

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Axis Mundi:

The City and Geographies of Identity in Cheju Island, South Korea

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Timothy R. Tangherlini, Chair

This dissertation explores an emerging tourist destination’s transition from a former rural periphery into one of Korea’s fastest growing urban centers. In less than half a century, Cheju City, the capital of Cheju Island, grew from a sleepy provincial seat into a bustling tourist city with metropolitan ambitions. A central concern is how do residents of an emerging city become “urban”? Cheju Island has long been a curiosity in Korea due to its real and exoticized cultural differences from the mainland, but its present urban reality is often under-addressed. The findings in this dissertation examine how the “Free International City” project begun since 2002 fundamentally altered ways of life and thinking and provoked complete reinventions of tradition and a rural Cheju imaginary. The new spaces of the city offered unprecedented means to organize resources and ideas. Cheju islanders developed their own urbanisms with local idioms that synthesize imported ideas to a Cheju-specific situation that also differs – and, at times,

rejects – mainland Korean urbanisms. A further paradox of unprecedented contact with and interdependency on mainland Korea is that mainland-island divides have persisted rather than diminished. In the face of destruction, rural traditions and communities have also acquired a new vitality and definition as they become markers of island identity. Cheju City, as a constantly shifting geographical form and concept, functions as an axis around which islanders construct their everyday spaces and interactions amongst each other and with the wider world. From a combination of historical, statistical, and ethnographic perspectives, this dissertation analyzes the ways people of multiple walks of life articulate, imagine, enact, create, and resist the city.

The dissertation of Tommy Tran is approved.

Namhee Lee

Allen F. Roberts

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2017

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, who had long tolerated my eccentricities, and my Cheju Island friends, locals and expats, who inspired my endeavors from the beginning of this project.

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## INTRODUCTION

A frequent question that curious people, Korean and non-Korean alike, asked me was simply, “Why Cheju?” The answer was always long and complicated. Halfway through, I would wonder if I was speaking to the other person or to myself. I have always been convinced, that Cheju Island has much to tell us about the tempests of twenty-first century globalization, its promises, its deceptions, its seductions, and its backlash. Darren Southcott, former editor of the *Jeju Weekly*, remarked to me once in early 2016, “Cheju is a microcosm of what we are seeing going wrong in the neoliberal world.” Cheju’s small geographic size yet large metropolitan ambitions allow us to see the immediate local effects of foreign investment policies, state power, urban experimentation, and tourism development all at once. Whenever Cheju’s ambitious leaders set forth for new frontiers, the island’s tumultuous past was never far behind.

My first introduction to this island was in 2007 when I first lived in Cheju for the English Program in Korea (EPIK). The last traces of the Japanese tourism bubble were fizzling out, Sin-Cheju (New Cheju City) was filled with the emptied shells of abandoned brothels, and one could see the abandoned false starts for tourist traps scattered around the island. With a few exceptions, a night out at a foreign food place or an indie band concert was unthinkable. Aside from Ediya and Tom n’ Toms chain shops (of which there were only a handful in all of Cheju City), there was only the old Huwa-Huwa coffee shop by Cheju City Hall for earl gray tea or black coffee with a fresh walnut tart. My first apartment at the edge of the Foreign Language High School in Aewōl-ūp was surrounded by forests and patches of walled farmers’ fields where *sasūm* (deer) would romp through on a cold winter’s night. One could steal away to one corner of the country coastline without meeting a single tourist. Flights to Seoul or Pusan – all monopolized by the national flag carriers – could cost between a hundred to two hundred USD.

For many locals in 2007, Cheju was a virtual Tatooine, the most distant place from Seoul, the bright center of the South Korean galaxy. Island pride was not overt. People dreamed of going to find a new future in the capital or elsewhere or they were content to get by with whatever they had available. There was nothing exciting in Cheju City except for its dramatic dormant volcano, Hallasan. A common refrain from coworkers was, “It’s nice, but boring.” Yet Cheju City, a quiet provincial city surrounded by a vast green countryside, had an undeniable charm of its own. Where local pride emerged was when people would refer to it as one of greener cities in Korea, boasting clear blue skies in a country menaced with smog. I was for the most part unaware of the major issues at the time, but I had a sense that Cheju’s leadership had something major planned as the number of construction sites steadily increased. The *Kukche chayu tosi* (“Free International City”), an ambitious international tourism development program the Cheju and national governments enacted since 2002, was just beginning.

I was not prepared to see Cheju when I returned in 2010. The sleepy provincial seat I remembered was turning into a miniature metropolis. In a span of only a few years, the beehive of Cheju International Airport reminded me more of LAX. New high-rises pierced the Sin-Cheju skyline. Getting to Cheju via Seoul-Gimpo cost as low as sixty USD. The Nohyŏng-tong district appeared to double in size as new apartment complexes and development zone arose from former farm fields. Signs along the busiest streets changed into Chinese. Shopkeepers sometimes uttered “*Huanying guangling*” (Welcome, customers) in a Beijing accent. Hotels featured casinos. The quiet coastal villages, which had seemed moribund in 2007, were packed with weekend visitors from Seoul and no beach nor *orŭm* (parasite cinder cone) was without tourists. One could find a café at least every five minutes of walking. Smog lingered over the crest of Hallasan. Much of what I thought I knew about Cheju no longer applied. In these paradoxical times of clashing

visions for global trade centers and grassroots sustainability and frequent miscommunication in the age of communication technology, Cheju City's rise was a striking example of many of the world's emerging cities.

Nothing that I observed had its own independent nature nor appeared *ex nihilo*. The processes were already long in the making when I first saw Cheju in 2007. The physical changes in 2010 were simply the results of a series of plans and government negotiations with investors made since the beginning of the 2000s. What I observed was not the summation of a linear process, but complex dynamics where ruptures from previous conditions were never complete. Previous obituaries to tradition were premature while global promises failed to overcome local contradictions. Global trends, particularly China's rise as an economic juggernaut and South Korea's turn to tourism, interpenetrated with local attempts to harness future opportunities. At the same time, many islanders continued to feel and remember the unresolved tensions and inequalities between themselves and Seoul, the object of metropolitan desire and local resentment.

The great seventh-century Korean Buddhist philosopher Wŏnhyo once stated, "The past is already gone, the future has not yet arrived, and the present does not linger. Hence its creation is due to its not abiding, and therefore it is also unarisen" (2012: 273). In classical Buddhist thought, the concept of *pratītyasamutpāda* (Kr: *yŏn'gi*; dependent origination) emphasizes the interconnection of all concepts and phenomena. What we observe in the present is the summation of complex changes goes back far beyond the call of memory because the conditions accumulated and changed over the course of time enable the present state of things. An important lesson from the concept of dependent origination is that any and all actions reverberate in complex chains of causality and change. Individual action impacts collective results and thus an

attempt to understand urban change must take into account that cities or urbanizing regions are not merely collective abstractions but constantly interacting individuals and networks. For this reason, I take a two-level perspective in this dissertation: first at the macro-level of history and development of Cheju City as a conurbation and then second at the ground-level of individual everyday experience at specific places and events.

As the fallout of the Free International City is still under addressed if not ignored outright in accounts of a now largely-urban Cheju, a re-evaluation of the project should consider the interpenetration of local experiences and global trends. Seen in terms of interpenetration, we can observe the Free International City not simply in terms of governmental policy but also its effects, its failures, and its incidental and accidental results. The incidents and accidents are sometimes more instructive than the original intentions, as they can elucidate the blind spots of urban policy and economic planning. Although everything that I present in this dissertation will be limited to its time and scope like the works of my predecessors, what we conventionally delimit as past, present, and future are all connected on the same continuum. While twenty-first century urban paradigms may be premised on building entirely new human geographies, they must build on existing foundations. Whether builders can properly address such foundations determine the success or eventual collapse of their structures.

As a dwarf standing on giants' shoulders, I began my dissertation writing with an intention to continue where cultural geographer David J. Nemeth left off in 1984. I include a comprehensive history of Cheju from the T'amna civilization and then territory of Korean kingdoms as a background, but most of my dissertation is concerned with the *Kukche chayu tosi* ("Free International City") project put into action since 2002. A problem I immediately encountered was a lack of up-to-date Cheju literature and answers on the radical urbanization I

saw unfolding in the span of less than a decade. What happened between 1984 to 2007? In only the span of three decades, the rural and shamanic Cheju presented in academic literature bore little semblance to the cosmopolitan and urban twenty-first century I encountered. Ironically, the ideal forms of Cheju culture presented in this literature later had visible impact on how a largely-urbanized population reinterpreted tradition. What further convinced me to focus on Cheju's urbanization was Cheju National University Professor Ko Young-lim's (Ko Yöngnim) passionate efforts to argue for a new grassroots urban discourse when she established the Cheju Kukche Munhwa Kyoryu Hyöphoe (Jeju International Culture Exchange Association, JICEA). In 2013, dissertation research proceeded with one main thought in mind: how and when did Cheju Island become "urban" in multiple meanings of the term?

At a glance, one may notice that I employ a great number of seemingly disparate concepts from cultural geography, urban studies, and classical Buddhist and medieval Islamic thought interspersed in commentary and analyses across seven chapters. I try to put heavier emphasis on the concrete situation on Cheju rather than the theory behind the analysis. Commentaries rather than full theoretical analyses follow narratives. These decisions are intentional for I intended to keep much of this dissertation accessible to non-specialists while proposing a different framework seldom, if ever, used in Korean Studies. The conceptual frameworks employed throughout this dissertation may be unorthodox in urban studies, urban ethnography, and modern historical writing because Cheju's situation requires an unorthodox approach. Theory in this dissertation therefore is a proposition to consider phenomena and not a complete set of lenses. Critical theory is not altogether abandoned but is, using Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2008) term, "provincialized" when not applicable.

One consistent theme and central question I examine in relation to Cheju urbanization across this dissertation's seven chapters is in the title itself – the function of an axis. Unlike “center,” an “axis” is a relational term that suggests movement more than fixity. Although I draw from Paul Wheatley's (1969) concept of the *axis mundi* in which an urban center is a representation of the ideal cosmos, I reconfigure the concept to address an emerging conurbation such as Cheju City. While most of my Cheju friends scoff at the idea that their city could ever become a microcosm, an aspiration embedded in the Free International City, how they use Cheju City's spaces and how they critique it generates a sense of what a cosmology of the ideal urban space should be. For all its virtues and vices, Cheju City, as the most immediate urban space, still represents for islanders what a city should be, should not be, and could become. I consider the microcosm re-represented in the form of Cheju City as a living representation of a constellation of global economic relations, geopolitics, idealized urban forms, local worldviews, and individual needs. A topic of concern is how the urban form in real physical presence and the abstract concept of it both inform the ways people within Cheju City and without structure their everyday lives. The relational nature of the axis is also the reason I chose to employ classical Arabic and classical Chinese Buddhist terminology. The sheer difficulty of pinpointing precise American English translations for the widely variant uses of the Arabic and Sino-Korean terms allows for many opportunities for applications.

Urbanization interpenetrates everything in twenty-first century Cheju Island, from takeout fried chicken at a distant seaside village's annual ritual to the widespread proliferation of coffee culture. When I use the word “urbanization,” I use it in the sense of a constant process of making “the city” as both a physical reality and an abstract concept. The “city” is not a stable term with a single meaning, as the paradoxes of Cheju City demonstrate where a tourist hub with

luxury high-rise apartments and hotels manages to retain small town interpersonal relationships. In Sino-Korean, the term is translated into “*tosihwa*” in which the character “*hwa*” implies a comprehensive kind of change. Urban planning practice in Korea addresses “urban” and “rural” in sometimes ambiguous terms, as urban districts have recognized as *ōch'on* (fishing village) or *nongch'on* (farming village) and rural villages have projects designated as *tosi kuyōk* (urban zones). In the small geographic region of Cheju, regardless of where one lives, everyday life involves Cheju City in one way or another. The city of metropolitan aspirations allows unprecedented access to new resources, ideas, and means for organization, but also generated new challenges and barriers as islanders, historically isolated from the peninsula and continental Asia, attempt to assert their own spaces.

I cannot say that my dissertation would completely fulfill the readers' expectation, nor do I offer a complete theory of urban change. Many of what I write about I encountered through sheer accident or coincidence. I intentionally conclude without a sense of completion and closure because change tends to unfold through accidents, coincidences, and contingencies. Just as I was about to finish writing this dissertation in 2017, Korea's political economy experienced a sudden change with the fall of the neoconservative Park Geun-hye (Pak Kūnhye) regime (Boroweic 2017) and uncertainty that came with China's economic retaliation for the THAAD missile system deployment (Liu 2017). Even an axis is beholden to the vast interplay of incidental cosmic events and arrangements. A meteor could always hit and change the balance of things. What became my mantra by the end of this long project was this: things often fall apart in the most ironic ways possible.

Experiences in Cheju City had challenged and transformed many of the truths I previously held. There were many things I could not address and many open holes in my overall

work spanning only ten years of observation and two years of intensive field research. Throughout my research and writing my points of analysis changed constantly along with Cheju City. Though I include myself in some accounts, I write mostly in third person and switch between passive and active voice because I, too, was subject to the city.<sup>1</sup> The greatest challenge in making an account of an urbanizing geography from the ground level was that everything was time- and place-dependent; things that were true only months or even days ago could change at each passing sentence. This dissertation is not intended to be a total account or window to Cheju as a distinct geographic entity, but a point of departure for further explorations. During my dissertation research, Professor Ko always reminded me with a succinct phrase, “The first is not the best, but it is always the most important.” Necessity may be the mother of invention, but imperfection may be the mother of creativity for there is always something to be done.

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to Korea as “*yukji*” (the mainland) following Cheju Islanders’ everyday language. Non-Cheju islanders may find jarring the frequent use of the term “mainland” throughout this dissertation. Korean speakers sometimes remarked that in conversation I had an odd tendency to refer to the peninsula as “*yukji*.” To this I respond “*Chō-to sōmsaram-inikka* (That’s because I am also an island person).” I was also born and raised on a distant Pacific Island, Guam, and still find myself baffled at US “mainlander” behavior such as the brusque impatience of boarding a city bus that is not going to go anywhere or the inexplicable need to blare music through an open car window. Guamanians of various stripes, native or of immigrant origin, like Chejuans, could be simultaneously proud and frustrated at being confined to a tiny isolated place. Although both the terms “mainland” and “Cheju” are fraught with complication, the accidents as well as traumas of histories are what makes these

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<sup>1</sup> One clear example of this was in March 2017 when the head shaman of Onp’yōng initially mistook me for a fundamentalist Christian preacher because of the way I was dressed – in a dark suit, tie, and long black coat.



strong concepts among many Cheju islanders. Given the long asymmetrical relationship between Cheju Island and the Korean Peninsula as well as the long silence in Korean Studies in general, I felt it prudent to not distill Cheju islanders' voices, their passions, and resentment behind that one word "yukji." "Yukji" and "Cheju" are both physically real, but also constantly reconstructed and reconstituted at every individual action, thought, and encounter.

Each of the seven chapters was written to be somewhat autonomous of the others. Throughout the dissertation, I attempt to avoid speaking of events and phenomena through the language of theory. I pose theory occasionally as propositions for dialogue and not a programmatic exploration of the phenomenology of things. The first chapter also provides a brief overview of existing literature on Cheju Island and Korean urbanisms. Analytical frameworks that I introduce based on Mahāyāna philosophy integrated with a mix of geography and Ibn Khaldūn's methods are intended to function as additional tools and not as microscope lenses. Toward the end of this chapter, I discuss the actual fieldwork method as and practical limitations that I encountered.

The second chapter examines historical narratives as well as locally-produced scholarship on Cheju. As mentioned in the previous section, *Chejuhak* does not exist as a defined academic discipline, but has come to refer to the vast corpus of various material on all humanities- and social science-related works about the island. I refer to histories as opposed to history because interpretations of Cheju's past continue to be contentious issue in light of controversies over cultural preservation policy, tussles over representation in Korean history textbooks, flare-ups in island-mainland conflict, and Cheju City's Old Town renovation projects. The first section is a geographical and economic description of Cheju Province as it exists today. The second section provides an overview of Cheju histories from the T'amna period (1<sup>st</sup> c.?-1105 CE) to the present

with commentary on the specific historical events that *Chejuhak* scholars use as defining moments for Cheju identity. In an attempt to overcome the limitations of existing histories on Cheju, I intersperse individuals' accounts and commentaries with data presented in secondary scholarship and archives.

Chapter 3 provides an overview to Cheju's transformation into the so-called "Hawai'i of Korea," a colloquialism made policy and a term sometimes expressed with wishful thinking and sometimes derision. Although tourism is now ubiquitous on Cheju Island, in the history of Korea as a nation-state, this change was both early in conception and long in the making. From the end of the Syngman Rhee (Yi Sŭngman) regime (1948-1960), government planners entertained the idea of making Cheju a tourist resort, but actual implementation took decades under different regimes with different agendas. The chapter explores the successive Korean governments' initial attempts at fostering domestic tourism in Cheju and culminates with the Free International City project. Cheju tourism development shifted to attracting upscale international tourism and investment in the wake of trade liberalization, which diminished the importance of agriculture, and the 1997 IMF crisis. This chapter demonstrates how the shifting priorities and portrayals of Cheju produce contradictory images and productions of a tourist hub that aspires to be a budget beach getaway, nouveau riche playground, exotic frontier, and an eco-heritage site all at once.

Chapter 4 discusses the uneasy yet mutual relationship between urbanization and Cheju shamanism. As Cheju Island proceeds on a path to a cosmopolitan urban future, an urban-based *Chejuhak* folkloristics as well as newly-formed shamans' associations establish a 'rural' shamanic ritual, Ch'ilmŏri Shrine Yŏngdŭng-kut as an authentic representation of Cheju-ness. Adding to the irony is that this version of Yŏngdŭng-kut, which became an island-wide standard, is one derived from within Cheju City. This chapter explores how shamans and practitioners of

Cheju's indigenous religion adapt to urban conveniences to create new meaning. In contrast to previous scholars' anxieties over inauthenticity, this chapter argues instead that aspects of Cheju shamanism have become living urban heritage for a population anxious for an original Cheju.

Chapter 5 examines the shift (or at least an attempt to shift) to *ch'angjo kyŏngje* (creative economy) as policy and practice. Though the Kim Daejung (Kim Taejung) regime (1998-2003) sought to use cultural exports and tourism as means for post-IMF Crisis economic recovery, the specific term *ch'angjo kyŏngje* itself became prominent in Cheju with the post-2010 tourism boom. With an emphasis on *k'ŏlch'ŏ k'ŏnt'ench'ŭ* (culture content), numerous and often redundant culture programs have become a virtual sub-economy for a young urban population that still is constrained to a sluggish job market despite record tourism gains. The first part of Chapter 5 examines the numbers related to *ch'angjo kyŏngje* in terms of its rise to prominence in media publications, the JDI's controversial *Pichŏn 2030* (Vision 2030) report, and an analysis of economic data on Cheju between 2001 and 2016. The second part of the chapter balances raw impersonal data with dialogues with barristers, artists, and those involved with festivals. Although President Park Geun-hye's (Pak Kŭn-hye) administration heralded the shift to *ch'angjo kyŏngje* as an attempt to remedy growing youth unemployment, those involved in "creative" work have far different views.

Chapter 6 concerns the search for Cheju City's original center, the *wŏndosim* (original city center or Old Town) of Cheju City. Referred to as *sŏng'an* or *sŏngnae* (both literally meaning within the city walls) by people from outside the historic districts that comprise it, the *wŏndosim*, this area represents much of the contradictions of 'the city' as a concept, a function, and a reality. Although Cheju City, as an emerging urban center, in general has a vague character with little in clearly articulated imagery and spatial organization, its *wŏndosim* area consistently

is identified as its true core for more than a millennium. This chapter argues that the sense of the city does exist in Cheju City. Cheju City's *wōndosim*, despite its tiny geographic area, has functioned as an *axis mundi* since at least the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910) because of strong emotions and memory associated with it. Chapter 6 puts recorded histories, oral histories, urban planning, and personal accounts in dialogue to demonstrate the ways in which controversies, debate, and internal divisions shape the *wōndosim* and the potential framework for a *Chejudaun* (Cheju-esque) urbanism.

The last full chapter of this volume, Chapter 7, is based on research collected from November 15, 2015 to March 31, 2016, the final months of the main project. Whereas the bulk of the project concerns Cheju City, the last chapter shifts attention to the countryside and the peripheral districts of Sŏgwip'o City. Cheju City's development owes much to a widespread romanticization of rural towns and villages far outside of the center. With the post-2010 boom and the rapid influx of mainland Koreans, the countryside is rapidly becoming an extension of urbanites' contradictory desires and expectations in Cheju. The post-urban dream ironically became the impetus for urbanization in the form of a new airport project that threatens a rural village, parallel mainlander and islander societies, and arts and upscale café amenities scattered about the countryside. Despite the unprecedented scale of contact and exchange, conflicts between urban and rural Cheju as well as the divides between mainland Korean and Cheju islanders persisted. This chapter is a starting point for potential future explorations.

## CHAPTER ONE: “THE VIEW FROM THE PERIPHERY”

### 1.1 – Cheju Vignette: A Disjointed Return<sup>2</sup>

The cab pulled up at the bend of the coast road of Sinch’ön, a southeastern village at half-past seven. The reddish sun peeked through the clouds, but the skies were for the most part a dull gray. Though the sky seemed wintry, the verdant foliage and the cool yet foggy and humid weather suggested spring on this day of April 1<sup>st</sup>. Sinch’ön was mostly quiet and apparently indifferent to the changes sweeping the nearby tourist towns of Söngsan to the north and P’yosön to the south. The village sat along the Iljudoro road that circumnavigates the island. Its coastal road was one of the earliest integrated into the popularized Olle Walking Trail system as “Olle Trail Course 3.” One could see hints of weekend tourism (or at least attempts to tap into it) about. Along the main road to Sinch’ön, I was greeted with garish murals – all signed with the names of artists – on the walls of homes. For the most part on this day, Sinch’ön remained a sleepy place.

Today was the ritual day for Yöngdüng, the wind deity from a far-off island who travels along Cheju’s coastal communities for two weeks in the second lunar month of the year to be entertained, but the village proper betrayed no sign of the solemn festivity. Absent were the clattering *sölswe* (a metal bowl instrument played like a drum while set atop a rice sieve), booming *ching* (large brass gong), pounding *puk* (barrel drum), and thumping *changgu* (hourglass drum). Nevertheless, my documentary-maker friend Joey was certain that Sinch’ön would be something different. Devotion here, he iterated, is some of the strongest on the island.

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<sup>2</sup> With the exception of Kim Yöngch’öl, I was not given permission to use personal names of other Cheju islanders in this account. This is also the case in other ritual situations. Though shamanism is not as stigmatized in Cheju as it is in mainland Korea, I encountered many instances where people would rather remain anonymous.

Joining us was Tanner, an ethnomusicologist colleague from the University of Kentucky working on his dissertation research. Because Sinch'ön was a good hour-and-a-half away from Cheju City, we had all gotten up early at half-past four that morning to get a taxi. Only a few weeks ago Tanner's car, which he purchased from a shaman some months ago, had broken down while on the way to Songdang village's ritual to greet the tutelary deities. And despite having suddenly contracted norovirus, Tanner nonetheless decided on going to Sinch'ön. Since the car broke down at Songdang of all places, we have all joked that Tanner must have somehow offended Songdang's patron goddess Paekchutto. All three of us were exhausted, however. We had all arisen at the break of dawn to see one ritual after another in far-flung rural communities.

