

## Civilian Victims in Wando-gun from the Liberation until the Korean War (1945–1950)\*

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### Abstract

*According to reports published by South Korea's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (jinsil hwahae-reul wihan gwageosa josa wiwonhoe) in 2007–2009, the number of civilian victims in the Wando-gun area between 1945 and 1950 was around 1,000. Why did Wando-gun have so many casualties? Five reasons might be provided: (1) during colonial rule, the socialist independence movement was quite active in Wando-gun; (2) the police conducted left-wing mop-up operations in Wando-gun from 1945 to 1949; (3) during the Korean War, when police and the North Korean Army held their ground for six weeks in Wando-gun, mop-up operations of regional left-wing suspects occurred; (4) the North Korean Army, along with left-wing sympathizers, executed many people associated with the right-wing during their occupation of the island; and (5) after Wando-gun was restored to the South, police conducted strict interrogations of suspected traitors and executed many without trial. The case of Village A in Soan Island, where anti-Japanese nationalists were housed during the colonial period, can be regarded as representative. However, left-leaning sons and nephews of these nationalists were pursued and either executed or imprisoned by police. Those remaining during the Korean War were arrested and shot by police or had to flee to the mainland.*

**Keywords:** Korean War, Wando-gun, Soan Island, left wing, socialist movement, civilian victims

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## Introduction

Wando-gun is a county consisting of many small islands on the southern coast of Jeollanam-do province (or Jeonnam), South Korea. The adjacent counties north of Wando-gun are Haenam, Gangjin, and Jangheung; to the south, it faces Jeju Island in the distance. In the 1950s, Wando-gun county consisted of one *eup* (city) and eight *myeon* (townships): Wando-eup, Gunoe-myeon, Sinji-myeon, Gogeu-myeon, Yaksan-myeon, Soan-myeon, Nohwa-myeon, Cheongsan-myeon, and Geumil-myeon.

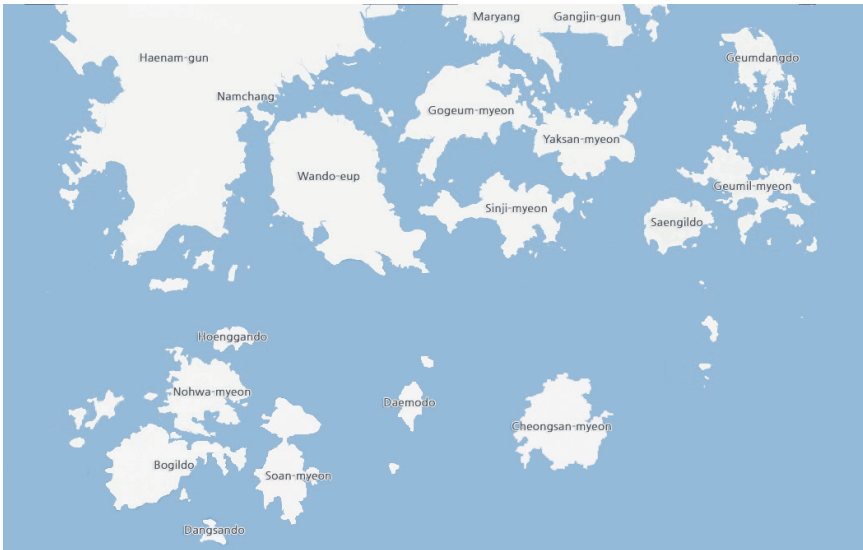
Before and during the Korean War (1950–1953), many casualties occurred throughout Jeollanam-do province; Wando-gun also had significant civilian casualties. Ever since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (*jin-sil hwahae-reul wihan gwageosa josa wiwonhoe*; hereafter, TRC) was launched in 2006, a number of cases regarding Wando civilian victims before and after the war have been investigated. According to the reports of the TRC published in 2007–2009, the number of victims in Wando-gun between 1945 and 1950 was around 1,000. The aim of this article is to understand why Wando-gun had so many casualties. To this end, this article surveys the situation of Wando-gun after the liberation (1945) and during the Korean War (1950).

Among the townships, Soan-myeon in Wando-gun had the highest number of victims; between 1945 and 1950, they numbered 250 people. In particular, Village A on Soan Island had 55 victims. Village A's case can be regarded as the most representative case of slaughter in Wando-gun. To understand the background of the slaughter, this article investigates the history of Soan Island during the colonial period and incidents that occurred in village A between 1945 and 1950.

Until now, most research on the massacres during the Korean War has not been concerned with the relationship between civilian killings before the war and massacres after the war. The ultimate object of this study is to survey the relationship between the massacres before and after the war and understand the meaning of the Korean War at the local level, especially for members of smaller villages and rural communities.

Accordingly, this article is based on several interviews with victims'

families and villagers during visits between 2012 and 2015. Other sources include four volumes of the TRC investigation reports on Wando-gun cases published between 2007 and 2009.<sup>1</sup> In addition, this article also referred to books describing the condition of Wando-gun directly after its liberation and during the Korean War.



**Figure 1.** Map of Wando-gun (1950).

Source: Naver Map.<sup>2</sup>

## Wando-gun's Civilian Victims Resulting from Division and War

### *The Sociopolitical Situation of Wando-gun (the 1920s to 1946)*

During Japanese colonial rule, the anti-Japanese movement was active in Wando-gun. Particularly in the 1920s, the anti-Japanese movement was

1. TRC investigation reports based on police reports during the Korean War (1950–1953) and the investigators' interviews with victims' family members and residents from 2007 to 2009.
2. "Wando," map, *Naver Maps*, Naver, September 22, 2015. Retrieved from [map.naver.com](http://map.naver.com). Place names translated from Korean to English by the author.

most active in Soan-myeon, surpassing the other townships in Wando-gun. Under the supervision of Song Nae-ho in the 1920s, the young men of Soan-myeon energetically formed and participated in many organizations, such as the (*suui wichingye* 守義爲親契), Baedal Youth Society (*baedal cheongnyeonhae*), Saljahoe,<sup>3</sup> and Grand Association of Laborers and Peasants (*nonong daeseonghoe* 勞動聯合大成會) among others. Song Nae-ho was one of the leaders of Seoul Youth Society (*seoul cheongnyeonhae*), which was one of the two main groups in the socialist movement in Korea along with the Tuesday Society (*hwayohoe* 火曜會). Consequently, the young men on Soan Island were associated with the Seoul Youth Society. Moreover, because Song Nae-ho also had a connection with independence fighters outside the country, he sent young men from Soan Island to Manchuria and China to join the independence movement. Another leader named Jeong Nam-guk went to Osaka, Japan, and directed the labor movement among Korean laborers. In the late 1920s, Song Nae-ho became one of the main leaders of the New Trunk Society (*singanhoe* 新幹會), but he was imprisoned for the Incident of the Grand Association of Laborers and Peasants.<sup>4</sup> During his imprisonment, Song was infected with tuberculosis and died soon after. In the meantime, other young leaders from Soan Island, such as Jeong Nam-guk, Jeong Chang-nam, and Wi Gyeong-ryang, were sentenced to prison for being involved in the Incident of Joseon Communist Party (*joseon gongsandang* 朝鮮共產黨; also known as Chungyeongwon Communist Party) formed by the members of Seoul Youth Society (Park 1993, 117).<sup>5</sup> In the 1930s, the base for the anti-Japanese movement in Wando switched to Gogeu-myeon and Yaksan-myeon while anti-Japanese fighters on Soan Island awaited the day of liberation.

