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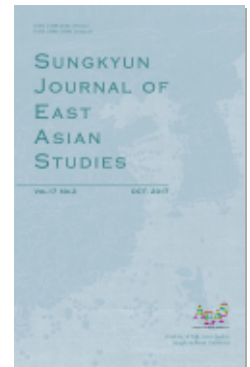
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Hang-seob Bae

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# Popular Movements and Violence in East Asia in the Nineteenth Century: Comparing the Ideological Foundations of their Legitimation

Hang-seob BAE  
*Sungkyunkwan University*

## ABSTRACT

In the nineteenth century, people in China, Korea, and Japan actively participated in popular protests. The rebellions in those countries had much in common, but one of the most striking differences is the degree of violence inflicted by these popular movements on their opponents. Chinese popular rebels were much more likely to kill or injure others than their counterparts in Korea and Japan. Such differences seem to be closely associated with the question of whether the rebel forces fought due to conflicting interests within the polity, or were seeking to build a new kingdom by pursuing a newly-risen religion while rejecting the existing ruling system and ideology that legitimized it. This paper will examine how the rebel forces based the legitimacy of their actions in relation to each country's "political culture." While popular movements in the West or the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom were based on the idea that God was more powerful than the secular ruler, popular movements in Korea or Japan did not have a transcendent source of authority that was superior to the monarch. This paper argues that this made a crucial difference to how people thought and behaved, influencing the degree of violence they employed.

**Keywords:** popular movements, Tonghak Peasant Uprising, Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, Japanese peasants' rebellions (*hyakushō ikki*), political culture, degree of violence

## Introduction

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the three East Asian countries of Korea, China, and Japan, experienced frequent popular movements. In Korea, for example, the elite *yangban*, who had originally led communities, lost their authority, thereby leading to more rampant corruption among local governors and officials. As only a few royal in-law families monopolized power, more people engaged in the trafficking of public posts, leading to increasing corruption, and the ruling system began to crumble. Consequently, popular movements frequently occurred from the 1860s onwards, culminating in the Tonghak Peasant Uprising, a massive popular rebellion that broke out in 1894 and continued for about a year. Meanwhile, China faced a number of serious political, economic, and social problems beginning in the late eighteenth century. Rapid population increase led to land shortages, and people suffered from famine amid a series of natural disasters, such as droughts and flooding. As the number of people swelled, so did the number of those who wished to become government officials; however, as the number of such positions was fixed, aspirants had to engage in fierce competition. Socio-economic hardship

led to risings on various scales throughout the nation, including the White Lotus Rebellion (白蓮教起義, 1796–1804). The attempt to establish the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in the mid-nineteenth century marked the culmination of these people's movements. Japan experienced similar upheavals. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the power of the shogunate and the lords of the *han* (feudal domains, 藩) began to wane and people gradually lost trust in them. When a devastating famine hit the country in the mid-nineteenth century, peasant rebellions and village riots occurred frequently. This revealed the extent of the rulers' incompetence and increased popular disappointment.

The rebellions in China, Korea, and Japan have much in common. For instance, they erupted around the same time mainly due to the corruption of public officials. However, they also differed in some respects, one of the most striking being the degree of violence inflicted on their opponents, particularly on public officials and other elites, and the level of killing or injuring their opponents. Chinese popular rebels engaged in a much greater degree of killing or injuring than their counterparts in Korea and Japan, who are generally seen as less ferocious. These are differences that should not be overlooked.

Such differences seem to be closely associated with the question of whether the rebel forces fought due to conflicting interests within the national polity, or were seeking to establish a new kingdom based on a new religion that rejected the existing ruling system and the ideology that supported it. Accordingly, this paper attempts to examine where the rebel forces based the legitimacy of their actions in relation to each country's "political culture." "Political culture," which is closely linked to the ruling system or ruling ideology, refers to "a tendency demonstrated by a specific community in political discourse and practice that defines the characteristics of an individual's or a group's political activity" (Baker 1987, xii). It not only determines the content of claims in each society, while including the institutional procedures and strategies for formalizing and fulfilling popular claims, but also formulates the binding principles and authority with regard to satisfying or adjusting these claims. As political culture provides a foundation for political concepts or the behavior of both the ruling and the ruled, it also is important for an understanding of the behavior that people exhibited during popular movements.

The objective of this exercise in comparative historiography is to offer deeper and broader insights by adopting the perspective provided by focusing on more than a single nation. By examining the degree of violence in popular movements in nineteenth-century East Asia in relation to each country's political culture, this paper will explore a new direction for research on popular movements.

### **Popular Movements and the Degree of Violence in Nineteenth-Century East Asia**

#### *Korea*

In the nineteenth century, the Kingdom of Chosŏn faced popular rebellions of unprecedented frequency. In this paper, the term "popular rebellions" designates a popular movement involving peasants living in a specific village, staged primarily to protest against the imposition of excessive taxes or officials' corruption related to tax collection. Those who represented the disgruntled residents first gathered to

share their opinions and then held an assembly to collect ideas from more people. Such an assembly was typically convened on a market day when many people had gathered at a marketplace, and a notice would be circulated among village residents to inform them about the meeting in advance. At the assembly, the attendants determined what kind of requests they would make to the local magistrate and appointed representatives who would file a petition with the authorities. The chosen representatives then visited the magistracy to deliver the petition. However, the officials usually refused to accept their demands—instead, they had the representatives flogged before imprisoning them or chasing them away.

Thus, village leaders drafted petitions based on the opinions they collected from other residents and submitted them to the magistrate, who then dismissed them. It was at this point that a popular rebellion typically erupted. There were few popular risings prior to the nineteenth century, but beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, they became more frequent. A case in point is the People's Revolt of the *Imsul* Year, which broke out in about seventy villages across the nation in 1862. Hundreds of thousands of protestors took up arms, some arming themselves with bamboo spears, but most wielding clubs (Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe 1979, 57). However, there were few cases of a rising spreading to a neighboring country or township. Most endured for about a month at most, and none rejected the existing dynastic system. The king still commanded respect and was regarded as a savior who would eradicate corruption and restore the moral order. Accordingly, attacks against local magistrates were restricted as they were appointed by the king. The people's reactions to severely corrupt local governors were limited to cursing or slapping. In addition, to proclaim that they were not qualified to serve as public officials, corrupt governors were placed on a palanquin and chased from the region. There was not a single case of a local magistrate being murdered, and when an official dispatched by the king to investigate the situation arrived, people usually dispersed and the rising ended.<sup>1</sup> Popular rebellions continued in this way until 1894, when the Tonghak Peasant Uprising occurred.

In many of the places that experienced a popular rebellion, however, there were numerous instances in which rich residents—in particular those with a bad reputation or those implicated in public officials' corruption—and local petty officials (*hyangni* 鄉吏), were killed, either through being beaten or trampled to death. These *hyangni* were low-ranking officials, appointed not by the king, but by local magistrates, and were responsible for practical tasks, including tax collection in local public offices. In one instance, in March 1862 a popular uprising occurred in Chinju as people protested against corrupt officials and unfair tax collection. The rebel forces invaded the local military headquarters, beat Kwŏn Chunbŏm and another corrupt low-level official to death, and burned their bodies. When the rebels saw Kwŏn Chunbŏm's son, Kwŏn Mandu, trying to save his father, they trampled him to death, too. The following day, they captured Kim Yun'gu, one of Chinju's *hyangni*, and beat him to death before setting his body on fire (Kuksa

<sup>1</sup> In some cases, the leaders of risings surrendered voluntarily and were imprisoned (Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 1979, 74).

p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 1972, 1). During the uprising in Chinju, the protesters either burnt down or destroyed 126 houses owned by acting officials or the rich in twenty-two townships, and looted seventy-eight houses for money or valuables (Kim Chunhyŏng 2001, 118–90).

