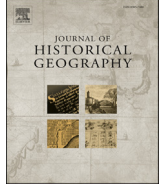




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Capturing the forgotten war: carceral spaces and colonial legacies in Cold War Korea

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I offer a detailed examination of the spaces and practices of detainment used by the United States military and its proxies between 1945 and the armistice that produced a so-called 'end' of the Korean War in 1953. Avoiding the reductive trappings of the Cold War binary, which positions this 'long peace' as a byproduct of two territorial powers struggling for geopolitical control, my chief objective is to explore how the use of carceral infrastructures on the peninsula demonstrates the abundant connections between the brutal imperialism of the Japanese regime, the US military government which ostensibly sought to liberate people from colonial oppression, and the violent police action meant to contain the 'expansive tendencies' of the Communists. I first position this paper relative to geographic scholarship on prisons, focusing on the important links between carceral spaces and state border-making practices. Next, I place the border-making capacities of carceral spaces into conversation with the complexities of empire by briefly describing the Korean prison assemblage under Japanese colonial rule. I then argue that key aspects of the Cold War carceral infrastructure overseen by the US in the wake of World War II are protractions of the often-ruthless violence of Japan's colonial prison system. In the paper's final two sections I outline the prison systems of the US military occupation of southern Korea and the subsequent landscape of detention during the Korean War. Though frequently overlooked, I demonstrate here that spaces of military detainment are important contact zones where the racial and the imperial collide, offering historical geographers a suite of crucial sites through which to push back against the Cold War's simplified binary rhetoric.

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Americans started to forget the Korean War even before the killing stopped. In October of 1951, as protracted armistice negotiations inched forward, war correspondents for *U.S. News & World Report* decried that 'men are dying at an increasing rate in the war almost forgotten at home'. Frustration mounted as the cost in casualties rose precipitously. The conflict, against what the authors called a 'third-rate enemy', was already 'half forgotten' and worse, was 'receding in the minds of many'.¹ The next year the magazine published more dispatches, each repeating this forgotten war moniker, which after nearly seventy years endures as one of the

most resilient descriptors of the violence on the Cold War Korean peninsula.²

While the war is the subject of countless historical analyses, Anglophone geographers continue to overlook it.³ Given that geographers frequently wrestle with the dynamic relationships between space and the violence of empire, this absence of analyses of Korea is especially notable. After all, its brutal air war and prolonged counterinsurgency came at a cost of millions of lives (most of them civilian), saw the quadrupling of the United States (US) military budget, the consolidation of the national security state, and

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¹ Korea: The 'forgotten' war, *U.S. News & World Report* 31 (October 5, 1951) 21.

² The 'forgotten war' in Korea, *U.S. News & World Report* 32 (February 29, 1952) 22–24; Life in the forgotten war, *U.S. News & World Report* 33 (August 8, 1952) 22–23. The Korean War was not the first conflict linked with forgetting, nor was it the last. See, for instance, V.T. Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*, Cambridge, 2016. Nonetheless, the Korean War's oblivion stands out for both its immediacy and its constancy.

³ While Anglophone geography has been nearly devoid of sustained research into the mid-century Korean case study, other cognate fields including critical history, sociology, and American and Asian-American Studies have long sought to engage with and push back against the peninsula's oblivion.

the beginning of an era of permanent military mobilization that continues today.⁴ The Korean War, a conflict that has never officially ended and whose afterlives continue to shape twenty-first century geopolitics, is not marginal to the geographies of the Cold War, it is a central to their constitution.

Although a full accounting of the geographic contours of this conflict and its colonial antecedents are beyond the scope of a single article, in this paper I demonstrate that the detention infrastructures of the mid-century Korean peninsula offer geographers an important archive through which to interrogate the spatial practices of imperialism and to challenge the 'territorially trapped' understandings of Cold War geopolitics. These simplified imaginaries, which rely on the taken-for-granted notion that the world is 'divided up into mutually exclusive territorial states', frequently reduce the myriad complex events in Korea to a rigid, primarily transatlantic binary narrative of 'two powers struggling for world supremacy' on either side of the 38th Parallel.⁵ Often accompanying this spatial partitioning is a temporal one, one that implies a neat historical division between the police action fought between the United Nations Command (UNC) and the communist forces of North Korea and China (1950–1953), the earlier military occupations of the peninsula by US and Soviet forces (1945–1948), and the civil conflict over the establishment of power in the wake of Japan's brutal thirty-five-year colonial reign (1910–1945).

Rather than take these spatial and temporal divisions as fixed, here I complicate them through a detailed examination of the spaces and practices of detainment used by the US military and its proxies between 1945 and the armistice that produced a so-called 'end' of the Korean War in 1953.⁶ Avoiding the reductive trappings of the Cold War binary, my chief objective is to explore how the use of carceral spaces and infrastructures on the peninsula demonstrates the abundant *connections* between the ruthless imperialism of the Japanese regime, the US military government which ostensibly sought to liberate people from colonial oppression, and the violent police action meant to contain the 'expansive tendencies' of the Communists.⁷

While there is no doubt some utility to this partitioning, it inevitably overlooks the confounding realities experienced in what Simeon Man calls the decolonizing Pacific — the 'historical conjuncture when anticolonial movements in the United States, Asia, and the Pacific became intertwined with the US militarization drive to secure the global capitalist economy'.⁸ In the wake of the Second World War, as populations across the mid-century Pacific vied for control of their political futures, a murky and fraught territorial logic replaced the spatial and administrative stasis of the colonial period. As Man notes, many — like the people of Korea — who had 'spent much of their lives fighting the oppression of a single colonizer found themselves confronting a new and more complex imperial power'.⁹ Ignoring these intricacies dramatically underplays the links between colonial repression and the supposed

altruism of US political and economic objectives, and further obfuscates the enduring role that violent policing and prisons played in establishing the geographies of mid-century East Asia.

Below I emphasize these connections in order to explore the 'transnational scope of the US carceral state' in the extraterritorial context of a Korean peninsula itself in the throes of decolonization, military occupation, and the constraints of Cold War geopolitics.¹⁰ As anthropologist Heonik Kwon notes, such a transnational — and in this case *transpacific* — analysis is important, as it identifies 'the cross-cutting dimensions of colonial history and bipolar history' that international relations and historical geographies of the Cold War often overlook. He adds that transpacific analyses recognize that the racial and the imperial coalesce, that post-colonial history and Cold War geopolitics are 'mutually constitutive historical processes'.¹¹

To make these connections I first position this paper relative to geographic scholarship on prisons. Focusing on the important links between carceral spaces and state border-making practices, this literature offers a key point of entry into my exploration of detention in the Cold War. Next, I place the border-making capacities of carceral spaces into conversation with the complexities of empire by briefly describing the Korean prison assemblage under Japanese colonial rule. I argue that key aspects of the Cold War carceral infrastructure overseen by the US in the wake of World War II are protractions of what scholars have called colonial modernity.¹² Rather than understanding the violence of settler colonialism as being contradictory to the workings of modern liberal institutions, colonial modernity describes 'the problem of coloniality as the constitutive 'darker side of modernity', as its unacknowledged but intimate counterpart'.¹³ Tracing these disavowed intimacies forward into the spaces of the decolonizing Pacific, in the paper's final two sections I outline the prison systems of the US military occupation of southern Korea and the subsequent landscape of detention during the Korean War. Though frequently overlooked, I demonstrate here that spaces of military detainment are important contact zones where the racial and the imperial collide, offering historical geographers a suite of crucial sites through which to push back against the Cold War's simplified binary rhetoric.

Carceral geography and the cold war

In highlighting the role of detainment in the transpacific Cold War, I build on the work of carceral geographers, whose research examines the intertwined histories of prison spaces, prison infrastructures, and the imbrication of both with the spatial formations of the state itself.¹⁴ These scholars capture the complexities of 'how 'the carceral' figures deeply in many social, economic, and political systems' across time.¹⁵ Their work draws attention to the fact that although carceral spaces are frequently sited in remote places and, like the Korean War, often forgotten, they are not simply buildings "over there" but a set of relationships' that are intricately

⁴ C.S. Young, POWs: The hidden reason for forgetting Korea, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33 (2010) 318. Geographers forgetting the Korean War stands in stark relief against the quantity and quality of recent geographic research into World War II, the Vietnam War, or the Cold War more broadly defined.

⁵ J. Agnew, The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of international relations theory, *Review of International Political Economy* 1 (1994) 53; E.G. Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, New York, 1951, 2.