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3. A small group formed in Soan-myeon in 1926 to study political ideologies.
  4. The members of the Grand Association of Laborers and Peasants expelled a police officer named Chu Sang-min from the place of holding a general meeting of their organization. As a result, Song Nae-ho and other members were arrested on charges of interference with a government official in the execution of his duties (Park 1993, 102).
  5. Chungyeongwon Communist Party was formed by the old faction of Seoul Youth Party at a restaurant named Chungyeongwon in Seoul on December 21, 1927. The leader of the Chungyeongwon Party was Lee Young. Jeong Nam-guk, Jeong Chang-nam, and Wi Gyeong-rang from Soan Island joined the party (Park 2014, 220).

Once the day of liberation arrived (August 15, 1945), right-wing leaders, such as Kim Jang-ryeol and Park In-seon, established the Wando Branch of the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (*wando geonguk junbi wiwonhoe* 莞島建國準備委員會; hereafter, WCPKI) on August 21. In addition, some right-wing supporters, such as Kim Yong-ho, formed the Wando Branch of the Youth Society for Korean Independence (*joseon geonguk cheongnyeonhae* 朝鮮建國青年會). In the meantime, Kim Min-yeong and Choe Byeong-sik formed the Public Police to secure public order, which acquired the Sailing Association from six *myeon* and dominated the Sailors' Union. Meanwhile, left-wing individuals, including Shin Gwang-hui, created the Security Committee on their own. However, right-wing forces took the initiative in influencing the politics of Wando-gun.

One of these right wing leaders, Kim Jang-ryeol, who organized the WCPKI, had studied at Nihon University in Japan. He participated in the nationalist movement in the 1920s by serving as the Wando branch manager of the *Dong-A Ilbo* and executive manager for the Wando Youth Association and Wando Branch of the New Trunk Society. Concurrently, Park In-seon served as Councilor of Jeollanam-do province in the late 1920s (Park 2001, 143n27). Another important figure was Shin Gwang-hui, who was arrested for the Incident of Grand Labor Society, which included the Soan Island farmers' rally in 1924, and was sentenced to six months in prison with two years of probation. In 1927, he served as commissioner of the Wando Youth Alliance and was arrested again for the Incident of Baedal Youth Society in November 1927;<sup>6</sup> he was sentenced to two years in prison (Park 1993, 102). Thus, young men from Soan Island played leading roles in the anti-Japanese movement in Wando-gun during the 1920s.

Nonetheless, the WCPKI did not last very long. On September 6, left-wing leaders of the Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence proclaimed a People's Republic in Seoul. Left-wing individuals in other cities

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6. The leaflets, which contained an explanation about the theory of the socialist movement, written by Lee Jeong-dong from Soan Island, were distributed at the meeting of the Baedal Youth Society held in Soan Private School on November 26, 1927. The police arrested seven members of the association on charges of violating the Public Peace Maintenance Law (Park 1993, 96–100).

then began forming the People's Committee. At this time, the rightwing WCPKI refused to convert to the People's Committee and took their sign down voluntarily. Subsequently, left-wing leaders, including Shin Gwang-hui, organized the Wando-gun People's Committee on September 22. Na Bong-gyun served as a commissioner of the People's Committee, whereas Shin Gwang-hui, Kim Hyang-nam, and Choe Hyeong-cheon participated in it (Ahn 1991, 157–159). Nevertheless, the right wing did not disband their public police force and still dominated the Sailor's Union. On October 30, the left wing mobilized hundreds of young men in attacking the Sailor's Union, and they succeeded in seizing the police station. Wi Gyeong-ryang, who was from Soan Island, then led left-wing members as the chief of the security force and dominated the public order of Wando-gun (Wando History Compilation Committee 1977, 273).

However, as US troops arrived in Wando on December 10 in the same year and Major Whitney took over the Wando-gun Magistrate's role, the situation changed. Major Whitney labeled the People's Committee an illegal organization and began arresting its members and sympathizers in the security force (Wando History Compilation Committee 1992, 359). As a result, some leaders of the People's Committee were imprisoned, while others continued their propaganda underground.<sup>7</sup>

These left-wing leaders who were avoiding persecution by the US military government and the police continued their movement by forming the Workers' Party of South Korea (*namjoseon nodongdang* 南朝鮮勞動黨) and the Democratic Youth League of Korea (*joseon minju cheongnyeon dongmaeng* 朝鮮民主青年同盟). The left-wing group held the March 1st rally, May Day rally (May 1st), and Liberation Day rally (August 15th) in 1947; in 1948, they continued their activities, such as holding a rally against the general election for the National Assembly on May 10, distributing propaganda materials, and posting written appeals.<sup>8</sup>

7. 2009 *nyeon sangbangi josa bogoseo* (2009 First Half-Year Report), Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2009 (hereafter cited as 2009-1 TRC Report) 3:561.

8. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:561.

*Wando-gun Police's Left-Wing Mop-Up Operations (1947–1949)*

The killing of civilians without trial by the police started at the Wando-gun May Day rally in 1947. Throughout Wando-gun county, the May Day rallies were held on Yaksan Island, Sinji Island, and Soan Island. The rally on Yaksan Island was attended by about a 1000 people opposing the compulsory collection of rice and advocating for land confiscation and redistribution without cost. After the rally, they marched in the streets. About 500 people gathered for the rally on Sinji Island. When the police ordered them to disperse, they continued with their march instead. On Soan Island, marching followed the rally; later, the police started to arrest the leaders.<sup>9</sup>

Subsequently, the police started shooting at demonstrators at the Sinji Island May Day rally, and two were killed. One victim had been involved in the Reconstruction Committee of the Jeonnam Movement Association (*jeonnam undong hyeobuihoe jaegeon wiwonhoe* 全南運動協議會再建委員會) in the 1930s.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, two people who led the May Day rally on Yaksan Island were arrested and executed by the police. They had been participants in the Jeonnam Movement Association (*jeonnam undong hyeobuihoe* 全南運動協議會) in the 1930s.<sup>11</sup> According to police reports at the time, the casualties associated with the May Day rallies throughout the nation numbered 21 dead and 39 wounded. Most of the casualties occurred in Jeollanam-do province (Jangheung-gun, Damyang-gun, Gwangyang-gun, and Wando-gun).<sup>12</sup>

In another case, around the time of the general election on May 10, 1948, police started rounding up left-wing party members campaigning against the election. On voting day, nine people were taken to Yuchon-ri,

9. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:576.

