

Ordinary People's War Stories

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This article attempts to reveal ordinary people's war stories about the Korean War through their private memories. The Korean War has been regarded as a major political event in which the nation and the people are historical agents. But the villagers of Siyang-li, Yesan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do reveal different kinds of war stories through their life experiences during the war. Their stories collected through life history interviews during field work in the village illustrate another version of the war in that the villagers understood it not as an ideological and class struggle but as a local conflict associated with personal feelings, charisma, and networks. They were multiple subjects whose experiences were affected by their social positions within local politics. Their stories are oral histories that must be considered legitimate historical memories of the war.

Keywords: Oral history, memory, the Korean War, massacre, local history

The Korean War and Ordinary People

The Korean War was the most important incident in modern Korean history. It is because the Korean War becomes a useful milestone for historians, scholars of political science, and sociologists to understand Korean society just after Liberation. The variety of research on the Korean War has something in common whether it is traditional, revisionist, or otherwise. First, people mainly focused on who started the war, what caused the war, and how the war went. Second, they have had almost no interest in how differently the war went from region to region. Third, the subjects of action in past research are the state and

the nation (Yoon Taek-Lim 2003: 149). Lastly, there has been no interest in the historical interpretation of the Korean War by those who suffered it as life experience.

But in the 1990s, a new trend appeared in the study on Korean modern history. Since microscopic history, new cultural history, and history of everyday life of the West have been introduced, various research topics of modernity have been developed and tried aside from concentrating on the existing structure and historical events in the academic world of Korean social history. Also, such new trends as globalization, localization, and informatization have made Korean society more democratic, open, and flexible. In the meantime, social interest has moved from the macro subjects of nation, state and society to the micro subjects of region and individual.

In the changes of scholarly and social discourse, oral history has become an alternative toward the movement of interest to region and individual and the historical study escaping from modernism and colonialism. The individual experience and memories that did not appear in the macro subjects like nation, state and society and in an authoritative political system have become precious materials for better democratization and the discovery of historical truth. Such individual experiences and memories came to appear in the form of oral statements because they could not be found in the records the ruling class monopolized. Accordingly, these new trends have made possible an oral and historical approach to the Korean War.

This article aims at the oral and historical approach to the Korean War in accordance with such trends. This researcher has reconstructed the war stories of villagers collected through a field trip to Siyang-li, Yesan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do over nine months from 1989 to 1990. This article attempts to present the interpretation of the Korean War “within the village” or “from the viewpoint of the villagers.” This article focused on revealing the politics of the historical interpretation in such micro space as a village and the diversity of discourse. This article also focused on the politics of memories formed by the different social positions of the villagers rather than the collective memories of the villagers.

War and Words

1. New Approaches to the Korean War

At the turn of the 1990s, there were many attempts to evaluate the Korean War from the viewpoint of the people who had suffered the war aside from the approach centered on the existing history of politics and events. Kim Dong-chun has raised the question about the notion of the Korean War stipulated as 6.25 (June 25th) and has tried to revive the “subordinated knowledge” of the oppressed under the ideology of anti-Communism to find out the silenced stories on the Korean War (Kim Dong-chun 2000: 33). By reconstructing the history behind the Korean War, he has developed a discussion on the meaning of the Korean War in forming the relation between the state and the people. This discussion can be understood in the context of widening the research topics on the Korean War and in the trend where social science meets history (Park Myeong-lim 1997: 164-5).

In the meantime, there appeared attempts to deal with regional differentiation of the Korean War. *Gwangju jeonnam hyeondaesa* (Gwangju Jeonnam Modern History Planning Committee of the *Jeonnam ilbo* 1991) tells vividly the war experiences of villagers through oral testimony. Jung Keun-Sik (1992) and Jang Sang-hwan (1996) have paid attention to the differentiation of the Korean War in specific regions. Jeong Jin-sang (1994, 1995) studied two villages in Jinyang-gun, Gyeongnam and dealt with the changes of the system of status and hierarchy. Park Chan-seung (2000) raised a question about interpreting the Korean War according to the hierarchy at Sedeung-li, a cognate village in Jindo, and concluded the experiences of the Korean War there were mainly caused by conflicts and antagonism among relatives and families within the village. Although the case studies of Jeong Jin-sang and Park Chan-seung were based on a village as a unit of study, such villages have been understood as an example of the macro structural change. The tendency to interpret the Korean War by paying attention to the formation of relation between the state and the people like Kim Dong-chun and Jeong Jin-sang in historical sociology can be considered an advanced interpretation in comparison with the existing concept of taking the Korean War simply as the antagonism between the rightist and the leftist, national liberation, and class conflict. But their core concepts are foreign power, the state, classes, and the people (Kim Dong-chun 2000: 58). Here, the people have collective existence but do not reveal their diversity and complexity fully.

