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Myung-Lim Park

Journal of Korean Religions, Volume 9, Number 1, April 2018, pp. 105-130  
(Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jkr.2018.0004>



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# Towards a Universal Model of Reconciliation: The Case of the Jeju 4.3 Incident

Myung-Lim Park

## Abstract

In April 1948, what began as an uprising on Jeju Island against US military occupation turned into a full-scale massacre by government suppression forces that resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Jeju residents. For many decades, under the anticommunist and authoritarian South Korean government, the truth of what became known as the Jeju 4.3 Incident was not investigated and the victims went unrecognized. With democratization, a remarkable transformation took place as a government-sponsored commission was established to establish the truth about the massacre and to recognize the victims. In this process, the civilians of Jeju played both a major and magnanimous role that sought to determine the truth and commemorate the victims but not to seek retribution. As a result, Jeju's identity has undergone a dramatic change as it has come to be known as a place synonymous with forgiveness, peace, human rights, and reconciliation. The people of Jeju are now forging a remarkable path towards truth, reconciliation, and coexistence that may be referred to as the "Jeju model." This paper firmly argues that this Jeju model should not be limited to Jeju but be extended to South Korea, the whole Korean Peninsula, East Asia, and even beyond as a way of healing past trauma and wrongdoing.

**Keywords:** Jeju 4.3 Incident, massacre, perpetrators, victims, Yŏngmowŏn, reconciliation, forgiveness

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**Myung-Lim Park** is the chair of the Department of Area Studies, the Graduate School at Yonsei University, where he also serves as Director of the Kim Dae-jung Presidential Library and Museum and Center for Human Peace and Healing. Among his research interests are peace studies, constitutional studies, political theory, and modern Korea. His recent publications include, "The Distinctiveness of Republicanism in Modern Korea: Ideas and Constitutions" in *Republicanism in Northeast Asia* (Routledge 2015), "Der Koreakrieg" in *Länderbericht Korea* [BPB country report: Korea] (Bundeszentrale 2015), "Constitutional Reform for Democratic Constitutionalism and Semi-Presidentialism" (*Economy and Society* 2016), and the book, *Kang Wŏnyong, in'ganhwa ūi kil, p'yŏnghwa ūi kil* [Kang Wŏnyong, a life devoted to humanization and peace] (Hangilsa 2017).

**Correspondence:** mlpark@yonsei.ac.kr

This work was supported by the Academy of Korean Studies Grant funded by the Korean Government (MEST) (AKS-2010-DZZ-3104).

## Introduction

Theodor Adorno termed the Holocaust as *something unthinkable beyond the unthinkable* (Adorno 2001, 116). Such an expression, the status of *aporia*, something irresolvable with human hands, is perhaps the most apt way of articulating the tragic history of Auschwitz. In human history, *aporia* in the face of events that are “unthinkable beyond the unthinkable” has been endlessly repeated. In the words of Adorno, Auschwitz has “continued to exist after Auschwitz” (Adorno 2001, 101). The Jeju 4.3 Incident of 1948 was one such “Auschwitz after Auschwitz.”

In traditional times, Jeju was known to Koreans as a peripheral place, an island of exile, adversity, and hardship (Hyön Kiyöng 1983). Jeju maintained its various identities as a place of popular unrest, suppressed silence, and tourism during South Korea’s authoritarian period and the Cold War. With the process of South Korea’s democratization and the revelation of the hidden truths of the Jeju 4.3 Incident, Jeju has also become known as a place of resistance and massacre.

Through the historical process, the complex identity of Jeju has come to rest upon images of periphery, tourism, resistance, and massacre. Needless to say, Jeju has a long history of oppression and silence predating the democratic transition. Today the island finds itself at a historical inflection point as it seeks to transform its identity into a place of reconciliation and peace. Since the tragedy of the 4.3 Incident, Jeju’s identity changed has dramatically to become a place synonymous with forgiveness, peace, human rights, and reconciliation.

In the history of Jeju, the period of the 4.3 atrocities was a sort of “historical year zero,” when all lives were devastated and all hopes lost.<sup>1</sup> However, the people of Jeju are now forging a remarkable path towards truth, reconciliation, and coexistence that goes beyond the “year zero.” This effort shall be referred to here as the “Jeju model” or “Jeju way.” This paper also firmly argues that this Jeju model should not be limited to Jeju but be extended to South Korea, the whole Korean Peninsula, East Asia, and even beyond. The Jeju 4.3 Incident was an indigenous global conflict as well as part of a “global civil war.” It was also the explosion of a local conflict that reflected the political divisions

of the two Koreas. Thus, as a way of healing past trauma and wrongdoing, this Jeju model may be applied from the local level to the global, or *vice versa*.

Thus, this process of overcoming the legacies of the past may be termed the Jeju model of reconciliation, and serve as a prototype for coping with other cases of severe oppression in South Korea. It may also serve as a precedent for overcoming the ideological divisions between North and South Korea as well the future integration of the people of both sides. Thirdly, the process might also be shared with the victims of other mass tragedies throughout the world as a way of reconciling with the past. In other words, the factors and attributes of the Jeju model should be scrutinized to determine whether it might be applied at more general or universal levels. Even though the Cold War bifurcation of the world contributed to the Jeju violence and massacre, Jeju would share its experiences of reconciliation and accord with the world.

