Christianity, American Missionaries,

and Korean Immigration to the United States, 1903-1915

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This article[[1]](#footnote-1)will examine the role of American Protestant missionaries and Christianity more generally as they impacted the process of Korean immigration to and settlement in the United States during the early years of the twentieth century. It spans developments in both Korea and the United States, providing a link that suggests that events in Korea contributed to shaping the development of the Korean community in America.

**1. Missionary Support for Emigration - Direct**

Beginning with the Presbyterian Dr. Horace N. Allen in 1884 soon after the conclusion of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United States in 1882, American Protestant missionaries began to arrive in Korea. Over the next two decades, many of them, like Allen, spent years learning the language and culture of the peninsular kingdom with an eye to converting Koreans to Christianity and helping to alleviate some of the hardships that Koreans endured during the declining years of the Chosŏn dynasty. Allen, for example, used his medical training to that end by founding Korea’s first Western hospital. In the process, many of the American missionaries came to sympathize with Korea and Koreans and hoped that their own government would devote more political attention to the country to prevent it from being swallowed up by the major powers surrounding it. When these missionaries went on home leave, they often lobbied Washington to support Korean independence. These entreaties, however, fell on deaf ears at the State Department, relegating the missionaries to little influence in Korean affairs except at the person-to-person level in Korea itself.[[2]](#footnote-2)

One missionary, however, the aforementioned Horace Allen, had traded his stethoscope for the frock coat of a diplomat, becoming the US Minister to Korea in 1897. In that more influential position, he pursued what the other missionaries in Korea could not—dollar diplomacy—believing that Washington would pay more attention to Korea if there were more American business interests there. And so when the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HSPA) approached him in the fall of 1902 seeking his help to import Korean laborers to offset the majority Japanese laborers, he saw an opportunity to add yet another American investment to the growing, yet still miniscule, list of American business concerns in Korea. Allen’s actions opened the door for some 7,500 Koreans to begin moving to Hawaii in January of 1903, a movement that would continue until the summer of 1905.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Although it was now legal to emigrate to the United States, Hawaii, recently incorporated as a US Territory, and the US mainland were far removed geographically, culturally, and psychologically from the experience of the average rural farmer who made up the vast majority of Koreans at the turn of the century. Indeed, most Koreans did not even know exactly where that country was: “My father said that he did not even know where it [the United States] was located except that he heard it was somewhere in the west, thousands of miles across the seas.” For Koreans, it was one thing to cross the northern border into China or Russia, a movement that had proceeded unofficially since the 1860s as Korea’s domestic troubles intensified. After all, one could always return to Korea if necessary on short notice and with a minimum of difficulty. Going to America, however, was a different ball game entirely, and despite the plethora of “push” factors, there was no guarantee that Koreans would seize the opportunity to travel across the ocean. It was American missionaries at the local level in Korea who helped “pull” the Koreans toward America both directly as well as indirectly.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Perhaps one of the earliest and best examples of a missionary who actively and directly encouraged emigration was the Methodist missionary Reverend George Heber Jones [Cho Wŏn-si]. A personal friend of Allen, Jones advised his parishioners to emigrate, telling them that the weather and scenery in Hawaii were very agreeable and that, as Christians, they could set up a church there and evangelize. As a result of his exhortation, more than fifty of his followers volunteered to go in the first boatload. Before they departed, Jones held a large tent meeting to prepare them, supplied them with literature, and handed a few of them letters of introduction to the Superintendent of Methodist Missions in Hawaii, Reverend George L. Pearson. So pervasive was the Christian influence among this first group that during this pioneer voyage they organized a prayer-meeting in the steerage of their ship and carried on Christian work among their fellow emigrants.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**2. Missionary Support for Emigration - Indirect**

