewise incorporated the literature on genocide into his analysis of Korean-War era massacres. However, when he addresses the matter of specifically defining the violence, Kim opts for an emphasis on typologies of massacres. Though this approach is often illuminating, it leaves the reader without a synthetic analysis which addresses the political purpose and patterns which lay behind the violence. In Korean-language scholarship, on the other hand, there is a significant and growing body of work dealing with the era's mass killings.

In these works, terms such as "genocide" (chenosaidū), "mass-slaughter" (chiptan haksal), "large-scale massacre" (taeryang haksal), and "civilian massacre" (min'ganin haksal), are used ubiquitously and often interchangeably. However, the majority of these works are specific case studies, and seldom view the series of Korean-war massacres in a comparative context.

Furthermore, as these works are not available to English readers, and appear in an already peripheral field, the violence of Korea's national division has yet to penetrate the mainstream of genocide studies.

9 Kim Seong-Nae, "Sexual Politics of State Violence: On Cheju April Third Massacre of 1948", in Traces 2: Race Panic and the Memory of Migration, Morris and Brett de Bary, eds, (Hong Kong University Press, 2002);
10 In Kim's schematic, the massacres committed during the Korean War may be divided into four types: Massacres by state agents committed during military operations, massacres committed during military operations by non-state actors with the tacit consent of the state, executions, and personal retaliations. Kim Dong-Choon, The Unending War: A Social History. Translated by Sung-ok Kim, (Larkspur, CA: Tamal Vista Publications, 2009):151-153.
Finally, we must acknowledge two major issues concerning the anticommunist violence of the Korean War and the label of genocide's applicability to this history. The first is the matter of intention. These killings occurred during a brutal civil war in which the newly-authored South Korean state was clearly under siege by an ideological foe. Nor, according to my research, was there any clear evidence of a pre-meditated and thorough plan to exterminate all communists and their families prior to the onslaught of civil war violence. Rather, the program of mass-extermination was shaped by the demands of the internecine conflict and evolved throughout the war's progress. However, the somewhat ad-hoc, diffuse, and improvisational character of these killings should not obscure us from identifying the clearly political and organizational logic which propelled these episodes. As the first two chapters demonstrate, there was a causal and correlative relationship between these mass-killings and the broader counter-revolutionary program of South Korea's political right. This was primarily authored through the anticommunist right's consolidation of the National Security State and their use of its instruments and organizational arteries to categorize, identify, and expunge their political advisories.

The second problem concerns the absence of certain kinds of victims within the category of genocide. Conventional definitions of genocide are drawn from the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which identifies genocide as acts intended to destroy a "national, ethnical, racial, or religious" group. As Cribb points out, "the definition seems almost pointed in its exclusion of political killing". Seen from this perspective, the exclusion of the violence against civilians throughout the Korean War's exclusion from the ever-expanding pantheon of modern genocides is hardly surprising. Indeed, according to Cribb, this emphasis on ethnic extermination has led to a "persistent reluctance in the field of genocide

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studies to allow mass political murder to qualify as genocide". Given the nomenclature's status as the embodiment of the supreme moral crime, this reluctance to deal with politicized murder has led to some curious omissions. Thus, the ideological purging carried out by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia against members of their own ethnic community "continues to sit uncomfortably on the sharp frontier of genocide studies", despite that fact that conventional estimates put the number killed at two million—twenty five percent of the total population. On the other hand, in 1996 five miners in Brazil were convicted of genocide after killing sixteen Yanomami Indians, on the grounds that the killings were explicitly ethnic and intended to destroy the group.

There are, therefore, limitations in attempting to frame the politicized violence we are discussing under the conceptual rubric of genocide. There also clear shortcomings to the label of "genocide" as the loadstar for adjudicating sustained acts of mass violence. We may also plausibly question the utility of these semantic debates when confronted with the spectre of mass violence. However, as Perry Anderson notes," in history...the depth of a truth is usually a function of its width—how much evidence it engages and explains". For this reason, I opt for the above-mentioned neologism of "politicide". In Harff's reading, intent is crucial to identifying violence as politicidal, and can be demonstrated if the mass killings meet four criteria: 1. That the potential perpetrators are agents of the state or rival authorities; 2. Elites and groups linked to them use hate propaganda and attack political opponents of the state; 3. Government repression is greatly disproportionate to that of the opposition; 4. Authorities of the state ignore

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15 Ibid, 463.
16 Mazower, "Violence and the State", 1162.
these killings and other abuses carried out against political opponents. The violence that befell thousands of Koreans throughout Cheju island and the mainland is consistent with this paradigm.

The proof of this hypothesis is laid out in the narrative itself, but in light of the above criteria, it is worth outlining a few broad features. In reference to the first proposition, there can be little doubt that the primary culprits for these killings were members of the state. Definitions of the "state" are contested, and here I use a conventional definition where the state is the organized political community under one government. In the case of the ROK, I argue that the primary organizational instrument for facilitating the sustained policies and practice of mass-murder was the National Security State. Specifically this refers to the coercive apparatus of the southern system, in particular the security forces, paramilitary organizations, the legal edifice, and their ideological function in the nascent regime. Concerning the use of hate propaganda, it is clear that binary discourses of exclusion helped legitimate and propel the liquidation of the South Korean political left. This, I argue, was rooted in the ideology of anticommunism—a political identity that was partially forged in the context of civil war, national division, and state consolidation. There is almost universal agreement amongst scholars of mass violence that politicized vocabularies which focus on purity and contamination are ubiquitous in episodes of the organized eradication of a national, ethnic, racial, or political "Other". In the case of the South Korean right's ideology of anticommunism, we find frequent use of nomenclatures such as "ppalgaengi" ("commie", or "red), "Pulsun Puncha" ("impure person"), or "P'okto" ("rioter"). These not only functioned as dehumanizing slurs, but were reified into legal and ontological categories within the National Security State. For those caught within this ideologized political taxonomy, they were subjected to a form of "necropolitics", one in which the supreme exercise
of state sovereignty was the power to adjudicate and administer death.\(^\text{18}\) Closely related to this, the ethos of anticommunism also constituted a semiotic script for demarcating the lines of inclusion and exclusion within the Korean nation (minjok). Indeed, to the authors of these massacres, they were not merely wiping out a potential threat, but were shaping the character of the Korean nation by eliminating a group of people who could never be a part of it. Pak Myŏng-lim has argued that at the root of the Korean civil war lay two competing claims to authentic Korean nationhood.\(^\text{19}\) This led to a particularly grim paradox through which large swaths of Koreans were excluded from what it meant to be a "Korean". In his analysis of totalitarianism's logic of suspicion and murder, Jacques Semlin captures the terror of this predicament:

The potential 'traitor' will, by definition, be the one who, while a member of 'us', seeks to conceal his dissension. Even as a member of the 'people', he turns out to be an 'enemy of the people'. He may have the same appearance, the same face, and the same blood as 'us'. But he does not want to be part of 'us'. The imaginary dynamic then becomes something altogether different...it is constructed on the basis of a the recognition of a fundamental similarity but one that turns into betrayal...The violence that can result from such a split can only be horrific. It can go from ostracism to imprisonment, even elimination, of 'traitors'.\(^\text{20}\)

The fraternal bloodletting of the Korean War tragically replicated this logic.

Turning to Harff's third criteria for politicide, that government repression must be greatly disproportionate to that of the opposition, the matter is more contested. In the initial phases of

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the Cheju revolt, guerrillas scored important victories against the police and local rightists, while revolutionary slogans demanding purging of government officials, the removal of the American Occupation, and the reconstitution of the "People's Committees" (see chapter one) were frequent. Meanwhile, the National Guidance League killings transpired in the initial months of the Korean War when the Korean People's Army (inmin'gun) advanced southward. Furthermore, there is evidence which implicates members of the National Guidance League's involvement in the North Korean 1950 summer occupation, the resurrection of "People's Committees", and acts of retaliation against police and other rightists. Finally, the Kŏch'ang massacre occurred in a region which had been witness to ferocious internecine conflict since the fall of 1948. At different moments throughout this period, "Partisan" forces launched assaults on rightist positions, targeted political elites and their families, and in the case of the Yŏ-sun Incident (see chapter two), sought to facilitate the overthrow of the First Republic. The political "left", in other words, was not a mythical foe, and its political agency is crucial to understanding the shape and contours of the politicide. However, the violence from the state was disproportionate and often deliberately targeted unarmed civilians. Lastly, are the issues of duration and tacit consent from the state. In casting a wide-temporal net which includes the pre-war and war-time periods, we witness sustained practices that led to the indiscriminate massacre of civilians. We also chronicle the retention and promotion of key individuals implicated in the blood-letting during this period of war and mass violence. In many cases, political elites were directly involved. For example, Cho Pyŏng-ok, who was a member of the Korean Democratic Party and a respected politician in the eyes of American authorities, was a principle architect of the Cheju repression. Kim Ch'ang-nyong, a major figure for the facilitation of the National Guidance League atrocities, was widely known to be President Syngman Rhee's main enforcer within counter intelligence.
Other figures rose up through the ranks because of their capacity to hunt-down and kill "leftists"—both armed and unarmed, real and phantom. Song Yo-ch'an, the main figure behind the enforcement of Martial-Law on Cheju Island, became Martial Law commander in the summer of 1950. Kim Chong-wŏn, meanwhile, had a well-earned reputation for carrying out atrocities during the Yŏ-sun and subsequent guerrilla suppression campaigns and was promoted to the upper echelons of the military command structure in Kyŏngsang province in the fall of 1950. It was from this perch that he created the set of policies responsible for the series of atrocities that are now known as the Kŏch'ang Incident. These are just a few examples of a much wider causal connection between atrocities and career advancement. Tracking these developments is one of the major tasks of this dissertation.

I therefore define the series of massacres as a politicide. However, the following discussion is not an exercise in typology. Rather, as a work of history, it is an attempt to provide a detailed chronicle of the gestation and evolution of this political genocide throughout the years of Korea's civil war. The first chapter addresses the former of these through an analysis of the now-infamous Cheju Incident, which is estimated to have resulted in roughly 30,000 deaths. Once framed as a communist revolt, the Cheju Incident is now officially recognized as a series of massacres that transpired from March 1 1947 until September 21 1954—the bulk of which occurred during the winter of 1948-1949 at the hands of the ROK suppression forces. Here, I trace this process. Of particular historical significance is how the increasingly radicalized political struggle between rightist and leftist forces on the island from 1946 onwards laid the institutional, ideological, and psychological groundwork for the 1948-1949 slaughter. Specifically, I chronicle how local and mainland hard-line anticommunist elements—with tacit or explicit support from US Occupation authorities—mobilized the series of crises which
enveloped the island to advance their own power. This process of consolidation and ideological purification, I argue, contained the seeds of the politicidal violence that was coordinated by the state in the 1948-1949 winter.

A second theme of this chapter is on the relationship between the formation of the ROK National Security State and the tremendous violence which descended upon Cheju. I focus on the linkages between figures such as President Syngman Rhee, the security forces, and right-wing youth groups, demonstrating the co-dependent relationship between these groups that was forged through the crises of the 1948 fall, and role of this political axis in facilitating the mass violence on the island. Beyond this institutional analysis, I also examine discursive shifts that occurred throughout the incident and illustrate how the mobilization of dehumanizing rhetoric worked both as an instrument of ideological consolidation and a rationale for administering large-scale violence. In particular, I trace the rise and use of the above-mentioned terms, such as "ppalgaengi", "pulsun punja", and "p'oktoja", as semiotic makers for categorizing entire elements of the population along the lines of those who were worthy or unworthy of life. I argue that this process was mirrored by the erection of a diffuse and wide-ranging legal apparatus, which created legal, political, and existential categories along the lines of citizen and non-citizen. At the helm of this was the 1948 National Security Law. This gave the state extra-legal power and total juridical sovereignty over the lives the entire South Korean population.

My second chapter places Korean-war era massacres—specifically the National Guidance League Incident and the Kŏch'ang Incident—at the centre of the analysis. Following the method developed in chapter one, I argue that these massacres were embedded within a larger trajectory of politicidal violence waged by the National Security State against real and imagined leftists. Challenging contentions that the National Guidance League killings were a
consequence of panic on the part of ROK government in the context of rapid retreat and disintegration, I demonstrate these systematic killings were the outcome of a sustained policy of leftist liquidation. To buttress my claims, I analyze the personalities and ideological proclivities of the key agents involved in facilitating the killings. According to my research, there was a systematic and uniform nature to the National Guidance League killings, implemented by the National Security State. I draw out the parallels that existed between this incident and the previous episodes in Cheju. For example, I show that within the command structure of the National Guidance League, was a system for categorizing each member along a political continuum. These legal identities mirrored the discursive frameworks developed throughout the Cheju episode. Finally, I examine how the massacres played out at the village level. Whereas the dominant representation of the incident is that it was a largely arbitrary massacre of apolitical peasants, I offer a more complex picture. Though it is certainly true that the vast majority of victims posed no clear threat, I show that in many cases, these massacres were calculated political acts in which local rightists used the National Guidance League as instrument for surveillance and eventually wiped out rival individuals or clans that threatened their social position.

In the second section to this chapter, I turn my attention to the Kŏch’ang massacre and the broader dialectic of guerrilla warfare and counter insurgency that it coincided with. I depart from dominant theories from scholars and bereaved families which contend that this was an exceptional incident of a breakdown of soldier discipline, demonstrating this atrocity’s similarity with the collection of incidents at Cheju two years prior. I also show that the main instrument of the ROK counter-insurgency policy, the so-called "kyŏnbyŏk ch’ŏngya", was an extension of existing processes of social and political bifurcation within the ROK state structure. Firstly, the
strategy lent a spatial dimension to this logic, as it consisted of the division of entire villages or regions along the lines of friend/enemy. Secondly, it extended state sovereignty over the lives and deaths of civilians to the figure of the soldier, endowed with capacity to administer summary executions. These were not novel inventions as they had their origins on Cheju island. They therefore demonstrate a continuity within the counter-insurgency blueprint that had a sustained record of civilian slaughter.

In the second section of my dissertation, I move to a discussion of the post-politicidal aftermath of these atrocities and the uneven struggle between their perpetrators and survivors over their meaning from 1951-1961. As Ernesto Verdeja remarks, "Political violence does not end with death", as a common feature of mass murder is the attempt to destroy any memory of the victims "with the aim of eliminating them from history". Post-civil war South Korean society was consistent with this pattern, as the victorious forces of the political right sought to shape the meaning of the country's recent traumatic division and eviscerate the memory their own atrocities. Throughout the truncated nation's history, the dominant memory of the Korean conflict has been subsumed under the so-called "June 25" (yugio) narrative. Critical to note is that June 25 is not merely a date, but an epistemological field for demarcating the origins, character, and meaning of the conflict. As former TRCK member Kim Dong-Choon has noted, memorializing the conflict under the heading of “June 25”—the day that North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel—has allowed various South Korean governments to attribute all the war’s causalities and devastation to a “communist conspiracy”. According to Kim, “textbooks for primary and middle school students have been written, national holidays selected, museums

subsidized, and speeches of politicians delivered” to evoke North Korea’s historic guilt. The corollary of this is that the state-authorized violence against its own citizens has been obfuscated from dominant representations of the Korean War past.

However, the state is not the primary protagonist of these chapters. Indeed, if the first section is concerned with the actions of the perpetrators, the second is occupied with the agency, voices, and strategies of the victims. Enveloping the historical narrative is an analysis of how select communities of survivors and victims' families coped with the legacies of these massacres, and their post-war politicization. I argue that in the wake of these atrocities, victims' families were confronted with the spectre of "social death": the loss of identity within a set of social relationships and the nation state. Survivors of the politicide were subjected to this pernicious form of social exclusion, as the ideological project of anticommunism consolidated itself throughout South Korean society in the 1953-1960 years. Resistance from the families, however, was not completely absent throughout these years as families strove for ways to work through, transcend, or at least reconfigure this tragic condition. In chapter three, I track two realms where this was explicit: the legal and the spiritual. Concerning the former, I evaluate two trials: one in Kŏch'ang in 1951, and one in Kyŏngju in 1957. In both cases, families were able launch trials against certain individuals responsible for the deaths of their loved ones. While these trials brought ROK atrocities to light, they failed to dislodge the state's hegemony over their interpretation, as bereaved families were forced to prove their ideological purity in order to be deemed "innocent". Effectively, these trials worked to reproduce existing anticommmunist categories of social bifurcation.

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In the case of the latter, families were initially denied the right to properly bury or mourn the loss of relatives deemed to be "traitors" by the state. Because of the violent nature of these deaths, families were obligated to perform special mortuary rites for the souls of the victims or suffer the risk of malevolent hauntungs by vengeful or hungry ghosts. I argue that this opened up a major conflict over the rights of the state on the one hand, and the rights of kinship on the other. I conclude my chapter by analyzing two cases in which families were able to successfully petition the state for the right to properly bury and mourn their loved ones. Through these rituals, bereaved families were able to reclaim physical spaces where they could build mass graves and carve out alternative epistemologies for making sense the nation's recent traumatic past. This was done by reframing the "commie" victim in the image of the ideal Korean family archetype and through forging solidarity within the village community around the idea of collective bereavement. These acts of collective identity reformation anticipated more far-reaching challenges to the hegemony of the state in 1960-1961.

In the final chapter, I chronicle the events of the April 19 1960 student movement until the aftermath of the May 16, 1961 coup through the prism of the activities of Bereaved Family Associations (yujokhoe). In the wake of the collapse of the First Republic, a brief period of relative political liberty occurred. The yujokhoe petitioned the Chang Myŏn-led government for historical redress, the punishment of perpetrators, and the establishment of cemeteries and monuments honouring the loss of their relatives. While met with limited success, these efforts were ultimately laid to waste with the advent of the Park Chung-Hee military dictatorship. In the wake of the coup, Park ordered the mass arrest of these group's leaders and the systematic destruction of monuments and cemeteries dedicated to the victims.
I explore the possibilities, limitations, and ultimate tragedy of these endeavours. The first section evaluates the institutional successes and limitations of these efforts. I show that while the yujokhoe were successful in revealing a hidden history of systematic atrocity, these attempts at restitution were stymied by the still-present anticommunist National Security State. The second component of my section explores the ideological and discursive strategies employed by these survivors. Challenging existing accounts which downplay the politics of these groups, I demonstrate that the yujokhoe were conscious political actors, who through the revelation of their silenced history of atrocity, sought to challenge the entire ideological legitimacy of the First Republic and the state's official version of the Korean war. I argue that this was accomplished through three interrelated rhetorical strategies. Firstly, following from the alternative imaginings conceived at the grave sites in 1950s Korea, families utilized memorial services and petitions to confront the dehumanizing rhetoric of the previous decade. Here, victims were for the first time publically portrayed as the wandering spirits of innocent victims slaughtered by security forces. Secondly, these groups positioned their personal histories of trauma within a larger debate over the future destiny of the Korean nation. Within this narrative, the victims were conceived as martyrs for a future democratic and unified nation, while the agents of their destruction were portrayed as "betrayers" of the "minjok". Finally, though offering a potent critique of the state, the yujokhoe worked within the ideological confines of anticommunism. My story concludes with an account of the mass arrest and torture of their leadership, and the destruction of the various mass graves and monuments erected to honour victims of state violence. Through this analysis, I show that the new military regime continued to operate within the same politicidal logic of the First Republic—creating absolute categories between citizen and non-citizen and deeming traitorous subjects as unworthy of mourning.
This following dissertation is indebted to and builds upon a growing body of literature that investigates the social and cultural facets of the so-called "Cold War". Conventionally understood as a super-power rivalry between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, the "Cold War" has been dubbed by conservative scholar John Lewis Gaddis as a "Long Peace"—a period of "stability" in the international system in which a third world war was avoided. More specific to studies of the Korean War, William Stueck has argued that the Korean conflict played a crucial role in solidifying this system as it served as a substitute for World War Three. On these grounds, Stueck contends that it was a "necessary war" because the US/UN intervention imposed clear limitations upon Joseph Stalin's ostensibly aggressive interventions. More recent scholarship has challenged these elite-focused, Euro-centric paradigms. A diverse cohort of thinkers has sought to dislodge the notion that Cold War history can be understood principally as a global, geopolitical, and ideological confrontation between the United States and Soviet Union. Masuda Hajimu has observed that "the actual divides of the Cold War existed not necessarily between Eastern and Western camps but within each society". According to Hajimu, "ordinary people were hardly passive in terms of the practice of Cold War politics", and more recent work has sought to examine people's experiences and memories of the conflict at the local level. More germane to the present discussion, scholars have explicated the tortuous dynamics between mass violence, memory, and the emerging bipolar order. As anthropologist Heonik Kwon notes, the global Cold War was experienced by many decolonizing states in the form of mass death and a subsequent “political displacement of memories“ by the

political order's stifling bipolar logic. Likewise, the Taiwanese intellectual Chen Kuan-Hsing perceptively observes that “the effects of the Cold War have become embedded in local history” and inscribed into the East Asian peoples’ “national, family, and personal histories.” To Chen, the effects of the war are so potent that they are mediated through the bodies of its subjects. Korea’s status as a living monument to the Cold War’s deformities renders it fertile ground for navigating these tragic complexities. By exploring the inherent political, social, and psychological dimensions of a history of systematic politicidal violence, this project provides an illustration of the peninsula’s capacity to illuminate deeper scholarly and global concerns.

Finally, and related to the above, this dissertation contributes to a broader shift in Korean War historiography. Once dominated by American-centric geopolitical concerns, Korean War scholarship has broadened its spatial and intellectual parameters to include questions of nationalism, state building, communal violence, social history, state massacres, and individual and collective memory. Significant to my present purpose has been an effort to probe the linkages between the nation’s traumatic history of violence and its ongoing geopolitical and societal divisions, while exploring the political, ideological, ethical, and mnemonic implications of this unending dialectic—a task at which South Korean intellectuals have been at the forefront.

this discussion. Author Ruti G. Teitel posits that transitional periods are ones in which a clear shift of political orders towards greater liberalization is at stake. The quest for justice is central to these periods, as societies strive for novel political and normative frameworks to transcend previous eras of darkness. Closely related to this is the role of history. In times of political transition, previous epistemic "truth regimes" regarding a nations' past are frayed and actors compete—however problematically—to forge a novel historical consensus appropriate to the society's future political development. Narratives of romantic redemption proliferate, as those victimized by previous regimes emplot their sufferings within a broader national narrative of overcoming and recuperation.30

Unsurprisingly, therefore, South Korea’s post-1987 democratic transition was accompanied by legal and epistemic struggles pertaining to the nation’s recent traumatic past. In this climate, bereaved families, civil society groups, and activists sought not only restitution and the restoration of honour, but also a revaluation of, and admission into, dominant national narratives. As anthropologist Linda Lewis’s research attests, this process was most thorough in the case of the 1980 Kwangju massacre, where an incident once officially portrayed as a Communist insurrection was reframed and co-opted by the state as a catalyst for the nation’s painful democratic march.31 Though less romantic in tone, activists petitioning for restitution regarding pre-Korean War and Korean War-era massacres adopted the discursive forms of transitional justice. Groups such as the Kŏch’ang Incident Bereaved Families Association (Kŏch’ang Sakkŏn Hŭisaengja Yujokhoe) and the Provincial 4.3 Committee launched investigations, held

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demonstrations, and petitioned governments for legal recognition—activities that culminated, respectively, in the 1996 Special Measures Act on the Restoration of the Honor of Those People Involved in the Kŏch’ang Incident (Kŏch’ang Sakkŏn túng Kwalyŏnja ŭi Myŏngyehoebok e kwanhan T’ŭkpyŏljoch’ibŏp) and the 2000 Special Act on the Fact-Finding Investigation into the April 3 Cheju Incident Victims and the Restoration of their Honour (Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Kyumyŏng mit Hŭisaengja Myŏngyehoebok e kwanhan T’ŭkpyŏlbŏp). These acts helped spur the eventual creation of the 2005 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Korea (TRCK), the principle vehicle for exposing the National Guidance League killings to the public.

A subset of recent Korean War scholars have been engaged in this process. Indeed, intellectuals such as Kim Dong-Choon and Jung Byung-Joon played active roles in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, as Korean scholars Chŏng Ho-gi and Han Sŏng-hun have demonstrated, in South Korea there have been severe limitations in relying on this legalistic strategy to institute broader changes in social consciousness—limitations that also apply to historical analysis. These include the major time lapse between these incidents and the establishment of the subsequent truth commissions, the continuing social and political power of anticommunist conservatives, fissures within the aggrieved victims’ communities, lack of punishments for the perpetrators, a shortage of financial restitution for the victims, a dearth of official documents, and a lack of subpoena power for the commissions to obtain documents or testimonies from government security institutions. The cumulative result has been a large gap between the number of official victims tallied and the number estimated to have been killed in this time period. Beyond these issues, Han and Chŏng point out, there are epistemological contradictions within the logic of transitional justice itself. Han, for example, notes that the notion of “reconciliation,” which is premised on moving beyond a painful past, mitigates
punishment for perpetrators, therefore stymieing a proper acknowledgment of the past. Chŏng, meanwhile, raises a more profound problem, one with which my own work engages. The various commissions’ focus on a specific legalistic category of institutionalized “victimhood” has effectively excluded larger causal questions concerning these massacres, such as the legacies of the Japanese colonial era, national division, anticomunist ideology, exclusionary state policies, and their politicized afterlives. The social “truth” produced by these endeavors, therefore, has been radically circumscribed. This dissertation is consequently an attempt to excavate these largely unexplored chasms of the Korean War past.

Though thus far the discussion has focused on the analytic and historiographical contributions of this dissertation, we should remind ourselves that violence is not an abstract concept for those subjected to it. Rather, it is a lived reality which has a concrete history. Thus, a persistent preoccupation of the following pages is to register and communicate this tumultuous past to the reader. For individuals caught up in the pitiless vortex of the southern state’s politicide, its horrors were experienced on a narrower and more vivid scale than what can possibly be captured by our analytical frame. At various points of the piece, therefore, I juxtapose the detached optic of the scholarly gaze with the voices of the victims themselves. Revealed in these accounts is a savage history of intimate violence waged upon the lives and bodies of its targets. At its most visceral level, it is a tale of anguished voices, pulverized bodies, and the precariousness of life. It is also a story of the aftermath of these atrocities experienced in the forms of hauntings, resentment, and repressed yearnings for a most just post-politicidal

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settlement. It is a lived-history, potently stored in the survivors' senses: One in which the sounds of gun fire, the putrid stench of death, and image after image of loved ones' deaths afflict survivors' consciousnesses. Our story begins with a brutal assault against a mostly unarmed island population and ends with the destruction and desecration of victims' graves throughout the nation. It is therefore a bleak history—at times relentlessly so. But for many of the families cast asunder by the tempest of the peninsula's still-unresolved national division, resistance, if ultimately impotent, was never void of purpose. In their efforts to sustain their dignity, redeem old wounds, and appease the spirits of the afflicted, surviving families were obligated to sift through an opaque past—one which paradoxically still contains the capacity to illuminate nagging questions regarding the nation's political present. This dissertation is therefore a modest effort at recuperation, however problematic that notion may be. In begins on the isolated region of Cheju-do.
Chapter One: The Cheju Incident and the Origins of the Anticommmunist Leviathan

During the Second World War, at the age of eighteen, Cheju resident Kim Sang-hyo was drafted into the Japanese army. Kim found aspects of the situation "embarrassing" and witnessed much "immoral behaviour" from his countrymen. Following Korea's "liberation" from Japan, Kim made his way back to his home village of Sŏnhŭl-ri, located in the mountainous regions north-east of Cheju City. Like many Koreans returning home, Kim thought that with his country liberated he could live an honourable and decent life.

Kim's dreams failed to come to fruition. As he describes, the first seven months of his life back at home were ones of deprivation. Rice shortages afflicted the entire village, causing Kim to reminisce that conditions in his hometown under the American occupation were "wretched". More ominous was a growing friction between the residents and security forces—particularly the police and newly arrived right-wing youth groups. In Kim's recollection, these tensions had their roots in the behaviour of particular individuals during the colonial period. For example, during this period, the relationship between the local military and the villagers was quite tranquil and this pattern continued into the early post-liberation period. However, the situation between the majority of the villagers on the one hand, and a growing alliance of police, the anticommmunist Northwest Youth Association (Sŏbuk Ch'ŏngnyŏndan, hereafter NWYA), and locals who had exploited their positions within the Japanese colonial structures for their own wealth on the other, was rapidly deteriorating. According to Kim, the central figure at the fulcrum of these problems was a man simply identified as "Bu". In 1942, "Bu" received exclusive permission from the Japanese authorities to cut the forests surrounding Sŏnhŭl-ri for
his lumber operations on a five year contract. Three years into the agreement, liberation occurred and villagers agreed that the lease was no longer valid. "Bu" insisted on maintaining the lease, and conscripted the local security forces into protecting the claim, leading villagers in turn to launch sporadic disturbances against the police and NWYA.

In December of 1948, the situation escalated, radically altering Kim's life. Suppression forces brought in by the central government entered Sŏnhŭl-ri, taking the side of the police and youth groups. Accused of being communist sympathizers, ninety four villagers who had hid in a cave were slaughtered. Two days later, another seventy were rounded up and executed by machine gun fire. Though he managed to initially survive by hiding, Kim was eventually surrounded and captured by counter-insurgency forces. Kim was then taken to a nearby make-shift prison where he was repeatedly tortured and interrogated under the watch of a local military commander, judge, investigator, and lawyer. Kim recalls over a hundred names being called out at once, uniformly being accused by the judge and prosecutor of crimes already determined by the decree of regiment soldiers. Convicted on the grounds of fleeing and hiding from soldiers—and therefore guilty of having communist sympathies—Kim received a fifteen year prison term and was transferred to a mainland prison in Taegu.

Over five decades after the fact, Kim regards the extent of the beatings and torture that he received as "beyond words". Prison guards would routinely enter the cell, divide the prisoners up like "infants", and strike them with firewood. Prisoners were also forced to beg for meals and were ordered to give the names of other suspected "leftists". Kim was personally slandered for being from Cheju, as guards would often taunt to him that people from Cheju were worse then thieves. Kim's recollections of his time at Taegu indicate a situation that was truly Kafkaesque,
as neither he nor the majority of those serving time were aware of the crime that they had committed. They were simply regarded as "thought criminals".

Shortly after the North Korean army (Inmin'gun) invaded the south on June 25 1950, Kim was transferred to a prison in Pusan. Twenty of his fellow Cheju residents were sent with him, while countless others did not make the journey southward and were executed by security forces. In Pusan, Kim shared a cell with those allegedly involved in the Yŏ-sun mutiny. Prisoners in Pusan were screened and processed, and those with suspicious backgrounds were discreetly executed. For those who survived, such as Kim, life in Pusan prison was arguably more brutal than the previous time in Taegu. Cells were overcrowded to such a degree that prisoners were often piled on top of each other and could not sleep. Meanwhile, food shortages were so severe that he could "barely survive", and those who become ill were simply taken out by prison guards and shot. Kim vividly recalls living his day to day life in Pusan under the constant spectre of death. Screams of agony and fear emitting from other cells were the norm, and the sounds of locks being opened and handcuffs being fastened signaled to Kim that another prisoner was being taken away to be executed. During these bleak moments, Kim would lament the loss of his once-uncomplicated life in his hometown.

Miraculously, Kim managed to achieve a stay of execution, and was transferred to Masan prison. On the road between Pusan and Masan, Kim witnessed the execution of a number of people from the Kangwŏn and Chŏlla provinces who had allegedly cooperated with the People's Liberation Army. In Masan, Kim's sentence was mitigated to seven and a half years and he was finally able to give himself a bath. The food situation also improved, at least initially. Kim recalls that prisoners were ranked by class, and those deemed to be the least guilty of thought crimes were given greater rations. However, guards would regularly extort prisoners out of their
meals. After a while, Kim fell ill from repeatedly eating rancid food and was forced to live off of boiled soup. In August 1954, one month prior to the official end of hostilities in Cheju, Kim was released on bail after contracting tuberculosis. Kim was then placed under the "guilt by association system" (yŏnjwaje), preventing him and his relatives from social advancement. To this day, Kim insists that he had no ideology, did not know any of the "rioters" in Cheju, and still has no idea what a communist is.\textsuperscript{33}

It would be a misnomer to claim that Kim Sang-hyo's traumatic experiences are representative of an entire generation's encounter with Korea's period of liberation, division, and civil war. But for hundreds of thousands of real and alleged "leftists" caught on the losing side of an internecine struggle on the southern half of the peninsula, Kim's tale—equal parts remarkable and grim—is hardly atypical. Indeed, Kim's odyssey of misfortune, state brutality, and survival raises a number of questions and themes which animate the first two chapters of this treatise. How did residual resentments from the colonial era contribute to the early formation of Korea's civil war? In what ways did local grievances intersect with early cold war ideology at the level of the village? What systematic processes went into the mass killings of thousands of South Korean civilians, and in what ways were they connected to the development of the First Republic? What is the concrete history of ideological polarization in Korea, and how did the mass politicization of the peninsula's population impact ordinary Koreans?

This chapter explores these questions principally through an analysis of the so-called "Cheju Incident" (Cheju Sakkŏn). The scale of the atrocity, the fissures that its historical legacy has caused throughout Cheju society, and the still-murky documentary record have worked

\textsuperscript{33} Cheju-do ūi 4.3 T'ŭkpyŏl Wiwŏnhoe [Cheju-do Assembly 4.3 Special Committee], Cheju 4.3 P'ihae Chosa Pogosŏ: 2-ch'a [Report on the Damages of 4.3: Second Edition], (Cheju City: Cheju-do Assembly 4.3 Special Committee 2000), 433.
together to produce a profound ambivalence as to how to properly define the event. Indeed, at
the Cheju 4.3 Peace Park (Cheju 4.3 Pyŏnghwa Kongwŏn)—a site dedicated to the remembrance
of the Cheju Incident's victims—the series of violent catastrophes that plagued the island are
eulogized with a coffin-shaped tomb, tersely titled "unnamed monument". Intentionally left
undefined, the episode is presented as a gaping wound that resists definition or closure.
Throughout the truncated nation's short history, however, various actors have staked claims on
the event's meaning. American and ROK officials at the time labeled it a "riot" (p'oktong) or
"uprising" (ponggi). Deeply saturated in Cold War anticommunist and Confucian ideology,
primary culpability was attributed to communist agitators working on behalf of the North Korean
"puppet regime". In the 1980s "Minjung" intellectuals and student activists reconceived the
Cheju incident as a "struggle" (hangjaeng). According to these radicals, the violent resistance
waged by rebels against agents of the state on Cheju island were legitimate nationalist responses
to a emerging political order which threatened to permanently divide the peninsula. Rather than
rioters, the island's residents were labeled as authentic "patriots", carrying the torch of Korean
autonomous development against the forces of imperialism.34

These same activists played an integral role in leading democratic uprisings that
eventually led to a free election in 1987. In post-authoritarian South Korea (1987-present), a
narrative of "state-violence" began to emerge. Forged in the context of bereaved families
petitioning the state for recognition of atrocities committed against them or their families, this
interpretation focuses on the role that the state played in facilitating the mass violence inflicted
upon the island's population. Though not entirely abandoned, Cold War categories and the
dynamics of revolution and counter-revolution were somewhat downplayed in favour of a

34 Nam Hee Lee, The Making of the Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea,
(Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2007), 59-61
narrative which focused on the suffering of civilians and the culpability of the First Republic. The "state violence" interpretation also consists of a stronger regional dimension, as a critical aspect of the narrative is a story of the central state encroaching upon the political and cultural autonomy of an island population. Within this paradigm, the series of violent episodes on the island are enveloped under the broad, and more neutral, nomenclature "incident".  

While there is no societal consensus as to how to collectively register the traumatic events on Cheju island, this latter explanation has now achieved official recognition. For example, the government-sanctioned Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report states that “the April 3 Incident was a series of incidents in which thousands of islanders were killed as a result of clashes between armed civilian groups and government forces . . . over the period from March 1, 1947 . . . until September 21, 1954”. However, as Kim Min-hwan has noted, the "riot interpretation" (poktongnon) continues to function as an "absent presence" by cryptically structuring the narrative of state violence. This is most evident through the removal of communist activists from the category of legitimate victims.

This chapter works both within and through the categories developed by these rival interpretations. However, I am not concerned with adjudicating the relative merits of each schematic. Nor do I attempt to impose a unified interpretation or political verdict on a complex and calamitous history that deservedly remains unresolved. Rather, I trace the 4.3 Incident's

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35 See, for example, Kim Hun Joon, *The Massacres at Mt Halla: Sixty Years of Truth Seeking in South Korea*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2014). Though the term sakkŏn is typically translated into English as “incident,” there is no direct English equivalent of the word. Its literal meaning is “an event that causes social problems and attracts social attention.”

36 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Kyumyŏng mit Hŭisaengja Myŏngye Hoebok Wiwŏnhoe, [The National Committee For the Investigation of the Truth about the Cheju 4.3 Incident], *Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pogosŏ*, [Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report]. (Sŏul: Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Kyumyŏng mit Hŭisaengja Myŏngye Hoebok Wiwŏnhoe), 536. Hereafter, *Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ*.

historical significance within a larger historical narrative of politicidal violence waged by the emerging ROK state against populations suspected of being "leftist" in the context of a pitiless civil war. Bruce Cumings has argued that Cheju was “a magnifying glass, a microscope on the politics of the postwar Korea”. I narrow down and elaborate upon this sentiment by principally focusing on the island's tormented post-war history through the optic of mass violence. At the heart of this chapter is the 1948-1949 winter suppression campaign—a grim period of Korean history in which the sporadic, low-density, violence of the early post-liberation era morphed into a sustained and organized politicidal atrocity. How post-war Cheju society arrived at this point, the relationship between this violence and the broader politics of Korea's national division, and the institutional context of this mass bloodletting are the main themes of this section.

As our introductory chapter, the primary analytic task is to identify and trace the foundational relationship between the Cheju Incident and the larger phenomenon of politicidal violence that anchors this dissertation. At the most rudimentary level, I argue that the violence at Cheju was both constituted by, and constitutive of, larger patterns of mass violence organized by the embryonic ROK National Security State. The consolidation of rightist anticommunist power was integral to this dynamic, as were the great left/right conflagrations of the era which played out at the local, national, and global level in the emerging Cold War. Specifically, I examine the necessary relationship between the violence which befell Cheju island and the dynamics of state creation in South Korea. I demonstrate that the correlative relationship between rightist consolidation and the mass violence at Cheju was congruent—operating within a traceable historical logic. Structurally, this chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, I trace the early left/right divisions through Korea in general, and Cheju in particular. Here, the principle

focus will be how these national and local cleavages both evolved, and degenerated, into a zero-sum conflict over political hegemony on the island. This process crystallized with the violent guerrilla leftist uprisings on April 3, 1948 from which the series of incidents draw their namesake. The middle section chronicles the series of atrocities which plagued the island community throughout the winter suppression campaign. While not discounting leftist atrocities, I make clear the centrality of rightist state violence during this period. Here, the analytic recedes in favour of a narrative explicitly dedicated to bearing witness to these grim episodes of individual and collective horror. In our final section, the tone shifts back towards the analytic, as I explicate the constellation of interests, the institutional make up, and ideological forces behind the spectacular violence. The purpose here is not only to provide an institutional template for understanding the logic behind the massacres at Cheju, but also to draw out themes that will continue to be developed throughout the remainder of the discussion. Although the focus here is primarily on state organization and structure, the reader should caution that the mass mobilization of instrumental violence and terror drew from an amalgam of cleavages within Korean society. These were organically rooted in the resentments of the colonial past and cultivated in the harvest of nation's deformed process of liberation. We begin, then, with a brief summary of the peninsula's post-liberation promises and contradictions.
Prelude to a Massacre

The politics of the Korean Peninsula throughout 1945-1948 are complex in the extreme. Internally, liberation from Japan brought with it a set of competing demands, including cries for independence, calls for retribution against the Japanese and noted "collaborators" (*ch’inilp’a*), and the organization of political parties. Added to this were a host of regional and social contradictions, which brought with them conflicts between landlords and peasants, security forces and labour organizations, and newly formed youth groups reflecting various ideologies and interests of the indigenous "left" and "right" and everything in between. Hovering over all of this was an East Asia radically in flux, as the vacuum released by the collapse of the Japanese empire, the newly-forming global Cold War, and the Chinese revolutionary civil war all shaped and threatened to engulf the peninsula and its inhabitants.

Familiarity with this historical terrain is indispensible towards an understanding of the politics of peninsular division, civil war, and mass organized violence. However, the scholarly literature on these topics is well developed and is makes little sense to re-hash it here.\(^{39}\) Of fundamental concern are the left/right cleavages that percolated throughout South Korean society, as these became the principle energies animating the waves of state terror which began on Cheju. They were also the primary barometer utilized by the state and its agents for implementing the series of atrocities chronicled shortly. Though imprecise, both Koreans and Americans at the

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time explicitly thought in these terms, as the dominant currents of the era's politics pivoted along this axis.

What can be said of the left/right schism in post-liberation Korea and the agents, ideas, and goals behind these groups? While faction ridden, syncretic, and highly volatile, we may identify a coherent set of positions, tactics, and institutions within each camp. Leftist politics during this period principally focused on issues such as land reform, and were organized through labour unions, peasant unions, and left-wing youth groups. In the early years, the locus of leftist power south of the 38th parallel were the so-called "People's Committees" (*Inmin Wiwŏnhoe*). An outgrowth of the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (established in the immediate aftermath of Japan's surrender in 1945), the People's Committees had divisions in every province and remained most formidable in the areas furthest removed from the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK). People's Committees were typically supplemented by peasant unions (*nongmin chohap*), workers' unions (*nodong chohap*), and various student and women's groups. Indigenous communists likely played an integral role in the organization of these committees, but these efforts were supplemented by students, demobilized soldiers, local village elites, and, in some cases, landlords. The official platforms of these groups hued closely to the broader politics of the embryonic left as they demanded that all Japanese property be reverted to Koreans, that all land and factories be owned by Korean workers and farmers, and that all men and woman have equal rights.

The ideology of the early post-liberation "right" is more idiosyncratic and difficult to discern as it reflected a constellation of forces aligned against the political program of the left. Made from a collection of former landlords, anti-Japanese nationalists, politicians in the Korean Democratic Party, diasporic independence activists (such as Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku),
Christians, and accused former "collaborators", this motley set of interests constituted the original gel that would eventually solidify into the hard-line anticommunist form that was central to the episodes of mass extermination. Its power was derived from its influence within the nation's coercive institutions—particularly the police—and the dominant belief within USAMGIK that they were the only force capable of preventing a pro-Soviet communist takeover of Korea.

From this skeletal sketch of the basic internal political divisions within South Korea's "liberation space" (haebang konggŏn), three related points are worth emphasizing. The first is that the socio/political make up of these two ideological movements rendered them mutually exclusive. Indeed, the fundamental left/right schism in post-liberation Korea fit the parameters of Carl Schmitt's classic "friend/enemy" distinction, whereby the exercise of one group's political power necessary implies the obliteration of the other.40 Secondly, as the precise ideological, institutional, or even geographic makeup of the Korean state had yet to be authored, the left/struggle was therefore over the nature of the state itself, rather than power within it. This added a potent urgency to the bubbling internecine conflict. Finally, the relative weakness of domestic support for the political right, coupled with the broad organizational basis of the left, meant that the American occupation and the rightist forces it backed were forced to engage in a counter-revolutionary politics whose principle tool was repression.

Though geographically isolated and culturally distinct from mainland Korea, these schisms were well-pronounced on Cheju Island. At the Cheju 4.3 Peace Park, there is an iconic image depicting the island's "liberation" from the Japanese by the American army. Whereas in Seoul, US soldiers replaced the Japanese Imperial Flag with the Korean flag (T’aegŭki), the

image at the museum shows the American flag being hoisted as the flag of the Japanese empire is lowered. Displayed in the museum for maximum symbolic effect, the image foreshadows the quasi-colonial status that the island was brought under in the post-liberation years. However, in the immediate period of emancipation, the American occupation's attitude towards the island was principally one of disinterest and neglect. Because of the island's isolation, its lack of significant transportation networks, and the shortage of reliable communication between it and the mainland, early US strategy towards Cheju was principally concerned with decommissioning the remaining Japanese military and repatriating them back home. In the long-term, this neglect led to a degree of autonomy and rootedness of the island's People's Committee, that since its inception in October of 1945, was the dominant organized political force on the island. Though in its initial stages the local People's Committee included a broad spectrum of left and right groupings, by November of 1945, power was firmly in the hands of the left led by O Tae-chin. While the US was initially indulgent of these elements, Cheju's 1946 establishment as a separate province meant that the island's integration into central state was predicated on the removal of these committees. Added to this, US occupation policy was hardened by the 1946 peasant uprisings in the Cholla and Kyongsang Provinces, which the US occupation blamed almost entirely on the agitations of the South Korean Worker's Party's (SKWP) leader, Pak Hŏn-yŏng. Finally, in the wake of the violent repression of these protests, and the banning of SKWP, the left became more radical. Cumulatively, these local and national developments led to a condition on Cheju island in which the US sought to claw power away from a deeply rooted and increasingly militant left, through the introduction of equally uncompromising rightist elements, often imported from the mainland.

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These dynamics were the critical background for the March 1, 1947 protests that are officially recognized as the beginning of the Cheju Incident. The events of March 1, 1947 have been described as the "fuse that sparked" the series of incidents which rocked the island. The political grievances which drove the protesters into the streets, and the subsequent responses from South Korean security forces and the US Occupation, reveal much about the evolving political dynamics in the southern portion of the peninsula. Occasionally dubbed the Sam-Il (3.1) demonstrations, on the anniversary date of the March 1, 1919 independence protests against the Japanese colonial state, an estimated 20,000 islanders took to the city square of Cheju City. Numerous smaller demonstrations were likewise held throughout the island on the same day. The local authorities had approved of the initial ceremonies, but banned any street parades or protests. However, at 2pm, a large protest broke out, leading the police to hastily respond with violence. Order was temporarily restored, but at a steep cost: six civilians dead at the hands of security forces and eight seriously injured, including a small child. No arms were found amongst the arrested demonstrators, and a report later revealed that all of the victims were spectators.42

As the protests and the ensuing deaths are considered to be the origins of the Cheju conflagrations, it is worth considering the underlying factors which lay behind them. Local factors were critical in motivating islanders into the streets. The island's recent integration into the proto-South Korean state as a separate province led to an increased tax burden, and, over three years, a five-fold increase in the police force on the island. As many officers served under the Japanese colonial regime or came from the mainland, this was a major source of resentment. Further, the island had recently undergone a significant cholera outbreak, while chronic rice

shortages led to increased frustration with the authorities at a time when power was being wrested away from indigenous politicians who enjoyed legitimacy.\textsuperscript{43}

However, when we turn our attention to specific sources of violence, explicitly political factors appear to have been most salient. With its power slowly being curtailed at both the local and national level, the left sought to utilize the upcoming anniversary of the March Independence Movement as opportunity to critique the American occupation and its allies. On Cheju, the "Cheju Committee for Preparation for the Ceremony for the 3.1 Protest" was formed in February, 1947. Though its membership list officially included figures from the local police and other rightist politicians, it is not clear that these men either consented to this or were even present at any of the meetings.\textsuperscript{44} At its helm was An Se-hun, a former member of the People's Committee and current Chair of the Cheju Chapter of the South Korean Workers Party. The SKWP mobilized the existing infrastructure of the People's Committees and their subgroups for a coordinated peaceful protest on March 1 throughout the island. At the ceremony in downtown Cheju City, An gave the opening speech and called for power to be handed back to the People's Committee, a withdrawal of the arrest warrant for Pak Hŏn-yŏng, and to abolish all administrative bodies from the Japanese colonial era. Through the ceremony and subsequent protests, additional speeches called for the punishment of traitors, land reform, the overthrow of the Interim Legislative Assembly, and adherence to the principals of the Moscow Agreement.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{43} Kim Hun Joon, \textit{The Massacres at Mt Halla}, 28.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{The Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report}, 124.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 127. Worked out at the Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow (December 16-27 1945), the Moscow Agreement reflected a compromise between the American and Soviet sides over the future of Korea. The Americans preferred a joint trusteeship of five years, but the Soviet's countered with an agreed proposal to establish a Provisional government in Korea. The issue of trusteeship was potentially explosive to Koreas, so it was intentionally downplayed in the actual text. See, Bruce Cumings, \textit{The Origins of the Korean War Volume. 1: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes}, 1945-1947. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 215-222; Millet, \textit{The War for Korea}, 68-69.
The protests were therefore a challenge to the authority of the emerging state itself, and their violent and seemingly exaggerated response must be viewed in this context.

