

The 1931 Anti-Chinese Riot in Colonial Korea: A Focus on the Process of the Riot

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Abstract | This article analyzes the participation mechanisms and collective behavior displayed during the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot in colonial Korea. It focuses specifically on collectivity and its ability to transcend individual values and generate group behavior (e.g., riots), arguing that this collectivity has normative characteristics emerging from ethnic conflict. This approach is unique and can enable a better understanding of such behavior. First, the research takes the riots themselves and their place of occurrence as the central vantage point rather than focusing on the background factors that precipitated them. Second, this approach provides a more substantial explanatory process because it addresses the compulsory nature of crowd participation in addition to its voluntary nature. To contextualize this argument, the paper explores the significance of the Wanbaoshan incident that triggered Koreans at that time. This exploration reveals that Koreans' mass participation can be accounted for by the idea of "perceived legitimacy" shared by rioters. Second, this paper investigates whether this perceived legitimacy coerced others to participate while also probing if specific norms led to selective and self-regulatory forms of violence and involvement. The paper also shows that the Pyöngyang riot (where the pogrom occurred) represents more than an isolated case; it is, instead, a more evolved form of rioting than that which occurred in other regions. Finally, the paper discusses the response of the security police to further contextualize how the riot progressed.

Keywords | Anti-Chinese riot, Wanbaoshan incident, Pyöngyang riot, ethnic violence, crowd participation, perceived legitimacy, massacre (pogrom)

Introduction

During the colonial period, Korean people suffered human rights violations such as the Kantö Massacre (1923), forced labor, and the sexual exploitation of "comfort women." It may thus be natural that existing studies have represented

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Koreans as oppressed people and victims based on those facts. The problem, however, is that the representation of the colonized population as the ultimate “good victim” has been so strong that it has left no room for other representations. In this respect, it became impossible to doubt the legitimacy of the oppressed people and their cause. Such popular representation closes off the possibility of critically reflecting on the violence and discrimination committed by oppressed people in history (Chang Yong-gyŏng 2017, 303). The 1931 Anti-Chinese riot, the main subject of this paper, involved tens of thousands of Koreans on a national scale and entailed appalling mass violence that resulted in the death of more than 100 Chinese people. In relation to such events, it becomes impossible to ignore the formidable violence that oppressed people can commit. The 1931 Anti-Chinese riot can be considered an important historical event that allows us to reflect on the collective discrimination and violence committed by colonized people against other groups.

To properly examine the events of this period, it is imperative not to forget that the perpetrators of this incident were colonized people. In other words, it is necessary to capture coloniality within the context. This notion of coloniality requires attention in two ways: first, spatial expansion. Korea was integrated into Japan’s imperial space without its sovereign rights. While Korea did not have sovereignty, Koreans experienced an expansion of their recognizable world within the context of Japanese imperial space. Of course, this cognitive expansion experienced by colonized people was not the same as that enabled for the dominant people, as the colony was a hierarchized world. In the imperial space, the symbolic capitals classifying the world and setting the rules of the game were also distributed asymmetrically, as were other political, economic, and cultural resources (Ch’ae O-byŏng 2021, 23). Koreans perceived imperial space through this asymmetric symbolic order. The analysis of the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot offers a unique window to look into the internalization process of this asymmetric symbolic order. The event that sparked the riot took place in Manchuria, a place where the national interests of China and Japan were in sharp conflict. Furthermore, given that such large-scale violence erupted in Korea, the gaze of the colonizers who were in charge of security at the time should not be overlooked. In this regard, the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot allows us to reflect on popular violence and capture an idea of coloniality in Korea.

This article attempts to explain the progress of the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot based on these historiographical values. I focused on the process of the riot to capture its inner dynamism. This paper asserts that the power that drives this dynamism comes not from individual motivation or disposition but from collective force and its ability to transcend individual values. Although any riot

is an expression of collective action that cannot be merely reduced to a sum of individuals, previous studies on the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot focused mainly on the background factors of the riot and neglected to pay attention to the process of the riot itself. Such background explanations lead us to view a riot as a natural result of given background factors. For example, studies focusing on the political interests of the then-imperial power or indigenous elites (Min Tu-gi 1999; Pak Yŏng-sŏk 1985; Pak Chŏng-hyŏn 2014; Yi Sang-gyŏng 2011) give little account of motivations of the mass crowd who participated in the riot. Such approaches not only postulate the masses as passive beings but also block critical scrutiny of the Korean populace as executors of violence.

In contrast to those earlier studies, recent studies have attempted to explain the Anti-Chinese riots by focusing on antipathy (Kim T'ae-ung, 2013; Kim Hŭi-yong 2009; Son Sŭng-hoe 2009; Yi Ok-ryŏn 2008; Yi Ũn-sang 2016; Yi Chŏng-hŭi 2012; Jung Byung Wook 2012, 2015, 2017), which allows an understanding of the motives for participating in riots. According to these studies, hatred toward Chinese people came from the negative representations of the Chinese, which frequently appeared in the media or from ethnic competition in the labor market. These studies highlight that the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot was a dramatic showcase of the Anti-Chinese sentiments that had accumulated since the past. The Wanbaoshan incident was merely a pretext. However, these emotion-driven explanations still remain at the level of analysis where the background of the riot is explored and do not explain how individuals with such motives move forward as a group.

Violence has its own domain, independent of ethnic conflicts. Explaining violence merely as an expression of antagonism toward other ethnic groups has various drawbacks. Brubaker and Laitin (1998, 425-26) stated that "violence has generally been conceptualized, if only tacitly, as a degree of conflict rather than as a form of conflict." However, violence is not a "self-explanatory outgrowth of such conflict, something that occurs automatically when the conflict reaches a certain intensity." Thus, existing ethnic disputes cannot be taken as an absolute explanation of a riot itself. In the case of the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot, the pattern of violence shown by the crowd in the riot situation cannot be simply explained by the demographic composition of lower-class workers who had been at odds with the Chinese. Therefore, it is necessary to explain separately how individuals constitute groups with the same purpose of violence. Furthermore, a different explanation is needed to present the characteristics of the group.

Previously, it was Le Bon's model of mob mentality that posited the absence of the individual ego and the contagion of violence. Crowd psychology offers a powerful explanation for how one follows the behavior of a group, regardless of

individual values or tendencies. The colonial police, Koreans, and even Chinese at the time leveraged the concept of crowd psychology to understand the behavior of the suddenly violent Koreans. In a recent study, Chòe Pyòng-do (2012) also endorsed the view of the time and saw crowd psychology as a trigger for the riot to spread. However, the etymological root of the term “contagion” itself posits that the subject does not need to be explained or remain inexplicable, thus keeping our understanding at a primitive and abstract level (Horowitz 2001, 397). In other words, contagion as the mechanism of crowd behavior replaces what needs to be explained with something that does not need to be explained.

In contrast, this article attempts to clarify the normative nature of the riot process with a theoretical discussion of ethnic riots or violence. Unlike the crowd psychology approach, which treats riots as the absence of the self, I examine identity as the foundation of ethnic violence. Such ethnic riots are closely related to social norms. An often-overlooked aspect in existing studies is that the riot is “commonly approved in the wider society of which the rioters are a part” (Horowitz 2001, 366). In other words, ethnic riots are often legitimized by society. When such legitimacy is awarded, violence is tolerated, and unlike ordinary ethnic skirmishes, violence intensifies to the level of carnage. In this paper, I analyze the accepted collective norms among the participants of the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot and argue that assaulting the Chinese was collectively accepted as a norm, thus leading to mass riots.

The structure of this article is as follows. First, I focus on the differences between the daily fights and riots between Koreans and Chinese before the 1931 riot. Even before that riot, inter-ethnic violence was common in colonial Korea. However, this tendency did not spread nationwide. In this regard, it is necessary to explain the fundamental difference between ethnic fights and ethnic riots. In this article, this difference will be explained by the concept of perceived legitimacy. In the second part, I examine the specific process and pattern of riots in which perceived legitimacy led to mass participation in the riot. The third part focuses on the special nature of the Pyòngyang riots, in which about 90 percent of the related deaths occurred during the riots. If the riot has a strong normative character, why was the carnage that took place in Pyòngyang nearly absent in other regions? Should the Pyòngyang riots be regarded as exceptional events? The last part offers answers to these questions by noting the relationship between norms and the pogrom.

