Modern Asian Studies (2025), 1–21
doi:10.1017/S0026749X25000058

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

(Re)imagining 'Tears of Mokp'o': From a Korean resistance anthem to a baseball fight song

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(Received 19 August 2024; revised 27 January 2025; accepted 28 January 2025)

Abstract

Although some modern popular songs are deliberately composed for the purpose of commentary or protest, most are produced for commercial reasons. However, such songs may nonetheless be adopted by political, cultural, and social movements, and in these cases, fans' participatory meaning-making has an important role in the songs' new purpose. Taking the 1935 Korean ballad 'Tears of Mokp'o' as a representative example, this article traces how the melancholy love song acquired successive layers of meaning against the backdrop of changing politico-economic contexts throughout the twentieth century. Drawing on political, popular music, and sports histories, I first examine how 'Tears of Mokp'o' became known as an anti-colonial anthem under Japanese rule, a position that persisted in postwar South Korea. I then investigate the ways in which fans of the Haitai Tigers, a professional baseball team, utilized the song to express a complex set of emotions and commitments regarding their politically oppressed and economically neglected home region of Chŏlla. Against the backdrop of their traumatic memories of the 1980 Kwangju Uprising, Haitai fans, through their collective singing of 'Tears of Mok'po' in stadiums during games, transformed it from a colonial-era pop hit/anti-colonial anthem into a baseball fight song that expressed their spirit of regional insubordination in the 1980s and 1990s. Entering the twenty-first century, 'Tears of Mok'po' no longer played the same role for the Tigers and their fans, and it receded into historical memory. This change in meaning and association shows how the political and historical meaning-making of popular songs can be constructed, reintegrated, and even dismissed.

Keywords: Popular music; resistance anthem; Korea; twentieth century; regionalism

Introduction

> An old sad song, dating to the days of Japanese colonial rule but still beloved here, tells of 'Tears of Mokpo'. Though more than two decades have passed and the country is stirring with new economic activity, tears are still shed in this southwestern port over the discrepancy between the people's bright hopes and

> the drab reality. Before the liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, Mokpo, the fifth largest city in South Korea, prospered with shipments of rice to Japan and trade with China. Now, a national newspaper says, Mokpo represents a special example of Korea's 'agonized cities,' with 'no land for newcomers to settle on, no houses, no jobs and not even enough water to drink'.[1]

This quote from a 1966 *New York Times* article describes how the once prosperous port city of Mokp'o was left out of South Korea's economic development after the colonial period. In fact, the backward conditions prevailing not only in Mokp'o but also its home region of Chŏlla were a source of contention in South Korea throughout the second half of the twentieth century. What is especially interesting about the article is the correspondent's metaphorical use of the famous Korean ballad 'Tears of Mokp'o' to help conceptualize the frustration and discontent of the city's people. While this framing might have seemed creative to foreign readers of *The New York Times*, Koreans by and large would have viewed it as natural. For them, since its original release in 1935, the song had evoked a politically subjugated and economically exploited colonial Korea. Under later South Korean developmental regimes, the song had become associated with the alienation of Chŏlla, as described in the *New York Times* article. The distinctive regional politico-economic imagery associated with 'Tears of Mokp'o' in post-liberation South Korea acquired greater intensity after the 1980 Kwangju Uprising, in which a mass protest movement in Kwangju, the largest city in Chŏlla, was violently suppressed by the South Korean military. Numerous civilians were killed, but government censorship prevented news of the incident from reaching most South Korean citizens. In official reports, what the participants called a massacre was instead framed as 'mayhem' (*soyo satae*) caused by thugs, rioters, and out-of-control armed mobs.[2] General Chun Doo-hwan, who oversaw the operation, was formally inaugurated as president within a few months.

Intended as a distraction from political concerns, Chun's government soon launched several initiatives aimed at developing the country's sports and entertainment industries. One such project was the establishment of a professional baseball league in December 1981, named the KBO (Korea Baseball Organization) League. Among the initial KBO teams, the Kwangju-based Haitai Tigers was founded in 1982 to represent the Chŏlla region. Although they lacked financial support, the Tigers quickly became a formidable team with an ardent and devoted regional fanbase. It was these fans who soon adopted 'Tears of Mokp'o' as their anthem. They had an especially strong affinity for the song, as it gave them a means to express their resentment at the grim political and economic realities of Kwangju and the broader Chŏlla region.

While sometimes composed deliberately as commentary or protest, most modern popular songs are produced for commercial reasons. Nonetheless, such songs are at times adopted by political and social causes, and when this happens, listeners' participatory meaning-making plays an important role in the songs' new purpose. Taking

[1]Emerson Chapin, 'Koreans Recall "Tears of Mokpo"; City's High Hopes Contrast with Drab Realities', *The New York Times*, 8 May 1966, p. 11.

[2]Chun-man Kang, *Han'guk hyŏndaesa sanch'aek. 1980-yŏndae p'yŏn: Kwangju haksal kwa Sŏul Ollimp'ik* [A Walk through Modern Korean History. In the 1980s: The Kwangju Massacre and the Seoul Olympics] (Seoul: Inmul kwa sasangsa, 2003), vol. 1, pp. 182–183.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'Tears of Mokp'o' as a representative example, this article draws on political, popular music, and sports histories to trace how the melancholy love song acquired successive layers of meaning against the backdrop of changing politico-economic contexts throughout the twentieth century. I first examine why it was received as an anti-colonial anthem under Japanese rule and how this understanding persisted and was reinforced in postwar South Korea. Furthermore, I investigate the ways that fans of the Haitai Tigers utilized the song to express a complex set of emotions and commitments regarding the Chŏlla region. I reveal that these fans, through their collective singing of 'Tears of Mok'po' in stadiums during games, transformed it from a resistance anthem into a baseball fight song, demonstrating the spirit of regional insubordination in the 1980s and 1990s. These multifaceted functions, changing over time, show how the political and historical meaning-making of songs can be repeated, imbricated, or even dismissed.

The meaning-making of 'Tears of Mokp'o' in colonial and post-colonial Korea

In his book *Noise Uprising*, Michael Denning observes:

> Often the most innocuous songs and sounds carried anticolonial and nationalist connotations in the eyes of the population and of the authorities. This is particularly true of one of the most common song forms, the romantic lyric tribute to the land, often built on the simple musicality of place names.[3]

Likewise, the plaintive 'Tears of Mokp'o', which stirred the emotions of numerous listeners in Korea, was also considered as a kind of anti-colonial anthem. Moreover, the song's popularity across the empire of Japan led to the release of a Japanese cover version, 'Farewell Ship Song' (*Wakare no funauta*, Teichiku 50344). Indicating that it was a product of colonial hybridity, Clark Sorenson thus places 'Tears of Mokp'o' in the category of 'songs of empire', an expression coined by E. Taylor Atkins.[4] To describe this concept, Atkins highlights the dual identity of the popular song 'Arirang', which drew on a Korean folk-tune. Modern renditions of 'Arirang' were appreciated by both Koreans and Japanese, but in distinct ways. For Koreans, it was a kind of protest song with a nationalistic subtext, while Japanese nostalgically associated it with traditional ways of life that had been devastated by modernity.[5] 'Tears of Mokp'o' was similarly perceived as having dual meanings.

In the mid-1930s, when the song was produced, the city of Mokp'o was not unknown in the Japanese empire. In fact, its geopolitical significance as an open port peaked in the first half of the twentieth century. Located on the southwestern tip of the Korean peninsula, it occupied a strategic location connecting Korea,

[3]Michael Denning, *Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of a World Musical Revolution* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), p. 160.

[4]Clark W. Sorensen, 'Mokp'o's Tears: Marginality and Historical Consciousness in Contemporary South Korea', in *Spaces of Possibility: In, Between, and Beyond Korea and Japan*, (eds) Clark W. Sorensen and Andrea Gevurtz Arai (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), p. 181.

