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Won Moo Hurh. *"I Will Shoot Them from My Loving Heart": Memoir of a South Korean Officer in the Korean War.* Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2011. 196 pp. $35.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7864-6503-3.

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Scholars of twentieth-century Korean history, the Cold War, and the Korean War more specifically, will be overjoyed by the publication of *âI Will Shoot Them from my Loving Heartâ: Memoir of a South Korean Officer in the Korean War*, by Won Moo Hurh. Hurh aptly titles his memoir, âI Will Shoot Them from my Loving Heart,â to identify a consistent motif in his work–the struggle between his civilian, scholastically driven identity and the military-refugee identity forced upon him by the exigencies of war and his stint as an artillery forward observer. He lucidly writes about the North Korean invasion of Seoul, South Korea, and the wanton slaughter that immediately ensued.

Hurh was the son of an industrious father and mother who possessed enough financial and business acumen during the 1930s and 1940s to establish their family in Seoulâs middle class. Unfortunately, his father died from complications of pleurisy and tuberculosis in 1946. Hurh traces how his fatherâs death and the sudden violent insurgence of communist conquerors in Seoul by late 1950 forced his family to liquidate most assets, flee, and become itinerant refugees for several years. He also carefully documents his experience in the Republic of Korea Army (ROK), from officer candidate school until his honorable discharge. Hurh recalls that on the âsunnyâ day of June 25, 1950, when South Koreans and North Koreans marshaled to war, his âdreams for the futureâ–a future that included higher education–âshatter[ed] when I saw ... convoys of South Korean Army troops heading northâ (p. 35). While Hurh reserves most of his memoir for detailing his experience in the Korean War, he also writes extensively about his life during the Japanese occupation, the Korean kinship system, and his various adventures in primary education.

Before reviewing the content of this memoir, itâs appropriate for me to briefly discuss its usefulness as a primary source for historians, sociologists, and other researchers interested in this subject. Like all oral history, Hurhâs recollections constitute a valuable, albeit individual and limited, source for exploring the Korean War from a South Koreanâs point of view. In fact, for those not fluent in reading Korean, Hurhâs memoir may be one of the few accessible firsthand accounts currently available in English. That being said, researchers must exercise caution and carefully decouple Hurhâs actual recollections and experiences of the Korean War from subsequent knowledge he gleaned during his postmilitary life. In some areas of the book, Hurh digresses into exploring arguments, antiwar stances, and critiques of the Cold War that he (sometimes admittedly) developed during fifty years of careful reflection. In particular, Hurh grounds the epilogue in his own professional attempts as a sociologist and ethnologist to explore the meaning of the Korean War, its impact on participants, and what motivated soldiers in 1950 (and other wars) to shed blood. He concludes, from both his own experience and his research, most soldiers fought for survival, family, and their comrades rather than abstract ideological aims.

Bearing Hurhâs academic career in mind, it becomes clear that his dogged quest to understand the mentality of soldiers often becomes intermingled with his memories of comrades, camp morale, and the menâs general

sense of direction during the Korean War. Hurh divides his memoir into ten chapters, beginning with his earliest memories of childhood and ending with his enrollment at Monmouth College in Illinois. âChances of Life,â âMy First Life-Chance,â and âMemories from the Early Years,â contain somewhat scattered memories from his childhood and teenage years, the impact of strict Japanese rule on Korean culture, and the importance of kinship in Korean society. âThe War and My Shattered Life Courseâ muses on how the outbreak of war affected Hurhâs family, and the citizens of South Korea. The author includes here a graphic, appalling account of how North Koreans systematically murdered South Korean civilians in Seoul, disposing of their bodies near the Han River. For those interested mainly in Hurhâs personal wartime experiences, the author begins detailing his training, frontline experience, and army life in chapter f5: âOfficer Candidate School.â Chapter 6–âThe Frontline and Fort Sillâ–contains the most poignant picture of the Korean War and Hurhâs first impressions of America. Scholars with interest in South Koreaâs military training system might peruse chapter 7, âTeaching at the ROK Artillery School,â where Hurh carefully details his brief tenure as a ROK artillery instructor. He approaches training from a pessimistic point of view, tending to place camp corruption and inefficiency in high relief. In âBack to the Front,â Hurh reflects on his experience during the Battle of Kumsong (July 1953) as director of the Fire Direction Center (FDC) for the ROK 76th Field Artillery Battalion. Subsequent to the battle, Hurh suffered the doldrums of camp life after the official cease-fire on July 27, 1953, where he and his men were stationed on the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). In the final chapter, Hurh served his remaining time assisting General Headquarters in Seoul, where he dispensed military citations for various decorations and awards

