The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
n-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 11, Issue 36, No. 2, September 9, 2013.

Reading *Volcano Island*: In the Sixty-fifth Year of the Jeju 4.3 Uprising 『火山島』 チェジュド４・３蜂起65周年に読む

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Jeju Does Not Sleep

I was eight or nine when M *samchon* ("Uncle M") arrived at our house in Japan on one of his regular late-night visits. In fact, it seemed as if he chose to visit at this hour, as if he was hiding from something or someone. Although he was not really related to us, he came from the same part of Korea, Jeju Island, and we referred to him using the term *samchon*, a Jeju term used when addressing uncles and aunts. He spoke in the Jeju tongue, which was unlike any of the other versions of Korean that I had heard at that time. Although my father was born in Jeju, even he had a hard time communicating with our *samchon*. This was because my father had grown up in Japan, his parents having taken him back to Osaka, where they ran a small business, soon after he was born. The visitor's Japanese was quite poor, but it was slightly easier for me to understand than Jeju-style Korean. Using the few words that I was able to understand, I could figure out that his childhood friend, Beomdori (Mr. Beomdol to us kids), was in the process of slowly recovering his speech. Given that Uncle M was in his late twenties or early thirties, my childishly inquisitive mind found it odd that a grown-up, such as Uncle M's friend, was learning how to speak. Not to speak a foreign language, like Japanese, but to speak, period.

Boemdori was nine and Uncle M ten when they were smuggled out of Jeju Island in the aftermath of the April 3 Uprising of 1948 (known among Koreans by the abbreviation "4.3" or *sasam*). By the end of 1948, most of Uncle M's male relatives and many of his female relatives had been killed, either by the army or by *Seocheong* (an abbreviation of *Seobuk cheongnyeondan* or North West Youth Militia), an extreme-right wing militia gang originating from amongst anti-Communist settlers from northern Korea that the South Korean government actively deployed in its efforts to eradicate leftist forces. Beomdori and his mother were dragged along to witness the execution of fellow villagers, including that of his own father. In the face of such unspeakable brutality, his mother had lost her sanity and Beomdori his power of speech. In fact, he had remained mute since that time. The story was often heard that the army and the gangs wanted to kill all of the male offspring in order to finish off the "red" lineage for good. It was in this environment that Beomdori's grandmother and Uncle M's mother decided to send the youngest male survivors of their respective families away from the island.

Jeju between Korea, China and Japan

With the support of the US military government (discussed below), then in control of South Korea including Jeju, the army and its allied gangs went about their slaughter on a massive scale. The ordeal lasted over one year following the initial uprising on April 3, 1948. Killers did not simply kill, they took their time, using knowledge of kinship tradition and social taboos to methodically target their victims in such a way so as to inflict maximum devastation. Examples included forcing a grandson and grandfather fight until one of them died, forcing a father-in-law and daughter-in-law to have sexual intercourse in public, or, in a practice known as *cheonyeotobeol* ("virgin hunt"), gang-raping women and girls for hours before shooting them to death (Oh 2004). The killers looked for "them" (the "reds"), yet there were no clear criteria to distinguish "them" from uninvolved islanders. Their strategy dictated that all young people be treated as suspicious and that all males be subjected to beating (Kwon 2006: 81-82). Villagers, and especially family members, were forced to witness the mass execution of captured rebels. Often, executions were carried out at the edge of a cliff overlooking the ocean, as this spared the army the job of clearing the corpses. Mothers and wives lost their minds and threw themselves off the cliffs into the ocean as well. (One of my father's maternal aunts died this way, following her husband, a schoolmaster, who was shot and fell from the cliff.) It was a time and a place filled with blood, corpses, human body parts, ashes, widows, orphans, and unspeakable devastation. For the army and Seocheong, the islanders were not compatriots, not even fellow human beings; for these killers who had come from the mainland, the islanders were considered even lower than vermin, deserving to be exterminated. Words cannot describe the resulting atrocity.

Roundup of Jeju islanders

My father lost all but one of his cousins and six of his seven uncles. His grandfather, my great grandfather, had had eight sons, six of whom were killed in the years 1948-1949. One of the remaining two, the youngest, had traveled to Manchuria to practice law during the colonial period, later opting to be repatriated to northern Korea, while the other, the middle one (my grandfather), was living in Japan. It was understandable, therefore, that I grew up hearing about 4.3. I am not an exception in this regard: other friends whose families originally came from Jeju were also raised to regard it as shameful not to know about 4.3. I even had a few classmates whose mother or father fled Jeju for Japan during those years. The main thing that we heard, however, was that some unspeakable, inexplicable, and indescribably horrific things had happened on Jeju in 1948 and that thousands had been killed, as if to say that this was something beyond horror, violating human sanity. I was nevertheless surprised to learn relatively recently that there had been a fifty-year ban in South Korea on such activities as investigating or conducting research related to the 4.3 Uprising, in addition to teaching about it in history education or even talking about it.

In South Korea's national history, 4.3 did not or should not exist, because it was a communist-instigated riot. During the three decades of military dictatorship in South Korea, the name communism itself became unspeakable. Hence, officially mandated silence was imposed on 4.3 until very recently. In the context of Cold War politics, being "red" or *ppalgaengi*, was synonymous with being a national traitor. Under South Korea's anti-communism law, according to which not only the perpetrators of national security offenses but also their close relatives were implicated, even the shedding of tears over the death of a family member who had been labeled as a treasonous communist was seen as a crime in itself (Kim 2003: 70-71; Lee 2011: 70-71). Hyun Ki-young, a prominent novelist of Jeju origin, published in 1978 a short story featuring an elderly

woman who survived 4.3—*Sun-i Samch'on*, Aunt Suni (Hyun 2012). After its publication, he was arrested, tortured, and released on condition that he never write about Jeju's 4.3 again.

Whether the islanders were truly communist or not, or whether they even knew what communism was, we do not know. And the above-mentioned Hyun's novel does not even support communist ideas: far from it—it captures a complex situation on the island where the thirty-year span (between 1948 and 1978, the year of publication) had reconfigured the human relations even inside a family. Hyun simply emphasizes an eerie childhood memory of ancestral memorial services bursting out all on the same day in his native village—because most of the villagers' family members had been murdered on the same day in 1948, and the author was haunted by the visual memory of a thick flock of crows hovering over the corpses (Hyun 2012: 56-58). This was sufficient to warrant his arrest and torture.