⁶ These dates are provisional, as I recognize that the conclusion of war's spectacular violence is not indicative of the end of the slow violence that endures in war's afterlife. R. Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Cambridge, 2011; J.A. Tyner, *Military Legacies: A World Made by War*, New York, 2009.

⁷ X. [G.F. Kennan], The sources of Soviet conduct, *Foreign Affairs* 25 (1947) 570.

⁸ S. Man, *Soldiering Through Empire: Race and the Making of the Decolonizing Pacific*, Oakland, 2018, 8.

⁹ Man, *Soldiering Through Empire*, 6.

¹⁰ J.M. Loyd and A. Mountz, *Boats, Borders, and Bases: Race, the Cold War, and the Rise of Migration Detention in the United States*, Oakland, 2018, 5.

¹¹ H. Kwon, The transpacific Cold War, in: J. Hoskins and V.T. Nguyen (Eds), *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field*, Honolulu, 2014, 81.

¹² T.E. Barlow, *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, Durham, 1997; J.W. Kang, The prison and power in colonial Korea, *Asian Studies Review* 40 (2016) 413–426; N.A. Kwon, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan*, Durham, 2015; M.E. Robinson and G-W. Shin (Eds), *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, Cambridge, 2001.

¹³ N.A. Kwon, *Intimate Empire*, 9.

¹⁴ D. Moran, *Carceral Geography: Spaces and Practices of Incarceration*, Burlington, 2015, 12–13.

¹⁵ K.M. Morin, Carceral space and the usable past, *Historical Geography* 41 (2013) 1.

intertwined with lives and processes both within and beyond their walls.¹⁶ Carceral geographers demonstrate these connections by highlighting the ways that the production of spaces of detention relies on specific regimes of mobility, circulation, and systems of spatial and population management.¹⁷

Defining detainment as '(i) intentional practices that restrict individuals' ability to move from one place to another and (ii) impose orders of space and time so that individual mobility is highly constrained, if not eliminated', Martin and Mitchelson highlight the fact that detention need not refer specifically to the sequestration of people charged with crimes.¹⁸ Their description is useful here, as it encourages analysis of a range of spatial typologies, including domestic prisons and jails, migrant detention facilities, refugee camps, offshore processing zones, and other modes of sequestration and circumscription. Far from being a singular architectural or institutional form, then, carceral geographers show that states deploy a diverse suite of techniques and spatial formations — including forests and the logics of environmental conservation itself — in order to enact their infrastructures of detention.¹⁹

Abolitionist scholars extend this focus on the co-constitution of carceral spaces and the racial capitalist state by pinpointing how spaces of detainment manifest as both a 'consequence of state failure' and as 'projects of state-building' that serve as 'geographical solutions to social and economic crises'.²⁰ Their critique relies on the 'analytical ability to understand how seemingly disconnected institutions of state violence are interconnected and how they produce and police social difference'.²¹ Yet as comprehensive and important as this work is, outside of considerable attention paid to camps and so-called states and spaces of exception, critical carceral scholarship rarely offers a sustained historical investigation into infrastructures of detainment in a wartime or imperial context.²² What do we learn about carceral geography from the use of cages in extraterritorial conditions of state-building, where relationships of labor, economic order, and sovereign control are at their most opaque and the threat or existence of state failure is at its most acute? Here, then, I seek to suture together the dynamism of carceral geography with the Cold War history of US warfare in order to explore the ways that 'the nature of ... prison spaces and their purposes do matter, and they matter intensely' in making the geography of the decolonizing Pacific.²³

Exploring the intersection of these research narratives emphasizes the fact that a key way in which carceral spaces 'matter' is

their role in border-making through the spatial management of specifically raced, classed, and gendered populations. The borders that unfold through detention regimes thus reflect the state's priorities of 'monitoring social boundaries of belonging' in order to enable the mobility and circulation of certain people as they sanction 'the exclusion of others from land, resources, wealth, and opportunity through legal regimes and military power'.²⁴ In cases of military occupation and war, however, these relationships between human mobilities and borders are often distinct from those framing migrant detention or refugee camps. Foreshadowing the explosion of mobile carceral technologies in the 21st century, it is the state's fluid and often partial geographic mobility on contested terrain — through territorial occupation or advancing or receding military fronts — that underpins much of the Cold War military carceral archipelago, not necessarily the movement of people or populations.²⁵

Further complicating these intricacies is the fact that in overseas military contexts, carceral enclosure at times serves punitive ends, at others focuses on the instrumental management of martial terrain. Sometimes it functions to assure the safe circulation of commodities in a region, and at still others sequestration manifests as an extension of the refugee camp's carceral humanitarianism, offering a space for the provision of care and protection for specific populations living through violence.²⁶ Thus while military detainment, like the domestic prison and migrant detention facilities, is a 'technique of bordering' that is 'integral to the sovereign legitimacy the state' — reifying the boundaries between us and them, good people and bad people, civilians and combatants, friends and enemies — it can also reveal the instable dynamism at the heart of the very clarity that walls and borders imply.²⁷ Who is the enemy? Where were they captured? By whom? Why?

Without a consistent judicial apparatus (or, often, due process), answering these questions is at once the purview of state leaders with their strategic geopolitical imaginaries and simultaneously a task that a diverse array of individuals must undertake in a variety of places. By the mid-1940s, for instance, one of the central tenets of US Cold War foreign policy was that two poles neatly divided the world — the capitalist and communist states — and that the former needed to spatially contain the latter's desire for territorial expansion. This spatial imaginary does little to map the dynamism across infrastructures like Cold War prisons. Rather than occurring solely at the scale of the state or along clearly demarcated military fronts, then, these border-making performances frequently happen at the interfaces that emerge when bodies encounter and subsequently move, manage, and cage captives. During the Korean War, these were places where the African-American soldier, the Communist Chinese fighter, the military police advisor, the Japanese-American interrogator, the rightist South Korean guard, the left-wing translator from the countryside, the Indian medic, and the Philippine base-worker all might encounter one another in a space meant to clarify the parameters of war's inclusions and exclusions, friends and enemies. While engaging with this panoply of actors is beyond the scope of this paper, focusing on the

¹⁶ R.W. Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, Oakland, 2007, 242.

¹⁷ C. Anderson, *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, London, 2018; C. Anderson, C.M. Crockett, C.G. De Vito, T. Miyamoto, K. Moss, K. Roscoe, and M. Sakata, Locating penal transportation: punishment, space, and place c. 1750 to 1900, in: K.M. Morin and D. Moran (Eds), *Historical Geographies of Prisons Unlocking the Usable Carceral Past*, New York, 2015, 147–167.

¹⁸ L. L. Martin and M. L. Mitchelson, Geographies of detention and imprisonment: Interrogating spatial practices of confinement, discipline, law, and state power, *Geography Compass* 3 (2009) 460.

¹⁹ R.C. Edwards, Convicts and conservation: inmate labor, fires and forestry in southernmost Argentina, *Journal of Historical Geography* 56 (2017) 1–13; L. Mei-Singh, Carceral conservationism: contested landscapes and technologies of dispossession at Ka'ena Point, Hawai'i, *American Quarterly* 68 (2016) 695–721.

²⁰ R.W. Gilmore, Fatal couplings of power and difference: notes on racism and geography, *The Professional Geographer* 54 (2002) 1.

²¹ J.M. Loyd, M.L. Mitchelson, and A. Burridge (Eds), *Beyond Walls and Cages: Prisons, Borders, and Global Crisis*, Athens, 2012, 3.

²² There are exceptions to this, notably the outstanding work of Laleh Khalili, Monica Kim, and Peter Zinoman: L. Khalili, *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies*, Palo Alto, 2012; M. Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War*, Princeton, 2019; P. Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862–1940*, Los Angeles, 2001.

²³ Moran, *Carceral Geography*, 29. (emphasis in original).

²⁴ R. Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*, New York, 2016, 164.

²⁵ L. Amoore, Biometric borders: Governing mobilities in the War on Terror, *Political Geography* 25 (2006) 336–351. R. Nisa, Capture at the speed of bandwidth: digital biometric encounters in the Everywhere War, in: L. Amoore and V. Piotukh (Eds), *Algorithmic Life: Calculative Devices in the Age of Big Data*, London, 2015, 109–126.