10. The Reconstruction Committee of the Jeonnam Movement Association was clandestinely organized by the young men from Yaksan Islands in 1934. It was discovered by the police in 1938. At that time, seven people were indicted.

11. The Jeonnam Movement Association was secretly organized by young socialists in Wando-gun, Haenam-gun, Gangjin-gun, Yeongam-gun, and Jangheung-gun in 1933. However, it was discovered by the police in 1934. Eventually, 558 people were arrested, and 57 people were brought to trial.

12. *Dong-A Ilbo*, May 4, 1947.

Saengil-myeon in Wando-gun and were executed by the police.<sup>13</sup> When the 14th Regiment revolted in the Yeosu–Suncheon area of Jeollanam-do province in October 1948, the mop-up operation against left-wing activists by the police was even more brutal, and Wando-gun was no exception. Yi Gyu-seol, who had taken the lead in attacking the Gogeum-myeon police sub-station in March 1948 and was hiding in the mountains behind Chirin-ri, Gogeum-myeon, was arrested and executed in February 1949.<sup>14</sup> In April 1949, Kim Jang-gyun, resident of Bija-ri on Soan Island, who was hiding in Jukcheong-ri, Wando-eup, was shot dead by the police who attacked him by surprise. Kim had graduated from a middle school in Japan, went to Guangdong, China, as a Japanese marine, and escaped to Chongqing to join the Korean Liberation Army (*hanguk gwangbokkun* 韓國光復軍) (Han 1993, 189, 228). After liberation, he returned to Korea and took charge of the Democratic Patriotic Youth League (*minju aeguk cheongnyeon dongmaeng* 民主愛國青年同盟)<sup>15</sup> in Wando-gun, for which he had been wanted by the police.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, in July and August 1949, the Wando police intensified their left-wing sweep. The left-wing forces wanted by the police in association with the 1947 May Day Rally and 1948 May rallies against the election (May 10) were hiding in Mt. Gonggoji (336 m above sea level) in Haedong-ri, east of Yaksan Island. The police mobilized villagers and surrounded the mountain; then, they removed bushes and searched the area. At that time, three people were arrested on the mountain and shot dead by the police.<sup>17</sup> Around the same time, some villagers of Gahak-ri on Geumdang Island collected barley to help the fugitives who had escaped to the mountains. Someone informed the police, and many Gahak-ri villagers were arrested. Among them, 18 people who took the lead in collecting the grain were executed

13. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:570.

14. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:585.

15. This was a left-wing organization of young men; the original name was the Democratic Youth Association, but it was renamed the Democratic Patriotic Youth Association of Korea in May 1947.

16. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:617.

17. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:570.



without any trial or legal conviction after a short confinement in a substation and Wando police station from August 17 to 20 at Geumdang-myeon or Wando-eup, respectively. Others were brought to trial; those found guilty were sentenced to prison (including Mokpo Prison) and seemingly executed after the Korean War broke out.<sup>18</sup> On September 27, 1949, Hwang Sang-nam and the four people who hid him in Gunoe-myeon were arrested and shot dead by the police. Hwang had taken part in a reading club at Gwangju Normal School and was sentenced to one year in prison for participating in the 1929 Gwangju Student Uprising. He also participated in the Jeonnam Movement Association in the 1930s and was sentenced to 18 months in prison.<sup>19</sup>

As discussed previously, the killing of left-wing activists occurred in the Wando area even before the Korean War began; in particular, many were executed after the summer of 1949 and even without trial. Such incidents were occurring in Wando-gun and in other counties of Jeollanam-do province after the revolt of the 14th regiment in Yeosu and Suncheon in September 1948, and they left a permanent mark on the history of this area.

### *The Massacres of Wando-gun Civilians after the Outbreak of the Korean War*

#### 1) The Massacre of the Members of the National Guard Alliance

The National Guard Alliance (*gungmin bodo yeonmaeng* 國民保導聯盟; hereafter, NGA) was an organization established by the Korean government on April 20, 1949 to control the people associated with the left-wing forces. However, some members were not actually left-wing, and others were unaware of their membership status because the police arbitrarily enrolled them as NGA members. After the Korean War began, the South Korean army and police arrested and executed tens of thousands of NGA members. Starting in early July, the NGA members in Wando-gun were arrested and detained either in substations or in nearby warehouses until some were transported to the Wando police station. As the North Korean Army gradu-

18. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:608.

19. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:567.

ally headed south, the police transported them to Mokpo by boat on July 17 and handed them over to the Mokpo Marine headquarters. Between 50 and 100 people were taken. It appears that they were transported to the coastal area of Mokpo and drowned on the same night. On the other hand, with the news that the North Korean Army occupied Gwangju on July 23, Wando police loaded prisoners from each substation on different boats and shot and discarded the bodies under water.

Moreover, in 2009, the TRC confirmed the list of 113 victims from the Wando-gun massacre of NGA members. The number of victims can be categorized based on their hometowns: three from Gunoe-myeon; 11 from Wando-eup; nine from Sinji-myeon; 27 from Gogeu-myeon; 18 from Yaksan-myeon; five from Geumil-myeon; 19 from Soan-myeon; nine from Nohwa-myeon; and 13 from Cheongsan-myeon. Based on the age groups, most victims were in their 20s (61%) and 30s (20%); the rest were in their 40s (8.6%) and 50s (2.8%). Among the victims were also some teenagers (7.6%). With regard to occupations, most victims were in the agricultural or fishing industries (88.6%), and the others were *myeon* office clerks, employees at cooperatives, teachers, and students (11.4%). Among the victims were Kim Hyang-nam and Mun Seung-su, who participated in the Gwangju Student Uprising against Japanese rule in 1929. In addition, 29 people (26%) had been previously convicted of violating the National Security Law or various decrees between 1947 and 1949, and sentenced to fines or imprisonment.<sup>20</sup> However, considering that the list is incomplete, the number of victims is estimated to be much higher than 113 people. Moreover, it appears that the police arrested and executed not only NGA members but also people considered as potential left-wing forces. In Cheongsan-myeon, for example, ten young people were arrested on July 16 and buried in the sea the next day.<sup>21</sup>

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20. *2009 nyeon habangi josa bogoseo* (2009 Second Half-Year Report), Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2009 (hereafter cited as *2009-2 TRC Report*), 4:436-445.

21. *2007 nyeon habangi josa bogoseo* (2007 Second Half-Year Report), Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2007 (hereafter cited as *2007 TRC Report*), 204.