Successive military dictatorships in South Korea continued to regard Jeju Islanders with suspicion. In the early 1990s, the then President Roh Tae Woo even sealed off Darangsui, a cave that was the site of one of the hundreds of mass murders that took place in 1948/1949. It was only after the nation's first civilian government was formed in 1992 that 4.3 began to emerge as part of South Korea's national memory. Significant progress was not made until the following decade, however, with a special 4.3-related law promulgated in January 2000 and a formal apology made to the people of Jeju by President Roh Moo Hyun in October 2003. In addition, a museum and monuments were erected, and commemoration rituals have taken place (Mun 2005: 329ff.; Kwon 2008; Yang 2008: 215ff; see also Kim & Selden 2010).

Names of victims inscribed at Jeju Memorial

During the same time span, from the 1950s through the 1980s, this same incident assumed a different form and significance across the strait in Japan. There was a striking contrast between the way in which one nation suppressed 4.3 from its official discourse for half a century and the way in which a group of exiles in a foreign land retold the incident, in chant-like, or perhaps curse-like refrains. The purpose of this article is to think about how 4.3 speaks to Koreans in Japan of Jeju origin. (Hereafter, for the sake of clarity and brevity, I refer to this group and members thereof as Jeju *zainichi, zainichi* being a Japanese term used when referring to non-Japanese living in Japan.) To begin with, there is even a difference in the estimated number of deaths associated with this incident. While a maximum figure of 30,000 is found in official South Korean sources, Jeju *zainichi* normally put forward a much higher figure of 80,000 (out of a total island population at the time of 270,000). I am less interested in finding out which figure is more accurate than in registering this difference. For, this simple numerical difference in itself tells a story, a story of enormous pain and sorrow that has been convoluted and confined within a complex historical spectrum.

So, what was 4.3? And, more specifically, what was 4.3 to the Jeju *zainichi*? As of 1959, 84,000 (fourteen percent) of the nearly 600,000 Korean residents in Japan traced their ancestral homes to Jeju (Morita 1996: 40). Given the nature of the mass exodus from the island and the many cases of undocumented entry of islanders to Japan following the 4.3 Uprising, which continued well into the 1950s, it is likely that the real figure would have been even higher (see Morris-Suzuki 2010). For islanders and their descendants living in Japan, 4.3 lived on, and continued to be talked about, as if it had happened only yesterday. Just like in the resistance song produced by the anti-government South Korean student/labor movement in the 1980s that was entitled Jamdeulji anneun namdo ("The Southern Island That Does Not Sleep"), with its reference to the Uprising, 4.3 did not sleep among the Jeju *zainichi*.

In order to think about 4.3 in close proximity to the sensitivities of the Jeju *zainichi*, I rely on an epic novel by Kim Seok-beom, a Japan-born Korean novelist whose ancestral home is Jeju Island. Although this novel, *Volcano Island*, was published in Japanese as Kazantō, I shall refer to it here using its Korean reading, *Hwasando*. Originally carried in a Japanese monthly literary periodical, *Bungakukai*, between February 1976 and August 1981, the novel was re-edited by the author and an additional three chapters containing 1,000 new pages added before being released in the form of a three-volume novel in 1983 (Kim 1983c: 559). There is a specific reason why I, as an anthropologist, have opted to use a fictional text in this study rather than resorting to a more traditionally anthropological method, such as collecting examples of oral history. I shall discuss this issue later in the article. Let us first briefly look at what happened in 1948/1949 before moving on to a brief description of the above novel.

The "Red" South

In the context of the special law enacted in 2000 with the purpose of recovering the honor of the victims of 4.3, the incident is defined as follows:

> The Jeju 4.3 incident refers to successive and multiple armed conflicts that erupted on March 1, exploded on April 3, 1948, and lasted until September 21, 1954, the suppression of which resulted in numerous casualties among Jeju islanders.(Kang 2003)

On March 1, 1947, Jeju islanders held rallies and demonstrated in the streets in commemoration of the anniversary of the March First Movement of 1919, an incident in which Koreans under Japanese colonial rule had taken part in nation-wide mass protests and demonstrations against the Japanese. These activities were organized by the Jeju People's Committee, a group that had come into existence as part of the rise of the left in post-liberation Korea (see Yi 2007 for a discussion). Left-wing forces in the southern half of the peninsula, however, found themselves seriously compromised under American military rule. While the Workers' Party of South Korea had been formed as soon as the war was over as a sister party to its northern counterpart, its activities were rapidly forced underground with the rise to power of the right-wing, American-backed leader Syngman Rhee. Even though it may have been leftist organizational forces on the island that organized these actions, such protests were a reflection of the general frustration felt by islanders at the imposition of American military rule immediately after the end of Japanese rule, with no opportunity for Koreans to savor the end of colonialism. In the aftermath of the 3.1 Incident of 1947 more than two thousand people were arrested and six persons killed by the police, who opened fire on unarmed demonstrators.

Syngman Rhee quickly moved to secure his power by scheduling an election to be held in the southern half of the peninsula only, on May 10, 1948. Island-based forces opposed to this plan began to re-organize themselves, and in the early morning of April 3, 1948, armed insurgents simultaneously attacked multiple police stations on the island. While this series of attacks is generally seen as having been orchestrated by the Jeju Workers' Party, the Jeju branch of the South Korean Workers' Party, a sister party of the North Korean Workers' Party, it is also generally considered that the majority of rank-and-file participants in such attacks were peasants and fishermen who were not particularly familiar with communism or leftist ideologies, but simply opposed national partition on one hand and increasing foreign domination of Korea on the other. It should be added that the Seoul government purposefully deployed members of the *Seocheong* (see above) en masse to the island in order to suppress dissent. This group consisted primarily of displaced former northerners that had fled the Soviet-governed North. Its members' hatred of communism and commitment to extinguishing it has been well documented. Mostly minimally educated and proud of their tough, violent, and ruthless reputation, Seocheong members wielded extra-judicial power on the island, conducting armed vigilante missions summarily punishing those caught in their net. The notoriety of the Seocheong and the warlord-like behavior of its members were the source of both fear and frustration among islanders.