[5]E. Taylor Atkins, 'The Dual Career of "Arirang": The Korean Resistance Anthem that Became a Japanese Pop Hit', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 66, no. 3, 2007, pp. 645–687.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

China, and Japan. The port was additionally attractive because of the easy access it provided to agricultural resources such as rice and cotton from the fertile Chŏlla region as well as marine products like salt, seaweed, and fish, along with various specialty products from nearby cities including paper, ginseng, tobacco, and dyes.[6] Thus, after Mokp'o was declared an open port in 1897, Japanese merchants and landlords quickly began to settle there. Within a month of the opening, Japan established a consulate, ostensibly to protect these new arrivals.[7] Ten years later, in 1907, out of Mokp'o's population of 6,466, Japanese residents numbered 2,851, or 44 per cent.[8] By 1935, when Okeh Records held a national competition to write lyrics for 'local anthems' (*hyangt'o ch'an'ga*) representing ten major Korean cities, Mokp'o was one of them.[9]

Contests to generate material for local anthems were popular in Japan in the 1930s, and they also took place in the colonies. Im Ta-ham calls these colonial song contests, which the Government-General of Korea organized through its *Keijō Nippō* newspaper, 'media events as public propaganda tools'.[10] As they were conducted in Japanese, Okeh Records organized its own contest for Korean listeners in 1935. However, out of about 3,000 entries, Okeh only selected those from three instead of ten cities: Pyŏngyang, Pusan, and Mokp'o.[11] The winning lyrics for Mok'po were written by Mun Il-sŏk (1916–?).[12] A recent graduate in literature from Waseda University, Mun wrote an emotive love song depicting a forlorn bride longing for her lover. This was already a familiar theme in the popular music of Japan and its colonies, beginning with the Japanese hit 'Island Girl' (*Shima no musume*) in 1932. 'Longing on a Lonely Island' (*Kodo ŭi chŏnghan*, Polydor X511-A) was released the same year in colonial Korea, making its singer, a *kisaeng*[13] named Wang Su-bok,

[6]Sŏng-hwan Ch'oe, 'Kaehang ch'ogi mokp'ohang ŭi ilbonin kwa haesang net'ŭwŏk'ŭ' [A Study on the Japanese Maritime Network at Mokp'o Port at the Beginning of the Port's Opening], *Han'guk'ak yŏngu*, no. 26, 2012, pp. 52–54.

[7]Sŏkchun Hong, 'Kŭndae munhwa yusan kwallyŏn tamnon ŭl t'onghae pon tosi chŏngch'esŏng ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa pyŏnhwa—kaehang toshi tokp'o ŭi sarye' [The Formation and Transformation of Urban Identity with Special Reference to Discourses on Modern Cultural Heritage—A Case Study of Mokp'o City, Korea], *Han'guk'ak yŏn'gu*, no. 19, 2008, pp. 82–83.

[8]Ch'oe, 'Kaehang ch'ogi mokp'ohang', p. 57.

[9]According to an advertisement published in the *Chosŏn Ilbo* on 28 January 1935, the ten cities were Kyŏngsŏng, P'yŏngyang, Kaesŏng, Pusan, Tae-gu, Mokp'o, Kunsan, Wŏnsan, Hamhŭng, and Ch'ŏngjin.

[10]Ta-ham Im, 'Taejung sŏnjŏn changch'i rosŏŭi midiŏ ibent'ŭ: Kyŏngsŏng ilbo ŭi "kyŏngsŏng gout'a" hyŏnsang mojip (1931) ŭl chungshimŭro' [A Media Event as a Public Propaganda Tool: Focusing on the Contest of the *Keijo-Nippo*, 'Keijo-kouta'], *Ilbon yŏn'gu*, no. 30, 2018, pp. 5–36.

[11]Chun-hŭi Yi, '"Mokp'o ŭi nunmul" 80nyŏn chiptaesŏng kinyŏm ŭmban naonda' ['Tears of Mokp'o': 80th Anniversary Commemorative Album Coming Out], *OhmyNews*, published online on 1 September 2015, available at http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002140485, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[12]Not much information is available about Mun Il-sŏk. Based on the testimony of local historian Yi Saeng-yŏn, many scholars have concluded that Mun's real name was Yun Chae-hŭi, and he passed away soon after the release of 'Mokp'o ŭi nunmul'. However, the Mokp'o City History Publication Committee (Mokp'o shisa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe) recently reported that Mun's name appeared on several songs produced from 1938, three years after the release of 'Tears of Mokp'o'. For more information, see *Tasŏn madang mokp'o shisa* [Five Volume History of Mokp'o] (Mokp'o: Mokp'o shisa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 2017), vol. 4, p. 550.

[13]In colonial Korea, *kisaeng* were female professional entertainers/courtesans skilled in the performing arts.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

an instant star.[14] Despite their apparent consistency with this trend, Mun's lyrics were unconventional for a song intended to be a local anthem. Listeners might instead have expected an uplifting tune praising Mokp'o's scenery, famous residents, and rapid modernization. By selecting 'Tears of Mokp'o', Okeh seems to have deviated from its original intention of making positive and inspiring local anthems for propaganda purposes and instead chosen the lyrics mainly for commercial reasons.

In contrast, the lyrics of the two other winning songs, 'Busan Song' (*Pusan norae*, Okeh 1794) and 'Pyongyang March'[15] (*P'yŏngyang haengjin'gok*, Okeh 1808) are characteristically anthemic. For example, the first, second, and third verses of 'Busan Song' end with 'the door to Chosŏn', 'the city of youth', and 'the port to civilisation' respectively.[16] Reflecting the city's reputation as a tourist attraction in Korea, 'Pyongyang March' contains much praise for the scenic sites of the city. However, Korean listeners may not have appreciated these sorts of overtly propagandistic songs as strongly as Japanese settlers, since they were no longer advertised after April 1937.[17] 'Tears of Mokp'o' has had much greater longevity, and is still broadcast and performed in Korea and Japan. The original and translated lyrics are as follows:[18]

Sagong ŭi paennorae kamulgŏrimyŏ	The sailor's shanty fades into silence,
Samhakto p'ado kip'i sumŏdŭnŭnde	Three Crane Island cloaked in tumultuous waves
Pudu e saeassi arongjŏjŭn otcharak	Upon the pier, the bride's drenched hem
Ibyŏl ui nunmul inya Mokp'o ŭi sŏrŭm	Could these be tears of farewell? Mokp'o's sorrow.
Sambaekyŏn wŏnanp'ung ŭn	Beneath Nojŏk Peak,
Nojŏkpong mite	A sweet breeze drifts from Sambaek Pond
Nim chach'wi wanyŏnhada aedalp'ŭn chŏngjo	The traces of my beloved are clear, heartrending sentiment
Yudalsan param to Yŏngsan'gang ŭl anŭni	Even the breeze from Mt. Yudal
Nim kŭryŏ unŭn maŭm Mokp'o ŭi norae	embraces Yŏnngsan River The heart yearning for her lover is Mokp'o's song.

(*Continued*)

[14]Hye Eun Choi, 'The Making of the Recording Industry in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945', PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2018, pp. 130–131, ProQuest (AAT 10830548). The song's lyrics were written by Ch'ŏng Hae, and Chŏn Ki-hyŏn composed the music. Ch'an-ho Pak clarifies that the name 'Chŏnghae' printed on the record label was a pen name of Yi Un-bang; see Ch'an-ho Pak, *Han'guk kayosa* [Korean Popular Music History], (trans.) Tong-nim An (Seoul: Miji buksŭ, 2009), p. 228.

[15]As explained by Hiromu Nagahara, 'march' here does not imply Western military music. It denotes songs that were set in fashionable urban spaces such as Ginza, as in the case of 'Tokyo March'. See Hiromu Nagahara, *Tokyo Boogie-woogie: Japan's Pop Era and its Discontents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 36, https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674978409.

[16]Chun-hŭi Yi, '80yŏ nyŏnchŏn, Pusan esŏ hanil norae taegyŏli p'yŏlch'yŏjin sayŏn' [The Story of the Korea-Japan Singing Competition that Took Place in Busan 80 Years Ago], *OhmyNews*, published online on 11 January 2021, available at http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002709820, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[17]Han'guk ŭmban akaibŭ yŏn'gudan [Korean Record Archive Research Group], *Han'guk yusŏnggi ŭmban* [Korean Gramophone Records], (ed.) Yŏn-hyŏng Pae (Seoul: Han'gŏ rŭm tŏ, 2011), pp. 661, 676–677.

[18]Choi, 'The Making of the Recording Industry', pp. 147–148. I have modified the original translation slightly.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(*Continued.*)

Kip'ŭn pam chogaktal ŭn hŭllŏganŭnde	In the deep night a crescent moon floats away
Ŏtchit'a yet sangch'ŏ ka saerowŏjin'ga	How can that old wound rise anew?
Mot onŭn nim imyŏn i maŭm to ponael kŏt ŭl,	If my lover cannot return,
Hanggu e maennŭn chŏlgae Mokp'o ŭi sarang	I will send my heart away, too Fidelity moored in the harbour, Mokp'o's love.

