



Building Collective Memory of No Gun Ri: Creating Archives as Memory

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Abstract:

The No Gun Ri incident was a mass killing of Korean refugees by American soldiers during the Korea War. Korean survivors' collective memory was the fundamental source for researchers. The process of documenting No Gun Ri encapsulates all traces of its collective memory, including military archives, testimonies of survivors and veterans and forensic evidence. Further, the web space provides researchers a place to share information. However, archives have done little to build the memory in this whole process.

There has been limited research which explores the archival dimension of collective memory. This study examined the history of No Gun Ri research and analyzed the relationship between building a collective memory and archival documentation of No Gun Ri. This study suggests that archives are memory institutions, a kind of locus of collective memory which provides traceable resources for researchers. More progressively, it insists archives invite researchers to build additional knowledge and memory. In tandem with this study, a pilot web site was created for a total archives on No Gun Ri with traditional and non-traditional archival materials. Additionally, this study encourages researchers to take part in building a collective memory of No Gun Ri through the addition of their own information and discussions.

Introduction

An archives is an institution to which society delegates the responsibility of remembering. French sociologist, Pierre Nora, articulates that modern memory is based on archives where materials provide a tool to trace modern memory.¹ However, traditional discourses in the archival field have restricted archives to simple information providing institutions where

¹ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989): 7.

people can find evidence to substantiate particular events with factual information. This approach has been widely modified in the information fields, embracing libraries, museums, and similar institutions. The information that these institutions provide is not only simple evidence, but rather is an opportunity to consider the past, as a vehicle to revisit and remember the past. The collective information in archives is now regarded as the basis of how people leave records to remember their present in the future. Nevertheless, until recently, the archival field has witnessed only limited research which explores the archival dimension of collective memory. Even fewer efforts have been made to empirically connect archives to memory.

The No Gun Ri incident was a mass killing of Korean refugees by American soldiers at No Gun Ri, in the central part of South Korea from July 26 to 29, 1950 during the Korea War. This event became known to the public through an Associated Press investigative report in 1999. Since it was first publicized, this incident has drawn much attention from various researchers and generated a great deal of controversy concerning the incident itself, interpretation of military documents, and the veracity of source materials. Even though there have been copious discussions and controversies, archives were not able to capture this important dimension of No Gun Ri history. Archival documentation was one of major source to research, but the history, or the memory of No Gun Ri, could not be comprehended without knowing how archival documents influence the No Gun Ri discussions and how formal and informal understandings of this event have been developed. This study, therefore, attempts to look at the archival documentation and related discussions in the published No Gun Ri history in order to clarify how the collective memory of this event has been established as a whole and what archives can contribute to a society for promoting memory studies of historical events.

Collective Memory and Total Archives

Archives as “memory institutions” play a crucial role in determining what may comprise the historical record of a people and their culture.² Archives wield power over the direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity as well as how individuals, groups, and societies know and remember themselves. With power over societal memory, archivists are “performers in the drama of memory-making” and “memory is not something found or collected in archives, but something that is made, and continually re-made.”³ By refusing the traditional view of archives as neutral institutions, Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook assert that archives should serve as “one foundation of historic understanding” and “validate our experience, our perceptions, our narratives, our stories,” for our memory.⁴

This viewpoint emphasizes the social responsibility of archives as rememberers of history and creators of its identity. Through the examination of the general history of archives

² Clara M. Chu, Rebecca Dean and Patrick Keilty, “Epilogue: Meditations on the Future of Latina/o Archival and,” *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* Vol. 5, no. 1 (2009): 1, <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1176&context=gseis/interactions> (11 Apr. 2009).

³ Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz, “Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance,” *Archival Science* 2:3-4 (2002): 172.

⁴ Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1-19.

in relation to the concept of collective memory and heritage, Hugh Taylor maintains that archives need to work in interdepartmental cooperation within other memory institutions, such as museums, art galleries, and local societies, in the heritage spectrum to broadly contribute to the public memory of society.⁵ In discussing the archivist's role in the global context of the information age, Wallot maintains that archivists serve two competing and complementary functions: as keepers of evidence and information of their parent institutions, and their "ultimate and essential role of long-term memory, identity, and values formation and transmission. This totality or combination of these missions, linked through the concept of memory, is greater than the sum of the parts."⁶

Records are created for reasons. Ciaran Trace similarly rejects the positivist assumption that archival documents are "authentic as to procedure and impartial as to creation" because records are socially constructed and maintained entities.⁷ For this reason, they are often considered inauthentic and cognizant of posterity. Therefore, it is a necessary process of interpreting records to construct memory. In the case of the No Gun Ri incident, most of the records discovered are war records by American soldiers. Since No Gun Ri discussions involve two parties—victims and American soldiers, this inauthentic and cognizant aspect of the records was the center of major arguments about the incident while simultaneously being used as primary evidence. Thus, this viewpoint of records as manifestations of political and social power with relation to collective memory should be taken into consideration when examining No Gun Ri history since history is written with what has remained in archives.

