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A Christian Pacifist: An Chunggŭn's Christian Ethics and Armed Struggle

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Abstract

This paper seeks to understand Korean national activist Thomas An Chunggŭn's (1879–1910) thoughts on peace and war from a religious point of view. Regarding Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), the first Japanese resident-general of Korea, as evil, Thomas An resorted to armed struggle and assassinated Itō at the railroad station in Harbin, Manchuria on October 26, 1909 in the name of Korean independence and peace in the East. An's faith in religion served as a driving force in his engagement in national movements, both non-violent and violent, to make peace and restore national sovereignty. By comparing Japanese Christian pacifist Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930), who rejected any kind of war, with An, this paper examines the similarities and differences between An's pacifism, which was developed in the context of a colonized Korea, and Uchimura's, which was formed within that of imperial Japan. In so doing, it explores whether Thomas An can be categorized as a Christian pacifist from the perspective of Christian ethics.

Keywords: absolute pacifism, An Chunggŭn, armed resistance, Christian ethics, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, evil, Righteous Army, Mandate of Heaven, Uchimura Kanzō, Peace Association

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Introduction

How should a Christian react in the face of national crisis? What is a Christian supposed to do when the Church does not allow them to resist the state's oppressive policies? Jesus Christ has been widely understood as a pacifist. He is known as the Prince of Peace and gave his disciples the gift of peace (John 14:27), telling them they were blessed when they made it (Matthew 5:9). The Catholic Church regards this as the essential Christian message that they have been bequeathed, with peace as one of the central concepts of church doctrine.

People long for peace. Christian disciples are supposed to be peacemakers. However, to what degree is a Christian allowed to resist the state to make peace? To what extent can we tolerate the use of violence to restore peace? Korean nationalist and activist Thomas An Chunggŭn (1879–1910) was one Christian who went through the agonizing journey of seeking answers to these questions when his country and its neighbor were endangered by Japanese imperial expansionism. When Korea became a Japanese protectorate under the Ŭlsa Protectorate Treaty in 1905, the Korean Catholic Church led by the Society of Foreign Missions in Paris (*Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris*, or M.E.P.) did not allow its flock to participate in any Korean nationalist movements under the mission policy of separating politics and religion, instead emphasizing the salvation of the soul in the next world (No 2005, 76).

Defying the Catholic Church leaders' instructions, however, Thomas An participated in various nationalist movements, such as running schools and promoting the National Debt Payment Movement (*kukch'ae posang undong*). He also resorted to armed resistance by organizing a Korean Righteous Army (*ũibyŏng*) to wage a war of independence from Japan, and assassinating Itō Hirobumi, the most prominent symbol of the policy to colonize Korea, in Harbin, Manchuria on October 26, 1909. An claimed that his killing of Itō was to restore Korean independence and peace in the East (Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 1983, 384–385; Kukkabohunch'ŏ · kwangbokhoe 1996, 52; Cho 2010, 84). Moreover, he firmly believed he had been granted the Mandate of Heaven to accomplish this and eliminate the cause of the troubles afflicting East Asia (Sin 2009b, 246–252; Hwang 2013, 228–234). Then are An's thoughts on peace and war based on Christian doctrine? Is it possible to justify

his armed resistance and killing of Itō from a religious point of view? To answer these questions, this paper will compare Japanese Christian pacifist Uchimura Kanzō's thought on peace and war with Thomas An Chunggün's based on Christian ethics.¹

Biographical and Historical Background

Thomas An Chunggün (1879–1910) was born into a *yangban* family in Haeju, Hwanghae province, in what is today North Korea, the first son of An T'aehun (1862–1905) and Cho Söngnyō (1862–1927), better known as Cho Maria. An Chunggün received a Confucian education but was influenced by his enlightenment-oriented father and converted to Catholicism in January 1897. He was baptized by Fr. Nicolas Joseph Marie Wilhelm (1860–1938) with 33 relatives and fellow villagers during a two-day visit by the missionary to Ch'önggye-dong.² An's baptismal name was Thomas, after the apostle who went to Asia to spread the gospel. From that point, An actively participated in church activities as an altar server and the leader of the Catholic Community, spreading the gospel with the missionary.

In February 1904, the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) broke out over rival imperial ambitions in Manchuria and Korea. Japan's victory over Russia in the war allowed it to force Korea to conclude the Protectorate Treaty in 1905, depriving it of all diplomatic rights. From that point, An's life changed completely. Ironically, it was Fr. Wilhelm who led him to opening his eyes to nationalist movements. As the Russo-Japanese War broke out, the missionary told Thomas An that Korea would be ruled by that war's victor. His warning led An to consider the fate of his country and the role the international politics of the imperial powers played in the fortunes of a weak Korea. From then on, An began to read newspapers and history books to understand international affairs (An 1999, 152). However, he also wanted to find solutions from Catholicism by restoring morality to the world.

Following the advice of Fr. Charles Joseph Ange Le Gac (1876–1914),³ who urged him to focus on education, develop associations, unite the hearts of the people, and cultivate true strength, An participated in non-violent national movements, such as helping to manage Tonüi School and Samhüng School,⁴

and joining the National Debt Payment Movement.⁵ He also ran a mine named Samhapūi 三合義 in the hopes of helping to develop the Korean economy, but ultimately Japanese interference prevented its success (An 1999, 157).

Meanwhile, Korea's Emperor Kojong dispatched three secret envoys to the Second International Conference held in The Hague, the Netherlands in June 1907 to announce that he had not signed the Protectorate Treaty in 1905 and that consequently it was invalid. Under the treaty, however, Korea had already lost its diplomatic rights and the Korean delegates could not even enter the conference room due to Japanese protests (Dudden 2005, 7–13). Stung by Emperor Kojong's secret move, Itō Hirobumi, who led Japan's colonial project, forced him to abdicate and disbanded the Korean army. Moreover, Korea was forced to accept the Third Japan-Korea Treaty in late July 1907, making it into a *de facto* colony of Japan (Takii 2014, 183). Koreans realized that no country would or could help them.

