

**HAWAIIAN CONNECTIONALISM:  
METHODIST MISSIONARIES, HAWAII MISSION,  
AND KOREAN ETHNIC CHURCHES<sup>1</sup>**

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In a sermon preached during the 2004 General Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Hae-Jong Kim, the first Korean-American bishop in The United Methodist Church, described the historic voyage of the *S.S. Gaelic*, the first ship that transported Korean immigrants to Hawaii in 1903, an event that marked the beginning of Korean-American history.<sup>2</sup> Onboard the *S.S. Gaelic* were 102 Korean passengers, the same number of passengers, Kim noted, who were aboard the *Mayflower*.<sup>3</sup> However, more remarkable to Kim was the number of Korean Methodists aboard the *S.S. Gaelic*: fifty-one or half of the total number of Korean passengers. Kim added, “But, listen to this: When they arrived in Hawaii 20 days later, the Methodists were 58. During the voyage, they converted seven new Christians. So began the history of the Korean immigrant church.”<sup>4</sup>

The development of Korean Methodism across the Hawaiian islands is of particular importance for an understanding of Methodist connectionalism across transnational and local levels; Methodist missionaries in Korea, Methodist leadership in the Hawaii Mission, and Korean Methodists in Hawaii played important roles in developing the Korean ethnic churches in Hawaii that became the dominant Methodist church in Hawaii in the early twentieth century. Although Methodist missions in Korea had begun less than twenty years earlier, the start of Korean churches in Hawaii in 1903 illustrated the fluid and unpredictable nature of Christian communities, es-

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<sup>2</sup> Scholars separate three distinct periods in Korean American history. While scholars vary on the start of the second period, they unanimously agree that the year 1903 marked the beginning of Korean American history. See David Yoo and Ruth Chung, “Introduction,” *Religion and Spirituality in Korean America*, eds. David Yoo and Ruth Chung (Urbana, IL: U Illinois P, 2008), 2; Bong-youn Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979); and Hyung-chan Kim, ed., *The Korean Diaspora: Historical and Sociological Studies of Korean Immigration and Assimilation in North America* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> “102 *Mayflower* passengers” reached Cape Cod. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, 22<sup>nd</sup> ed. (NY: Knopf, 2002), 77.

<sup>4</sup> Hae-Jong Kim, “Roots and Wings of the Wesleyan Spirit,” Message presented as part of the General Conference (United Methodist Church), Pittsburgh, PA, April 27-May 7, 2004 [church archives on-line]; available from <http://gc2004.org/interior.asp?ptid=17&mid=4416>; Internet; accessed February 13, 2006.

pecially in relation to diasporic and immigrant locations. As Koreans landed on foreign soil and planted new communities, they began a creative religious process, from strengthening the network of churches across the islands to mobilizing their resources for projects and campaigns to developing a communitarian spirit.

## Background

Relations between the United States and Korea began officially in 1882 with the signing of the Korean-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce. The Treaty contained a provision that allowed Korean immigration to the United States, but few Koreans actually emigrated abroad. However the surging demand for sugar on the U.S. mainland necessitated the recruitment of plantation laborers in Hawaii. The U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) sent sugar prices soaring in the North and West after severance of ties with the South meant the halting of trade with the agriculture-rich South. With sugar prices increasing more than six-fold in 1864, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association worked to fill the demand in the lucrative market.<sup>5</sup> As the Association expanded the number of sugar plantations across the islands, Hawaii's production of sugar—in four years—jumped to 17,127,161 pounds in 1867 from 5,292,121 pounds in 1863.<sup>6</sup>

David Deshler, a thirty-year-old owner of the East-West Development Company, representing the interests of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association, entered Korea in 1902 for the purpose of recruiting Koreans to work on Hawaii's sugar plantations. Given that Korea's Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) historically prohibited its subjects from emigrating abroad, King Gojong was reluctant to approve Deschler's request.<sup>7</sup> After the King overcame his reluctance and granted permission, Deschler opened recruiting stations at Korea's major cities and established an Emigration Bureau in Seoul where emigration papers were processed. Although Deshler and his team of Korean translators promoted Hawaii's weather, tropical conditions, and the opportunity to earn wages, few Koreans signed up. Koreans remained "suspicious and 'believed only a fraction' of what they heard, with

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<sup>5</sup>"The U.S. Civil War cut off the North's supply of sugar from the South, and prices climbed from four cents a pound in 1861 to twenty-five cents a pound in 1864. Hawai'i's sugar producers responded and sugar exports increased from 572 to 865 tons . . . The Reciprocity Treaty of 1876 [between the U.S. and Hawaii] allowed Hawaiian sugar to enter the United States duty-free, boosting sugar production in the islands and installing 'king sugar' and the corporations that dominated its production, financing, and shipping" (Gary Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* [NY: Columbia UP, 2001], 14).

