

How Koreans Were Viewed in Hawaii: 1903-1906

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The wave of Korean immigration to Hawaii of 1903 was a first in many senses. It was the first group immigration approved by Emperor Kojong. It was the first immigration encouraged by American missionaries in Korea. It inaugurated work by Korean immigrants in American sugar plantations. It initiated the first establishment of churches by Korean Christians outside Korea. It resulted in the first inspection of Korean citizens abroad by a Korean government official. By the same token, it first introduced Hawaii sugar plantation managers to Korean workers in their fields. It also made possible for the first time communal worship of members of the Hawaiian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Korean Christians, this less than 20 years after American missionaries first landed at Chemulpo.

This paper examines how various groups of people viewed these first Korean immigrants in Hawaii. The period examined here is limited to the first four years of immigration, with the assumption that these Koreans were not significantly altered, or “Americanized”, during that time. It is hoped that this study will conjure up a “fresh image” of Korean workers in Hawaii. The viewers as such are grouped into five categories: American missionaries in Korea, Korea's

Vice Foreign Minister, sugar plantation managers, Hawaii Methodist Mission Superintendents, and Hawaii newspapers. The viewers' reports, diary, and newspaper articles are examined.

I. Background

Following the signing of the Treaty of American-Corean Amity between the United States and Korea (Chosun dynasty) in April 1882, the U. S. government appointed Lucius Foote as Envoy Extraordinary and established the American legation in Seoul in May 1883. On July 3, 1884, the American missionary Robert Samuel MacLay, with the help of Kim Ok Kyun, was able to obtain permission from King Kojong for American missionaries to undertake medical and educational mission work in Korea. In September 1884, Dr. Horace Allen, until then a missionary to China, arrived in Korea as the American legation's medical doctor in-residence. Not long upon his arrival, Allen was called to the palace to perform medical treatment for an important official injured during the coup attempt of 1884. Largely as a result of his successfully treating Min Young Ik, a relative of Queen Min, Allen gained the confidence of King Kojong. On Easter Sunday 1885 American Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries first landed at Chemulpo harbor to begin their work. In September 1887, George Heber Jones arrived in Korea and began his missionary work in the Seoul and Kyunggi-do areas.

In the spring of 1902, Allen, by then the American Minister to Korea, persuaded Emperor Kojong to allow Koreans to immigrate to Hawaii. Allen chose David W. Deshler, an American businessman who had a part-interest in the Unsan Gold Mines in Korea and in the American Trading Company, to be the agent handling Korean immigration to Hawaii. Earlier, in 1897, Deshler, with his close family ties to then United States President William McKinley, had been

influential in Allen's appointment as American minister to Korea.¹ On November 15, 1902 Emperor Kojong granted the emigration franchise to Deshler.

Meanwhile, in October 1902, Eben Faxon Bishop, representing the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA), arrived in Korea to prepare the necessary groundwork for Korean immigration. In this capacity he was successful in resolving some intricate problems, such as the legality of bringing in Koreans as field laborers and transporting them en-masse. With Hawaii's entrance as a territory of the United States in 1898, United States federal law prohibiting contract-labor immigration had come into effect in the Hawaiian Islands, and thus the legality of bringing in Koreans was a matter of delicate concern.

Deshler created two organizations to handle immigration. The first was the East-West Development Company to recruit immigrants. The second was the Deshler Bank, with an operating capital of \$25,000 provided by the HSPA, to handle the financial aspects of the operation.² Deshler, however, had difficulty in recruiting potential Korean immigrants. His problem was solved by the help of the Reverend George Heber Jones of the Methodist Episcopal church of Incheon and also the Superintendent of the West District (Kyunggi-do area). Jones happened to be a friend of Horace Allen and he was convinced that immigration to Hawaii would be good for Koreans. At Jones' urging and encouragement, many church members signed up and Korean immigration was able to proceed.

While the Rev. Jones and other Methodist missionaries were encouraging Koreans to immigrate, American Presbyterian missionaries, particularly in the Pyongyang area, objected to

¹ Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America, immigration to Hawaii, 1896-1910*, University of Hawaii Press, 1988, p. 29.

² Ibid. p. 47.

the planned immigration due to its illegality, as well as out of fear of losing many budding young Korean Christians.³

News of Korean immigration to Hawaii was succinctly reported in the January 1903 issue of the *Korea Review*, published since 1901 with the Rev. Jones as editor by the Methodist Publishing House in Seoul. The report reads,

On December 22 fifty-four Koreans took passage with their families for the Hawaiian Islands to engage in work on the sugar plantations. No contract is made with these men before leaving Korea.* They are not required to promise to stay any specified length of time but in case they leave within a reasonable time they will have to pay their return passage out of their earnings. They are to work ten hours a day but not on Sundays. All children will be put in schools, as education is compulsory. The Koreans are encouraged to take their wives and families with them. Encouragement will be given them along religious lines and opportunities will be given for Christian instruction. On the whole it would seem that this is a good opportunity for work, and Koreans who go to Hawaii will learn valuable lessons. The hours of labor are short compared with those of Korean farmers or coolies, and there seems be little doubt that they will be prosperous and contented.⁴

(*This was to circumvent the law prohibiting contract-labor immigration.)

II. Views of Visiting American Missionaries from Korea

The first report on how Korean immigrants were faring and on their reception by Hawaii residents was made by the Rev. Samuel F. Moore in 1903.⁵ Moore was a Presbyterian missionary who had first arrived in Seoul in 1892 and worked with outcast butchers. In Korea he championed human rights and the abolition of the class system. He established many churches in the Seoul area, at one of which members of the noble class and outcasts worshiped together. It appears that at the time of the article's writing Moore was on leave in America and was concerned about rumors concerning the condition of Korean laborers in Hawaii. On his return

³ Patterson, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

⁴ This paragraph was an item in the "News Calendar," without byline. The editor of the monthly magazine was Homer B. Hulbert.