The responsibility of archives that "we are the result of the past and cannot easily jump out of its main current" involves the notion of "total archives," where a diversified and contemporary documentary base for future historians is garnered with a global vision of the society and its component parts.⁸ Archivists have traditionally controlled the records central to "memory and identity formation" through vigorous management of records, appraisal and selection and their "constantly evolving description, preservation, and use."⁹ These factors have customarily allowed archives to give greater voice to dominate cultural and bureaucratic structures than to groups who may have been historically marginalized. In the total archives model not only is the voice of the rich, powerful and famous recorded but also that of the meager and menial.¹⁰ In support of this goal, a total archive collection stresses the necessity of preserving all types of archival material.¹¹ For several decades Canada, the birthplace of the total archives, has emphasized a holistic approach to archival collection. In addition to the conventional archival holdings of textual records and photographs, most Canadian archives

⁵ Hugh A. Taylor, "The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries as Heritage," *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982/83): 124-125.

⁶ Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Limited Identities for a Common Identity: Archivists in the Twenty-First Century," *Archivaria* 41 (Spring 1996): 23.

⁷ Ciaran Trace, "What Is Recorded Is Never Simply 'What Happened: Recordkeeping in Modern Organizational Culture," *Archival Science* 2:1-2 (2002): 137.

⁸ Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Building a Living Memory For the History of Our Present: New Perspectives on Archival Appraisal," *Journal of Canadian Historical Association* (1991): 263-282

⁹ From J. Schwartz and T. Cook, "Archives, records, and power: The making of modern memory," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 2.

¹⁰ Terry Cook, "The Tyranny of the Medium: A Comment on 'Total Archives'," *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979-1980): 141.

¹¹ From Wilfred I. Smith, "Introduction," *Archives: Mirror of Canada Past*, (Toronto, 1979), 18, recited from Cook, "Tyranny of the Medium," 142.

attempt to supplement their records by collecting various media such as maps, architectural drawings, art, film, sound recordings and even databases. Yet, these efforts have not always been successful.

Early in the development of the total archives concept, it was assumed that active institutional acquisition programs would be in place as well and that researchers would be best served from central locations. However, in practice there has been little coordination among archives.¹² Additionally, the rise of the web has created a climate in which “territorial distance is gradually losing its status as the primary means of reckoning social and cultural distance and proximity.”¹³ Localities are seen by some as in danger of losing their sense of place. In response to this, many archives, combined with the internet revolution, have created powerful new ways in which researchers can access archival holdings.¹⁴ The rise of “digitally born” archival and museum exhibitions is generating exciting possibilities for scholars and students alike.

The dawn of the digital era offers not simply enlarged possibilities for total archives but also increased responsibilities. Archives are now able to collect more records, and in fact, must proactively seek to collect and preserve digital records if the total archives concept is to have any meaning at all in the twenty first century. All around us the signs of an emerging knowledge economy are visible through an increasing reliance on intangible and symbolic goods. Total archives have long sought to go beyond the traditional archival tradition of only collecting static objects in defined areas. Archives (or memory institutions) are facing growing pressure to deal with documents, publications and information in electronic forms. This new environment demands that memory institutions undertake innovative use of digital communication technologies in the activities of digitization, archiving, presentation and user services.¹⁵

One of the most exciting potentials in the Internet environment is user participation in the creation of archives. It is important that archivists remember that they will be held accountable by tomorrow’s users, who will depend on their decisions to be well formulated.¹⁶ It is even more important that archivists recognize that the formal and information communication of researchers will be a critical part of collective memory over a certain history. If archives wish to exist as a memory institution, to completely fulfill this responsibility and to remain true to the goal of creating a total archive, they need turn to user and their input in collections – specifically in a virtual space. One means by which user participation is solicited in the archival and memory creation process is through the

¹² Teresa Thompson, “Ecumenical Records and Documentation Strategy: Applying ‘Total Archives’,” *Archivaria*, 30 (Summer 1990): 104-5.

¹³ Brien Brothman, “Where’s Home? Documenting Locality at the Dawn of the Electronic Age,” *Archivaria*, 47 (Spring 1999): 151.

¹⁴ Laura Millar, “The Spirit of Total Archives: Seeking a Sustainable Archival System,” *Archivaria*, 47 (Spring 1999): 47.

¹⁵ Carla De Laurentis, “Digital Knowledge Exploitation: ICT, Memory Institutions and Innovation from Cultural Assets,” *Journal of Technology Transfer* 31, no. 1 (January 2006): 79-80.

¹⁶ John M. Dirks, “Accountability, History, and Archives: Conflicting Priorities or Synthesized Strands?” *Archivaria* 57 (Spring 2004): 49.

employment of wiki technology.¹⁷ Whatever the method, archivists must skillfully exploit the concepts of a total archive and with more urgency than ever in an age of rapid digital shift.

Jean François Lyotard argued that only God “has or is the memory of the whole”¹⁸ and no matter how complete, no “total archive” can even boast of completely capturing the memory of any community or event. However, with attention to digital formats and user participation, archives can hope to capture, more completely and holistically, the communal memory of the users it serves than it did before.

Archival Documentation of No Gun Ri

The No Gun Ri incident came to light for the first time in Korea in 1994. Korean survivors and their families had researched the event as a desperate method to publicize their story; in this course, some progressive journalists reported No Gun Ri. However, these news reports did not receive much attention outside Korea. It was when the Associated Press reported this incident in September 1999 that the publicity of No Gun Ri became wider internationally. From the ground of survivors’ collective memory, the No Gun Ri research was expanded to journalists and later to academic researchers.

Early Discussions on No Gun Ri

Before the AP report, No Gun Ri research was sparse and limited within Korea. Most research was conducted or encouraged by survivors or victims’ families. The first publication on No Gun Ri in Korea was a novel in 1994 that was written by a victim’s family member as a means of publicizing their story.¹⁹ This novel was based on what the author, his family and his villagers went through during the Korean War with accounts based on oral history and some support from secondary literature. News reporters, which covered this novel and survivors’ story, were heavily dependent on interviews with survivors to describe the incident.