<sup>6</sup> See Katherine Coman, "The History of Contract Labor in the Hawaiian Islands," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 4.3 (August, 1903): 65.

<sup>7</sup> This manuscript uses the Revised Romanization of Korean (RRK) for the transliteration of Korean words into English. The RRK was adopted by the South Korean government as the official Korean language romanization system since 2000. Because personal Korean names cannot be accurately romanized without knowing them in *hangul* (Korea's native language), the English rendering of Korean personal names have been kept.

the result that no one was signing up to emigrate to Hawaii.”<sup>8</sup>

Had it not been for the efforts of George H. Jones, a missionary from the Methodist Episcopal Church who used his unique influence to encourage Korean emigration, few Koreans would have come to the United States. “Very fluent” in Korean, Jones not only promoted Hawaii to his church but also to the residents of Incheon, the port-city where Jones was stationed.<sup>9</sup> According to the sociologist Hyung-chan Kim, “Of all American missionaries, Reverend George Heber Jones of the Methodist missions was most influential with Korean emigrants.”<sup>10</sup> In-Jin Yoon wrote, “The intervention of the Reverend George H. Jones of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Incheon was crucial in overcoming the initial resistance.”<sup>11</sup>

Using his presence in the city of Incheon, Jones encouraged more than fifty members of his Nairi Methodist Church and twenty workers from the Incheon port-city to emigrate to Hawaii.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the majority of the Korean immigrants on the first ship to the Hawaiian Territory of the United States were directly influenced by Jones. On a Monday in December, 1902, when Koreans gathered at Incheon port to get ready to board the ship, Jones exhorted the crowd as they were about to embark on a trans-Pacific journey to start a new life:<sup>13</sup>

While encamped at the seaport of Chemulp’o [old name for Incheon], awaiting the transport to bear them away into a strange land, Rev. George Heber Jones, a Methodist Episcopal Missionary, became interested in their welfare, and held large tent meetings in order to inspire them with laudable ambitions and prepare them for the strange experiences so soon to overtake them. He also handed a few of the leaders among them letters of introduction to the Superintendent of Methodist Missions in Hawaii, and gave them in parting his heartfelt blessing.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1896-1910* (Honolulu: U Hawaii P, 1988), 48. According to Patterson: “For some, fear of the unknown was an inhibiting factor, most having never been far from home. Others hesitated because they thought ill of leaving their relatives and deserting the graves of their ancestors. Still others feared the distances involved; it was one thing to emigrate north to the Vladivostok area but quite another to cross several thousand miles of the Pacific Ocean, perhaps never to return” (48-49).

<sup>9</sup> Soon Hyun, who attended Jones’ church, recalled that Jones “could speak the Korean language very fluently” (quoted in Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, 49).

<sup>10</sup> Hyung-chan Kim, “The History and Role of the Church in the Korean American Community,” in Hyung-chan Kim, ed. *The Korean Diaspora* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1977), 49.

<sup>11</sup> In-Jin Yoon, *On My Own: Korean Businesses and Race Relations in America* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1997), 51-52.

<sup>12</sup> Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> In 2002, Koreans, Korean Americans, denominational and episcopal leaders in the United Methodist Church led a centennial celebration of the Korean passage to Hawaii, which marked the start of Korean American history. See “Korean and Korean-American Mission Praised by the Rev. R. Randy Day,” *Global Ministries News Archives* (January 21, 2003): [article on-line]: available from [http://gbgm-umc.org/global\\_news/full\\_article.cfm?articleid=1365](http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=1365); Internet; accessed 5 February 2008. See Kathy Gilbert, “Korean United Methodists Celebrate 100-year History,” *United Methodist News Service* (May 5, 2003): [article on-line]; available from [http://archives.umc.org/umns/news\\_archive2003.asp?story=%7B01C2CD88-43A0-43BF-9E08-2AC59BABFDA7%7D&mid=2406](http://archives.umc.org/umns/news_archive2003.asp?story=%7B01C2CD88-43A0-43BF-9E08-2AC59BABFDA7%7D&mid=2406); Internet; accessed February 5, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> John W. Wadman, “Educational Work among Koreans,” Reports of Public Instruction, December 31, 1910-December, 1912 (Honolulu: Department of Public Instruction, 1912), 146.