Recognition of this political challenge from the left, however, does not imply its culpability. Nor should one fall into the trap that the patterns of state on society violence portended on March 1, 1947 were simply examples of the state over-reacting to legitimate political threats. Rather, in recognizing the clear political stakes involved in this confrontation, we are able to identify the buds of a tortuous dialectic in which forces from the left and right respectively cultivated and sought to shape the dynamics of an escalating series of crises on the island. Rightist forces' clear and often successful efforts at manipulating these tensions to their own political advantage were on display in the wake of the March 10, 1947 general strike launched on the island. Principally organized by the Cheju chapter of the SKWP, the protests involved the participation of 95% of the island's public workers (41,211 in total). Though organized by the left, the concrete demands of the protest were launched against the specific behaviour of the police during the March 1 demonstrations: 1. Disarm the police and cease torture; 2. Execute the officers responsible for killing civilians; 3. Force the police officers to resign; 4. Guarantee the livelihoods of the families of the victims and the injured; 5. Cease the arrest of "patriotic figures"; and 6. Purge pro-Japanese policemen.\(^46\) This narrow focus on justice and the hated police lent the protests a great deal of support throughout the island.

Initial estimates from US intelligence reported that the majority of the island's population sympathized with the strike regardless of their political persuasions. As they noted, "the basic reason for the strike appears to be a hatred of the police because of the police action during the

\(^{46}\) *The Cheju 4.3 Investigation Report*, 132.
March 1 riot. However, it is clear that the crisis brought forth by the strike presented forces from the right and its sympathetic patrons within the US occupation an opportunity. The key figure within the Korean security forces was Cho Pyŏng-ok. A respected opponent of Japanese colonialism, Cho's American education and strong anticommunist credentials enamoured him within the American military government. As one of the founding members of the Korean Democratic Party, Cho was one of the most powerful figures of the political right during the post-liberation years. Cho was head of the national police between October 1945 until August 1948, and was instrumental in the creation of the national police and the rehabilitation of the careers of a number of suspected collaborators. Like Syngman Rhee, Cho preferred working with Koreans who had served under Japan to any accommodation with the communists. Beyond his role in the police, Cho was a calculating politician and ideological warrior who sought to defang the lingering anti-Japanese sentiment within Korea which threatened the legitimacy of his embryonic national police force. When asked about his use of so-called "pro-Japanese" elements in the police force, Cho responded that "the majority of these people cannot be considered as 'pro-Japanese' police officers; instead they were merely 'pro-job' people." In his 1946 repression of the Autumn Harvest Uprisings, Cho showed a penchant for utilizing mass repression as an instrument of political conquest, as he used the crisis to arrest the leaders of local unions and People's Committees in advance of "their actual criminal activities." As we shall see, this proclivity towards pre-emptive arrest and the criminalization of thought were major features of the violent decimation of the political left and civilians caught within this political program.

49 Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 1, 371.
When Cho arrived on the island on March 14 to restore order, he brought with him this ideological baggage and his acumen for manipulating political developments. While mentioning nothing about the police's actions, Cho promised to "get to the roots" of the crisis by cramping down on the "deceptive propaganda" and "destructive plots" of the leftists. In Cho's reading, the events of March 1 were simply a "riot", and he told the people of Cheju that "frequent rioting damages the country's dignity and credibility by projecting and image to the world of the Korean people as unable to sustain political and moral autonomy". Privately, Cho was more direct. According to one witness, when Cho met with striking employees from the provincial office, he told them that the people of Cheju had "rebellious ideas" and that he would wipe out the island's population "if they got in the way of the foundation of the Korean nation". Not to be outdone, Deputy Head of Police, Ch'oe Kyŏng-jin, remarked that Cheju was an "island full of reds" with 90% of population "tinged with left-wing ideology". In both Cho and Ch'oe's statements, we may readily detect an emerging totalizing discourse that contained within it a justification for mass organized killing in the name of order, ideological harmony, and nationhood.

Following on the heels of the general strike, an investigation team led by American Colonel James Casteel arrived on the island. Despite the cogent analysis from US intelligence mentioned above, the team determined that the protests and subsequent general strike were 70% to blame on communist agitators from the SKWP, who had successfully manipulated the sentiments of an island population with leftist leanings. Reaction, not reform, therefore, was deemed the appropriate course of action. With the ideological and institutional backing of the US, the far-right was able to further assert itself in the wake of the general strike's aftermath. The most tangible expression of this was in the police force. As 20% of the police force

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50 Cheju 4.3 Investigation Report, 149.
51 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 121.
participated in the strike, local police were viewed with some suspicion. Cho seized the opportunity to purge the department and brought in 421 new officers with rightist inclinations from the mainland. Added to this was the entrance of numerous right-wing paramilitary youth groups. The most significant of these was the Northwest Youth Association. Inaugurated on November 30, 1946 in the aftermath of the August uprisings, the NWYA has been described by Cumings as an "obnoxious...but classic example of terrorist reaction, pure and simple". Composed primarily of young, unemployed, and dispossessed refugees from the northern regime's ideological cleansing campaigns, the NWYA's trajectory in many ways paralleled the broader developments within Cheju Island from peaceful protests, to counter repression, to armed resistance, to mass civilian slaughter. At its height, it had 300,000 enlisted members throughout the country. The head of the local Cheju chapter of the NWYA referred to Cheju as "little Moscow", and prior to April 1948, 700 of these young men had entered the island.

Though ostensibly a bottom-up paramilitary group, the NWYA was almost immediately brought into the Cheju security structure by the recently installed Governor Yu Hae-chin. From the North Chŏlla province, Yu arrived in Cheju promising to take a middle path between the extreme left and the extreme right camps. However, as US officials revealed, Yu was unambiguously an "ultra rightist" with strong "dictatorial tendencies". Upon his arrival, Yu labeled all opposition groups as communists and banned their meetings. Further, Yu hired the NWYA as his own personal security service. The relationship between Yu and the NWYA was mutually beneficial, if also detrimental to the political cohesion of the island. In exchange

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53 *Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ*, 143; See also, Hq. USAFIK, *G-2 Periodic Report*, No. 693, November 25, 1947.

54 *Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ*, 266, 172.
for security, Yu provided the largely unemployed youth with a modest sense of means and
purpose, and also ensured that police turned a blind eye to the various acts of violence and
torture committed by NWYA members against suspected leftists. Despite their reputation as
unruly thugs, the NWYA demonstrated a capacity to think strategically, and its leadership was
clearly aware of the unfolding dynamics on the peninsula. At mass rallies held throughout the
island in 1947, members would carry pictures of Rhee, wave the South Korean Flag (T'aegŭkki),
and carry English language signs denouncing local and international communism. This
sensitivity would pay dividends as the NWYA was later integrated into the major suppression
forces in Cheju island, launched in October of the following year.\textsuperscript{55}

From March of 1947, therefore, we may identify the basic architecture which went into
the slaughter of the following year: increased rightist consolidation of the repressive and
administrative structures of government, a climate of sharpening ideological polarization that
dovetailed mainland/islander friction, and an ambivalent US occupation that both aided and
indulged the extreme right. On the heels of the general strike, the assault against the left from
the right was swift and uncompromising. Two days after Cho's arrival, over 200 individuals had
been arrested and interrogated. Incarceration increased steadily: within one month, 500 people
had been jailed, and by April 3 1948, Cheju's political prisoner population swelled to roughly
2,500. Conditions within these prisons were characteristically brutal. A US report cited one
example where 35 malnourished prisoners were crowded into an 11 square meter cell, while
stories of torture also circulated. Indeed, according to recently declassified documents and
witness testimonies, prior to the 1948 spring assault, three cases of death by torture transpired.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} It should also be noted that it was common practice amongst all rightist groups to nominate either Syngman Rhee
or Kim Ku as their leaders. Kim Bong-Jin, "Paramilitary Politics", 6.
\textsuperscript{56} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 146, 152, 534
Most troubling in these accounts is the fact that the torture appears to have not been principally instrumental. Rather, sadism played a major role, indicating that the political conflict was becoming increasingly pathologized into one in which extermination and the mutilation of the flesh were normalized forms of political warfare. For example, one of the deceased, Pak Hang-ku was found dead in the street after being shot to death. The autopsy revealed that prior to the shooting, he was beaten with clubs and stones to within inches of his life. In another instance, a charismatic leftist named Yang Ŭn-ha was killed by police while in custody. A witness testified that Yang had been subjected to repeated beatings and electric wire torture before eventually being hung by the ceiling by his hair and having his testicles repeatedly punctured with awls (a long and pointed spike, often used in woodworking). The latter treatment was identified as his cause of death. Unsurprisingly, both of these instances involved recently conscripted police officers from the NWYA.\(^57\)

Beyond the jail cells and their attendant torture facilities, the teetering political conflict ominously began to take on a communal form, with entire villages sucked into the maelstrom. Typically, these involved conflicts between police and rightists, on the one hand, and leftists and their families, on the other. US intelligence sources at the time attributed this to the ignorance of the Cheju residents, which made them susceptible to the propaganda of both sides of the conflict.\(^58\) However, the sources of these antagonisms were far more insidious, as they were often the consequence of local forces’ conscious political agency. Such was the case of the Pukch’on-ri, a north-eastern lying hamlet that in the winter of 1949 was the scene of a brutal atrocity. In August, 1947, youths in Pukch’on began to distribute leaflets denouncing governor

\(^{57}\) Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 149-152.
\(^{58}\) Headquarters of the United States Armed Forces in Korea (USAFIK), G-2 Weekly Summary, No. 123, January 23, 1948.
Yu. Deemed an "illegal" act, police began to approach the youths, and when the assailants ran, fired upon them. Three were injured, including a teenage girl. When they heard of the incident, a mob of villagers swarmed two of the police officers that remained behind and beat them severely. The villagers then marched for 3 kilometers to the local police station in Hamdŏk and began to loudly protest. Police responded by mounting a machine gun on the top of the building and firing blanks into the crowd to disperse them. In the incident's aftermath, forty villagers were arrested.\(^5\)

As ideological polarization increased, trust within the island's network of villagers began to erode. The result was that from the spring of 1947 until the following year, the island remained an uneasy smoldering cauldron of animosities. The largely dysfunctional central government in Seoul demanded grain quotas from officials in Cheju. This further antagonized relations between Governor Yu and the island's residents as the hated police and right-wing youth groups were used to coerce reluctant farmers. Leftists, in turn, sought to mobilize these resentments and calls for the assassination of Yu were ubiquitous. The US sent a fact finding mission by Colonel Lawrence A. Nelson. After a three month audit (November 1947-February 1948), Nelson recommended that Yu be removed from power. However, no changes were made.\(^6\)

For their part, moderates were squeezed between the radical camps and were hamstrung by a US military government that in the emerging Cold War order prized anticommunist political stability. Meanwhile, the island's institutional politics gravitated toward further rightist consolidation and repression, even as the sentiments of the residents failed to drift in this direction. The cumulative consequence of all these developments was that the island's political conflict began to resemble one between state and society.

\(^5\) Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 129.
\(^6\) Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 136-139.
Events reached a critical boiling point on April 3, 1948, when a combined force of 350 local and mainland guerrillas from the SKWP launched coordinated night time raids on twelve police stations and various right-wing group offices. Once the dust had settled, three rebels, four police officers, and twelve right-wing youths had been killed. Fighting was initially concentrated along the north coast, but rapidly spread throughout the island with only the east coast spared by May. Interpretations about the meaning of the coordinated guerrilla attacks have varied widely. At the time, the dominant viewpoint within the US Military Government was that the attacks were part of a broader strategy by the SKWP, working at the behest of the northern regime to disrupt the separate elections planned for the south on May 10th of the same year. Indeed, this version of events remains dominant within conservative circles in South Korea, and is still part of the standard narrative of the events leading up the war represented in South Korean War Memorial Complex. In English language scholarship, its most recent advocate has been Shelia Jager. In her much-praised volume, *Brothers at War: The Unending Conflict in Korea*, Jager attributes culpability to SKWP leader Pak Hŏn-yŏng and North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung. According to Jager, the April 3 uprisings were a part of Kim Il-Sung’s "dream of reuniting the peninsula under his rule by provoking a general uprising in the South". In Jager's reading, the attacks were an extension of Pak's orders (derived from Kim) that the local branches of the SKWP undermine the May 10 elections. Though Pak advocated non-violent approaches, events on the island evolved beyond his control.61

This view, of course, is overly simplistic. Undoubtedly, the timing of the attacks was related to upcoming elections and the general orders from the SKWP that these be undermined. However, the local context was most salient and the available evidence now suggests that the 4.3

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uprising was principally a defensive maneuver. Firstly, we must consider the increasingly weakened state of the radical left. Regardless of its negative effects on Cheju society, Yu's campaign of repression was paying dividends. Indeed, by the spring of 1948, much of the SKWP in Cheju's senior leadership had been arrested or was in hiding. The most dramatic example of this was when the Cheju police revealed the entire structure of the SKWP on the island, leading to the mass arrest of its leaders. Though they were eventually released by the US authorities, this event dramatically revealed the power imbalance between the left and right. As one internal source from the SKWP revealed, the Cheju chapter felt that it was faced with two alternative courses: "just sitting and waiting for death...or standing up and fighting". The upcoming elections for a separate southern state threatened to escalate this condition, though they also presented the SKWP with an opportunity to reclaim some of its lost power and legitimacy. Such was the rationale of the young radical, Kim Tal-sam, who became the most influential figure within the Cheju branch and spearheaded the coordinated series of attacks. The initial targets of the guerrilla's raids reflected the strategic logic of Kim and the increasingly radicalized left. According to the memoirs of surviving guerrillas, police and the NWYA were chosen because a) they were the most hated on the island, and b) the US military and constabulary had more advanced weaponry and therefore could not be defeated. Further, in avoiding the constabulary, Kim and his guerrillas were hoping to assault the power base of the far-right, while leaving negotiations open with other groups. It was a maneuver which from its inception was condemned to failure.

On the surface level, the coordinated attacks appear to have opened up a genuine debate within the American and Korean camps, pitting hardliners against moderates. Representing the

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62 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 157.
63 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 155-165.
former, was Governor Yu and police Director Cho Pyŏng-ok, who both saw the incident as an attempt at a communist takeover and an opportunity to crush the left. To Cho, the uprising was uncomplicated—a "felonious conspiracy" initiated by agents of global communism. Concerning the moderate camp, one finds the Ninth Regiment commander of the constabulary Kim Ik-ryŏl, who argued that Cheju's problems stemmed primarily from the excesses of the police force. The Americans, for their part, were primarily concerned with fulfilling their objective of holding a peaceful election the following month, and therefore tended to side with the hardliners over the long run. The hardliners were ultimately able to win this conflict by creating facts on the ground. Cho, for example, immediately requested that an additional 500 members of the NWYA be sent to the island, despite their well-documented record of atrocities. Members of the police force, likewise sought to draw the up-to-this-point politically neutral Constabulary into the conflict by lighting villages on fire and blaming them on leftists.64

By early May, these tactics had accomplished their goal as the forces for moderation were purged or silenced. The crucial moment came on May 1 with the arson incident at Ora-ri. On April 28, Kim Ik-ryŏl met with guerrilla leader Kim Tal-sam to negotiate conditions for a possible cease-fire on the condition of future amnesty for the guerrillas. The Regiment commander had the blessing of Lieutenant Colonial John S Mansfield who at the time oversaw the Ninth regiment's activities on the island. According to Kim's Ik-yrŏl's memoirs, he and the guerrilla leader agreed to stop the fighting within 72 hours and Mansfield was pleased with the negotiations.65 Whatever changes that may have existed for a peaceful resolution were obliterated by the events at Ora. The events at Ora give us insight into how the violence of the political conflict played out at the micro-level and how the Korean right manipulated these

64 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 190.
65 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 198.
events for their own political purposes. Already a site of intense local conflict, Ora exploded into chaos on May 1 after police officers and members of the NWYA went on a rampage throughout the village in search of leftist elements that they suspected of being involved in a previous kidnapping and murder of a female relative of some of their members. Twelve houses were burned in the carnage. Leftists responded by chasing the youths away and killing one of their mothers. Later that day, police arrived and opened fire on the village, killing another woman.\footnote{Cheju 4.3 Sakkôn Chinsang Chosa Pokosô, 199.} On May 5, at a major meeting attended by Yu, Kim Ik-ryŏl, Cho, and US Commander Major William F. Dean, Kim brought forth evidence that the arson incident was carried out by right-wing youths. Cho pounced on Kim's words, and accused him of being a "Communist" and suggested that the leader of the Ninth Regiment was the son of communist who was secretly controlling Kim. The two men immediately came to blows. A day later, Kim was sacked and replaced by Pak Ching-yŏng, a commander more sympathetic to the policy of hard-line suppression. Figures from the hard-right now sat at the helm of the Governorship, the Police force, and the Constabulary and had the full blessing of US officials. For its part, the US used stock footage from the burning of Ora-ri in a movie title "May day on Cheju-do" to demonstrate the depravity of communist forces.\footnote{Merril, "The Cheju-do Rebellion," 179.}

With a more compliant commander in charge of the Constabulary, the basic architecture for a unified campaign of suppression was now in place. Headed by the Constabulary, the spring and summer suppression campaign consisted of three stages. In the first stage, strategic hamlets were created along the island's coastline, with villages conscripted into local right-wing militias (addressed below), for the purposes of fortifying walls and night time patrol. Police and right-wing youth were then given carte blanche to carryout village-by-village searches, and apprehend
suspected leftists. Entire villages were burned and remaining residents were relocated to ad-hoc screening centres along the coastline. Finally, security forces interrogated suspects as a means of weeding out suspicious elements. Though policies of mass executions had not yet taken root, in the indiscriminate round-up of suspects, the mass mobilization for the war effort of entire communities, the incorporation of politicized methods of quarantine, and the full-scale arson of whole villages, we may readily identify many of the core features that went into the politicidal violence of the following winter.

Despite these methods (or perhaps partially because of them), things did not initially go well for the government forces. Disorder was so rampant throughout the island that elections could only be carried out in one of 3 of Cheju's constituencies. A second attempt was made on June 23, with equally dismal results. The morale of the suppression forces was equally problematic. On May 20 a large segment of the constabulary mutinied, providing guerrilla forces with additional manpower and badly needed weaponry. Insubordination was also a major issue, felt most dramatically when Pak Ching-yŏng was found in his office murdered by an underling. Conditions within the police force were even worse, where low morale and lack of security plagued its members throughout the spring and summer. The guerrillas, meanwhile, controlled the majority of the inland territory, and were assumed to have the sympathies of the many of the islanders.

It was the civilians, however, who received the brunt of the suffering. From May to September of the same year, the official number of victims is tallied at 1012 (roughly 169 per month), though the actual amount is likely double to that. The physical insecurity of the islanders was paralleled by shortages of food and basic supplies, a problem which Cheju already

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68 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 534.
suffered from prior to the open guerrilla warfare. Less tangible, but equally deleterious, was a progressive polarization and disruption of social life within Cheju's tightly-knit village communities. This issue was most acutely expressed within Cheju's youth. Caught between the guerrillas, police, and right-wing youth groups, the island's young population were alternatively coveted as potential recruits or targets of suspicion, and often both. Making matters worse were the increasing numbers of NWYA members who roamed the villages searching for food and shelter. In extreme cases, members were reported to have taken unmarried young women and forced them into arranged marriages as a means of securing property.  

Suppression forces and agents of the right were the most indiscriminate in their methods. However, without question, the rebels contributed to the culture of terror that was slowly enveloping the island. Though limiting their attacks primarily to the police and youth groups, the families of these groups were also frequently targeted. These assaults on family members were often responsible for initiating a pitiless cycle of revenge taking that reached its apogee during the winter suppression campaign. In other cases, they were already instances of revenge taken by the rebels who had had their own family members massacred by rightists. Indeed, it was not uncommon during this phase of the guerrilla warfare for entire villages to wiped out by the guerrillas or suppression forces—including the women and children. The creeping and totalizing nature of the violence in this epoch was paralleled by a rise of competing discourses from each camp. Each shared the common element of reducing large swaths of the island's population to objects of political warfare in a grand narrative of national destiny. Prior to his assassination, Pak stated that it was "fine if 300,000 Cheju people were victimized", if it meant

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69 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 371.
70 Jager, Brothers at War, 51.
preserving the nation's integrity. Leftists likewise claimed that in killing rightists, they were fighting for all 30 million people of Korea.\textsuperscript{71}

Fighting raged throughout the spring and summer, taking a brief lull during the wet season. Guerrilla attacks resumed in September and on October 11, and the now three-month old South Korean government proposed a heightened campaign of suppression. Six days later, a Naval blockade enveloped Cheju's coast, hermeneutically sealing off the island. In addition, the newly appointed head of the Cheju constabulary, Song Yo-ch' an announced that anyone found more than 5 km from the shoreline would be shot, thus creating a free fire zone through much of the island. Two days later, the Fourteenth regiment of the constabulary stationed at the southern mainland city of Yŏsu rebelled in open mutiny after refusing orders to quell the island unrest. The rebellion spread to the nearby city of Sunch'ŏn, and was thoroughly squashed within a week. The surviving members of the uprising fled to the Chiri mountains, setting up a guerrilla base camp, which is critical to understanding the nature of the massacre at Kŏch’ang. For now, however, it is imperative to note that with the bitterness of the Yŏsun rebellion now added to an already existent hard-line suppression policy, the basic seeds had been sown to cultivate a brutal civilian massacre.

\textsuperscript{71} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 218-219.
The Winter Slaughter

From mid-November 1948 through to March of the following year, a large-scale systematic civilian massacre was carried out throughout Cheju-do. Ostensibly launched as a major counter-insurgency operation in the context of a guerrilla war, it is now clear that what transpired over these five months was a one-sided, politicidal affair. Described at the time as a "program of mass slaughter" by a US official, and buried by the ROK for five decades, recent investigations suggest that the initial assessment was on the mark. A look at the statistics uncovered by the Committee for the Investigation of the Truth of the Cheju 4.3 Incident (Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Kyumyŏng mit Húisaengja Myŏngye Hoebok Wiwŏnhoe) confirm this verdict. Of the 14,024 official registered victims from the 4.3 Incident (the total number is estimated between 25,000-30,000), 60% transpired over this four and a half month period. Additionally, it is estimated roughly that 78% of the killings were committed by suppression forces (police, soldiers, and right-wing groups), 12% by the guerrillas, with the remaining percentage beyond verification. Furthermore, the winter suppression campaign brought with it a new unpleasant reality: Prior to this period, young males were the principal targets of the counter-insurgency campaigns. However, from November onwards, this was no longer the case. Indeed, between November and February, over 75% of all deaths of those over the age of 61 and under the age of 15 are alleged to have happened. Finally, in terms of the military struggle, the

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72 Headquarters of the United States Armed Forces in Korea, G-2 Periodic Report, No. 1097, April 1, 1949.
73 The official number of deaths is likely significantly lower than the actual number. The most agreed upon statistic is that between 25,000 and 30,000 Islanders perished during the violence (roughly 10% of the Island). This number was arrived at by calculating Cheju's population before and after the series of incidents. See, Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 363-367.
74 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 371.
75 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 293, 373.
data gives a strong impression of a grossly uneven encounter. In a December report of the Ninth Regiment's battle engagements, for example, 431 guerrillas were reported killed and 5,719 jailed, compared with only 3 dead and 8 injured from the government forces.\textsuperscript{76} Police forces, meanwhile, only lost 17 men during these months.\textsuperscript{77} This discrepancy takes on more significance when we consider the fact that throughout the whole period of the guerrilla uprising, the total number of armed-guerrillas is estimated to have never exceeded 500 people at one time.\textsuperscript{78} In other words, a high percentage of unarmed civilians became legitimate targets of the suppression forces, and this partially explains the degree of so-called successes in the military arena by government forces.

It is therefore sufficient to note that a persuasive case can be made that a central facet of the Cheju Incident was a series of civilian massacres, primarily directed and carried out by the Republic of Korea (though still under American operational control), over the winter months. From November through March, much of Cheju-do resembled an inferno of grisly violence; its citizens often indiscriminately shot to death and entire villages burned to the ground. The mountain villages (chungsan maũl) beyond the five kilometer boundary suffered the worst. But the state-sanctioned mayhem engulfed the whole circumference of Cheju, morphing the island into a horizontally experienced episode of mass death, which would shape the islanders' personal and collective sense of identity for many decades. It is beyond the scale of our present analysis to provide an exhaustive summary of each respective incident of mass killing. At any rate, thanks to the painstaking work of activists, research institutes, and truth commissions, a rich documentary record of these calamities is now available in the public record. However, a few

\textsuperscript{76} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 295.  
\textsuperscript{77} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 373.  
\textsuperscript{78} The Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report, 220
examples will give the reader insight into their brutality, the nature of the perpetrators and the victims, and the broader socio-historical forces at work behind these episodes of violence.

The primary purpose here is to lay bare the grim and sustained assault on human life that was waged during these months. The scale, duration, and brutality of these episodes demands that we elevate the violence to the centre of the narrative. And yet, throughout these descriptions, we must be attentive to the central political struggle that these were constitutive of. Equal parts instrumental and pathological; chaotic, yet flowing from an organizational logic. These atrocities were the savage culmination of the build up of conflicting political energies flowing through liberation period. We traced their gestation in the previous section and now we chronicle their manifestation.

In some cases, the overtly instrumental nature of the killings can be readily identified. In late December 1948, for example, widespread torture and summary executions were carried out at the Cheju Agriculture School (Nongŏp Hakkyo) located near Cheju City. Just as the political developments on Cheju may be read as a microcosm for the larger conflicts of the post-liberation era, Cheju Agriculture School symbolized the shifting fortunes and fates of the island's political left. Initially this institution was a major educational facility organizational space for the left. As early as 1946, young students organized against the American occupation from the campus and were involved in the planning of the March 1 demonstrations. When the general strike broke out, all its teachers and students were reported to have participated. In the wake of the 4.3 uprisings, the school was converted by suppression forces into a detention centre for public officials and other outlaws from the island. Described as a "waiting room for death", lawyers, judicial officials, educators, government workers, newspaper editors, and business leaders swelled its ranks in purgatorial limbo. Here, common phenomenon were beatings and torture. The school
grounds were converted into a series of prison camps for weeding out and eviscerating what remained of the oppositions' elite. Though the majority of those stationed at this converted prison survived, summary executions were routine. In one confirmed case, six prisoners were taken on December 23 by members of Ninth Regiment to a nearby milling house and shot at point blank. Afterwards, the bodies were burnt to ashes.\textsuperscript{79} This incident hues closely to the broader established pattern whereby political murder stood as the culmination of an ongoing civil war over the control of the Korean state and nation.

More common, however, were episodes where ordinary villagers were suspected by security forces of sympathizing with communist guerrillas and accordingly punished. An archetypal example of this pattern transpired in the western lying mountain village of Haga-ri, where on the early morning of November 13, 1948, soldiers from the Ninth Regiment entered the village, burned it to the ground, and executed 24 civilians on suspicion of providing information to communist forces. The deceased ages ranged from 18 to 71 and included a pregnant woman—hardly a cohort of battle-hardened guerrillas. According to witness testimonies, similar incidents transpired within different divisions of the Ninth regiment on the same day throughout seven geographically dispersed villages, thus indicating that this was a standard practice, rather than an isolated case of collapsed military discipline.\textsuperscript{80} Similar occurrences transpired with a depressing monotony. In the eastern lying mountain village of Kyorae-ri, fourteen individuals ranged from 3 to 60 years of age were gunned down as fellow villagers were compelled to watch helplessly.\textsuperscript{81} Evidence suggests that all of the victims were "old and weak" (noyakcha). Again, on December 15 of the same year, all the 18 to 40 year males and females from the southern

\textsuperscript{79} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 381-382.
\textsuperscript{80} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 387-388.
\textsuperscript{81} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 388.
mountain village of T'san-ri were segregated and killed over the course of two days, morphing T'san-ri literally into a "village without young people". In other instances, entire villages, and the genealogy and kinship networks they embodied, simply ceased to exist. On November 13, the village of Wondong was razed, and burned to ashes, with all of its residents massacred. Officially, thirty-four perished, the youngest of which was four years old. All of the bodies were burnt to a crisp afterwards. Korean military logs indicate that not a single rebel was found.

The most common massacres ranged from thirty to fifty people at a time, but there are forty-five recorded cases of one-hundred or more deaths, the largest of which happened in the early winter of 1949 in Pukch'on-ri. As the reader may recall, Pukch'on was already the site of police on villager violence prior to the 4.3 uprisings. On May 10, 1948, locals from Pukch'on also sabotaged the polling stations in protest of the countries' separate elections. Meanwhile, in November 1948, two members of the constabulary were gunned down by rebels near the village. It was in this context that what is now regarded as the "most tragic" of Cheju's series of episodes transpired. The "Pukch'on Incident" occurred on January 17 1949 after soldiers from the Second Regiment were ambushed on their way to Hamdŏk village by guerrillas stationed at a mountain pass surrounding Pukch'on. Two soldiers lost their lives in the attack and in retaliation, forces from the Second Regiment went on a major killing spree. Armed soldiers entered the village in the early morning and ordered roughly 1,000 villagers into a school and proceeded to torch over four hundred houses as the locals "trembled in fear". Thereafter at 5pm, the villagers were lined up, separated by class and gender, and over three hundred were mowed down by gun fire. From this point on, Pukch'on become known as the "village of no men" (munamch'on) and in a 1954 census it was revealed that its female to male ratio was 3:1. One witness remarked that the

82 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 389.
83 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 391.
villagers were used as target practice as many of the division's soldiers had yet to experience real life combat. As an unfortunate epilogue to this incident, on the following day, an estimated one hundred people along the road between Pukch'on-ri and Hamdŏk were executed as part of a "red family hunting mission" (ppalgaengi kajok saekch'ul chakchŏn).\(^84\)

Here, it must be emphasized that the damage wrought by these miserable experiences cannot be isolated merely to the deceased individuals and their families. Rather, it is essential to grasp that the incidences of mass killing throughout these months on Cheju became parasitically woven into the day to day community practices of the locals and structured the relations between the island population and the state in a detrimental manner. If this last point is somewhat opaque, it may be clarified through a few concrete examples. In the bitterly contested village of Samyang-ri, the village's young males were generally kept hidden from security forces out of fear of reprisals as the town had a past history of supporting guerrillas. However, with the passing of the town's eldest female on October 27 1948, young people were expected to participate in the funeral rituals in accordance with local customs. Aware of the dilemma that this posed, police used the funeral as an opportunity to seize young suspected guerrilla sympathizers and executed them within a week. Shortly after, the remaining family members were put under control of Minbodan and Teahan Youth Group members, who regulated their lives, beat and harassed them, and committed proxy killings (taesal) of suspected guerrillas escapees' families (top'i kajok).\(^85\) Similarly, in early December in the mountain village of Hagwi-ri, police used a routine winter supplies (such as rabbits and wood) mobilization order to round up suspected youth and executed ten young males. Closely mirroring the incident at Sangyang-ri, family members of those who escaped were left at the mercy of police and NWYA

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\(^84\) *Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ*, 413-414.
\(^85\) *Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ*, 416. These two right-wing youth groups are described below.
members who committed a massacre of thirty-six unarmed civilians.\footnote{Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 393-394.} In other instances, those who voluntarily surrendered to security forces under the assumption that they would receive amnesty were taken to prisons, tortured, and executed—a phenomenon which tragically foreshadowed the National Guidance League killings.\footnote{Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 400-402.}

Young men were the central antagonists throughout this sordid affair. However, one rebel cryptically noted that it was the "women who suffered the most" from the suppression forces.\footnote{John Merrill, "The Cheju-do Rebellion", 168.} One may reasonably dispute this verdict, but it is clear that the women of Cheju were subjected to unique forms of deprivations. Indeed, though there are no clear statistics on the matter, testimonies from victims and soldiers reveal the existence of wide-spread rape. The principal culprits were the roaming gangs of youth associated with the NWYA. Seething with hatred for the island's "reds" and consumed with primal sexual lust, these young men were notorious for raping the unmarried women of families suspected of harbouring rebel sympathies. The conquest of women's bodies was also incentivized by state policies. For example, NWYA members (who often came from families that were dispossessed of their land in the north) were offered land that they seized from rebels or by marrying into Cheju society. A consequence of this was that many NWYA members forced the widows of rebels into marriages as a means of social advancement. Though not officially sanctioned, the mass-rape was often transpired in state institutions and was organized by agents within the security apparatus. In the jail cells and interrogations rooms, women were intermittently beaten, stripped naked, raped, and hung upside down. Tak Sŏng-nok, a military captain and key member of the intelligence staff, was one of the worst offenders. A drug addict with psychopathic tendencies, Tak was notorious for
kidnapping women, forcing them into marriage, and then killing them when he lost interest. Under his watch, countless women were raped with impunity. Chief of the NWYA, Kim Chae-nŭng, likewise organized and participated in the torture and rape of woman. Women that were deemed to be non-compliant by Kim were stripped naked and forced to stand atop guard towers all night through the freezing cold. In other cases, woman's bodies were subjected to brutal, instrumental, and symbolic violence. In Hagwi-ri a pregnant woman was tied to a tree and repeatedly stabbed with swords as punishment for allegedly holding the seeds of a communist.

Throughout these ordeals, the women of Cheju were not simply passive victims. When rightists were captured and sentenced to death by revolutionary "people's trials", women were often given the honour of executing their tormentors. In instances where the men fled to the mountains, women courageously prevented the complete decimation of their family lineages. Brave mothers threw their bodies in front of machine gun fire destined for their children who had been condemned to death by proxy. In one case, a grandmother saved the life of her grandson by wrapping him up in a blanket and hiding him in a bamboo grove before she collapsed and died from bullet wounds. Some young women simply refused to give in. A woman from Kŭmdŏk-ri was subjected to daily rounds of electric wire torture and told that the electrocutions would end if she would consent to sex with the police, but refused. However, the police and youth groups developed vicious—albeit ingenious—methods for blunting female resistance and fraying their solidarity. For example, the above woman was eventually dragged in front of the village and the police demanded that the rest of the women step forward and stab her to death unless they

89 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 382-383.
90 Ibid, 386.
91 Ibid, 394.
93 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 380.
wanted to suffer a similar fate. Eventually, one woman complied. The balance of terror irreversibly stacked against them, the integrity of Cheju's matrifocal society was one of the many casualties of the right's politicidal campaign.94

This abridged narrative of unrestrained violence could go on and on ad nauseam. We close with the voices of witnesses and survivors. Six decades after the fact, these testimonies serve as our most intimate resource for accessing the grim realities of the Cheju politicide as it played out on the bodies, minds, and memories of its victims. Survivor Ko Nam-bo recalls narrowly escaping execution by machine gun fire only to witness from afar his father and two brothers executed and lit on fire.95 An In-haeng vividly remembers the terror he felt as soldiers debated whether he and his fellow villagers should be executed by machine gun fire or swords. An silently wished for the latter option. An survived because his mother's body fell on top of him and shielded him: "My mother fell down, holding me in her breast tightly at the same time. The blood from my mother was all over my body. She shivered terribly. After the shooting, the police stabbed every one because they believed there could be survivors. However, I could avoid the sword because my mother lay on me."96 Oh Tae-kyŏng remembers being forced to applaud as members of his family and fellow villagers were massacred. According to Oh, "the most horrendous thing was to watch the crawling baby murdered" while rest of the villagers weirdly clapped their hands in unison.97 Song Ki-chŏng served in the Korean War and admits to killing many people. However, he claims that the atrocities carried out in Cheju "against unarmed civilians were the most horrible" he ever witnessed.98 Members of the security forces were not

94 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokošŏ, 480.
95 Ibid, 388.
96 Ibid, 394.
97 Ibid, 480.
98 Ibid, 408.
immune to the trauma. Senior police officer Kim Ho-kyŏm is still haunted by memories of sleepless nights as he was kept awake by the sounds of women being tortured and raped in interrogation rooms. Yang T'ae-pyŏng recalls the sickening spectacle of watching two young men who had hid in a cave having their heads repeatedly smashed against rocks. In Yang's words, "they were not human beings anymore". It is not clear from the testimony if he was referring to the victims or the perpetrators.

State Creation, Rightist Consolidation, and the Sprawling Architecture of a Politicide

As the above examples and testimony attest, the violence which befell Cheju was principally experienced as a series of intimate and discreet episodes of individual murder. It is therefore unsurprising that recent research on the memories of its survivors demonstrates that victims associate their own personal trauma with the "4.3" nomenclature. However, beyond the deprivations of mere individuals lurked a broader and ongoing process of ideological consolidation, state identity formation, and the organization of the national security apparatus. In the first section I traced the fundamental political contest to which this was a part of, and how it played out in the local context of Cheju. In this final section, I analyze it from the macro-

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99 Ibid, 494.
100 Ibid, 408.
perspective. Here I outline the basic systematic features which formed the ideological matrix of the Republic of Korea's National Security State. Formed in the context of regime consolidation, crisis, and civil war, it is within this burgeoning coercive network that we find the agents, rationale, and set of policies that constituted the politicidal liquidation of the real and imagined South Korean left. This was a dynamic and unfolding process—one which both shaped, and was shaped by, the events on Cheju. Here I trace its initial growth.

The crucible of this trajectory was forged in the series of political crises engendered by the 1948 establishment of the ROK, led by the septuagenarian Syngman Rhee. Promulgated on August 15, 1948, the Republic of Korea rested on shaky foundations from its inception. Squeezed internally by both left and right-wing forces, and under intense external pressures, Rhee's first year in office was punctuated by a series of crises, all of which led back to a profound problem of credibility and legitimacy. A confidential report from the US' Foreign Service remarked at the time that the "record of tests and crises" posed "the question of the ultimate survival of the Government". However, though Rhee and his cohorts were faced with an acute challenge to the existence of the fledgling republic, they were also presented with an opportunity to crush the political left and cement anticommmunist power. The horrific events at Cheju were crucially interwoven within this larger political tapestry.

How did this transpire? On the external front, Rhee's inaugural year was haunted by the specter of an imminent American withdrawal of troops. Under pressure from Congress, a geopolitical strategy which favoured Europe to East Asia, and a desire not to get bogged down in a peninsula with little military significance in a hypothetical war with the Soviet Union, the Truman Administration's policy towards Korea geared towards a gradual withdrawal of its

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physical presence in the south. While hardly an American puppet, Rhee's complete dependence on US support during this period is beyond dispute, and a possible exit of American military support therefore portended an existential threat. Despite a series of delay tactics from Rhee's side (and the assistance of US Ambassador John Muccio), in December 1948 the US and USSR agreed to withdraw their troops by the end of the year, though the last of the American troops did not technically leave until June of the following year (500 "advisors" meanwhile remained).

However, the easing of the direct military footprint on Korea was not equivalent to a lack of commitment from the American side towards Korea in general. By 1947, American Cold War policy on the peninsula had consolidated around the establishment of a separate and viable southern state. South Korea’s importance was in part based on its imagined position as a potential source of raw materials and labour for the resuscitated Japanese economy in the newly emerging East Asian capitalist order framed by future Secretary of State George Marshall. More fundamental was Korea's symbolic position in the Cold War, which by 1947 was in its embryonic form. As a site where American and Soviet models competed along an artificial border, political success and the military viability of the southern state became critical tests for the credibility of the US as a global superpower.

From this vantage point, the US' decision to reduce its direct military commitment to Korea appears puzzling at first glance. However, in assessing US imperial policy, one must consider not only its goals, but also its methods. As Steven Lee has observed, in essence the US has operated as an "informal empire", one in which the power is devolved to compliant local elites. Here, the overarching goal is to share the burdens of the empire with the client regime. According to Lee, the basic thrust of the US' informal empire in East Asia was this: "the long

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103 Cheju 4.3 Sakkôn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 242.
104 Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, Volume. 2, 45-48
term object of the United States was to establish interdependent states in Korea, Vietnam, Japan, and elsewhere. Once this was done...the elements of coercion, force, or influence...could be removed”. Though ostensibly rooted in liberal/democratic ideals, in practice the results have often been illiberal and Syngman Rhee's ROK was no exception to this general pattern.  

It is doubtful that Rhee thought in such explicitly theoretical terms. However, key statements which emanated from Rhee's regime from the time of the Cheju uprising suggest that the consummate politician had a firm grasp of South Korea's place in the US' East Asian Cold War architecture and the symbolic significance of the events on Cheju as a barometer for gauging Rhee's utility within this emerging global order. In the midst of the brutal winter suppression campaign, Rhee remarked on January 21, 1949 that the "blackmail" being carried out on Cheju-do threatened to undermine the American commitment to his government, and therefore had to be crushed by the harshest means possible. Similarly, On May 10th of the same year, with the rebellion effectively quelled, Prime Minister Yi Pŏm-sŏk remarked that the significance to Cheju went beyond the survival of South Korea, and that the successful suppression campaign was a significant victory for all of East Asia in the struggle against communism. In other words, the suppression campaigns which necessarily culminated in civilian slaughter were an integral element of Rhee's calculated statecraft of positioning himself as a reliable stalwart in the US' global struggle against communism. Thus, there emerged a direct set of causal relationships linking the slaughter of innocents in Cheju and the American

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106 Pak Ch'ŏn-Sik, 4.3 ŭi Chinsil [The Truth of 4.3], (Cheju City: Cheju 4.3 Pyŏnghwa Cheatan [Cheju April 3 Peace Foundation] 2010), 18.
107 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 289.
liberal order of East Asia, with the fledgling ROK state as the key intermediary holding this horrific chain together.

On the domestic front, a similar trajectory emerged as Rhee was able to harness a potentially catastrophic political crisis to his maximum advantage. Rhee's dependence on an alliance between Japanese collaborators, landlords, and the tainted National Police left his government vulnerable to charges that it had a collaborationist taint. Abetted by the American occupation and the intellectual and physical infrastructure of the residual colonial state, throughout the 1945-1948 years, Rhee was able to weather this crisis, securing official control of the ROK by 1948 though a dubious election. However, with the inauguration of the ROK, power of legislation shifted from the USAMGIK to the National Assembly and Rhee consequently faced a new challenge from forces looking to settle old scores from the colonial era. The Government was threatened by the advent of the Special Committee for Investigating Anti-National Crimes (*Panminjok Haengwi Tŭkpyŏl Chosa Wiwŏnhoe*), a body inaugurated on September 22, 1948 with the specific mandate to punish collaborators. Armed with a set of independent prosecutors and the power to order arrests, the committee posed a ominous threat to two of Rhee's most important allies: the National Police and the Korean Democratic Party. Indeed, within its first year of existence, 688 people had been arrested, 37% of whom were police officers.¹⁰⁸

The political crisis surrounding the committee was tangibly connected to the concurrent events unfolding on Cheju. As previously mentioned, the animosities surrounding the reinstitution of colonial-era institutions and the members who served them were a major source

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of the initial unrest on Cheju. Meanwhile, Chief Inspector for the Special Investigation Squad on Cheju, Ch'oe Nam-pu, was later involved in an assassination plot against the committee's members. It is Rhee's specific response to this incident, however, that deserves attention here as it underscores the septuagenarian's ability to utilize the law and anticommunist ideology as a means for cementing his political coalitions, while nullifying the power of his adversaries.

Concerning the committee, for example, the response from the state was swift. On September 23, a mass rally titled "The Rally to Oppose Communism" was held in downtown Seoul to oppose the law. Spearheaded by Yi Chon-hyŏng, a man who hunted Korean resistance fighters under the Japanese colonial army, the rally undoubtedly carried Rhee's full blessing. Police bulletins declared that anyone who did not attend the rally was a communist, and Yi boldly declared that "a collaborator is an anticommunist". With this, one can see a remarkable inversion taking hold: those who opposed colonialism became enemies of the nation, while those who had sided with the Japanese morphed into its protectors. Indeed, that such statements could be openly propagated in downtown Seoul three years after liberation demonstrates the degree to which anticommunism had surpassed anti-colonialism as the dominant nationalist discourse in South Korea. The state was crucial in authoring this shift. Within this climate, the Committee and its members' work was stymied as they faced constant harassment from police officers, intermittent beatings, and assassination attempts. The final blow to the Committee and the post-liberation politics that it represented was dealt on June 6, 1949, when Rhee secretly ordered a mob of an estimated 300 police and right-wing group members to ransack the Committee headquarters, beat its members, and destroy all of its legal documents. As the office was destroyed, the mob was

109 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 243-244.
heard chanting "crush the communist party's anti-National Committee". From this point onward, the Committee was a spent force.

The contest between the Committee and the regime was emblematic of a wider struggle over ideological hegemony. It was one that through their control of the executive and the coercive apparatus, Rhee and his partners emerged victorious. Indeed, with the creation of the southern system and its concomitant civil war, hard-line anticommunism became the dominant state ideology and rapidly washed over South Korean political society. Initially, this was articulated through the southern state's official ideology of Ilminchuŭi (One People Principal), though eventually a more general and pervasive anticommunism took sway. A syncretic pastiche of anticommunism, anti-capitalism, democracy, fascism, Confucian morality, and indigenous familialism, Ilminchuŭi was officially short-lived and had almost disappeared from government discourse by 1952. However, as the first official ideology of the embryonic state, residual elements of this discourse informed the general parameters of the southern state's still-existent hegemonic anticommunist ideology. For our present purposes, two related features of this ideology are worth emphasizing. The first was its statism. This tendency was well embodied by An Ho-sang's statement that Ilminchuŭi welded "nationalism and statism" (minjokchuŭi and kukkachuŭi). An was Ilminchuŭi's principal theoretician and the nation's first Minister of Education. He was also an overt fascist, and is rumoured to have been influenced by Nazism. Related to this was the institutionalization of an ideological discourse which paradoxically privileged unity, while simultaneously accelerated existing societal bifurcation.

Indeed, at his first address to the National Assembly on August 31, 1948, Rhee emphasized "national solidarity" (*minjok tangyŏl*). For men like Rhee, An, and the nation's first Prime Minister Yi Pom-sŏk, national solidarity was rooted in the Korean people's pure bloodline, which stretched back thousands of years. This notion of the unitary bloodline was incorporated into the concept of the modern nation state. According to An, "if parents, brothers, and sisters are one family, then compatriots with the same bloodline are the nation. If a household is the house of a family, then the state is the house of the nation."  

However, the emergence of two separate states and the full-blown civil war in the south revealed a clear contradiction, as the enemies of the nation state were Koreans. As a response, ideologists painted the communists as something other than Korean. For example, as Jerome De Witt has noted, in the wake of the Yŏsu rebellion An Ho-sang commissioned leading writers to "inform" the Korean population of the nature of the guerrilla war in the south. These writers described the communists in a beast-like manner, outside of the "real nature" of the Korean *minjok*, and therefore worthy of extermination. In this way, Ilminchŭui represented an extreme example of Benedict Anderson's insight that the modern nation presents itself as "simultaneously open and closed". This dichotomy rapidly gave rise to a series of euphemisms which spoke the language of purity and contamination. The polar opposite of the *minjok* became the "red" or "commie" (*ppalgaengi*). Meanwhile, the term "impure person" (*pulsun punja*) began to be used frequently by agents of the state to describe potential threats.

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113 Ou, "Homology Unleashed", 336.
114 Jerome De Wit, "The Representation of the Enemy in North and South Korean Literature from the Korean War", *Memory Studies*, 6(2): 147-149.
Thus, Ninth Regiment Commander Song Yo-ch'an announced that the October 17 1948 quarantine of Cheju Island was to "purge impure elements" from the island that tried to "violate national sovereignty". Yi Pŏm-sŏk privately remarked to American officials that the islanders were spiritually contaminated, and that the regime was "determined to exterminate them" if they refused to listen to the government's patriotic appeals. Buttressing this was a moralistic lexicon with Confucian overtones, which worked to re-enforce the in group/out group binary that is identified by William Gameson as one of the prerequisites for facilitating a mass extermination. Indeed, as Kwon Kwŏ-suk has observed, terms like "riot" (p'okto) and "rioter" (p'oktoja), became monikers for denoting those on Cheju who disturbed the natural hierarchies within Korean culture. Mirroring the inclusive state/familialism identified above, this rhetoric adopted the perverse logic that families of leftists were likewise excluded from the minjok. This legitimated the various proxy killings that we identified above, and informed the basic rationale for the "Guilt by Association System" (yŏnjwaje).