Furthermore, in a movement that occurred in the same year in Kaeryŏng, in Kyŏngsang Province, thousands of rebels raided a government office. Their first action was to free those who had been imprisoned for filing a petition on behalf of the residents. They then killed local government clerks and four police constables (*p'ogyo* 捕校), setting fire to their bodies and all the documents from a warehouse in the yard of the yamen, before finally entering the streets to set fire to dozens of houses (Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe 1972, 41; 1979, 3: 116). In Hoein, Ch'ungch'ŏng Province, Sunch'ŏn and Changhŭng in Ch'ŏlla Province, and Cheju, local officials or those who betrayed rebel forces were killed, and public offices and the houses of local officials or the rich were destroyed or burned down (Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe 1979, 3: 85; 1972, 68–69, 112–14, and 135–38).

Whenever a popular uprising occurred, attacks were concentrated on infamous local clerks, wealthy landlords, or merchants, whose houses were also burnt down or destroyed. Although rebel forces were in conflict with local officials or landowners, they did not attack every official or landlord. For example, peasants in Kosŏng in Kyŏngsang Province rose up in 1894 to resist a tax hike; though the hike was introduced by the current local magistrate, the root cause of the riot was the corruption in which local clerks had long engaged. Hence, the protesters' attitude towards the incumbent governor was amicable, and they asked him to conduct an investigation into how much of the tax revenues had been stolen by the local clerks to date. At the same time, the rebels attacked houses owned by local clerks who were known to be unfair and their rich accomplices, burning down a total of twenty-five houses. However, they refrained from violent actions against local clerks who had been good and friendly to residents, telling each other “never to attack them” (O Hoengmuk 2007, 578–79 and 606–12; Pae Hangsŏp 2014, 114–16).

Sometimes, as many as several thousand persons participated in a rebellion which might continue for about a month; yet the rebel forces did not kill or injure many people. Moreover, the punishments meted out by the royal government to rebel leaders arrested after rebellions were not heavy as they did not reject the dynasty and the ruling ideology itself. Among those arrested for staging the Chinju Rebellion, only three, including the main leader Yu Kyech'un, were executed, twenty-six were exiled, and forty-two were freed.<sup>2</sup> Of the Ch'ŏng Hansun group, which led a people's rising for about a month in Hamp'yŏng, Ch'ŏlla Province, and perpetrated the most serious violence among the rebels in 1862, including the battering of local clerks and even magistrates, only six were ultimately executed (Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe 1979, 3: 74).

The Tonghak Peasant Uprising, which broke out in April 1894, was a large-

<sup>2</sup> *Pibyŏnsa tŭngnok* 備邊司謄錄 [Official documents of the Border Defense Council], Ch'ŏlchong 13, Fifth Month 22nd day, [http://db.history.go.kr/id/bb\\_249r\\_001\\_05\\_0480](http://db.history.go.kr/id/bb_249r_001_05_0480), accessed September 13, 2016.

scale popular revolt that differed from previous ones, as it spread beyond counties and townships to almost every corner of Chosŏn.<sup>3</sup> While the uprising continued even after the top leader, Chŏn Pongjun (1856–1895), was arrested in December 1894, it ended in most regions by the end of that month. Unlike other rebel forces, the Tonghak peasant fighters fought not with clubs but with guns or swords they took from government offices or from military forces during battles, as well as bamboo spears. One of the most outstanding characteristics of the Tonghak Peasant Uprising, when compared to massive popular movements of other countries, is that the rebel forces left relatively few people injured or killed. According to extant records, peasant forces rarely killed people after occupying a given region or while they were on the march, except for a few cases that we will now examine.<sup>4</sup>

While advancing on Chŏnju in late May 1894, peasant soldiers murdered Yi Hyo'ŭng and Pae Ŭnhwan, the two central-government officials who had come to Wŏnp'yŏng in Chŏlla Province to deliver the king's order to disband (Anon. 1996, 16–9; Anon. a 1996, 115).<sup>5</sup> It was, however, the result of an accident, for which the peasant forces immediately apologized. Immediately after the incident, upon hearing that Chinese and Japanese military forces had arrived in Chosŏn, the peasants, who were occupying Chŏnju Castle, entered into negotiations with the government military so that they could unite and drive the foreign forces out of the country together. The peasant leader sent a written communiqué to Hong Kyehun, commander of the government military, to apologize for killing the two officials. He explained they mistakenly thought the officials had come to recruit soldiers to fight against the peasant forces, rather than to deliver a letter of admonishment from the king (Anon. 1996, 66–67). In other words, they killed the officials due to a mistaken belief regarding the purpose of the men's visit.

In addition, the peasants who rose up in Sŏsan and T'aean on October 1, 1894, took Sŏsan magistrate Pak Chunggi, T'aean magistrate Shin Paekhŭi, and Kim Kyŏngje, who had been sent by the central government, to a marketplace and

<sup>3</sup> Views and names of this incident have repeatedly changed, and a number of mixed opinions about it still exist to date. Regarding this, see Young Ick Lew 1990, 151; George Kallander 2010, 126–41. However, the South-Korean government renamed this incident the “Tonghak Peasant Revolution” in 2004 in an attempt to restore the reputation of the participants in the uprising, who had been long condemned as “bandits,” even after the country's liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945.

<sup>4</sup> In contrast, quite a few of the members of the peasant forces were killed or injured. Regarding the number of peasant rebels who lost their lives during the Tonghak Peasant Uprising of 1894, a historical record compiled by followers of Ch'ŏndogyo (the name under which the teachings of Tonghak continued to be propagated), estimates it to be 200,000 (Yi Tonhwa 1933, 69). O Chiyŏng estimated that 200,000 to 300,000 people died (O Chiyŏng 1940, 176). Meanwhile, Cho Kyŏngdal conjectures that the number of peasant fighters who died during battles, in prison, or by execution amounted to almost 50,000 (Cho Kyŏngdal 1998, 313–17). It is difficult to verify the accuracy of those estimates, but the records generally emphasize losses among the peasant forces that were much more numerous than the number of those they killed. However, it is likely that the figures have been exaggerated. As one of the biggest battles left only several hundred fighters dead, the number of peasant fighters who died during the rising almost certainly did not exceed 30,000. It is believed that more died by execution after being arrested or captured than in action, and it is certain that the figure is greater than that of the number of public officials or ordinary citizens killed by the peasant soldiers.

<sup>5</sup> Anon. 1996. *Yangho ch'ot'o tŭngnok*. The king offered his condolences upon their death and promoted both of them posthumously to high office (*Ilŏngnok* 日省錄, Eighteenth Day of the Seventh Month, Kojong 31).

publicly beheaded them (Ch'angsan Huin Cho Sökhön Yöksa 1996, 10: 132–33; Kuksa P'yöngch'an Wiwönhoe ed. 1959, 501; *Kabo kunjöng silgi*, vol. 1, Eleventh and Thirteenth Day of the Tenth Month, 1894). All three men had acted against the followers of Tonghak and imprisoned around thirty leaders of the local peasant forces, who were sentenced to be executed soon. Another exception is the case in which Kim Kaenam, one of the top leaders of the peasant forces, arrested the Namwön chief magistrate in Chönju and killed him on October 17, 1894. This Yi Yonghön had encouraged the people of Namwön to take over the castle, and tried to form an alliance with counter-insurgency forces in Unbong, a neighboring town, to mount a pincer attack on Kim Kaenam's peasant forces, who were stationed in Namwön. This fueled Kim Kaenam's intense hatred toward him (Hwang Hyön 1996, 1: 257).<sup>6</sup> In another incident, in January 1895 peasant forces invaded and occupied Changhüng Castle and executed Changhüng magistrate Pak Hönyang (Hwang Hyön 1996, 1: 257). Except for these incidents, rebels rarely killed officials or *yangban* landlords except in the heat of a battle, and there was not a single case of collective murder, with one possible exception. In late November 1894, eight or nine dead bodies were discovered at a camp used by peasant rebels, who fled after being defeated by government troops. While the military reported that the dead were commoners abducted by the peasants, rather than government soldiers or counter-insurgents, their identities are not known for certain.<sup>7</sup>

