Article

Political Reconciliation through the Performing Arts: Selected Activities of Koreans in Early Twentieth-century Hawai‘i

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Introduction

This article examines the participation of Korean Hawaiians in an annual multicultural event called the Balboa Day (1915-1941) to understand the role of musical activities in uniting Korean communities.[1] Archival resources of the Pan-Pacific Union (hereafter PPU), the organization hosting the Balboa Day, provide valuable information about active Korean participation in the local event. During this period, Korean Hawaiians were in a precarious position. Korean immigrants were legally considered Japanese nationals holding Japanese passports, as the Empire of Japan annexed Korea from 1910 to 1945. The population of Koreans was significantly smaller than that of other ethnic groups. Most importantly, Korean immigrants in Hawai'i during the early twentieth century were divided due to political refugees' different strategies for Korean independence from Japanese rule. By investigating the context and rationale for Korean participation in the local event amid such challenges, this study identifies dual identities that multigenerational Korean Hawaiians tried to establish through their musical activities.

Several prominent political refugees launched national independence movements with Korean immigrants in the United States. In particular, the Gungminhoe (Korean National Association 國民會) formed in 1909 indicates the movement to unite all Korean organizations in the United States and its territories in a concerted effort to protect Koreans (Houchins and Houchins 1974, 565-67). However, its political leaders were distinctly different in personal temperament, educational backgrounds, and most importantly, their strategies for Korean independence. Such divergence within the movement bred personal rivalries, which consequently led to divisions within the political organizations of Korean immigrants in America. Comprised of leaders who had been influenced by liberal, socialist, and nationalist movements, the Korean Provisional Government (hereafter KPG) was a breeding ground of fierce competition among these conflicting ideologies (Park 2009, 8). In Hawai'i, the schism between those advocating Pak Yong-man (1881-1928) and those

1. In this article, musical activities refer to what Christopher Small calls "musicking" in *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998). According to Small (1998, 9), "musicking" is the act of taking "part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance, or by dancing."

supporting Yi Seung-man (1875-1965, known in the West as Syngman Rhee, the first president of the Republic of Korea from 1948 to 1960) specifically fueled the discord (Kim 2002, 1-2).[2]

As the Gungminhoe had a local chapter in Hawai'i, Yi and Pak initiated political activities in Hawai'i beginning in the mid-1910s. Yi advocated a diplomatic approach to freeing Korea, arguing continued independence activities through the Korean Commission to America and Europe. Yi's diplomatic strategies were opposed to the Gungminhoe that supported Pak's military methods. While in Hawai'i, Pak established the Korean Military Corps in 1914, while Yi founded educational facilities for young Koreans. Yi's continuing disagreement with using funds for the Korean Military Corps led to its shutdown in 1917 (Tikhonov 2009, 4). After Yi was appointed to the Shanghai-based KPG in 1919, a scandal over allegations of Yi's abuse of power brought about an intensified dispute. Yi left the Gungminhoe and organized the Dongjihoe (Comrades' Society 同志會) in Honolulu in 1921 to reinforce his position vis-à-vis the KPG, thus leading to the salient feature of the Korean communities in the 1920s and 1930s: political conflicts between pro-Yi forces (pro-Dongjihoe) and pro-Pak forces (pro-Gungminhoe).[3]

The conflict continued until 1941, when the largest Korean immigrant political organizations in the United States, including the Dongjihoe and the Gungminhoe, agreed to establish the United Korean Committee in America (hereafter UKC) towards the pursuit of the unification of all Korean groups in light of the growing political and military crisis in the Pacific (Kim 2011, 136). Until the UKC made concerted efforts to unite divided political movements in America, the political factions within the first-generation Korean Hawaiian

2. In terms of personal names, this article uses the Revised Romanization system unless the individual has published or indicated a preference for an alternate spelling. Korean names are given the family name first, followed by the given name. In the case of Koreans in Hawai'i, except for Pak Yong-man, Yi Seung-man, and Yi Won-sun, who were not longstanding residents but political refugees, I put the last name at the end of a person's full name, after any given names, regardless of whether they had US citizenship.

3. The Daejoseon dongnipdan (Korean National Independence League) was the first organization established by Pak Yong-man, who was repulsed by Yi Seung-man's attitude and separation line of diplomacy while in the Gungminhoe. Since its organization in March 1919, the Daejoseon dongnipdan was one of two big powers that led Korean society in Hawai`i and continuously competed with Yi's forces. In October 1934, the Daejoseon dongnipdan and the Gungminhoe ultimately made an alliance and were formally unified to oppose pro-Yi forces.

communities seemed an issue that could never be completely resolved.

The majority of first-generation Korean immigrants in Hawai‘i during the early twentieth century were not political refugees and students but plantation workers and picture brides. The first group of 102 Korean immigrants, including 21 wives and 26 children under the age of 18, arrived at Honolulu Harbor on January 13, 1903. Approximately 7,400 Korean laborers, most of whom were single males in their 20s and 30s, immigrated to Hawai‘i until the immigration of Korean laborers ended in August 1905. Korean immigration was stopped following the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, as Japan made Korea its protectorate and gained power to control policies of the Korean government (Patterson 2000, 1-3). Gender imbalance became a serious issue since high proportions of the Korean immigrants admitted before 1905 were young single men. The problem was resolved by the matchmaking system which enabled men to select brides from their native countries through photographs (ibid. 80). Around 900 Korean picture brides, out of approximately 1,100 who came to the United States, arrived in Hawai‘i from 1910 to 1924 (Hurh 1998, 34).