⁵ "One Night with the Koreans in Hawaii," *The Korea Review*, Dec. 1903, pp. 529-532.

trip to Korea, his ship stopped in Honolulu for one day and Moore took the opportunity to check out the veracity of rumors that Koreans had for the past two years been treated as virtual slaves by the plantation owners, and that they were being very badly treated on the plantations, where the food was putatively insufficient and the work very hard, and that as a result many were suffering from sickness. He found the rumors were just that. Moore learned from a Kahuku plantation manager that they were very satisfied with its Korean workers, and further, that the company would like to have many more.

In the August issue of the *Korean Review*, a news item clarified the legality of Korean immigration:

“There is a mistaken impression on the part of a few of the foreign residents in Korea that the work which is being conducted by Mr. D. W. Deshler in sending Korean to work in the sugar fields of Hawaii is contrary to U. S. law. There is a clause in these laws, which permits any State or Territory to advertise the advantages of and solicit immigration to that place. The Legislature of Hawaii has appropriated a considerable sum of money for the printing of literature soliciting immigrants, in conformity to the United States laws and a portion of this literature is being circulated in Korea. Those Korean who have been in Hawaii for sometime seems, so far as the letters we have seen convey intelligence on this point, to be getting along very well, and their children are within reach of modern schools and advantages.”⁶

The Rev. Jones, who played a key role in the recruitment of Korean immigrants to Hawaii, received reports from the Hawaii Methodist Mission superintendents and a letter from Pyeng Koo Yoon, a former member of Jones’ church in Incheon. Jones was able to describe the fervent Christian activities of newly immigrated Koreans in Hawaii.⁷ Jones reported, for instance,

⁶ “News Calendar,” pp. 365-366. News items were quoted from the *Che-guk Sin-mun*.

⁸ “Koreans in Hawaii,” *The Korea Mission Field*, Nov. 1905, pp. 14-16.

that 394 Koreans gave their hearts to Christ as a result of an evangelical tour by a young Christian worker, Kyung Ho Moon, who was also from his West district. Jones' report did not stop at noting the increasing number of Christian converts but also remarked on Korean Christians' earnest desire to have their own places of worship.

Upon the request of Hawaii Methodist Mission Superintendent William H. Wadman, the Rev. William A. Noble, a Methodist missionary in Korea, visited the Hawaiian Islands for 22 days in August-September, 1905. Noble's visit overlapped with that of Vice Foreign Minister Yun Tchi Ho. Noble met Yun in Honolulu and accompanied him to Ewa Sugar Plantation. (A report of Yun's visit is discussed in the following section.)

Noble's report contains details on the conditions of Korean plantation workers. He found that the average number of working days per month of Chinese laborers was 22.2 and that of Japanese was 20.67. On the other hand, Koreans worked an average 15.81 days per month. However, Noble was relieved and happy to learn that Christian Koreans had worked an average of 23.34 days for the month of July 1905. Noble claimed this demonstrated the remarkable superiority of Korean Christians over their unconverted brethren, and over other Asians as well. Noble saw the future of Hawaiian industries as depending upon the presence and efficiency of Korean laborers. Noble also reported that the plantation managers and owners encouraged Koreans by placing buildings at their disposal for religious services and frequently building churches for them and always giving them the Sabbath off. While Chinese and Japanese had idols and fetishes of their native lands in their homes, no Korean kept idols in his home nor retained ancient habits of worship.⁸

In November 1905 an unnamed American missionary visited Hawaii and authored "The Koreans in Hawaii" in the November issue of the *Korea Review* (pp. 411-413). According to this

article, about 7,000 Koreans were scattered well among different islands. Many Koreans worked in Honolulu as clerks, gardeners, cooks, grooms and in various other positions where they received steady pay. With very few exceptions, the Koreans were described as a quiet and well-behaved people, noting that there was only a small gang of ten or twelve Koreans in Honolulu who were exerting a bad influence. These latter drew in the unsophisticated Koreans from the plantations and introduced them to drink and gambling, but plans were afoot for the speedy apprehension and deportation of this evil element. The article also noted that those who were physically unable to carry out plantation work were weeded out, and the present plantation workers were uniformly happy and successful. No Koreans were in native dress and coiffure, but all were neatly clothed and groomed. The writer concluded that no one who had Korea's welfare at heart could continue to oppose the future immigration of Koreans, for the Korean workmen were in great favor with the managers, who sincerely regretted the stoppage of immigration.⁹

George Jones spent two months in Hawaii during the summer in 1906 and wrote a detailed report on the Koreans in Hawaii.¹⁰ In 1905, the total number of laborers employed in the sugar plantations was 48,229, and of these 9.71% were Koreans. Jones found the distribution of Koreans on the plantations by occupation as follows:

Administration	10 (clerks, interpreters)
Cultivation	4,384
Irrigation	1 (most expert form of farm labor)
Manufacture	19 (firemen and machinists at mills/ not in engine rooms)
Superintendence	4 (lunas)

⁹ Korean immigration to Hawaii was stopped in August 1905 due to the interference and influence of the Japanese government.

¹⁰ "The Koreans in Hawaii," *Korea Review*, Nov. 1906, pp. 401-406.

Transportation	248
Unclassified	17
	4,683 (about 75% of the total Korean population/ remainder being women and children)

Jones also reported the following:

- Field hands received \$18 per month for 26 days working 10 hours per day
- A house with a small garden patch was provided to the family for free
- Fresh water and fuel were provided for free
- Hospital care was free
- Education at schools with American teachers was free and schools were conveniently located
- Unmarried persons were assigned to a dormitory with other Koreans
- Sanitary inspection was both frequent and rigid
- Actual living expenses varied from \$6 to \$9 a month
- Diet usually consisted of rice with vegetable salad, meat, soup, and bread/ butter.
- Koreans ate many fruits, such as papaya and pineapple
- Koreans wore American clothes; ate American food and acted as much like Americans as they could.

George Jones wrote another report in the December issue of the *Korea Review*.