Thus, the truth disclosure, transitional justice, and reconciliation process of the Jeju 4.3 Incident needs a thorough comparison with existing cases of post-transitional justice in order to advocate the Jeju case.<sup>2</sup> To date there have been several models for dealing with past wrongdoings, such as trial (Nuremberg, Tokyo), retaliation (Israel-Palestine, early Northern Ireland, and Rwanda), concealment/negation (China, Russia, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Mozambique), truth/reconciliation (South Africa, South Korea, and Latin American countries), and coalition (Finland and Austria after World War II, late Northern Ireland, and Germany after unification). Proposing the Jeju model on a global scale would elucidate the current achievements, characteristics, challenges, and limitations of it.

Other existing models have shown certain limitations or distinctions. The trial model was ineffective in healing either social trauma or the trauma of individual victims and their bereaved families by being nothing more than a process for bringing those who were responsible to justice. The retaliation model made social and individual healing nearly impossible. The concealment/negation model does not even approach individual healing. The truth/reconciliation model, regardless of its high appraisal in the past, is limited by its lack of specific social and economic rectifications. The coalitional model connects healing, reconciliation, and community restoration.

### **Features of the Jeju Model: Mutual Forgiveness, Government-Civilian Cooperation, Persecutor-Victim Reconciliation, and Coexistence**

The most important characteristic of the Jeju model is its spirit of mutual forgiveness.<sup>3</sup> In the process of truth revelation the people of Jeju demonstrated self-restraint, tolerance, and a spirit of conciliation in order not to revive past conflicts. They neither expressed a mentality of retaliation nor resorted to any violence. This enabled persecutors and victims, ruling and opposition parties, and conservatives and progressives to achieve meaningful cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

The Jeju model presents the zenith of tolerance and reconciliation without the least legal punitive action, resurrection of fierce conflicts between victims and perpetrators, or mutual retaliation, even after democratization, this despite the tremendous bloodshed and casualties of the 4.3 Incident. Thus, the Jeju model shall remain the exemplary case study for other attempts at reconciliation from collective trauma.

A second distinguishing characteristic of the Jeju model is its government-civilian cooperation and spirit of joint governance, both at the national and local levels, as shown in the following four examples.<sup>4</sup> First, the establishment of the National Committee for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju 4.3 Incident (Cheju 4.3 sagön chinsang kyumyöng mit hūsaengja myöngge hoebok wiwönhoe; hereafter sometimes just Jeju 4.3 Incident Committee) under the Kim Dae-jung Administration; second, the investigation process from both above and below for the designation of victims; third, the establishment and operation of the Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation (Cheju p'yöngghwa chaedan) and Jeju 4.3 Peace Park (Cheju 4.3 p'yöngghwa kongwön); and fourth, commemorative services of each village and the island as a whole. Further, civilians, along with the victims' families, were directly involved in organizing and participating in every aspect of the process and the government did not act to thwart the spirit of such civilian efforts on behalf of the bereaved families. The (local) government was transformed into an institution actively supporting and guaranteeing the lasting reconciliation of civilians, whereas the past (central) government had been the primary agent of the massacre.

The establishment, activities, and financing of the local bereaved family associations and the cemetery, and the facilities for commemorating the killed of Hagui-ri, Sangga-ri, Jangeon-ri, Gasi-ri, and Bukchon-ri villages, characterize another remarkable aspect of the Jeju model: civilian autonomy within the government-civilian cooperation. Hagui-ri and Bukchon-ri, the two villages who suffered the most tragic losses, displayed the full autonomy of village communities. One more facet of the civilian-government cooperation of the Jeju model is the quick transition to full-fledged civilian management of the process, as is apparent in the changing composition of personnel of the 4.3 Peace Foundation and their activities from the early days of its establishment until now.

A third characteristic of the model is the strength of civilian-civilian solidarity that has persisted since the process of truth revelation and reconciliation began. In particular, the voluntary reconciliation and harmony between the associations of perpetrators and the bereaved families, including the dramatic annual joint worship and common flower offering by victims from both side. The two formerly conflicting associations now act in concert to an extent that it may be considered a representative case of internal forgiveness and unity in order to overcome past conflict and trauma (Cheju 4.3 hūsaengja yujokhoe 2015).

The fourth characteristic of the Jeju model is its stable continuity of reconciliation and coexistence. Many previous initiatives to overcome past wrongdoings, notably after the passage of a special act or truth disclosure, have lost their original promise and revived discord. Jeju, on the other hand, has not revealed any such tendencies, and has maintained its unity until the present save for some very small dissenting protests. The established process of truth and reconciliation shall not be destroyed unless external factors intervene. The Jeju community has clearly confirmed that reconciliation and peace go together.

### **Reconciliation Case I: Yōngmowŏn Altar of Hagui-ri Village**

The case of Hagui-ri village in Aewol City has particular importance because it showcases the dramatic reconciliation and harmony that characterizes the Jeju model.<sup>5</sup> Among the island's villages, Hagui-ri had some of the highest casualty figures from the Jeju 4.3 Incident; the entire village was destroyed and it