The Korean population in Hawai‘i was almost five times more than those who resided on the mainland U.S., fostering the growth of Korean organizations in significant numbers during the early twentieth century. The original cohort of married immigrants grew at a fast pace during the first two decades of their stay in Hawai‘i. They drastically multiplied as Korean immigrant couples were mostly at the peak ages for reproduction. Korean Hawaiians were largely Korean-speaking foreign-born adults with an increasing number of Hawai‘i-born children (Yu 1977, 129-30). In short, Koreans who resided in Hawai‘i during the early twentieth century can be largely divided into three groups: (1) families consisting of plantation contract workers and picture brides, (2) political refugees and students who arrived in Hawai‘i from the mainland in the 1910s, and (3) children of the first group, either the 1.5 generation who followed parents at a young age or the second generation born and educated in Hawai‘i.

These contextual and social circumstances raise questions as to how the political factions affected everyday life of all the Korean groups and whether there was a link unifying the divided communities. To answer the questions, I analyzed newspaper and magazine articles, interview materials, the University of Hawai‘i Archives, and PPU Archives, focusing on the Balboa Day. The findings of the primary sources reveal that the 1.5- and second-generation Korean

Hawaiians, with the help of a few of the first generation, actively participated in the festival. This paper argues that the musical activities of multigeneration Korean Hawaiians which effected their ethnic and local identities played a role in reconciling the divided Korean Hawaiian communities. No prior studies have focused on how the political conflicts affected Korean Hawaiians including the 1.5 and second generation. Moreover, the discussion of their musical activities has received limited attention. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to expanding our understanding of the sociocultural activities of the multigenerational Korean Hawaiians.

Divisions in the Korean Community Resulting from the Political Faction

The population rate of O‘ahu grew exponentially during the early twentieth century. Korean immigrants, like other Asian ethnic groups, began to leave plantation villages and move to cities of O‘ahu in the late 1910s, when a sharp conflict of interests between the two political parties escalated. Most Koreans moved to urban areas simply to start their own businesses, following the earlier pattern of the Chinese and Japanese. In addition to the traditional Asian immigrant hotel, restaurant, and grocery enterprises, Koreans engaged in thirteen different commercial operations, including a variety of goods and furniture retailing, ready-to-wear clothing, manufacturing, and construction (Ko 1973, 218-19). They mostly resided in Wahiawa, Waialua, and Honolulu, all of which were big cities in O‘ahu. The largest number of Koreans were located in Honolulu, which harbored “at least 100 Korean-owned stores and 30 professional offices” (Pan-Pacific Union 1929, 2).[4]

The political factions affected churches and church schools in the urban areas in O‘ahu, which played an important role in socializing among Korean immigrants. By the end of the first decade after the first group of Korean immigrants arrived, there were over thirty-one Protestant churches for Koreans

4. *Mid-Pacific Magazine* is a travel/tourist magazine published in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. Alexander Hume Ford, the founder of the PPU, founded and edited the magazine. The magazine includes *Pan-Pacific Youth,* v. 1, no. 1 (Dec. 1926)-v. 2, no. 3 (Aug. 1929). The archive is accessible to the public at https://evols.library. manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/33754.

in Hawai‘i alone (Kim 1959, 40). For all the groups of Korean Hawaiians, including plantation workers, picture brides, and their children, churches played a pivotal role in meeting the communal as well as spiritual needs from the very beginning of their lives in Hawai‘i. Their churches were “centers of the Korean community” where even non-Christians came for companionship and the discussion of various issues, including those that reflected their aspiration for national independence (Kim 2002, 4).

The first Korean church service was held at Molokai plantation on July 4, 1903, barely six months after the arrival of the first group of Korean immigrants. The Korean Methodist Church in Hawai‘i was established in November of the same year; some Korean immigrants began to minister at the St. Luke’s Episcopal Church since 1907. Also, there was the Korean Christian Church of Hawai‘i founded in 1918. These Korean churches were divided according to their political lines. Several archival resources show tensions between Korean Methodist Church and Korean Christian Church members, the two biggest churches for Korean Hawaiians during the time. The Korean Methodist Church was founded in 1903 with people who subsequently became members of the Gungminhoe while the Korean Christian Church was what Yi Seung-man founded. As Yi opposed Pak’s stance on foreign relations of Korea, Yi left the Methodist Church and established his own church, forgoing any denomination labels.

Dorothy Kim Rudie (1920-2009), a Hawai‘i-born second generation, mentions that St. Luke’s Episcopal Church was not as involved in politics as the Korean Methodist Church and Korean Christian Church in *When the Korean World in Hawaii Was Young, 1903–1940* (Chang and Lee 2012).[5] Nevertheless, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church was likely to be composed of Pak Yong-man supporters. This is because all the first-generation Korean Hawaiian members of the church were pro-Gungminhoe. Pak worked as a member of the church in the last years of his life as well (Kim 2017). Furthermore, beginning in 1923, a Korean priest of the St. Luke’s Episcopal Church joined Pak’s armed resistance against Japanese rule (Kim 2018). As such, the St. Luke’s Episcopal Church was likely an ally of the Korean Methodist Church.