²⁶ K. Oliver, *Carceral Humanitarianism: Logics of Refugee Detention*, Minneapolis, 2017; R. Nisa, Capturing humanitarian war: the collusion of violence and care in US-managed military detention, *Environment & Planning A* 47 (2015) 47, 2276–2291.

²⁷ J. Turner, *The Prison Boundary: Between Society and Carceral Space*, London, 2016, 31.

detention practices in southern Korea nonetheless highlights the dynamism of these spaces and enables me to heed Matthew Farish's call 'to move beyond the overarching metanarrative of a singular Cold War, explained solely through a series of mobile terms such as *containment* and *domino*'.²⁸ Rather, I hope to move the reader towards an analysis of the Cold War that binds these terms to the specific carceral practices of the decolonizing Pacific.

The colonial antecedents to the US carceral infrastructure in Korea

The thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule in Korea, stretching from 1910 to the 1945 surrender of its overseas territories after the Second World War, was an often-ruthless system of governance that penetrated deeply into nearly all aspects of everyday life on the peninsula. Through various forms of violence and coercion, colonial administrators silenced political opposition, sought to erase indigenous Korean languages and cultural practices, demanded sexual servitude, and used forced labor for industrial and military production. The racial logic employed by the colonial bureaucracy meant that Koreans, who the Japanese press often portrayed as 'uncivilized, backward, unclean, and generally lacking a modern work ethic', commanded lower wages and had far fewer avenues for economic development than did native populations.²⁹

And yet, unlike in other Japanese colonies, a large number of Koreans made up the higher echelons of the expansive colonial police and surveillance apparatus.³⁰ Despite 1919 reforms which led to the reduction of Koreans working for the police, in 1937 Koreans still 'numbered 7203 out of 17,067 policemen in Korea'.³¹ Regardless of who made up the rank and file, the police were so cruel that for many Koreans their uniforms became 'a symbol of terror'.³² Police violently quashed anti-colonial dissent, silenced opposition to imperial resource theft, rendered summary judgments in minor criminal cases, and took bribes to protect the interests of Japanese elites and their Korean collaborators.³³

This rampant inequality on the peninsula meant that there was considerable Korean opposition to Japanese colonial power — and in particular the police and their Korean collaborators — for ideological, economic, and cultural reasons. To maintain order in the face of this resistance, the colonial state increasingly relied on carceral strategies to secure their rule. A 1912 Government-General-issued ruling, for instance, gave the police 'virtually unlimited power to regulate people's behavior' by pronouncing that '[a]ny person shall be detained or fined if he or she ... violates an instruction or order of police authorities'.³⁴ As the 1920s approached, the colonial government fought to discipline the growing numbers of communists, nationalists, and intellectuals

who were agitating for self-determination. In the wake of the expansive March 1st Movement (a multi-sited nationalist mobilization for Korean sovereignty) in 1919, almost 8000 people were killed and over 50,000 imprisoned.³⁵ This general uptick in detentions forced Japan to expand its prison capacity, building new prisons to supplement those already distributed across the peninsula (Fig. 1). Given the growth of this political discord, the average daily inmate population more than doubled from just under 10,000 in 1913 to a high-point of over 23,000 in 1943.³⁶

Like the colonial prisons in French Indochina so vividly



Fig. 1. Japanese colonial prisons in Korea, 1919.

Map: By author.

Source: Sites listed in J.W. Kang, The prison and power in colonial Korea, *Asian Studies Review* 40 (2016) 413–426.

²⁸ M. Farish, *The Contours of America's Cold War*, Minneapolis, 2010, xvi.

²⁹ T. Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II*, Oakland, 2013, 22.

³⁰ C.C. Chen, Police and community control systems in the empire, in: R.H. Myers and M.R. Peattie (Eds), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*, Princeton, 1984, 224.

³¹ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 43.

³² Press Relations Office, HQ XXIV Army Corps, Seoul, Korea, 'Press Release for American Press via Tokyo and Army News Service,' 5 April 1946, National Archives and Records Administration II in College Park, MD [hereafter NARA], Record Group [hereafter RG] 554, Records of General HQ, Supreme Commander Allied Powers, and United National Command; United States Armed Forces in Korea; XXIV Corps, G-2, Historical Section; Records Regarding the Okinawa Campaign, US Military Government in Korea, 1945–48, United States Military Government [hereafter Records of General HQ], Korean Political Affairs, Box 26, 1.

³³ Chen, Police and community control systems in the empire, 230.

³⁴ C. Lee, Modernity, legality, and power in Korea under Japanese rule, in: M.E. Robinson and G.-W. Shin (Eds), *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, Cambridge, 2001, 37.

³⁵ T. Morris-Suzuki, *Showa: An Inside History of Hirohito's Japan*, London, 2012, 45.

³⁶ Kang, The prison and power in colonial Korea, 420.

described by Peter Zinoman, Japanese colonial prisons were repressive, dirty, overcrowded, and violent reflections of a racist colonial state.³⁷ Although brutality along with arbitrary and lengthy detention were enduring legacies of the Japanese colonial penal apparatus, by the 1920s and 30s the police were in charge of a series of constructive governmental schemes like a population census, land surveys, public hygiene campaigns, and road building and repair projects.³⁸ Later, with the increasing economic and political toll of the Second World War, state objectives in the colony changed and Japan pursued a more aggressive shift towards strategies 'that increasingly sought to rule through the mobilization and control of consent' with the goal of targeting and enhancing Koreans' 'health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, education and general well-being' as key laborers in Japan's war economy.³⁹

This placed different demands on the carceral infrastructure, and the Japanese moved from the largely punitive use of detention towards a regime that emphasized the production of docile subjects and the transformation of the souls of the imprisoned.⁴⁰ As part of this shift, a two-tiered detainment system emerged, with one tier framed around these biopolitical objectives of a population-centric modern, dispassionate, rational system of corrections and the other, primarily for political prisoners, that marshaled cruelty and torture in the pursuit of state order. As the colonial penal apparatus developed, these two carceral paths fused into a single spatial expression of the contradictions of colonial modernity.

On the one hand, carceral spaces were key sites for the introduction of thoroughly modern forms of governance, regulation, and discipline. These worked through the utilization of 'close surveillance, scientific correction and ideological conversion' buttressed by 'tight daily schedules' and the implementation of standardized forms of detainee administration and classification.⁴¹ Prison administrators assessed people based on their behavior and would incentivize ideological transformations by offering prisoners access to additional food based on their scores on standardized evaluations. Such programs of 'close control' detailed and logged prisoners' willingness to adhere to prison rules, monitored their work habits, documented their personal hygiene practices, and tracked their political conversions.⁴²

However, Japanese colonial prisons were fragmented examples of this modernization at best, and often employed more draconian practices in the service of a brutal regime of prisoner abuse and torture. Indeed, not all prisoners were receptive to conversion, and as was the case in French Indochina, the warehousing of political dissidents in prisons produced a social space for anti-colonial agitation and organizing. Thus, interwoven with the modern form of penology noted above would be the 'racializing ... dark face' of Japanese colonial prisons.⁴³ This dark face relied heavily on the use of violence against political prisoners — the so-called 'anti-national race' — whose anti-colonial, nationalist, communist, or other dissident activities routinely led to harsh corporal punishment like starvation or searing the body of a prisoner 'with a hot iron, hanging him upside down and forcing water into his nostrils ... driving a nail into his fingernails or toenails'.⁴⁴

To facilitate this, the colonial regime used its authority to give these political detentions the force of law. With the passage of the 1941 Preventive Detention Order, for instance, the state codified the administrative infrastructure for the detention of political actors intercepted by police *before* the commission of a crime or rebellious act. This and later policies would assure that certain bodies, notably the politically unruly Korean anti-imperialist, would be racialized, framed as always already risky, and subsequently excluded from the framework of rights and treated violently. Others, whose souls the regime could more easily 'reintegrate with the spirit of the Japanese nation', were disciplined through the techniques of modern penology and absorbed into the colonial project.⁴⁵ The prison would be a key space by which and through which the Japanese colonial regime could do the work of sorting, of revealing which bodies to include and those to exclude in its project of colonial state-building.