On the contrary, research like the “bottom-up reconstruction” project (“from the bottom up”) that Kim Dong-chun raised has been actually carried out in the unit of a village. Recently, research has appeared from the viewpoint “within the village” through the words of the inhabitants of a village, a stronghold of the people or the people’s lives. Yi Yong-gi (2001) reconstructed the war experiences of the villagers through fieldwork and the collection of oral testimony at Odu-li, a communist village, Gapja-myeon, Icheon-gun, Gyeonggi-do. He has analyzed the character of the relation between the state and the farmers in the relation between a unit of *myeon*, a bottom administrative organ and a unit of village, an ordinary space of livelihood for the farmers. Park Jeong-seok (2002) showed the politics of collective memories of post-war villagers and the formation of the identity of the villagers through analysis of the oral memory and lapse of memory about the Korean War at a communist village of Haenam. Yeom Mi-gyeong (2001) dealt not with the history of a village but the process of how the position of a ruling family, the family of Haenam Yoon branch in Gangjin, Jeonnam, had changed by joining in communist activities in the community during the Korean War. Yun Hyeong-suk (2002) showed that the traditional way of thinking such as the economically dependent relationship between landowner and tenant, consciousness of being “one family,” appointment of officials, and assessment of individuals held more influence during the Korean War at Daechon-li, H-gun, Jeonnam rather than class conflict or ideological differences.

2. Oral History and War in the West

War is a very important subject in the study on oral history in the West, not to speak of the U.S. whose study has been developed to a considerable degree. Lots of oral testimonies of those who experienced World War II have been published in Europe and the U.S. (Mullener 2002; Terkel 1984). The most popular topic in the study on oral history connected with World War II is the Jewish Holocaust. The oral statements of the survivors during the Holocaust have been published often (see Langer 1991, White 1988). The oral history of the Vietnam War has also been published in the U.S. (Stacewicz 1997). Recently, the words of women excluded in studies on war have been published (Hayton-Keeva 2003).

Those who spoke in these studies were the witnesses and survivors who had experienced the war but not members of the same community. There are also studies on oral history of the violent trauma the inhabitants of a city experienced

like *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory* (Linenthal 2001). However, the studies on oral history of war have depended mostly on witnesses and survivors living in various areas rather than the war experiences of the inhabitants of a particular region.¹

Though it is not a study on oral history, an example of a historical and anthropological study on war memory of the inhabitants of a particular region is *Socialists of Rural Andalusia: The Interplay of Politics and Economics* (Collier 1987). The author reveals that hierarchy was not considered an important axis of political polarization in the memory of socialist families at Los Olivos, Andalusia, Spain.

Like this researcher, the representative studies on war experiences of the inhabitants of a particular region as a study on oral history are those of Alessandro Portelli. In *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Alessandro Portelli. 1997. Madison: University of Wisconsin), he deals with various cases of World War II experienced in Italy. In *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Alessandro Portelli. 2003. New York: Palgrave), he deals with the oral testimony of a Nazi massacre in Rome during World War II.

“The Massacre at Civitella Val di Chiana (Tuscany, June 29, 1944): Myth and Politics, Mourning and Common Sense” in his *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* deals with the memory of a massacre at Civitella Val di Chiana, Tuscany. This was an incident where German soldiers murdered about 200 civilians and children at and around Civitella after members of the Resistance killed three German soldiers. He deals with the competition between official memory on war of the dominant discourse of the anti-German Resistance and the local memory of the citizens of Civitella after the war. He argues that this “split memory” must be widened and progressed to stipulate the dichotomy between the systematic memory of the resistance and the collective memory of the community, the hierarchical order it implies, and the fragmentary plurality of other memories (157).

In his recent book, he describes as “an open wound” in the memory of Rome the incident where the Nazi massacred and buried 335 Roman citizens after an attack of the Resistance during the Nazi occupation (Linenthal 2005: 1). He

1. This article focuses on a study of oral history in the West dealing with war experiences of inhabitants of a particular community, which is similar to the research conducted by me.

opposes social circumstances such as post-war neo-fascism by means of obtaining information through interviewing the widows of the massacred citizens and argues that the massacre was not the fault of the anti-German resistance but that the Nazis were the slaughterers. The continuing subject of Portelli's studies is the conflict and competition between dominant memory and counter-memory; never dichotomous, it is more complex and diverse. He argues that the competition of various memories is essential to democratic society but they are not always the same-valued oral texts.

Historical Memory and Oral History

1. Historicization of Private Memories

According to the Popular Memory Group, the social production of memory occurs in two ways: public representation and private memory. In the public representation of history, dominant memory appears while various interpretations of the past compete with one another. The dominant historical representation can be very close to a very ideological and typical myth. The official representation of the past appears very sharply in relation with the state. National history and heritage are the representative examples of dominant official memory the state takes advantage of. Official media are also the major sources of official representation. Private memories come from everyday life. But private memories are "not recorded and silenced in reality" (Popular Memory Group 1982: 210). Private memories reflect individually subordinated or private experiences of life.