## 2) Massacre by the Naju Unit

After the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, the 6th Division of the North Korean Army departed from Yesan on July 13 and headed south, going through Janghang, Gunsan, Iri, Jeonju, Gwangju, and Mokpo. The South Korean army and the police at Jeonnam could not stop them, and the North Korean Army eventually seized Gwangju on July 23. Once the North Korean Army occupied Gwangju, the police force in Jeollanam-do province quickly retreated, but the process was not smooth. The police forces from Hwasun-gun, Yeongam-gun, Gwangsan-gun, Naju-gun, Muan-gun, and Gangjin-gun planned to retreat to the eastern areas of Jeollanam-do province. However, the North Korean Army had occupied Gwangyang in the east of Jeonnam on July 25. The police forces from the southwest regions gathered in Gangjin-gun and Jangheung-gun, but they could not go further to the east.

Subsequently, the commanders of the police forces held a joint meeting on July 27 in Jangheung and decided to remain at their post. Then, the North Korean Army attacked Jangheung via the Mokpo, Naju, and Bosung routes.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the police command group decided to give up Gangjin and Jangheung and retreated to the Wando-gun islands. Thereafter, the North Korean Army occupied Jangheung on July 29.

After retreating to Wando, the police established their headquarters in Wando-eup on August 1. They decided to distribute the police forces separately on Wando, Nohwa, Gogeu, Yaksan, and Cheongsan Islands. While the police forces were retreating, the so-called Naju Unit Incident occurred. The Naju Unit consisted of the Naju police and a group of right-wing youth. On July 25, they bypassed Haenam-gun and arrived in Wando the next day. By the time the Naju Unit arrived in Haenam, the Haenam police had already vacated the city, leaving it in a state of anarchy. Thus, some villagers who mistook the Naju Unit for *inmingun* (North Korean troops) shouted, "Hurrah, *inmingun*!" and were shot dead. The villagers who fled from the Naju Unit, believing it to be the North Korean Army, were also tracked down

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22. The North Korean Army occupied Naju and Mokpo on July 24.

and killed. On the way to Wando from Haenam, the Naju Unit pretended to be the North Korean Army and demanded that villagers welcome them. Then, they shot those villagers. The number of civilians murdered by the Naju Unit in Haenam reached 55 people.<sup>23</sup>

On their way to Wando on July 25, the Naju Unit called at the Wando police station, introducing themselves as part of the North Korean Army, and demanded that the village welcome them upon their arrival in Wando. The Wando policemen had already evacuated the city on July 24 and were staying on Geumil-myeon, Sorang Island, while the police station was occupied by local leftists after the police evacuation. Subsequently, the local leftists prepared the welcoming rally for the North Korean Army. On the morning of July 26, the Naju Unit passed Wando-eup port and arrived at Wando Middle School in Gunnae-ri, Wando-eup. About 200 or 300 people had gathered there. When the Naju Unit identified themselves as the Naju police, not the North Korean Army, the frightened crowd fled by jumping over the school fences. Among the crowd, ten people who failed to escape, were arrested, and detained in the police station (Kim and Im 1975, 106–113).

In the meantime, Wando police sent some of their men to Wando-eup to assess the situation there. On the same night, they heard that the Naju Unit was in Wando, so the entire police force returned to Wando-eup. Thereafter, the Wando and Naju police embarked on a search operation for people who prepared and participated in the welcoming rally at Wando Middle School. Eight villagers who mistook the Naju Unit for the North Korean Army and welcomed them were arrested and shot dead. The five school teachers who prepared the welcoming rally were also executed. In addition, five local residents arrested at the welcoming rally were shot dead.<sup>24</sup> The number of victims that died in incidents related to the welcoming rally was at least 39 people.<sup>25</sup>

From then on, the Wando police decided to mop up the leftists by

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23. 2007 TRC Report, 178-194.

24. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:572–573.

25. 2007 TRC Report, 196–203.

adopting the Naju police's strategy of disguising themselves as North Korean Army. For the next three days (July 27–29), they did so on Cheongsan, Soan, and Nohwa Islands. They shot three people dead on Soan Island and five people on Nohwa Island. On Cheongsan Island, they shot six villagers on site for coming to welcome the disguised Wando police. Moreover, they sorted 20–30 people from among the villagers, loaded them on a boat, shot them dead, and buried the bodies at sea.<sup>26</sup> As such, the victims slaughtered by the Naju and Wando police disguised as the North Korean Army from July 26 to 29 totaled about 60–70 people.

### 3) The Massacre of Left-Wing Suspects during the Confrontation Period between the South Korean Police and North Korean Army

After August 1, all police divisions in the southwest regions of Jeollanam-do province retreated to Wando-gun islands. The groups placed on Wando Island included the Wando police and a right-wing youth group (300 people), the Naju police and a right-wing youth group (270 people), and the Hwasun police (60 people). The remaining forces moved to Cheongsan Island, and the divisions from Yeongam-gun and Muan-gun headed to Yeosu. On August 3, 150 people from the Gangjin police and a Youth Association moved to defend Gogeum Island while the Jangheung division stayed on Cheongsan Island. On August 11, a segment of the North Korean Army comprising about 50 people arrived on Nohwa, Bogil, and Soan Islands. When the Jangheung division on Cheongsan Island heard the news, they moved to Nohwa and Bogil Islands, killed ten soldiers from the North Korean Army, and freed 330 villagers who had been imprisoned. Among them, 50 people were evacuated to Cheongsan Island, and 100 policemen and youths were stationed on Nohwa Island. Then, the North Korean Army arrived on Pyeongil Island on August 18. In reaction, the Jangheung division on Cheongsan Island was dispatched and recaptured Pyeongil Island the next day (Wando History Compilation Committee 1977, 275). The North Korean Army at that time did not have enough soldiers and ships to attack

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26. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:631–632; 2007 TRC Report, 204–205.

the South Korean police staying on Wando-gun islands. Thus, the South Korean police and North Korean army maintained a state of confrontation for six weeks. In the meantime, more than one hundred leftists and sympathizers from the Wando-gun islands went to Namchang port in Haenam-gun by ships and collaborated with the North Korean Army.<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, the police patrolled several major islands of Wando-gun and performed a mop-up operation of real and presumed left-wing suspects. Between August 12 and September 12, the police shot dead three people from Sinji-myeon and two people from Gogeu-myeon on suspicion of being left-wing sympathizers. Even from a remote island called Dangsa in Soan-myeon, five people were transported to the Wando police station in early September and executed in the woods on September 10 in Wando-eup. In addition, on another remote island called Seoneop in Nohwa-myeon, eight people who saw the police and fled to the woods were shot on the spot. On Cheongsan Island, young men in their 20s and 30s as well as teenagers were arrested on the charge of being leftwing and detained in Cheongsan substation. Two days later, they were transported to Chuja Island and executed in the Daeseo-ri cemetery.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4) The Massacre of Civilians by the North Korean Army and Left-Wing Forces after the North Korean Army's Arrival in Wando-gun

On September 14, the North Korean Army (comprising over 1,000 people) and local left-wing forces (of over 400 people from Haenam-gun and Wando-gun), who were confronting South Korean police forces, simultaneously attacked Wando, Gogeu, Yaksan, and Sinji Islands from the Namchang Port in Haenam-gun, Maryang Port in Gangjin-gun, and Hoejin Port in Jangheung-gun. The police could not stop them and had to retreat to Cheongsan Island. Earlier that month on September 5, the North Korean Army had already arrived on Geumil and Geumdang Islands. Consequently, most of the islands in Wando-gun fell into the hands of the North Korean Army and local leftists, except for Cheongsan Island, which was successfully

27. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:563-564.

28. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:580-634.

defended by the police forces (Wando History Compilation Committee 1977, 276–277).

Now that the North Korean Army was in Wando-gun, they established organizations to maintain public order. The North Korean Political Bureau established a police office in Wando-eup, substations in *myeon*, and self-defense units in *ri*. In addition, they also tried to organize political and social parties such as the people's committee, youth association, peasants' association, and women's association among others. At that time, the commissioner of the Wando-gun people's committee was Wi Gyeong-ryang from Soan Island. He was the chief of the security forces on the left-wing side immediately after the liberation in 1945. He had been hiding until that point and took charge of the people's committee. These left-wing organizations immediately began to sort out so-called "reactionary elements." Their main targets were the wealthy, the police, right-wing youth group members, and public officials. Their method of cleanup was a *people's court* held in each *myeon*, but "summary conviction" was often done. However, the North Korean Army's occupation of Wando-gun only lasted two weeks. The Incheon Landing Operation on September 15 was followed by the restoration of Seoul to the South by United Nations Forces on September 28. Consequently, the North Korean Army started withdrawing from Wando-gun on September 30, and local leftists retreated to neighboring counties, such as Gangjin-gun, Jangheung-gun, Haenam-gun, and particularly to the mountains in Yuchi-myeon, Jangheung-gun. During their withdrawal, the North Korean Army and affiliated organizations executed most of the right-wing leaders who were detained.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, one must ask who were the victims during the North Korean Army's occupation? In the Wando-eup police office, about 40 right-wing leaders from neighboring townships, such as Gogeu-myeon, Nohwa-myeon, and Sinji-myeon, were captured by the North Korean Army and local leftists. The right-wing leaders included former police officers, former members of the Daehan Youth Association, *myeon* directors, *myeon* office secretaries, village foremen, church elders, police substation sponsors, and

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29. 2009-2 TRC Report, 4:237.

land owners.<sup>30</sup> They were taken into the custody of the substations in their respective towns and later transported to the Wando police office where they were slaughtered on September 30, the day the North Korean Army began their withdrawal. At around 6 p.m. that day, 40 people detained in the police office were tied together in groups of four with electrical cord around their wrists. They were taken to the port in Gunnae-ri, Wando-eup, and loaded onto a boat that stopped in the coastal waters of Judo Island, 150 meters from the port. The North Korean soldiers and local leftists tied rocks to each group of four people and pushed them into the sea. They sunk underwater, and those who surfaced above the water due to loosely tied rocks were shot dead by the North Korean Army. However, ten people were reported to have miraculously survived.<sup>31</sup>

In total, according to TRC investigation reports, the number of victims of the North Korean Army and local leftists during the North Korean Army occupation was 93 people.<sup>32</sup> However, some presume that the number of victims was actually more than 100.

##### 5) The Massacre of Civilians by the Police after the North Korean Army's Retreat

After the North Korean Army and local left-wing forces had completely retreated from Wando-gun, the South Korean police arrived on Wando Island on October 3 (Wando History Compilation Committee 1977, 278). By October 5, the other *myeon* had been restored. When the North Korean Army was retreating, they provoked the villagers by saying, "Once the UN forces arrive in Wando-gun, it will be in flames. When the police arrive, they will kill everyone who has not evacuated during the occupation of the North Korean Army. So, flee far away from here." In reaction, a large number of villagers took boats and fled to mainland areas, such as Maryang-myeon of Gangjin-gun and Hoejin-myeon or Daedeok-myeon of Jangheung-gun. Regardless of possibly being accused of treason during the North Korean

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30. 2009-2 TRC Report, 4:247-267.

31. 2009-2 TRC Report, 4:244-245.

32. 2009-2 TRC Report, 4:313.



Army's occupation, many villagers escaped the town believing that "Wando-gun would be in flames." When they arrived on the mainland, the police in Daedeok-myeon of Jangheung-gun encouraged them to "return to their hometowns." Some women and children returned, but young and middle-aged men either went to the woods in Yuchi-myeon of Jangheung-gun or became farmhands in Gangjin-gun and Jangheung-gun. Most of the men who went to the woods were killed by the South Korean army and police. Those who had been arrested were transported to the Gwangju POW Camp, brought to trial, and sentenced to imprisonment or set free. Among the people who had returned to their hometowns and those who had never left, suspected traitors were detained at the police substation from mid-October to the following spring. Among them, people categorized as having committed treason were shot dead in each *myeon* and buried in the sea. Some of them were transported to the Wando police station for detention, and they were later executed or brought to trial.

In fact, many victims were instantly killed at their residences without being taken into custody at the Wando police station.<sup>33</sup> Among those individuals whose family members were executed in connection with the NGA in Gogeu-myeon were people who cooperated with the North Korean Army. They escaped to the mainland after the police came back, but when they returned to their hometown, they were arrested and executed immediately by the police. In Yaksan-myeon, the police and Daehan Youth Association members took the suspected traitors into custody at the substation or Youth Association buildings and executed them onshore, either early in the morning or late at night. Sometimes the suspects were killed on the way to the substation from the village. In Geumdang-myeon, about 20–30 suspects of treason were transported to the Wando police station; however, the Geumdang substation often conducted executions on site. According to a witness from Geumdang-myeon, such executions were often based on per-

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33. The Gyeonggi-do Police Bureau reportedly classified the suspects of treason into three categories: (1) class A was the target of immediate conviction; (2) class B was the target of investigation and trial; and (3) class C was the target of release after investigation (2009-1 TRC Report, 3:697). Presumably, the Jeollanam-do Police Bureau issued a similar ordinance.

sonal antagonisms. As for Geumil-myeon, police officers arrested suspects of treason; however, after their investigation, they released some suspects and buried others at sea. Overall, the villagers testified to the drowning of about 50 people.<sup>34</sup>

## Victims from Village A in Soan-myeon

### *The Main Figures from Village A*

As mentioned previously, Soan-myeon in Wando-gun had the highest number of victims. They numbered at least 250 people between 1945 and 1950. In particular, Village A on Soan Island had 55 victims. Village A's case can be regarded as one of the representative cases of the massacre in Wando-gun. To understand the background of the massacres in Wando-gun, particularly Soan-myeon, this chapter will investigate the anti-Japanese movement on Soan Island during Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945) and the situation of Soan Island from liberation until the Korean War (1945–1950). Additionally, this chapter will investigate incidents that occurred on Soan Island during the Korean War (1950).