No Gun Ri was not well-known at this time. It was unknown which U.S. Army unit was stationed at No Gun Ri at the time of killing. An academic paper that was co-authored by a family member of a survivor reported two American military documents to seek the Army unit responsible for the killing. This work attempted to compile all the mosaic fragments from archival documents and secondary literature in order to provide a bigger picture of what survivors insist happened.²⁰ Other researchers analyzed detailed war situations during the last week of July in the broader area to identify U.S. divisions and regimental positions. It was suspected that 5th, 7th, and 8th Regiments of the 1st Cavalry Division were in the area nearby No Gun Ri until July 29. Archival documents that were used to substantiated the 1st Division’s position: the *Communication Log of the 5th Regiment* and a military record for operation, *Operation Plan Number 10-50*. The former document showed that on July 25

¹⁷ Michelle Manafy, “Higher Ground,” *EContent*, (June 2005); 4.

¹⁸ Jean François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford University Press, 1991), 39.

¹⁹ Eun-yong Chong, *Do You Know Our Agony?*(그대, 우리의 아픔을 아는가?) (Seoul, Korea: Tari Media, 1994).

²⁰ Pyong-su Choi and Ku-do Chong, “A Study on a Massacre of Civilian in Yong-dong area, Chung-chong Province, in the Early Stage of the Korean War (1),” *Journal of Humanities* (최병수, 정구도, “6.25 동안 초기 충북 영동지구의 민간인 살상사건에 관한 연구 (1): 노근리의 미국 대양민 집단살상사건을 중심으로,” *인문학*) 17:1: (1999): 245-283.

1950, a day before No Gun Ri, this unit encountered a group of refugees and stopped them but did not have any more information on what happened next.²¹ The latter document called for the 5th Regiment to support the 8th Regiment's disengagement from the NKPA and rearward movement out of Yongdong, a bigger area of No Gun Ri. This document also showed that the 7th Regiment was charged as Divisions Reserve to support the 5th Regiment.²² Two North Korean newspaper articles were also used for corroborating the fact that the North Korean Army arrived at No Gun Ri on July 29 and for a general description of the killing.²³ Circumstantial evidence was also discussed based on secondary literature, including the general status of U.S. soldiers who were ill-prepared and prone to panic about North Korean infiltration.

Major issues surrounding the killing include the evacuation of villagers on the previous night by warning and escort of American soldiers, examining the refugees' belongings, and air attacks on railroad tracks (around 100 people were killed by air strafing) before the killing under the railroad bridge at No Gun Ri. Additional issues concerned survivors' individual experiences under the railroad overpass tunnels during the time of the massacre were supported by survivors' testimony. There were also considerable efforts to estimate the number of deaths. North Korean newspaper reports of 1950 were used as it was reported that there were 400 bodies piled up in tunnels at No Gun Ri.

Because this time period evidenced only a small amount of publications, the arguments and discussions on No Gun Ri were sketchy and less extensive. A total of four archival documents were used in the early research. Researchers gave significant credibility to these sources as they granted the value that they were written right after the incident. American military documents were given special credibility for specific information of time and place, since secondary literature had only an overall description of general situations during longer periods of time and over wider places. In addition to archival documents, the fact that these villagers have been honoring their dead on the same day, year after year, for 50 years was noted.

The AP Story on No Gun Ri in 1999: September 1999 to April 2000

An AP correspondence in Seoul, Korea, Sanghun Choe, wrote a story about No Gun Ri, covering the survivors' allegations and the U.S. military's denial, when survivors were rejected over a petition to the U.S. government in 1998. This report was a compelling story, and the AP began its own research. The AP team found records discrediting the denial and obtained interviews from veterans who participated or witnessed the incident. Finally, the AP produced a story on September 29, 1999 that caught great attention throughout the world. Major newspapers in the U.S., including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, headlined their front pages with this story from the news wire. In a matter of days, the U.S. and the Korean governments announced their intentions to conduct full investigations.

²¹ S-2-3 Journal, the 5th Cavalry Regiment: Ka-Ri, Korea, 1950. 7. 25-29.

²² The 1st Cavalry Division, *Operation Plan Number 10-50*, Hwanggan (1088-1483), 1950. 7. 24. 23:15.

²³ Chon Uk, an article in *Korean People's Daily*(조선인민보), Aug. 10, 1950; Chon Uk, another article in *Korean People's Daily*, Aug. 19, 1950.

The AP report was written based on interviews with survivors and American veterans and archival documents discovered from various archives in the U.S. It prompted many news reporters to seek more historical evidence of the incident. The materials that Korean survivors discovered in previous years received new attention by researchers. The AP and other news agencies soon published more reports on No Gun Ri with the additional discovery of archival documents. The AP report significantly influenced the research following by either providing substantiating source materials or inspiring other researchers to endeavor on the subject.

After the AP report, discussions about the background of No Gun Ri were prolific. Researchers considered circumstantial understanding about the war's general situation in Yongdong as essential information to explain the incident. Researchers argued that ill-preparedness for war and misunderstanding about the real war strength of the North Korean People's Army laid the general foundation of U.S. soldiers' confusion and fear. The soldiers had little understanding of Korea. A historian argued that a racially-based attitude might have aggravated the situation.²⁴ Researchers pointed out that this situation may have affected the soldiers at No Gun Ri. The *New York Times* news articles during wartime in 1950 and secondary literature provided space for this discussion.