The first two lunar months in Cheju comprised the peak ritual season as communities performed rites to greet the gods for the new year and welcome the visiting gods Yöngdüng and Yowang (Standard Kr.: Yongwang). The annual weather phenomena involving a sudden spell of rough winds from the north and choppy seas at the beginning of the second lunar month were (and still are) interpreted as Yöngdüng's approach. Aside from Yowang, Yöngdüng also travels with family. The identity of certain family members is made known depending on the particular weather patterns that manifest on the *maji* (welcoming) day. Farming and fishing activities were either halted completely or at a minimum due to the frigid and windy weather conditions as well as ritual observances in this sacred period.

What Joey was unsure about was the exact location of the village's shrine. As far as he remembered, it was tucked onto a short cliff that overlooks the sea. I had also travelled through this area and past the shrine in 2011 and was surprised at how much had changed in a few short years. There was an entirely new coastal road – paved over what was once a series of loosely connected fisheries and farm field access paths that doubled as the then-new Olle Course 3 – as

well as new houses, cafés, and guesthouses. The only thing that was recognizable was an old rusty fish-processing facility whose green coat of paint had been flaking off over the years. Even for Joey, who had visited just a year before, the change was jarring. The developments were very modest compared to other parts of Cheju where entire tourist towns popped up overnight, but substantial enough for us to lose our bearings.

As the morning gloom soaked the overcast sky, we knew we were certainly late for the ritual. When we realized that we got off at the wrong part of the village, we decided to drop by a café and restaurant to check if the owners were local to get information. We knew that it was unlikely that we would learn anything useful, but we needed to figure out which part of Sinch'ŏn we were in. More often than not, the new cafés, especially those with gaudy stylized or pseudo-European decor, were mainlander-owned. Mainlanders who moved to Cheju villages for the country idyll to set up cafés and guesthouses tended to have little contact with Cheju islanders. Even fewer had any knowledge of local practices and lived within the community as islands within an island. Our suspicions were confirmed as soon as one of the proprietors, a forty-something woman, spoke. She had a smooth accent lacking the raspy ruggedness of southeastern Cheju speech that almost mimics the jagged coastlines. Unable to understand our inquiry, she immediately cut us off by saying that she was not from the area and we had better ask someone else. At that point, Joey immediately recalled that there was another shrine adjacent to the café. The shrine, which was between a women divers' workstation and the café, comprised a short cinderblock structure covered with a corrugated sheet metal roof. Scattered cooked rice grains, tangerine peels, and the lingering scents of burnt joss sticks and spilt *makkŏli* (rice liquor) were clear indications that people had prayed here earlier. This confirmed that this day was indeed the

ritual day. We continued westward in the direction of the P'yosŏn township down the path along the coastline and outcroppings.

When Tanner asked Joey to describe the shrine, Joey described it as a simple semi-enclosed space surrounded by low basalt rock walls, and an altar comprised of a larger flat stone. Sinch'ŏn's shrine was of traditional type. In many other situations around Cheju, rapid development prompted villages to relocate whole shrines or encase them in makeshift buildings of corrugated sheet metal and concrete. Shrines usually had as their chief centerpieces large oddly-shaped rocks or trees as access points for divinity to interact with the human world. Another indication of the shrine on a ritual day would be a tall bamboo pole decorated with colorful paper and polyester streamers as a nonverbal announcement to all passers-by that a *kut* (shamanic ritual) was being performed. Joey then recalled that the shrine was near a stream mouth and a so-called "peace bridge" that was rumored to have been the local government's attempt to resolve a feud, which culminated in a violent scuffle, between women divers of Sinch'ŏn and the neighboring village of Hach'ŏn. Sinch'ŏn, Joey added, had the rare fortune that it was largely spared from the ravages of *Sasam sakŏn* (The 1948-1954 'April Third' Massacre)<sup>3</sup> due to its difficult physical terrain, which prevents easy access. With the access roads, the new coastal route, and the hiking trails, the Sinch'ŏn of 2015 was hardly an isolated nook of southeastern Cheju Island.

We finally came upon the shrine located adjacent to an old access road that led to a low bridge over the stream mouth and two other access roads to the coastal fisheries, seaside houses, and farm fields of Hach'ŏn. Atop a short promontory overlooking the bridge and stream was a

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<sup>3</sup> *Sakŏn* literally means 'incident.' Though many islanders consider it a massacre, the national and provincial officials are reluctant to refer to it directly as a 'massacre' given the politically sensitive nature of the issue.



*posalchip* (mainland-style ‘bodhisattva’ shaman’s house) decorated with paper talismans and auspicious Buddhist dharani. That *posal*, Joey said, was a mainlander but sometimes consulted by locals for personal issues. Sinch’ŏn, like so many other villages, no longer had a presiding lineage shaman. The access road, like the coastal road where we got off, was integrated into the Olle Trail network and there were a few trail walkers ambling along on their way to the tourist town of P’yosŏn. From this narrow road, muddied from light rain in the pre-dawn hours and mashed from foot and vehicle traffic, we could see the large glass and concrete block figure of the Haevichi Resort that overlooks P’yosŏn’s beach. The roughly two-meter colored paper-decorated bamboo pole standing at the entrance of the small shrine stood in modest rivalry as it, too, overlooked the sea below the cliff as the tallest object in the immediate area. The shrine itself was covered with a large striped tarp hoisted by poles that turned the entire space into a makeshift yurt. There was a long line of motor scooters along the walls.

A group of some twenty elderly women waited outside while some thirty or forty were inside the shrine. All had baskets of prepared food and alcohol. Tanner recognized the clatter of *mengdu* (shamanic divination tools) and chant-like murmurings. From outside, we caught a glimpse of a pair of shamans – one older woman in a dark purple *kyeryang hanbok* (modernized Korean traditional wear) and a younger thirty-something woman in a bright pink winter coat – tossing *sanp’an* (brass divination cups in a small tray). We wondered if we had come too late. The invitation to the Yŏngdŭng deity and worship ceremony were already performed. But it was only barely past nine o’clock. Now the parishioners were receiving their individual consultations. As soon as one was finished, she would exit the shrine, scoop a spoonful of each of her food offerings to toss out as a sacrifice to the spirits, and then proceed to go to the rocky shore below the low cliff. At the edge of the rocks, she would hurl traditional paper-wrapped rice packets into

the sea for Yowang (Standard Kr.: Yongwang), the Dragon King of the sea and patron of mariners and fishers. The throw had to be deliberate yet not-so-deliberate, we later learned. A rice packet that floated up was an inauspicious sign that Yowang had rejected the offering for some reason and so worshippers would throw their rice in a way that it would satisfactorily sink into the water but not make it look like they were too blatant about it.

As we had never met the pair of shamans performing this ritual, we did not want to be considered intrusive. We instead spoke to the women waiting outside. They referred to the shrine as “Kotchit-tang”<sup>4</sup> and explained that the tutelary grandmother deity was surnamed Ko. The women here regarded the Yöngdüng deity as Yöngdüng Harübang (Standard Kr.: Yöngdüng Haraböji, ‘Grandfather Yöngdüng’), a male deity, though conventional portrayals of Yöngdüng-kut tend to consider the deity in terms of Yöngdüng Halmang (Grandmother Yöngdüng) in accord to the tradition of Cheju City’s Ch’ilmöri Shrine. This particular ritual was not referred to a full *kut*, but an “*insa*” (greeting) for Yöngdüng and Yowang. The senior-most woman present mentioned that only large villages such as neighboring Onp’yöng still do the full Yöngdüng-kut. Sinch’ön’s ritual was cut shorter. It became clear to us that the ritual had been simplified over the years for practical reasons. Most present were well beyond their forties.

The changes did not at all diminish worshippers’ dedication and their trust in its efficacy. A few had gone out of their way to make the trip to their natal village even though they had married into other villages and towns. And one other thing that did not change much was the good-natured festiveness that came with congregating at a communal *kut*. Joey mentioned the

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<sup>4</sup> In standard Korean it would be “Ko-ssit-tang.” The full name is usually written as ‘Sinch’ön Pönhyang Koch’it-tang’ 신천 본향 고чит당, which translates to ‘Sinch’ön Village Main Shrine- Madame Ko Shrine. In Sinch’ön, however, it is pronounced ‘고짚땅’ as rendered above.

belief in which bad weather indicated that Yōngdŭng’s daughter-in-law had come along and that the two deities were quarreling. Most recognized the tradition immediately and smiles emerged in unison. When we asked the senior-most woman, an octogenarian, outside the shrine about why it was the daughter-in-law in every village, she burst out laughing as if it were all too obvious.<sup>5</sup> “*Menuri nappŭnikka*” (Because daughter-in-laws are bad), she said in a wry manner. Tanner then asked if it he would be allowed to enter the shrine and jokingly brought up his misfortunes with his car and bout with norovirus. The senior-most woman replied that he should go into the shrine and seek blessings. Tanner was abruptly stopped, however, when the head woman diver, a tall and gruff woman ordered him away from the shrine.

We were unable to enter the shrine during the ritual, but the women – except for the head woman diver – did not mind our presence and allowed us to observe as they warmed up to us. Though we initially thought that the reason for the prohibition against our entry into the shrine was gender-related, keeping in mind that certain Cheju shrines are restricted to men for one reason or another, this was quickly dispelled. A suited local official, accompanied by his young chauffeur, came to the shrine to demonstrate obeisance to the deities and to the shaman. In contrast to the simplicity of the shrine and the divers’ tough character, the official’s appearance suggested that Sinch’ŏn was relatively prosperous. Perhaps because of other pressing business matters, the official ignored us completely though he appeared to recognize Joey.

What came as a pleasant surprise to us was that there were no mainlander camera people or other researchers. This gave Joey and Tanner, who both braved the rugged cliff path to watch

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<sup>5</sup> An odd aspect of this version in Sinch’ŏn is that while the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflict is a common trope in Cheju as in the rest of Korea, this is altered in Sinch’ŏn since Grandfather Yōngdŭng is emphasized more than Grandmother Yōngdŭng. This would instead be an instance of a father-in-law and daughter-in-law conflict not so common in Cheju or Korean folklore.

worshippers toss their offerings into the sea for Yowang, better opportunities to take unobstructed pictures and recordings. Meanwhile, I decided to ask a little more about the ritual. A middle-aged woman responded. She spoke with a Cheju accent lacking the rising intonation more typical of Seoul speech, but her responses to me were in clear standard Korean. I wondered if she was a new parishioner.<sup>6</sup> She responded that she had moved to Cheju City long ago and returned only for the Yōngdŭng-kut event. I asked about what she knew about the practice. She shrugged and replied, “It’s for praying to a wind deity, isn’t it?” She added that she knew little else about the ritual or its importance except that it was a family tradition. Her home village was Sinch’ŏn, but she had lived in the city for too long to know the details.

Divinations were completed just before noon. The head woman diver hoisted the large decorated bamboo pole as the two shamans led a procession out of the shrine and toward a rocky shore about two or three hundred meters east. The other women carried their offerings in baskets as they followed. This was the sendoff for the Yōngdŭng and Yowang deities. Although the procession lacked percussive music typical of larger rituals, it was still carried out with a mix of festivity and seriousness. The head woman diver then set down the bamboo pole at the edge of the shore and was given a live chicken bound in twine. While other senior divers burned the paper streamers and *kimae* (paper spirit money), the head woman diver took the chicken to the furthest edge of the shore, strangled it with her bare hands, and then hurled it to the sea. Finally with folded palms and a bow to the waves, the Yōngdŭng-insa was complete and the deities were on their way to the next village before they depart Cheju via Udo island. After the last embers of the sacrificial paper crumbled to ash, it was time to break off for lunch.

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<sup>6</sup> There are rare instances in which non-local people became converts to Cheju shrine shamanism after experiencing divine intervention, but these individuals were encountered at the more well-known shrines of Songdang and Ch’ilmŏridang.

The shamans and the women invited us to join them. We followed them to a large tent where all sat upon cardboard box- and rug- covered plastic storage pallets. The shamans went to a separate adjacent tent to eat with the senior women divers and Sinch'ŏn village leaders. We were surprised to find that lunch consisted not of the usual fare for Cheju festivals or community *kut* – *kuksu* (Korean noodles with anchovy broth soup), or *tolle ttŏk* (flat round rice cakes) with fried *okdom* (sea bream), or rice with kimchi. Instead, all were provided green and white paper boxes emblazoned with a familiar Korean logo: *P'erik'ana* (Pelicana). The post-ritual meal consisted of fried chicken with white radish pickles all delivered from a nearby fast food restaurant. Puzzled, Joey, Tanner, and I asked about their choice of an after-ritual meal. “Why fried chicken?” I asked. A woman said, “Having chicken means the ritual is done.” Another woman added nonchalantly that having fried chicken was easier. In the old days, she mentioned, everyone would have brought their own chickens and whatever was not sacrificed would have been cooked for the community meal. Because it would be inconvenient and because most no longer raised their own chickens, ordering out was the logical choice. What they were eating was a Korean adaptation of American takeout food, but because it was still chicken it was not at all seen as a deviation from Sinch'ŏn village practice. Tanner remarked, “Imagine how weird it must have been for the delivery guy.”

The Yŏngdŭng ritual was done, but the ritual day was not yet finished. An uncommon feature of Sinch'ŏn's annual ritual cycle is that all villagers with the surname Sŏn (Standard Kr.: Hyŏn) were required to have a female family member pray at the Sŏn-ssi Ilwol-tang (First Month Shrine of the Sŏn Family), a shrine dedicated to a tutelary goddess of the Sinch'ŏn Sŏn clan. Another reason Joey and Tanner wanted to come to Sinch'ŏn today was to see if we could have a chance to see a rare ceremony. The Sŏn family shrine is an example of a shamanic shrine linked

to a clan's spirit ancestress, who is believed to have lived in historic rather than mythic time.<sup>7</sup> Village oral tradition posits the shrine as her grave site. A special practice associated with the Sŏn family shrine is that Sŏn family members dress the *sinmok* (spirit tree) in colorful *hanbok* (Korean traditional clothing) as an offering to the goddess. This ritual, Joey mentioned, was only done once every other year and few researchers ever saw it directly. Being at the right place and right time, we were thus afforded a rare opportunity to see the Sŏn shrine offering ceremony. Although we were unable to see the dressing ceremony, which we learned had already been done the previous year, we were nonetheless in for a surprise.

At around one o'clock when the ritual was about the start and the first Sŏn family members arrived at the shrine, all, including the shamans, were stunned that someone else was performing ritual music inside the shrine. A middle-aged woman was chanting and striking the *ching*. Tanner, being well-versed in Cheju's shamanic music, could not recognize the rhythm or the chanting style. Behind the woman was her younger woman who opened and brandished a ceremonial decorated folding fan at the chanter's cues. Like the two Cheju shamans who presided over the Yŏngdŭng ritual, neither were dressed in any special garb, but their coordinated actions suggested that they were professionals. Listening to the chanting style and *ching* more closely, I recognized that they were of a Buddhist character. Her accent also indicated that she was a mainlander, likely from South Kyŏngsang province. She was a *posal*, a shaman who gains access to the spirit world through spirit possession and uses Buddhist

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<sup>7</sup> See Chin SG 2005: 143. Many of the origin stories for the more commonly-worshipped deities in Cheju do not refer to a specific historical period. The same is true with the Sŏn family patroness, Sŏn-ssi Halmang (or Sŏn-ssi Puin), but worshippers regarded her as a historical figure rather than a more distant deity such as Ch'ŏnjiwang (King of Heaven and Earth) or Yŏmna (Lord of the Underworld). Among Sinch'ŏn-ri residents of the Sŏn (Hyŏn) family today, she is still considered an ancestress.

religious technology.<sup>8</sup> There was a middle-aged man waiting at the shrine. I asked him what he and the shamans were doing there. He said that he was from another part of the island and that he had commissioned the *posal* to cure his son. It was not usual for Cheju islanders or men to turn to mainland-style shamans, who have migrated in significant numbers to the extent that they have a presence across the island. And it was not unusual for them to use Cheju shrines, as mainland shamans also recognize the utility of using the existing spiritual energies of the island's sacred places. What was unusual was that one would be so brazen to have a separate ritual at a clan-specific shrine on the ritual date.

The stunned and increasingly irate Sŏn family shrine worshipers muttered amongst themselves when they realized what was happening. Yet they were not direct about their anger. “Who does that girl think she is?” one of the Sŏn women grumbled of the younger college-age woman, “Her assistant?” The pair of Cheju shamans were baffled about the situation, but nonetheless kept their calm as they waited at the shrine entrance. This odd situation was the only time we could speak with them. Breaking the awkwardness, Tanner asked about the shrine. The younger Cheju shaman still seemed perplexed by the event but, perhaps to take her mind off of the matter, gestured at a large dirt patch near the shrine entrance and said, “That’s a tomb there.” According to village tradition, the Sŏn family shrine is also a tomb site of the spirit it enshrines.

The Sinch’ŏn women were getting annoyed as the *posal* continued. The older Cheju shaman, though her face betrayed irritation as well, asked them to soften their grumbling and explained that the *posal* was praying on behalf of someone’s child. “She’s a *posal*, isn’t she?”

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<sup>8</sup> *Posal* do not claim to be *mansin*, the preferred term for ‘shaman’ among mainland practitioners, nor do they have direct official affiliations with established Buddhist orders. This is not to say that they are purely peripheral to Korean Buddhism or shamanism, however. The distinction between Buddhism and shamanism in Korea (and in Cheju) at the practical level is more a recent phenomenon. Some *posal* do become recognized as temple sponsors and their ritual activities may be given quiet approval among some Buddhist clergy.

Joey asked. The younger shaman nodded. She would say nothing else about the matter. Tanner asked what village she and the senior shaman was from. She responded that the senior shaman was her mother, who was from T'aehŭng, about twenty minutes from P'yosŏn. As we spoke, her local pride emerged. She mentioned that she was probably Cheju's youngest traditional shaman and that she had been learning from her mother since she was fifteen. She spoke in pure standard Korean with us, but we noticed that when she provided divinations at the seaside shrine, she had spoken in Chejuŏ (Cheju language) as if it were second nature. She was a bona fide lineage *simbang* (Cheju shaman). As she and her mother waited, I could read disgust on their expressions and that they were attempting to suppress it. Nonetheless, they calmly and repeatedly asked the Sŏn family worshippers to allow the *posal* to finish the ritual. Avoiding conflict, regardless of the matter, at a shrine was crucial. Any sign of discord would offend the gods. Cognizant of the rule, the Sŏn family women decided to hold in their anger out of respect.

One clan member, however, would not drop the issue. I recognized her, having talked to her some hours earlier at the seaside shrine – the woman from Cheju City. She did not raise her voice, but she did not lower it either. She did not directly talk about the *posal* and the assistant as she spoke to the other Sŏn women, but it was all too obvious who and what she was referring to when she spoke about how rude it was for people to go into other peoples' shrines and do their own rituals. The other women did not hide their agreement, but they asked her to drop the matter and wait for the ritual to finish. I estimated that she was unaware of the rule of shrine etiquette, having been acclimated to the city. When the *posal* did finish and when the younger T'aehŭng shaman took over to pay homage to the shrine goddess and provide the year's divinations for Sŏn clan members, the urbanized Sŏn woman still complained about the mainlanders' impropriety. Her rural relations laughed along good-naturedly. Although the Cheju City woman came for the



Yöngdüng *insa* out of obligation to tradition to the second ritual to honor her Sön clan identity, she had different mannerisms and a different understanding from her rural relations. Even while the city woman and her country relations were united in their annoyance, there was another, albeit less conspicuous, schism between Cheju City and rural Cheju. It may have been her urban experience, where day-to-day interactions are far less in the context of tight village communities and assertiveness is more necessary, that prompted her to be more upfront with her displeasure.

Months later, Joey and I did have a chance to learn more about what the younger T'aehüŋ shaman thought about the incident. Kim Yöngch'öl, a prominent shaman who was preparing to inherit his position from his mother that year, invited Joey to witness a *kwiyangp'uri* (ritual for the soul's passage). Aside from an older senior shaman and her daughter, who was also training in the craft, the younger T'aehüŋ shaman was present as a *somi* (assisting shaman). We finally learned her name – Ch'oe. Though she did hint a mild irritation about our earlier attempts to contact her after the Sinch'ön rituals, she was a little more open to us as she noticed that we were familiar with Kim.

At a *kuttang* (commercial ritual room) located in a makeshift building from parts of a former greenhouse near a factory and farm fields some fifteen minutes south of the tourist town of Hamdök, Kim Yöngch'öl was tasked with performing a private post-mortem mourning ritual. *Kuttang*, a separate facility with multiple rooms for the explicit purpose of holding private shamanic rituals, was a mainland innovation that was imported to Cheju as major towns grew dense. Cheju shamans had also taken to using them as they were convenient, offered privacy for clients, and were far removed from dense residential areas where non-practitioners see *kut* as mere noise. Two other rituals were occurring in the other rooms at the same time and, judging by the percussive music styles, a mainland *posal* conducted one while a Cheju shaman conducted

the other. When the shamans and the *kut* patrons took a tea and coffee break, a shrill scream pierced through the thin walls from the room next door. Ch'oe laughed, as did Kim Yŏngch'ŏl, and the other senior shaman and her daughter. Joey remarked that it sounded like a *posal* and asked what Ch'oe thought about them. She responded with amusement, “*Wanchŏnhi talla!*” (They're completely different!).

## 1.2 – “Pyŏnbang-ŭi sisŏn”: The View of the Periphery

Self-identified Cheju islanders refer to Cheju Island as “*pyŏnbang*” (“periphery”) in a commonsense manner. “Mainland” and “Cheju” are concretized abstractions in everyday use, just as “urban” and “rural” are still set as conceptual oppositions. The fact that plane rides of less than an hour's duration became extremely common and affordable after 2010 has not diminished the efficacy of such dualisms, even though many of all backgrounds are aware of their fictive character. Using immediate physical experience to serve as the axis of one's cognitive fields, after all, makes the epochal changes of the twenty-first century sensible in a world that seems to turn too fast. But Cheju is still often left out of discussions on twenty-first century Korea. Aside from geographic realities – Cheju being an island – a part of the reason for this persistent, albeit problematic, binary is that Cheju is often peripheral to many Koreans on the Korean peninsula. The situation fares no better in academic discussion for Cheju is too often left out of the orbit in Korean Studies, which leaves islanders in a Pluto-like situation that frustrates them as much as it strengthens their rivalry toward their peninsular “*yukji*” counterparts.

Comprehensive studies of Cheju are far and few in English. David J. Nemeth's 1984 dissertation *Cheju Island peasant landscape: an architecture of Neo-Confucian ideology*, a study on geomancy and the influence of Neo-Confucian thought on practical spatial arrangements, is the only existing work dedicated wholly to Cheju's historical cultural geography. The

distinguishing feature of Nemeth's work is that it provides a broad overview of the island's transformation and human interventions in its geography since the Chosŏn Dynasty. Of important value is that the dissertation identifies continuities that persisted up to the time of his field research in the 1980s. To date, Nemeth's work remains the most complete account. Nemeth's dissertation was in part a major source of inspiration for considering Cheju urbanization in terms of an axis. Though he did not refer to the term specifically, Nemeth's findings suggested that islanders conceived of a cosmic arrangement around which they determined settlement patterns, tomb sites, and their identities vis-à-vis the Korean Peninsula and continental Asia. Two key weaknesses, however, are that the dissertation paid too little attention to other geographies beyond a Neo-Confucian sphere, which itself is a vague concept, and that Nemeth greatly underestimated the degree to which tourism would take over Cheju Island.