Deeply complicit with this rise of virulent anticommunist ideology was the erection of a legal and security apparatus that, at its extremes, manifested the most radical and violent potentialities of the southern system. Korean scholar Sŏ Chung-sŏk has identified this as the "national security law system" (Kukka Poanpŏp Ch'ech'e). As its title suggests, the lynchpin

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116 “Muhŏga T'onghaeng Kŭmjī /Cheju Song Yŏndaejang P'ogo” [Unauthorized Curfew/Cheju Commander Song Reports], Chosun Ilbo, October 20, 1948.
120 Sŏ Chung-sŏk, “Chŏngbu Surip hu Pankong Ch'ech'e Kwachŏng e Tehan Yŏn'gu” [Research on the Process of Establishing the Anticommunist System after the Establishment of the Government] Han'guksa Yŏn'gu [Korean History Research], Issue 90, (1995): 430. Likewise, Kim Hak-che has argued that this emerging legal structure conformed to the "state of exception" as outlined by Carl Schmitt and further developed by Giogio.
of this system was the national security law, promulgated on December 1, 1948 after an acrimonious debate in the national assembly. Officially designed to give the state increased power to punish "anti-state groups", the law served the dualistic function of securing the state, while also giving its author tremendous power to regulate society. The law gave the executive extended power to punish seditious acts such as organizing "disturbances" or inciting violence. More troubling, the law gave the state power to arbitrarily criminalize thought. For example, it was made illegal to "praise" any group deemed to be anti-state, or spread "false information" that disturbed the "national order". Both expansive and ill-defined, the law allowed the regime to equate any activity which opposed Rhee's and his cohorts actions with treason. Within the first year of its existence, it was used to prosecute 188,621 people.121

Added to this evolving legal regime of rightist power was the Martial Law decree, which enveloped Cheju Island in the period of the suppression campaign. Framed in concert with American General W.L. Roberts, the November 17, 1948 decree's most salient feature was that it gave security forces extra-legal powers, chief amongst these the power to carry out summary executions without trial.122 This maneuver not only gave security forces the power to administrate coercive justice, but also inscribed them with the ability to invent ontological categories, which coalesced around the Manichean Cold War political categories of the era. Political subjectivity became the prerogative of the state's coercive apparatus, and the right to life and death became reducible to one's perceived position in the communist/anticommunist binary taking hold on the peninsula. Buttressed by the existing quarantine, this regime of legalized

122 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 277.
political violence took upon a spatial character. This was expressed most dramatically in the above-mentioned quarantine order that ordered the mass evacuation of the mid-mountain villagers and deemed any remaining villagers to be communists or rebel sympathizers. As one witness from suppression forces bluntly put the matter: "People in mountainous areas were ordered to come down to coastal areas, and those who did not come down were all regarded as red guerrillas." Added to this problem was the fact that the Martial Law decree was ambiguous and that its practical interpretation was left to Song Yo'chan—a man of low education and strong ideological proclivities. Song openly admitted that he did not understand what Martial Law was and based his interpretation of the decree on his previous experiences in the Japanese Army hunting guerrillas in Manchuria. According to an underling, this essentially boiled down to burning down villages and "shooting people in a certain area". State sovereignty over the lives and deaths of villagers became a matter not only of politics and security, but also one of geography.

With the growth and dissemination of this legal/coercive regime, the relationship between the state and Cheju's population adopted the form of a "necropolitics" that the philosopher Achille Mbembe identifies as the great terror of the modern era. Indeed, the situation on Cheju island embodied Mbembe's observation that the supreme expression of state sovereignty was in the power to exercise control over mortality itself—a condition where the murder of the state's enemies was the "primary and ultimate objective". This, in Kim Seong-Nae's prescient reading, was the function of a particular historical conjecture in which the temporary suspension of the rule of law coincided with the state's attempt to carve out a "permenent political space" for

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123 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 373.
124 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 280.
125 Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics", 11-12.
anticommunism on the island. In concrete terms, this was facilitated through the concurrent creation of an ideologically harmonious suppression force. This process and its devastating consequences to civilian populations can be traced throughout the events on Cheju. As previously mentioned, in the early period of the uprising, a clear distinction existed between the Constabulary, on the one hand, and the police, on the other. Guerrillas understood this distinction and responded by primarily targeting police stations throughout the campaign. This pattern shifted somewhat as the Ninth Regiment's Commander, Kim Ik-ryŏl, was ushered out in favour of Pak Ching-yŏng, who was then replaced by the equally hard-line Commander, Song Yo-ch'an on the heels of Pak's assassination. The major turning point, however, occurred between the Yŏ-suın Mutiny and the Martial Law decree as a radical overhaul of Cheju's constabulary took place. At the nucleus of this realignment was an increase in the number and importance of the right-wing youth that we have already identified as a major cause of the violence of the previous year. From November through to January, thousands of young ideologically committed men volunteered or were enlisted to crush what they perceived as a North Korean-directed assault on their new country from its most southern flank. This human wave of ideological ferment was rooted in national and regional dynamics that crested and came crashing upon the island population in the 1948-49 winter.

On Cheju, the NWYA was the most significant youth group impacting events, and its trajectory is illustrative of these wider currents. First, we must grasp that in the post-liberation atmosphere of South Korea, youth groups served as a critical arena of struggle for the rival factions jockeying for control of the newly emerging state. Thus, Yŏ Un-hyŏng organized the Committee for the Preparation of Independence Youth Security Group; Syngman Rhee and Kim

Ku had the Korean National Youth (KNY) which held an estimated 1.3 million members by the fall of 1948; the left, meanwhile, harnessed the Korean Democratic Youth, which at its peak, was thought to be 826,940 strong. Even the Americans grasped the importance of these groups, as General John Hodge clandestinely organized and supported the Korean National Youth from 1946 onwards. These groups were also launching pads for career advancement as the Korean National Youth's organizer, Yi Pŏm-sŏk, became Korea's first Minister of Defence and later Prime Minister, while the NWYA leader, Mun Pong-je was appointed director of the National Police in 1952.\textsuperscript{127}

Rhee's official front was the KNY (later the \textit{Taehan Youth Group}), but the ties between Rhee and the NWYA were thorough. In September 1947, for example, right-wing youth groups were split between those who sided with Rhee's strategy of establishing a separate state and Kim Ku's push for a united right-wing front committed to unification. In this quarrel, Mun Pong-je took Rhee's side, a decision which rapidly paid dividends as the NWYA began to be directly integrated into the constabulary. By October of the same year, two thirds of all cadets in the Military Academy were from the NWYA.\textsuperscript{128} Additionally, a secret agreement was worked out between Rhee and the NWYA whereby NWYA members were rewarded for their loyalty with key positions in the military and police force. Accordingly, for every twenty members provided, Rhee ensured that one was appointed as a Sergeant; for every fifty, one as a Lieutenant; and for every 200, one member would receive the rank of Captain in the national police. Through this arrangement, an estimated 6,500 NWYA members joined the constabulary, while 1,700 joined

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\textsuperscript{128} Kim Bong-Jin, "Paramilitary Politics", 311.
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the ranks of the national police. In Cheju, this increase was particularly manifest. Over 1,000 NWYA members entered the island for the suppression campaigns, adding to the 500-700 members already present. These members were solicited not only to beef up the existing security apparatus, but also to replace local Cheju soldiers whose loyalty to the islanders put them under suspicion as possible communists. This strategy ensured that the specific character of the suppression forces launched into Cheju was heavily saturated with the anticommunist ethos of the NWYA.\(^{129}\)

The NWYA were the most notoriously violently terroristic of the groups which descended upon Cheju, but they were hardly alone: members of the Taehan Youth and Minbodan likewise joined the crusade. Ostensibly recruited to provide routine village "security", these groups had a paramilitary function, often mobilized the villagers for labour, were utilized for scouting missions, and in some cases directly participated in military operations and massacres.

We already established the Taehan Youth's centrality to the Rhee regime, so let us turn our attention to the Minbodan. Originally ushered into existence as the Hyangbodan by National Police Director Cho Pyŏng-ok in the spring of 1948 to ensure a successful outcome to the May 10 elections, the group was disbanded after continuous violent behaviour and ties to Japanese colonialism proved embarrassing to the Rhee government. The group was resurrected in the fall of the same year as the Minbodan and functioned as the main police auxiliary force in Cheju during the winter campaign.\(^{130}\) The group's primary task was to provide village security by building large lookout towers to spot impending guerrilla raids. However, the group was notorious for using brutal methods and converted villages into heavily guarded virtual prisons. In one case, youths from the group were spotted by American officials grisly massacring

\(^{129}\) *Cheju 4.3 Sakkôn Chinsang Chosa Pokosô*, 267, 303.

\(^{130}\) *Cheju 4.3 Sakkôn Chinsang Chosa Pokosô*, 274.
villagers in February 1949.\textsuperscript{131} Further, the Minbodan aggressively recruited villagers into its ranks, including males under the age of 15 and over the age of 65. Some of these islanders were forced into joining a special division within the army which served at the front line in battles with guerrillas.\textsuperscript{132} Tragically, Cheju's islanders were mobilized to participate in their own oppression, with the Minbodan facilitating this tactic. From this, we are provided another window into the thoroughly penetrating and deeply destructive nature of the state's anticommunist security strategy as it played out on the island of Cheju.

The Minbodan's ties to Korea's colonial past also alert us to a phenomenon which transpired over the duration of the Cheju Incident: the increasingly solid partnership between ex-colonial security troops and young anticommunist ideologues. Firstly, we should note that the three most important commanders of the suppression forces, the Ninth Regiment's Song Yo-ch'an, the Eleventh Regiment's Ch'oe Kyŏng-nŏk, and Ham Pyŏng-sŏn of the Second Regiment were all former Japanese army volunteers. Consequently, the military make-up of the suppression forces closely hued to the political coalition that anchored Rhee's Presidency. Commander Ham serves as an archetypical figure for illustrating the makeup of this emerging network. A former officer who served the Japanese Army in Manchuria, Ham was suspected of being involved in various atrocities throughout the region. Appointed to the Constabulary's Second Regiment in December of 1948, within one month Ham had relieved Song as the head of the suppression forces on Cheju.\textsuperscript{133} As chief commander of the suppression forces, Ham helped facilitate and oversaw a rapid acceleration of the NWYA/Constabulary axis. Most notable, perhaps, was the creation of the Second Regiment's Third division, known as the "Elite

\textsuperscript{131} Merill, "The Cheju-do Rebellion", 187.
\textsuperscript{132} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 274-275.
\textsuperscript{133} Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 305.
Company” (*T'ŭkpyŏl Chungdae*). Primarily comprised of NWYA members and armed with extra-legal powers, the Elite Company was conceived as special force utilized to detect resistance fighters, gather intelligence, and serve on the front lines in battles against guerrillas. Regardless of its intended function, however, civilian massacre was one of its major contributions to the 4.3 series of incidents. Indeed, it was this division that was responsible for the mass atrocity carried out at Pukch'on in January. Thus, we may identify a clear causal chain linking the political make up of the nascent South Korean state and the brutal massacres that were carried out throughout Cheju-do at the local village level.\(^{134}\)

**Conclusion: The Triumph of Anticommunism and a Prelude to a Politicide**

If the above narrative is persuasive thus far we may deduce the following: that, a) a significant amount of civilians were slaughtered on Cheju, primarily during the winter suppression campaign; that, b) these killings were not isolated instances of a military breakdown or the acts of sadistic individuals, but were the culmination of an intense ideological struggle for control of a state that by this time was dominated by political forces representing the political right; and that c) although under the control of the American occupation, the political character and intensity of these massacres were products of the southern regime's strategy of regime consolidation through military terror. Here, the overused maxim falsely attributed to Carl Von Clausewitz that war is the continuation of politics by other means strikes us as particularly apt.

\(^{134}\) *Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ*, 306.
In assessing the regime's centrality to the horrors that befell the island, critics have tended to focus their gaze upon its illiberal tendencies, equating the excesses of the suppression campaign with a fundamental failure of the Rhee regime to live up to the promises of democracy. Thus, in the Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report—an archetypical example of this particular form of discourse—a thoroughly liberal inquiry into the nature of the 4.3 events is presented. To this end, one finds in the report a sustained attack on the dubious legality of the Martial Law Decree, a focus on the sovereign dignity and rights of suffering individuals, and a discourse which labels Rhee as a "shortsighted" leader who arrogantly misread the situation at Cheju as a broader communist assault. Finally, the report notes the failure of both the South Korean and the American authorities to live up to the laws established at the UN in 1948 concerning human rights and genocide. These conclusions are consistent with the broader contours of the "state violence interpretation" that we pointed to in the introduction.

There is considerable philosophical and moral merit to this line of critique. However, there is a certain level of anachronistic historical thinking at work. Indeed, in placing the events on Cheju within a liberal discourse, we risk conflating the political goals that the new South Korean state ought to have sought with what it concretely strove towards. Or, to put the matter another way, an exclusively liberal analysis of the National Security State is necessarily of limited utility precisely because the goals and methods of the government were illiberal, and deliberately so. As we have traced above, the series of massacres which reached their apogee during the winter suppression campaign were of an unambiguously political character. The political dynamics underlying these campaigns operated in two related keys. At the local level, the rolling back of an increasingly radicalized left exaggerated existing ideological polarization

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135 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 539.
on the island. Crudely, albeit effectively, rightists of various agendas levied this conflict for their own purposes, eventually seizing the main arteries of power on the island, and consolidated their rule through US-backed violence. What emerged from this strategy was a causal trajectory linking the decimation of the People's Committees to the devastation of the island's population. This logic mirrored and was accelerated by the political contest over control of the central state. The latter struggle was constituted by a series of crises through which the southern regime cultivated its system of coercive power and ideological legitimacy. Cumulatively, these dynamics produced a political climate in which regime security and ideological consolidation necessarily entailed a sharp degree of violent extermination. The grim chronicle of massacres which befell Cheju were the bitter expression of this process.

There can be little doubt as to the effectiveness of these strategies. By the beginning of March, suppression forces had secured the majority of the remaining villages and moved towards a policy of driving the remaining guerrillas into the mountains. By April, the rebellion was deemed effectively squashed with over 2,000 "guerrillas" captured and 5,409 surrendering as part of an amnesty program, though it is likely that the majority of these men were unarmed peasants seeking shelter from the ongoing onslaught. The bulk of those who surrendered were incarcerated and interrogated with many receiving life sentences or the death penalty.

Right-wing power on the island was meanwhile entrenched in the new political order. Members of the NWYA received key positions in government and Cheju's economy, and held a virtual monopoly over its newspapers. Their fallen ideological brethren were honoured as patriotic martyrs in the struggle against communism, while Song Yo-ch'an, architect of the

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136 The leading paper at the time was the Cheju Sinbo, at a daily circulation of 5,000. Prior to the uprisings, it was seen to be in the hands of the "extreme left". It was taken over by Kim Chea-nung, head of the local NWYA. See, The Foreign Service of the United States of America, Listing and Comments on Korean Daily Newspapers, March 14, 1949.
island's quarantine, became head of the country's military police the following year when he
would institute similar tactics on a nation-wide scale. Rebel leader Yi Tŏk-ku, meanwhile, was
shot to death on June 7, 1949, his body left hanging from a downtown tree as a trophy for the
war's victors and warning to those who sought to oppose the new political regime—a rather
potent symbol indeed. In April, Rhee visited the island and nonchalantly lectured a group of
2,500 refugees to "forget the past. What is done is done. Your task now is to become loyal
citizens of the republic."

Events that month throughout the country likewise proved favourable to Rhee as the Anti Traitor Committee's offices were smashed and looted and a
number of key progressive legislators were convicted as South Korean Worker Party spies in the
infamous "Black Mole Incident" (Kuk'oe P'ūarakch'i Sakkŏn). Meanwhile, Rhee's rival to the
right, Kim Ku, was found dead in his home on June 26. Ku was a victim of an assassination
likely orchestrated by Kim Ch'ang-nyong, Rhee's right-hand man and head of the Korean
Counter Intelligence Corps (KCIC), and carried out by An Tu-hŭi, a member of the right-wing
extremist youth group "White Clothes Party" (Paegŭisa).

The Americans likewise shared in the spoils of victory, as an orderly election was carried
out on the island in the spring of 1949—in this instance, the terrible violence inevitable to the
construction of a sprawling liberal empire delegated to a client regime, and sanitized by the
spectacle of a free election. Ambassador John Muccio praised the counter insurgency forces for
blunting the power of a clear "Soviet effort to sow confusion and terror in southern Korea."
Privately, Muccio expressed reservations regarding the "unusual sadistic propensities" on the

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137 The Foreign Service of the United States of America, Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, American Mission in
Korea, President Rhee's Visit to Cheju and Military Aid for Korea, April 12, 1949.
138 Jung Byung-Joon, "Paekpŏm Kim-gu Amsal Paegyŏng Kwa Paegŭisa" (Background to the Assassination of Kim
Ku and the White Clothes Party), Han'guksa yŏn'gu, Issue 128, 274-283.
part of the government, but ultimately attributed these to "revenge operations". Reflecting on the events over the winter, Everett Drumright, Consular to the American Mission, noted the "gratifying progress" that was made in the suppression campaign, and attributed its success to the "good will and cooperation" between the islanders and the security forces. Others had a more jaundiced view of events. While praising the suppression forces for their "decent treatment of natives", Colonel Roberts cryptically remarked that the "alleged liberators do not have the cleanest hands".

In the aftermath of the 4.3 Incident, Cheju was a political graveyard. Enveloped by a wrathful bleakness, much of Cheju's tranquilly beautiful environment was burnt to ashes. Countless unmarked mass graves for the dead littered its landscape. Witnesses to this day recall the stench of putrefaction that washed over the village communities and the ominous sights of ravens circling the island to claim fresh carcasses. Shell-shocked, demoralized, and often homeless, Cheju's survivors were condemned to pick up the pieces of their broken lives and communities. In some instances, islanders were so terrified to return home that they remained hidden in the island's network of caves, covertly scrounging for food at night to avoid the suspicions of the security forces. Shamanistic rituals were performed to honour the dead and comfort the living, but the spiritual power of these rites was powerless to prevent the ascent of the secular anticommmunist leviathan. In other cases, the ideological cleavages proved too much to bear. For example, in Hagui-ri, the village became divided into two halves between government supporters and suspected communists, and renamed, thus serving as a sad

139 John Muccio, The Special Representative in Korea (John Muccio) to the Secretary of State, April 9, 1949.
microcosm of the era's polarization. In 1949, Cheju's hastily built prison system swelled with young men, grimly awaiting a fate beyond their capacity to influence. Cheju's sufferings however, were far from over. One year later, systematic killings would take place once again on the island, this time in the form of the National Guidance League killings—the subject of our next chapter.

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Chapter Two: The Korean War Liquidation of the Southern Left

In 1950, as the Korean War raged throughout the peninsula, a US government propaganda film by the name of *The Crime of Korea* was beamed to American television audiences. Produced by the United States Signal Corps, *The Crime of Korea* portrayed a desperate Korean people under siege by ravenous communist aggression. The movie carried many of the features that one would expect to see in an early Cold War propaganda film about American involvement in East Asia. The film conformed to the emerging anticommunist ideology of the era, labeling the Korean conflict as little more than the result of naked and calculated “communist fanaticism… determined to destroy what it could”. By contrast, America’s actions were framed as equal parts stoic, dignified, and heroic, with the American G.I. situated as the ultimate symbol for America’s place in the emerging East Asian order. As the unidentified narrator instructed, “every American G.I. was a symbol of freedom” to the “natives” of the Korean peninsula.\(^{144}\)

Beyond anticommunism, the film carried with it many of the orientalist tropes which were characteristic of American cultural assumptions about East Asia during the early years of the Cold War. Harnessing the paradoxical differentiating and universalizing tendencies of American Cold War orientalism, the film painted Koreans as an exotic people, strange even by the standards of their “fellow Asiatics” in one breath, but ultimately “simple human beings who wanted to live in peace and independence” in the next. To those familiar with the cultural

politics and historiographical debates surrounding the Korean War, the film is likewise revealing. Eviscerated from *The Crime of Korea*’s narration of the war were the 1945-1950 years, thus obscuring the causes of the peninsula’s original division, the civil war in the south which foreshadowed the larger conflagration, and the US’s integral, if highly debatable role, in shaping the contours of these developments. Ahistorical, decontextualized, and emotionally provocative, the movie now reads as an archetypical example of a set of ideological concerns and cultural assumptions that influenced American policy towards the peninsula, as well as public opinion towards the conflict.

In retrospect, however, *The Crime of Korea* fascinates less because of its banality, than its uniqueness. In contrast to a sanitized, Korean-less portrayal of the war, the propaganda piece placed violence against Korean civilians at the core. A grim picture emerged, which six decades later still carries the capacity to shock. Throughout the feature, the viewer is repeatedly confronted with a visual testimony of the war’s brutality. The corpses of dead Korean adults and children litter the peninsular landscape, as images of malnourished children searching for food or deceased relatives proliferate. The decimation of Korea’s ancient culture is likewise thrown into sharp relief, with image after image of Korea’s material and cultural destruction thrust upon the viewer. Filmed and presented with an unsentimental realism, *The Crime of Korea*, stands as a graphic representation of the staggering toll that the war took upon Korea’s civilian population.

However, if constructed solely to demonstrate the horrors of communist aggression, in retrospect, the film’s meaning is now far more layered. Thanks to the painstaking efforts of Korean citizens, journalists, activists, and academics, we now know that the phenomenon of mass killings—a regular feature of the Korean War—was in fact a broad-based experience, committed by both warring sides and often directly implicating the US/UN command. Indeed,
when viewed with the obligatory historical perspective, *The Crime of Korea* proves intentionally revealing. Most striking is an image which appears 4:45 seconds into the short film. Here, the viewer is presented with a massacre site outside of the southwestern city of Taejŏn. As we are confronted with stacks of corpses laying in crudely dug trenches, the narrator signals that such ruthless killings were not incidental to the war, but were the result of a calculated strategy to produce “terror” throughout Korea. On two points, the film is most certainly correct: prison massacres—often committed by communist forces—occurred in and around Taejŏn in the early months of the war, and these incidents cannot simply be dismissed as inevitable products of a terrible civil war. However, on one crucial point, the story presented is completely backwards: In this image, the viewer witnesses a massacre carried out by Republic of Korea (ROK) forces against imprisoned leftists in July 1950. Moreover, with the assistance of recently declassified documents, it has now been revealed that some of the massacres at Taejŏn were carried out with the full knowledge of American officials who documented and carefully photographed the incident.

As the reader may recall, this bears an eerie resemblance to the "May Day" propaganda video discussed in the previous chapter. However, the significance of the series of massacres at Taejŏn prison goes well beyond providing us with another example of the cynical manipulation of an atrocity. In a concentrated form, the massacres at Taejŏn prison expressed the larger institutional matrix created by the South Korean National Security State for liquidating the political left, and the principal targets of these policies. Who were the victims? There is still some ambiguity here, but the evidence strongly suggests a diverse set of victims from the Cheju Incident, the Yŏ-sun Incident, various other suspects under preliminary detention (*yepi kŏmsok*), and, most significantly, members of the National Guidance League. That three geographically
disparate episodes from South Korea’s civil war period converged and manifested themselves in the killing fields surrounding Taejŏn is highly suggestive, and indicates that the phenomenon of mass killings was integrally woven into the apparatus of the National Security State. Untangling this history of massacres, the history of internecine conflict that produced them, and the continuities between the pre-war massacres which befell Cheju and the series of Korean War massacres that the ones surrounding Taejŏn were part of, is the central task of this chapter.

More explicitly, I am examine two distinct, but interrelated, atrocities carried out by ROK forces during the Korean War: the National Guidance League Incident and the Kŏch'ang Incident. Kim Dong-Choon has remarked that the "killings of NGL members overwhelm other atrocities during the Korean War in size and brutality".145 Readers may draw their own conclusions regarding these claims. Indeed, a compelling case may be made that the US' indiscriminate bombing of the North exceeds the National Guidance League killings in terms of scale.146 Nor is it certain that the mass executions carried out against NGL members were any more vicious than the rampage of violence, rapes, and general mayhem carried out against the population of Cheju. However, Kim makes a valid rhetoric point: in terms of organization, continuity, and intention, the National Guidance League Incident represents the apogee of the mass blood-letting we have been tracing. Throughout the summer of 1950, anywhere between 20,000-200,000 confessed "communist" members of the NGL were rounded up and executed en mass. The Kŏch’ang Incident, meanwhile, occurred in the winter of 1951 when veteran counter-insurgency commanders from the Cheju/Yŏ-sun campaigns ordered the systematic slaughter of over seven hundred civilians—the majority of whom were women, children, and the elderly—throughout

145 Kim Dong Choon, "Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres", 533.
the township of Sinwŏn. Though the victims were initially accused of aiding and abetting southern Communist partisan (ppalch'isan) forces, subsequent investigations have exonerated and restored their honour. In their efforts at clarifying the truth of the incident, bereaved families, activists, and Korean scholars have tended to treat the slaughter at Kŏch'ang as an isolated affair. However, as I demonstrate, the events of 1951 were inextricably tied to the broader history of civil war, anticommunist consolidation, and politicide. Chronicling the contours of this process as it played out during the Korean War is the chief analytic task of this chapter. The story, however, begins where our last chapter left off: in the midst of the southern civil war and the advent of the anticommunist National Security State.

**Leftist Liquidation, Reform, and the Rise of the National Guidance League**

In the wake of the successful suppression of the Yŏ-sun mutinies and the Cheju guerrilla uprisings, the First Republic was far more internally secure than the previous year, save for a bubbling guerrilla insurgency concentrated in the Chiri Mountains. Coercive power was the central force of gravity in the anticommunist political order south of the 38th parallel, with the infamous National Security Law being its lodestar. Through this legal measure, the regime was able to effectively blur the line between dissent and treason, and the country began to proliferate with political prisoners. Indeed, throughout 1949, an estimated 118,612 people had been prosecuted through this particular law, with an 80% conviction rate in a legal climate that
worked to the state's advantage. While many were released and placed under surveillance, the prison population began to mushroom and by August of 1949 stood at 35,119.\footnote{Chinsil Hwahae rŭl wihan Kwagŏsa Chŏngni Wiwŏnhoe [Truth and Reconciliation Commission], Chinsil Hwahae Wiwŏnhoe Chonghap Pogosŏ III: Min'ganin Chiptan Huisaeng Sakkŏn [Truth and Reconciliation Comprehensive Report III: Incidents of Large-scale Civilian Sacrifices]. (Sŏul: Chinsil Hwahae rŭl wihan Kwagŏsa Chŏngni Wiwŏnhoe, 2009): 138, 229.}

We have already made note of the early ROK's indifferent, if not contemptuous, relationship to the most elementary standards of democratic principles. However, the mass influx of political prisoners presented the emerging police state with a vexing problem: overcrowding. Despite hastily constructing a sprawling network of detention centres throughout the country, the state was unable to keep pace with the human wave of incarceration brought upon by its own strategies of hard-line suppression and societal bifurcation. The problem was not simply one of logistics, but also optics. Domestically, the plague of false arrests and poor prison conditions "were building up some popular resentment", according to the US embassy. News reports about the abject conditions of these prisons proliferated in the Korean press, revealing a picture of mass overcrowding, malnourishment, and the harsh treatment of inmates convicted for what were often "very minor acts of disloyalty".\footnote{The Foreign Services of the United States of America, Summary of Political Affairs of the Republic of Korea, August 1949. September 13, 1949.} Confronted by a bi-product of its successes in polarizing the society through legal arrangements and coercive power, the regime opted for a policy which sought to mitigate these effects by actively augmenting and deepening their causes. The result was the National Guidance League, promulgated on June 5th of 1949.

Headed by former leftist Pak U-chŏn, the National Guidance League has received scant attention in English language historiography. Cumings argued that the National Guidance League had its origins in the Korean philosophical tradition (rooted in Neo Confucianism),
which espoused that political order was premised upon subjects carrying "correct thought".\textsuperscript{149} Shelia Jager has bluntly stated that, for all intents and purposes, the National Guidance League was "a form of totalitarian state-control of the people".\textsuperscript{150} More sustained analysis has come from Korean scholars, with the most dominant position arguing that the National Guidance League was a postcolonial institution, mimicking similar reform agencies set up by the Japanese colonial state to convert leftists, such as The League for Servicing the State.\textsuperscript{151} Pak Myŏng-lim, meanwhile, has presciently argued that the group was a part of a larger system of "negative integration", whereby citizenship in the new polity was adjudicated within a political hierarchy—one in which the "commie" was formally recognized as something other than a Korean citizen.\textsuperscript{152} These positions are not mutually exclusive, and for our present purposes there is little reason to quarrel with them. More germane to our inquiry is the overarching function of the National Guidance League within the nascent First Republic itself, and its relationship to civilian deaths. To this end, I pose that, like the suppression campaign against the Cheju rebels, the National Guidance League primarily served the political function of bifurcating Korean society and cementing anticommmunist conservative power. Similarly, it became an instrument for administering mass death.

In the previous chapter, I addressed the radically inclusive and exclusive characteristics of the southern state's anticommmunist ideology, and the concrete manifestations of this system in the form of the National Security State. In the case of the Cheju Incident, the clear relationship between ideological consolidation and physical extermination was established. However, from

\textsuperscript{149} Cumings, \textit{The Origins of Korean War Volume. 2}, 215.
\textsuperscript{150} Jager, \textit{Brothers at War}, 92.
\textsuperscript{151} Kang Sŏng-hyŏn, "Akk'a' wa 'Ppalgaengi' ŭi T'ansaeng: 'Chŏk Mandŭl ki 'wa 'Pigungmin' ŭi Kyebohak," [Akk'a and the Birth of the 'Ppalgaeng'i: The Making of the Enemy and the Genealogy of the Non-Citizen]: \textit{Sahoe wa Yŏksa} [Society and History], Che 100-Chip(2013): 235-254; \textit{Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn}, 139
\textsuperscript{152} Pak, "Chŏnjaeng kwa Inmin".
its initial inception, the National Security State likewise experimented with ideological consolidation through reform. The National Guidance League was the most dramatic expression of this. In its official prospectus, the organization was clearly outlined as an institution for augmenting, rather than displacing, existing policies of repression. As it stated, "inasmuch as one's thought is influenced by his sense of a certain creed, such cannot be eradicated only by force or oppression. It might work on a temporary basis, but not permanently. Therefore, we must subjugate political opponents by politics and ideological opponents by ideology".153 Officially, the organization was premised upon the issue of clemency. Confessed "communists" would receive a pathway towards citizenship on the condition that they renounce their ties to communism. Behind this relatively benign facade lurked a tangled tapestry of stigmatization, ideological control, and social engineering that was weaved together by the same principles and politics that laid Cheju Island to waste the previous winter.

As an ostensibly reformist institution, the National Guidance League lasted for one year, from June 5, 1949, until the North Korean Army's invasion on June 25, 1950. The history of the organization throughout these twelve months is complicated and fluid, but three salient and interrelated features—all of which point directly to the dynamics of state integration and leftist liquidation—are worth noting: ideological indoctrination, social engineering, and bureaucratic organization. The official platform of the organization clearly linked ideological purity to the fate of the nation state. The first four principles were as follows:

1. We firmly aim at supporting the Republic of Korea and its healthy growth.

2. We also firmly aim to oppose and overthrow the North Korean regime.

3. We aim at shattering the Communistic idea which ignores human liberty and nationalism.

4. We aim at shattering the destructive policy of the North and South Korea Labour Parties by further strengthening our ideological weapons.\(^{154}\)

Consistent with the patterns outlined in the previous chapter, a commonly shared Korean bloodline was invoked. Central to the reformist tendencies within the institution was the notion that because the leftists were part of the same nation, they could be ideologically converted. As the Prosecutor-General stated, leftist conversion was based on the idea that they would "realize that their blood is (the) same as the blood of the Korean people". Though this was different from the more explicitly exterminationist tendencies we identified in the last chapter, it is crucial to note that it still sat firmly along the continuum of the eradication of leftists. Leftist ideology was deemed as a deviation from the normative notions of the Korean people and the nation state. According to Prosecutor Kim, "ideological division" among "fellow-countrymen was "utterly wrong", and therefore the appeal of communism could only be attributable to the "false propaganda of the communists".\(^{155}\) Tied to these sentiments was a larger historical argument over the causes of the nation's malaise. According to its leader Pak U-ch'ŏn, the appeal of communism was solely based on the belief that communism stood for Korean independence because most of the "famous Korean patriots were communists". Mirroring his old leftist ideology, Pak argued that this belief was essentially one of false consciousness because Kim Il-Sung and Pak Hŏn-yŏng were "merely Moscow pawns" who had given their allegiance to


another nation. While there is certainly a great deal of truth to the fact that the communist movement's popularity in Korea was partially premised on its resistance during the colonial period, Pak's analysis studiously avoided concrete social issues such as land reform or hatred of the police.\footnote{The Foreign Service of the United States of America, \textit{Division of Northeast Asian Affairs}, December 2, 1949.} To blunt the appeals of communism, a highly moralistic lexicon was invoked to draw out sharp distinctions between correct and incorrect thought. The communist movement was portrayed as being dominated by "people-molesting elements", and as "wicked", "vicious", and "sinful". The National Guidance League, on the other hand, was deemed as one of "enlightenment". In these radical binaries, we may readily identify the official rationale guiding the institution: as a moral and practical deviation from "enlightened" Korean nationalism, communism was a contagion to be eradicated. Persuasion would be the ultimate vaccine.

I ideological conversion, however, was not simply a matter of intellectual persuasion. More substantial was a deep sociological process where members of the league were integrated into the National Security State through an intense system of coercion and incentives. Initiation into the group was highly ritualistic. "Converts" were obliged to confess in writing to past sins and to pledge "selfless devotion" to the Republic of Korea. These confessions were catalogued by the state, complete with a picture of the member, their address, and a list of all the past organizations to which they were a member.\footnote{Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 336.} These were then converted into identification cards that members were obligated to carry at all times. One member later testified that these cards functioned as a "mark of suspicion".\footnote{Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 349.} Members were arranged along the ideological spectrum under three broad categories, in a pyramid-like structure. At the bottom, was the most numerous class, simply identified as "ordinary members". In the middle were "regular members", 

\footnote{The Foreign Service of the United States of America, \textit{Division of Northeast Asian Affairs}, December 2, 1949.}
\footnote{Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 336.}
\footnote{Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 349.}
while the top was composed of "special members". In practice, this hierarchy was determined almost entirely by each person's loyalty or use to the state. "Ordinary" members were those that sufficiently proved that they supported and understood the program. "Regular" members were those who in their confession letter were able to indentify three "communists" for the league to profile. Members were given the rank of "Special" if they brought in five or more new recruits, or performed other activities of "distinguished merit".\footnote{The Foreign Service of the United States of America. National Guidance Alliance, June 2, 1949.}

Though the language of conversion, enlightenment, and reform dominated the proclaimed ethos of the National Guidance League, this latter feature of confession and recruitment revealed the institution's true function: the decimation of the Korean left—explicitly the South Korean Labour Party. Indeed, in the raging conflict between right and left, the National Guidance League was inextricably bound to full-scale policies of leftist eradication, with its recruits directly conscripted as agents. Members were forced to pledge to "become bullets for blasting the South Korean Labour Party", with propaganda activities being the preferred weapons of choice. There were internal and external dimensions to these activities. For example, recruits were obligated to participate in "leadership training" activities. These included attending seminars extolling the virtues of the ROK, lectures on the National Security Law, and watching films educating them on patriotism and the proper behaviour of citizens.\footnote{Podo Yŏmmaeng Sakkŏn, 357.}

More significant in my reading was the external side of the equation. In its prospectus, the Nation Guidance League openly declared that "ordinary people" were its potential audience for proselytizing the "national spirit".\footnote{The Foreign Service of the United States of America. National Guidance Alliance, June 2, 1949.} To this end, members engaged in a number of high-profile public acts denouncing communism and praising the nation state. A major feature of this
was press activities. For example, the group had an official organ called "the patriot", that posted anticommunist editorials and the confessions of recent recruits. As many of the group's members were illiterate, these confessions were often ghost written. The group also published an anti-north comic strip for younger audiences to learn of the deprivations of the Kim Il-Sung regime and global communism. The most transparent public relations activity in the press was the use of high-profile arrests and conversions. Apprehended suspects were often forced to make public confessions. In advance of this, the police would announce a press conference, ensuring extensive media coverage of these public "conversions". American officials suspected that these ceremonies were carried out "largely for propaganda purposes". Additionally, the group would engage in other acts of "enlightenment". For instance, members of the League would be invited into local prisons where they would march throughout the hall shouting that prisoners resist the "deceptive tactics" of the South Korean Labour Party. The group also organized public speech contests in which league members were encouraged to write speeches denouncing the South Korean Labour Party or the Soviet Union.

Paralleling these official propaganda activities were more insidious clandestine operations, tied directly to the police. Mimicking the underground organizational activities of the political left, recruits were organized into small cells and sent to infiltrate the various leftists groups. Members would then collect information and reveal it to the police. The documentary history of these activities is sketchy, but it is clear that it was a major component of the League's work. These methods were given credit for leading to the mass arrest of what remained of the South Korean Labour Party leadership in March 1950. On March 27th, Yi Chu-ha and Kim San-

162 Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 355-356.
164 Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 355.
yong were arrested by authorities in Seoul, along with 13 other members of the party. Hong Nim-pyo, a former South Korean Labour Party staff officer, was instrumental in bringing the group down. Through the National Guidance League, Hong worked his way up to the level of detective and used his previous knowledge of the group to infiltrate it and force its lower ranking members into extracting information. US reports cited the arrests as the "severest blow" struck against the southern communists to date.\textsuperscript{165} As the above example shows, the National Guidance League was a crucial component of the South Korean Labour Party's virtual decimation by the eve of the Korean War.

Who were the targeted recruits of the National Guidance League? This is a vexing question, one which to this day remains a taboo topic in a landscape of national memory that is littered with landmines. To the Bereaved Family Association leadership, these people were "patriots". To the state, they were ultimately subversive elements and potential North Korean recruits. The verdict of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission points largely to the conclusion that the vast majority of its members were void of any particular ideology. To buttress this claim, they cite the figure that roughly 80\% of all of the institution's membership were illiterate peasants.\textsuperscript{166} The answer, is, in fact, rather complicated. Testimony from bereaved families indicate that many of those who joined were composed of lineages that were associated with independence activities against the Japanese, which then translated into leftist activism in the post-liberation period. For example, survivor Chŏn Suk-cha's father and cousin were both independence activists and members of socialist parties in the early post-liberation years. In

\textsuperscript{165} The Foreign Service of the United States of America, \textit{Summary of Political Affairs of the Republic of Korea for the Month of March}. April 1950.
\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Min'ganin Chiptan Hüisaeng Sakkôn}, 159
1949 they joined the league and were killed in the summer of 1950. Sin Su-kyŏn recalls her brother secretly teaching Han'gŭl in the later years of the colonial period. He continued his activism into the post-liberation years and was eventually pressured into joining the League in 1949. Again, Kim Chon-hyŏn's parents were both engaged in leftist activism during and after the Japanese colonial period. They joined the league in 1949 and were killed in the early months of the war.

However, consistent with the overarching rationale of the National Security State, the group's potential targets exceeded the narrow confines of card-carrying members of the South Korean Labour Party or other overly political actors. This can principally be attributed to the rather nebulous definition of "communist" invoked by both the US and ROK, coupled with Rhee and his cronies' penchant for using the coercive apparatuses of the state to crush political opponents. In early 1949, US intelligence estimated that there were 10,000 card-carrying South Korean Labour Party members, but vaguely suggested that the number of people who actively supported their program was close to 600,000. Further, they estimated that through their clandestine infiltration of various cultural and social organizations, communists may have held sway over two million South Koreans. For its part, the ROK had a more specific, though still broad, criteria for identifying potential recruits. Theoretically, a potential target was any individual who was a member of a group deemed "leftist" at some point after August 15, 1945. This included a wide swath of political organizations, youth groups, former members of the

168 Inmun Sahoe Chosa, 268.
169 Inmun Sahoe Chosa, 354.
170 Central Intelligence Agency, Communist Capabilities in South Korea, February 21, 1949.
People's Committees, labour and peasant organizations, or even people who attended lectures by "leftist" intellectuals. Indeed, in Seoul, where the total number of National Guidance League members was 12,196 by the end of 1949, only 4,342 (roughly 35%) were identified as members of the South Korean Labour Party. Similarly, in Ulsan, 32% (215 of a 632) were members of Pak Hŏn-yŏng's party. Targeted groups also included affiliations associated with figures such as Yŏ Un-hyŏng. For example, major targets for "recruitment" were members of the Labouring People's Party, who were believed to be aligned with Yŏ prior to his 1947 assassination. Survivor Yi Kye-sŏn testified that her father worked for the People's Committee in the early months of liberation, and was therefore later targeted for "conversion". The taint of leftism, however, went beyond direct involvement in formal politics. One witness recalled that because he participated in the 1946 Autumn Harvest demonstrations in Taegu, he and his family were blacklisted and eventually coerced into joining the group. Further, people accused of giving money to communists, or having any "leftist" literature, were identified as potential recruits. The cumulative result of this was a broad-based culture of suspicion and guilt by association sanctioned and mobilized by the state.

These intensive processes of ideological mobilization and social engineering were buttressed by the National Guidance League's intimate relationship to the police and its broad organizational reach. Though allegedly an "unofficial organization", for all intents and purposes the National Guidance League was an extension of the National Security State. Its central offices were located in downtown Seoul, directly adjacent to City Hall and the main police

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171 The Foreign Service of the United States of America, Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, Summary of Political Affairs of the Republic of Korea, December 1949.
172 Inmun Sahoe Chosa, 298.
173 Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 364.
station in Seoul. Its official advisory board consisted of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Prime Minster, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of National Defence, and the nation's Supreme Prosecutor. Its Vice President was also the Vice-Minister of Justice. Key roles as "Councillors" were also given to local prison wardens and High Prosecutors of each province. Furthermore, local mayors and police chiefs were listed as part of its staff. Day to day operations were principally overseen by a cohort of prosecutors and inspectors. A brief look into their background reveals the historical and political stakes embodied by its leadership. At the helm was O Che-do, who was an apprentice for the Japanese intelligence services from 1940 onward. Sharing organizational duties were Yi T'ea-hui, Chang Che-kap, Kim T'ae-san, and Ch'oe Un-ha. All of these men had backgrounds in law enforcement or prosecution under the Japanese colonial regime.\(^{175}\)

The group was also directly tied to the Korean Counter Intelligence Corps, a relationship that grew in significance following the North Korean invasion. At the head of the KCIC was Kim Ch'ang-nyong. Born in 1920 in the now-North Korean Province of Hamgyŏngnam-do, Kim joined the Japanese Military Police, where he excelled as an undercover agent, rooting out Chinese and Korean communists and independence activists. Sentenced to death as a traitor by the North Korean government, Kim escaped death twice and fled to Seoul in May 1946 where he gradually became closer to Rhee. By 1949 he was considered to be the septuagenarian's right-hand man. As head of the KCIC, Kim was responsible for weeding out potentially subversive elements within the nascent ROK security apparatus, but as evidenced by Kim's suspected

\(^{175}\) Ibid, 341.
involvement in the assassination of Kim Ku, it is clear that Kim's activities worked to buttress Rhee's power.\textsuperscript{176}

Sprawling outwards from the capital, the League was extended throughout each respective province. Mirroring the organizational structure of the South Korean Labour Party, the cellular structure formed the core of the League's primary organization. Cells consisted of a maximum of twenty members, while a branch usually was twenty to one hundred people. The National Guidance League in the provinces was similar in structure and purpose to its central operations in Seoul. The Provincial governor and Chief district prosecutors were appointed as the main advisors, while judges and prosecutors adopted the positions of councillors. Day to day staff operations were handled by the police chiefs, while "capable" converts were officially appointed as "Director-in-Chief". Outside of the provincial capitals, the League was organized from the bottom-up at the village (\textit{ri}), township (\textit{myŏn}), and county(\textit{gun}) levels. A cell was organized in each village and the League's offices were always tied directly to the local police branch. Effectively, this meant that both the League, and the larger ideological program of the National Security State to which it was embedded in, had tremendous reach.\textsuperscript{177}

Technically, the National Guidance League was a "volunteer" organization. However, as the analysis thus far has intimated, the reality was far more complex. Why did recruits join? While we cannot completely discount legitimate acts of ideological "conversion", self-interest, coercion, bribery, or simple ignorance appear to have been the primary motivators. Undoubtedly, intimidation played a major role. This can primarily be attributed to the behaviour of the police and the often ideologically zealous right-wing youth groups. The recruitment drive for the League became entangled with the micro-political struggles that had been raging at the village

\textsuperscript{176} Kim Dong Choon, \textit{The Unending Korean War}, 202.
\textsuperscript{177} The Foreign Service of the United States of America, \textit{The National Guidance Alliance}, June 2, 1949. 220.
level since 1945. In essence, police and local rightists were given carte-blanche for labeling and creating official categories of potential leftists to be recruited. According to an anonymous witness from the township of Chinrye (outside of Kimhae, South Kyŏngsang Province), youths from the Taehan Youth Group would regularly rampage through the village, collect villagers, and demand that they sign up for the group. Though technically the sign-up was voluntary, the witness recounted that everyone understood that they had no choice because if they refused, they would be branded as communists.\textsuperscript{178} This created an essentially absurd situation: if one agreed, they were officially recognized as a "communist"; if one refused, they were branded as a "communist". In other cases, people joined as a means of protection against rightist violence. For example, one witness from Taejŏn recalled that members of the Northwest Youth Group would often smash villagers' homes to pieces so local residents would join the League in an effort to get protection from the police. Given that one year later they would be massacred by these same forces, these types of predicaments were as ironic as they were tragic.\textsuperscript{179} Similar to the grim spatial logic we witnessed on Cheju, entire neighbourhoods were converted into objects of suspicion and accordingly coveted. Survivor Pak Chon-hwan recalls that after the Yŏ-su Incident, his entire village of Okok-ri was called a "commie neighbourhood" (ppalgaengi tongne) because people from the village had supported the uprising. As a result, the majority of villagers were coerced into joining, effectively converting the stigmatism into an official legal category.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{179} Inmun Sahoe Chosa, 303.
\textsuperscript{180} Inmun Sahoe Chosa, 370.
This micro-consolidation of anticommunist power was energized by a set of state incentives which rewarded recruits and recruiters in distinct, but symbiotic ways. For example, each respective bureau was given monthly quotas to reach and placed in competition with each other. As the South Korean bureaucracy was a primarily vehicle for social advancement, there were considerable stakes involved in this. In other instances, when members wrote their confession notes, they were intimidated into providing lists of other leftists, thus creating an atmosphere which resembled an ideological witch hunt. Dovetailing this policy of intimidation was a pattern of state officials offering rations and fertilizers in exchange for League membership. As rice shortages were a major concern in the rural communities, this helps explain the large number of peasants that joined the group.¹⁸¹

Cumulatively, these practices led to the League's massive growth in its first year. By the end of 1949, the group was estimated to have had 200,000 members, while by the June 25, 1950 invasion by the North, membership was over 300,000.¹⁸² On the eve of the collapse of the southern state, the National Guidance League embodied the contradictions of the First Republic's policy of anticommunist integration: on the one side stood the promises of integration, citizenship, and entrance into the national community; on the other, a mass system of surveillance, fear, and stigmatization administered by a National Security State capable of tremendous violence. These contradictions flowed from the same ideological precepts, and, in the long term, were likely irreconcilable. Absent the North Korean invasion, it is unclear what would have become of the National Guidance League, and it is worth noting that at the National Guidance Leagues' one year anniversary ceremony, 6,928 members completed the ideological

¹⁸¹ Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 159.
¹⁸² Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 387.
screening process (T'almaeng) and officially graduated from the program on June 5 1950. Concretely, however, the latter tendency took hold in the context of a retreat in which the South Korean state and the set of political interests and communities it embodied were threatened with extinction. What transpired over the first few months of the Korean War was perhaps the largest state-sponsored massacre of civilians in South Korean history.