In August, An left Korea for Jiandao (K. Kando, also known as Gando)⁶ to carry out nationalist activities there with the help of Korean Catholic expatriates. On August 1, the very day the Korean Royal Army was disbanded, An witnessed some skirmishes between Korean and Japanese soldiers in Seoul on his way to Jiandao (O 2010, 29). Once in Jiandao, An stayed at the home of a Catholic in a village called Puldong 佛洞, meaning “French village,” where many Korean Catholics resided.⁷ However, he found that the Koreans there had been influenced by Fr. Bret (1858–1908) of Wönsan Parish,⁸ who ardently advocated the mission policy of separation of church and state, and consequently An's efforts to promote nationalistic movements were not able to sway the people of the region (No 2005, 53–81). Moreover, Japan had already established a police station under the Korean Residency-General in Longjing on August 23, 1907, which served as an advanced base for Japanese encroachments on Manchuria and prevented Koreans from engaging in independence activities there (O 2010, 31). It was therefore impossible to obtain any support from the Catholic Church and Korean Catholics. Nevertheless, An did not abandon his hope of restoring morality to the world.

As An experienced some limitations to conducting non-violent movements in Jiandao, he proceeded to Vladivostok in the Russian Maritime Province to organize a Korean Righteous Army (K. *ũibyŏng*) with Korean expatriates there. At that time Korean expatriates were actively conducting a kind of

guerilla war in the region. The leaders of these Righteous Armies can be characterized into three types: The first were those who had fought against the Japanese in Korea and then moved to Russia to carry on the struggle, men like Yu Insök (1842–1915) and Hong Pömdo (1868–1943). Many of these organized the Righteous Armies in Korea when Queen Min was brutally murdered by the Japanese in 1895. Since the 1905 Protectorate Treaty, they moved their military bases to Russia and the former soldiers of the Korean Royal Army joined them when the Army was forcibly disbanded in 1907. The second type were those like Pak Kiman, who organized army units among the Korean community in Russia and Jiandao. The third type included those who had changed their nationalist activities from what might be characterized as non-violent patriotic enlightenment at home to armed resistance abroad; men like An Chunggün (Yun 2010, 81).⁹

An visited Yi Pömyun (1863–1940),¹⁰ who since 1902 had several times served as the inspector of Jiandao (*Kando kwallisa*) for the Korean government. During the Russo-Japanese War, Yi fought with the Russians against the Japanese, leading the Korean Ch'angüigun 倡義軍 (Promoting Righteousness Army). An persuaded Yi to organize a Korean Righteous Army, arguing that fighting against Japan would be following the Mandate of Heaven.¹¹ An thought Itō Hirobumi was destroying Japan's relationships with its neighbors and forfeiting the trust of the world by saying that Koreans desired their country to be a protectorate of Japan. An maintained that Itō even deceived the Japanese emperor so that he could kill those who stood in the way of him realizing his imperial ambitions, which could be called “being against heaven,” and that the Koreans should “respond to the will of Heaven and follow the desires of the people” by eliminating Itō (An 1999, 158).

Finally, hundreds of Korean expatriates organized the Tongüihoe 同義會 (Society of the Same Will) in April 1908 at the home of the Korean Russian Ch'oe Chaehyöng (1860–1920).¹² One of the secret envoys to The Hague, Yi Wijong (1884–1924?),¹³ brought 10,000 rubles provided by Emperor Kojong (O 2010, 44–46; Ch'oe 2012, 110–111). Ch'oe offered 13,000 rubles, while the Korean expatriates in Russia donated 6,000 rubles (Sin 2009a, 60). An also added about 4,000 rubles collected from Koreans in the region as military funds to be used to organize the army (Kuksa p'yönnch'an wiwönhoe 1977, 235).

At the meeting, Ch'oe was selected as president-general (*ch'ongjang*), Yi Pömyun as vice-president-general (*puch'ongjang*), Yi's cousin Yi Wijong as president (*hoejang*), Ōm Insöp as vice-president (*puhoejang*), Paek Kyusam as secretary (*sögi*), and the founding members, including An, as council members (*p'yöngüiwön*). Thus, the Korean Righteous Armies in the Russian Maritime Province were mainly combined with Yi Pömyun's Ch'angüihoe 倡義會 (Society for Promoting Righteousness) and Ch'oe Chaehyöng's Tongüihoe. Because of this they were called the Ch'angüigun and Tongüigun, respectively. However, Yi was a member of the royal family whereas Ch'oe was from the lower classes, though he had accumulated a large amount of money in Russia.

From the beginning, such different people found it difficult to work together. Nevertheless, both Yi and Ch'oe cooperated to conduct the so-called "Kungnae chin'gong chakchön" (Operation to march onto Korean soil) in July 1908 in an effort to drive the Japanese out of Korea. Later, An testified in his court trial that a man named Kim Tusöng¹⁴ from Kangwön province had served as governor-general (*ch'ongdok*) of the Korean Righteous Army, Yi Pömyun as general-commander (*ch'ongdaejang*), Chön Chaeik as chief-general of both camps (*toyöngjang*), Ōm Insöp as lieutenant-general of the left camp (*chwayöngjang*), and An Chunggün as lieutenant-general of the right camp (*uyöngjang*) (Yun 2010, 81).

It is difficult to ascertain the exact size of the Korean Righteous Armies that participated in the operation to march into Korea in 1908, but U Töksun, who later plotted the assassination of Itō with An, testified in his memoirs that it amounted to about 1,200 men. In the operation, U led 600 soldiers organized into twelve units, and An 200 soldiers in four units (U 1999, 619). With their combined Korean Righteous Army, Yi Pömyun and Kim Tusöng conducted a joint operation with another Righteous Army leader named Hong Pömdo (1868–1943), who usually fought in the northern region of Korea. In that operation, An won an initial victory and captured some Japanese soldiers and merchants. Despite his unit's strong protests, he released the Japanese captives with their weapons in accordance with international law. However, this caused conflict and some of the army leaders left their units. Moreover, their whereabouts were revealed to the enemy forces and at the ensuing Battle of Yöngsan, An was severely defeated and barely escaped with his life, retreating to the Russian

Maritime Province (An 1999, 161–168). At that time most of the leaders of the Korean Righteous Army lacked the concept of the nation-state or modern military discipline. They were not reform-minded (Yun 2003, 292). It was therefore impossible to reorganize the army.