The Japanese penal apparatus highlights these two simultaneous expressions of colonial modernity, but as I show in the next section, it also establishes a key vocabulary of practices by which to link colonial state-making violence with the liberal, anti-colonial state-making practices of the US military occupation. During the occupation the two-tiered carceral system, the administrative production of rightlessness for specifically classified groups of people, and the utilization of preemptive detainment were (and continue to be) potent instruments of US military carceral power.⁴⁶ This is not to argue that the US learned these strategies from the Japanese. In fact, the US used similar strategies in the Philippines and again in Hawai'i and across the Pacific in the Second World War.⁴⁷ However, in Korea one sees a distinct manifestation of practices by which the violence of 'racialized exclusion' is coupled with liberal discourses of 'universalizing inclusion' as a form of US carceral management.⁴⁸ Much of this nuance gets lost if we only consider the Cold War as a conflict that simply pit communists against the noble interests of the democratic free world while burying the complex racial logics of colonial rule under the valences of a largely transatlantic political contest for the future of humanity.

Colonial modernity and the penal regime of the US military government

In 1943, the leaders of the allied powers met in Cairo to discuss the postwar future of Japan's territories, resulting in a joint declaration stating that the allies, being 'mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent'.⁴⁹ Mindful as they may have been, the US and the Soviets ultimately arranged to facilitate decolonization by partitioning Korea at the 38th Parallel, with the transition managed in the north by the Soviet Union and in the south by the United States. Without substantive contributions from Koreans, the spatial and political complications of the decolonizing Pacific shifted the meaning of 'in due course' for millions across the peninsula

³⁷ Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille*.

³⁸ Lee, Modernity, legality, and power in Korea under Japanese rule, 27, 37.

³⁹ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 22, 38.

⁴⁰ As Kang notes, this shift resonates with the narrative about the birth of modern penology told in M. Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, 1979.

⁴¹ Kang, The prison and power in colonial Korea, 420.

⁴² C. Philo, Accumulating populations: Bodies, institutions and space, *International Journal of Population Geography* 7 (2001) 478.

⁴³ Kang, The prison and power in colonial Korea, 414.

⁴⁴ Kang, The prison and power in colonial Korea, 423.

⁴⁵ Lee, Modernity, legality, and power in Korea under Japanese rule, 42.

⁴⁶ A.N. Paik, *Rightlessness: Testimony and Redress in US Prison Camps since World War II*, Chapel Hill, 2016.

⁴⁷ J. Kuzmarov, *Modernizing Repression: Police Training and Nation-Building in the American Century*, Amherst, 2012; J. Nebolon, 'Life given straight from the heart': settler militarism, biopolitics, and public health in Hawai'i during World War II, *American Quarterly* 69 (2017) 23–45; A. Friedman, US Empire, World War 2 and the racializing of labour, *Race & Class* 58 (2017) 23–38.

⁴⁸ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*.

⁴⁹ United States Department of State, Final text of the Communiqué, in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers: The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran 1943*, Washington, D.C., 1961, 448–449.

from an imagined near-future of independence and self-determination to its violent, indefinite delay. With the surrender of Japan in August 1945, the United States arrived on the peninsula, and shortly thereafter established the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK). The military government quickly implemented a series of policy decisions—about the army, police, bureaucracy, and judiciary—that would set the terms for the subsequent three years of occupation as well as impact the ongoing internal conflicts and the Korean War that followed.

Initially US administrators sought to publicly distance themselves from what they called the violent 'Oriental customs' that 'have always decreed that police abuse prisoners'.⁵⁰ But rather than mark a clear end to the colonial modernity of the Japanese occupation, many of these abusive practices continued well into the Korean War, often with the implicit or explicit approval of US government officials. These colonial tactics, reanimated by the particular contours of American racism and imperial ambition, helped destabilize the camps and erode the boundaries between war, internal policing, pacification, and the politics of decolonization.

As a result, although many Koreans greeted the soldiers who came to the peninsula in 1945 with cheers and welcomed them as liberators, within weeks the 'victorious, democratic United States established a military government in a 'freed' land'.⁵¹ Further, many of the military government's policies and practices differed from the post-World War II American military occupations in Germany and Japan. While both of those countries were US enemies during the war, the US ruled them indirectly, employing existing governing institutions and power structures after war's end. Korea however, which had previously been of little concern, was to endure direct foreign rule by a military government, which relied in part on the martial presence of thousands of American troops, a host of American military advisors, and a suite of domestic security apparatuses.

At the helm of the USAMGIK was General John R. Hodge, an American Military General who lacked any substantive experience in governance. The officers carrying out Hodge's rule had also, one month prior, been on Okinawa preparing for what they assumed would be continued battle with the Japanese in World War II. Once in Korea, these soldiers—without any training—administered such diverse governmental operations as the power company, the transit systems, the commerce department, hospitals and other industries.⁵² This inexperience coursed through the criminal justice apparatus as well, as Arthur Brandstetter of the US Police Bureau lamented in late-1945 that the top two or three police advisors 'had not one vestige of police or [military government] training'.⁵³

Despite their own lack of expertise, initial decisions by the military government demonstrated that while they considered the Koreans ready for decolonization, they did not believe them capable of managing their own state. Given their apprehensions about Korean sovereignty, they simultaneously made efforts to modernize governing structures while relying on and amplifying the colonial techniques and technologies of arrest, incarceration, and torture that they were nominally there to eliminate. All of this made it difficult for many to parse the occupation from the colonial

modernity that came before and demonstrates how the many sinews of imperial violence and carceral power blur the presumed clarity of the typical Cold War spatio-temporal binary.

Notions of friend and enemy were in flux in the early days of the occupation and would remain so long after the signing of the Armistice in Panmunjom. The official position was that General Hodge should treat the Koreans as friendly and the Japanese as enemies. But in a decolonizing Korea that was largely illegible to the US military government, Hodge, fearful of Communist advance and Leftist politics more generally, recognized Japan as a strong, modern state who had valiantly resisted the US military in the Pacific. Indeed, he frequently elected to side with the Japanese, their Korean collaborators, and conservative 'propertied elements' in the south, many of whom had 'amassed fortunes during the Japanese colonial period'.⁵⁴

As Hodge's 'reductionist vision' of the Korean political landscape gained prominence in Washington policy-making circles, the binary Cold War imaginary clouded out a large and dynamic plurality of Korean voices addressing issues including land-tenure, nationalism, sovereignty, and democratic futures.⁵⁵ Policy-makers assumed that simplifying these textured distinctions into a straightforward friend/enemy diagram would expedite decision-making and further US objectives. It had the opposite effect. Indeed, for many western journalists in Korea at the time it was clear that the military government used a 'fear of communism, rather than the desire to reform or rehabilitate' as the basis of policy decisions.⁵⁶ This despite the fact that in late summer 1946, polls indicated that only 7% of Koreans were in favor of communism.⁵⁷

Almost immediately, Americans came to rely on and reinforce an updated form of the Korean National Police (KNP) structure that existed during the Japanese colonial period, many of whom were affiliated with or had collaborated with the repressive colonial regime. Supported financially and administratively by inexperienced American military advisors and counter-intelligence services, the KNP made extensive use of preemptive and administrative detention, police violence, and other extreme measures of social control. Despite vocal Korean opposition, General William H. Maglin, who led the Military Police Branch, claimed that the use of Japanese police forces was vital, as 'it [was] absolutely necessary to have experienced men' doing police work. Attempting to sever the intimacies between the brutal colonial past and what he saw as a spatially and temporally distinct decolonial present, he added that 'a policeman should be judged on his present performance instead of past employment unless he had been so notorious under the Japanese that he could command no respect'.⁵⁸ Even by late 1946, after the military government had repatriated the Japanese members of the police force, over 80% of the police force above the rank of lieutenant had worked under the colonial regime, and roughly 25% of the force as a whole.⁵⁹

Though broadly unpopular, the military government invested 'the systems of security, arrest, imprisonment, torture and legal

⁵⁴ Oh, *Korea Under the American Military Government*, 4.

⁵⁵ B. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945–1947*, Princeton, 1981, 137.

⁵⁶ M. Gayn, *Japan Diary*, Rutland, 1981, 351.

⁵⁷ B. Kim, Paramilitary Politics under the USAMGIK and the establishment of the Republic of Korea, *Korea Journal* 43 (2003) 299.

⁵⁸ Minutes from Conference on Police in Korea, May 1946, NARA, RG 554, Records of General HQ, Korean Political Affairs, Box 27, Folder: Police History: Notes and Early Drafts, 2.

⁵⁹ Minutes from Conference on Police in Korea, May 1946, 2; J.K. Robertson, *Legacy of Empire: Japanese Influence over the US Military Government in Korea in 1945*, unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2006, 5, fn 13.