It was finally identified that that the 2nd Battalion of the 7th Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division was stationed at No Gun Ri at the time of the killing. This fact was proved by archival documents such as war diaries of the 7th Regiment, communication logs of nearby U.S. units, and map overlays of the 1st Cavalry Division in addition to several secondary pieces of literature. That the 2nd Battalion of the 7th Regiment arrived at Yongdong on July 25 and the fact that these soldiers retreated to No Gun Ri in disarray as word of an enemy attack that night was revealed through some primary documents in tandem with secondary materials. A U.S. military intelligence report indicated the North Korean's front line was four miles from No Gun Ri on July 26. A 7th Regiment war diary and North Korean newspapers of early August 1950 proved that 7th Regiment retreated from and North Korean troops arrived at No Gun Ri on July 29.

Since the survivors alleged that they were strafed from the air before being fired upon under the railroad overpasses, researchers searched supporting evidence that air strikes might have targeted refugees. Several Air Force after-mission reports from late July and early August 1950 were discovered and they clearly stated that pilots sometimes strafed "people in white" or "people appear[ing] to be evacuees" or people who "could have been refugees."²⁵ A *Washington Post* article introduced additional document that refers to a P-80 war plane "with allied markings" strafing the railroad in the vicinity of No Gun Ri on the morning of July 25.²⁶ Another document describing the strafing was a North Korean soldier's diary,

²⁴ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korea War II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Yoksabipyungsa, Seoul, Korea, 2002), 691.

²⁵ *After-mission report*, 35th Fighter Bomber Squadron, 8th Fighter Bomber Group, Mission 35-1, July 20, 1950; *After-mission report*, 35th Fighter Bomber Squadron, 8th Fighter Bomber Group, Mission 35-4, July 20, 1950; *After-mission report*, 35th Fighter Bomber Squadron, 8th Fighter Bomber Group, Mission 35-3, July 31, 1950.

²⁶ Michael Dobbs, Roberto Suro, "Army Dismissed Massacre Allegation; Koreans Sought Redress for 5 Years; Cohen Orders Probe," *The Washington Post* (Oct.1,1999).

stating that “U.S. bombers had swooped over Yongdong and turned it into a sea of fire” on July 26.²⁷

Among archival evidence, the AP discovered critical military documents that substantiate harsh refugee control policies in the Army. These documents stated straightforward expressions, such as, “No refugees to cross the front line. Fire [on] everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children;”²⁸ “No repeat no refugees will be permitted to cross lines at any time;”²⁹ “All civilians seen in this area are to be considered as enemy and action taken accordingly;”³⁰ “all civilians moving around the combat zone will be considered as unfriendly and shot.”³¹ The documents are dated from July 24 to 27 – just before and during the time of No Gun Ri (July 26 to 29, 1950) – and issued by the Eighth Army headquarters (the top command of the U.S. in Korea) to front-line units and by neighbor units. Considering the issue dates and sources, most No Gun Ri researchers including the AP reporters linked these documents directly to the incident. Due to the refugee policies and the fear about the North Korean infiltration, Korean refugees were the target for suspected infiltrators. A *Washington Post* reporter discovered another war diary of July 24 1950, describing confusing situation of suspecting refugees and the controlling refugee flows.³²

Survivors and American veterans’ interviews were particularly critical in discussing the evolution of the killing at the tunnels. Many survivors testified that the majority of the refugees were elderly, women, and children, and some veterans said they were not convinced these people were the enemy. Whether there were any enemy soldiers among the refugees or any gun fire emanating from the tunnels was contentious because the conflicting accounts of survivors and veterans. Order issuance to shoot those refugees was also a keenly contentious discussion in the entire No Gun Ri body of research because the remaining refugee control documents were from neighboring units or from the Army command structure in Korea, and there exists no archival evidence that, as some research argue, the 7th Regiment actually received these orders.

Researchers seemed to consider oral testimonies of survivors and veterans as credible, especially when those testimonies were supported by archival documents. The North Korean news reports of 1950 were also regarded as credible because the contents were very similar to survivor accounts and other recently disclosed facts. Korean victims’ death records were used

²⁷ Bruce Cumings, “Korean My Lai,” *The Nation* (Oct. 25, 1999). Also available at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/19991025/cumings> (May 1, 2009).

²⁸ *A Communication Log*, the 8th Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division, July 24th 1950. In the Records of U.S. Army Commands, Cavalry Regiments 1940-1967, Box 42, RG 338, NARA.

²⁹ *Message*, EUSAK, CNR: G 20578 KGP, 26 Jul 50, sub: *Controlled Movement of All Refugees*. In Records of U.S. Army Commands, Korean Military Advisory Group, Box 23, RG 338, NARA.

³⁰ *Memorandum*, Commander, 25th Infantry Division, 27 Jul 50. In AG Command Reports (War Diaries) 1949-1954, 25th Infantry Division History Jul 50, Entry 429, Box 3746, RG 407, NARA.

³¹ *War Diary*, 25th Infantry Division, 24-30 Jul 50. In AG Command Reports (War Diaries), 1949-1954, 25th Infantry Division History Jul 50, Box 3746, RG 407, NARA.

