

## Guest Editor's Introduction

### New Directions in Korean War Studies: In Memory of Ordinary Life

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A new trend in the post-Cold War era after the middle of 1990s is multi-archival research made possible by easier access to Soviet archives and Chinese documents. The debate on revisionism and traditionalism was revitalized within academic circles through this post-revisional multi-archival method. To cleanse past wounds and to meet a cleaner future, oral history is also very important.

A new tendency of Korean War studies in the 2000s is to deal with Korean people's ordinary lives during the war which had been embroiled in ideological conflict. Orthodox histories of two separate governments depend only on documents that exclude the victims' memories. Common people's experiences in the provinces were different from top-level politicians in central government. Ordinary people's lives at the local level, which were suppressed in the Cold War era, have recently been revealed in interviews. Their counter-memories will be new sources for alternative history in integrating and reconciling old left-right confrontations. Thus, collecting interviews is the foundation of oral history archives.

Keywords: The Korean War, oral history, oral history archives, memory, local history

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## Introduction

The year 2006 is the 61<sup>st</sup> year of Korean liberation from Japanese colonization.

*The Review of Korean Studies* Volume 9 Number 2 (June 2006) : 5-32

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Fifty-six years have passed since Korean War. It is now 101 years after the Treaty of 1905 and 41 years after normalization of diplomatic relations between Korean and Japan. Now, it is time to reflect on the past history of invasions and division by outsiders and to accomplish the future task of reunification. In order to realize reunification, the reflection on the Korean War should be realized first. A new trend of Korean War studies does not follow traditional approaches of political/war historical analyses but focuses on common people's experience of the War. And more studies or examinations on this new approach are required.

The voices of people who had to go through the Korean War period were largely ignored in academic circles although the Korean War is the most tragic experience of Korean modern history. It is true that most research on the Korean War have been limited to more political issues such as fact-finding investigation. However a war is not a dry document but a living history and memory that people had get through and still suffer in their daily lives. More than a half century has passed since the Korean War but people still keep various memories of it though they have not had any chance to express their experiences or emotions because of ideological issues. By studying the neglected who could not speak out, blocked by a divided country and polarized Cold War regime after the Korean War, it will be possible to acquire the whole perception of the Korean War, get over confrontation and war, and move toward to reconciliation and co-development.

It is required to listen and get records of ordinary people's personal memories through interviews in order to reveal memories of those who could not produce any written documents and to transfer their personal memories into historical memory.

### **From Center to Local: A Social Historical Approach, and War Studies of Massacres, Sufferings, Human Rights, and the History of the Past**

At present, one of the most important issues of the Korean War is of course "the sufferings" of those who got through and managed to survive during the war themselves. With the beginning of post-cold war period, studies on people's sufferings have been explored though they had been ignored, or even bringing the issue up had been taboo for a long time. Also, to cleanse stained history has emerged as a contemporary agenda so these studies have attracted more acade-

mic interest.

In early and mid-1990s, a political and social history approach was used to research this issue. For example, a book titled *Gwangju jeonnam hyeondaesa 2* (Contemporary History of Gwangju, Jeollanam-do, 1991) brought out interviews and reports of journalists on living memories of the Korean War. The main idea and aim of this book was to argue that “history shall be re-written again and again as a new era comes, just like the lessons from the distinguished contemporary history of Cambridge,” and to contribute to getting over division and realizing reunification. The new trend of democratization and history review has instigated various academic works.

Jung Keun-sik who published a remarkable paper titled “Jangheungeseoui jeongchitujaeng” (Political Struggle in Jangheung), in *Yeoksawa hyeonjang* (History and the Scene of History) in 1990 developed his analysis further and presented “Hangukjeonjaenggwa jibangsahoeui galdeung” (Korean War and Conflict in Local Communities) in *Hangukjeonjaenggwa hanguksahoe byeondong* (The Korean War and Changes in Korean Society, 1992). He tracked various cases like Jangheung, Yeosu-Suncheon, and so on based on written documents and tried to analyze them as political conflicts. Then he moved to researching lower level cases like villages. Later, Jung Keun-sik issued his oral history collections in the paper, “Hangukjeonjaeng gyeongheomgwa gongdongchejeok gieok: Yeongam gurimgwoneul jungsimeuro” (Korean War Experience and Communal Memory in Youngam Gurim Village, 2002). This was a work that succeeded his earlier research, “Jiyeoksahoeui janggi gujosau gusang” (The New Conception of Long-Structural History of Local Community) in 2001. He interviewed different oral history speakers several times in May and June of 2000 and February and July of 2001 and he interviewed and studied important figures repeatedly. Besides this, he referred to unpublished reminiscences of Gurim village people. According to his research, scars of the Korean War in Gurim village residents were very deep and diverse. First of all, the normal generation reproduction of residents had been disturbed. One villager reviewed that almost every young men was lost. Secondly, though the village community remained, it became a just medium that makes all the residents “citizens” of a divided country. It resulted in the system where most residents reluctantly and passively followed state power for a while. Gurim villagers were very cynical about national policies but officially followed them so that they would not lose favor with state power. Thirdly, experiences of hostility or conflicts among residents were deeply internalized while in their ordinary lives

they were not easily perceived. The critical moment that anti-communist ideology acquired actual power was the Korean War, but regards to the internalization of anti-communism, war experiences were not the same to all. Those who stood at the side of the right-wingers still use right-wing terms in spite of communal reconciliation. Common people consistently suffered under the suspicion of treachery. The feeling of being victimized and regarded as leftists, though they were not, was generalized. So those who were worried whether they would be under suspicion of being leftists because their careers would be affected tried very hard to cleanse their past by making themselves or their children find ways into fields where the system of guilt-by-association was less powerful. For example, going to church after the War provided a very important guaranteed shelter for their ideology.