After the safe passage of the *S.S. Gaelic*, recruiting Koreans became easier for Deshler. With a group already in Hawaii and proof of satisfactory conditions, as evidenced by pictures taken in Hawaii of satisfied Koreans, Deshler opened nearly a dozen offices “scattered throughout Korea by 1905.”<sup>15</sup> However, the geo-political situation made Korean emigration to Hawaii short-lived, as the last ship carrying Korean laborers ended in 1905. Between 1903 and 1905, 7,226 Koreans left for Hawaii’s plantations.<sup>16</sup> In all, the Korean laborers represented eleven percent of the total plantation workforce in 1905.<sup>17</sup>

In 1905, despite the King’s protests, Japan asserted sovereignty over Korea, effectively ending Korean independence.<sup>18</sup> According to the Protectorate Treaty, Japan took full control over Korea’s external relations and placed domestic affairs under the supervision of a Japanese resident.<sup>19</sup> The Japanese residency-general, or the “de facto colonial government,” subsumed Korea’s government functions—from “diplomatic to police, financial, judicial, and military affairs.”<sup>20</sup> With control of the main organs of the Korean governments, Japan pressured King Gojong to cease granting visas in 1905, thereby effectively staunching the flow of Korean emigration to the United States for many decades.

### Korean Christianity on the Plantations

As Koreans settled in Hawaii, they embraced Christianity in a way unlike any other ethnic group. George H. Jones was not surprised by the news of rapid spread of Christianity among Koreans in Hawaii; he considered the emigration of Korean Christians to be a way to send the mission work back to the United States. “It is clear,” wrote Wayne Patterson, “that Jones genuinely approved of the idea partly for the [Korean] emigrants’ own advantage and partly in the belief that mission work would be more successful away from the home country.”<sup>21</sup>

Jones’ vision was realized even before the first ship carrying Korean passengers arrived in Hawaii. During the ten-day voyage across the Pacific Ocean on the *S.S. Gaelic*, Koreans who were from Jones’ Nairi Methodist Church in Incheon took the initiative of holding Christian services in the ship’s steerage where people were “herded together in the three-tiered bunks,

<sup>15</sup> Wadman, 92.

<sup>16</sup> 6,048 men, 637 women, 541 children (Hurh and Kim 84:39).

<sup>17</sup> David Yoo, “Nurturing Religious Nationalism: Korean Americans in Hawaii,” in *Practicing Protestants*, eds. Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Leigh Schmidt, and Mark Valeri (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006), 107.

<sup>18</sup> The Protectorate Treaty “was imposed on the Korean government virtually at gunpoint, thereby raising questions about its legality. It placed the external affairs of Korea under Japanese direction and management” (Yongho Ch’oe, Peter Lee, and Wm. Theodore de Bary, eds., *Sources of Korean Tradition*, Vol. 2 [NY: Columbia UP, 2000], 289).

<sup>19</sup> Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley, CA: U California P, 1998), 188.

<sup>20</sup> *Sources of Korean Tradition*, Vol. 2, 290.

<sup>21</sup> Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, 49.

sweating, vomiting, and eliminating.”<sup>22</sup> Despite being cramped into the “dark steerage hold of a ship,” the Korean Christians “carried on Christian work among their fellow emigrants.”<sup>23</sup> As noted above in Bishop Kim’s sermon to the General Conference, eight people on the ship converted to Christianity. With eight persons added to their fold, a total of 58 out of the 102 were Christians and they were ready to start a church on land.<sup>24</sup> Holding religious services in the ship’s steerage was apparently commonplace as, according to Korean witnesses, “there was at least one Christian minister who gave inspiration and hope to the despairing immigrants . . . on every immigrant ship that carried Koreans to Hawaii.”<sup>25</sup>

When the *S.S. Gaelic* finally arrived in Honolulu, the Rev. George Pearson, the Methodist superintendent of the Hawaii mission, welcomed them ashore.<sup>26</sup> Pearson was the second superintendent of the Hawaii Mission, succeeding Harcourt Peck in 1897. During the 1904 General Conference, the Hawaii Mission was officially established and oversight was assigned to Board of Home Missions.<sup>27</sup> After the *S.S. Gaelic*, a second ship carrying sixty-four Koreans entered Hawaii, and Koreans “started ‘informal’ worship services together with the immigrants from the second boat not long after they settled in the Kahuku-Waialua area.” Just as George H. Jones used his Methodist connections to alert the Hawaiian missions ahead of their arrival, so members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Hawaii assisted in welcoming them, adjusting to the new land, and helping them to start churches. Pearson “visited all the plantations where Koreans were dispatched, and succeeded in opening a few night schools in English for the benefit of Koreans.”<sup>28</sup> Continuing the work of supporting educational activi-

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<sup>22</sup> Margaret K. Pai, *The Dreams of Two Yi Min* (Honolulu: U Hawaii P, 1988), 34.

<sup>23</sup> Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, 50.

<sup>24</sup> George Heber Jones, *Korea: Land, People, and Customs* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1907), 108.