In October 1909, An heard the news that Itō had come to Manchuria to negotiate with the Russian Finance Minister Vladimir Kokovtsov (1853–1943) about the South Manchurian Railroad, part of Itō's plan to spread the Meiji constitutional system to Manchuria (Takii 2014, 179). An took this opportunity to eliminate what he saw as the main threat to peace in the East and Korean independence. On October 26, when Itō was being saluted by the Russian military at the railroad station in Harbin, An shot him to death, wounding three members of his entourage (An 1999, 170–174).¹⁵

Pacifism in Christian Ethics

In Christian ethics, pacifism can be divided into three different types: the principled, pragmatic, and selective. First, principled pacifism rejects any kind of violence. Whatever suffering might be encountered in the exercise of pacifism, it has to be endured as a means to the desired peaceful end (Elford 2001, 171). Japanese Christian pacifist Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930) can be categorized into this group. Uchimura rejected any kind of violence, criticizing the Russo-Japanese War after witnessing the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). As a Protestant, he pursued non-violence, advocating absolute pacifism.

Second, pragmatic pacifism considers violence to be counterproductive and non-violence productive. This group recognizes the ideal of pacifism but admits that certain conditions need to be considered. Mahatma Gandhi is regarded as an example of this group as he promoted a non-violent national movement against imperial British rule over India (Elford 2001, 174). However, Gandhi showed ambiguous attitudes towards the British and Japanese imperialists by encouraging the Indian youth to fight with the British in the Boer War and praising Japan's modernization as almost equal to the advanced West when it won the Russo-Japanese War (Misra 2014, 691–695; Han 2017, 131–138).

Finally, selective pacifism considers fighting wars only in exceptional cases. A German pacifist theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) is a good example of this type. Defining the Hitler regime as an exceptional case, he argued that the Church should take a more active stance against corrupt political powers like Nazi Germany. In such a situation, he believed that the Church should carry out three tasks: First, it should ask the state whether its actions can be justified and legitimate. Second, it should always be on the side of the oppressed. And third, it should be responsible “not only to care for the victim under the wheel, but to put a spoke in the wheel itself” (Ulik B. Nissen 2009, 152).¹⁶ Based on this belief, Bonhoeffer stood up against Hitler’s regime and became involved in attempts to kill Hitler in 1943. He was arrested and then executed in a concentration camp on April 9, 1945.

Just as Bonhoeffer wanted to stop Hitler and his regime, Thomas An eliminated Itō, who he thought had destroyed peace in the East. An’s killing Itō was like “putting a spoke in the wheel” in order to stop a bus driven by a drunken driver (Han’guk kidokkyo yōksa yōn’guso 2006, 338). Bonhoeffer thought he should pull Hitler from behind the wheel of the state to save many innocent lives, and so he joined attempts to kill him. By the same logic, An wanted to eliminate what he saw as evil Itō (Yun Kyōngro 2010, 145–146). Even though An claimed “There is no religion above the nation” (Kuksa p’yōnch’an wiwōnhoe 1977, 534), An’s life and national movements were all related to his faith in Christian teachings. Immediately after his killing of Itō, he was arrested by the Russian military police and then handed over to Japanese authorities. He subsequently underwent eleven interrogations and six trial sessions. Before his first interrogation, An submitted a note entitled, “Han’gugin An Ŭngch’il sohoe” (Thoughts of the Korean An Ŭngch’il) to the Japanese authorities.¹⁷ In that note, he deplored the ongoing military rivalry between powerful countries which disregarded morality and human life. He also revealed why he felt he had to kill Itō:

Heaven is present in humanity and so all people in the world are brothers and sisters. All possess the same human nature that cherishes freedom, loves life, and abhors death. Today, the people of this world usually assert that we live in a civilized age but it is not really like that. The powerful of the

most developed societies use such talk only as an excuse to kill the others. Not a day passes on the six continents of the world in which cannons do not blast smoke and bullets do not rain down. . . Itō Hirobumi could not understand what was happening and recklessly formulated his cruel policy. As a result, it will be difficult for the whole of East Asia to escape collapse. . . For me, doing nothing was unthinkable and so at Harbin, with a single bullet, I declared the crimes of that old thief Itō before the whole world, and in so doing awoke East Asian youths to a purpose. (An 2008, 67–68, translated by Jieun Han and Franklin Rausch)

As seen from the above, An saw Itō as the main cause of trouble and wanted to warn the world, especially by awakening the youth of East Asia. In the first interrogation session held on October 30, 1909, when Japanese prosecutor Mizobuchi Takao asked An why he was hostile to Itō, An enumerated the fifteen crimes committed by Itō. Among these, the twelfth was disturbing peace in the East (Kuksa p'yōnch'an wiwōnhoe 1983, 3–4).¹⁸

In the tenth interrogation session, when Mizobuchi pointed out that killing a person was a sin in Catholicism, An insisted, “In the Bible, killing a person is a sin. However, when there is a person who tries to steal another person’s country and take other people’s lives, it is a sin if you sit idle by. Therefore I just eliminated that evil” (Ibid., 284). An understood that Japan’s oppressive rule over Korea led by Itō was an evil thing and an exceptional case that needed to be addressed, and consequently, as a lieutenant-general of a Korean Righteous Army, he had to resort to armed resistance and kill Itō in order to save the lives of others. An never considered that his killing of Itō ran against Catholic doctrine.

Righteous War vs. Objection to War

In the nineteenth century, there was perhaps no country that more clearly realized the double meaning of the word “peace” than Korea. At the Second International Peace Conference in The Hague (June 15–October 18, 1907), the Korean envoys’ appeal to regain peace and independence was collectively

rejected by the delegates of the world who were attending the conference to ostensibly promote peace. This was because at that time peace meant that Japan would legally rule over Korea (Dudden 2005, 8).

