War and Women's Lives: On the Experience of Bereaved Women of Left-Related Victims of the Korean War*

Lee Ryong-kyong

This research attempts to shed light on war and its continuing violence by relating the experiences of bereaved women of victims of civilian massacres before and during the Korean War of 1950. Although the Korean War ended over 50 years ago, war is always accompanied by the murder of civilians, which remains as a scar as various forms of culturally and structurally instituted violence. This article inquires on the life-long suffering of the surviving powerless who live under these forms of structural and cultural violence.

Keywords: Korean War, war and women, Left-related victims, civilian massacres

Introduction

March 20, 2003.

With the U.S. invasion of Iraq, global efforts to realize peace and justice in the past century went up in flames in a single moment. This day will be remembered as one in which the dark shadow of war once

* This article is a revision of a master's thesis titled" A Study on the Experiences of the Female Survivors Related to Communism Before and During the Korean War: From the Gender-Sensitive Perspective Peace View "completed at the Department of NGO Studies, Sungkonghoe University, in 2003.

The Review of Korean Studies Vol. 6, No. 1 (85-108)

again marred the history of mankind.

Coverage by U.S. stations on CNN signals continually broadcast scenes of screeching fighter planes, war strategies showcasing the U.S. ś ultramodern weapons, and strategic situation maps in vivid graphics, as if in a " 3-D simulation game. " In the U.S.-centered media, it is almost impossible to find images depicting the true character of the wretched spectacle of war, such as the people, houses, schools, and bridges that are hit by bombs. Since the Vietnam War, the U.S. has emphasized surgical and precision strikes that only impact military targets and do not victimize innocent citizens. In this US-Iraq War, the U.S. again claimed its attacks would be focused on military installations and other special targets by utilizing highly sophisticated weapons with precise guidance systems. However, in the now one-week old US-Iraq War, bombs and missiles have landed in civilian installations and residential areas, resulting in approximately 4000 civilian casualties, most of whom have been women and children. In the U.N. tabulation of war victims from 1990 to the present, approximately 90% of all war victims have been innocent civilians, mostly women, children, and the elderly.

This war, which the U.S. and England predicted would be quickly resolved, is increasingly extending to be a prolonged conflict. Whether the war is long or short, the end of the war will quickly bring peace, imperfect though it may be. However, what will be remaining for citizens, especially to women, who are the greatest victims of war?

After the end of war, 35% of those in the Cambodian countryside with families to support are women, most of whom are widows. The majority of young mothers with children to raise must resort to prostitution to survive, and the daughters of these widows often quit school to help their mothers and are high risks to become prostitutes. In the complete absence of societal safety nets or support organizations, women or war widows with no male relatives to support them lead lives of absolute poverty and social marginalization. Even after bombing has stopped, the misery of war continues for women and children.

The women and children who survive war are continually battered and are never accounted for. This is due to insufficient analysis of war and violence, as well as the lack of gender-based analytic cases and categorizations. According to Johan Galtung, a researcher on peace, violence takes not only in direct forms, such as war, mass holocaust, and

sexual violence, but also can exist as cultural violence, which directly or indirectly normalizes or legalizes the structural violence which intermediates direct violence.

In this context, this research attempts to shed light on war and its continuing violence by relating the experiences of bereaved women of victims of civilian massacres during and after the Korean War of 1950. Although the Korean War ended over 50 years ago, war is always accompanied by the murder of civilians, which remains as a scar as various forms of culturally and structurally instituted violence. This article inquires on the life-long suffering[1] of the surviving powerless who live under these forms of structural and cultural violence.

Massacres of Civilians before and during the Korean War

Before examining the experience of women with regards to war and violence, it is necessary to summarize the civilian massacres before and during the Korean War from which the bereaved women of left-related victims originate.

The massacres that resulted in an estimated one million killed on the Korean peninsula occurred between the establishment of an independent South Korean government and the 1950 Korean War.

Of the civilian massacres as a whole, more than one hundred thousand civilians were victimized before the war by the South Korean military and police at the Cheju Insurgency of April 3 (1948), during the suppression of the Yŏsun incident (1949) and the suppression of partisan guerrilla forces. The over one hundred thousand civilians massacred before the outbreak of the Korean War was rooted in the liberation of South Korea from colonization by imperial Japan and also the subsequent process of nation building.

1. Left-related suffering is defined as follows: First, the killing of a member of the family as a member of the National Guidance League. Second, cases where citizens were massacred due to their residence in a region where the enemy was active or because they were regarded as colluding with the enemy according to the military/police. Third, massacres during the process of changing" nationality "that were related to revenge on military and police traitors or personal vengeance among civilians that conspired with both sides.