Perceived Legitimacy and the Breakout of 1931 Anti-Chinese Riot

The incidents of skirmishes between Koreans and Chinese frequently featured in newspapers at the time, even before the Anti-Chinese riot in early July 1931. The number of Chinese migrant workers in colonial Korea rapidly increased in the 1920s, as did daily disputes between Koreans and Chinese. Chu Yo-han, a poet and journalist, suggested that the daily practice of the Korean exclusion of Chinese migrants finally exploded into the 1931 riots; in his view, the 1931 riot was not a surprise (Chu Yo-han 1931). As I have discussed earlier, many studies to date have understood the riots as a result of the escalation of existing ethnic disputes. However, this perception blurs the line between previous conflicts and the explosiveness and suddenness of the 1931 riot, which was a nationwide event in scope that led to an unprecedented massacre. Even though there were daily disputes between Koreans and Chinese, it bears explanation why those inter-ethnic disputes neither developed on a nationwide scale of riots nor did they cause a huge death toll prior to July 1931.

Brass defines ethnic riots as “an event in which a large crowd is involved and attacks the people, lives, and property of an opposing ethnic group” (Brass 1997, 4). Despite the ambiguity in his use of the word “large scale,” the definition gives us a point of differentiation between a riot and an ordinary crime of violence (Scacco 2010, 9). Horowitz also distinguishes ethnic riots from ethnic fighting, in that the latter maintains the balance of power in a limited space and does not intensify violence to the point of killing people (Horowitz 2001, 495-97). This distinction is meaningful because such a different scale of violence comes from the fundamental difference between the two.

The participants in ethnic fights limit their use of violence due to confrontational tension and fear in face-to-face situations. In other words, a fear of immediate physical harm or reprisal prevents participants from executing extreme violence. Therefore, participants do not intensify the fight. Rather, they end up having a limited fight and maintain the balance of power (Horowitz 2001, 497). Additionally, fears of resultant penal punishment also deter the mainstream group from participating in collective action. However, one cannot merely regard tension and fear in face-to-face situations as selfish decisions driven by intimidation by physical harm. According to Collins (2008, 26-27), humans have evolved to be highly “susceptible to the dynamics of interactional situations” and prone to “keep up face-to-face solidarity” by creating “interaction rituals” rather than breaking such through violence. In this respect, violence should not be viewed as automatic behavior when motivated, and depicting violence as if it were contagious seldom matches the actual situation of violence

(10). In light of this, the protagonists of violence within ethnic riots regard themselves not as “criminals” but as “warriors” (Horowitz 2001, 359). With this theoretical consideration, this article seeks to answer how such a large number of people could take part in the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot.

In this section, I focus on perceived legitimacy as a way to explain the difference between the limited ethnic fighting before and the ethnic riot itself. Perceived legitimacy in this instance means participating in a riot when one recognizes their own violent behavior as justifiable. This perceived legitimacy, unlike everyday ethnic strife, not only justified violence against the Chinese but, more importantly, also compelled those non-participants who were earlier keeping a distance to join the riot. Justification-based coercion can explain how people who had refused to violate interactive rituals in their daily lives eventually joined the violence, overcoming their fear of physical reprisal and legal punishment. Furthermore, when the perceived legitimacy of the crowd supersedes the legitimacy of the police authority that punishes the lynching violators, the psychological barriers that prevent violence are more easily broken down. The fact that the police sympathized with Anti-Chinese violence at the time meant that rioters faced less threat of physical counterattack or punishment, or they perceived this threat in such a way. More importantly, Horowitz (2001, 359) states, “when doubts arise about the illegitimacy of violence,” the rioters could perceive their violent actions as “sanctioned and sometimes even glorified as a contribution to the welfare of the group.” In other words, authoritative support was critical to overcoming their fear of physical reprisal and legitimate violence.¹

To examine how the crowd secured and recognized their perceived legitimacy, the first article worthy of attention to is the *Korea Daily's* (*Chosŏn ilbo*) extra issue published on the evening of the July 2, 1931. The *Korea Daily* extra issue released the false news of an incident in which nearly 200 Koreans were slaughtered at the hands of Chinese people in Wanbaoshan, Manchuria (hereafter Wanbaoshan incident). After the release of this issue, riots spread across the country, starting with Inchŏn, then Kyŏngsŏng (Keijō in Japanese, colonial Seoul), and Pyŏngyang. It is noteworthy that the attack on the Chinese began around 1:10 a.m. on the July 3. It was just three hours after the distribution of the extra issue at 10:00 p.m. (Yi Chŏng-hŭi 2012, 427). To understand such an immediate massive reaction from people in Korea, it is

1. The attitude of the security police or the state is very decisive in the occurrence of collective violence. For a discussion on this, see Horowitz (2001, ch. 9) or Tilly (2003, chs. 1 and 2). What is particularly noteworthy in this section is that such police attitudes have an important effect on the psychology of rioters in relation to the moral not the physical aspect of their actions.

necessary to consider not only the content of the news but also the interpretive context that accelerated its reception. Since early June, news media had consistently placed weight on delivering news about the Korean migrants in Manchuria, especially regarding the eviction of Korean migrants from Wanbaoshan. Hence, it is imperative to examine the meaning of this preexisting context before the release of the false news on the July 2. Through this interpretive context, we can obtain a better understanding of the explosive consequence of the *Korea Daily's* July 2 extra issue and how the false news provided legitimacy for the retaliative measures against the Chinese living in Korea.

The Korean news reports on the Wanbaoshan incident also provide a glimpse into the police attitude toward the Anti-Chinese riots. Japanese security police in colonial Korea censored newspapers thoroughly to sort out news that may disrupt public security, obstruct police investigation, or conflict with the military. For instance, in 1927, the Department of Book Inspection in the Police Affairs Division confiscated articles on Anti-Chinese riots that could potentially provoke Koreans (Yi Chŏng-hŭi 2012, 429). In 1927, an anti-Chinese riot broke out in Korea when people heard the news of Koreans being expelled from Manchuria. From this, we can see that the police authority must have been fully aware of the broader ramifications of bad news about the Sino-Korean ethnic conflict in Wanbaoshan. In fact, when Chinese government officials and civilians obstructed Koreans' construction of irrigation waterways, the Japanese Consulate in China warned: "There is no guarantee that [a riot] as in 1927 will not happen in Korea when Koreans are expelled from Manchuria" (Telegram from Foreign Minister Shidehara to Hayashi, the consul-general of Fengtian, 1931, as quoted in Son Sŭng-hoe 2007, 105, "Shidehara gaimu daijin yori" 1931). Therefore, it bears explanation as to why the news of the eviction of Koreans in Manchuria was continuously fed into Korea despite the projected danger.

The news media had provided major coverage on Wanbaoshan and the Korean migrants there since the beginning of June 1931. The number of articles reporting the matter verifies this. Between the June 3 and July 4, there were a total of thirty articles released by the *Korea Daily* and *East Asia Daily* (*Tonga ilbo*) about the Wanbaoshan incident.² While the number may seem small now, given the mass media technology, but was quite extensive at the time that this

2. The press articles covered in this paper are within the *Korea Daily* and *East Asia Daily* database. However, these databases sometimes contain pre-censored articles seized by the Department of Book Inspection in the Police Affairs Division. Thus, I checked whether the articles covered in this paper also appeared in the microfilmed *East Asia Daily* and *Korea Daily* kept in the Seoul National University and the *East Asia Daily* kept in Korea University. There was no significant difference between the newspaper editions.

incident occurred. Each newspaper report delivered every move of the situation in chronological order: from the release of the eviction order issued to the Koreans in Manchuria, their expulsion and arrest, Japan lodging a strong protest, confrontation between the Chinese police and the Japanese police, the agreement on organizing the Sino–Japanese joint investigation, a list of people who were deported, and a list and photos of those arrested. The situation in Wanbaoshan, which had been reported every day or two, was not reported for a week between June 12 and 19, when there was no further escalation. Then, after June 19, when the situation worsened, newspapers resumed delivering urgent news of the worsening crisis. The situation in Wanbaoshan was then reported on constantly after that point.