⁵⁰ Press Relations Office, Press Release for American Press via Tokyo and Army News Service, 1.

⁵¹ B. Oh, *Korea Under the American Military Government, 1945–1948*, Westport, 2002, 4. Emphasis in the original.

⁵² Maj. Gen. H. Huppert, Korean occupational problems, *Military Review* 29 (1949) 15.

⁵³ Interview with Major Arthur E. Brandstatter, Police Bureau, December 1945, NARA, RG 554, Records of General HQ, Korean Political Affairs, Box 26, Folder: Police History, 1.

process' that violently propped up the colonial regime with new powers.⁶⁰ Indeed, as part of its shift towards modern policing, the occupation nearly doubled the national police force active in southern Korea to 25,000.⁶¹ Over the next four years, that number would double again.

Further, while the Americans might have raised the occasional objection to the repressive 'police state' tactics of intelligence personnel and their allies in the National Police, the abuse persisted.⁶² The 1947 annual report of the occupation's military intelligence branch, the Counterintelligence Corps (CIC), bemoans the rightist violence of the National Police, but concedes that despite their 'many small purges of leftists' they were nonetheless 'an effective weapon in removing all political opposition and have been rather successful in so doing'.⁶³

As it had in the Philippines, then, the US relied on the spatial ordering and security provided by a proxy national police and intelligence apparatus. Laleh Khalili has noted that when government agencies and institutions use proxies, they produce a 'regime of invisibility whereby the violence, dirt, shit, blood, torture and illegality of detention are neatly bracketed, outsourced to amenable clients and allies'.⁶⁴ The US Counterintelligence Corps was not shy about acknowledging the value of these particular invisibilities. While identifying that '[a]t times, the police ... became over enthusiastic in their treatment of leftist espionage agents,' and that it 'was not rare for the police to turn over ... men who had confessed under physical duress', nonetheless 'the fine cooperation of the National Police in bringing innumerable espionage agents to the attention of CIC more than balanced their occasional excesses'.⁶⁵

The brutality of the National Police was not simply a manifestation of the way 'Asians treat prisoners', as implied by the Orientalist imaginaries above. It was in many ways constituted by and through their association with the military government and the work of the American police advisers themselves. One investigation by the US military into the police and prison infrastructure in Korea 'specifically blamed [the] Military Government for the evils of the police system. Military Government officials ... had neglected to correct police misuse of power, pleading it was inexpedient'.⁶⁶ But this outsourcing came at a high cost in lives and power on the peninsula, with observers worrying that 'the police have become a security threat' to US forces themselves. These confusions produced a terrain in which the police, 'with their American backing', were strong enough 'to investigate what they choose to investigate, to let alone what they choose to let alone, to jail who may choose, to make purchase of leftists and then to build up any story of leftist plans for overthrowing the present government'.⁶⁷

The use of proxies as part of the landscape of apprehension and arrest extended to include right-wing youth groups that the government insisted were not politically motivated and who often worked as annexes of the KNP.⁶⁸ These youth groups, too, often employed extraordinarily violent means, and in numerous events across the occupation, their activities were associated with massacres and unwarranted arrests.⁶⁹ In expanding the reach of the occupation, then, even the proxy forces used proxy forces, doubly concealing the violent paramilitary manifestations of colonial modernity from the global Cold War geopolitical diagram premised on containing friend and enemy territories.

Once caged, many prisoners would find themselves in the same facilities that had enclosed them under the colonial apparatus (Fig. 2). For instance, in the interest of expediency the military government made use of the Seodaemun Prison, which as the former home of the colonial Preventive Detention Office and site of many cases of prisoner torture placed it at the crucible of Japanese colonial repression.⁷⁰ As before, these facilities remained notable for their 'cruelty to prisoners, unsanitary jail conditions, and false and needless arrests'.⁷¹ One draft of a prison survey claimed that the prison in the Pohang region was 'dark, damp, badly ventilated, mosquito-infested. There were no washing facilities, the blankets had never been cleaned, the latrine was a hole in the floor. (In fairness it must be pointed out that Korean housing standards are



Fig. 2. National prisons in southern Korea during the US Military occupation, 1946. Map: By author.

Source: W.H. Maglin. List of National Prisons, 15 August 1946, History of the KNP, NARA, RG 554, Records of General HQ, Korean Political Affairs, Box 25, Folder: Police History: Notes and Early Drafts, 2.

⁶⁰ Robertson, *Legacy of Empire*, 70.

⁶¹ G. Henderson, Human rights in South Korea, 1945–1953, in: W. Shaw (Ed), *Human Rights in Korea: Historical and Policy Perspectives*, Cambridge, 1991, 136.

⁶² The History of the Counterintelligence Corps in the United States Army, Vol XXX: CIC During the Occupation of Korea [hereafter History of the CIC], March 1959. NARA, RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, 1903–2009, Department of Defense. Department of the Army. Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence. US Army Intelligence Center. US Army Intelligence School. (7/10/1958–7/1/1962), Box 8, Folder 1, 16, 17.

⁶³ Annual Progress Report for 1947, 971st Counterintelligence Corps Detachment, page 19, in [Records of the Counterintelligence Corps] *Mi Kunjŏnggi Chŏngbo Char-yojip. CIC (Pangch'ŏptae) Pogosŏ, 1945.9–1949.1*, vol. 1, Kangwŏn-do Ch'unch'ŏ; n-si, 1995, 273.

⁶⁴ L. Khalili, The utility of proxy detention in counterinsurgencies, in: J. Bachmann, C. Bell, and C. Holmqvist (Eds), *War, Police and Assemblages of Intervention*, London, 2014, 93.

⁶⁵ History of the CIC, 26, 27.

⁶⁶ Notes on the History of the KNP, NARA, RG 554, Records of General HQ, Korean Political Affairs, Box 25, Folder: Police History: Notes and Early Drafts, 2.

⁶⁷ Annual Progress Report for 1947, *Records of the Counterintelligence Corps*, 273.

⁶⁸ Kim, Paramilitary Politics under the USAMGIK and the Establishment of the Republic of Korea.

⁶⁹ H.J. Kim, *Massacres at Mt. Halla: Sixty Years of Truth Seeking in South Korea*, Ithaca, 2014.

⁷⁰ The US would continue to utilize the carceral spaces of former regimes, perhaps most famously exemplified by their (re)use of Iraq's notorious Abu Ghraib for their own torturous detentions.

⁷¹ Press Relations Office, Press Release for American Press via Tokyo and Army News Service, 1.

far below Occidental standards). Prisoners are not allowed to lie down during the day, to write letters or communicate with anybody in any way'.⁷² The final memo noted that '[m]any prisoners claimed to have been badly beaten, one so seriously that he was made deaf in one ear'.⁷³ As the decolonization continued, townspeople in the city of Pusan were of 'the opinion that the police were no better than the Japanese police'.⁷⁴

In late 1947, the United States would scale back its control over the peninsula and cede authority to the United Nations who, with the assistance of numerous American military advisors, assured that the National Police, along with the carceral infrastructure that the US had nurtured, remained.⁷⁵ By 1948 the Soviets had left the northern portion of the Korean peninsula and in June of that same year, the US ceased its military occupation of the South (though some troops and advisors remained). Political turmoil and violence surged across the peninsula, setting the stage for the rise to power of US-backed anti-communist president Syngman Rhee in the South. In an attempt to quell the growing disorder, Rhee deployed the National Police and the newly formed Army of the Republic of Korea to arrest and intimidate members of leftist political groups.

In December 1948, his government passed the National Security Law, which officially granted the police and the army the authority to imprison citizens who criticized the government or its policies, liberalizing a police structure that already had a 'basis for massive preemptive arrests of potential political dissenters'.⁷⁶ Almost 90,000 were arrested between September 1948 and May 1949, and between the winter of 1948 and the summer of 1950, the line between mass arrest and mass killing became increasingly muddled.⁷⁷ Nowhere was this chaotic violence more explicit than during the events on Jeju Island in 1948, which ultimately resulted in between 15,000–30,000 deaths, most at the hands of the US-backed Interim Government.⁷⁸ Leftist members of the army in the Yeosu region responded with a violent mutiny, and were met with a massive lethal reaction by the state.