After Korea ś liberation from Japan in 1945, Rhee Syngman and the U.S. military government inherited the physical and human capital of the Japanese colonial period. Under the banner of repression of leftist ideology, they pushed through the establishment of a separate South Korean government in 1948. This was an antidemocratic, ahistoric action that disappointed the expectation of the masses for a unified nation. In this political situation, the 1948 Cheju Insurgency of April 3, the 1949 October 10th Yŏsun incident and similar movements in other regions commenced in opposition to the establishment of a separate South Korean government and election. The Rhee Syngman regime, which felt the threat of intense popular resistance, hurriedly restored military discipline and began to use post-liberation political resistance to the establishment of a government as a pathway to sustain the government by utilizing the National Security Act (passed December 1, 1948) and the Podoyŏnmaeng (National Guidance League, founded June 5, 1949; hereafter NGL). This meant the constitution of a socio-political system characterized by anti-communist national policy. Under the patronage of the U.S. military government and the Rhee Syngman regime, the activation and anti-communist activity of various mass organizations supported by anti-communist right wing and police forces meant the subjugation of forces opposing the government and the suppression of citizens ' individual rights. Furthermore, anti-communist thought served as a foundation for rationalizing civilian massacre for anti-communist purposes. Ultimately, the Rhee Syngman regime and the U.S. stipulated that the Cheju Insurgency of April 3 and the Yŏsun incident were leftist insurrections, and commenced to label as enemies and massacre all leftist activists, as well as civilians and even students who had aided them. This regime identified communists as the singular enemy in order to smooth over internal political tensions, and rationalized its vicious strategies of repression through anti-communist ideology.

The military clash of force between the regular armies as determined by the military demarcation line of 1949 eventually expanded to the face-to-face confrontation of June 25, 1950. The scope of massacres increased concurrently. First, the state convoked the NGL and engaged in massacres. The NGL, created by the state, was supposedly comprised of the former members of leftist organizations formed by those

who had once opposed the Rhee Syngman regime but had changed course, but most of the members were those who had no ideological tendencies. However, once the war began, the government identified approximately 200-250 thousand members of the NGL south of Suwon as well as those on the black list as potential enemies and without any legal proceedings brought them to police stations and executed them. Similarly, members of the NGL who were imprisoned in jail were killed by South Korean military and police at the start of the war around the end of June 1950. The People ś Liberation Army occupied Seoul within 3 days on June 28th, and by July, had occupied almost all the regions in South Korea with the exception of South Kyŏngsang and part of North Kyŏngsang. The world had changed overnight.

Furthermore, in this process the Korean War, which had started off as a civil war, turned into an international war with the intervention of the U.S. and, with the entry of the U.S. into war, the massacres increased significantly. During military operations in Iksan, Nogŭn-ri, etc., U.S. military misjudged innocent civilians fleeing in white clothing as the enemy and massacred them with bombing or machine gun fire. The representative case is the Nogŭn-ri incident that was widely publicized in 1999 through the AP.

The Allied forces retook Seoul on September 28th. Even after the " September 28th Reclamation "as well as the Yŏsun incident, the tactical area for liquidation of communist guerrillas was hugely expanded, centering around the whole of Chiri-san and extending to the Chŏlla and Kyŏngsang provinces. In February 1951, the 11th division ś communist guerrilla liquidation strategy known as " kyŏnbyŏkch ŏngya "was responsible for the mass killing of thousands of civilians in Kŏch ảng, Shinwon-ri." kyŏnbyŏkch ŏngya, "meaning" kill all, burn all, take all, " was a strategy employed by the Japanese military in Manchuria. The leadership of the 11th division, who had learned " kyŏnbyŏkch ŏngya " from the Japanese military during the Japanese colonial period, reinstituted this strategy with Kŏch ảng residents as the targets. Through this strategy, Kŏch ảng Shinwon-ri, which was looked upon as a " hostile village "that served as a guerrilla stronghold, was burned down and everyone in it, including children, the elderly, and women, were massacred.

On January 4, 1951, the Allied Forces had to abandon Seoul and

move south with the intervention of the Chinese Red Army. During the six months from June 1950 to January of the following year, the civilians in portions of South Korea, including Seoul, experienced two different instances of change in“ nationhood ”

In this process of“ changing nationhood, ”the massacre perpetrated by right wing and police organizations, retaliation against military/political traitors, and personal reprisal between civilians who shifted support for both sides reached immense proportions. In general, in the period of occupation by the People ś Liberation Army, there were frequent murders of families of police, right wing personnel, and right wing youth organization members by leftists and families of NGL victims, in a continuation of prewar conflictual experiences between the left and right. Further, after the subsequent entry of the South Korean military, right wing organizations under the patronage of the police took advantage of the vacuum in public peace to essentially play the role of state organs to arrest/confine/execute traitors and their families without any sort of formal judgment of their traitorous behavior. These killings of revenge were carried out in more vicious fashion than other killings, and the resulting psychological damage remains much more intensely than in other areas.