The location of the Wanbaoshan article is also noteworthy. Wanbaoshan-related reports were mainly featured on the second page. The second page is where newspapers carry articles on domestic politics. Due to the reading structure of the time, the first thing that caught the reader's eye were the articles on the upper right side of that page (Yi Min-ju 2010, 139). In other words, important articles were mainly located in the upper right corner of the second page of the newspaper. The importance of this position can also be inferred from the fact that about half of the articles confiscated by the censorship authorities ran their stories here (139). About a month before the Wanbaoshan incident news was published, the *East Asia Daily* reported Wanbaoshan-related news in the upper right corner on the second page. The *Korea Daily* did so three times. Although these four occurrences do not constitute a large number, they inform us that the Wanbaoshan situation was considered top domestic news.

The *Korea Daily's* June 12 article placed on page seven—although not on page two—is also noteworthy. This article, titled “Farmers Irrigating without Landlord's Permission Were Evicted” (“Chiju sŭngnak öpsi” 1931), was not located in the upper right corner, but this article was followed by the headline news on page two, which dealt with the feud between Korean and Chinese workers in Korea. It seems that these two articles were placed side by side in the upper right corner so that readers could easily make connections between the two and read them in pairs under a frame of the “Sino–Korean conflict.” This editorial arrangement provides a glimpse of the intention of the publishing company as it tried to shape public sentiment.

Korean news media put weight on Wanbaoshan-related reports not only in terms of the quantity and compositional location within the publication but also in terms of the quality of reports. News media treated the report on Wanbaoshan as a grave issue for Koreans. When the situation in Wanbaoshan became embittered, the *Korea Daily* utilized significant space to run an article

reporting it on June 21, titled “An Account of Our Countrymen’s Suffering in Sanxingbao (Part 1)” (“Samsöngbo tongpò sunan’gi” 1931). Then, the newspaper went on to provide in-depth coverage of the issue in five consecutive articles. Unlike previous articles that treated the issue as a one-off event, this series of articles printed detailed stories about the leasing agreements between Koreans and Chinese, the current situation of Korean migrants in Manchuria, and photos and captions accompanied by lengthy captions. The *East Asia Daily* also published an in-depth article on June 24, printed in the upper right corner on the second page under the headline, “Life in Wanbaoshan Is like Battlefield. 400 Poor Souls Can Be Evicted Anytime Soon” (“Chönjang kat’ün” 1931), which devoted a considerable amount of space to the coverage.

Although the Wanbaoshan issue was reported heavily in Korea, the contents do not necessarily contain objectively truthful accounts or reports on the actual situation in China, as far as it is historically understood today. As one might expect, the utmost concern of the Korean press was the safety and economic situation of Koreans. This point became noticeable from the beginning of June, when news of the Wanbaoshan issue was first reported in Korea. On June 3, the *Korea Daily* delivered its news report on Korean migrants in Sanxingbao near Wanbaoshan as follows:

This spring, nearly 200 Korean migrant farmers in forty households were given an eviction order by the Changch’ün prefectural government, even though they have already signed a formal leasing contract in Sanxingbao, Changch’ün. On the morning of May 31, the Changch’ün prefectural government dispatched 200 military and police officers. On the night of the same day, thirty-two people in six households were chased out of Changch’ün without being allowed to take possession of their belongings. The situation is becoming urgent due to Chinese officials’ irrationality, and the farmers are in a state of extreme anxiety. (“Kwan’gae chung üi” 1931)

As seen, the article expressed concern about the well-being of the Koreans, stating that they were in an extremely difficult situation due to the sudden irrational measures deployed by the Chinese military and police, even though those migrants had irrigated the land under a legitimate contract. The *East Asia Daily* also released nearly identical articles on June 5.

The *East Asia Daily* conveyed the plight of Korean farmers by placing a photo like the one in figure 1 at the center of the page (see figure 2). The photo showed seven Korean farming families, who were evicted and moved to Changch’ün from their settlement in Sanxingbao, standing with their hurriedly packed luggage next to them. Moreover, Korean newspapers reported sensational



Source: “Samsip-yuk in ül mach’a” (1931).

Figure 1. A photo of evicted Korean migrants in Manchuria

stories—for instance, that one Korean farmer was in critical condition due to a lynching by Chinese officials and citizens, and Koreans could not purchase any food after the eviction order began, and so were almost dying of starvation—that would provoke Korean newsreaders. By mid-June, the Korean press was not only delivering the details of the situation but also publishing articles that focused on smaller details and contexts in relation to it, which gives us a glimpse of how the private newspaper in Korea influenced the popular perception of the escalating situation.

The *Korea Daily* was the first to publish in-depth coverage of Korean migrants in Wanbaoshan on June 21. The aforementioned article entitled “An Account of Our Countrymen Suffering in Sanxingbao (Part 1)” (“Samsöngbo tongpö sunan’gi” 1931) gives a detailed account of the plight of Korean peasants in Sanxingbao. It explains a situation in which Korean farmers were burdened with the rent to be paid to the Chinese landowner, the fee to the broker Hao Yongde, with further fees due to the Chinese landowner who owns the land through which their waterway passes. The above-mentioned article in the *East Asia Daily* on June 24 titled “Life in Wanbaoshan is like battlefield. 400 Poor Souls Can Be Evicted Anytime Soon” (“Chönjang kat’un” 1931) explains in detail why the Changch’un prefectural government suddenly issued an eviction order under these circumstances. According to the article, these Korean migrants arrived in Sanxingbao after being expelled from Manchuria. The migrants signed a “hard and fast contract” and began irrigating the wasteland. However, when nine-tenths of the waterway construction was completed, the Changch’un prefectural government abruptly issued an eviction order. The eviction was on



Source: “Samsip-yuk in ūl mach’a” (1931).
 Figure 2. The location of photo of evicted Koreans within the newspaper

the grounds that this large-scale manpower mobilization used to complete the waterway construction felt like a communist invasion and that the land development interfered with traffic.

However, the *East Asia Daily* article was only half truthful in its reporting, and in fact reflected Japan’s position on this matter. One of the key issues facing China and Japan in the Wanbaoshan area was the legality of the contract that Korean farmers signed with Chinese broker Hao Yongde. According to the Chinese side, even though Hao indeed signed a contract with Korean tenant farmers, he was not a landlord but a broker. First, Hao signed a lease contract with several Chinese landowners who owned land near Wanbaoshan. Then, he signed another contract with Koreans to let them cultivate the land by paying a certain rental fee. Clause thirteen of the lease contract between Hao and the Chinese landowners stated that “This contract will take effect from the date of its ratification by the current government and will be null and void if it is not approved by the current government.” Later, Ma Zhongyuan, the head commissioner of Changch’un, confirmed that he disapproved of Hao’s contract (Son Sŭng-hoe 2007, 95-96). Therefore, the Chinese side argued that the contract was invalid after all. However, the Japanese side countered that this was not true and that it had received official permission from the Chinese government. Furthermore, this version of the story insisted that the lease contract

between Hao and Koreans did not require any government approval; the contract among the Chinese was the broker's fault and the Koreans should take no responsibility (Pak Yöng-sök 1985, 95).

The conflict of national interest was the underlying reason for the dispute over the legality of leasing contracts. The Japanese police also dispatched their forces to the scene under the pretext of protecting Koreans, something of which China was suspicious. The presence of Japan's police force on Chinese territory probably constituted an infringement of national sovereignty, and the conflict could ultimately provide an excuse for Japan's invasion of the continent. Japan's armed forces were being mobilized in a situation where the Chinese were already wary of Japan's attempt to expand its sphere of influence through Korean settlement in Manchuria. On the other hand, Japan explained their involvement in the Wanbaoshan situation as a humanitarian effort to relieve the evicted Koreans, thereby expanding the financial and social influence of the Japanese in Manchuria (Son Süng-hoe 2007, 94-95). With this prospect, Japan viewed the conflict at Wanbaoshan as a very decisive moment. The loss in this confrontation may have resulted in the decline of Japan's overall initiatives in Manchurian development (Son Süng-hoe 2007, 100). For their part, the Korean press were aligned with Japan's view, claiming the legality of the contract was inseparable from the fate of their nation.