As mentioned earlier, the subject is typical of similarly themed songs of the time—a heartsick young bride yearning for her lover while looking out over a harbour. However, unlike the unnamed islands in many such songs, Mokp'o is a real place instead of a mere abstract space of longing. In the lyrics, Mun Il-sŏk dexterously interweaves descriptions of the bride's emotions with references to well-known locations around the city, namely Three Crane Island, Nojŏk Peak, Sambaek Pond, Yŏngsan River, and Mt Yudal, so that the stories and images associated with each contribute to the song's overall meaning. Listeners unfamiliar with the sites and narratives connected to them could still enjoy the song, but those who were would most likely find 'Tears of Mokp'o' more affecting.

Mun's references are apparent from the beginning of the song. The first verse describes the bride in tears standing on a pier across from Three Crane Island after her lover's departure. Naming this island could lead listeners to imagine a tragic destiny for the bride, since it is the setting for a well-known folktale that goes as follows: A handsome military officer lived alone on Mt Yudal to train. One day, he encountered three young women who had come to draw water from a well at the foot of the mountain. Their beauty and coyness distracted him so much that he could not concentrate on his training, so he told them to leave. Even so, when he saw them departing on a boat, he could not control his sadness. He shot arrows at the boat to get the girls' attention, hoping that they would stop and return, but the arrows damaged the boat and caused it to sink. The girls drowned, but instead of dying and sinking to the bottom of the sea, they were miraculously transformed into cranes and flew back out of the water. Together, they became Three Crane Island.[19] Listeners from Mokp'o and elsewhere who knew this sad story could therefore easily anticipate how the narrative of 'Tears of Mokp'o' would unfold. In the same way, the stories associated with the other sites mentioned in the song could have generated equally affective resonances for knowledgeable audiences.

Another key aspect of the lyrics is that the bride herself is identified with Mok'po. The city is thus personified as an emotional being, which universalizes the bride's personal sadness and longing. This is evident in the first verse, where the heartbreak of the solitary bride is extended to the whole of Mokp'o by concluding with 'Mokp'o's sorrow'. This lyrical device is consistent throughout, with the second and third verses ending in 'Mokp'o's song' and 'Mokp'o's love' respectively. Listeners can thereby imagine a topography in which the bride is interconnected with Mokp'o or is even a metonym for the city.

[19]Yun-sŏn Yi, 'Samhakto' [Three Crane Island], in *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture* (National Folk Museum of Korea, n.d.), available at https://folkency.nfm.go.kr/kr/topic/detail/5552, [accessed 11 March 2025]. This story has many variations.

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If the bride has lost her lover, then what has Mokp'o lost? Koreans in their colonized homeland might have readily concluded that the city represented a space without sovereignty, where prosperity did not extend to much of the Korean population. Rather, the city was a place from which Koreans departed for Manchuria and Japan, some for better opportunities but most simply to escape the poverty and oppression that characterized colonial rule. Furthermore, imperial exploitation was vividly evident in Mokp'o, since it was from there that locally produced staple goods, notably rice, salt, and cotton, were shipped to Japan. Hence, day-to-day realities and nationalist discourses both underscored Korea's colonial victimhood. Similarly, these conditions are reflected in the well-known poem 'Thy Silence' (*Nim ŭi ch'immuk*) written by the renowned poet and Buddhist monk Han Yong-un,[20] in which *nim* ('lover' or 'thou') can be easily taken to mean Korea's independence. The poem begins with the line, 'Thou hast gone', evoking a sentiment shared by the bride in 'Tears of Mokp'o'. Thus, when the song was interpreted as a national allegory, the bride's longing pointed to nothing other than Korea's sovereignty and the need for liberation.

Koreans, then, did not think of 'Tears of Mokp'o' only as a song of victimhood but also as one of resistance against Japanese rule. They found a subtly subversive message in it, especially in the first lines of the second verse. Clark Sorenson explains this interpretation:

> To conceal the true meaning of the passage the record company had used the traditional Korean technique of writing Chinese phrases that mean one thing in Chinese, but that express a subversive meaning when read only for their sound value in Korean. 'Lake of Three Cypresses' (Sambaek Pond) is homophonous with 'three hundred years'. 'Peaceful zephyrs' (*wŏnanp'ung ŭn*) when read quickly sounds close to 'bearing resentment' (*wŏnan p'umŭn*).[21]

Korean listeners may therefore perceive this line not as 'Beneath Nojŏk Peak, a sweet breeze drifts from Sambaek Pond', but instead as 'Beneath Nojŏk Peak, bearing three centuries of resentment'. Mun's inclusion of Nojŏk Peak in the second verse was very clever if he intended to express an indirect anti-colonial message, as the hill was the site of a well-known incident from the Imjin War that had taken place about three centuries earlier (1592–1598). The seven-year struggle to repel an invasion from Japan, which Korea finally won with help from Chinese forces, left the peninsula devastated. Admiral Yi Sun-sin, the most revered military leader in Korean history, played a decisive role in the war. One of his tactics was to cover Nojŏk Peak with grain bags, to trick the Japanese into concluding that Korea had enough military provisions for a prolonged fight.[22] Thus, the reference to Nojŏk Peak in the second line evokes both historical Japanese aggression and Korean resistance, so it seems natural to hear the following line as 'bearing three centuries of resentment'. This apparent double meaning is one of the main reasons that 'Tears of Mokp'o' has been considered a model of creative subversion and a symbol of resistant national spirit.

[20]The poem appeared in the poetry collection of the same title: Han Yong-un, *Thy Silence* (Hoedong seogwan, 1926).

[21]Sorensen, 'Mokp'o's Tears', p. 151.

[22]Pak, *Han'guk kayosa*, pp. 344–345.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This way of interpreting the song did not go unnoticed by government censors, and the figures involved in its production were investigated by the police. None of them, including the head of Okeh Records, Yi Chŏl (1903–1944), the lyricist Mun Il-sŏk, and the songwriter Son Mok-in (1913–1999), was ever officially punished, but the investigation helped to authenticate a subversive message in 'Tears of Mokp'o'. Son testified that the official attention increased the song's popularity, as the record sold even more after the police became involved.[23]

Even with its evocative lyrics, 'Tears of Mokp'o' would not have been as successful without music that reflected its theme. Okeh Records organized another contest in the hopes of finding suitable music, but they were not satisfied with any of the entries. Instead, the company finally settled on a piece written by one of their own employees, Son Mok-in. Recruited while studying music in Japan, Son had joined the company as a songwriter in 1934.[24] Despite his inexperience, he quickly proved his value to the company with the success of his first two compositions prior to 'Tears of Mokp'o', and he went on to have a prolific career as a songwriter, popular piano and accordion player, and singer. In addition, Son became the bandmaster of the Okeh-organized C.M.C. (Chosŏn Music Club) Band, possibly the most famous swing band in colonial Korea. He was successful enough that his career across Korea and Japan continued even into the post-colonial era.[25] As for 'Tears of Mokp'o', Son's music must have been very well received, since two instrumental versions were produced. The first, released in 1937, was an accordion performance by Son with guitar accompaniment by Kim Hae-song (1910–?), and the second featured a Hawai'ian guitar arrangement by the Japanese jazz musician Dick Mine (1908–1991) accompanied by Park Si-ch'un (1913–1996) the following year.[26] These instrumental records demonstrate that the music for 'Tears of Mokp'o' was well-liked in its own right.

It is worth noting that Son's composition sounded like Japanese popular music, since he wrote it in the style of *t'ŭrot'ŭ* (then called *yuhaengga*). It might seem counterintuitive that a song valued for its apparently nationalist and anti-colonial subtext would be composed as *t'ŭrot'ŭ* rather than *sinminyo* (lit. 'new folksongs'). Arguing that *sinminyo* was Korea's first indigenous form of popular music, Hilary Finchum-Sung suggests that composers in the 1930s took Korean folksongs as a foundation and created a new genre by combining Western and Korean features. They borrowed the melodic and rhythmic structures as well as the themes of traditional folksongs to develop *sinminyo*, but they wrote it to be played on Western instruments. As its familiar tunes gained popularity among Koreans, *sinminyo* was recognized as a profitable new genre by the major record companies.[27] In contrast, the rhythm, scale, and vocal inflections

[23]Mok-in Son, *Motta purŭn insaeng ch'an'ga: Son mokin ŭi t'ahyangsari* [Unfinished Song about Life: Son Mokin's Living Away from Home] (Seoul: Hot Wind, 1992), p. 182.

[24]Pak, *Han'guk kayosa*, p. 349.

[25]Ibid., pp. 314–320. He wrote music for 'Woman of the Casbah' (*Kasuba no onna*, 1955), released under the name Kugayama Akira, one of his Japanese pseudonyms. The song is arguably among the most significant popular songs of the Showa Era (1926–1989), with numerous artists releasing their own versions of it.