Political Expulsion

After the 1953 Armistice and the exit of the Rhee Syngman regime with the June 1960 Uprising, Kŏch ảng National Assemblyman Shin Jeong-mok began a National Assembly testimony on the civilian massacres in the Kŏch ảng area. The bereaved, who had been victimized by killings before and during the war and could not even recover victim remains for the past 10 years, formed victims ’family associations in each region, and demanded the exhumation of victim remains and the punishment of those responsible for the massacres. In the National Assembly, the“ Special Committee for Truth Investigation on the Massacre of Innocent Civilians, ”was organized and fact finding was pursued even at the level of the National Assembly, and significant ignominies in portions of South Kyŏngsang and South Chŏlla were discovered. However, the Park Chung-hee military regime that seized

power through coup d'état on June 16, 1961 cast the nationwide activities of bereaved families as "commie" activity. During trials on "rebellion," the government arrested "conspirators" and returned imprisonment verdicts, making movements to restore victims' honor illegal. Afterwards, no one was allowed to speak of the civilian massacres, and via the guilt-by-association system (*yŏnjajwe*), victims' families were identified as "targets for surveillance" and watched closely by the KCIA. The guilt-by-association system meant that members of the NGL, and left-related victims' families were characterized as national enemies, potential political dissidents or traitors to state power, and thus the system served as the institutional foundation for various types of repression and expulsion.

Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi, whose parents had been branded leftists and murdered, was constantly visited at home and office by police and thus had to leave her home and was fired from her job. The continuous surveillance and visitation by KCIA in daily life meant that those being watched experienced dread, timidity, fear in their daily lives, and also had the effect of social banishment by influencing those people surrounding them.

In addition to the state's constant daily surveillance, left-related victims' families could not gain employment in public service, military, or police due to background checks, and could not travel abroad.

> "There was no [disadvantage due to guilt by association] in our village. We didn't even bother going into those fields. The police branch office had our genealogy. To see if there had been a death or not" (Sŏ Sang-guk).

Thus, victim relatives that were male and high school educated, like Sŏ Sang-guk, "didn't even bother going into those fields," and chose voluntarily to evade spheres they were restricted from such as the military or police. Males generally became farmers at their hometown or became merchants, in order to deal with the realities of being a communist family under the guilt-by-association system. Most male relatives of left-related victims state that there is "no" ill effect from state control via the guilt-by-association system because of their voluntary "evasion,"

The experience and response of left-related victim families to political expulsion depends on age and gender.

Individuals were directly affected by guilt-by-association in cases where the individual's parents had been killed and the individual was relatively young in comparison to Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi and the other interviewees; however, women who had no extensive experience in society were sometimes indirectly affected through their husbands. Shin Yong-dal, whose father was killed as a member of the NGL, was never promoted in her job due to her father's leftist background despite the fact that her husband was employed as a policeman for 18 years.

However, males or those women whose husbands had been killed and who have no sons (unlike Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi or Shin Yong-dal), often state that they had "no" or "do not know" of any direct disadvantage from the guilt-by-association system. Further, males who answer "no" or "do not know" can definitely be distinguished from women who have no sons and whose 70-80 year old husbands were killed.

Women, who are currently in their mid-late 70's, did not have any opportunity for education, and experienced society or the public sphere only insofar as related to their husbands' fields. Because most women considered this situation as natural, they had no opportunity to enter the public sphere. Further, because these women, as well as all males related to victims, did not have sons who could enter society or the public sphere, they did not experience any disadvantage of the guilt-by-association system even through their children. Thus, they state there was "no" or they "do not know" of any victimization through the guilt-by-association system.

Nation and society excluded left-related victims' families from participation in special political/economic spheres through the guilt-by-association system or the National Security Law. Even among these families, those women who did not have sons were completely excluded even from the limited spheres that were open to men. Furthermore, due to the extreme poverty in which they lived, the difficulty of entering the public sphere or being socially active was handed down to their daughters.

The hardship of women's lives as primary providers of family livelihood

After liberation from under Japanese colonialism, the delicate existence of a foundation for socioeconomic regeneration was turned to ashes with the Korean War. Due to the war, homes and property were all burned down by the military and police, and post-war emergency aid policy was removed due to the existence of "commie" families. Women who had lost their parents or husbands during the war were in situations of such intense poverty and hunger that they scarcely had the leisure to grieve over their dead.

> "At the time, my 6-year old younger sibling who was on my older sister's back got sick from malnutrition. Another 9-year old younger sibling died in my lap when I was 15. How could I possibly describe everything? The 6-year old eventually died of malnutrition"(Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi).

Women of victims' families did not possess the skills, knowledge, or experience to escape dire poverty and hunger. These women, who had grown up in poverty-stricken households where farming was the family's main labor, had to take complete charge of household duties rather than pursue education. Even those women whose families were well off farmers or had some influence were controlled by the feudalistic thinking that "ladies should not be turned to the outside world," or "women who learn too much lose all their luck" and thus most women were excluded from opportunities for education or social experience merely for the reason that they were female. These women, who had from an early age been denied education or social experience due to poverty and patriarchal attitudes, faced unthinkable poverty when their fathers and husbands were killed before and during the war. When they were thrust into the role of family breadwinner, the degree of their poverty would be such that "dying would be better."