Throughout the insurgencies, the Ninth Regiment, stationed on the island and under the command of Lt. General Kim Ik-ryeol (often spelt Ik Ruhl), refrained from interfering, basically leaving the responsibility for suppressing such activities with the local police force. The American Military Government assigned to General Kim the mission of reaching peace with the armed insurgents. Kim successfully obtained a truce on April 28, 1948. But, the American Military

Government revised its policy the very next day, recalling Lt. General Kim and sending the Eleventh Regiment to reinforce the army on the island in May. The military then adopted a firm policy of suppressing insurgents. General Song, who replaced General Kim, is said to have stated that 300,000 islanders deserved to be burnt to death. In October, Martial Law was declared on the island, inland villages were relocated in order to separate residents from guerrillas, and mass destruction began. For example, in January 1949, a massacre occurred in a small village of about three hundred households called Bukchonri in which all but four villagers were killed (Kang 2003: 210). By the middle of 1949, the army had largely succeeded in subduing the rebel forces (see Cumings 1989; Merrill 1989).

Following the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, Jeju continued to be targeted as an "enemy-friendly" area. During a two-month period in July and August 1950, detainees held on 4.3-related charges at prisons in Daejeon on the mainland were executed without trial. From November 1952 through June 1953, the South Korean government deployed a special unit known as the Rainbow Unit to the island, thoroughly suppressing any further anti-government or anti-war activities. The government report on the 4.3 Uprising mentioned above estimates that the incident led to a total of thirty thousand deaths, the destruction of 160 villages, and the destruction of 15,228 homes. It further estimates that 91,732 people, or about thirty-five percent of the then total population of the island, suffered some form of loss, injury or damage. In addition, countless islanders were affected by the implications of shared responsibility placed on families of alleged communist insurgents under the anti-communism law that still exists in South Korea today (Kang 2003: 211).

The excessive use of force on Jeju Island can be attributed to a fear of communism against the backdrop of rapidly increasing Cold War tensions between North and South Korea. The majority of individuals killed were innocent villagers. Beyond these points, however, it is difficult to grasp exactly what happened and who did what to whom, not only because of the lack of official documentation, but also because South Korea officially branded the 4.3 Uprising an example of "red" (communist) riots and anti-government insurgencies. The only alternative was the North Korean version of events, in which 4.3 was portrayed as a heroic, anti-US, anti-Rhee uprising by the people of Jeju, who craved national unification and the achievement of complete independence of Korea from foreign influence. Thanks to recent scholarship in South Korea that sheds light on this hitherto understudied incident, a complex picture is emerging, indicating wide discrepancies between individual memories of events that reflect the different positions held by individuals during the conflict itself and the shifting views that emerged in the decades that followed (Kwon 2001). For, despite the fact that the majority of its casualties and victims were innocent people, the uprising cannot be viewed as a simple conflict between pro-government and anti-government forces. It involved, for example, individuals such as a local police officer who was a helpful neighbor most of the time, yet had to follow orders to kill; villagers whose livelihoods were destroyed by the guerrilla forces; women who married Seocheong militiamen; the children of a man who villagers remember providing assistance to the army; soldiers who refused to follow orders to kill; local entrepreneurs who profited from the destruction of a neighboring village; a man who joined guerrillas simply because of kinship obligations; and so on. In sum, sixty-five years later, the mnemonic contours of the 4.3 Uprising are hard to trace—hard in a technical as well as in an emotional sense.

Volcano Island

Across the straits that separate Korea from Japan, however, the 4.3 Uprising was remembered in a more consistent and unified way: as an anti-US, anti-Rhee uprising by the people of Jeju Island in which thousands of innocent islanders were mass murdered without mercy. According to today's South Korean understanding, this kind of interpretation would be categorized as being aligned with the North Korean version of events, i.e. seeing 4.3 as an example of a banmi inmin hangjaeng ("anti-American people's uprising"). It would not be wrong to see similarities between the way in which the uprising is understood among Jeju *zainichi* and the version of events found in the official North Korean discourse. It is true that throughout the postwar era, right up until the late 1980s, sections of Koreans in Japan have stood by North Korea and supported its regime, despite the fact that an overwhelming majority (up to ninety-eight percent) of first-generation Koreans in Japan originated from the southern provinces of the Korean peninsula. At first organized under the banner of the *Joryeon* or League of Koreans in Japan (1945-1949) and then as *Chongryeon* or the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (1955 onwards), Koreans in Japan constituted for decades a formidable anti-South Korean lobby (Ryang 1997).

It is important to point out, however, that the stance taken by North Korea and its Japan-based supporters in *Chongryeon*, in which the 4.3 Uprising was seen as an example of anti-US armed resistance, a courageous act by the people of Jeju, and an event worthy of commemoration and honor, was not completely aligned with the emotional engagement of Jeju *zainichi* with the incident. While their views overlap to a certain extent, Jeju *zainichi* are also aware of the broader context of regional prejudices held by mainlanders towards Jeju Islanders for centuries.

Jeju, or Tamna as it was then known, first came under the domination of the Korean peninsula in the eleventh century A.D., during the reign of the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392). Located to the southwest of the peninsula and enjoying a relatively mild, temperate climate, Jeju was, before modernization, the only place in Korea to produce oranges. Its economy was, nevertheless, a meager one, largely based on fishing and the raising of livestock, and the island's limited resources meant that its social structure was relatively free of hierarchical elements. The Mongols invaded Goryeo on numerous occasions during the thirteenth century, eventually occupying Korea for a period of time, and Jeju was offered as a grazing spot for the horses of the Mongol army. Some believe that the Jeju dialect retains many Mongol words. During the subsequent Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), exiled criminals were banished to Jeju. The island was known for three items: women, rocks, and wind. Because of its geological formation as a result of the volcanic eruption of Mount Halla, situated in the middle of the island, Jeju is full of volcanic ash and rocks. Surrounding Halla, small, hilly volcanic rock formations known as *oreum* in the native tongue cover the island, which has a total surface area of 1,850 square kilometers. Jeju women traditionally worked—and they worked hard. Unlike traditional Korean women on the mainland, Jeju women were often the breadwinners in their families. This was particularly the case for those living in coastal villages, due to their diving skills. Matrimonial customs and kinship relations also traditionally differ from those of mainland Korea, where the influence of Confucianism was significantly stronger. On Jeju, marriage involved the sharing of provisions, rather than the payment of a dowry or bride price, the groom providing the matrimonial dwelling and the bride furnishing it and filling it with household items. There were significant differences between the island and the mainland in terms of language, dietary customs, house-building practices, rituals and spiritual beliefs, gender relations, kinship terms, the division of labor, and so on. Jeju even has its own autochthonous origin myth, according to which three men, with the last names of Ryang (Yang), Ko (Go), and Pu (Bu), emerge from three different caves (see Yi 2005; Jeon 2010). This is distinct from what is now widely accepted as Korea's origin myth, in which a woman marries a bear and gives birth to Dangun, the country's first king.