The Japanese authorities as represented in the Korean media were depicted as protectors of Koreans, concurring with the Japanese claims. For example, in the *Korea Daily* June 5 article, "Japanese Consulate refused negotiation, Chinese made intimidating demeanor" ("Ilbon yöngsa" 1931), the Japanese consulate's "stern warning" in response to the sudden eviction order and assault by the Chinese military and police were discussed. Moreover, while the newspaper elaborated on the Japanese consulate's efforts to negotiate and resolve the case, the Chinese counterparts were portrayed as pig-headed and irresponsive to negotiations. The subsequent media reports continued to describe the Japanese side as being active in resolving the case and in a position to protect the Korean peasants; in fact, this was not always the case. According to Son Süng-hoe (2007, 98), at the beginning of the incident, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered retracting its policy of protecting Koreans. They tried to pull out the police force immediately before the escalation of the Sino-Japanese conflict. Moreover, the Japanese authorities did not reform their own longstanding suspicion of the Koreans living in Manchuria and labeled them as potential "unruly Koreans" (*futei Senjin*), and beyond the protection of the Japanese empire. Such ambivalent behavior was not limited to the Wanbaoshan case; it was the attitude of the Japanese imperialists throughout Manchuria.

In contrast to the positive portrayal of the Japanese government, the Korean press portrayed the Chinese government as an unreasonable oppressor of Koreans. This trend of negative depiction carried on until early July. After the *Korea Daily's* extra issue on July 2 and the breakout of riots in Inch'ŏn, this portrayal became more blatant. For example, on July 3, the *Korea Daily* reported that the Chinese government dispatched a large number of its officials to assault Korean farmers and demolish the waterway work that those farmers had carried out so far ("Samsŏngbo tongpò sunan iksim" 1931). In the news article, this action was portrayed as an act of violence that had maliciously hindered the honest efforts of the Korean farmers and destroyed any possibility for future harvests by them.

The Wanbaoshan incident was continuously and heavily reported through the media even before the *Korea Daily's* extra issue on the night of July 2. These reports consistently portrayed the Koreans as the victims of problems caused by irrational Chinese officials and people. The newspaper's dependence on Japanese sources led its view to align with the Japanese claims. The Japanese authorities were therefore portrayed as the active protectors of Korean migrants at Wanbaoshan. In this respect, although it is difficult to reveal the direct process of reasoning as to why censorship was passed, from a circumstantial point of view the Korean press at least did not contradict the Japanese security officials' view of the incident. Hence, censorship by the Japanese police was less rigorous to news articles favorable to their view. Tanaka Takeo, the chief of the security department at the Government-General of Korea, later recalled that the Chinese tormented Koreans so much that he let slide the Chinese sufferings at the hand of the Koreans (Tanaka 2001, 203). Such naïve attitude reveals the fact that there was a lot of commonality between Tanaka's own view of the Wanbaoshan issue and that which appeared in Korean newspapers.

The incident at Wanbaoshan, which was reported as such, had two effects in relation to the occurrence of the riot in Korea. First, Korean and Chinese people had polarized views on the issue. This polarization strengthened a sense of solidarity with Koreans in Manchuria and at the same time made it possible for Koreans to regard the Chinese living in Korea in the same light as the Chinese in mainland China.³ What is important is that the bipolarization between the Chinese and Koreans enabled the Koreans to accept the *Korea Daily's* extra issue without suspicion. The news of Koreans being killed by Chinese in Manchuria could easily be accepted as this inter-ethnic confrontation had already been

3. On the process of the ethnicization (or racialization) of conflicts that occur before racial or ethnic violence, see Hagan and Rymond-Richmond (2008).

fomented.⁴

The second consequence of the news of the Wanbaoshan incident was that it justified the hostility toward the Chinese in Korea. The Chinese, who used to be seen as a minority in Korea, were identified with their mainland peers who were in the dominant position of harassing Korean minorities in China. The dominant ethnic group places itself in a relatively weaker position than other minority groups. Identifying oneself as the underdog is commonly observed in ethnic riots, for it provides justification for internal solidarity and violent actions (Horowitz 2001, 172-78). In the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot, news reports related to Korean migrants in Wanbaoshan enabled the inversion of the perceived power balance between the two ethnic groups. Consequently, the ordinary hostility that existed against the Chinese transformed into what was perceived as a legitimate antipathy with a national mission. In addition, this form of justification conformed with the perspective being propagated by the Japanese colonial power. If anti-Chinese animosity faced opposition from the Japanese security authorities, the perceived legitimacy would not have been easily put into effect. Furthermore, the absence of any physical punishment from authorities levied against the acts of violence offered unspoken moral support (359). In other words, for the consensual views of the Japanese ruling government and the Koreans, the riot could draw its moral justification from the official position espoused by Japan's imperial power.

Of course, it is difficult to know exactly how well the Korean participants in the riot were aware of the Wanbaoshan incident. Considering the literacy rate at the time, not many people would have had immediate access to the news. Even so, legitimacy is not formed according to the level of individual knowledge. As mentioned earlier, those who participate in such ethnic riots exist not as isolated groups in a particular society but as a part of that society (Horowitz 2001, 366). The mob must be based on a legitimacy that is generally accepted by society in order to be part of society. Intellectuals and those who did not take part in the riots may have objected to the rioters' violent actions, but when there was a broad consensus that Koreans (in China) are in trouble from the evil conduct of the Chinese people, those people outside the group of mobs endorsed the violence. Crowd behavior, in other words, is "an extreme manifestation of their own feelings" (14). If we understand the flow of the Wanbaoshan news before the riot in this manner, we can understand why the *Korea Daily's* extra issue on July 2 had such consolidative power. The Koreans were already prepared to

4. The degree of polarization between ethnic groups is an important factor influencing the degree of acceptance of a specific event regardless of its authenticity. See Bhavani, Findley, and Kuklinski (2009).

receive news about the killing of Koreans in Manchuria. The news was the final step in shaking an overripen tree. All these processes were carried out with the acquiescence or sympathy of the Japanese ruling group.

Normative Characteristics within the Development of the Riot

While the animosity from ethnic competition in the labor market did not incite the violence, the news on the eviction of Koreans in Manchuria provided impetus for the violence in Korea. The Korean press sent two messages to Koreans. First, it told them that the Chinese had breached the moral standard restricting violent engagement in ordinary civil life. Second, it manifested a new normative consciousness that revenge should be sought for these fellow Korean countrymen. Unlike previous ethnic quarrels between Koreans and Chinese, hostility against the Chinese turned into not a voluntary but a compulsory action for Koreans.

The case of justifiable riot can be identified from the normative characteristic of its development. In particular, this normative character can be found in the fact that the riot developed under duress. This coercive nature is evident in the process of participating in the riot, according to the trial records concerning the Inchŏn incident. Some participants of the incident testified that they took part in the riot through coercion and intimidation. Chŏng Paek-man, who joined in the assault and activity of domestic arson that took place around 5 p.m. on July 4, 1931, attested that Kim Hong-gi kept pestering [the crowd] to beat the [Chinese] to death with him. Kim told [the crowd] that those who did not go were threatened to be killed later, so [everyone] followed him (Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe 2003, hereafter Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*). Chi San-bong, who went with Chŏng Paek-man, also stated that he joined in because of the statement "Follow me otherwise I'll kill you" ("Chi San-bong's Interrogation and Trial Records" in Vol.1 of *Saiban kiroku*). It is possible that those culprits made these statements to avoid taking responsibility. Hence, its enforceability cannot be definitively stated. Chŏng Paek-man added a statement later that he also participated for fun. Nevertheless, this kind of coercion was observed beyond the Inchŏn case.