In the process of the production of social memory, there are two kinds of relations. One is the relation between dominant memory and counter-memory occurring in the public fields including the academic world. The other is the relation between official discourse in the modern national system and the more private memory created in the living culture (Popular Memory Group 1982: 211). Continuous competition arises among various public representations; one of them becomes dominant memory and the other becomes counter-memory. These two kinds of memory urge the justification of historical truth and bring forth two opposite historical interpretations. Accordingly, continuing competition arises between dominant memory and counter-memory in order to take hegemony.

The representation of dominant memory has been continuously formalized

and reproduced in the official history by national organizations. But there is a dormant discrepancy between official memory and private memory deriving from experiences of life (Alonso 1988: 49). This discrepancy leaves a possible space for public counter-memory to appear. Counter-memory is private but collective memory of the subordinated or oppressed. The relation between dominant memory and public memory is not fixed but incessantly compromised. This private memory can be a representation of official history as counter-memory, composing hegemonic memory and counter-discourse opposing discourse.

There are various strata in the historical memory of the Korean War. When applying the discussion of the Popular Memory Group to the Korean War, these various strata have formed social discourses competing with one another with differentiated values and authority in Korean society. Up to now, the historical memory of the Korean War has conspicuously appeared in the official historical interpretation such as textbooks by the state. On the other hand, private memory deriving from personal experiences has been separately transmitted as the life story of an individual or family history. In particular, the life history or family history of the leftist families was put under taboo as silenced and oppressed war stories. This article aims at reconstructing the Korean War at Siyang-li, Yesan, Chungnam not through an official representation of the past but through private memory and revealing the historical characters of the private memory. Therefore, this article argues that the war stories of the inhabitants of Siyang-li should be recognized as historical memory opposing the dominant historical memory.

2. Writing History with Oral Sources

Though memory, private or official, takes on various forms in representation, it can be divided into literature and oral sources in general. Until now, in a study on history, literature has had priority over oral sources and made history a study on written documents. In a study on history, most of the official representations of memory have taken the form of literature but private memories have not taken the form of literature and have been silenced. As the way of bringing various private memories to the present is in the form of words, oral sources can be an important mechanism for representing private memory.

Though an oral statement is an important way of representing vanishing private memory, oral sources have been neglected as historical materials in the study of history. In spite of their abundant availability and diversity as historical

materials, oral sources have not been accepted as credible materials for studying history. It is said that oral sources can not be reliable as historical evidence because they are subjective, personal, private, and partial. But here exists a counterargument. Jan Vansina, a typical oral historian, argues that “the more subjective materials are, the better they reflect the reality of the past” (1980 276).

Oral historians have made an effort to define oral sources and prove their effectiveness and credibility in opposition to the literature-centered study on history (Yoon Taek-Lim 1993). In the process, oral historians have concluded that oral history is no better than written documents. As Edmund Leach said, “Records cannot be part of history just because they are left (Leach 1990).” Historical materials are a certain viewpoint and insight and the result of the subjective judgment of culture on what “the facts” are. What is important is not so much whether oral sources are effective as how effective they are as literature. The validity of oral history can be evaluated according to careful collection and analysis.

In order that oral sources may free themselves from supplementary materials for confirming the facts of the past and be recognized as a representation of reality, an epistemological turn is essential to raising oral sources to the level of historical materials. According to the Public Memory Group, there are many difficulties in understanding the potentiality of oral sources, among which an epistemological one is the most difficult. That is, there is a problem in defining an object of historical research in a study on history (Popular Memory Group 1982: 219). This problem is connected with empiricism in orthodox study on history. The empiricism of historians comes from a particular form of archival research that can be called the dialogue between the historian and the proof, (written records). As stated above, while written documents can be the records written from the viewpoint of the ruling class, archival research can be considered as dealing with a particularly selected kind of history.

This empirical standpoint of historical research restricts the progressive possibility of oral history. The Popular Memory Group urges that oral history can start when empirical and positivistic norms collapse. Memory and personal statements through memory are cultural structures, just as history is. This group suggests structural and cultural reading on these cultural structures as an alternative approach to empirical norms. Structural reading pays attention to the conditions subjectively monopolized by the speaker, i.e., the conditions, structures, and processes that form special experiences of life of an individual. Cultural reading focuses on how a statement takes on structured experience or the mean-

ing of life history from the general cultural repertory. These two readings are complementary to each other (Popular Memory Group 1982: 226).

The second difficulty as an obstacle to study on oral history results in the question to connect personal subjectivity and social context. How can personal experience represent the whole social experience? That is, it is a question about the social representative character of personal experience. To cope with this problem, it is necessary to find out the way to connect the macro social processes treated mainly in describing history and the micro personal statements that are main materials of private memory. Thus, Gramsci suggests the very natural view that human beings comprise not only social existence but also historical existence. According to Gramsci, "a human being is an abridgment of all the past because each individual is not only an existing relation but also the historical synthesis of these relations" (Gramsci 1971: 353). The autobiographical history of the public is how dominant social relations were seen from the individual point of view. Thus, the understanding of dominant social relations through an individual view shows the connection between the micro and macro social structure. Accordingly, oral history is not a problem of the representative character whereby personal experience is the whole social experience but shows a way of connecting between individual and society.