Under Japanese colonial rule, many Jeju men traveled to Japan in order to seek better sources of income, like the counterparts from the mainland. The immigration pattern was basically the same as that of peninsular Koreans, with single men making the journey alone at first, to be joined a few years later by their families once they had gained a secure livelihood. From 1923, with the commencement of direct ocean service between Jeju Island and Osaka, Jeju *zainichi* became concentrated in the Osaka area (see Kim 1985). It is thought that there were about 2.4 million Koreans living in Japan by the time Japan surrendered in August 1945. With the end of colonial rule, Koreans returned en masse to their homeland, leaving about 580,000 in Japan. Osaka Prefecture continued to be the area with the largest number of Koreans, with figures remaining in the range of 150,000 during the 1950s and 1960s (Morita 1996: 131-132). According to 1964 data, about 86,500 Koreans in Japan traced their origins to Jeju, with 19,000 of these living in Tokyo and 61,700 in Osaka (Morita 1996: 148). From what I can determine from fragmentary information, Adachi and Arakawa Wards in Tokyo and the Ikaino area and other parts of Ikuno Ward in Osaka absorbed most of the (undocumented) 4.3 exiles as they sought assistance from family members, relatives, and—not infrequently—former neighbors from the island.

Chongryeon organizations were strong in the above-mentioned wards of Osaka and Tokyo, and were mainly led by Koreans of Jeju origin. It needs to be emphasized that, behind the façade of pro-North Korea patriotism, *Chongryeon* inherited a strong flavor of regionalism in its expatriate politics. The now deceased Han Deok-su, the longest serving chairman of *Chongryeon*, originated from Daegu in North Gyeongsang Province. He was known to have disliked and distrusted *Chongryeon* members of Jeju origin and, thus, not many Jeju Koreans were able to break into the ranks of cadre in the organization. Where the Jeju *zainichi* excelled was in the field of education, and most prominently in the higher education of the organization, and a large proportion of the faculty at *Chongryeon*'s Korea University was made up of intellectuals of Jeju origin. In relation to prospective marriage partners for their children, Koreans in Japan of mainland origin looked unfavorably on those of Jeju origin. Accordingly, it was common practice for young Jeju *zainichi* men and women to find marriage partners among the population of fellow *zainichi* whose families originated from Jeju.

It is therefore not surprising that the Jeju *zainichi* I talked to stressed the violence and brutality of mainland Koreans during the 4.3 Uprising. In fact, I was struck by the fact that rather than simply referring to 4.3 as an anti-US uprising, my Jeju *zainichi* acquaintances first mentioned the brutality of outsiders (i.e. Koreans from the peninsula) such as the Seocheong, who "spoke a different language," "were illiterate *kkangpae* [thugs]," and "shared nothing in common with Jeju traditions." Such recollections would then normally be followed by references to Syngman Rhee, and then to the *migugnom* ("American wretches"), whom they viewed as bearing ultimate responsibility for what happened during the uprising. In the beginning, it was almost always outsiders from the peninsula that constituted the target of their criticism. On this point, their stories were thus somewhat removed from the official North Korean line, according to which 4.3 would be subsumed under the broad rubric of the *namjoseon hyeongmyeong* or South Korean Revolution. For Jeju *zainichi*, 4.3 was, first and foremost, an uprising by islanders for the benefit of their island. This is captured in Kim Seok-beom's novel *Hwasando*.

Hwasando

Although the novel itself took seven years to complete, *Hwasando* depicts a time span of a little more than two months between February and April 1948. There are two main protagonists and several secondary protagonists. The two main characters are Nam Seung-ji and Yi Bang-geun. Seung-ji is a *zainichi* Korean who returned to Korea after liberation in 1945, while Bang-geun is the son of a Jeju business owner, Yi Tae-su. Leaving his mother and younger sister behind in Osaka, Seung-ji returns to Korea, enrolling at a junior college in Seoul. Upon completion of his studies, he returns to his native Jeju and becomes a middle school teacher. When the story begins, Seung-ji has quit his teaching position in order to fully devote himself to work for the Jeju Workers' Party. As a party member, he is working alongside his comrades to prepare protest activities against the May 10 election, which is to be held exclusively in the South. His maternal uncle, Kang Mong-gu, is one of the party leaders on Jeju. When the story opens, Kang is in prison following his arrest in the aftermath of the March 1 demonstration the previous year (1947). Seung-ji is on a mission to relay a message to Yu Dal-hyeon, a middle-ranking party leader, in the island's capital, Jeju City.

Yu Dal-hyeon is a high school teacher. Fond of putting on pretentious airs, Dal-hyeon tends to talk down to people, including Seung-ji. A reserved and cautious man, Seung-ji puts up with this treatment, while Yi Bang-geun resents it. Yu Dal-hyeon is obsessed with Bang-geun, wanting to induct him into the party. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Yu Dal-hyeon is not working cooperatively with the Jeju party members, preferring to work directly with the mainland party.

Yi Bang-geun is a patriot. He has a history of having been arrested during the colonial period by the special police in Japan while studying at a university in Tokyo for harboring anti-Japanese sentiments. After being transferred to Seoul's Seodaemun prison, where he endured severe torture, Bang-geun had accepted *tenkō* ("conversion"—i.e. to pro-Japanese thinking), and this enabled him to get out of prison. This past casts a shadow over Bang-geun's mind, which, as the story develops, becomes a major element in his self-loathing and nihilism.