Similar narratives of compulsion were presented in the arson incident of the Sinsŏl-district racetrack near Kyŏngsŏng. Yi Chŏn-gil was one of the participants in the destruction and arson of Chinese residences between July 4 and 6. During the interrogation, Yi testified that he could not help but do it because he was threatened by other people saying that he would be beaten up if he did not go

with them, so he had no choice (“Yi Ch’ŏn-gil’s Trial Record” in Kuksa P’yŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe 2004, hereafter Vol. 2 of *Saiban kiroku*). Moreover, there was persuasion even without threats. When Cho Kyŏng-ch’un was at Tonam-district tram stop in Sinsŏl-district, he heard a person named Yi Pok-nam saying, “In Manchuria, Koreans are being abused because of the Chinese, so we must beat the Chinese living here.” Yi said he and others also thought so, and they agreed with him (“Cho Kyŏng-ch’un’s Interrogation and Trial Records” in Vol.1 of *Saiban kiroku*).

What can be seen from Cho Kyŏng-ch’un’s statement is that the moral obligation to retaliate for Koreans in China was another driving factor in addition to coercion as represented by physical threats. It seems that even bystanders felt this moral pressure. When the group gathered in Sinsŏl-district were on their way to the racetrack, they heard music coming from the phonograph on the street and asked the phonograph owner to turn it off. One of the rioters yelled, “Now, the Chinese and Koreans are in trouble and clashing with each other, the world is in a state of turmoil, and you are playing the phonograph and enjoying it. How disgraceful!” The owner agreed and turned it off at once (“Witness Im Sŭng-ho’s Trial Record” in Vol. 2 of *Saiban kiroku*).

However, not everyone agreed with this violent behavior. There were also those who emerged on the streets to discourage the crowd’s violent behavior. What should be noted here is the attitude of the rioters toward those who restrained the collective violence. Son Yang-han, a rice trader in Inch’ŏn, discouraged violence near the Pyŏngyang Pavilion restaurant in Yong-district on July 3, saying to an excited crowd, “The truth of the Manchurian incident is not yet clear, so it would be better to disband.” In reply, Ch’ŏng Yong-rak, who was at the forefront of the crowd, retorted, “Koreans living in northern Manchuria are being abused by the Chinese, and it is natural for us to assault the Chinese living in Korea.” Son Yang-han’s dissuasion was ignored (“Witness Son Yang-han’s Trial Record” in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*). The rioters were firm enough in their convictions not to be persuaded by such logical dissuasions.

If the police appeared to be on the side of the Chinese, then even the police with their public authority would not be an exception to these attacks. One of the charges against Ch’ŏe Jin-ha, the head of the *Korea Daily’s* Inch’ŏn branch, was crowd agitation. According to the witness Ch’ŏe Dong-gyu, Ch’ŏe Jin-ha told students around the police box near Oe-district at around 2 a.m. on July 5th, that it was the police authorities protecting the Chinese and blaming Koreans for the riot. Ch’ŏe further stated that soon there would be a fight between Koreans and police officers (“Witness Ch’ŏe Dong-gyu’s Trial Record Examination” in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*). According to the witness Kim Hyŏng-wŏn, Ch’ŏe said, “Police

officers deserve stoning” (“Witness Kim Hyōng-wōn’s Trial Record” in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*). Ch’oe, of course, denied those accusations. Whether the accusations were true or not, charges against Ch’oe Jin-ha reveal one fact: The police persistently sought witnesses to confirm the incitement because the rioters targeted the police boxes and its officers who tried to calm them.

According to Itakura Yoshijirō, the provincial police commissioner, a group of thousands of people were heading toward Chinatown in Oe-district, around 9 p.m. on July 4, which was an hour before the agitation in which Ch’oe Jin-ha was involved. When the crowd was stopped by the police near Mongnoe Hospital, they outragedly struck down the home of a Chinese barber, Wu Hesheng, destroying the front door glass and haircutting tools (“Itakura Yoshijirō’s Preliminary Examination” in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*). When the police tried to restrain the crowd, a hail of stones was thrown at them (“Witness Hirashita Kiyokichi’s⁵ Trial Record” in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*). At this time, about forty-one officers were injured, some of whom were severely wounded. The outraged crowd attacked because the police officers tried to protect the Chinese.⁶ Once a new norm was formed, even the police, who had the normative power, could not invalidate it in a riot situation.

The normative nature of the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot is seen in the rioters’ selectivity of target. Roughly tens of thousands of people participated in acts of vandalism and violence concurrently, but the targets were limited to Chinese residents or properties owned by them. The trial record of the Inch’ōn case lists the buildings attacked by the crowd, as follows.

Table 1. List of destroyed residential buildings

1. 1-19, Yonggang-district, Inch’ōn. Residence of Gong Runbiao (Chinese, pancake maker)
2. 2-3, Yonggang-district, Inch’ōn Residence of Wang Mengting (Chinese, pancake maker)
3. (Same as above) Residence of Run Fushun (Chinese, pancake maker)
4. 2, Saŋgūn-district, Inch’ōn Residence of Wang Mengzhou (Chinese, pancake maker)

5. With different readings of the Kanji characters, it is possible that the surname may be pronounced as Hishita or Hiramoto and given name as Kiyoyoshi or Kiyoshi.

6. According to Chōng Paek-man’s statement, the crowd gathered in Chinatown began stoning the police in anger around 10 p.m. on July 4, when they saw the officers detaining some of the crowds (“Chōng Paek-man’s Trial Record” in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*).

Table 1. List of destroyed residential buildings (continued)

5.	499, Hwapyŏng-district, Inchŏn Residence of Cui Zhuanxin (Chinese, pancake maker)
6.	500, Hwapyŏng-district, Inchŏn Residence of Gu Zihou (Cook)
7.	74, Mansŏk-district, Inchŏn Residence of Wang Rizhi (Chinese, pancake maker)
8.	3, 1st St, Songp'an-district, Inchŏn Residence of Jiang Yongling (Chinese, farmer)
9.	(Same as above) Residence of Yang Zhongzhen (Chinese, noodle maker and pig farmer)
10.	2, 3rd St, Chung-district, Inchŏn Residence of Wu Hesheng (Chinese, barber)
11.	(Same above) Residence of Wang Mengzhou (Chinese, pancake maker)
12.	(Same as above) Residence of Suzuki Atsutane (Japanese, baker)
13.	20, Yonggang-district, Inchŏn Residence of Gao Renfeng (Chinese, cook)
14.	29, Yonggang-district, Inchŏn Residence of Gong Genwang (Chinese, pancake maker)
15.	13, Kŭmgok-district, Inchŏn Residence of Mu Zonger (Chinese, pancake maker)
16.	14, Kŭmgok-district, Inchŏn Residence of Wang Dekui (Chinese, pancake maker)
17.	(Same as above) Residence of Bi Jiaren (Chinese, same occupation as above)
18.	158, San'gŭn-district, Inchŏn Residence of Wang Mengzhou (Chinese, general merchandiser)
19.	17, Tosan-district, Inchŏn Residence of Yin Huanwu (Chinese, pancake maker)
20.	(Same as above) Residence of He Wendong (Same occupation as above)
21.	(Same as above) Residence of Sun Dongchen (Chinese, socks maker)
22.	131, Hwa-district, Inchŏn Residence of Wang Dingxuan (Chinese, pancake maker)

Table 1. List of destroyed residential buildings (continued)

23. 1-51, Hwa-district, Inchŏn Residence of Sun Shusheng (Same occupation as above)
24. 3-2, Hwa-district, Inchŏn Residence of He Rendong (Same occupation as above)
25. Pudo-district, Inchŏn Residence of Mr. Song (Cook, head of the household: Gong Xianfa)
26. 32, Pudo-district, Inchŏn Residence of Tan Shouyu (Same occupation as above)
27. 19, 3rd St, Hwa-district, Inchŏn Residence of Cong Zhizhu (Chinese, pancake maker)
28. 12, Hwa-district, Inchŏn Residence of Lin Huichang (Farmer)
29. 12, Hwa-district, Inchŏn Residence of Lin Jiyou (Farmer) and Lin Huiju (Same occupation)

Source: "Police Investigation Report July 5, 1931," verified by Police officer Okada Isashi, in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*.