Most of the American missionaries, however, influenced emigration indirectly by giving Koreans the impression that the United States was a paradise. This occurred in several ways. Some missionaries passed on reports of the good experiences of the Koreans who had already gone to Hawaii. One such missionary was Homer Hulbert, the editor of the *Korea Review*.Hulbert weighed in early, during the first month of the movement, citing compulsory education, religious opportunity, comparatively short working hours, and the opportunity to learn “valuable” lessons. Seven months later, he wrote that “those Koreans who have been in Hawaii for some time seem, so far as the letters we have seen convey intelligence on this point, to be getting along very well, and their children are within reach of modern schools and advantages.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Hulbert also published glowing reports written by others. An article in the *Korea Review* by Reverend Pearson concluded that the Koreans “have received good treatment and they generally are well pleased with their homes, advantages and prospects.” And, the Presbyterian missionary S. F. Moore in his “One Night with the Koreans in Hawaii,” also published by Hulbert in the same journal, noted that the Koreans were well treated on the plantations.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Other missionaries influenced Koreans indirectly by the messages in their sermons. For example, the missionaries linked Christianity with the good life in America. As one student of the Methodist missionary Henry Appenzeller noted, “To the timid, stoical Korean, the message [of Christianity] was one of hope and life. Eagerly he asked of its power and a sample of its results. The one was told him by the missionaries, the other was pointed out to him in the advanced life of the United States. Soon the United States was the hope for Korea, for was it not there that the wondrous Cross had brought beneficent results? Was it not there that the pagan ceased from troubling and the Christian could rest? Was it not worth the while of any timid, down-trodden Korean laborer to make the attempt of reaching this haven of peace and plenty?”[[8]](#footnote-8) Even the homes of the missionaries indirectly influenced the Koreans to emigrate to the United States. When Koreans visited missionary homes, they caught a glimpse of typical American life. Horace Allen, for one, noted that Koreans “admire the comforts of the home life of the strangers.” When one young Korean saw the missionaries’ houses, he said “High above the others, those houses seem like some fairyland palaces! How calm and peaceful they look! Just look at those windows dazzling in the golden glow of the setting sun! That’s Goom-San, or the Land of the Golden Mountain. It must be a beautiful country, indeed, and a big, strong and rich country!”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Koreans were also impressed by and became familiar with, western dress: “And all the time Ma Moksa [Reverend Samuel Moffett] was standing there preaching I watched him most intently, observing how he looked, how he was dressed, and how he preached, and dreaming if I could only be like him some day. If I could not be an American-born like him, at least I could dress like him and preach like him, I thought. Yes, I wished that I could go to Me-Gook some day and come back as a missionary to my native country!”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Mission schools also reduced the distance between things Korean and American for the students enrolled in them, making a possible life in a new country seem less daunting. In Moffett’s Sungsil School in P’yŏngyang with its Western curriculum, “The new missionary school taught geography, arithmetic, and many other new things that the old fashioned schools had never taught.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

Koreans who were treated by missionary doctors using Western medicine increased the admiration of America on the part of the patient. One young Korean who was cured of an eye infection proclaimed that “I wanted to become a doctor like [the Presbyterian missionary] Dr. Wells. My father said there was no doctor school in the country that he knew of. To learn to be a doctor, he said, the only place to go was the place where the doctor had come from, which was Me-gook.” In sum, Koreans who had interacted with missionaries had become familiar with the English language, Christianity, western dress, western houses, western medicine, a western curriculum, and life in America to a certain degree. It should be no surprise that Koreans who had experienced these would be more likely to emigrate to America than those Koreans who had not. But not all American missionaries supported emigration to the United States.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**3. Missionary Opposition to Emigration**

Despite this encouragement, both direct and indirect, there were some missionaries who opposed emigration to the United States, centered around the Presbyterians in P’yŏngyang. One reason for the opposition, raised by Moffett, was that the Korean emigrants were unwitting participants in the violation of the US immigration laws against contract labor because they had signed work agreements stipulating hours, wages, and working conditions before they had left Korea. Allen, who was the prime mover behind the emigration, moved quickly to counter this threat by enlisting Homer Hubert to carry an article in his *Korea Review* regarding the “mistaken impression on the part of a few of the foreign residents in Korea that the work in sending Koreans to work in the sugar fields of Hawaii is contrary to U. S. law.” In fact, changes in the recruitment procedures brought the process into compliance with American law, undercutting this argument by the missionaries.[[13]](#footnote-13)

A second reason Moffett and others opposed emigration was that the Korean emigrants to Hawaii would be “liable to suffer ill usage or be demoralized.” Allen was quick to counter that charge as well by pointing out that “the move on their part seems to be one that you of all men would be glad to encourage. The chief men of the islands are Christians – sons of missionaries - and the sabbath is kept and church going is encouraged.” Moreover, “as the movement is one that seems to be desired by our own people and most beneficial in every way for the Koreans, I ask you to withhold judgment until you are better informed.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

A third complaint was based on jurisdictional disputes and denominational jealousies. Moffett wrote to his superiors in New York that of those who had emigrated to America, “a far larger number of men less advanced and of less hopeful character have gone to Hawaii.” And since “we have no work in Hawaii, the result is likely to be a transfer of their allegiance to the Methodist Church and we ought not to lose them.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