In this he saw Koreans transformed by their experience in Hawaii. The Koreans in Hawaii, according to Jones, were self-reliant and independent in character, better able to take care of themselves and meet their responsibilities. His report continued:

- 1) In Hawaii Koreans, facing industry, honesty, liberty, even-handed justice, generosity and intellectual improvement every day, have shaken themselves away from their native ideals and philosophy of life. They are freed from the forces compelling them to gravitate morally as their father and grandfather had gravitated.
- 2) Koreans in Hawaii understand the civilization of the West better than their fellow countrymen in their native land. In Hawaii, Koreans learned what equality and liberty mean.
- 3) Koreans in Hawaii have learned to recognize time and its value.
- 4) They have learned something of system.
- 5) Koreans in Hawaii are learning sanitation. The camps or villages in which the Koreans live are built in an orderly and systematic manner and the laws governing their cleanliness are very strictly enforced.
- 6) Koreans in Hawaii have learned the lesson of unity and harmony. The great unifying force is the Christian church.
- 7) Koreans in Hawaii are financially well off.¹¹

¹¹ "Koreans Abroad," *Korea Review*, Dec. 1906, pp. 446-451.

III. View of the Vice Foreign Minister Yun Tchi Ho (Yun Chi Ho)

Yun Tchi Ho, vice foreign minister, arrived in Honolulu on September 8, 1905, to investigate the working conditions to which Korean laborers were subjected. There had been reports in Korea of the inhumane treatment of Korean immigrants to Mexico by their plantation managers and he was ordered to visit both Hawaii and Mexico. What Yun saw in Hawaii and his thoughts can be read in his diary from September 8 through October 3, 1905.¹²

Yun visited 32 sugar plantations on Oahu, Kauai, Hawaii, and Maui and made 41 speeches to approximately 5,000 Korean immigrants. In his addresses, Yun encouraged his countrymen to be diligent, steady, clean, and thrifty. He counseled them to use their newspaper, the *Shinjo Sinmun* (New Korean Newspaper), not as an instrument of quarrel but as an organ for instructing people on useful matters. He prohibited them from using the word *yuk-juk* (traitor) against one another. Yun said that Christians should not quarrel over denominational questions. He said collections should not be levied for various projects until a single project was carried out to satisfactory effect. Yun also entreated them to maintain cordial relations with the Japanese and other fellow Asian laborers (Sept. 18, 1905). These statements may be interpreted to mean that the Koreans Yun encountered fell short of such ideal attitudes and habits.

In his conclusion, Yun characterized Koreans in Hawaii as:

1. thinking gold dollars were blossoming on every bush;
2. some through hard work saved money while others bought bicycles
3. having more complaints against fellow Korean loafers than plantation managers; (for some parasites, as he described it, went from one camp to another, carrying a pack of cards and with it disorganization and demoralization; thus all managers are in favor of a pass-book system without which it would be difficult to compel loafers to work or quit);
4. not knowing how to save money;
5. not in awe of the Japanese, who are sour, rude and disagreeable.

¹² *Ilgi* (Diary), National History Compilation Committee, Seoul, 1976, pp. 145-170.

Upon his return to Korea, Yun submitted his report in October 1905, and it was then serialized in the *Daehan Maeil Sinbo* (Korean Daily Newspaper) between January 10-17, 1906. In this series Yun cites the total number of immigrants to Hawaii between 1902 and July 1, 1905 as 7,519, including 6,546 men, 474 women and 505 children.¹³ Of the total immigrants, 3,170 did not write their *wonjeok* (family hometown), while 3,366 did. Of those who did indicate their hometown, 906 were from Kyunggi-do, 696 from Pyungan-do, 677 from Kyungsang-do, 335 from Jeonra-do, 253 from Whanghae-do, 196 from Hamkyung-do, 155 from Kangwon-do and 148 from Chungcheong-do.

During the three-year period Yun described, more than 300 immigrants moved to the American mainland, while more than 100 returned to Korea and 79 died. The number of Koreans settled on more than 30 Hawaiian plantations varied from as little as 10 to as many as 500-600. A total of 4,946 Koreans were employed on Hawaii sugar plantations.

In general, Yun notes that foreigners (meaning here plantation managers), described Koreans as physically robust and healthy. They were perceived as good workers and fast learners, not inferior to any other ethnic laborers. However, Yun notes that there are some who prefer gambling, and working one day and playing 10 days. He writes that Koreans lack an economic mindset and 7 out of 10 spend their monthly salary of 18 American dollars (112 Korean won, or 36 Japanese yen). Nevertheless, some Koreans were able to save \$400-\$500 during a three year period. Unfortunately, many Koreans lost their cash, which they carried around with them, being ignorant of how to utilize the banking system.

Overall, Yun was satisfied with what he saw in Hawaii and gave three reasons why immigration to Hawaii was good for Koreans. First of all, Hawaii weather and food were suitable; Second, everyone became diligent, since it was difficult to survive without working;

¹³ These actually add up to 7,525.

and it was good to obtain new knowledge in a new world. In order to continue the immigration, however, he saw the necessity to install a screening and managing system, so that loafers, drinkers, and gamblers would be screened out. These bad influences harmed national pride and honor.

Yun recommended the following for future Korean immigration to foreign countries:

1. Immigration rules and regulations should be established.
2. Have the immigration company guarantee that the sick and those with other problems as are judged by Consul should be returned on the company's expense.
3. Immigration should not be permitted to those countries in which natural environments and living conditions are not inspected.
4. Concluding from the Hawaii case, it is necessary to limit the annual number of immigrants. There is a chance that screening may be difficult and oversupply may lower the wage of immigrants.

IV. Views of Sugar Plantation Managers

In early 1905 the HSPA, for its internal use, requested each plantation manager to grade its Korean workers.¹⁴ Each manager's description is summarized below. Yun Tchi Ho's description is added in **bold** for comparison.

Kauai

Kilauea Sugar Company: 65 Koreans (19% of total work force),
about 25 Koreans (Sept. 16, 1905)

"Good workers, but lose much time"

Manager Moore had a problem with a bad interpreter.

Makee Plantation: 136 Koreans (15%), **About 200 (Sept 15, 1905)**

"Koreans were inferior to Chinese and unable to do the heavy work the Japs do."