<sup>25</sup> Bong-young Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), 97.

<sup>26</sup> By an arrangement made between the Protestant denominations in Hawaii, the Congregational and Anglican Churches were assigned the Chinese population while the Methodists were given the Japanese and Koreans (Duk Hee Lee Murabayashi, *Korean Ministerial Appointments to Hawaii Methodist Churches* [Honolulu: University of Hawaii, Center for Korean Studies, 2001], 7).

<sup>27</sup> Prior to 1904, the Bishop of the California Conference assigned missionary pastors to Hawaii. The Methodist work in Hawaii first began in 1855 when the Methodist bishop in San Francisco appointed Rev. W. S. Turner to start a church in Honolulu. However, the work produced little results. A “second [Methodist] attempt” took place in 1888 when a Japanese Methodist Church was started as part of the Pacific Coast Japanese Mission (Murabayashi, *Korean Ministerial Appointments*, 5). “The Hawaii Mission held its first annual meeting at First Church, Honolulu, December 28, 1906 . . . . The work prospered, and in 1967, by vote of the Mission, the National Division of the Board of Missions, and the Southern California-Arizona Conference, Hawaii became a full district of what is now the California-Pacific Annual Conference” (Frank Butterworth, “Hawaii Mission,” *Historical Section: California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church* [official publication by the conference, 2010], L-3). For a full examination of the beginnings of Methodism in Hawaii, see Richard H. Bimson and Erna S. Bimson, *Hawaii Mission of the Methodist Church: 1855-1955* (S.I., s.n., 1955), 3-13.

<sup>28</sup> Murabayashi, *Korean Ministerial Appointments to Hawaii Methodist Churches*, 8.

ties of the Korean community, John W. Wadman, who succeeded Pearson as the Methodist district superintendent at the end of 1904, “was instrumental in purchasing a piece of property . . . for the purpose of organizing a boarding school for Korean boys.”<sup>29</sup>

According to Wayne Patterson, Koreans started churches in nearly every plantation where Koreans worked “without any external prompting.”<sup>30</sup> In addition, with little external funding, Koreans undertook the task of starting churches. According to a 1905 Annual Report of the Methodist Episcopal Church, “These [Korean chapels on Oahu] have all been built and dedicated free of debt and without any charge to the Missionary Society.”<sup>31</sup> On the island of Kauai, “two church edifices have been erected without any expense to the Missionary Society, and two more are under way.”<sup>32</sup>

Several months after the *S.S. Gaelic* brought the first group of Koreans, Korean Christians in Kahuku organized in the summer of 1903 “a Christian church and about fifty persons worshiped God led by Yun Chi Pong on every Sunday morning.”<sup>33</sup> Korean preachers like Yun were plantation workers like the rest of the congregants but they were experienced church members, and some of them had received Bible training in Korea. On the island of Oahu, the Korean Christians on the Ewa plantation “collected three hundred dollars” amongst themselves for the purpose of building a church in 1904.<sup>34</sup> Renton, the manager of the Ewa Plantation, who was a Christian himself, was so impressed with the self-initiative of the Koreans that he “donated \$750 to build a church and used the \$300 collected by the Koreans to furnish it.”<sup>35</sup> To supply the pulpits of the various Korean congregations that had been sprouting across the Hawaiian plantations, the Korean Christians sent word back to Korea that they needed pastors. An article published in 1904 stated that among the first 600 Koreans who emigrated to Hawaii, “three hundred are members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.”<sup>36</sup>

Although Koreans were one of the smallest ethnic groups by population on the Hawaiian Islands, Koreans had the highest average Sunday School attendance among all Methodist Episcopal Churches in Hawaii, with 605 in 1905. In comparison, the Japanese had 276, and the whites had 64. In fact, the Methodist church in Hawaii had more Koreans than any other group, as Koreans “constituted 64 percent of the total Methodist congregation in

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<sup>29</sup> Hyung-chan Kim, “The Church in the Korean American Community,” in *The Korean Diaspora*, ed. Hyung-chan Kim (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1977), 51.

<sup>30</sup> Wayne Patterson, *The Ilse: First Generation of Korean Immigrants in Hawai'i, 1903-1973* (Honolulu: U Hawaii P, 2000), 56.

<sup>31</sup> “Hawaii,” *Eighty-Seventh Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, For the Year 1905*, 385.

<sup>32</sup> “Hawaii,” *Eighty-Seventh Annual Report of the Missionary Society*, 386.

<sup>33</sup> Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Wayne Patterson, *Ilse*, 56.

<sup>35</sup> Patterson, *Ilse*, 57.

<sup>36</sup> “Methodists in Hawaii,” *Methodist Magazine and Review* 60 (July-December, 1904), 283.