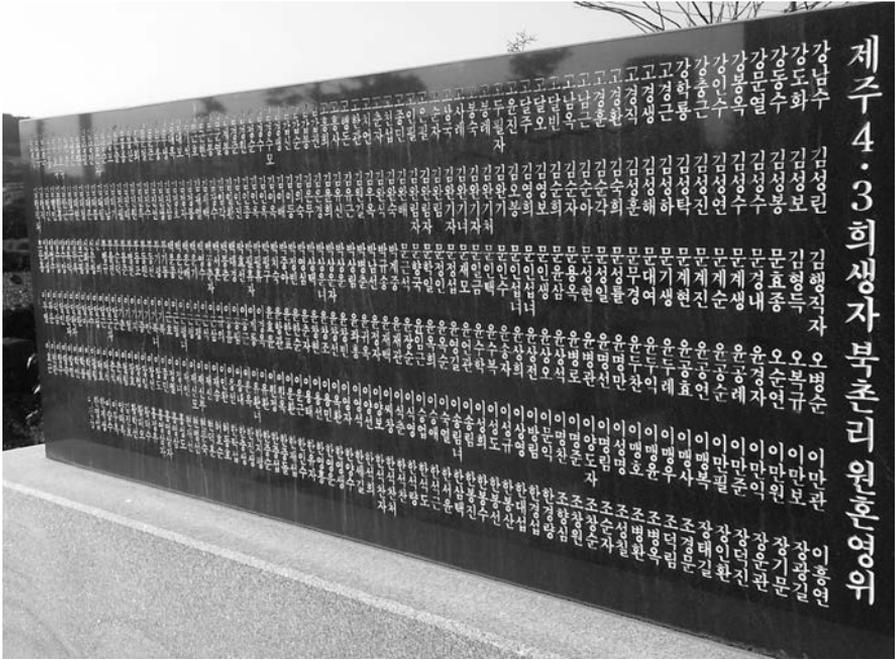


**Image 1:** Memorial for Jeju 4.3 victims at the Yŏngmowŏn in Hagui-ri

*Source:* Jeju 4.3 Peace Museum ([www.43archives.or.kr](http://www.43archives.or.kr))

disappeared. It endured the highest levels of human tragedy and suffering. However, the villagers voluntarily established at Yŏngmowŏn, an altar for commemoration, in May 2003, even before the final Jeju 4.3 Incident investigation report was officially adopted by the government. All of three memorial stones—for anti-colonial patriotic martyrs (Wiguk chŏlsa yŏnghyŏnbi 為國節士英顯碑), fallen soldiers of the Korean War (Hoguk yŏngnyŏng ch'ungŭibi 護國英靈 忠義碑), and the civilian victims of the 4.3 Incident (4.3 Hŭisaengja wiryŏngbi 4.3 犧牲者 慰靈碑)—are found together at one site. There are altogether five memorial stones.

Yŏngmowŏn was founded even before the final investigation report was adopted and before the Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation was instituted. The establishment of a collective commemoration site represents the deep internal consolation and reconciliation initiated by the villagers themselves. Hagui-ri village had lost its very name as a result of the massive killings that took place there. It originally consisted of two districts. However, the forces of the Jeju 4.3 Incident caused it to split into Donggui-ri and Guiil-ri. The loss of the name was



**Image 2:** Bukchon-ri memorial stone in 2015

Source: Kim Seong Nae

actually a method of escape from its horrific ideological stigmatization as a “red village” or “commie village.” The loss of the village name also snatched away its collective identity.

However, after democratization, the two villages finally recovered the name Hagui-ri in 1993, 45 years after the 4.3 Incident. The continuous efforts to regain the “village identity” encompass the correction of the distorted past identity of Hagui-ri as a red village. The reinstatement of the name was more than the simply the restoration of a space. It meant the overturning and reintegration of collective identity of Hagui-ri. It was a prolonged *ex post facto* effort, which fundamentally overcame ideological distortion by a “return” to the pre-4.3 hometown.

What is more surprising is that the people of Hagui-ri did not simply plunge into the return to collective identity. They revolutionarily severed their false

identity of “red” that had been infused by the authoritarian state, and formed an utterly new one of reconciliation and harmony. This was represented as an unimaginable spiritual leap, a *grand jete*, a great embrace of all, including patriots, martyrs, perpetrators, and victims, and all in one place.

The journey from exile to hometown goes beyond just a return to a lost Garden of Eden. It includes rebuilding and rebirth. The spirits of the Hagui-ri people transcend the ideal of lost paradise in that they were innocent exiles who had returned without sin: paradise was regained. It is also a dramatic contrast between the lost home and its reclamation. The long return of the purged to the utopian home is the most genuine and fervent goal found in the *Odyssey*, *Faust*, and *Pilgrim's Progress*.

After ten years, on May 27, 2003, the people of Hagui-ri, after many meetings and much dialogue, forgiveness, and preparation, were finally able to establish the Yōngmowŏn altar to heal past sufferings and conflict. This is a rare case of autonomous and voluntary denial and overcoming of the past that can hardly be found in any other place in the world.<sup>6</sup>

The memorial at the Yōngmowŏn altar for the Jeju 4.3 civilian victims reflects the heart of human suffering and reconciliation more than any epic poem of the great poets. The epitaph for the Jeju 4.3 civilian victims (“Yōgi wa korae sugira”: Come and bow down) is compelling and ardent. It begins with the phrase, “All those who are born on this earth, come here to bow low your heads. Thus, let us not speak of our grudges and resentment before this stone,” and concludes with the phrase, “All those born on this island, come here and bow down.” It is an epitaph of grand reconciliation, such that no living person before it can help bowing down in reverence.