Manager Fairchild says Koreans are the worst laborers.

Lihue Plantation: 57 Koreans (4%)

"Not quite so good as Chinese and Japanese"

Koloa Plantation: 113 Koreans (15%)

13 Patterson, *op.cit.*, pp. 119-121.

"not so capable or industrious as Japanese"

Manager McLain says Koreans are better workmen than Japanese and Koreans learn quicker to handle teams and machines. McLain has had no trouble with Koreans so far, nor does he expect any. (Sept. 14, 1905)

McBryde Plantation: 193 Koreans (16%)

"promise well as field laborers, but had not enough experience with them to give any opinion"

Hawaiian Sugar Company: 168 (11%)

"our third choice for field labor; they are not nearly as bright or smart as the Japanese; are industrious enough, but have no initiative"

Gay and Robinson's Plantation: 22 Koreans (12%)

"being recent arrivals, little experience as regards this class"

Waimea Plantation: no number indicated

"third place behind Japanese and Chinese in preference for field labor,"

"they are very little tried as yet, but seem fairly well adapted for our field work"

Kekaha Plantation: 95 Koreans (11%), **about 90 Koreans (Sept. 14, 1905)**

"third in preference for field labor behind Chinese and Japanese"

Manager Faye prefers Japanese and Koreans to Chinese

Oahu

Oahu Sugar Company: 203 (21% of total work force)

"third place behind Chinese and Japanese workers"

Ewa Plantation: 288 Koreans (13%)

"new class of labor not wholly tried,"

Waialua Plantation: 207 (8%)

"prefers the Chinese to Koreans"

"they have been here so short a time, it is hard to say definitely: they promise well"

Kahuku Plantation: 80 (12%)

"third in preference behind Chinese and Japanese"

"industrious as field laborers. Excitable, but easily influenced by authority"

Honolulu, Apokaa, Waianae, and Waimanalo plantations employed no Koreans.

Maui

Pioneer Mill: 66 Koreans (5% of total work force)

"have only lately had this class of laborers, too short a time to form an opinion"

Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company: 236 Koreans (10%)

"have not been in the country long. Not so reliable as Japanese or Chinese."

Kihei Plantation : 31 Koreans (7%)

"ranked third in preference behind Chinese and Japanese"

"fair workers, with signs of improvement as they become more acclimatized"

Maui Agricultural Company: 93 Koreans (6%)

"some are fairly good, but most are inferior to the Japanese and Chinese"

Kipahulu Plantation: 21 Koreans (10%)

"similar to Japanese, not to be depended on as steady day laborers"

Hana Plantation: 6 Koreans (2%)

"not nearly as desirable as Japs or Chinese"

Olowalu and Wailuku plantations did not employ Koreans.

Hawaii

Hawaii Mill and Plantation: 74 Koreans (22% of total work force)

"listed as fifth in preference behind Hawaiian, Portuguese, Japanese, and Chinese"

"good common and field labor"

Union Mill: 17 Koreans (7%)

no comment

Head luna says that Koreans are awful good workmen. (Sept 20, 1905)

Kohala Plantation: 86 Koreans (19%)

"fairly good, quiet but very slow"

Halawa Plantations: 8 Koreans (8%)

"poor"

Pacific Sugar Mills: 49 Koreans (10%)

"experience with Koreans is limited: their capabilities as workmen neither equal the Chinese or Japanese field laborers"

Honokaa Plantation: 59 Koreans (9%)

"rather new in the country; so far very satisfactory for field work"

Paaupuu Plantation: 40 Koreans (8%)

"had but few and only a short time. Cannot say."

Hamakua Plantation: 39 Koreans (9%)

"same as Chinese but inclined to be quarrelsome and intemperate. Not as industrious as Chinese, Portuguese or Japanese."

Kukaiaua Plantation: 3 Koreans (2%), **about 60 Koreans (Sept. 24, 1905)**

"So far they have not proven satisfactory to us."

Manager Horner said that in 25 years of his experience he has not seen better workmen than the Koreans. Of 60, 40 to 55 go to work every day.

Ookala Plantation: no number indicated

"fairly good labor"

Laupahoehoe Plantation: 24 Koreans (6%)

"fairly good laborers and seem to stand the climatic conditions. We have had but little experience with these."

Olaa Plantation: 267 Koreans (18%)

"third in preference behind Chinese and Japanese"

"unsteady as new men but with tendency to improvement"

Hawaiian Agricultural Plantation: 51 Koreans (12%)

"fairly good workers, but not so reliable as the Japs or Chinese"

Hutchinson Plantation : 106 Koreans (18%)

"fourth in preference behind Puerto Ricans, Chinese and Japanese"

"have to be educated to work: are willing enough"

Puako Plantation: 10 Koreans (13%)

"fifth in preference behind Hawaii, Portuguese, Japanese and Chinese"

Niulii, Hakalau, Honomu, Pepekeo, Onomea, and Waiakea Plantations had no Koreans

Niulii: 30 Koreans (Sept. 21, 1905)

Manager Hall is well pleased.

Hakalau: nearly 100 Koreans (Sept. 24, 1905)

Manager Ross is well pleased with the Koreans.

It can be surmised from the above report that a majority of plantation managers viewed the Koreans as poor or mediocre field workers in comparison with Japanese and Chinese workers. Only one out of thirty-four plantations with Koreans workers rated them as “good,” and a mere four as “fairly good.” The planters might have had high expectations that the Koreans would be an excellent class of farm laborers, because E. Faxon Bishop had assured HSPA so in the fall of 1902. While Bishop was on a fact-finding trip and to lay the groundwork for bringing Koreans to Hawaii on behalf of HSPA, he made assurances Koreans would prove to be good laborers, since they were lusty and strong fellows, physically much the superior of the Japanese.¹⁵ Bishop's conclusion was drawn from his observations of rice farmers and miners in Korea. In fact, James W. Hunt, the assistant manager of the Oriental Mining Company, which held a concession in Korea, declared in his visit to Hawaii that the Koreans were decidedly the best mine workers, noting he preferred the Koreans over both the Chinese and Japanese.¹⁶ However, a majority of the Korean immigrants were not in fact farmers, unlike the case of both the Chinese and Japanese immigrants.