Yi Bang-geun becomes big news in the city after beating up Seocheong militia members in a bar. As usual, the militiamen are behaving in a wanton fashion toward hostesses and other customers, as if they own the place. Bang-geun is going to ignore what is going on, but it becomes unbearable to him and he explodes. The police arrive and only Bang-geun is arrested. Even though his father is a powerful man on the island and his maternal uncle, Jeong Se-yong, is a high-ranking police chief, he still has to spend the night in jail. In his cell, crowded with filthy men and filled with the stench coming from the toilet attached to the cell, he meets Kang Mong-gu, who is expecting to be released as part of an amnesty on the first anniversary of the March 1 demonstration. Kang and Yi begin to develop respect for one another.

It is Yu Dal-hyeon who conveys the news of the planned April uprising to Bang-geun. Bang-geun is captivated by the news, although he rules out any possibility of personally getting involved in it. But Yu persists, courting Bang-geun in his effort to make him a party member—interestingly, not via the Jeju branch, but through direct communication with the party's headquarters on the mainland. Nonchalant, Bang-geun feels he could not care less whether it is the branch on the island or its mainland counterpart that is involved: he knows that he will not play any part in the uprising. Unlike Yu Dal-hyeon, Kang Mong-gu has a straightforward manner, his priorities firmly directed toward the island and its future. As such, he urges Yi Bang-geun to join their resistance activities in order to show his solidarity with his fellow-islanders (and not his loyalty toward party headquarters). Somewhat to the chagrin of the reader, Bang-geun strenuously refuses—this decision is going to cost him emotionally, although the story leaves this point rather vague.

This extraordinarily long novel goes into meticulous detail in its description of everyday life on the island as well as the clandestine preparations made by islanders for the April uprising. There is a marked shift in mood when Bang-geun ventures into the mountain village where Seung-ji's aunt lives, signaling to the reader that the mountain villages spread out along the foothills of Mount Halla are to become guerrilla strongholds—conforming to the historical labeling of guerrillas as *sansaram* ("mountain people") (Kwon 2001). These villages would bear the brunt of the destruction and devastation in the aftermath of the 4.3 Uprising, following raids by the army and police, supported by members of the Seocheong militia. But *Hwasando* stops short of describing the massive raids that started in May 1948, instead closing right after an armistice agreement is reached between Lt. General Kim Ik-ryeol and the rebel leaders at the end of April. But, the armistice is soon to be revoked with the intervention of the US Military. As May 10 approaches, it becomes clear that there is no possibility of the planned "South-only" election being successfully carried out on Jeju: less than a handful of individuals are interested in voting. Although he has registered to vote, Bang-geun is undecided as to whether he will vote. As he tries to recover from his drinking session the previous night, his head fills with images of Jeju, Mount Halla, and Korea. This is a prophetic ending: with the launch of massive armed attacks by US-backed army, police and militia forces aimed at conclusively suppressing all resistance on the island, the lives of the novel's protagonists seem likely to enter a precarious phase.

Reading Kim Seok-beom

As Kim Seok-beom's longest novel, *Hwasando* is arguably his representative work, although the 4.3 Uprising is a theme that is found in many other examples of his work. Indeed, Kim Seok-beom's entire corpus can be deemed as a multi-dimensional and multi-periodic engagement with the 4.3 Uprising. Born in Osaka in 1925, Kim returned to his ancestral home of Jeju Island with his family at the age of fourteen. When Japan surrendered, Kim and his family were living back in Osaka. Kim traveled to post-liberation Seoul to study, but rather than settling in Korea, he returned to Japan, graduating from Kyoto University in 1951. From early on in his career, he has expressed an interest in literature that has the 4.3 Uprising as a primary motif. In 1951, under the pen-name Pak Tong, Kim published a short piece entitled *From the Journal circa 1949—A Chapter from the Mountain of Death* (Kim 2005a[1951]: 551ff.). One year before its publication, in 1950, Kim had gone to Tsushima (a Japanese island located in the straits between Korea and Japan) to escort two female relatives who had escaped from Jeju and were heading for the Japanese mainland. One of the women had lost her breasts through torture during the year-long raid on the island that followed the 4.3 Uprising: her torturer had first burnt her breasts and then cut them off (Kim 2010: 92). His writing draws on the raw horror and anger that he experienced upon learning this (Yi 2012: 291). Later, in 1981, her story was published in a short story under the title *A Woman without Breasts* (Kim 2005b: 305ff.).

Having kept silent for six years following the publication of his first novella, he published a short story, *The Death of a Crow* (Kim 2005a[1957]: 43ff.), again with the 4.3 Uprising as its main theme. This story "[was instrumental] in shedding light on the 4.3 incident, which had been hidden behind a veil [in South Korea]" (Yi 2013: 226). The same theme was carried over into his 1970 story, *Mandoku yūreikitan* (translated into English as The Curious Tale of Mandogi's Ghost) (Kim 2005a[1970]: 157ff.; Kim & Textor 2010). *Hwasando* is, in many senses, the culmination of Kim's 4.3 literary opus. If so, why, one wonders, does this story have such an ambiguous ending? From the ending, I quote:

> With the arrival of dusk, the corners of the room, the legs of the sofa, the entire atmosphere, and the garden turned lavender, yet, rather than becoming dark, it created the sobering color of the sunset. This color seeped into the garden, and then into [Bang-geun's] study, as if it were a liquid and had dyed the air. The pillars across the garden and the terrace's square floorboards were all wrapped in the veil of the sunset and the entire house felt almost as if it had sunk deep under the bottom of crimson waters. ... Yi Bang-geun was feeling the pressure of the crimson water over his entire body. In this dream-like space, the sun was red as if bleeding, as if [the world had entered into] the raw liver of a huge monster. This could have been inside the belly of the giant whale that [Bang-geun had seen] in his dream. Yi