The National Guidance League Incident: A De-Territorialized Politicide

On the dawn of June 25, 1950, the Korean People's Army (chosŏn inmin'gun) crossed the 38th parallel in an effort to reunify the peninsula under communist control. Equipped with Soviet weaponry and strategic planning, the invasion caught combined US/ROK intelligence by surprise and made stunning advances in the initial period of the conflict. For the ROK state, it was an absolute catastrophe. Roughly doubled in troop strength by the KPA and lacking in tanks, ROK forces rapidly collapsed in the first week of the war and it is estimated that by the end of June, its total troops had fallen from 95,000 to 22,000. Seoul was captured on June 28, 1950 and President Rhee and his cabinet secretly fled to Suwŏn, leaving thousands of administrators behind. In an early incident that foreshadowed the fate of many of Korea's refugees during the war, the Great Han Bridge, the Kwangjin Bridge, and three other railway bridges were detonated in a desperate defensive measure prior to the KPA's capture of Seoul. These actions likely led to the killings of thousands of crossing civilians and trapped many more

183 Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 159.
behind enemy lines.\textsuperscript{184} In other words, within the first week of the war, a precedent was already set whereby military expediency and regime survival trumped the basic life and death concerns of Korea's population. The profoundly socio/political character of the civil war was also apparent in these initial days of conflict, as the occupying KPA forces immediately resurrected the People's Committees, severely punished rightists, and instituted an extensive regime of social, political, and economic revolution.\textsuperscript{185}

On June 27, US President Harry Truman ordered US air and sea forces to assist the southern regime. On the same day, the United Nations authorized a combined membership force to intervene against the North Korean act of "aggression". Caught off guard by the surprise invasion from the north and void of a strong military presence, the US was compelled to rely upon a hastily assembled collection of decommissioned, inexperienced, and undertrained troops from the occupation of Japan under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. From Japan, MacArthur dispatched the Eighth US Army, at that time headed by General Walton H. Walker (Walker was officially appointed commander on July 13), with three attached divisions: the Twenty Fourth Division, the First Calvary Division, and the Twenty Fifth Division. Crippled by a lack of familiarity with South Korea's terrain and culture, logistical problems, and insufficient anti-tank weaponry, the first month of the war for the US brought with it a series of defeats and southward retreats, while Walker's command sought to fortify a massive defensive line dubbed the "Pusan Perimeter". In this context, US army engagements were primarily designed to stem the KPA onslaught, and US forces suffered heavy casualties from a foe perceived to be militarily

\textsuperscript{184} Janice Kim, "Living in Flight: Civilian Displacement, Suffering, and Relief during the Korean War, 1945–1953." Sahak yŏn'gu [History research] 100 (2010): 296. One source has noted at least 4,000 casualties arising from these acts. To make matters worse, by that time only 24,000 ROK troops had crossed the bridge, thus leaving 2/3 of the army stranded in Seoul.

\textsuperscript{185} Kim Dong Choon, The Unending Korea War, 93-141.
and racially inferior. For example, in its first military engagement with North Korean forces at Osan on July 5, members of the Twenty Fourth Division were rapidly overrun by a superior fighting force of KPA tanks and infantry men, forcing US forces into a hasty retreat. More ominously, in the July 14-21 Battle of Taejŏn, the Twenty Fourth Division was badly mauled by KPA forces, suffering over 3,000 casualties. Eventually, however, the strategy of buying time and bleeding out the advancing KPA forces paid off as combined US/ROK forces were able to hold the perimeter around Pusan in a bitter mid-August battle along the Naktong river. This stand gave the UN command time to regroup and prepare for the amphibious invasion at Inch'ŏn which effectively obliterated the KPA supply chain and forced them into a disorganized retreat. It is within this context of KPA invasion, and US/ROK retreat and retrenchment, that the National Guidance League Incident transpired.

There is much debate surrounding the significance of the June 25, 1950 North Korean invasion and its place within the larger trajectory of Korea's national division. Conventional histories generally mark it as the beginning of the Korean War proper, and therefore demarcate it as the temporal boundary separating Korea's liberation period from its wartime experience. In South Korea, the term "yugio" (6.25) still resonates (though less so with younger generations) throughout a society educated to believe in the North's absolute culpability for the country's violent division. Other scholarship, which emphasizes the civil characteristics of the Korean War, tends to downplay its importance, relegating it to a turning point within a larger narrative of civil war and national division. When we view these debates through the prism of the National Guidance League Incident, a different picture emerges: one in which conventional victories by the KPA over combined ROK and UN forces were paralleled by a violent political extermination
project carried out by the ROK against National Guidance League recruits and other suspected leftists.

The ravages of time, the destruction of evidence, government secrecy, the compromised memories of survivors and their families, and the political sensitivity of the issue has left historians with a fragmentary understanding of the killings which transpired primarily throughout the months of July and August. There are wide discrepancies concerning the number of killed throughout these months, which speaks volumes to the continuing problems of historical certitude and societal memory that plague South Korea's understanding of this seminal incident. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Korea's report, the official number of registered victims stands at 5,129, though it is almost certain that the actual number is considerably larger. Kim Dong Choon, who served as a standing commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from December 1, 2005 to December 10, 2009, argues that the number exceeds 100,000, while Heonik Kwon has recently put the number as high as 300,000.\textsuperscript{186} Official statistics from specific towns provide us with important insights, but vary so widely that it is impossible to identify a stable pattern concerning the percentages of members that were killed. In Kimhae, for example, 75.5\% of all League members were massacred, while in nearby Ch'ŏndo, 27.4\% are estimated to have perished under the auspicious of ROK security forces. In Ulsan, meanwhile over half of all recruits were presumably executed.\textsuperscript{187} Complicating things further, the killings were part of a much larger systematic killing of communist suspects, blacklisted civilians, detained rebels from the Cheju and Yŏ-sun uprisings, and preliminary detainees. Within the existing records, it is difficult to retrospectively distinguish between these groups. Concerning the mass killing at Taejŏn which began our

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{186} Kim Dong Choon, "Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres," 525; Kwon "Legacies of the Korean War," 164.
\item \textsuperscript{187} Min'ganin Chiptan Hüisaeng Sakkŏn, 163.
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chapter, the number of killed was at least 1,800, but only 285 have been actually confirmed with League members' deaths estimated at 34. In Taegu, another major extermination site, of the roughly 1,400 victims, only one has been confirmed as a National Guidance League recruit, suggesting that there is a significant amount of ambiguity surrounding the specific category of victims, and that the mass killings of suspected leftists in the early months of the Korean War goes well beyond the National Guidance League killings.  

How then, are we to make sense of this episode? Let us first examine the origins. For the historian, the origins of the NGL Incident—like the broader conflagration to which it was a component of—is an interpretive minefield. This may be attributed to the fact that beyond a lacuna of evidence, we must also contend with the still-tremendous political and ethical stakes involved in this history. In this case, the attribution of agency necessarily implies culpability, and we are therefore thrown into the still-acrimonious and often tedious debates concerning the legitimacy of each respective state. The moral complexities and concomitant potential for intellectual confusion surrounding this issue are well demonstrated in professor Suh Hee Kyung's analysis of the justice of the killings. Invoking the preeminent just war theorist Michal Waltzer, Suh argues that the "case can be viewed as a dilemma between national security (survival) and the protection of civilians (human rights). Suh concedes that the vast majority of National Guidance League members who were killed had already surrendered and posed no demonstrable threat to the state's survival. However, she adds that it is "impossible to clarify responsibility" for the National Guidance League killings, and even argues that since the massacres occurred during a war that the North Koreans started, it is proper to suggest that the Northern regime share a great deal of ethical responsibility for a series of killings unambiguously commissioned by the

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188 Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 166.
ROK state. Effectively, Suh's verdict re-enforces the nationalist position of the South Korean right: that because the atrocities were the product of a war that started on June 25, 1950, and because it was the Northern regime that initiated the fratricidal bloodletting, it is ultimately the culpable party for the war's violence—including acts committed by the southern regime.\footnote{Hee Kyung Suh, "War and Justice: Just Cause of the Korean War", Korea Journal, (2012): 21-24.}

Underpinning Suh's logic is the notion that the National Guidance League killings were ultimately defensive in nature; or, as they appear in the official reports on the killings: that they were "preventative massacres". There is some evidence—albeit limited and not necessarily reliable—to support this contention. Much of this pivots around the notion that the League functioned as a "fifth column" for the North Korean invaders. Without question, this was a legitimate fear of ROK and US officials prior to the outbreak of official hostilities. Because the League was perceived to be packed with ex-communists, the concern was that it could be a "potential vehicle for renewal of Communist activity". To my knowledge there is no evidence that this was actually the case prior to the war, and, as already mentioned, the vast majority of League recruits were not necessarily ideologically committed "communists".\footnote{The Foreign Service of the United States of America, Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, Summary of Political Affairs of the Republic of Korea October, 1949. November 7, 1949.} In the first few days of the North Korean invasion, however, it appears as though select members from the National Guidance League did indeed work with the North Korean invaders. National Guidance League members were actively involved in violent retributions against rightists and police officers in the border city of Kaesŏng when KPA troops occupied it on June 25, 1950.\footnote{Kim Dong Choon, The Unending War, 161.} Furthermore, when North Korean troops overtook Inch'ŏn within the first week of fighting, League members were rumored to have participated in pro-communist mass rallies and people's
courts against state officials. Numerous, but somewhat sketchy, accounts of the early weeks of occupation in Seoul indicate members of the National Guidance League performing functions for the new regime. One witness claimed that they played a leading role in reorganizing the People's Committees and punishing alleged "rightists". Another report from evacuees suggested that "thousands of members dropped their repentance of communism like a burning coal" and were responsible for mass "bloodshed and a reign of communist terror". However, the report was conducted from Pusan and was hastily cobbled together from evacuees fleeing the chaos of war, and its reliability is therefore unclear. Finally, escaped police officers from Seoul told John Muccio that the "worst excesses" of the occupation regime were committed by members of the League. While we may choose to remain agnostic as to the scale and accuracy of these conditions, it is clear that these stories filled ROK officials, particularly those within the National Security State, with dread.

The argument that the National Guidance League killings occurred in the context of a "supreme emergency" is therefore not completely without merit. But it is far too narrow, inflates the role of contingency, and is ahistorical. Indeed, when we peer into the anatomy of the massacres, what we find is a sharp continuity between the pre-war and wartime operations of the League and the National Security apparatus to which it was a facet of. This occurred through the

196 In his influential theory of "Just War", Walzer makes an argument for the "State of Emergency" as a possible exemption from the normative requires of just war. In Walzer's reading, the intentional targeting of civilians is conceivably justified in rare cases in which the basic survivor of a state and society demands such an action. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 251-255.
confluence of laws, ideology, organization, and political lineages that we have already identified as containing a latent politicideal energy. Concretely, the National Guidance League killings were a series of separate massacres that proceeded along in a partially ad-hoc manner as the battle line moved southward. However, the basic decision and legal rationale behind the killings flowed from the central state and were determined within the first week of war. According to then-acting head of the Sixth Division, Kim Man-sik, a direct order from President Rhee was sent out to all senior officials on June 27, 1950 to pre-emptively execute all potentially subversive elements in South Korea. In practice, this principally meant members of the National Guidance League or the South Korean Labour Party. Added to this were a series of draconian measures (including media censorship, the curbing of freedom of speech, extended rights for police to conduct house searches and pretention, and a radical curtailment of freedom of association rights) which culminated in the establishment of a nation-wide Martial Law decree on July 21, 1950. Cumulatively, these measures provided the legal backbone for the mass executions.

In our previous chapter, we outlined the significance of these legal instruments, focusing on their role in expediting ontological distinctions between friend and foe that formed the core of the ROK’s anticommunist strategy. As the National Guidance League itself was already an instrument for codifying this ideological bifurcation, the series of laws passed by the Rhee regime in the first month of the war were simply an acceleration of existing tendencies radicalized by the KPA onslaught. A critical feature to these laws, for example, was the codification of the term "pulsun punja", (meaning "rebel", or "impure"), a blanket legal category

198 Min’ganin Chiptan Hüisaeng Sakkôn, 142.
which enveloped blacklisted suspects, pre-detainees, and National Guidance League members
under a single bureaucratic nomenclature. In essence, it was a specific legal articulation of the
more ubiquitous "ppalgaengi" slur. Under the set of laws and decrees governing the pulsun
punja, power was initially handed down to military and conventional police officers to process
suspects and subject them to ideological screening. According to witnesses and documents,
pulsun punja were categorically ranked by their level of ideological suspicion. In many ways,
this represented a simple inversion from the hierarchical arrangements regarding recruits.
Though there existed slight variations from region to region, pulsun punja were generally
divided into three groups (A, B, C). "A" criminals were afforded the highest distinction of being
killed immediately, while "B" group members were subjected to additional "screening" (with
torture and interrogation being the primary methods) and selectively shot or released with
surveillance. "C" members, meanwhile, were considered low priority and ostensibly released.
However, as the majority of known executions which occurred in the summer of 1950 were
members of the National Guidance League or people serving sentences under five years, we can
surmise that when handed over to the security apparatus, the administration of justice tended to
tilt towards a guilty verdict.\textsuperscript{199} Through such legal and institutional processes, we may tie the
National Guidance League killings to pre-existing characteristics germane to the founding of the
ROK that were visible during the Cheju rebellions.

In both form and content, the chain of command for gathering, screening, and killing of
League members was consistent with patterns that have by now been well-established. With the
official order from the central government to execute the ideologically suspect established, the
administration of the policy was effectively handed over to the military police and the KCIC.

\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn}, 144, 167
frame the matter as charitably as possible, the ideological neutrality of these two branches was highly dubious. We have already intimated that at the helm of the KCIC was Kim Ch'ang-nyong, a man of notorious cruelty with deep ties to the previous colonial regime and Rhee's power base. With the outbreak of full scale war, the KCIC became integrated within the military, as KCIC officers were attached to each combat squadron with counter-espionage being its chief function. As the main vehicle for tracking down leftists, the KCIC was responsible for interrogating suspects, undercover activities, recruitment, arresting suspected guerrillas, investigations, and other similar operations. One of its principal tasks, however, was to track, process, and execute National Guidance League members and other suspected leftists under pre-detention. Furthermore, the KCIC oversaw all activities of the police, military police, and right-wing paramilitary youth groups, and by August 1, 1950 had complete control over all detention centres south of Taegu. Thus, it was the primary vehicle for carrying out the National Guidance League killings, headed by an anti-communist ideologue with a colonial era pedagogy in the service of Rhee's personal power. Assisting the KCIC in its endeavour was the military police. During the war, military police were inscribed with a number of tasks, including maintaining public order, searching for secret agents, processing refugees, and other security tasks. Regarding the National Guidance League Incident, the military police worked closely with the KCIC, tracking down suspected leftists and often directly carried out killings of suspects. We have already elaborated upon the police's connections to previous colonial power, but we may also note that at the head the military police during this period was Song Yo-ch'an, the author of the Cheju quarantine which effectively converted large swaths of the island into a killing field.

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200 Min'ganin Chiptan Hūisaeng Sakkŏn, 191.
201 Min'ganin Chiptan Hūisaeng Sakkŏn, 173.
Concerning the chronology of the incidents, killings hued closely to the development of the warfront as retreating ROK forces hastily incarcerated and executed real and imagined political enemies. Given the rapidity of the KPA advance, National Guidance League members to the north of Seoul were largely spared from the onslaught, though it is rumoured that the first killings occurred in Hŏngsŏng in Kangwŏn-do on June 28. It is also estimated that members from Seoul's prisons were transferred south to Suwŏn along with other prisoners and massacred en masse in late June and early July. While the documentary evidence concerning this particular incident remains sketchy, eye witness accounts (including family members and American Colonial Douglas Nichols) recall prisoners being transferred by trucks to outlying regions of Suwŏn where they were lined up and executed by handgun. According to Nichols, roughly 1,800 were killed in this episode.\footnote{Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 152.}

Geographically, the National Guidance League killings were largely a de-territorialized affair, with likely no village, town, or city south of Seoul left unscathed. Indeed, according to one report, 105 specific massacre sites have been identified, ranging as far north as Chunchŏn in Kangwŏn-do and all the way south to Sŏgwipo in Cheju.\footnote{Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 158-162.} Over the summer months, the organized killings proceeded in a fashion equal parts grim, monotonous, and sustained. Regions heavily implicated in the battles were initially hit the hardest. In Ch'unch'ŏng for example, killings occurred in the northern towns of Ch'ungchu, Ûmsŏng, and Chinch'ŏn from July 5-8 and transpired in the southern regions of Yŏngdong and Okch'ŏn from July 18-20. Already brutalized by the suppression campaigns of the previous years, the slaughter returned once again to the Chŏlla regions as intermittent cleansing operations were carried out from the middle of July onwards throughout its towns and villages. In the areas north of Taegu, a similar pattern

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{1} Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 152.
\bibitem{2} Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 158-162.
\end{thebibliography}
took place as major killings of League members occurred in Ulgin and Ponghwa from July 5 through to July 10, while executions took place in the southern regions from the middle of July until the end of the month. Meanwhile, in American occupied areas such as the Pusan Perimeter and Cheju, killings transpired primarily from August until the September 28 restoration of the Capital. 204

A closer examination of the death toll from these regions reveals the degree to which the vast organizational reach of the recruitment drive of the previous year was mobilized to exterminate the League's recruits. Endowed with extensive lists of thousands of confessed "communists", police and their auxiliaries raided members' houses, and dragged them to detention centres even when no explicit crime had been committed. Taejŏn and its surrounding areas were sites of frequent, large-scale killings. In the city itself, over 1,000 League members were killed throughout July. Similarly in Okch'ŏn and Ch'ŏngwŏn between 500 and 1,000 were executed. Cumulatively, Yŏsu, Sunch'ŏn, and Posŏn witnessed over 1,000 massacres as the political resentments of the previous year provided the impetus for local rightists to settle old scores from the guerrilla uprising. Ironically, it was the one area that was free of the North Korean occupation—the collection of towns and cities which encompassed the Pusan Perimeter—where the greatest number of League members were executed. Kyŏngsan, the site of the cobalt mines where prisoners from Taegu Prison were executed, had the highest concentration of victims, with a death toll that is expected to have exceeded 1,000. Meanwhile, executions of 500 to 1000 civilians occurred in cities and towns such as Pohang, Pusan, Ulsan, Yŏngch'ŏn, Ch'ŏngto, and Kimhae. That this mass-organized blood-letting transpired in the

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204 *Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn*, 148.
only region (except for Cheju) spared from the North Korean onslaught demonstrates the shortcomings of the argument that they were carried out in self-defence.205

For further evidence of the incident's systematic character, we may cite the consistency of methods for eliminating NGL members and the disposal of bodies. Unlike the 4.3 Incident, these murders generally lacked the sadism of the Cheju killings. In most instances, League members and other prisoners were carried out to nearby valleys, lined up, and executed by gunfire, with their bodies unceremoniously dumped into crudely dug trenches. In Korea's seaside towns, members were often escorted into the ocean by boat, shot, and dropped into the ocean, thus rendering the disclosure of both victim and perpetrator nearly impossible. In numerous other cases, members were told that they were to be released, then subsequently driven out to a remote airstrip or cave and killed. Given the scale and intensity of the enterprise, critical human and physical resources were devoted to the endeavour, as right-wing youth groups were mobilized to track down members and dig the killing pits, while factories and mineshafts were respectively converted into holding facilities for prisoners and their corpses. That this was carried out in the context of state disintegration demonstrates the highly effective organizational capacity of the killing apparatus, and the security forces' commitment to leftist liquidation.

The physical architecture behind the string of mass killings was vast. However, it is ultimately the prisons, pits, and mineshafts which remain the most potent symbols of this politicide. Collectively, these sites formed a symbiotic ecosystem for the processing, movement, and disposal of bodies deemed dispensable by state policy. Perhaps more so than any other location, Taejŏn prison and its surrounding regions were emblematic of the larger state-mandated bloodletting. US officials later remarked that, "the Taejŏn massacres will be recorded in the

205 Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 544.
annals of history along with the Rape of Nanking, the Warsaw ghetto and other similar mass exterminations." According to the report compiled by Colonel James W. Hanley, thousands of prisoners were "slaughtered in cold blood for political expediency". Though Hanley was referring to the communist massacre of ROK soldiers that we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the same verdict applies to the previous massacres committed by the ROK in the region, primarily throughout July. There is a great degree of variation in the numbers of Taejŏn prisoners killed, with estimates ranging from 1,400 to 7,000. Without question, however, a sustained massacre took place at Taejŏn prison and its outskirts with the full knowledge the US military. As early as July 3, US army intelligence reported that South Korean security forces in Taejŏn were rounding up communists and executing them. Witness testimony, onsite exhumations, and documents uncovered by the TRCK now give us a clearer picture as to what transpired. On June 28, detained prisoners from the Yŏ-sun uprisings were dragged out of their cells, taken by truck to valley nearby and summarily executed. These killings went on for three days and were the first in a series of three waves that continued until July 16, 1950. Though initially directed against clearly convicted communists, the mass round up and execution began to include National Guidance League members and other thought criminals, with the majority of these victims slaughtered between July 6 and July 16. The screening process hastily transpired on an ad hoc basis, and was often arbitrary. One guard later confessed to having to execute a prisoner that he knew to be only guilty of theft. On the other hand, standardized

206 War Crimes Division of Korea, Extract of Interim Historical Report, Korea War Crimes Division, June 30, 1953.
209 Jager, Brothers at War, 95.
mechanisms were in place to facilitate a routine system of executions. An anonymous witness named "Yun" testified that for ten days straight, police officers at Taejŏn would begin their day by loading up a truck full of prisoners and driving it out to the valley, where they would spend "all day executing prisoners". This combination, which fused an indiscriminate method for labelling "communists", with a relatively consistent method of disposal, helps explain the scale of atrocity which transpired at Taejŏn.

The cold, instrumental, and at times arbitrary nature of these mass killings should not obscure the fact that for many of the perpetrators and victims, the National Guidance League incident was often an intimate affair—one in which the violence was the culmination of local feuds that had been amplified by the political schisms of the pre-war period. In Chinju, for example, rightists used the opportunity to wipe out potential rivals to their local power base. These consisted primarily of local intellectuals and opinion leaders with socialist tendencies that had been critical of the police in the past, or were simply viewed with suspicion because of their elite level of education. On Cheju Island, 700 "leaders" of the National Guidance League were arrested following June 25. These included a Chief Judge, a Chief Prosecutor, lawyers, and businessmen who were critical of the police or had participated in politics prior to the 4.3 uprisings. For other families, the violence of the league killings were a simple extension of the 4.3 incident. Such was the case for survivor Kim Sŏng-su, whose family's trajectory emblemizes the wretched linkages between the two incidents. During the 4.3 episode, his family became separated, with his parents fleeing to the mountains. One of his sisters was imprisoned

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210 Taejŏn Ch'ungch'ŏng, 230.
211 Pak Chŏng-sŏk, "Chinju Chiyŏk Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn Hŭisaengja wa Yujoktŭl: Kusul Sarye rŭl chungsim ŭro," [Sacrifices from the Chinju Region National Guidance League Incident and Bereaved Families: A focus on Oral Testimonies], Yŏksa Pip'yŏng [Historical Criticism], (2011): 360-362.
and killed during this period. When the Korean War broke out, the majority of his village and family were imprisoned. Though the females were let go, the males, including his older brother, were sent to Taejŏn. Shortly afterwards, Kim Sŏng-su received a letter saying that his brother had been executed, along with other members of the National Guidance League. Kim and his family's misfortunes concretely illustrate the lived history of politicide that was an integral aspect of this fratricidal conflict. A superficially disparate chronicle of atrocities, stitched together by a set of legal practices, ideological interests, and the organizational matrixes of a National Security State confronted with the dilemmas and opportunities presented by a state of emergency.

By the time of the September 28 restoration of Seoul, the National Guidance League killings had effectively achieved their objective, with most of its members processed, murdered, or in hiding. However, the reestablishment of right-wing political order did not end the cycle of ideological cleansing, as a new round of killings of suspected leftists took place from early October until the January 4, 1951 joint Chinese/KPA recapture of Seoul. Though in this instance, both real and suspected collaborators with the North Korean occupation were the victims, there were profound continuities between the post-restoration killings and those of the previous summer. The Government established a Joint Investigation Division (*Hap tong susa ponbu*), which gave the police, military, and correctional divisions extralegal powers to track down and execute suspects. Mirroring the National Guidance League incident, those captured were respectively classified from A through to C in accordance with their level of perceived threat to the South Korean government. By the time of the January 4, 1951 retreat, hundreds of thousands had been arrested with an estimated 20,000 executed without trial throughout the fall. The fall restoration also brought with it a reemergence of a phenomenon which dominated South Korea's

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213 *Inmun Sahoe Chosa*, 396.
214 *Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn*, 251-258.
security concerns prior to the full-scale North Korean invasion: the guerrilla suppression campaigns surrounding the Chiri Mountains, and it is to these, and one particular episode of civilian slaughter, that we now turn.

The Guerrilla Campaigns and the Kŏch'ang Incident: A Critical Background

Within Korea's tumultuous post-liberation history, there is perhaps no other episode that more clearly illustrates the civil character of Korea's war of national division and the arbitrariness of the pre/post June 25, 1950 timeline than the intermittent guerrilla warfare that was primarily concentrated within the Chiri mountains from late 1948 until the spring of 1952. Pitting southern partisans against government security forces, the guerrilla uprisings and suppression campaigns were the culmination of the leftist failures of the previous years and the Rhee/US axis' tendency to respond to political/military crises with hard-line policies. Like our previously discussed Cheju and National Guidance League Incidents, the guerrilla campaigns were intricately woven into the broader logic of political division throughout the peninsula, and the battle for ownership of the South Korean state that this trajectory was constitutive of. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a tremendous amount of civilian carnage was a central feature of this struggle. In this final section, I focus on one particular incident, the Kŏch'ang Incident, that served as a crescendo within a tragic score of state-on-society violence, which, like a symphony, ebbed and flowed from 1948 onwards, held together by an reoccurring motif of
violence and mass death. Before embarking upon the details of the Kŏch'ang Incident, however, we must first situate it within the broader narrative of the guerrilla war campaigns.

In our summary of the Cheju incident, we briefly mentioned the joint Yŏ-sun Incident. Though thoroughly crushed, the mutiny was the most significant threat to the incipient Rhee Government and the starting point for a primarily indigenous South Korean partisan uprising that in its first phase lasted until the June 25 invasion of 1950. It was also the initial stage in a four year-long arc of internecine political struggle, violence, and massacres throughout the Chŏlla and Kyŏngsang provinces. Assessing the direct causes—and therefore, in the case of Korean society, "blame"—for the rebellion is a complicated matter. The immediate cause was the Fourteenth regiment's refusal to follow orders to suppress the concurrent rebellion on Cheju island. This has led representatives of the victims to conclude that the rebellion was principally an anti-imperialist uprising against "anti-democratic" and "anti-unification" elements.\(^{215}\) From the opposite end of the spectrum, the American Occupation and Rhee Government condemned it as part of a Moscow inspired plot, orchestrated by Kim Il-Sung to overthrow the newly elected South Korean Government.

In the political arena, these positions are mutually exclusive. However, this is not necessarily the case for the historian. Though both clearly exaggerate elements of a complex history, there is considerable evidence to support that a) endogenous factors relating to dissatisfaction with the police, separate elections, local grievances with exploitive landlords, and the eradication of the local People's Committees motivated most of the participants, and that b) the rebellion was a clear attempt to set off a wider chain of events that would lead to the

\(^{215}\) Yŏsun Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Wiwŏnhoe [Commission for the Investigation of the Truth of the Yŏsun Incident], Yŏsun Sakkŏn Sunch'ŏn Chiyŏk P'il'ae Silt'ae Chosa Pogosŏ [Investigation Report on Actual Damages from the Yŏsun Incident in the Sunch'ŏn Region] (Sunch'ŏn: Chinsang Chosa Wiwŏnhoe, 2010), Forward.
overthrow of the First Republic and the establishment of a leftist regime. Let us briefly examine the latter of these premises first. Though there is little evidence to support the conspiratorial claims, there was without question a broader political agenda than undiluted patriotism at work in the mutiny. As we already mentioned, the constabulary was a major site of political conflict, with the left infiltrating many of its regiments. Prior to the uprising, the Fourteenth Regiment was suspected by American advisors of being politically unreliable. Further, it is clear that under the rebel occupied areas, authorities immediately sought to implement a revolutionary agenda. For example, a People's Congress was held, which adopted a six-point resolution which included the goals of "mopping-up Pro-Japanese, national traitors, and the police, and land reform through expropriation and free distribution of land". Likewise, speakers at public assemblies widely called for a "Korea People's Republic" and in some instances the North Korean flag was flown throughout the streets. Most ominously, so-called "Peoples Trials" were held, leading to the public shaming and often execution of rightists, Korean National Police members, and landlords. One source indicated that simply having good clothes could lead one to be shot. However, the initial popular support that the rebellion received indicates that widespread dissatisfaction with the First-Republic motivated members of the population to join or assist the rebels. Meanwhile, as Yi Su-na has demonstrated, throughout both the rebellion and the subsequent guerrilla war, recruitment for the rebels was primarily local. Furthermore, in its initial phases, participation in the uprising was voluntary and strongest in areas with rooted People's Committees, thus indicating that the loss of sovereignty was a crucial motivating factor. Indeed, according to Yi, it was not until the fall of 1949 that the uprising came under a

\[216\] Jager, *Brothers at War*, 52.
\[218\] Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2*, 262.
\[219\] Ibid, 261.
hierarchical structure of centralized control—suggesting that the rebellion was spontaneous and planned out in an ad-hoc manner.\textsuperscript{220} In other words, with the inevitable allowance for local variations, the political dynamics propelling the events surrounding Yŏ-sun corresponded to a similar logic that we identified to be at work throughout the Cheju uprisings—one in which local resentments, the political conflict between right and left, and the consolidation of right-wing anticommmunist power drove leftists into a doomed confrontation with the forces of coercion.

With Sunch’ŏn and Yŏsu respectively recaptured by government forces on October 23 and October 28, 1948, surviving members from the mutiny fled to nearby villages and mountains, setting up headquarters for further incursions. Though pockets of guerrillas could be found as far north as the eastern border of the 38th parallel operating within the Taebaek Mountains, the majority of guerrilla incidents were concentrated in southern Chŏlla, followed by the areas of Kyŏngsang-do bordering the Chiri Mountains. The extent of North Korean involvement in this phase is a matter of controversy, and there is evidence to support the fact that the Kim Il-Sung regime operated a training centre for Partisans known as the Kangdong Hagwŏn.\textsuperscript{221} However, in the southern regions of substantial guerrilla activity, little evidence exists of North Korean support or direction, with nearly all guerrilla recruits being indigenous to the area, armed with Japanese and American arms. Like its Cheju predecessor, the southern Partisan campaign was predominately a local affair, concentrated in an area where the American military government was late to penetrate.

Similar to the events at Cheju, guerrilla strategy was premised upon entrenching themselves in mountain redoubts, entering villages at night to secure supplies and rally support,

\textsuperscript{220} Yi Su-na, "Yŏsun Sakkŏn ihu Ppalch’isan Hwaltong kwa kū Yŏnghyang" [Activities and Influence of Partisans During the Yŏsun Incident], \textit{Yŏksa Yŏng’gu} [Historical Research], 20, (2011): 175-205.
\textsuperscript{221} Cumings, \textit{The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2}, 283.
and attacking favourable targets such as police stations and right-wing youth offices. Guerrilla strength was concentrated in areas of traditional left-wing support and military successes tended to occur in the spring and summer months when foliage was dense and food and supplies more ample. The government's counter-insurgency methods likewise mirrored those which befell Cheju. Following previously established patterns, the regime's strategy represented a militarized version of the Manichean political logic that drove the right's consolidation of political power. To break the rebel/peasant nexus, counter-insurgency forces divided villages along perceived ideological lines, cutting off food supplies to suspicious areas, and burning down entire villages that were suspected of cooperating with the enemy. Right-wing youths were likewise conscripted to hunt down suspected communist collaborators and served as civilian watch groups. These young men were armed with bamboo spears and carefully tracked the day to day movements of the villagers. Unsurprisingly, at the head of the guerrilla suppression campaign were two ex-Japanese Kwantung army officers, Kim Paek-il and Chŏng Il-gwŏn. The winter months proved most advantageous to the counter-insurgency forces, as the lack of foliage made tracking the guerrillas a relatively simple task, while the barren mountain terrain was unfavourable to the guerrillas' acquisition of supplies. By the spring of 1950, it appeared as though guerrilla strength had been sapped, marking the counter-insurgency campaign as one of the First Republic's few unqualified successes.222

Predictably, the 1948-1950 counter-insurgency campaign brought with it a plethora of civilian atrocities which bore an eerie resemblance to those which transpired on Cheju, as battles between guerrillas and suppression forces were waged at the village level. Dissimilar from our previous two cases, rebel forces shared a greater responsibility for the violence against civilians.

However, it is estimated that roughly 70% of all atrocities were committed by government soldiers and right-wing youths.\textsuperscript{223} Official death counts are shaky at best, with the official number of registered atrocities at 2,043 for the Yŏ-sun-June 25 1950 period. Victims' groups place numbers much higher, at over 10,000.\textsuperscript{224} It is likely that the victims' representatives are closer to the mark. Indeed, in a November 1949 government commissioned report on South Chŏlla, the total number of deaths for the region was compiled as 11,131. Given that this was for only one of the four afflicted provinces and was conducted prior to the winter suppression campaign of 1949-1950, it is highly plausible that the number is far greater than this.\textsuperscript{225}

Incidents of civilian violence were most prevalent in the areas within and surrounding Yŏsu and Sunch'ŏn, but spread out throughout the Chŏlla and Kyŏngsang provinces, thus giving the atrocities both local and regional characteristics. Indeed, massacres occurred in forty-seven distinct cities or districts. Significant large scale killings (over 1,000) were carried out in Sunch'ŏn and Yŏsu, but thirty-seven separate small scale killings (under 100) are estimated to have been carried out in smaller villages throughout the region. This variance between scale and location is highly suggestive of a coordinated policy which, while designed to crush guerrilla power, was also clearly targeted at potential rebel supporters. Finally, the highest category of unarmed victims were those suspected of providing food or shelter to enemies. This indicates that the violence from the state was highly coercive, calculated towards obtaining political obedience within a restive population.\textsuperscript{226}

It is difficult to find an area within the regions of Yŏsu, Sunchŏn, Posŏn, Kohŭng, Kwangyang, and Hwasun that was not afflicted. A representative sample of a few of the nearly

\textsuperscript{223} The official number is 69.4%. \textit{Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn}, 94
\textsuperscript{224} \textit{Yŏsun Sakkŏn Sunch'ŏn Chiyŏk P’ihae Silt’ae Chosa Pogosŏ}, IV.
\textsuperscript{225} \textit{Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn}, 94
\textsuperscript{226} \textit{Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn}, 114-116, 128.
ubiquitous instances of village-level slaughter reveal the interaction between ideological consolidation of the National Security State on the one hand, and the micro-politics at the village level on the other. Sustaining this cruel chain of causation was the endowment of summary execution in the hands of security forces—a practice that was simultaneously occurring on Cheju Island. The semiotics of these massacres was predictably similar. In effect, soldiers, police officers, and other rightists were empowered to convert large swaths of the population into disposable lives for often dubious reasons. A witness from Chŏmŏn-myŏn recalled that the entire village was classified as "aligned with the enemy" and summarily executed.\(^{227}\) This diffuse and thorough projection of state sovereignty was also exercised over individual bodies in the form of torture, a practice which, in turn, led to an increase in the number of alleged subversives. Typically, torture was carried out in the police stations. In doing so, the police force not only functioned as an instrument of coercion and stability, but also as an agency for the production of political subjectivities. For example, in Ponsan-ri, young men were rounded up by rightists and sent to the police station where they were tortured into naming other leftists, which led to the further hunting down and killing of civilians.\(^{228}\) This vicious cycle foreshadowed a practice of the National Guidance League we saw above whereby the number of accused "leftists", and therefore, the number of civilian deaths, were radically increased by the coercive logic of the embryonic National Security State.

Within this context, old political or personal scores could be settled under the guise of wiping out communist subversives. Such was the case of Kim Mong-gil, the village chief of


\(^{228}\) Posŏng Sakkŏn, 618.
Ungch’-myŏn. During the colonial era, Kim had engaged in anti-Japanese activities and was active in the local People's Committee following liberation. On the heels of the Yŏ-sun uprising, leftists took over Ungch’i and held revolutionary trials where rightists and landlords were executed. At the assembly, Kim gave a brief speech in which he said, "The State and Nation must be united". Shortly after the police and military seized control of the village, Kim was hauled to the police station on November 30, 1948 where he was interrogated and tortured for ten days. During this period, his family's home was burnt to ashes. On December 9, Kim and nine others were executed by the police. In other cases, simple jealousy could evolve into a form of resentment leading to politicized death. For example, in November of 1948, a well-educated man named Hong Ok-tong was executed by the police. Though officially this was attributed to the fact that he was spreading propaganda on behalf of the communists, witness testimonies present a different picture. During the colonial era, Hong was from a wealthy household and sent to Japan to be educated. This caused some of the villagers to look upon him with suspicion and jealousy. When the Yŏ-sun episode broke out, locals spread a rumour to the police that Hong was a communist because he had read leftist literature while attending university in Japan. This charge was enough to get him executed. Both Kim and Hong's deaths painfully illustrate the abject precariousness of human life brought upon by a particular conjecture: one in which seething local resentments were energized by the zero-sum contest over control of the southern state, and one in which the intrusion of the ideological, bureaucratic, and legalistic logic of the anticommutist National Security State provided a ready-made rationale for

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229 Posŏng Sakkŏn, 611.
human slaughter. For villagers caught within this maelstrom, the line between life and death was often arbitrary, but seldom random.

Regardless of the moral qualms that one may find with such a strategy, by the spring of 1950 it appeared to have achieved its desired effect, with the guerrilla movement all but eviscerated according to North Korean sources. However, in the fall of 1950, the cycle of guerrilla uprisings and counter-insurgency leading to civilian deaths would repeat itself again in the wake of the North Korean retreat, leaving in its historical wake one emblematic massacre to which we now turn.

The Second Guerrilla Uprising and the Routine Nature of the Kŏch'ang Massacre

The Autumn of 1950 ushered in a new phase of the Korean conflict with US-led UN forces cutting KPA forces to pieces and forcing them into a rapid retreat euphemistically referred to without irony as "The Great Strategic Retreat" in official North Korean hagiography. While the bulk of Korean War historiography concerning the events from the 1950 fall through to the 1951 spring is concerned with pivotal moments such as the American decision to cross the 38th parallel, the Chinese entrance into the war, and US General Douglas Macarthur's dismissal for insubordination, this period also witnessed a revival of the southern partisan guerrilla offensive, thought to be a dead issue the previous spring. Already a severe nuisance to American troops

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231 Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2, 404.
during the KPA summer onslaught, partisan strength grew in the fall of 1950 as retreating KPA
troops joined existing underground networks in an effort to form a rear column against a
militarily superior foe.\textsuperscript{232} It was the final serious indigenous military threat that the First
Republic face and in many ways was the climax of South Korea's civil war era.

The number of guerrillas operating in the southern provinces remains a matter of
speculation. A South Korean Government official estimated that close to 50,000 guerrillas
operated in South Chŏlla alone, while a National Assembly investigation in late October put the
number at 40,000. However, given the Rhee Government's penchant for exaggerating enemy
strength to justify military procurements and draconian policies, we ought to view these statistics
with a modicum of suspicion.\textsuperscript{233} American sources put the number at a more modest 20,000 with
as many as 10,000 coming from retreating KPA forces.\textsuperscript{234} This influx of northern partisans,
however, should not distract us from the fall guerrilla campaign's inherently local dynamics, as
the regions of previous leftist power (save for Cheju where leftists were virtually exterminated
during the 4.3 Incident, ) once again reemerged as the focal points for guerrilla struggle. Indeed,
similar to the previous uprisings, South Chŏlla and the areas surrounding the Chiri mountains in
Kyŏngnam-do were the most guerrilla infested regions with 206 units spread primarily
throughout them.\textsuperscript{235}

Undoubtedly hardened by the preceding violence, which culminated in the KPA
southward invasion, the ROK (now under the control of the US-led UN command) promulgated
a brutal suppression campaign at the beginning of October. Tied to the Ninth division of the
American Army which gave it carte-blanche in dealing with Korean villagers, the suppression

\textsuperscript{232} Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 264.
\textsuperscript{233} Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 264.
\textsuperscript{234} Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 2, 689; Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 264.
\textsuperscript{235} Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 243.
campaign was organized under the ROK's Eleventh division and was overseen by the
costabulary's Chief of Staff, Chŏng Il-gwŏn, one of the principal authors of the previous
counter-insurgency operations. The Eleventh division was divided between three regiments, the
Ninth, the Thirteenth, and the Twentieth, and enveloped all of the Honam and Yŏngnam regions.
Heading the Eleventh division was Ch’oe Tŏk-sin, a former member of Jiang Jieshi's
Goumingtang army, while each regiment was led by former Japanese officers and veterans of the
Cheju and Yŏ-sun campaigns. Attached to each regiment were various right-wing youth civilian
and defense groups, who were charged with keeping watch, securing roads, and conducting
village searches for suspected leftists. In other words, there was no basic change in the
physiology of the suppression campaigns from Cheju onwards, despite the repeated phenomenon
of civilian atrocities.236

The suppression campaigns were carried out methodically, coordinated through a four-
stage strategy which secured main cities and roads first, moving to the village level, and finally
into the mountains to mop up remaining guerrillas by the beginning of 1951. During the fall
battles, atrocities from both sides of the ideological spectrum were common place as villagers
either actively assisted the warring sides or were consumed by the war's vortex. Corresponding
to our previously established patterns, violence spread throughout the cities, townships, and
villages, with the bulk of the carnage aimed at civilians carried out by government forces. The
lynchpin of the Eleventh division's counter-insurgency strategy was a tactic employed by both
the Kwangtung and Goumingtang forces known as "kyŏnbyŏk ch'ŏngya". A brutal, if effective
policy, kyŏnbyŏk ch'ŏngya was premised upon securing safe villages while starving the enemy of
critical resources. In practice, this meant dividing villages along ideological lines, moving

236 Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 244-245.
civilians and food to safe hamlets, with suspicious villages burned and reduced to ashes in an effort to cut off guerrilla access to crops. In other words, the policy was a carbon copy of the scorched earth tactics employed on Cheju Island two years prior, and a dramatic expression of the binary ethos of the southern regime.\(^{237}\) Incidents of soldiers entering villages, lining up residents suspected of supporting the rebel cause and shooting them were ubiquitous. In the Honam regions, the majority of atrocities were carried out in the fall of 1950, and have been officially tallied at 2,417. In Yŏngnam, the majority of the violence was carried out from the winter of 1951 until the spring, and again occurred over a four month span from December 1951 until March of the following year and is estimated to have surpassed 1,000 deaths.\(^{238}\) As is likely clear to the reader by now, however, these numbers only indicate those officially registered, so the actual number killed is considerably greater. It was in the first period of the Yŏngnam campaigns that the incident transpired at Kŏch'ang that we use to close off this tragic chapter.

Situated on the Northeastern flank of the Chiri Mountains, the unassuming county of Kŏch'ang was a scene of a grisly atrocity carried out by suppression forces in February, 1951 in the township of Sinwŏn. From its immediate aftermath to this day, contests between the perpetrators, agents of the state, and bereaved families have proliferated over the nature and meaning of the atrocity. Recently, bereaved families have claimed an official site which registers their version of events. Just beyond Sinwŏn's dusty main street, stands the massive Kŏch'ang Incident Memorial Park (Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn Ch’umo Kongwŏn). Consisting of a monument, a mock cemetery to the victims, a museum, and various other displays erected to educate the public and honour the victims, the site stands as a physical testament to the state's brutality and the painstaking efforts by survivors to restore the honour of their family members.

\(^{237}\) Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 254.  
\(^{238}\) Min'ganin Chiptan Hŭisaeng Sakkŏn, 260.
Flanking the park are a series of cemeteries and massacre sites. These sites not only register a heinous atrocity, but also carry with them the scars, contradictions, and triumphs of a community doggedly determined to honour the spirits of the deceased by clarifying the truth of what happened to their loved ones. Visitors can walk along the same paths that villagers were forced to trudge at gun-point barefooted through the snow, stand and reflect next to the pit where victims were executed and torched, read the eulogies authored to deceased souls, and touch the names of the lives wasted in that bitter winter.

The site carries with it an explicitly didactic function—a clear attempt to imprint a permanent verdict onto a long-distorted past. Embedded throughout the museum is a redemptive narrative of a buried atrocity brought to life through the stubborn efforts of the bereaved families. An integral component of this story concerns the framing of Sinwŏn prior to the devastating massacre. In the Historical Education Museum, this is displayed through a series of panels simply titled "Kŏch'ang Civilian Massacre". In the first panel, Sinwŏn is portrayed as a "quiet mountain village" where villagers "lived nearly like one family". Visually reinforcing this narrative is an image of a father and mother pleasantly toiling the lush green fields, while children joyously play in the mountainous background. No specific date is given for the image, implying that this was the natural and timeless state of affairs for the peasantry prior to the military's intrusion. History and the military, however, intrude in the next set of panels. Here the viewer is presented with a series of visual and textual depictions of a three-day killing spree carried out against unarmed villagers. Juxtaposing the initial image, a firm chronology is present throughout this narrative, with specific descriptions of when and where each atrocity was carried out. Cumulatively, this approach to temporality works to solidify a key component of the victims' contemporary discourse surrounding the incident: that the Koch'ang bloodbath was a
singular episode—one in which a simple and apolitical peasantry was caught within a war-zone and suffered the excesses of a zealous military.

For many of the victims in Sinwŏn, this was indeed the case, and it is hoped that it is no great disservice to the memories of the deceased to suggest that the political history of the village and surrounding regions was far more checkered. Indeed from 1948 onward, the mountainous regions of Kŏch'ang, Hamyang, and Sanch'ŏn that flanked the Chiri mountains were a hot-bed of guerrilla activity, village conflicts, and continuous slaughter that ran the gauntlet from heavily politicized to arbitrary. Despite its mythologized status as an idyllic network of peasant communities, Sinwŏn township was deeply implicated in these developments. The earliest evidence of direct political conflict and massacre that I have been able to find was in the fall of 1949. This occurred in the village of Waryong-ri and involved the deaths of Kang Wŏn-sik and Pak Yong-ho. In October 1949, Kang was murdered by partisan forces because of his position as village leader of the rightist Taehan Youth Group. At his funeral, Kang's father accused Pak and two others of planning the assassination. Police hauled the three to the Kŏch'ang police station for questioning, but released them after determining that they offered "no specific threat". When Pak returned to the village, however, Kang's father protested that it was Pak who alerted partisan forces to the whereabouts of Kang's house, and another local police officer took Pak out to a valley and killed him with a sword. Later in the summer of 1950, when North Korean forces came through the village, Kang's father was placed in a birdcage and interrogated by soldiers because of his suspicious rightist background. However, he was eventually released. Intriguingly, Waryong-ri was one of the main villages where the Kŏch'ang Incident later
transpired. Evidence also exists from this period that villagers within Sinwŏn were the targets of violence from the police and military if they were suspected of giving the Partisans rice—even if this was conducted under threat. For example, in the village of Ch'ŏnsu-ri, Yu Pong-t'ae was repeatedly taken to the Sinwŏn police station and flogged for providing for provisions to partisan forces. Eventually, Yu fled to the mountains, but was caught shortly afterwards and summarily executed at the Sinwŏn police office.

Both Pak and Yu's stories confirm that the combination of partisan activities, villager suspicion, and the arbitrariness of police power provided Sinwŏn with a volatile energy. It was the structure of village power, however, that proved most potent. Pak Yŏng-po, the village chief (myŏn chang), symbolized the nexus of rightist power flowing between the village and the state. Beyond his position as village head, Pak was the leader of the local branch of the Taedong Youth Group, a far-right youth group whose aims, tactics, and operations were closely aligned with the Northwest Youth Group. Additionally, Pak was eventually named head of the Sinwŏn branch of the National Guidance League. With his office adjacent to the Sinwŏn police box, Pak utilized his administrative authority and ties to the youth groups to advance his own power and to eliminate real and imagined leftist threats. For example, when Pak learned that a member of his office staff’s cousin had an interest in leftist ideology, Pak ordered members of the Taedong Youth Group to force his co-worker to join the National Guidance League. In another instance, Pak was reported to have ordered the death of his second in command (Pu myŏn chang), Yi Kuk-wan, on the grounds that he did not support Syngman Rhee. Ostensibly, ideology was not a

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240 Ibid, 349.
factor as Yi was head of the *Ch'ŏson Minjok Ch'ŏngnyŏndan*, a right-wing youth group associated with Yi Pŏm-sŏk's power base.\(^{241}\) Throughout his tenure with the National Guidance League, Pak played an integral role in first mobilizing recruitment and later rounding and processing the victims. In the case of the former, members of the *Taedong Youth Group* and Northwest Youth Group went into villages, accused villagers of giving the communists rice, and told them that they could get amnesty if they joined the League. According to one witness, seventeen men from Sinwŏn joined the League and they were eventually rounded up and killed in July 1950 in the Kŏch'ang central police station. 150 other League members from the region are estimated to have been killed in this same episode. In other worlds, through Pak's efforts, Sinwŏn was clearly integrated into the larger organizational killing apparatus of the National Security State.\(^{242}\)

Finally, prior to the killing-spree, Kŏch'ang was a site of tremendous contestation between the partisan and suppression forces. Consistent with other regions surrounding the Chiri mountains, from the fall of 1950 through to the winter of 1951, Kŏch'ang was highly contested terrain, infested with local and residual guerrillas from the KPA. Indeed, on December 5, 1950, guerrillas had ambushed the regional police office, killing 10 combined police officers and right-wing youth members.\(^{243}\) It is within this context of bitter internecine civil war, rightist domination of the local coercive apparatus, and the accumulation of village resentments that the Kŏch'ang Incident unfolded.