First of all, Village A is a coastal village on Soan Island. Because the village has few rice paddies, people's livelihoods are dependent on dry-field farming and fishing. At present, the number of households is about 100, down from a previous high of 163. Most of the villagers are Kim clans with Gimhae origins. However, the Kim clans with Gimhae origins do not come from the same clan. In fact, two specific Kim clans exist: Samhyeon 三賢 and Dochonggwangong 都總管公,<sup>35</sup> and a long-term rivalry existed between the two Kim clans in the same village.<sup>36</sup> For instance, a member of one Kim clan took charge of the village as headman (*ijang* 里長), with whom the other

34. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:590–616.

35. Kim Jin-heum (b. 1938), Kim Jin-jong (b. 1933), and Kim Ok-mo (b. 1935), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 29, 2012.

36. Baek Byeong-seon (b. 1927), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 17, 2014.

Kim clan did not cooperate (Jeong 1995, 221).

Notably, during the Japanese colonial rule, numerous freedom fighters came from Village A, particularly from the Samhyeon Kim clan. Among them was the most respected elder, Kim Il-yeong (1883–1945).<sup>37</sup> In 1909, the Soan Island villagers started a dispute over land ownership with Viscount Yi Gi-yong, nephew of King Gojong, and won the case in 1921. Regarding the dispute, in the late Joseon dynasty, land ownership on Soan Island did not belong to the family of Prince Yeonnyeong 延齡君, the seventh son of King Sukjong, which meant that only he had the right to collect taxes from the land. However, Prince Yeonnyeong's family sold the land to Viscount Yi Gi-yong. In reaction, the Soan Island villagers argued that Prince Yeonnyeong's family originally had the right to collect taxes, and the ownership of land belonged to the Soan Island villagers; they eventually won the dispute.<sup>38</sup> During this dispute, four people represented the Soan Island villagers, one of whom was Kim Il-yeong.

To celebrate this victory, the Soan Island villagers all agreed to aggregate money to expand their Junghwa Private School and rename it as the Soan Private School. Kim Il-yeong served as the first principal of the Junghwa Private School in 1913, and in 1922, he served as the first principal of the Soan Private School. The Soan Private School's teachers implemented education that instilled the sentiments of patriotic nationalism to students. As a result, on the grounds that the Soan Private School was nurturing fighters for independence and socialism, Jeollanam-do province and the police forcefully closed the school down in May 1926, only four years after it opened. In response, about 300 Soan-myeon villagers held a meeting and elected Kim Il-yeong as a representative on July 13. He then visited the Jeollanam-do Board of Education and attempted to negotiate with them about reopening the school, but this attempt failed (Park 1993).

Another leader from Village A during colonial rule was Kim Gyeong-il (1888–1938). He was the second eldest son of Kim Ju-yeong, who was Kim

37. The new names that appear hereafter are all aliases.

38. Soan Island villagers had already been refusing to pay taxes to Prince Yeonnyeong's family from 1896. See Takjibu (Finance Ministry), *Gongmun pyeonan* (Files of Official Documents), no. 31, July 17, 1896.

Il-yeong's cousin. When the Junghwa Private School was established in 1913, Kim Gyeong-il became a teacher and instilled nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment in the students. When Junghwa Private School was renamed Soan Private School, he served as the second principal after Kim Il-yeong. He eagerly strived to instill nationalism in students until the school was forced to close in 1926 (Park 1993).

Due to Kim Il-yeong's influence, the family produced many educators. His second eldest son, Kim Seong-gon, studied in Japan and returned to teach at the Soan Public School. Kim Hui-gon, the eldest son of Kim Ju-yeong (Kim Il-yeong's cousin), also served as a teacher there. He later taught on Gogeu Island of Wando-gun and Jangsan Island of Muan-gun. In addition, Kim Hui-gon's son Kim Jin-seong graduated from a teaching college in Japan, and when he returned, he taught at an elementary school on Gogeu Island and another on Soan Island. After liberation, he was teaching at Hwangsan Elementary School in Haenam-gun.<sup>39</sup> As such, in Kim Il-yeong's household there were nine educators who had studied in Japan and returned. In addition, Kim Jin-ho, Kim Jin-hyeon, and Kim Jin-myeong graduated from Wando Middle School. Among them, Kim Jin-ho reportedly formed gatherings of youth and taught them by using left-wing books.

### *Left-Wing Victims before the Korean War*

Right after the liberation from Japan, middle-aged men from Soan Island, such as Shin Gwang-hui, Wi Gyeong-ryang, and Kim Jang-gyun, led Wando-gun's left-wing forces; thus, their strong influence on Soan Island was inevitable. The structures of the Labor Party of South Korea and the Democratic Youth Association were relatively strong. The groups indicated their strong influence by holding the 1947 May Day rally at the Soan Elementary School. However, after the rally was over, police started arresting the main organizers, who in order to escape then either left Soan Island or went into hiding in the woods there.

In one particular instance, Kim Il-yeong's second eldest son, Kim Seong-

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39. Kim Ok-mo (b. 1936), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 18, 2014.

gon, was terminated from his teaching position at Soan Elementary School in 1947 on suspicion of being leftwing. It appears that he escaped to Mokpo later. Kim Seong-gon was subsequently arrested by the Mokpo police on July 20, 1948 and suffered severe interrogation and torture for an entire night at the Mokpo police station, before dying the next day. Kim Jin-su, who was arrested with him, became mentally disabled due to the severe torture. According to a newspaper report, the two police officers who tortured them were indicted by the prosecuting office on a charge of torture resulting in death.<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned earlier, starting in the summer of 1949, the Wando police carried out more intense mop-up operations against the left wing. The same situation occurred on Soan Island. In July 1949, Village A residents Kim Jin-dong (b. 1923) and his brother Kim Jin-hyeon (b. 1925), hunted by the police on charges of being leftwing, were captured and shot dead by the police. While Kim Jin-dong was being sought by the police, he was hiding in the woods on Soan Island. He was then arrested, interrogated, and shot dead along with Kim Myeong-hui (b. 1920, a resident of Gudo Island in Soan-myeon).