The Tonghak peasant forces' reluctance to kill or injure can be demonstrated by the fact that they expressed regret over killing dozens of government soldiers during a battle. In November 1894, the Tonghak peasants and local military of the Ch'ungch'öng area fought each other in a region close to Taejön. The peasants won an overwhelming victory, leaving seventy government soldiers dead on the field. In December that year, when the peasant forces were defeated in the Battle of Ugümch'i in Kongju, and retreated to Nonsan, the rebel leader, Chön Pongjun, sent a letter to the government military to suggest that they should stop fighting each other and join forces against the Japanese troops deployed in Korea. In the letter, he expressed his personal sincere regret that both sides had injured and killed each other's fighters in the battles of Ugümch'i and Taejön, saying that it was "very regretful" (Kuksa P'yöngch'an Wiwönhoe ed. 1959, 379–80).<sup>8</sup> This suggests that the peasants found it difficult to justify the act of injuring or killing others, even in the heat of battle.

By contrast, the royal government severely cracked down on the Tonghak forces, viewing their uprising as treason committed by the believers of a heretical and evil cult. The Chosön government issued a directive to kill the leadership of the peasant fighters during the early stages of the Tonghak Peasant Uprising, which

<sup>6</sup> In addition, as the rumor that Kim Kaenam was calling himself "the king to open the southern region" (開南王) suggests, he showed a tendency to reject the legitimacy of the Chosön dynasty (Ch'oe Ponggil 1996, 2: 263).

<sup>7</sup> *Kabo kunjöng silgi* 甲午軍政實記 1, Eleventh Month, Twelfth Day, 1894.

<sup>8</sup> Some reports indicate peasant forces killed some soldiers at that time by setting fire to them (*Kabo kunjöng silgi* 甲午軍政實記 1, Tenth Month, Ninth day, 1894).

was followed by a more comprehensive order calling for the capture and killing of peasants in the second round of the uprising that began in October 1894.<sup>9</sup> A number of the peasant rebels were summarily executed upon being captured; in some cases, even the fathers or mothers of rebels were flogged or killed.<sup>10</sup>

### Japan

Popular movements during Japan's Edo period left few people dead or injured. Representative of this period are peasant uprisings: *hyakushō ikki* (百姓一揆). In the early years of this period, from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, *ikki* were characterized by armed uprisings led by powerful local families (*dogō* 土豪) who had lost their privileges in the process of the separation of warriors and farmers from the *daimyō* military forces. Such *ikki* came to a halt, however, in the wake of the Shimabara Rebellion led by Christians in 1637. Thereafter, there was little *ikki* activity until the early eighteenth century, when peasants demanding benevolent governance (*jinsei* 仁政) from the *daimyō* (大名) began to rise up in *hyakushō ikki*, which occurred more frequently as the century progressed. *Hyakushō ikki* were mostly driven by heavy taxes levied by lords or petty village officials (*murayakunin* 村役人) or corruption related to taxation.

As mentioned above, what participants in *hyakushō ikki* essentially demanded from the *daimyō* was “benevolent governance.” People from several villages formed an alliance to stage an uprising and their weapons were mostly tools, such as farming implements. Since they followed the principle that “we dare not carry a weapon that could harm human life,” weapons like bamboo spears or guns were only rarely used. The protesters carried farming tools, not to kill or injure others, but rather to destroy their targets' wealth. However, after the *bakufu* system collapsed and the Meiji Restoration began, “*ikki* that reject the new government” and weapons like swords and guns, as well as bamboo spears, began to be wielded by Japanese rebels.<sup>11</sup> In this way, rebel forces in popular movements during the Edo period rarely committed any acts of killing or injuring other human beings. According to Suda Tsutomu, of the 1,430 *hyakushō ikki* that broke out in the Edo period, only fifteen involved violence (physically attacking someone with a weapon), while only thirteen involved the burning of houses (excluding cases where rebels gathered household goods together and set fire to them). Moreover, fourteen of the fifteen violent cases and eleven of the thirteen arson-related cases occurred in the nineteenth century, suggesting that the ban on violence and arson was observed as a custom by rebel forces participating in *hyakushō ikki* before then. Suda Tsutomu, who criticized popular movement researchers for ignoring such cases as anomalies, focused on changes in the behavior patterns presented by the *hyakushō ikki* during that time. Suda argued that when the *hyakushō* in the nineteenth century believed that their lords were not fulfilling their responsibilities, they started committing *uchikowashi* (打ちこわし), acts of destroying public offices

<sup>9</sup> *Kabo kunjōng silgi* 1, Ninth Month, Twenty-eighth day: Tenth Month, Seventh Day, 1894.

<sup>10</sup> *Kabo kunjōng silgi* 1, Tenth Month, Second Day, 1894.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding the weapons used in *hyakushō ikki*, see Yabuta Yutaka 1992; Uchida Mitsuru 2000.



(*yakusho* 役所) or the houses of the rich, sometimes with fire, without filing petitions beforehand. Some even started to carry weapons and to inflict casualties in the process of *hyakushō ikki* (Suda 2000, 36–38; 2002, 197–201).

In some instances, even before the Meiji Restoration (1868) rebels began to vandalize houses and commit arson during *hyakushō ikki*, while feudal lords counterattacked by shooting rebels dead (Suda 2000, 38–43). However, uprisings became even more violent after the Meiji Restoration. In October 1878 (Meiji 11), several-dozen peasants in Kanagawa attacked the house of a landlord who had loaned money to people facing financial difficulties, using their land as collateral, and then seized the land from those who could not repay their loans. The enraged peasants fired guns toward his house to set fire to it, before invading the property and killing seven people, including the landlord, his family, and his employees, and injuring four others. The peasants beheaded the landlord, while killing the others with blows to the head with *tobiguchi* (鳶口, a tool for firefighting that consisted of a long staff topped with a sharp, curved head), or by setting them on fire. Such attacks and lethal violence were exceptional and not seen in *hyakushō ikki*, “the *ikki* for renewing the world” (*yonaoshi* 世直し), or “the new government-defying *ikki*” (Fukaya 1989, 441–44). Despite these cases of cruelty, popular movements in Japan generally left very few people dead or injured, compared with those in China or the popular movements in the West briefly considered below, and there were few cases of mass deaths or injuries (Fukaya 1989, 429–32; Suda 2000, 36–38). This means that popular movements in Japan’s Edo period were less violent than those in Chosŏn in terms of human casualties. Still, according to Inoue Katsuo, authorities’ punishment of rebel forces was stricter in Japan (Inoue 2002, 109–11).

Meanwhile, confrontations and conflicts occurred between the peasants in villages where commoners lived and *burakumin* (部落民, outcasts) during the Edo period. The two parties sometimes united to protest against the authorities, but also confronted each other due to differences in social class or conflicts over economic interests. In the nineteenth century, this bilateral conflict escalated into serious injuries and fatalities. For instance, in 1832, peasants and *burakumin* in Chōshū engaged in an intense conflict over the shipping of leather. Consequently, the peasants attacked the *buraku* (部落), the communities where the outcasts resided, burning houses and killing people (Buraku kaihō kenkyūjo ed. 1995, 156–61).