³² *War Diary*, 25th Infantry Division, 24-30 Jul 50. In AG Command Reports (War Diaries), 1949-1954, 25th Infantry Division History Jul 50, Box 3746, RG 407, NARA. This document states, “No one desired to shoot innocent people, but many of the innocent-looking refugees dressed in the traditional white clothes of the Koreans turned out to be North Korean soldiers transporting ammunition and heavy weapons in farm wagons and carrying military equipment in packs on their backs. . . . There were so many refugees that it was impossible to screen and search them all.”

for evidence as these documents show some elderly people of that time were still alive in record because the whole family was killed at No Gun Ri and there were no survivors to file a death record. In death records, an entry for a place of death was inscribed as “under the No Gun Ri railroad bridge” for many records.

Controversy over the veracity of news source: May 11 2000 to January 2001

The AP team won the Pulitzer Prize for the investigative journalism with the No Gun Ri story in April 2000. Shortly after this event, there was another round of controversy on No Gun Ri. In May 11th 2000, a news article in the *Stars and Stripes* (a newspaper for U.S. troops) raised a question that some of the sources that the AP used were in question as to their veracity.³³ This report was relayed by a *U.S. News and World Report* article and garnered more attention.³⁴

The controversy is that three veterans among those who were interviewed by the AP might have not participated in or witnessed the incident in question. These suspicions are based on their military records. Morning reports and military personnel records indicated one of the veterans, Edward Daily, was not a machine gunner of the 7th Regiment, but instead a mechanic from the 27th Ordnance Maintenance Group at the time of No Gun Ri. Two other veterans, Delos Flint and Eugene Hesselman, were concerned that they might have not seen the killing because military records note they were sent to a rear hospital due to an injury on July 26 1950, the first day of the No Gun Ri incident. Daily later admitted that the accounts he provided to the AP may have been heard secondhand, and he could not dispute the archival evidence. The other two veterans did not agree to follow-up interviews by other researchers. Even though there was controversy over the interviewees’ reliability, the consensus of researchers seems to be that the veracity of the report concerning the No Gun Ri killings stands. The central element of the AP story - that American troops fired on refugees - was confirmed by other researchers including the U.S. government’s investigation team. The Pulitzer Committee reaffirmed its award to the AP regardless of the controversy over the sources.

The background of the massacre were still discussed. U.S. soldiers were not ready for a war and the soldiers of the 7th Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division were not an exception to this situation.³⁵ Another aspect of circumstantial elements for the incident, the air strafing before the killing were discussed intensively with new discovery of documents. Survivors alleged that when they reached No Gun Ri with an escort of American soldiers, they were screened for any weapons. Then some survivors saw the soldiers communicated on radio and left. Then there were aircrafts approaching and strafing them. Thus, survivors raised an issue if the Army called for air operation to the Air Force to explain their experience.

In June 2000, a CBS correspondent reported a declassified document, called the “Rogers’ Memo,” dated July 25, 1950. This document was created by Col. Turner Rogers and

³³ Ed Offley, “New Evidence Challenges *No Gun Ri* Massacre Charges,” *The Stars and Stripes*, May 11, 2000.

³⁴ Joseph L. Galloway, “Doubts about a Korean ‘Massacre’,” *U.S. News and World Report*, May 12, 2000 on their web-site: May 22, 2000 in the magazine.

³⁵ As a reporter describes, the 7th Regiment - “the storied regiment of George Custer and Little Bighorn- were largely untested. Many of the troops were no more than frightened teenagers with no combat experience, led by too few battle-tested officers and sergeants.” Joseph L. Galloway, “Doubts about a Korean ‘Massacre’.”

noted that the Army had requested the Air Forces to strafe civilians and the Air Forces complied. The documents also states that this operation could receive wide publicity and cause embarrassment to the air force and the government.³⁶ Many researchers agreed that the contents reveal military operations toward Korean refugees in terms of air attacks, which in part corroborated survivors' claims of being attacked by aircraft while staying on railroad tracks.

Captured North Korean news reports and additionally discovered North Korean military documents from 1950 were also used as the main archival sources.³⁷ The reporters of North Korean newspapers came to No Gun Ri immediately after U.S. troops withdrew and reported the accounts from the survivors of how the killing occurred. These confiscated North Korean military documents were translated and circulated within forty units of the U.S. Army, according to another document attached to the North Korean documents. The fact that No Gun Ri was known to the Army from the time of the war was mentioned by some researchers.

Since the AP report and the vigorous controversies over their news source, many new archival documents have emerged and influenced the discussion of No Gun Ri. Discovery of some documents led to more No Gun Ri discussions, and the discussions disputing some source materials led to the discovery of even more military documents. Researchers now utilized more archival documents than interviews.

Governments' Investigation Reports: After January 11, 2001

Finally, in January 2001, government investigative reports from Korea and the U.S. were published. Both governments established an investigative team and published the results respectively based on their positions and viewpoints. The *Report of the No Gun Ri Review* of the U.S. team employed very passive viewpoints of the incident in which the responsibility of the incident was imposed on the confusing war situation, making it an unfortunate but largely unavoidable accident. The Korean government's report, the *Report of the No Gun Ri Investigation* (노근리사건 조사결과보고서), had much more liberal viewpoints on the incident than its counterpart and recognized a large part of what survivors had alleged. In general, the governmental reports were evaluated to contribute revelations of a great amount of military documents and other source materials that could be used for further research.