[26]Han'guk ŭmban akaibŭ yŏn'gudan, *Han'guk yusŏnggi ŭmban*, pp. 785, 919. Son Mok-in's record was listed as Okeh 12050, and Dick Mine's as Okeh 12149.

[27]Hilary Finchum-Sung, 'New Folksongs: *Shin Minyo* of the 1930s', in *Korean Pop Music—Riding the Wave*, (ed.) Keith Howard (The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), pp. 11–12.

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of *t'ŭrot'ŭ* were strongly influenced by a hybridized style of Japanese popular music that eventually became known as *enka* in postwar Japan.[28] 'Tears of Mokp'o' was an early example of this type of song, which not only used the Japanese *yonanuki* minor scale[29] but was also in duple metre, both typical features of the genre. Therefore, it has long been considered a representative *t'ŭrot'ŭ* song in South Korea.[30] Kwon Do-hee notes that period audiences understood *t'ŭrot'ŭ*'s distinctive sonic features as indicating that it was not indigenous to Korea, and they instead associated the new genre with 'Japan, imperialism, Westernization, and dominance'.[31] Son Mok-in's composition of 'Tears of Mokp'o' as a *t'ŭrot'ŭ* song befitted its primarily urban setting, like other songs with similar themes.

The singer Yi Nan-yŏng cannot be overlooked when explaining the popularity of 'Tears of Mokp'o'. Yi began her musical career as a so-called intermission singer (*makkan kasu*) for a Western-style theatre troupe, whose role was to entertain audiences between acts. She was recruited as an independent recording artist in 1933. Yi's vocals for 'Tears of Mokp'o', as Yi Yŏng-mi argues, were the epitome of what fans expected from female *t'ŭrot'ŭ* singers at the time.[32] This is demonstrated by her greatest hits collection from 1938, titled *Yi Nan-yŏng kŏlchakchip* (Okeh12176).[33] *Kŏlchakchip* literally means a 'collection of masterpieces', and in the colonial era such records usually contained a medley of three hit *t'ŭrot'ŭ* songs accompanied by spoken sections on each side, an honour reserved for Okeh's top singers.[34]

Surprisingly, Okeh marketed 'Tears of Mokp'o' as a *sinminyo* song in its advertisements and promotional materials. In Figure 1, the lyric sheets for the song contain the text *chibang sinminyo* (lit. 'new local folksongs') between two diagonal lines immediately beneath Yi's photo. Given that Okeh systematically produced 'Tears of Mokp'o' via a contest, this would most likely have been a careful choice rather than a simple oversight. By marketing its *t'ŭrot'ŭ* song as *sinminyo* in the mid-1930s, Okeh could represent it as simultaneously traditional and modern, which must have increased its popular appeal. In other words, Okeh promoted 'Tears of Mokp'o' among Koreans

[28]Yu-chŏng Chang, 'A Study on the Traditionalism of "Trot"—Focused on Yi Nanyŏng's "Tears of Mokp'o"', *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, vol. 5, 2016, pp. 60–67; Christine Reiko Yano, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010).

[29]'Yonanuki' means to omit the fourth and seventh notes from the diatonic scale. Nagahara Hiromu, in his analysis of 'Tokyo March', asserts that a syncretic *yonanuki* minor scale is what makes Japanese popular music 'Japanesey' (*Nihon chō*). Nagahara, *Tokyo Boogie-Woogie*, p. 36.

[30]Yŏng-mi Yi, 'Yi Nanyŏng "Mokp'o ŭi nunmul"' [Yi Nanyŏng 'Tears of Mokp'o'], *Taejung ŭmak sound* [Popular Music Sound], vol. 3, published online on 18 February 2018, available at http://ksoundlab.com/xe/index.php?mid=sound_music100&document_srl=8196&listStyle=viewer&page=1&ckattempt=1, [accessed 11 March 2025]. Most *sinminyo* songs were created in triple rhythm, a characteristic feature of Korean vernacular popular music.

[31]Do-hee Kwon, 'Shin Joong Hyun's Rock Sonority and Korean Pentatonicism in "Miin"', in *Made in Korea: Studies in Popular Music*, (eds) Hyunjoon Shin and Seung Ah Lee (Oxford: Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), p. 124.

[32]Yŏng-mi Yi, *Hŭngnam pudu ŭi kŭmsuni nŭn ŏdi ro kassŭlkka* (Seoul: Hwanggŭm kaji, 2002), p. 50.

[33]Yŏn-hyŏng Pae, *Han'guk yusŏnggi ŭmban* [Korean Gramophone Records]. Surim munhwa ch'ongsŏ [Surim Culture Series] (Seoul: Han'gŏrŭm tŏ, 2011), vol. 3, pp. 932–933.

[34]According to the archival website Korea SP Records, Okeh released *kŏlchakchip* compilations for only three other female singers: Chang Se-chŏng (Okeh 20014), Pak Hyang-rim (Okech 31083), and Yi Hwa-ja (Okeh 31037).

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Figure 1. Lyric sheets for 'Tears of Mokp'o'. *Source:* Archive and Research Centre for Korean Recordings.

by linking the assumed Koreanness of *sinminyo* with the song's nationalist image, while at the same time targeting the emerging segment of educated urban youth who were sensitive to new musical trends. Okeh therefore did not discourage contested or polarized perceptions of the song but actively utilized them to promote it.

The company employed a similar strategy in its visual representations of Yi Nanyŏng. She is wearing traditional clothes in the picture on the first lyric sheet and Western clothes in the one on the right. In the first photo, she looks demure and reserved, with her eyes averted from the camera, while in the photo on the right, she is wearing Western clothes and smiling directly into the camera. Her hair is bobbed and she wears a hair band (Figure 1). If the first image is what would have been expected from portrayals of most female singers of the era, especially those who performed *sinminyo*, the latter is in keeping with representations of so-called modern girls, which would have appealed to those who were interested in highly Westernized or Japanified music in colonial Korea. The different lyric sheets further demonstrate the long-lasting popularity of 'Tears of Mokp'o'. The second photo was originally on Yi's Japanese-language albums, which began to be distributed in 1936, a year after the song was first released. Moreover, another lyric sheet with a photo of Yi, with even shorter hair and a wider smile, appeared in advertisements for her records as late as November 1943.[35] This strongly suggests that 'Tears of Mokp'o' sold steadily throughout the colonial

[35]The photo in this lyric sheet was used for one of the last releases by Okeh Records (Okeh 31193), for which advertisements were published in November 1943. The record contains war propaganda songs performed by Okeh's top musicians: 'An Application Written in Blood' [*Hyŏlsŏ chiwŏn*] and 'Furore of Twenty-five Million' [*Yich'ŏn obaengman kamgyŏk*].

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period, especially considering that the production of Korean gramophone records ended towards the beginning of 1944.[36]

As Yi Nan-yŏng's popularity spread beyond the Korean peninsula into Japan and other parts of the empire, her Korean identity was obscured, especially for Japanese audiences. A month after the release of 'Joy of Spring' (*Haru no kanki*, Teichiku 50287), which was a cover of her hit Korean song 'Welcome to Spring' (*Pommaji*, Okeh 1618), her Japanese version of 'Tears of Mokp'o', titled 'Farewell Ship Song' (*Wakare no funa uta*, Teichiku 50344) was released in 1936.[37] For these two releases, Okeh's parent company Teichiku Records presented Yi under the Japanese alias Oka Ranko, and it included a photo of her in Western clothes. In addition to Yi's Japanese pseudonym, the origin of the song was also largely masked. The only names that appeared on the label of the Japanese record besides Oka Ranko were those of the lyricist Shimada Kinya (1909–1978) and the arranger Sugita Ryōzō (1889–?). With the new title and lyrics, Teichiku not only removed the Korean signifier 'Mokp'o' but also failed to credit the composer Son Mok-in. Yi released ten Japanese-language songs under the name Oka Ranko between 1936 and 1938, which were either Japanese cover versions of her hit Korean songs or original Japanese compositions.[38] Those with no knowledge of popular music in Korea, therefore, could have easily taken 'Farewell Ship Song' and Yi's other recordings to be Japanese products.[39]

As Sorenson notes, 'Tears of Mokp'o' and 'Farewell Ship Song' highlight 'the mutuality of colonial hybridity' in the Japanese empire.[40] This mutuality was not ephemeral, but its influence remained long after the colonial era. Both the Korean and Japanese versions were safely resettled into their respective 'invented' categories, *t'ŭrot'ŭ* and *enka*, while the popular music of Japan and its erstwhile colonies formed routes of what Andrew F. Jones terms 'circuit listening'.[41] Jones focuses on Chinese-language popular music of the 1960s in the global media ecology of the Cold War era. Here, informed by his use of 'circuit' as both materiality and metaphor, I apply the term 'circuit listening' to both overt and obscure musical linkages between Japan and its former colonies in the second half of the twentieth century, even if those circuits were small and localized. 'Tears of Mokp'o' continued to resonate in Japan throughout its transition from empire to nation-state, but in the postwar era, the various Japanese renderings were titled 'Mokp'o no Namida', a direct translation of the song's Korean name.