Christians are obliged to seek true peace. They are not supposed to lean back passively. They have to resist actively but non-violently as much as possible. In reality, however, Koreans who were shunned and could find little help from the world could do almost nothing but resort to armed resistance to restore peace. Like most of the Korean Righteous Army leaders,¹⁹ An also regarded his military activities to restore national sovereignty as part of a righteous war. Moreover, he thought Itō was an evil man who had even deceived his emperor. When An encouraged Korean expatriates to join the Righteous Army, he emphasized why he thought Itō threatened Korean independence and peace in the East:

... Alas! Those [Japanese] bandits called our righteous armies insurgents²⁰ and raised an army to punish them and cruelly slaughtered our people. Over the past two years hundreds of thousands of our people have suffered. So who are the insurgents? Is it not those who steal the land and kill people? Or is it those who are protecting their own country by defending it against foreign bandits? This is a case of a criminal claiming to be the victim. This cruel and violent policy towards Korea originated from that powerful politician, that old thief, Itō Hirobumi. By claiming that it was the twenty million Koreans that wanted Japan to protect them, and by saying that peace is advancing each day, he has tricked the [Japanese] emperor and has covered the eyes and ears of the great powers. He formulates evil schemes in accordance with his own designs. There is nothing he cannot do. How can we endure this indignity? My fellow Koreans, if we do not eliminate this bandit, then Korea will certainly perish and the East will eventually be destroyed... (An 1999, 159–160)

An regarded his armed resistance as part of the Righteous Army as a war of independence against Japan. An's view was influenced by the *Kongnip sinbo*, which insisted that the Righteous Army was a Korean regular army whose

rise constituted a war of independence against Japan, whereas Japan considered it as mob rebellion (Han 2003, 59–61; Sin 2009a, 49; Cho 2010, 97–102). Like other Koreans who fought in the Righteous Army, An considered his army's advance onto Korean soil to be a righteous war with Japan. An's concept of a righteous war was almost identical with the notion of just war in Christianity. In general, the just war in Christianity should be met with the following conditions: 1) The war must have a just cause; 2) It must be waged by a legitimate authority; 3) It must be formally declared; and 4) It must be fought with a peaceful intention (Johannes Nissen 2009, 46). As stated above, Emperor Kojong provided financial support through Yi Wijong in 1908 when An organized the Korean Righteous Army with Korean expatriates in Vladivostok. Thus, the Korean Righteous Army was established to succeed the disbanded Korean Army to wage war against Japan.

Moreover, An considered his assassination of Itō as part of his independence war with Japan. Probably due to this, from his very first trial session and meeting with the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the Kwantung Government-General Hiraishi Ujindo on February 17, 1910, An claimed several times that he should be treated as a prisoner of war as a lieutenant-general of the Korean Righteous Army and his trial should be conducted under international law (Kuksa p'yōnch'an wiwōnhoe 1983, 313, 384–385; Kukkabohunch'ō · kwangbokhoe 1996, 52).

Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930), considered a “Japanese modern prophet” by John Howes (2005), also once advocated the Christian concept of the just war, believing in the possible beneficent effects of war (Howes 1980, 100–101). He supported the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), like most Japanese. In his article, “Justification for the Korean War,” published in *The Japan Weekly Mail* (August 11, 1894), he maintained that Japan had the right to intervene, and indeed it was their duty to do so when Koreans were dying of hunger, being attacked by Chinese robbers, and rapidly heading toward destruction. Uchimura also argued that Japan had sent troops to Korea in strict accordance with international law and the spirit of the Tientsin Treaty of 1882,²¹ explaining that as China was treacherous, the Japanese decided upon war.

Uchimura was born the eldest son into a low-class *samurai* family in Edo (Tokyo). He converted to Christianity at the age of seventeen when studying

at Sapporo Agricultural College. After finishing college, he married Asada Také in March 1884 against the wishes of his parents. The marriage did not last long, and after his divorce, he went to the United States to study at Amherst College, where he received his second bachelor's degree in 1887. He returned to Japan and worked at the prestigious Number One Higher School in Tokyo. But he became most famous for his refusal to bow before the Education Rescript in 1891. His refusal was not based on his rejection of the Imperial Rescript on Education or the emperor, but because he believed that bowing deeply, as he would to God, would constitute an idolatrous act (Sō 1992, 105–106; Moroi 2012, 374–375). Following this, he could not find work in any government-related organizations and had to become a freelance writer.

However, Uchimura changed his attitude toward war after the Sino-Japanese War when he saw that imperial Japan did not use the money extracted from China to save its weak neighbor but only to build up its own military. In 1904, when the Russo-Japanese War broke out, Uchimura announced that he rejected any kind of violence, arguing that the Bible did not justify war (Howes 1980, 102–106). From that point on he remained a Christian absolute pacifist, strongly opposing war until his death. His objection to the war was a brave and conscientious stand to take, considering the social atmosphere at the time when almost all Japanese supported the victorious wars over China and Russia. Nevertheless, Uchimura loved Japan. His nationalistic viewpoint was well reflected in an article on Korea entitled, “Kōfuku naru Chōsengoku” 幸福なる朝鮮国 (Happy Chosōn), published in his monthly magazine *Seisho no kenkyū* (Biblical Studies) in October 1907. In that work Uchimura claimed that Chosōn Korea was happy because it had obtained spiritual freedom and independence in the Great Revival:

I have heard that the descending of the Holy Spirit has been overwhelming in Chosōn [Korea]. Happy Chosōn! As she has lost her political freedom and independence, it seems that she has obtained spiritual freedom and independence. She who once became a center of Eastern culture and influenced it even to the archipelago in the East [Japan], has now become a center of the evangelization in the East again. Hopefully her lights will spread out everywhere. The Lord does not despise Chosōn. God loves its people. He

does not present them with the army and the ships. Instead, He has sent them the Holy Spirit which is much more powerful [than an army and navy]. It is not necessary for Chosŏn to be disappointed. In ancient times, as Judea lost its political freedom but enlightened and civilized many countries in the West with the new religion [Christianity], Chosŏn [Korea] has lost its political independence but now received the good news of God to enlighten and civilize the countries in the East. I have heard that the Holy Spirit has come down in Chosŏn, pinning a great hope for the future of the East. At the same time, I cannot but wonder how deeply and how widely God's providence surpasses our thoughts.²²

The Great Revival was a Holy Spirit movement originated by American Methodist missionary Robert Hardie (1865–1949) in 1903 when he confessed his failures in front of his missionary colleagues and then to the Korean congregation the following Sunday. This sparked a period of daily meetings for prayer and Bible study by the Koreans so that they also made public confessions. Like the Korean Catholic Church, the Protestant missionaries did not support political movements under a policy of separation between state and religion (Pak 2006, 284). As the Korean Protestants experienced national crises, such as the Russo-Japanese War, the Protectorate Treaty, and the abdication of Emperor Kojong, they needed to pour out their political sorrows and pent-up emotions as a form of religious repentance. They confessed that they lost political freedom and independence due to their sins and prayed to God for national salvation (Oak 2013, 293). Moreover, the Western missionaries prevented the Great Revival Movement from developing into a nationwide political one. Thus, spiritual freedom was not fully allowed to Koreans, and consequently they could not be happy as Uchimura claimed.