Studies addressing Cheju shamanism and folklore are much more represented in Anglophone literature. Timothy Tangherlini's and Park So Yŏng's studies on Cheju shamanism and ritual (1988; 1990) discuss the island's spiritual practice as they were practiced in the late 1980s. Cheju has changed radically in three decades, but the observations that ritual creates a "Cheju" space of solidarity remain true in the present. Kim Sŏngnae's (1989) groundbreaking study on the relationship between the trauma of the April Third Massacre and Cheju shamanism explores the integral role that shamanic ritual plays in attempting to address long-suppressed histories. Because the space of shamanic ritual allows people to discuss topics that have been otherwise taboo, stories and memory of the April Third Massacre and the state-sanctioned violence committed against Cheju Islanders between 1947 to 1954 were preserved. Michael Pettid's (2000; 2003) writings reexamine subtle aspects of Cheju's oral literature, especially

certain *ponp'uri* (deity origin myth), as expressions of discontent over the island's lost sovereignty and resistance against mainland Korean domination.

Yun Kyoim's (2006; 2007; 2015) and Hong Sunyoung's (2013) works are perhaps the most up-to-date in examining the changes to Cheju traditional practice. The most important contributions of their works are that they directly address the intersections of tradition, heritage politics, urban life, and the contradictions of cultural preservation policies and staged rituals from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. Though Cheju City is again merely a backdrop, both demonstrate how material concerns and Cheju spirituality are very much interconnected. They underscore that Cheju shamanism operates in an urban present. Yun had, up until 2011 at least, frequently researched on Cheju as indicated in her work. Hong, as a native scholar, has continuously engaged in Cheju cultural issues to the present. On the matter of staged ritual, reading Yun's and Hong's works side-by-side presents an interesting contrast. Whereas the former demonstrates a sharp disconnect between the demand for rural authenticity and the actual artificial nature of staged rituals, the latter demonstrates how staged ritual becomes urban tradition albeit one tossed through the maelstrom of competing interests. Yun's more recent work explores the tension between cultural preservationist demands for rural authenticity and declining meaningfulness in an urban context. Hong, on the other hand, demonstrates that a revived and reinvented ritual can take on a new purpose and become authentic in its own right.

Aside from academic literature, women divers and shamanism, are often re-represented – and mis-represented – as quintessential representations for Cheju in a variety of Anglophone media from cultural health psychologist Anne Hilty's (2010) *Reaching the Core of Beauty* to *National Geographic Traveler* articles<sup>9</sup> to inaccurate news articles on CNN and Business

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<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.natgeotraveller.co.uk/destinations/asia/south-korea/south-korea-jeju/>. Cheju's women divers are often romanticized almost to the point of mystification, but an aspect often left out in these narratives is that many

Insider.<sup>10</sup> Where Cheju is already treated as peripheral in Seoul-based media, Anglophone media companies do likewise and without the pressing need to correct themselves. Some of the more nuanced representations of Cheju in English are the blog *Pagans We Are* and the *Jeju Weekly*. Since the past decade, some interest from non-Korean and non-Japanese academics, travelers, and writers have been turning to Cheju, paradoxically in part due to the disconnect between presented images and its lived realities. Interest in Cheju stems perhaps not so much from the provincial government's organized self-promotion but a variety of coincidences – the Kangjŏng Naval Base controversy, the post-2010 tourism boom, the global phenomena of culture-led development policies, mobile transnational artists and performers, and a continued proliferation of EFL teaching jobs that comes with Cheju's urban change.

Written and oral Cheju histories, multivocal and constantly contested, are as much about the present than they are about the past. Though not acts of outright fabrication, writers and tellers emphasize what is needed to set the record straight. References to a simple rural past reflects how much the urban present informs interpretation. The existing academic literature provides important starting points for exploring Cheju Island, but the drawbacks quickly become obvious. Even in narratives that question mainland Korean accounts, historians tend to recast Cheju as an almost homogenous Other to the mainland with limited attention to the varied ways islanders regard one another. Making “Cheju” a distinct topic entails constant discursive

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hold very complex and ambivalent views toward their profession. Most that I have encountered do not want their children and descendants to take up diving. Several also have embraced city life.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-worlds-busiest-air-route-is-between-seoul-and-jeju-2016-12>. Outside of *Jeju Weekly*, English-language news articles are the most egregious in inaccuracy. The most baffling aspect of the *Business Insider* article is that it mislabels Sŏngsan Sunrise Peak as Hallasan. Another telling example is the *New York Post*'s identification of Cheju as a “small town” in a reposted YouTube video by Wilkine Brutus, who had lived on Cheju and did not describe the island as such.

oppositions between a vaguely constituted islander subjectivity and a mainland antithesis, if not an antagonist.

An example of this internal homogenization of Cheju is the concept of “*haemin chōngsin*” (seamanship) touted in *Chejuhak* cultural geography (Song SD 2010; Kwōn SC 2006: 48-49). The premise of *haemin chōngsin* is somewhat an application of geographical determinism in which the harsh island environment had prompted Cheju island society to develop a work ethos similar to the Protestant ethic. The opening to anthropologist Chōn Kyōngsu’s (2010) prolegomenon on a *munhwa illyuhak* (cultural anthropology) for Cheju valorized the image of the strong self-sacrificing woman diver-mother figure, an accidental perpetuation of a Cheju stereotype. While family structures and relationships are remarkably less hierarchical in Cheju, the *haemin chōngsin* concept is problematic because 1) Cheju culture and means of livelihoods changed over time; 2) Cheju is also internally differentiated between coastal, highland, and mountain regions throughout much of its history; and 3) coastal, highland, and mountain regions have their own distinct cultures. Hierarchy exists, even for the now-celebrated *chōmnyō* (Kr.: *haenyō*; women divers).<sup>11</sup> No one, including *chōmnyō*, is at all separate from the city and connections to the mainland Korean metropole. That the standard Korean word *haenyō*, which literally translates to “sea women,” has become common currency in academic and media literature rather than the Cheju word *chōmnyō* illustrates this self-homogenization.

Attempts to disentangle “Cheju” as a cultural identity reveals as much about urban desires than rural life as it is lived in the twenty-first century. A problem that lies with the matter that many rural people, who *Chejuhak* scholars tend to consider authentic representatives of

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<sup>11</sup> See Gwon GS 2005 regarding the changes among women divers in the twentieth century. This was not a focus of my field research, but I did notice that women divers’ associations mostly sold to Suhyōp, the national fisheries cooperative whose heads and representatives are primarily male. In some occasions such as in the Cheju City district of Yongdam-tong, urban women divers sold directly to tourists.

Cheju-ness, do not exhibit a predilection for entrepreneurship and an inclination to cosmopolitanism; ironically, this is more characteristic of Cheju City people than rural residents. As Roland Barthes (1961) observed with a *Panzani* brand pasta advertisement, the “Italianicity” of the image, like the construction of the authentic rural Cheju-ness, functions through overlapping condensed systems of signs and associations beyond the image itself. The interpenetrated associations become a mosaic that the reader or viewer reconstructs and naturalizes as an essential character or representation of a culture. Adding to the incongruity is that though the countryside is never far off in Cheju, its image rather than its material changes take precedence in its representations.

With few exceptions, the matter that Cheju has been heavily urbanized is rarely directly addressed. When scholars do address urban Cheju, they do so in passing as exemplified in the final section of anthropologist Hyōn Yongjun’s *Cheju saramdŭl-ŭi sam* (The Lifestyles of Cheju People) (2009) where it simply constitutes a break from the past. Anthropologist Yi Kiuk’s (2003) studies of changes in rural economies from the 1960s to the late 1980s revealed – perhaps unintentionally – the background of an island gravitating toward Cheju City as agriculture and fishing faced decline in the face of trade liberalization, urbanization, and the rise of tourism. Though not directly stated, *Chejuhak* scholars implicitly refer to Cheju’s urbanization as the impetus for their work. The many publications of *Chejuhak* from the 1980s to the present parallel Cheju City’s rise as a cosmopolitan city, echoing the rise of nineteenth-century folklore studies amidst industrialization in Central and Northern Europe. Making or interrogating Cheju as a periphery in contradistinction to a center is constant in existing literature, English or Korean. The author suggests that Cheju itself, though conventionally considered peripheral, has its own functioning yet oscillating axis. When reading this dissertation, the reader should keep in mind

that who and what is meant by “Cheju islanders” or “Cheju people” is context-dependent, constantly shifting, and not a stable reality.

This dissertation may leave many questions unanswered given the limitations of time, the availability of material, and issues internal to the methodological approaches. The author attempts to produce as detailed accounts as possible, using as much data and existing sources as possible, while keeping in mind fourteenth-century scholar Ibn Khaldūn’s dictum that “knowledge that has not come down to us is larger than the knowledge that has” (1967: 39). Any later research can produce new findings and results that can revise, complete, or challenge what has been produced in these following pages. Analysis begins with attempts to identify the basic features of material, interpersonal, and spiritual conditions for making a society exist as an experiential reality and then examinations of how these things are reconstituted in practice.

The choice of Cheju as a site of investigation was made since 2007, long before full dissertation research began.<sup>12</sup> What follows in these pages combine ethnographic and historical investigation with personal accounts of experiences regarding changes over the past ten years. Unlike twentieth-century industry- and nation-building urbanization, many emerging cities have more in common with Cheju City. The world’s new cities are developing as administrative centers, metropolitan satellite towns, finance hubs, high-tech industrial centers, or tourist destinations. They therefore will not resemble established metropolises such as Los Angeles, Tokyo, or Mexico City, but cities like Chandigarh, Yogyakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Shenzhen, or Siem Reap. In the Republic of Korea (hereafter “South Korea”), one can compare Sejong City, Suwŏn, Daejeon (Taejŏn), Songdo New City, and Gyeongju (Kyŏngju) respectively. If all goes to development plans with the so-called *Kukche chayū dosi* (Free International City) project first

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<sup>12</sup> I first lived in Cheju in 2007-2008 while working under the English Program in Korea (EPIK) and had repeatedly re-visited the island ever since.



announced in 2001, Jeju City (hereafter “Cheju City”) is to become a new center for free trade and tourism.

Though the Free International City idea was lampooned as wishful thinking among many locals in its early years, especially as neoliberal globalization quickly lost its luster, much of it came to fruition for better or for worse. Delayed development plans finally went into motion and the provincial government dropped visa requirements for Chinese nationals and a special provision to allow permanent residency to foreign nationals (which, again, is oriented largely to Chinese nationals) who invest more than 500,000 USD starting from February 1, 2010 (Yi CH 2010). Cheju’s popularization as a destination for urbanites who tired of Seoul’s congestion also inadvertently pulled it closer into the orbit of Seoul. The appearance of budget airlines, which dovetailed a surge of Chejuphilia, allowed unprecedented ease of travel. Because of the contained nature of Cheju Island’s geography, the radical changes were everywhere felt, heard, tasted, smelled,<sup>13</sup> and seen in less than a decade.

The bureaucratic artificers of Cheju’s development transformed the island from a marginalized periphery of the South Korea into the country’s prime resort destination. Yet many islanders would argue that the change – and creative mapping to reposition Cheju (Figure 1) as a new center of Northeast Asia – had not fundamentally rectified past and existing injustices. The shift to a global orientation accentuated difference as much as interconnectedness. Cheju also presents a distinct case that may provide insights for urban studies in Korea and elsewhere by virtue of its geography. As an island with metropolitan political and economic aspirations, Cheju is small enough to observe and trace the multiple interconnections between people and places yet large enough to gain a macro-level perspective on the implications of tourism- and culture-led

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<sup>13</sup> Air and water pollution has especially become severely acute after 2010 when litter, sewage overflows, and *mise mǒnji* (fine dust from air pollution), which typically menaced the mainland, became a more serious issue on Cheju.

urbanization. That the city’s administration and not a few of its residents aspire for it to become an administrative, finance, high-tech, and tourism center all at once is another attribute that makes it an invaluable urban case study. How does Cheju City, the island’s main center for more than a millennium, become Cheju ‘City’? How are abstract ideas of ‘Cheju’ made and practiced as fundamental components for community-building, economic transactions, political definitions, identity conflicts, and physical lived experiences? And how has Cheju City’s transformation into a new bustling urban center transformed or disrupted these components?

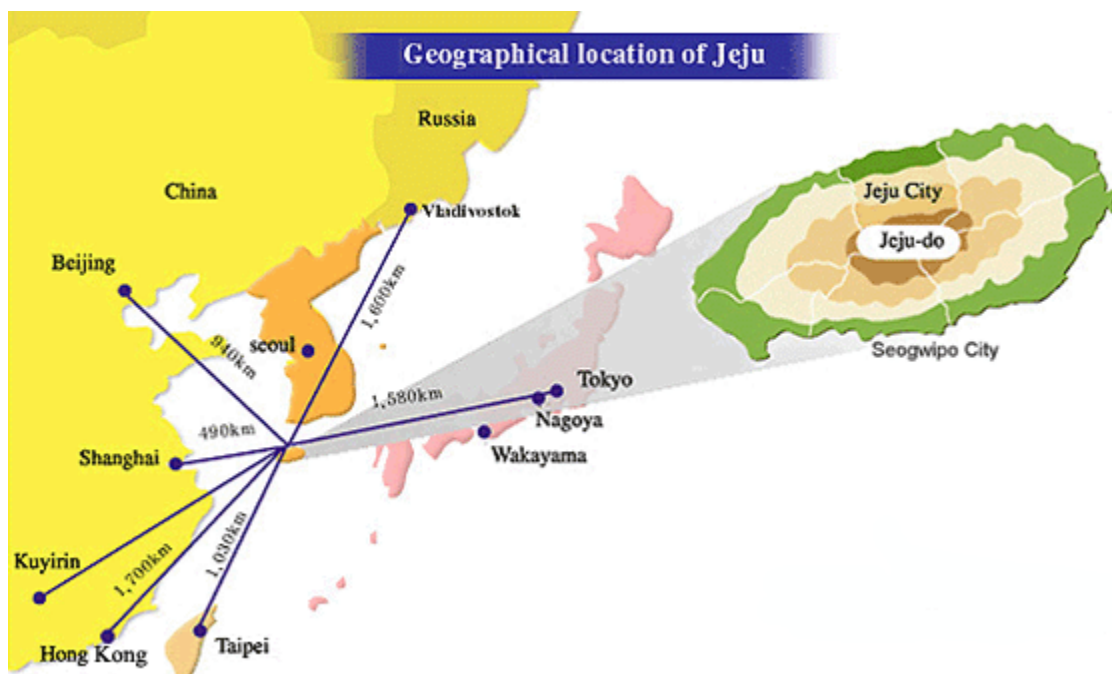


Figure 1: Map of Northeast Asia with Cheju Island in the center.<sup>14</sup>

At a glance, Cheju would appear to be easy to define. Under the surface, Cheju is an “onion society,” or so Cheju National University geography professor Kwon Sangcheol (Kwŏn Sangch’ŏl) once said in a casual discussion. Kwon referred to what Seoul National University anthropologist Chŏn Kyŏngsu had mentioned upon realizing that his years of observing Cheju

<sup>14</sup> Image from <http://jejeuco.com/jeju/info.htm#>. The original source of this image is unclear, but it seems to have originally been made for a Free International City presentation.

only turned up more questions and surprises. Like Chŏn, Kwon is still an outsider to the island despite having lived there for two decades. Their description is no exaggeration. Cheju is wrought with many complications and contradictions. In a conversation with a self-identified native Cheju islander, one might hear that Cheju is both “Korean” and yet “not really Korean” at the same time. What this means is vague in everyday speech, but it nonetheless is a sentiment shared among Cheju City and rural residents alike.

The onion metaphor is also appropriate to methodological approaches. One must peel away the layers with caution or risk distorting one’s vision, an issue too common in many narratives about Cheju. A substantial corpus, mostly locally-produced, of research on Cheju has attempted to accomplish this with interdisciplinary approaches to particular layers. Regardless of individual scholars’ own proclivities, a common starting point in defining *Chejuhak* (Cheju Studies) localism is to dig through the ‘Korean yet not Korean’ paradox.

The author deliberately employs terms ‘localism’ and ‘localist’ in this dissertation, but with neutral connotations. Although *chiyŏkchuŭi* (“localism” or “regionalism”) carries negative connotations in Korean as it does in English, much of *Chejuhak* uses locality to challenge the Seoul-centered bias of Korean Studies and nationalist abstraction in East Asian histories. Identity is not reducible to a left-lite identity politics issue in Cheju. *Chejuhak* scholars simply reiterate already-existing sentiments. The ambiguity is a part of everyday experience because Cheju islanders are often aware that their histories, especially traumatic histories passed through friends and family, are seldom addressed in state curricula. In the shelves of Korea’s largest bookstore chain Kyobo Books, Cheju mostly appears on the *hyangt’osa* (local history<sup>15</sup>) shelf or in the

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<sup>15</sup> See Tangherlini 2008. The Sino-Korean character “*hyang*” 鄉, which one can translate as “village,” also carries with it rural and nostalgic connotations as expressed in the word *kohyang* (hometown). When I was at the Kanghwamun Kyobo Bookstore in Seoul in January 2016, a Cheju islander I met there expressed her anger over how travel writers romanticized her island and suggested that they probably had never actually been there.

travel guide section. While self-identified islanders do unequivocally claim membership with the South Korean nation-state, unresolved resentment simmers underneath the shimmering covers of new glass and steel constructions built to entice mainland Koreans and international visitors. An example of this sort of critical regionalism to challenge peninsula-based academia is Yi Yŏngkwŏn's project to create a history of Cheju by a Cheju person.

Cheju historian Yi Yŏngkwŏn (2004; 2005) argued that the importance of Cheju history to Korean Studies is precisely because historians in mainland Korea from the Three Kingdoms Period (57 BCE-668 CE) to the present have considered it peripheral. Unlike grand narratives of Korean history as exemplified in Lee Ki-baik's (Yi Kibaek) *New History of Korea* (1984), Cheju's experiences as a semi-colony provides a critical counterpoint in terms of "*pyŏnbang-ŭi sisŏn*" ("the view of the periphery"). Such a project, he argues, entails an attempt to bring the lived experience of people outside the centers into historical narrative. His revisionist history project is not unique nor is historical revisionism a new practice, but Yi intended to disrupt Korean narratives of homogeneity and collective victimhood. Mainland Koreans, too, Yi argued, had engaged in their own colonialisms on many occasions ranging from the Koryŏ Dynasty's (918-1392) annexation of the island to President Syngman Rhee's (r. 1948-1960) approval to violently suppress rebelling islanders.

A methodological contribution of Yi's work was that it provided a deliberately, albeit very briefly, stated framework on using peripheries as points of departure for understanding centers. In the preface to *Cheju Yŏksa Kihaeng* (A Historical Survey Tour of Cheju), Yi discussed the 'view of the periphery' as follows:

"The 'view of the periphery' would show us the reverse of the nationalist central elites' history...If one were to look straight at Korean history with the 'view of the periphery,' what had not been seen would be seen...Rather than the nationalist perspective of a run-

of-the-mill model student [*pömsaeng*], it would hence be on the grounds of our common points of view.” (2004)

Although Yi did not go into more detail on what is “*pyönbang-üi sisön*” in either of his two major works, *Ssaero ssünün Chejusa* (A New History of Cheju) (2004) and *Cheju Yöksa Kihaeng* (2005), this concept was the overarching framework. *Pyönbang-üi sisön* was not so much a theory of history as it was a practice of history. Yi attempted to demonstrate that Cheju, mainland Korea, regional Northeast Asia, and global changes converged and confronted one another on the very ground of Cheju Island.

As an example that Yi introduced to highlight the disconnect between mainland nationalist ideology and Cheju’s more complicated realities was the thirteenth-century Sambyölich’o uprising. Whereas textbook histories depicted the Sambyölich’o forces’ last stand against the combined Mongol and Koryö Dynasty forces in Cheju as fearless nationalist resistance against Mongol domination, Yi indicated that it was a terrible disaster for Cheju Islanders caught in the conflict between two foreign powers (2004: 6). A key point of contention that Yi argued was that Cheju was not a part of a “Korean” Koryö. On the contrary, Cheju islanders likely saw mainland Koreans as troublesome invaders in the same light as the Mongols. To add nuance to his argument, Yi further noted that though Mongol rule was repressive as Korean histories depicted, Mongols also left lasting contributions to Cheju island culture.

Rather than privileging the abstract umbrella of the nation or abstract notions of capital or modernity, the localist orientation in *Chejuhak* that Yi’s work reflects examines concrete manifestations of those abstractions. Lived experience, personal stories, and oral histories are key components and not peripheral details. A first step to rectifying limitations of broad historical accounts in terms of *pyönbang-üi-sisön* and localism is to start at what is immediately perceivable. The axis of change in this configuration is the where material conditions and

historical forces meet in their raw perceivable form such as tributary goods inspections or armed clashes on Cheju soil to constitute the *chung'ang* (center) and *pyŏnbang* (periphery).

Using localist history approaches does have limitations. Though not directly stated, *minjung* (the masses) revisionist historiography, which developed in the backdrop of the 1980s democratization movement, colors much of Cheju academic writing. The basic premise of such historiography is a corrective to elite- and state-centered histories through positing the *minjung* as the subject of history (Lee NH 2007). With the experiences of the oppressed classes as the vantage point from which *minjung* historians orient history, the 'center' in history is therefore inverted. *Chejuhak* takes this practice a step further in setting Cheju in contradistinction to mainland Korea. In such a formulation, the *minjung* ironically disappears in an abstract totalized concept. The whole mass of human experiences is pulled into a black hole notion of peoplehood.

Whether Yi successfully draws out the lived realities of Cheju people beyond the abstract notion of Cheju people is debatable. Though his history had been an attempt to rectify the absence of Cheju voices in history writing, his history, too does not move beyond binary oppositions despite its initial premise of some form of mutuality – even if asymmetrical – between centers and peripheries. Such issues are endemic in other disciplinary aspects of *Chejuhak*. Anthropologist Hyŏn Yongjun's volume on Cheju lifestyle (2009) focuses exclusively on rural tradition as the authentic Cheju. Folklorist Mun Mubyŏng, who remains one of the few active in the field, insists on an orthodox interpretation of Cheju shamanism as an essential expression of Cheju identity and resistance. Literary scholar Kim Tonghyŏn (2016) interrogates Cheju-ness as a metropolitan Japanese and mainland Korean colonial byproduct, but his work, like most *Chejuhak*, also does not directly discuss the presence of Cheju City. While valuable for challenging elite- and Seoul-centered narratives, these interpretations ultimately depend on too-

constrained binaries. Most works assume an abstract monolithic Cheju identity and rupture between modernity and pre-modernity. Cheju, too, has its own centers of gravity, especially in the form of Cheju City.

No clear definition of what is *Chejudaun* (“Cheju-esque”), much less Cheju’s present urban reality, exists. Another irony (though an inevitable one) of *Chejuhak* is that it is based in and very much a product of Cheju’s centers – Cheju academia and Cheju City. Where mainland-to-Cheju internal Orientalism is subject to critique, *Chejuhak* scholarship, Yi’s work included, ironically sometimes does the same in romanticizing the rural premodern imaginary. None address the matter of who decides where Cheju’s peripheries begin or how this relationship is a constant back-and-forth process. Cheju City, its residents, its activists, its experts, and its elites are also transformed in their encounters, physical and conceptual, with an authentic Cheju frontier, whether it is beyond Cheju City or within its ancient inner city. *Chejuhak*, in failing to address urban transformation and internal fragmentation, repeats the problem of *minjung* revisionist history in reifying the center instead of seeing how concepts and practice are constituted in their mutuality as well as their tension. Revisionist history that simply inverts the order of things in turn repeats the problem of theories of modernity in general.