[36] *Yusŏnggi ŭmban ch'ongnam charyojip* [A Comprehensive Discography of Gramophone Records] only contains information about records released between 1907 and 1943.

[37] Pak, *Han'guk kayosa*, p. 352.

[38] Their Japanese titles were 春の歓喜 (520287), 別れの船唄 (50344), アリランの唄 (50344), 夕波歌えど (50440), 海のふるさと (50440), 蛍草の唄 (50484), 感傷の秋 (50494), 合歓の木蔭で (N153), 白薔薇の乙女 (N172), and 月見草の歌 (N175). For more information, see Mun-sŏng Kim, 'Pallak, kŭ namja ŭi ŭmban iyagi' [Enjoyment, the Man's Story of Records], Chŏng Ch'anggwan ŭi kugak CD ŭmban segye [Chŏng Ch'anggwan's World of Korean Traditional Music CD Albums], published online on 30 December 2014, available at http://www.gugakcd.kr/music_detail.asp?cd_num=KOUS-011, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[39] Considering that Yi Nan-yŏng performed on Okeh's tour of Japan, though, her ethnic identity might have been known to some Japanese.

[40] Sorensen, 'Mokp'o's Tears', p. 181.

[41] Andrew F. Jones, *Circuit Listening: Chinese Popular Music in the Global 1960s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

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After Sugawara Tsuzuko (also known as Nagamatsu Tsuzuko, born 1927) recorded her version (Teichiku C-3854) in 1955,[42] numerous Japanese, Korean, and ethnic Korean singers have released their own interpretations.[43] Most of these artists acknowledged the song's Korean origin by inserting 'Mokp'o' or other Korean terms into the lyrics. The fruits of colonial hybridity, then, are still relished by contemporary *enka* and *t'ŭrot'ŭ* fans.

Although 'Tears of Mokp'o' is known as a representative *t'ŭrot'ŭ* song in South Korea, it was not, as Chang Yu-chŏng points out, a target either of scholarly criticism or government censorship during Korea's decolonization process,[44] even while *t'ŭrot'ŭ* as a genre was continually criticized for being Japan-influenced and decadent. Especially under the Park Chung Hee regime (1963–1979), which banned numerous songs under the pretext of purifying South Korean popular culture from 'Japanese colour' (*waesaek*), 'Tears of Mokp'o' was left alone. The internet newspaper *Shimin ŭi sori* (Sound of citizens) states that 'From liberation in 1945, the Korean War and division in the 1950s, to the compressed economic development under successive authoritarian regimes, "Tears of Mokp'o" helped console South Koreans suffering from deprivation and displacement.'[45] Such statements can be commonly found in newspapers and other sources.[46] *T'ŭrot'ŭ* songs that played similar consolatory roles, such as 'Site of a Ruined Castle' (*Hwangsŏng ŭi chŏk*, 1932), 'Away from Home' (*T'ayang sari*, 1934) and 'The Tumen River is Crying' (*Nunmulchŏjŭn tuman'gang*, 1938), also escaped accusations of having 'Japanese colour'. Being perceived this way in turn helped the genre navigate not only government censorship but also critical discourses through the second half of the twentieth century.

In North Korea, popular songs written in Western musical styles during the colonial period were officially declared to be 'bad' or 'counter-revolutionary', and they were accordingly banned under the Chuch'e (self-reliance) cultural policy from the mid-1960s. Hence, the position of even the aforementioned songs became precarious.[47] It was after the end of the Arduous March (1994–1998), known to the rest of the world as the North Korean Famine, that Kim Jŏng-il instituted a new category for these songs:

[42]The National Showa Memorial Museum (Showakan) has online catalogues of ephemera, one of which includes an SP record with the title 'Mokpo no namida', sung by Sugawara Tsuzuko. This version lists Son Mok-in as both the composer and arranger. Interestingly, his Japanese alias Akira Kugayama is used instead of his Korean name. See https://search.showakan.go.jp/search/record/detail.php?id=90096463, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[43]Yi Son'e (李成愛, K: Yi Sŏng'ae), Mina Aoe (青江三奈), Nakamura Mitsuko (中村美律), Tabana Yoshio (田端義夫), and Tendō Yoshimi (天童 よしみ) are among those who recorded 'Mokpo no namida'. Their performances are available on YouTube.

[44]Chang, 'A Study on the Traditionalism of "Trot"', p. 66.

[45]Ta-yi Kim, 'Taejunggayo ro hangil chŏngsin simŏ chun Yi Nanyŏng' [Yi Nanyŏng Instilled Anti-Japanese Spirit through Popular Songs], *Simin ŭi sori* [Sound of Citizens], published online on 21 February 2013, available at http://www.siminsori.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=72537, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[46]Some assert that most musicians at this time were collaborators to one extent or another, and Yi Nan-yŏng was not an exception. However, this is a minority view.

[47]Jong-gun Kim, 'Nambuk chumin ŭi chŏngsŏ sot'ong kije rosŏ taejung kayo' [The Popular Song as a Mechanism of Emotional Communication between the South and the North Inhabitants], *T'ongil inmunhak* [The Journal of Humanities for Unification], vol. 71, 2017, pp. 16–17, https://doi.org/DOI:10.21185/jhu.2017.09.71.5.

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'popular songs of the Enlightenment Period' (*kyemonggi kayo*). These were defined as elegies that metaphorically expressed the misfortunes of a colonized country and its people's suffering as well as strong progressive ideals and national sentiment.[48] 'Tears of Mokp'o' fit this definition well, and it was officially reintroduced and promoted. Thus, the song is present to this day in both Koreas as well as Japan.

Projecting a regional identity onto 'Tears of Mokp'o'

The affective link between the Haitai Tigers baseball team and 'Tears of Mokp'o' was engendered by reappropriating the identification of the politico-economic conditions of colonized Korea with those of the Chŏlla region in South Korea. That is, if the song had signified Koreans' discontent under Japanese rule, it represented the same for the economically marginalized and politically oppressed people of Chŏlla in postwar South Korea. By forming this association, fans of the Tigers established the song's role as a dual anthem for the team and the Chŏlla region it represented.

As previously noted, 'Tears of Mokp'o' was initially seen as an unlikely choice for a fight song due to its melancholic tone and measured musical qualities.[49] However, Haitai Tigers fans embraced it because they reinterpreted its historical significance as an anti-colonial anthem, weaving it into their own narrative of regional alienation and discrimination. In other words, South Korea's history of regionalism led the fans to adopt 'Tears of Mokp'o'. Regionalism has been identified as one of the most salient issues in South Korean politics throughout its history, and it has been demonstrated with the greatest intensity and cohesion by the citizens of Chŏlla, especially against the neighbouring southeastern Kyŏngsang region.[50] During Park Chung Hee's long rule, Chŏlla was exploited for cheap labour and agricultural products to help fuel South Korea's rapid economic growth. With its high population, the region was the source of most of the industrial workers and urban poor in the larger cities, and they in turn suffered from negative stereotypes.[51] Furthermore, the political rivalry between the Kyŏngsang-bred Park and the long-time opposition leader Kim Dae Jung, who received unwavering support from his political stronghold in Chŏlla, greatly contributed to the regional cleavage.[52]

[48]Ibid., pp. 14, 20–21.

[49]South Korean sports fans in the 1980s freely used any songs they desired for cheering on their teams without worrying about intellectual property rights. Although the Korea Music Copyright Association was founded in 1987, it was not until 2017 that songwriters began requesting extra fees for changing their lyrics, which meant that each team had to negotiate a copyright deal for each fight song.

[50]Gi-Wook Shin, 'Introduction', in *Contentious Kwangju: The May 18th Uprising in Korea's Past and Present*, (eds) G. Shin and K. Hwang (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003), p. xx; Keedon Kwon, 'Regionalism in South Korea: Its Origins and Role in Her Democratization', *Politics and Society*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2004, p. 548, https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329204269982; Sallie Yea, 'Maps of Resistance and Geographies of Dissent in the Cholla Region of South Korea', *Korean Studies*, vol. 24, 2000, pp. 76–78; Kwang-il Yoon, 'Regionalism', in *The Oxford Handbook of South Korean Politics*, (eds) JeongHun Han, Ramón Pacheco Pardo and Young-ho Cho (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 69, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192894045.001.0001.