> Bang-geun, as if dozing off, sat on the sofa, his eyes closed. Inside the huge belly of this monstrous whale, surrounded by red walls, its beard as sharp as the bamboo swords of the guerrillas [….] In the distance, a bell was ringing—ringing against red walls, as if vomiting blood. Crows—have you come here because the bell is ringing too loud? Who is ringing the bell? No one is—it is ringing on its own. On the backs of Yi Bang-geun's eyelids, Mount Halla appeared in the distance. From afar, on top of the mountain, folded inside deep valleys, Sameuiyang *oreum* [small volcanic formations] appeared. As if they were the vaginas of women, this *oreum* had two vulvas facing each other. A vast field. The bell is ringing across this vast field […] as if to throw up blood [from deep below]. Crows, have you come because of the bell ringing? Behold the sadness of the young widow, know this sorrow… No, the bell is ringing from a much greater distance, beyond 8.15 [Korea's liberation], across the wild fields of Korea, whose youth was stolen by Japan, Korea that is herself this young widow. The bell is ringing in the field of dreams, or maybe it is ringing outside dreams. Hot, it is hot, the trembling heat of this air that rubs the skin… Yi Bang-geun woke up. He emerged from the dream. He stood up, slowly shaking his head that was heavy with wine, and went outside his study. He stood on the corner of the terrace and looked up at the orange sky. A wave of heat scorched his skin and the hot air trembled. Yi Bang-geun saw the wind race above his head.(Kim 1958c: 557-558; Ryang translation).

Unlike the hundreds of pages that precede this paragraph—it is one long paragraph—filled as they are with concrete details, the novel ends in a vague, abstract, and somewhat unclear manner. The last paragraph shifts between tenses—between the present of the novel (which is the past) and the present of the dream or, rather, the time inside Yi Bang-geun's dream, which cannot be located temporally. There are no obvious signs or indications of which sentences belong within the realm of the dream and which outside it, as the sentences criss-cross each other, defying grammatical rules of tense agreement. Crimson light, the color red, blood, the pressure of the red air… needless to say, such terms allude to the coming anti-government uprising and also to a premonition of massive and brutal bloodshed. The reference to crows is notable or perhaps, understandable—just as in Hyun Ki-young's novel, many Jeju *zainichi* told me that in 1948-1949, the island was covered with black crows that flocked thick over heaps of dead bodies. What of the bell, though? Why the bell? What sound does this indicate, a sound so loud that it invites crows, a sound that comes from across a vast field of time-space, prior to the 8.15 liberation of Korea, lamenting the loss of national sovereignty to Japanese colonial rule, the form of a young widow symbolizing Korea? A widow, and then, the Sameuiyang *oreum*, representing her vagina, may direct the reader to the violation of Korea by Japan and then the violation of Jeju by the "outsiders," but such symbols might also be taken as indications of Korea's fertility; after all, new life is delivered from a woman's vagina. Why is this widow young? She is young because her newly-wed husband was executed—perhaps on March 1, 1919, or on April 3, 1948. Indeed, many young women became widows in the aftermath of the year-long armed assault on the island. The image of the liver or, more precisely, the inside of the liver of a huge monster whale can also be interpreted in a double sense: it could mean that Jeju Island was facing no possible exit from the upcoming bloody atrocity; it could also allude to the regenerative function of the liver as an organ, indicating that, no matter how unspeakable the atrocities that were to befall the islanders, Jeju would be resurrected. This almost enigmatic ending may make more sense if we conduct a close examination of the two protagonists in the story, Nam Seung-ji and Yi Bang-geun.

Yi Bang-geun

Yi Bang-geun is involved in an illicit sexual liaison with the family's maid, Bueogi. She is heavy-set, middle-aged, and not beautiful, but sturdy and hardworking. She has been serving his family since before his mother passed away some ten years ago. After his mother's death, his father brought his long-term mistress, Seon-ok, into the house. One night, Seon-ok finds out about the relationship between Bang-geun and Bueogi. Seon-ok then falls ill, insisting that she requires a mudang or shaman to perform a cleansing ritual. The ritual begins and the shamaness impersonates Bang-geun's deceased mother, declaring that a son of this family is having sexual intercourse with the maid. Bueogi breaks down, admitting her guilt. Shortly after this event, Bueogi is dismissed. Bang-geun's connection with Bueogi is, however, not simply a sexual one: it is his connection with the raw earth of Jeju. Granted, Bang-geun is exploiting Bueogi's labor as well as her sexual services, but there is more to it than this. Bang-geun is at risk of losing an anchor that reminds him of his identity due to his personal wealth (based on assets he inherited from his mother) and that of his family. In fact, Bang-geun is completely redundant in the novel. He does not participate in the armed uprising—he is only curious about what is going on. He even visits a guerrilla district, but that is all—it is only a visit.

Critics often question why Kim Seok-beom created this apolitical character, Yi Bang-geun as a key character in a novel whose spirit is revolutionary. Kim himself once stated that "it is difficult to explain" why Bang-geun is a major protagonist (1990: 44-45). In my view, the novel requires the presence of Yi Bang-geun. For Kim himself is ultimately an onlooker with respect to the 4.3 Uprising. It was sheer luck that he happened not to be in Jeju in 1948 and that he avoided being arrested, persecuted, tortured, or even executed. Kim's sensitivity (which in my mind is representative of the first-generation of Jeju *zainichi*) thinly veils his keen consciousness of not having been there. This near miss, this instance of sheer luck, inevitably creates a consciousness of guilt, or more precisely, an urge to do something in order that those 80,000 islanders not die in vain. Yi Bang-geun is, in this sense, both structurally and in terms of inner coherence, Kim Seok-beom himself. Kim is looking at Jeju through Bang-geun's eyes.

In Chiteino taiyō or The Underground Sun, a sequel to *Hwasando*, Bang-geun kills himself, having executed the traitors Yu Dal-hyeon and Jeong Se-yong, despite the latter being his uncle (Kim 2006). This is exactly how Kim envisioned the future of Yi Bang-geun in the afterword to the final volume of *Hwasando* (Kim 1983c: 560-561). This is interesting, as it indicates the effects of the passage of a certain span of time. Readers may have expected Bang-geun to thrive, in light of the acknowledgement of the 4.3 atrocities and formal apology by the South Korean government in 2003, yet, Kim terminates Bang-geun. Nam Seung-ji, on the other hand, lives on in the sequel as one of the main protagonists. Let us see who Nam is in *Hwasando*.