Uchimura's two standards for happiness came from his love for Japan. His nationalism represents his love for two Js: Jesus and Japan. He was a patriotic Christian, believing that Japan was destined to Christianize the world (Howes 2007, 145). He thought that Japan had a mission given by Heaven, even though he wrote many critical writings on Meiji Japan. His thoughts on Japan's mission were similar with what An argued about the Mandate of Heaven, in that it was bequeathed by heaven.

The Mandate of Heaven (天命) and Japan's Mission (天職)

Christians are encouraged to behave in a Christ-like way. Following the will of God is a part of being a Christian. Moreover, peacemaking is a fundamental duty of the disciple. When An was trying to organize a Korean Righteous Army, he persuaded Yi Pömyun (1863–1940)²³ to join it as commander-in-chief by using the concept of the Mandate of Heaven. An argued that Japan won the Russo-Japanese War because Heaven could not tolerate the brutal behavior of Russia. But now Japan had lost its morality and it was time to defeat it (An 1999, 158). After he was sentenced to death, An again emphasized following the will of Heaven in his meeting with the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the Kwantung Government-General. He said, quoting an old saying, “The one who obeys the will of Heaven will succeed and the one who opposes it will perish” (Ibid., 53). An interpreted Japan’s declaration of war against Russia as strengthening Korean independence and therefore as obeying the will of Heaven. However, after Japan’s victory, Itō Hirobumi pursued his own policy, defying the will of the Japanese emperor. Thereafter, Korea and Japan found themselves in the trouble and Itō lost his moral standing and killing him thus became the will of God, that is, part of the Mandate of the Heaven granted to An by the Lord. An testified that he had eliminated the evil, which was his duty as an East Asian (Kukkabohunch’ō · kwangbokhoe 1996, 52–53).

As An mentioned in the meeting with the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the Kwantung Government-General, in ancient China, when the Shang dynasty was collapsing, the countries of the world revered a noble man named Zhou and made him take control of all under Heaven. Thus, according to Confucian doctrine, Heaven would select the moral ruler to govern China, granting him the Mandate of Heaven (Ch. *tianming*; K. *ch’ōnmyōng* 天命). If that ruler lost divine support, he could no longer claim legitimacy from the Mandate of Heaven (Ching 1978, 120; Schwartz 1985, 53; Baker 2014, 155). By emphasizing the Mandate of Heaven, which had moved from the Shang to the Zhou, An claimed that Itō too had lost his legitimacy to rule and thereby should be punished by the Lord.

In Christianity, God is regarded as the Lord of human history and rulership is viewed as originating from the Mandate of Heaven, which refers to the will or decree of Heaven. This can also refer to destiny or fate (Ching 1978, 120–122). An received a traditional education based on the Confucian teaching that the universe is governed by a moral Heaven and that human beings are supposed to behave morally. This led An to easily equate the Confucian concept of obedience to Heaven as obedience to God (Rausch 2012, 265).²⁴ An never doubted that his killing of Itō might run counter to Catholic doctrine. Thus, his thoughts on the Mandate of Heaven mixed with Confucianism, Catholicism, and nationalism to motivate him to oppose Japan's attempt to colonize Korea and its neighbors.

Unlike Thomas An, who formed his faith in Catholicism in harmony with traditional Confucianism, Uchimura advocated Japanese Christianity, transcending traditional Japanese religion. He emphasized “independence.” Based on this belief, his lectures on the Bible developed into *mukyōkai shugi* (“no-churchism”). Korean Protestant thinkers such as Kim Kyosin (1901–1945) and Ham Sōkhōn (1901–1989) became his disciples, following his ideas of *mukyōkai shugi* and absolute pacifism. However, Uchimura firmly believed that Japan had a mission “to reconcile the East with West and to be the advocate of the East and the harbinger of the West” (Barshay 2013, 27). In his article, “Japan: Its Mission,” Uchimura claimed that Japan had a role in serving as a representative of the East to bridge it with the West. This was the heavenly mission and vocation (K. *ch'ōnjik*, J. *tenshoku* 天職) given to Japan. Thus, he believed that Japan had a duty to enlighten weak neighboring countries such as China and Korea (Sin Unyong 2012, 173).

Based on this belief, Uchimura supported the Sino-Japanese War. Even after he accepted absolute pacifism, objecting to the Russo-Japanese War, his thoughts on Japan's mission remained unchanged. Even though he did not support Japanese imperial expansionism, he showed a very unique nationalism epitomized in his statement, “Japan for the World; the World for Christ; and All for God,” in his essay “I for Japan” (Barshay 2013, 21). Due to Japan's geographical location, Uchimura claimed that Japan had a providential mission and role in world history.

Their Dreams: An's Peace Association and Uchimura's Absolute Pacifism

As An maintained several times, his ultimate goal was not just to eliminate Itō but to realize peace in the East and then the world. His pacifism was partly reflected in his unfinished treatise *Tongyang p'yŏnghwaron* (On peace in the East), a treatise written in prison because he was not allowed to testify at his trial. An's unfinished treatise begins by emphasizing union, "It is an ancient and unchanging principle that union brings success and division brings failure. But today the world is divided into East and West as different races struggle against each other" (An 1999, 192).²⁵ He criticized the ongoing military rivalry over regional hegemony that disregarded innocent human lives and peaceful co-prosperity.²⁶

An's thoughts on peace in the East are more specifically reflected in his talks with chief justice of the Supreme Court of the Kwantung Government-General Hiraishi Ujindo on February 17, 1910. In this meeting An suggested that Japan obtain hegemony without resorting to military force. He emphasized that Japan needed to put its economy in order as the most urgent matter. Second, it had to obtain the trust of all the countries of the world. And third, it should determine how to defend itself (Kukkabohunch'ŏ · kwangbokhoe 1996, 55). An understood that Japan waged war for economic reasons, but suggested Japan should return Lüshun (Port Arthur) to China and organize a Peace Association with Asian countries and then the world. This is how Japan might obtain hegemony without resorting to military force.