Furthermore, the political factions affected Korean women’s social

5. This lists some of the interviews without adding editors’ analysis. Therefore, this study often refers to the published interview material as primary sources.

activities. Picture brides were very busy with running a small business as well as domestic tasks. The picture brides played a direct and indirect role in the rapid urbanization and rise of Korean business enterprises. After the family businesses stabilized, the young wives could find time to involve themselves in church activities, women’s organizations, and the Korean independence movement (Yang 1984, 9-10). Their public activities exemplify a more egalitarian tenor in the structure of the Korean American family. The structure was starkly different from the patriarchal structure of the traditional Korean family (ibid. 26).

Even Korean female political organizations were divided into two groups. Picture brides established the Korean Women’s Relief Society (hereafter KWRS) in 1919. Its primary duty was fundraising and the daily maintenance of other Korean organizations for political and social movements in the United States (Choi 2004, 145-46). KWRS’ support and relief activities for domestic and overseas Koreans included the sponsorship of church and social community, education encouragement, and relief of unfortunate compatriots. The KWRS was divided into the pro-Dongjihoe and the pro-Gungminhoe in 1930 as a result of a major contention between executives. Although the relief activities of the two parties were not dissimilar, they remained separated and selected their respective staff members. The two sides carried out events of their own until the two were combined into one in 1941 (Oh 2005, ii). Simply put, these findings provide evidence that the first-generation Korean Hawaiians, both former plantation workers and picture brides, led bifurcated political, religious, and social lives. They were either members of pro-Pak or pro-Yi affiliations, rarely interacting with the other side.

Even the second-generation rarely had a chance to meet the other political communities when they were young. This was due to their parents’ exclusive social sphere that never moved beyond its pro-Yi or pro-Pak community. Even the educational institutes teaching Korean language and history to the second-generation Korean Hawaiians were affiliated with Korean churches. As the churches and communities were divided based on the political schism, youngsters and parents rarely had a chance to meet and associate with members of the other side. A majority of the Koreans, regardless of pro-Yi and pro-Pak loyalties, donated a significant portion of their income to nationalist causes, which included support for Korean private schools and language schools. Despite the fact that both sides had the same goal of preserving Korean identity for Korean youths, the divided political parties led to their divided educational

institutions.

Koreans in Hawai'i established private boarding schools at their affiliated churches: Korean Boarding School (1906-1913) passed on to Korean Central School (1913-1918) and Korean Girls' Seminary (1915-1918) passed on to the Korean Christian Institute (1918-1928). The first institution was the Korean Boarding School (Hanin gisuk hakgyo or Korean Compound 韓人寄宿學校), which was established in Honolulu in 1906 by the Korean Methodist mission. Located on the corner of Punchbowl and Beretania Streets in downtown Honolulu, the school had three White American teachers and two Korean teachers with a dormitory superintendent teaching elementary and middle school curricula. As the school was officially recognized as a private government school, graduates were allowed to attend other high schools after graduation, mostly the Mid-Pacific Institute, Mills School, and McKinley High School. In 1913, Yi Seung-man, upon his arrival in Hawai'i, assumed the presidency of the Korean Boarding School and changed the name of the Korean Boarding School to the Korean Central School (Hanin jung-ang hagwon 韓人中央學院). After Yi took control of the school, the number of students enrolled increased from 36 to 120. Yi introduced a revolutionary practice with the adaptation of coeducation, which was "an earth-shaking move" that broke the long Korean Confucian tradition of disallowing boys and girls to be together in the same classroom (Ch'oe 2007, 53-88).

After serving as a president at the Korean Central School for only three years, Yi left the school and established the Korean Girls' Seminary (Hanin yeohagwon 韓人女學院) in 1915. As the Girls' Seminary was expanded as a coeducational institution in 1918, its name changed to Korean Christian Institute (Hanin gidok hagwon 韓人基督學院). The Korean Central School, which managed to operate until 1918 with 66 male students, was discontinued as most of the students moved to the Korean Christian Institute upon its establishment, taking Yi's side (Murabayashi 2014). It is similar to the pro-Yi members who left the Gungminhoe and joined the Dongjihoe. In this sense, their political rivalry between Pak and Yi included a dispute over school administration.

Not all Korean children attended these boarding schools. Moreover, the Korean boarding schools were all closed in 1928 due to operational and financial challenges. However, almost every second-generation Korean Hawaiian still attended a language school that Korean churches operated as after-school

activities. In addition to the aforementioned institutes comprising elementary and middle school curricula, there were twenty-five Korean language schools in Hawai'i, whose numbers peaked in the 1910s. Nearly every Christian mission for Koreans in Hawai'i provided Sunday school and Korean-language classes for children as after-school programs. Dorothy Kim Rudie clearly describes the second-generation Korean Hawaiians' experience at the Korean language school:

> We would go to public school first. Then, at 2:30 or 3:00 o'clock, we would be dismissed and go home to get a bite to eat. Then, we changed into Korean uniforms. Black skirt and white blouse. Later, they modified it, and it had a button for us so that we, as children, could button the blouse to make it easy for us to play. They put us according to our age group. We learned reading, writing, and Korean history. That was up to about eighth grade. (Chang and Lee 2012, 16)