The question of modernity is always an impossible task because it assumes a fictive rupture when continuities maintain context-specific dynamisms. Nationwide industrialization came in Korea in the 1960s and an urban-majority demographic change came in the 1970s-1980s. Korean modernization projects (of both Koreas) are deeply intertwined with needs for self-redefinition of national space and identity with respect to Korean pasts (Tangherlini and Yea 2008; Pai 2013) and colonial modernity (Shin and Robinson 1999). Continuities, though subtle, intertwined with ruptures are a fundamental part of its ideological and physical architectures

(Jung 2013). Whether Korea had broken from its colonial and dynastic past remain constant issues, even as the Seoul skyline is pierced with serrated concrete, glass, and steel in fictive triumph. The backlash against globalization, the resurgence of militant localism, and the failed promises of progress in the first two decades of the twenty-first century has tested the limits of critical theory.

Critical theories' limitations, especially those derived from specific French and English experiences, has been brought up in Korean language and Anglophone writings, but they again perpetuate a problem of reifying elite-vs-nonelite or Korean-vs-Other binaries. Jung Inha (2013), for example, does argue that Korean modernist urbanism emerged from a complex interplay between colonial modernity, North American and European influences, and the South Korean developmental state, but his work ultimately assumes that an essential timeless 'Korean' character exists. Discussions of Korean modernity within Korean Studies again privilege a Seoul modernity. Colonial modernity analyses (Eckert 1991; Shin and Robinson 1999; Schmid 2002; Henry 2014), focus too heavily on a tiny Seoul middle class or elite perspective versus a metropolitan Japan when border crossings for various reasons were equally, if not more, prevalent beyond the capital. Aside from the problems of using the awkward term modernity itself, a key issue that is not explored is how has modern urban development – that is, development premised on technologies that compress space and time in terms of transportation, travel, administration, and imagination all at once – played out in provincial, emergent, and late-developing cities?

Yi Yŏngkwŏn presented a challenge that deserves a response, but the notion of “viewing the periphery” itself needs significant modifications and a different framework. Yi was correct to posit that the Korean *chung'ang* (center) has meaning when a *pyŏnbang* (periphery) exists in



relation to it and that the *pyŏnbang* is a perpetually destabilizing presence. Besides an overemphasis on the binary in *minjung* historiographic epistemologies, where Yi's project was lacking was an investigation to how the dynamic mutuality of these concepts constantly shaped them not only as abstract representations but as everyday practice. With a new look at and from the "view of the periphery," the author proposes to look not only at opposites as definable objects for inquiry but rather as shifting components that exist in mutual dynamic transformation.

First, the author proposes to reconfigure the terms *chung'ang* and *pyŏnbang* in terms of an axis. The concept of an axis offers a distinct advantage over the concept of a center. Whereas a center implies an existing and defined formation, an axis implies interpenetration. An axis is a nonvisible configuration that exerts real force and is knowable through its gravity rather than its shape. An axis functions as such when something else is in relation to it and, like the shifting axial tilt of a planet, its orientation oscillates subtly and constantly. Hence an axis, as discussed in this dissertation, is at once the mirror parallel of Van Gennep's concept of the "liminal" (1960) and Victor Turner's concept of the "liminoid" (1982). While "liminal" implies a straddling of the threshold, this state of being betwixt and between functions as an axial configuration that mediates phases of transition. In mathematics, the axis is a reference line of a Cartesian plane in which it mediates points' relationship to the origin. In function, an axis as it is applied in mathematics and astronomy has some incidental resonances in Mahāyāna Buddhist thought such as the Korean philosopher Wŏnhyo's application of the Huayan concept of *ch'eyong* (Ch: *tiyong*, Essence-Function).

Wŏnhyo's basic premise of what became his expositions on *t'ong* (Ch: *tong*, interpenetration) draws from the *Huayanjing* (Sanskrit: *Avatamsaka Sūtra*), which argues, using

the metaphor of Indra's Net<sup>16</sup>, that all things are constituted in their interpenetration (Muller 1995). Wŏnhyo observes the concept of *t'ong* in the phenomenon that the various forms of Buddhist doctrine and practice prevalent in seventh-century Korea all functioned (*yong*) on the same essential ideas (*ch'e*). What was used to argue for synthesizing disparate doctrinal interpretations is applicable to reevaluating how different phenomena are linked, a basic idea that Wŏnhyo consistently explored in his prolific career. By extension, what is taken for our basic understanding of reality is not that the objects exist independently but that they exist in relation to each other by default. Aspects of classical and medieval Islamic thought, particularly exemplified in Ibn Khaldūn's understanding of how civilizations coalesce or disintegrate, also consider change and phenomena in terms of unceasing dynamic interplay rather than mere dialectical synthesis. Dualities define the parameters for debate but have meaning only when positioned, affirmed, and negated. The process constitutes an axis where perception and physical reality meets, engages, and turns.

To account for the actual paradoxes and multilayered ironies in the distinctions between city and countryside, urban life and rural tradition, mainland Korea and Cheju the language of Korean Buddhism, as briefly mentioned earlier, allows for an analysis of their interpenetration. In order for such an analysis to be applied to human relations at a larger scale beyond abstract phenomena necessitates the introduction of Islamic analytical concepts that addresses concrete human practices that produces mutuality. The author therefore uses and synthesizes two analytical tools: the Buddhist precept of *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination) as expressed in Wŏnhyo's application of *t'ong* (interpenetration) and the frameworks of Ibn Khaldūn's (1377;

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<sup>16</sup> Indra's Net is a commonly used metaphor in Mahāyāna Buddhist discourses and sermons to express the concept of interpenetration. Derived from Huayan philosophy, it refers to an instance in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* in which a single jewel encapsulating a Buddha-realm emits rays of light that refract into endless interconnected jewels.

1969; 2005) *‘ilm al-‘umran* (the science of “civilization” or “culture”) premised on *‘asabiyyah* (“group-feeling”). Where classical and medieval thought has an advantage over dialectical thinking is that they address continuities and account for the possibilities of disintegration or regression. Classical Buddhist and medieval Muslim thought are not cyclic per se, but recognize change in terms of wave patters with recognizable troughs and crests.

The concepts of *‘asabiyyah* and *‘ilm al-‘umran* are not defined consistently throughout Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqadimmah* because they are practices of history and not total theories. An advantage of the ambiguity of classical Arabic terminology in contrast to overly-specific German terminology is that they allow wider room for context-dependent practical applications. The term *‘asabiyyah* conventionally translated as tribalism in modern Arabic. In the variegated ways that Ibn Khaldūn uses the term, it could refer to close non-familial ties that emerge through mutual dependency fostered over time. A simple way of defining the term is to describe it as a “natural feeling or disposition among human beings, aimed particularly at helping and protecting group members when they are treated unjustly” (Ab Halim 2014: 40). Among *badawī* (Bedouin, nomadic peoples, or those exposed to the elements), *‘asabiyyah* is first based on kinship (Ibn Khaldūn 2005: 98-99) but can extend to wider clan relations in the interest of mutual protection.<sup>17</sup> *Badawī* also describes those “in the state of being outside” (105) literally or in relation to the metropole. For *ḥaḍāra* (sedentary or urban peoples) living within bounded habitation and among large populations, community-wide ties are much more difficult to maintain and individuals are more self-interested. Yet even for the *ḥaḍāra*, a community survives if people are able to foster *‘asabiyyah* beyond kin. Such a transfer is possible in a sense

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<sup>17</sup> Classical Arabic terminology does not appear in Franz Rosenthal’s translations. I was made aware of them thanks to Kayipinar’s (2008) and Amri’s (2008) use of the Arabic terms in their articles on Ibn Khaldūn. My UCLA colleague and native Arabic speaker Raiyah bint al-Hussein also corrected my misspellings.

of shared identity as in Benedict Anderson's (1983; 1991) notion of the "imagined community." The choice to remain bounded to community is at once rational and emotional.

*Badawī* and *ḥaḍāra* are not absolute human formations, nor are they pure binaries. Ibn Khaldūn's project in the *Muqaddimah* was concerned with how the contradictory needs and tensions among peoples led to consolidating themselves into urban life or dissolution into competing factions. Relationships with urban formations, which contains or represents all the trappings of civilization, hence are a driving force for change for those a part of or in conflict with them. Groups that successfully force their way into prominence based on those solidarities can conversely immediately begin to lose their staying power due to the hubris that comes with the atomized and more secure life of a settled existence.

Ibn Khaldūn's framework conceives of history as quasi-cyclical<sup>18</sup> in which both dynamically transform into one or the other depending on material circumstances and the degree to which *'asabiyyah* is successfully maintained. In the quick dissolution of metropolitan-based social movements' power at the ballot boxes in Istanbul, Turkey (Castells 2014) as well as the South Korean and US presidential elections, one can see how the distinction between rural (or provincial) and urban identities continue to affect politics in the crises of liberal democracy since the 2000s. A fragmented world perhaps is the impetus for new nationalisms and reaffirmed rural-based solidarities. In this dissertation, the author reconfigures the two terms as indicative of rural and urban communities as well as the state of being outside versus the hubris of settled stability.

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<sup>18</sup> 'Cyclic' might be a more common term, but I hesitate to refer to 'premodern' conceptions of time as such because Buddhist, Daoist, and Islamic thought do not consider time as a circle per se, but more like identifiable wave patterns with predictable troughs and crests. Why this attribute should be kept in their application is that they all, by extension, imply that things are never guaranteed to be permanent. One can too easily and too dangerously apply Ibn Khaldūn's concepts, especially *'asabiyyah*, to argue for fundamental permanent cultural difference and multiculturalism's impossibility (as is fashionable among neoconservative thinkers), while, on the contrary, Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*'s purpose was to demonstrate that the rise and fall of civilizations are not only natural but also that permanence is impossible.

In Cheju Island, an emotional attachment to cultural or community identity can inspire grassroots initiatives as much as professional nepotism.

Ibn Khaldūn's concept allows us to reconsider the important dimension of emotional connections that can bring people together to redefine community or drive them apart. The key factors that allow for *'asabiyyah* are twofold. The first is close or frequent contact, a factor that is inescapable in the Bedouin and Berber tribes that Ibn Khaldūn described as well as Cheju Islanders where anonymity, even in Cheju City, can be remarkably difficult in contrast to mainland Korea. The second factor is a dynamically tense and mutually reconstituted relationship. For the Bedouin of medieval North Africa, it was the urban-based Arab city-states or kingdoms upon whom they were dependent for goods yet constantly in conflict. For Cheju islanders, it is Seoul, Cheju City, the mobile "creative class"<sup>19</sup>, and specific districts in competition for scarce resources or recognition.

Contradictory observations on Cheju islanders' historical maritime character on the one hand and insularity on the other can be better understood as the result of a long-perpetuated sense of threat and need for mutual survival than mere regionalism. M. A. Kayapinar explains that while Ibn Khaldūn's use of *'asabiyyah* is based on the classical Arabic understanding of the word, it also gives notes "the imagination or belief that creates close contact and mutual help" (2008: 338). Both the classical meanings and Ibn Khaldūn's reconfiguration bear some resemblance to what islanders colloquially refer to *kwendang* in Cheju Island. The classical

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<sup>19</sup> See Florida 2012. *Rise of the Creative Class* is often counted as one of the originators of the concept of a "creative class" of people involved in tech startups, knowledge production, and cultural content industries.

definition of *'asabiyyah* can perhaps be related to Cheju's *kwendang*.<sup>20</sup> *Kwendang*, as it is practiced in Cheju, refers to earlier practices involving mutual labor exchange within tight community groups that include both kin and non-related neighbors. Like *'asabiyyah*, *kwendang* is at once a material practice and an emotional bond that makes concrete a group identity. Becoming a Cheju person involves everyday practices that reconstitute ties or boundaries, whether such acts are in ritual as in shamanic observances or exclusionary actions as in deliberate employment of Cheju language. To conceive of Cheju is to reconceive its geographical position as a periphery or even a "contact zone" where the reach of metropolitan Korea is engaged or contested (Pratt 1992). In twenty-first century Cheju, islanders, after seven decades of compulsory nationalization as part of the Republic of Korea body politick, still identify *oejiin* (outside people) or *yukjisaram* (mainland people).

Cheju's, Korea's, and East Asia's break with dynastic- and geomantic-centered geographies and compressed urbanization resulted in as many ruptures as continuities. Yet rupture and continuity are not always antithetical. What one calls 'modernity' is not purely the result of dialectical transformations to produce objectively better results. Urban life is not always individual-centered, power and resistance are not always antithetical, the city does not simply subsume the rural, city development and change are not always due to economic rationale, and making urban space is not always about relations to capital. Human relations in Cheju do not operate in the same manner as Western Europe, North America, or even mainland Korea yet remarkably parallel. Social groupings depend as much on *'asabiyyah* for their viability as they do economic rationales and power. The insider-outsider distinction in Cheju is pronounced,

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<sup>20</sup> "Kwendang" refers to communal reciprocity and favor exchange in Cheju. Communal reciprocity extends beyond agnatic kin and can include non-related neighbors. It has a positive connotation when discussed in regards to rural practice, but connotes nepotism and corruption when used to describe Cheju City politics.

despite the unprecedented degree of exchange and communication with mainland Korea and despite the fractious local politics. *Pratītyasamutpāda* and *'asabiyyah* seem wildly different and to put them together may be an idiosyncratic exercise of madness, but all emphasize mutual constitution (rather than mere binary opposition) and overarching questions for understanding how abstractions are made concrete.

Although Yi Yōngkwōn's follows the format of *minjung* revisionist history, his idea behind *pyōnbang-ūi sisōn* nonetheless remains useful insofar as the primary purpose focuses on how oppositions are interpenetrated via conceptual axes. Cheju, Cheju society, and Cheju City are useful terms so long as they are understood as conventional concrete abstractions, to appropriate Henri Lefebvre's term (Stanek 2008: 64),<sup>21</sup> that have profound effects on lived experience yet do not have inherent and independent existence. Social groupings that come into being to form society are not purely dependent on economic rationale or power operations, but also the extent that they maintain *'asabiyyah* that allows for members to continuously identify with one another. The lifeline of social movements', Manuel Castells (2014) reminds in his studies of social networks' impact in social movements, depends on the strength of shared notions of reciprocity, whether it comes as a physical exchange or a sense of recognition. But even Castells failed to account for the strength of emotional bonding in maintaining or negating movements, a factor that *'asabiyyah* applied in *'ilm al-'umran* methodology can supply where conventional theories of power fail. The success of change and movements to resist or reconfigure arrangements depend on or least interact with existing features.

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<sup>21</sup> According to, Lukasz Stanek's reading of Lefebvre, space considered in isolation exists as abstraction but becomes real via relationships, hence the term "concrete abstraction."

Anthropologist Andrew Kipnis (2016), in his study of the emerging Chinese city of Zuoping, thus based his idea of “recombinant urbanization” on the *taijitu* to take account that continuities of rural practices and revolutionary era ideals do exist with change. On the advantage of referring to the *taiji* (Kr.: *t’aegŭk*) concept of the *yin-yang* (Kr.: *ŭm-yang*) dynamic, Kipnis argues as follows:

“In contrast to black/white images of social transformation, the yin/yang diagram suggests mutual incorporation and interdependence. There is a bit of yin the heart of yang and vice versa. Transformation involves different dynamic juxtapositions of the elements, not simple replacement” (2016: 14).

Change does occur, but previous forms, practices, and ideas are never completely overcome and discarded. Continuities are very much a part of the process. Rural spatial arrangements, particularly villages-in-cities<sup>22</sup> that persist in a new urban landscape and familial obligations may serve as impetuses rather than hindrances for people to interact with the city. The same is true in Cheju City, South Korea where rapid urbanization parallels that of phenomena in China.

Kipnis’s use of *taijitu* in “recombinant urbanization” can be further expanded with respect to the third-century CE Madhyamaka philosopher Nāgārjuna’s understanding of *pratītyasamutpāda*. The basis of the precept of dependent origination in Madhyamaka thought, which also influenced Wŏnhyo (Muller, Park, Vermeersch 2012; Park 1979), is that because things are mutually arising and mutually constitutive, components have no inherent meaning unto themselves and are therefore empty if seen only in isolation (Komito 1987). The phenomena of this default mutuality, which Wŏnhyo identified as what constitutes *ch’e* (essence) (Park 1979), is not a stable formation but rather involves a constant process in thought and action

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<sup>22</sup> Kipnis observed that pre-existing rural villages that maintained their community structure though they were enveloped by an emergent city. Although in some examples in China these communities were forced to integrate into cities or bought off, in Zuoping and parts of southeastern China, some communities had such strong local bonds and identities that they successfully forced governments to negotiate or recognize their practiced autonomy. In this case, one can also apply *‘asabiyyah* to the phenomenon where social bonds had a profound effect on material reality.



where affirmation, negation, and double negation are continuous. The implications of *pratītyasamutpāda* is that all manifestations of phenomena must be considered in relation to their multiple causes and effects. Cause-effect is not unidirectional nor merely bidirectional. Everything is subject to inquiry and cannot be left as a default category.

In practical application of dependent origination and interpenetration to Cheju, one can again appreciate *pyōnbang-ŭi sisōn* in that Cheju is inseparable from mainland Korea and the greater Northeast Asia. The national projects of regional powers historically intersected in Cheju in one way or another –Korean nation-state building, Japanese imperialism, and Chinese finance capitalism. Korea, as Yi Yōngkwōn and Kim Tonghyōn argue, had been able to fashion itself as a regional axis in part because of its colonial lordship over Cheju. Beyond conceptualizations, the physical practices of attempting to make real Cheju Island as the Korean Hawaii or the Free International City as well as their ensuing backlashes involve a complex web of interpenetrated actions and intentions. Cheju identity arises not as a fixed concept but in instances when people affirm themselves as such, negate a totalized Korean identity, and also doubly-negate their own identities when qualifying what Cheju identity means and it functions in individual experience. This phenomenon is most visible in the “not really Korean” paradox that many islanders mention in casual conversation. Aside from identifying continuities and their impact on change, examining chains of mutual causality in combination with the factors that make community solidarities possible or fragile also can provide some insights on how a city functions as a city in practice and in concept.

### **1.3 – Constructing ‘the City’**

A feature of cities continuous since their earliest beginnings is that they are concrete realities in everyday life yet vague abstractions in how people conceive them. The most defined

cities, whether they were deliberately built to re-represent the cosmos such as Seoul (Hong 2013; Henry 2014), are still never isolated and constantly changing. Many scholars in Korean Studies have discussed modernity, but the very axes – the cities – privileged as sites of modernity are mere shadows if not absent. Where discussions of urbanization exist, they often are done so in relation to Seoul. Confirming *Chejuhak* scholars' frustrations, mainland- and Seoul-centered narratives leave out much of the peripheries' impact on the centers. Another practical concern left unaddressed is the matter that the city is used as a relational concept than a total geographical form that includes dynamic actors and forces. The city appears to exist by default or simply as modernity's byproduct though its basic form and function is made not simply through rationalization but through all manner of practices, mundane or intellectual. Aside from the large corpus of architecture and urban planning literature (which, being wedded to technocratic intents, are too limited to design than practice), only a handful of works attempt to analyze Korean urban space as practical assemblages.

Robert Oppenheim's (2008) study provides an account of re-inscribed meaning onto the ancient Silla (57 BCE-935 CE) capital of Kyōngju. The construction of the ontology of Kyōngju was a construction of heritage space and objects in which government and civil society participated, competed, and collaborated. Kyōngju residents – most specifically educated middle-class residents and intelligentsia – recode ancient remains as heritage as state-sponsored heritage discourse became domesticated and took on a life of its own. Although the Park Chung Hee regime (1961-1979) reconstructed the city as a showcase ancient capital to demonstrate succession from a grand Silla golden age, civic groups' attempted to lay claim to the city's heritage. What began as state-sanctioned heritage became citizens' collective property as residents reconceived themselves as members of a Korean nation-state and a part of an urban

civil society. Although Oppenheim demonstrates how Kyōngju is made and reassembled as a space of layered meanings, his account does not discuss how Kyōngju is remade as an urban space. How peoples' lives shape Kyōngju is not sufficiently explored. The ideas of Kyōngju are foregrounded, but Oppenheim's account presents the city of Kyōngju as a living environment more or less as a backdrop.

Todd Henry's publication on colonial Seoul (2014) addresses the problem of making not only the 'modern' city but the city as an axis for colonial modernity. Henry avoids narratives of Japanese absolute power, single-minded Korean resistance, or national identity crises, and demonstrates that Seoul was never the result of a single vision but a chimaera of competing desires and intentions of Ch'ongdokbu (colonial government-general) authorities, Korean residents, and Japanese settlers. Pre-existing geographies of the old Chosŏn Dynasty capital, continuities of Korean practices as well as Korean indifference to modernizing projects, and contradictory interests forced colonial bureaucrats to constantly revise their plans. Henry shows that although Japanese colonizers did leave indelible marks on Seoul in the form of bureaucratic and transportation infrastructure, civic buildings, and urban layouts, the ideal modern colonial capital was never realized. Different Seouls occupied a single space. Korean resident and Japanese settler space remained mostly separate. Two weaknesses in Henry's work, however, are that he offers too brief a discussion on the historic microcosmic significance of Seoul's geography – a major factor for its importance for more than five centuries – and, like most works on Korean cities, an absence of any attempt to define 'the city.'

Jung Inha's work on Korean urbanism (2013) provides an overview of twentieth-century architectural and city planning approaches as well as Koreans' adaptations of Japanese and Western models to indigenous designs. An important contribution of Jung's work is that it takes

on a broader view of Korean urban spatial formations though primary examples are focused on Seoul. Jung demonstrates that far from simply following imported models, Korean designers and planners consistently returned to traditional conceptions of living space. While buildings tended to be ostensibly modernist in form, they, including the bland apartment blocks that characterize many Korean cities, ultimately took as a starting point the *madang* courtyard of the traditional Korean house. City planning during the 1960s to 1990s were most radically different from earlier forms of community, but they still were made for a Korean geography where open land and natural resources are scarce and peninsular humidity determined building material choices. Where there was rupture of outward form, there was also continuity of internal logic. Jung's work unfortunately is largely metropolitan-oriented and affords little space to discussing actually existing or the possibilities for provincial urbanisms.

Lisa Kim-Davis's (2004) dissertation again examines Seoul's centrally-planned urban redevelopment but her chief contribution is that she considers the perspectives of social movements and civic groups. Whereas Jung's planning- and architecture-oriented work fails to include resident experiences and thus renders them mere passive recipients of urban change, Kim-Davis explores their tense relationship with development. Kim-Davis poses as a key question how people of Seoul "read their constantly evolving cityscape" (2). Her research examines the violence of urban change and the ways residents, especially underprivileged urbanites and women, attempt to push back against state- and developer-instigated economic and political forces that attempt to overwhelm them. A striking result of Kim-Davis's work is her observation that women are more involved in locally-based organizing that do not have explicit feminist objectives. A continuity of the gendered dimension of women's space in the domestic

sphere appears in urban residents' movements. But again, a pertinent question remains unanswered – what is the city?