The third difficulty in the study of oral history is the tendency to consider the object of a study on history only to be in the past. The oral history of memory and its narrative accompanies not merely the past but the relation between the past and the present. The testimonies of oral history are essentially affected by the present incidents and are the results of restructuring what can be thought and narrated. They are the dialogue between the past and the present and the interrelation not only between private memory and public representation but also between past experience and the present situation (Popular Memory Group 1982: 241).

The fourth difficulty in researching oral history is that the study of history comes from the relation between power and inequality, i.e., the political quality of historical representation. In the study of oral history, the relation between researcher and speaker is not based on an equal relationship in general. It is the historian who provides the final explanation, suggests the dominant interpretation, and passes judgment. The speaker of historical narrative is mostly excluded in history writing. This is another form of the special hierarchical relationship between most researchers into oral history in the middle and lower classes as the objects of research (Popular Memory Group 1982: 220). This power relation

becomes acute in the oral representation of history. This is because power is always involved in historical representation.

Finally, oral history makes the existing concept of history understood as the relation between the past and the present. Thus, the history made in the relation between the past and the present shows the history created in the interrelation between the speaker and the researcher. Also, it can be regarded as an interpretation on the dominant social relation from a personal point of view. Then, oral history can be an alternative discourse against the literal hegemony by reproducing the life stories of the people who can not leave their literal records.

Accordingly, the way to reveal the private memories of ordinary people who can not leave their own written records is to listen to their life stories through interviews.² After listening to the stories of the Korean War of the people in Siyang-li, Yesan, Chungnam through oral history, this article discusses what their private stories say and mean.

The Korean War in a Village

1. June 25th Incident in Siyang-li³

The Korean War has been called June 25th or the June 25th Incident in Siyang-li.⁴ Siyang-li was a communist village called “Moscow of Yesan” during the Korean War. The memory of the villagers for the occupation period under the North Korean army was taboo under the post War anticommunist military

2. This researcher had an interview with grandmothers and grandfathers who experienced the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War in the village. The interview was done after grasping the whole circumstances of the village and by visiting narrators own houses and interviewing alone or in pairs to discover their life stories. Because of the obstinate ideology of anticommunism at that time, this researcher could not record the contents of the interview and had to put them down. Refer to this researcher’s articles: *Illyuhakjaui gwageoyeohaeng: Han ppal-gaengi maeurui yeoksareul chajaseo* (The Journey of an Anthropologist to the Past: In Search of the History of a Communist Village) (Yeosabipyongsu 2003) or “Gusulsawa jibangminui yeoksajeok gyeongheom jahyeon: Chungnam Yesan Siyang-liui Bak Byeong-ho ssi gusul jeungeoneul jungsimuro” (Oral History and the Representation of Historical Experience of Villagers: Centering on the Oral Testimony of Bak Byeong-ho in Siyang-li, Yesan, Chungnam, 1997) for the fieldwork and details of the interview.

3. In this article, false personal and regional names are used for the benefit of the narrators.

4. Siyang-li is a village belonging to M-myeon, Yesan-gun, Chungnam and is divided into two

regime. But their tabooed and silenced private memories provide a micro-history in contrast to the macro-history of the Korean War.

The development of June 25th in Siyang-li resulted from the Japanese colonial period. Under Japanese colonial rule, Siyang-li was divided into two administrative districts and the political situations were different in the first district, Gamgol, and the second district, Bamgol. At the end of the 1920s in Siyang-li, Yu Chan-gil, a highly educated intellectual, operated a night school in the village and led an enlightenment movement and an anti-Japanese movement together with Kim Yeong-chan, his associate and son of a landowner along with Kang Hyeong-jun, an independent farmer. Under the influence of the Students Anti-Japanese Uprising in Gwangju, they (who were the teachers of enlightenment academy in a neighboring village) played a leading role in the strike and the blank paper incident of elementary school boys in M-myeon where Siyang-li is located. Because of the incident, they were arrested, tried, and had to serve a sentence. The M-myeon office later appointed Yu Chan-gil as chief of Gamgol, Kim Yeong-chan as chief of the woodlands, and Kang Hyeong-jun as chief of Bamgol. Yu Chan-gil and Kim Yeong-chan lived at Gamgol, and the spirit of the anti-Japanese movement and the character of Yu Chan-gil had an enormous influence on the inhabitants of Gamgol. However, Kang Hyeong-jun who lived at Bamgol and led the anti-Japanese movement together with them became hateful towards some villagers in the process of recruiting village youngsters for Japanese war efforts.