Also, Jeong Jin-sang links the abolition of the status system and class distinction with the Korean War in his 1994 thesis, “Hangukjeonjaenggwa gyegeupgujo byeondong: Gyeongnam Jinyang-gun du maeul sarye yeongu” (Korean War and Change in Class Structure: Case Study of Two Villages in Jinyang-gun, Gyeongnam).<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the social history field, the literature field debate on village community has been very active. The prose collection of a novelist, Song Gisu, in 2005 is remarkable as retrospective essays about the historicity of a village community and changes caused by the experiences of colonization and war.

From the end of the 1990s, starting from the Nogun-li massacre, the Geochang<sup>2</sup> and Hampyeong massacres (Kim Yeong-taek 2001) came into the spotlight and social attention on “civilian massacre” increased (Heo Man-ho

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1. In a succeeding paper, “Hangukjeonjaenggwa jeongeundaejeok gyegeup gwangyeui haeche” (The Korean War and Abolition of Pre-Modern Class Distinction, 2000), Jeong Jin-sang suggested that Korean War provided a chance for semi-feudalistic landlord-tenant relations and status system to collapse decisively. He also wrote “Haebangjikhu sahoesinbunje yujeui haeche: Gyeongnam Jinyang-gun du maeul sarye yeongu” (Abolition of the Old Social Status System just after Liberation: Case Study of Two Villages in Gyeongnam Jinyang-gun, Park Jae-hong et al. 2000).
  2. Park Myung-lim earlier issued a paper titled “Jibangeseoui hangukjeonjaeng (1): Chungbuk, 1945-53” (The Korean War in the Province 1: Chungbuk, 1945-53, 1997a) and also wrote other papers like “Gungmin hyeongseongwa naejeok pyeongjeong: Geochang sakkeonui sarye yeongu” (National Citizen Foundation and Internal Equability: Case Study on the Geochang Massacre, 2002a), “Jeonjaeng, jeongchi, geurigo jinsil: Geochang sakkeonui chunggyeok, yeonghyang, uimi seoseol” (War, Politics, and the Truth: Their Impact, Influence, Introduction of Meaning, 2002b).

2000; Kim Yeong-beom 2001; National Fact-Finding Committee for Civilian Massacre before and after the Korean War 2005). Associated Press documents' revelations on the US troops' civilian massacre in Nogun-li, Yeongdong-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do together with Pang Sunjoo's documents brought about social interest on the War system and human rights issues (Choe Byeong-su and Jeong Gu-do 1999: 245-83; Pang Sunjoo 2000; Choe Sang-hun et al. 2003; Jeong Gu-do 2003). In addition to this, Park Chan-seung issued a paper, "Hangukjeonjaenggwa Jindo dongjok maeul Sedeung-liui bigeuk" (The Korean War and the Tragedy of a Homogenous Village, Sedeung-li in Jindo, 2000). He criticized class-centered Korean War studies and analyzed that the main cause of the massacre in Sedeung-li was conflict and confrontation between relatives and families of the village.

Kim Dong-chun had watched common people's daily lives in the Korean War period closely and raised human rights issues in the paper "Hangugui inkkwon hyeonsilgwa inkkwonui sahoehak" (Status of Human Rights in Korea and Sociology of Human Rights), which were represented in a critical sociology symposium organized by the association of Korean researchers on industrial society on October 9, 1999. In 2000 he also published a book titled *Jeonjaenggwa sahoe: Uriegye hangukjeonjaengeun mueosieonna?* (War and Society: What Did the Korean War Mean to Us?). Main agendas of the book are refuge-occupation-civilian massacres and the author scrutinized the issue of civilian massacre in chapter 4 (p. 195-286) of the book. He even wrote, "I present this book to nameless innocent spirits of both North and South Korea who disappeared without realizing why they had to die during the Korean War." In other words, differently from existing studies he tried to explain what war left to common people and what impact war has on current Korean society. He reorganized state activities based on statements of soldiers, policemen, and generals etc. To take a view of occupation and massacre issues, he studied US documents, exploration reportage of the media, survivors' association-issued documents, and he performed field research including interviews with survivors and the bereaved. Meanwhile, Kim Dong-chun raised questions about the analysis that a war is the matter of national states and insisted that from his research on personal war experience he found out that a national state is not a very important category (Kim Dong-chun 2003: 198-200).

About the same time, the social historical approach on the Korean War was introduced.<sup>3</sup> "Hangukjeonjaengui sahoesareul wihayeo" (For Social History of the Korean War, 2000) by Jeon Sang-in is a good example.<sup>4</sup>

## **From Politics to Everyday Lives: An Oral Historical-Anthropological Approach, and from Document to Oral History, from Center to Local**

One could raise a question that the social historical approach can not be totally independent from political discourse. That is, discussions on actual war experiences of common people who went through the Korean War, not in political slogans but in their daily lives, could be ignored. It is not too much to say that existing political historical and critical views were under the influence of “people’s history” in the 1980s. However, as most socialist states collapsed at the end of the 1980s, the debate on whether people’s historical science was still valid arose (Kim Seong-bo 1991: 49). Besides this, post-modern historical science from the West was introduced into the field of Korean history, which resulted in increased interest in the others (common people, women, minorities, and so on) that had been excluded from modernist historical science.<sup>5</sup> Yoon Hae-dong tried to reconceptualize “people” and get over the limits of existing people’s history studies with a social historical approach (Yoon Hae-dong 1999: 386-8). Lee Yong-ki paid attention to the internal diversity and dynamics of people and proposed “social history” as people-oriented “history from the bottom up.” It is not only different from “history from the top down” that understands history from the angle of rulers or elites but is also distinguished from “history of the bottom” that only emphasizes people’s resistance and identity and ignores the fact that rule and resistance engage into each other. Social history researchers believe social history as “history from the bottom up” goes down to the bottom, the living grounds of the people and there views society from the bottom to the top (Lee Yong-ki 2000: 19-21). Yoon Taek-Lim examines that while people’s history was counter history confronting official history until the 1980s, it could not reflect the personal history of local people or the voices of laborers, farmers or