Valérie Gelézeau (2012) examines the making of Seoul from the 1960s to the end of the twentieth century with a particular focus on the *ap'at'ũ tanji* (apartment complex) that characterize much of urban Korea. Gelézeau demonstrates that the standardized massively-reproduced apartment blocks are microcosms unto themselves that reflect the seismic changes at all levels of life begun since Korea's violent transition into an industrial and then postindustrial economy. Despite their standardized appearance, apartment complexes internally possessed certain continuities from previous residential arrangements. With the basic cultural geographic framework of landscape, Gelézeau explores how the landscape created with the apartment complex came to express the complicated and overlapping factors of the developing state's need for expedience, middle class aspirations, and the attempt to create for everyday life a Korean modernity. Gelézeau's work retains its relevancy, especially as combined state- and corporate-led large-scale redevelopment practices that she described in the 1960s to 1990s persist. Gelézeau's insistence that the day-to-day lives of people in the city is a crucial to understand what makes it as a concretized abstraction. Some of the urban development forms that Gelézeau observed, have changed by the second decade of the 2000s, however, as Korea saw a resurgence of interest in inner cities and localisms.

Aside from the recurrent emphasis on Seoul – a factor that strengthens Yi Yǒngkwǒn's insistence that Korean Studies scholars must address *pyǒngbang-ũi sisǒn* – what is most vexatious is that the aforementioned literature still discusses the 'city' without attempting to untangle it. Kyǒngju becomes Kyǒngju without the city. Korean cities become modern Korean cities without a clear examination of Korean urbanism. Korean urbanism comprises buildings

without urban residents. Modernity is in a perpetual wrestling match with tradition, but these accounts do not consider that the conflict, like professional wrestling, is a staged encounter with its diehard fans. Although Kim-Davis and Gelézeau do utilize residents' experiences, the interpersonal dynamics of areas outside of Seoul, especially in Cheju, can be substantially different. Political economy-based analyses and consideration to spatiality further do not take into account a critical factor that could make or break community as much as power play of the most vulgar sort – the emotional component in Ibn Khaldūn's term '*asabiyyah*'. The existing literature treats the Korean city as a mere backdrop and not a focal point for inquiry or an axial component that shapes relationships. How is urban space produced and how is it functional in everyday life?

In Cheju, too, scholars leave this question unanswered despite a pervasive sense of center-periphery tensions that inform the ways people view Cheju experiences beyond academic inquiry. The closest attempt to defining the city as a practice and experience is architect Kim T'aeil's 2007 and 2011 edited volumes on Cheju City, but his volume also has the same silences as Jung Inha's work. A persistent yet unspoken prejudice held in *Chejuhak* is that the primary spaces that one can treat as authentic Cheju space are those in ritual consecration or a pre-modern original. Much of the vast corpus of Korean Studies literature furthermore regards the city as a perpetual phantom that lurks behind the gamut of arbitrarily categorized social movements, political economies, artistic interventions, human behavior, and new forms of human organization. As urban space continues to be the province of urban planning and architecture, beyond studies of social movements and 'modernity,' missing in the narratives are the myriad mutual interactions between people and space mediated through action and emotion.

A paradox confronted this dissertation project from the very beginning: for many residents, Cheju City is at once a city and not a city. One resident, Jung Sinji (Chŏng Sinji), argued that Cheju City was “not an authentic city.”<sup>23</sup> In terms of population density, cosmopolitanism, and amenities, Cheju City is far beyond many localities designated as ‘cities’ in the United States, which demonstrates the fundamental problem of the term city. Cheju City is one of South Korea’s emerging urban centers, but it also possesses a long history as a small provincial seat. At one level, Cheju functions as a peripheral regional capital with an architecture that deliberately faces Seoul (Han C. 2016).<sup>24</sup> At another level, it has been the island’s main center at least since the end of the T’amna (1<sup>st</sup>?3<sup>rd</sup>? c-1105) period where the old T’amna royalty presided and where tribute goods collected from the countryside were inspected for mainland (and, for the fourteenth century, Mongol) export. Complicating these factors is that Cheju City operates as a country town where urban anonymity is difficult. *Kwendang* persists in one form or another. Continuity with rupture in Cheju City parallels Kipnis’ Zuoping, but aside from the geographical differences Cheju City, having been a capital in its own right, arguably has a longer history as a city.

What, exactly, is a city? A single term encapsulates a variety of legal, physical, practical, and ontological aspects. This section proposes two main additional features as defining characteristics of the city: 1) a sort of “concrete abstraction” (again appropriating Henri Lefebvre’s term) based on a local consensus regarding the form and function of built space; and 2) a purely relational concept in which people, for multiple reasons, constantly construct constellations of practice and identity in relation to an *axis mundi*. Because existing theories can

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Jung Sinji, Nohyŏng-tong, Cheju City, June 24, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Han Chino mentioned that the *T’amnasullyŏdo* images of old Cheju City appear upside down because the intended audience is that of the royal court in Seoul. The court literally looks down at Cheju.

be too limiting or sidestep the question of the city, multiple approaches are utilized, improvised, and reconfigured out of necessity. To incorporate the experiential complexities of the city to gain a fuller understanding and appreciation, one then must turn to multiple disciplinary approaches.

A brief overview of other scholars' attempts to disentangle the concept is a start. To begin, one can consider some archeological and sociological definitions of urban and city. Urban studies and critical geographic approaches to urban space and their formation and purposes with respect to political economy are also useful. The author proposes a reformulated approach using Paul Wheatley's concept of the *axis mundi* and tying together the overarching question of the axes with their constant re-manifestations in practice. Wheatley's concept was in reference to the so-called traditional city, but classical ideas of the city as a representation of a cosmic ideal are pertinent, if not more relevant, to the present age of mobile capital, rapid transportation, and mass communication.

Archeologist V. Gordon Childe (1950) attempted to define the historic city using ten distinct features in an article that attempted to approach the social sciences with his theory of the "urban revolution" in human development. Childe's article, which was still the most cited archeological article in the early 2000s (Smith 2009), proposes that early settlements can be defined as cities based on ten criteria: 1) density and population; 2) full-time specialists not tasked with basic food production; 3) a means of concentrating surplus; 4) monumental buildings that symbolize surplus; 5) existence of a ruling class; 6) methods of recording and applied sciences; 7) calendrical systems; 8) specialist artists and sophisticated representational forms; 9) trade with neighbors or foreign entities for luxuries and industrial materials; and 10) specialist craftsmen provided access to raw materials and security. Childe wrote specifically of the earliest settlements that archeologists conventionally defined as urban and did not intend to establish a



comprehensive theory of the city, but his ideas are a good starting point. The ten factors are both specific and involve relational components – what defines a city also depends on its time and context rather than an absolute fixed idea. A consistent feature in Childe’s criteria, however, are the city’s function as an economic, symbolic, and political center where features that are otherwise unsustainable in rural settings. Childe’s definitions also incidentally parallel Ibn Khaldūn’s distinctions for *ḥaḍāra* (sedentary), which also incidentally paralleled early European sociological concepts of urbanization (Chabane 2008: 332).

Sociologist Rene Maunier’s (1910) attempted a definition that was deliberately vague while specific. Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century definitions of cities tended to be based on demographic and juridical characteristics (536-538), particular features such as industry, or population. Maunier considered all of these to be problematic because they are too variable. A more productive working definition for the concept of the city, Maunier stresses, must “be common to all the types of cities” and “found everywhere relatively unchanged, and vary as little as possible in degree” (541). Rather than morphological features, a definition of the city should concentrate on its inner workings that make it operate differently from other categories of communities. Maunier thus arrives at the following as a partial definition:

“The city is then a *complex community of which the geographic localization is especially limited in relation to the city’s size (volume), of which the amount of territory is relatively small with reference to the number of human beings*” (545, author’s emphasis).

Maunier’s first step seems too simple at a glance, but a feature of his attempt to classify the ‘city’ is that the quality of being a form of a large aggregated habitation, which technically could also by extension include an aggregation of nearby villages, is considered secondary while degree of complexity is placed as primary. In Maunier’s terms, where a city is distinct from a village aside from being massive, compact, and contiguous is that it is a complex collection of both locally-

defined – that is, locally-defined within the confines of a city geography – groups and diverse personal associations while not affecting its territorial organization (547). A city can therefore appear externally homogenous while internally being heterogenous.

Demographer William H. Frey and sociologist Zachary Zimmer (2001) argue for defining urban as the “Functional Community Area” (14). A problem with usage of the term in sociology and demography is that it is an abstraction based on interrelated factors of population size, density, organizational features, economic conditions, labor, and administration though statistical definitions tend to define cities based on legal criteria (26). Frey and Zimmer propose three distinctive characteristics that distinguish urban from rural: their ecological, economic, and social elements. First, urban areas tend to be identified with densely-populated areas. Second, urban areas have non-agricultural economies and can take on multiple non-agricultural economic functions. And third, urban areas are distinguishable from rural areas with respect to their inhabitants’ behaviors, lifestyle, amenities, organization patterns, interactions, and values. Although the three key elements are common amongst many regions defined as urban, they are not absolute features. A caveat to defining a geographical area as urban again arises when confronted with two factors: 1) the definition of high density may differ among countries; and 2) areas classified as metropolitan areas incorporate vast territories that also include low-density or agricultural districts. Frey and Zimmer spoke specifically of the United States as an example, but the arbitrariness of city designations are also common in East Asia, especially in Korea and China. The administrative designation of city (Kr.: *si*; Ch.: *shi*) can lump together a hodgepodge of geographies and arbitrarily define them as all under city jurisdiction.

With the spatial turn in academia since the end of the previous century and revived interest in the works of Henri Lefebvre, critical geography attempted to rectify the problems of

geography's inability to deal with economic and social crises. The renewed attention of scholars such as David Harvey (1989; 2001; 2006; 2012) to space addressed underdeveloped aspects of Marxist analysis and critical theory to examine how power and phenomenology functions in physical interventions. The author does not fully apply these approaches given their tendency to reduce phenomena to power or capital, but a few brief notes on their premises are nonetheless instructive. One certainly can utilize aspects of critical geography and Marxist thought to Cheju if one so inclines.

Lefebvre, who was once relegated to the fringes of Marxist thought for some time, proposed the notion that space is a human artifice for specific purposes. Space does not simply exist by default, but instead involves much human intervention to establish and demarcate social relations. Producing space therefore involves a triad of operations as follows (though not in a particular order of operations): 1) spatial practices that involve daily activities of production and reproduction; 2) representations of space that include the conceptualized forms created for specialist knowledge production; and 3) representational space in which space is directly lived through its images and symbols (Lefebvre: 1991: 33). Spaces change with the modes of production, such as the change from feudal to capitalist modes of production. The changes prompt recoded distinctions between town and country for rationalization with the political economy.

Geographer David Harvey adopted Lefebvre's thought to geography and analyzed the development of cities, especially with the phenomena of industrialization and neoliberalism, as means to produce rationalized landscapes for capital accumulation (1989: 22). Whenever crises in capitalism occur whether it be market downturns, capital flight, or a severe breakdown due to accumulated internal contradictions, a "spatial fix" (Harvey 2001; Yoshihara 2010) where new

markets, spaces for production, or magnets for surplus labor are opened in peripheries to serve as a temporary solution. Harvey is hardly alone in identifying global capital flows as major if not prime impetus.

Sociologist John Urry (1995) and urban studies scholar Yoshihara Naoki (2010) also observe that rather than homogenizing space, capital and capital movement has been an impetus for specializing localities. The specialization that results does not necessarily privilege the local although it can spur localism among residents in tourist regions. Planning policies emphasize specialization to make space attractive to investment. The purpose for differentiated investment policy, urban design, and social experimentation therefore is to integrate locales to homogenizing global economic processes. One can observe this phenomenon in many non-metropolitan Korean cities' urban re-branding schemes, even if images and slogans do little to change material fortunes (Oh YJ 2014).

Returning to Childe's criteria, one can appreciate that the function of cities has not fundamentally changed in six to seven millennia, a mere blip in the story of civilization. The city still has centrifugal economic, political, and representational functions. The word "center" perhaps is not useful to consider the city. Rather, the city, or at least an ideal metropolis, functions more as an axis. Considering the matter that even classical capitals such as Kyoto (Stavros 2014) did not always have coherent form or even actual political power while they functioned as an idealized representation of civilization, the axis has long been characteristic of conurbations.<sup>25</sup> The shift to an urban century, the wide availability of media, and the necessity

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<sup>25</sup> The example of medieval Kyoto present a strong example of a city as an axis rather than a defined center. For much of the medieval period until the sixteenth century, due to ravages of war and abandonment, Kyoto lacked a coherent physical form as a capital in the same manner as its contemporaries Byzantine Constantinople or Ming Dynasty Beijing, but continued to function as a locus of high aristocratic culture and the ceremonial seat of the emperor.

for cities to compete with one another at a global scale has highlighted the need for cities and their residents to redefine cities as the brighter star in a constellation.

Twenty-first century urban planning has been premised on making cities definitive expressions of globalism, futurism or eco capitalism. Urbanism takes the form of culture-led urban development or promotion policies (Zukin 2010; Florida 2011; Oh YJ 2014), high-tech new cities (Das 2013; Jung IH 2013), or the so-called “eco-city” (Tan and Lee 2014; Rapoport 2014). Designers, urbanists, governments, and developers afford much attention to making cities – and especially new emerging cities – representations and manifestations of twenty-first century futurism and cultural idealism. These new city designs stand in contrast to not only their respective countryside but established metropolises demonstrate that urbanism in practice is still a practice of manifesting ideological cosmologies in physical space. Cities exist in mutuality to their pasts, their hinterlands, and to one another. The past is as much the basis as it is a point of departure. Competing needs to establish community continues the ages-old problem of *‘asabiyyah* or the lack thereof. A conceptual *axis mundi* sort still informs design

Geographer Paul Wheatley (1969) described the city-as-cosmos in terms of the *axis mundi*. According to Wheatley, a feature common to ancient capitals and traditional cities were that they were premised on making physical a parallel between the macrocosmos and the microcosmos to ensure order and prosperity (9-10). The *axis mundi* itself therefore was the site where “it was possible to effect an ontological transition between worlds, quintessentially sacred enclaves within which man could proclaim the knowledge that he shared with the gods and dramatize the cosmic truth” (25). Wheatley addressed his concept to so-called traditional cities, but this dissertation argues that his observations are still relevant . The primary difference between microcosmic capitals and industrialized or post-industrial cities lies in the abstractions

of language and technology of expression. Cities still function as a central axis around which localized actions – whether it be mundane practices going into town for shopping or philosophical oppositions between city and countryside – manifest. Even with mobile global capital and their functions relegated to nodal points, cities, as spaces to accumulate and consume, continue to have their own gravitational fields.

Urban planning throughout the history of cities has been premised on creating a re-representation of an ideal of some form with distinct symbols to represent a selected built geography as the basis of governance, security, wealth, and achievement. Like Chosŏn Dynasty Seoul or Ming Dynasty Beijing, so-called modern cities such as post-revolutionary Buenos Aires (Bakker 2011) and Georges-Eugene Haussmann's nineteenth-century renovation of Paris were fashioned as much in relation to their representation as beacons of universal truisms as axes of governing power and capital. The classical ideas of the city have not been overturned, but rather accentuated. What must be added to Wheatley's *axis mundi*, however, is that making cities as microcosms are not only ideological and elite-centered practices, but involve all inhabitants and everyday life activity. The most basic act of living in the city or aspiring an urban ideal, as Gelézeau (2007; 2012) and Henry (2014) observed with Seoul, is what makes manifests the city's purpose.

Where Ibn Khaldūn's concepts can further add to our understanding of cities is to re-introduce the emotional component, the '*asabiyyah*' of groups that interact with urban space, a factor too often missing in urban studies. Emotions are crucial to the axial function of the city as they drive interpersonal interaction and self-conception as well as the ways people approach space. A crucial contribution in Castells' (2014) and Qin's (2013) works is that they demonstrate the importance of such emotions as they explored the function of outrage in social movements

and trauma from domicile respectively. Who decides – or at least possess stake in – what becomes the centrifugal ideal depends not merely on power and capital but also the aspirations, ‘*asabiyyah*, and interventions of residents.

The city as image or simulation is nothing new. Ease of movement has increased demands for specialized nodal points for capital or administration while greater availability and accessibility of media has made imagining axes far easier than the pre-wired age. One can simply mention or display an image of a city such as Los Angeles, New Orleans, Jakarta, or Rio de Janeiro and produce a response. Modernism, postmodernism, and futurist interventions parallels earlier attempts to make the metaphysical physical through magico-religious esotericism. Cheju’s planners made blatant such aspirations when they coined the slogan “*Segye-ka channŭn Cheju, segye-ro kanŭn Cheju*” (“The World comes to Cheju and Cheju goes to the World”), an echo of Seoul’s 1988 Olympics extravaganza.

As of 2016, Cheju City is still considered a provincial city that is anything but Seoul, but it is everywhere present on the island. It is a key nodal point to Seoul for all islanders, a function that has not changed in five centuries, yet consistently remained a capital in its own right. Even in everyday speech, Cheju City was regarded as “*sŏng’an*” or “*sŏngnae*,” which both mean “within the walls.” Cheju City functions as an axis while also orbits mainland Korea. The function of urban *axis mundi* curiously operates in this ambiguity. Different actors within and without attempt to redefine Cheju City and Cheju as a whole via Cheju City itself.

The two main questions of the axis and the concept of the ‘city’ are analytical questions and thus not intended to be concrete frameworks. The goal is not to provide a definitive answer, but instead make conceptual propositions. The focus is rather the accounts of disparate groups’ attempts to define urban space and the manifestations of economic and political rationales in

everyday life. Concepts drawn from other scholars are useful insofar as they can be brought in dialogue with the concrete cases presented. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz suggests, “the office of theory is to provide a vocabulary in which what symbolic action has to say about itself – that is, about the role of culture in human life – can be expressed” (1973: 27).

## **1.5 – Methodologies**

The search for answers to the questions of the city and how it functions in everyday life integrates textual research with direct observation. Both complement one another, but aside from demonstrating how recorded change had played out in the lives of actual people, direct observation can sometimes challenge textual material. What one writes or says is not necessarily what one does and likewise one cannot assume that what is recorded is necessarily a faithful representation of actual situations. As Ibn Khaldūn noted, that a historian who depends too heavily on the archive “remains unaware of the changes that conditions have undergone. Without a moment’s hesitation, he applies his knowledge (of the present) to historical information, and measures such information by the things he has observed with his own eyes, although the difference between the two is great” (2005: 26). In Ibn Khaldūn’s day, the solution was to incorporate immediate observations and other accounts to put them in dialogue with the archive. For the purpose of this project, an attempt to rectify the limitations of textual based research is ethnography.

At the most basic level of analysis and presentation, the author employs aspects of Ibn Khaldūn’s critical historiographic method that informs his 1377 (1969; 2005) magnum opus, the *Muqadimmah*. Ibn Khaldūn emphasizes the need to constantly cross-reference as wide a variety of sources possible, examine the viability of sources’ claims and to check whether their propositions hold in practice, and then to use direct personal observations of historical events or



social phenomena to support or question claims. Though expressed in a fourteenth-century Islamic framework, the *Muqadimmah* avoids excessive theoretical posturing and instead favors empirical research. His theory is practiced and molded throughout and not established as a total metaphysical system. The ultimate concern is to find how the city, society, identity, and practices are mutually constituted and why communities and ideas of community form or fracture in concert with material realities. Historical and statistical analysis is balanced with direct observation as macro-level views may obscure actually-existing conditions.

Research for this dissertation was mostly conducted from 2015 January 9 to 2016 March 31. The first full year from 2015 January 9 to 2016 January 9 was funded with a Fulbright Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (DDRA) Fellowship while the January 21 to March 31 research in 2016 was funded with a Korea Foundation Fieldwork Research grant. Preliminary research was conducted for at least a month in the summers of 2012 to 2014. The short-term 2013 and 2014 research stays were funded under the UCLA Summer Research Mentorship and a combination of the Mellon and Henry and Yvonne Lenart Travel Fellowship respectively. In addition to formalized research, other aspects included are some references to personal observations from life in Cheju in 2007, the year of the so-called “Nyu Cheju Undong” (New Cheju Movement) and the Japanese tourism recession. Changes in Cheju had been a major academic concern since 2007, but earlier study was limited due to language barriers and a lack of accessible material, factors that did not change until 2010. In total, observation spans roughly nine years with roughly two years dedicated wholly to field research.

The author decided in 2014 that the core project for this research would focus on Cheju City when urban issues took the forefront in debates on the island. In the same year, institutional relationships were established with the Jeju International Culture Exchange Association (JICEA;

Cheju Kukche Munhwa Kyoryu Hyöphoe) and Jeju Global Inner Peace; the former served as the primary host institution during the Fulbright Fellowship period while the latter became the primary host during the Korea Foundation Fellowship period. Although this dissertation research is mostly the product of an individual researcher, the methodological approaches and research questions formed since 2012 involved much input from, the dissertation committee, Cheju academics, colleagues in the field, and civic organization leaders.

Methodology is easier done than said. Before actual dedicated research and during the prospectus writing process, the project began with three theoretical approaches: 1) the issue of space and capital based on David Harvey's application of Marxist analysis in his 2001 *Spaces of Capital*; 2) Henri Lefebvre's (1991; 2014) interconnected theories of the socially-mediated production of space and the two-sided coin of everyday life in which submission and utopian potentials are realized; and 3) Michel de Certeau's (1984) distinction between strategic measures for power and the everyday tactical maneuvers to circumvent them. Upon day one, however, all initial theoretical pretensions were immediately dashed and thus the ultimate decision to adopt aspects of Ibn Khaldūn's *'ilm al-'umran*. The gulf between theory and actual practice and conceptual frameworks and reality is far too large. The division between private and public is not always so clearly delineated and economic rationale is not always a motive force. Although the three approaches to space are considered, their application is limited.

The second issue encountered on day one was the realization that any attempt to replicate exactly the methods discussed in introductions and quasi-manuals on fieldwork (Jackson 1987; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw. 1995) was an impossibility. Cheju is not North America or Zambia. As is common in mainland Korea, honorific conjugations are usually expected of an East Asian-looking person, even if said person is a foreign researcher with an awkward command of spoken

Standard Korean mixed with Cheju pronunciations. At the same time, unspoken communication practices in Cheju are also dissimilar from mainland Korea. Formality may be expected in the beginning, but many older Cheju islanders readily shift to informal or blunt speech. Insider-outsider distinctions, and even the space of where inside and outside begins, have different functions in Cheju than in mainland Korea. An example of the spatial difference is that in rural Cheju, a place where closed gates became a phenomenon only in the late twentieth century, casually walking into another person's walled compound is not considered unusual. Neighbors may show up unannounced without negatively impacting relationships. Another aspect where Cheju differs from mainland Korea, is that Cheju islanders tend to prefer simpler and straightforward speech though elders may respond to a short question with a long answer. The distance kept in North American encounters also does not apply in Cheju. Touching and playful sarcasm are used to express friendliness.

However useful such fieldwork manuals are in informing would-be ethnographers techniques for investigation, the realities of the field are chaotic. Whereas sociological approaches attempt some measure of scientific controls in survey methods, ethnographic inquiry is a practice of controlled chaos. Such a practice begins with dispensing the fantasy of being the Victorian explorer in a pith helmet altogether. The ethnographer is never a mere observer. One thing that does hold true in fieldwork textbook advice and reality is the following piece of advice from folklorist Bruce Jackson: "The best interviewers somehow make the difference between conversation and interview as unobtrusive as possible" (1987: 80).