The fourth and main reason for missionary opposition, however, was that emigration took promising young men away from Christian work in Korea. While acknowledging that “in a country as wretchedly ruled as this there is beginning to be much restlessness and a desire to get out of it is not to be wondered at,” Reverend William Baird’s report in the *Monthly Station Letter* argued that the sugar plantations of Hawaii are “not the best place for the development of the Korean Christians, and the only hope for their country is for those who are Christians to stay here and help to overcome the wrongs here.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Baird went on to criticize other missionaries, both in Korea and the United States, for encouraging emigration. In one case, he cited a letter written to students in Korea by a Korean who had recently gone to San Francisco inviting them to leave and giving them the impression that they would be able to support themselves by work furnished by Christian schools. The result of that letter, claimed Baird, “was to discredit all I had said to the pupils against their going to America.” To prevent an exodus, Baird recommended against an “unwise expenditure of benevolence” on the part of missionaries that are “putting irresistible temptations” in front of Korean young men and “filling with discontent and restless longings the minds of many.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Sallie Swallen voiced her own opposition: “We have never known such unrest among the Koreans due to the excitement of so many going to the Hawaiian Islands to work on sugar plantations, and the dreadful hard times.” She admitted that “we can’t blame them for wanting to go to America, and yet we do not encourage their going.” Instead, “we would rather the Christian people would remain here and do what they can.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

More than a year later, the P’yŏngyang Presbyterians were still complaining that emigration was taking their Christian students and that they were forced to try to dissuade some from leaving. In one case in which their students left, William Baird wrote that “We very much deplored their going because they were promising boys of some Christian experience and we needed them here.” They were needed as teachers, “especially since we find it hard to get a sufficient force of foreign teachers” and “native trained men could do invaluable work.” And Reverend Charles Bernheisel complained in his diary that three baptized persons and four catechumens had gone to Hawaii under the influence of a Christian evangelist, whose “influence has been very detrimental to this group where he spent a good deal of time that should have been given to preaching to the heathen.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

Due in part to Allen’s efforts, the changes in recruiting procedures, and mostly the popularity of emigration among the Koreans themselves, the P’yŏngyang Presbyterian missionaries eventually reconciled themselves to the fact that Koreans would continue to depart for the US. Consequently, they abandoned their overt opposition as ineffectual and did the next best thing by eliciting promises from the intending emigrants that they would eventually return to Korea. Such a scene occurred when Easurk Emsen Charr [Cha Ŭi-sŏk] went to see his mentor: “I didn’t forget to say goodbye to Reverend Moffett who baptized me. When I went over to his home that evening and told him I was on my way to America, he said, ‘Oh, how nice, Easurk! I’m glad, and I wish you all the success from your trip.’ Then he asked me what I intended to learn in America. When I told him that I intended to learn to be a doctor and return as a medical missionary from America, he was delighted and said, ‘That’s just fine. We need more doctors, especially Korean doctors for the Korean people. May God bless you and keep you until your return as a Christian doctor.’” Few, however, would keep their promises to return, Charr among them.[[20]](#footnote-20)

In short, despite the opposition of some of the Presbyterian missionaries in P’yŏngyang, emigration to the United States remained so popular that they were unable to hold back the tide. The recruiter, David Deshler, wrote that emigration to Hawaii “had the approval of the majority of the missionaries, who saw in the work an opportunity for Koreans to improve their condition and to acquire useful knowledge and to better themselves financially.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