In popular movements after the Meiji Restoration, the *hyakushō* committed more violent collective attacks that involved injuring and killing in *buraku*. As the government issued a proclamation in 1871 to emancipate the *burakumin* by granting them the same social status as *hyakushō*, disgruntled commoners attacked them, burning down their houses and killing or injuring them. In January 1872, commoners in Fukatsu (深津) Prefecture and Okayama (岡山) Prefecture, who opposed the proclamation, stole guns and ammunition from government offices, burned the houses of the former *burakumin*, and killed or injured a number of them, including women. After the Meiji Restoration, while rebels wielded weapons in *ikki* resisting the new government, it was rare for them to actually use artillery or handguns. In this incident only, which was caused by a confrontation between commoners and former *burakumin*, were cannons used. This incident reveals that

the rebels opposed the new order in the early Meiji era and that discrimination against those from a lower social class, dating back to the Edo period, was deeply rooted (Fukaya Katsumi 1989, 429–32). In an 1873 uprising that erupted in Mimasaka (美作) against excessive tax collection, 263 former burakumin houses were burnt down, fifty-one others were ruined, and eighteen burakumin were killed. In another uprising, in Chikuzen (筑前), where people wielded bamboo spears, more than 1,500 *burakumin* houses went up in flames (Buraku kaihō kenkyūjo ed. 1995, 177–78). Violence similar to such collective attacks against the persecuted *burakumin* were not witnessed in the Tonghak Peasant Uprising or other Korean popular rebellions in the nineteenth century. As Korea's social class system was not as strict as that of Japan, the nation's popular movements did not engage in collective conflict or mutual attacks between commoners and the low-born. Unlike in Japan, there was no strict separation between the commoners and the lowest classes in Korea. Some people from the lowest class served yangban families as slaves, but, in most cases, commoners and lowly people lived in the same villages and might cooperate with each other when farming. There was a class similar to the *burakumin* in Korea called *paekchōng* (白丁, butchers) but they did not engage in any collective conflict or confrontation with commoners, so the two classes rarely clashed with each other. Instead, the commoners and people from the lowest class joined forces in popular movements. In the 1862 *Imsul*-Year People's Revolt, slaves played a key role beginning with the planning of the rising and even engaged in such acts as attacks on local officials' houses (Kuksa P'yōnch'an Wiwōnhoe 1972, 27). In the Tonghak Peasant Uprising in 1894, commoners and low-class people formed a unit to fight together in battle ("Pak Pongyang kyōngnyōksō" 1996, 7: 540), and low-class people also raised and led their own troops (Hwang Hyōn 1996, 1: 342). That such popular uprisings were led by slaves, people from the lowest social class, makes them very different from what occurred in Japan. This may reflect the two nations' different social compositions, including their class systems, and the consequent differences in how people from different classes perceived each other.

### China

There is an obvious contrast between what occurred in the popular protests in Korea and Japan and those of China.<sup>12</sup> First, Li Zicheng (李自成), who staged a massive uprising in Shanxi Province (陝西省) during the late Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), seized Xiangcheng (襄城) and Henan (河南), and committed such acts of violence as cutting off the noses and legs of 190 Confucian scholars and killing them by throwing the men down from a high place (Tanigawa Michio and

<sup>12</sup> Cho Kyōngdal has conducted a comparative analysis of the Tonghak Peasant Uprising and Japan's Ōshio Heihachirō (大塩平八郎) Rebellion, which occurred in 1837, and found that the latter was more violent inasmuch as it aimed to kill all rich people who only thought of their private desires and those who assisted them, in contrast to the Tonghak Peasant Army, which tried to avoid killing and injuring people and instructed the soldiers not to damage other people's property (Cho Kyōngdal 2011, 284–310). However, the difference in the degree of violence between the two uprisings is minimal when compared to the difference between them and Chinese rebellions.

Masao Mori eds. 1982, 57). Around the same time, while Zhang Xianzhong (張獻忠) led a gang of bandits in rebellion, in 1645, he summoned together a number of intellectuals in Chengdu (成都), Sichuan, under the pretext that he would hold a civil service examination, and killed them all. It is said that there was a mountain of writing brushes and ink stones left behind by the victims (Yi Chun'gap 2010, 320). Acts of killing occurred even among the rebel forces themselves. In a bondservant rebellion that occurred in Macheng (麻城), Hubei (湖北), rebel forces were forced on the defensive by a counterattack from a landlord-led militia (民兵, Minbing) and therefore tried to attract the support of Zhang Xianzhong, who spearheaded a large-scale rising around the same period. When Zhang joined forces with the bondservants, he killed sixty of the rebels who opposed his joining them (Sato 1985, 132–33).

China saw popular movements occurring more frequently as it entered the final years of Emperor Qianlong's reign in the late eighteenth century, when a variety of political, economic and social issues began to emerge. Due to a rapid increase in population, shortages of land and public positions increased, while the country was afflicted by a series of floods and other natural disasters, all amid public corruption and the central government's weakened control over provinces, leading to a steady stream of small and large rebellions nationwide, including the White Lotus Rebellion (Rowe 2009, 150–58).

Various secret societies, characterized by an apocalyptic and messianic faith, appeared from the late seventeenth century onwards, explicitly denouncing the traditional hierarchical system that demanded obedience to government officials, the clan and the elderly, and landlords. Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, secret societies assumed a more distinct form, engaging in smuggling and other economic activities that triggered conflict with the government, which, in turn, led to uprisings, including the Triad Rebellion, which was led by Lin Shuangwen (林爽文) in Taiwan in 1761 (Rowe 2009, 178–79 and 181–82).

One of the most representative popular movements is the White Lotus Rebellion, which broke out in 1796. It took a decade for the Qing Dynasty to suppress it, costing 120 million silver taels, which was twice as much as the state treasury held under the Qianlong Emperor (Rowe 2009, 156–57), or three times the annual tax revenues at that time, thus causing a serious financial crisis.<sup>13</sup> Over the course of that decade, many government military personnel, local landowners, and other opponents of the rebels, lost their lives, as did many members of the White Lotus sects. Although complete statistics are not available, hundreds of thousands of White Lotus sectarians killed more than four hundred government military officers in a battle in Sichuan Province. In addition, wealthy landowners in the regions that were conquered by the sectarians suffered greater losses. In Sichuan Province alone, 500 to 600 landlords lost their lives (Tanigawa and Mori eds. 1982, 184). Here, a religious element based on belief in a transcendental truth, represented by phrases like “A new world will begin as Maitreya comes down to

<sup>13</sup> The Chinese annual revenue in the mid-eighteenth century was slightly more than 40 million taels. See Elliott 2009, 189.

the earth and governs it,” “Practice the Way (*dao* 道) on behalf of Heaven,” and “Let’s change heaven and earth,” was combined with an ethnic conflict between the Manchu and Han peoples, as suggested by the slogan, “Let’s get rid of Manchu people and raise the Han” (Elliott 2009, 189).

According to Ho-fung Hung, popular uprisings from 1820 to 1839 did not become mass movements against the dynasty, unlike those in the late eighteenth century. While large-scale rebellions decreased in number, in the 1830s, many Chinese, enraged at corruption and injustice among public officials, increasingly sent representatives to Beijing to submit petitions denouncing them (Hung 2011, 155–56 and 165–66). Ho-fung Hung attributes this to Jiaqing’s successful efforts at restoring the throne’s moral legitimacy that resulted from his desire to revive the Qing dynasty (Hung 2011, 158).