On the other hand, Kim Jin-hyeon escaped to Mt. Gonggoji in Haedong-ri, Yaksan-myeon, far away from the police. Nonetheless, the police searched the mountain by lighting fires, so he was eventually captured, and the day after his brother died (August 3), he was executed on the coast of Haedong-ri, Yaksan-myeon.<sup>41</sup> Even Kim Jin-se (b. 1925), a soldier in the National Guard who had come home on vacation, was arrested in early July 1949. On July 12, the Soan police executed him with Ko Myeong-seop (b. 1917; a Mira-ri resident) at the foot of the village mountain. Kim Jin-se reportedly served as leader of a youth association before he joined the military.<sup>42</sup> Around the same time, five other young men from Soan-myeon were arrested for being leftwing and subsequently shot dead.

Furthermore, on August 20, 1949, the leaders of Soan-myeon, such as

40. *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 10 and 18, 1948.

41. *2009-1 TRC Report*, 3:619.

42. Kim Jin-jong (b. 1934), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 19, 2014.

Kim Jang-su (b. 1905, a Bija-ri resident), Kim Hui-gon (b. 1900, a resident of Village A), Kim Hyeong-gon (b. 1908, a resident of Village A), and Choe Yong-gi (b. 1899, a Bija-ri resident), were taken into custody by the Cheongsan Island police, interrogated on Cheongsan Island for three days, and executed on the coast of Myeongsasip-ri, Sinji-myeon. Among the victims was Kim Jang-gyun's older brother Kim Jang-su; he went to Japan in 1927 and worked as a member of the Ilsimdan, a secret anti-Japanese organization formed under the supervision of Song Nae-ho from Soan Island. Before liberation, he returned home and worked at the Soan-myeon office. He was reportedly running a business in Bija-ri after liberation.<sup>43</sup> As mentioned earlier, Kim Hui-gon, son of Kim Ju-yeong (the leader of anti-Japanese movements on Soan Island) and older brother of Kim Gyeong-il, worked as a teacher for a long time in Wando-gun and Muan-gun. Kim Hyeong-gon, who was Kim Il-yeong's nephew and Kim Hui-gon's second cousin, reportedly served as the director of a fishermen's cooperative in the three *myeon* of Soan, Nohwa, and Cheongsan after liberation. At that time, Kim Hyeong-gon's eldest son, Kim Jin-myeong, was wanted by the police.

Another Soan-myeon leader, Choe Yong-gi, was Shin Gwang-hui's brother-in-law; his son was serving a term in Seodaemun Prison in Seoul after being arrested for working as Shin Gwang-hui's henchman. His daughter was also locked up in the Wando-eup police station, and on the way after visiting his daughter in jail, Choe Yong-gi was arrested by Jeong In-gi, who was originally from Soan Island and worked as a conscripted policeman on Cheongsan Island.<sup>44</sup> The aforementioned four people were in their 40s and 50s, teaching or leading the fishermen's cooperative, and they were not deeply involved in left-wing activities. However, some believe they were executed in place of their family members (son, daughter, or younger siblings), who were hiding after their involvement in various left-wing movements on Soan Island.

In the meantime, sometime between 1948 and 1949, a right-wing youth group called "Youth Association" was organized. Kim Gyeong-seon,

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43. Kim Jeong-ryeong (b. 1940), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 29, 2015.

44. Choe Jong-ju (b. 1946), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 29, 2015.

a member of the Dochonggwangong Kim clan who did not even have an elementary school education, established it in compliance with orders from the Soan-myeon police substation. The rest of this right-wing youth group also mainly consisted of the Dochonggwangong Kim clan. According to reports, two men with the titles of overseers were under the direction of Kim Gyeong-seon; they frequently arrested and tortured young, left-wing men and their family members. For example, when Kim Jin-yeol fled, having been suspected of joining the Labor Party of South Korea, the right-wing youth group arrested his father and severely tortured him while interrogating him about his son's whereabouts. They even confiscated cattle belonging to Kim Jin-yeol's parents. Eventually, his parents had to leave their home and stay with relatives in Haenam-gun for several months.<sup>45</sup>

#### *Victims from Village A during the Korean War*

After the Korean War broke out, the North Korean Army occupied Wando Island for a period of only two weeks from mid- to late September. On September 14, they attacked Wando Island in full force, and when the Soan police retreated to Cheongsan Island, left-wing forces from Soan Island gathered at a place called Heodeomjae pass in Mira-ri. They were convinced that the time of the People's Republic had arrived and decided to punish the right-wing forces. However, on September 15, the Naju Unit, which was retreating to Cheongsan Island from Wando-eup, stopped by Soan Island. The Naju Unit gathered right-wing members as they patrolled villages before retreating to Cheongsan Island. Consequently, no situations akin to the massacre of right-wing people by left-wing forces occurred because the Naju Units protected them.<sup>46</sup>

In addition, news of the Incheon Landing Operation on September 15 apparently spread to Wando-gun. A number of Soan Island villagers testified that they saw numerous fleets moving west in the sea south of Wando around September 14. For this reason, the residents of Soan Island seemed

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45. Kim Jin-baek (b. 1934), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 19, 2014.

46. Cheong Byeong-mo (b. 1937), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 20, 2015.

to think that the war situation was fluctuating, and subsequently, the situation dramatically changed. On September 30, when the North Korean Army retreated from Wando-gun altogether, the people suspected of being left-wing on Soan Island all escaped to the mainland. Meanwhile, the police returned to Soan Island. They started identifying traitors who cooperated with the North Korean Army. The suspects of treason were arrested and executed, transported to the Wando police station, or sent home after a warning. A Soan-myeon villager, who had been arrested on a charge of treason, testified as follows: "After the restoration of Wando-eup, the police came to Soan-myeon, gathered the villagers in the school playground, and arrested the suspected traitors. At that time, my brother and I were arrested and interrogated in the Soan police substation and Wando police station. There were so many people who had been taken into the custody of the Wando police station that some people were detained in warehouses in the vicinity. My brother was detained in a jail room of the Wando police station and one night he was taken by the police and shot dead in the woods behind Jukcheong-ri, Wando-eup. I was brought to trial in Mokpo and freed, but my brother was executed without being tried."<sup>47</sup>

As can be seen from this discussion, when the North Korean Army retreated, many people evacuated Wando-gun and sought refuge in other neighboring inland counties, such as Haenam-gun, Gangjin-gun, and Jangheung-gun, regardless of whether a person had committed treason during the Army's occupation or not. Many often died outside their hometowns without being able to return home. Taking one family as an example, after Kim Hyeong-gon was executed in August 1949, his family wandered around Wando-eup or Mokpo, staying with relatives. After the North Korean Army occupied Wando-gun in September 1950, his family returned to Soan Island. However, when they heard that the North Korean Army was withdrawing, all seven members of the family (Kim Hyeong-gon's wife, four sons, one son's wife, and one granddaughter) passed through Gangjin and evacuated to Jangheung, Yuchi-myeon. In May 1951, when they were still fleeing toward Hwasun, they were shot dead by a punitive expedition. Among

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47. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:627.