No Gun Ri discussions were very prolific due to both governments' investigation reports. Both governments announced that they had conducted extensive research reviewing more than a million pages of archival documents, conducting interviews with almost 200 veterans and 75 survivors, and examining all possible forensic evidence. The two governments did not assent to the investigation results as a whole from their counterpart, but

³⁶ Memorandum to General Timberlake, "Policy on Strafing Civilian Refugees," Colonel T.C. Rogers, DCS/Operations, HQ 5AF Advance, 25 Jul 50.

³⁷ Kim Chae-Uk, Military Affairs Committee, Choe Chong-Hak, OIC, Cultural Section, Headquarters First Army Camp, "Cultivation of Hatred to Obtain Revenge," to All Units Under this Command, Aug. 2, 1950; Kim Chae-Uk, Military Affairs Committee, Choe Chong-Hak, OIC, Cultural Section, Headquarters First Army Camp, "Precautions To the Troops," Aug. 8, 1950; Chon Uk, an article in *Korean People's Daily*(조선인민보) (Aug. 10, 1950); Chon Uk, an article in *Korean People's Daily*(조선인민보), Aug. 19, 1950; Yi Tae-jun, "To the Frontlines," *Newspaper of the Workers*(노동신문) (Aug. 5, 1950); Pak Ung-gol, "Diary from a frontline: from Yongdong to Kimchon," *Democratic Korea*(민주조선) (Sep. 7, 1950).

they agreed that “In the desperate opening weeks of defensive combat in the Korean War, U.S. soldiers killed or injured an unconfirmed number of Korean refugees in the last week of July 1950 during a withdrawal under pressure in the vicinity of No Gun Ri.”³⁸

The biggest criticism of government investigation reports was their interpretation and presentation of evidence. The U.S. investigation team was very cautious about taking legal responsibility and too passive about making a precedent for other similar incidents. Therefore, their interpretation of evidence was very strict.³⁹ Some Korean researchers criticized U.S. investigators for using two different criteria of interpreting evidence and claimed that they did not take the narrowest interpretation in, for example, blaming the North Korean infiltration but failed to link it to No Gun Ri. The team was also criticized for not placing adequate weight on oral history. In fact, the U.S. team did not use survivors’ interview transcripts, as a whole, due to the ambiguity, they said, of the criteria of conducting the interviews. Some researchers, including the U.S. investigation team, did not place much weight on oral history due to the possible fallibility of human memory, while others, including the Korean team, considered the collective memory of survivors more credible than recollections of individual veterans.

Due to the extensive research by both governments, discussions on the surrounding of the incident were well grounded on a variety of source materials. The U.S. report especially emphasized the confusing situation related to refugee problems, North Korean infiltration tactics, and the condition of the U.S. troops as major factors of the No Gun Ri massacre.⁴⁰ The U.S. report maintained that the 1st Cavalry Division constantly had contact with the enemy and described the situation at No Gun Ri as intense.⁴¹ However, it was also noted that the 7th Regiment was not in immediate contact with the enemy as researchers cited Army intelligence reports to determine the North Korean front line that was placed four miles from No Gun Ri at on July 26 and moved forward less than two miles toward No Gun Ri on July 28.⁴²

More discoveries of archival documents promoted vigorous discussions on the general refugee policies over the whole war period. The AP research team later published a book, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri*, in 2001 from the expansion of their original research.⁴³ This book introduced numerous additional documents detailing refugee policies and standing orders to

³⁸ Statement of Mutual Understanding Between the United States and the Republic of Korea on the No Gun Ri Investigations, January 2001, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2001/smu20010111.html> (May 1, 2009).

³⁹ A historian criticized that “The Pentagon inquiry had not been able to find any direct evidence of orders to fire on civilians. The AP team had found several such orders in their archival searches, but the Pentagon used a narrow definition that would have required such an order to say, in effect, ‘See those innocent civilians over there? Shoot them.’” Bruce, “Occurrence at Nogun-Ri Bridge -An Inquiry into the History and Memory of a Civil War,” *Critical Asian Studies*, 33:4 (2001): 512.

⁴⁰ A journalist criticized that “the 192-page report describes a period of disarray, poor leadership and confused troops in the early deployment of U.S. Army divisions in the Korean War, and says the passage of 50 years ‘greatly reduces the possibility that we will ever know all of the facts’ of No Gun Ri.” Charles J. Hanley, “Investigation leaves key question unanswered,” *The Associated Press* (January 11th 2001).

⁴¹ Department of the Army Inspector General, *Report of the No Gun Ri Review*, January 2001, <http://www.army.mil/nogunri> (May. 1 2008).

⁴² Hanley, Choe, and Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri*, (NY: Henry Holt, 2001),43.

⁴³ Hanley, Choe, and Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri*, (NY: Henry Holt, 2001).

fire, issued generally over the whole war period.⁴⁴ In addition, another piece of archival evidence that was discovered by a historian ignited yet another round of discussion on No Gun Ri in 2006.⁴⁵ The document, written by John J. Muccio, U.S. Ambassador to Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State, mentioned that a meeting of top officials of the U.S. in Korea was held on July 25 1950 to discuss a rigid refugee policy which implied using lethal forces on refugees if they approached U.S. lines. This document became crucial evidence, especially because the *No Gun Ri Review* described that refugee control policies was established to protect refugees and did not mean to authorize the use of deadly forces. Insisted it was rather the misinterpretation of battlefield soldiers to use their weapons for refugee control.⁴⁶ The new emergence of archival documents undeniably led to more discussions in research.