Small and large uprisings still continued until finally, in 1851, the largest popular movement in the nineteenth century, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Rebellion, occurred. On January 11 of that year, which also marked the thirty-eighth birthday of Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全), the movement’s leader, the Society of God Worshippers gathered in Jintian Village and declared “the first year of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom” (Spence 1996, 133–34; Cho Pyŏnghān 1981, 73 and 221; Kim Sŏngch’an 1989, 91). Prior to that, in early December 1850, about 10,000 God Worshippers, joined by bandit recruits and Hakka refugees, gathered together in the Jintian area. Regular units of the Qing forces and local militia forces (*tuanlian* 团练) led by local gentry, attacked the stronghold of the God Worshippers, only to be defeated by them, resulting in the death of some fifty combatants. The second bout of attacks by Qing forces commenced on January 1, 1851, but they were again defeated, losing ten officers and three hundred men. Immediately following this victory over the Qing, Hong Xiuquan proclaimed “the Five Articles of military discipline” which can be summarized as: 1. Obey orders; 2. Separate men from women; 3. Never violate any of the military rules; 4. Maintain harmonious relationships with a fair mind and keep promises to the commander; and 5. Work together in unity and do not to retreat from battle (Spence 1996, 129–33).

In these “Five Articles of military discipline” there was no phrase that warned against lethal acts. In fact, while the rebels’ leadership instructed them not to hurt ordinary people, the military forces of Qing were defined as demons, and the rebels were instructed to kill each and every one of them (Spence 1996, 224–27 and 237–38; Zhao and Feng et al. 1990, 54–57). One of the orders Hong Xiuquan gave in Yong’an (永安) was “both men and women, raise your swords and join forces to bravely kill demons” (Kikuchi Hideaki 2010, 306).<sup>14</sup> During the summer of 1851, they tenaciously pursued those who betrayed the Taiping forces, and publicly executed those who were caught. Furthermore, in October 1851, the rebels pledged to promptly execute, with no exceptions, those people who provided

<sup>14</sup> Kikuchi (2010, 210 and 316) explains that the religious passion that accompanied the violence of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom came from two elements; a “wild power” hidden in Chinese society, and “traits of modern Europe” (that is, the dichotomy between civilization and barbarism of Eurocentrism, which justifies a civilizing mission toward the non-west and the violence implied (the violence) that is implicit in it).

supplies to the “demon” troops, those who fought in the local militias against the Taiping forces, who raped women or committed robbery by taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the chaos of war, and those who murdered local residents (Spence 1996, 137 and 141). Among the Taiping forces, there were some who ate captured Qing soldiers, traitors among the rebels, and arrested fugitives, not driven by hunger, but by hate (Kim Söngch'an 2012, 14–15). Moreover, after they occupied Nanjing (南京) in 1853, members of the Taiping forces killed and injured each other in factional infighting. For example, in September 1856, “Eastern King” Yang Xiucheng (楊秀清) was killed for trying to overthrow Hong Xiuquan, as a result of which the king's relatives and subordinates, including court ladies and maids, were slaughtered in the thousands, with as many as twenty-thousand being killed (Spence 1996, 244; Kim Söngch'an 2012, 117, 137, and 141). It is estimated that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom left about 30 million people dead in the fifteen years before its suppression (Rowe 2009, 198).

Moreover, when the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was about to begin, a separatist movement led by Muslims arose in Yunnan triggered by intense ethnic conflict between native people and immigrants. A Manchu provincial judge ordered an ethnic cleansing, leading to more than 4,000 Muslims being slaughtered in the Yunnan provincial capital of Kunming in May 1856. In response, a group of Muslims led by Du Wenxiu (杜文秀, 1823–1872) seceded and established a Muslim state based in Dali (大理), located on a major trade route to Tibet and Myanmar. This is the so-called Panthay Rebellion which was successfully suppressed by the Qing in 1873 after the killing of five million people in Yunnan Province through a series of genocidal acts (Rowe 2009, 209).

### *The West*

Western rebels who participated in popular movements of the late Middle Ages, used violence that was much more brutal than that of the Korean or Japanese fighters. In Brentwood, Essex, the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (Wat Tyler's Rebellion) broke out when rebels protested against a heavy poll tax levied in the wake of the Hundred Year's War with France. The revolt spread to the county of Kent and the rebel forces led by Wat Tyler advanced to London. Early in the revolt, Brentwood residents beheaded three civil clerks who had come to collect the taxes. They also decapitated three local men who had been dispatched with orders to capture the criminals and hung their heads from poles as a protest. The rebels occupied castles in Essex and Kent, freed imprisoned serfs, and set fire to documents. Moreover, they killed a number of residents, including Flemings, and attacked churches and houses owned by the officials or clerics they hated (Harrison 1984, 88–89). Houses and villas of lords, clerics, and money lenders in neighboring regions were attacked and looted by the peasants, and rebel troops who advanced to a city received a warm welcome from the poorest class (Harrison 1984, 95–96).

Inspired by John Ball, who asked, “When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?” about 100,000 rebels took over London, insisting that, as all men were created equal, men being subjugated to other men contradicted “God's will.” They held talks with the king regarding the abolition of serfdom and

payment of feudal dues in gold, but some discontented members of their forces killed an archbishop, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and other officials, as well as foreigners, roamed through the city with their heads stuck on pikes, and then placed their heads above the gate of London Bridge (Harrison 1984, 90–92). Based on the millenarian vision that “the Day of Judgment” was coming (Cohn 2004, 203), the rebels dreamt of a populist kingdom without lords, clergy, the middle class (such as lawyers), officials, and gentry standing between the king and the people (Harrison 1984, 103). In response, Geoffrey Lister, the leader of the rebel forces in Norfolk, and John Wrawe, who was leading rebels in Suffolk, were arrested and hacked to pieces. Once quelled, the revolt was followed by a ruthless repression (Harrison 1984, 96).

Norman Cohn has contended that rebel forces who participated in millenarian movements across Medieval Europe believed themselves to represent “God’s law” or to be obeying “God’s will,” and were convinced of their absolute infallibility, thereby turning cruel and merciless. A property-sharing system was implemented, while polygamy was declared and a reign of terror started where the killing of humans became routine. The Taborites, a group that emerged in Bohemia in the early fifteenth century, sought to restore anarchistic communism. Considering rich urban dwellers, merchants, or absentee landlords as targets to be eliminated, they attacked and burnt down the prosperous cities. In the spring of 1420, an announcement was made revoking all types of feudal restrictions, dues, and corvée labor; yet almost all of the Taborites harassed and oppressed ordinary people nearby in an inhuman manner, even forcing devout believers to pay exorbitant rents (Cohn 2004, 215 and 218).

Peasant forces fighting in the German Peasants’ War (1524–1525) rose up for the cause of social justice, using the Bible to justify their rebellion. There was a great deal of violence on both sides. Approximately 300,000 commoners participated, of which 100,000 were either killed in battle or executed, including 50,000 who died in Franckenhausen on May 15, 1525 (Raath and de Freitas 2005, 5). Markgrave Casimi tortured peasants to satisfy his thirst for revenge: more specifically, he decapitated peasant fighters, dug out their eyes, and severed their fingers (Scott and Scribner 1991, 299–301). Peasant forces, too, mass-murdered captured aristocrats and their troops. For example, on April 16, 1525, the peasant fighters who occupied Weinsberg engaged in cruel vengeance against captured aristocrats, whom they forced to run through two rows of peasant forces armed with spears, which they used to skewer the passing aristocrats. On that day, around seventy aristocrats were killed (Menzel and Saltus 1899, 887; Scott and Scribner 1991, 158).

In 1534, after the German Peasants’ War ended, the Anabaptists who re-emerged in Münster, Northwest Germany, implemented a reign of terror, killing dozens of people who would not accept their doctrines, which included property-sharing and polygamy (Cohn 2004, 264 and 269–70). Criticizing non-believers as “those who disgrace God,” they beat them and found joy in their victims’ pain. Some of the victims were the elderly, the sick, young children, pregnant women, and even women who had just given birth (Cohn 2004, 263).