Several other interviewees in *When the Korean World in Hawaii Was Young* describe their experiences very much like the above remarks, verifying the parents' zeal to educate their children Korean language and history. Given that they attended the Korean boarding schools or Korean language schools affiliated with either the Gungminhoe or the Dongjihoe, the second-generation Korean Hawaiians had limited chances to meet the other side of Korean political communities. Interviews of the second-generation Korean Hawaiians demonstrate such disconnection. According to Mary Hong Park (1908-1904), who was born in 1908 in Korea and moved to Hawai'i at age three with her parents, making friends with the Korean Christian Church members was difficult. Before going to college, she had no contact with the Korean Christian Church people. Winifred Lee Namba, who was born in 1928 to 1.5-generation Korean Hawaiians, shares the same kind of experience. She got together quite often for holidays only with her church members who were all Yi's followers. Also, another second-generation Korean Hawaiian, Mary Kim Halm (1920-2006), notes that as a member of St. Luke Episcopal Church, the youths mingled within their own group of friends in the neighborhood. Her friends were those who went to the same church and language school. As she points out, it was rare that the younger generation socialized with youth groups from the different churches. All these interviews reminiscing about their childhood illustrate Korean communities that were politically, religiously, and socially

divided. To young Koreans, the separation resulted not so much from political conflicts as from the different churches and language schools they attended.

Korean Cultural Organizations for Political Reconciliation

Was there a link unifying the divided Korean communities? This study found the answer from their musical activities. Multicultural environments, where different ethnic groups carried out cultural exchanges, were pervasive in Hawai‘i beginning in the 1920s. Hawaiian authorities promoted various programs facilitating cultural interaction between immigrant communities as an extension of tolerance to different ethnic cultures (Choi 2020, 5). The 1.5- and second-generation Korean Hawaiians' initiatives to partake in such local events, along with a few of the first generation, are notable. This article argues that the younger generation's efforts to challenge the political factions among the older generation was a motivational factor of the Korean participation in cultural events.

The 1.5- or second-generation Korean Hawaiians were mostly indifferent or opposed to the political factions pervasive among the first generation. To the question as to the political conflicts among the first-generation Korean immigrants, the younger generation answered, "As far as Korean politics, I was not interested," or "It didn't mean anything for our age groups" (Chang and Lee 2012, 2; 15). Most of them were not aware of specific reasons for the first generation's political conflicts. There were even some cases where the second-generation Korean Hawaiians between the Methodist Church and the Korean Christian Church intermarried, although it was hard for them to persuade their parents to approve of the marriages.[6]

Donald Kang (1897-1946), leader of youth groups in Honolulu, was willing to help young Koreans irrespective of their parents' political and religious affiliations, even though he was actively involved in the Gungminhoe activities.[7]

6. Mary Hong Park's interview on the marriage of Y. C. Yang and Pauline Yang, and Esther Soon Yee Hong Kang's interview on her marriage in *When the Korean World in Hawaii Was Young* mention this.
7. Mary Lee Moon Han's interview in Roberta Chang and Seonju Lee, *When the Korean World in Hawaii Was Young*. Donald Kang, whose Korean name was Young-gak, was a 1.5-generation Korean Hawaiian who followed his parents when he was very young. After finishing his B.A. program in English at Pomona College, he returned to Hawai‘i in 1920. He engaged in the printing business in Honolulu as he was actively involved in the Gungminhoe activities by collecting huge sums of funds for the Korean independence movement along with organizations involved with Provisional Government in Shanghai.

Tae-seong Yi [Tai Sung Lee] (1888-1942), also known as "leader and advisor to the younger-generation Koreans," stood obviously opposed to the political factions in Korean societies.[8] According to Yi in *Mid-Pacific Magazine* (1932, 140), "It is to be deplored that among themselves [the first-generation Korean Hawaiians] they are not so amicable." He stressed that "leaders [of the younger-generation Korean Hawaiians] have proof that feuds and factions are dying out and are looking forward to the near future when inter-Korean quarrels will be no more" (ibid.). These remarks uncover that the younger generation raised questions about the prevalent factionalism among the first-generation Korean Hawaiians.

This article focuses on three Korean cultural organizations whose founding members participated in diverse local events including the Balboa Day by cooperating with members of the opposing political party: the Korean University Club (hereafter KUC), Hyung Jay Club, and Boseonghoe (also recorded as Bo Song Whe, Po Sung Hoi, or Poh Song Whe). Members of these organizations, most of whom were young adults from Korean immigrant families, promoted cooperation and social cohesion between the different political parties in preparing for their presentation of Koreanness on stage to the local population.

First, Korean university graduates and their spouses founded the KUC in 1926. Most of them were alumni of the University of Hawai‘i. Y. C. Yang (1897-1975), known as Yang Yu-chan in Korea, and Mary Lee (1903-1983), both of whom were recorded as committees for the Balboa Day festivals, were both the KUC members. More specifically, the PPU assigned Yang as a chair of the committee and a vice-president for the event in the 1930s. Yang was originally a medical doctor with his degree from Boston University. As a 1.5-generation Korean Hawaiian, he immigrated to Hawai‘i in 1902 to follow his parents. Dr. Yang, after opening a private medical practice in 1925,

8. As Roberta Chang and Wayne Patterson (2003) describe, Tae-seong Yi came to Hawai‘i in 1904 at age twenty. He, after working as a translator at various places, became the Korean secretary for the YMCA International Branch. He organized many youth programs and guided students to vocational choices (Chang and Patterson 2003, 125).

distinguished himself as a social worker representing Korean communities in Hawai‘i in the 1930s and the 1940s.