The epitaph goes on: “For the past fifty years, the dead and the living alike led an unnatural life as wandering souls, without a place to anchor...” (*chugŭn inŭn chugŭn taero, salanamŭn inŭn sala innŭn taero, che charirŭl ch’atchi mot han ch’ae, hōgong e pal tidiro salaogi oŏn 50 yōnyōn*), and then states that we gather here to give to heaven what belongs to heaven, to history what belongs to history (“Let the heavens deal with the question of fate. Let history deal with its own portion of culpability”).<sup>7</sup>

We no longer dig into the old and painful wound. Rather, let us sprinkle fine earth upon the wound since it is a duty imposed upon the survivors living

together. Then let us also wait for the day when the bleeding stops, scabs form, and new skin granulates. The memorial stone shall be erected by everyone's hands as a solemn pledge that everyone forgives, as everyone is a victim looking back on the past. Thus, those who died please shut your eyes, and those who yet live, please join your hands together."

The absolute harmony and absolute forgiveness of the epitaph enables reality to experience the nature of humanity: the ultimate healing and ultimate reconciliation of every human being. This is the quintessence of Hagui-ri spirit, testifying to the fundamental base of the human spirit, and the spirit of Jeju 4.3.

Listed together on the memorial stones at Yōngmowōn are the names of patriots who resisted Japanese colonization, the victims of Jeju 4.3, and the fallen of the Korean War. It is an expression of the desperate will of the living to jointly remember the tragedy and pain, on the part of both victims and perpetrators, of these periods. It is an unthinkable level of integration, solidarity, and unification showing how the history of violent conflicts and mutual annihilation may yet be unified into one. It shows the ultimate transcendence of death.

Every January 3 by the lunar calendar a joint memorial service is held. This joint memorial worship is an unbelievable gesture of unification. At that time, life and death, friends and enemies, love and animosity of the past find reconciliation in the same place among the later generations. To date there has been no equivalent manifestation of reconciliation and restoration in a village community, at least in Korea.

But the most astonishing part is that both victims and perpetrators are inscribed together at Yōngmowōn. For human beings, it seems where conflict becomes imperceptible, reconciliation must be inevitable. The reality, however, is the opposite. Conflict is common in human society, whereas reconciliation is rare.

There is one tragic case of a father and son. Father X<sup>8</sup> was murdered by armed guerrillas and is placed upon the memorial for the Korean War dead, whereas his son O, who was killed by the police, is enshrined on the memorial for 4.3 victims. The two did not have opposing ideologies, thus their deaths should no longer be distinguished or discriminated against in the living world

any more than they are in the next. Other similar cases involve tragedies between siblings or other members of the same family.

What does ideology mean to a family that experienced deaths on both sides? The rank-and-file (rather than the core leadership) among those who joined the guerrillas or the South Korean armed forces were not divided by any real ideological differences. For them it certainly did not come down to a choice between loyalty to the state or rebellion against it. For them, it was simply a choice for getting by.

Therefore, if possible, deaths on behalf of the state and deaths at the hands of the state need to be integrated. Now in Hagui-ri the long distinction between the insurgent and man of meritorious service is dissipating, as Yōngmowōn shows. In the long run, this distinction between the meritorious servants and victims must be abandoned.

The names listed on the memorial stones are marks of memory and commemoration; they are all now commemorated together. Such mutual forgiveness is extraordinary. Compared to Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" that led to killing, the "integrity of goodness" on the part of the people of Jeju, which dedicates itself to peaceful coexistence, must be eulogized as the essence of humanity.

Korean society, which has experienced extreme ideological conflict, such as in the Korean War, needs the unity that comes with truth and reconciliation, atonement and magnanimity, justice and tolerance. That is to say, on one side, recognition of sacrifices for the state should be made, while on the other side, the losses caused by that state's violence should be atoned for in order to integrate and unify all historical deaths.

The people of Jeju have taken up this spirit of reconciliation as revealed by the selection process of victims, the lists in Jeju 4.3 Peace Park, and Yōngmowōn in Hagui-ri. The Jeju community and its villages are extremely cosmopolitan in their spirit of forgiveness, tolerance, and coexistence. Such a grand affirmation and unification, wherein no living human being is discriminated against, begins from the non-discrimination of the deaths.

In Hagui-ri, where all conflicts have been overcome, there exists only a grand unity. The redemption, reconciliation, and sublimation shown at Yōngmowōn belong to the spiritual realms of salvation and completeness. There,

anger and hatred cease, while forgiveness and tolerance grow. There, human beings realize the power of reconciliation and coexistence, which is greater than that of killing and massacre. There, one is compelled to face the purified soul. The inscription of Hagui-ri cries out: “All those who are born on this earth, come here to bow low your heads.” The cry becomes a soul-ringing appeal.

### **Reconciliation Case II: Perpetrator and Victim Co-worship**

If the Hagui-ri case is a model of forgiveness and reconciliation at the village level, the one between the Association for the Bereaved Families of the 4.3 Incident (hereafter, Association for Bereaved Families) and the Police Veterans Association of Jeju Province (hereafter, Police Veterans Association) is an exemplary model of forgiveness and reconciliation between perpetrators’ organization and victims’ at the provincial level.<sup>9</sup>

A joint luncheon on May 24, 2013 marked the beginning of this process. Here, the presidents and members of each association agreed upon the basic principle of reconciliation and coexistence, and proclaimed a joint statement promising mutual participation in their respective memorial services. It had taken sixty-five years from the Jeju 4.3 Incident to reach such a concord.