**4. The Linkage between Christianity and Emigration**

Of course, not all of the emigrants were Christians. But the evidence suggests that the great majority, if not card-carrying Christians, had had at least some contact with Christian missionaries. The reason for that is that the cohort of emigrants closely resembled the cohort attracted to Christianity. That is, both were overwhelmingly younger rather than older, more likely to be urban dwellers than rural dwellers, more likely to be unemployed or employed in urban-type jobs than in farming, and often more likely to be recent migrants to the cities after being uprooted from their ancestral homes in the countryside by some combination of war, rebellion, famine, drought, disease, oppressive taxes, corrupt officials, poverty, or banditry. Because most American missionaries were based in the cities, they attracted these young, urban, rootless males on the margins of society who were open to any opportunity that presented itself, either the new religion of Christianity or emigration to the United States or both.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Although there is a strong correlation between Christianity, American missionaries, and those who chose to emigrate to the United States, it would not be correct to say that religion was the main reason for their decision to emigrate. Rather, the main reason was a combination of bleak prospects in Korea combined with good reports of life and work in the United States. That is, Christianity functioned as an intervening variable, making the decision to leave easier because those Koreans were more familiar with Americans and American culture through their association, however tenuous, with American missionaries. That is, if a Korean were Christian, it increased the likelihood that they would choose to emigrate.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Although statistics are notoriously inexact, it is estimated that at the beginning of the twentieth century there were perhaps only one hundred thousand Korean Christians in a country of ten million, representing no more than one percent of the population. Aware of the close connection between Christianity, American missionaries, and the desire or willingness to go to America, David Deshler wisely selected Korean Christians, like Hyŏn Sun, to assist him in the recruitment effort. And since most of the likely emigrants were to be found where the missionaries themselves were located, Deshler located his dozen or so recruiting offices [the *Dong-Sŏ Kaebal Hoesa*, or East-West Development Company] in the cities. In this way, Deshler was able to send the 7,500 Koreans to Hawaii, many of whom had some sort of connection to missionaries and Christianity, before Japan, citing emigration irregularities, forced Korea to suspend emigration in the summer of 1905. At the same time that emigration came to a halt, Horace Allen was relieved of his post, having failed in his attempt to use dollar diplomacy to persuade Washington to support Korean independence. President Theodore Roosevelt seemed prepared to allow Japan to take over Korea at the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War.[[24]](#footnote-24)

**5. Christianity on the Plantations – The *Tonghoe***

But Korea was still an independent country in the summer of 1905, and its Foreign Minister, Yi Ha-yŏng, decided to reform the emigration process so that Koreans could once again travel abroad. To that end, he selected his Vice-Foreign Minister, Yun Ch’i-ho, to go on an inspection tour of the Koreans in Hawaii. Upon his arrival, Yun was accompanied on his visits to the various plantations by the Methodist Reverend John W. Wadman, who had succeeded Reverend Pearson in the previous year. At the plantations, they found that the Koreans, being mostly single young men, exhibited behavior typical of many young men away from the constraining influences of their elders and traditional mores—drinking, gambling, swearing, fighting, and committing sexual assault. As Wadman observed, “The Koreans are in a very needy condition and fearfully immoral influences prevail among them. Gambling and drinking are common practices. Their reputation is very bad indeed.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

Yun and Wadman saw Christianity as the solution to this moral breakdown–a logical conclusion given Wadman’s position and Yun’s own Christian views honed by his Methodist seminary training at Vanderbilt University and Emory University. By Yun’s reckoning, those Koreans who were Christians or who worked on plantations where there was a strong Christian presence were more content, better behaved, and law-abiding. But Yun spent only a month in Hawaii before returning to Korea, and the Planters were more interested in how the Koreans worked in the fields and less in what the Koreans did on their own time. Consequently, it fell to the Koreans themselves to police their plantation-based communities. And it was Christian principles that contributed to this policing.[[26]](#footnote-26)



Yun Ch’i-ho (seated center) visits the Korean day school,

Korean Methodist Episcopal Church, September, 1905

Because Korean plantation society was largely made up of young bachelors, the few married women and their teenaged daughters inevitably faced the risk of sexual assault. One interviewer noted, “Most Koreans were young and unfamiliar with cultured life. There was need of protecting the 600 families. Drunkenness and unruly manners among these unmarried Koreans had to be defended against.” One put it bluntly: “Koreans were ignorant and made many problems for women.” And a nineteen-year-old woman remembered her parents warning her that “inasmuch as I was a teenager, I was told to stay away from the ‘bad’ plantation workers.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

Consequently, Koreans on the plantations spontaneously developed organizations known as *tonghoe* or village councils that were based at least in part on Christian principles. The leaders of these organizations were invariably some combination of Christians, those few with families, and/or those few who had been farmers. The *tonghoe* aimed to protect the few females and to establish a modicum of stability for those who might remain working on the plantations for the long term. The *tonghoe* included a headman or mayor (*tongjang*), a chief of police (*sachal*), and a police force (*kyŏngcha*l). The council drew up rules and regulations outlawing the kinds of behavior that most Christians would oppose – drinking, swearing, gambling, fighting, illicit sexual relations, and sexual assault. Penalties included warnings, fines, floggings, being placed in stocks, and, as a last resort, banishment for repeat offenders.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The efforts of the *tonghoe* met with success and soon nearly all plantations with Koreans had them. Interpreter Hyŏn Sun noted that “the morale of Korean villages became better gradually. As these types of self-regulations proliferated, Korean wanderers decreased.” The *tonghoe* also made certain plantations more attractive to Christian Koreans with families: “The news about our self-ruling Kahuku Korean camp was spread all over Hawaii. Many married Koreans came to the Kahuku Camp. The outstanding persons I still remember are mostly Christian families from Pyung Yang.” As further evidence of the *tonghoe*’s success in maintaining law and order, “the local authorities tacitly recognized the self-government of the Koreans in each camp, for they generally accepted what the Koreans had done among themselves whenever any lawbreakers were dealt with.” In short, although the *tonghoe* were not, in and of themselves, overtly Christian organizations, they did promote many aspects of Christian probity.[[29]](#footnote-29)