[51]Wang-Bae Kim, 'Regionalism: Its Origins and Substance with Competition and Exclusion', *Korea Journal*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2003, pp. 16–18.

[52]Hyun-Chool Lee and Alexandre Repkine, 'Changes in and Continuity of Regionalism in South Korea: A Spatial Analysis of the 2017 Presidential Election', *Asian Survey*, vol. 60, no. 3, 2020, pp. 420–421.

Neglected in terms of government recruitment and regional development, the people of Chŏlla could not help but experience deep-rooted discontent and resentment, which ultimately caused the protests in the city of Kwangju, the administrative centre of the region, to be the 'most pronounced and severe' during the nationwide democracy movement in 1980.[53] General Chun Doo-hwan, who had mounted a coup d'état following Park's assassination, sent in the army to suppress the unrest on 18 May 1980. The ensuing ten-day struggle resulted in high civilian casualties and lingering emotional trauma among the survivors. Moreover, Kim Dae Jung was arrested a day before the attack and sentenced to death. Although the sentence was not carried out, it was enough to inflame the people of the region.[54] Nonetheless, memories of Kwangju were largely buried, dismissed, and even distorted in the mainstream media under Chun's government. For many years, 18 May was treated in government discourse and the conservative mainstream media as a riot instigated by North Korean spies and other subversive elements. Kang Chun-man points out that this representation caused an 'enemy creation effect' (*chŏng ŭi ch'angch'ul hyogwa*) through which (South) Chŏlla was reinvented as the enemy of the rest of South Korea.[55]

Meanwhile, in the 1980s the country was experiencing a heyday of sport. Although Chun's rule was highly authoritarian, he nonetheless implemented measures to deregulate and even promote sex-, screen-, and sports-related businesses and institutions, typically grouped together as the '3S Policy'.[56] The government encouraged professional sports by launching the Professional Baseball League (1982), the Professional Soccer League (1983), and the National Folk Ssirŭm (traditional wrestling) Competition (1983). In 1981 Chun submitted South Korea's bid for the 1988 Olympics, which was subsequently approved, and the country successfully hosted the Asian Games in 1986. Thus, Chun was nicknamed the 'sports president' (*sŭp'och'ŭ taet'ongnyŏng*) by South Korean sports fans and athletes.[57]

The first organization to be formed under Chun's sports initiative was a governing body for baseball, the KBO, which set up a league in 1982 with six teams owned by various major business groups.[58] Kim Bang-chool observes that a unique feature of the league was its region-oriented recruitment system, whereby the players chosen for each professional team were high school graduates from the team's home province. No professional team could scout players until they had played for their regional teams for at least five years. Kim argues that by capitalizing on the great popularity of the regionally organized High School Baseball League, the KBO helped ensure that 'hometown heroes would continue to captivate the local community well after the players'

[53]Sallie Yea, 'Reinventing the Region: The Cultural Politics of Place in Kwangju City and South Cholla Province', in *Contentious Kwangju*, (eds) Shin and Hwang, pp. 109–131.

[54]Shin, 'Introduction', pp. xiv, xix–xxii.

[55]Kang, *Han'guk hyŏndaesa sanch'aek*, pp. 185–186.

[56]Sang Mi Park, 'The Paradox of Postcolonial Korean Nationalism: State-sponsored Cultural Policy in South Korea, 1965–Present', *The Journal of Korean Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2010, p. 83.

[57]Yŏng-no Ki, 'Chun Doo-hwan, "Kŏmbulgŭn p'i" mihwakihae sŭp'och'ŭ iyong' [Chun Doo-hwan Uses Sports to Beautify 'Dark Red Blood'], *Newsian*, published online on 30 March 2021, available at http://www.newsian.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=47913, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[58]Bang-Chool Kim, 'Professional Baseball in Korea: Origins, Causes, Consequences and Implications', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2008, p. 377.

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high school graduation'.[59] That is, the KBO made the most of entrenched regional identification to stimulate the popularity of professional baseball in each province. Although the government's political motives in sponsoring baseball were not unrecognized among the South Korean populace, very quickly watching KBO games became a 'national pastime', with well over 2,000,000 spectators visiting baseball stadiums in 1983.[60]

The Kwangju-based Haitai Tigers had a humble start, but they rapidly progressed and went on to make baseball history in South Korea. Compared with the other provinces, finding a company that had both the financial capacity and the will to sponsor a baseball team in Chŏlla was not an easy task, since there were no major companies from the region. In the end, Haitai, a medium-sized corporate group centred around a confectionary company, committed itself to organizing the team, but its financial support remained weak. By the time the newly formed Haitai Tigers held their inauguration ceremony, there were only 14 contracted players.[61] In their very first season, the Tigers had to play 80 games with a roster of 15, which did not allow for any breaks or injuries. Even the Inch'ŏn-based Sammi Superstars, known to be equally short of funding, began with 23 players.[62] Sammi unsurprisingly performed poorly, with such distinctions as 'the lowest winning rate' and 'the most consecutive losses', and the team was accordingly sold to the Punghan Group three years after it was founded. In contrast, the Haitai Tigers achieved a legendary nine wins at the national baseball championship, called the Korean Series, and they set a domestic record by winning in four consecutive years from 1986 to 1989.[63] This meant that for 19 years of the team's existence, the Tigers won almost half of all Korean Series championships. Their fans, especially those with memories of the Kwangju Uprising, took their games seriously, since the Tigers' successes allowed them a rare chance to feel victorious as people of Kwangju as well as Chŏlla.

Haitai fans' embrace of 'Tears of Mokp'o' as a fight song was not systematically planned, it seemed to arise organically. Once they were introduced to the song, the fans immediately adopted it. Yim Ch'ae-jun, the team's doctor, recalled that when the Tigers won their first victory at the Korean Series in 1983, the introductory bars of 'Tears of Mokp'o' were played. All the Haitai fans in the stadium then sang it together in tears. Yim's Japanese guests were bewildered and asked him what the song was and

[59]Ibid., pp. 377, 380.

[60]Yonhyap News Agency, *Korea Annual*, 1985, p. 217, quoted by Bang-Chool Kim, 'Sport, Politics and the New Nation: Sport Policy in the Republic of Korea (1961–1992)', PhD thesis, Ohio State University, 2001, ProQuest (AAT 3011091), pp. 173–174.

[61]'Haet'ae t'aigŏjŭ—30il ch'angdansik' [Haitai Tigers—The Inauguration Ceremony on the Thirtieth], *Maeil gyŏngje*, published online on 29 January 1982, available at https://www.mk.co.kr/news/economy/533389, [accessed 11 March 2025]. There was one more player, Kim Il-kwŏn, but initially he joined the team as a trainee due to his previous contract.

[62]Chi-yŏng Kim and Ung-yong Ha, 'Mudŭngsan rejŏndŭ, haet'ae t'aigŏjŭ' [The Legend of Mt. Mudŭng, Haitai Tigers], *Han'guk ch'eyuksa hak'oeji* [Journal of Korean Sports History], vol. 19, no. 3, 2014, pp. 56–57.

[63]'Adyu! haet'ae—Yŏktae ch'oeda usŭng tim' [Adieu! Haitai: The Most Winning Team of All Time], *The JoongAng Ilbo*, published online on 25 February 2002, available at https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/968896, [accessed 11 March 2025].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

why the fans were crying despite their team's victory.[64] A reporter described the same moment in a newspaper article:

> On October 20, 1983, at the Chamsil Baseball Stadium, the moment the Haitai Tigers won the Korean Series, a sad song resounded from the cheering seats. It was 'Tears of Mokp'o'. The joy of winning was not what was conveyed in this song. It was grief that people had to live holding their breath despite being discriminated against. The spectators, whose memories of Kwangju in 1980 were still vivid, could not raise their voices except at the baseball field, so they sang in unison at the top of their lungs. Since then, this heartrending tune that was out of place on the baseball field became a fight song for the Tigers. Whether they won or lost, the crowd sang 'Tears of Mokp'o' at the end of every match.[65]

This description shows how naturally the affective connection was formed between Haitai fans and the song. To those from Kwangju and Chŏlla with traumatic memories of 18 May, who had to live in silence under the same regime that terrorized them, singing 'Tears of Mokp'o' became a ritual of self-consolation. As stated by an anonymous subject interviewed by the sports scholars Kim Ji-yŏng and Ha Ung-yong, 'I went out to work on the streets stained with the blood of my family members every day. There were eyes watching even when only two people gathered, and the *makkŏlli poanbŏp* (lit. 'rice wine National Security Law') was often abused. Who can explain how precious the baseball stadiums were to us, where we could sing 'Tears of Mokp'o' with our voices in our throats?'[66] The slang expression *makkŏlli poanbŏp* referred to the arbitrary application of the National Security Law, where even minor complaints about the government, even those made casually on social occasions, could lead to serious consequences such as police interrogation, prison time, or torture. The statement thus highlights the shame and insecurity endured by the citizens of Kwangju, who had to constantly self-censor their speech for fear of being arrested or worse. Against this backdrop, singing 'Tears of Mokp'o' was understood in political as much as cultural terms.[67] If the Tigers' games were like rituals for overcoming communal trauma, 'Tears of Mokp'o' was the musical accompaniment.