Nam Seung-ji

If Yi Bang-geun is Kim Seok-beom's eyes, Nam Seung-ji is his heart. Paralleling the trajectory taken by Kim in his youth, Seung-ji is repatriated from Osaka to Seoul. However, rather than coming back to Japan from Seoul, as Kim did, Seung-ji moves back to Jeju Island. After an initial period spent teaching at a middle school, he joins the Jeju Workers' Party. This party, however, operates somewhat independently from central command. While Kim is not clear about the party's organizational structure, the reader can fully appreciate the fact that the islanders have built up their organizational base around the leadership of the local party on the island. This becomes clear when, unbeknownst to Seung-ji and his uncle Mong-gu, a high-ranking figure in the island's party organization, Yu Dal-hyeon tries to recruit Yi Bang-geun by putting him in direct contact with a liaison from the party's central headquarters in Seoul. The emphasis on the separation between the mainland party and Jeju party merits notice, since right-wing commentators in South Korea try to depict 4.3 as a result of directives given top-down from the central control of the South Korean Workers' Party, while the truth is perhaps far more complicated, with competing and confusing involvement of local interests and human relations (Yi 2008 for a rightist interpretation). (Later, in the sequel, Yu betrays the party on the island by passing on its membership list to the police. Outraged, Yi Bang-geun finishes him off.)

In terms of character, Seung-ji is honest to a fault and somewhat inflexible. It is almost painful to read about his pursuit of purity and perfection. He is a nervous man and awkward around people, in part because he is aware that he has become Japanized as a result of the years he has spent living in Japan. As part of their preparations for the 4.3 Uprising, Mong-gu and Seung-ji sneak into Japan in order to obtain financial support from Jeju Koreans living there. Seung-ji is briefly reunited with his mother and sister. Seung-ji's maternal uncle in Kobe owns a mid-size business and promises Mong-gu a large donation in exchange for leaving Seung-ji in Japan, so that he will be able to marry. His childless uncle is concerned that Seung-ji, as the only male of his generation in his lineage, needs to marry in order to produce a successor for his lineage. Seung-ji is outraged to find out about this deal and insists that he be sent back to Jeju with Mong-gu. Despite his mother's sorrow and his sister's deep disappointment, he leaves Japan for Jeju with Mong-gu. The scene in which he leaves his mother is one of the saddest in the novel, because the reader is made deeply aware that Seung-ji will never see his mother and sister again. For, with the arrival of the 4.3 Uprising, the reader is overwhelmed by an ominous premonition.

Back on Jeju, the reader watches Seung-ji head off into the mountains with a heavy heart. For, he or she knows that he will be mercilessly killed, along with thousands of other guerrillas. Thus, it is a pleasant surprise to see him escape Jeju and come back to Japan in The Underground Sun, the sequel to *Hwasando*. How happy his mother and sister must have been. Yet, how dreadful for them to have learned what went on in Jeju in 1948-1949. This chasm, the gap between the ones that saw—such as Beomdori and Uncle M—and those that heard—like Kim Seok-beom himself—constitutes an undercurrent of

Kim's literature. This is an important gap, the gap between witnesses and survivors, as members of the latter group—people like Beomdori—often find themselves devoid of words.

Language Is Missing

In his very first publication, From the Journal circa 1949, one finds key elements that would recur in Kim's corpus thereafter. This novella is written in the form of an eyewitness account by a traveler, presumably a *zainichi* from Japan, who visits Jeju in 1949. Upon arrival, the visitor witnesses a series of atrocities and mass executions. In a town square, the intersection of the two main roads has been established as an execution ground. Under a hot afternoon sun, the sky filled with crows, three trucks arrive, two full of men and one of women. The men and women look out over the crowd as if trying to identify someone they know, someone they love. Suddenly, an old woman clad in a white hanbok, the Korean traditional dress, runs toward the third truck. A soldier curses and beats her. She is hurt, but will not stop screaming, sounding as if she is crying out her daughter's name.

> From behind a building, a mounted soldier approached her and [...] the horse kicked her with all its force. The old woman, nevertheless, crawled on, continuing to call out her daughter's name. A machine gun finally dealt with her. She was no longer able to move.
>
> The third truck braked and a young woman was dragged out. I could not see very clearly, but she was a beautiful woman. Her bare, white breasts were showing and her burgundy skirt was torn into pieces. She saw the dead old woman and began screaming like a crazy person: "Eomeoni [Mother], eomeoni, aigo [an expression of grief], eomeoni--!!!" Three soldiers slammed her to the ground and one thrust bayonet deep and straight between her youthful, beautiful breasts. I noticed I was praying. [...] Without even wiping the blood off the sword, the soldier took out [his] gun and shot two bullets into the young woman's temple. Three soldiers slowly kicked her body. Both of her arms were red, soaked in her blood.
>
> [....]
>
> A mother and a child were standing next to me. The child's eyes were glaring with horror. The mother hugged the child's shoulders. Her hands were shaking uncontrollably. Tears ran down her pale face. One old man whispered to her: "Ma'am, do not show your tears to the dogs."
>
> [....]
>
> One young woman's fresh blood dyed the square red.[...] I wonder if there were tears on her cheeks… (Kim 2005a[1951]: 557-559; Ryang translation)

The crows, crimson light, blood, and the woman's body referenced in the above recur in *Hwasando*, as seen in the final paragraph that I quoted above—the bloody inside walls of the whale's belly, the Sameuiyang *oreum* as a woman's vagina, the crows, and the red sunset are the main elements of that paragraph. In between the Journal circa 1949 and *Hwasando* lies a span of thirty years. Yet, the identical set of elements recurs, as if to suggest that it is primarily through these elements that Kim Seok-beom interprets the 4.3 Uprising.