Most of the dissertation research concerns people who self-identify as Cheju islanders and long-term residents. Since long-term is a subjective parameter, for the purpose of this dissertation, long-term residents include those who have seen Cheju before and after its 2006

transition to a so-called *t'ŭkbyŏl chach'ido* (Special Self-Governing Province). Although changes prominent in 2015 and 2016 were already set in motion since the end of the 1990s, the resultant *Cheju t'ŭkbyŏlbŏp* (Cheju Special Law) was an important milestone. Legal changes allowed for the major tourism developments and policies to proceed, particularly the 2010 revision to travel visa and residency registration requirements. Perspectives discussed in this dissertation are not, however, entirely limited to native-born and long-term residents. A few mainland newcomers and non-Koreans have been included in the dialogues.

Conversations and interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder whenever possible to ensure accuracy. Arranged individual or group interviews involved signed consent forms when possible, but many impromptu conversations took place throughout the research period. Consent forms proved to be cumbersome in Cheju perhaps due to South Korea's recent history of autocratic military governments. When asked to read and sign a consent form for interviews, not a few asked half-jokingly, "Are you CIA?" This was especially awkward for older Cheju islanders. Local ethnographers in Cheju also seldom use consent forms and instead opt for verbal permission. Much deal-making in Cheju, including official contracts and, are still weighted more heavily toward verbal rather than written agreement; this is common for people of all backgrounds regardless of education level.<sup>26</sup> As a rule, where written or recorded verbal consent could not be procured, names of individuals have been coded to protect anonymity. Korean and non-Korean colleagues' names have also been coded where necessary. Where full names are used is only in situations where the person in question is already a public figure.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> An example of this was my housing contract. My agreement with my landlady was verbal at the outset and the 'contract' was basically a template purchased from a stationery store and filled out with relevant information.

<sup>27</sup> This includes academics, Buddhist clergy, and Cheju shamans whose names are already well-known in Cheju City or intend to bolster their reputations as civil society figures.

“Public figure” in this case includes people who have been active in open forums and media discourse. An exception to this are political activists involved in sensitive issues.

Information relevant to this dissertation are in relation to urban issues, thus biographical information is minimal and the chief subject in question remains Cheju City itself. Any information that could be deemed sensitive from a person who did not allow for recording was immediately deleted. When an individual expressed discomfort at being recorded, which is rare in tech-savvy South Korea, only handwritten fieldnotes were used. Coincidental casual off-record conversation sometimes produced as much information as did arranged interviews. Most of those interviewed or encountered were seen on an almost regular basis. Given the impromptu nature of such exchanges, information could only be collected in scattered notebook or cellphone jottings. The issue of where the ethnography begins is always murky. As James Clifford (1988) noted, ethnography is always fraught with the issue of authority in which the monograph can easily fall into the trap of being presented as the ethnographer’s monologue. The unattainable yet necessary ideal is to allow for as polyvocal a representation as possible, but this also entails its own difficulties.

Ethnographic moments always have a layer of artificiality, especially in cases where etiquette boundaries and restrictions such as using specific language for elders or body language specific to a region can maintain a barrier between the researcher and the other person. Recorders, field note-taking, and even the institution-required consent forms can significantly alter (or stymie) interaction. There are far too many vectors and variables involved in any given moment in the field, a matter that complicates any pretension to absolute scientific objectivity and one that the renowned anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1963) also admitted. Levi-Strauss was incorrect to iterate that proper ethnography had to be done primarily on a culture

different from one's own. There are differing layers of access for any given group and both the insider and outsider perspectives are necessary for nuanced understandings, which is why secondary source material were important resources. The ambiguous place of a foreign researcher in Cheju sometimes unexpectedly allows a foreigner more access than a mainland Korean. Furthermore, where the field begins and ends is not always clear no matter how much attempts to strictly define it. Yet fieldwork remains a "science," as Levi-Strauss understood it, so long as the practice remains anchored to the principles of rigorous inquiry.

Ethnography is the underlying basis for this project though much of the writing can also be considered a history. Regarding ethnography, Levi-Strauss noted its parallel to history in that it concerned detailed accounts of peoples of a time and place different from that of the observer, however slight that difference may be. Ethnography's primary goal, like history, is to reproduce specific instances as much as possible with data garnered from empirical investigation. The distinction between the two is usually based on the grounds that history is based on multiple documents that can be cross-checked whereas ethnography is based on the observations of an individual researcher (Levi-Strauss 1963: 53). On the other hand, multiple ethnographies can remedy the situation and verification of historical events may depend upon ethnography to complete or challenge what history cannot fill or question. The anthropologist or ethnographer therefore is "above all interested in unwritten data...because that which he is principally concerned differs from everything men ordinarily think of recording on stone or on paper" (Ibid., 42). Levi-Strauss emphasized focus and contained ethnographies on non-urban small societies, but this dissertation is premised on the idea that a rigorous urban ethnography that can result in a larger proposition is certainly doable. At its most basic, ethnography involves a constant day-to-day study of an ongoing present in a specified space and among a specified group of people

chosen, on the basis of a theoretical or methodological purpose, in order to garner primary data that would be synthesized into a working model of analysis.

One can go about fieldwork wrongly in many ways, but no single right way to do fieldwork exists. A finely-crafted project with tightly controlled parameters is an impossibility unless one were to subject an entire population to an Orwellian dystopia. But even where such a thing exists there are possibilities for variable results. Research is full of missteps. Yet errors also are productive.

Early on in this project in the summer of 2014 and January 2015, urban anthropologist Peter J. Nas's (2011) "mental mapping" approach was used. Mental mapping, which draws upon urbanist Kevin Lynch's (1960) theory of that a person's experiences and relationships with cities is intertwined with their visual qualities. Lynch's theory, which he termed "imageability," involved mapping that has respondents produce their own personal maps of cities to highlight their daily interactions with cities as well as places they consider most important. Although this method confirmed hypotheses on what were Cheju City's signature locations, mental mapping ultimately had to be abandoned for several reasons. The first was that Nas's project in urban Java involved a research team that sought a large number of respondents whereas this dissertation's project is mostly the work of a lone researcher. The second limiting factor was that the exercise of drawing maps became too awkward for some people that the maps exercises prevented rather than opened further conversation. Because Cheju City's presence and its identity as a city are still very much vague to its inhabitants, this approach, which is more applicable to major cities with monumental architecture such as Yogyakarta and Jakarta, is not productive. What also became apparent was that Cheju City's inhabitants reconstructed the city in ways not limited to the visual. Some referred to places and things that either do not physically exist or had been

irreversibly altered beyond the point of easy recognition. Nas's approach was not entirely discarded as his idea that an urban ethnographer should follow in the footsteps of the *flaneur* remained useful.

The ethnographer in the city is akin to literary critic Walter Benjamin's reappraisal of the poet Baudelaire's *flaneur*. An urban ethnographer, like the *flaneur*, wanders the city with an intent to gaze upon the kaleidoscope visions of the cityscape, to be both away and at home in the streets and to be in the center of things yet absorbed (Nas 2012). The ethnographer-*flaneur* does not maintain a detached voyeuristic gaze, but is at all times interacting with the city and its denizens. Benjamin's *flaneur* maintains a self-conscious remove in order to dispense with any pretensions of going native or being nothing more than a visitor. Gazes are always returned. The native is always, in one way or another, looking over the ethnographer's shoulder.

The initial method of inquiry adapted for research after much trial and error from 2012 to January 2015 involved a basic three step process that draws some inspirations from Clifford Geertz's approach of "thick description" (1973: 6). The first and most basic step was simply to observe a part of Cheju. The criteria for selection of a place was based on impressions of use and traffic in each area as well as frequency of its mentioning in media and day-to-day conversation. The second step was to draw a question from impressions of repeated observations. As a single day's observation was insufficient, the same area was revisited over multiple days until day-to-day use and patterns of routine can be inferred and recreated to a limited degree. This involved a constant practice of doing the same thing and going to the same places on the exact same route consistently so that the city's day-to-day rhythms could be observed.

Given the impossibility of complete reconstruction, ethnographic representation is not intended to be total and instead focuses on features that have garnered much attention or have



changed significantly over time. Accounts strive to represent not snapshots but polyvocal conversations between the researcher and the people of Cheju City as well as the spaces of Cheju City itself. More detailed ethnographic research was also not done for Sin-Cheju (New Cheju City) due to the constant movement of short-term tourists in the New Town districts and the lack of personal attachment<sup>28</sup> to that part of the city. Sin-Cheju would require a different methodological approach. The chosen primary fields of observation were within the vicinity of Cheju City's Old Town area and thus comprise the bulk of this dissertation with a few occasional forays into rural villages and towns. Areas not included in the dissertation are potential locations for further investigation.

As a basic example of what was gathered at the most basic level, an 8 to 11 AM city street scene reconstructed at Chung'ang-ro, the main four-lane thoroughfare of the Samdo-2-tong district, is as follows. Street cleaners, who all wear the yellow vests that bear the Cheju City logo, sweep up the previous night's trash at seven to eight o'clock in the morning. They travel in pairs with at least one dragging a rickety cart in which they keep their cleaning tools or trash bags, which they dispose at the *k'ŭrin hausŭ* (the "clean house" where all community garbage and recycling bins are located). Shopkeepers trickle down into the stairwells leading to *chihasangga* (the underground shopping center) to start the business day at around ten o'clock. In summer or in winter, a tourist descends into the constantly air-conditioned or heated *chihasangga* as a respite. By eleven o'clock, the aroma of steamed rice, pork broth, and kimchi wafts from the *haejang'guk* (coagulated pork blood soup) and *sundubu* (soft tofu stew) shops to entice workers from nearby construction sites while Chung'ang Bakery sets out its first baked

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<sup>28</sup> What is meant by "personal attachment" includes family histories, long-term memories, and concerted efforts to define a Cheju-esque space. Sin-Cheju was indeed built over the centuries-old villages that became Yŏn-tong and Nohyŏng-tong and ancient village shrines such as Nŭngdang still exist, but people approached in this dissertation tended to identify Cheju City with the Old Town.

baguette loaves of the morning. The bare lightbulbs of the Ssaltabang café switch on as soon as the proprietress from Seoul comes back with bags filled with milk cartons. O-i Café, located just a three-minute saunter away, opens whenever the performer-cum-barista is not on stage or at rehearsal. These observations involved occasional interactions with people on the street or in shops and other establishments. At some points, the rhythms of Chang'ang-ro could be disrupted with various festivals, a pause in an eatery where the restaurateur mentions an eight-centuries-long family tradition regarding the origins of his surname, or an interjection from a casual observer who questions the answer given from an interviewee on whether Cheju City's first cinema had *pyŏnsa* (silent film interpreters).

Given the scope of a city, ethnographic research alone is insufficient and necessitates data collection that involves the following: 1) collection and analysis of media articles; 2) collection of official statistical information produced by the provincial government and the semi-private Jeju Tourism Association (JTA); and 3) collection and analysis of local media articles and commentary. Raw numerical data, academic and journalistic articles, and media recordings provide macro-level information that cannot be acquired through individual fieldwork observations. A vast amount of information on Cheju has been produced since 2010 due to a combination of technological changes, renewed attention to Cheju City as an emerging city and tourist hub, and the ensuing boom in Cheju Studies. Most of the island is documented and constantly being monitored.

*Chejuhak* (Cheju Studies) has become more available to non-locals, but Cheju academia has been slow to update in terms of technology or methodology. A wealth of information and works exist, owing in large part due to a boom of interest in Cheju from within and without since the early 2000s. Online academic article databases such as DBpia and the Jeju Development

Institute's (JDI; Cheju Palchŏn Yŏn'guwŏn) online archives include substantial *Chejuhak*-related content. On the other hand, tourism sites, journalistic articles, and blogs – many of which local intellectuals decry as inaccurate – are uploaded and published far faster than academic productions. Despite professed desires to internationalize *Chejuhak*, few scholars have sought to make their works accessible beyond the Korean- and Japanese-speaking spheres. The Jeju Tourism Organization (JTO; Cheju Kwan'kwang Kongsŏ) produces content in English, Chinese, and Russian of varied quality.<sup>29</sup> The issue of quantity versus quality is another issue in information on Cheju. Far too many newly-published articles offer little new information, a reflection of the irony of the information age. Many *Chejuhak* scholars are no longer in the field. Only a handful of scholars and investigative journalists (such as folklorist Han Chino and Halla Ilbo reporter Chin Sŏnhŭi) have taken to writing in-depth editorials to address these deficiencies.

State-collected statistics on climate, demographics, GDP, and tourist arrivals are all open-access. This information overload does have certain caveats. With only the exception of downloadable OECD statistics, which do provide some description of parameter criteria and methodology, statistics made available on Korean official websites provide no such information. The researcher can only take the numbers as authoritative, but these figures also must be questioned. As statistics have their own limitations and may reflect the bias of a survey giver, a situation that frequently occurs in pre-election polls in Korea and elsewhere in the world, ethnographic findings collected in this project were checked in relation to these various data sources. Data may correlate to what occurs on the ground while at other times ethnographic data may bring up issues that can be used to question statistical records.

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<sup>29</sup> JTO has also aroused controversy among some local artists and intellectuals, who have charged them with fabrication or plagiarism.

Articles from Cheju local media is used as a background to events and issues. The most frequently cited local media sources in this dissertation are Halla Ilbo, Cheju Ilbo, KCTV Cheju, Cheju-ŭi Sori, and Media Cheju. The first three are some of the major media agencies on the island. Cheju-ŭi Sori and Media Cheju are both internet-based media; the former is larger and more well-established while the latter is far smaller in size and is known for strong opinion pieces regarding the state of Cheju developments. In this dissertation, what is reported in media is also balanced against what is said on the streets of Cheju and what statistics are provided from the provincial government and *Cheju kwan'kwang hyŏphoe* (Jeju Tourism Association, hereafter JTA).<sup>30</sup> The years 2015 and 2016 has brought to light the longstanding problems of journalistic accuracy on both sides of the Pacific. Media agencies do have partisan interests or at times may be pressured to avoid covering potentially sensitive topics. Completely independent media does not exist on the island. Cheju's paradoxical big smallness as an emerging city and a small geographic region results in ambiguous relationships between media and the larger population. As a journalist indicated, Cheju has the unusual distinction of having excessive media outlets, many of which are one-person-led operations, depend on some form of government subsidy, and plagiarize articles of Halla Ilbo or Cheju-ŭi Sori.<sup>31</sup> Media outlets also are involved in organizing provincial government-sponsored festivals to supplement already-tight budgets. The peculiar character of Cheju's media is in part due to the island's geographic reality and in part due to the so-called *ch'angjo kyŏngje* (creative economy) shift since the 2010 tourism boom.

Thanks to Cheju government and nongovernmental organizations' swift to embrace digital technology. By the spring of 2016 when the main research period terminated, though

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<sup>30</sup> JTA and JTO are different entities with the former being semi-private and the latter being a state agency.

<sup>31</sup> KTY, interview with author, Ildo-2-tong, Cheju City, 7 January 2016.

indexing and site organization remains unwieldy, the most up-to-date economic and census data are available on government and JTA websites. State agencies revise numbers sometimes monthly. All media outlets from the prime sources on the island from major outlets such as Halla Ilbo to tiny operations such as Chemin Ilbo make full use of digital technology and maintain vast archives of articles published since the start of online news. Research institutions such as the Jeju Development Institute (JDI; Cheju Palchön Yönguwön) also made a few of their sponsored history and Cheju Studies compilations available in their entirety online. On the other hand, primary source documents published prior to 2010, are not digitized. Parts of several documents used for this dissertation research such as the 1984 iteration of the *Chejudo Chonghap Kaebal Kyehoek* (Cheju Province General Development Plans) had to be manually viewed at the *chonghap charyo sent'ö*, the provincial public archive.

This dissertation is the culmination of research and observations that go back as far as 2007, but many things had to be left out or left incomplete due to necessary limitations. What is written in the following accounts do attempt to cover a broad scope, but the primary concerns are as mentioned above – space, the city, and ‘*asabiyyah*. Drawing from Wu Hung’s *Remaking Beijing* (2005), all chapters include memoir-like narrative accounts and commentaries, titled “Cheju Vignette,” of specific events and encounters in Cheju. The vignettes provide the reader more vivid and physical representations to counterbalance the more impersonal “objective” descriptions and analyses. As Geertz’s famous (or infamous?) account of a cockfight in Indonesia demonstrates, a thick description of a bubble in space and time can provide insights on larger phenomena.

The stories of Cheju are full of contradictions, gaps, paradoxes, and ironies. Neither a report based on quantitative data nor a grand historical narrative of its changes can ever provide a

clear picture of the sheer complexity that exists in this small confined space. Though this dissertation will have its own deficiencies its primary objective is to provide a detailed discussion and critique of what is transpiring in Cheju as well as the larger issues of rapid urbanization, intercultural conflict, and tourism development in East Asia. The attempt is not to find or propose an absolute model. Nothing is guaranteed and this dissertation encompasses a small sliver of time. Things are never certain. Identifying the accidents, coincidences, and paradoxes of historical change in their patterns and repetitions can be more insightful than conforming things to a linear narrative of progress.

### **1.6 – Cheju Vignette: The Guest**

It might have been the coldest day of the year when we went out to the main shrine of the seaside village of Wŏlchŏng at the break of dawn on the March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015. With overcast skies and the frigid fierce winds typical of northeastern Cheju, the weather report on the iPhone – before it shut itself off due to the intensity of the cold – indicated 30 degrees Fahrenheit (-1 degrees Celsius). Every gust felt like a sharp knife slashing whatever skin that was exposed to the elements. Tanner and I got up at around 4 AM to meet with Joey and HMG, a traditional music performer, at the Cheju City Hall Tom n’ Toms café at 5:15. We joined with BM, an expat former English teacher photographer interested in doing a photo series on women divers’ practices in Japan and Korea, and left for Wŏlchŏng at 5:35. Arriving at 6:10 AM, we were about an hour before the *kut* would begin. Although it was still very dark and we could not see clearly where the path to the shrine was, a motorcade of women on motor scooters and ATVs on a narrow, rugged farm field access road wheeled passed us.

Wŏlchŏng, a village of the Kujwa-ŭp region, is known for its strong shamanic traditions and tough women divers, a reputation that it shared with its larger neighbor and rival, Kimnyŏng.

Other Cheju islanders jokingly remark that where a person of Kujwa sits grass would not grow, an acknowledgement of both villages' legendary toughness. Also owing to its shared geography with its neighbor, Wŏlchŏng has the distinction of registry into the wider UNESCO-sponsored Geoparks system. The village is located over part of the same great lava tube system that propelled its neighbor to tourism fame. For the most part, however, Wŏlchŏng residents native to the area are more content with keeping to farming, fishing, or diving than capitalizing on its scenic beach, which mainlanders have so eagerly done. Although anecdotes of territorial spats between Wŏlchŏng and Kimnyŏng were mentioned from time to time, the two *tang maein simbang* (village shrine shamans) of both villages, Kim Tolsan (Figure 2) and Sŏ Sunsil, also maintain a close relationship as two major figures in the K'ŭn'gut Preservation Society. In 2007, I recall a native of Kimnyŏng mention that at her village's previous Yŏngdŭng-kut, shamans Sŏ Sunsil urged (with divine mandate) the East Kimnyŏng women divers' association to not quarrel with Wŏlchŏng over fishing ground rights. The role of shamans in Wŏlchŏng and Kimnyŏng has been to serve as de facto mediators not only for the gods but also for local conflicts as well.



Figure 2: Wölchǒng's *tang maen simbang* Kim Tolsan.<sup>32</sup>

Wölchǒng's shrine is located in a natural pit at a hillside surrounded by *toldam* (rock walls) and trees. In the middle at the south-facing edge was a newly-built shack where a cabinet representing god doors was enshrined. At the opposite side was a freight container building that serves as a preparation room and, for this day at least, the only refuge from the freezing winter winds. The ground of the entire shrine was covered in cement, making a sort of plaza where the *kut* (shamanic ritual) would take place. These changes were all recent, Joey noted. Previously, the shrine had a far more aged rustic appearance with a simple structure resembling an old Cheju farmhouse barn. Fierce winds felled one of the shrine's older trees a year prior. On one side of the shrine opposite from the entrance were small holes below the rock walls that people referred to as *kwe* (caves or grottoes) where Joey spotted traces of animal bones from past sacrifice ceremonies.

In the freezing cold and whipping northern winds, a few community members and village officials lit a large bonfire at an open pit at the edge of the shrine while a bamboo pole decorated with streamers was pulled up at the entrance of the shrine. Before worshippers would present offerings and a list bearing names of family members to the *tang maein simbang* Kim Tolsan, they would crawl through a narrow gap in the thickets to a grove at the top of the hill to make an offering to the grandmother god there. Wölchǒng's was another shrine with estranged deities – a grandfather god, who despises pork and presides as the Wölchǒng's chief patron deity, and a grandmother deity who became exiled after breaking a village taboo on pork consumption.<sup>33</sup> All

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<sup>32</sup> Photo by author, Wölchǒng, Kujwa-ŭp, March 3, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> This is the opposite of Songdang where the patron deity and agricultural goddess Paekchutto is a pescatarian while her estranged consort and hunter deity, Soch'ŏn'guk, consumes pork. Cheju has many of these oppositions where feuding deities are separated based on what foods they receive.



who attended the rituals observed the taboos; to pay due respect to the grandfather god, one must not have consumed alcohol or pork, quarreled with another person, engaged in sexual activity, or had been in contact with blood for at least three days. Unlike most other parts of the island, the Wölchǒng's main community shrine still had a large number of devotees though most were ageing. Those who had long left the village returned to the shrine on the main ritual day. Two queues formed and it was not until 8:30 AM that Kim Tolsan stopped receiving lists and offerings to begin the *kut*. At around 9 AM, Kim began the *ch'ogamje*, the rite to narrate the beginnings of the universe and to link the cosmos with the immediate present time and place.

Since it was still far too cold despite the clear sunny sky and because the bonfire was rapidly dying down, we all took refuge inside the now overly cramped container building. Almost everyone, save for the higher *tanggol* (shrine patron), who chose to remain outside, huddled around a small gas space heater in the building. The *yijang* (village head) and his wife were serving lunch to those inside. Recognizing Joey, they invited us over to join. The *yijang* took office three years prior and thus it was his third time sponsoring the ritual. Customary in many villages in eastern Cheju where shamanic religion remains strong, village officials regardless of gender are expected to observe the *kut*. I asked the *yijang* about the shrine's renovations and he explained that worshippers had wanted to refurbish the building because the old shrine was too uncomfortable. It was rather opportune that one of the old shrine trees uprooted and collapsed as the village had a reason to allocate resources for the shrine. One of the assisting shamans would also perform a *sǒngjup'uri*, a ritual consecration in which the shaman taps the back of an axe head against a new building, to bless the structure.

When the *kut* was in full swing, there was a familiar face among the crowd. Vickie, a twenty-something professionally-trained barista and native of Wölchǒng, came with her mother.

Younger visitors to shrines (aside from the occasional hipster or mainland tourist) are a rarity in Cheju as the island's urbanized millennial generation is divorced from the practices of their forebears, but Vickie differs. Though she lives in Cheju City and became interested in coffee culture, she sees the annual *kut* as a sort of festival and chose to respect her home village's traditions. HMK, who joined us from the beginning, also like Vickie, gained an interest in Cheju shamanic traditions for similar reasons. Though the numbers of younger islanders interested in local traditions have steadily increased, the community is still so small that many of those who choose to revisit the shrines know one another.