\(^{242}\) *Kyŏngnam Kŏch'ang*, 489-491.

The events that collectively comprise the Kŏch'ang Incident occurred from February 7-11 as Commander of the Ninth Regiment O Ik-ryŏng dispatched the Third Battalion headed by Han Tong-sŏk to mop up existing guerrillas. Battered by the onslaught of the suppression campaigns and severely deprived of food, guerrillas were rumoured to be receiving support from the villages surrounding Sinwŏn township, an anathematic prospect for the counter-insurgency forces. On the early morning of February 7, Han's forces entered Sinwŏn uncontested, finding mainly elderly and female civilians. Clearly frustrated, for the next three days the Battalion raided the local villages of Tehyŏn-ri, Hungyu-ri, and Waryong-ri, rounding up roughly 1,000 villagers and bringing them to Sinwŏn's elementary school (Sinwŏn kungmin hakkŏ) on February 10th. Over the next two days, the villagers were divided and interrogated, with the majority ultimately slaughtered by Korean troops in the nearby valleys. Roughly 700 of an estimated village population of 1,400 are recognized to have perished. Later evidence suggests that all of them were unarmed, and included many women, elderly, and 327 children under the age of 16. To add insult to injury, many of the women were raped prior to their execution, and the freshly killed bodies were thrown into a bit, doused with gasoline, and collectively lit ablaze. 244

The anatomy of the Kŏch'ang massacre suggests a carefully plotted exercise, carried out under a situation that at the time was devoid of significant military duress. Throughout the ordeal, guerrilla resistance was absent, and local detectives and police officers were on site in the school classrooms screening for potential subversive elements. Corresponding to our previous episodes, the dividing line distinguishing mercy from death was political rather than explicitly military, as the dichotomy between survivors and the afflicted served as a barometer for the

244 Min'ganin Chiptan Hüisaeng Sakkŏn, 260.
social and ideological tensions of the village. Before carrying out the killings, the Third Battalion separated the members of the local security forces, wealthy landlords, and their families from the general population, indicating that while civilians were clearly targeted, the violence was explicitly discriminatory and calculated to achieve a socio/political objective. In the 1960s, it was revealed that Pak Yŏng-po assisted the military in identifying non-military households and watched without protest as the slaughter unfolded. To enhance our case that the events at Kŏch'ang were consistent with the systematic politicidal logic that we have developed throughout this treatise, we may add that nearly identical incidents were committed by the Third Battalion from December 1950 through to March 1951 in the townships and villages of the near-lying Sanch'ŏng and Hamyang regions (Obu-myŏn: Pugong-ri, Taehyŏn-ri, Samjang-myŏn: Honggye-ri, and Sich'ŏn-myŏn: Naegong-ri, Naedae-ri). In all of these cases, as well as Kŏch'ang, evidence of the atrocities was disposed of as the victims' bodies were burned to ashes and their bones were scattered and secretly buried in the valleys outside of the villages.

What enabled these events to transpire with such ubiquity? I have already pointed to the issues of local cleavages and the precarious condition that villagers were thrust into by the twin demands of partisan and counter-insurgency forces. A third element may now be added: the role of Kim Chong-wŏn, who at the time of the incident was District Provost Marshal and Commanding Officer of Kyŏngnam Province. Through his rise to power, his ideological proclivities, and his willingness to use extreme violence as a means of achieving his personal and political goals, "Tiger" Kim epitomized the politicidal arc of the National Security State. Born into a poor Korean family that lived in Japan, Kim joined the Japanese army in 1940 and rose to the rank of sergeant—a rank which, in the words of US Ambassador John Muccio, "epitomized

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245 Min'ganin Chiptan Hūisaeng Sakkŏn, 261.
246 Min'ganin Chiptan Hūisaeng Sakkŏn, 262.
the brutality of the Japanese Army at its worst". Following Korea's liberation, Kim briefly served as a police captain in Seoul, before joining the constabulary in 1946. Despite his reputation for insubordination against US military authorities (which led him to frequently change positions and locations), Kim steadily rose to the rank of deputy regimental commander of the suppression operations in the wake of the Yǒ-su insurrections. Kim's behaviour prior to the war has led Kim Dong-Choon to conclude that he was a "morally depraved" individual, who, along with Kim Ch'ang-nyong, was likely responsible for the "majority of civilian massacres" during this period. Professor Kim's depiction is completely appropriate. During the Yǒ-su crackdown, "Tiger" Kim was captain of the anti-riot army and was infamous for publically decapitating enemy collaborators with a Japanese-style sword. As commander of the Twenty-second Regiment, Kim was known for implementing summary executions of detainees and targeting civilians that he suspected of aiding the enemy. For example, in Wǒngu-dong, Kim publically executed civilians that he suspected of spreading propaganda leaflets. During this episode, he forced the rest of the villagers to watch, and his men opened fire on women and children who tried to flee. Villagers claim that over 500 were killed in this atrocity. Kim's noted brutality prior to the war earned him the moniker of "tough cookie" by Ambassador Muccio, but the word "butcher" is perhaps closer to the mark.

When the Korean War broke out, Kim's Regiment was transferred to the front lines, where he rapidly earned the disdain of the Americans. Despite his formidable reputation, Kim was regarded by the American military as a "coward", who preferred to shoot his own men rather than stand up to the advance of the North Korean Army. Kim's antics led American Colonel

249 Ibid.
Rollins S Emmerick to conclude that if Kim was not moved, he would "shoot the SOB" himself.\textsuperscript{251} Kim was relieved of his command, but was later appointed Deputy Provost Marshal General of Kyŏngsang Province where he exercised Martial-Law. During this period, Kim played a significant role in the mass execution of political prisoners and National Guidance League members throughout the region. At the time, an American adviser noted something "strange" in Kim's increasingly "excitable" behaviour, and learned that Kim's plan was to execute 3,500 prisoners in Pusan on the grounds that feeding them was a waste of resources. Another plot to kill 4,500 prisoners in Taegu was also revealed during this month. Officially, Americans were able to stop both of these atrocities. However, as already revealed, the regions surrounding Pusan and Taegu were significant arenas for the summer politicide, suggesting that Kim and his subordinates' plans were largely carried out without interference. Indeed, an anonymous American official even promised Kim that if the war situation became dire, he would be "permitted to open up the gates" of the prisons "and shoot the prisoners with machine guns".\textsuperscript{252} Finally, we may add to Kim's sordid resume a reputation for rigging elections, kidnapping National Assembly Members, and harassing and torturing members of the press.\textsuperscript{253}

By the fall of 1950, Kim had acquired the various titles of Vice Commander of Military Police in the Civil Affairs Department of the South Kyŏngsang District Martial Law command, District Provost Marshal, and Commanding Officer of the District Army Security Unit. Cumulatively, these positions made him the "principle agent for the enforcing of martial law", and perhaps the "most powerful man in the province", according to US sources. Additionally, though technically under the control of the ROK Army, Kim had direct access to Rhee, and

\textsuperscript{252} Emmerich, Rollings S. \textit{Early History of the Korean War 1950 By Lieutenant Colonel Rollings S Emmerich.}
\textsuperscript{253} Kim Dong Choon, \textit{The Unending Korean War}, 201-202.
reportedly supplied information to, and received direct orders from, the President.\textsuperscript{254} From his perch, Kim oversaw the implementation of Operation Order Number 5. Handed to the Eleventh Division, Operation Order Number 5 proved decisive for facilitating the Kŏch'ang atrocity. At the subsequent trial against the commanders of the Third Battalion, the order was revealed to have stated that "the battalion commander taking command of the operation in the Sinwŏn region is given the right to set up an itinerant court martial, and is allowed to execute those convicted as enemy sympathizers after a summary trial."\textsuperscript{255} This legal framework is consistent with previous policies and strategies that we have outlined, whereby supreme sovereignty over the lives and deaths of civilians was endowed in the figure of the individual commander. However, recent evidence has been unearthed which suggest an even more direct role for the National Security State in authorizing the deaths of the people in Sinwŏn, as well as the surrounding areas. A long-repressed sentence within Operation Order Number 5 ordered soldiers to "shoot all the people in enemy hands" throughout Hamyang, Sanch'ŏn, and Kŏcha'ng.\textsuperscript{256} To date, it is the clearest direct order for the sanctioning of political genocide that was widely practiced by the ROK security forces throughout the civil war era. That we find it coming from the offices of a major figure within the National Security State in general, and Rhee's personal power-base in particular, is at this point hardly surprising.

Operation Order Number 5 was emblematic of the instrumental and sustained logic which underpinned the series of killings we have thus far chronicled. In its elastic legal cover, its sanctioning of spatialized mass-death, and its conflation of civilians with the "enemy", its serves as a sign-post for the ideological proclivities and exigencies of a fledgling regime that was equal

\textsuperscript{254} Foreign Service of the United States, \textit{Tiger Kim VS. The Press}, May 12, 1951.
\textsuperscript{255} Kim, \textit{The Unending Korean War}, 274.
\textsuperscript{256} Chinsil Konggae' han Chigwŏn Naetchot ŭn Chinsirwi" [Employee of Truth Commission is Expelled for 'Disclosing Truth"], \textit{Hankyŏrye}, October 11, 2010.
parts tyrannical and brittle. Contrasting the cold, dehumanizing logic of these kill orders was the reality of the massacre as it played out within the community itself—a lived history registered in the excruciating memories and testimonies of survivors. We close this section off with a spectrum of their voices and experiences. Revealed in these accounts is a grim chronicle, illustrating the arbitrariness of life, the loss of entire families, and sustained ruptures within the community. Mun Pyŏng-hŏn was 25 at the time of the atrocity. Because of his age, the family agreed to send him to a cousin's house in a neighbouring village for refuge, which ultimately allowed him to survive. But it was a poisoned chalice. Mun returned home to find that his entire family had been executed. As he recalls "my father, mother, wife, my two younger siblings, Hong-jin (his first born)... My family lineage was lost... Suddenly, I was an orphan."²⁵⁷ Yun Han-yŏng, meanwhile, survived by hiding under his mother's corpse.²⁵⁸ For others, deception was the only recourse to ensure one's survival. Mun Hong-han managed to escape death at Sinwŏn elementary school by falsely claiming that he was the member of a military family. While others knew he was lying, nobody spoke up.²⁵⁹ Though many of its members were eventually executed, the small village of Ch'ŏngyŏng was initially spared because one of the villagers claimed that the partisans had gone in the opposite direction. This gave time for some of the surviving families to flee north.²⁶⁰ These recollections are stark testimonies to the abject precariousness of life that the communities were subjected to under a military operation driven by a policy of political cleansing.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 239.
²⁵⁹ Ibid, 222-223.
²⁶⁰ Ibid, 226.
What stands out most in these accounts, however, are the traumatic memories of death scenes. A ubiquitous feature of survivors' accounts is the repeated sound of gunfire. Nine years old at the time, Kim Un-sŏp vividly recalls the repeated "Bang" sounds of gunfire which ripped through her village of Chŏngyŏng.\textsuperscript{261} Likewise, Kwŏn To-sul of Chungyo village remembers the fear that he and his son felt as they sat alone in the dark listening to the "Bang Bang" sounds of gunfire and the voices of soldiers shouting at villagers to "raise your hands, and come out".\textsuperscript{262} For others, it is the grotesque images and smells of corpses that "still appear in (their) dreams" at night.\textsuperscript{263} One witness remembers finding dead bodies "ripped open" with blood gushing out of their face. "From the eyes, from the mouth, it all came out...blood kept pouring out".\textsuperscript{264} Mun Pyŏng-hŏn, one of the first to discover the pit at Paksangol, described the scene as a "pit of hell", full of corpses that he could not distinguish. Mun recalls being "shocked" by the smell of decomposition as it forced him to fall to his ankles and stare blankly at the pile of burned human debris that once included his family.\textsuperscript{265} It is these graphic testimonies, violently etched into the memories of survivors, that remain the most potent foil against the state-sanctioned, sanitized accounts of the nation's civil war that have dominated the South Korean historical imagination.

These accounts may disturb one's conscience. But given the preceding summary of events from Cheju onwards, it need not come as a shock. Kŏch'ang was simply a routine massacre; another tragic moment in a chronicle of atrocities which collectively formed a core feature of the ROK's initial creation in a time of war. In the wake of the incident, few witnesses remained from the atrocity, save for a select few survivors and a charred heap of human remains.

\textsuperscript{261} ibid, 225.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid, 235.
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid, 220.
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid, 227.
\textsuperscript{265} Ibid, 220
which only days earlier had been living subjects in a series of tightly-knit communities. Soldiers lightly covered the corpses with dirt, but witnesses recall that every time it rained, the remains would reappear, and a pungent aroma would waft over the nearby villages, reminding residents of the horrors of that winter.266 Condemned by the National Security State to perpetually live with this bleak reality, surviving members refused to submit to the seductive logic of despair. Armed with their yearnings for justice and a need to appease the spirits of the dead, surviving family members and sympathetic legislators began a campaign to redeem the memories of their kinsmen erroneously labels as communists—a process which did not officially receive acknowledgement until 1995. The first, and only dimly successful phase of this struggle, is a key subject for our next chapter.

Conclusion: Civil War, Politicide, and the Question of Memory

In the conclusion of his two-volume opus on the origins of the Korean conflagration, Bruce Cumings inquired, "what is it that we are remembering to forget?".267 Cumings was provoking his readership to reflect upon an American national memory that eulogized the conflict as a "forgotten war". For the author, the implications of this willed-amnesia were stark, as his nation refused to confront "the truth of the Korean War: (that) it was the worst of American postwar interventions". Reasonable minds may quarrel with this verdict, but the

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266 Ibid, 220
evidence marshaled in its favour is formidable. From 1948-1953, millions of Korean lives were wasted in a brutal, if localized, conflict that relentlessly morphed into a novel type of global warfare—one that was expansive in its hypothetical boundaries, but prosecuted under the euphemisms of "limited war" and "containment". No doubt, the USSR, North Korea, and China all played their part in unleashing this catastrophe. But in terms of sheer volume, it is the forces of anticommunism—particularly the US and the fledgling First Republic—that share the greatest degree of responsibility for the lives lost.

The preceding analysis has tracked the latter regime's role in this pattern of globalized anticommunism, containment, and catastrophic violence. Through it, I have sought to establish a direct line connecting the ideological make-up of the southern regime—particularly the National Security State—to the wave upon waves of violence against civilians administered by its agents. In making sense of this violence, I have insisted upon the centrality of politicide. For what transpired throughout the civil war was an organized and sustained violent eradication of the indigenous political left. There are, of course, counter arguments to this premise: that the killings unfolded in a somewhat haphazard fashion; that the southern state was too brittle and disorganized to facilitate such a complex operation; that the massacres were motivated by fear and self-defence rather than an overarching political program of action; or that in times of relative regime security, the techniques of thought reform eclipsed the logic of terror and extermination.

We are dealing with a variegated and complex past, and it is nonsense to pretend that the rightist violence we have chronicled conforms to an archetypical genocide along the lines of the Shoah. And yet, the scale of the atrocity is too wide, its duration too long, and its intimate connection to the state and its political elites too obvious to reduce these massacres to the
inevitable and disparate excesses of a bitter civil war. If the roll-call of massacres outlined in the previous two chapters has not by now exhausted the readers’ patience, it is worth closing this chapter by recapitulating the scope, scale, and intensity of what we are dealing with.

Predominately between 1948-1952, state-authorized massacres proliferated throughout the entire southern half of the peninsula. Driven by a clear political objective, these features included, but were not limited to: the targeting of entire families suspected of having communist sympathies; the burning of villages accused of assisting rebels; the screening, division, and eradication of entire communities along ideological lines; the sacrilegious burning of corpses as a method of destroying evidence; the integration of extreme rightists into the front-lines of counterinsurgency efforts; the retention and promotion of known ideologues and mass murderers; incentive structures that encouraged ideological witch hunts; the creation of a mass surveillance system to impose ideological discipline; forced marriages and the wide-scale raping and murder of women; secret killings and the undisclosed disposal of bodies; public executions as a form of psychological terror; the conscription of labour to construct mass burial sites; the use of warehouses and cobalt mines to store corpses; the proliferation and institutionalization of dehumanizing discourses; extensive torture either as means of extracting information or as an end in itself; a legal system which gave the state extra-constitutional authority and the power to adjudicate political and ontological categories of citizen and non-citizen and of life and death; the extension of these powers to commanders in the forms of on the spot trial and summary executions; the creation of spatial exceptions, rendering entire regions within the country void of basic rights. The list could go on and on. Cumulatively, these practices likely led to a minimum of 200,000 deaths. At its most egregious margins, this politicidal logic manifested itself in the incidents of whole-scale sadistic slaughter that the doomed villagers in Sinwŏn county fell prey
to. However, true to its predominately instrumental purpose, the principle targets were young-
adult males.

If the war has occupied a vacant and seldom visited corridor in the palace of American
national memory, the same could hardly be said for post-war South Korea. Condemned to sort
through its recent and unresolved historical wreckage, historical amnesia was a luxury that the
peninsula's inhabitants could ill-afford. The raw memories of this violence and its underlying
politics were ubiquitous but not-yet molded to any officially sanctioned narrative. The post-war
epoch thus brought with it an uneven conflict over the privilege to define the parameters of its
discussion. There were global, national, and local textures to this affair. But the politicide's
afterlife was most acutely felt in the shattered communities of its victims who were forced to
cope with its legacies under the gaze of its unrepentant authors. While the violence of the civil
war politicide all but receded, its facilitators and their underlying ideological program
consolidated their grip throughout the next decade. The disparate communities of mourners
would pay a heavy toll for this, and it is this central fact which animated the struggles over the
violence's legacies in the next decade—the subject of our next chapter.
Chapter Three: Social Death and Politicidal Hauntings (1951-1960)

On July 2, 1950, the newly launched organ of the former South Korean Labour Party, Liberation Daily (*Haebang Ilbo*), ran a speech by the chairman of the Seoul Provisional People's Committee Yi Sŭng-yop. Full of the hubristic jubilance that characterized the North's early victories in the war, Yi triumphantly called upon the citizens of Seoul to "rally around the People's Committee" and "bravely sweep away the traitors who block the unification and independence of the fatherland". "The people are victorious" Yi blustered, going on to prophesize that "in days the flag of our republic will wave over Cheju Island and all of Korea".\(^{268}\)

Subsequent events would make a mockery of such illusions. By the time of the war's inconclusive finale, whatever potential there may have been for unification through a revolutionary politics of the left had been thoroughly annihilated. In the annals of Cold War history, the Korean conflict is generally eulogized as a stalemate. However, in the southern half of the peninsula, where the "civil" component of the war was most palpable, it was clear victory for the counter-revolutionary right. What remained of the once-formidable revolutionary left was condemned to a terminal process of exsanguination. With their communication and supply lines to the north cut off in the latter years of the conflict, South Korean partisans' capacity to challenge the ROK was negligible. Brutalized by the efficient counter-insurgency tactics outlined in chapter one and two, partisan power was effectively broken by 1952. Activity continued within the Chiri mountain range into 1956, and reports from the local Cheju press

reveal the presence of guerrillas into the late 1950s.\footnote{Cheju 4.3 Sakkôn Chinsang Chosa Pokosö , 357.} However, these were not the activities of a reinvigorated vanguard. Rather, they were the final gasps of a moribund political movement obdurately clinging to a revolutionary energy that had long abandoned the peninsula.

Tellingly, the war in the south did not end with the hoisting of the DPRK flag throughout Cheju Island as Yi had prophesized. On September 21, 1955, in celebration of the one-year anniversary of the official end to hostilities on the Cheju Island, the ex-Colonial officer turned Chief of Cheju Police, Shin Sang-mok, erected the Hallasan Peace Monument atop the Paengnoktam crater. In the monument's epitaph, due praise was given to the brave patriots who risked their lives defending the island from a mostly-unarmed peasant uprising.\footnote{Cheju 4.3 Sakkôn Chinsang Chosa Pokosö , 356-357.} Unsurprising was the complete absence of any reference to the systematic violence that the people of Cheju were subjected to. A critical component of the southern state's campaign of ideological legitimization—the obliteration from official memory of the mass slaughter of a large swath of its own population—had began in earnest.

The erection of a monument on top of Mount Hallasan not only symbolizes the victory of anticommmunist forces over the indigenous radical left throughout South Korea, but also provides a useful entrance point for examining the broader politics of the historical representation of civil war violence that constitute the major analytic concern of the latter portion of this dissertation. To briefly recapitulate, the first two chapters were primarily concerned with documenting the deaths of principally unarmed South Korean civilians at the hands of South Korean security forces. In these chapters, I emphasized three interdependent incidents—the Cheju Incident, the National Guidance Alliance Incident, and the Kŏch'ang Incident—arguing that these episodes
were the consequence of a larger campaign of politicide that was intimately connected to the formation of the embryonic ROK state and its dominant political order.

With the decline of the left in South Korea firmly secured, the politicidal logic of the early ROK national security state moved beyond the arena of physical extermination towards a full-fledged assault on the memory of the conflict. This was waged at the levels of ideology, politics, society, and even mourning practices. It was, in other words, just as totalizing and ideologically rooted as the previous period of violence. In the next two chapters, I trace a decade-long process in which a prominently one-sided conflict was waged between the ROK state and the victims of the recent massacres. It culminated in the 1960-1961 period when families and survivors of the politicide briefly organized themselves and demanded restitution. Though these activities were thoroughly crushed, they briefly removed the veil of silence surrounding the southern regime's atrocities.

In this chapter, I narrate the first ten years of this process (1951-1960). The dearth of source material concerning the bereaved families from this decade has led it to be overlooked by historians as a significant period in formulating the subsequent memory politics of these violent calamities. Typically, the era is portrayed as one of darkness and absolute suppression. This is understandable enough. As Cumings notes, "seeking any kind of redress for the demise of loved ones...was impossible as long as Rhee was in power. Trying to do anything about these atrocities meant jail, torture, and death. Endless blacklists put the families of victims into a kind of living purgatory". Indeed the repression during this period was severe, and in many ways more deeply rooted than what is portrayed in Cumings' bleak synopsis. However, it did not go uncontested. Throughout the decade, select families of the victims challenged the Rhee

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government's attempts at denial. Nor was this repression static. The antagonistic relationship between the anticommunist state and the relatives of its victims was a dynamic one, articulating itself in a myriad of forms and shifting between times and circumstances. The major task of this chapter is to sketch out the initial rounds of this conflict before its explosion in the wake of the First Republic's collapse.

A principal argument of this chapter is that the necropolitics that we witnessed in the first two chapters did not dissipate in the post-war period, but in many ways expanded. For the bereaved families of the victims, at stake in these years was nothing less than social death. As philosopher Claudia Card argues, "social vitality exists through relationships...that create an identity that gives meaning to a life". According to Card, "major social loss is a loss of identity, and consequently a serious loss of meaning for one's existence". Gordon Avery notes that social death involves an individual's integration into a society through a process of social negation that renders them as a "human non-person". Survivors of the politicide were subjected to this pernicious form of social exclusion. There were political, social, ideological, symbolic, and legal dimensions to this process. However, its most formidable effects were felt in the intimate domains of remembrance and mourning. State oppression, in other words, was not merely political, psychological, or physical, though it was certainly all of these. Rather, it was a profoundly social endeavour, destroying intimate and familial bonds. This transpired in both public and private spaces, as the First Republic and its security forces sought and worked towards the complete obliteration of the memory of the violence that these families were subjected to. While most were forced into silence, a few families and groups creatively worked to resist the depravations of the anticommunist state. Throughout this decade, this struggle was

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fought at both the institutional and spiritual levels, though this resistance was radically fragmented. In other words, there was a productive feature to this ruthless dialectic between the state and its victims, as the depth of state oppression molded the subsequent challenges to it. The full force of these contradictions ultimately came into fruition in the 1960-1961 years, when bereaved families organized themselves and articulated a coherent mode of dissent that bridged the gaps between the local, national, spiritual, and formally political.

As a transitional section, this chapter is devoted to three specific tasks—all of which elucidate the degree to which the victims were threatened with social death, and how this context of social death shaped the victims' responses to the state. The first objective is to outline the ideological and political structures of the post-war First Republic and its diffuse effects on the politicide's community of mourners. With anticommunism solidified as the material and ideological apparatus of the ROK, structural conditions were imposed on the bereaved families which rendered them and their lost loved ones as non-entities within the divided nation. The second is to trace what legal opportunities and constraints existed for these families throughout the 1950s. Despite the authoritarian and anticommunist structure of the regime, cracks in the edifice did occasionally appear in these years, allowing survivors to seek legal restitution. I focus on two cases—one in Kŏch'ang, the other in Kyŏngju—where an encounter with the regime's past violence was brought into the political sphere. In both cases, however, the hegemony of the state and its anticommunist ideology remained intact. Finally, I outline conflicts over mortuary rites. This battle, I show, was deeply debilitating to the communal and family structures of these villages, compelling select families to creatively alter traditional mourning practices in order to appease lost spirits. However, in a few isolated cases, families were able to carve out spaces of mourning where a degree of autonomy from the state's gaze was
permitted. At these sites, novel mnemonic visions were able to blossom as survivors forged solidarities of collective bereavement through the construction of mass graves and memorial services. This context of anticommunist repression, limited legal recourse, and the struggle to grieve set the stage for much larger conflict in 1960-1961. These three themes dominate the analytic focus of the chapter, though the narrative itself is predominately chronological. Our story begins where it left off in the last chapter, in the township of Sinwŏn, in the winter of 1951.

The Legal Aftermath of the Kŏch'ang Incident

On April 11, 1951, an article appeared on page four of the New York Times detailing the aftermath of a brutal atrocity in a hamlet that author George Barrett referred to as "Shim-Um" (Sinwŏn). At least 300 of a community of 1,400 had been slaughtered there two months earlier, rendering Sinwŏn a "village of the dead", in the author's words. Barrett remarked upon the "weird unreality" of calmness surrounding a village that was recently at the heart of fierce guerrilla conflict. Korean reporters echoed this last sentiment by noting that surviving households uniformly flew the T'aegŭkki (the official flag of the ROK) throughout the village, as a demonstration of their loyal patriotism.²⁷⁴ Meanwhile, in official circles, a veil of silence surrounded the events of February 1951. However, according to Barrett, what is now referred to as the "Kŏch'ang Incident", was an "open-secret" within the surrounding communities as well as

²⁷⁴ "Sakkŏn ŭi ŭp (Kŏch'ang ŭi) chakkŭm" [The state of the village (Kŏ'chang) of the Incident], Kyŏnghyang Sinbu, 20 April, 1951.
police and government circles. Nor was Barrett's piece the only one to appear in the international press, as similar stories ran in cities as far ranging as Washington DC, Lethbridge Alberta, Canada, and Panama City. For a brief period, the ugly underbelly of the Korean conflict threatened to be exposed within both Korea and the "Free World".

In the preceding chapter, I argued that Kŏch'ang was a typical slaughter in a much larger process of politicidal violence. Why, then, did the incident gain such notoriety? What were the immediate political consequences of the incident? How did the scandal play out in South Korea, and what do its results tell us about the broader constellations of social and political power at that time in South Korea? The answer to the first question appears to be mainly a matter of contingency and human agency. Initially, the aftermath at Kŏch'ang was similar to other atrocities carried out during the guerrilla suppression campaign as agents of the state sought to cover-up the slaughter of innocents. This, we shall see, was a constant strategy waged by the military and its apologists. On February 13, 1951, Third Battalion Commander Han Tong-sŏk imposed Martial Law, preventing access to reporters. Officially, this was done in the name of "security", though clearly control of information was critical at this point. Han's efforts, however, were unsuccessful as local National Assembly member Sin Chung-mok first alerted Defence Minister Sin Sŏn-mo of the atrocity, who brought it to the attention of Syngman Rhee and Home Minister Cho Pyŏn-gok. However, the government initially decided to investigate the matter internally and Cho Pyŏng-ok later conceded in his memoirs that key evidence was covered up in the initial reports. Frustrated with these initial results, representative Sin moved for legislation


276 Han Sŏng-hun, “Kŏch’ang Sakkŏn ŭi Ch’ŏrigwajŏng kwa Namnŭn Munje”, 49.
for a special investigation into the incident on March 29, 1950. The events of February were rapidly risking to engulf Rhee and his Liberal Party in a national scandal. 277

Initial responses to the incident from the media, government, and security forces reveal the considerable stakes involved in the revelations concerning the atrocity, as well as the discursive power structures shaping its representation. Firstly, it is clear that at issue was something larger than an isolated crime. Indeed, as the *New York Times* cryptically indicated, the "open secret" not merely concerned the events surrounding Kŏch'ang but the larger human rights problem of the ROK. Barrett's article, for example, made comparative references to large-scale executions of political prisoners and alleged prisoners carried out in the wake of the UN forces recapture of Seoul the previous fall. What was now being called the "Kŏch'ang Incident" was opening a window into the ruthlessness of the Rhee government, and its use of systematic politicized violence. 278

Given this context, it is unsurprising that the national debate concerning the atrocities carried out in Sinwŏn was mediated through larger frames such as ideology, nationalism, and regime integrity. For the perpetrators, the regime, and their apologists, the revelations were mere rumours—a smear campaign waged by enemies of Syngman Rhee in the midst of a war which threatened the very survival of the nation. In the National Assembly debates on March 30, for example, Defence Minister Sin declared that all the victims were either communists or pro-communist sympathizers. He also downplayed the number of victims. Though villagers at the time claimed that as many as 1,000 were killed in Sinwŏn and the surrounding areas, Sin insisted

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277 “3-tae Sakkŏn Chinsang P'ongnoho/P'yŏkpo Sakkŏn/ Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn/ Kungmin Pangwigun Sakkŏn/ Ch'ŏngni t'ung Kwan'gye Changgwan Ch'amsŏk/ Onŭl Kukhoesŏ Chungdae Pogo” [Exposing the Truth of the Third Battalion Incident/Placard Incident/Kŏch'ang Incident/National Defence Forces Incident/Prime Minister and Related Ministers to Attend/Today National Assembly to Receive Major Report], *Tonga Ilbo*, 30 March, 1951.

278 George Barrett, "Village Massacres", p.5.
that it was less than two hundred. The following month, Rhee echoed similar sentiments.

According to the President, the majority of those killed were "t'ongbijja" (sympathizers), and the killings were "capital punishment", not a massacre. He went on to add that the reports of larger numbers of civilians killed in both Kŏch'ang and nearby regions were "rumours" (somun). Martial Law Commander of the Ninth regiment in Kyŏngnam, Kim Chong-wŏn, however, was the most strident in his rhetoric. In multiple interviews and press conferences, Kim dismissed the entire episode as a "lie". Kim questioned the entire legitimacy of the investigation, which in his reading, threatened the very future of the Korean republic. According to Kim, the bereaved families, National Assembly members, and newspaper reporters who advocated on behalf of the victims were guilty of "unpatriotic language" (piaegukchōgin ŏnsa). Kim went on to note that all of the victims were military aged men who conspired with communists to set up a "secret base" in Sinwŏn, and that those demanding an inquiry threatened to slander the military, and therefore the nation itself. To Kim, the rhetoric from the opposing side risked allowing the "blood soaked" land of Korea to be forfeited to communist forces. However, Kim stated that if an investigation were carried out, the military would cooperate fully with the team.

From the above summary, we can see that uniting the initial defence for the regime was an anticommunist discourse which created categories of worthy and unworthy victims, utilized
appeals to nationalism, and minimized the scale of the atrocities. Here, it is worth repeating the extent to which these binaries distorted the average civilians' experience of partisan and counter-insurgency warfare in the Chiri mountains. For civilians caught up in the guerrilla war, basic survival strategies often trumped ideology. As both warring parties repeatedly moved through villages demanding food, information, and shelter from residents, villagers were often extorted into pledging ideological loyalty. In this situation, "assistance" to communist or government forces was often just a short-term survival strategy, rather than a symbol of deep ideological commitment. In the climate of civil war and relentless anticommunism, however, these ambiguities were obliterated. Therefore, for the victims of the killing spree in Sinwŏn, the only option available was proof of ideological fidelity.

Though challenging the state's narrative, survivors of the atrocity and those that advocated on their behalf operated within these discursive and legal confines. In response to the state's claims that villagers may have offered food to the partisans and that the area was a sight of communist infiltration, anonymous villagers simply said that the accusations were "baseless", thus tacitly conceding the ideological parameters of the state's argument.283 Meanwhile, proponents in the media for an investigation appealed to higher ideals of nationalism and war against communism. A March 31 editorial in the Tonga Ilbo well encapsulated this sentiment. According to the newspaper, an investigation into the incident would benefit the fight against communism as greater transparency would strengthen South Korea's burgeoning democracy. Moreover, the editorial opined that as other countries already knew of episode, it was imperative

283 "Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn Chinsang/Kongboch'a esŏ Chŏngsik Palp'yo" [The Truth of the Kŏch'ang Incident/Official Report Formally Published], Kyŏnghyang Sinmun, April 25 1951.
that the Republic of Korea prove its democratic credentials by refusing to conceal the truth. At stake was nothing less than "democratic freedom" and "world peace".284

National Assembly member Sin's efforts were initially successful and legislation was passed for an investigation into the massacre on March 31. Sin was appointed head of the investigation team, along with a team of seven other National Assembly members.285 Alarmed with the news, the Army moved immediately to obstruct the investigation. On April 3, Han Tong-sŏk returned to the site and concealed some of the bodies two kilometers away from the area under the investigation team's purview. It was the events of April 6, however, that ultimately destroyed whatever prospects there may have been for formal justice for the victims. As Sin and his team approached the region, they were ambushed by what was reported as Russian machine gunfire. Roughly eighty guerrillas surrounded the team and its vehicle, firing upon them from all directions. General Kim Chong-wŏn, who had been ordered to escort the team safely on its mission, returned fire and ordered a prompt retreat. Immediate reports mentioned that two ROK soldiers and one police officer were injured in the skirmish, while an estimated six guerrillas were killed. Thanks to Kim's timely intervention, the investigation team escaped unscathed. In reality, the attacked was a plot orchestrated by Kim to cover-up the atrocity. According to several observers, Kim and thirty of his men entered the area the previous evening, occupied positions, and facilitated a fake ambush of the investigation team. Soldiers later confirmed these accounts.286

285 'Ŏmjunghan Ch'aegim Ch'ugung", Pusan Ilbo 2 April, 1951.
286 "Kŏch'ang Chosatan P'isŭp/Kim Min Sabuchang Chihi:wí ro Kyŏkt'oe" [Kŏch'ang Field Investigation Team Attacked/Repulsed by General Kim's Command], Pusan Ilbo, 7 April 1951; "Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn P'isŭp tangsi ŭi Chinsang" [The Truth at the time of the Kŏch'ang Incident Attack], Tonga Ilbo, August 11 1951.
While later uncovered, the fabricated guerrilla raid prevented any further field investigation. With this prospect removed, Sin and his team were forced to rely on testimonies from participants and documents voluntarily released by the military. In addition, photos from that day taken by the military mysteriously disappeared between the time of the atrocity and the establishment of the investigation team, rendering it nearly impossible to prove that villagers of all ages had been massacred. On April 24, the commission’s report was released to the National Assembly and the public. Though hardly presenting a flattering view of the Army command, the report reflected the state’s power to shape the results of the investigation and the discourse surrounding it. The report began with a lengthy section on the background situation in the Kŏ‘ch’ang region prior to the atrocity. The first sentence of the report described Sinwŏn as a hotbed of guerrilla agitation since Korea’s liberation on August 15, 1945. Moreover, the villagers were characterized as being under the influence of “communism” and engaging in “acts benefiting the enemy”. On the other hand, suppression forces were portrayed as patient and professional, constantly under threat from ambush by guerrillas and manipulated by dishonest villagers secretly working with the southern partisans (“t‘ongbi purakja”, or “villagers who sympathized with rebels”). In this account, they entered Sinwŏn and rounded up suspects on the grounds that the village was known to be operating as a secret base for guerrilla operations and numerous villagers had been seen hailing communist forces.

The official report’s version of the incident widely contrasted with the now-recognized consensus. According to the report, the military and police investigators carefully screened over 600 villagers at Sinwŏn Elementary School. Security forces then released all families associated

with the police and military, all villagers under the age of fourteen and over the age of sixty-five, and all villagers deemed to have been sufficiently "reformed" in their politics. The remaining 187 alleged communists were then charged and convicted under Martial Law, summarily executed by gun fire, and buried 500 meters down the road from the execution site.\(^{289}\) A gruesome and calculated atrocity was reframed as an example of excessive soldier anger and judicial zeal.

Though ostensibly a report on the "truth" (chinsang) of the massacre, it is clear that the official account of 1951 was deeply compromised by the operations of ideology. Firstly, we must consider the way that the authors framed the chronology of the events. In beginning the account with the August 15, 1945 liberation, the report implicitly conformed to the burgeoning anticommunist discourse on the origins of the civil war. In this account, responsibility for the civil unrest and violence which plagued the peninsula in the post-liberation era—particularly in the American occupation zone—was wholly attributed to the intrigues of “red guerrillas”. Other sources of instability, such as existing class cleavages, the decimation of the People's Committees, the reestablishment of the Japanese colonial state security structure, and the US/ROK decision to hold a separate election and establish a separate state were left out of the critical background for understanding the instability in the Chiri mountain area. Concerning the actual incident, primary agency was once again attributed to the guerrillas, as ROK forces were portrayed as reactive or victims of circumstances.

However, the report was most revealing for its absences. Most problematic was the complete silencing of voices from the victims' families or other witnesses. This meant that the military's version that they were responding to acts of communist infiltration went unchallenged.

\(^{289}\) Ibid.
despite the fact that survivors from the village had already claimed (a claim which was later confirmed) that this accusation was without substance. Further, in relying solely on military witnesses and documents, the report drastically reduced the number and types of victims. For example, the number of 187 was significantly lower than the current figure of 716. Related to this, the report claimed that children under 14, people over 60, and women were excluded from those executed. However, the majority of those killed in Sinwŏn were from this category. Nor was it mentioned that the screening and division of the village's population was also done by class, as the families of landlords were spared from the atrocity. With this, the sociopolitical features that contributed to the instability and violence of post-liberation South Korea were silenced. Further, the fact that many of the bodies were incinerated rather than buried was left out of the report. Finally, and predictably, the report was silent about the mass rape which transpired before the executions.  

Crucial issues of context were also omitted, a revealing fact given that the report included a background story that went back to the 1945 liberation. For instance, the heinous acts at Sinwŏn were preceded by a string of other atrocities in the nearby lying Sanch’ŏn and Hamyang regions, which were carried out by the same battalion. Though this information came to light in newspapers during the Kŏch'ang investigation, it was not followed up upon legally or included in the final report. More odious was the removal of a significant document which clearly demonstrated that the counter-insurgency methods adopted by the Ninth regiment were premised upon the mass eradication of entire villages. An appendix to a military order from the Eleventh division (to which the Ninth regiment was under) titled "Military Order 5", summarized the basic approach adopted throughout the Sanch’ŏn, Hamyang, and Kŏch'ang regions. Counter-

290 Ibid.
insurgency soldiers were ordered to "execute by gun-fire" (ch'ongsal) entire populations of villages deemed to be "under the hand of the enemy". In other words, persuasive evidence was available which suggested that a) the incident was not isolated, but followed a larger pattern of systematic killing, and that b) explicit orders existed within the chain of command dictating the indiscriminant eradication of entire populations deemed suspicious. The publication of the official report, therefore brought with it two great lost opportunities: the inclusion of voices of the victims of state violence, and a sustained inquiry into the ideological and systematic forces at work behind these atrocities.

However, the inquiry was not without political consequence. In the wake of its publication, a string of high-profile resignations rocked the Rhee government as Minister of the Interior Cho Pyŏng-ok, Minister of Justice Kim Chun-yŏn, and Minister of Defence Sin Sŏng-mo resigned. In a press conference the next day, Cho candidly remarked that President Rhee had requested that he resign. Damage control appears to have been Rhee's primary concern, as the three men were responsible for publishing the investigation. Despite its diluted tone, Rhee was incensed by its findings. The resignations did little to quell the issue for Rhee and his government. Coupled with a financial scandal at the department of defence, the disclosure of the Kŏch'ang incident led to calls within the raucous National Assembly that Rhee was a "dictator" and some even demanded his impeachment. Meanwhile, Rhee's Vice President Yi Si-yŏng publically complained that Rhee was staffing his cabinet with his cronies and threatened to resign. Rhee, however, refused to accept the resignation, leading to greater dissention within the

293 “Naemu, Pŏmmu, Yangjangwan Sap'yo rŭl Chech'ul/Cho Pyŏng-ok Ssi Sap'yo Naeyong” [Minister of Interior, Minister of Justice, and Minister Yang Propose Resignation/Contents of Cho Pyŏng-ok’s Resignation], Tonga Ilbo, April 26
Shortly afterwards, Yi resigned his post. It is within this context that the National Assembly moved for a criminal prosecution of the main perpetrators of the Kŏch'ang slaughter. Passed on May 14, 1951, the motion called for the prosecution of those responsible for carrying out "illegal executions" in a non-battle situation. The legislation stuck to the figure of 187 and emphasized that soldiers carried out the executions in a wider context of duress. In its appeals to higher ideals, the legislation claimed that punishing the perpetrators was the only way to ensure the protection of "democratic politics". No mention was made of carrying out justice on behalf the victims. As potential communists or communist sympathizers, their voices, and the larger politics behind their deaths, were silenced. Instead, abstractions such as the "nation" (minjok) and democracy were more commonly invoked.

On July 29, 1951, Court Marshall proceedings began in Taegu for Ninth Regiment Commander Yi Ik-kyŏng, Third Battalion Commander Han Tong-sŏk, and Ninth Regiment Intelligence Officer Yi Chong-dae. The prosecution asked for the death penalty. Throughout the first two weeks of the trial, Kim Chong-wŏn was brought in for questioning, and grilled about his alleged role in orchestrating a staged attack on the investigation team. Kim denied these charges, thus committing perjury. Later in the month, Kim was arrested and tried for obstruction of justice. The inquisition became a major news story, with the leading newspapers such as the Chosun Ilbo, Tonga Ilbo, and the Kyŏnghang Sinmun extensively covering the issue. The Associated Press and the New York Times also covered the story, though little detail or context was offered in these latter accounts.

296 "Pihappŏpchŏk Haenghyŏng/Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn Ch'ŏwi Pogo [Illegal Execution/Kŏch'ang Incident Handling Committee Report], Kukche Sinbo, 16 May, 1951.
What can we derive from the coverage of this period? Based on my findings, the major dailies adhered to a strictly "factual" account of the trial's proceedings, dutifully reporting the trial's details and not much else. What emerged was a public account of the episode which focused on the legality of the executions of suspects, rather than an investigation into the political and military practices that caused the killings in the first place. Occasionally, editorials raised larger issues. However, these focused on the health of the state, society, or nation. In an August 8 editorial for the Tonga Ilbo, for example, the writer argued that in the case of the Kŏch'ang incident "state authority was abused and used to oppress the people". The editorial concluded with a call for the punishment of those responsible the crime: "for the destiny of the state whose sovereignty belongs to its people, condemn these illegal traitors in front of the people!" The treason, however, was framed as a legal issue involving due process committed against the Korean people as a whole. Tellingly the article made frequent references to the injuries being done to "citizens" and the spirit of the "minjok", but no reference was made to the sufferings of actual villagers. As the article was composed in the rhetoric of nationalism, the direct injuries done to potential communist supporters were necessarily excluded. Similarly, the Kyŏnghyang Sinmun focused on whether or not the killings were legal, and if so, who was morally responsible for violating the law. The opposition paper was silent on the issue of moral culpability for the slaughters themselves. Undoubtedly, censorship played a role in limiting what could be printed in the papers, once again demonstrating the state's power in framing the issue. In a few isolated cases, the voices of the survivors did creep through. The Kukche Sinbo carried a brief comment by an anonymous widow who was quoted simply as

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298 “Yŏgi Minchu Chŏnggi Sala itta/Chŏngūi rŭr Chihyanghanŭn Yangsakkŏn Twitch’ŏri” [The Spirit of Democracy Lives Here/A Step Towards Justice by Clearing up Civilian Incident], Tonga Ilbo, 8 August, 1951.
299 “Kŏch’ang Sakkŏn Kunchae/P’igo Han ṭŭ Sinmun Kyesok” [Military Reexamines Kŏch’ang Incident/Defendant Han’s Interrogation Continues], Kyŏnghyang Sinmun, 1 August, 1951.
saying that her executed husband had "no relationship" to the communist guerrillas. However, stories such as this were rare exceptions in a news environment dominated by the testimonies of military and government officials, overlooked by the watching gaze of the war censorship regime.

The trial continued throughout the fall and a verdict was announced on December 16, 1950 that brought with it a modicum of justice. Yi Il-kyŏng and Han Tongs-ŏk were convicted of wrongful execution. Yi received a sentence of life imprisonment while Han was sentenced to ten years of hard labour. Meanwhile, Yi Chong-tae was acquitted. In the case of the first two, the crown had requested the death penalty, while seeking ten years for the Yi Chongtae. For his role in the obstructing justice, Kim Chong-wŏn was given a seven year sentence. Opposition parties and newspapers protested that the trial was a farce as former Defence Minister Sin and head of the Eleventh Division Ch'oe Tŏk-sin avoided prosecution. However, they continued to insist upon the official number of 187 male victims and did not criticize the broader political and military practices that lay behind the slaughter. Nor were there further calls for inquiries into the slaughters carried out in neighbouring regions. Within the boundaries of acceptable opinion, the Kŏch'ang incident was eulogized as an isolated episode—responsibility for its horrors deemed to be the result of a few individuals. For its part, international news briefly covered the trial's decision, faithfully reporting the military's account that "the townspeople were

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300 "Ch’ung Simmun Kyesi/Kŏch’ang Incident" [Witness Examination Begins/Kŏch’ang Incident], Kuche Sinbo, 30 July, 1951.
301 "Kŏch’ang Sakkŏn Sŭondo!/Kim Chong-wŏn e 3-nyŏn/Ch’oego Mugi/Sin Sshi nŭn Chewoe" [Kŏch’ang Incident Sentences!/Kim Chong-wŏn given 3 Years/Maximum Sentence Life in Prison/Sin is Excluded], Kyŏnghyang Sinmun, 18 December, 1951.
302 "Kŏch’ang Sakkŏn Sin Ssi rŭr Ch’ukung/Ilban Chep’an Hoebu/Ilgŏn Sŏryu Kŭmmyŏnggan Songch’ŏng" [Sin Cross-examined for Kŏch’ang Incident/General Decision Transmitted/Case Document to be sent to Prosecutor's office Today or Tomorrow], Kyŏnghyang Sinmun, 21 December, 1951.
communists” as a basic fact. It would be close to a decade before another challenge to these spurious allegations could be raised by survivors from Sinwŏn.

As a final insult to the victims, the Rhee government pardoned the convicted men shortly afterwards. Yi Ik-kyŏng received a presidential pardon after serving one year and six months. He immediately returned to the military and reached the rank of colonial by 1956. Han Tong-sŏk was also pardoned around the same time and likewise returned back to the military. Most disturbingly, Kim Chong-wŏn was released by special order in March 1952, serving only three months for his role in facilitating the massacre and firing upon National Assembly members in an effort to cover up his crime. In 1956, he was promoted to National Police Commissioner. At his inauguration, Kim simply said “I am not responsible for the past”. The sordid tale involving Kim, however, did not end here and we pick it up again in the next chapter.