On June 6, 2013, the 58th National Memorial Day, the members of the Association for Bereaved Families attended the worship service of the Police Veterans Association and honored the fallen police, the oppressors during the incident. On August 2, the two associations held a joint press conference for reconciliation and coexistence. On December 27, they cohosted the first joint commemoration ceremony. How is this imaginable? After the joint worship, they together visited the Jeju 4.3 Peace Park for the victims and the Jeju National Cemetery for the fallen police.

On April 3, 2014, at the 65th anniversary ceremony, then South Korean prime minister Chung Hong-won stated officially, “It is very meaningful that both associations are together at the place of reconciliation.” In response to the victims’ attendance at the 58th National Memorial Day ceremony, members of the Police Veterans Association attended the memorial event of the 4.3 victims

for the first time. This was sixty-six years, and two generations, after the outbreak of the 4.3 Incident.

The progress of reconciliation and coexistence has further developed into joint pilgrimage abroad. From September 13 to 18, members of both associations visited the Cambodian Killing Fields and the Vietnam War Memorial sites together.

On October 28, 2014, Jung Moon-hyun (president of the Association for Bereaved Families) and Hyun Chang-ha (president of the Police Veterans Association) carried the torch together at the 95th Opening Ceremony of the National Sports Festival held at Jeju Stadium. It was a touching scene. If one considers just how difficult it would be to get the families of victims of the Korean War and representatives of the military or police to do the same thing at the national level, one realizes just how the Jeju community is leading. On November 25, 2014, the board members of the Association for Bereaved Families attended the celebrations of the 51st anniversary of police veterans' day.

From 2015, the participation of these two organizations in joint worship events has become routine. This is a truly revolutionary development. The dialog and joint attendance of the two sides, once unimaginable, has become lasting. The psychological and emotional barriers between the two associations no longer exist.

Who held an event and for what was no longer important to either side. The ideological and spiritual boundaries had finally collapsed. The Police Veterans Association was finally awarded a presidential citation for its contribution to the unity and harmony of a divided people and deep reconciliation with the bereaved families.

On August 2, 2016, all officials from the Jeju Provincial Office concerned in any form with the Jeju 4.3 Incident investigation, including the then governor, gathered at a joint meeting hosted by both associations. Present also was the superintendent of education of Jeju who was responsible for the education of the next generation. It was a symbolic gathering, where the reconciliation of the civilians led the government officials, and where the reconciliation of the present led the future.

In many past atrocities, there have been confrontations between government and civilians during the process of truth investigation, or cases where

alienated civilians opposed the unilateral initiatives of government officials. However, during the process of dealing with the 4.3 Incident, the Jeju community continues to cooperate closely and comprehensively and to navigate their differences through dialog.

Anger and the desire for vengeance are fundamental human emotions. In an enthralling scene from the *Iliad*, Thetis advises her son Achilles not to retaliate against Hector for Hector's murder of Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, because Achilles would die soon after he killed Hector. This refers to the cycle of vengeance wherein one death precipitates another death by God. Someone should break this chain of violence and death, but who?

“My son, from what you've just been saying,  
you're fated to an early death, for your doom  
comes quickly as soon as Hector dies.

[...]

Then let me die, since I could not prevent the death of my companion. . .  
Though you love me, you'll not convince me.” (Johnston 2006, 18)

Thetis is proposing forgiveness. Achilles did not listen to his mother. Here, the work of Homer reveals how hard it has been to forgive and tolerate from the very beginning of human history. The people of Jeju surpass Thetis or Achilles. They are forgiving those who killed not just their friends, but their brothers and parents.

### **The Scope and Range of Responsibility for Enhancing Reconciliation**

Tolerance through the discharge of responsibility is critical when it comes to overcoming the past. Particularly, the lessons of the Jeju experience are quite significant.<sup>10</sup> How were the Jeju people able to maintain tolerance while pursuing justice?

During the process of truth investigation, the people of Jeju did not demand the legal punishment of those who were responsible. In fact, the investigation committee did not even organize a list of the high commanders. Why was there



**Image 3:** Joint memorial services celebrating the third anniversary of the declaration of “reconciliation and coexistence” by perpetrators and victims (August 2, 2016); the memorial service at the cemetery for the loyal dead (*ch’unghon myoji*) (left) and the service at 4.3 Peace Park (right)

*Source:* Author

no urging for the punishment of the perpetrators on the part of the Jeju community? This was the product of an attitude of forgiveness, patience, and patriotism by the Jeju people, who did not desire to create another conflict. As a small community, they sought only a proper investigation of the facts, the undertaking of commemorative projects, and the realization of amends and reconciliation.

In order to determine the nature of the 4.3 Incident, however, one inevitably has to ask what kinds of crimes occurred and who was responsible. Punishment aside, investigation is essential for accountability and to prevent such tragedies in the future. It was necessary to meticulously document and categorize all cases of accountability for all aspects of the Jeju 4.3 Incident.

In this respect, the crimes of the Korean state against the people of Jeju are crimes against humanity. Jeju 4.3 was only the beginning of many such crimes in contemporary Korea. Following Karl Jaspers (2001), in the case of the Jeju 4.3 Incident, accountability can be determined in the following four areas.

The first is legal and criminal responsibility. This is the most superficial responsibility for the directly related parties. The Jeju people will never ask for the punishment of perpetrators, including for their past incrimination based on the guilt-by-association system and their ideological oppression. Despite the large-scale massacre, no one has faced legal punishment.