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3. Korean War studies in the sociology field have been integrated since the early 1990s (Korean Sociological Association 1992).
  4. This paper was again included in his book of 2001. It is a book review on a diary *Yeoksa apeseo* (In front of History) by Kim Seong-cheol, two novels of Park Wan-seo in 1992 and 1995, and a collection of poems by Ryu Chun-do in 1999.
  5. Yoon Taek-Lim examines that leading figures like Davis, Darnton, White, and LaCapra of post-modern historical science and German research on daily history, historical anthropology, and micro-history lead by Ludtke have influenced the Korean historical science circle from the middle of the 1990s (Yoon Taek-Lim 1995; Yoon Taek-Lim 2003: 105).

women because its discourse was as uniform as official history in structure (Yoon Taek-Lim 2003: 80). Therefore, she suggested new history writing based on oral history of the neglected. She tried to reorganize life history and family history using not only oral history but also field research, in-depth interviews and so on and recognized folk material as historical documents and collected them (Yoon Taek-Lim 2003: 118). Also, she insisted that research on local identity should be done by seeking for local specialty and individuality from historical experiences of local residents through local history as total history, and not as national history localized (Yoon Taek-Lim 2003: 117).

Anthropologists Kim Gyeong-hak, Park Jeong-seok, folklorist Pyo In-ju, sociologist Yeom Mi-gyeong, and historian Yoon Jeong-nan, in a cultural study of Honam in Jeonnam University, co-published *Jeonjaenggwa saramdeul: Araerobuteoui hangukjeonjaeng yeongu* (Korean War, Community, and Residents' Experiences, 2003) and *Jeonjaenggwa gieok: Maeul gongdongcheui saengaesa* (Korean War, Community, and Residents' Memories, 2005). The title of *Korean War, Community, and Residents' Experiences* is Korean War studies from the bottom up because the authors believed existing studies were viewed from the top, and thus, contained political color. In other words, they thought the points of view on the Korean War should be drawn down to individuals. The authors examine that Korean War memories that did not match nationalism or anti-communism after the war had been forgotten and that the people were forced to keep silent on this issue. So, researchers especially interviewed and documented war experiences of those who were punished under the suspicion of being "commies" or of treason and their surviving families. All the research was later compiled into a collection. Here, life history and oral history methodology in the limelight of anthropologists were adopted and experiences and memories of war were brought into the field of academic discussion.<sup>6</sup> The authors of *Korean War, Community, and Residents' Experiences* recognized the fact that viewpoints of lower class people and women were totally omitted from the anti-communism perspective and tried to restore everyday life history of the neglect-

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6. One of the good examples of oral history collections is *Naega gyeokkeun hangukjeonjaenggwa Park Chung Hee jeongbu* (The Korean War and the Park Chung Hee Administration of My Experience) (The Academy of Korean Studies 2004). But this collection is not the story of ordinary people but statements of important figures. There is also a book of war memorandum by Yim Seongyeon and Lee Muho (Yim Seongyeon et al. 2001; Lee Muho 2003). Recently, chronicle-style research books have been published (Choe Yong-ho and Kim Byeong-ryun 2003; Lee Seonkyo, 2003).

ed through an oral history approach. Their research field was mostly centered on the local community in Jeonnam and they sought to examine closely how war experiences have been repeated and reproduced in memories and living spaces of those who went through the Korean War and local society afterwards. The aim of the research was to reveal historical experiences of local residents.

The story of those who had to join the communists under fear of being killed under suspicion of being traitors because they had done compulsory labor under North Korean rule (Park Jeong-seok 2003: 61)<sup>7</sup> and vivid statements about the process how one of the representative Korean upper class families, Haenam Yoon's family, was branded as leftist or Red in confrontations of the right-wing and the left-wing because this family had joined the independent struggle under Japanese colonization and remained in the socialist camp after liberation (Yeom Mi-gyeong 2003: 116)<sup>8</sup> have much more meaning than just documented history records. Park Jeong-seok focused on the collective memory of villagers and Yeom Mi-gyeong did not examine village history but looked over modern and present history through family history.

By studying the oral history of war experience Yoon Hyeong-suk found out that people understand war situations as more traditional social relations than ideology (Yoon Hyeong-suk 2003: 77). It can be regarded as a good example that at least partially breaks down existing fixed ideas of viewing the Korean War only as an ideological conflict. Meanwhile, Pyo In-ju adopted a folklore approach in "Jeonjaeng gyeongheomgwa gongdongche munhwa" (War Experiences and Community Culture).

The authors of *Korean War, Community, and Residents' Memories* expressed their wish in the beginning of the book saying, "We believe it has great meaning in reorganizing local history to collect the life histories of those who experienced the Korean War or were influenced by it to restore omitted past and to dig out

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7. Park Jeong-seok who wrote "Sangiguningwa yugajogui jeonjaenggyeongheom" (War Experiences of Wounded Soldiers and War-Bereaved Families) in this book had earlier published similar papers like "Jeonjaenggwa 'ppalgaengi'e daehan jibdangieok ilgi" (Understanding Communal Memory on War and the Communists, 2002).

8. Yeom Mi-gyeong who wrote "Jeonjaeng yeonguwa gusulsa" (War Studies and Oral History) in this book had earlier produced papers on "Yangbangamunui hangukjeonjaeng gyeongheom: Jeonnam gangjinjiyeokui geundaejeok jibaechungui byeonhwareul jungsimeuro" (Korean War Experiences of the Upper Class: Changes of Modern Rulers in Gangjin, Jeonnam, 2001) and "Jeonjaeng yeonguwa gusulsa: Araerobuteoui hangukjeonjaeng yeongureul wihan saeroun bangbeomnon" (War Studies and Oral History: A New Methodology to Study the Korean War from Bottom Up, 2001b).

vivid historical documents” and “we wish this book could be an opportunity to restore the vivid lives of the common people concealed by macro-discourse of it.” If the book of 2003 is said to present general outlines, the book of 2005 is more particular in examining detailed cases more closely. Interactions of researchers’ specialized field studies and local residents’ oral statements restored what happened during the Korean War, what memories people have and how these memories changed their lives. This book is composed of three parts including local residents, marginalized men, war of the living and the dead and of nine papers such as “Hangukjeonjaeng hisaengjadeurui jugeumcheori bangsikkwa uimihwa gwajeong” (The Process of Dealing with, and the Signification of, the Dead from the Korean War).