The argument about air attacks to refugees was supported by newly available archival documents: *After Mission Reports of the 5th Air Force* on July 26 and 27.⁴⁷ These documents indicate there were strafings very close to No Gun Ri - including an unidentified target - and the result was "good." The survivors' assumption that American soldiers called in an attack on the refugees by radio was disputed as the Korean and U.S. teams found it difficult to request an air attack from the ground due to the technology available during wartime. The U.S. team supposed that if there were an air attack, it would have been an accidental air strike caused by the misidentification of targets. However, the Roger's memo already revealed that ground forces often requested air strikes to the Air Force to fire on civilians and the Air Force complied.

The description of the details about the shooting under the tunnels was supported by forensic analysis of bullet marks and shells that were embedded in the tunnels in addition to survivors' testimony. This forensic data analysis that the Korean investigation team provided indicated that the majority of bullet shells were U.S.-made. The U.S. investigation team did not determine how many refugees were killed but mentioned that the number was likely far less than survivors alleged. The Korean team tried several methods to extrapolate the number of casualties using all possible sources including the genealogical information and the list of graves for those killed and concluded that 248 people died, injured or ended up missing at No Gun Ri while survivors alleged more than 400 people were killed.

Collective Memory of No Gun Ri

The No Gun Ri research began from the ground of the collective memory of survivors. Later more archival documents were discovered and used extensively in research. No Gun Ri researchers used archival materials more often, with credibility, to prove circumstantial facts and fragments surrounding the incident. Also, archival documents were the catalysts for discussions on the subject and the impetus for further research. Archival sources were an

⁴⁴ The 61 Field Artillery Battalion of the 1st Cavalry Division, *Journal*, Aug 29th, 1950.; The Field Artillery Command of the 1st Cavalry Division, *Journal*, Aug 29th 1950.; The 35th Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division, *War Diary*, Aug 17th 1950.; The 35th Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division, *War Diary*, Aug 17th 1950.; U.S.S. Valley Forge (CV-45), *The Report of Operation for the U.S. Navy Carrier Valley Forge for 16 July to 31 July 1950*, Aug. 9th 1950.

⁴⁵Sahr Conway-Lanz, "Beyond *No Gun Ri*: Refugees and the United States Military in the Korean War," *Diplomatic History* 29:1 (January 2005): 49-81.

⁴⁶ ⁴⁶ Department of the Army Inspector General, *Report of the No Gun Ri Review*, January 2001, <http://www.army.mil/nogunri>: 26. (May 1, 2008).

⁴⁷ *Fighter-Bomber After Mission Report missions* 35-11, 35-12, 35-7 for 26 and 27 Jul 50.

important foundation on which to build and influence the knowledge of No Gun Ri and, consequently, played a role in establishing the No Gun Ri history and its collective memory, particularly as one of the major sources for related and collaborative evidence.

The interpretation of documents was of special importance in the process of No Gun Ri research under the circumstances where there were discrepancies between survivors' and veterans' testimonies. In fact, many times military documents themselves were targets of controversy in terms of how to interpret them. The U.S. government, especially, took the narrowest interpretation as a means of diluting responsibility and blamed the confusing war situation. Thus, the interpretation of documents was one of most contention discussions among researchers and a crucial process of establishing their arguments.

Therefore, the whole process of controversies and discussions around No Gun Ri is a critical part of understanding this incident. Yet, published materials have documented only formal exchanges of intellectual communications. Behind the publications, hearty informal communications vividly occurred. No Gun Ri researchers used informal sources more often to seek relevant materials. This is especially due to the efforts of the survivors' organization and some journalists in sharing related materials. No Gun Ri researchers developed strong networks of source information sharing with other researchers who shared a similar viewpoint about the incident. They provided their own information to researchers and they seemed to have prioritized the public interest or the honor for their own military group over the institutional interest in terms of sharing information. When the AP reporters encountered a problem with publishing further research, they shared their own discovered archival documents with Korean journalists. A military historian shared what he discovered from military documents from the standpoint of American veterans with other journalists who shared the same understanding about the event and who themselves were veterans of this army unit.

Researchers also shared archival documents with the general readership, with additional information such as video clips of the interviews with survivors, veterans, and other experts in law and the military, through the Internet. The AP reporters posted military documents on their websites, which they discovered during the process of their research. Journalists from *U.S. News and World Report* also shared the documents they used for their arguments on the web. Later researchers could take an advantage of such information through web access. As a whole, the collective memory of No Gun Ri has been built based on the discovery of related archival materials, the accumulation of survivors' collective memories and their own archives, and through the sharing of such information. This atmosphere, by and large, became the foundation of building blocks in No Gun Ri history.

The informal communications and the web space invited more researchers from various fields to this subject. In fact, No Gun Ri attracted researchers with a variety of expertise in areas such as law, sociology, political science, and media studies. Digitizing archival documents and making them available online greatly promoted researchers' use of them. In fact, the archival community has discussed more active approaches to their patrons by utilizing digital technology of their holdings for some time. Obviously, the case of No Gun Ri demonstrates the archival community was still not very proactive to reach out to researchers with digital technology.

Most of web sites that had provided images of documents and other materials disappeared after greater interest from the public began to diminish. It was failed to preserve all the broadcasting in mass media, including TV news shows, documentaries, and special program on this topic. TV is a powerful media to form the public knowledge on a certain topic. However, the lost of this information would defect of complete understanding of the incident as a whole. It has been almost ten years since the AP reported this incident. The ten years have witnessed the research sources are being lost, rather than built. The ten years of period still has not observed any efforts from archives to preserve the memory of this incident.