Soon after liberation, for the interim, Yu Chan-gil and others joined the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence or the People's Committee. After the establishment of the Syngman Rhee (also known as Yi Seung-man) regime in 1948, they participated in Bodoyeonmaeng (The Guidance Alliance) before the outbreak of the Korean War because of the oppression against communist or socialist movements. Drafted workers and recruits came back home after liberation, and political conflicts became acute due to the movements for or against the trusteeship within Siyang-li, resulting in political conflicts within the village as well. The villagers who followed Yu

districts. During the fieldwork in 1989, there were 778 persons in 150 families. Their major way of livelihood was agriculture (79%), mainly rice farming and fruit growing. Refer to *Illyuhakjaui gwageoyeohaeng: Han ppalgaengi maeurui yeoksareul chajaseo* (The Journey of an Anthropologist to the Past: In Search of the History of a Communist Village, 2003) for further information.

Chan-gil, Kim Yeong-chan, and Kang Hyeong-jun supported the leftists and those who were dissatisfied with Kang Hyeong-jun within Bamgol supported the rightists.

As soon as war broke out, it is said that the villagers in Siyang-li were pleased, as if they had been liberated. When the North Korean army occupied Yesan, Yu Chan-gil, Kim Yeong-chan and Kang Hyeong-jun went to the People's Committee of Yesan-gun and joined in the communist government as leaders of Yesan-gun. In Siyang-li, Jeon Bong-jun from Bamgol became chief of the People's Committee under which there were the Women's Union and the Self-Government Guard. The villagers received education and had to provide labor under the direction of the People's Committee and the Self-Government Guard. Those who worked for the People's Committee at that time were mostly poor farmers without land and illiterate people. On the other hand, those who had a certain degree of property and were dissatisfied with Kang Hyeong-jun were regarded as rightist. Most of the villagers at Gamgol agreed with Yu Chan-gil and worked together; therefore, many inhabitants of Siyang-li were at the head of leftist activity. The People's Committee tried to investigate farmlands including other products and distributed them, but the communist government ended after two and a half months. The compulsion and violence of the People's Committee brought forth another round of terrorism. Therefore, the villagers became skeptical of communism during the North Korean occupation period.

Towards the end of the communist occupation period there was an incident where an old man who had been a lead figure at Bamgol was struck dead. Just after this incident, those who had participated in the leftist activities at Bamgol were caught by the Public Security Guard after the daughter of the dead old man informed of their activities. Also, Siyang-li became a target of the rightists within the region and the officials of the district arrested inhabitants of Siyang-li. Many inhabitants of Siyang-li were killed because of this at that time. The family members of the leftist leaders, Yu Chan-gil and Kim Yeong-chan of Gamgol, sought safety in flight. Yu Chan-gil was shot to death in Siyang and Kim Yeong-chan disappeared. Their elder sons and daughters joined in the National Youth League and the Women's Union or enlisted in a volunteer army. Most of them were killed or went missing. Although slaughter did not occur among the villagers at Gamgol, Siyang-li, the officials of the district arrested those who participated in leftist activities. But an atrocious slaughter between the rightists and the leftists within Bamgol did occur because of the death of the old man. Kang Hyeong-jun of Bamgol disappeared and all his family left the village. The fami-

lies of Yu Chan-gil and Kim Yeong-chan of Gamgol came back to the village after the incident settled down and have been living in Siyang-li since.

2. Memories of Massacres

Through the June 25th Incident, the inhabitants of Siyang-li suffered a revolutionary change, had been massacred by both the rightists and the leftists, and had seen their loved ones suffer. Some of them were struck dead or were shot to death while others got lost. Then, many families dispersed because of poverty and political oppression and became exhausted emotionally and psychologically. The war affected this village more severely than any other village. This was because there were some leading communists performing important duties in the local government during the North Korean occupation period in this village. As the villagers themselves commented, they contributed to gaining themselves the nickname of “the second Moscow of Yesan-gun,” known to all regions of Yesan-gun. Siyang-li was regarded as a communist village but not all villagers were communists. The political situations were different at Gamgol and Bamgol during the North Korean occupation period. The difference of political division in both villages increased during the liberation period and was visualized and strengthened during the war. This was the period the villagers could distinguish the rightists from the leftists clearly. The lives of most villagers were influenced by their ideological standpoints they could not help but choose. Terrorism had governed everyday lives of the villagers.

a. Terrorism during the North Korean occupation period

In general, the communist leaders of Siyang-li were the highly educated and upper classes but their followers were poor and uneducated. Jang Jun-sik from Gamgol urged that members of the South Korean Labor Party were the most illiterate and fearful. According to Jang Jun-sik, they had great authority, governed the village and did many wrongs under the auspices of the Self-Government Guard. Yi Sam-su from Gamgol said that this was the period when “people were afraid of one another.” According to him, among the leftists some supported the political system of North Korea and worked voluntarily while others followed the North Korean system in spite of themselves. The villagers could not say anything toward them because they were afraid of being regarded and executed as the rightists.