Women family members of left-related victims who were unmarried virtually never left their village before getting married. Thus, when their husbands died, they had to shield themselves from the wind behind pup tents in burnt-out houses and eek out a living farming what

land there was with remaining family members.

> “ At that time, I lived just to live. There were no men at all. There were five women: two mothers, two daughters, and me. That ṡ why we had no strength. Our plot of land was 13 *majigi* [a patch of field requiring one mal, 18 liters, of seed] long or so. I sold the land that was too far and we farmed the land that was close. At that time, I feared nothing. I was so determined, that I walked alone at night to water the land that was far away. If men watered their land in the day, I had to secretly water our land at night. If I didn ṫ do that, the land went bone dry. If water were scarce, I would take from someone else ṡ field to water my own land. I ḋ steal the water at night to water my field. We were looked down upon because there were only women in our household. I would sneak at night when no one could see and turn the waterway. What could I fear? If I got caught, I ḋ say I live with my son and my grandmother. All I could think of was I had to say something so my kids and my mothers could live ”(Yi Myŏng-sun).

Women who became the family breadwinners submitted to all manner of sacrifices to ensure their family ṡ survival, such as working in the fields during the day and weaving at night; however, such sacrifices were not limited to themselves. For these women, household work and farming were the most important priorities for day-to-day survival, and thus raising children was inevitably a second priority. These women could only give birth and breastfeed their babies; other menial household chores and babysitting was the responsibility of other women in the house, particularly older daughters. Although this was due partly to the universal difficulties of the postwar period, eldest daughters had to take full responsibility for keeping house, and much like their mothers, had to forego any opportunities for education beyond elementary school.

Furthermore, in a patriarchal, patrilineal society, the inheritance or ownership of wealth by women was institutionally impossible, with the exception of a few extremely rare cases. Yang Yŏng-hŭi, who lived at her husband ṡ brother ṡ house after her husband was killed, could not

even inherit the farming land which had been allotted to her and her husband. Further, even after her husband was killed and she was left alone, the enforcement of Confucian funereal duties of female family members of murder victims continued as strong as ever. Women who lived in the countryside and were devoted to agricultural labor followed traditional convention and went to live with her husband's family and maintain house there without her husband. Therefore, they unchangingly lead lives where they would "work like a serf, behave like a nun." In order to overcome intense economic hardships, women had to not only play a providing role, but also take care of their husbands' parents and sisters, and when they did not have sons, would even have to adopt and raise a foster child in order to continue the family line.

Women who had been left to their own devices were lucky to even have land on which to farm. Women who did not even have such land, but only had a large family to support, often left their hometowns to look for the types of work that a woman could do with her body, such as domestic service or prostitution. Sexual violence against women during war is already well known. During the Korean War as well, bereaved women of left-related victims were often sexually assaulted by military, police, and right wing organizations, and in some regions there were even cases of forced marriage to those who had killed their relative or husband. However, due to Korean society's view of sexual violence as "shameful to women," victims could not speak out freely, and often could only run away or commit suicide.

For bereaved women of left-related victims, other than domestic service or prostitution, there was one other survival tactic to escape poverty the level of "dying from hunger," which was remarriage. However, remarriage was not a simple matter, due to the burden of their dependent family as well as the unjust perception borne of the traditional patriarchal attitude[2] that once a woman is married, she

2. "My father was strict about remarriage. After my husband died, I could never go back home. I could never return because after getting married, I was considered as belonging to another family... However, my son went after he grew up. I couldn't even drop by... I was in mourning for 12 years after my husband died. Because of my father..." (An Wol-hŭi). "My older brothers said not to come to their houses if I didn't want to live there. They said I should not exploit my parents' last name and if I were to die, to die there" (Yi Myŏng-sun).

must become as if a“ ghost ”to her husband ᄉ house. However, despite the negative societal perception toward remarriage, there were many who chose to remarry or to become a mistress among bereaved women of left-related victims who had no children or one very young child, had no land to farm on, or no other way to escape from poverty.

Interviewees who survived through poverty with all their strength say that when they think of those days when three square meals was difficult, the current world is a good one to live in. However, bereaved women of left-related victims still have not escaped from the vicious circle of poverty. Women who do not have a family to support them survive through government aid after being classified as eligible for poor relief. However, in Korea, the only divided nation in the world which must pour huge amounts into national defense to buttress its developmentalism, investment for social welfare is inevitably wanting. Therefore, because government assistance is not sufficient for survival, these women, despite the fact they are 70-80 years old, are still farming or working in some other supplementary job that their body will allow. This plainly reveals how the vicious circle of poverty is still not over for bereaved women of left-related victims and how they are still at the very lowest levels of poverty.

The dissolution of communities

The greatest suffering of women who survived the Korean War was the loss of their husbands, siblings, and parents, and the resulting destruction of the foundation for their livelihoods.

Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi, whose parents died and whose siblings survived, was sent with her siblings to a relative ᄉ house. In a situation where one more mouth to feed was a great burden on survival, Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi and her siblings were unwelcome dependents. Although eventually Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi ᄉ siblings were sent to the house of her eldest uncle, they only wanted her little brother and the rest were sent elsewhere, the sole reason being that they were female. In a patriarchal society, this is what is meant by the deprivation of women ᄉ foundation for support and resources through the death of one ᄉ husband, male siblings, or father.

To Chŏng-hŭi, who was the daughter-in-law to the 13th consecutive

head household, was entirely responsible for *sadaepongje* (the ancestral worship beyond fourth generation) 10 times a year, as well as caring after her in-law siblings and their weddings. However, after her husband was murdered as a member of NGL, she was ostracized and branded as a "commie" family even by her own relatives.

> "Even my relatives don't come for fear of being beaten to death. They don't come because just for talking they'll all be taken and killed. After the war, since that the head of the household went to the military and was absent, they had nothing to fear. I somehow did *sadaepongje* little by little. And did *jesa* 10 times a year" (To Chŏng-hŭi).

Even between siblings, when a younger sibling was taken away and killed and the police came to investigate, the reality of the times was that one could only answer that the sibling was only a half-sibling in order to survive. This situation did not change even after the war. Ultimately, bereaved women of left-related victims who were left to their own devices were not only cut off from their male-centered patriarchal kinship relations and the related division of labor, but were also subjects of caution within their familial community due to their being labeled as a "commie" family. When their husbands or fathers had been targeted as a "commie" and killed, remaining members of "commie" families had to suffer being deprived of their belongings and even their home by people around them, and were not even allowed to utter a word of complaint. In fact, they were lucky to even keep their lives.

Even after the guilt-by-association system was abrogated in 1980, their survival, in a society that had internalized anti-communist ideology through education and various other incidents through schools and other public institutions, meant to completely evade, deny, and maintain silence within their neighborhood—which was in some senses more painful than death itself. Korean society was one in which you could not even express longing to see a murdered relative, to ask why he or she was murdered, nor to search out the place where they were killed.

For the bereaved, the unexplained murders and experience of war

meant their ostracization from not only their familial community but also severance from their neighborhoods.

For the bereaved in Nachu Ch ǒlch ǒn-ri, despite the fact that 31 households did *jesa* on the same day within the same village, they did not know how many people were murdered on the same day for 50 years, until the association of bereaved families was established in 2001 and a memorial was raised for victims at the village entrance in March 2002. Despite the fact that there were people in the neighborhood who had been present at and survived the scene of the murders, no one had asked each other about their experiences. The" killings "were an open secret that had to be covered up and could not be discussed within the village. In addition, the killings were a" memory "that could not be discussed, in particular with children.

> " Only I knew about it, and I didn ṫ talk about it. It became known because of the raising of this memorial. It was this way because it was enough that I suffered with this knowledge... I never talked about how where when he died "(Sŏ Sang-guk).

Even now, the greatest reason why bereaved families are wary of participating in the association for bereaved families is because" reunification has yet to happen, and it is impossible to know how the political situation may change and affect the children in the future. " Ultimately, although the bereaved are saying" it is enough that I suffer, "it is evident that the generation who lived before and during the war suffers from a psychological complex about the concept of " commie. "The postwar generation ṡ complex of anti-communist ideology was instituted primarily through anti-communist education by educational institutions. Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi had no choice but to stay silent for the sake of her children, who had been fully indoctrinated by anti-communist education.

> " I didn ṫ speak of such things with my children as they were growing up. I was afraid that they would be thrown into confusion because of their indoctrination by anti-communist education. It hasn ṫ been long since the end of the Cold War era " (Sŏ Yŏng-hŭi).

The central point of the anti-communist education, which continued for a long time in the postwar period, was that the North Korean invasion of the South was the cause of the Korean War. This was a very effective logic for placing the complete blame for the consequences of the war on North Korea with a complete disregard for the actual character of the war. Because of the ceaseless instilling of a fundamental abhorrence for North Korea as threatening the national well-being, the bereaved of left-related victims who had been branded as“ commies ” had no choice but to deny/evade/stay silent. The distancing of themselves and their posterity from the killings of the past represented a severance of a shared understanding with their community and the next generation.

Interviewees did not (and still do not) know what a commie or the NGL was when their husbands were murdered as members of the NGL, and they could not even mention the conditions around their husbands ’deaths, thinking that“ talking about it is not allowed. ”

> “ We did not separate from the neighborhood because we were a NGL household. However, we could not even say my husband had died as a member of the NGL. ”(Yi Myŭng-sun)
>
> “ I could not (speak to outsiders about this). Now, the world is better so I can speak like this but back then I couldn ’t even mention it. Back then, wasn ’t it a military world? So I didn ’t speak because I thought I could not talk about it, and could not talk of the NGL... ”(Hwang Yŏng-sun).