Several other visitors came by 10 AM. Since major elections were slated for next April, politicians of the ruling Saenuri and opposition Töburö Minju (Democrats) Parties advertising their candidacy made their rounds at every Cheju City, Sögwip'ö City, and countryside event. Shaking hands with everyone they meet (foreigners included) and offering their cards with a smile, they asked all, as obsequiously as possible, to vote for them. Shrine worshippers accepted the cards, but quickly ignored the politicians. On a ritual day in Cheju, it is always customary to welcome guests, even if they bring their own baggage. The politicians were not, however, considered an annoyance as they were also locals and it was expected of an election campaign year. Two particular guests from Seoul, on the other hand, were treated with a benign neglect of a type that one could detect unexpressed eye rolls behind worshippers' apparent apathy.

The two guests from Seoul were a thirtysomething spectacled man in and a female accomplice of around the same age. They said nothing to the any of the worshippers as they went about with their expensive professional-grade camera equipment to snap hundreds of photos of everything and everyone directly in their faces, whether they wanted to be in their pictures or not. The two were a dynamic duo. As soon as the female accomplice noted a very elderly woman

hobbling down the rugged steps to the shrine, the cameraman would only get dangerously very close and hold the camera directly in her face to snap a few dozen pictures. He would also do the same at dramatic points of the *kut*, getting as close to Kim Tolsan as possible to take snapshots of her every movement. At some points, he gestured at her as if to request that she pose for the camera.

BM, who is also a photographer, expressed his shock at the Seoulites' behavior. There were lines that photographers should not cross, no matter how realistic or artistic the shot. My other companions and I were equally appalled by the two guests' behavior. These antics, Tanner had noted, were the reason that some villages have turned to restrict photography at *Chamsu-kut* (women divers' *kut*) elsewhere. The worshippers and Kim Tolsan, however, ignored their presence for the most part. Yet as a nonverbal sign that the photographer had crossed the line too far, a *somi* (attending shaman), a middle-aged woman with short red hair, pushed him out unceremoniously without a word when he was too close to the god doors. The *somi* was known for her seriousness in ritual. She treated everyone the same way, including researchers. The photographer continued unfazed.

When I asked the woman if she knew anything about the ritual, she responded that they did not. Her follow-up response, though she spoke with a strange flair of self-induced ecstasy, sounded as if she had memorized it as a mantra: "To document the dying religions of the *minjung*." It was a phrase straight out of the 1980s *minjung* movement-inspired scholarship, which problematically lumped all rural tradition as being of the simple-yet-suffering masses. I asked if they had spoken to the villagers. They had not, but they did have permission from Kim Tolsan and the village to photograph. Did they know why the ritual was being performed? They did not know. They were simply there to see the last of *minjung* culture, whatever that was.

Kim Tolsan remarkably maintained her composure throughout the entire *kut* and she went about the process as if he were invisible. The photographer's intrusiveness was not her concern. She was only interested in learning of the gods' responses to Wölchǒng villagers' inquiries regarding the year's catch and cautioning the *yijang* (much to his embarrassment) that the gods were displeased with his drinking habits. Joey had mentioned that when he had asked Kim regarding photographers. Kim had replied casually that because her colleague Sǒ Sunsil, who became a well-known personality on the island, was not opposed to photographers, she felt she should have no objections either. Kim Tolsan, after all, was open to Joey interviewing her for his documentary on Cheju shamanism and had even spoken at the nearby Koraega-twel café when she was invited.

The difference in response to the guest could simply reflect our own personal bias, but the actions of photographers, especially those from metropolitan Seoul, has in some contexts elicited strong negative responses. As Tanner mentioned, a few villages began restricting access when far too many photographers descended upon their community rituals. In one case in Wahül's annual *sinkwaseje* New Year's ritual, we saw a brief confrontation between ritual participants and camera people where officials and shamans angrily demanded that the troublesome visitors stop being disrespecting the altars. In another case in Sǒhwa (Sehwa) village, a local did not hold back her fury in expressing rage at mainlanders treating her home, an actual Cheju *ch'oga* thatched home, and neighborhood as a tourist attraction. And although Wölchǒng shrine worshippers indulged the two Seoulites with a benign neglect, conflict between Wölchǒng and mainlanders is very real. The worshippers were likely honoring the common rule mentioned in the first section of this chapter – conflicts should not take place at shrines. The beauty of the village's now-popular beach belies the resentment against mainland Koreans and

deepening contradictions in Cheju. These newcomers, Wŏlchŏng natives such as Vickie quietly note to foreign researchers, have been a nuisance. While shamans have come together to form their associations to professionalize their craft and preserve the island's oral traditions, Cheju Island has become deeply divided.

Cheju's reception to outsiders is, if not ambivalent, paradoxical, a factor that a foreigner such as myself (as well as my colleagues and local and nonlocal friends on the island) became all too aware. While media opinion pieces in 2007 complained that Cheju islanders were either too apathetic or cold toward outsiders, my experience – as well as those of my colleagues – as a foreign researcher was far different. Walking into a person's rock-walled compound unannounced and uninvited is common among islanders in the countryside (though somewhat unusual for urbanites). Contrary to the 2007 opinion pieces, in my experience throughout my time in Cheju rural islanders regarded foreign visitors not with cold suspicion or hostility but either a benign neglect or warm curiosity. But this was also due to the different position that a foreigner may have in Cheju than a mainlander. A foreigner is not necessarily seen as a long-term disruption for a foreigner is seldom expected to have a long-term relationship with the island. A mainlander, while occupying a position as “Korean,” can be regarded as potential competition or, at worst, an intruder who earns the dubious honor of being referred to, in the most pejorative sense of the term, a *yukjikkŏt* (“mainland scum”).

## CHAPTER TWO: CITY OF THE SEVEN STARS

“And yet each piece of information about a place recalled to the emperor’s mind that first gesture or object which Marco had designated the place. The new fact received a meaning from that emblem and also added to the emblem a new meaning. Perhaps, Kublai thought, the empire is nothing but a zodiac of the mind’s phantasms.”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (1974: 22)

“To the east the edge of Chǒngŭi County is eighty *ri* and to the west the edge of Taejǒng County is eighty-one *ri*. South to the sea is a hundred twenty *ri* and north to the sea is one *ri*. The sea route to the point of Kwanduryang in Haenam is some nine hundred and seventy *ri*...Originally, it was one of the Nine Han. It was referred to as *T’amna* (as is enumerated among the Nine Han in the *Anhong’gi*), *T’angna*, or *T’amora*. It is in the sea south of Chǒlla Province and encompasses some four hundred *ri*.”

Yi Wǒnjin, *Yǒkju T’amnaji*, 1653 (2002: 12)

### 2.1 – Cheju Vignette: Contact Zone

Five o’clock is the general closing time for market vendors. It does not matter that it happens to be a clear, sunny, and hot midsummer afternoon. July 3, 2015 to be exact. In this stretch of market, most follow the unspoken standard business hours almost exactly – the metal shutters are raised at eight-thirty or nine and they come down at five. Business goes in full swing between ten in the morning and three in the afternoon. The shops are mostly small family businesses. Market vendors alternate during the noon lunch hour. Or they may simply pause from their meals to make a sale to whichever customer happens to take an interest in their wares. This regularity allows for a degree of flexibility because of its certainty. The customers tend to stop coming by four. Having spent the much of the day selling and goading customers to buy, the vendors are already exhausted and ready to sit out the last hour. They will sell to whoever happens to need something, but they would not be so proactive in beckoning passers-by in Japanese with accented Korean thrown in. Outwardly vendors speak in Japanese or a mix of Kyǒngsang, Chǒlla, or *p’yojun* (standard) Korean. Listening closely, Moira, my Ann Arbor

linguist colleague, caught the unmistakable sounds of Cheju speech tossed behind the storefronts. It was a mix of Korean and Chejuŏ though we were not in Cheju. This is the regular weekday scene and rhythm of the main “touristy” Koreatown market street through Momodani in Osaka, Japan.

All along this stretch of the market street one finds decorated colorful lantern-like street fixtures reminiscent of the Disneyland-like folk villages in Korea, ceremonial archways, and storefronts emblazoned with *han'gŭl* written alongside Japanese script. K-Pop music blares out from the Korean brand-name cosmetic shops interspersed with other stores along the crowded pedestrian thoroughfare. At the far end of the street is a gate with the name “Paekchemun” (Gateway of the Paekche Kingdom), perhaps as a reminder to Japanese of the time when intercultural exchange between the archipelago and the peninsula was seen on both sides as mutually beneficial. Moira and I quickly caught sight of a pair of *tolharŭbang* (stone grandfather statue) (Figure 3), which have become a symbol of Cheju Island, outside a meat shop.



Figure 3: *Tolharŭbang* pair in Momodani Osaka Koreatown.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Photo by author, Momodani, Osaka, Japan, May 14, 2015.

The Osaka Koreatown, which encompasses a large swath of the Momodani and Tsuruhashi neighborhoods in Ikuno Ward, is among the oldest and largest continuously-existing Koreatowns in the world. In contrast – yet still inextricably connected – to Momodani’s section of Koreatown, the Tsuruhashi area, located by the JR and Midosuji Stations, is far less fancy. The Tsuruhashi side consists of a rusty arcade over a large market that extends through a maze of alleyways that snake around the two major stations and a long covered pathway that leads to the direction of the main tourist-oriented Koreatown. Outside of the Tsuruhashi marketplace area is a compact residential neighborhood with several small Korean Buddhist temples – all located within residences<sup>35</sup> – and Korean shamans’ homes. A striking feature of Tsuruhashi was that it retained much of the architectural features of early twentieth-century Osaka – the compact wooden townhouses and narrow maze of streets – making it a location of choice for domestic historical survey tourism. Whereas the Momodani Koreatown market has been spruced up, the more aged and pachinko parlor-speckled Tsuruhashi portion retains hints of a more uncomfortable reality of what Koreatown had been (and arguably still is): an ethnic ghetto.

The recorded history of Koreatown here goes as far back as the first decades of the previous century as a legacy of Japanese imperialism. Even when the choice to come to Osaka was voluntary, it was seldom, if ever, on equal terms. Koreans sought to escape repression or grinding poverty in their homelands. Cheju islanders comprise the most distinctive group among these “Zainichi Koreans” (Resident Koreans). Migration between Cheju and Osaka was constant. Steamship routes allowed islanders a direct means to pursue work and a taste of the metropolis in Osaka rather than Seoul. For Cheju islanders, the presence of family members on both sides of

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<sup>35</sup> Kannonji (Kr.: Kwanŏmsa), which is technically under the Korean Chogyŏ Order, is the exception, occupying an entire high-rise building with a stylized top and façade that gestures at Korean temple architecture. Kannonji operates as a de facto community center for all Korean Buddhists residing in Ikuno-ku.



the sea meant continuous communication even after Korea's 1945 liberation. Nowhere outside of Korea is there a veritable 'little Cheju.' "The whole street is all Cheju people," a Korean food vendor noted when Moira and I asked about how one is to tell who has Cheju ancestry. She gestured at her elderly mother, who was cutting up pork for *chokpal* (pig feet). She said she was from Sŏngsan, the easternmost point of Cheju Island.

It was not until four o'clock that Moira and I could move beyond being *flaneureuse* and have more full conversations with the market people. The four o'clock wrap-up period was a hint that a monk of a nearby temple gave us. Having mentioned that we had difficulty in communicating with the vendors, who were all far too occupied and reluctant to engage in chatter beyond business, the monk suggested that we try to talk to them again at four. That, he noted, is the only time market vendors would be willing to chat with anyone is that last hour before closing. When we asked if he knew anyone in particular with a Cheju background, he responded simply to approach any one of the kimchi vendors. It was the same advice that a certain Mr. Kimura, a Japanese resident of Tsuruhashi who also arranges local history tours for area schools, and Osaka City University Professor Kashihara had given me when I had visited Osaka alone in May.

When Moira and I came upon a kimchi shop where the vendors, a trio of women in their fifties, seemed to be unwinding at the last hour of their business day, we perused their kimchi selection and noticed the strong smell not usually common in the kimchi adapted to Japanese tastes. My colleague and I were at first unsure if they were of Cheju heritage as they had a Japanese style to their appearance, lacking the perm more common to Korean women their age. As the women chatted amongst each other, however, my colleague noticed that they not only spoke primarily in Korean but also used Chejuŏ verb conjugations. We asked if they were from

Cheju. The senior-most of them responded in the affirmative. They were from Samyang, the easternmost *tong* (urban neighborhood) of Cheju City. Surprised by our question and intrigued, the three invited us into the shop to sit down and chat.

The inside of the shop was a tiny space with bare concrete walls and flanked by metal preparation tables and refrigerators for storing kimchi. As there were no regular seats we all simply sat on emptied plastic crates or flattened cardboard boxes. The women treated us to a familiar Korean drink – honeyed red ginseng tea. As soon as we settled, we mentioned that we had come to Osaka from Cheju and were interested in Koreatown. The women said that they all came right before Cheju’s tourism economy took off in the 1980s. Memories of old Cheju City were vivid. Samyang-tong was still comprised mostly of *ch’ogajip* (thatched houses) and rough dirt roads. It was a distant fringe of Cheju City. One of the most meaningful memories was collecting *kosari* (fern bracken) on the hillsides in Cheju. Though they switched to Japanese *kosari* (fern bracken), as the senior-most woman explained that Japanese *kosari* has a sweeter taste, Cheju island is still their main source for ingredients. Only Cheju could provide an original taste. Despite the shrinking number of flights between Cheju and Osaka and the increased prices of tickets, a factor that frustrates and worries Zainichi Cheju merchants, it is not unusual for vendors and restaurateurs to import Cheju products or directly make purchases themselves. On the matter of diminishing flights, all agreed that the increasing cost of travel between Cheju and Osaka was a worrisome trend.

The one thing that all most longed-for was the view of Hallasan, the island’s great central mountain. In an odd coincidence, Moira happened to have a photobook of Hallasan that the Zainichi Cheju community advocacy office had given her the previous day. As the youngest of the three women flipped through the book at the dramatic photos of the mountain and its fauna

and flora, the two older women commented on whether certain plants were edible or if they were poisonous. In their youth, it was common for people to hike up the slopes of the mountain to forage for edible wild plants or to find natural herbal medicines. Cheju was extremely poor back then. Most people had to know how to forage. Poverty was what led them and many of their neighbors to Osaka, but the island was still with them. Moira would remark that one “could take the Cheju *ajumma* (‘auntie’) out of Cheju, but not Cheju out of the Cheju *ajumma*.”

Zainichi Cheju people confront multilayered paradoxes. They are an indelible part of the greater Osaka human geography but they are also identified as (and self-identify with) the label ‘Korean.’ Despite practical assimilation, in state apparatuses, neither Japan nor both Koreas recognize them as ‘Japanese.’ Though many have opted to give up their ‘Korean’ identity, many Zainichi, for a variety of reasons, do not pursue nominal assimilation. A few third- or fourth-generation Zainichi Cheju people, one Buddhist priest noted, have sought to reject nation-state boundaries, and pursue a cultural-based ‘Korean’ identity.

In the early twentieth century, Osaka, in lieu of Seoul, functioned as an axis to Cheju. Colonial era steamship routes allowed islanders of various backgrounds to pursue the metropolitan life and its benefits directly in Japan than through Seoul. Cheju Islanders were peripheral minorities in the larger Korea, but they incidentally had the opportunity to have more ready access to the imperial Japanese mainland. Yet in Japan, they are minorities of ambiguous status and hence the need to form a defined community within Osaka. They are ‘Japanese’ in everyday experience, ‘Korean’ in ethnicity, and ‘Cheju’ by identity all at once. Into the twenty-first century, Osaka lost much of its importance to Cheju Island yet Zainichi Cheju still consider Cheju their first-reference homeland. While Shanghai eclipsed Osaka in Cheju Island, Cheju lingers in the shadows of Osaka Koreatown. If anything, that Zainichi Cheju form a distinctive

community demonstrates that Cheju is larger than Cheju Island. The experiences of Zainichi Cheju reflect the ambiguities inherent to Cheju itself – historically pulled by and drawn to different fields of gravity and interests, Cheju is, as islanders often say, Korean but “not Korean.”

## 2.2 A Geography of Cheju Island

How does one find a place in Cheju? “Look for the big tree,” an elderly woman resident responded to a question regarding the location of Kimnyŏng’s Kwenaegit Shrine. “Which tree?” was the follow up question as there were many ‘big trees’ around Kimnyŏng. To this, the woman responded making an exaggerated gesture, “*Kkkkkkkũũũũũũũũũũ namu*” (“the biiiiiig tree”). She was not kidding. The tree beside Kwenaegit Shrine was indeed big. This may seem like an eccentric response for an inquiry on directions, but in nine years of experience in Cheju this was a frequent answer in many parts of rural Cheju Island where paths and intersections are unnamed. To locate something is to conceive it in a relationship with something else. A starting point for any attempt to understand how Cheju functions for inhabitants and visitors alike is an initial examination of its physical features. This section of the chapter provides a basic geographic overview of Cheju.<sup>36</sup>

For an island that deceptively appears almost symmetrical on a map, locating things physical and conceptual in Cheju can be vague (Figure 4). How people outside of Cheju City understand directions is different from those who have lived in the city for most their lives where distinguishing the subtleties of trees is not a skill most possess. While elderly rural residents traversed the fields and forests, moving past rocky outcroppings and long snaking basalt rock walls with relative ease, sometimes walking for miles to get to the next village, younger Cheju

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<sup>36</sup> More precise statistics and information are provided in the first section of the Appendix.

City residents can be at a loss to find something when the car GPS fails. But this geographic acumen is also not altogether absent in Cheju City, including those who identify as city people. When given a street address, the numerical street addresses that the government systematized by 2014 still baffled a middle-aged moving man. Before then, how one found a place was simple: the time-honored practice of simply pointing out the nearest largest object or the object that ‘everyone’ knows. Longtime mainlander and foreigner residents find themselves doing the same. Such-and-such a place is at Chewŏn Apartments. In 2015, new developments surrounded Chewŏn Apartments, an island of a low-rise apartment complex built in the 1970s in the heart of Sin-Cheju, to the point that they were invisible from the bus stop.

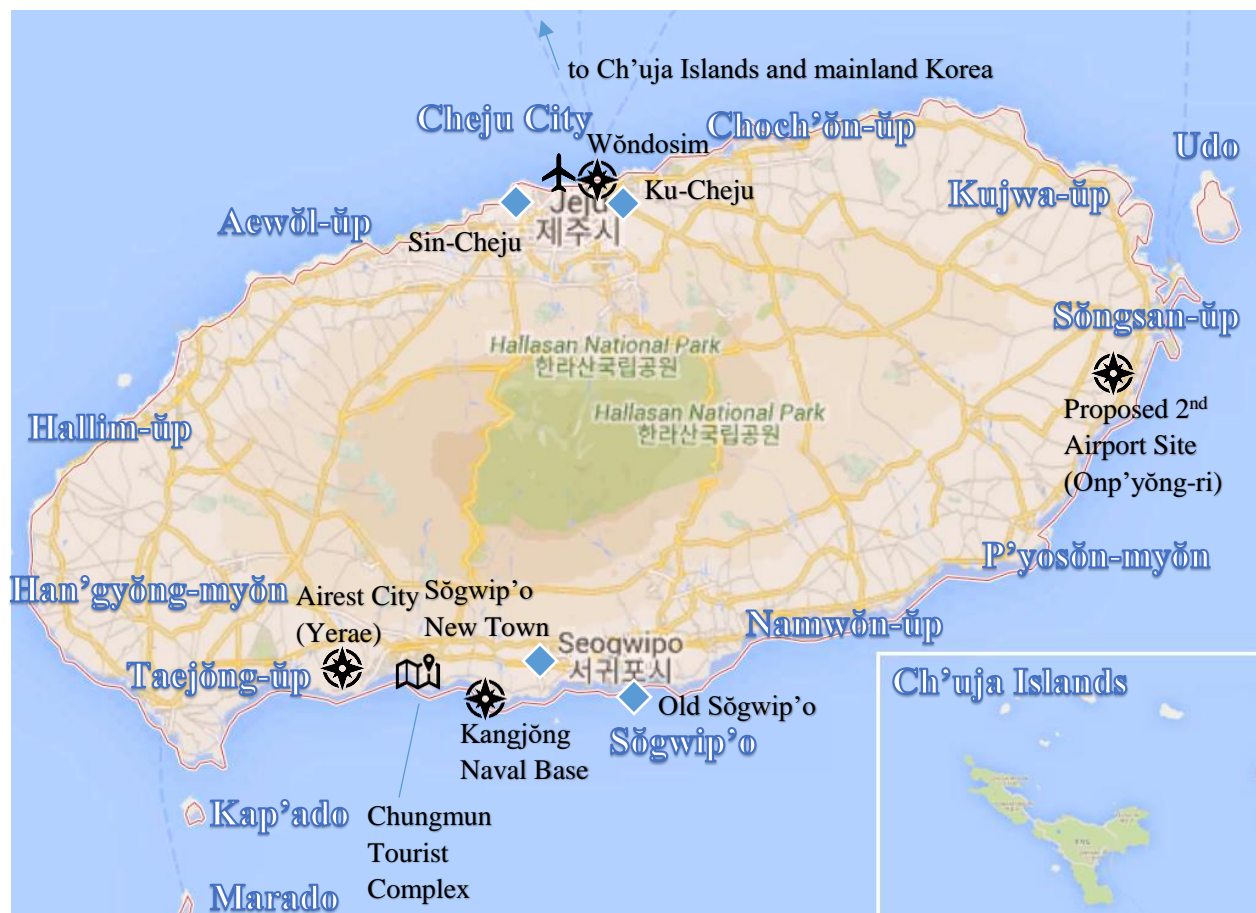


Figure 4: Map of Cheju Special Self-governing Province.<sup>37</sup>

What is not vague, even for the cartographically challenged, is that Cheju is separate from the mainland and that it is indeed different. Cheju's isolation, despite the hop and skip of a fifty-five-minute plane ride from Seoul-Gimpo (Kimp'o) International Airport, becomes all too real when harsh winds and thick haze cover the island, grounding all flights and fierce waves stall most ships. The distance is also one predicated on cognitive dissonance, a factor frequently emphasized in *Chejuhak*. Mainlander-islander distinctions are pronounced in day-to-day grumbling and distinctions are further created within the legally-designated territory of "Cheju" as a province also. Such distance also exists within Cheju when one travels nearly two hours from Cheju City on the Tongilju (East Iljudoro) bus to Onp'yŏng where urban dreams are rejected as outright destructive to local community.<sup>38</sup> Other islands exist as part of 'mainland Korea' such as the Ch'uja Islands, which are legally a part of Cheju but considered culturally a part of Chŏlla Province. Even within Cheju City, despite its compact geography, the two halves of Ku-Cheju (Old Cheju City) and Sin-Cheju (New Cheju City) physically split with Cheju International Airport between them are connected yet separate.

With ever-expanding and ever-improving infrastructure, most of Cheju is accessible, but ease of accessibility is only the surface of things. Ease of access has, on the other hand, resulted in more congested traffic conditions, skyrocketing cost of living, and internal islands of privilege. Newer and grander constructions littering Cheju express pretenses of heroic conquest

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<sup>37</sup> Original images from Google Maps, accessed April 29, 2017. Composite map edited by author. Cites marked with a star represent major disputed sites.

<sup>38</sup> See Yi TY 2016 <http://www.mediajeju.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=191565> regarding furor over proposed second airport. More on the airport issue is discussed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

over a once-hostile natural environment. Underneath the concrete, however, the unstable foundations and failure to address real differences and divisions only add to new conflicts.