**Ideological Consolidation and the Conditions of Survivors and Bereaved Families**

On July 27, 1953, after three years of inconclusive fighting, the United States, the People's Republic of China, and the Democratic Republic of North Korea signed an armistice agreement. For both ideological reasons as well as the need to maintain domestic credibility, [footnotes]

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305 “Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn Nae Ch'eagim anita/Sinim Kim Chong-wŏn Ch'ian Kukchang Ch'wiimtam” [I am not Responsible for Kŏch'ang Incident/Police Director Kim Chong-wŏn at Inaugural address], *Chosun Ilbo*, 30 May, 1956.
Rhee refused to sign the agreement. In principle, all parties were supposed to work out a lasting agreement at a conference in Geneva the following year, but the negotiations were fruitless as the North and South's mutual rejection of each other’s claims to legitimate statehood precluded any progress. In the realms of geopolitics and world history, there is merit to the characterization of the Korean War as an early Cold War satellite conflict which ended in a draw. However, when we turn our attention to the internecine struggle for control over the southern state, the war resulted in an unambiguous victory for the anti-leftist forces, with Rhee clearly at the helm. The recognition of this political victory achieved through violence demands that we interrogate the linkages between this period of mass violence and its ensuing legacies in the realm of state/society relations—particularly in relationship to the survivors and families of the various massacres.

It is useful if we begin with a broad description of the institutional and ideological structure of the ROK throughout this decade. Firstly, we should note that the Rhee-led ROK state fit the model outlined by the French marxist Pierre Bourdieu (and borrowed from the German sociologist Max Weber) whereby the "state" is the entity which exercises a monopoly over the legitimate use of "physical and symbolic violence over a definitive territory". Of central concern for making sense of the institutional and symbolic supremacy of the ROK state is the ideology of anticommunism. If a critical component of the 1948-1953 years was the violent rise of anticommunism within the southern state, the years of 1953-1960 witnessed its consolidation.

The solidification of anticommunism meant that survivors of the politicide were not only deemed as pariahs by the state, but were also threatened with exclusion from the Korean nation

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itself. The most visceral expression of this was through the yŏnjwaje, translated as the "involvement system" or "guilt by association" system. A vestige from the Chosŏn dynasty, and believed to be formally practiced until Chun Doo-hwan officially abolished it in 1981, the yŏnjwaje meant that immediate and extending families could also be punished or stigmatized for crimes committed by an individual. While technically abolished in the 1884 Kabo Reforms, the yŏnjwaje continued to persist in folk customs, and during the era of national division, became widely practiced within the National Security State. Much of the evidence concerning the practice was destroyed in 1981, but the Cheju Investigation Report, which to my knowledge contains the most detailed records on the yŏnjwaje, contends that 76% of all Cheju inhabitants claim discrimination from the system. Indeed, in 1950, it was reported that 27,000 of the islands' population were considered suspicious persons and 50,000 family members were listed for surveillance. Practices pertaining to the yŏnjwaje included, but were not limited to, regular surveillance of individuals and their families, denial of entrance into the civil service, denial of military promotion due to having suspicious backgrounds, and discrimination surrounding hiring and firing practices in various public professions such as law and education. The deleterious effects of this system were not only material, but also profoundly psychological. Nowhere was this more the case that upon the sons and daughters of alleged "communists". As the system could potentially envelope entire lineages, the offspring of the politicide's victims were integrated into a social universe in which they were marked with the taint of leftist blood. Interviewees have testified that when they were growing up, other children from the neighbourhood would often taunt them as being an "ill-bred person without a father" (aebi ŏmnun hurejasik). The schoolyard was also a major arena for inculcating social stigmatization.

307 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 608.
as victims’ children were subjected to gossip or ostracism. These forms of abuse were often intimately inscribed into the bodies of its objects, as those subjected to it recall feeling perpetually "anxious" or having pains in their chest whenever they went to school.\textsuperscript{308} Through these processes, we may trace how the political categories of the anticommunist system were reproduced from the ground-up in the forms of taunts, social ostracism, and the inevitable psychological scars produced by this social world.

A related effect of this system was to compel families into a fearful and strategic silence. This was not merely an issue between the state and the victims, but also held considerable stakes in a filial society with a strong emphasis on ancestors, community, and blood ties. Fearing not only state discrimination, but also banishment from the local community, victims often resisted stigma by burying their own pasts. Many victims of violence during the Cheju massacres, for example, joined the Anticommunist Association of Families of the April 3 Cheju Incident Victims. It was only through disguising themselves as heirs to rightist patriotic lineages that survivors could attain any semblance of compensation or recognition.\textsuperscript{309} More commonly, survivors and their families simply stayed silent or attempted to make accommodations with the relentlessly anticommunist, but corruptible, First Republic. For example, a former police officer from the Kyŏngbuk province admitted that until 1956, it was common practice at his station to routinely roundup ex-members of the National Guidance League and extort them out of their money and valuables under the threat of increased surveillance. According to the witness, families were told if they gave the police money, they could have their names removed from the

\textsuperscript{308} Chinsil Hwahae rŭl wihan Kwagŏsa Chŏngni Wiwŏnhoe [Truth and Reconciliation Commission], Che 2-Pu Chip'ŏn Hŭisaeng Kyum'yŏng Wiwŏnhoe Sakkŏn(2): Ch'ŏngwŏn Och'ang Ch'anggo Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn [Committee for Examining Incidents of Large-scale Sacrifice, Part 2: Ch’ŏngwŏn Och’ang Warehouse National Guidance League Incident], (Sŏul: Chinsil Hwahae rŭl wihan Kwagŏsa Chŏngni Wiwŏnhoe, 2008), 632.

\textsuperscript{309} Heonik Kwon, "Legacies of the Korean War", 165
lists. However, after receiving the money, police would refuse to remove their names.\textsuperscript{310} Given this situation, it is unsurprising that surviving members of the National Guidance League remained virtually silent about the atrocities they suffered. This would not change until the spring of 1960.

In contrast to survivors and family members who suffered under these formal and informal mechanisms of persecution, the individuals and institutions responsible for the politicide mostly thrived throughout the 1953-1960 years. While nominally a constitutional republic, political power throughout the years of Rhee's rule was concentrated within a shadow elite with close ties of mutual dependency to the ersatz republic's first President. The continuing rule of Rhee and his Liberal Party (created in 1951) was secured through manipulation and repression by the police and intelligence agencies, which were stacked with Rhee loyalists, anticommunist zealots, or those whose backgrounds within the Japanese security services or bureaucracies made them useful, but unthreatening, to his position. In the latter years of his Presidency, this pattern reached its zenith. At the core of the Liberal Party from 1956 onwards was a cohort of ex-Japanese police officers and bureaucrats, such as Chang Kyŏng-gŭn, Han Hisŏk, Yi Ik-hŭng, Im Chŏl-ho, and Kim Ŭi-jun. Uniting all these men were close ties to Rhee, strident anticommunism, and intimacy with the South Korean police organizations.\textsuperscript{311}

A look into the fates of many of the individuals either directly or indirectly involved in the mass killings reveals the impossible odds that victims were up against during this decade. We have already discussed the aftermath of the Kŏch'ang ordeal, and it is of no great surprise to learn that a similar logic was at work concerning the legacies of the Cheju and National Guidance League incidents. Let us consider the case of Cheju. Rhee's chief political rival

\textsuperscript{310} 	extit{Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn}, 435.

\textsuperscript{311} Han, 	extit{The Failure of Democracy}, 23-25.
throughout the 1950s was Cho Pyŏng-ok. If the reader recalls, Cho was a key player implementing a hard-line policy of oppression on Cheju island in the early months of the uprising. During the post-liberation period, Cho was likewise instrumental in pivoting the needle of South Korea's political compass away from anti-Japanese collaborationist sentiment and towards anticommunism. As commander of the national police from 1945 until 1948, Cho was responsible for rehabilitating former Japanese colonial era police officers back into positions of power throughout the department.\footnote{Han, \textit{The Failure of Democracy}, 10. By 1960, 70\% of police chiefs were trained under the Japanese government.} Though never "pro-Japanese", Cho's anticommunism led him to the conclusion that an experienced police force was the only way of quelling the rise of communist power in the southern half of the peninsula. Again, while Home Minister in 1950, Cho was a key figure in overseeing the systematic massacre of National Guidance League members. Likewise, Song Yo-ch'an, the key architect of the free fire zone during the Cheju massacre and the Provost Marshal at the time of the National Guidance Alliance killings, steadily rose through the ranks throughout the decade, eventually becoming Army Chief of Staff in 1959.

Key figures in the heinous Northwest Youth Group were also rewarded. Its founder Mun Pong-je was appointed Director of National Police in 1952 and also served as Education Minister shortly afterwards. Meanwhile chief of the Northwest Youth on Cheju Island, Kim Chae-nŭn, took over the island's leading newspaper, the \textit{Cheju Ilbo}, and staffed it with other members of the youth group.\footnote{Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 479.} Interestingly, in June 1954 a brief scandal involving Kim erupted when he was brought in for questioning under allegations of fraud. Kim's arrest sparked protests in Cheju accusing Kim of "bribery", "terror" and a "systematic assault". Kim's notoriety also led to newspaper reports revealing his murder of the Director of General Affairs of the Cheju government, Kim Du-hyŏn. However, papers ominously reported that the island's
residents lacked trust in the justice system on the island and were fearful of speaking out against Kim's numerous crimes. The episode fizzled out, and in 1960, Kim remained an important and feared figure in the island's politics.\textsuperscript{314}

The leading architects of the National Guidance League and the subsequent slaughter of its members also enjoyed positions of influence and prestige throughout Rhee's tenure. For example, at the helm of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was Kim T'ae-sŏn, a man who, as head of the Korean National Police during the Korean War, openly admitted to executing members of the National Guidance League.\textsuperscript{315} Kim later become Mayor of Seoul. Kim Ch'ang-nyong, meanwhile, maintained his position as head of the army counter-intelligence corps until his assassination in 1956. The main men directly in charge of implementing the program similarly acquired positions of privilege and fortune in the immediate post-war years. Yi T'ae-hui was appointed Dean of Law School at Ewa University and shortly afterward attended Yale University. In 1960, he was appointed Attorney General of South Korea. By 1955, Chang Che-kap rose to the rank of Chief Prosecutor at the Public Prosecution Office in Seoul, and in 1958 opened up his own law firm. Following a similar career trajectory, Yi Chae-do was appointed Chief Prosecutor for the nation's Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office and opened up an influential law firm in 1960.\textsuperscript{316} The point here is not to demonstrate that there was a direct correlation between one's connection to the civil atrocities and subsequent success in the post-war years—though often there was. Nor is it to emphasize the fact that involvement in a systematic campaign of atrocities was of no great impediment for future career advancement, although, again, this was also true. Rather, it is to remind the reader that the civil war campaign of anticommunist politicide was so

\textsuperscript{314} "Kagonghal manhan Munje ŭi Inmun", [Portrait of a Terrible Problem], Yŏngju Ilbo, 8 June, 1954.
\textsuperscript{315} Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War Volume 2, 700.
\textsuperscript{316} Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 339-341.
intricately and institutionally embedded within the ideological and national security apparatuses of the early ROK state that it was rare to find a member of the political elite that was not in some way tied to these atrocities. The implication is that if a hypothetical attempt had been made to launch a thorough prosecution of the leading figures and institutions responsible for this aspect of the war's violence, the entire edifice of the First Republic would have lost its backbone.

Given these objective political and social realities it is of no great shock to find that from 1953-1960, there were almost no attempts at bringing to justice the various perpetrators of the atrocities carried out during the civil war. There was, however, one exception which gives us important insights into how the aftermath of these atrocities played out at the local and legal realms. The case involved Yi Hyŏ-pu, a man who as head of a local Minbodan (a right-wing militia that we addressed in chapters one and two), carried out a series of massacres throughout the areas surrounding Kyŏngju in 1949. The particular set of incidents occurred in Naenam-myŏn Myŏnggye-ri at the end of from March through to the end of July. The incidents proceeded along a familiar pattern, as Yi and his armed group searched homes of accused "commies", often killing entire households deemed suspicious. In one documented episode, the Minbodan went into the homes at night of two suspected families and began randomly firing into every room. Thirty people were killed in this episode, and the surviving relatives formed the backbone of the Bereaved Family Association in Kyŏngju in 1960.\(^{317}\)

The indignities brought upon the various families throughout the region did not end with the slaughter. A common practice in the war's aftermath was that property owned by suspected "reds"—some of which was confiscated from landlords and handed over to these families during the brief, but radical, period of land reform enacted during the summer 1950 North Korean

\(^{317}\) Sŏbu Kyŏngnam, 41-44.
occupation—was forfeited to the state and given to "patriots" that had fought on the side of the ROK or lost their social position in the North following the 1946 land reforms. Though ensconced within the Pusan Perimeter, and therefore never subjected to a radical realignment of land relations, similar policies of confiscation were carried out in the Kyŏngju region following the war's ambivalent conclusion. Such was the case concerning Yu Ch'il-mun and his family's property. In March 1949, much of Yu's family was wiped out by Yi Hyŏ-pu and his cronies on the grounds that Yu's first son had joined the South Korean Labour Party and therefore the entire family was guilty. Yu and his parents managed to survive the massacre as they were in another home at the time of the killing. During the war, Yu was a member of the Navy. When the war finished, Yu remained in active service, and was therefore unable to return home. Because of their ideological taint, Yu and his family were placed under close observation and his parents' property was labeled as belonging to "reds" and forfeited to Yi Hyŏ-pu. In 1954, Yi sold off portions of the Yu family's property, thus turning a profit from the legacies of the massacre to which he was the principle author. In 1957, Yu attempted to address this historical wrong by launching a civil suit against Yi. Yu's military background leant him a certain level of prestige and the case was even covered in the Tonga Ilbo. However, by 1957, Yi was a member of Rhee's Liberal Party and an influential figure within the local politics of Kyŏngju. Yi was able to use his position to bribe key lawmakers and threaten and intimidate Yu and his family into settling the lawsuit on terms favourable to Yi.  

Like the cases involving Kim Chong-wŏn and Kim Chae-nŭn, the unresolved legacy of bitterness surrounding the massacres in Kyŏngju would resurface again in the 1960-1961 period.

For now, however, we may briefly summarize the significance of Yu's failed struggle for recognition. Firstly, it gives us a window into how the yŏnjwaje operated in practice. Rather than being compensated for their sufferings, Yu and his family were stigmatized, monitored, and eventually deprived of land. Though Yu's military service helped his reputation, it was not enough to surmount the formal and informal barriers in place against his family. Secondly, the above incident demonstrates the clear correlation between involvement in civil war era massacres and subsequent social advancement. Initially, Yi was endowed with the power to label Yu and his family as "reds", which in the long run gave him control over their property—a position to which he profited from. Furthermore, Yi's background as a feared rightist was a springboard for his future rise as a significant figure within the Liberal Party, which in turn gave him the power to squash any attempt at legal restitution. Yu's case, therefore, renders clear the extreme limitations imposed on bereaved families for seeking financial or legal recognition for the crimes committed against them and their loved ones. With these firm limits in place, families sought to retain one of the few rights they had remaining: the right to grieve and mourn.

Wrongful Deaths and the Politicization of Mourning

A major theme of the remainder of this work is the historical conflict between the state and bereaved families over traditional mourning rites and the honouring of spirits, the acutely uneven mediation of this conflict through anticommunist ideology, and this conflict's role in shaping the subjectivities and modes of resistance adopted by many of the bereaved families.
The full force of this process bloomed into a potent conflict during the 1960-1961 turmoil, vigorously fought within the local, national, political, and symbolic spheres of Korean society. However, the seeds of this political harvest were sown during the Rhee years, even if the documentary evidence supporting this is scarcer than the historian desires. At this point, therefore, I layout the theoretical groundwork and conclude this chapter with a few known cases of contestation over mourning in 1950s Korea.

At stake, I argue, are two epistemological issues within scholarship. The first concerns ghosts and haunting in the modern era as analytic subjects. The second, and more significant for our present purposes, relates to the place of ghosts within traditional Korean folk customs and the attitudes towards wrongful deaths within this tradition. Let us begin with the former. Over the past two decades, an interdisciplinary subset of scholars have embraced the so-called "spectral turn". Academics working within a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, psychology, media studies, gender studies, philosophy, literary criticism, and postcolonial studies have taken the issues of ghosts and hauntings seriously enough that there now exists what scholars Martha and Bruce Lincoln call "critical hauntology". 319 Though incorporating a diverse array of subjects, time periods, methodological tools, and locales, I would argue that a common thread unifying these works has been an analysis of the "ghost" (in both its tangible and symbolic forms) as a manifestation of repressed trauma. Thus, Avery Gordon argues that hauntings are a form of mediation and symbolic reminders of unresolved trouble. 320 Likewise, Grace Cho—who examines intergenerational hauntings of Korean Americans—argues that the traumatic legacies

associated with military prostitution have endowed trauma with a "spectral agency", afflicting the Korean-American diaspora in myriad and discreet ways.  

In making sense of the politics of mourning in South Korea surrounding civil war era massacres, this theoretical turn is beneficial in two, interrelated ways. Firstly, in placing ghosts, haunting, and other apparitions at the centre of the analysis, "hauntology" demands a temporal rupture between past and present. Within this analytic register, the sutured traumatic past refuses closure, rearticulating itself in ghostly forms which carry with them the capacity to act out repressed grievances in the present. This scholarship also offers the potential for a richer account of power. As Avery notes, "haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known...especially when they are supposedly over and done with". Throughout the remainder of this dissertation, these two aspects of hauntology are crucial. In calling for a mediation between the past and present through manifestations of trauma, this methodological turn allows for a deepening of the concept of the "unending" Korean War. Rather than simply being reduced to a geopolitical and diplomatic fact, within this paradigm we may explore the socio/psychological dimensions of the war's continued unfolding. Secondly, its focus on systematic power demands that we place anticommunism—the dominant ideological force behind these mass killings and their subsequent displacement from social memory—at the centre of the analysis.

Within the context of post-war South Korea, however, there are limitations to this theoretical paradigm. A significant analytic shortcoming within the dominant strands of hauntology is its ambiguity concerning the real and the metaphoric. While the framing of ghosts as representations of textual, unconscious, or psychological manifestations of trauma has lent

322 Avery, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.
credibility to the study of haunting, this metaphorical promiscuity can lead to the obfuscation of an obvious fact: For many who are afflicted by the presence of "ghosts", the apparitions are real and concrete social facts. The analyst need not share these beliefs to make sense of, or record, their historical force. And yet, scholars have been hesitant to emphasize the reality of haunting as a historical phenomenon, thus creating boundaries over the meaning of haunting between scholars and our historical subjects. As the Lincolns point out, "to the extent that hauntology denies ghosts ontologic status and recodes the unquiet dead as persisting in texts, memory, and uneasy silences rather than spirit, it locates them inside the consciousness of those they 'visit,' rather than on the borders of the physical and metaphysical, thereby rationalizing, simplifying, and perhaps also distorting aspects of the phenomena it claims as its object of study".\textsuperscript{323}

In the Lincolns' reading, these distortions stem from the fact that the literature on haunting borrows from certain strands in western Marxist and post-modern thought, rather than the folk and cultural traditions of the agents afflicted or locales where haunting exists. Indeed, with few exceptions, Korea has been off the radar for scholars working in critical hauntology despite its long and rich cultural history of ghosts and spirits, and a plethora of scholarly literature dealing with the subject. This lack of communication is unfortunate, though hardly surprising, given Korean studies' peripheral status within contemporary academia. I therefore, place the two traditions in dialogue. That ghosts are critical to an understanding of the Korean identity and trauma is beyond dispute. Boudewijn Walraven succinctly summarizes the matter: "Many ghosts in Korean tradition... have carried with them to the afterlife a heavy burden of unfulfilled desires and grudges about injustice done to them, that is the feelings of frustration and bitter regret called 'han', which in the past decades by many have been called characteristic of

\textsuperscript{323} Martha Lincoln and Bruce Lincoln, "Toward a Critical Hauntology", 96.
Korean identity. Indirectly...the ghosts reflect Korean ideas about the meaning of good and evil, justice and injustice in this world.”  

This particular aspect of Korean culture has a long historical pedigree, reflective of its syncretic blend of Shamanistic, Buddhist, and Confucian heritage. These traditions relating to ghosts have been shaped by the vicissitudes of time and Korea's particular historical experience and vary from region to region down to the village level. However, as Michael Pettid argues, they have been united by a common set of practices and concerns and have remained "statically grounded" at the communal level.  

Indeed, according to Pettid, practices concerning mourning rites and the appeasement of spirits did not shift greatly up to the 1970s when they first began to be recorded. 

As the above quote from Walraven attests, in the context of ghosts and trauma within present Korean society, the concept of "han" is critical. A number of scholars have observed that "han" has achieved almost a mythical status within contemporary Korean society. However, despite its centrality, pinning down a definition of "han" remains an elusive, and perhaps futile, task. As James Freda observes, "chapters, entire books and even, it seems, academic careers have been devoted to the definition and the analysis of han", but the concept itself remains untranslatable. Moreover, despite its common contemporary usage, it is largely a modern construct, rather than a stable indigenous category. 

Despite this ambiguity, within the Korean tradition of mortuary rites there is a coherent and identifiable discourse of unresolved grudges and resentment grounded in the concept of

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"wŏnhan". Roughly translated, "wŏnhan" refers to a forceful, resentful, and vengeful grudge. In the event of a troubled death (such as a young child, a violent death, a death away from home, or a death where there are no relatives to properly honour the spirit), resentment (wŏnhan) can affix itself to the souls of the departed, converting them into restless, vengeful spirits (wŏnhan kwi or wŏnhan yŏnghon). Condemned to eternal suffering because of their traumatic deaths, these souls can become trapped in a purgatorial limbo between the living world and the afterlife if their wŏnhan is not properly appeased. The most typical manifestation of this lack of closure is the malevolent hauntings of close family members or loved ones who have been unable to perform proper burials or other mortuary rites pertaining to the appeasement of spirits. In many cases, Shamans are brought in to cleanse these spirit's wrath through the possession of the Shaman as a medium so that spirits may air their grievances. The phenomenon of wŏnhan, therefore, is an intimate and drawn out process, afflicting both the begrudging spirit and their family. In this sense, it is both inter-subjective and reciprocal.

As the above description implies, there are tremendous ethical stakes surrounding wŏnhan. As Freda argues, wŏnhan itself is endowed with a moral agency—a "repressed grudge that can explode for ill or well". Similarly, as Pettid and Harolyk note, discourses related to death and "han" in Korea are often saturated with "binary notions such as purity and contamination, separation and continuation, dread and reverence." Crucially linked to this is the issue of agency, as the dead themselves are given subjectivity with the potential to afflict harm or bring good fortune depending on circumstances. Indeed, ghosts are endowed with the

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328 Walraven, "Ghost Catchers in Contemporary Korea", 19. As Walraven notes, numerous other terms are used for "ghosts" or "spirits" in Korea, depending on the context. These include: kwisin, sin, sinmyŏng, yŏng, shillyŏng, hon, hŏllyong, yŏnghon, yuryŏng, wŏllyŏng, wŏn' gwi, yŏgwi, chapsin, or tokkaebi.
330 James Freda, "Discourse on Han", 5.
331 Harolyck and Pettid, "Considerations on Death in the Korean Context", 3.
capacity to make demands upon their loved ones, threatening them with misfortune if their grievances are not properly dealt with. Finally, there exists a long tradition in Korea of spirits having more freedom to make social and political criticisms that the living are unable to raise. This latter feature became overtly politicized by representatives of bereaved families in the 1960-1961 period.

With this methodological sketch in place, we may now examine its specific implications for the families of Korean-war era massacres. Beyond their immediate trauma, these deaths presented families with an acute crisis over mourning. For example, we must consider the violent nature of these deaths in relationship to the customs outlined above. Indeed, as these deaths were "wrongful", they demanded special mourning rites to appease the spirits. However, grieving families were presented with a series of obstacles, both practical and political. Firstly, the immolation and desecration of victims' corpses was a normative practice for security forces. As bereaved families were required to take special care of bodies to ward off vengeful spirits, this posed a considerable dilemma. Further, we must consider the scattered nature of the victims' remains. Walraven makes clear that an important feature of mortuary rituals in Korea involves the return of remains to the victims' hometown, so the spirits may rest in peace with their family. However, as we saw in the case of the prison killings and National Guidance League killings, many massacres and burials transpired in locations far away from home. While in some incidences, widows or family members were able to search through the crudely dug pits, trenches, or mineshafts for the bodies of their loved ones, countless other survivors were prevented from carrying out these duties.

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332 Pettid, "Ghostly Encounters", 185.
333 Walraven, "Ghost Catchers in Contemporary Korea", 23.
Above these practical impediments loomed the oppressive structures, both tangible and invisible, of the National Security State. These existed through formal and informal mechanisms, varied from region to region, and evidence of how they were precisely implemented is scarce. A thorough analysis of how they operated, therefore, is beyond the reach of the historian. However, it is clear that the state's presence loomed large over how survivors dealt with honouring their loved ones who were both victims of murder and political pariahs. Officially, the principal impediment lodged against bereaved families was a legal one: According to Korean law, it was illegal to disturb the graves of buried bodies. For numerous families, performing mortuary rites was therefore criminal behaviour.

As Heonik Kwon has presciently noted, Korean families were caught within a tragic dialectic. Drawing from Hegal, Kwon argues that bereaved families were entangled in an impossible collision between "the law of kinship"—which demanded that families honour the spirits of their lost ones—and the "the law of the state", which forbid citizens from commemorating enemies of the state.\textsuperscript{334} Throughout the duration of the First Republic, the outcome of this conflict tilted radically in favour of the state. Such was the case for the grieving families at Pukch'on-ri on Cheju island. If the reader recalls, in January of 1949, the tiny village of Pukch'on was witness to perhaps the largest single massacre throughout the 4.3 incident. In the wake of the terrible massacre, the people of Pukch'on fell into a catatonic silence regarding the incident—rendered mute by both the crippling weight of the atrocity and legitimate fears over further persecution. On January 23, 1954, however, the veil of secrecy was briefly lifted. Local villagers gathered together for a memorial ceremony for Kim Sŏk-tae, a Pukch'on resident who died as an ROK soldier during the Korean War. The ceremony was held on the same

schoolyard playground where the horrendous massacre had transpired. In the middle of the service, one of the male residents shouted, "Six years ago today this village was burned to ashes and people were killed under a false accusation. Let’s take a moment to commemorate the souls of the victims." Members of the crowd spontaneously began to loudly lament in unison. However, police were alerted of this transgression, and the perpetrators were put under increased surveillance and harassment. From 1957 onward, bereaved families from the massacre quietly held memorial services (*Chesa*). However, these were conducted under secrecy, and until 1960, carefully avoided criticizing the state.335

As the case of Pukch’on reveals, state power—at the legal and ideological levels—radically intruded upon the mourning and grieving practices of the victims’ families. State oppression was so thorough and severe that most families suffered in silence, not daring to challenge the existing order. Many secretly snuck into the unmarked mass-graves and dug up the remains of their loved ones so that they could perform the necessarily rituals. For countless others, however, the threat of punishment was too great. Beyond the agonizing trauma of this injustice, this threat led to a crisis of kinship and numerous incidents of haunting. The full weight of this burden did not come out into the open until 1960-1961, when families were finally given an opportunity to properly mourn the victim and air their grievances. However, resistance was not completely absent in the 1953-1960 years and I conclude this chapter with two known incidents where victims were able to successfully confront the state's hegemony over the politics of bereavement.

The first of these involved the victims' bodies of the February 1951 massacres in Kŏch’ang, Sanch’ŏng, and Hamyang. Following the largely unsuccessful trials of the fall of

335 Cheju 4.3 Sakkôn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 506; "Kkŭmtchikhan Angmong Kwabu ŭi Maŭl" [A Widow's Village of Nightmares], *Chosun Ilbo*, 22 Dec, 1960.
1951—to which the mass killings in Sanch'ŏng and Hamyang were excluded—families were legally prevented from retrieving the remains of the victims. In later interviews, surviving family members referred to this as the victims' "second death".\textsuperscript{336} For three years, survivors were prevented from accessing the mass grave sites. However, in the spring of 1954, some remedies were made. Survivors from Sinwŏn and Panggok village separately organized committees and petitioned their local governments for permission to properly retrieve and bury the remains of the victims. Surprisingly, they were granted permission and in April of 1954 (on the third day of the third lunar month), were able to retrieve the bodies and perform memorial rites.\textsuperscript{337}

Little is known about the content or specific rituals carried out at these events, but records from the Sanch'ŏng Hamyang Bereaved Family Association (\textit{Samch'ŏng Hamyang Sakkŏn Yangmin Huisangja Yujokhoe}) indicate that the principle purpose was to "appease the spirits" (\textit{yŏnghon oero}).\textsuperscript{338} In the case of the victims from Sinwŏn, more information is available to the researcher. Family members went to Paksan, the scene of the largest massacre site, where an estimated 517 civilians were mowed down with machine gun fire and thrown into a pit and subsequently doused with gasoline, lit on fire, and unceremoniously buried. As this tragic form of death and sacrilegious cremation brought with it the threat of wandering vengeful ghosts, appeasement of the spirits was of absolute necessity. This act of retrieval in 1954 was a painfully intimate experience, with surviving family members searching through earth, rubble, and charred corpses in an attempt to identify the remains of their kin. However, the decay of the

\textsuperscript{337} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{338} \textit{Chinsil Kyumyŏng kwa Myŏngye Hoebok Chŏnmal}. [Details of Truth Inquiries and Restoration of Honour], \textit{http://shchumo.sancheong.go.kr/sub/05_01.asp}. Accessed October 10, 2015.
corpses, coupled with the scattering and extensive charring the bones, rendered precise identification impossible.\textsuperscript{339}

Confronted with this plight, survivors devised a creative alternative to appeasing each individual spirit. This makes for morbid reading, but provides us with invaluable insights into the terrible weight of these atrocities' aftermath, and the families' resiliency and agency in relation to this condition. Families carefully rooted through the remains, and collected the bones and skulls of the deceased. They then sorted through the bones and, unable to recognize the age, gender, or identity of each individual, arranged the skulls by size. The large adult skulls were deemed to be male, smaller skulls were identified as female, while the tiny skulls of infants and children were collectively given no specific gender. It was determined that 109 men, 189 females, and 225 children and infants were killed, making a total of 517 (the rest of the 716 of now-identified victims were scattered elsewhere).\textsuperscript{340} As the reader will recall, the official trial from 1951 determined that only 187 had been killed, all of which were men of military age. While this "discovery" of the larger number and wider types of victims merely confirmed what surviving family members already knew, uncovering this buried truth proved invaluable in subsequent attempts at restitution and compensation in 1960 and 1987 onward.

Victims were then honoured in a manner rich with symbolism. The bodies were collectively buried in three layers in one mass tomb (\textit{mudŏm}) covered by a large round mound (\textit{pongbun}). The "male" remains were placed on the bottom level, while on the top the "female" bones were stacked. In the middle were the deceased children. The tomb itself mirrored this formation as family members created it in the shape of a baby between its mother and father. The baby was nestled within its mother's chest, feeding from its mother's breast. Families then

performed collective rituals of appeasement for the spirits and wept bitter tears of catharsis.\textsuperscript{341}

What is the significance here? We can see that woven into the practical matter of tending to the begrudged spirits were the early seeds of a collective solidarity forged around the notion of communal bereavement. Indeed, the 1954 tomb for the 517 victims butchered at Paksan was perhaps the initial space for physically and symbolically challenging the epistemic dominance that the state ideology of anticommunism held over the communal and national memory of the nation's recent politicide. As I argued above, though the 1951 trials brought elements of the atrocity to light, they were ultimately premised upon an obliteration of the victims' perspective. This was registered in the low tally of victims (187) and the official designation of these victims as male communist sympathizers in the final report. The tiny burial mound in Sinwŏn presented an alternative vision—a sacred space symbolically removed from the bipolar logic which initially authored the communities' decimation and the political displacement of its memory. Previously labeled as communists, victims were positioned in an idealized family structure, with the father and mother protecting their collective offspring. The model family archetype here served as a radical foil—a concrete manifestation of a communities' capacity to transcend state-produced categories and re-articulate itself as a unified bereaved subjectivity.

Three years later, a similar series of events transpired on Cheju island. The episode pertained to a massacre committed by South Korean security forces on August 20, 1950 of detained prisoners quarantined at Mosūlpo Police Station near Sŏgwipo city. As we mentioned in chapter two, thousands of prisoners throughout Cheju Island were preemptively massacred by South Korean forces in preparation for a possible invasion of the island by advancing North Korean soldiers. These atrocities were often carried out in strict secrecy, meaning that most

\textsuperscript{341} Ibid.
families of the victims did not know where to collect the remains so that they could be properly buried. However, in the case of 193 victims massacred at a cave at Sangmo-ri in Deajŏn-myŏn, families were informed of the site's location and the villagers' identities by nearby witnesses. However, as families were prevented by law of honouring or touching the spirits of "traitors", they were forced to suffer in silence. There is some confusion within the historical record as to how long this official silence endured. According to the "Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report", families received permission to enter the site and re-bury the remains in May of 1956—a claim backed by Heonik Kwon. Kim Seong-nae, on the other hand, has argued that the families' reclaimed the bodies of their loved ones in 1958. My own research, based on the records compiled by the One Hundred Ancestors and a Single Descendant Association, suggests that the remains were recovered on April 4, 1957.

These inconsistencies within the historical record are not entirely surprising given the incident's secrecy and the inexactitude of human memory, and it is hoped that they may be clarified in the future. However, there is general agreement regarding how the bodies were cared for, and, for our present purposes, it is this aspect that is most significant. Sixty-one of the 193 victims had been secretly recovered by another cohort of relatives of the victims, so 132 unidentified bodies remained. Families carefully dug up the remains from the cave and brought them to a nearby burial plot in Sangmo-ri that they had purchased. Similar to the charred remains uncovered at Paksan in 1954, decomposition of the corpses prevented proper identification. Families were therefore prevented from honouring each spirit individually.

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342 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 529-530; Cheju-do ūi 4.3 T'ŭkpyŏl Wiwŏnhoe "Cheju 4.3 P'ihae Chosa Pogosŏ, 473.
344 Kim Seong-nae, "Mourning Korean Modernity in the Memory of the April 3 Cheju Incident", Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, 1.no.3 (2000): 470.
345 Cheju-do ūi 4.3 T'ŭkpyŏl Wiwŏnhoe, Cheju 4.3 P'ihae Chosa Pogosŏ, 473.
Presented with this dilemma, the residents of southern Cheju responded in ways which paralleled their forbearers at Sinwŏn. Though unable to identify each deceased individual, families painstakingly foraged through the remains, finding 132 skulls and sets of arms and legs. While these likely came from different bodies, the families assembled 132 human-like forms and collectively buried them in a large tomb. According to a surviving elder, this was done so there was "a minimal human shape with a head, two arms, and two legs". The site was then named the grave for "One Hundred and Thirty Two Ancestors and a Single Descendent" (Chosang ŭn ilpaek sŏrŭntu iliyo chason ŭn hana ida).

Like its Paksan predecessor, the tomb of "One Hundred and Thirty Two Ancestors and a Single Descendent" embodied the symbolic scars of an uneven conflict over mourning between the anticommunist state and its victims on the one hand, and the early rumblings of a solidarity forged around collective bereavement on the other. Firstly, we must consider the name. Heonik Kwon has noted that we see in its title an inversion of traditional Korean concepts of genealogy. Typically, genealogical descent is premised upon a pyramid-type structure, with an expanding line of continuity flowing downward through time from its initial source. Thus, we see a contradiction of these traditional temporal norms. However, it is best to see this site as a creative inversion propelled by existing kinship patterns—rather than their violation. At the root of the grave's creation was the need to honour the spirits. However, because they could not be honoured individually, a collective response was in order. In other words, there was a thoroughly pragmatic component behind the authoring of the grave. However, there was also something deeply symbolic at work—authored by the community's response to the legacies of the atrocity and subsequent suppression. In positioning an archetypical descendent as the

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347 Cheju-do ŭi 4.3 Tŭkpyŏl Wiwŏnhoe, *Cheju 4.3 Pʼihae Chosa Pogosŏ*, 473.
symbolic offspring of the collective victims, we see a shift of kinship solidarity move from one premised upon blood, toward an expansive notion of kinship rooted shared suffering and bereavement. Indeed, as Kwon argues, the grave constituted a "single community of mourners, despite their differences in genealogical identity and separate ties to the dead". The parallel between this grave and the one at Paksan is striking. In both instances, the intimate bonds of family, descent, and kinship formed the semiotic repertoire for registering alternative understandings of the civil war's bloody violence than those imposed by the Rhee government. In essence, it represented a radical inversion of the logic of the yŏnjwaje. Rising organically from the communities' responses to a legacy of violence and repression, it was at these sacred sites where alternative narratives, epistemologies, and subjectivities could be forged under the oppressive penumbra of the anticommmunist leviathan. The brutal tension between the demands of the state, on the one hand, and the need to appease the spirits on the other, laid the ground work for this process.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has offered a panoramic view of the uneven conflict between the anticommmunist state and the survivors of the politicide to which it was the primary author. Taking stock of 1950s South Korea, a few general observations may be made about the nature of political society and the plight of the state's victims. As we posited in the introduction, the war's

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quasi-termination did little to quell to fundamental socio/political antagonisms within Korean society that fueled the period of massive civil war blood-letting. With an anticommunist regime firmly anchored in the south, rightists consolidated their victory by further entrenching their power over the main tentacles of the National Security State, domination of the legislature, and control of the cultural apparatuses. Nowhere was the full force of this hegemony more potent than its effects on the lives of the bereaved families of real and imagined "leftists". Indeed, if the 1948-1953 period brought with it a novel political regime whereby entire swaths of the South Korean population were systematically reduced to demonic political abstractions unworthy of life, the following decade witnessed a refinement and augmentation of these practices. As I traced throughout this chapter, the yŏnjwaje, confiscation of property, and the denial of mourning were the concrete manifestations of the politicidal logic of the anticommunist state that carried with it the spectre of social death. Confronted with these oppressive conditions, the vast majority of survivors remained quiet, as the basic necessities of survival and family honour understandably took precedence.

And yet, a modicum of resistance did occur throughout the decade. What can be said of this? Though weak, fragmented, and articulated in a myriad of manners, the most transparent modes of resistance occurred in the legal and spiritual realms. In the case of the former, select families and legislators worked within existing state structures to bring to light isolated instances of state violence that threatened to expose the entire edifice of wanton slaughter. However, as the episodes in Kŏch'ang and Kyŏngju demonstrated, the basic political and ideological structure of the anticommmunist state remained intact, and indeed was largely able to fix the contours of these challenges. Thus, while briefly bringing to light a hidden history of atrocity, the
cumulative socio-political legacy of these trials was to reveal, and ultimately further cement, the existing matrixes of anticommunist power.

More complex was the theatre of mourning. For it was in its intrusion into the realm of the sacred where the reach of state power was at its most egregious, but also most vulnerable. A logical extension of its anticommunist ideology, the government continued its assault on the families of its victims by politicizing local mourning practices through their abject denial. In doing so, the state imposed a series of crises within communities over the appeasement of spirits and burial rites. In the cases of Sinwŏn and Sangmo-ri, this tension produced concrete sites and practices where alternative visions of the nation's recent violent past could be forged. Through the construction of tombs, the creation of symbolic nomenclatures, and the reconstitution of broken bodies and bones, the deceased and their bereaved families could be rehabilitated as a unified suffering subject. Anchoring all this was the symbolic architecture of the ideal Korean family, which served as a radical foil to a historical era that unreasonably demanded the obliteration of the boundaries between political subjectivity and long-running cultural practices concerning the honouring of ancestors.

The agency and resiliency of these families in the face of the state's radical politicization demands that we acknowledge the actions of these communities of mourners as modes of resistance. However, we must be careful not to misrepresent the scale of their intentions nor their cumulative political effect. Indeed, absent any political alteration, these would have remained what they essential were: alternative practices of mourning driven by the cruel necessities of appeasing ostensibly traitorous spirits. Their meaning essentially localized within disparate peasant communities, their indigenous folk practices, and their creative responses to legacies of trauma, there is little evidence in these acts of a conscious or organized political
resistance. Nor should there have been: these were principally organic responses to a crisis over mourning. To the extent that these bereaved families entered into the political arena, it was primarily a politics of evasion and autonomy, rather than one overt confrontation. Fragmented from each other by time and place, and at great remove from the dominant theatres of the nation's political and cultural power, the significance of these tombs did not resonate beyond these isolated community of mourners. Indeed, their power was localized and essentially symbolic, and therefore of no great threat to the regime's hegemony over the narrative of script of its violent rise to power. However, by the late 1950s, the Rhee regime was as decrepit as it was oppressive. In the spring of 1960, it rapidly collapsed. When the edifice crumbled, once silenced bereaved families came forward, demanding a reckoning with the politicidal violence of the civil war era. Previously divorced from one another, legal demands for restitution and community yearnings for the appeasement of spirits coalesced into dynamic and singular discourse that challenged the very legitimacy of the First Republic. It is this confrontation between the state and bereaved families that forms the concluding chapter of this dissertation.
Chapter Four: The Ghosts of the Korean War Past

On November 13, 1960 a significant, but now obscure, event transpired in downtown Kyŏngju. Leaders of the newly formed Kyŏngju Victims of Massacres Bereaved Families Association (Kyŏngju P'ihaksalja Yujokhoe), families of the victims, and Buddhist monks gathered together in solidarity to perform a belated joint-funeral procession march (chahaptong wiryŏngje) for victims of pre-Korean War and-Korean War era massacres. Led by figures now forgotten to Korean history, such as Kim Ha-chong, Ch'oe Yŏn-gu, and Kim Ha-t'aek, the funeral march reflected the degree to which South Korea's anticommunist ideology had effectively eviscerated the lines between the personal and the political for victims' families. Remaining photographs from that day reveal the profound political stakes involved as thousands gathered to honor their dead ancestors. The timbre of this day was captured in the slogans written on banners (hyŏnsumak) which flanked the proceedings. While some implored attendees to "weep in sympathy for a thousand years for the souls with no graves" and to "shout throughout the fatherland's mountains and valleys", those narrowly dealing with mourning and catharsis were not the only messages on display. Complementing these were slogans that carried with them an overt and specifically political character. For example, one called for the establishment of a special law to prosecute the perpetrators of previous massacres. Another directly accused police officers of murder and called for the expulsion of corrupt public officials. Most pointedly,
Yi Hyŏ-pu, the man who as head of the local Minbodan in 1949 initiated a large killing spree in Kyŏngju, was called out as a murderer to be "banished from the earth".\(^{349}\)

In light of our narrative thus far, there is a fantastic quality to the ceremony. Indeed the activities at the funeral march would have been unthinkable one year earlier and became unmentionable the following year. The event thus symbolically marked a brief temporal and political horizon in which a confrontation with Korea's traumatic past was interwoven with a liberationist politics of future emancipation, before it was surgically laid to waste by the exigencies of an ascendant military dictatorship. This final chapter narrates the prospects, the strategies employed, and ultimate failure of bereaved families to uproot the pervasive culture of silence which surrounded the politicidal campaign that engulfed their families in the previous decade. While this movement succumbed to anticommunist repression in the wake of Park Chung-Hee's May 16, 1961 Coup d'état, I am not principally concerned with accounting for why the 1960-1961 movements for historical redress failed in this lonely moment of history. Instead, we explore a set of interrelated questions and themes germane to the arguments, mode of analysis, and methodology developed throughout this dissertation. To what extent were victims' groups able, however briefly, to upend the taboos within South Korean society concerning violence against alleged leftists and their families during the civil war? What discursive and legal strategies did these groups employ, and what do these tactics us about the broader historical, political, and epistemic climate that bereaved families were compelled to act within? In what ways did the previous decade's crisis over mourning infuse the political demands and rhetorical repertoires of these actors? How did local organizations interact with broader nation-wide

imperatives to form a horizontal community of grieving families? Did counter discourses within the communities of bereaved families conform or threaten the dominant ideology of anticommunism? What was the relationship between these groups and the promises of the April 19 revolution, and how was historical redress tied to these larger politics of transformation?

The principal focus of this chapter, in other words, is on the Bereaved Family Associations themselves: their composition, their activities, their discursive practices, and their relationship to the political, historical, narrative, and epistemic theatres that have anchored this analysis. Scholarship dealing with this episode in the Korean language is sparse, and is virtually absent in the English language. This dearth of scholarly analysis is primarily the result of a paucity of sources available to researchers. Furthermore, surviving Bereaved Family Association members and their families are reluctant to speak of the 1960-1961 years. Many others have simply passed away. Moreover, in the wake of the Bereaved Family Incident (Yujok Sakkŏn), documents and records of the group were seized and destroyed, condemning future activists, families, and historians to a structured amnesia.

We are also confronted with another dilemma. Similar to the other topics covered in this dissertation, the most authoritative and detailed texts concerning the Bereaved Family Associations comes from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Korea. This work is invaluable, but it poses a challenge to scholars. While ostensibly official documents devoted to uncovering historical "truth", the Commission's reports represents a particular interpretation, reflective of its political, temporal, and epistemological constraints. As a legalistic set of documents collected and forged in the context of Korea's still-incomplete transition to democracy, the Commission's reports frame the Bereaved Family Incident in judicial and liberal terms. Thus, the historical adjudication of this event pivots upon a series of binaries:
liberal/illiberal state practices, traitor/innocent civilian, and legal/illegal activities. The result is an historical account which deservedly exonerates the victims of 1961. However, through this process, the profoundly political nature of these groups is tacitly obliterated and much of the historicity of the actors is consequently muted. We are left, then, with an "official" account of an obscure past—subordinated to the legal, institutional, and epistemological demands of an institution that navigated through a particular historical conjecture in South Korea's political present. Yet scattered sources from newspapers of the era, trial records, and testimonies and documents retrieved from the Commission itself, suggest a more rich and textured history—one that was deeply informed by the macro and localized forces and events that we have previously chronicled.

With few exceptions, the scholarship available to English readers conforms to these categories. Writing about the student activities and bereaved families who worked to uncover atrocities associated with the Cheju 4.3 Incident, Han Sun Kim has argued that these actors were motivated by "a sense of justice, an emotional response to the plight of the victims, and a drive to pursue the truth". Jung Byung-Jung, meanwhile, asserts that propelling the yujokhoe’s activism was an "outcry over basic human rights, not ideology". Other scholars have cautiously explored the political character of these activities. For example, Kim Dong-Choon points to the profound political stakes involved in 1960-1961. According to Kim, these groups threatened to destabilize the sacrosanct "myth" that the Korean War was an anticommunist crusade, and also threw into question the legitimacy of the police and military. Heonik Kwon,

350 Kim Hun Joon, The Massacres at Mt Halla, 49.
meanwhile, presciently notes that during this period, a radical conflict was opened up between the state and its victims over the issues of mourning and human remains. Nevertheless, in Kwon's reading, conscious political agency is predominantly granted to the state. Commenting on the activities and repression of the bereaved families surrounding the Taegu region, Kwon argues that for those who participated, it "remains unanswered" how their actions could have been deemed treasonous. As we shall see below, however, this history is more complex. Indeed, many of the participants from Taegu, as well as other regions throughout the nation, had a clear understanding of the political stakes involved over the private and public mourning of their loved ones.

The Korean-language scholarship on this subject is more empirically and analytically rich, though likewise principally focused on the depravity of the state. For example, in his microanalysis of the politics of bereavement in Kyŏngju, Yi Ch'ang-hyŏn demonstrates the process whereby local police, relatives of rightists, and eventually, the state, worked to sabotage the activities and persecute members of the local bereaved family group. Likewise, Yi Tong-jin, in a detailed inquiry into the 1962 revolutionary trial proceedings against the various yujokhoe leadership, argues that the Park government created ontological and political categories differentiating "good citizen" (yangmin) and "non law-abiding citizen" (piyangmin). According to Yi's research, the Park regime determined that former members and relatives of the National Guidance League or South Korean Labour Party were enemies of the state, and therefore void of legal protections. Attempts at clearing the names of victims were thus deemed seditious, as they

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354 Yi Ch'ang-hyŏn. "1960-nyŏndae ch’o Kyŏngju P’ihaksalja Yujokhoe Sakkŏn ūi chŏngae Kwajŏng kwa Sŏnggyŏk" [The process and characteristics of the Kyŏngju Massacre Bereaved Families Association Incident in the early 1960s]. Sarim, 35 (2010): 235–257. Most notably, local rightists (some of whom were plain clothed officers) would instigate riots and police would blame bereaved families for initiating them.
allegedly threatened the delicate fabric of the anticommunist social system. While the voices of the yujokhoe are not entirely suppressed in these accounts, the state-centric focus of the two authors necessarily inscribes the history of the yujokhoe into state-produced categories—albeit through a critical focus. The result is that while we now have a clearer picture of state oppression against the yujokhoe, there is as yet no precise accounting of these groups as historical and political agents.