In order to implement his ideas, An revealed seven specific ways to organize the Peace Association. First, in order to obtain financial security, one *wŏn* in membership dues should be charged per member. Second, a joint bank could be opened and common currency issued. Third, branch offices of both the peace association and the bank could be established in key locations. Fourth, a joint army of the three countries of Japan, China, and Korea could be organized after returning Lüshun to China. Japan would station five or six naval vessels at Lüshun for its own security. Fifth, the youth of these three countries would form military units and would learn each other's languages. By doing so they would develop a more positive view of each other. Sixth, under Japan's guidance, China and Korea would be able to plan how to

develop their commerce and industry. And finally, he suggested that the emperors of the three countries of Japan, China, and Korea meet with the Pope in Rome, take their oaths together, and be crowned by him (*Ibid.*, 55–57).

Much of what An wished to implement in the Peace Association was forward-looking and resembled current economic regional blocs. More importantly, An suggested that the Emperors of China, Japan, and Korea be crowned by the Catholic Pope. The symbolic meaning behind this may not be readily apparent. This notion was the product of An's belief that only religion could bring peace to the East and the world. To him, regaining Korean independence and achieving peace in the East was as much a religion as Catholicism. He thought the people of the world could be one as the children of God. In this context, he claimed that the meaning of peace was that all of the countries, large or small, must be independent (Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 1983, 174). It was his hope that the Peace Association would realize an International Peace Conference in Lüshun where every delegate, whether from a strong or weak nation, could participate, unlike the Peace Conference in The Hague, where Koreans were not even allowed to enter.

In a social atmosphere where almost every Japanese praised their country for its victory over imperial Russia, Uchimura courageously rejected the use of violence, advocating absolute pacifism. As an activist for peace, he was highly critical of the imperial Japanese government. He encouraged young Japanese to serve the interests of peace throughout the world. As a devoted Protestant, he firmly believed that all men were brothers of the same family and blood, made in the image of the same heavenly father, contending that, "The Japanese who have prepared themselves to be men of the world can make the world their own" (quoted in Howes 1980, 117–120).

Uchimura's concern with morality was essential to his thoughts on peace. As stated above, however, he revealed a double standard regarding Koreans who were suffering from oppressive Japanese rule. Probably due to this, he interpreted the Cheam-ri Massacre committed by Japanese soldiers on April 14, 1919 as a legitimate act of self-defense (Sŏ 1993, 93). This incident occurred during the March First Independence Movement in Korea, when the Japanese army gathered the villagers of Cheam-ri and locked them in a local Methodist church. The Japanese soldiers then shot and burned them to death (Clark

2003, 51).²⁷ However, the victims were innocent Christians and believers in Ch'ondogyo, not robbers or rebels. Nevertheless, Uchimura defended imperial Japan, claiming that Japanese authorities had to fire at those Koreans to suppress the uprising. Moreover, Uchimura kept silent when the Great Kantō Earthquake occurred in 1923 and in its aftermath many Korean residents of Japan were murdered by Japanese.²⁸

Conclusion

Thomas An Chunggūn was a man of action. He was also a man of religious faith and a devoted Catholic. Despite the Church's misunderstanding and indifference, An endeavored to regain peace in Korea and the East by following his notion of Christian doctrine. Regarding Itō as evil and the main threat to Korean independence and peace in the East, An resorted to armed resistance and assassinated Itō to eliminate what he viewed as the main cause of the trouble afflicting the East.

However, what An really sought was not simply the assassination of Itō but the realization of peace in the East and then the world. What he suggested to Japan was a way to obtain regional hegemony without using military force. In his dream of a Peace Association at Lüshun, all countries, weak or strong, would participate. His pacifism was based on union and harmony, not on individualism and uniqueness.

Christians should not sit idly by in the face of injustice, but should be as non-violent as possible. Thomas An experienced a very specific and real impression of the oppressed Korean people through Japanese colonial rule in Korea. As a Christian, he felt a true need to do something for his nation and people. Amidst national crisis, he tried to resolve the problems faced by both colonial Japan and colonized Korea in the face of the Church's silence. His ideas on a Peace Association in Lüshun were meant to overcome the ongoing military rivalries and to go beyond war. This is why An's pacifism is still meaningful in this day and age.

Then is it possible to categorize Thomas An Chunggūn as a Christian pacifist? Based on Christian ethics, Thomas An represents a selective pacifism,

like that of the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. An's Korean Righteous Army activities and killing of Itō were rightful acts in resistance of Japan's oppressive rule over its neighbors. As reflected in his *On Peace in the East* and the meeting with the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the Kwantung Government-General, An envisaged the Peace Association on behalf of the East and the wider world. However, he also emphasized Confucian values, such as the Mandate of Heaven. In this context, his pacifism mixed with Catholicism, Confucianism, and nationalism.

Notes

- 1 A comparative study of An Chunggŭn and Uchimura Kanzō was first made by Sin Unyong (2012), who compared An's pacifism with Uchimura's absolute pacifism.
- 2 A letter by Fr. Wilhelm to Bishop Mutel (1854–1933), dated December 6, 1896, states that Chunggŭn's father An T'aehun and his brother visited Fr. Wilhelm (Korean name Hong Sōkku 洪錫九) on the Saint Day of Francis Xavier to ask the missionary to baptize the people of his village. Fr. Wilhelm went to Ch'ōnggye-dong on January 8, 1897 and baptized thirty-three people over the course of two days, including An Chunggŭn's father and Chunggŭn. His father's baptismal name was Peter (Sin Hyerim 2016a, 30–31).
- 3 Fr. Le Gac was from Alsace-Lorraine, which was historically contested by France and Germany, so it seems he could appreciate An's nationalist activities.
- 4 Samhŭng School was a night school originally established by O Ilhwan, a governmental official in Chinnamp'o. The school, affiliated with the Chinanmp'o Parish, provided English lessons to about 40 students in early 1907. An's brother-in-law Kim Nŭngkwōn offered financial support of 15,000 nyang to build the school and his two brothers also provided financial help until An left for Jiandao (K. Kando). After that the school was reorganized as a night school and named Osōng School. Tonŭi School was established by Fr. Paurie in 1901 and was also affiliated with Chinnamp'o Parish. An was the second principal of the school. However, it closed its doors in 1916 due to financial difficulties (Cho 2010, 87–89).
- 5 The National Debt Payment Movement was started by Kim Kwangje and Sō Sangdon in Daegu in January 1907 in order to repay 13 million wōn of national debt to Japan. Augustine Sō was a devoted Catholic and Thomas An came down

to Kyesan Parish in Daegu to promote the movement as a representative of P'yŏngan province. An's wife and sister-in-law donated their jewelry to the movement (Hwang 2013, 61).