Han P ’il-sŏn, who said she had not spoken to another person about her husband ’s death even once before meeting a researcher, was initially most concerned that“ if I say these things, won ’t someone be upset? ”This can be seen as an expression of the“ caution with words ” that has become a matter of lifelong habit for the bereaved of left-related victims. Pak Aeng-sŏn still maintains her fear of the past“ investigations ”[3] of the military and police who murdered her husband and villagers. Her fear was revealed while discussing specific details in the midst of her interview with a researcher, when she stated“ If you write such things down, what if someone investigates me later, that I said those things? ”Due to the internalization of such self-censorship, most

bereaved had to stay silent and could not but sever a common understanding of the murders with the next generation and their community.

Collective nihilism and the confusion of values

As women were excluded from the public sphere and had to devote themselves to the survival of their family and economic activity[4], they could not know why their family or husbands" had to be taken away, had to die. "Furthermore, they had no opportunity to understand, judge, and examine the suffering they were put through. Because of the situation, the military, police, commies and revolutionaries were all simply objects of fear, and they did not even know what a commie or the NGL was.

> " I didn t know then... at the time. At the time, I didn t know what the NGL was... There was no TV, no radio, and no reports... I only graduated from elementary school, you see. If I had a

3. In the mountain village of Kurye during the repression of the Yŏsun incident, soldiers came to the village in mountain villager clothing and investigated villagers to capture reactionary guerrilla. Pak Aeng-sŏn states while shaking her head that" (How did they investigate?) They investigated with their military authority. They came dressed like commies and asked questions. It s hard to talk about. I still can t talk about it. To catch each other. (So what did they do if you said something improper by accident?) They would take you away and kill you or interrogate you. They took away innocent people. "
4. Unlike men, who could be active in the public sphere and come in contact with political issues, women survivors had neither such opportunity nor chances to meet with others due to the patriarchal attitude that outside matters were the territory of men s work. Women s sphere of influence was mostly limited to the household, and contact with the outside world was limited to visits to parents or to the textile factory. In particular, if they were taking care of their in-laws, they could not go to the textile factory, and visits back home were not allowed until after a few years of marriage." I used to sew silk at night. I don t know if [my husband] had leftist tendencies or not. I don t know what he did. It s not as if I talked with my husband. At night, I slept. During the day, I worked. Back then there was so much work. All I did was work all day " (Yi Myŏng-sun)." At that time, women didn t go outside much and worked all day at home and couldn t know everything going on inside either. Now, you can go out and go shopping and the like but back then, you couldn t even go shopping and all we did was our work and weaving " (Han P il-sŏn)." They never allowed women to even go for a walk outside. We were kept at home, ate at home... how could you know anything? (...) Even if the police came, they just talked with the men outside and left. It was not a time when wives could speak out and such. So I don t know "(Im Sun-ye, Pak Aeng-sŏn).

> chance to see reports then, if I had learned something then, like now... then I wouldn ̓t have lived like this... with regrets... it was like that then ”(Yang Yŏng-hŭi).

For bereaved women of left-related victims, the anti-communist ideology that has been internalized in their postwar lives is a direct medium, along with the keyword“ commie, ”for their hellish experience during the war. Interviewees, in particular for those who lived in the remote mountainous regions with no sons to take care of them, still maintain the belief system they had 50 years ago when their husbands were murdered, with an undeveloped, childlike view of the world. Han P ̓il-sŏn still thinks of the Yŏsun incident as a“ rebellion ”as described by the Rhee Syngman regime, and maintains an unchanged notion of the term“ commie ”that was used to justify the vicious repression of the time.

> “ There were the commies back then. Commies that used to roam the mountains at night. We called mountain people commies. Mountain people were commies and reactionaries. That ̓s what the soldiers called them. Back then, when soldiers were swarming all over the place and saying the commies have come, we thought, oh that must be right ”(Han P ̓il-sŏn).

Human history can be described as the inheritance process of memories, which is accompanied by yet another conflictual process. Furthermore, an individual ̓s true character is not simply a fixed essence as determined by society, but a continuously formulated societal process involving the mutual interaction of social factors and individual subjectivity. However, those such as Han P ̓il-sŏn and Hwang Yŏng-sun, who had no children and had to live out their lives in solitude, cannot relay their memories to their posterity, and instead must maintain silence due to societal repression of their memories; and as time passed their individual character had no opportunity to be changed through social relationships. For them, as discussing the death of commies was taboo, they lived from hand to mouth for 50 years with no one to talk to or listen to about the murders. For this reason, the

memory of their murdered family had become internalized as something that cannot and should not be talked about, as if their thinking process and memory was frozen 50 years ago, unchanged from after the experience of the" murder. "

Even if the development of their thought process was not frozen as with Han P ĭl-sŏn and Hwang Yŏng-sun, people living in the context of the direct violent killings of wartime (and more murders from subsequent reprisals) decided to forfeit their subjective thought process that determined their belief system in place for" anti-communism "as constructed by the state. Thus, while people do not know why the Yŏsun incident or Korean War occurred, reactionaries are commies, and commies are " gangs of North Koreans, "and thus they are immediately equated with those who threaten societal safety, such as spies.