V. Views of the Superintendents of the Hawaiian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁶ “Koreans Are the Best Workers,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (predecessor of *Honolulu Advertiser*, hereafter *Advertiser*), July 28, 1906, p. 1.

The Reverend G. L. Pearson, superintendent of the Hawaii Methodist Church, in an article for the *Korea Review* one year after the first group of Korean immigrants had arrived at Honolulu harbor, wrote, "A few have come who are not at all fitted for the work, being unused to hard toil, having too little strength or an enfeebled health. A small number of such characters are dissatisfied and are a burden to the Korean community. Men who are unable or unwilling to work find a hard time in Hawaii, as do all such persons in any country. Nearly all are industrious and are hopeful."¹⁷ One month later, Pearson wrote another article, in which he estimated there were about 1,000 Koreans in the islands. He noted that Koreans readily adjusted themselves to their new conditions, were hopeful of prosperity, and were very grateful for the religious privileges given them. Pearson hoped that all Koreans might be benefited, not only by higher wages, but also by learning new habits and views of industry, by securing some knowledge of various trades and business methods, and by acquiring ideas of liberty and justice characteristics of Christian governments.¹⁸

Pearson estimated that about three hundred of the 1,000 Koreans in Hawaii were Christians. Their Christian fidelity was seen in their refusal to work on the Sabbath, their public worship, preaching, prayer and class meetings, and Bible study, which were conducted at all places where any considerable number of Koreans could be found. Some plantation managers erected small chapels, while others offered rooms for religious use. In Honolulu Korean Christians had rented a house to be used as their headquarters. They emphasized the issue of

¹⁷ "News Calendar," *Korea Review*, Jan. 1904, p. 31.

¹⁸ "Koreans in Hawaii," *World-Wide Missions*, Feb. 1904.

self-support, and Koreans were responding so well as to encourage the faith that their work would be largely self-supporting.

Dr. John W. Wadman succeeded Pearson in 1905 as superintendent. Wadman reported at the first annual conference of the Hawaiian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁹ His report contains successful stories of Christian Koreans on all islands. He notes how many evangelists were faithfully toiling to convert many poor and needy souls. Further, about 1,600 to 2,000, of a total of 6,000 to 7,000, Koreans were church members in Hawaii. There were about 30 mission stations, including churches and prayer meeting groups. Nine pastors (Chan Ho Min, Yee Che Kim, Young Shik Kim, Chong Soo Lim, Chi Pom Hong, Soon Hyen, Kyung Chick Lee, Pan Suk Shin, Chin Tai Choi) were appointed to various churches, and the remaining eight churches were to be supplied as pastors became available. The number of appointed Korean pastors and churches was greater than the six Japanese pastors appointed to a total of eleven churches. Most Korean churches were self-supporting. Four chapels on Oahu and two on other islands were built free of debt and without any cost to the Methodist Missionary Society.

In addition to their Christian activities, according to Wadman, Koreans were fully determined to educate both their children and themselves. At Ewa Plantation a day school was prospering, and in Honolulu a boarding school was also opened. In addition, two night schools were operating. The Korean Boarding School for Boys was opened in the fall semester of 1906. The school was made possible by the Koreans' pledge of \$2,000.

On an unfortunate note, Dr. Wadman described immoral Koreans on the island of Hawaii. Due to the bad influence of some ringleaders, gambling and drinking were common practices at

19) *Official Minutes of the First Session of the Hawaiian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Dec. 27-31, 1905, pp. 23-25.

some camps. One Korean church worker in the Kohala district was beaten and another brutally kicked, both of whom were left for dead.

Similar to Jones' description of Korean Christians, Dr. J. Sumner Stone, who appeared to have represented the Methodist Board from the U.S. mainland, also wrote a glowing report. For Dr. Stone, the first experience of meeting Korean laborers came during his trip to the Hawaiian Islands in November 1906.

Stone found the Korean congregation clean, intelligent, and well dressed. He learned that Koreans in Honolulu had contributed \$2,000 to acquire school and church facilities. Stone noted he had heard Hawaii Governor George Carter stating, "I found one Korean community which had imitated the Pilgrim Fathers of New England. Their first act after settling on the plantation that was to be their future home was to buy a lot for a church. The church was built later after they had saved money enough from their wages as plantation laborers. Another little Korean neighborhood clubbed together and bought a horse and carriage that the missionary and his assistant might ride their circuit among the plantations to carry the gospel to the newcomers."²⁰

Stone reported that the planters were unanimous in their praise of Christian Koreans. He saw Koreans as pure, clean, and generous people and not lazy. He believed that it was Christianity that made the Koreans industrious. The planter confessed that a Christian Korean's worth on the cane plantation was fully \$100 a year more than a heathen.

Stone wrote that of six thousand Koreans on the island, two thousand had accepted Christ, and that among six thousand Koreans not one erected a heathen temple anywhere on the islands. Rather than erecting temples to idols, they built Christian churches, rented mission halls, and

²⁰ "Korean Methodists in the Hawaiian Islands," *World-Wide Missions*, Dec. 1906, pp. 3-4.

contributed generously for the spread of the gospel. This was in marked contrast to the Japanese and Chinese.

Stone observed that the Koreans were an ambitious people, with the schoolbook ranking next to the Bible, and the schoolhouse next to the church. Day schools were thronged with their children, night schools with their men. They came to the islands to advance their conditions in every way. They wanted to return to Korea educated, capable, and prosperous. One man, a father of three boys, was asked if he expected to return to his native land. "Yes," was the reply, "when I have given my three boys a college education. I am saving my money with that object in view." Stone declared, "None of our (Methodist) missions pay better in the number and character of the [Korean] converts, It is inspiring to contemplate the eagerness with which they (Koreans), for ages a hermit nation, enter the doors of opportunity which now swing open to them."