In his book *The Haitai Tigers and Kim Dae-jung*, Kim Ŭn-sik contends that the song was a symbolic bridge connecting the Tigers, Kim Dae Jung, and the varying emotions of the people of Chŏlla.[68] In his review of the book, Yi Yong-sŏk notes that one aspect of

[64]'Sŭp'och'ŭ ro chibaehara! 5kong 3S chŏngch'aek' [Rule by Sports! The Fifth Republic's 3S Policy], *Ijenŭn marhal su itta* [Now It can be Told], 22 May 2005, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqhKQnqQLVU, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[65]Chŏl-hyŏn Kim, 'Yagujang e ullyŏ p'ŏjin "Mokp'o ŭi Nunmul" kwa Yi Nan-yŏng' ['Tears of Mokp'o' that Resonated in Baseball Stadiums and Yi Nan-yŏng], *Asia kyŏngje*, published online on 11 April 2017, available at https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2017041110575119927, [account required; last accessed 20 March 2022].

[66]Kim and Ha, 'Mudŭngsan rejŏndŭ', p. 56.

[67]Hun-sang Kang, 'Chŏlla-do saramŭn haet'aet'aigŏjŭman ŭngwŏnhaeya hanayo?' [Do People from Chŏlla Have to Root for the Haitai Tigers?], *Wŏlgan kyŏngyŏnggye*, vol. 379, 2010, p. 35, available at http://kiss.kstudy.com/thesis/thesis-view.asp?key=2877266, [accessed 22 March 2025].

[68]Ŭn-sik Kim, *Haet'ae t'aigŏjŭ wa Kim Dae Jung* [The Haitai Tigers and Kim Dae Jung] (Seoul: Yisang Media, 2009), pp. 124–125.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

their response related to the people's financial difficulties. That is, Haitai fans viewed their team's victories as part of an inspiring drama showing how individuals, through sheer talent and effort, could achieve greatness and escape poverty. When they sang 'Tears of Mokp'o' together, the elation of victory converged with the anguish of their daily struggle, and they shed tears without knowing whether they were happy or sad.[69] The people of Chŏlla displayed homophonic solidarity in their cheering and collective singing, which gave rise to a collective catharsis among them in stadiums as well as other gathering places. This is different from such memorial activities as reading Kwangju narratives alone or watching Kwangju-related films privately or in public, as those in stadiums coordinated to generate sonic spectacles as a channel for their emotions.

Notwithstanding the depoliticizing effect of singing 'Tears of Mokp'o' for emotional release, the Chun regime still identified potential danger in mass gatherings of Haitai fans, especially at the Tigers' home stadium in Kwangju, and it took steps to reduce this risk. The inaugural director of the KBO, Yi Yong-il, testified that in the first year of the league, he had arranged home games for the Haitai Tigers on 15 and 16 May, which led to a request to reschedule them from 'a person working for President Chun'.[70] The regime must have thought that holding the games so close to 18 May, the anniversary of the Kwangju Uprising, was too risky. The vice director of the KBO at that time, Yi Ho-yŏn, would not change the dates, so both games ended up being held in Kwangju as originally planned, with heavy security provided by riot police. There were rumours that 3,000 widows in traditional white funeral clothes would appear at the ballpark to protest, so Yi was extremely nervous about the situation getting out of control. His worries proved to be unfounded, but the KBO never scheduled a home game for the Tigers again, to ensure that the fans' emotions would never spill outside the boundaries of the stadium.[71]

Haitai fans adopted 'Tears of Mokp'o' as a fight song in unstated but careful negotiation with the political circumstances of their time. Their full-throated group singing at games in the major stadiums of South Korea was an effective yet safe way to express their anger and frustration at the state. At the same time, it was a rite that powerfully reminded their opponents and the rest of the country, who were watching the games both at ballparks and on national television, about their marginalization and oppression. The fans therefore added new social and political significance to the song in the same way that their colonized forbears had. Among South Korean baseball fans in the second half of the twentieth century, 'Tears of Mokp'o' also meant 'Tears of Kwangju' and 'Tears of Chŏlla'.

'Tears of Mokp'o' in the new millennium

After the turn of the century, Koreans observed that the seemingly unbreakable link between the Haitai Tigers and 'Tears of Mokp'o' had begun to dissolve. This change

[69]Yong-sŏk Yi, 'Haet'ae t'aigŏjŭ ŭi ŭngwŏn'gok ŭn wae "Mokp'o ŭi nunmul" ilŏssŭlkka' [Why was the Haitai Tigers' Fight Song 'Tears of Mokpo'?], *OhmyNews*, published online on 17 November 2012, available at http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002375582, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[70]'Sŭp'och'ŭ ro chibaehara! 5kong 3S chŏngch'aek'.

[71]Ibid.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

can be explained largely by transitions that occurred in three areas: political, financial/institutional, and generational. In terms of politics, Kim Dae Jung was finally elected president in 1998, which made him the first, and until now, the only president from Chŏlla in South Korean history. His presidency was made possible because of the democratic consolidation the country experienced in the 1990s, following the June Democratic Uprising of 1987. Kim's government provided Chŏlla with significant bureaucratic positions and developmental funding, which helped reduce regional resentment and fostered a more optimistic outlook for the future.[72] Meanwhile, Kwangju was promoted as the heart of South Korea's progressive movement and its citizens lauded as 'the righteous defenders of South Korea's democracy and human rights'.[73]

Another reason for the weakening of the Haitai Tigers' association with 'Tears of Mokp'o' was a change in the team's ownership and composition. During South Korea's foreign exchange crisis in the late 1990s, the Haitai Group came close to bankruptcy, resulting in the departure of many of the team's star players, especially to its arch-rival, the Samsung Lions. In the end, Haitai could not prevent having to let go of the team in 2001 and passing ownership to the Hyundai-Kia Automotive Group, after which they became known as the KIA Tigers. The new, affluent owner even moved their home stadium in 2013, from the decrepit Mudŭng Baseball Stadium to the Kwangju-Kia Champions Field.[74] The team was still based in Kwangju, but unlike Haitai, Hyundai-Kia's identity was never bound to Chŏlla; in addition, it owned four other professional teams based in Ulsan, Cheonan, Suwon, and Incheon.[75] Moreover, the KIA Tigers recruited players regardless of their regional connections, utilizing the free agent system as well as player trades in the 2000s. According to a 2007 *Chosun Ilbo* article, 70 per cent of the KIA Tigers' players at that time were not originally from Chŏlla, and neither was the team's manager. This lack of representation made the Tigers' 'regional colour' (*chiyŏk-saek*), along with the Samsung Lions, the weakest among the KBO teams.[76] With the KBO's cancellation of its primary nomination system for recruiting based on regional affiliation in 2008,[77] the practices of South Korean professional baseball was further neoliberalized.

The growing number of younger supporters of the new KIA Tigers was the third major factor that caused 'Tears of Mokp'o' to lose its appeal. Such fans were unlikely to share a regional identity built on the same sort of collective trauma and resentment as previous generations. The restructuring of regionalism since the 1990s further

[72]Yea, 'Maps of resistance and geographies of dissent', pp. 88–89.

[73]Yea, 'Reinventing the Region', p. 126.

[74]Ji-young Kim and Ung-yong Ha, 'Mudŭngsan rejŏndŭ, haet'ae t'aigŏjŭ' [A Legend of Mt. Mudeung, a Story of the Haitai Tigers], *Han'guk ch'eyuk sahak'oeji* [Korean Journal of History of Physical Education, Sport, and Dance], vol. 19, no. 3, 2014, pp. 65–66.

[75]The affiliate teams of Hyundai-Kia are the Ulsan Mobis Phoebus, the Cheonan Hyundai Capital Skywalkers, the Suwon Hyundai E&C Volleyball team, and the Incheon Hyundai Steel Red Angels.