- 6 Jiandao refers to a region in the upper reaches of the Tumen River and which currently constitutes much of Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture of China's Jilin province. During the late Chosŏn dynasty, many Koreans settled in this region seeking better harvests. During the Japanese colonial period, Japan gave up Jiandao to the Qing following a territorial dispute over the region in 1909. Therefore, Korea was excluded from the treaty though there are many Koreans still living there (Schmid 2000, 219–240; Han 2008, 211–228).
- 7 An stayed at the home of a Korean named Nam and who was the leader of the Korean Catholic community there. Puldong was a *kyouch'on*, village where Korean Catholic converts lived together (Sin 2009a, 42).
- 8 Fr. Aloysius Bret (Korean name Paek Yusa, 1858–1908) came to Korea in April 1894. He worked at Wŏnsan Parish in Hamgyŏng province in North Korea. He was transferred to Jiandao in September 1907 and established a parish in Longjing, Jilin. Before leaving for Jiandao (Kando), Thomas An Chunggŭn visited him to receive the sacraments on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, but Fr. Bret refused to give An any sacrament on the grounds that An was engaged in national movements, and thus in defiance of the Church's instruction not to do so (Cho 2010, 101).
- 9 After the Protectorate Treaty, the number of Koreans of the elite class leading Righteous Army activities increased. After Korea's annexation by Japan more Koreans went to Russia and Kando to join Righteous Armies. For more information on An Chunggŭn's Righteous Army activities, see Sin Unyong (2009a), Pan Pyŏngryul (2009b), and Pak Minyŏng (2010).
- 10 Yi Pŏmyun was a descendant of the fifth son of King Sejong, Prince Kwangp'yŏng. His elder brother was Yi Pŏmjŏn (1852–1911), who was a close confidant of Emperor Kojong and a diplomat in Russia. Thus, the organization of the Korean Righteous Army in the Russian Maritime Province was made possible by the cooperation between Yi Pŏmyun and the leader of the Korean Russian Community Ch'oe Chaehyŏng (Pak 2010, 197; O 2010, 41).
- 11 An Chunggŭn wrote in his autobiography that he persuaded Yi Pŏmyun into following the Mandate of Heaven, arguing that if they responded to the will of Heaven, they would succeed, as evidenced by Japan's victory over China and then Russia. But as Japan became immoral and did not keep its promise for Korean

- independence and peace in the East, it should be punished for its immorality. Thus, An believed God would intervene in human history (An 1999, 158–159).
- 12 Ch'oe Chaehyŏng, also known as Pyotr Semyonovich, was born into a tenant farming family in North Hamgyŏng province. His family had to move to the first Korean village in Russia in 1869 due to a poor harvest. Ch'oe studied in a Russian school and then joined the Russian Imperial Navy. He did business with the Russian government, accumulating a large sum of money. As a representative of Korean Russians, he spent his great wealth in supporting various anti-Japanese movements. However, in April 1920, Japan rounded up Russian revolutionary forces and Korean Righteous Army soldiers. Ch'oe was arrested in Ussuriysk during such a roundup and shot to death when he attempted to escape (Pan 2009a).
 - 13 Japanese authorities put the three Korean delegates on trial in abstentia and sentenced Yi Sangsŏl (1870–1917) to death and Yi Chun (1859–1907) and Yi Wijong to life in prison. Therefore they could not return to Korea. However, Yi Chun died suddenly in his hotel room in The Hague out of severe anger and frustration. Yi Sangsŏl and Yi Wijong returned to Vladivostok to join nationalist movements and Korean Righteous Army activities.
 - 14 An testified in court that he was ordered to work as a lieutenant-general in the Righteous Army in Jiandao and the Russian Maritime Province by Kim Tusŏng, the commander-general (*ch'ongdok*) of eight provinces of Korea (Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 1983, 333). However, Kim Tusŏng's identity has not been clarified. It can be surmised Kim was a close confidant of Emperor Kojong who could control the Righteous Army in the Russian Maritime Province (O 2010, 55), whereas Ch'oe Tŏkkyu argued that Kim was Emperor Kojong based on a Russian report of June 22, 1910, which showed that Emperor Kojong asked Russian Tsar Nicholas II not to oppose Japan's treaty of annexation with Korea and the exchanges of opinions on Kojong's plan to seek exile in the Russian Maritime Province (Ch'oe 2012, 122–132).
 - 15 Itō's traveling companions, Harbin consul-general Kawakami Toshihiko, Palace Secretary Mori Taijiro, and the director of the South Manchuria Railway, Tanaka Seitaro, were all each struck with one bullet either in the foot or the chest, but none were seriously wounded.
 - 16 Ulik B. Nissen argued this point based on Bonhoeffer's writing, "Die Kirche vor der Judenfrage," published in 1997.
 - 17 Ŭngch'il 應七 ("seven remarks") was An's childhood name, and derived from the fact he had seven birthmarks on his abdomen (An 1999, 131). This note was submitted to the Japanese authorities on November 6, 1909 (An 2008, 68).

- 18 In his first interrogation conducted by the Japanese consulate in Harbin on October 30, 1909, An listed the fifteen crimes committed by Itō Hirobumi: 1) The crime of killing the Queen of Korea about ten years ago; 2) The crime of forcing the conclusion of the five-article treaty which is against Korea; 3) The crime of forcing the conclusion of the twelve-article treaty that gave military disadvantages to Korea; 4) The crime of forcing the Emperor of Korea to abdicate; 5) The crime of disbanding the Korean army; 6) The crime of slaughtering innocent Koreans when the Righteous Army rose up against the treaty; 7) The crime of forcibly seizing political power and other rights; 8) The crime of burning good textbooks used in Korean schools; 9) The crime of prohibiting Koreans from purchasing newspapers; 10) The crime of forcing the use of the paper money issued by the First Bank; 11) The crime of seizing railroads, mines, and land; 12) The crime of destroying peace in the East; 13) The crime of tricking the emperor [of Japan] into thinking that things in Korea were peaceful and without incident when in fact between Korea and Japan there is no end to war and slaughter; 14) The crime of killing His Highness the Japanese Emperor's father, the former emperor; and 15) The crime of deceiving the world by saying that Korea wanted to be protected by Japan.