Mary Lee, who worked as a committee along with Yang, was a wife of Yi Won-sun (1890-1983), a political refugee immigrating to Hawai‘i in 1914. As Yang did, Lee moved to Hawai‘i to follow her parents in 1904, when she was only one year old. Lee had never experienced Korean culture in person as she moved to Hawai‘i at such an early age. However, she was enthusiastic about Korean culture; she taught younger Koreans Korean folk games and folk songs that she had learned from her parents. After her marriage in 1922, she focused on social works for Korean females in Hawai‘i and worked as a president of the Korean Christian Institute. Her works included directing Korean musical performances at the Balboa Day. Both Yang and Lee, as key members of the KUC, actively participated in the annual event as program committee members, although they had never been systematically trained in performing arts.

Second, the Hyung Jay Club was founded in 1927 as an international institute of the Young Women's Christian Association (hereafter YWCA) by Ha Soo Whang (1892-1984). Whang, also known as Hwang Hae-su, immigrated to America when she was thirty years old to study. Whang arrived in Hawai‘i in 1919 after finishing her BA in sociology from Athens Female College in Alabama, a Methodist-affiliated college that had missionary ties to Korea. (Chang and Patterson 2003, 127; Choi 2004, 154). She tried to find older generations who had Korean traditional music and dance training before coming to Hawai'i, and could teach this to the younger generation. Susan Chun Lee (1895-1969, also recorded as Mrs. Henry D. Lee) and Yong-ha Chae (approx. 1872-?) accepted Whang's offer and dedicated their lives to teaching and performing Korean music and dance in Hawai‘i.

Susan Chun Lee came to Hawai‘i in 1918 with her two-year-old daughter to join her husband, K. S. Lyu, who established a business in Los Angeles, California.[9] Lee, a graduate of Ewha Womans University in Korea, had opportunities to observe court dance rehearsals and performances. She had a brother, who studied Western medicine in Japan and worked at a hospital within the main royal palace of the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), which resulted

9. Susan Chun Lee was different from other picture brides. She came to Hawai‘i not to marry a plantation worker but to educate her child. Her active role of teaching Korean performing arts at the Hyung Jay Club began when she lived with her new husband in Waialua.

in Lee's frequent visits to the palace. Lee's elder sister once studied *gayageum* (a traditional Korean plucked zither with 12 strings) as well, thus offering Lee opportunities to appreciate traditional Korean music.

Meanwhile, Yong-ha Chae came to Hawai‘i in 1904 at the age of 32 and worked on a plantation in Hilo located on the east side of the Island of Hawai‘i. Whang, after getting the news of Chae's ability to dance and play music, requested him to be a teacher of the Hyung Jay Club in 1940. Before immigrating to Hawai‘i, Chae is known to have been a Buddhist monk at temples where he must have experienced traditional folk dances from the Buddhist tradition. As he was not able to speak English, he had to teach the second-generation Korean Hawaiians by having them imitate his movements (Van Zile 2007, 259-61). The PPU Archives record names of the teachers, the founder, and key members of the Hyung Jay Club as Korean participants who presented Korean music and dance at the Balboa Day.

Lastly, the Boseonghoe was the first Korean sorority at the University of Hawai‘i. Founded in 1937 "for the fostering of closer relationships among the Korean women students" of the school, it was active until 1941.[10] Some members of the Boseonghoe participated in the Balboa Day as hostesses at tea party events to introduce Korean culture and customs. Sarah Lee Yang (1908-2001), who was the adviser of Boseonghoe, directed the Balboa Day tea parties. Its members learned Korean traditional music and dance from her. Yang, a Hawai‘i-born second generation, learned Korean traditional music and dance at the Hyung Jay Club and passed them down to the younger generation. Also, some members of the sorority joined the festival committee along with Y. C. Yang and Mary Lee.

It is noteworthy that the abovementioned leading members of the Korean cultural organizations were from both sides of the political groups. Families of Y.C. Yang, Mary Lee, and Susan Chun Lee were devout Yi-supporters in the Dongjihoe. Ha Soo Whang and Sarah Lee Yang were from a family ardently supporting the Gungminhoe. Putting aside their political factions, they teamed up to participate in the multicultural event. More importantly, members of the three organizations were mostly 1.5-, and second-generation Korean Hawaiians

10. The information of the Boseonghoe was collected from the file titled "Organization, Inactive, Student PO SONG WHE [Boseonghoe] (#608)," in one of the University of Hawai‘i Archives titled the Bureau of Student Activities (Box #13).

who had a negative outlook on the political factions. Having such young adults as the vast majority of members, the organizations aimed to unite the divided Korean communities.

Firstly, the KUC was a mixture of mostly the Korean Christian Church and St. Luke's Episcopal Church young adults. As previously mentioned, the former church was what Yi Seung-man managed, while the latter one supported campaigns of Pak Yong-man. The KUC's objective was to pool resources of professional men and women without regard to politics and religion. As such, the Korean non-partisan social organization with a mixture of 1.5- and second-generation professional Koreans demonstrates their efforts to achieve ethnic unity. Both gradualists arguing diplomatic methods and revolutionaries preferring military attacks for Korean independence were welcome to join the club.