Hawaii.<sup>37</sup>

In 1906, Korean Christians started publishing a monthly newsletter that was “distributed among thirty-six Korean churches” on the islands.<sup>38</sup> Between 1903 to 1918, “approximately 2,800 Koreans were converted to Christianity and thirty-nine churches were established in the Hawaiian Islands alone.” Historian Hyung-chan Kim wrote, “This numerical growth is a remarkable achievement in view of the fact that the total number of persons of Korean ancestry in the Islands during this period was less than 8,000.”<sup>39</sup> By World War II, the Koreans in Hawaii, according to David Yoo, were “overwhelmingly Christian.”<sup>40</sup>

The tremendous growth of Korean churches in Hawaii tended to obscure the persecution the pioneering Korean church leaders endured for their faith. For example, a Methodist church document in 1905 described Korean Christian workers in the district of Kohala who “suffered much through fierce persecution.” One person was “beaten with stripes, and the other brutally kicked, and both left for dead.” Not only did Korean church leaders, many of whom were plantation laborers themselves, mobilize fellow Koreans for church in their respective camps; they also challenged the established culture of gambling and drunkenness in the plantation camps that Korean Christians viewed as immoral and unwholesome. As a result, other laborers and camp managers resented the Koreans’ resistance to the camp lifestyle. According to an observer, “The camps are infested with ringleaders in all bad things, so that as laborers they have lost caste among the managers, and their reputation is very bad.”<sup>41</sup>

Despite efforts to eliminate the influence of Korean Christians in the camps, Korean churches, house churches, and “kitchen churches” made inroads wherever Koreans resided, spurred by enthusiastic and motivated evangelists. A long-time resident of Hawaii, Tai-youn Kim said, “There was always a Christian church” where Koreans lived and the Korean church became the “center of the Korean community.” The church provided many important cultural and social services. According to Koreans in Hawaii, it seemed as if “every Korean wanted to live near the church, and almost every Korean went to church on Sundays to meet each other and to help those in trouble.”<sup>42</sup> In short, the church became the “heart” of the Korean community in Hawaii.

The church was not the only Korean organization in Hawaii, but it was the

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<sup>37</sup> Yong-ho Choe, “History of the Korean Church: A Case Study of Christ United Methodist Church,” in *Korean-Americans: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Ilpyong Kim (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym Press, 2004), 42.

<sup>38</sup> Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson, eds., *The Koreans in America, 1882-1974* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1974), 10.

<sup>39</sup> Hyung-chan Kim, “The Church in the Korean American Community,” 50.

<sup>40</sup> David Yoo, “Nurturing Religious Nationalism: Korean Americans in Hawaii,” 107.

<sup>41</sup> “Hawaii,” *Eighty-Seventh Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, For the Year 1905*, 386.

<sup>42</sup> Choy, *Koreans in America*, 97.

strongest institution. Combining spiritual and ethnic elements, the Korean church instilled a feeling of self-worth and purpose and created a tight-knit community. The Korean community in Hawaii was socially, ethnically, and economically homogenous, a situation that fostered a sense of commonwealth. Nearly everyone worked on a plantation; they earned about the same wages; and they endured the same miserable conditions. The members of the Korean community took responsibility for one another in the pursuit of the common good. For example, as the first-generation Korean laborers retired from fieldwork, the Korean community built the Korean Old Men's Home to care for aging Koreans.<sup>43</sup>

When George H. Jones traveled to Hawaii in 1906 and met the extended Korean community, he realized that they exceeded his expectations. "One third of all the Koreans in Hawaii," Jones noted, "are professing Christians." Jones discovered that the Koreans were not an inward-looking community; they were changing the culture on the islands for the better. Korean Christians, Jones wrote, "dominate the life in the camps on the Islands of Oahu, Kauai and Maui where they are stamping out gambling and intoxication."<sup>44</sup>

Including a family that he baptized in Korea, Jones recognized many of his former church members, including Soon Hyun, who worked as an interpreter for the plantations.<sup>45</sup> In Hawaii, Hyun became a community activist: he organized "Self-Rule Associations" on the islands and conducted English classes in the evenings for the community. The superintendent of the Methodist Mission in Hawaii recognized Hyun's leadership and recruited him to work for the church as a pastor. Accepting his invitation, Hyun was appointed by the Methodist Church to the island of Kauai where he traveled on horseback, covering "the island from one end to the other, taking care of the sick, arranging schooling for the children, and conducting religious services."<sup>46</sup>

The multiple roles that Hyun fulfilled as a pastor to the Korean community was not uncommon. Korean pastors performed religious duties, taught English classes, functioned as community activists, and organized political activities. According to Wayne Patterson, the Korean pastor acted as an intermediary between Koreans and the plantation manager.<sup>47</sup> Individuals and families "constantly" turned to the pastor "for advice and aid."