In this respect, the killing and injuring of other human beings perpetrated by peasant forces during European millenarian movements or the German Peasants' War contrast starkly to the actions of the Koreans or Japanese during popular movements. The act of killing or injuring a person itself was, in effect, forbidden in protests staged in Japan or Korea, such as the Tonghak Peasant Uprising, and the taking of life was tightly restricted, and it was declared that even those who would inflict lesser personal damage would be "locked up in hell" (Kim Yunsik 1960, 311; *Chuhan Ilbon kongsagwan kirok* 1986, 1: 19; Anon. b 1996, 6: 176). In fact, relatively few lethal actions were witnessed in the Tonghak Peasant Uprising and other large-scale, long-lasting popular movements.

### **Degree of Violence and Grounds of Legitimacy of Popular Movements**

*Uprisings that did not reject the governmental system: Korea and Japan*

To understand what caused such differences in the people's movements of Korea, Japan, China, and the West, it is worth examining people's different perceptions on human life and the variety of natural and social environments that engendered such views.

In the case of China, acts of killing and injuring were frequently committed in general civil uprisings, protests by slaves, and anti-tax struggles prior to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which was quite similar to a millenarian movement in nature (O Kūmsōng 1989, 91–139; Ch'oe Kapsun 1989, 181–204; Pak Wōnho 1990, 85–124). The Chinese took up guns and knives, and waged "battles," even in struggles between clans, leaving many casualties in the process. However, local governors decided not to intervene in ethnic strife (Freedman 1970, 114–25; Nakajima 2002, 189–91). Although it was not an ordinary peoples riot, the Rebellion of Zhong Renjie (鐘人杰), which occurred in 1841 in Chongyang County, Hubei, also involved much lethal violence. The revolt, caused by a conflict between low-level gentry, including Zhong Renjie, and local officials over the right to collect taxes, continued for forty-three days in 1841–1842. After seizing control of the castle-town in which they lived, fourteen leaders occupied a neighboring castle-town, and they killed the county magistrates of both, as well as administrators, local officials, and dozens of their family members. Having taken over both castles, they sent a public notice to each village to force the wealthy to offer food and killed those who did not obey (Hong Sōngha 2013, 329–62). Collective killing and inflicting injury, as seen in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, must be related to "traditional" behavior and perceptions. However, this cannot explain the sheer scale of killing or the gruesome actions of cannibalizing government soldiers or traitors during that rising. To account for such phenomena, this paper will consider the ideas, ideologies, and religious basis that served popular movements to legitimize such actions.

In this respect, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt made a very interesting point concerning the relationship between Japan's Meiji Restoration and violence, stressing "the almost total absence of sacralization of violence" as one of the important characteristics of Japan's Meiji Restoration when compared to other major revolutions of Britain, France, and the United States: "Of course, violence

did rage during the events leading to the Restoration and after it; it did not become sanctified to the extent that it did in the Great Revolutions.” He also added that close and continuous ties did not develop between the major actors in the Meiji Restoration and religious or cultural sectarian groups or autonomous religious leaders (Eisenstadt 2003, 444–46). Furthermore, Eisenstadt suggested that unlike the Great Revolutions in Europe, the United States, Russia, and China, the Meiji Restoration did not present the development of a universalistic, transcendental, or missionary ideology or any element of class ideology, claiming that these components were also very weak during peasant rebellions or protests in the Tokugawa era (Eisenstadt 2003, 442). This suggests that violence in social movements is related to a religious or ideological background that can legitimize it.

For the Korean peasant forces—not just in the Imsul-year People’s Revolt, which erupted in some seventy villages across the country in 1862, but also in the largest popular movement, the Tonghak peasant uprising of 1894—the idea or ideological ground that was used to legitimize their behavior was the ruling ideology of Confucianism.<sup>15</sup> The Tonghak peasant protesters depended on Confucian ideology to legitimize their actions, which they claimed to be part of a “Righteous Movement” to save the nation (Bae Hang-seob 2013, 399–430). This is different from China’s Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which relied upon Christianity as its ideological foundation, while the country’s ruling ideology was Confucianism. Accepting Christianity to legitimize a rebellion was unimaginable in Chosŏn, which was strongly dominated by Confucianism.

In late April 1894, when the peasant forces first rose up in Mujang, Chŏlla Province, they set forth four major rules (四大名義), the first article of which was “Do not kill innocent persons, and do not destroy property.”<sup>16</sup> Respect for human life is well demonstrated in the “Four regulations for those fighting in a battle” or the “Twelve Articles of military discipline” which were proclaimed around the middle of April when the number of the newly joined peasants skyrocketed. With the number of peasant fighters increasing every day, the total figure had increased to 12,000 or 14,000, or more than three times as many as when the Tonghak Peasant Uprising began. Furthermore, from around that time, the peasant forces were joined by people who had social grievances, by those who were fascinated by the mere name of Tonghak, and by ruffians from all over the country, in addition to those who could not stand the ruling elite’s greed and tyranny (Pae Hangsŏp 2002, 31–71). In view of this, the rising’s leaders announced the following two codes of conduct to curb misbehavior.

“Four Regulations for Those Fighting in a Battle”

<sup>15</sup> Mark Setton makes a persuasive claim that the egalitarianism in the history of Tonghak also originated from Confucian populism and egalitarian tendencies (Setton 2000, 121–44).

<sup>16</sup> The rest of the articles are as follows: 2. Be loyal to the king and be filial to parents, save the world, and bring comfort to the people’s life; 3. Expel and exterminate the Japanese dwarfs, and illuminate sagely rule; 4. Lead the troops into Seoul, and completely purge the noblemen in power. Spread widely the principles, and uphold the rightful causes, thereby following the sagely teachings. See Chŏng Kyo 1996, 4: 363; *Sisa sinbo* 1996 (June 8, Meiji 27), 22: 292–93 and 295.



1. A soldier who wins without having an enemy's blood on his sword claims the greatest credit.
2. When fighting in an unavoidable battle, always consider it important not to kill or injure human life.
3. Do not ruin others' property when marching by.
4. The military shall not be stationed near a village where people are good to their parents or to their brothers, and are loyal and sincere.

"Twelve Articles of Military Discipline"

1. We shall treat with benevolence those who surrender
2. We shall save those in trouble
3. We shall expel corrupt officials
4. We shall respect and obey those who fulfill their own duties
5. We shall not pursue those who run away
6. We shall feed those who are hungry
7. We shall stop evil and cunning persons from doing such deeds
8. We shall save and help the poor
9. We shall remove the disloyal
10. We shall persuade the disobedient
11. We shall give medicine to the sick
12. We shall kill those who mistreat their parents

The articles above are the foundations of our action. Whoever breaks these rules will be locked up in hell" (Kim Yunsik 1960, 311; *Chuhan Ilbon kongsagwan kirok* 1986, 1: 19; Anon. b 1996, 6: 176).

In the "Four regulations for those fighting in a battle," the parts that valued human life (Articles 1 and 2) attract our attention, while in the "Twelve Articles of military discipline" the articles that warned against the corrupt and greedy (3, 7, 9, and 10) and those that showed humanistic care toward the poor and the weak (1, 2, 5, 6, 8, and 11) stand out. The sentence attached at the end of the "Twelve Articles of Military Discipline" (set out in full above) reveals a firm intention to maintain this code of conduct. Kim Kaenam, who exhibited relatively "radical" behavior, discovered, on August 25, 1894, that one of his peasant fighters had snuck into an office and stolen a silver ring. He immediately beheaded the culprit, hung his head from a pole, and displayed it in front of the troops to warn other peasant warriors against such deeds (Hwang Hyŏn 1996, 1: 210). But this is the only case in which the commander beheaded a peasant soldier. This suggests that these peasant forces strictly adhered to their rules of conduct.