Even if ethnic quarrel in the labor market was one of the main motives for the riot, it was not the cause. As table 1 shows, Chinese workers were not the main target of the attack. The Koreans attacked the Chinese indiscriminately merely because they were Chinese. Except for number 12 on the list (Japanese residents), the crowd did not destroy any non-Chinese residences. Koreans destroyed only Chinese residences as their target. This selectiveness is more evident in the testimony of bystanders. Im Su-bok, believed to be a Korean, was a staff member at the Pyŏngyang Pavilion restaurant. At the time of the riot, Im witnessed crowds occupying the streets from his home. According to him, the crowd was behaving very violently near his house. Hence, he was worried about what would happen to him as well ("Witness Im Su-bok's Trial Record" in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*).

It seems that most of the people were afraid of the violent behavior of the crowd, as Im stated. Yokota Tamayoshi, a supposed Japanese figure, stayed up all night during the incident because of the violent behavior of the crowd ("Witness Yokota Tamayoshi's Trial Record" in Vol. 1 of *Saiban kiroku*). Similar statements can be found in the testimonies of Chŏe Yŏng-mok and Matsumura Torahito. Non-Chinese people living near primarily Chinese-populated areas were shaking with fear due to the violent behavior of the crowd ("Witness Chŏe Yŏng-mok's Trial Record"; "Witness Matsumura Torahito's Trial Record" in Vol.

Table 2. The overview of casualties during 1931 Anti-Chinese riot

Casualties							
Chinese			Korean			Police officer	
Death	Serious injury	Minor injury	Death	Serious injury	Minor injury	Serious injury	Minor injury
119	45	150	3	5	28	9	78

Source: Appendix table 1 in Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku (1931).

1 of *Saiban kiroku*). However, nowhere in their testimony is there any mention of physical damage to their property. The crowd intensively attacked Chinese shops and houses while avoiding other buildings in the vicinity.

O Ki-yōng, a reporter for the *East Asia Daily*, also observed such selectivity. According to his account of the Pyōngyang riot, the crowd broke into a Chinese restaurant (Tongsūngnu) and heard people shouting, “The owner of this restaurant is a Korean. Let’s not destroy the restaurant,” multiple times. Upon hearing this, the crowd destroyed all the furniture except for the telephone in the restaurant but did not damage the building itself, unlike the fate of other Chinese-owned buildings (O Ki-yōng 1931). The mechanism of selectivity keeping the property of Koreans from destruction operated in the crowd action. Such selectivity was evident when we looked into the victims’ ethnic identity.

The information presented in table 2 was collated after the riot by the Police Affairs of the Government-General of Korea. The number of casualties reported here is somewhat smaller than that appearing in the document of the Chinese Consulate General in Korea (Zhonghua Minguo Gongmin Congfu Waijiaobu 2009), which reported 142 deaths. As noted, the Japanese record categorized the casualties into three groups. The categorization clearly shows that the main casualties were restricted to the Chinese, Korean, and police. While the riot in 1931 was a large-scale riot that mobilized thousands to tens of thousands of people in each region, the rioters picked Chinese houses and people selectively as their target.

The Intensification of the Pyōngyang Riot: A Changeover to Massacre

Previous sections of this article explained how large numbers of people became involved in the riots nationwide. The false news of the Wanbaoshan incident

compelled Koreans to participate in the riots. This was not physical coercion but a normative coercion based on the collective identity of the nation. The formation of collective norms overwhelmed that of individuals and led to the participation of large numbers of people in the riots; moreover, it defined the large-scale behavior observed. However, these explanations are for the national unit and not a specific region. For this reason, hostilities surrounding these ethnic groups cannot fully explain why the mass death toll occurred only in Pyöngyang, unlike in other regions. Among the 119 deaths of Chinese people listed in table 2, 112 died in and around Pyöngyang. In other words, most of the deaths occurred during the Pyöngyang riot. Therefore, the Pyöngyang riots must be distinguished from the riots in other regions, and this warrants a separate explanation.

Horowitz (2001) has classified the “pogrom” as a subcategory of ethnic riots based on the lack of the ability of those subjected to violence to retaliate. Accordingly, a pogrom is defined as a form of ethnic violence conducted against those who have no power to retaliate (Horowitz 2001, 20). In Pyöngyang, as can be seen in table 2, Koreans unilaterally and collectively murdered the Chinese. When investigating the pogrom in Pyöngyang compared to riots in other regions, the problem that arises is whether the nationwide collective norms described in the previous section can be applied to the regional case of Pyöngyang. Although the degree of anger and violence was not proportional, it can be observed that the slaughter of civilians was accompanied by intense anger. The Pyöngyang case demonstrated the intense brutality and wrath of the rioters that seemed too extreme even as a form of revenge. Can the uncontrollable anger and regulative norms of the crowd be said to coexist? The following section analyzes the Pyöngyang riots as a continuation of the collective norm overpowering individual norms.

In order to solve this question, it is necessary to reestablish the relationship between the riots in other regions and the Pyöngyang riot. Unlike other regions, the Pyöngyang riot requires separate explanations but cannot be considered an exceptional phenomenon at the same time. One way to do this is to classify the regional riots by the degree of their intensification. That is to say, the Pyöngyang riot encompassed the character of the riots in other regions, while at the same time the pattern of the riots intensified. This means that the riots developed in a gradual nature. In the case of riots, violence tends to develop from low to high intensity rather than all levels of violence simultaneously occurring (Klusemann 2012; Nassauer 2016). Intense forms of violence-genocide, brutality unnecessary for the purpose of murder, and the fiery expression of anger are mostly found in the state in which the riot has progressed to some extent rather than at the

beginning of the riot.

Klusemann (2012, 469) found that genocide, as an advanced phase of ethnic violence, occurs at the moment when humans overcome the emotional difficulties of committing violence against other humans. According to him, humans tend to be extremely nervous about harming someone in a face-to-face situation, and without the emotional breakthrough to overcome that tension, riots would not progress any further. While stealing or arson is achieved faster because it is psychologically much easier, murder occurs later because it is more interactively difficult (474). As an outcome of interactions between people in a collective action, such emotional momentum emerges. From this perspective, it can be inferred that the tension and fear in the face-to-face situation may still have constrained the crowd nationwide. However, the Pyöngyang riot was an occasion where such emotional barriers were eliminated. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate whether the Pyöngyang riots covered the pattern of riots in other regions, but at the same time, new types of crowd behavior had to exist that was not seen in other regions. Furthermore, such differences should occur relative to a qualitatively deepened form of collective emotion.

The most severe form of violence in Kyöngsöng and Inchön was house destruction. In the case of riots near the Racecourse at Sinsöl-district in Kyöngsöng, the perpetrators entered a Chinese house on July 4, destroyed all kinds of furniture, and came back on July 6 to burn down the remaining building. In the case of Inchön, a more advanced pattern of violence than this is seen. Large crowds gradually gathered in the Oe district from 8:30 p.m. on July 4. The riot reached its peak around 10 p.m. (“Ch’öe Jin-ha’s Trial Record” in Vol.1 of *Saiban kiroku*; “Witness Tanaka Sukejirö’s Trial Record,” “Witness Pak Ch’i-yöng’s Trial Record,” and “Hirashita Kiyokichi’s Trial Record” in Vol. 2 of *Saiban kiroku*). When there were no more Chinese homes left to destroy, the crowd began to attack the police box near the Oe-district. The mob used oil that they found in Chinese houses to set fire on them, but the police, who had already sensed the danger, charged into the crowd and dispersed them. The police crackdown gradually dispersed the crowd around 2:00 a.m., and the escalating atmosphere of the riot gradually calmed down (“Witness Tanaka Sukejirö’s Interrogation Record” in Vol. 2 of *Saiban kiroku*).

Pyöngyang also exhibited a similar pattern before the massacre, but the difference was that when the crowds destroyed all of the Chinese houses, they started assaulting and killing the Chinese people around them. According to O Ki-yöng (1931), the Chinese returned to collect their remaining belongings after escaping the initial phase of destruction. The Chinese might have expected that Koreans would stop rioting and destroying houses, as in Inchön. However,

contrary to their expectations, the situation deteriorated even further, and the rioters began to target people.