Those villagers who supported the anticommunist and pro-American regime of Syngman Rhee were marked out as rightists and fled from the village. The rightists who had stayed in the village suffered and forfeited their property. Some of them were killed when the U.N. Forces joined in the war and the North Korean army retreated to the north. Five villagers were struck dead at Bamgol. On the contrary, nobody was killed at Gamgol. Those who were killed at Bamgol were Kim Heung-su, the father of Kim Seong-jun, Kim Chan-mun, and his brother, Kang Jae-hi, and Heo Hoe-chun. Yi Seong-jin, who had been a deputy chief of the People's Committee, said that those killed were not good-hearted persons. Kim Heung-su, chief of the district just before the war, was notorious for his fastidiousness. He was beaten to death by a people's court of the local leftists. The Kim brothers were suspected of being police spies before the war. Kang Jae-hi was deputy chief of Gyeongbangdan and had assisted the police during the Japanese occupation period. The villagers hated gossipy Heo Chun-hoe. Whether their reputation was good or bad, their deaths led to the massacre of the local leftists by the deceased's families after the Restoration.

b. Further terrorism after the Restoration

Because of the intervention of the United Nation's Forces, communist rule ended in two months and a half and another political reversal occurred in Siyang-li. During the political vacuum caused by the retreat of the North Korean Army, the families of rightist survivors immediately began to counterattack the leftists. Kim Yeong-sun who had fled from the village during the communist occupation period came back to the village after the restoration. "The families of those massacred in the village came back, then caught and beat those who had joined the rebel army. They came from towns to the village to eradicate all the villagers with bamboo spears. As the village had been called a second Moscow, the remaining villagers had to assist the rebel army and run errands reluctantly. The chiefs had already fled. Most of them have been lost until now."

Just after the restoration, the village was in chaos. As Yi Yun indicated, nobody could reestablish order in the village for about twenty days until the police were sent after the restoration. But the families of those massacred by the local leftists began to retaliate. With nobody killed by the leftists at Gamgol, there was no counterattack by the rightists. Instead, the communists in the village became the target of retaliation from rightists from other villages. It was because during the communist occupation period, they had taken most of the

important posts of towns, joined in the administration and politics of other villages and towns, and had caused many deaths. This village was regarded as a communist village and the villagers were afraid of outsiders and lived in terror. The villagers of Gamgol were afraid of visits of town officials and tried to disappear as soon as they heard the name of town.

Yun Tae-guk was one of the villagers who were forced to assist the People's Committee at Bamgol. As he graduated from an elementary school, he helped to assess a tax on the harvest at the People's Committee of the village. He said:

“When the national defense forces came, I was arrested and taken to town because I had taken charge of the accounting. I was beaten by the Youth Guard in town. I was released after my elder brother cried mercy to an intimate of the Youth Guard. Arriving home, a person that had struck an old man dead accused my brother of being an accomplice to the crime. My brother had been forced to stand guard. Once again, we were arrested. We were taken to the town police station and were examined. We were almost beaten to death. Those beaten at that time were like beaten frogs. In fifteen days, we were released thanks to the appeal of the villagers. Some of us were regarded as active leftists and were killed only because they could not talk. They were taken to a storehouse in Yesan and were killed. Hundreds of bodies were scattered in the storehouse.”

Before President Syngman Rhee declared a law prohibiting the lynching of communists without due legal process in December 1950, many local leftists had been murdered without being tried. It is remembered that the rightists murdered about thirty villagers after the restoration. The communist leaders were almost all killed or disappeared. The villagers who had followed them were almost all killed while their property was forfeited and their families were scattered.

3. A Red Family, Once Fighters for Independence

The communist leader of Siyang-li was Yu Chan-gil, a highly educated intellectual from the land-owning classes. He received his higher education in Seoul during the 1920s, came back home, and then directed the anti-Japanese movement through the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement. After liberation, he joined the Labor Party of South Korea and served as the first chief of the People's

Committee of Yesan-gun during the communist occupation period. After the restoration, he was executed by local rightists while retreating with the North Korean Army.

The family of Yu Chan-gil was dissolved continuously during Japanese colonial rule and the reality of division caused by modern Korean history. The remaining family had to face a fierce struggle for existence. During Japanese colonial rule, the family of Yu Chan-gil had to experience the division of family under Japanese pressure because of the anti-Japanese movement. Yu Chan-hi, the youngest of three sons was suspected as a man behind the scenes of the independence incident of the M elementary school, was wanted by the Japanese police, left for Russia and disappeared from the Yu family history. The eldest son, Yu Chan-su, taught as a teacher in Seoul, went to Manchuria, worked at Mannong Industrial Co., and came back to Seoul to be a teacher after liberation. Meanwhile, the second son, Yu Chan-gil, stayed home farming, directed the anti-Japanese movement through the rural enlightenment movement, and continuously assisted the independent movements of the communist consolidation. The family of Yu Chan-gil had to live under the surveillance and control of the Japanese police after the incident involving enlightenment academy in 1930 footnote: the teachers of the enlightenment academy located in the neighboring village encouraged the elementary school boys in M-myeon to strike and submit blank papers.