By 1950, more than 100,000 Koreans had been killed or 'disappeared', and between 17,000 and 50,000 political prisoners were in custody.⁷⁹ Survivor testimony has indicated that the KNP played an instrumental role in detaining political prisoners (making preventive and precautionary arrests) and passing the detainees on to the Korean military and later UN troops. This use of preemptive detention and police violence as a form of social control earned South Korea the dubious distinction of being a 'republic of

prisons'.⁸⁰

In the months before the North Korean invasion, then, as '[w]holesale arrests ... caused the jails to overflow and forced the government to establish 're-education camps'', the US press struggled to offer readers a frame through which to understand the geography of violence on the peninsula, which relied on the support and training of American military advisors.⁸¹ As the boundaries between war, internal policing, pacification, and the politics of decolonization blurred beyond recognition, one *New York Times* article made sure to remind readers that this turmoil was unrelated to the increased militarization brought on by these Cold War confluences, but to civilizational differences rooted in Asian cultural histories: 'Western-style democracy and its views on law and human rights sprang from civilizations far away— in miles and philosophy— from those in Asia. It is difficult to impose such a policy here'.⁸²

Cold war apprehensions: wartime detainment in Korea

Despite these violent continua stretching from the colonial period across the postcolonial landscape of the peninsula, traditional narratives about the Korean War locate its beginning when the North Koreans launched an attack across the 38th Parallel on June 25th, 1950. As the US was not prepared for the scale and speed of the invasion, war planning and provisioning had to happen exceedingly quickly. While the United States and its allies continued to rely on the above-discussed carceral practices of the National Police forces, during the war they also had to rapidly construct facilities for enemy prisoners of war (EPW) and establish an infrastructure for the battlefield movement of captured detainees. The resultant military detention assemblage took shape in an ad hoc, reactive way that reveals the tensions at the core of the transpacific Cold War. That is, the carceral geography of the Korean War highlights the Cold War struggle between performing wartime detainment as part of a seemingly-universal political project premised on the notions of inalienable human rights and a global free market while at the same time using specific historical and racial dynamics to justify the use lethal violence and prolonged detention.

Just two weeks after the invasion, on 10 July 1950, the United Nations Command (UNC), under the direction of President Truman, General Douglas MacArthur, and the US Eighth Army, chose a location for the first EPW site in Pusan, and two just weeks later, the recently-completed enclosure was already full, necessitating a move to a new location by 6 August. In the chaos of the war's first days, UN guards frequently moved scores of detainees within and between enclosures, camps, and newly-constructed replacement camps — often outrunning the nascent system meant to keep track of them. In the confusion wrought by camp construction, detainee population growth, prisoner relocation, and administrative disorder, no 'reliable method of keeping track of individual [prisoners] existed' from the war's beginning.⁸³

During the early stages of the Korean War, moving prisoner bodies from the front lines often took the form of large numbers of people marching in tattered clothes through the cities and countryside that made up the battlefield. October 24, 1950, for instance,

⁷² Draft Notes on an Investigation into Conditions at the Pohang Prison, no date, NARA, RG 554, Records of General HQ, Korean Political Affairs, Box 27, Folder: Police History: Notes and Early Drafts, 54.

⁷³ Memo from USAMGIK Headquarters to All Concerned, Investigation of Police, 30 July 1946, NARA, RG 554, Records of General HQ, Korean Political Affairs, Box 26, Folder: Police History: Notes, 4.

⁷⁴ Memo from USAMGIK Headquarters to All Concerned, Investigation of Police, 5.

⁷⁵ The US would not, however, scale back its interest in training international police forces or developing overseas police assistance programs, which policy-makers by the 1960s increasingly believed was an important tool in bringing order to unruly populations at home and abroad. S. Schrader, To secure the global Great Society: participation in pacification, *Humanity* 7 (2016) 225–53.

⁷⁶ Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 1, 160.

⁷⁷ Henderson, Human rights in South Korea, 137.

⁷⁸ H. Kim, Seeking truth after 50 years: The National Committee for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju 4.3 Events, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 3, 2009, 406.

⁷⁹ R.J.H. Johnston, Political Jailing in Korea Denied, *The New York Times*, November 26, 1947; Y. Kim, Beneath the Tip of the iceberg: Problems in historical clarification of the Korean War, *Korea Journal* 42 (2002) 60–86.

⁸⁰ D-C. Kim, The War against the 'enemy within': hidden massacres in the early stages of the Korean War, in: G-W. Shin and S-W. Park (Eds), *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean Experience*, London, 2007, 85.

⁸¹ W. Sullivan, Police brutality in Korea assailed, *The New York Times*, February 1, 1950, 13.

⁸² W. Sullivan, US advisors in Korea troubled by trend to centralized authority, *The New York Times*, February 2, 1950., 3.

⁸³ S.M. Meyers and W. Bradbury, The political behavior of Korean and Chinese Prisoners of War in the Korean Conflict: A historical analysis, in W. Bradbury, S.M. Meyers, and A.D. Biderman (Eds), *Mass Behavior in Battle and Captivity: The Communist Soldier in the Korean War*, Chicago, 1968, 238.

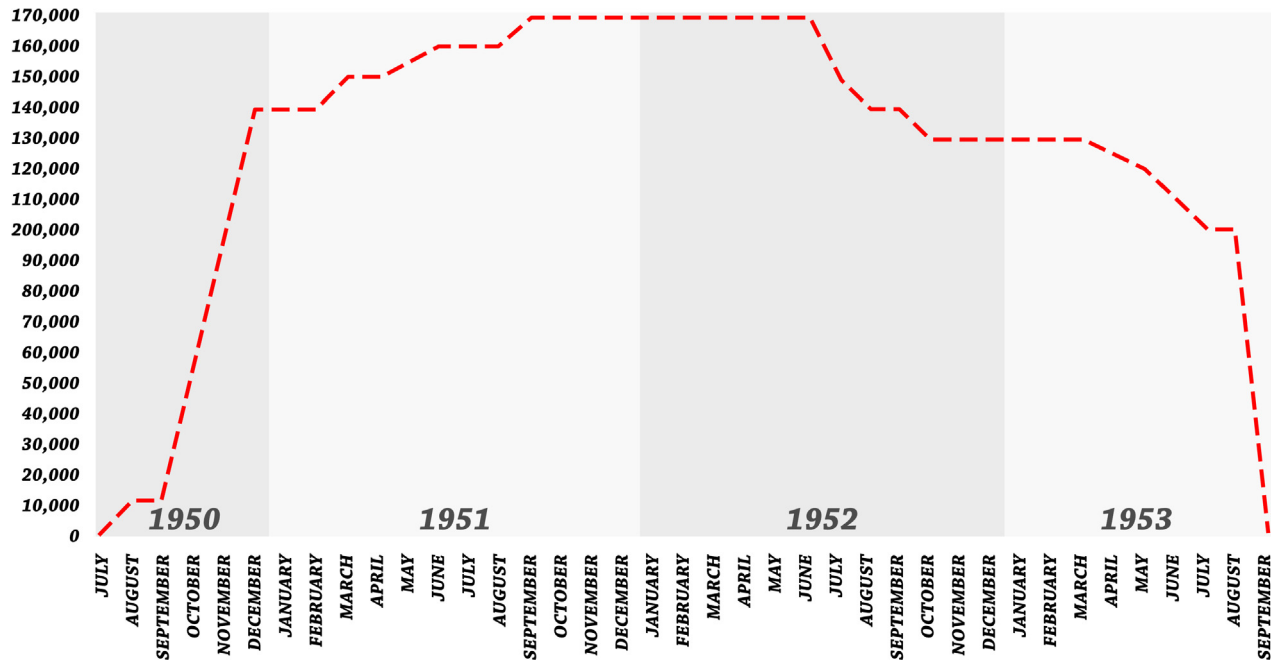


Fig. 3. EPW Quantities in South Korea from July 1950 to September 1953.

Chart: By author.

Source: S.M. Meyers and W. Bradbury, *The political behavior of Korean and Chinese Prisoners of War*, 214.

saw 26,000 prisoners taken.⁸⁴ As was the case in the two World Wars, the scale of this linear movement was a significant complication of battlefield logistics. In each of these conflicts, soldiers used the existing transit infrastructure of the battlefield to the greatest extent possible, employing the roads and train systems used to deliver troops and ammunition to the fighting front as lifelines to 'backhaul' prisoners to collection points and camps: the bidirectional logistics of military force in industrial warfare. Official records from the Korean conflict state that around 170,000 captives (Fig. 3) made the journey to one of the nine enemy prisoner of war camps (Fig. 4).