During the war, anyone labeled as a commie were arrested and murdered along with their friends and family. Furthermore, under the suspicion of" commie sympathizer, "entire villages were killed (including women and children) and burned to the ground. In this situation, it was not a choice of which belief system to select, but to accept the sole path of survival, which was" anti-communism. "

As described previously, after the war ended, the bereaved of left-related victims were societally ostracized through the guilt-by-association system and the like, and had no choice but self-censorship in order to survive in a society of routinized and internalized anti-communist ideology. The bereaved, who could not outwardly express their vexation, could only live with a *han* (deep sense of injustice) in their hearts that could not be erased by the silence in their social relationships.

Furthermore, bereaved women of left-related victims, whose entire social spheres were limited to their own personal spheres, hold back any value judgments regarding the" killings, "and lived" as if being punished, "while" not thinking or anything and just raising the children. "Thus, female interviewees generally blame the killings on being born at a bad time or on their own predestined destiny. The murders of parents, siblings, husbands are all due to their own fates and they were born" at a bad age. "And as Pak T åe-hŭi states," only we feel a sense of injustice..., "meaning that only the dead and the surviving who live a life of suffering feel a sense of injustice. This reflects an internalized sense of nihilism about the reality" which can ť be spoken of, "and the

fact there is no one“ who would understand even if told. ”

> “ In the past, we couldn ̓t even mention those who died there [people who were taken away to the NGL]... although there was some talk of those who died in the military ”(Yi Myŏng-sun).
> “ If during war, if you die from getting shot by our forces, uh, if you are shot by our forces you are a commie, and if you get shot by the enemy forces you ̓re the bereaved. But this [NGL] is our force being shot by guns from our forces. There ̓s no way out ” (An Chŏng-min).

While victims from the same war,“ if you get shot by enemy forces, ” you can receive state assistance as a socially honorable bereaved family, but“ if you get shot by our forces, ”that person ̓s death, needless to say why, is that of a commie and is socially downgraded to be responsible for the war. This is why the bereaved feel there is“ no way ”out. Generally speaking, no matter how unjust the death or suffering, only once it is consoled can there be stability for the dead soul and the surviving living. However, in our society, not only has there been a complete absence of consolation or vindication on a societal or individual level, but also those who have attempted truth finding have been taken away to pay a price. The bereaved families who are witness to this have, as a consequence, an even deeper sense of emptiness and powerlessness.

> “ It ̓s almost time for me to die, why would I blow the whistle? Those who died are dead, those who are alive should just live meekly. Of course I feel indignant and wronged. There ̓s no justice. Even if there were people who wanted to find the truth, where would they report this truth when not even the heaven and earth know that people like us exist. ... You have to be smart to reveal the truth (...) I don ̓t have any power because I have no son, and I ̓m not young either ”(Yi Myŏng-sun).

Interviewees said that“ those who are successful and talented, ” remain quiet for their own interest, and that they themselves do not have the“ words ”to express themselves due to their poor education,

and because they are old, weak, and have no wealth to speak of,“ feel a sense of injustice but have nothing to do. ”And as up to the present, for the nation or those“ who are successful in the government and are talented ”will not“ restore, as their situation gets bad if they explain the situation. ”This leads to the prevalence of a sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness which precludes any hope placed on truth finding or honor restoration efforts. Thus, interviewees have a sense of collective nihilism as well as a strong mistrust of political authorities, expressed in the following:“ What bastards among them are not thieves? They ŕe all the same. ”

> “ From then on [since the death of my grandfather] it ś always been the same. So sometimes I get short of breath, have a hard time breathing, and my heart beats fast. But I just eat it up inside. Where would I say this? No one is listening. I just eat it up inside and that ś it. Who would sympathize? Who would pay attention? Of course I go to the hospital. But it ś no use. My shortness of breath doesn ť get fixed with medicine or anything so I just leave it be ”(Han P ĺl-sŏn).

Thus, everything is borne by the individual, who suffers alone and “ eats the pain inside. ”

The violence of anti-communist ideology done to bereaved women of left-related victims is not only limited to collective nihilism but also causes a distortion of their memories due to their efforts to come to terms with societally created memories as defined by the state. Until Yi Chŏng-sŏn saw an article in the newspaper in 1993 about the Kŭmjŏnggul civilian massacre, she believed that her mother ś death was caused by the People ś Liberation Army despite the fact that the killer still lived in her hometown and although there were many witnesses.

> “ There was no way to know. Since they said the People ś Liberation Army killed a lot of people, I thought the People ś Liberation Army dragged her away and killed her. Everyone said the People ś Liberation Army did many bad things. But actually, the police did all the killing and blamed the People ś Liberation

Army. That's how I understood it"(Yi Chŏng-sŏn).

Although Yi Chŏng-sŏn states "There was no way to know," she knew at the time that her mother was imprisoned, dragged away somewhere and killed. However, instead of what she knew, she accepted the societally constructed and distorted memory in a society pervaded by anti-communist ideology. She had adapted her memory to the ideology of the state, believing the killing was by the "People's Liberation Army."