They reviewed the subjective and vivid memory of violence and massacres in Jeonnam province such as Yeonggwang, Gangjin, and Yeongam where many were killed by local left-wingers including the case of a Christian massacre around Yeomsan-myeon, Yeonggwang-gun. And they tried to raise this memory to the history level of inter-subjective statement. In a paper, “Hangukjeonjaeng dangsiui jibdanhaksal mit jwaige daehan gieokdeul (Massacres in the Korean War and Memories of the Leftists),” Kim Gyeong-hak shows that reality and nature of collective massacre was not only the matter of ideology but related to various factors like trivial grudges and competition among individuals or families, familism, fear of revenge, how much respect or hearts of the people they had and so on. That is the proof of the importance of one’s way of living in turbulent days.

Narrators awaken war memories of marginal men neglected by national memory but that is why they are more vivid. The oral historical approach could reveal painful memories of the common people like massacres and sufferings of the guilt-by-association system that had been disregarded in official war documents. A lot of people directly/indirectly joined massacres to save themselves and family members or out of a fear of revenge and held their tongues. Sometimes, when people were in danger of their lives because they belonged to the landed class or were charged as right-wingers, they rather joined and became leaders of the left-wingers. Villagers near mountainous areas where the communists were in hiding had to serve two totally different rulers: policemen during the day and burglars during the night. A family of a communist had to accept its fate of stigma or even chose remarriage to get rid of the stigma. In a paper, “Hangukjeonjaengi gidokgyoin haksarui woningwa seongkkyeok” (Cause and Nature of a Christian Massacre in the Korean War), Yoon Jeong-nan discussed

that memory can be constantly reorganized and ruled by the present from revealing the reason why events that never happened were exaggerated and recorded such as the case of the Christian massacre in Yeomsan-myeon, Yeonggwang-gun. Park Jeong-seok examined at what point the memory of marginal men who had to seek refuge from one side to the other not because of ideology but only because of a desire to survive is different from standardized official memory in a paper “Jeonjangui gongganeseo jubyeonineurosseoui jeonjaenggyeongheom” (War Experiences of “Marginal Men” in Battle Fields). In “Yeoseongui jeonjaenggieokkwa saenghwalsegye” (Women’s War Memory and Life) Yeom Mi-gyeong collected various oral life histories of women in a left-wing village in Gangjin, Jeonnam and this study shows a woman’s identity is built up by region, class, education, gender ideology, personal character, and different life experience. Park Jeong-seok described social pain and the life of a bereaved family of those who were killed by police and troops in the Yeosun massacre and could not avoid the stigma of being communists because of it in a paper “Yeosun-sakkeone daehan gieok” (Memories of the Yeosun Massacre).

Meanwhile, Lee Yong-ki reorganized villagers’ war experiences at the level of a village through field research and oral history collection in a so-called Red village, Odu-li, in Icheon, Gyeonggi-do and analyzed the nature of state-farmer relations at the level of *myeon* (township), the lowest administrative body. It is another approach of history from the bottom to the present of people’s war experiences suppressed and distorted by state power (Lee Yong-ki 2001: 11-55; Lee Yong-ki 2002: 364-84).<sup>9</sup>

Now, let us review works of Yoon Taek-Lim, a historical anthropologist. One

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9. Lee Yong-ki also wrote methodological analyses like “Gusulsai olbareun jarimaegimeul wihan jeon” (A Proposal for the Righteous Location of Oral History). And the paper “Maeulseoui hangukjeonjaeng gyeongheomgwa geu gieok: Gyeonggi-doui han ‘moseukeuba’ maeul saryereul jungsimeuro” (The Experience and Memories of the Korean War in a “Commie” Village) was presented in a symposium, “What the Korean War Meant to the Common People” organized by the Institute for Korean Historical Studies on November 4, 2000. The program of the symposium was as follows: The war experience of south Korean people; the generality: New approach of Korean War studies; war experience in a village-case study of villages in Gyeonggi-do (Lee Yong-ki, Seoul National University); people’s war perception and the North Korean Volunteer Army (Bae Gyeongsik, the Institute for Korean Historical Studies); war experience of the North Korean people; reactionary ideology and people’s choice--Peace Preservation Corps (Kim Jae-yong, Won Gwang-dae); war casualties and changes in North Korean society (Lee Shincheol, Sungkyunkwan University). You can download them from <http://blog.naver.com/stupa84?Redirect=Log&logNo=100019217563>. The papers mentioned above were published in the sixth edition of *Yeoksamunje yeongu* (Critical Studies on Modern

of the most important works is *Illyuhakjaui gwageo yeohaeng: Han ppalgaengi maeurui yeoksareul chajaseo* (Time-Machine Trip to the Past by an Anthropologist: Seeking for the History of a Red Village, 2003).<sup>10</sup> According to her analysis, historical memory on the Korean War can be divided into the public and the private. Public memory can be seen in official history explanations like text book while private memory from personal experiences has been transmitted individually as a life history or family history. Especially, life history or the family history of left-winger's family was repressed and even taboo. In the book mentioned above, Yoon Taek-Lim reorganized the Korean War in Siyang-li, Yesan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do not by official past made by state or elites but by private memory and she revealed the historicity of private memory (Yoon Taek-Lim 2003).