Furthermore, the peasant forces did not reject the legitimacy of the king. While some records state that the highest leader of the peasant protesters, Chŏn Pongjun, declared the foundation of a new dynasty and called himself "king" after occupying Chŏnju Castle in late April 1894 (Yi Pömsök 1996, 313), this is an error. Chŏn showed respect toward the king from the beginning, insisting that they were acting on behalf of the king in order to legitimize their actions. The peasants

never presented a new discourse to justify their deeds, or any being or value that transcended the king (Bae Hang-seob 2013: 413–16). Meanwhile, the king, guided by Confucian principles, considered all his subjects as his own children. Although, brutal criminals and traitors were punished severely by being beheaded, “bestowing grace upon him by saving his life” 好生之德 was regarded as a virtue, even if a heinous crime had been committed.<sup>17</sup> The peasants’ perception of the king and of “the king’s will” as opposed to the killing of his people played a key role in curbing the acts of injuring or killing others during rebellions.

### *Protests against the Ruling System: Religious Revolts*

The peasants who fought in the German Peasants’ War (1524–1525), opposed the concept of lordship and regional rule that infringed on “ancient customs,” legitimizing their opposition on the basis of “ancient laws” and “ancient rights” (“das alte Recht”). In addition, by securing the principle of the universal legitimacy of “God’s law” and “God’s justice,” they gained a perspective that allowed them to stage protests beyond a single independent principality (*Territorialstaat*; Wunder 1975, 54–62; Sehara 1988, 437–79 and in particular 452–53; Maema 1985, 118–20). Wat Tyler’s Peasant’s Revolt in Britain of 1381 (Cohn 2004, 198–204), the land reformers of the eighteenth century (Cho Süngnae 1997, 33–59), and Russian peasants before the Russian Revolution appealed to “God’s will” and “God’s justice,” to demand land reform and economic and social equality, as well as to resist the lords’ unjust rules (Shanin 1982, 227–43).

Making use of a transcendental being, “God,” to obtain legitimacy for a certain action is also found in China’s Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. The Society of God Worshippers, who led the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, were much affected by elements of Christianity, especially at the early stage of their movement, and their leader, Hong Xiuquan, called himself a son of God and a brother of Jesus. The Taiping were hostile toward the Manchu and harbored strong anti-Qing sentiments. Thus, although in his thought he embraced elements associated with the ruling ideology, Hong Xiuquan, who both created and headed the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, denounced the Qing Dynasty. He defined the Emperor of the Qing as a demon, as well as a target that had to be first eliminated for the establishment of the “Heavenly Kingdom.” Hong Xiuquan tried to eliminate demons with a “demon-slaying knife” in accordance with God’s will, and conceived the *tianchao tianmu zhidu* (天朝田畝制度), a system to distribute land to the people, based on the idea that everything was created by the Emperor of Heaven (Shangdi) and thus belongs to him.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Tasan Chōng Yagyong 丁若鏞 observed, “Only heaven can save or kill a man, and, therefore, a man’s life is tied to heaven.” See Chōng’s, Preface to *Hūmhūm Sinsō* 欽欽新書 [A new guide to judicial inquests]. He thereby stressed the importance of human life, which had also been emphasized by Mencius. His remark, “One must not kill an innocent man even if it means losing the world,” implies that his view of murder cases was based on Confucian ideas about human life. See Sim Hüigi 1985, 33–38. Chong might have believed this, but most officials did not, and the government continued to torture and execute people.

<sup>18</sup> In principle, “the Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty,” was conceived as a way to distribute land according to the number of family members, and its legitimacy was found in “God’s will,” as it claimed, “when people under heaven don’t possess a thing and return everything to God, the Heavenly

The God in which the West or the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom believed was not only a being that surpassed kings or emperors but the very Creator. Therefore, was it not a “natural” consequence that the people following “God’s will,” in accordance with the Creator’s or “God’s will,” had a right to deprive a person who was against it of his or her life, in accordance with the Creator’s or “God’s will” (Suzuki Chūsei 1982, 566)? As Suzuki Chūsei has stated, when a sense of crisis, brought about by an existential threat is accompanied by acute panic and fear, faith in a perfect world that would overcome the crisis generates infinite delight and relief. On the basis of this, Suzuki explained the destructive features of the millenarian rebellions, observing that deep grudges and resentment against religious enemies, persecutors, and men in power, who were held to have caused the crisis and prevented a “perfect” world from materializing, were reflected as attributes of the Messiah; consequently, to the millenarians, the God of salvation was a God of resentment and revenge, and also the God of destruction who would punish and annihilate religious enemies.

In Korea and Japan, too, if a popular movement rejected the dynasty or had an ideological foundation that differed from the ruling ideology, its features were quite different from the Tonghak Peasant Uprising or *hyakushō ikki*. Most of the Korean popular movements in the nineteenth century sought to legitimate their actions through Confucian ideology, but there were a few exceptions. The Yi P'ilche Rebellion of 1871, the Hong Kyōngnae Rebellion of 1812, and the Disturbance of Yi Chaesu of 1901 are cases in point. Yi P'ilche, who stirred up a riot in Yōnghae, Kyōngsang Province, appealed to prophetic millennial ideas to legitimize his revolt. As he rejected the reigning Chosŏn dynasty and pursued the creation of a new kingdom, after capturing the magistrate's office in Yōnghae, he immediately, with a single stroke, beheaded the local magistrate appointed by the king (Weems 1964, 19; Yun Taewŏn 1987, 166; Chang Yōngmin 1987, 124; Pae Hangsŏp 2002, 75).<sup>19</sup> Participants in the Hong Kyōngnae Rebellion of 1812 also rejected the Chosŏn Dynasty from the very beginning and legitimized their action with the millennialism of the prophetic writings of *Chōnggamnok* 鄭鑑錄 that predicted the fall of the dynasty.<sup>20</sup>

The rebel forces led by Hong Kyōngnae allowed local officials who surrendered to live, but did not hesitate to slaughter those who resisted, their families, military commanders, or police officers (Chōng Sŏkchong 1972, 168–69; Ko Sŏkkyu 1997, 242–44). Since the Hong Kyōngnae Rebellion rejected the Chosŏn Dynasty, it faced a cruel response from the government. The rebellion lasted for about four months; among the total of 2,983 rebels who surrendered at Chōngju Castle and the residents who stayed there, 1,917 were executed, with only 224

King will manage it and allow large families under Heaven to have an equal life, clothe themselves well, and feed themselves well” (Cho Pyōnghān ed. 1981, 60, 112–13; Kim Sōngch'an, 2001, 201–25; Kim Sōngch'an 2012, 153–54).

<sup>19</sup> Weems wrote that it was Mun'gyōng where Yi P'ilche attacked and killed a local governor, but it was, in fact, Yōnghae.

<sup>20</sup> For the ideological foundations and significance of the Hong Kyōngnae Rebellion, see Sun Joo Kim 2007, 89–104 and Karlsson 2001, 253–77.

boys and 842 girls aged ten or younger spared (Chŏng Sŏkchong 1971, 199). That the rebel forces led by Hong Kyŏngnae killed local officials appointed by the king without hesitation seems related to that fact that they believed in millennialism as an ideological ground to legitimize the revolt and that they, therefore, denounced royal rule from the very beginning.