In the beginning when church facilities were not available, Koreans wor-

<sup>43</sup> David Yoo, "Nurturing Religious Nationalism: Korean Americans in Hawaii," 113, 114.

<sup>44</sup> George Heber Jones, "The Koreans in Hawaii," *Korea Review* 6.11 (November, 1906): 405.

<sup>45</sup> Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, 49.

<sup>46</sup> According to his son, Soon Hyun "organized a 'Self-Rule Association' to help preserve their cultural identity as Koreans. In the evening, after work, he conducted classes in English for the workers" (Peter Hyun, *Man Sei! The Making of a Korean American* [Honolulu: U Hawaii P, 1986], 27).

<sup>47</sup> "Certain individuals and families constantly go to him for advice and aid. He is the medium through which these individuals keep in touch with the plantation manager" (Wayne Patterson, *Ise*, 67).

shipped in makeshift sanctuaries on the plantations. “Boardinghouse kitchens” became a popular space for worship on Sundays.<sup>48</sup> When the number of worshippers outgrew boarding house kitchens, they began to seek the formal organization as churches. On November 3, 1903, Koreans in Honolulu petitioned the Rev. Pearson, the superintendent of the Methodist mission in Hawaii, for a place to worship.<sup>49</sup> As a result of their inquiry, a week later, Pearson helped start the “Korean Evangelical Society in Honolulu.”<sup>50</sup> In April, 1905, the Society received full status as a church.

Emigration of Koreans lasted briefly from 1903-1905, but Koreans created one of the largest Christian communities in Hawaii. As way of comparison, the 1905 church document from the Methodist Episcopal Church reported one Anglo congregation with one hundred people as full members on the Hawaiian Islands.<sup>51</sup> Among the Japanese, there were 6 congregations with 119 full members. Among the Koreans, there were 12 congregations with 201 full members.<sup>52</sup> Counting the Sunday School for children and adults, probationers, inquirers, and baptisms, John Wadman, the superintendent of Hawaii, wrote, “We have enrolled from sixteen hundred to two thousand as members and probationers.” Wadman continued, “In all we have established over thirty Mission stations [among the Koreans], and have now in our regular employ ten evangelists and four teachers.”<sup>53</sup> A milestone was reached in 1931 when Dora Moon and Chung-Song Lee Ahn became the first Korean female local pastors in Hawaii. Recognized and licensed by the Methodist Church, they were appointed to congregations where they were authorized to administer the sacraments, officiate at funerals, and other church duties. A year later, Dora Moon helped start the Korean Missionary Society that raised funds for the purpose of assisting churches and families in Korea.<sup>54</sup>

### Women and Community-Building

Moon and Lee’s groundbreaking community-building in the Korean community epitomized the contribution of Korean women in Hawaii. The addition of Korean “picture brides,” many of whom were educated Christians, greatly assisted in the development of religious and social organizations

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<sup>48</sup> Wayne Patterson, *Ilse*, 56.

<sup>49</sup> “Efforts to establish a congregation began on November 3, 1903, when a group of Koreans in Honolulu chose An Ch’ung-su and Yu Pyong-gil to negotiate with a superintendent of the Methodist mission for a place of worship” (Hyung-chan Kim, “The Church in the Korean American Community,” 51).

<sup>50</sup> Duk Hee Lee Murabayashi, *Korean Ministerial Appointments to Hawaii Methodist Churches*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> “Hawaii,” *Eighty-Seventh Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, For the Year 1905* (NY: Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1906), 383.

<sup>52</sup> “Hawaii,” *Eighty-Seventh Annual Report of the Missionary Society*, 387.

<sup>53</sup> “Hawaii,” *Eighty-Seventh Annual Report of the Missionary Society*, 385.

<sup>54</sup> Yong-ho Choe, “History of the Korean Church: A Case Study of Christ United Methodist Church,” *Korean-Americans: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Ilpyong Kim (Elizabeth, NJ: Holym Press, 2004), 48.

aimed at assisting and improving the welfare of their community, such as the Korean Women's Association and Women's Missionary Association.<sup>55</sup>

Margaret K. Pai remembered her mother's leadership in the Methodist Ladies Aid Society, which had extensive coverage throughout the islands. The Society aimed to provide a network of services to reach "every Korean family in the community." Pai wrote:

Although the immigrants were all poor, so dedicated were the Society members that no family went without food or a roof over their heads (immigrant men often lost their jobs); a mother who became ill could depend on other mothers to help her; and a mother with a newborn baby did not have to rise from her bed until she was strong. All these services were rendered despite the fact that every woman was burdened with heavy responsibilities of her own.<sup>56</sup>