**6. Christianity on the Plantations – Korean Churches and Pastors**

In addition to the *tonghoe*, a second aspect of Christianity that impinged on the Korean plantation experience was the formation of Korean churches, initially organized by the Koreans themselves. According to one account, the first organized worship service was held as early as July 4, 1903, less than six months after the arrival of the first Koreans. At another plantation, “we organized a Christian church and about fifty persons worshipped God every Sunday morning.” Since there were no Korean churches yet built, services were held in the boardinghouse kitchens. The pastors were plantation workers who had had some missionary training in Korea.[[30]](#footnote-30)



Ewa Korean Methodist Episcopal Church, 1913

The Korean church initiative elicited a favorable response from a few of the plantation managers. For example, the Koreans on Ewa Plantation collected three hundred dollars and requested that a church be built. The manager “was greatly pleased and said that they were better than he because they believed in God firmly even though they were laborers.” As a result, he donated $750 to build a church and used the $300 collected by the Koreans to furnish it. The church was dedicated on April 30, 1905 with 110 people in attendance.[[31]](#footnote-31)

As these Korean churches sprang up spontaneously, the Methodist missionary establishment deemed it necessary to bring them under its authority. As Homer Hulbert observed when he arrived in Hawaii in 1905, Reverend Wadman “makes frequent trips throughout the islands visiting the Koreans and looking after their religious and educational interests. He has enrolled over 1,600 men and women on the records of the church, as members or probationers, and seven chapels have been erected.” Wadman also organized a cohort of Korean Methodist ministers, some of whom were attached to particular plantations, while others itinerated among several plantations. These ministers also acted as mediators: As one remembered, “Besides preaching, I used to help the welfare of the Koreans and straighten [out] misunderstandings between the Korean workers and the plantation officers.” Some also offered language classes—Korean language for the children and English language for the adults. On occasion, some of these pastors were subsidized by individual plantation managers. This *ad hoc* construction of Korean chapels and provision of salaries for Korean pastors by the individual plantations did not go unnoticed by Wadman.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Because these pastors engaged in preaching, converting, teaching, interpreting, and mediating on the plantation, Wadman believed that he could persuade the planters in a systematic approach to support his mission work among the Koreans financially. The planters at that time had two major complaints against the Koreans. The first was that the Koreans were poor agricultural workers, not surprising since they were from the cities, and thus were less useful as an offset to the Japanese. The second was that Koreans were becoming increasingly unstable by “plantation hopping” or worse, moving to the city. The planters had already been told by Yun that Christian Koreans made better plantation workers, and that a strong Christian presence on the plantations would make Koreans more stable. Wadman now argued that his Korean pastors could make the Koreans work harder and keep them on the plantation. Wadman specifically wanted the plantation managers to contribute in two ways: building chapels for the Koreans and paying the salaries of the Korean pastors. In return, he had to promise that the Koreans would be better workers: “I am arranging for the bearer of this [letter], Rev. Mr. Kim, pastor of the Ewa plantation, to visit your plantation once or twice a week so as to try and get these men to do better [work] and help all he can to bring about a better state of things.” To another manager Wadman wrote that “wherever our little Church is established and a faithful pastor resides with his [illegible] school and night classes, besides his Sunday services, a better class of people is raised up and a more healthy moral atmosphere prevails. It really pays.” Besides creating better workers, Wadman was quick to point out that his churches also were more likely to keep the Koreans from leaving: “These little chapels which we are building like the ones we have put up at Ewa, Kahuku, Waialua, Eleele, etc, etc, help greatly to keep the Koreans in one place and so in the end it pays the plantation for any [illegible] they may feel disposed to make in this direction.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