Throughout the book Hurh takes time to provide a sense of what civilians experienced during the war, the state of morale in his army units, and the progress or lack thereof toward finishing out the war. Hurhâs commentary on race relations, and his status as an in-between ethnicity in Lawton, Oklahoma, represents a rich facet of his memoir. In 1951, ROK Army officials selected junior artillery officers to attend an advanced training school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Hurh admits that he was unaccustomed and ignorant toward issues of race, particularly as it pertained to the United States in the early 1950s. During liberty one weekend, Hurh decided to embark on a journey to nearby Lawton, Oklahoma, by public transit. He recalls: âI waded back to the rear of the bus. To my surprise the back row of seats was unoccupied ... âFor Colored.â I pondered about the meaning of these wordsâ (pp. 92-93). Eventually, an African American U.S. Army sergeant sat beside him. After mustering up some courage, Hurh asked the sergeant about the meaning of âFor Colored.â It was then that Hurh learned of segregation–âAt that time, the concept of âcolored peopleâ had never entered my mind, nor the social meaning of âcolorâ as racial segregationâ (p. 93). Hurh then spends some time musing about issues of race in Lawton, Oklahoma, where Americans generally received him with warmth and affection. Hurh, âbeing neither black nor white,â was able to transition fluidly between the color line in Lawton, Oklahoma and use facilities designated for both whites and blacks (p. 95). The authorâs remembrances of these events are remarkable, particularly the way in which whites perceived him within a racially segregated system. Scholars of race and segregation might find it worth their time investment to peruse this brief area of Hurhâs memoir.

On a most basic level, this work represents Hurhâs quest to piece together various memories from the war and hopefully influence a current generation of readers to abhor, and perhaps prevent, the perpetuation of human warfare. But, this work also symbolizes a half-century struggle for Hurh to ponder one important question about the Korean War: why? Hurh posits the âwhyâ question in several ways. Firstly, why did his âlife-chancesâ unfold as an artillery forward observer in the ROK Army? He suggests that class–during the time Hurh notes that Koreans faced a vast income gap between the wealthy elite and poor–affected his chances at escape from war and his postwar struggle to acquire an honorable discharge. Hurh watched as friends and schoolmates of privileged backgrounds enjoyed deferment, early discharge, or total escape from the war. Second, Hurh tries to explore the purpose of limited warfare–why all the death, destruction, chaos, and interruption from family and life during these years? What did South Koreans, North Koreans, or the other powers that be (the United States, China, and Russia) gain from this protracted civil war that ended with armistice? Hurh paints a vivid portrait of how Koreans (both North and South) paid the heavy toll of a limited engagement fought in the name of Democracy and of Communism. A conflict, by Hurhâs own estimate, that ended with armistice and little advantage gained for either side.

This raises a broader point about this memoir: the fact that it should be read as a denouncement of disasters wrought by twentieth-century imperialism. Due to

U.S. and U.S.S.R. occupation, Koreans could not play a role in deciding their fate as an independent nation after Japanese colonialism. In fact, Hurh makes transparent his distaste for imperialism during the twentieth century, where world powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union exacerbated regional and local conflicts in places such as Korea and Vietnam to establish a foothold for the competing ideologies of democracy and communism. Hurh concludes that for the first twenty-five years of his life, he experienced the hell of Japanese colonial rule and the wanton destruction of the communist invasion from North Korea. His was a childhood bookended by two outside occupiers that wrought social dislocation and destruction. Hurh succinctly describes his experience as a refugee and combatant in a few short sentences: âThe pain I experienced as a war refugee was not physical, such as hunger, fatigue, and chills ... but also an overbearing psychological pain caused by a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and meaninglessness of my existenceâ (p. 51). What could he hope to change in the world around him, given that even his political leaders bent to outside influence?

Unfortunately, like all memoir, Hurhâs character resides in a vacuum, making obscure any judgment of whether his case fits the typical or exceptional of life during the Korean War. Certainly, though, Hurhâs ability to finally separate from the ROK Army, attend college in the United States, and eventually pursue graduate and professional degrees in America and Europe seems to be quite unique–partly due to his perseverance and intelligence, but also a result of certain âlife-chancesâ that Hurh utilized. Lay and academic audiences alike will find much to enjoy in Hurhâs compelling and timely memoir. The Korean War is often the âForgotten War.â Hurhâs memoir adds a unique and important perspective to a growing body of scholarship that examines the first physical conflict of the Cold War.