Helen Chung, a member of the Korean Christian Church and the Korean Women's Relief Society, remembered the "spirit of giving" among the women. She said, "My mom and the others worked hard all day and then came to the church at night to make kimchee and other food to sell so that they could raise funds for the church and for Korea. People would come by the church all the time, not just on Sundays, and whenever you needed to find someone, you usually could find them there." The attachment to Korea, their homeland, continued decades after their arrival. For example, the Women's Relief Society sent "over 700 tons of goods to Korea" in 1946. The Korean Women's Relief Society began in 1919 when 41 representatives of "various Korean women's societies throughout the islands met in Honolulu to merge their efforts." According to David Yoo, "the primary aim of the [Korean Women's] Relief Society was to provide support for women and children in Korea and for the provisional government in Shanghai."<sup>57</sup>

In 1907, the first women's organization was formed; it later evolved into the Korean Women's Educational Association in 1909. Duk Hee Lee Murabayashi, the vice-chairwomen of the 2003 Centennial Committee of Korean Immigration to the United States, recalled the primary purpose of the Korean Women's Educational Association: "education, education, education." Murabayashi noted the nationalism of the women as an important factor in the promotion of education. She said, "They had lost their country and they saw education as the only means they had to regain their country's sovereignty."<sup>58</sup>

## Support of Schooling for Children

<sup>55</sup> Han-kyo Kim, "The Korean Independence Movement in the United States: Syngman Rhee, An Ch'ang-Ho and Park Yong-Man," *Korean-Americans: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Il-pyong Kim (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym Press, 2004), 67.

<sup>56</sup> Margaret K. Pai, *The Dreams of Two Yi-Min*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> David Yoo, "Nurturing Religious Nationalism: Korean Americans in Hawaii," 113.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Adamski, "A Better Life," *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (January 12, 2003): [article on-line]; available from <http://archives.starbulletin.com/2003/01/12/news/story3.html>; Internet; accessed May 5, 2009.

Korean children had limited opportunities to receive formal education. To remedy this situation, Korean communities across the islands, in spite of their limited financial resources, began to raise money for schools. The close-knit Korean community produced a collectivist ethos that facilitated the growth of schools. Koreans in each respective camp formed a strong bond, as Bernice Kim, a community leader, noted in 1934 when she said that “each camp was like a small unit of the old Hermit Kingdom transplanted to another land.”<sup>59</sup>

Working ten hours a day, six days a week with a half-hour for lunch, a Korean adult received sixteen to eighteen dollars a month.<sup>60</sup> A Korean plantation laborer wrote, “We worked in the hot sun for ten hours a day, and the pay was fifty-nine cents a day . . . When we got back to the camp [after quitting work at 4:30pm], we ate, washed, and then went directly to bed.”<sup>61</sup> Due to the difficult conditions on the plantations, approximately a quarter of the Korean workers left each year. The number of Korean plantation workers dropped to 3,615 at the end of 1906; 2,638 or 6 percent of the plantation labor in 1907; 2,638 or 4.5 percent of the plantation labor in 1908; 2,125 or 4.5 percent of the plantation labor in 1908; and only 1,700 remaining in 1909.<sup>62</sup>

Plantation worker Hyung-soon Kim recalled that Korean workers were “treated no better than cows or horses . . . . Every worker was called by number, never by name. During working hours, nobody was allowed to talk, smoke, or even stretch his back. A foreman kept his eyes on his workers at all times. When he found anyone violating working regulations, he whipped the violator without mercy.” A Korean woman recalled, “I’ll never forget the foreman . . . He said we worked like ‘lazy.’ He wanted us to work faster . . . He would gallop around on horseback and crack and snap his whip.”<sup>63</sup> Hong-gi Lee recalled, “I lived in the camp: it was just like the army barracks; wooden floors and we slept on wooden beds or just on the floor, with one blanket over the body. Usually four single men lived in one room.”<sup>64</sup>

The workers in the fields were closely monitored by foremen or camp police who galloped around armed with snake whips. The whip symbolized his authority to punish those who refused to comply with demands of

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<sup>59</sup> Bernice Bong Hee Kim, “The Koreans in Hawaii,” *Social Science* 9.4 (October, 1934): 409-413.

<sup>60</sup> Choy, *Koreans in America*, 94; Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, 17. As a note of comparison, Ko Shigeta, a Japanese laborer who entered Hawaii in 1903 at the age of seventeen, received fourteen dollars a month as he worked on Oahu’s Aiea plantation. Ko said, “Fifty of us, both bachelors and married couples, lived together in a humble shed—a long ten-foot-wide hallway made of wattle and lined along the sides with a slightly raised floor covered with a grass rug, and two *tatami* mats to be shared among us” (Gary Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* [Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1992], 28).