Although not deriving the legitimacy of their actions from a religion other than Confucianism, the Disturbance of Yi Chaesu (李在守亂 *Yi Chaesu ūi nan*), which occurred in Cheju in 1901, was highly exceptional in terms of human casualties. It was triggered by the excessive tax burden imposed by Kang Ponghŏn, a tax collector dispatched by the royal household, but it also reflected a conflict between Catholics and Cheju residents. Yi Chaesu, one of the key figures of the rising, seems to have been from a family of government slaves (*kwanno* 官奴). The revolt led by Yi began in April 1901 and continued for about four months, leaving many people dead. Although it was the Catholics who attacked first, the rebel forces, armed with guns, artillery, knives, and explosives stolen from the public office's armory, slaughtered 600 Catholics in just a month. After the rising was quelled, only three rebel leaders, including Yi Chaesu, were sentenced to death, a very small number compared to the total killed by the rebels (Kim Okhŭi 1980; Chŏng Chin'gak 1983, 77–93; Pak Ch'ansik 1996, 62–106; and Hyŏn Kwangho 2015, 5–44).

That during the Disturbance of Yi Chaesu, rebels massacred about 600 people was exceptional when compared with other popular movements in Chosŏn. The difference is most likely attributable to its religious element. While the rebel forces embraced Confucianism and insisted on their identity as subjects of the King of Chosŏn, their opponents were Catholics, who during the nineteenth century had been branded as followers of an evil teaching and suffered extreme persecution by the government. In this respect, the Disturbance of Yi Chaesu can be seen as an attempt to safeguard the ruling system and ideology rather than as a challenge to it. Boudewijn Walraven, who traced how memories about the riot have been passed down and changed, observed that Yi Chaesu seems to have seen himself as a “righteous soldier” fighting a just campaign against the enemies of the nation (Walraven 2009, 13). This attitude eventually led to the massacre of Catholics, who were seen as traitors to the nation and “heretics.”

In Japan, a revolt led by Christians had very different characteristics. “The Shimabara Rebellion” of the early Edo period (1637) was one of the biggest *ikki* in the history of Japan and also one of the largest internal upheavals in the Edo period. This rebellion was staged by Christian-led unions of peasants from Shimabara (島原), ruled by Matsukura Katsuie, and Amakusa (天草), ruled by Terazawa Katataka, in the west of Kyushu. It lasted for about four months, from late 1637 to early 1638, before finally being suppressed by the militaries of the bakufu and the daimyō, who massacred about 37,000 people (Sin Tonggyu 2007, 123). The rebels armed themselves with guns, artillery, and spears, unlike those in the subsequent *hyakushō ikki*, killing magistrates sent by the bakufu and even some of their family members. They also killed hundreds of soldiers and ordinary people during the rebellion (Gonoi Takashi 2014, 181–254).

However, when it comes to killing, the behavior of the rebel army in the Hong Kyŏngnae Rebellion of Korea and the Shimabara Rebellion in Japan was different from the millenarian rebellions of the West and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of China, which were based on Christian ideology. Although these rebellions witnessed many fatalities on both sides in battle, unlike the millenarian rebellions or the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, there were no cases of the mass murder of aristocrats, the ruling class, or even ordinary peasants or the faithful when cities or castles were taken. But these rebellions were a rejection of the ruling system of the times, or seen as such, and therefore, once they had suppressed these revolts, the ruling authorities administered extremely severe punishments. This is what the Hong Kyŏngnae Rebellion and Tonghak Rebellion in Korea and the Shimabara Rebellion in Japan, which all denounced the government or were considered to do so by the authorities, had in common with the millenarian rebellions in the West or China's Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

### Conclusion

As noted earlier, political culture provides significant clues for our understanding of popular movements, as it helps explain the basis for political beliefs and actions and defines the norms for legitimacy for both the ruling and the ruled. Moreover, it reveals how the thinking or actions of not only the ruling class but also the people are closely linked to the ruling ideology.

For instance, E. P. Thompson has shown that the culture of the common people has neither been self-defining nor immune to external influences, but developed as a reaction against the control and coercion of aristocratic rulers (Thompson 1993, 6–7). Regarding the demands made by popular movements, James C. Scott has claimed that, “protesting based on a consensus ruling principle makes more sense and is more persuasive than creating a completely new social concept” (Scott 1990, 92–94). Together, such research reveals how popular movements are suffused by political culture. In fact, in many of the people's movements in the middle ages, “people appropriated and utilized an easily available ruling ideology, regardless of trust in the rules” (Freedman 1999, 298). This is because when the elite failed to meet the requirements political culture placed upon them the ideology that the rulers used to legitimize their social position could ultimately become a resource for people to legitimize their protests.

From the perspective of political culture theory, the ruling ideology is very significant for people seeking to legitimize their thoughts or actions. In this sense, the fact that, while popular movements in the West or the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom were based on an idea that God transcends earthly rulers, popular movements in Korea or Japan lacked such an authority, constituting a significant difference to how people thought and consequently behaved, including the degree of violence they employed.

In Chosŏn, the king was the highest authority to whom rebels in popular movements could appeal to justify their actions and requests. The Tonghak peasant forces insisted on equal distribution of land based on the concept of the Royal Domain, the theory that all land in the nation belonged to the king. Japanese

people also employed the thought of the Royal Domain or the idealization of ancient society to legitimize their claims and demands. Resistance after the Meiji Restoration also introduced the same ideas for the same purpose when they rejected the privatization of land in a society where modern and capitalist law and order became dominant and the landlord system was taking root (Tsurumaki Takao 1991, 4–32, 59–64; Tsurumaki Takao 1994, 220 and 244). It was the king (c.q. the emperor) who had the highest authority to grant legitimacy to these popular movements. Essentially, the people in Chosŏn and Japan did not have a transcendent being, a “universal” faith, or a new worldview with which they could justify violence against other human beings, unlike rebels in the West or in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

While those who participated in the Hong Kyŏngnae Rebellion found their quasi-millenarian ideological foundation in the *Chŏnggamnok*, they did not resort to intense violence. After all, they obtained the legitimacy for their rising not from God, or another Creator or transcendental entity, but from their perception of time as cyclical, that is, the concept that a peaceful age alternates with a chaotic one. Japan’s Shimabara Rebellion, led by Christians, was apart from an effort to protect their Catholic faith, less an aggressive rejection of the governing system and ideology, than a protest against the dire persecution of Christians and wanton exploitation of the peasants.<sup>21</sup> It did not involve a religious calling of “correcting the world’s wrongs” according to “God’s will” or the doctrine of God’s chosen people.

Finally, compared to uprisings in Korea and Japan, Chinese popular movements involved more frequent acts of killing or injuring people on a greater scale, even if some were not based on a religious or transcendental authority. As the revolt by Muslims in Yunnan in 1856 or the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom suggest, Chinese popular rebellions either found their legitimacy in a religious element or were partly triggered by an ethnic conflict. There also seems to be a link between the high level of violence and many rebel forces’ outright rejection of the ruling dynasty or authorities. The Rebellion of Zhong Renjie seems to have been the exception; although it was unrelated to a regime-defying faith or ethnic conflict, it involved much more frequent and violent acts of killing and injuring human beings than rebellions in Korea or Japan. Although this might be partly attributable to the lack of action by national authorities, who remained relatively indifferent rather than directly intervening in the protests and punishing those involved, further research should be undertaken on what caused such a comparatively high level of violence.

<sup>21</sup> The participants of the Shimabara Rebellion were not all Christians: some people were forced to participate, and the religious authority of Amakusa Shirō (天草四郎), whom the Christians nominated as their leader, gradually decreased. When the rebel army was defending Shimabara Castle, about forty *rōnin* (浪人) were discussing further measures and leading the rebel army. See Sin Tonggyu 2007, 145–46.

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