[76]Chin-yŏng Pak and In-ha Kwŏn, 'Yŏn'goje ŏje-onŭl-naeil' [The Local Draft System, Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow], *The Chosun Ilbo*, published online on 25 March 2007, available at https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2007/03/25/2007032500256.html, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[77]Hŭi-jin Ch'oe, 'P'ŭro yagu chiyŏng yŏn'gojeo 1ch'a chimyŏng chedo 5nyŏn mane puhwal' [The First Nomination System Based on Regional Connections Revived after Five Years in Professional Baseball], *SBS News*, published online on 9 April 2013, available at https://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1001725950, [accessed 11 March 20254]. The primary nomination system based on regional affiliation was reinstated five years later in 2013.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contributed to this change. Kang Myung-goo points out that the previously dominant divide between Chŏlla and neighbouring Kyŏngsang declined in significance as the capital region's overgrowth and overaccumulation at the expense of the rest of the country became the most pressing issue.[78] Younger fans were therefore more inclined to enjoy professional baseball simply as a sport, without political associations. In addition, having come of age listening to K-pop, there might not have been the interest in *t'ŭrot'ŭ* or enough familiarity with 'Tears of Mokp'o' to sing it. In fact, the song's immediate adoption as a team anthem among the first generation of Haitai fans was made possible in part by their prior knowledge of the melody and lyrics. They could sing it spontaneously because, as a 'consoling song', it had been known to many South Koreans in their everyday lives throughout the twentieth century. However, supporters of the new KIA Tigers no longer found the song to be emblematic of their regional or personal identities in the new millennium.

In the end, the future of 'Tears of Mokp'o' as a fight song was in the hands of KIA Tigers fans. Their team's victory in the 2009 Korean Series was the first in 12 years and the first since the team's change in ownership. The victory was thrilling, since it came with Na Ji-wan's home run at the bottom of the ninth inning, breaking a tie with the SK Wyverns. At this highly charged moment, the Kia cheerleaders exhorted fans to sing 'Tears of Mokp'o', but few responded. Ch'oe Tong-ho, a sports commentator, remarked that some of them might have been shocked to witness the broken link between the team and its long-time anthem, while other fans might not even have known the mournful-sounding song.[79] With 'Tears of Mokp'o' no longer sung collectively at KIA Tigers baseball games, there could be little doubt that its dual role, as a fight song and regional resistance anthem, had finally come to an end.

Conclusion

The shift from a military to a civilian government in the 1990s greatly facilitated changes in the ways that the people of Chŏlla expressed their grievances. Their voices could now extend beyond the stadiums, and cultural outputs, such as literature, films, and dramas addressing the memory of 'Kwangju', have flourished in recent decades. Meanwhile, South Korea's baseball games have become exceedingly 'entertainmentized' with an elaborate 'cheer culture'. An ABC News article from 2017 reports that South Korean baseball features energetic dance routines and clamorous voices, with cheerleaders rallying fans to enthusiastically support their teams. In this context, the fans' 'cheer battles' in the stands are considered as crucial as the games themselves. The deeply immersive cheer culture in South Korean baseball stadiums has even attracted international fans.[80]

[78]Myung-goo Kang, 'Decentralization and the Restructuring of Regionalism in Korea: Conditions and Possibilities', *Korea Journal*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2003, p. 98.

[79]Tong-ho Ch'oe, 'Sesang esŏ kajang sŭlp'ŭn ŭngwŏn-ga, "Mokp'o ŭi nunmul" kiŏk'ashimnikka?' [The Saddest Fight Song, 'Tears of Mokp'o', Do You Remember?], *Pressian*, published online on 21 May 2013, available at https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/40851, [accessed 11 March 2025].

[80]'A Look Inside South Korean Baseball's Elaborate "Cheer Culture"', *ABC News*, published online on 30 October 2017, available at https://abcnews.go.com/International/inside-south-korean-baseballs-elaborate-cheer-culture/story?id=50817262, [accessed 11 March 2025].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Although 'Tears of Mokp'o' and the role it played for the Haitai Tigers lost their relevance among general KIA Tigers fans, the song and the team are still connected in popular imagination. Such articles as 'The Saddest Fight Song, "Tears of Mokp'o", Do You Remember?' and 'Why was "Tears of Mokp'o" the Fight Song for the Haitai Tigers?', published in 2013 and 2017 respectively, are two of many examples that indicate its ongoing resonance. In 2021, a public television programme titled *Yŏksa jŏnŏl, kŭnal* (That Day, History Journal) also investigated the establishment of the KBO under Chun Doo-hwan.[81] A clip from the programme was later posted on its YouTube channel, titled 'The Haitai Tigers and "Tears of Mokp'o"'.[82] In such ways, the embodied experience of communally singing 'Tears of Mokp'o' has been re-remembered in magazines, newspapers, books, and on TV shows, through which the association between the song and the Tigers, drawing on Chŏlla regionalism, resonates as a historical memory among the people. The focus of such public memories is not so much on the hardships the region endured. Rather, they highlight the remarkable achievements of the people of Kwangju and Chŏlla in baseball and their significant contributions to the country's democratization.

South Koreans continue to utilize popular songs to express their political, social, and cultural concerns. 'Into the New World' (*Tashi mannan segye*, 2007), the debut song by Girls' Generation, is a well-known recent example. It was initially part of a 2016 student protest at Ewha Womans University, and the participatory meaning-making through singing that took place there soon gave it broader political and cultural currency in South Korea. It was often sung among millennial demonstrators calling for President Park Geun-hye's impeachment later in the year. The punk band Crying Nut's signature song 'Giddy Up' (*Maldallija*, 1996) was also sung at protest vigils because of the coincidental alignment of its title and lyrics with a controversy involving the equestrian daughter of Park ally Ch'oe Sunsil.[83] Released almost two decades earlier, 'Giddy Up' was revived to satirize the issue.[84] However, perhaps because of the specific nature of the song's subject matter, there are no reports of it having been sung at other South Korean protest sites since then. 'Into the New World', on the contrary, has become a standard song at demonstrations and rallies in South Korea. Thanks to K-pop's global reach, the song's presence at sites of political and cultural unrest in South Korea was shared rapidly through digital media, and it found a place with like-minded efforts in other countries, including Hong Kong's 2019–2021 pro-democracy movement and

[81]'Chŏn Doo-hwan, sŭp'och'ŭ taet'ongnyŏngŭl kkumkkuda—p'ŭro yagu ch'ulbŏm' [Chun Doo-hwan Dreams of Becoming a Sports President—Professional Baseball Launched], *Yŏksa jŏnŏl, kŭnal* [That Day, History Journal] (Korean Broadcasting System, 23 February 2021).

[82]'*Haet'ae t'aigŏjŭ wa Mokp'o ŭi nunmul*' [The Haitai Tigers and 'Tears of Mokp'o'], *Yŏksa jŏnŏl kŭnal*, published online on 23 February 2021, available at https://youtu.be/9oifgwIlzA0?si=Y9Yea94axzx331n0, [accessed 11 March 2025]. This clip includes footage of Haitai fans singing 'Tears of Mokp'o'.

[83]The 2016 scandal involved civilian interference in government affairs, with Ch'oe Sun-sil playing a significant role during the Park Geun-hye administration. Ch'oe's daughter also benefitted from various privileges as an equestrian athlete.

[84]Chae-hun Yi, "'Sangsil ŭi sidae" taejunggayoga sŏnsahanŭn wiro·p'ungjaŭi him' [The Power of Comfort and Satire Provided by Popular Songs in the 'Age of Loss'], *Newsis*, published online on 28 December 2016, available at https://www.newsis.com/view/NISX20161120_0014528462, [accessed 11 March 2025].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Thailand's 2020–2021 anti-government protests.[85] In these and other ways, 'Into the New World' has been used to promote solidarity among both domestic and international protesters, and their meaning-making for the song has further overlapped with and expanded in various parts of the world, thus demonstrating the persistence of affective politics in popular songs.

Acknowledgements. I am deeply grateful to the two anonymous reviewers at *Modern Asian Studies* for providing me with their extremely helpful comments. I also appreciate Heather Lee, Yucong Hao, Ruth de Llobet, Shuang Wen, Jennifer Egloff, and Asligul Berktay, who read my drafts and gave me valuable feedback and suggestions.

Funding statement. This research was conducted with support from the Academy of Korean Studies in 2023.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

[85]Ikura Eri'i, '"Rentai no uta" to shite no shōjo jidai "mata meguri aeta Sekai"' [Girl's Generation's 'Into the World' as a 'Song of Solidarity'], *Asahi terasu*, published online on 10 October 2022, available at https://webzine.asahipress.com/posts/6338, [accessed 11 March 2025].

Cite this article: Choi, Hye Eun. 2025. '(Re)imagining "Tears of Mokp"o': From a Korean resistance anthem to a baseball fight song'. *Modern Asian Studies*, pp. 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X25000058