Yoon Taek-Lim insisted that private emotions like individual political disputes among villagers created masks of ideology during the Korean War and that caused the extreme confrontation of killing one another. She suggested that ideology did not bring political confrontation but already existing personal antipathy (political separation) could become an ideological mask, giving an example case that if one villager was proven to be a communist, other villagers who had antipathy to him or her adopted a right-wing platform (Yoon Taek-Lim 2003: 171-2).<sup>11</sup>

This means that confrontation among villagers during the Korean War was

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Korean History) in 2001. Meanwhile Park Jin-hong's *Doraon paeja: 6.25 gukgun poro cheheomgi* (The Prodigal Son Returned Home: The Story of a 6.25 War Prisoner, 2001) is a very interesting biography. He volunteered to be a student soldier in 1950 and was captured by the Chinese Army in Deokcheon, Pyeongannam-do in November 1951. After 33 months as a war prisoner of the North Korean Army he returned home in July, 1953. In this book he provides detailed memories of how the North Korean Army treated war prisoners and how the South Korean Army investigated war prisoners in Yongcho-do prison.

10. This book succeeds the research of her 1992 Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota. Back to Korea, in 1997 she issued "Gusulsawa jibangminui yeoksajeok gyeongheom jaehyeon: Chungnam Yesan Siyang-liui Park Hyeong-hossi gusuljeungeoneul jungsimeuro" (Revival of Oral History and Local Residents' Historical Experience: Centering around Oral Statements of Park Hyeongho in Siyang-li, Yesan, Chungnam) (1997: 187-213). Also see "Gieogeseo yeoksaro: Gusulsau ironjeok bangbeomnonjeok jaengeomdeure daehan gochal" (From Memory to History: Study on Various Issues of Oral History Methodological Theory, 1993) and "Yeoksaillyuhakjaui sigageseo bon yeoksahak: Gusulsa yeongureul jungsimeuro" (Historical Science from the Viewpoint of a Historical Anthropologist: Centered around Oral History Study, 2001) and so on.

11. The determinism of bisectonal relations-set up between class and ideology can be denied from

more like private political disputes than the ideology or class struggles of villagers. In other words, it is insisted that behind ideology and class struggle slogans there were private antipathy, disputes between families, and discord between local political power groups and in practice these personal conflicts were more substantial. It could be assumed the individual/emotional hegemony struggle under the mask of ideology must have been fiercer than ideological the struggle (Yonhap News, July 4, 2003).<sup>12</sup> North Korean troops did not know local situations very well and the very party who brought massacre and fear was not the soldiers but local residents. Until now, we have wrongly understood that outsiders like soldiers, police, and youth groups were the main focus of massacres. Villagers also stated that every bright or intelligent person was killed because all were communists. The reason why the dispute in Siyang-li was not a class struggle is that most local left-wing leaders were rich and well-educated intelligentsia. Of course, in the lower level, members of the South Korean Worker's Party, the percentage of the poor was very high. Also, there were survivors who crossed the ideological line of the right and the left often and most of them were on a high moral plane. Yoon Taek-Lim concluded social justice shared with local residents in the context of local governance was located beyond the line of the right and the left, crossing the line frequently. Therefore, division of the right and the left was very fluid and hardly detectable at the local level.<sup>13</sup> Also, even inside a small rural village like Siyang-li, the situation of Gamgol and Bamgol was very different and it shows that experiences of a historical event, the Korean War, were not same. That is why she suggested examining local history in the context of social position, not of the right and the left division. Her research

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the case of people who were very rich but chose to be leftist because of ideological reasons after education (Yoo Chankil and Kim Yeongchan) and the opposite case of people who stood for the right-wing because of personal antipathy to rich communists while most poor people were left-wing (Kang Huichin, a farm servant of Yoo Chankil).

12. [http://news.naver.com/news/read.php?mode=LSD&office\\_id=001&article\\_id=0000404880&section\\_id=103&menu\\_id=103](http://news.naver.com/news/read.php?mode=LSD&office_id=001&article_id=0000404880&section_id=103&menu_id=103).
13. However, confrontation between the right and the left in central governance was relatively clear and it actually caused Korean War. So, we need to separate local situations from the center. And even behind central ideological confrontation, various power struggle factors like discord between different families and regions etc interacted and there were some cases not divided into two sections. So, there remained many who did not belong to the right or the left. But through the war people were forced to choose only one, the North or the South, and to be divided. It was about the same at the local level that the war deepened polarization so in the conclusion, there could be some similarities in central and local situations thus there is no need to separate local situations from center in all aspects.

makes it possible to revise standardized and polarized social discourse composed by anti-communism ideology of the Cold War and a divided country and to acknowledge the diversity of social discourse and to achieve alternative historical understanding. For the people of Siyang-li, how to remember and speak out about their war experiences is more important than historical records of the war. Oral statements from their own memories could be the very truth of history for them. Her paper kept this critical mind. Yoon Taek-Lim paid attention to the politics of memory established differently from the various social positions of villagers. In this point, her approach focusing on memory and various political issues is different from Park Jeong-seok's approach focusing on collective memory of villagers. While Lee Yong-ki paid interest in the process and way of national perception in building up in a village, Yoon Taek-Lim closely examined the diversity of discourse.

“Jeongchakchon wollaminui saenghwalgyeongheomgwa jeongcheseong: Sokcho ‘abaimaoul’gwa Gimje ‘yongjinongwon’ eul jungsimeuro” (The Identities of North Korean Refugees in Resettlement Villages of South Korea) was written by Kim Gwi-Ok in early 1999 as her Ph.D. dissertation for Seoul National University. Then, based on this thesis, she published a book *Wollaminui saenghwalgyeongheomgwa jeongcheseong: Miteurobuteoui wollamin yeongu* (The Life Experiences and Identity of North Korean Refugees: A Bottom-Up Study of North Korean Refugees, 1999b).<sup>14</sup> Formerly she contributed “Hanguk-jeonjaenggwa bukhan sahoejuui geonseol” (The Korean War and the Establishment of Socialism in North Korea, 1992). She revealed the Korean War experiences of common people by means of various interviews in local areas. She carried out field research in two villages of refugees from North Korea and could feel the power and fear of atomic bombs, germ warfare, and anti-communism during the Korean War. She concluded that North Korean refugees were neither commies nor anti-communists (Kim Gwi-Ok 2004). This project shows how she collected oral histories of North Korean refugees vividly. Her pioneering work is believed to contribute to the revitalization of local studies.