In general, Wadman was successful in his efforts to have the planters erect chapels and subsidize his pastor’s salaries subsidized. However, although these efforts increased the Christian orientation of the Korean community, they did little to improve the work habits of Koreans or to keep them on the plantation. In fact, the Koreans recorded the fastest departure rate from the plantations of the 32 different ethnic groups in Hawaii’s history. Consequently, after a decade of financial support, plantation managers became increasingly unwilling to contribute to pastors’ salaries. “Mr. Wadman made promises which he has not lived up to and in the writer’s opinion the monthly donation should be afterwards considered on its merits if it should be continued or not,” wrote one plantation manager. Moreover, the dwindling number of Koreans on the plantations meant that the Koreans could not help defray such expenses, despite Wadman’s assurances that “he would endeavor to collect from the Koreans further contributions.” And, the Methodist Church found itself on the brink of a factional split, resulting in Wadman’s resignation in 1914.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Wadman was succeeded by Reverend William Henry Fry who continued to appeal to the individual plantation managers to subsidize the salaries of the Korean pastors. He did this by saying that he would bring them back to the plantations from the city. But once having made the move to the city, primarily Honolulu, Koreans were loath to return to what was, in Hawaiian terms, the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder. As a result, the managers largely rejected his overtures: “I am in receipt of your [Fry’s] letter of the 18th instant with reference to placing your Korean Pastor, Rev. Y. T. Cho on our pay roll at $18 per month. Your letter has had my careful attention, but I regret to have to inform you that I do not see my way to grant your request in this connection. At the present time we only have one Korean on our pay roll. I am very sorry to disappoint you in this connection, but feel under the circumstances that I cannot do otherwise.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

**7. Christianity and Factionalism**

A final word is necessary on the confluence between Christianity and political factionalism among the Koreans in Hawaii. The most prominent example of this was the formation of the Korean Christian Church that split off from the Methodist Church in the late 1910s. While some of this stemmed from disagreements over financial issues, educational issues, and the role of Reverend Wadman, the primary cause of the split was a struggle for power for power in the Korean community between Syngman Rhee and his *Dongjihoe* [Comrade Society], with which the Korean Christian Church was affiliated, and the *Kungminhoe* [Korean National Association] which was affiliated with the Methodist Church. These two groups remained at odds with each other for most of the next three decades. This article will not deal with this example in detail since it is covered elsewhere in more detail, but rather will look briefly at an earlier example of the confluence between religion and factional politics at the very beginning of the formation of the Korean community in Hawaii.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Most of the Koreans in Hawaii identified themselves as Methodists, as the Presbyterians in P’yŏngyang had feared, and, not surprisingly, most of the organizations that Koreans founded were dominated by those of that persuasion. One notable example was the *Sinminhoe*, or New Peoples Society, founded in Hawaii in late 1903 as the first avowedly political society. Its leader was Hong Sŏng-ha, a close collaborator with Reverend Pearson, and its program called for reform of the home government in Korea. However, a conservative faction of that society arose against the more radical Methodist leadership, charging that they were traitors to Korea and labeling it the *Yŏkjŏkhoe*, or the Traitors Society. This opposition faction, upset by the Methodist monopoly in leadership roles, aligned itself with the small Episcopalian mission in Hawaii. Its Bishop, Reverend Henry Restarick, noticed that “a number of [Koreans], mostly non-Christian, came to me in the summer of 1905 and asked me to minister to them.” He may have had an inkling that they had come to him for political rather than religious reasons because he observed that Koreans “are not an easy people to deal with, as they are divided into factions which quarrel and sometimes come to blows.” As a result of the factionalism, the Sinminhoe disintegrated and its leader Hong returned to Korea and resurrected the Sinminhoe there in 1907 with Tosan An Ch’ang-ho. The early career of Kim Ik-sŏng, the Episcopalian leader of the opposition faction, is instructive in looking at the linkage between religion and factionalism. Kim led a group of about fifty to form a new society, the *Ch’inmokhoe* [Friendly Society] in 1905, which later became the *Ch’ŏnhŭng Hyŏphoe* [Lightning Flourishing Society] in 1907. Kim had by this time taken the name Isaiah and in 1907 became the first lay reader of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. When the Korean community attempted to unify politically in 1907 and again in 1909, the *Ch’ŏnhŭng Hyŏphoe* remained outside the fold until it finally agreed to unite in the spring of 1910 with the Methodist-dominated *Kungminhoe* [Korean National Association].[[37]](#footnote-37)

**8. Conclusion**

Clearly, Christianity and American missionaries were intimately involved in both the emigration process in Korea as well as the formation of a Korean community in Hawaii during the early years of the twentieth century. It began with missionaries painting a bright picture of life in the United States and encouraging, either directly or indirectly, emigration to the United States, despite the opposition of some missionaries who wanted Korean Christians to remain in Korea. Moreover, the small minority of Koreans who were initially attracted to Christianity shared the same characteristics of those who would choose to emigrate to the United States. Once on the sugar plantations in Hawaii, Christian principles served as one major component in the formation of a nascent Korean community, the tonghoe. Additionally, central to the Korean communities on the plantations were churches staffed by native pastors, in affiliation with Methodist missionary leaders in Hawaii. Indeed, Christian churches were so central to the early Korean experience in America that they became inevitably caught up in the factional struggles which would come to characterize the Korean community.