Stone witnessed that Koreans were not confining their energies to the cane fields but were also pushing into mercantile pursuits. Although many Koreans accumulated wealth and property, Stone saw them as a people not to be worshipers of gold, as were many of their associates in the islands. Stone was assured that the Koreans were certainly, and in many respects, exemplars to the American churches back home.

VI. Views of Hawaii Newspapers

Newspaper articles relating to the legality of the early Korean immigrants appeared from May through October of 1903.²¹ On June 3, 1903, Frederick V. Berger in fact sued E. Faxon Bishop for violating contract labor laws by importing Koreans. The case was withdrawn in

²¹ "Investigated the Koreans," *Advertiser*, May 23, 1903, p. 7; "Sue for A Large Sum" *Advertiser*, May 26, 1903, p. 2; "Ask Judgment in Korean Cases," *Advertiser*, July 18, 1903, p. 3; "Scandal in the Suit Against Faxon Bishop," *Advertiser*, July 19, 1903, p. 1; "Law Was Not In Effect," *Advertiser*, July 25, 1903, p. 8; "Korean Cases Withdrawn," *Star-Bulletin*, Oct. 6, 1903, p. 1

October with the defendant paying the plaintiff's legal costs of \$1,445.93. Nevertheless, through such cases the Hawaiian public learned of the legality issue concerning Korean immigration.

While the above suit was in progress, a newspaper article of June 6, 1903, declared "Koreans Are Good Labor."²² On November 23, 1903 in a front-page article concerning the HSPA annual conference, the *Advertiser* reported that president H. A. Isenberg mentioned in his presidential address that "there have been small number of Coreans, who, so far, have given satisfaction".²³ Subsequent newspaper articles from 1904 began to report that Koreans were ignorant of some aspects of Western culture. At Waipahu plantation, one Korean suffering from intestinal trouble, thought he was sick because the plantation doctor kicked him in the stomach. His coworkers believed likewise. Regarding this incident, the newspaper described the Koreans as "a benighted and superstitious lot, believing in signs, omens and ghosts and...deeply suspicious of the white man" and further, that "these translated hermits believe anything against the strange men of the West."²⁴ A similar incident led to a more serious problem of an assault against a doctor. Subsequently, nearly 200 Koreans at a Waipahu plantation "practically went on strike and assumed an angry attitude toward the management and especially toward the doctor."²⁵ At Makaweli a Korean was found dead at the plantation railroad, and the plantation physician declared that the man died of natural cause in spite of bruises about the body. A coroner's inquest was ordered. Enraged at the news that an autopsy would be done, about 300

²² *Advertiser*, June 6, 1903, p. 20. The article carried comments of John Sherman, manager of Pahala plantation (Island of Hawaii).

²³ "Planters Association in Annual Session," *Star-Bulletin*, Nov. 23, 1903, p. 1.

²⁴ "Local Brevities," *Advertiser*, July 31, 1904, p. 4.

²⁵ "Koreans Laid Hands on Waipahu's Accused Doctor," *Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1904, p. 1.

Koreans carried out a violent demonstration, attacking the coroner's and "[taking] possession of the body and buried it according to their own rites."²⁶

Ignorance of Western practice or vigilantism was also evident in the legal field. In February 1904, A. W. Taylor, a debt collector for the Deshler Bank, was attacked by a group of Koreans who allegedly had outstanding loans taken out for passage to Hawaii.²⁷ Taylor had gathered some Koreans to settle their accounts. Several Koreans agreed to pay, but "a rough element among the laborers thought it would be a good thing to kill Taylor...[and thus] wipe out the debt." This group held a traditional Korean court and decided that Taylor must die according to the traditions of some of the lower classes of Korea. For this the judge sentenced eight Koreans to three months' hard labor, expressing "hope that this would be a warning to other Koreans that the laws of the country must be respected and that if they thought themselves injured they should visit the proper authorities and make their complaints instead of attempting to carry out their own revenge in a blood thirsty manner."²⁸ In another incident reflecting cultural clash, a Korean who murdered his wife was "fastened, up and down the rough boards of the store veranda" by a crowd of excited Koreans who had taken it upon themselves to punish the murderer.²⁹

On the other hand, American justice was judged ineffective and slow from the Korean perspective. An article contributed by Choi Sang Ek provides a good example. Choi expressed cynicism about the American legal system when he spoke of an assault case in which a victim was bedridden for six months while his assailant remained free. Choi stated, "If criminals are

26 "Koreans Riot at Makaweli," *Star-Bulletin*, Oct 2, 1905, p. 5.

27 "Arrest Koreans," *Star-Bulletin*, Feb. 16, 1904, p. 1.

28 "Rioters Go To Jail, Lindsay Sent Eight Koreans to Reef," *Advertiser*, Feb. 19, 1904. p. 8.

29 "Koreans Try to Lynch a Korean," *Star-Bulletin*, Oct. 18, 1905, p. 5.

permitted to live and associate with the good citizens, the citizens will be compelled to take the law into their own hands and protect themselves.”³⁰

Further accounts of serious violent manifestations of the Korean nature appeared in Hawaii newspapers between March and July 1906.³¹ In 1905 Pak Han-no stole \$56 and a passport from another Korean and then gambled the money away before the crime was discovered. The victim suspected Pak and with the help of six friends he tortured Pak to death. The seven Koreans surrendered to the police and were later sentenced to death. This sentence aroused intense debate in Honolulu. Some thought the Koreans were uncivilized barbarians deserving of the death sentence and some, such as Dr. John Wadman, the Superintendent of the Hawaii Methodist Mission, pleaded for paternalistic mercy. In the end, three were hanged while two were sentenced to fifteen years' hard labor.