In 2007, Kim Seok-beom witnessed the excavation of human remains from underneath the runway at Jeju International Airport. This was one of the sites used for mass executions during 1948 and 1949. Kim saw and touched multiple bones and skulls. There were whole skeletons, others that were disjointed and dispersed, and skulls that were grouped together. In addition to bones, the excavation work also uncovered pieces of rubber shoes, a button from a Daejeong Middle School uniform (Daejeong being the southern county of the island), and other fragments of miscellaneous items. As he watched the work progress, Kim realized that he was looking for one body or, more precisely, one set of bones, which would have what used to be a white towel alongside it with a personal name and address written in black ink. Back in 1950, when Kim had met two women from Jeju on Tsushima Island, one of them told him about one young woman (perhaps only a teenager) whom she shared a prison cell along with many female inmates during the 1948-1949 Jeju raid. This young woman had kept a white towel. Her cellmates were slightly offended, since they shared what little they had while together in the cell. But the girl would not let anyone, even the old women who should be treated with respect, use her clean white towel. On the day of her execution, she requested ink and a brush from the guard and wrote her name and address on the towel. She raised her skirt and bound it to her thigh, telling everyone that this way her family would be able to identify her bones after she was gone. She bid farewell to her cellmates, who now understood that she had known all this time that she was going to be executed. This girl appears in various incarnations in several of Kim's novels. In 2007, witnessing the excavation, Kim was afraid, yet at the same time hopeful, that he might find this towel alongside her bones… Seeing the hundreds of bones, scattered and destroyed, Kim was unable even to cry. Only after his return to Japan did he wail—for two whole days. He then understood why relatives and acquaintances that had experienced 4.3 firsthand found it so hard to talk about it. It simply defied language: no words could convey what truly happened on the island in 1948-1949 (Kim 2010: 89-91). Just like my Jeju relatives, who could only repeat that some unspeakably horrible things had happened, as if chanting a prayer or perhaps cursing the event—I do not know which.

Kim wrote his 4.3-related novels, including *Hwasando*, without having directly experienced the event. He took it as his mission as a novelist to write about, and continue writing about, 4.3. This reminds me of the following passage by Primo Levi about writing in lieu of "the true witnesses" of the Auschwitz:

> I must repeat: we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses [...] We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute [...] Even if they had paper and pen, the drowned [in the camp] would not have testified because their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before being snuffed out, they had already lost the ability to observe, to remember, to compare and express themselves. We speak in their stead, by proxy (Levi 1989: 83-84).

Prior to 2007, when he was present for the excavation of the execution site, Kim had not been a witness to the 4.3 Uprising and its aftermath. But his fiction continued to document what happened in 1948-1949 on Jeju Island. I would contend that, in fact, it had to be through fictional language that Kim was able to write about 4.3. Considering that the survivors (who were not true witnesses, according to Levi, due to the very fact that they survived) had lost their power of language too—as in the case of Beomdori—and they are left to repeat their curse-like chants that some inexplicably and indescribably horrifying things had happened on Jeju and that thousands had been brutally killed, no proper language that would recount what actually happened was available. Behind these chants (or curses) lay thousands of women who had lost their breasts, mothers who had lost their children, fathers and sons (some not even teenagers) who had become martyrs, wives who had thrown themselves off cliffs upon witnessing their husband's executions, and many, many others who had died brutal deaths, often after hours, days, and weeks, if not months, of torture. Here, truth exists outside linguistic structure, dislocated from the logo-centric senses. The Jeju *zainichi*, including those who had experienced 4.3 and those who had absorbed their experiences, had to make sense of it without proper language. Kim Seok-beom's fictional language captures this reality, this limitation, and this dilemma—not as report, not as confession, but as fiction. The reason why I, an anthropologist, have chosen to rely on Kim Seok-beom's fiction rather than ethnographic data obtained through fieldwork and interviews lies here—the lack of language that captures what happened in 1948 on Jeju Island. This is not simply technical—it also concerns an ethical question. When one is fully aware that by being asked about 4.3, the respondents would face a formidable emotional challenge and pain, anthropological fieldwork may compromise the ethical protocol of respecting the people involved. I do not have a clear answer for this.[1]

There remains, nevertheless, a difference between the nation that forced absolute silence onto the islanders of Jeju for over fifty years and the community of exiles that talked about the massacre of 80,000 innocent people, if only in a chant-like, prayer-like, and curse-like manner, through powerful refrain, generation

after generation. Seen from the perspective of the Jeju *zainichi*, the name of the newly erected museum commemorating 4.3, Jeju Pyeonghwa Ginyeomgwan or Jeju Peace Memorial Hall, sounds somewhat deceptive. Where is this peace that it bears in its name? Is this a future projection? For, unlike the officially commissioned exercise of truth telling and reconciliation involving Jeju islanders and South Koreans, Jeju *zainichi* have lived with the reality of 4.3 ever since 1948 and will continue to do so, even though they may not possess the language with which to recount the events. And in fact, many survivors are no longer alive.

Uncle M and Mr. Beomdol eventually obtained full legal documentation and settled in Japan. Uncle M married a Korean woman, also from Jeju, and together they started a luggage production business. They are now proud grandparents. In the middle of Cold War tensions between Koreans with pro-North and pro-South allegiances in Japan, Uncle M was consistently critical of North Korea and *Chongryeon*, flatly refusing to have anything to do with the organization. To him, therefore, 4.3 was far from an example of red resistance, perhaps having developed a phobia about anything remotely resembling communism after others had linked the uprising to this ideology. Our family was broadly supportive of *Chongryeon* and we therefore avoided discussing politics whenever Uncle M and his family came to visit. Mr. Beomdol, on the other hand, never truly recovered his ability to use his native Jeju language, although he slowly learned to handle Japanese. He never married, lived on his own in the upstairs apartment of a Korean factory owner, and worked in the factory his entire life. He passed away about ten years ago without ever telling us about what had caused him to lose his power of speech, the hell that he and other islanders had witnessed in 1948. As for my father, he still has not "converted" to South Korean nationality and thus remains in Japan without ever having returned to visit his ancestral home. Perhaps this is for the best. Daejeong district of Jeju being his hometown, he would have attended Daejeong middle school had he been back in Jeju in 1948. Along with human remains, in 2007 a Daejeong middle school button was also dug out, according to Kim Seok-beom. Those bones that belonged to the person who wore it could have been my father's. In this sense, I, too, and my children and my children's children exist by pure luck. For, in 1948-1949, being a Jeju person warranted death, as the South Korean state with US backing attempted to physically eliminate its own people. Thus I ask: what is there to remember and see, when one knows that thousands of innocent lives were erased with the utmost brutality and when one knows that we still lack the language to capture what really took place many years ago?

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Recommended citation: Sonia Ryang, "Reading Volcano Island: In The Sixty-Fifth Year of the Jeju 4.3 Uprising," The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 11, Issue 36, No. 2, September 9, 2013.

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Notes

[1] This is not to slight others' effort to document witness accounts and engage in truth-telling about 4.3, which is a courageous and important work.

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