The second is political responsibility. But just because legal punishment was not sought, did not mean that the more serious assessment of political responsibility, and official apology, was not required. The establishment of the Jeju 4.3 Incident Committee by President Kim Dae-jung, the official apology by President Roh Moo-hyun, the designation of a national memorial day for the victims of the 4.3 Incident by President Park Geun-hye, and the promise of President Moon Jae-in for a complete settlement, derive from the acceptance of such political responsibility.

The third is moral and ethical accountability, a dimension of responsibility that is higher than legal or political. In this sense, it is necessary to locate, introduce, and commemorate many of the righteous people from this incident—the Korean Oskar Schindlers, including men like lieutenant colonel Kim Ikryul, who held peace talks with the guerrilla leader Kim Talsam, who agreed to stop the uprising, and to hold morally responsible the perpetrators for the slaughter from both the suppression forces and military. In short, it is necessary to determine and commemorate those individuals who were steadfast in their moral and ethical standing as human beings amidst the turmoil.

The fourth is a common spirit and internal consciousness of responsibility on the part of the generation of the time of the wrongdoings. This denotes the deepest sense of responsibility by those who form a community. For instance, in the case of Germany, a genuine overcoming of past wrongdoing shall only be possible when the entire German nation takes responsibility for the crimes of Nazi Germany, not simply when an individual figure or party accepts culpability. Of course, such a common consciousness of responsibility shall not ignore nor diminish the responsibility of individual wrongdoers for atrocity.

Similarly, when Korean society and the Korean government feel a collective sense of guilt and responsibility for the Jeju 4.3 Incident, the first massacre of innocent civilians in South Korean history, this shall become the point of regeneration of Korea regarding its past issues. All Koreans who labeled the Jeju people as “Reds” bear some responsibility for the massacre. When the Korean people reach this point, they shall at last be able to say they have genuinely “re-humanized” one another through internal reconciliation and coexistence.

### **Transformation of Jeju and the Layers of Jeju 4.3**

Here, the significance of the transformation of Jeju in regards to the Jeju 4.3 Incident shall be examined. It commenced from South Korea’s nationwide democratization. In the following five distinctive turning points for contemporary Jeju society, there is virtually nothing unrelated to Jeju 4.3. Thus we can say that Jeju 4.3 is the microcosm of modern Jeju, and that modern Jeju is an expansion of the trajectory of the 4.3 Incident.

The first was the passing of the Special Act of Investigation of the Jeju 4.3 Incident and Recovering the Honor of Victims, which was enacted on January 12, 2000, and the ensuing establishment of the Jeju 4.3 Incident Committee. This was the first fundamental transition as it was the starting point for transforming the regeneration and restoration of the Jeju community through an investigation into the truth. These actions set the momentum for Jeju’s reorientation towards peace, reconciliation, and coexistence.

The second was the adoption of the Jeju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report (*Cheju 4.3 ch’insang chosa pogosŏ*), on October 15, 2003 (Jeju 4.3 Incident Committee 2003), and the Presidential Statement on the Jeju 4.3 Incident by then South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun on October 15, 2003 (Jeju 4.3 Incident Committee 2003, 543–544). The former was the first official and legitimate investigation report adopted and established by the government of Korea in regards to the resistance of civilians and ideologically based confrontations and killings of the past, notably during the period of the national

founding. Roh Moo-hyun's official contrition as "the president" was also unprecedented since the founding of the Republic of Korea.

The third was the official designation of Jeju as a Free International City (Cheju kukche chayi tosi) and as Peace Island of the World (Segye p'yŏnghwa ūi sŏm). These designations marked the beginning of the sustainable development and prosperity of Jeju, overcoming its former status as an isolated island. The "island of massacres" now began to transform itself into a representative of peace.

The fourth was the establishment of the Jeju 4.3 Peace Park and Foundation. These were established on the locations of former slaughter to transform them into places of commemoration, memorization, reconciliation, and peace.

The Fifth was the designation of April 3 as a national memorial day for the Jeju 4.3 Incident by the government of South Korea. On March 24, 2014, then President Park Geun-hye decided to declare an official memorial day for the victims of the 4.3 Incident. Thenceforward, the official authority for hosting annual events of commemoration became the government of Korea. The mutual sharing of memories through the inversion of crime and justice has transformed the subject of massacre into the subject of commemoration.

The enactment of the Special Act, adoption of the Jeju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report, and the official apology by progressive presidents, as well as the declaration of a national memorial day by a conservative government, demonstrate that the Jeju 4.3 Incident has finally been transformed into a common commemorative event, moving beyond the progressive-conservative dichotomy. This is an important transformation and a sharing of memory. Finally, the era of ideological memory was brought to an end by the government.

How were all these transformations achieved in such the short time span of ten years? They were possible because of the overall trend of democratization in South Korea, along with the singular communitarian characteristics of Jeju itself. The small size of the Jeju community was also a crucial factor.

The main question is whether this "4.3 spirit" can become the future (not the past) of Jeju. The outlook is positive. Without the 4.3 spirit for both justice and reconciliation, almost all of the realities of Jeju, not to mention its symbolism, would be meaningless. It would simply be just another province or island.

As such, if there had been no 4.3 Incident, who would talk about reconciliation and peace for Jeju? Or who would endeavor to find the present value of the past? The gravity of history is proportional to the scale of its victims. The past becomes the future when the wisdom for the future derives from past experiences.