Consistent with the idea of the modern, efficient military machine, the doctrine in use at the beginning of the conflict tied the performance of these battlefield circulations to a seemingly population-and-place-less field de-linked from the particularities of politics or history. Instead, the frames for these guidelines are the apparent universality of human rights and the potentially-global dominion of US militarization.⁸⁵ Doctrine adopted later in the war would map these ideas, offering instructions for the military police and military interrogators responsible for moving prisoner bodies across a generic, geographically sanitized battlefield (Fig. 5).⁸⁶ This diagram of a linear war proposes that the capture and evacuation of a detainee is a one-way path weaving through the combat zone and a series of temporary holding areas some distance away from the violence of the front, to rest finally in the relative safety of the communications zone or rear area. Marking a clear architectural difference from the national prison infrastructure, similar standardizations would be important to UNC camp siting, layouts, construction techniques, and supply chains (Fig. 6).

However, while it is possible to chart this spatial process in a

way that implies its universality (and therefore its utility in detaining any person that the military may encounter), it is not possible to *perform* battlefield detentions without incredibly specific factors shaping these transnational encounters. Wartime detainment infrastructures are ultimately contact zones 'where



Fig. 4. United Nations Command Enemy Prisoner of War Camps, 1953. (Squares represent main camps; triangles are branch camp extensions).

Map: By author.

Source: *The Handling of Prisoners of War During the Korean War*, 1960, NARA, RG 338, Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), Records Relating to Enemy Prisoners of War, 1951–1960, Box 1650.

⁸⁴ R.W. Thompson, *Cry Korea*, London, 1952, 189.

⁸⁵ US War Department, *TM 19–500: Enemy Prisoners of War*, Washington, D.C., 1944.

⁸⁶ Department of the Army, *FM 19–40 Handling of Prisoners of War*, Washington, D.C., 1952.

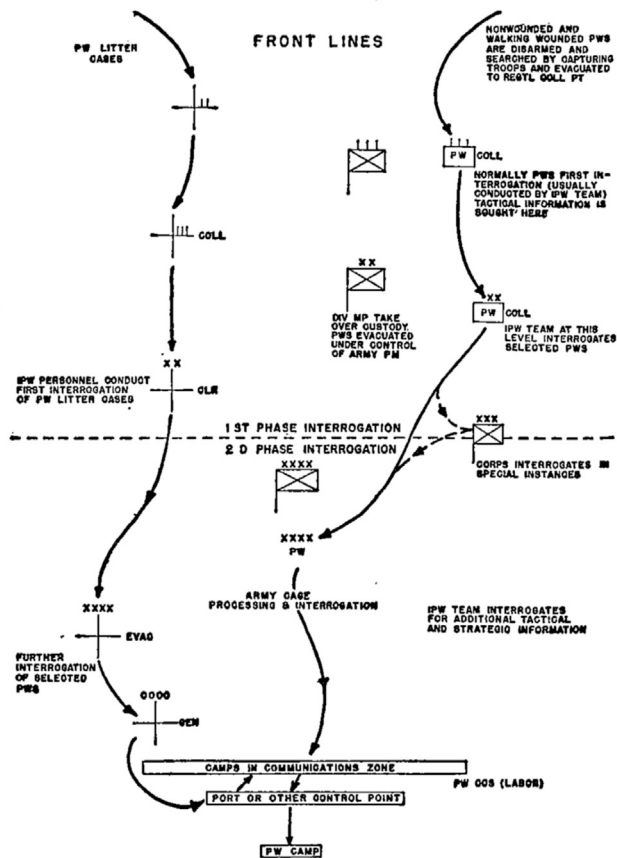


Fig. 5. Enemy prisoner evacuation and interrogation diagram, 1952.

Source: Department of the Army, FM 19-40 *Handling of Prisoners of War*, Washington, D.C., 1952, 18.

disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination'.⁸⁷ Just as racializing the enemy was central to the performance of the Japanese colonial detainment infrastructure and again embedded in its afterlife during the US military occupation, the racial and the imperial Cold Wars merge in particular ways in the Korea's wartime detention infrastructure. Journalist Reginald Thompson highlighted how these boundaries manifested on the battlefield, noting that despite their 'good-natured' demeanor, Marines 'never spoke of the enemy as though they were people, but as one might speak of apes ... I don't think it ever occurred to them that these Koreans were men, women and children with homes, loves, hates, aspirations, and often great courage'.⁸⁸

These dehumanizing narratives were in constant tension with the dispassionate frameworks of modern military doctrine and the simplified binary rhetoric of the Cold War, both of which downplay or erase the role of race in producing the carceral spaces of the decolonizing Pacific. The detained Asian body, then, served for many as their introduction to a new knowledge system and a new subject identity. Troops learned about the enemy by the ways that singular events on the battlefield refracted through racist and Orientalist discourse. Rumors (of the arrival of a train full of passive Chinese prisoners with no military escort, say) reinforced, as one postwar review of the wartime detainment program noted, the American 'attitude of complacency in regard to the docility of

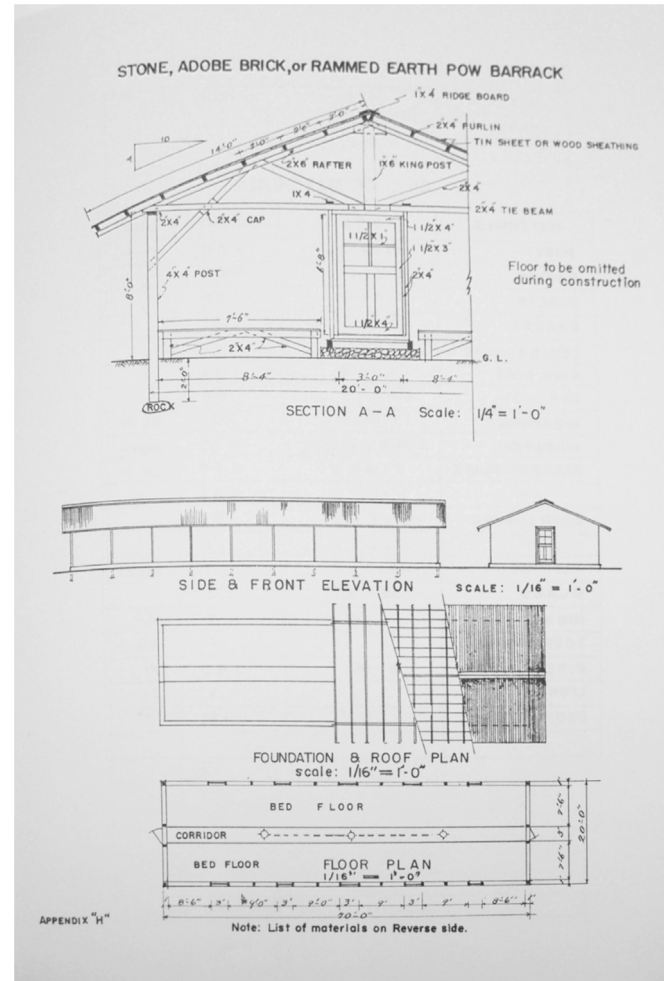


Fig. 6. Standard building specifications for UN prisoner of war barracks.

Source: HQ, United Nations Command, *Operations Instructions, Reference Enemy Prisoners of War: UNC Pamphlet No. 1*, 1952, Appendix H.

prisoners of war'. Such an attitude resonates with the then widely-held belief that all Asians exhibited a 'politeness and acquiescence to [their] host (captors?) or superior that is not present to the same degree in US culture'.⁸⁹

As battlefield strategy shifted away from industrial war with clear fronts and rear areas and towards a prolonged counterinsurgency and an 18-month diplomatic stalemate — which largely focused on what would happen to the prisoners after the war — linear doctrinal mappings no longer accurately described capture and evacuation. With multiple agencies like the national police, military intelligence, the South Korean Army and other UNC personnel all capturing and detaining people in myriad contexts, increased pressure fell on troops and the managers of carceral spaces to rapidly organize populations and make their political affiliations clear immediately. As prisoners who thought that duration of their detainment would be short were learning that it wouldn't be, political identities within the camp hardened and the resulting disorder was so profound that the Korean War prison system became known as the war's second front.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ US Army, Pacific Command, *The Handling of Prisoners of War*, 8.

⁹⁰ Col. K. Gustafson, *The Korean Second Front: Prisoners of War*, Unpublished thesis, US Army War College, 1963.