A task of this chapter, therefore, is to illuminate the broader context that shaped these events, supplementing the important work of the Commission and these pioneering scholars with a more comprehensive historical evaluation. As my cumulative chapter, the central argument of this section is concerned with the relationship between the activities of the Bereaved Family Associations and the previous decades of politicidal violence, repression, crises over mourning, and social death. I explore the political constitution of the Bereaved Family Associations’ subjectivities and what this may tell us about the broader macro-historical and theoretical issues we are dealing with. To this end, I raise a number of observations and analytical points which anchor my larger argument. Firstly, though locally organized and premised upon issues of mourning and restitution, it is clear that the diverse groups seeking historical redress in the 1960-1961 years constituted a horizontal, nation-based form of politics, which sought to link their private forms of grievance with present political concerns. This, I argue, was constituted by the politicidal nature of the violence itself, as well as the specific contours of the post-politicidal aftermath on bereaved families. Just as the violence of the civil war era was constitutive of a broader political project, historical recognition of this violence was also embedded within a

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larger context of political transition; And, just as the necropolitical tentacles of the southern state extended into the domain of mourning in the 1950s, the 1960-1961 Bereaved Family Associations fused their mortuary practices with an overtly politicized discourse—one which sought to redefine the nation's traumatic past.

Past and present were not the only temporal realms at stake, however. These groups creatively wove their traumatic lineages into a teleological narrative of national destiny which culminated in an imagined unified democratic nation state. In these endeavours, Bereaved Family Associations were both enabled and constrained by the post-April 19, 1960 student movement's political and epistemic atmosphere—one where despite the relatively chaotic and fluid nature of politics, anticommunism retained its discursive dominance. This was most salient in the case of Bereaved Family Associations as well as their opponents' use of the "good citizen"/"non law-abiding citizen" (yangmin/piyangmin) discourse—a binary whose specific historical meaning was framed by an anticommunist ethos. Bereaved families therefore operated within the hegemonic terrain imposed by the very political project that ushered in the deaths of their loved ones. The range of their activities was thus legally, politically, and epistemologically curtailed.

I argue, therefore, that rather than simply being a failed effort to seek historical redress, the events of 1960-1961 represented a particular temporal and epistemic horizon—one in which local and intimate grievances interacted with the residues of the politicidal aftermath and the still-dominant ideology of anticommunism. When combined with the institutional openings of the post-April 19, 1960 atmosphere, the moral and creative energies of the bereaved families briefly coalesced into a counter-discourse that wedded the intimate traumas of a politicidal past to a transitional politics of emancipation. However, while opening up a very real space for
mournning, redress, and challenges to state narratives, these groups did not transcend the
hegemonic constraints imposed by the ROK state or the broader Cold War climate.

The April 19 Student Movement, the Establishment of Bereaved Family Associations, and
Inquiries into the Past

A persistent methodological theme of this work has been an exploration of the
intersections between specific incidents of violence, macro-political and epistemic processes, and
the individual and cultural memories attached to these events. The approach, in other words, has
been predominantly genealogical and hermeneutical in nature, dialogically linking micro-
histories of violence and memory to the broader patterns of South Korea's historical development.
This chapter is no different. As already intimated, of fundamental concern here is the
relationship between the activities of the bereaved families and the prevailing political climate
circa 1960-1961. Of great importance, therefore, is the April 19, 1960 student movement and its
political aftermath.

Similar to many of South Korea's recent transformative moments, South Korean civilians
and scholars remain divided over the meaning of the events of 1960-1961: Was it truly a
revolution? Were its promises realized or betrayed? Why was the Second Republic so unstable?
What was the North's role during these months? Less acrimony exists, however, as to the
morality of the movement itself, with various groups in South Korean subsequently seeking to
appropriate the legacy of the 4.19 movement. Following his 1961 Coup d'état, Park positioned
his regime as the proper heir of the movement's revolutionary promise, inculcating through public school textbooks the idea that the Park faction rescued the revolution from corruption and internal communist subversion. Radical Minjung intellectuals, meanwhile, placed the events of 1960 within a teleology of South Korean nationalist self-actualization, with students often at the vanguard of this trajectory.356

The most detailed account of the politics of the period remains Han Sungjoo's *The Failure of Democracy in South Korea*. As the title suggests, Han's basic contention is that the 1960-1961 epoch may be defined as a failure to achieve democracy. According to Han, South Korean democracy was unfulfilled because a weak political centre was unable to transcend the cleavages which existed between the conservative forces of the anticommmunist state and the radical demands of the students. Prime Minister Chang Myŏn, in this account, represents the embodiment of this dilemma—an earnest but weak moderate, outflanked by more radical and reactionary forces. Desperate to maintain cohesion within a fragmented body politic, Chang methodically alienated his rivals and allies, leaving him vulnerable to Park's machinations. In this sense, while suffering a less ignoble fate, Chang succumbed to similar pressures that engulfed other failed centrists of South Korea's recent historical past such as Kim Kyu-sik, Yŏ Un-hyŏng, and Cho Man-sik—a feckless moderate whose centrism was alien to the vortex of political pressures that eventually consumed him.357

Four decades after its publication, Han's work remains solid, and in its basic parameters are unassailable in itself. However, for our present purposes, it suffers from a few limitations. Han's analysis of the 1960-1961 period is fundamentally institutional in nature. While providing a detailed account of South Korea's ersatz party system, its factionalism, the continued power of

357 Han, *The Failure of Democracy*, 1-7.
the national security state, and the period's constitutional wrangling, an evaluation of how the revolution was experienced at the local level is absent. Thus, political actors that were active at the national level, but inconsequential to the political struggles that were waged in the upper echelons of power—such as the Bereaved Family Associations—do not appear in Han's meticulously researched account. As we shall see, this was not the case of evidence being unavailable, as the activities of these groups were regularly reported in major newspapers such as the *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, the *Choson Ilbo*, and the *Tonga Ilbo*. I argue, rather, that this oversight stems from the fact that Han's narrow conception of the political. In focusing solely on the level of formal institutionalized politics, Han overlooks the broader political culture of era, and the ideological and moral stakes involved within this unstable climate. The politics of bereavement, I opine, are central for understanding this latter point.

By the end of the 1950s, the edifice of the First Republic began to crack under the weight of its own contradictions. Plagued by factionalism, corruption, declining American favour, and an increasingly democratically oriented student demographic, the First Republic was increasingly compelled to rely upon fraud and terror to ensure its longevity—moves which further entrenched these tensions. These contradictions eventually come to a boil in the wake of the March 1960 Presidential and Vice Presidential elections. Initially, two of the great pillars of Rhee's political career—violence and fortune—appeared to create a favourable climate for the octogenarian. In 1959, Rhee extinguished his chief rival to the left, Cho Pong-am, executing him on trumped up charges of espionage. Conversely, Rhee's principal rival for the Presidency within the anticommunist camp, Cho Pyŏng-ok, died unexpectedly during the election campaign.

Given that Rhee's Presidency was assured, the contest for Vice Presidency became the central political contest. This was fiercely waged between incumbent Chang Myŏn and Rhee
hand-picked successor, Yi Ki-bung. Yi's extensive ties to the police and reputation for cronyism made him a symbol for the excesses of the First Republic and deeply unpopular in urban areas. Rhee and Yi therefore relied upon intimidation during the campaign. Opposition candidates were routinely beaten and members of the infamous Anticommunist Youth Corps manned polling stations. Meanwhile, local police chiefs openly campaigned for Liberal Party candidates. When votes were tallied on March 15, Yi won by a massive margin, 8.4 million votes to 1.8 million. Democrats in the National Assembly cried foul—declaring that the election was "illegal, null, and void"—a sentiment that was subsequently confirmed when an internal investigation found that the Ministry of Internal Affairs and police headquarters stuffed ballot boxes in Yi's favour.

It was in the streets, however, where the most ferocious battles were waged. From February 28 onward, sporadic student protests erupted throughout the country, setting off a dialectic of increased state repression and student militancy. Initially inchoate, students became increasingly organized. Whatever legitimacy remained for the First Republic all but crumbled in early April when the body of Kim Chu-yŏl was found by a fisherman floating in the southern port city of Masan's harbour. His body mutilated and his cranium cracked open by a tear gas canister, Kim became a symbolic martyr in the struggle for democracy. Rhee and the security forces responded with greater repression, while accusing the demonstrations of being communist inspired. These once potent arsenals, however, increasingly smacked of the desperation of a decrepit regime. The events to which the movement derives its namesake occurred on April 19 when an estimated 30,000 university and high school students poured into the streets of Seoul, eventually converging at the presidential mansion of Kyŏngmundaes. Police responded with brutality, opening fire on demonstrators and causing them to riot. By the end of the day, 130
were dead and over 1,000 wounded. For the next week, riots were a daily occurrence and martial law was declared. Remarkably, Army Chief of Staff Song Yo-ch'an, a figure so critical to the violence during the civil war, refused to intervene, and limited soldiers' actions to defence against overt acts of violence. Galvanized by their successes, protestors began demanding the resignation of Rhee, a wish that was granted when Rhee met with Song and US Ambassador Walter P. McConaughy on April 26 and resigned the Presidency. Foreign Minister Hŏ Chŏng became acting President. The following day, Yi Ki-bung committed collective suicide with his family. Rhee, meanwhile, fled to Hawaii where he died four years later at the age of 90. Before moving on, it is worth pausing to reflect upon the irony of Rhee's legacy: A staunch nationalist who, like his antagonist Kim Il-Sung, succeeded in building a repressive state structure while failing to achieve a unified nation.

With Rhee out of the country and his Liberal party thoroughly discredited, political power was in the hands of the Democratic party. Though Hŏ acquired the Presidency, the most powerful man in the interim was Vice President Chang, who, with the death of Cho Pyŏng-ok, became the leading politician of the Democratic establishment. Han has noted the disjuncture between the soft-reformism of the Democratic leadership and the more radical politics of students which brought down the Rhee edifice. In Han's reading, the early reforms to the Second Republic were merely cosmetic, as the basic institutional and ideological apparatuses of the ROK were kept in place.358 There is a great degree of truth to this characterization, and it is indeed central to understanding the dynamics of the 1960-1961 years. However, it obscures some of the very real political and epistemic stakes that were opened up in the wake of the Rhee's defenestration—particularly at the local level. This is evident in case of the Bereaved Family

358 Han, The Failure of Democracy in Korea, 33
Associations that sprung in being in the post-April 26 malaise. Kŏch'ang was the initial tinderbox.

As the reader may recall, the grave site at Pak'san valley in Sinwŏn township was a space for concrete alternative imaginings to those of the post-politicidal narrative imposed by the First Republic. It is likely not a coincidence, then, that it was the inaugural space from which a wider reimagining of the civil war period burst forth into the national scene in 1960. The events which transpired on the night of May 11, 1960 remain somewhat contentious. Indeed, at the Kŏch'ang Memorial Park, the evening's proceeding have been etched out from the official narrative carved by the current representatives of the slayers' victims. Kim Dong-Choon, meanwhile, has argued that this event was primarily driven by frustration over the failure of the legal and political proceedings of the period. However, as it preceded the stymied opportunities at transformative justice discussed below, there appear to have been more prescient factors than political frustrations at work. Journalistic accounts from the era disagree mildly about some of the specifics, but offer a general narrative. In the evening, roughly seventy bereaved family members from Sinwŏn gathered at the Pak'san grave site to honour those massacred in the winter of 1951. Following this, the group marched to the home of Pak Yŏng-po. Pak had been village chief at the time of the slaughter in 1951. Pak had used his position to inform police and soldiers about which families were wealthy rightists and relatives of the police so that they could be spared from the atrocity, while doing nothing to protect other families. He also had a strong rightist pedigree with ties to far-right youth groups, the police, and the National Guidance League. The mob, which had grown considerably in size, demanded that Pak come out, and when he refused, they broke into his house and dragged him into the streets. Pak was beaten and pummeled with stones, and died in the ensuing carnage. Some accounts claim that the death was
accidental. However, what immediately followed ought to remove any doubts as to the purpose of the violence. Pak's body was placed within a heap of debris and torched by members of the angry mob—the same fate which afflicted hundreds of people in Sinwŏn nine years earlier. There is little doubt that an act of symbolic revenge had taken place. Eventually, the military was called in to quell the violence, and the main assailants were arrested and later tried and convicted.\(^{359}\)

What followed in the immediate aftermath of this evening is somewhat surprising and contrasts radically with the dynamics of the previous decade. For the first time in nine years, Sinwŏn was thrust into the centre of national politics, its buried past resurfacing through major national papers such as the *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun, Tonga Ilbo*, and even the conservative leaning *Chosun Ilbo*. Rather than sparking the expected anticommunist witch hunt, however, a struggle for national reflection was ushered in, one that brought with it a rare form of mnemonic politics that put the anticommunist right on the defensive. Intrepid journalists and eventually National Assembly Members played key roles in this process, but the bereaved families and their leadership were the vanguard.

Remarkable in these early journalistic accounts is the manner in which investigations into the assassination of the local village chief instantly opened up a broader inquiry into a gruesome past, its cover-up, and the individual and political machinations underpinning this decade of atrocity and silence. In reports from the *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun* on May 12 and May 13, for example, readers were informed that the killing of Pak was a "revenge killing" (*poboksalin*). The bulk of the attention in these pieces was devoted to the atrocities of 1951, and then acting

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Martial Law Commander of Kyŏngsang Province Kim Chong-wŏn's role in facilitating these killings and obstructing the 1951 National Assembly investigation into them. The latter piece called for further investigations into the activities of Kim as means for ensuring domestic peace and justice for the victimized families. In other words, rather than blindly condemning the murderers, the report tied the politics of the past to the present, and demanded that measures be taken to alleviate this affliction. This was a radical contrast to how most of the press covered the incident in 1951.360

Two factors appear to have been most potent in working towards solidifying this narrative. The first was the repressed but still existent social memory of the 1951 public inquiries in the Kŏch'ang massacre and the attendant published documentation. While the main perpetrators of the atrocity had their sentences reduced or were rehabilitated, Kŏch'ang, unlike other episodes, was officially recognized as a crime. Thus, when a new generation of journalists began digging into the silenced history of the Kŏch'ang incident, a public record, however flawed, was available for them to draw upon. This was most pronounced in the case of the _Han'guk Ilbo_, which for two weeks serialized the trial records from 1951.361 The second, and arguably more important factor, was the public airing of the voices of the victims—long silenced by a culture of fear, surveillance, and indifference. The tone in these early drafts was angry, defiant, and action orientated. On the heels of the village chief's assassination, crowds were reported shouting "Kim Chong-wŏn must die" and Kim and former Minister of Defence Sin

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361 "Haetpyŏt ŭl pon 10-nyŏnchŏn Kirok/P'innan Kukhoe Malhan Kŏchang Sakkŏn (1)" [Shedding light on the Record From 10 Years ago/Sheltered National Assembly discussed Kŏch'ang Incident], _Han'guk Ilbo_, 17 May 1960, Chokŏn 3 myŏn.
Sŏng-mo were accused of "unspeakable crimes against humanity". Other reports humanized the victims by providing a window into a community constituted by trauma, loss, endurance, and resentment. We need not dwell on the torment encountered in these tales. Suffice to say, common themes included survivors narrowly escaping death only to find the rest of their family members dead, and the loss of husbands, farmland, cattle, dwellings, and siblings. Tellingly, I was not able to find a single reference to the mass rape of women which occurred throughout the killing spree, indicating that certain subjects remained taboo.

Two related legacies emerged from the resurfacing of the Kŏch'ang Incident. First, we can identify an inchoate, but nevertheless substantial probe into structures of the First Republic that went into forming the massacres and its subsequent denial. Though ostensibly focusing on naming key figures involved in the killings and their partial cover-up, it is clear from these early drafts of history that a broader mode of inquiry was at work. Stories concerning Kim Chong-wŏn and Yu Pong-sun (a local police inspector implicated in a series of atrocities in the Kŏch'ang region who later became a Liberal Party member of the National Assembly), for example, not only brought up their ties to the larger anticommmunist national security state, but also traced their political careers which followed the Kŏch'ang killing spree. As these reports demonstrated, both Kim and Yu were rehabilitated, with Kim eventually becoming Police Chief of North Kyŏngsang Province, and Yu elected to office as a member of the Liberal Party. While not asserting it as such, these reports carried with them the seeds for a broader critique which threatened to delegitimize the political architecture of the South Korean state.363

363 "Yu Pongsun ssi rŭl Hwasun/Koch'ang Sakkŏn ūi Wichŭngja Hyŏpŭi ŭng ŭro [Yu Pongsun Summoned/Discuss False Testimony Regarding Kŏch'ang Incident], Yŏnhab Sinmun, 15 May, 1960; "Sakkŏn tangsi Sach'al Chuiim Yu Pongsun ssi Hwanmunhal tŭt/Pusan Chigŏm Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn ūl Chaechosa" [Head Inspector at
More significantly, however, was the fact that the rediscovery of the Kŏch'ang episode inspired a nation-wide movement of bereaved families to seek justice and historical redress along the outlines that were beginning to take shape in the village of Sinwŏn. This process first took shape in the near-lying regions of Hanyang and Sanch'ŏn, where South Korean counter insurgency forces engaged in similar episodes of mass murder. Previous petitions to the Rhee government from survivors for an inquiry were met with a stony silence, thus helping cement the impression that the events in Sinwŏn were an exception, rather than the rule. In the wake of the First Republic's collapse, family members could once again seek restitution, spurred by the revelations of atrocities that occurred Kŏch'ang. Eventually, survivors from Kŏch'ang, Hanyang, and Sanch'ŏn worked together for a joint investigation, which, in turn, inspired other survivors to step forward. Beyond Kŏch'ang and its neighbours, numerous Bereaved Family Associations proliferated throughout the Kyŏngsang, Honam, and Cheju regions over these months. For example, in the last week of May, groups emerged out of T'ongyŏng, Masan, Taegu, Sŏngju, Milyang, and Tongnae, to name a few.

What can be said of these groups: their size, their composition, and their various agendas? To begin, we may note that despite their variations in size, region, and level of political involvement, Bereaved Family Associations shared a number of crucial features. Typically organized at the village or regional level, Bereaved Family Associations consisted of anywhere between twenty and nine-hundred members. These groups focused on specific incidents that had afflicted them in the civil war era, demanding recognition of these crimes and

the time of the Koch'ang Incident Yu Pongsun Summoned/Pusan District Reexamines Kŏch'ang Incident], Han'guk Ilbo, 15 May, 1960.

364 The Sŏngju Bereaved Families Association (established on May 3 1960), for example, only had twenty members. The Kyŏngju Bereaved Families Association (established on October 10 1960), meanwhile, reached a membership of 860.
punishment of specific perpetrators. For example, the Kyŏngju Bereaved Families Association's activities focused on the punishment of Yi Hyŏ-pu, the local rightist who through bribes and extortion, had effectively escaped justice since 1949 (see chapter three). Heading the group in Kyŏngju was Kim Ha-chon and his twin brother Kam Ha-t'aek, while Yu Ch'il-mun, who had launched a failed lawsuit against Yi, was also a member.

The Kims' personal grievance against Yi stemmed from the series of massacres committed by Yi and his cronies throughout Naenam-myŏn in the spring and summer of 1949. Through carried out in 1949, the conflict between Yi and the Kim family had its origins in the fallout from the 1946 Autumn Harvest uprisings in Taegu. After the leftist-infused peasant uprisings, Yi started the Naenam branch of the Taehan Youth and by 1947 was a significant rightist in Kyŏngju, eventually heading the local Minbodan. According to Kim Han-chon, "if you did not know who Yi Hyŏ-pu was, you were not from Kyŏngju". Kim, however, claims that his family's issue with Yi evolved not from politics, but from "personal spite" (sagam). In the fall of 1947, a member of Kim's village had five bags of rice stolen. The villagers did a house by house search and eventually discovered the bags in an underground room in the house of someone simply referred to as "Pak". The village chief, and relative of Kim, Kim Hak-ŭn, ordered Pak to be banished from the village. However, Pak refused, and alerted his younger brother, who was a member of Yi's Minbodan. Pak's younger sibling then alerted Yi and the entire Kim family were labeled as "communists". Two years later, when the civil war was raging in the area, Yi and his militia massacred twenty-two of Kim's relatives. Kim, who was in the sixth year of public school at the time, fled to another province and changed his name to Kim T'ae-u. However, following the 4.19 movement, Kim returned home, reverted back to his original name, and headed the Kyŏngju Bereaved Family Association. Incredibly, Kim and his
cohorts were able to successfully petition for the arrest of Yi on charges of murder and arson. In March 1961, Yi was convicted on both counts.365

In most other cases, the committees' leadership was composed of educated survivors with political backgrounds of left-wing activism in the post-liberation era or student activists who had taken part on the April 19, 1960 movements. In the case of Cheju, for instance, students from Cheju National University formed the Association for the Investigation of the 4.3 Cheju Incident, demanding in May 1960 for a national inquiry into the deaths of civilians from the Cheju Incident. These students not only petitioned the government, but also were involved in fact finding itself.366

The backbone of other groups was largely made up of former activists from the post-liberation era. A brief look into the backgrounds of the leadership of the various associations to arise out of the Kyŏngbuk and Kyŏngnam provinces provides us with crucial insights into the lineage of these groups. The head of the Taegu Bereaved Family Association, Yi Wŏn-sik, was a member of the South Korean Labour Party in the post-liberation years, joined the National Guidance League in 1949, and was jailed in Taegu penitentiary at the start of the war. While he survived the campaign of mass executions, his wife did not. Yi Sam-kūk, whose father was killed as a suspected leftist, was head of the Kyŏngbuk Bereaved Family Association, an umbrella group for all the regionally based groups in North Kyŏngsang Province. In the post-4.19 era, Yi was a member of the Minjok Chaju T'ongil Chungang Hyŏbūihoe, a leftist organization devoted to peaceful reunification with the North and independence from America. T'ak Pok-su, the most prominent female within these groups, joined the National Guidance League in 1949, to which her deceased husband was also a recruit. Given these backgrounds, it

366 Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Chosa Pokosŏ, 39.
is unsurprising that these groups were highly politically conscious and driven by the need to exonerate their lineages.\textsuperscript{367}

These leftist genealogies may have carried with them the infamous "red" taint, but they endowed the various Bereaved Family Associations with an interlocking organizational capacity. As Kang Ch'ŏng-tŏk of the Kyŏngsan Bereaved Family Association recalls, this was forged through dormant political relationships that had been established in the early post-liberation period. According to Kang, the bulk of the region's leaders were previously active in various peasant organizations, People's Committees, or the South Korean Labour Party in the 1945-1950 years. Others, like Kang himself, had been members of Cho Pong-am's Progressive Party prior to his 1959 execution, and in the 1960 period were involved a diverse set of socialist parties or reform movements.\textsuperscript{368}

With limited political support or connections within the existing national security bureaucracy, activists worked from the bottom-up, relying upon the efforts of devoted individuals and the seething memories villagers. Kang, for example, used his existing connections with the staff at the Taegu-based \textit{Maeil Ilbo} where he had previously worked to publish advertisements for the Bereaved Family Associations or circulate reports of local villagers' excavations of the victims' remains. In other cases, volunteers would march through the streets with a loud speaker denouncing the Rhee government or handout manifestos and reports chronicling the crimes of the previous decade.\textsuperscript{369} As news of the Kŏch'ang Incident circulated, some witnesses hesitantly came forward. For example, the Ulsan Bereaved Family Association was greatly benefitted when a local who had been a truck driver for the bodies of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[368] Chinsil Hwahae rŭl wihan Kwagŏsa Chŏngni Wiwŏnhoe, \textit{Inmun Sahoe Chosa}, 19.
\item[369] Ibid, 11-13.
\end{footnotes}
executed prisoners led survivors to a site of a mass grave outside of the city. Villagers were alerted and over a thousand locals participated in a mass exhumation of their family members' remains. These early efforts at truth clarification, waged spontaneously at the village level, occasionally resulted in friction between the families and the police. For example, members of the Ulsan Bereaved Family Association dug up and collected some of the remains from a massacre site and brought the bones into the local police station. In the township of Namch'ŏn, villagers gathered outside the police station after a belated funeral for one of the victims and pelted the police station with rocks. Like the calls for Kim Chong-wŏn's death, these episodes revealed the profound tensions within Korean society smoldering from the unresolved legacies of the post-liberation era.

The political struggle was also legal and legislative. The activism of survivors from the Kŏch'ang and neighbouring regions first came to fruition on May 23, 1960 with proposed legislation to launch an inquiry into these atrocities. Representatives from the Honam, Kyŏngsang, and Cheju provinces successfully amended this legislation for inclusion, threatening to convert it into a nation-wide investigation. However, to my knowledge no representatives from Seoul, Kyŏnggi, Ch'unch'ŏn, and Kangwŏn came forward. This was likely because, as regions that lived under North Korean occupation for the longest duration, the "red" stigma was most palpable. It was agreed that a special investigation team, The Special Investigation Commission on the Truth of Innocent Civilian Massacre Incidents (Yangmin Taeryang Haksal

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370 Che 2-Chang Chiptan Hŭisaeng Kyumyŏng Wŏn'hoe: Ulsan Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn [Committee for Examining Incidents of Large-scale Sacrifice, Section 2: Ulsan National Guidance League Incident], (Sŏul: Chinsil Hwahoe rŭl wihan Kwagŏsa Chŏngni Wŏnhoe, 2007), 176-178.
371 Ibid, 176.
372 Inmun Sahoe Chosa, 13.
Chosadan) would launch an inquiry from May 30 until June 10 into many of the unresolved killings.

The scope, the make-up, and the results of this commission serve as a microcosm of the political world of the early Second Republic, the balance of political power, and the priorities of the interim government. Firstly, we may note that these efforts were considerably constrained. Staffed by a team of nine investigators and limited to a ten-day time span, the commission was too small and short-lived to engage in any sustained treatment of the politicide. To cite just one perverse fact, over the total of ten days, three members of the commission visited Cheju, only once, for six hours. Further, the commission was stacked with members either directly or indirectly involved in the violence or with close ties to the political establishment. For example, one of the members had been a police chief during the Korean War. Meanwhile, key figures, such as Pak Sŏng-kil, who represented the victims from Kyŏngsangg, and Kim Ŭ-t’aek, were respectively members of the Liberal and Democratic parties. The commission was also without subpoena power, meaning that victims had to voluntarily testify to the hastily composed and poorly advertised inquiry. The commission’s effectiveness was additionally hampered by the fact that it was unable to find the locations of many of the leading figures of the police and military from the civil war period, while the Statute of Limitations only reached back ten years, rendering prosecution unlikely. Finally, throughout the proceedings, voices from the right shaped the debate considerably. A common accusation from this camp was that the commission would create "disorder" with "impure elements" (pulsun kyeyŏl) hijacking the proceedings. Predictably, these voices generally emerged from figures directly or indirectly tied to the police.

374 “3-Kae Chosatan P’akyŏn/Yangmin Taeran Haksal Sakkŏn Chinsang Kyumyŏng” [3 Members of Investigation Team Dispatched/To Examine Large-scale Massacre of Civilians], Tonga Ilbo, 23 May, 1960.
The effect of these accusations was that a number of survivors did not come forward out a legitimate fear that they would be once-again branded as communists.\textsuperscript{375}

It is therefore unsurprising that when measured against contemporary estimates, the 1960 commission turned up only a fraction those who were actually killed. In total, the commission revealed 8,522 victims. The largest number came from the Kyŏngbuk (2,200) and Kyŏngnam (2,892), most of whom were victims of the National Guidance League killings or the mass executions at Taegu Prison. On Cheju, the commission uncovered 1,878 deaths. Meanwhile, the commission confirmed 1,552 deaths in the Honam regions.\textsuperscript{376} Beyond the deaths, the report also documented extensive property damage, including over 10,000 homes and the loss of thousands of livestock throughout the country.\textsuperscript{377} The limited scope and findings of this commission has led scholars such as Kim Hun Joon to dismiss it as a “failure”.\textsuperscript{378} If we adopt Kim's present-orientated standards of human rights-based transitional justice, there is merit to this verdict. However, in my reading, his conclusion is unduly reductive and harsh—particularly when we consider the historical context and the considerable hurdles facing survivors. Indeed, what is remarkable, in retrospect, is not so much the commission's limitations, as its accomplishments and potentially revelatory qualities. Here, two points are worth emphasizing. Firstly, in identifying a series of massacres which took place in disparate regions over a sustained period of time, the reports from the commission unambiguously demonstrated that the violence was of a

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376 Sakkŏn tangsi Pudaejang mit Kwallyŏnja Kyumyŏng" [Commander at the time and those involved with Incident Identified" Cheju Sinbo, 13 June, 1960; "8 Ch'ŏni nŏmnŭn Haksalcha/Puljirŭ ko Yak'tal Nanhaeng/3 Pu Haptong Chosatan kwa T'ukpyŏl Choch’ibŏp Chejŏng ŭl Ch'okku/Yangmin Haksal Kukhoe Chosatansŏ" [More than 8,000 Slaughtered/Violently Burned and Plundered/ 3 Member Investigation Team and Enactment of Special Law Urged.. Han'guk Ilbo, 21 June 1960.
377 Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 311.
378 Kim Hun Joon, "Transitional Justice", 243
}
systematic nature. In light of the contours of South Korean anticommunist nationalism the significance of this finding cannot be ignored. For, in conclusively demonstrating that organized political violence emanated from the National Security State, the reports threatened a core feature of this nationalism: that the state was the guardian of the people.

Secondly, and related to this, the commission allowed victims to publically reveal intimate stories of institutional persecution and to name specific perpetrators which were then made public. Chang Kap-sun's testimony is illustrative of this first function. Chang was attending high school in Cheju in 1948 when his father was abducted by police, and taken in for questioning, never to be seen again. Shortly after, Chang left for Pusan to further pursue his education, but three months into his studies he heard a rumour that there had been a large massacre in his home village of Sinŏm. Chang returned to find his father's bullet-ridden, rotting corpse. Though Chang was certain that soldiers from the Second Regiment had committed the massacre, he could not go to authorities about the crime out of fear that he would be labeled as being from a communist family. Chang's testimony put a human-face to the trauma, confusion, and fears that many of the island's inhabitants were forced to endure for over twelve years.379 In the testimony of Ko Sun-hwa, meanwhile, the institutional and systematic forces behind the massacre were laid bare. Ko, who headed a local preliminary investigation team on Cheju comprised of 3,500 volunteers, revealed tales of grim atrocities from bamboo spears, mass executions, and beheadings. Most significantly, Ko pointed to the collusion between police forces, the Ninth Regiment, and the Northwest Youth Group. Ko noted that one of the worst

perpetrators was Northwest Youth leader, Kim Chae-nūng. In singling out Kim, Ko was accusing a man who had once been one of the most powerful figures on the island. Other testimonies from the mainland were of a similar nature. During the proceedings, the Taegu based *Segye Ilbo* ran an interview with another anonymous truck driver who described the process through which the bodies of prisoners at Taegu prison were taken to the valleys and cobalt mines to be disposed of. The witness described the routine massacre of young men throughout the spring and fall of 1950. In other words, hints of a sustained massacre were present in these reports.

While no precise data is at our disposal, evidence suggests that public support for the survivors was considerable. The power of this sentiment was clearly on display in the initial debates surrounding the establishment of the commission. Proponents argued that since public sympathy was on the side of the families, it would be prudent to launch inquiries as a way of preventing further unrest. Nor was sensitivity to public sentiment limited to the commission's defenders. Addressing the prospect of a truth commission in late May, the Cheju City chief of police acknowledged the popularity of the truth-seeking efforts. Though the police chief argued that the proposed commission did not do enough to distinguish between innocent victims and communists, that it risked being hijacked by communists, and that it threatened the reputation of patriotic families, he recognized that the public mood was significantly orientated enough

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380 Ibid.
towards the victims that an inquiry was necessary to reestablish trust between the island's population and the national government.\textsuperscript{382}

The results of the commission were released to the public on June 21, 1960, but they did little to quell the issue. In the immediate wake of their publication, protests broke out throughout the country from bereaved families and students claiming that thousands of massacres remained unacknowledged. At Korea University, for example, students from Cheju launched a protest, arguing that 7,000 deaths remained unaccounted for. At the heart of this demonstration was a concern over those from Cheju who were killed on the mainland during the mass killing of pre-detained prisoners and National Guidance League recruits that transpired during the first few months of Korean War.\textsuperscript{383} Indeed, the incomplete nature of the investigations led the commission to recommend further inquiries in order to gain testimonies from suspects and those who were in positions of power at the time of the killings, while also finding more candidates for financial restitution. In the following months, however, the legislative avenues were effectively closed off. In the July 29, 1960 elections, reformist and radical candidates fared poorly, ensuring a National Assembly dominated by moderate and conservative factions. Nor was Prime Minister Chang Myŏn particularly sympathetic towards efforts aimed at further restitution. As he explained to one student journalist, the series of atrocities carried out during "6.25" were "unavoidable". Further, Chang argued that the scattered nature of the victims' remains made it difficult for the government to properly compensate survivors for their losses. The duty of Korean society was to move on.\textsuperscript{384} In utilizing the "6.25" nomenclature and counseling a form of

\textsuperscript{383} "4. 3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Kyumyŏng" /Chaegyŏng Haksaeng, Kukhoe ap'sŏ Temo" [Examine the Truth of the Cheju Incident/ Students Studying in the Capital Demonstrate in Front of National Assembly], \textit{Cheju Sinbo}, 22 June, 1960. Some of those killed would have included members of the National Guidance League.
\textsuperscript{384} \textit{Ingwŏn Ch'imhae Sakkŏ}, 263.
tacit forgetfulness, Chang was employing familiar tropes in the rhetorical lexicon of anticommunism.

The truncated and aborted legislative process, however, is only part of the story of the 1960-1961 struggle for recognition led by the Bereaved Family Associations, as the reclaimed right to mourn took central stage. Though official restitution was effectively curtailed, the politics of the street was far more vibrant. What transpired throughout this year were not simply intimate acts of private mourning. Rather, through their practices of honoring the dead and searching for the "truth" of the Korean War past, Bereaved Family Associations latched onto, and contributed to, a larger political debate concerning the past, present, and future direction of the Second Republic. The departed souls would be the central protagonists. It is to this phenomenon that I now turn.

Raising the Korean War Dead

Throughout the Rhee years, the struggle to properly mourn the victims of ROK-commissioned civilian slaughters, was a central preoccupation of surviving families. I drew particular attention to the documented cases of Kŏch'ang and Cheju. To recapitulate, I argued that the logic of politicide from the civil war period continued into the post-war era. The Manichean ethos of anticommunism persisted, though the main thrust of the state's ideological dominance moved from one of physical extermination to one of symbolic violence. The brutal implications of this recomposition were acutely on display in the case of bereaved families, who,
out of fear of being punished, were unable to perform funeral rites for parents, siblings, or children labeled as communists. Lives unworthy of living became deaths unworthy of mourning.

This form of repression produced three notable effects that are integral to understanding the discourses and strategies employed by the Bereaved Family Associations in 1960-1961. Firstly, as mentioned in chapter three, we must consider cultural practices within Korea that were particularly strong in the rural communities that were witness to many of these massacres. Consequently, for many aggrieved families, the inability to properly mourn or tend to the spirits carried with it the spectre of hauntings from vengeful spirits. The boundaries between the spiritual and the secular and the individual and the political melted into one another. Secondly, the specific role of anticommunist ideology must be emphasized. Central to the state's prohibition on funeral rites was that those killed were communists and therefore dishonourable souls. As anticommunism remained formidable in the 1960-1961 interim, the newly permitted practice of public mourning included a reckoning and negotiation with this social fact. As such, similar to the Bereaved Family Associations' legal strategies, acts of public mourning were also premised upon reframing the dead from "communists" into victims of wrongful violence.

Finally, in a few select instances, bereaved families were able to carve out alternative identities through the construction of mass graves. Forged around the concept of the collective bereaved family, these sites contained an alternative understanding of the civil war era's violence. Though apolitical, this visual script contained within it the seeds of a counter-hegemonic narrative. In the 1960-1961 period, when prohibitions regarding the honouring of these spirits were lifted throughout the country, the alternative subjectivities incubated through these mortuary practices blossomed into a radical critique of the First Republic.
With these three underlying premises established, we may now make sense of the Bereaved Family Associations' utilization of mourning rituals and truth-seeking activities as a mode of political discourse. First, however, a caveat. As there were strong localized and personal dimensions to these various endeavours, we must acknowledge the existence of heterogeneity. Though not elaborated upon in great detail here, representatives from Kŏch'ang, Cheju, and the Kyŏngsang regions varied in their degrees of political commitment and their depth of state criticism. However, significant common features reoccur throughout the remaining records of these groups, indicating a unified, if somewhat inchoate, repertoire of political engagement. This discourse was defined by three overlapping principals: a form of mourning which utilized honour restoration as a medium for critiquing the state; a romantic narrative of democratic nationalism, and; accommodation with anticommunism. These themes are best understood relationally, forming an interwoven mnemonic tapestry.

In retrospect, it is difficult to precisely gauge the cumulative political force of these interventions. However, it is clear that the words of the Bereaved Family Associations had great potential reach. For example, the Ulsan Bereaved Family Association's public eulogy (ch'utosa), was broadcast over the airwaves of the Pusan-based network MBC.385 Further, the Bereaved Family Association's use of major dailies in Taegu ensured a potentially wide audience. Public memorial services were often widely attended. A November 13, 1960 wiryŏngje in Kyŏngju was rumoured to have been attended by over 4,000 individuals.386 There were often direct contests over political and epistemic power at stake in these endeavours. On June 3, 1960, over 200 demonstrators in Ulsan protested in front of the police station, demanding documents pertaining

385 Ulsan Kungmın Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 996.
to the alleged deaths of 800 of their relatives. Meanwhile, in Milyang, thirty relatives of executed members of the National Guidance League charged into the home of a former head of the local Taehan Youth Group and ransacked the property.\(^{387}\) This potentially subversive impact of these groups is crucial for understanding the importance of the Bereaved Family Association's discourse, as well as their subsequent suppression.

A core feature of the politicidal South Korean anticommunist system was the was obliteraton of the "communist" other. At its extreme limits, this was manifested in the form of organized violence, assassinations, stigmatization, the yŏnjwaje, and the denial of mourning. Radically violent and deeply penetrating, this process of political and spiritual extermination brought with it the creation of negative subjectivities and the catastrophic spectre of social death. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the most prominent theme we find in the accounts of the Bereaved Family Associations is one of rehabilitation and the reconstruction of identity, focused on the souls of the deceased themselves. Here, the issue accorded most gravity was the integrity of victims. Nowhere was this more pronounced than in the case of Kŏch'ang. In a May 20, 1960 public statement from representatives from the Kŏch'ang Bereaved Families Association, for example, the villagers were described as "like angels" (chŏnsa wa kat'ŭn), immune from engaging in fraud, threats, or political intrigue.\(^{388}\) Again, in a Ch'utosa delivered in November of the same year, the victims were characterized as being "gentle as sheep" (yang kach'i sunhan insa), forced to suffer hardship despite offering no resistance or insubordination.\(^{389}\) Though less creative in their use of metaphors, representatives from Cheju and the Kyŏngsang groups incorporated similar tropes. In their May 26, 1960 petition to the National Assembly, members

\(^{387}\) Ingwŏn Ch'imhae Sakkŏn, 324.
\(^{388}\) "(Minŭi) Kŏch'ang Min ŭi Palŏn" [(the Will of the People), Public Statement from the People of Kŏch'ang], Kyŏnghyang Sinmun, 20 May, 1960
\(^{389}\) Kŏch'ang Ch'utosa. A Han'gŭl Version of the Text is Available at http://blog.naver.com/smallnews/7924103
from the Association for the Investigation of the Truth of the 4.3 Incident (4.3 Sakkôn Chinsang Kyumyŏng Tongjihoe), appealed to the innocence of the island's residents, referring to them as "yangmin" (a term denoting honourable citizens).\(^{390}\) Similarly, in the official petition from the National Association of Bereaved Families (Chŏnkuk p’ihaksal yujokhoe), an amalgamation of the various Kyŏngsang groups that also eventually served as an umbrella agency for the entire network of bereaved family groups, the souls of the victims were described as "noble" (Sungko).\(^{391}\)

Valorization was not the only method in the rhetorical repertoire of the bereaved families. In an attempt to subvert the dehumanization of the previous decade, the souls of the deceased and their families were placed at the centre of the mourning rituals and the larger terrain of memory politics in which they were embedded. These passages remain the most emotionally affective features of the surviving documents as they reveal a network of shattered communities, shouldering the burdensome task of providing private comfort to the aggrieved souls and their families while countering the public stigma associated with these deaths. At the root of this was an effort to humanize the victims. Once contemptuously dismissed as "reds"—demonic abstractions threatening the nation's well-being—the victims were now presented simply as lost family members and victims of a gross injustice. Perhaps more so than any other discursive strategy, it was the emphasis on the family that served as the most potent elixir for ushering in this transformation. "Maengsŏha-nŭn kitpal" (The Flag we Pledge our Allegiance to), the official song of the National Bereaved Families Association, well encapsulates this sentiment. Composed by Yi Wŏn-sik as a "sad and sorrowful lullaby", the song vowed to freely call the

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\(^{390}\) 4. 3 Sakkôn Chinsang Kyumyŏng Tongjihoe [4.3 Incident Investigation Committee], "Kwanggo/Hosomun" [Advertisement/Letter of Plea], Cheju Sinbo, 26 May, 1960.

names of the disgracefully killed "minjok", who were left with no graves. At the end of each verse is a recurring refrain which varies slightly: "We are the sons and daughters of the massacred". "We are the wives of the massacred". "We are the parents of the massacred". In the public eulogy delivered for the victims of the Kŏch'ang massacre, we find similar sentiments. A passage reads, "it is said that we all colluded with the communists". "Oh the pain...oh the mourning". "Among the suffering spirits were people over seventy and eighty and under the age of nine". The passage then goes on to say that these were the community's grandchildren, daughters, and sons.

If pathos, rehabilitation, and a focus on family were salient themes, the register was often decisively political. Standing in sharp juxtaposition to the benign and humanized renderings of the deceased were a series of depictions of Rhee and the Liberal Party as malignant forces. Frequently described in an invective tone, the Rhee government was ubiquitously referred to as a "dictatorship" (tokche) that "massacred innocent people like flies". Throughout these passages, explicit appeals to human rights were made. In their public petition, for example, representatives from Cheju accused the Rhee regime of "recklessly trampling... human rights and freedom", and therefore deserving of serious historical judgment for their crimes against "citizens" (kungmin). In their sŏnŏnmun (declaration statement) to the Chang Administration, representatives from the National Bereaved Families Association adopted a similar stance.

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392 Yi Wŏnsik, Maengsŏ hanŭn kitpal, [The Flag we Pledge our Allegiance].
http://cafe457.daum.net/_c21_/bbs_search_read?groupid=1OAsc&fldid=JoOg&contentval=0000Ezzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz&nenc=&fenc=&from=&q=%B1%E8%BB%EF%BC%AE&nil_profile=cafetop&nil_menu=sch_updw&listnum=
393 Kŏch'ang Ch'utosa.
394 Chŏn'guk P'ihaksalja Yujokhoe Sŏnŏnmun.
395 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Kyun'yōng Tongjihoe [Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Commitee], "Kwanggo/Hosomun" [Advertisement/Letter of Plea], Cheju Sinbo, 26 May, 1960.
According to the authors, the Rhee government violated the victims' human rights as they were executed without trial—an act which went against the constitution of the republic.396

Intricately wedded to the rhetoric of human rights were appeals to nationalism. Indeed, as victims were accused by the state of being communists—and therefore betrayers of the nation—it is striking to observe throughout the various speeches, petitions, and eulogies, the influence of nationalism at both the overt and covert levels. This was on display in the various associations' use of euphemisms for describing the Rhee government, the types of killings, or nature of the victims. For example, representatives from Cheju accused Rhee and his cronies of being "impure people" (*pulsunja*), a term that was used throughout the period of mass killings to describe communists, victims, and their families.397 In a public statement from the Kyŏngbuk Bereaved Families Association, the killings of members of the National Guidance League were condemned as being "anti-national crimes" (*panminjok choegwa*). Again, in a passage recited at a *wiryŏnje* in Taegu, the unidentified author accused the First Republic of being run by "collaborators" (*ch'ìnilp'a*), "anti-Koreans" (*panminjokja*), and "betrayers" (*pyŏnchŏlja*).398 Comparatively, representatives from Taegu, Cheju, and Kŏch'ang all used the monikers of "patriot" (*aekukja*) or "patriotic" (*aekukchŏgin*) in describing their deceased family members. It is in these passages that the radicalism of the *yujokhoe* discourse reached its zenith.

What then, were the implications of this radicalism? Why did mourning and identity restoration necessarily entail an engagement with, and an inversion of, the dominant streams of South Korean nationalist discourse? What stakes were involved in a critique of the despotism of

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396 Chŏn'guk P'i'haksalja Yujokhoe Sŏnŏnmun.
397 4. 3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Kyumyŏng Tongjihoe [4.3 Incident Investigation Committee], "Kwanggo/Hosomun", *Cheju Sinbo*, 26 May, 1960.
398 Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe [Korean Revolutionary Trials Compilation Committee]. *Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, I-V-Chip* [Revolutionary Trial Historical Documents, Volume 1-5], 77-78-tchok
the Rhee years, and what alternative political horizons did the _yujohoe_ fix their gaze upon? Finally, what was the meaning of their loved ones' deaths within these visions? Here, we must consider the second core strategy of the Bereaved Family Associations: a narrative of romantic transition and democratic nationalism. Turning back to Teitel, we find that nations emerging from periods of tyranny and dictatorship search for novel interpretations of their recent past. These tend to be narrated through rhetorical mode of tragic-comedy or tragic-romance. According to Teitel, these narratives proceed along a line moving from past sufferings and tragedy towards a progressive future of reconciliation. Within this process, knowledge of past crimes plays a critical and emancipatory role, offering future generations instructions on how to avoid the repetition of these catastrophic pasts. Democracy and liberalization are the final acts in this unfolding drama. As Teitel opines, "the move to a more liberal society is enabled by a reckoning with the past". The destiny of the state and the nature of historical interpretation, in other words, are crucially intertwined.

While variations exist, it is clear that Bereaved Family Associations operated within these parameters as they fused with autochthonous practices of mourning. Historically and politically conscious agents, _yujokhoe_ members sought to mark and define their family members' deaths within a broader arc of progress. Similar to state-centred anticommunist conceptions, appeals were made to timeless and ahistorical constructions of the Korean nation. Again, a focus on a mythologized nation, united by history, blood, and its unique geographical features was prominent. In one of the earliest public appeals, for example, leaders from Kŏch'ang explicitly called upon the people of Korea to "receive the blood of Tangun", the mythological founder of

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400 Ibid.
the Korean nation. In invoking Tangun, the representatives were integrating their own struggles and fortunes within the broader destiny of the Korean people. We find references to Korea's mythic past in numerous other Bereaved Family Association texts as well. In a public ceremony for returning the ashes in Taegu, Kyŏngbuk Bereaved Family Association member Yi Pok-yŏng began his eulogy with an illusion to his pride in Korea's five thousand year past. In doing so, Yi was utilizing an ideal concept of Korea's past as a foil to the more recent tragedies that had afflicted both the nation and the various families who were victims of the Korean War-era state slaughters. Nature was also integral to this construction, as frequent references to the country's rivers, mountains, and streams irrigated the grounds of the Bereaved Family Associations' nationalist narrative. The use of these tropes was most present in the case of a slogan that served as a rallying cry uniting the various Bereaved Family Associations in the Kyŏngsang provinces in solidarity: "The mountains and the rivers of our homeland accuse and the stars in the sky testify". Here, the portrayal of nature was offered as a radical foil to the deprivations and temporal ruptures of the modern state: a stable optic of knowledge and moral witnessing for the bereaved families' tragedies.