Family members of Ha Soo Whang, the founder of the Hyung Jay Club, were deeply involved in the Gungminhoe activities. Whang's brothers were ministers of the Korean Methodist Church associated with the Gungminhoe. Based on a recent interview of Whang's niece in *LA JoongAng Daily* article (2017), the Whang family regarded Yi Seung-man as a "traitor" *(banyeokja),* reflecting their extreme political animosity against Yi. However, Whang tried to unify Korean communities regardless of their political lines through cultural activities. Another niece of Whang further notes in *When the Korean World in Hawaii Was Young*, "Young Korean girls from all the broad community of Hawai'i, despite the political cleavage among their parents, came and joined this organization [the Hyung Jay Club]" (Chang and Lee 2012, 8).

Likewise, the Boseonghoe aimed at sharing Korean customs and culture regardless of their parents' political factions. Demonstrating that the sorority tried to find their cultural identity and share their ideas with the older generation regardless of their political lines, the yearbook of the University of Hawai'i, *Ka Palapala,* in 1937 explains the goal of the Boseonghoe activities as follows:

> The Korean sorority club, like other racial organizations, brings together girls of Korean ancestry to encourage closer relationships among them…A welcome addition to club activities for Boseonghoe was the Korean men's fraternity, Baek Yong. Together these two Korean affinities skated, swam, hiked, danced, and listened to a series of talks on their motherland. In order to further interest in the rich culture of the Orient, particularly that of Korea, the Boseonghoe undertook to sponsor a series of study classes. Meetings were also held downtown, at which time an opportunity was given members to associate with older people and gain their viewpoints.
>
> (University of Hawaii Associated Students 1939, 208)

Young adults of Korean descent in the cultural organizations actively participated in local multicultural events during the early twentieth century. The presentation of Koreanness on stage was possible due to their cooperative efforts, putting aside the political battle. The solidarity between the divided political groups existed at least in terms of the cultural activities.

Presentation of Korean Performances at Balboa Day Festivals

The Balboa Day is an ideal example demonstrating how young adults of Korean descent participated in musical activities in Hawai'i during the early twentieth century. There were several cultural events in Hawai'i where Koreans presented musical performances during the period. Koreans annually presented "dramatic" performances at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, YWCA, and public schools (Choi 2020, 174). Among different cultural events hosted by the cultural, religious, and educational institutions in Hawai'i, only the Balboa Day began in the late 1910s, before the aforementioned Korean cultural organizations were established. Also, there were diverse Balboa Day programs in which different ethnic groups showed their culture and traditions on stage: inter-racial religious services, entertainments at the committee meetings, tea parties, and banquets. Musical performances, in most cases, were the venue that the multiethnic performers in the festival chose to represent their ethnicity. They seemed to be aware that music, among different cultural forms, would best transcend linguistic barriers and help listeners understand the diversity of culture with high level of excitement.

The Balboa Day originally commemorated the first arrival of a European explorer, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, in the Pacific islands. Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945), the founder and secretary of the PPU, first conceived of the Balboa Day in 1915. It was when the ex-Queen of Hawai'i returned to the old Royal Palace in Honolulu for the first time in 23 years to receive the flags of all

Pacific nations, including island nations of Polynesia, Australasia, and Pacific Asia. The PPU took charge of organizing the Balboa Day after its foundation in 1917 and developed it as an annual cultural event including musical programs. The annual festival, sometimes called the Pan-Pacific Day, continued until 1941 (Hawkinson 1926, 13-16).[11]

To understand the purpose of the Balboa Day, there is a need to understand the PPU that hosted the festival. The then Governor of Hawai'i, Walter F. Frear (1863-1948), appointed Ford, who had previously visited Hawai'i as a freelance writer, as a Minister of Friendship for Hawai'i. Ford's mission was to visit Pacific nations and find a proper means of bringing ethnic groups into closer harmony and cooperation. While staying in Hawai'i after giving up his journalistic work to accept the Governor's offer, Ford was dismayed to find that canoe racing was dying out in Hawai'i. In order to revive the sport, he organized the Honolulu Outrigger Club. As the membership grew, Ford came up with an idea that informal gatherings of a social organization could be a key to overcome racial issues. Ford believed that friendships in such social clubs could "bridge international gaps, by forgetting national prejudices" (Hawkinson 1926, 3). At its first conference meeting in 1911, two hundred members representing various nationalities decided to encourage a true friendship among all people of the Pacific. The resolution finally led to the establishment of the Hands-Around-the Pacific Association, which became the PPU in 1917 (ibid. 13).

The PPU demonstrates the U.S. authorities' purpose of establishing unity among ethnic groups in Hawai'i and political cooperation between the Pacific nations. After World War I, the authorities realized the need to confirm solidarities between different ethnic groups to prevent another possible war sparked by racism. It was not by chance that the PPU was organized immediately following WWI in Hawai'i, where numerous immigrants from Asia resided. There seemed no place on earth quite so ideally located for an experiment of this type than Hawai'i. It was considered "a paradise" for every immigrant community regardless of their culture, ethnicity, and religious practices (Pierce 2004, 124-54). Over eighty percent of plantation workers in

11. The Second World War, beginning with a surprise military strike of the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service on Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i on December 7, 1941, brought about the cessation of Balboa Day festivals, as well as the disbandment of the PPU.

Hawai'i during the twentieth century were from China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. Thus, the establishment of the PPU was a defensive measure to prevent disputes between different ethnic communities mostly from Asia.