In contrast to the above negative portraits of Koreans in Hawaii, certain political activities of Koreans were also reported between July and October 1905. In July 1905 it was reported that seven thousand Koreans in Hawaii had combined their resources to send a representative to the Russo-Japanese War peace conference to be held in Portsmouth, New Hampshire that August. Pyeng K. Yoon was to do what he could toward obtaining a guarantee from Japan that Korea, after a certain number of years, be granted independence, just as the United States promised Cuba and Puerto Rico. The account goes on to describe how P. K. Yoon, who is described as a Christian fluent in English, with the help of John Wadman, met with Secretary of War William H. Taft in Hawaii and obtained from him a letter of introduction to

³⁰ “A Korean’s Moralizing on Our Criminal Law,” *Star-Bulletin*, April 22, 1905, p. 3.

³¹ “Seven Koreans Are To Be Hanged,” *Star-Bulletin*, March 26, 1906, p. 1; “Five Hilo Murderers are To be Hanged,” *Advertiser*, March 28, 1906, p. 5. The article carried a group picture of murders. However, the same article also carried a picture of three Japanese Murderers from Hilo; “Murderers Come to be Hanged,” *Star-Bulletin*, March 31, 1906, p.1; “Wadman Asks Mercy For Koreans,” *Advertiser*, April 17, 1906, p. 1; “Five Koreans Must All Hang,” *Star-Bulletin*, April 19, 1906, p. 6; “Five Koreans Reprieved by the Governor,” *Advertiser*, April 27, 1906, p. 1; “Prayers for the Koreans,” *Star-Bulletin*, April 28, 1906, p. 1; “Brief for the Koreans,” *Star-Bulletin*, May 16, 1906, p. 4; “Koreans Send Their Thanks,” *Star-Bulletin*, July 3, 1906, p. 6.

President Theodore Roosevelt. As a result, Koreans in Hawaii collected \$500 to cover the expenses of their representative. Although Yoon's (and Syngman Rhee's) mission did not bear fruit, through such public efforts the pressing issue of Korean independence was introduced to the public in Hawaii.³²

Another source of more favorable images of Koreans in Hawaii came from Christian leaders. Both visiting American missionaries from Korea and local Methodist superintendents described Koreans as fervent Christians. In February 1904, Hawaii Methodist Superintendent George L. Pearson described Koreans in an article in the morning paper:

“Strangers to our civilization and utterly ignorant of our laws, it is to be expected that in some things they may give offense. But little trouble of a serious nature has occurred, however. Efforts are being made to enlighten them regarding the essentials of our government. It is confidently expected that they will be law abiding. Troubles arising between Oriental laborers and employers have been largely due to misunderstanding due to poor interpretation. All who have anything to do with Koreans should seek to know their characteristics and customs and to obtain a clear understanding of all differences they may arise.”³³

In August 1905, the Rev. Wilbur C. Swearer, an eight-year resident missionary in Seoul, introduced Korean culture and religion at the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Honolulu. Swearer, dressed in Korean costume, even sang songs in both English and Korean.³⁴ On August 18, 1906, the *Advertiser* carried an article by visiting Ira A. Morton of the *Western Christian Advocate*. Morton's long article described Christian Koreans as having left religious prejudice behind in contrast to the Japanese who brought with them their Buddhism.

³² “Korean Envoy to the Peace Conference, Seven Thousand Koreans in Hawaii Send Mr. Yoon to Urge the Independence of Korea at the Meeting of Plenipotentiaries.” *Advertiser*, July 17, 1905, p. 1; “Saito Meets Korean Envoy,” *Star-Bulletin*, July 17, 1905, p. 1; “Mr. Yoon's Mission to the Mainland,” *Advertiser*, July 18, 1905, p. 3; “The Hawaiian-Korean Mission,” *Star-Bulletin*, Sept. 8, 1905, p. 4; “Mr. Yoon In Earnest, His Efforts for Korean Independence in the East,” *Advertiser*, Oct. 16, 1905, p. 1.

³³ “Our Korean Population,” *Advertiser*, Feb. 23, 1904, p. 3.

³⁴ “Life in the Hermit Kingdom,” *Star-Bulletin*, Aug. 12, 1905, p. 8.

Yun Tchi Ho's visit to Hawaii produced a favorable impression of high-ranking Korean officers on behalf of the Korean immigrants. A *Star Bulletin* article described Yun as a "slightly built man, this high caste of Korean, with a face of great intelligence and a thorough grasp of international affairs as well as those of his own country." It went on, "Questioned as to the excellent command that he has of English Yun Tchi Ho said with a laugh that he had been learning the language wherever he went. He was a student in a college in Georgia for five years and after lived in different parts of the United States. Ho has been in Britain considerably and also in Continental Europe, Russia being of the countries that he has explored."³⁵ Another article in the *Advertiser* highlighted Yun's advice to the Koreans.³⁶ Although these two newspaper articles did not directly help build the image of Koreans, they illustrated a nobler side of the Korean character.

In August-September 1905 the missionary W. Arthur Noble spent 21 days in Hawaii investigating the conditions of the Korean plantation laborers. Afterwards he sent a lengthy letter to the Rev. John Wadman, superintendent of Hawaii Methodist Church, which Wadman in turn published in the newspaper.³⁷ Noble discerned a remarkable superiority of the Korean Christians over their unconverted brother and other fellow Asians. He noted that none of the Korean laborers had been in Hawaii more than three years and the mass of them had not been on the plantations eighteen months. Noble found that in some camps as many as 50 percent of the Korean laborers were Christians and their efficiency as laborers was very high. In other camps he estimated about 10 percent were Christian. Noble wrote that a very conservative estimate taking in all of the Koreans currently in the Hawaiian Islands put the Korean Christian population at 20 percent, a marked contrast to the Chinese and Japanese, whose Christian percentage was

³⁵ "High Korean Officer Here, Will Visit All of the Islands," *Star-Bulletin*, Sept. 8, 1905, p. 1.

³⁶ "Korean Speaks to Methodists," *Advertiser*, Sept. 9, 1905, p. 4.

³⁷ "Missionary Noble on Work Among Koreans," *Advertiser*, Sept. 18, 1905, p. 7.

estimated at less than 3 percent. Noble was aware that the plantation managers encouraged the Koreans' faith by placing buildings at their disposal for religious services, often building churches for them, and always giving them the Sabbath free. However, Noble felt that the Methodist Episcopal Board of Missions should transfer a missionary from Korea to Hawaii to work among the Koreans.