The march of Korea's recent history, however, had contaminated the purity of the nation. Unsurprisingly, in many of these testimonies, the fall from grace began with the Japanese colonization of the peninsula. In a eulogy delivered for the victims as Kŏch'ang, for example, the unidentified speaker lamented the fact that the nation was forced to live "in chains" for thirty-six years. Suffering continued into the post-liberation years, an era defined by this author as a

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402 Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, 1962.
403 Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, 1962, 44-45-tchok
great "historical mistake" (yŏksa kwao) that could not be overlooked.\textsuperscript{404} Meanwhile, Yi Wŏnsik publically declared that since liberation day (August 15, 1945), the nation had been dominated by those who "refuse to ask for forgiveness".\textsuperscript{405} The nadir of Korean history, however, arrived during the Rhee years. We have already addressed above the specific vitriol launched against Rhee and his backers. For our present purposes, the key point to consider is that Rhee was not merely accused of crimes against innocent Koreans, but crimes against history itself. In his sermon delivered in downtown Taegu, Yi Pok-yŏng remarked that for the Rhee regime, the "historical judgment was grave".\textsuperscript{406} Likewise, Yi Wŏn-sik referred to the National Guidance League killings as one of the worst crimes in Korean history.\textsuperscript{407} Perhaps most dramatically, in the October 20, 1960 petition produced by the National Bereaved Family Association, Rhee's depravities were brought into the pantheon of history's great atrocities. The authors accused Rhee and his allies of being worse than Hitler, as they had slaughtered their own race.\textsuperscript{408} While it is tempting to dismiss this as hyperbole, in its appeals to the importance of Korean blood and historical uniqueness, the petition worked within the parameters of a redemptive nationalist discourse.

The romantic pivot in the historical arc came with the 4.19 student revolution, as the unresolved legacies of the nation's civil war past blurred with the more immediate political present. Indeed, within nearly all of the Bereaved Family Associations' various pronouncements, the yet-unrealized promises of the 4.19 movement stood as a constant reference point of emancipation. For the representatives from Cheju (some of whom were students), the events of

\textsuperscript{404} \textit{Kŏch'ang Ch'utosa}.
\textsuperscript{405} Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, \textit{Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa}, 1962, 77-78-tchok.
\textsuperscript{406} Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, \textit{Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa}, 1962, 42-43-tchok.
\textsuperscript{407} Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, \textit{Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa}, 1962, 77-78-tchok.
\textsuperscript{408} Chŏn'guk P'ihaksalja Yujokhoe Sŏnŏnmun.
the spring of 1960 were portrayed as a "democratic revolution" (*minju hyŏngmyŏng*), with the Second National Assembly carrying the prospects for "hope", "justice", "law", and "freedom".\(^{409}\)

In the eulogy delivered for the massacred at Kŏch'ang, Koreans were implored to "create a new history" (*searo-ūn yŏksa ch'angcho*), and a "new democratic state" (*minju sinsaeng kukka*).\(^{410}\)

Surviving family members from the various National Guidance League killings throughout the Kyŏngsang provinces likewise invoked the democratic ethos of the 4.19 movement. In a public declaration to local newspapers, representatives from the Kyŏngbuk Bereaved Family Association urged for the "foundation of a country based on democracy".\(^{411}\) Meanwhile, at a funeral march in downtown Taegu (date unknown) Yi Wŏn-sik referred to the events of April as an "expression of the nation's conscience and democratic capabilities".\(^{412}\)

Tied to political redemption was an appeal towards epistemic overcoming. Indeed there was an elegant synchronicity to the manner in which the various Bereaved Family Associations wove their personal search for truth into the political struggles of the nation. Just as political liberalization offered these groups greater freedom to search for historical justice, the knowledge produced by this pursuit was portrayed as integral to the fate of South Korea's democratic project itself. As the Bereaved Family Associations framed it, the political stakes were stark: While uncovering the painful realities of the civil war past would further entrench the democratic spirit of the student movement, their continued denial risked destroying the entire enterprise. In passages dealing with the revolution, therefore, the timbre was typically one of obligation and moral urgency. For the petitioners from the National Bereaved Families Association, the unresolved murders were like a "knife inserted into the chest of democracy". Koreans thus had a


\(^{410}\) *Kŏch'ang Ch'utosa*.

\(^{411}\) Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, *Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa*, 1962, 42-43-tchok.

\(^{412}\) Ingwŏn Ch'ımhae Sakkŏn, 276.
duty to "accurately identify the gruesome details of its history" while "shedding light on the conscience of democracy".\textsuperscript{413} In Cheju, activists declared the nation was in "the midst of a moment of great historical education", but could not have genuine freedom without a proper accounting of the past.\textsuperscript{414}

Interspersed throughout these interventions was a claim about the nature and meaning of the deaths themselves, as well as the spirits. A core goal of the Bereaved Family Associations was to counter the previous dehumanization of their loved ones—a strategy primarily rooted in constant appeals to the innocence, humanity, and communal rootedness of the victims. Another plank was added to this repertoire, however: the bereaved victims and their ghosts became the central protagonists of the nation's recent political drama, playing the roles of tragic martyrs. A feature of the wŏnhan discourse was that spirits could be forces for ill or good. Consequently, the health of Korea's nascent democracy hinged upon the present treatment of these beings. Thus, we find in the petition from the National Bereaved Family Association, a political universe haunted by "vengeful spirits without graves", whose unrequited grudge threatened to engulf the not just the families, but the entire nation.\textsuperscript{415} In their eulogy to the massacre victims of Kŏch'ang, the author urged representatives of the Second Republic to resolve the resentment of the spirits through compensation and promised that the wrongfully killed souls could be "protective spirits" for the nation.\textsuperscript{416} The most forceful articulation of this sentiment, however, came from Yi Wŏn-sik in his memorial "legacy of blood": "our husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, and young children were unlawfully killed, and they turned into vengeful spirits. If they had lived until now, they could have been the frontrunners and warriors of the peaceful reunification of the

\textsuperscript{413} Chŏn'guk P'i'hapsalja Yujokhoe Sŏnŏnmun.
\textsuperscript{414} "Kwanggo/Hosomun", Cheju Sinbo, 26 May, 1960.
\textsuperscript{415} Chŏn'guk P'i'hapsalja Yujokhoe Sŏnŏnmun.
\textsuperscript{416} Köch'ang Ch'utsosa
country…as well as the leaders of the young generation of our time with passion and
devotion”. In these calls for truth-seeking and public mourning, we gain insight into the
political, epistemological, and moral horizons of the Bereaved Family Associations: a discourse
in which their strategies of truth seeking comingled with romantic nationalism and a politics of
mourning. At stake in these interventions was no less than their families’ honour and the destiny
of the new republic itself.

The politics of the Bereaved Family Associations however, did not transpire within an
ideological vacuum. In their efforts to clarify the past and imagine a better future, these actors
were frequently confronted with resistance from entrenched rightist politicians, police officers,
soldiers, and their families. Ultimately this entailed a reckoning with anticommunism itself—the
hegemonic material and ideological basis of the southern state. How did this struggle play out?
Firstly we should recognize that the power of the Bereaved Family Associations was
significantly curtailed. This existed in the form of a largely indifferent political class, as well as
a persistent public discourse from skeptics warning that the Bereaved Family Associations'
activities would be hijacked by "impure" elements. We may also add a third element: oppression
and terror. As Yi Ch'ang-hyŏn has demonstrated in his micro-history of the Kyŏngju Bereaved
Families Association Incident, the association was under constant harassment from local rightists
and police officers. Most notably, in early November 1960, the offices of the Kyŏngju group
were burned and looted, as police officers stood idle. Further, rival family members of former
security forces and rightist youth groups would show up at demonstrations and ceremonies
dressed as police officers and instigate riots. These were then interpreted by the police as being
started by the Kyŏngju Bereaved Family Association and used to justify further police

417 Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, 1962, 77-78-tchok.
surveillance of the group. The group was also assaulted with symbolic violence, with rightist groups accusing the survivors of being "commies" and warning other Koreans that the "National Guidance League is rising"—an implicit reference to the early Korean War uprisings from some League members that precipitated their massacre. Finally, opponents of the Bereaved Family Associations engaged in the discursive politics of the 4.19 revolution. As one police pamphlet designed to disparage the survivors stated, "the 4.19 revolution is not a communist revolution", thus insinuating that members of the local association were trying to co-opt the revolution for nefarious purposes.418

Undoubtedly, this climate imposed considerable challenges for the various Bereaved Family Associations. How then, did they respond to the issue of communism, and what does their collective response reveal about the nature of anticommunism? In general, it can be stated that anticommunism shaped and disciplined the ideological boundaries of permissible discourse from the Bereaved Family Associations. Despite the centrality of communism and anticommunism to the civil war era's violence, however, the two terms seldom appear within the Bereaved Family Associations' discourse. Further, when they did make an appearance, it was in a rather circumscribed manner. Of first order was countering communist stigma. In their eulogy, for example, the orator at Kŏch'ang addressed the issue of aiding communist guerrillas and the stigma of being "ppalgaengi".419 Likewise, in their public statement, activists from Cheju pled the innocence of victims from the 4.3 episode who were "killed as communists".420 In their public manifesto, the National Bereaved Families Association accused Rhee of hiding his crimes

419 Kŏch'ang Ch’utosa.
"under the guise of anticommunism" (pan'gongŭi mimyŏng e sumŏ). Implicitly, this remark suggested that anticommunism itself was not at issue, just the previous regime's manipulation of it. More overtly, in their code of practice (silch'an yogang), representatives for the victims of the 4.3 Incident Investigation Committee adopted the slogan "let's overthrow communism" (kongsanjuŭi t'adohaja). Similar chants echoed throughout the streets of Cheju at public protests throughout the spring of 1960. Whether this reflected a genuine ideological commitment to anticommunism on the part of the bereaved families or was simply a rhetorical strategy is difficult to discern, and, at any rate, is beside the point. In either case, the hegemony of anticommunism was on full display.

More commonly, the communist/anticommunist binary which gave rise to these incidents of mass violence and continued to structure the politics of the peninsula was unmentioned. This silence, however, should not be interpreted as a suggestion that it had no effect. Rather, I contend that anticommunism predominately functioned as an absent presence, unnamed but of fundamental importance to how Bereaved Family Associations publically narrated their recent traumatic past. We see this most clearly in the case of the bereaved families from the Kyŏngsang provinces, who were most willing to directly politicize these traumatic deaths, but tip-toed around the issue of anticommunist ideology. Thus, in place of a face-to-face confrontation with the hegemonic ideology, we find a series of euphemisms, evasions, or alternative discourses. At the inaugural ceremony for the Kyŏngbuk Bereaved Family Association, for instance, Kim Hyŏn-gu admonished former security forces as "blind devotees to authority who created a climate of violence and fear" that South Koreans were still forced to live

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421 Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, 1962, 72-tchok.
with. While Kim cryptically referred to some of anticommunism's salient features—reverence for state authority and its continuing power to psychologically shape Koreans—the question of ideology itself remained absent. Again, at a funeral procession march held by the same group, the National Guidance Alliance members who were killed were simply referred to as those that surrendered voluntarily and were killed while awaiting trial under the National Security Law. While technically true, it is the silences here that concern us. Though the morality and justice of a major cornerstone of the southern state's power structure—the National Security Law—was called into question, the politics surrounding the National Guidance League were left unaddressed. Indeed, nowhere was it mentioned that National Guidance League members were confessed communists or that the group itself was an overt instrument of anticommunist indoctrination. The question of ideology shirked, an attempt was made to shift the political terrain to one of the state's legal obligations to citizens.

Weighed against the evidence presented in previous chapters, what are we to make of these political cadences? In the first two chapters, it was argued that despite their local and temporal variations, the Kŏch'ang, Cheju, and National Guidance League Incident were part of a concerted politicide. Though lacking the methods of supreme organization or the undiluted intention of archetypical genocides such as the Holocaust, the systematic and sustained nature of the violent liquidation of southern political left during the civil war years is beyond question. Regime security was undoubtedly integral to this process, but so to was consolidation—political and ideological. From the Cheju crisis onward, the nascent republic radically bifurcated South Korean political life, relentlessly saturating the society with a Manichean anticommunist discourse. As the peninsula was plunged into civil war and invasion, this process took upon a

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423 Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, Han'guk Hyŏngmyŏng Chaep'ansa, 1962, 43-44-tchok.
424 Ibid, 77-78.
character of an existential struggle and organized mass killing. In the case of the above three episodes, both resisters and civilians were sucked into this vortex—casualties of a broader contest to create and define an emerging post-colonial nation. In the wake of the war's end, anticommunism's grip was broadened, spread out through the agencies of the National Security State and thrust into the realm of mourning. In this sense, ideology was central to these deaths as well as their subsequent mnemonic displacement at the communal and national level. For over a decade, surviving family members were crushed by the weight of this tragic condition.

The events of the 1960 spring presented an opportunity for bereaved families, but also imposed a considerable burden. Given their particular history, the question of civil war deaths was pregnant with symbolism. "Truth" seeking, therefore, necessitated not only a process of legal investigation and clarification, but also an epistemological and ideological subversion of some of the basic tenets of the southern state's legitimizing discourse. To what extent did the various Bereaved Family Associations grasp their predicament and attempt to overcome it? It is a truism of intellectual life that historians and their subjects seldom narrate an experience through the same set of terms. We should not expect the present case to be any different. Nevertheless, these various actors had a profound sense of the broader stakes at issue in their quest for redemption. Politically and historically conscious, the leaders of the Bereaved Family Associations delicately interwove their communities' private traumas with a public discourse aimed squarely at destabilizing the hegemonic understanding of the nation's recent past. The result was a radical, if narrow at its margins, rethinking of the civil war era—one that retains its potency five decades after the fact. What were once "reds" became tragic victims of an authoritarian regime's depravities and potential martyrs for a future democracy. Previously begrudged souls, denied public recognition and forced to haunt their loved ones, became central
agents in a present political drama, endowed with the capacity to transcend the nation's dark history. The First Republic, framed by its authors as the guardian of the "minjok", was recast as the nation's betrayer; its victims and their heirs, its potential redeemer.

And yet, for all the audacity and moral force of their interventions, the discourse of the yujokhoe remained estranged from a complete reckoning with the previous decade's politicide in two crucial, and interrelated, ways. The first was a temporal displacement which altered the meaning of the civil war era massacres. For in latching onto a redemptive narrative which privileged an imaginary future republic, the initial political struggles which gave rise to the killings were obfuscated. What were essentially the bloody excesses of a left/right post-colonial Cold War confrontation were recast as state crimes to be adjudicated through the moral lenses of liberal transition. With few exceptions, the issues of land reform, collaboration with Japan, or nationalist reunification—so central to the obliterated hopes and violence of the liberation period—were tacitly silenced in these acts of public remembrance. In their place, was a language of romantic overcoming: the truth of past atrocities uncertainly fixed to the wagon of a not-yet-authored democratic future.

The second, and more weighty limitation, concerns the relationship between the various Bereaved Family Associations and anticommunism. For, it is in this discourse that we are able to most clearly see the stakes, creativity, as well as the restrictions placed on the Bereaved Family Association's efforts. Sealed into an ideological, discursive, and geopolitical order of unrelenting anticommunism, these groups creatively worked to restore the honour of their families by inserting their remembrance into a greater narrative arc of progress, democracy, and, at times, anticommunist triumph. But if this strategy gave this movement its entrance into the recognized boundaries of the era's political debates, it also fixed its limit. The gravitational
weight of Korea's recent fratricidal war setting clear limits for acceptable visions into its violent past, Bereaved Family Associations were conscripted into an epistemological compromise: the need to shed light on the "truth" of their loved ones' deaths, limited by their inability to interrogate the state ideology of anticommunism and its violent ascent. For to overtly question the systematic processes that went into the mass terror that afflicted large swaths of South Korean society in the civil war era, was to question the legitimacy of the state itself, and this was a line not to be crossed. Confronted with this imposition, Bereaved Family Associations sought legitimacy through a tacit acquiescence to the anticommunist hegemony which underpinned the South Korean state. As a mode of political discourse, the Bereaved Family Associations' public activities shed light on a dark and repressed period of the recent past, but also opened up a host of problematic questions: What future place in national history would there be for examining anticommunist violence? How could victims of the national security state be honoured within a political culture that valourized the military? If the victims were not communists, and anticommunism was not responsible for their deaths, what was their precise historical meaning? How could the politics of the era of national liberation and division be explicated without reference to the period's radical ideological polarization? In a climate of national division, reinforced by a global Cold War, what space existed for alternative political and narrative visions other than those imposed by anticommunism? And in what ways did the remembrance of state massacres augment or complicate these projects? As the yujokhoe shouted their demands for historical justice, these questions and contradictions hung suspended in the heady winds of the 1960-1961 interim, yearning for a resolution.
The Rise of Park Chung-Hee and the Bereaved Family Incident

Whatever possibility there was for working through these dilemmas will forever remain hypothetical. Throughout the 1960-1961 period, the Bereaved Family Associations were hardly the only actors fashioning alternative destinies for the nation's future. Dissatisfied with the endemic corruption of the Rhee and Chang governments, junior ranking members of the military with reformist tendencies began organizing a purge and conquest of the upper echelons of the National Security State. At the helm of this movement was Major-General Park Chung-Hee, a man with a checkered background in the Japanese military and the Yŏ-sun Mutiny. From the spring of 1960, Park methodically garnered support throughout the military command for a military coup. On May 16, 1960 at 3am, Park and his cohorts put their plan into action, and by 4:15am, the administrative buildings of all three branches of government had been occupied. After spending three days in hiding, Chang Myŏn returned to the capital and officially relinquished power to the ruling military junta. The Second Republic was summarily finished—a testament to both its frailty and Park's masterful planning.

On the matter of Park's ascension to the throne of political power, the historic verdict within Korea is split. To some, the coup was a "revolution", the precursor to the decades of rapid industrialization and economic growth which catapulted the young republic into the orbit of global economic dynamos. To others, it was simply an illegitimate act of insurrectionary violence, one that retarded Korea's democratization for three decades. One point, however, is beyond dispute: for our protagonists, the events of the 1961 spring were an utter catastrophe. Once again, the families of the victims were caught up in the politics of regime consolidation and
the hardening of anticommunist ideology. Upon his seizure of power, Park set up the Military Revolutionary Committee (*Kuksa Hyŏngmyŏng Wiwŏnhoe*). Though Chang To-yong was ostensibly put in charge, real power was wielded by Park and his allies such as Yi Sŏk-je, Pak Ch'ang-am, and Kim Jong-p'il. They established the National Emergency Measures Act (*kukka chaegŏn pisangjoch'ibŏp*) on June 9, 1961. Four days later, the group promulgated the Revolutionary Trial and Revolutionary Prosecution Act (*hyŏngmyŏng chaep'anso mit hyŏngmyŏng kŏmch'albu chojikpŏp*), which eventually included a section on "Special anti-state behaviour" (*t'ŭksu pan'gukaa haengwi*). It was under this section that the full weight of anticommunist law was brought upon the leaders of the Bereaved Family Associations.

Why did the ruling junta initiate what is now called the Bereaved Family Incident (*yujokhoe sakkŏn*)? According to Han Sŏng-hun, the mass arrest and punishment of its leaders was predicated upon appeasing whatever hypothetical anxieties existed within the Administration of John F Kennedy about Park's brief communist background. Citing one of Park's close cohorts, Yi Sŏk-je, Han argues that Park understood that support from America was premised upon the new junta's success at operating as an anticommunist bulwark. A crackdown on alleged communists would affirm Park's sincerity in this endeavour. The Bereaved Family Association leadership and other alleged leftists were thus symbolic offerings to a superpower whose support was integral to the survival of the southern state.\(^{425}\) We may supplement Han's instrumentalist interpretation with additional factors that we have been tracing throughout this dissertation. For example, Park told Revolutionary Chief of Police Pak Ch'ang-am: "The leaders of the Bereaved Family Associations of Massacre Victims are Namnotang (South Korean Labour Party) members, and they are trying to take advantage of the 4.19 confusion to overthrow the

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\(^{425}\) Han Sŏng-hun, "Kŏch'ang Sakkŏn ŭi Ch'ŏrigwajŏng kwa Namŭn Munje", 48.
government, so let's thoroughly prosecute and investigate them". Through Park's claim that the leadership was a fifth column attempting to manipulate the spirit of the 4.19, we see the General reiterating one of the main tropes of the right-wing anti-yujokhoe discourse. Further, in the trial records we find the same Manichean logic revolving around the categories of "good citizen" (yangmin) and "non law-abiding citizen" (piyangmin). Indeed, as Yi Tong-jin has demonstrated, throughout the trials, the junta used past political affiliations and blood ties to deprive members of legal protections, in course converting them into an alternative legal and existential category to be rooted out from the nation. In their allegiance to American geopolitical initiatives, domestic paranoia, and the Kafkaesque use of legal trials to create political identities, the continuities between the systemic anticomunist violence of the civil war era and the obliteration of their memory are laid bare.

For the afflicted Bereaved Family Association members and their families, the trauma and heartache of this episode was palpable. If the summer and fall of 1960 was a time of defiance, reclamation, and activism, the following year was one where the bitter fruits of this political harvest arrived in the form of mass arrests and show trials. Though lacking the murderous tendencies of the Rhee years, the justice laid out by the Park junta was motivated by retribution and heavily politicized. Based on flimsy evidence, various members were brought to trial on trumped up charges. While the lower ranking members were mostly exonerated after a few months in prison, high-ranking members were targeted. Yi Wŏn-sik, for example, received the death penalty. Kwŏn Chung-nak, Yi Sam-kŭn, No Hyŏn-sŏp, meanwhile, received fifteen year sentences. Numerous other smaller sentences were doled out, generally falling under the

426 Ingwŏn Ch’imhae Sakkŏn, 270.
427 Yi Tong-jin, "Kungmin kwa Pikungmin ŭi Kyŏnggye".
category of inspiring "pro-communist" (yongkong) sentiment. Beyond this, the months spent in prison between the arrests and trial were ones of uncertainty and agony. Numerous accounts reveal psychological and physical abuse, such as harsh beatings and electric water torture. Unsurprisingly, relatives recall that upon their release, accused family members came home sapped of their strength, often living quiet and lonely lives, the events of 1960-1961 seldom mentioned to their children or grandchildren. A few remained vanquished, but unbowed. Such was the case with Kim Ha-chong, a member of the Kyŏngju group that we began our story with. At his trial in the fall of 1961, Kim held up a paper written in his own blood which simply read "unjust" (ŏgurhada)—a fitting epitaph for this sordid episode of South Korean history.

True to the script thus far, the government dovetailed these practices of political persecution with an assault on the memory and spirits of the victims. Most traumatizing of all, perhaps, was the destruction of monuments honouring the victims and the desecration of the joint mass graves built in the summer of 1960. While clear evidence does not exist directly implicating the Park junta in these practices, their frequency and spatial diversity suggests some level of systemic organization. In Kŏch'ang, for example, the memorial monument which contained an etching of the eulogy we referred to above was smashed into pieces and buried in the ground on June 25, 1961. Meanwhile, the burial plot was bulldozed, scattering the bones of the carefully constructed 1954 tomb and mound near Paksan. Officially, this practice was ordered without irony by Kyŏngnam's Governor Ch'oe Kap-chun on the grounds that the families had violated existing laws by disturbing the bones of the deceased. Similarly, monuments and mass graves were destroyed, dug up, and reburied in areas surrounding Kimhae. Witnesses from

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428 Ingwŏn Ch’imhae Sakkŏn, 172-176.  
429 Ingwŏn Ch’imhae Sakkŏn, 278.  
430 Ingwŏn Ch’imhae Sakkŏn, 305-307.
Namsan and Sŏlch'ang-ri recall authorities digging up the two grave sites and removing bones to another location. In Ulsan families found that their collective grave site was bulldozed over and that all of the bones of the victims had disappeared. The rumour at the time was that authorities had dug up the bones, burned them, and scattered them in the ocean. A witness recalls a mysterious plume of black smoke two kilometers away from the burial site and being told that they were the bones of "National Guidance League commies". As a final insult, the Ulsan police sent the families a bill. Meanwhile, the grave for the One Hundred and Thirty Two Ancestors and a Single Descendent was destroyed by the Sŏgwipo Police forces. In some cases, communities were able to mitigate the indignities of these episodes by arriving at the graves before the security forces, piling the remains of their loved ones into large sacks, and carrying them off to be secretly buried. However, these desperate acts of defiance ought not to obscure the decisive verdict on this era of Korean history, as the scattered detritus of their loved ones symbolically marked the failed aspirations of the yujokhoe.

Conclusion

It remains an open question as to what is the greater indignity: to suffer an atrocity, or to have the memory of that suffering erased from history. From 1948 to 1960, the families of victims of state atrocities in South Korea were condemned to live with both fates. It is this basic

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431 Kimhae Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 907-908.
432 Ulsan Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 999-1001.
433 Ingwŏn Ch’imhae Sakkŏn, 304-311.
social fact—and its particular historicity—which animated the politics of the 1960-1961 Bereaved Family Associations. In the politicide's aftermath, there was little recourse for its survivors or relatives of their victims. Subsumed into a rigidly anticommunist political and social hierarchy, bereaved families inhabited a reality in which even mourning for lost loved ones fell under the state's gaze. The 1960-1961 period of relative liberation ushered by the First Republic's collapse brought to light the appalling weight of this condition. Through their mourning rituals and their demands for justice, the Bereaved Family Associations revealed a wounded community of grievers forced the live with the psychological scars produced by stigmatization and hauntings. That these were fueled by a transparently politicized mode of discourse is, in retrospect, hardly surprising. Not content with its acquisition of material power, the First Republic's appetite for ideological hegemony reached into the realm of the spiritual, engendering an acute crisis of mourning for survivors. In the wake of its collapse, the political and epistemological consequences of this intrusion refracted back at the massacres' perpetrators, as the Bereaved Family Associations organically fashioned a post-politicidal critique of the Korean War past which sought to lay bare and expunge the crippling legacies of its violence. What emerged was a radical reframing of the Rhee regime, the targets of its violence, and the history of the civil war era itself.

However, if the First Republic and its agents proved vulnerable, the same cannot be said of the underlying ideological and material structures of the anticommunist leviathan proper. Throughout this year, the radical flourishes of the Bereaved Family Associations were stymied by the legal and discursive structures of the anticommunist system. Though articulating a thorough critique of the First Republic and its structures, the overarching macro-ideological
rationale legitimating its violence remained off limits. It must be stressed here that we are not criticizing these activists. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how this history could have played out any differently. Simply put, the constellation of forces aligned against the yujokhoe were too great and the means at the disposal for the forces of reaction too formidable: an anticommunist deep state, firmly monopolizing the means of legitimate violence and ideological credibility; a predatory foe to the north, instilling fear throughout the society of anything that even whiffed communist sympathy; towering over all this, an American superpower, occasionally troubled, perhaps, but ultimately unburdened by the violent excesses of its anticommunist client. The young general Park Chung-Hee benefitted from these circumstances when he launched his coup on May 16, 1961, an event that sealed the fate for our protagonists. Their vision of an anticommunist republic anchored by a recognition of their family's traumatic past was rapidly revealed as the mirage that it was. In its wake, surviving members were forced to endure decades of surveillance, stigmatization, and economic marginalization, practices that only officially ended with the nation's post-Cold War democratic transition. The families' loss, however, was also that of the nation's. It would be close to three decades before Koreans were once-again afforded the opportunity to rethink their fratricidal division and the consequences of its politicidal dimensions. We may conclude, then, by acknowledging the optic for moral witnessing, testimony, and political courage provided by the yujokhoe; enabled and constrained by a brief revolutionary moment in which the nation was free to imagine alternative pasts, presents, and futures to those imposed by the stifling logic of its national division.
Epilogue: Residues of Violence in the Political Present

On January 30, 1964, at 7:40pm Kim Chong-wŏn passed away. Confined to a bed at Seoul University Hospital, Kim died at the young-age of 43. Complications arising from diabetes and heart disease were the culprits. It was an anticlimactic end to the life of a feared predator once dubbed a "tiger”—a man who was intimately connected to politics of mass death and memory in South Korea that this dissertation has been preoccupied with. Kim's official significance to the history of the young republic was reflected in the obituaries in the Chosun Ilbo, and Tonga Ilbo which amounted to a total of four sentences. Despite their paltry length, evidence of Kim's checkered past surfaced in these entries with each acknowledging his 1960 conviction for masterminding the attempted assassination of Chang Myŏn—a crime for which he was pardoned in 1961. However, silenced in these brief retrospectives was any mention of Kim's role in the political violence of the civil war, his subsequent conviction and amnesty for covering up the Kŏch'ang Incident, or the victims' families' stubborn, and ultimately doomed, efforts at making Kim accountable for his heinous crimes.434 If the forced amnesia of the politicideal past was once the domain of perpetrators such as Kim, a less dramatic, but more thorough form of forgetting appears to have taken hold in the early Park years. A reality that was forcefully illustrated by Kim's abridged obituary in the nation's two leading conservative dailies.

Indeed, the Park junta's methodical decimation of the yujokhoe effectively obliterated any opportunity for a sustained reckoning between the politicide's victims and its perpetrators. For

decades, this unacknowledged history has been a major lacuna in the historical imagination and moral compass of South Korean society. As this dissertation has demonstrated, throughout Korea's civil war, large portions of South Korea's population were subjected to a wide-reaching, sustained, and instrumental program of mass violence. Focusing on three representative incidents—the Cheju Incident, the National Guidance League Incident, and the Kŏch'ang Incident—I argued that these episodes were part of a broader, nation-wide, politicide. Rooted in the state's founding ideology of anticommunism, authored by various state elites, and carried out by agents within the National Security State and its paramilitary adjuncts, this violence engulfed tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of real, imagined, armed, and unarmed "leftists". As the politicide was committed by agents of the National Security State and reflective of the perpetrators' hard-line anticommunism, it is unsurprising that we found the same ideological and institutional structures shaping the post-war memory of this violence and the broader socio/political hierarchy that the violence authored. This was made clear in our analysis of the life worlds of the politicide's survivors in the 1953-1960. Virtually cut off from legal avenues for restitution, socially stigmatized, and denied the right to mourn or tend to the spirits of their loved ones, survivors were confronted with hauntings and social death. This process of negative identity construction, however, was dynamic and did not go unchallenged. Forged in the context of a series of crises engendered by the state's intrusions into mourning practices, select families forged new identities rooted in a solidarity of collective bereavement. In the 1960-1961 period, these embryonic subjectivities grew and merged with a broader politics of transitional justice. Though they were unable to dislodge the hegemony of anticommunism, the various yujokhoe offered a counter-narrative to the Korean war past—one in which a recognition of state violence and the rehabilitation of bereaved families' relatives were paramount to the nation's health. A
founding feature of the Park junta's inception, therefore, was the burial of a past that was constitutive of the southern state's identity and the daily lives of its victims.

Survivors and bereaved families, however, could not erase this past. For the rest of their lives, countless individuals were condemned to live day-by-day with the catastrophic legacies of this bitter history. In survivors' testimonies, the same dreary accounts appear ad nauseam, revealing the appalling weight of an unresolved history of violence and loss. Most common are references to deep psychological wounds. A survivor from Kŏch'ang recalled that after the events, his neighbour was driven to alcoholism, an illness which led to his premature death. Ko Chŏn-hui, the wife of Yi Hyŏn-pil who was killed on Cheju Island, was eventually consumed with depression and committed suicide. Lives were often shattered by the effects of being part of a lineage defined by violence and social and political alienation. Sons and daughters grew up in orphanages or with relatives and recall having "depressing family lives" or struggling with their own relationships as adults. In many cases, these deaths meant the loss of the families' able-bodied young men. As many remained farmers, this loss of labour condemned them further to lives of poverty and hardship. Others recall living their whole life afflicted with "hwabyŏng", a mental disorder arising from repressed rage.

These intimate miseries were compounded by the continued forms of social alienation that brought with it a kind of social death. Forced to live with the taint of communism, many

436 Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report, 621.
439 Kyŏngbuk Yŏch'an Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 121.
children adopted the so-called "red complex" (ppalgaengi k'ŏmp'úlleksů)—a social condition in which many felt hopeless about the future or removed from normal society because of their tainted lineages.\textsuperscript{440} This affliction was not pathological, but an honest reflection of a basic social fact. Indeed, with the failure of the yujokhoe to recover the honour of the names of the victims, the yŏnjwaje was further entrenched. Because the records concerning the yŏnjwaje were mostly destroyed when the practice was officially abolished in 1980, there is not a concrete documentary trial proving how widely applied this practice was. However, remaining evidence suggests that throughout the Park years, it was indeed pervasive. For example, a 1972 KCIA document titled "Investigation of Pro-communist Reformers" (yonggong hyŏksin punja chosasŏ) revealed that the relatives of 200 victims of murdered National Guidance League members at an undisclosed location were catalogued and put under continuous surveillance by the intelligence agency.\textsuperscript{441} Again, a 1975 security document titled "Blacklist of People Undermining Anticommunist Agenda" (taegong injŏgwihae yoso myŏngbu) listed 209 relatives of National Guidance League Incident victims under surveillance in another anonymous region of Korea.\textsuperscript{442} Similar to the case of the killings themselves, suspicious families were categorized and ranked according to their perceived level of threat. Seen from this light, it is sad, if sobering, to reflect on the twisted afterlife of the National Guidance League: an ostensibly reformist institution turned murderous, resurrected in the Park years as a database for monitoring and persecuting the descendents of its original targets. This culture of suspicion and surveillance was often relentless. Bereaved families from Kimhae complained that they were perpetually visited and monitored by

\textsuperscript{440} Kimhae Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 909.
\textsuperscript{442} Ibid. 11.
members of the security services and that their relatives were interrogated every time they moved.\textsuperscript{443} Descendants of the Cheju massacre hardly fared better. Kim Chun-pae, who was arrested during the 1948 winter suppression campaign and later escaped from Mapo prison, spent his entire life under watch from local security forces. According to Kim, police would visit him every three days, asking him what he was up to. His family eventually obtained a 1982 document citing the reasons for why he was monitored. It was revealed that Kim was monitored because he had a suspicious background, he seldom attended anticommunist rallies, and was often overheard complaining about the Cheju Incident.\textsuperscript{444} Similar circumstances throughout the island were so prominent that in a survey conducted in 2000, 86\% of respondents claimed to have been afflicted by the \textit{yŏnjwaje} in one form or another.\textsuperscript{445}

The Park years were also a time of systematic economic persecution for the politicide's survivors. Because of their suspicious blood-lines, the sons, daughters, and relatives of alleged communists were often denied opportunities or promotions within the state bureaucracy—a crucial vehicle for South Korea's economic development. Most common were cases in which applications to take the civil service examination were rejected without any immediate justification or remedy. For example, in a study of 301 relatives of National Guidance League members, thirty-eight (13\%) reported that either they, or members of their family, were denied access to the civil service because of their "red" backgrounds. O Sang-ryŏl recalled that in 1972 he passed the first stage of the examination but was rejected in the interview when the examiners learned of his father's leftist background. Likewise, Kim Ŭi-kong passed the civil service test in 1966 but was mysteriously rejected entrance into the service. He later learned that this was

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{443} Kimhae Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn, 908.
\item \textsuperscript{444} Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report, 613.
\item \textsuperscript{445} Ibid, 609.
\end{itemize}
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because of his family lineage. Unsurprisingly, survivors of the Cheju atrocities and their families also struggled to gain entry into the civil service.\textsuperscript{446} Again, similar forms of economic discrimination were prevalent in the education system, with the children of leftists denied entry into university because of their parents' backgrounds.\textsuperscript{447} Finally, those under the \textit{yŏnjwaje} were often denied foreign visas for travel or work abroad. Chŏng Mu-sŏk from Ulsan claims that in 1970 he tried to go to Saudi Arabia for work, but was denied a visa despite passing the application test. After this episode, Chŏng gave up his dreams of saving up money for his family and decided to simply become a farmer.\textsuperscript{448} While the economic dislocation caused by these episodes was the most transparent effect, we should note that it added another layer of estrangement from the nation state. In the Park years, economic development and nationalism were wedded together. As these families could not share in the spoils of the so-called "miracle on the Han", we may read this system of social decimation as a form of expulsion from the national community itself.

Under the penumbra of a relentlessly authoritarian socio/political regime, survivors and their families were faced with limited recourse for redemption. However, traces of resistance and survival strategies can be found throughout these years. If the tightly-knit familial structure in South Korea led to a expansive system of social and political persecution from the state, at the local level, it often worked to mitigate these deleterious effects. It was not uncommon, for example, for members of the village or politically connected relatives to lend assistance to those beleaguered by the \textit{yŏnjwaje}. For example, Ko Sŏng-hwa, whose uncle was killed as a leftist during the Cheju massacre, recalls that the local chief of his village forged his uncle's death date.

\textsuperscript{446} See for example, \textit{Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn}, 625-626; \textit{Ulsan Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn}, 1001; \textit{Yŏngch'ang Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn}, 132.
\textsuperscript{447} Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report, 615; \textit{Yŏngch'ang Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn}, 132-133.
\textsuperscript{448} \textit{Kungmin Podo Yŏnmaeng Sakkŏn}, 625.
by twenty years so that Ko and his cousin could avoid that yŏnjwaje. In other cases, activities of political merit or marriage into "patriotic" families could alleviate the taint of "pro-north" sympathies. Cheju resident Mun Chang-hae was able to put an end to the harassment he was receiving from security forces by visiting the Cheju Police and proving that he had a metal of merit for his service in the Korean War. For others, changing address and names was not an uncommon practice. These weapons of the weak did not little to challenge the prevailing political order. However, for many individuals, they offered one of the few ways of escaping the tentacles of the yŏnjwaje.

The Park, and post-Park authoritarian years (1979-1987) also witnessed a quiet and uphill struggle over the right to grieve. Though there was some success to these endeavours, they entailed bitter compromises and negotiations with the authorities. In 1966, members of the One Hundred and Thirty Two Descendants Association met with local National Assembly member Hŏn O-pong and requested to rebuild the previously demolished memorial tower in Sangmo-ri. Though this was denied, family members were permitted to enter the area once a year to honour the spirits of the dead. Likewise, surviving members of the Kŏch'ang murders reorganized themselves and petitioned the authorities in 1965 for reimbursement to rebuild the joint cemetery. Though this permission was denied, family members purchased the land in 1967 and rebuilt the two cemeteries for the male and female adult woman. The third mound for the babies, however, was beyond repair. For these families, the struggle over the site at Paksan did not end. In 1982, three years after the assassination of Park and two years after the official end to the yŏnjwaje, bereaved families petitioned to the government of Chun Doo-hwan for an investigation.

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449 Cheju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report, 620.
450 Cheju 4.3 P'ihae Chosa Pogosŏ: 2-ch'a, 473
into the atrocity and financial restitution. However, the government denied these requests on the grounds that they could be used as "international propaganda" by the "North Korean puppet regime". Echoing Kim Chong-wŏn circa 1951, the Chŏn government argued that attempts to clear up the names of "impure persons" could throw society into confusion and lead to distrust of the military. Eventually, families were granted permission to rebuild the memorial stone that was destroyed in 1961. However, the accompanying ch'utosa was altered from its original form to make it appear as through the killings occurred because of a few "reckless soldiers", rather than as a general political program. In the post-1987 aftermath, families from Sinwŏn reformed their bereaved family association. In a symbol that singled the continuing power of anticommunism, the families' inaugural petition for an investigation into the past began with the address, "Dear patriotic citizens who are dedicated to anticommunism".

Families from Sinwŏn were not the only survivors to come forward in the wake of the nation's transition from military to civilian rule. Emboldened by recent democratic gains, inquiries into human rights abuses from the previous military governments, and the organizational strength of bottom-up civil society groups, survivors and family members of the victims of the Cheju massacre, the National Guidance League Incident, and other instances of civilian massacres have petitioned successive governments for clarification of the past and restitution. When compared to the doomed efforts of the 1960-1961 yujokhoe, these efforts have been met with considerable success. Similar to previous episodes of contestation, the impact of these quests for redemption have extended beyond these matters of personal justice for the

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452 "Kŏch'ang Yangmin Haksal Sakkŏn (4)/P'uryahal han mot P'urŏ Nun Mot kama" [Kŏch'ang Civilian Massacre Incident/Due to the Unbearable Resentment, They Cannot Close Their Eyes in Their Death Bed], Hangdo Ilbo, 11 February, 1989.
afflicted individuals. Bolstered by a host of scholars, journalists, artists, lawyers, and civil-society activists, the bereaved families once-again instituted a broader inquiry into the relationship between the nation's history of violence and its political present. Following the stymied and prematurely terminated work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, these efforts have stalled. While it is impossible to forecast their future prospects, the reconstitution of right-wing political hegemony in South Korea, the contemporary fractures of the political left, and the on-going hardening of the so-called "division system" all portend a pessimistic short-term future for these endeavours. If the post-1987 efforts have in many ways reached their terminus, an autopsy is therefore in order. I therefore close this dissertation with a brief reflection on their characteristics and pitfalls in relationship to our previous analysis of the politicide and its aftermath.

Three interrelated features, I argue, are most salient. Firstly, as intimated in the introduction, the dominant discourse that animated these endeavours was one of transitional justice. Indeed, in their efforts to clear their family names, bereaved families were once again thrust into, and participated in, a broader debate concerning the nation's past, present, and future. At the national level, bereaved family associations and activists on their behalf inserted these inquiries into the past within a wider narrative of overcoming the nation's dark authoritarian past. Knowledge of these atrocities was framed as a benefit to the democratic health of the nation's democracy and as a preventative measure against future outbreaks of war and violence. Victims of these slaughters were retroactively inscribed into the national past, with the nomenclature of

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455 Two recent works to explore this process in-depth are Kim Dong-Choon, "Ikŏsŭn Kiŏk kwa ŭi Chŏnchaeng Ida: Han'guk Chŏnchaeng kwa Haksal, Kū Chinsil Ŭl Ch'a'chasŏ [This is a War Over Memory: The Korean War and Massacres, the Search for Truth], (Soŭl: Sakyechŏl, 2013) and Kim Hun Joon, The Massacres at Mt Halla. 456 Paik, Nak-Chung., The Division System in Crisis: Essays on Contemporary Korea. Translated by Kim Myung-hwan, June-kyu Sol, Seung-chul Song, and Youngju Ryu, (New York: Global, Area, and International Archive, 2011).
"civilian massacre" (min'ganin haksal) adopted as a definitional term. This national discourse of transitional justice was infused, and evolved within, the overarching parameters of an emerging globalized liberal discourse focused on human rights. Tellingly, the efforts at transitional justice culminated in the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the global blueprint utilized by post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies for exploring and healing past ruptures. In doing so, South Korean victims of state violence have sought understanding and legitimacy by placing themselves within an imagined global community of victims of twentieth century violence.

However, for the victims themselves, the dominant spatial optic for exploring and narrating the politicide has been local. As the violence and its legacies were principally intimate and personal, this is hardly surprising. With legal prohibitions overturned, families have turned to honouring and properly mourning to the dead, perhaps finally giving comfort to the spirits' wŏnhan. For survivors of the National Guidance League killings and other civilian massacres, pilgrimages to the initial sites of the massacre have become a custom, while shamanistic rituals for the Cheju massacres' dead have offered the spirits the chance speak. In many cases, the sons and daughters of the 1960-1961 Bereaved Families Associations have been at the forefront of these endeavours. This local dimension to the politics of memory has also entailed a reclamation of space within the national mnemonic landscape in the form of peace parks dedicated to the remembrance of these atrocities. In these spaces, the once dehumanized "ppalgaengi", are now named and honoured as victims of state violence. These sites have also served to consolidate community subjectivities rooted in a shared sense of collective bereavement. At the Cheju 4.3 Incident Peace Park and the Kŏch'ang Incident Memorial Park,

457 See, for example, Kim Seong-nae, "The Work of Memory", 223-239.
for example, large memorial services are held on the anniversary of each respective atrocity. Cumulatively, these acts are reflective of the brave efforts of these bereaved families to reclaim the honour of their wounded lineages and put to rest the real and metaphoric ghosts of the Korean War past.

However, measured against our contention that the violence occurred in the context of an evolving politicide, there are limitations to this discourse. In my view, the most troubling of these is a fragmentation between these communities of mourners at the national level. In place of an over-arching discourse of mass violence and politicide, the contemporary memory landscape regarding these killings is articulated through a series of "incidents". The curious result is that while these incidents are often inserted within a global history of mass violence, solidarity at the national level remains elusive. In some respects, this fragmentation and localization of the politcidal past is entirely predictable. As Susan Sontag notes, "the memory of war...is almost always local". And yet, complimenting and distorting this normative script has been an underlying residue from the politicidal past: the continued hegemony of anticommunism. Indeed, a methodological claim running throughout this dissertation has been that the identities and frames of resistance adopted by bereaved families were often molded by, or against, the ideological demands of anticommunism. The failure to forge a horizontal mnemonic solidarity surrounding the civil war politicide is therefore rendered intelligible. Marginalized, maligned, and coerced by successive anticommmunist dictatorships, victim groups were forced to insulate themselves from the "ppalgaengi" label by emphasizing the locally particular aspects of these episodes and the apolitical nature of their victims. The most telling illustration of this fact is that there is not a single national monument dedicated to the remembrance of the victims of the

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National Guidance League Incident. Nor is the League discussed at the memorial parks at Cheju and Kŏ'ch'ang, despite its integral connections to these incidents. As self-confessed communists, victims of the National Guidance League atrocities continue to perilously straddle the line between worthy and unworthy victims.

If transitional justice entails an epistemological overcoming—as Tietal opines—the verdict regarding South Korea's efforts to peer into, and overcome, its civil war past is therefore split. No longer solely attributable to the machinations of its neighbour to the north, South Korean state violence against its own citizens during the war has now been officially recognized, while alternative victim-centric narratives now occupy an important space in the nation's mnemonic landscape. But the continued power of anticommunism—albeit in a cryptic and subdued fashion—to police the acceptable parameters for public discussions of these issues suggests an inherently abortive feature to the process of transitional justice in South Korea. We should stress, however, that this is not such much a failure of imagination, as it is a reflection of structural and ideological impediments produced by the still-smoldering conflict between the northern and southern regimes. As Theodore Adorno once remarked, "we will not have come to terms with the past until the causes of what happened then are no longer active. Only because these causes live on does the spell of the past remain, to this very day, unbroken"459. The current fractures of historical memory on the Korean peninsula are the profound reflections of this predicament. A full reckoning with the peninsula's civil war and politicidal past, therefore, is contingent upon a working through and overcoming of the division system itself. As the ghosts of the Korean War past continue to haunt the peninsula's present, this remains an urgent task; its contemporary prospects all too bleak.

459 Theodor Adorno, "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?", In Geoffrey Hartmann (ed), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1986), 129.
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Appendix: a Note on Sources

This dissertation, particularly the first two chapters, relies extensively on the various reports from the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Chinsil Hwahae rŭl wihan Kwagŏsa Chŏngni Wiwŏnhoe), The National Committee For the Investigation of the Truth about the Cheju 4.3 Incident (Cheju 4.3 Sakkŏn Chinsang Kŭumyŏng mit Hŭisaengja Myŏngye Hoebok Wiwŏnhoe), and other records compiled by the various yujokhoe from these massacres. These collections are the fruits of a decades-long struggle for clarification of the past and the restitution of the honour of the victims and their families. Considerable effort and sacrifices were made throughout this process, and it is an understatement to say that the author is greatly indebted to the painstaking work and considerable risks entailed by the brave and dedicated individuals behind South Korea's arduous road towards transitional justice.

These reports, of course, are not without their limitations—a fact that their authors openly admit. Some of issues are specifically addressed at various points in the dissertation. At the empirical level, these include the long passage of time between the incidents and the commissions' work, the destruction or disappearance of evidence, the commissions' lack of subpoena power, the failure to name and prosecute perpetrators, witnesses' reluctance to come forward out of fear of further stigmatization, and the short petition period for receiving claims, among other issues. However, it is the authors' contention, that while imperfect, these sources are authoritative in their claims. I base this on the stringent methodological standards employed by these commissions, as well as the multi-layered and multi-archival research conducted by their associated teams. These include the exhumation of massacre sites, careful review of petitioners' claims, the compilation of official sources from multiple government agencies in multiple countries, and the collection and analysis of testimonies from numerous witnesses and victimized families.

Of course, throughout the dissertation, I raise concerns regarding these reports. In particular, I engage with two major limitations of these reports. The first is the likelihood that the number of deaths exposed by these commissions is much lower than the actual number who perished in the politicide. When relevant, I juxtapose competing claims so that readers may gain some insight into the lack of certitude surrounding this issue. Another limitation concerns the narrative script of these reports. As I argue, these reports are consistent with the general parameters of transitional justice, and at various points throughout the work, I engage with, and critique, this framework. Overall, the reports are concerned with shedding light on these various atrocities and restoring the honour of victims and families wrongfully accused of harbouring communist sympathies. In general, they do not consciously attempt to identify the historical meaning of these incidents or their causes. The preceding analysis, thus, was a modest attempt to supplement the important work of these commissions with a more thorough and integrated historical analysis.