My analysis of archival sources, including from the *Mid-Pacific Magazine, the Bulletin of Pan-Pacific Union,* and the PPU Archives labeled as Balboa Day Clippings, reveals that dates, programs, and participants of the Balboa Day changed over time. The PPU originally celebrated the Balboa Day on September 17. However, the PPU altered the official celebration date for the Balboa Day any time from September 17 to September 25. Also, the 1919 *Bulletin of Pan-Pacific Union* records the Balboa Day festival as a week-long celebration; however, the festival lasted only two or three days from the 1920s. Although the length of the festival was reduced over time, core events of the day such as speeches, banquets, and deliveries of national flags continued to take place until the outbreak of WWII. More importantly, programs of the Balboa Day became more diversified as growing numbers of different ethnic groups, including Koreans, participated in the event.

Korean Hawaiians at first participated as choral singers at the Sunday services commemorating the Balboa Day. Based on the 1919, 1921, 1922, and 1923 *Bulletin of Pan-Pacific Union,* Koreans continuously participated in the multiethnic church services to celebrate the festival. In particular, the PPU periodical of 1923 describes the scene in which Korean women sang a hymn at the center of the stage during the service as follows:

> By 7:30 last night the Central Union church was crowded to the door by a colorful throng, which had assembled at the call of the Pan-Pacific Union to participate in an inter-racial religious service commemorating Balboa Day or Pan-Pacific Day, as it is coming to be called. A hundred young men and women from the Kamehameha school were seated to the left of the platform. To the right there was a group of 100 Koreans, the women dressed in their picturesque native garb…All other available space in balcony and on the main floor was filled with Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos, many dressed in their native costumes.
>
> (Pan-Pacific Union 1923a, 3)

The hymns sung by ethnic Koreans at the church service were based on the melodies of American hymns with lyrics translated into Korean. At the Balboa Day festivals of the 1920s, Korean groups, mostly women and children, always

sang hymns with Korean translations, while other ethnic groups performed traditional music or dance of their own countries. For example, at a dinner party of the 1923 Balboa Day, music was furnished by a Chinese orchestra "playing typical Chinese music"; a Filipino orchestra "showing traces of the Spanish influence"; and Japanese instrumental music accompanying "a geisha dance." Koreans alone sang "an adaptation of modern hymn music in Korean" at the party (Pan-Pacific Union 1923b, 5). It was not until the 1930s that ethnic Koreans began to present their traditional performing arts and folk cultures at the Balboa Days. Their presentation of traditional Korean culture, not Western-style hymns, partly resulted from the establishment of Korean cultural organizations beginning in the late 1920s.

The 1.5- and second-generation Koreans affiliated with the cultural organizations presented Korean folk games, folk songs, and traditional dances at tea parties and banquets of the Balboa Days. *Neol*, a traditional Korean jumping game similar to see-saw, which had long been played on New Year's Day or Spring Festival (*dan-o*) in the Korean peninsula, was presented by four young Korean girls. Korean folk songs at the festivals would have included *nong-ga menari, heungtaryung, nanbong-ga, sabalga,* and *sijo* on the grounds that these songs were performed at other local events at the time (Choi 2020, 140). Their dance performances were like some choreography moves taken from Korean folk dance and court dance, not the full version of original Korean dance. The newly transformed dances were frequently presented by Korean young females mostly in groups of four or five (Van Zile 2007, 259; Choi 2020, 160).

It is notable that Korean Hawaiians presented even Korean traditional court dances abroad. Court dances were what professional female entertainers (*gisaeng*) performed in colonial Korea. Originally, female court performers (*gwangi*) affiliated with a palace institution were in charge of performing the Korean court dance for people of the upper class. However, after the abolition of Korean class system (1894) and the subsequent emancipation of female court performers (1908), many of the former court performers joined *gisaeng* unions (*gwonbeon*), institutions set up for the training and oversight of professional female entertainers (Kwon 2001, 322; Zhang 2004, 102). Therefore, in Korea during the Japanese colonial period, the former court performers presented what they had performed exclusively for upper-class people to the general public. Female entertainers who had not been affiliated with the palace began to learn performances from the previous female court performers and presented them to the general population together (Zhang 2004, 105). Simply put, Korean music and dance presented at the Balboa Days, even though they were quite different from the original ones, were what professional entertainers performed mostly at commercial theaters in the Korean peninsula.

Dual Identities

What motivated the multigenerational ethnic Koreans to establish the cultural organizations and perform Korean traditional music and dance? This article argues that their musical performances at multicultural events played an important role in strengthening both ethnic and local identities. Korean Hawaiian newspaper articles stress the role of Korean performing arts to show its ethnic identity. Some articles describe Korean plays as "the pride of our nation" (*Gungminbo,* November 17, 1937), while others note, "Korean performing arts are an effective tool for advertising Korean ethnicity to the world" (ibid. June 3, 1942). Likewise, interviews of the second-generation Korean Hawaiians demonstrate that they could maintain Korean ethnic identity through their musical activities. For example, Mary Whang Choy, who was a member of the Hyung Jay Club, notes that young adults of Korean descent never lost sight of the fact that they were Koreans and had pride in Korean cultural heritage.

The younger generation enjoyed performing Korean traditional game, music, and dance on stage because the musical activities were an important tool to solidify their local identity as well. Young adults of Korean descent, regardless of whether or not they were U.S. citizens, felt a strong sense of belonging to the local community. Most of the young Koreans lived, worked, or studied in urban, multicultural settings in and around Honolulu with no experience of political turmoil in their parents' homeland. As noted in several interview resources, their notions on relations with other racial groups as well as the first generation's political conflicts were vastly different from those of their parents. As such, the inclination of the younger generation to feel a sense of connectedness to the local community, not merely to preserve their ethnic identity, is presumed to have been a key driving force behind their bipartisan involvement in annual multicultural events like the Balboa Day.