What has Jeju shown so far (the past)? What is it showing today (the present)? What will it show (the future)? The identity of the Jeju people as initiators of reconciliation and peace originated from the victims of the past. Those victims are now reclaimed as rehabilitators, and may end up being elevated to reconcilers.

Jeju has already shown forgiveness and reconciliation, which go beyond the typical modes of transitional justice. Those who know the power of truth and justice better than anyone now realize that forgiveness and reconciliation represent much greater power. Undoubtedly, Jeju is writing a new chapter in the history of reconciliation.<sup>11</sup>

In this sense, Jeju shall go beyond what it has already shown in “the past as a future,”<sup>12</sup> to design a future through embracing all horizons of the Jeju 4.3 incident. That is to say, it is important to integrate the past and the present in order to make together a desirable future. To embrace the past together means to share a vision of the future.

Then, the final question concerns the nature of the Jeju 4.3 Incident. It was a global indigenous conflict in the era of the global civil war (*Weltbürgerkrieg*). In other words, Jeju 4.3 was a local and international conflict, a small precedent to the Korean War, which was the most typical example “global civil war”—neither civil war nor international war. It should never be understood in the dichotomous sense of being either an indigenous conflict or an international one.<sup>13</sup>

Simply speaking, Jeju offers forgiveness and reconciliation to both Korea as a whole and the outside world. But the center of the world, as an indigenous explosion of global Cold War confrontation, bequeathed it violence and massacre. But even though the outside world gave Jeju ideological confrontation, massacre, and trauma, Jeju shall be reborn as a fount for reconciliation, healing, coexistence, and peace to the world. That is to say, the 4.3 Incident has made the people of Jeju into *kosmopolitês* (world citizens).<sup>14</sup> However, the indigenous identity of

Jeju should not be forgotten or reduced. This is because the singularity of Jeju produced by the 4.3 Incident is the basis of identity for the world citizen. Jeju 4.3 was simultaneously a local and global phenomenon.

### **Reconciliation and Funerals for the Enemy: Restoration of Human Nature**

Why do humans come into a severe conflict? They are often driven into hatred, violence, and slaughter as a result of self-obsession with extremely minor differences, even when all other things seem to be the same. The fact that the Judeo-Christian account of the beginning of mankind is the fratricide of Abel by Cain implies the heart of human nature. The massacre of Jeju was committed in the context of an almost completely homogeneous society where race, history, culture, state, and language were the same, but only an infused (global) ideology from the outside created difference. Early on, Sigmund Freud pointed out the contradiction of the human personality, with its dualism of love-hatred and solidarity-violence due to the “narcissism of minor difference” (*der Narzissmus der kleinen Differenz*).<sup>15</sup>

The older and more homogeneous a people are, in terms of religion, race, culture, shared space, and livelihoods, the longer love and hate coexist. The discrete other is considered heresy, or even diseased, and an existential threat to that sameness, and so the will for its removal is most powerful and will result in extreme violence and even war.

Korea is a rare case, a place where ethnicity, language, culture, history and territory have been shared over a long historical time. An opponent has destroyed a community that has lived together as one family, one ethnicity, and one people simply out of to an excessive obsession with difference, though it be only ideological. As the truth investigation has shown, despite the fact that Jeju in fact did not harbor a different ideology, it was subjected to slaughter just because it was *suspected* to be different by the police, the military, and youth associations. Conversely speaking, however, it is possible to argue that if this slight difference can be overcome, great coexistence and peace will be possible. The contemporary history of Jeju transcends the tragedy of co-originality caused by minor differences, showing the way of a magnificent

pilgrimage to restore our fundamental homogeneity as human beings and the cordial spirit of community.

In order to integrate the meritorious and the victims, it is important to move towards a broader, universal level. The indigenous victim of global ideological confrontation, in other words, the local sufferings of a global citizen, must be overcome by us as global citizens. If the most intense conflict and heinous killing field can move towards reconciliation, there is no reason why those places with less suffering cannot also be reconciled.

Laozi argues that a soldier should be sad and remorseful when he has killed many people in war, and when someone wins a war there should not be celebrations with shouts of victory. but funerals and mourning for those who died and were defeated.<sup>16</sup> Here, the funerals refer to the mourning rites. Who, among us human beings, would be able to hold funeral rites for our fallen enemies?

Rituals for victims, including parents, brothers, and sisters, of the Jeju 4.3 Incident were long forbidden by the government, and invited the violence of retaliation. It was the problem of separation for the living to consider whom to commemorate in funeral rites. Ritual was the line separating loyalty and rebellion, as shown in an episode from *Antigone*.

Antigone had buried her brother Polyneices (Polyneikes) with proper funeral rites. The burial outraged Creon (Kreon) who had suppressed the burial, and he eventually locked up Antigone in a tomb. Antigone killed herself when she was locked in the tomb to starve to death. Her death caused her fiancée Haemon (Haimon) to kill himself as well, a death which accompanied that of his mother, and the wife of Creon, Eurydice (Eurydike). The tragedy of mankind from classical times has persisted through to Jeju Island, and through numerous massacres. One shudders before various Antigones today. How great are the people of Jeju, who live on without killing themselves and live through countless Antigonal moments to save their community as well as themselves? Whenever one conducts fieldwork in such a killing field, one cannot help from comparing Jeju 4.3 to a scene from *Antigone*, a contemporary *aporia*.