the sons, only Kim Jin-bo escaped to Mt. Baegun; he was later arrested by a punitive expedition, handed over to the prosecuting office, sentenced to five years in prison on a charge of violating the National Security Law, and freed after his term. On the other hand, Kim Hyeong-gon's second eldest son Kim Jin-yeong was detained in Mokpo prison and executed by drowning in the coastal waters of Mokpo around July 25.<sup>48</sup> In summary, from liberation until the Korean War period, Kim Hyeong-gon's household had nine victims. Kim Hui-gon's son Kim Jin-seo, who escaped during this time, never returned alive. On the other hand, Kim Myeong-suk (female, 19 years old) from Village A, who played the role of messenger for the Soan Island left-wing groups, boarded a boat and escaped to Haenam when the North Korean Army retreated. She later passed Yeongam and went to Jiri Mountain, where she was reportedly killed.<sup>49</sup>

Those people who did not evacuate also suffered greatly. Kim Nam-gon's son Kim Jin-seong (b. 1922) was teaching at Hwangsan Elementary School in Haenam-gun after liberation. From the moment he was identified as a left-wing teacher in around 1947, he went on the run. When the police retreated from Soan Island in September 1950, he came home. On December 22 of the same year, he was caught by police in his house. He was then dragged to the dock in Village A and executed in front of the villagers. In addition, his cousin Kim Jin-gang (b. 1908) was shot dead on December 23 at the Bija-ri intersection, where the current myeon office is located; his eldest son Kim In-su (b. 1929) was killed on November 23 at the Bija-ri beach in Soan-myeon. At that time, Kim Jin-gang was a farmer, whereas Kim In-su had just graduated from Wando Middle School.<sup>50</sup> The police apparently suspected them of treason because the family returned after having evacuated the island at the time of the North Korean Army's retreat.

Three households among the Dochonggwangong Kim clan also had victims. Before the war, the brothers Kim In-mo and Kim Jun-mo had

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48. Based on the list of victims from the Korean War, created by the Truth Discovery Committee for Wando-gun Civilian Victims.

49. Kim Dong-shim (b. 1937), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 28, 2015.

50. 2009-1 TRC Report, 3:625.

moved to the Gimhae Kim family's village in Ilpyeong-ri, Hyeonsan-myeon, Haenam-gun because it was hard to survive in Village A. However, they were always ostracized and despised for being outsiders, leading them to fight with local villagers on occasion. After the war broke out and the North Korean army bypassed the town, the police came to arrest them as well as their mother and sister and executed them all. In addition, a man named Kim Je-un was living in Hyeonsan-myeon of Haenam-gun before the war; he offered a hiding place for his friend Kim Jin-cheon, who was fleeing Village A, and was later caught and executed along with his friend and his wife.<sup>51</sup>

As mentioned previously, many men from the Samhyeon Kim clan in Village A were anti-Japanese nationalists. Their sons and nephews studied in Japan or Wando-eup. Some of them appear to have leaned toward the left during the confrontation between left- and right-wing people after liberation. They were later chased by police, and most were captured and executed before or after the Korean War began.

## Conclusion

This article outlined the numerous cases of civilian casualties occurring in Wando-gun between 1945 and 1950. According to the TRC report, the number of victims killed by the police or a right-wing youth group in Wandogun before and after the Korean War began is at least 506 people. Those killed by the North Korean Army and local left-wing forces during the Korean War is estimated at over 100 people. The total number of left-wing and right-wing victims is about 600 people. However, when adding the number of victims from the NGA incident (over 200) and the number of Wando-gun villagers killed on the mainland, the number is expected to be as much as 1,000.

The reasons behind the high number of victims in Wando-gun can be found in the following facts. First, during Japanese colonial rule, the socialist movement was quite active in Wando-gun. Second, the police conducted

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51. Kim Ok-mo (b. 1936), interview by the author, Soan Island, July 28, 2015.

left-wing mop-up operations in Wando-gun from 1945 to 1949. Third, during the Korean War, when the South Korean police and North Korean Army held their ground for six weeks in Wando-gun, the police carried out mop-up operations of local left-wing suspects. Fourth, during the occupation and retreat of the North Korean Army, they and the left-wing groups executed many people associated with the right wing. Finally, after the retreat of North Korean Army, the South Korean police conducted strict interrogations of suspected traitors and executed some of them without trial.

Specifically, in Wando-gun, Soan-myeon had the most victims. According to interviews with the surviving family members, a total of 250 people were killed in Soan-myeon. Village A (55 victims) had one of the highest numbers of victims among all the villages in Soan-myeon. The case of Village A can be regarded as one of the most representative cases in Wando-gun.

Most significantly, Village A, which housed people who played primary roles in establishing the Soan Private School in 1922, had anti-Japanese and nationalistic tendencies. Many of their sons and nephews studied in Wando-eup or in Japan. When the People's Committee was formed in Wando-gun immediately after liberation in 1945, some of the leaders were people from Soan Island who had been involved in the anti-Japanese movement from a socialist viewpoint during the colonial period. Due to the influence of these leaders, many young men from Soan Island leaned toward the left; the educated group in Village A appears to have been in the same situation. However, once the US military government began in late 1945, those who had participated in the People's Committee or left-wing groups were pursued by the police. Consequently, many young men from Village A were arrested or had to flee. Eventually, they were either executed or imprisoned, and even their family members were executed.

When the Korean War broke out and the North Korean Army came into Wando-gun, some people from Soan Island also joined the Wando-gun People's Committee. However, the North Korean Army's occupation in Wando lasted for only about two weeks. Thereafter, those who identified themselves as left wing in Village A had to flee Soan Island to the mainland when the North Korean Army retreated. Most of them could not return to their hometowns. Finally, other left-wing suspects who stayed in Village A

were arrested by the police and shot dead.

Accordingly, Village A had an especially high number of victims in Wando-gun because it housed many young men suspected as leftists after 1945. Many of the victims in Village A during the Korean War were the members of a family suspected as left-wing supporters before the war. We can find similar cases in other villages in Wando-gun, but this village seems to have been the most affected by the aftermath of the liberation from Japan and the conflict between the two Koreas.

While Village A housed many anti-Japanese nationalists during the colonial period, their sons and nephews, however, leaned to the left during the left and right wing confrontation after the liberation in 1945, and therefore, they could not escape from becoming victims. Thus, the civilian victims from Village A and Wando-gun were the sad outcome of division and war on the Korean Peninsula.

Today, the division of the Korean peninsula and the North-South persists, and the emotional wounds of the victims' families in Wando-gun have not yet healed. Fortunately, the families of Soan-myeon victims erected a monument for the victims on Soan Island in 2013, and the names of all of the victims were listed without distinguishing which side they were on. The monument appears to provide some comfort to the victims' families, albeit to a small extent, and serves as a reminder of the tragedy in Soan Island to everyone.

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