

First of March Korean Independence Movement and Sun Myung Moon

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On March 1, 1919, Koreans gather at Tapgol Gong-won (current day Pagoda Park in Seoul) to protest Japanese rule and fight for independence.

March 1st is a national holiday in Korea known as *Samil Jeol* (“First of March”), which commemorates the onset of the March First Independence Movement of 1919. On this day, thousands of Koreans openly resisted the occupation of the Korean peninsula by the Japanese government and began fighting for their independence.

“This movement bolstered the Korean peoples struggle for independence and increased the world’s awareness of their strong aspirations for liberation,” according to Shin Yon-ha, chair professor for Advanced Studies at Ewha Woman’s University, in the Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo*.

Korea was placed under the military rule of Japan in 1905 after the Eulsa Protective Treaty or Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty. The peninsula nation was officially annexed as part of Japan’s thirty-five years imperialist expansion in 1910. In Korea, this period of occupation is referred to as “Japanese forced occupation.” According to the Korean Culture Encyclopedia, the independent movement grew between 1910 and 1919, despite Japanese control over Korea by its army and police.

By noon on March 1, 1919, people gathered at Tapgol Gong-won (Pagoda Park) in Seoul, and the Korean flag was raised. By 2:00 p.m., a very large crowd had formed. A student, Chung Jae-yong, read the Korean Declaration of Independence aloud, and then shouted “*Mansei!*” The crowd responded, “*Mansei!*” repeatedly, and became rowdy. They began to march down Jongno Street and confronted the Japanese police. The police tried to block them, and violence broke out; the Koreans were all unarmed but were beaten and many were arrested. They dispersed before nightfall for fear that the police would kill any they found still on the streets.

Meanwhile, at a restaurant, 33 independence leaders signed the Declaration of Independence, sent a copy to the Japanese Governor General, and telephoned the police to report what they had done. They were arrested. Protests continued throughout the country, and by the next day had spread into new areas. In the cities, the Koreans were mostly non-violent. In the countryside, however, farmers took up the protest in more violent ways. Demonstrations continued throughout most of the month.

In the midst of Japan’s occupation of the Korean peninsula, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the founder of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), was born on January 6, 1920 (according to the lunar calendar), during a time of revolutionary ferment.

When Rev. Moon grew older, he also worked towards the independence of Korea, following in the footsteps of his great uncle Rev. Yun Kuk Moon, a graduate of Pyongyang Theological School.

“I said these things ‘Japanese need to go back to Japan’ in front of the chief of police, the county chief, and the town mayor,” Rev. Moon wrote in his autobiography *As a Peace Loving Global Citizen*. “I was taking over the spirit of Great-Uncle Yun Guk Moon and saying things that no one else dared to say.”

Originally, Rev. Moon’s great uncle Rev. Yun Kuk Moon was meant to be a part of the thirty-three national leaders who signed the Korean Declaration of Independence read on March 1, 1919, but because he was under surveillance by the Japanese police, someone else filled his position, according to Korea Meritorious Electronic Archives.

Thirty-three Korean religious leaders came together, including 16 Protestants, 15 followers of Chondogyo

(15 of the 33), and two Buddhists and drafted a Korean declaration of Independence and prepared to spread it throughout the country.



Illustration of Koreans waving taegukki, the Korean flag, as part of the non-violent protest on March 1, 1919, known as Samil Jeol.

Rev. Moon explained the providential reason for the tragic occupation by Japanese in Korea in his speech [“Day of the Victory of Love” on January 2, 1987](#): “During World War II, America was in the position of the Adam nation on the heavenly side, while England was the Eve nation and France was the archangel nation. On the satanic side, there was Germany as Adam, Japan as Eve, and Italy as the archangel. Why were Great Britain and Japan in the two Eve positions? They are island nations, which is a more feminine posture than a continent, which is larger and therefore more masculine. Furthermore, the United States is like a son to Great Britain, the mother country. This ties in with the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah through the body of a woman, or through a mother's womb.”

He continued: “Another important rule has worked throughout history: Satan always initiates attacks. World War II was no exception; it was initiated by Germany and Japan. At that time, the nation of Korea was under Japanese occupation, so in a way, as the Eve nation, Japan gave birth to Korea. When I was born, Korea was suffering under the rule of the Japanese imperial government. Japan, on the Satanic side, did its absolute best to do evil to the future Adam nation on the heavenly side. During my birth year of 1920, Korea was in the midst of a most difficult three-year period. The country was in the grip of a terrible famine. Furthermore, in 1919, a powerful independence movement rose up in which a great number of Korean people rebelled against the Japanese rulers. But they failed and suffered terrible punishment; much blood was shed. 1919 was the first of the three most difficult years. I was born in 1920. 1921 was the third year of that period.”