It is the most astonishing spirit who does not discriminate in death but offers funeral rites with deep condolence even for the enemy. This shows the

absolute aspiration for life and the reconciliation of all human beings who want to forgive and be forgiven, and to tolerate and be tolerated through the embracement of all death. While forgiving the enemy through the recognition and mourning of all deaths, Jeju has become a space of great forgiveness and tolerance, offering worship and ritual even for those who have killed their parents and brothers, for those that have given unimaginable pain and agony.

The spirit of Jeju towards past perpetrators are expressions of the resurrection of prayer to give one's whole life and soul by clearing the body and the mind. The sturdy spirits of the bereaved families arguing to stand and live together through the resolute forgiveness out of ruinous tragedy now bring repentance and eventually transform a community. Thanks to such gleaming souls of the victims and the bereaved families, the Jeju people today clearly realize that they owe their lives to those victims and their families. We cannot help bowing with reverence before the absolute moral leap of such regenerated souls.

Today, the people of Jeju are at the forefront of reconciliation. The principle of "life for a life, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for a hand, and foot for a foot" (Deuteronomy 19:21, Matthew 6:38), *lex talionis*, is clearly rejected and defined as an act of barbarism. Forgiveness is indeed extremely difficult. It is, however, a prerequisite for tolerance and reconciliation. It constitutes an indispensable and innate aspect of human nature. Without forgiveness, reconciliation, and a break from the past, we shall live under the lasting agony of persecution and the human community can never dream of peace. Forgiveness is the power and the wisdom. Hostility is not, but tolerance is. To this, Jeju today stands as manifest evidence.

## Notes

- 1 The term "year zero" (*année zero*) was coined by the French historian Henri Michel, who used it in reference to the year 1945 (Michel 1986, 149). It would be difficult to find a more apt term to conceptualize the absolute killing and violent destruction that occurred in Jeju in the years of the massacre there. Before Michel, however, the great director Roberto Rossellini had already made a film titled *Germania*

*Anno Zero* (Germany, Year Zero; 1947), that took place in the absolute ruins of postwar Germany. François Ponchaud, who witnessed the gruesome massacres of the Cambodian killing fields, also employed the term in reference to that country (Ponchaud 1977).

- 2 Regarding transitional justice/transition of justice, this may be called the reversal of justice in that it reverses perpetrators and victims in many cases. On this, see Kritz (1995) and Teitel (2000).
- 3 In regards to the scholarship on recovering and healing from state violence after the Jeju 4.3 Incident, refer to Kim Seong Nae (1989a; 1989b; 1998; 1999; 2001; 2004; 2013) and Kim Seong Nae et al. (2001).
- 4 For further reference, see Hyōn Hyegyōng (2008), Jeju 4.3 Incident Committee (2008), and Yang (2015, 507–512).
- 5 The descriptions below of Hagui-ri are based on the author’s fieldwork, interviews, investigations, and news gathering in Hagui-ri and Yōngmowōn over four trips. A more in-depth study of the “Hagui-ri model,” to include Sangga-ri and Jangjeon-ri, is currently in progress.
- 6 It can perhaps be compared with the so-called Gacaca courts in Rwanda, where perpetrators and victims of the Rwandan atrocities have come together in the spirit of reconciliation and coexistence.
- 7 Translation from Kwon (2013, 169–170).
- 8 X and O are used here to anonymize the real names on the inscription.
- 9 Association for the Bereaved Families 4.3 Victims and Korean National Police Veterans Association in Jeju Special Self-governing Province (2015). The civic organization Towards Understanding and Healing (TUH), dedicated to mutual healing and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, is very similar. The cooperative standing leadership of TUH derives from the Unionist/Protestant and Nationalist/Catholic sides, that is, the two antagonistic parties.
- 10 This was also the basic spirit of the Special Act of Investigation of the Jeju 4.3 Incident and Recovering the Honor of Victims (Cheju 4.3 sağōn chinsang kyumyōng mit hūisaengja myōngge hoeboke kwanhan t’ūkpyōlbōp) and the Jeju 4.3 Incident Committee.
- 11 For reconciliation theories and experiences of the world, see John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); Joanna R. Quinn ed., *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Post conflict Societies* -Queen’s University Press, 2009); Janez Juhart and Bojan Žalec eds. *Reconciliation: The Way of Healing and Growth* (Berlin: Lit Verkag Dr. W. Hopf, 2012).

- 12 Jürgen Habermas, *The Past as Future* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).
- 13 On the theory of the global civil war, see Carl Schmitt (1938, 48; 2006, 296); Ernst Jünger (1948, 24); Sigmund Neumann (1949); and Hannah Arendt (1965, 17). For the author's view of the world civil war theory in regards to the interpretation of the Korean War, see Myung-lim Park (2015; 2016).
- 14 See Derek Heater (1996) for the most standardized philosophical and historical study of the world citizen.
- 15 This is a common theme found in the works of Sigmund Freud—*Civilization and Its Discontents*, “The Taboo of Virginity,” *Group Psychology*, and *Analysis of the Ego*. His work provides deep insights into the parallel phenomenon of love and hatred, solidarity and violence in a long-established homogeneous society like that of Korea. See Gabbard (1993), Ignatieff (1997), and Sternberg (2003).
- 16 殺人衆, 以哀悲莅之. 戰勝, 以喪禮處之. See Kim Ch'ungyöl (2004, 87–90); Kim Honggyöng (2015, 816–824).

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