The family of Yu Chan-gil experienced another severe dissolution of family through June 25th Incident. The heads of the family disappeared because the eldest son, Yu Chan-su, went to North Korea and the second son, Yu Chan-gil, died. One of five sons and daughters of Yu Chan-su went to North Korea and another disappeared. The eldest son and daughter of Yu Chan-gil's eight children died and the second son went to North Korea. In Siyang-li, the wife and five children of Yu Chan-gil had to remain. The modern history of Korea was a period of suffering for the Yu family. The Yu family had to constantly live under surveillance, control, and terror during Japanese colonial rule, after liberation, and even after the restoration of the Korean War.

When state and society could not protect a family and a family became a victim of division and the ideology of anti-Communism in modern Korean history, the survival tactics of the Yu family might be a struggle for existence themselves. On the basis of land and fruit culture, to secure a livelihood and live far from politics was the only way they could maintain social status in South Korean society after the War. They are still suffering the stigma of communist

offspring and can not be free from the family history of pro-communist stigma, the basis of their identity. The contradiction of Korean society shown in the family history of Yu should be examined closely at the turn of impending unification.

During the second fieldwork trip in 1996, Yu Geun-chan, son of Yu Chan-gil, told of having received a notification by the H town office in 1995 to present documents to verify his eligibility as the heir of a meritorious patriot who died for the independence of his/her country; the Korean government was adding more meritorious patriots to the existing list in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of liberation. He collected and presented evidence about the anti-Japanese movement but Yu Chan-gil, father of Yu Geun-chan, had not been selected as a meritorious patriot for national independence. I inquired about the reason why from the Patriots and Veterans Administration Agency. According to the official in charge, simple evidence about the national independence movement could not be enough but rather, a person of merit for national independence should be evaluated and chosen by means of a biography of the person concerned. The official also explained that if the person had a record of either a crime or of being a pro-Japanese or pro-socialist (communist), he might well be excluded. It was said that Yun So-hyeon, who had joined in the independence incident at M Public Normal School directed by Yu Chan-gil, was selected as person of merit for national independence. However earnestly one participated in anti-Japanese movements, movements by socialists and communists cannot be recognized as national independence movements under the political system of South Korea. Fortunately, awards for socialist figures began in 2003 and it is expected that the evaluation on Yu Chan-gil will be changed.

Now, the unification of our country seems to be a progressive task facing us in reality. Discussions have been raised about recognizing the differences between the South and the North as a prelude to unification and dealing with the differences. We should advance a step farther simply beyond studying the North to embrace the North Korean people under the communist system within the scope of a nation. We need to reevaluate freshly those who took sides with the enemy and their families living in the state of an internal colony as victims of the ideology of anti-Communism in South Korean society. It is time for us to solve their split national identity, i.e., inconsistent identity that they are the families of those who led anti-Japanese movements and also the families of the communists. This task will be, after all, a task to rewrite modern Korean history to prepare for unification.

What Do Siyang-li People's War Stories Say?

1. Rereading of the Korean War through Private Memories

The war stories of the Siyang-li villagers are a chronicle of how the villagers suffered and survived under Japanese colonial rule up to the Korean War. The historical incidents during this period have been engraved and have become meaningful within the hearts of the villagers no matter what meaning historians may give to them. They understand that the historical incidents were more personal and political conflicts within the village than an ideological or class struggle. The importance of the incidents is more concerned with the evaluation on how they had an influence on the villagers and their families than with the evaluation of historians. Therefore, the history of Siyang-li provides another version of modern Korean history represented through private memory and oral testimony of the villagers.

One of the most decisive effects of the June 25th Incident is the fact that the ideology of anti-Communism got firmly fixed in South Korean society after the war. When the local communists and their organization were eradicated in South Korean society, those who were connected with the rightist Syngman Rhee regime to a certain degree could survive and became more antagonistic toward Communism. Those who supported Syngman Rhee government came to regard Communism as evil. Yun Tae-geuk, who had been forced to assist the People's Committee, urged as follows:

“Then, we did not know what was right. Whether the rightist was right or the leftist was right we did not know. It was not until the Korean War that we came to know that Communism was evil. In spite of its good theory, Communism put an emphasis only on the party. Communism was very evil and dangerous. It was not until then that we knew it. Whether they were the rightists or the leftists, they were all wrong. They said they were right. Recollecting what they had done, they were all the same.”

Choe Jeong-hun was on neutral ground because of his religion, Christianity, in the village and expressed the same opinion. As the rightists and the leftists killed one another, they made the same mistake. To Kim Seong-jun, a rightist, the Korean War was a good lesson. According to him, “After the communist occupation period, we realized that Communism had been evil and had told a lie.

After the communist occupation period, we doubted even the leftists. The June 25th Incident taught a good lesson. Without the June 25th Incident, our country would have become like Hungary, Yugoslavia, or Vietnam. The June 25th Incident was like the Vietnam War. It is right for justice to be restored. Vietnam is being restored to normal now.”

There was no one that expressed a different opinion from that of Kim Seong-jun in the village. It was because Kim Seong-jun's interpretation of the War was the historical interpretation of an authoritative political system after the War. There were no survivors among the communists or the leftists who could oppose Kim Seong-jun. The villagers said that as most of the brilliant villagers had been the communists and that most of them had been killed during the war. Since then, there have been no brilliant persons in Siyang-li.