A Total Archives for No Gun Ri

This study suggests that archives are memory institutions, a kind of locus of collective memory for historical events and providers of traceable resources for researchers. This kind of archives can be called “total archives” as they house not only traditional archival materials but also materials in various formats from various sources. More progressively, the archives are asserted to invite researchers to discuss and build additional knowledge and memory, which consequently becomes a part of collective memory.

In tandem with this study, a pilot web site was created for a total archives on No Gun Ri.⁴⁸ It hosts an encyclopedic narrative of the incident as well as various materials, including the images of major military documents, web resources, formally published works, news reports and so forth. This pilot web site of No Gun Ri total archives was created using wiki technology. The purpose of this project is to understand the importance of the collective memory of this event in a bigger picture and to create an archives as a memory institution. Thus, This type of archives hope to witness the building process of the collective memory of No Gun Ri by the researchers and general public, based on whatever materials available up to date. The wiki technology provides particular solutions for this purpose: the feature that anyone can edit and change the contents will provide a method for users to participate in building No Gun Ri knowledge. Also documentation on “who have changed what” would also provide important context surrounding discussions and development of No Gun Ri history. Additional features of user comments on individual documents or a forum space where researchers can engage in more vigorous discussions will be addressed in near future. For now, this archives begins with basic information to provide users and has not yet received dynamic responses by enthusiastic users. The beauty of a total archives, however, is that it can begin small but grow big.

This study also suggests that archives as memory institutions should create a project archives or a project collection of a certain event of interest. As an example of the No Gun Ri archives in this study, this type of project archive can consist of web resources, digital images of traditional materials, oral histories, video clips, links to book reviews, news reports, discussion forum among researcher and additional information by researchers (e.g. their own pictures of the incident sites, and the formal and informal discussions for the topic): a total archives of a historic event.

⁴⁸ The URL for this web site is <http://nogunri.wikispot.org>.

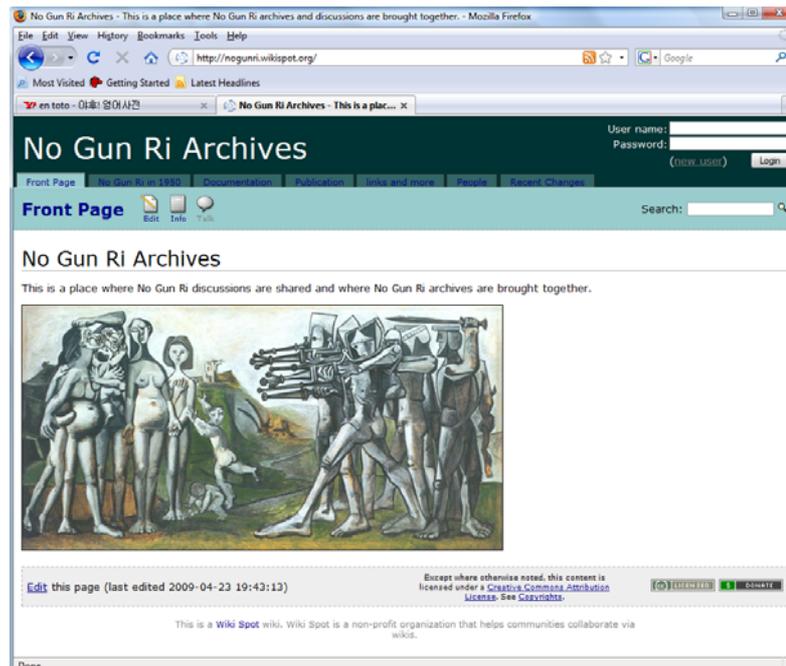


Figure 1. A Total Archives for No Gun Ri (No Gun Ri Archives on wikispot.org)

Conclusion

One interesting finding in this study is that the active archival users in No Gun Ri research were not typical archives users. The general public (survivors and family) and journalists were some of the most frequent archives-goers in addition to historians (including military historians). In the digital age and in the web environment, who would be the users of an archives will be even harder to anticipate.

Archivists know about history, and the historical contexts of their collections. Their role in society requires them to deeply engage in research about their collection, rather than to be mere processors of collection. Technologies can be outsourced, but knowing the contents of their collection cannot be. With the knowledge of their holdings and using the advantages of web environment and technology, archives can expand their services to broader audiences. Anticipating who will use archives is difficult, but outreaching to potential users with the contents of holdings and technology can create opportunities that archives have never had before.

Users and their participation in consuming information and adding value to aggregation of information are the key elements in building collective memory in archives. Archives are being held accountable by further users who will use, create, and aggregate intellectual building blocks of knowledge based on the information available in an archives. History is always written based on the interpretation and understanding of various sources in addition to controversies and discussions among researchers as seen again from the No Gun Ri case. As memory institutions that provide traceable resources of history and societal memory, archives can proactively provide a physical or a virtual place where collective memory is built in tandem with enthusiastic users' participation.

Biography

Donghee Sinn is an assistant professor in the Department of Information Studies, College of Computing and Information in the State University of New York at Albany in the United States. Her research and teaching area is the archives and records management. She has a Ph. D. from the University of Pittsburgh in the U.S. and has work experience from the National Archives of Korea.