Two Chinese were also killed in Inch'ŏn, but those homicides were apparently the unintentional consequences of beating. On the other hand, the Chinese attack in Pyŏngyang seemed purposeful. For example, newspapers reported that Chang Pong-jin, a snake seller and beggar, killed multiple Chinese people (the number of homicides committed varies from nine to thirty-six in different sources). The course of the killing took place over the night of July 5 until dawn the next day. A mass killing by one person in such a short span of time tells us that the purpose of the attack was simply to kill. Particularly notable is that Chang Pong-jin's murders were reportedly carried out "at the forefront of the mob" ("Sarinma Chang P'ung-jin" 1932).⁷ In other words, his actions were not an individual's deviation but at the center of the riot.

The murderers in Pyŏngyang regarded themselves as part of conscious and organized groups, since they openly revealed their identities using special titles and flags (O Ki-yŏng 1931; "Koe chadongch'a ch'ulmol" 1931). Furthermore, there were atrocities such as sawing a victim's leg off ("P'yŏngyang sagŏn kongp'an" 1931) or slicing the breasts of a pregnant woman (Son Sŭng-hoe 2009, 154), which were all horrific actions completely unrelated to the purpose of neutralizing hostility. And crucially, this level of violence differed from that displayed within riots in other regions.

As such, the Pyŏngyang riots entailed violence as in other regions but were also more severe in the intensity of their violence. As stated at the beginning of this section, the progression of violence depends on whether it can eliminate the emotional barrier that prevents such an escalation. The reason why the massacre did not occur in other areas is that the false news of the Wabaoshan incident was insufficient to eliminate or overwhelm this barrier. In Pyŏngyang, on the other hand, it stands to reason that one should be able to find a unique element that is fermented into the emotional momentum not found in other areas. The findings will allow us to determine the extent to which violence intensifies. What is noteworthy in this context is the rumor that spread in Pyŏngyang. This rumor deserves attention, both in terms of content and at the point in time when it spread.

One thing commonly found in the records of the Pyŏngyang riots at that time was that malicious rumors had spread in Pyŏngyang right before the genocide. In his diary on the Pyŏngyang riot, O Ki-yŏng wrote that before the

7. In the *Korea Daily* article, the killer's name appears as P'ung-jin; however, this article use the name Pong-jin, which is more widely used in other newspapers.

massacre began in earnest, “a scary rumor began to spread” (O Ki-yŏng 1931). Similarly, there were rumors floating around such as, “Four Koreans were killed while bathing in a Chinese bathhouse (Yŏnghutang),” “Thirty Koreans were killed by Chinese at Daech’iryŏng-district near Pyŏngyang,” “At Sŏsŏng-district, Chinese killed Koreans with weapons and conspired to enter the central district,” and so forth (O Ki-yŏng 1931; Kim Tong-in 1934).

Unlike the false news from the *Korea Daily*’s extra issue, which indicated Korean victims in faraway Manchuria, the names of locations appearing in these rumors were specific places close to and inside the Pyŏngyang metropolitan area. Thus, the Chinese were not killing Koreans in a distant foreign land but were committing murder somewhere in Pyŏngyang, where anyone could be the next target. In particular, rumors about a Chinese “serial murder somewhere in the alley” could create the fear that it could happen to anyone in the urban crowd. At first glance, it is hard to believe that Koreans actually assumed that the Chinese minority were capable of killing the Korean majority, overcoming their inferiority in strength. Despite that, Kim Tong-in, an intellectual and writer, noted “my heart was terrified” after hearing such rumors (Kim Tong-in 1934). From such circumstantial evidence, it can be inferred that the crowd sincerely believed in the rumors at the time.

When the crowd believed in a rumor directly threatening their lives, self-defense became the first priority, and the possibility of collective actions other than neutralizing such hostility could be seen invalid. Alternatively, retaliation for the innocent victims of previous homicides could further justify killing, which could rally more people. In other words, an intensified norm, different from the previous one, once again united the crowd.

However, the rumors themselves cannot be considered as the actual trigger for the masses to start killing. What should be noted more than the rumors is why they spread at that particular moment. From Kim Tong-in and O Ki-yŏng’s accounts, the answer lies in the timeline of emotional escalation of the masses. Before the rumors spread, both Kim and O observed rioter’s psychological barriers against extreme forms of violence. The riot in Pyŏngyang, like in other regions, did not start violently from the beginning. O Ki-yŏng noted that it started with the trivial act of ten children throwing stones at a Chinese restaurant. Kim Tong-in’s account of the following events captures the emotional escalation. Around 9 p.m., the night before the mass killing, Kim Tong-in went out of his house worried about his children’s safety, as they were returning from church. At that time, he saw a crowd of about 100 people shout at a (Chinese) barbershop with no violent actions. Kim felt that it did not look like anything was going to happen further, so he went back home. After 10 p.m., he went out

to the street again because his children still had not come home. That was the moment when he witnessed the shouting crowd, more active than before, starting to destroy the barbershop with “stones and clubs.”

According to Kim Tong-in, the raid against the Chinese began at 11:00 p.m. Enraged crowds filled Chinatown and started destroying Chinese houses and their properties (Kim Tong-in 1934). Kim had not used the expression “enraged crowd” (*hüngbundoen kunjung*) to describe the crowd previously. It was not until 11:00 p.m. that he saw a huge upswell in emotions, as rumors began to spread only after these infuriated mobs destroyed all Chinese houses in Pyöngyang (O Ki-yöng 1931). Rumors did not simply spread by chance but appeared toward the end when the crowd’s emotions were running high.

In this regard, Horowitz has stated that “rumors of invasion, extermination, and atrocity are followed by life and death versions of the same phenomena. Rumors have a certain predictive utility” (Horowitz 2001, 87). This is because the content of rumors is analogous to the hostile ethnic group’s next action. Thus, rumors reflect the psychology of the crowd. This spreading of rumors before a genocide is an indication of the impending genocide.

Why then do rumors reflecting the crowd’s psychology appear before genocide? This is also related to the crowd’s unsettled sentiments and the fear of confronting their enemy. Violence, no matter how well motivated, does not occur until the crowd gets over their tensions and fears related to these face-to-face situations. However, in this context, the rumor informs the crowd that they will die if they do not kill the enemy. Rumors can therefore play this enabling role.

Given the gradual nature of these riots, the beginning of genocide in Pyöngyang meant two things: The anger of the crowd had elevated to the point where they were prepared to start killing the Chinese. Second, the crowd eventually discarded their fear of confronting the Chinese. That is how much the riots had intensified. Therefore, the significance of the rumors in relation to the genocide is not to be found in the rumor itself but within the crucial juncture at which the rumor can be easily accepted by the crowd at the climax of a riot. At this stage, norms and outbursts of anger are not inversely proportional to each other; instead, norms channel the expression of anger, and anger generates norms.

On the other hand, given that the Pyöngyang riots were the most advanced phase of rioting, a multidimensional understanding of the riot is necessary—not only the crowd behavior but also the police’s failure to implement countermeasures of control. Simply put, one should ask what the police were doing when the riot in Pyöngyang escalated to genocide.

It was at 11:10 p.m. on July 5 when Yasunaga, the head of the Pyöngyang police department, arrived at Pyöngyang Police Station and began commanding police officers. This was the moment when the riot had reached its climax after the mass had destroyed Chinese houses and shops in Pyöngyang (“*Pyon’yan sho e hinan*” 1931, as quoted in Yi Chöng-hüi 2012, 441). The Governor of Southern Pyöng’an Province Sonoda Hiroshi received a report on the riots in Pyöngyang only after 11 a.m. on July 6, about fifteen hours after the riot started (“*Shügeki akatsuki ni oyobu*” 1931, as quoted in Yi Chöng-hüi 2012, 441). At the height of the Pyöngyang riots, Yasunaga and Sonoda were attending a banquet at a golf club. During this banquet, local Korean leaders and Chinese citizens arrived and sought protection, addressing the seriousness of the situation. In response, the two said confidently, “There is no need to worry. You will be all right.” (Yi Chöng-hüi 2012, 440).

As seen in Security Chief Tanaka Takeo’s testimony, the occurrence of disorder to some extent was tolerable for the police authorities. Ugaki Kazushige, who was expected to assume office as the Governor-General of Korea, also viewed it from the same angle. He later recalled the incident affirmatively, stating that the riot showed the spirit of the Koreans, and it helped to curb the influx of the Chinese (Ugaki 1970, 810). Given that the authority to mobilize the military was entirely delegated to Governor-General Ugaki, there was no expectation from the beginning that the police authority would proactively suppress the riot (Yi Chöng-hüi 2012, 446).