Most of the villagers called the June 25th Incident a fight among villagers. The June 25th Incident was more a fight among the villagers than a fight against the North Korean people. It was a personal, emotional, and political initiative fight among the villagers under the mask of ideology within the same village. They said that the North Korean Army had not known about the local circumstances and that it was the local rightists and leftists that had brought forth massacre and terror. The meaning of a fight among villagers differed according to the way the scope of the group was defined. Within the village named Siyang-li, the political situations between Bamgol and Gamgol were different. In Siyang-li, Bamgol and Gamgol were not divided into leftist and the rightist. They were almost all leftists at Gamgol but the leftists vied with the rightists at Bamgol. In Siyang-li, Yu Chan-gil and Kim Yeong-chan had been respected as leaders of anti-Japanese movements since Japanese colonial rule and their native place Gamgol had been united collectively because of their charisma during the liberation and the Korean War periods. On the contrary, though Kang Hyeong-jun had had the spirit of socialist national liberation together with Yu Chan-gil and Kim Yeong-chan, the conflicts between Kang Hyeong-jun and his followers and the youths drafted by Kang Hyeong-jun had taken on an ideological conflict between the leftists and the rightists because of the personal discord within Bamgol during liberation and the Korean War periods. Accordingly, the June 25th Incident was a fight between the rightists and the leftists within Bamgol, a fight among the villagers within Siyang-li including Bamgol and Gamgol and, furthermore, a fight between the local rightists and leftists within South Korea.

Also, the June 25th Incident in Siyang-li clearly shows that the classes were not the major factor of the conflict. The classes were only one of the many fac-

tors to fix the ideological borderline between the leftists and the rightists. Though the lower members of the Labor Party of South Korea were composed of the poorer classes, most of the local leftist leaders were the highly educated intellectuals of the richer classes. Their individual charisma accumulated since Japanese colonial rule and personal conflicts and emotional antagonism were the most influencing factors of the conflict. Therefore, the ideology in Siyang-li was the rhetorical and symbolic mechanism to reveal clearly personal conflicts, antagonism between families, and political competition among the villagers.

Also, the June 25th Incident in Siyang-li shows that the ideological borderline between the leftists and the rightists was relative and fluid. The social position of people is composed of age, generation, sex, classes, occupation, academic, and family background, etc. In the context of local politics, the social position of the villagers resorted to the ideological borderline between leftist and rightist according to circumstance. The case of Oh Deok-hwan would be an example. He was classified as a rightist in the village but as a leftist in Yesan-eup because he had worked in Yesan during the North Korean occupation period. Also, the villagers think that local leftists that have survived until now may have a suitable reason for their survival. It is because while the individual social position and the ideological borderline cross each other, a certain local justice, morality, or ethics the villagers had shared may have worked in spite of the chasm. The case of Jo Won-bo would be another example. Though he was an extreme local leftist, his impartiality and the credibility other villagers had given him saved his life. In the context of local politics, it seems that the social justice of the villagers existed, crossing the borderline between the leftists and the rightists.

2. *Minjung* (The People) as a Multiple Subject

Accordingly, the war stories of the villagers of Siyang-li show that the experiences of the villagers, so-called the people were not identical concerning the same historical incident called June 25th Incident within a small village. That is, their voices differed according to their various social positions. It would be something like making a cloth for covering with the stories of villagers to grasp what happened in Siyang-li in reality and what the historical facts were. The historical facts were composed of various voices in according as the private and individual experiences of the villagers are called the present through memory. How the villagers remembered and orally stated the June 25th Incident in Siyang-li is more important than what happened in Siyang-li during the Korean War.

Therefore, their words through memory are nothing more than historical truths to them.

Thus, the war stories of the villagers in Siyang-li have made the voices of the villagers heard and the diversity of social discourses recognized. The voices of the villagers have been silenced by uniform social discourses composed of the ideology of anti-Communism caused by the cold war and the division. Because it is shown the villagers in Siyang-li are not a single subject but a multiple subject. This represents an alternative historical interpretation of the Korean War to recover the local history of Yesan-gun and the silenced voices of the villagers in Siyang-li from the viewpoint of the local people.

War, Words, and Memory

The research on war through words has actively progressed aside from the archive research on war in the West. Meanwhile, the oral history approach to the Korean War began recently in Korea. The oral approach to the Korean War is a project on restoring the war experiences of ordinary people excluded in the major narrative of the Korean War. This project also shows complex and multiple competitions between dominant memory and counter-memory of the Korean War in Korean society. It is because words bring forth past experience to the present through memory.

Accordingly, the Korean War stories of ordinary people not only make up for existing modern Korean history but also, furthermore, must be recognized as a public historical discourse or interpretation. Their stories raise political implications which are contained in past voices that have continued to the present said. Walter Benjamin said, "... Only the history that even the dead could ascertain they could not be safe from the enemy they had defeated will have the quality to enable the past light of hope to flare up (1968: 257)." Oral history is a way of describing such history.

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