<sup>61</sup> Morris Pang, “A Korean Immigrant,” *Social Forces in Hawaii* 12 (1949), 19-24, as quoted in *The Koreans in America, 1882-1974*, edited by Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1974), 118, 119.

<sup>62</sup> Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, 56.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (Honolulu: U Hawaii P, 1983), 74.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Choy, *Koreans in America*, 96.

the plantation. According to the *Hawaii Herald*, “Some of them bear marks which they say were made with a whip.” Hong-ki Lee “who had come to Hawaii in 1903, described his German luna [Hawaiian for foreman] as very strict. ‘If anyone violated his orders,’ Lee said, ‘he was punished, usually with a slap on his face.’ Other Korean laborers reported harsh methods to make them work as they felt they had been “too roughly treated.”<sup>65</sup>

To advance the education of their children and to help them avoid a life on the plantations, the passing of cultural knowledge became a central concern. “Usually taught by the Methodist pastor,” Korean language classes became a staple on every island.<sup>66</sup> The Korean-language schools “were held in the late afternoon or evening, where students were taught not only language, but also Korean history, customs, and ethics.” A woman born in 1907 recalled her days in the Korean school: “We all were taught to speak and write Korean, our native language, and in order to acquire perfection father sent us to the village language school . . . That faithful old Confucius scholar eagerly bent to penetrate our stubborn minds to the wonders of the ancient classics.”<sup>67</sup>

In 1905, Korean Christians petitioned John Wadman, the Methodist Superintendent, to start an elementary school in Honolulu, where many Koreans relocated after fulfilling their contractual obligations on plantations. With Wadman’s approval and support, the Korean Compound opened on Punchbowl Street in 1906.

The Korean Compound offered instruction through eighth grade a taught Korean language and Bible study classes in the afternoon. Although the Koreans received only 75 cents a day as wages on the plantations, “many laborers contributed money for scholarships, 25 cents here, \$1 there.”<sup>68</sup> As the Korean Compound also housed the pastor of the Korean Methodist Church and the office of the Methodist superintendent in Hawaii, the school became the main Korean school in Hawaii.

## Conclusion

The end of the Korean War in 1953 marked fifty years since the first ship landed in Hawaii, starting the first wave of Korean immigration to the United States. Some of the original first-generation immigrants had died by 1953, and the second-generation Korean Americans began to take their parents’ places in the Korean church and community. The Korean community in Hawaii was further transformed when large numbers of Korean immigrants entered Hawaii after the passing of the 1965 Immigration Act. The Korean Methodist Church (re-named Christ United Methodist Church), the biggest Korean Methodist church on the islands with one thousand members, experienced a period of unprecedented growth after 1965. Christ Church expanded its sanctuary size to 500 in 1979. When church attendance con-

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<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 74-75.

<sup>66</sup> Wayne Patterson, *Ilse*, 117.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Wayne Patterson, *Ilse*, 118.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Wayne Patterson, *Ilse*, 118.

tinued to increase in the 1980s with adult attendance over 600, Christ UMC approved an ambitious project to construct a new building and sanctuary “at total cost of \$5.7 million.” The new Centennial Sanctuary was consecrated on September 6, 1998.<sup>69</sup>

Five years later, in April of 2003, Methodist church leaders from Korea and the United States, including bishops from the Korean Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church, converged in Hawaii and assembled at Christ United Methodist Church to mark the centennial celebration of the first voyage of Korean immigrants across the Pacific. During the four-day celebration, “Remember the Past, Celebrate the Present, Envision the Future,” church leaders called the event not a Korean celebration but a “churchwide” celebration.<sup>70</sup> The development of Korean churches in Hawaii represented a globalized perspective in which Methodist connectionalism facilitated the growth of faith communities across boundaries. As borders are increasingly rendered obsolete in a globalized world, the Korean church in Hawaii serves as an example of how Christian communities in a foreign setting can flourish with little external assistance, given strong motivation and spiritual commitment.

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<sup>69</sup> Yong-ho Choe, “History of the Korean Church: A Case Study of Christ United Methodist Church,” 61.

<sup>70</sup> Kathy Gilbert, “Korean United Methodists Celebrate 100-year history,” *United Methodist News Service* (May 5, 2003) [news article on-line]; available from [http://bishops.umc.org/umns/intlnews\\_archive.asp?story=%7B01C2CD88-43A0-43BF-9E08-2AC59BABFDA7%7D&mid=881](http://bishops.umc.org/umns/intlnews_archive.asp?story=%7B01C2CD88-43A0-43BF-9E08-2AC59BABFDA7%7D&mid=881); internet; accessed February 28, 2008.