However, in his autobiography written in prison, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa* (History of An Ŭngch'il), An listed Itō's fifteen crimes as follows: 1) The crime of killing Empress Min; 2) The crime of forcing the Emperor of Korea to abdicate; 3) The crime of forcing the conclusion of the five- and seven-article treaties; 4) The crime of slaughtering innocent Koreans; 5) The crime of forcibly seizing political power; 6) The crime of seizing railroads, mines, and land; 7) The crime of forcing the use of paper money issued by the First Bank; 8) The crime of disbanding the Korean army; 9) The crime of obstructing education; 10) The crime of preventing Koreans from being educated overseas; 11) The crime of confiscating and burning textbooks; 12) The crime of deceiving the world by saying that Korea wanted to be protected by Japan; 13) The crime of tricking the emperor [of Japan] into thinking that things in Korea were peaceful and without incident when in fact between Korea and Japan there is no end to war and slaughter; 14) The crime of destroying peace in the East; and 15) The crime of killing His Highness the Japanese Emperor's father, the former emperor (An 1999, 174–175).

- 19 All of the anti-Japanese fighters firmly believed that their *ūibyŏng* activities were righteous and morally legitimate. One of the Confucian scholar commanders, Hōwi, also declared that righteous war was legal in terms of international law. He was a judge on Korea's high court (Dudden 2005, 76).

- 20 The *Seoul Press*, a mouthpiece of the Japanese colonial authorities, used this term to describe the Korean Righteous Army who fought against the Japanese in “suppression of insurgents” (*Seoul Press*, November 13, 1909).
- 21 Uchimura said the Tiensin Treaty of 1882, but actually meant the Chemulp’o Treaty made between Japan and Korea in 1882 to allow the Japanese to station their military to maintain their own security following the Imo Incident in which a military uprising occurred against Emperor Kojong’s military reform and enlightenment policy.
- 22 聞く朝鮮国に著しき 聖靈の降臨ありしと、幸福なる朝鮮国、彼女は今や其政治的自由と 独立とを失ひて、其心靈的自由と独立とを獲つつあるが如し、願ふ、會ては東洋文化の中心となり、之を海東の 島帝国にまで及ばせし彼女が、今や再び東洋福音の中心となり、其光輝を四方に放たんことを、神は朝鮮国を輕蔑め給はず、神は朝鮮人を愛し給ふ、彼等に軍隊と軍艦とを賜はざるも、之に優さりて更に能力強き聖靈を下し賜ふ、朝鮮国は失望するに及ばず、昔時猶太亜が其政治的自由を失ひてより、其新宗教を以て西洋諸邦を教化せしが如くに、朝鮮国も亦、其政治的独立を失ひし今日、新たに神の福音に接して、之を以て東洋諸国を教化するを得るなり、余輩は朝鮮国に新たに聖靈の降りしを聞いて、東洋の将来に大なる希望を繋ぎ、併せて神の摂理の人の思念に過ぎて宏且つ大なるに驚かざるを得ず (Uchimura Kanzō, “Kōfuku naru Chōsengoku” 幸福なる朝鮮国 [Happy Chosŏn], *Seisho no kenkyū*, October 1907).
- 23 Yi Pōmyun was the Korean Governor of Jiandao (Kando) since 1902. During the Russo-Japanese War he fought against Japan with the Russians and then went into exile in the Russian Maritime Provinces with his followers after Japan won the war. After An’s assassination of Itō, Yi continued his armed struggles with other Korean leaders such as Yu Insōk, Hong Pōmdo, and Yi Sangsōl in Manchuria and Vladivostok.
- 24 As for An’s thought on the Mandate of Heaven, Sin Unyong and Hwang Chongryōl maintained that it is An’s unique thought mixed with Confucianism and Catholicism, whereas Kim Sut’ae argued that it was influenced by Saint Paul Chōng Hasang’s (1794–1839) *Sangjaesangsō* (Letter to the prime minister), which was written as a defense of Catholicism. Kim said that it was not an idea unique to An, but that both Chōng and An explain this Catholic teaching by comparing it with the Mandate of Heaven in Confucianism wherein human beings are the most precious one because they possess the spirit granted by Heaven (Sin 2009b, 237–243; Hwang 2000, 93–114; Kim 2011, 8–20).
- 25 The Japanese government kept the existence of his two works a secret until the Korean scholar Ch’oe Sōmyōn ran across a Japanese translation of An’s autobiography in an old bookstore in Tokyo in 1969 and the Korean-Japanese professor

- Kim Chŏngmyŏng found mimeographed copies of both works in the Japanese Diet Library in 1979. Accordingly, the writings finally came to public light. However, the original manuscripts have yet to be found (Yun 1999, 36–37).
- 26 For more information on An Chunggŭn's treatise, see Franklin Rausch (2012).
- 27 The Cheam-ri Massacre was made known to the world by Canadian Methodist missionary Frank W. Schofield (1889–1970), who authored the book *Unquenchable Fire* about it. He showed how Japan was “syphilizing” the Koreans rather than “civilizing” them. American Presbyterian missionary Horace H. Underwood (1890–1951) made a transcript of what he had talked about with the villagers (Clark 2003, 51–53).
- 28 When the Great Kantō Earthquake struck Japan on September 1, 1923, the resulting conflagration spread to giant ammunition dumps in Tokyo where the Japanese military was secretly mustering supplies for a war of domination across Asia. As many thousands of Japanese lost their lives in the large explosions, the Japanese military spread false rumors that Korean nationalists had poisoned water wells and powerful chemical explosions by Koreans had caused the earthquake. As a result of the popular anger fomented by these false rumors, about 800 Koreans took refuge in Tokyo City Hall, but they were all murdered by Japanese military police. Such atrocities were repeated in city after city in Japan and it is known that more than 9,000 Korean residents in Japan were murdered by Japanese (Yim 1959, 153–154).

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