The Rev. George H. Jones' two-month visit produced many positive articles regarding the Koreans from July through September in 1906. Jones was in Hawaii for the occasion of the opening of the Korean Boarding School for Boys and Methodist Church at the corner of Punchbowl and Beretania Streets. When Jones learned that Judge Willaim J. Robinson's speech included the Korean in his description of the "alien pauper laborer, social pariah, moral leper and religious fanatic," Jones wrote a long letter to Robinson which was carried in the newspapers.³⁸ Not only were Jones' travel activities reported, but also what he saw and his thoughts were also reported under the titles of "Koreans Satisfied, Dr. Jones Learns That Sugar Men Like Them" and "Hawaii As seen by Rev, Dr. Jones, Missionary to Koreans Impressed by What He Sees Here."³⁹

In addition to the articles on or by Christian leaders, newspapers were also busy reporting on Korean churches in the islands, starting with a *Star Bulletin* article on April 17, 1905.⁴⁰

³⁸ "Rev. Mr. Jones on Letter of Judge Robinson, Visiting Missionary to Korean Warmly Resents His Honor's Aspersions upon that Race—A Blue-Blooded Korean Field Laborer," *Advertiser*, Aug 13, 1906, p. 1; "Pulpit Defense of the Koreans, The Rev, George H. Jones Strongly Resents the Remarks of Judge," *Star-Bulletin*, August 12, 1906, p. 3

³⁹ *Advertiser*, Sept. 9, 1906, p. 11; *Advertiser*, Sept. 27, 1906, p. 5.

⁴⁰ "A Korean Church" *Star-Bulletin*, April 17, 1905, p. 1; "Korean Mission is Established," *Star-Bulletin*, July 10, 1905, p. 5; "Another Korean Methodist Church," *Star-Bulletin*, Aug. 12, 1905, p. 5; "Korean to Have Instruction Here," *Advertiser*, Oct. 10, 1905, p.1; "The Epworth League Has Korean Session," *Advertiser*, Aug. 14, 1905, p. 10; "Korean Organized," *Advertiser*, Aug. 26, 1905, p. 6; "Methodist Paper in Korean Print," *Advertiser*, May 4, 1906, p. 1; "New Headquarters for Korean Work," *Star-Bulletin*, Aug 10, 1906, p. 8; "Opening of Korean Headquarter," *Star-Bulletin*, Aug 14, 1906, p. 5; "Korean Methodists Church At Lihue," *Advertiser*, Nov. 15, 1906, p. 5; "The Banner For Koreans," *Advertiser*, Dec. 15, 1906, p. 3.

Articles on Korean churches built, Korean Mission (headquarters) established, and Epworth Leagues organized all portrayed the Koreans as fervent Christians.

There is no doubt that such newspaper articles helped neutralize the more negative attitudes towards Korean laborers in Hawaii.

VII. Conclusion

Views of Koreans in Hawaii differed according to the observer. American missionaries in Korea, particularly Methodist missionaries, who had proffered helping hands in the encouragement of immigration and the recruitment of Korean immigrants, were naturally highly concerned with the welfare of the immigrants. They were relieved to find Koreans were fairly treated and were even more delighted to discover that so many Koreans were converting to Christianity in Hawaii. Not only were the Christian numbers increasing but also the degree of self-support among the Korean Christians in Hawaii was beyond anything they had imagined. They were also delighted that Korean Christian workers were better appreciated by many plantation managers.

Yun Tchi Ho, Vice Foreign Minister of the Empire of Korea, was concerned with the behavior of the new immigrants and with their acceptance by plantation managers. Yun, from the perspective of a foreign official, concluded that immigration to Hawaii was good for Koreans. For a sustainable immigration, he recommended that national immigration policies be established and a screening (of immigrants) system be enacted.

For sugar plantation managers, the period from 1903 to 1905 came too soon upon the first Korean immigration for them to judge efficacy and efficiency of Koreans as field workers, since a majority of Koreans had been in Hawaii only a year. In these early years of Korean

immigration most plantation managers, more familiar with Chinese and Japanese workers, had no choice but to compare Koreans with these more seasoned and experienced laborers, and thus viewed Koreans as relatively poor workers. In addition, managers viewed Koreans easily moved from one plantation to another or even left the plantations for good. On the other hand, many managers viewed Christian Koreans as dependable and hard working despite the mediocrity of the field-work of Koreans in general.

From the Methodist Church's point of view, the Koreans were God-sent for the growth of Methodist churches in Hawaii. When the first annual conference was held in December 1905, Koreans comprised 64 percent of the total Methodist church members in Hawaii. Considering the Koreans comprised less than 2 percent of the total population of the Hawaiian Islands, this was a remarkable phenomenon.

Although newspapers reported the criminal activities of some Koreans, Koreans were certainly not the only subjects of such reports. Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian, and Caucasian criminal activities were also reported. Therefore, the image of the criminal did not equate only or even predominantly to Koreans. Besides the criminal incidents of some Koreans, newspapers also were known to portray the Korean as ignorant of Western medical as well as legal norms. However, Hawaii Methodist Church leader Pearson tried to minimize this image of the Korean as “strange” or “ignorant” by pleading for the toleration of different customs and cultures.

With the positive input of church leaders in Hawaii, as well as that of visiting American missionaries from Korea and the mainland, the majority of newspaper articles portrayed Koreans positively for their Christian activities. Newspapers not only reported on the construction of Korean chapels, but were also eager to report the activities of visiting missionaries from Korea and their appraisal of Korean Christians in Hawaii.

It is interesting to note that Koreans received help from American missionaries in defense of their ethnic characteristics or in praise of their religious devotion and activities. The views of these American religious leaders, as well as the views and activities of Yun Tchi Ho, representing the Korean government, and Pyeng K. Yoon, representing the 7,000 Koreans in Hawaii, were instrumental in shaping public perceptions of these first Korean immigrants as diligent laborers and devoted Christians.