There were indeed contacts between youth groups of the divided Korean communities as the younger generation grew up to be young adults. As the 1.5-

and second-generation Koreans attended high school and university, they began to extend their social activities beyond their own pro-Yi or pro-Pak community. Remarks of the second-generation Korean Hawaiians show the blurred boundaries of social activities between the previously divided communities as time went by. For example, Mary Hong Park's interview in *When the Korean World in Hawaii Was Young* notes that there was much friction between the Korean Methodist Church and the Korean Christian Church among the first-generation Korean Hawaiians, while the second-generation did not feel it that much over time. She points out that Korean youth groups from both churches participated in social activities together at school. She also specifies the YMCA as the place where the Korean Methodist Church and Korean Christian Church young people met, and Donald Kang started the basketball team with youth members from both sides.

This study highlights that, in addition to activities at school and church, musical activities of the younger generation at multicultural events in early twentieth-century Hawai'i played a crucial role in fostering solidarity among Korean communities that had conflicts due to political factionalism. The 1.5- and second-generation Hyung Jay club members felt proud of their performances, "which were so well received [by local audiences of different races or ethnic backgrounds] due to the color, the music, the dramatic presentation of the programs" (Chang and Lee 2012, 8). Ethnic Koreans in Hawai'i could read many articles from local newspapers like *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and *Honolulu Advertiser* describing their performance as "the very wonderful production" (ibid.).

In this regard, we can assume that the praise for Korean musical performances from non-Korean local people must have instilled in Korean Hawaiians a sense of ethnic pride and local identity. The older generation must have been proud of the younger generation for presenting Korean musical performances on stage; the younger generation felt a stronger sense of belonging to the community by participating in local events along with other ethnic groups. The participation in local events like the Balboa Day, which strengthened both the ethnic and local identities of the Koreans in Hawai'i, was a shared mission and functioned as a means of unifying the Korean diasporic communities before the UKC was established in early 1941.

Conclusion

This paper explored the tensions in Korean communities over the issues of political factions and the role of musical activities in unifying them in Hawai'i during the early twentieth century. Korean Hawaiians suffered from various ideological conflicts mostly resulting from political factions among the first-generation Korean Hawaiians. The political conflicts between the Gungminhoe and the Dongjihoe due to different strategies for Korean independence led to divisions in churches and women's social activities. Even the second-generation Korean Hawaiians rarely had opportunities to meet the other Korean political community when they were young, as the sphere of their parents' socializing was not beyond their own communities supporting either the Gungminhoe or the Dongjihoe. Almost all the second-generation Koreans attended Korean language schools that Korean churches managed. As the churches were affiliated with the political organizations, the younger generation had close relations only with church friends whose parents shared the same political views.

In this study, a particular focus was put on identifying the Korean cultural organizations founded in the 1920s and 1930s whose members participated in the Balboa Day, a local event hosted to enhance the unity among different ethnic groups in Hawai'i. I discovered that such musical activities of the organizations reflect the efforts of the multigenerational Korean Hawaiians to unify the divided Korean communities. Some first-generation Korean immigrants prepared and taught Korean traditional music and dance performances despite no professional training and experience in performing arts. The 1.5- and second-generation Korean Hawaiians, most of whom were children born to a couple of laborers and picture brides, were willing to learn traditional performing arts of Korea to partake in local events. Without their cooperative efforts, a variety of performances representing Korea in the multicultural event would not have been possible.

Living far away from their homeland under colonial rule, Korean immigrants recognized the need to preserve their ethnic identity. Also, the younger generation's presentation of Korean-ness on stage side by side with young adults of other ethnic backgrounds was important for fostering civic pride and local identity. The project of presenting traditional Korean music culture at the multicultural event resulted from a *bipartisan* agreement to strengthen the ethnic and local identities.

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Abstract

This study examines ideological conflicts prevalent among Korean Hawaiians during the early twentieth century and cultural activities that unified the divided Korean communities. Previous studies have focused on struggles among Korean political refugees, prompted by conflicting strategies for Korean independence from Japanese rule (1910-1945). To date, no prior studies have explained how the political factions affected the everyday lives of non-political Korean Hawaiians—those who came to Hawai‘i as plantation workers, picture brides, and their children; moreover, the discussion of their cultural activities has received limited attention. This study expands previous perspectives by focusing on the sociocultural activities of multigenerational Korean Hawaiians. Findings from archival resources reveal that political conflicts led to divisions among Korean churches, female social organizations, and second-generation Korean Hawaiians. Despite such challenges, Koreans actively participated in multicultural events such as the Balboa Day Festival and showed Korean traditional performances, through the orchestrated efforts of the first-, 1.5-, and second-generation Korean Hawaiians representing both sides of political factions. This study emphasizes that Korean Hawaiians, regardless of political, religious, and generational divisions, had common ground with the need to preserve Korean ethnic identity and to confirm their local identity by showing their presence to the multiethnic audiences through musical activities.

Keywords: Balboa Day, diasporic identity, early twentieth-century Hawai‘i, Korean diaspora, Korean music, political faction

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