A final point worth mentioning is that the police negligence during the progress of the Pyöngyang riot was in itself part of the gradual process of rioting. The Pyöngyang massacre was a lopsided assault against the Chinese. Horowitz has stated that an “ethnic riot is one-sided, because it is brought on by events believed to warrant violence by one side against another and because that side strikes when it has a clear advantage” (Horowitz 2001, 72-73). In other words, the dominant group would have less psychological hardship in relation to the use of violence than those in an equivalent position.

As O Ki-yöng observed, the Chinese never offered determined resistance to the angry crowd. Hence, the crowd was able to be fearless of such an absolute underdog (O Ki-yöng 1931). It was obvious that the number of Koreans overwhelmed the Chinese because it was the land of Korea. More importantly, the police, who were obliged to protect the vulnerable Chinese, failed to properly do so. Under such circumstances, the crowd would have been convinced that their attack would be successful. O Ki-yöng expressed the suddenness of the Pyöngyang riot as follows:

On the eve of the incident, six minor clashes occurred in the city, including the denouncing, intimidating, and beating of the Chinese under the guise of the Wanbaoshan incident. But who knew that the next evening would add another page to the bloodstained history of mankind: the Chinese massacre. The mob themselves, let alone the Chinese, never would have thought of it. (O Ki-yŏng 1931)

Not only O Ki-yŏng but also Kim Tong-in (1934) was surprised that the seemingly docile crowd, who would normally exchange jokes with the Chinese, would invoke their desire for bloody retribution on the same day and slaughter Chinese people. Perhaps, the police were also lulled into a false sense of security by the shockingly uncommon nature of this disturbance. Before the riots, there were no signs of potential massacres to be elucidated from the everyday occurrences between Koreans and Chinese in Pyŏngyang. The signs were only visible when one pays attention to the inner process of the riot. For their part, by not seeing the inherent danger of the riot and believing the complacent idea that a small riot was tolerable, the police let the more murderous situation develop. Even when Governor-General Ugaki heard of the tragedy that had been inflicted on the Chinese in Pyŏngyang at dawn on the 6th, he did not take it seriously (Ugaki 1970, 802-803). This shows that the authorities were very insensitive to the lives of the Chinese living in Korea. Due to this lackadaisical concern, murders and assaults continued in and around Pyŏngyang until the 9th.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the internal process of the riot itself rather than on the background factors before the outbreak of the riot. Collective behavior in riots should be viewed as a process with its own internal dynamics, not as a result automatically triggered by a cause (Stark et al. 1974, 866). This is because humans in such situations conduct actions in collective ways that they would not do if alone. However, previous studies on the 1931 Anti-Chinese riot focused only on what caused the riot, leaving the process of the riot unexplained. Although there are studies that sporadically refer to the events that developed during the riot process, there have not been any sufficient efforts to analyze the riot process rigorously. By systematically explaining this process, this article argues that the formidable power of popular violence came not from uncivilized behavior following the collapse of morality but from the regulative norm that made the proponents of violence “warriors.”

Table 3. Categorization of ethnic violence between Koreans and Chinese during the colonial period

	Fights between Koreans and Chinese	1931 Anti-Chinese riot	Pyongyang riot
Trigger factor	Personal quarrel	<i>Korea Daily's</i> extra issue	Rumor
Modality	Mutual assault	Lopsided assault and destruction	Lopsided killing
Antagonism	○	○	○
Forcibleness	×	○	○
Perceived legitimacy	×	Polarization of ethnic discord Resistance of underdog Police conformity	Polarization of ethnic discord Resistance of underdog Self-defense
Degree of intensity	Low	Medium	High
Conceptual definition	Ethnic fight	Ethnic riot	Pogrom

Table 3 summarizes the riot process categorized by type of violence. Minor disputes in everyday life and quarrels on the streets and disputes on the labor scene often escalated into a conflict between Koreans and Chinese. The eruption of violence, however, did not break the inter-ethnic balance of power. Those violent behaviors are short-lived and isolated from other regions. During the 1931 riot, on the other hand, this balance collapsed, and large numbers of people participated in the nationwide riots. Ethnic antipathy was not the major factor that toppled this balance because it is commonly found in the three types of violence: ethnic fighting, 1931 riots, and the Pyongyang massacre. Antipathy was not a compulsory reason to participate in violence. Antipathy alone could not justify the actions of the participants.

On the other hand, the news of the Wanbaoshan incident and rumors allowed the participants to perceive the legitimacy of their violent behavior. In particular, the legitimacy of the 1931 riot was gained not only from Korean participants but also from the Japanese police. In the Pyongyang massacre, a subcategory of the 1931 riot, this police sympathy was absent. However, alternative choices of actions other than committing murder for self-defense were blocked for the masses. The extreme genocide was caused by the mass

being escalated emotionally and, through their shared ethnicity, rallying to the same purpose. The participants of the riot became the executors of massacre toward the weak without realizing it in the whirlwind of such collective emotions. Without examining the dynamism of these riots, it is impossible to understand the inner experiences of the rioters and the unexpected consequences of the riots.

However, to pay attention to the inner process of the riot itself does not mean to understand the riot as an exceptional event far from its historical context. The riot cannot be fully understood without taking its historical context into account. This article focuses on the Wanbaoshan incident as a triggering factor for the riot. In order to understand why no other incident could have spread to a large nationwide scale, it is necessary to understand the historical context related to the Koreans in Manchuria. This historical context is closely related to Japan's invasion of the continent that followed the Sino-Japanese War and even World War II. By analyzing media reports related to Koreans in Manchuria at the time, this article has explored the connection between the Wanbaoshan incident and the riots on the Korean Peninsula at a cognitive level and to understand the riots in a specific region of the Korean Peninsula during a macroscopic transition period. Accordingly, it can be said that the 1931 riot was not an isolated incident limited to the Korean Peninsula. It was a part of the wider framework of collective violence perpetrated by the colonial authorities who viewed this national problem within the imperial order relative the transitional phase of continental aggression.

In relation to this thesis, future research tasks might include the following: First, it is necessary to develop more diverse theoretical discussions on ethnic conflict or ethnic riots. In this article, I explored the mechanism of violence at the microscopic or psychological level. Other theoretical approaches are possible, such as the positioning ethnic riot in relation to ethnic competition in the labor market (Bonacich 1972; Olzak 1992), or a constructivist approach that considers the elite or the state as a central actor (Wilkinson 2012). Earlier studies on the 1931 riot, despite their highly similar perspectives to these theoretical approaches, have not included much in the way of meaningful theoretical discussion. Furthermore, ethnic conflict or ethnic riots against the Chinese did not only take place on the Korean Peninsula: The anti-Chinese Riot in colonial Korea was one of many anti-Chinese movements across the world since the nineteenth century. Therefore, it is also necessary to position the 1931 Riot within the existing literature on anti-Chinese riots and Sinophobia studies. Today, as hatred against specific ethnicities and racism emerges as an important social issue, theoretical interest will doubtless reinforce the relevance and the

broadly ramification of studying anti-Chinese riots.

Second, a comparative study needs to be conducted on the riots that occurred between regions. In particular, by comparing the Pyöngyang riots with the riots that occurred in other regions in Korea, which I did not discuss in this article, we could answer the question of why the massacre occurred only in Pyöngyang. This article views the Pyöngyang riots not as an exceptional phenomenon but as a form that was more intensified than the riots in other regions. Therefore, to answer why only the riots in Pyöngyang led to a massacre, it is necessary to reveal regional characteristics or regional situations that are not found in other regions. Since normative solidarity is an important basis for leading crowd action, it should be possible to relate this regional characteristic and situation to the dissolution and strengthening of solidarity. In addition, it is necessary to carry out not only comparative studies but also cross-regional impacts related to riots. To this end, it is imperative to find new historical sources for the Pyöngyang riots. It is my hope that such efforts on this topic will progress as soon as possible, thereby adding more perspectives within this context of empirical research.

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