⁸⁷ M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London, 1992, 4.

⁸⁸ Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 44.



Fig. 7. Handmade weapons (includes flails, hatchets, and knives) captured at the UN EPW Camp, Koje Do, March 5, 1952.

Source: used with permission from the National Archives and Records Administration II in College Park, MD. Photo no. SC-399,364.

The camps, then, became sites of violent struggles for power, most notably at Koje Do where, in May of 1952 organized Communist detainees took Brigadier General Francis Dodd hostage in an attempt to bargain for, among other things, control of their relocation and repatriation and better camp conditions (Fig. 7). These changing camp and battlefield contexts meant that the UN Command, the National Police, and the Counterintelligence Corps would all struggle to 'fix' the identity of their captives as quickly as possible into a coherent set of political classifications — ranging from (KM) 'Known Member of Communist Party' to (A-C) 'Anti-Communist' — so that they could be evacuated through specific channels and kept in separate detention compounds.⁹¹

As Monica Kim notes, however, these classifications were difficult to ascertain, and the extensive use of the classification (U) 'Communist Affiliation Unknown/Political Affiliation Unknown' in the camps was as much an indication that political affiliations were fluid and unclear as it was that 'all Koreans along the political spectrum were potentially suspicious'.⁹² Exacerbating this was the fact that document and identity falsifications were common and utilized as much by persons seeking bodily safety as by partisans hoping to wreak havoc.⁹³ Despite the three years of military occupation that preceded the war, the Americans still had little knowledge of the Koreans' language or customs. The general lack of language skills, even if only to transliterate names into English, made processing in the cages extremely difficult for American servicemen. Uncooperative prisoners giving false names and the

frequent transfer of detainees between compounds only worsened this issue.⁹⁴

The ambiguities and uncertainties surrounding the apprehended body would cascade out from the point of battlefield encounter, and many captives were 'placed in POW channels' with affiliations still classified as (U). They often remained that way for months inside the EPW facilities, adding to the difficulties in securing the camps.⁹⁵ This also led to vastly different types of detention and treatment for the prisoners. While those captured by UN troops and brought to EPW compounds were entitled to the protections of the Geneva Conventions, those apprehended in violent sweeps by the Korean National Police and evacuated to provincial jails as political prisoners, became part of the repressive penal apparatus the US helped set up, fund, train, and oversee. Rather than reflecting any kind of stable communist or anti-communist enemy body or enemy terrain, the EPW population was, to a significant degree, a reflection of where, when, and by whom they were apprehended.

In this landscape of indiscriminate suspicion, doctrine's placeless, linear geographic imaginary premised on a stable friend/enemy distinction failed to provide an adequate framework for capturing, evacuating, and detaining prisoners. Instead, the use of UN camps as an extension of the battlefield, the violent legacies of rightist police power and leftist rebellion under the military occupation, and the United Nations Command's inability to effectively manage the camp compounds all worked to further entrench a particular Orientalist narrative about Asian culture and practice, highlighting the fusion of the racial and imperial Cold Wars. In the same review of the wartime internment program that lamented the assumed 'docility' of the Asian detainee, for instance, the Military Police Board noted that there was also a 'sadism and brutality in many Orientals which was not common in men of better educated areas of the world'. Their 'own lives were held so cheaply', and their 'vigor and drive [led] them to attack with less hesitation than other soldiers'.⁹⁶ When coupled with their 'appalling ability to take losses and to rush forward over piles of their own dead', how could these reviewers conclude that it was anything but 'extremely unwise to operate an Oriental communist POW camp' without extremely qualified security and administrative personnel to manage these preternaturally violent captives?⁹⁷

Rather than frame their analyses of wartime detainment around an understanding of the historically diverse struggles for sovereignty and self-determination that emerged in the wake of colonial occupation and imperial aggression, studies like these tied their conclusions to the notion that the intrinsically violent nature of Asians makes approaching, capturing, detaining, and sorting them much more difficult and dangerous than other populations. Unable to decide whether the enemy was acquiescent or brutal, the conclusion was to settle on both and advance the logic that racial and cultural differences themselves were indistinguishable from national security threats. When the bipolar geopolitical narrative failed analysts as an explanation for the dynamic drivers of battlefield violence, in other words, they deployed the image of an enemy whose very existence expressed a pathological bipolarity.

⁹¹ [Records of the Counterintelligence Corps] Migun CIC Chôngbo Pogoso: RG 319 Office of the Chief of Military History, Seoul, 1996, Vol. 2, 3, 4.

⁹² M. Kim, *Humanity Interrogated: Empire, Nation, and the Political Subject in US and UN-Controlled POW Camps of the Korean War, 1942–1960*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2011, 94.

⁹³ Agent Report, *False Intelligence Organizations or Agents*, dated 4 January 1952, [Records of the Counterintelligence Corps] Migun CIC Chôngbo Pogoso: RG 319 Office of the Chief of Military History, Vol 2, 717.

⁹⁴ J.F. Gebhardt, *The Road to Abu Ghraib: US Army Detainee Doctrine and Experience*, Fort Leavenworth, 2005.

⁹⁵ Location and/or Apprehension of Espionage Agents, date 16 March 1951 [Records of the Counterintelligence Corps] Migun CIC Chôngbo Pogoso: RG 319 Office of the Chief of Military History, 387.

⁹⁶ US Army, *The Handling of Prisoners of War*, 52.

⁹⁷ US Army, *The Handling of Prisoners of War*, 47.

Conclusion

In this paper I have linked together two understudied facets of Anglophone geographic scholarship: Cold War Korea and the historical geographies of wartime detention. If geographers remember the former at all, it is to map it as the site of a hot war in an almost-exclusively transatlantic Cold War premised on clearly delineated geopolitical and territorial concerns. Stories about containment and rollback, iron curtains and power blocs remain the primary focus of this geographic scholarship—leaving transpacific analyses to other disciplines, and by extension, leaving them aside almost entirely.⁹⁸ Within the discipline, the lack of engagement with this case study has meant that this simplified spatial narrative of friendly states fighting enemy states persists largely uninterrogated. Similarly, while there have been numerous studies about the theoretical and material complications of the camp, and outstanding scholarship about individual military prisons like Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, carceral geographers have left the specific historical, spatial, and performative logics of US overseas military detainment mostly unaddressed.

Here I have attempted, however provisionally, to fill this gap in the carceral geographic scholarship while complicating the reductive territorial trappings of a simplified transatlantic Cold War. Carceral geographers have taught us that, as 'geographical solutions to social and economic crises', prisons are key sites for the articulation of state space and for reifying forms of territorial order.⁹⁹ Above I have shown that in cases of international conflict, the construction and utilization of carceral spaces forefronts the role that sequestration plays in marking the boundaries between friend and enemy, inside and outside. It is in these militarized carceral encounters that we can see the extraordinary clarity of these bordering processes, while at the same time they draw attention to the ways that the fluidity and complications of imperial violence

continually undercut and complicate these boundaries.

Further, above I endeavored to turn historical geographers' attention not to the diplomatic history that buttresses the Cold War's imagined long peace (a peace which has somehow come at the cost of 30 million lives), but to the dynamic continua linking colonial modernity to the spatial practices of US military occupation and later, war.¹⁰⁰ More specifically, by moving through the colonial penal assemblage and into the period of military occupation and the Korean War itself, I have tried to show that transnational military detention spaces offer geographers an important spatial lens through which to interrogate the complicated relationships that emerge when the violence of racialized exclusion is used in pursuit of a liberal economic and political order ostensibly premised on universalizing inclusion and global applicability. In tracing this often-disavowed colonial modernity through the US carceral assemblages of the decolonizing Pacific, this interrogation of wartime population and spatial management draws attention to the ways that the production of overseas spaces of detainment interweaves with and exacerbates myriad contradictory practices that constitute the imagined binary geopolitics of the Cold War.

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⁹⁸ For a critical discussion of the transpacific Cold War in Vietnam, see: W. Attewell, *Ghosts in the Delta: USAID and the historical geographies of Vietnam's 'Other' War*, *Environment and Planning A*, 47 (2015) 2257–75.

⁹⁹ R.W. Gilmore, *Fatal couplings of power and difference: Notes on racism and geography*, *The Professional Geographer*, 54 (2002) 1.

¹⁰⁰ J.L. Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War*, New York: Oxford, 1989. See discussion in H. Kwon, *The transpacific Cold War*, 67.