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14. She also issued “Araerobuteoui bangong ideologi heomulgi: Jeongchakchon wollaminui gusulsareul jungsimeuro” (Abolishing Anti-Communist Ideology from the Bottom: Centered around the Oral History of North Korean Refugees in Resettlement Villages, 1999c) and “Ireobeorin ddo hanai yeoksa: Hangukjeonjaeng sigi Gangwon-do Yangyang-gun migun-jeong tongchiui banseong” (Another Forgotten History: Review on the US Military Administration in Yangyang-gun, Gangwon-do during the Korean War, 2000).

The works of Yoon Taek-Lim, Yeom Mi-gyeong, Kim Gwi-Ok and so on try to set up experiences and memories as history by delivering voices of agents who were excluded in the existing history narrative centered around structures and macro-events while other oral history studies focused on fact-finding and confirming historical records in the past (Yeom Mi-gyeong 2001b: 35-6).

### **From the strong to the weak: An outlook on the minority**

Here, minority means those who have low or weak social positions like women or children under patriarchal orders, the disabled, the sick, the mixed blood, foreigners, and so on. Until recently, Korean War studies did not pay attention to socially neglected minority issues. Besides, recent studies on this issue have been limited to research on women. Therefore, other minority issues except women remain unexplored fields and future studies are still needed.

It was in the beginning of the 2000s when women's memory on the Korean War became one of the important study themes. One of the pioneering works on this issue was *Jeonjaenggwa yeoseong: Hanguk jeonjaenggwa betunam jeonjaeng sogui yeoseong, gieok, jaehyeon* (War and Women: Women, Memory, and Reappearance in the Korean War and the Vietnam War) by Kim Hyeon-a (2004). She published *Jeonjaengui gieok gieogui jeonjaeng* (Memory of War and War of Memory) in 2002.

Meanwhile, the work of Lee Imha, Yeoseong, *jeonjaengeul neomeo ireoseoda: Hangukjeonjaenggwa jendeo* (Women Overcome the War: Korean War and Gender, 2004) closely examining the social history of Korean women in the 1950s is very remarkable. There are new trials to review the War from the viewpoint of women mostly neglected in existing war studies.<sup>15</sup> Especially, Dr. Lee Imha described how women were forced to be involved in the War: First, some were mobilized as soldiers and joined the Daehan Yeoja Uiyonggun (Female Volunteer Army of Korea), then they had to nurse wounded soldiers, and finally to serve as comfort women while others worked to fulfill the absence of men in the rear. She also contributed a paper to the project.<sup>16</sup>

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15. See articles by Kim Seongrye (2004), and Jo Okra and Jeong Jiyeong (2004) in order to learn women's oral history methodology.

16. Her Ph.D. dissertation in historical science, Sungkyunkwan University in 2003 was "1950nyeondae yeoseongui samgwa sahoejeok damron" (Korean women's life and social dis-

## From Ideology to Mankind: Literature and Memory in the the Post-Cold War Era

War literature provides good documentary resources because it contains war memories even though it is partially fiction.<sup>17</sup> The main current of war literature right after the Korean War was moral-textbook style anti-communist literature to accuse North Korea of having an aggressive nature. At that time, literature could not be freed from ideology.<sup>18</sup> After the 1970s, humanist aspects to examine the death of the human being more fundamentally could be seen and after the middle of 1980s, literature reviewing tabooed themes like massacres, individual war experiences, and so on from the viewpoint of beyond-ideology began to emerge. In other words, while in the 1950s under anti-communist ideology, ruins and scars or the violence of war were mainly focused upon rather than the nature of war, in the 1960s the tragic meaning of war under the then situations of censorship and military regime was subjected and introspected and in the 1970s some of the forgotten history was restored after questioning the absence of fatherhood. And after the 1980s, anti-communist nationalism declined and recently, the forgotten memory of individuals was reactivated and adopted as an aspect of the War picture.

The authors of war novels, according to their age during the War, could be divided into three categories; The first are those who lead and experienced the War themselves as adults, the second is those who grew up through the War period as youths, and the third is those who indirectly experienced the War through other people's memories. It would be meaningful to review Yoo Imha's allegation briefly, who reviews changes of Korean War literature from right after the War to today according to this generation classification. Yoo Imha, who received his Ph. D in Korean literature with a paper "Hyeondae hanguksoseorui bundaninsik yeongu" (A Study on the Division Consciousness in Korean

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course in the 1950s).

17. For preceding research on Korean War literature, see "Korean War and Korean consciousness: An anthology of Korean War literature with critique" (Mick Lee Fowler; Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Colorado University, 1974). Recently published books on this theme are *1950nyeon-dae hangukjeonjaeng jeonhu soseolyeongu* (Novel study before and after the Korean War in 1950s) (Seoul: Bookpolio, 2004) and *Hangukjeonjaenggwa si* (Korean War and poems) (Seoul: Cheongdonggeoul, 2003) etc.

18. To learn an early stage, see "6.25 jeonjaengmunhak" (6.25 War Literature) by Donga Ilbosa (1989).

Contemporary Fiction) in 1997, published *Gieogui simyeon: Hanguk soseolgwa bundanui hyeonsanghak* (An Abyss of Memory: Phenomenology of Korean Novels and Division) in 2002. In this project he divides and compares various war memories in novel literature into ones of the Cold War era and others of the post-Cold War era in his paper, “Bonginui pullim, eogapdanghan gieogui gwihwan: Talnaengjeon ihu hangukseore natanan jeonjaenggieogui saeroun yangsang” (Breaking the Seal and the Return of Suppressed Memories: New Aspects of Korean War Memory in Korean Novels after Post-Cold War Era).