The bereaved had their memories suppressed societally and maintained their silence in the long term, and in order to put to rest their internal suffering and conflict, fully accepted anti-communist ideology in order to decide to remain silent and forget. As their silence continued over many years, their memories became foggy, and the problem of "massacre" could be not publicly exposed as it continued to be a socially taboo issue. As the bereaved accepted the value systems as created by the state rather than based on the reality of their experiences, they suffered a confusion of their value systems.

Survival in the "refugee society," meant that during the day one had to obey the commands of the police and the military, while at night one had to obey the People's Liberation Army. This is reflected in the following statement that: "at night the commies flex their muscles and during the day South Korea flexes their muscles. You can't really say anything. If you say something wrong, you might get caught and dragged away by one side and killed." In this process, bereaved women of left-related victims learned through experience the wisdom of "being careful of what you say" and adopted an attitude of "only following what the government requests." As much as these women had to "jump if [the state] says jump," the "state" was a menacing and omnipotent presence that could not be challenged for women who had been excluded from the public sphere. On the other hand, male bereaved became accustomed to an attitude of intimacy with the government.

> "Back then, if my father had been generous to the government officials instead of only caring about money, he would not have died that way. When my father was taken away, and my grand-

> mother went to the town chief ʼs eldest grandson to beg for my father ʼs life, the police chief said it was too late. So now, among the people I know there are a lot of police. Especially officers. I can ʼt be too distant to them. For awhile I earned good money and had some leeway in my life. I even thought of being the town chief and was active for awhile ”(An Chŏ-min).

With regard to the massacre problem, this is how the bereaved institutionalized the memory of“ massacre, ”and consistent with an internalized understanding of anti-communist ideology, both men and women alike consented with the military state through their conduct of silence. Ordinary citizens also consented with the military state through their silence and onlooker attitude, partly driven by individual principle and partly driven by ulterior motives.

In answer to the question of when the best periods of their lives were, interviewees all answer that“ I never knew when I had fun or when my life was good, ”or“ I never thought that way. Not once. ”In such ways, the experiences with“ massacre ”and resulting violences of various sorts continue to dominate the lives of bereaved women through their continuing regret and the sound of silence.

Conclusion

With the June 1987 struggle for democracy, realization of Korean democratization, and expansion of civil society, the movement for human rights and peace became active and discussion of civilian massacres once again was brought to the fore. The resurrection of problems about historical truths that no one had imagined to be true began to spill out to all of society. Associations for the bereaved were formed in all regions of the nation and related human rights associations were also formed.

The bereaved are demanding truth finding and restoration of honor. No one has taken responsibility or answered the questions of who, for what reason, how many, and the when and where regarding the murders. The only“ facts ”are that they died in some valley or in front of some ocean. There is only the dead individual, without any idea of the

murderer or the reason for the murder. Thus, even today the victims' families are most frustrated about the reason for "death." At the very least, they would like the government to get involved in shedding light on the death of their husbands and families and to recover their remains.

Special laws have been passed with regards to the Kŏch'ang incident (1996) and the Cheju April 3rd Incident (2000). In 1999 the AP reported on the Nogŭn-ri incident through secretly hidden documents and U.S. soldier's testimony during their intervention in the Korean War. In January 2000 U.S. President Bill Clinton expressed regret about civilian casualties and a joint U.S.-Korean investigation was instituted. However, through the investigation reports, the U.S. revealed that if incidents occurred inevitably and accidentally without the intervention of the joint command, blame should not be placed on front-line U.S. soldiers

In 2003, the Korean government acknowledged and apologized for the Cheju April 3rd incident for the first time in 55 years. However, within Korean society, the scars of war still have not been treated. Some newspapers continue to carry ads that still claim that the Cheju April 3rd incident and the Yŏsun incident were subversive conspiracies against the nation orchestrated by the commies, and the U.S. and other organizations that need to bear responsibility have tended to avoid blame.

Even with reference to the Korean case, it is evident that truth finding of civilian murders caused by state power during war is not an easy task. In a situation where "truth" is repressed, it may be unsurprising that the hardships faced by victimized women have not been exposed.

Bereaved women of left-related victims, who have been victimized by the explicit violence of war and murder, have also suffered multiple injustices and injuries such as prejudice and repression under a situation intertwined with other forms of violence such as Korean society's patriarchy and patriarchal ideology, anti-communist ideology, and militarism.

New governments will be formed in currently warring Iraq and postwar Afghanistan. It cannot be said for certain whether these two countries will be able to form a democratic government and a government for women. However, it is possible to expect that as in the experi-

ence of bereaved women of left-related victims during the Korean War, there will be a variety of institutional and cultural violence leveled against women even after war and its massacres. There is no such thing as a clean war. War is explicit violence, and despite the halting of gunfire, this violence gives rise to other forms of violence such as hunger, sickness, prescribed conduct and prejudice. Thus, it is imperative that we approach the subjects of war and violence from a" gendered "perspective.

Lee Ryong-kyong received her M.A. from the Department of NGO Studies at Sungkonghoe University.