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1. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Im Conference on Korean Christianity at the University of California - Los Angeles on October 21, 2011, and a lecture presented at the Royal Asiatic Society - Korea Branch on June 25, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Fred Harvey Harrington, “An American View of Korean-American Relations, 1866-1905,” in Yur-Bok Lee and Wayne Patterson, editors. *Korean-American Relations, 1866-1997*. Albany: SUNY University Press, 1999, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For more detail on Allen’s motives and actions, see the discussion in my *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1896-1910*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994, pp. 19-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Wayne Patterson, editor. *The Golden Mountain: The Autobiography of a Korean Immigrant, 1895-1960*, by Easurk Emsen Charr. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. George Heber Jones, *Korea – The Land, People, and Culture*. Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham; New York: Easton and Manis, 1907, p. 108; Hyun Soon [Hyŏn Sun], “My Autobiography.” Honolulu: Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii, n.d., p. 61; No Chae-yŏn, *ChaeMi Hanin Saryak* [A Short History of Koreans in America]. Vol. 1. Los Angeles: America Printing Company, p. 2; Hyŏn Sun, *P’owa yuram-ki* [A Record of a Sightseeing Trip to Hawaii]. Seoul: Hyŏn Kong-yŏm, 1909, p. 5; Reverend John W. Wadman, “Educational Work Among the Koreans.” *Report of the Supervisor of Public Instruction to the Governor of the Territory of Hawaii, December 21, 1910 to December 31, 1912*. Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Company, 1913, p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Korea Review*, January, 1903, p. 30; *Korea Review*, August, 1903, Pp. 365-366. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Korea Review*, December,1903, pp. 529-532; *Korea Review*, January, 1904, p.31; see also Lillias Horton Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Top-Knots, or Life in Korea*. New York, Boston, and Chicago: American Tract Company, 1904, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Tai Sung Lee, “The Story of Korean Immigration,” *Korean Student Association Annual*. Honolulu, 1932, pp. 47-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Horace Allen, quoted in Fred Harvey Harrington, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1944, p. 58; Wayne Patterson, editor. *The Golden Mountain*, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Wayne Patterson, editor, *The Golden Mountain*, p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Wayne Patterson, editor, *The Golden Mountain*, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Wayne Patterson, editor, *The Golden Mountain*, p. 89. The reference here is to ten-year old Easurk Emsen Charr [Cha Ŭi-sŏk] whose uncle had been baptized by Reverend Horace G. Underwood. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Korea Review*, August, 1903, pp. 365-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Allen to Moffett, February 25, 1903, *Correspondence. Allen MSS*. New York Public Library. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Moffett to Brown, October 20, 1904, Presbyterian Church in the USA, *Korean Letters,* Vol. 234, Reel 281. Presbyterian Historial Society, Philadelphia. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. William M. Baird to Frank Ellinwood, March 21, 1903 (Monthly Station Letter, P’yŏngyang), Presbyterian Church in the USA, *Korean Letters*, Vol. 233, Reel 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Ibid*. Baird also claimed that some Koreans resorted to theft and lies in order to get to America. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Sallie Swallen to Jennie Ashbrook, October 9, 1903, *Mrs. William L. (Sallie) Swallen Letters, 1901-1903. In Samuel H. Moffett, Documents*, No. 6. In the possession of his son, the Reverend Samuel A. Moffett, Seoul. Used with permission. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. William M. Baird to John Baird, May 19, 1904, in *Samuel H. Moffett, Documents, no. 6; Reverend Charles F. Bernheisel Diary*, November 9, 1904, in *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Wayne Patterson, editor, *The Golden Mountain*, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. David Deshler to Huntington Wilson (Charge d’affaires, American Legation in Tokyo), undated, Enclosure in Huntington Wilson to Elihu Root, January 27, 1906. Hawaii, Territory, *Governors Files, Carter-U.S. Departments, State (October 1905-June 1907)*. Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, Pp. 103-104. Just as few yangban were Christians at that time, just so, few yangban chose to emigrate. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America*, pp. 103-113. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Ibid*., pp. 92-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Reverend John W. Wadman, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Hawaiian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1904-1905*, December 29, 1905. Appears as “Methodists in Hawaii Are Making Progress.” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, January 1, 1906. Yun was also slated to visit Mexico, where one thousand Koreans had emigrated, but his plan was thwarted by the Japanese. With the establishment of the Protectorate in November of 1905, the Japanese effort to halt emigration was completed. See Wayne Patterson, “Immigration and Imperialism, A New Look at the Japanese Takeover of Korea,” *Acta Koreana*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (June 2011), pp. 267-274. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Yun Ch’i-ho Ilgi* [Diary], September 11, 13, and 20, 1905. ed. Kuksa p’yŏnch’an wiwŏnhoe. Seoul: T’amgudang, 1973-1976. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Kingsley K. Lyu, “Korean Nationalist Activities in Hawaii and America, 1901-1945.” Typescript. University of Hawai’i, Hamilton Library, 1950, pp. 30-31; Kim Hyŏng-sun interview with Bong-Youn Choy, March 26, 1976 (in the possession of the author); Harold Hakwon Sunoo and Sonia Shinn Sunoo, “The Heritage of the First Korean Women Immigrants in the United States: 1903-1945,” *Korean Christian Scholars Journal*, 2 (Spring 1977), p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Bernice Bong-hee Kim, “The Koreans in Hawaii.” Master’s thesis, University of Hawai’i, 1937, pp. 108-112; Kim Wŏn-yong, *ChaeMi Hanin osimynŏnsa* [A Fifty-Year History of Koreans in America]. Reedley: Charles Ho Kim, 1959, p. 85; Hyŏn Sun, *P’owa yuram-ki*, p. 7; Hyun Soon, “My Autobiography,” pp. 62-63; Lyu, “Korean Nationalist Activities,” pp. 30-33. Lyu cites interviews with Lee Kyungshik, Cho Pyung-ho, Nahm Chancho, and Lee Hong-ki, the first of whom was the sachal at Camp Four, Makweli, Kauai, in 1906. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Lyu, p. 31; Hyŏn Sun, *P’owa yuram-ki*, p. 7; Hyun Soon, “My Autobiography,” pp. 63-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Sarah Lee Yang, “75 Years of Progress for the Koreans of Hawaii,” *75TH Anniversary of Korean Immigration to Hawaii, 1903-1978*. Honolulu: 75th Anniversary of Korean Immigration to Hawaii Committee, 1978, p. 17; Hyun Soon, p. 63; Bernice Kim, pp. 137-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Hyŏn Sun, p. 9; E. Leigh Stevens (Assistant Secretary, Castle and Cooke, Inc.) to the author, May 7, 1976; Sarah Lee Yang, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Wadman, “Educational Work Among the Koreans,” pp. 146-150; Homer Hulbert, “Koreans in Hawaii,” *Korea Review*, November, 1905, pp. 411-413; Hyun, pp. 66-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Wadman to Bull, December 9, 1904; Wadman to Watt, October 17, 1905, OSC 5/12. HSPAPA [Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association Plantation Archives]. Aiea, Hawaii; Wadman to Bull, May 11, 1906. PSC 19/12. HSPAPA. Chapels generally cost several hundred dollars to construct and the salaries for the pastors were about double the wage of the average worker, in the range of $30-$35. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Morrison to F. A. Schaefer and Co, Ltd. June 1, 1911, HSC2/10; F. A. Schaefer to Morrison, June 18, 1911, HSC 5/1. HSPAPA. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Eckart to Fry, January 25, 1915, PSCV.160. By the mid-1920s, the number of Koreans on the plantation had dwindled to little more than several hundred. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. For a complete look at this episode, see David K. Yoo, *Contentious Spirits: Religion in Korean American History, 1903-1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, pages 58-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “History of St. Lukes,” 7*5th Anniversary of Korean Immigration to Hawaii, 1903-1978*; Rt. Reverend Henry B. Restarick, *Hawaii, 1778-1920 from the Viewpoint of a Bishop*. Honolulu: Paradise of the Pacific, 1924, p. 319; *Hawaiian Church Chronicle* (successor to the *Anglican Church Chronicle*), September, 1908; Wayne Patterson, *The Ilse: First-Generation Korean Immigrants in Hawaii, 1903-1973*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000, pp. 49-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)