During the Cold War era, public memory on the Korean War operated as suppressive knowledge to make people passive citizens who just followed special power groups under political influence. However, sealed war memories of individuals who were forced to keep silent could not be collected as public memory and therefore could not be listed in official history in the Cold War era. The war memory of these individuals that could not break in museum exhibitions or monuments for the War dead had no chance to be listed in written documents of a divided country’s historical narration until the 1970s. But after the 1980s historical narration of war memory in Korean novels was activated, penetrating into the cracks of public memory of the state. It was *Taebaek sanmaek* (Taebaek Mountain Range) by Jo Jeongrae that created the turning point. Also, in the wave of the post-Cold War era, *Sonnim* (Guests) by Hwang Seokyeong, led wrongly victimized spirits to heaven and peace defining ideological confrontation as vain. Besides this, war memory narrations in the novels of Park Wan-seo and *Chimmugeuro jieun jib* (House of Silence) by Jo Eun, etc., overthrew and dismantled manly public memory from the viewpoint of women, previously muted and concealed memory finally began to sprout out. In this point, rewriting war memory in literature is said to be on the right track by the end of the post-Cold War era.

In methodological context, there is some war literature that is based on oral history and life history. Some works of the second generation of the left-wing families published after the 1980s rest on the basis of oral history. In these texts, war memory was narrated as individual and familial history or by extension to the voices of various classes rather than the public memory of a state. If oral life history can be said to look for a certain nature and historical principle omnipresent in the contemporary period by collecting numerous individual histories, literature fictionalizes forgotten voices and revives their stories as possible figures and possible events in a certain time. In the context of this, the “return of suppressed voice” through “the viewpoint of a child narrator” or “the viewpoint

from the bottom” can revitalize forgotten or muted private memory that would never be included in national hero-oriented war narrative in state war memory. On the other hand, as the memory of historical spirits was revitalized, a lot of national hero stories and laudable anecdotes of war victory in public memory have declined. Especially, the novel of Jo Eun is worthwhile in regards to describing the “muted memory” of marginal women who never had a chance to speak out. Above all, this novel closely examined what was behind the silence of women who had to get through the Cold War era. The author Jo Eun unsparingly displayed her idiomatic style in “feminine oral life history” using the principles of opening and closing memory. According to Yoo Imha, “oral life history” is the work to build cultural collective memory composed of nameless individuals’ history. In other words, this work could be said to reorganize the actual mentality in contemporary times with the muted memory of individuals regardless of fluent logic or narrative plots of a standardized history of public memory. However, compared with Park Wan-seo’s novels, Jo Eun’s novel is somewhat lacking in elaborate narrative structure so it leaves a rather loose feeling while introspective of her own specific and private experiences like marriage, child rearing, and so on were too much controlled.

### **Conclusion: Complement of the macro-historical approach by the micro-historical approach and the establishment of oral history archives**

Korean War studies could not get over the introductory stage nor professionalized until the early 1980s because of the lack of full-scale and serious academic research. Before the 1970s, ideological restriction interfered with academic research. But, since the Korean contemporary history study boom was created in the 1980s, new study groups majoring in the Korean War have increased. Therefore it could be said that it was a kind of wisdom of age or experience that makes the present academic discussion possible. In 2006, 56 years after the Korean War began, the future of Korean War studies is very bright. As a combination of archives and existing study trends have become the main stream trend, close examination on a new theme has been activated.

Now, Korean War studies can be said to move toward a social/anthropological approach from the political one, toward a micro approach from a macro one, and toward a private level from a collective ideological one.<sup>19</sup> Since 2000, the

historical science circle has showed interest in oral history study as an alternative method to the existing document-oriented one. Yoon Taek-Lim asserted that “document-oriented history can be said to be the history of the ruling class because only they could produce and leave documents” and “as the ruled class has no written documents of their own, history understanding by oral narrative can be a shortcut to understand the common people’s lives.”<sup>20</sup>

Fifty-three years have passed since the Korean War ended, and now the life of the neglected people is being focused on; thus, a peaceful system on the Korean peninsula in the near future can be predicted.

The “oughtness” that the Korean War studies should be centered in Korea can be achieved by closely examining new themes and organizing researchers. Such “oughtness” is spreading of historical consciousness of the subject by establishing the heart of Korean history study on the Korean peninsula without the closed nationalist thoughts which are contradictory to this modern era of globalization. Because the Korean War is still living and breathing urgent history to us, it would decrease to fossilized history if the center of Korean War history study were not located in Korea. On the other hand, if the center of Korean War studies can be set up in Korea, Koreans can let the world learn from our national and personal tragedy to contribute to arranging general solutions to war and its prevention and to peace regime establishment.

Park Myung-lim explained that nationalism/populism in the 1980s could be seen as a challenge against anti-communism under the Cold War regime, and from the beginning of 2000, a new trial to go beyond ideal populism and to reconstruct actual war experiences and memories of the common people has taken place. That is, broader themes like post-colonialism, post-nationalism, oral history, and village community related issues were introduced.<sup>21</sup>

The subject, a war, is for sure a macro and a political one because most wars

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19. Economic historical approach had been adopted early and now takes an important part in Korean War studies with political history. One of the progressive works is *Hangukjeonjaenggwa jabonjuui* (Korean War and Capitalism, 2000) edited by the Institute for Social Science at Gyeongsang University.

20. Quoted from Yonhap News of 4, July, 2003 “Yoon Taek-Lim published *Illyuhakjaui gwageo yeohaeng: Han ppalgaengi maeurui yeoksareul chajaseo* (Time-Machine Trip to the Past by an Anthropologist: Seeking for the History of a Red Village)”[http://news.naver.com/news/read.php?mode=LSD&office\\_id=001&article\\_id=0000404880&section\\_id=103&menu\\_id=103](http://news.naver.com/news/read.php?mode=LSD&office_id=001&article_id=0000404880&section_id=103&menu_id=103); internet search date is February 21, 2006.

21. See Park Myung-lim’s papers of 1997 and 2005.

root from political struggles in essence, though there are some cases that regional conflicts or religious confrontations were inherent. While those who lead the War at the center advocated political slogans, local common people may have confronted one another because of private and emotional antipathy. These individual level issues are covered up in the existing macro approach. Therefore, the new micro approach trend to the theme of war generally reviewed in the macro approach can be seen as a complementary understanding to sublate fierce confrontation between macro history and micro history.<sup>22</sup> While the macro approach in Korean War studies has been the mainstream until now, the micro approach can rediscover/complement the unofficial history of the common people as multiple agents neglected by the mainstream approach. It can also be linked to the approach of *Alltagsgeschichte*<sup>23</sup> as a complementary means to cover the lack of political history and social history.

Existing political analyses are mostly official explanations of the North and South Korean governments' relative and even objective academic analyses that can not overcome the standardized frame largely because they can not be perfectly freed from the winner's position in the Cold War. However, people's experiences can vary by region, class, generation or gender<sup>24</sup> Therefore, research from now on is required to pay attention to the historical experiences of various agents and the diversity of analyses. In so doing, various voices buried by nation-state-society oriented ruling discourse can be revealed and can play a counter narrative role to expose structural repression by reviewing structure through individual lives. It is expected that oral history can represent reality beyond reflection of the past.

I believe the study on the neglected who could not make their voices heard under the polarized Cold War system and the divided country after the Korean War would lead to the whole acknowledgement of the Korean War and to the way of reconciliation and co-development beyond confrontation and war.

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22. Early in the 1950s and 1960s, economists sought for co-existence of macro-economics and micro-economics based on the words of Serge-Christophe Kolm, "All important ones are macro-economic and all essential ones are micro-economic" (Baek Seung-jong 2001: 18).

23. Daily life study is centered around "behaviors and sufferings of those who are classified as the *kleine leute*." See *Alltagsgeschichte* (Lüdtke 2002: 15).

24. Yoon Taek-Lim insisted that every agent can end up with various analyses. See *Time-Machine Trip to the Past by an Anthropologist: Seeking for the History of a Red Village* (Yoon Taek-Lim 2003: 21). But there still remains the question of whether various analyses and attitudes at that time could be possible in polarized situations under war.

Reorganizing work on the Korean War centered around people's experiences based on various research outcomes of post-Cold War era is required to achieve this purpose. Also, in the process, oral history archives can be established (Kim Gwi-Ok et al. 2005: 143-62; Heo Yeongran et al. 2004).<sup>25</sup> To mature oral history study, precise accumulation of oral history studies by raising oral history researchers is required but at the same time there is an urgent need to establish oral history archives so that collected documents are not in dead storage but available to many people. It is necessary to build oral history libraries to provide researchers with various services based on archives accumulated by independent and public budgets while private archives that each researcher accumulated from his or her own academic oral history studies are also important. These oral history libraries may target important figures but the vivid experiences of ordinary people can be collected. Above all, building Korean War oral history archives should be launched immediately because we have to record the stories of those who experienced the Korean War themselves before they all pass away.

This special edition in *The Review of Korean Studies* (published by The Academy of Korean Studies) is an attempt to arouse the movement toward constructing oral history archives. The Institute for Contemporary History at The Academy of Korean Studies publishes collections of oral history.<sup>26</sup> Of course, these publications of documented and written oral history materials are not perfect and are limited to being centered around important figures, but they were worthwhile trials. From now on, by more precise collections of oral history

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25. "Gusulsa yeonguhyeonhwanggwa gusulsa akaibeujeuui guchuk" (Current Situations of Oral History Study and Establishment of Oral History Archives)" in *Gwageochongsan, inkwon geurigo girok: Guknaeoe yeoksagirokmul hyeonhwanggwa yeoksagirogwan geollibbangan mojaik* (Liquidation of the Past, Human Rights and Records: Current Situations of Historical Documents in and out of Korea and the Search of History Museum Establishment) (Kim Gwi-Ok et al. 2005: 143-62); "Kuksapyeonchanwiwonhoe gusuljaryo sujibsaep gaeyo" (Introduction of oral history collection project in National institute of Korean history) in *Hyeonhwanggwa bangbeob, gusul - gusuljaryo - gusulsa* (Current situations and means, oral narrative-oral documents-oral history) (Heo Yeongran et al. 2004)

26. See *Gyeokdongki jisikinui se gaji salmui moseub* (Three aspects of intellectuals' lives in turbulent times) (The Academy of Korean Studies, 1999); *Naega gyeokeun haebanggwa bundan* (Liberation and division that I experienced) (The Academy of Korean Studies, 2001); *Naega gyeokkeun hangukjeonjaenggwa Park Chung Hee jeongbu* (Korean War and Park Chung Hee administration that I experienced) (The Academy of Korean Studies 2004); *Naega gyeokeun minjuwa dokjae* (Democracy and dictatorship that I experienced) (The Academy of Korean Studies 2001); *Naega gyeokeun geongukkwa galdeung* (Founding of a country and conflicts that I experienced) (The Academy of Korean Studies 2004).

materials and concentrated collection of the common people's narratives at the same time through succeeding research and training,<sup>27</sup> oral history archives will be established.

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27. Jeong Hyekyeong, who collected oral history materials in the Institute for Contemporary History at The Academy of Korean Studies, organized the Korean Oral History Society, and in 2005 published an oral history introduction, *Gusulsa: bangbeobkkwa sarye* (Oral history: Methods and cases). This book reflects the early stage of contemporary oral history study.

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