Cheju Island's form as a relatively self-contained natural and human ecosystem is therefore deceptive. Almost everything from the origins of Cheju society to where to put Cheju in a larger context has been subject to controversy. Is Cheju Korean? East Asian? Northeast Asian? Pacific? Or should Cheju be understood as Chejuan? Even Cheju's geographic fact as an island is not a fixed truth. Aside from its distant past in geologic time as a volcano connected to continental Asia via a land bridge, twenty-first century human ambition could change its island status. Economic aspirations and politicking may literally pull the island to the mainland, a feat that the titan-goddess Sölmundae never completed due to Cheju islanders' failure to fulfill her demand eons ago in legend.<sup>39</sup> With the ever-growing demand for movement to and from Seoul, the provincial government-sponsored Jeju Palchön Yön'guwön (JDI, Cheju Development Institute) think tank has entertained proposals, originally made from Chölla province, to connect the island to the mainland via a KTX bullet train tunnel (Jean 2010). Whether divides could be engineered remains in question. Millennia of separation continues to weigh heavy on memory. Debate over how to begin to define Cheju has expanded far beyond academia. That Cheju discourse has become somewhat democratized comes not so much because of academia – and much less Cheju's administrations – but simply because, urbanization left no stone untouched, no blade of grass untrammelled.

### *A Macro-level View of Cheju*

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<sup>39</sup> See Yi YK 2004: 49-51. According a legend in the coastal town of Chochön, the titan-goddess Sölmundae Halmang intended to use a small cape called “Öngjangmae K'oji” as the starting point for a promised bridge to mainland Korea. Sölmundae would build the bridge for Cheju islanders provided that they come up with a full one hundred bolts of silk for her to make her underwear. Since Sölmundae was so large, however, only ninety-nine were collected and the bridge was never built.

A starting approach in defining Cheju begins with a look at its physical geography and the bare numbers. As e-government, the so-called “Government 3.0,” is a promise that has been delivered with every update,<sup>40</sup> Cheju’s government provides raw data and official announcements (especially with regards to milestones) on a monthly basis. In this subsection, only the data from 2010 – the beginning of the Chinese tourism boom – to August 31, 2016 (the last date of ethnographic research data collection) is used.<sup>41</sup> The data provided on “Government 3.0” paints a macro-level illustration of overall population, tourism, economic, and quality of life trends in raw numbers. A caveat is the paradox of ostensible transparency with factual opacity. Official websites do not always disclose how they acquire their data, their motivations for presenting their raw numbers, and if any anomalies or complicating factors existed in their data collection. One must keep in the back of one’s mind the question of if e-government is in part a concerted pretense of efficiency and transparency.

The entire province of Cheju is barely 1.85% of the entire physical territory of the Republic of Korea (hereafter “South Korea”) at 1,849.3 square kilometers (Kukt’o kyot’ongbu 2013). As of 2016, the total population surpassed six hundred and fifty thousand and is one of the few regions in Korea to experience a population increase due to migration. Cheju province is further subdivided into the two halves of Cheju-si (hereafter “Cheju City”) and Sögwip’o-si (hereafter “Sögwip’o”); Cheju City, which comprises 78% of the population, occupies the north half while Sögwip’o occupies the southern half.<sup>42</sup> The two *si* (city) districts are the result of administrative reorganization in 2006 under the so-called *Cheju t’ükyölböp* (Cheju Special

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<sup>40</sup> See [www.jeju.go.kr](http://www.jeju.go.kr). As of 2016, Cheju’s provincial government website boasts its “*chöngbu 3.0*” (government 3.0) features.

<sup>41</sup> See Appendix for statistics re-compiled from the government and JTA (Jeju Tourism Association) documents.

<sup>42</sup> See appendix for more detailed population statistics and Cheju’s administrative divisions.



Law) that brought about the rural North and South Cheju Counties' merge into the two cities. In clockwise order starting from the eastern edge of Cheju City, the former counties were further subdivided into the *ŭp* (town) and *myŏn* (township) districts of Choch'ŏn, Kujwa, Sŏngsan, P'yosŏn, Namwŏn, Andŏk, Taejŏng, Han'gyŏng, Hallim, and Aewŏl.

In practice, pre-2006 boundaries still function in everyday understandings of the island geography. The tourism bureau's map also maintains the former boundaries where Cheju City and Sŏgwip'o are separate entities from their outlying rural districts.<sup>43</sup> Districts with the designation of urban *tong* (neighborhood) are generally understood to be city regions even though they may be more sparsely populated than some rural *ŭp*. The former boundaries of both Cheju City and Sŏgwip'o were concentrated within the centermost parts of the northern half and southern half respectively and terminated at Hallasan, forming a cartographical hourglass shape in the middle of the island. A curious coincidence is that because Cheju is naturally an almost-symmetrical oval, the axial relationship replicates in many other factors of Cheju life. The island's three major roads – Iljudoro, P'yŏnghwaro, and 5.16 – all connect Cheju City and Sŏgwip'o with newer arterial and thoroughfare roads providing access to the provincial capital. Another byproduct of Cheju's geography is that regional names have maintained a remarkable degree of consistency since the Koryŏ Dynasty (918-1392).

The distinction between urban and rural in Cheju is murky. Labels may not reflect real practice since legal, administrative, and cultural definitions changed within less than a century. This is further complicated with the 2006 Cheju Special Law, which merged the rural North and South Cheju Counties. Places nominally and legally under either one of the island's two cities may be called colloquially as *nongch'on* (farming village) or *ŏch'on* (fishing village) with their

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<sup>43</sup> See [http://www.visitjeju.net/ko/index.jto?menuCd=DOM\\_000001718001000000](http://www.visitjeju.net/ko/index.jto?menuCd=DOM_000001718001000000) (in Korean).

rural implications fully intact. When going from these areas to the Cheju City Bus Terminal, one would still tell the bus driver “*Chejusi-ro kamnida*” (I am going to Cheju City) despite the fact that one is technically within its borders. Where the labels are further complicated is when residents, especially elderly Cheju island natives, will also speak of going to “*sŏng’an*” (into the city) when they are in one of Cheju City’s outermost *tong* such as Hwabuk or Oedo. What constitutes the authentic ‘Cheju City’ tends to refer more to the old part of Cheju City concentrated in the five areas of Ildo, Ido, Samdo, Kŏnip, and Yongdam for historical reasons that islanders across generations recognize. This ambiguity is not limited to everyday practice are also sometimes included in provincial administration.<sup>44</sup> Although legal definitions have an indelible effect on districts’ representation or lack thereof,<sup>45</sup> ‘cities’ exist by practice.

The population statistics given in the 2013 Jeju Statistical Yearbook (*Cheju t’onggye yebo*) and the 2015 statistics given on the Cheju Provincial Government website reveal a general trend toward increasing in-migration of mainland Koreans. Although growth rates appear to be modest, Cheju receives an enormous number of tourists. In 2016, environmental pressures and the risk of contamination of vulnerable water resources became a serious issue with excessive garbage piled up in Cheju City and oceanic pollution from sewer outflows at Todu-tong.<sup>46</sup> What had long kept Cheju’s population low throughout history was because its environment could never sustain large developments. Regardless, the provincial government has made it a policy to accommodate a target population of one million as noted in the *Che-2-ch’a Kukche chayu tosi*

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<sup>44</sup> One such example is from my own experiences working in the Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) program under the Cheju Provincial Office of Education in 2010 in which I was placed in Yerae-tong, which technically is an urban *tong* of Sŏgwip’o yet was nonetheless considered rural.

<sup>45</sup> As North and South Cheju Counties were consolidated under Cheju City and Sŏgwip’o’s direct administration, this also meant a loss of autonomy for some regions.

<sup>46</sup> See <http://s1.ihalla.com/read.php3?aid=1483282800554822044> (in Korean).

*chonghap kyehoek* (Free International City General Plans Phase 2) (Cheju 2011: 55) with the ultimate goal of transforming Cheju into a veritable metropolis.

Most curious is that an official map of Cheju Island aside from a tourist map is not directly accessible on the provincial government website, a possible byproduct of e-outsourcing in the age of Google and Naver maps. A quick online Google and Naver search of a map and images for Cheju Island brings up tourist maps and the map mentioned in the previous chapter (Figure 1), one that positions the island directly in the middle of Northeast Asia. The Educational Science Research Institute of Cheju National University's English language academic introduction to Cheju (Ahn SS 2007) likewise places Cheju as the axis (if not a center) of concentric circles of access to mainland Korea, China, Japan, and Russia. Searching for an image of Cheju maps in Korean and in English produces different results – where the former turns up mostly basic road or tourist maps in which Cheju Island is isolated, the latter results in more examples of wider regional maps as well as stylized tourist maps. When one searches for Cheju in Simplified Chinese (the script of mainland China) or in Traditional Chinese (the script of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and non-mainland Chinese), the result is similar to that of the English language results though Chinese results turn up more tourist imagery while English results do include blog entries on the anti-naval base protest in Kangjŏng. Although Google and Naver searches are hardly scientific ways of gauging understandings of Cheju-ness, they provide a glimpse as to what is frequently presented and accessed about Cheju. The non-Korean exoticization of Cheju along with the internal Korean Orientalism projected on Cheju in the early twentieth century (Kim TH 2016) has not fundamentally changed.

Aeronautically a stone's throw from Seoul, Shanghai, Osaka, Taipei, and Vladivostok all at the same time, the island's prime position has been a crucial factor in post-2010 engagements

with Cheju from developmental, economic and political perspectives. Cheju lies 60 km from the southernmost point of the Korean Peninsula, 490 km from Shanghai, 1,030 km from Taipei, and 1,580 km from Tokyo. The stormy nature of Cheju's seas and weather mixed with the island's resource scarcity and wider regional politics had until recently made Cheju "distant". Despite the island's remarkable ability to continually frustrate travel for one of the world's most technologically advanced nations in 2016,<sup>47</sup> the island's location and relatively lax restrictions – for better and for worse – on visa issuance and tourism development makes it attractive to Korean and Chinese corporate investment. Anti-foreign (specifically anti-Chinese) sentiments have begun to come to a boil in Cheju Island, especially with Chinese tourists' violent crimes becoming publicized issues in 2015 and 2016<sup>48</sup>, but much of the conflict is related to internal movement from mainland Korea to Cheju and within Cheju.

"Cheju" as a geographic designation is ambiguous. What "Cheju" means as a geographic term depends on where one physically stands. In Korea's legal definition, "Cheju" refers to the archipelago that comprises Cheju Province, stretching as far north to the Ch'uja Islands. In everyday speech, "Cheju" simply refers to Cheju City or Chejudo (Cheju Island), but "Chejudo" itself can mean two different things. "Chejudo" actually has two non-interchangeable meanings with different Chinese character combinations: Chejudo 濟州島 refers to Cheju Island itself – excluding surrounding islands such as Udo – while the other Chejudo 濟州道 refers to the province. At the same time, the Ch'uja Islands, though legally a part of Cheju, are locally considered a part of South Ch'olla Province due to cultural, historical, and linguistic differences.

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<sup>47</sup> Cheju Island experienced three days of extreme cold and snowfall in January 2016, leading to a complete shutdown of all air and ship traffic. Although treated as an unprecedented event in media coverage, blizzards are not at all unknown to the island. Only five years prior, a similar snowstorm occurred, temporarily paralyzing the island.

<sup>48</sup> See Yonhap News, October 12, 2016, "Chinese man indicted over S. Korean woman in Jeju church," <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2603000000.html?cid=AEN20161012008400315>.

Since 2006, the Korean government afforded Cheju the unprecedented designation of Cheju T'ükbyöl Chach'ido 濟州特別自治道. Perhaps as a mark of local pride, officials at functions rarely simply refer to “Cheju” is rarely just “Cheju” in any language. The full name is almost always “Cheju Special Self-Governing Province,” “*Jizhou tebie zizhidao*,” or “*Saishū tokubetsu jichidō*.” Officials and officiants alike use the full political designation and thus one might hear it in shamanic *kut* (ritual) or Buddhist *yebul* (Buddha veneration). Cheju also comes with a package of additional titles including the internationally-recognized UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site designation,<sup>49</sup> the nationally-designated *Segye p'yŏnghwa-ŭi sŏm* (Island of World Peace)<sup>50</sup> following the 2003 national government's admission of culpability in the 1948-1954 April Third Massacre, and the unofficial internet campaign prize of “New Seven Natural Wonders.” At first prized awards, all titles have become either controversial or simply unused in everyday contexts.

### *Natural and Human Geography of Cheju*

The verdant fields, large expanses of tangerine orchards, broad golf courses, and urban mega-blocks that characterize the Cheju Island in 2016 bear little resemblance to what David Nemeth (1984) saw in the 1980s. Up until the Park Chung Hee years (1961-1979) – or even earlier in the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) as anthropologist Yi Kiuk (2003) observed – accounts of Cheju in Chosŏn (1392-1910) and the preceding Koryŏ Dynasty histories describe the island as being mostly rocky and barren. Comments about the island's ‘*samda*’ (‘Three

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<sup>49</sup> See <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1264> and <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves/asia-and-the-pacific/republic-of-korea/jeju-island/>. The UNESCO designation refers to “Jeju Volcanic Islands and Lava Tubes” with Hallasan, Ilch'ulbong, and the Manjjanggul-Geomunoreum (Kŏmunorŭm) lava tube and cinder cone as the main features. Cheju was also inducted as part of the global Geoparks and biosphere reserve system in 2002, but whether the promises made (on the part of the provincial leadership) have been kept is an entirely different matter.

<sup>50</sup> See <http://www.jeju.go.kr/jeju/peace/summary/mean.htm> (in Korean).

Abundances' in reference to rocks, wind, and women) were not complimentary. Into the present, most of Cheju's streams are still dry river beds and wet rice-paddy farming is virtually impossible, save for Hanon and Kangjŏng in the Sŏgwip'o area. Nearly all the island's agriculture depends on small-scale dry-field barley fields, vegetable farms, and fruit orchards. That Cheju is an agriculturally productive land and the presence of kiwifruit and mangoes are purely twentieth-century phenomena. The short-lived heyday of rural life has given way to tourism and urbanization on a massive scale since the end of the 1980s. At the same time, the natural landscape still has a profound effect on island life.

When one approaches Cheju by plane, perhaps due to the ovular shape of the island and the position of Cheju International Airport at the very center of Cheju City's northern shore, one veers to the northwestern edge at Hallim and then flies eastward over the emerging beachside resorts of Kwakji, the rocky cliffs of Handam, vegetable patch fields of Aewŏl, and the new apartment complexes of suburban Oedo. All the while, the crest of Hallasan's summit, like JRR Tolkien's Mount Doom, stands at the center of all things, everywhere visible as fixed sentinel within the ominous mist of the island's notoriously fickle weather. This is the usual path of descent from Seoul. Flying from Pusan or Chinju, the approach may be from the opposite side from the large coastal crater of Sŏngsan Ilch'ulbong (Sunrise Peak) in the east, but Hallasan is always the unmistakable.

Five physical features are striking in the in-flight experience: 1) the moderate and occasionally stomach-turning turbulence one experiences when flying to the island via the mainland; 2) the singular massiveness of Hallasan dominating the entire landscape; 3) the irregular patterns of settlements; 4) the ubiquitous *toldam* (rock walls) that form the borders of fields and housing compounds between verdant green and earthy brown blotches; and 5) the

hundreds of *orŭm* (parasite cinder cones). At a glance from above, Cheju may exude a sense of age as it lacks the measured orderliness visible in the patchwork of the Kyōnggi region in the mainland. To consider this as having been the norm throughout the history of human habitation on Cheju island would be a mistake. The settlement patterns and the rock walls themselves are truly ancient features, but hardly any building on Cheju is older than a century due to the various forms of natural and human violence wrought here. All that has been constant (although climate change is also transforming this aspect) are the frequently rough winds and choppy weather.

A perusal of the mid- to late-Chosŏn period record given in the *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* (*Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty*) would alert any reader the extent to which protracted periods of natural disasters and hardship struck the island (Chin KH 2012). Although now known for a bounty of green vegetables grown year-round and subtropical fruit, Cheju was the island of *samjae* (“the Three Disasters”) – *p’ungjae* (fierce winds), *sujae* (flooding), and *hanchae* (drought) (Ibid., 331). The features taken for granted now as integral to Cheju culture – its communal *kwendang* culture of tight horizontal relationships and emphasis on diligent self-sufficiency are very much a result of extreme hardship and the island’s historically hostile environment. The Cheju of plenty – albeit a fictive plenty – today is very much a product of the twentieth century when waterworks, infrastructure, and nationalist grandstanding radically transformed the landscape, a factor curiously left absent in many discourses on the essential features of Cheju-ness on all sides of the political spectrum.

Among people who have seen Cheju before the 1960s, a frequent comment is how green Cheju has become. *Samnamu* (Japanese cypress) covers the sides of the island’s many *orŭm* (parasite cinder cones). This is not to say that Cheju is less polluted now. Cheju’s green credentials exist mostly in provincial authorities’ and boosters’ imaginations and a curious

inability to see the garbage piles stacked beside City Hall. What islanders and long-time residents recount was that Cheju was mostly gray stone and open grassland, as it should be. A retired Catholic priest, who had lived in Korea for more than half a century and who most expats refer to as ‘Jerry’ or ‘Father Jerry,’ once remarked that Cheju reminded him of Ireland, both gray and green at the same time.

Except for Hallasan and the ancient *kotchawal* forests, much of Cheju was field and grassland, a quality that perhaps convinced fourteenth-century Mongol rulers to make the island a pasture for tribute horses. Much of the *samnamu* trees are not old and many other trees that fill Cheju, especially tropical palm trees, are nonnative. KWB, a resident of Sinsan village and environmentalist, while hiking an *oriim* a short distance from his village in late March 2016, scoffed at the allergen-producing *samnamu*. It was the product of Park Chung Hee’s fantasy of making Cheju into a virtual Hawai’i, he noted. The *oriim* at the edge of Sinsan in the 1960s was mostly covered not in trees but in grass and indigenous herbaceous plants. The verdant Cheju of today is the result of centuries of human interaction. In an ironic twist, the decades of greening Cheju from the 1960s until the end of the twentieth century shifted to decades of paving over Cheju in the twenty-first century of alleged sustainable green development. Hallasan perhaps watches with bafflement as the torrential rains and fog that once characterized the island give way to smog while high-rise towers rise in an attempt to challenge the great mountain.

Cheju Island’s physical geography enables three complex overlapping tripartite divisions that still influence settlement patterns, economic concerns, and local practices.<sup>51</sup> On one level, there are three distinct regions that developed due to elevation – the *haean chŏchidae* (coastal plains) below 200 meters, the *chungsan’gan chidae* (“mid-mountain,” or highlands) from 200 to

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<sup>51</sup> See Appendix for geographical maps.



600 meters, and *sanak chidae* (mountain region) from 600 to 1,200 meters (Yi MW 2006: 50).

On another level, one can observe differences between the east, the west, and Cheju City.

Hallasan's enormity effectively divides the island north and south with distinctive weather patterns. Hallasan and its immediate environs experience alpine climactic conditions.

Cultural differences based on regional ecology are well-recognized among locals. People of eastern Cheju, which has a rockier and harsher environment, have a hardy – if not rough – reputation and hold more strongly to shamanic practices. Islanders of western Cheju, a region with more productive tillable land, are traditionally considered to have a more genteel disposition. Regional stereotypes still frame how islanders see one another. Distinctions within regions, too, exist as administrative districts encompass multiple geographic regions. Choch'ŏn-ŭp, which is directly to the east of Cheju City, for example, includes the vastly different communities of the coastal tourist town of Hamdŏk, the agricultural mid-mountain village of Taehŭl, and the upland horse and cattle ranches of Kyorae. Cheju City, long the axis of administration and the island's main city, constitutes its own region. Although Sŏgwip'o was set apart from Cheju City for tourism and agricultural development since the Park Chung Hee years, the north-south distinction is more a twentieth-century product. In practice, the three-way east-west-city distinctions, which also seem to be a survival of the Chosŏn Dynasty administrative divisions, are more pronounced.

Hallasan always functions as an immediate reference point. As the centermost point and the highest point, it is unmistakable. Hallasan is the origin of Cheju, the culmination of violent tectonic, volcanic, and atmospheric forces. Hallasan, a massive and omnipresent shield volcano, was born from a powerful explosion from a seafloor caldera, which gave rise to its 1950-meter summit. Local scholars' paeans to Sŏlmundae Halmang (Han CO 2016), the legendary titan-

goddess who crafted the mountain with her hands, as well as a vaguely-defined yet widely-honored *sansin* (mountain gods) are not off the mark in their recognition that the mountain is both the genesis and embodiment of the island. What is now recognizable as ‘Cheju Island’ began to take shape through four stages of volcanic eruptions between 1.2 million and twenty-five thousand years ago (Kwon SC 2006: 35). Paengnokdam crater lake at the top of Hallasan was created twenty-five thousand years ago. Because eruptions continued into recorded history with the most recent in 1002 and 1007, Hallasan is still classified as a potentially active volcano though with a minimal risk of eruption. Connected with Hallasan via a complex network of lava tubes are the island’s 368 *orŭm* cinder cones. During the last major ice age, Cheju was not an island but connected to the landmasses of present-day Korea, China, and Japan with land bridges. Human settlement included both land-based and oceanic migration.

Cheju’s geographic similarity to Hawai’i, a comparison too-frequently made among its boosters, ends at its island and volcanic physique. Many within Korea note its “warm” climate, but any suggestion that Cheju is tropical is exaggeration mixed with wishful thinking. Cheju is warm only in relation to mainland Korea and continental northern China. At 32° North Latitude, Cheju is in the humid subtropical mid-latitude belt of westerlies (Kuk’to kyot’ongbu 2012: 40). Aside from the southwest-to-northeast flow of the warmer Kuroshio Current, which stretches from Taiwan to Japan, Cheju’s oddities of climate are also due to its awkward position between Siberian and tropical atmospheric influences. Monsoonal tropical high-pressure systems and typhoons affect the island during the summer and the northern continental high-pressure system affects winter weather, bringing dry and cold continental air from Siberia. Cheju has a milder subtropical climate, but just as additional vectors in Seoul – notably the lack of wind and the pervasive solid concrete – affect how one experiences weather, the wind factor in Cheju has a

profound affect at the ground level. While mainland Koreans speak of a mild or warm winter in Cheju, Cheju islanders frequently utter “*Ch’uwō!*” (cold!) underneath frosty breaths.

Temperatures can jump beyond 35 degrees Celsius in the summer or dip below 0 in the winter.

When American scientist Malcom P. Anderson visited Cheju in 1910 to document Hallasan’s fauna and flora for forty days, one of the most striking features of the island was the relentless rainfall and fog (1919). On average, Cheju experiences some of the most torrential precipitation in Korea with the *changma* (monsoon season) washing out most of July. Typhoon season begins in June and technically ends in November and Cheju’s geographical position tends to make it the first to bear the brunt of any major storm bound for the Korean Peninsula or northeastern China. Equally as frequent as extreme tropical storms as noted since the *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* (Chin KH 2012) are droughts. Cheju frequently lacked sufficient water even since the mid-twentieth century because its porous volcanic earth is unable to retain it; much rainwater ends up as runoff, a chief reason that early settlements were concentrated near springs or lower stream beds (Kwon SC 2006: 38). Older residents in Cheju City recalled that even into the 1980s, some neighborhoods relied on public pumps, natural springs, or water delivery sites because running water was limited. The fierce winds for which the island is famous also have a profound effect on actual weather conditions even while recorded air temperatures may suggest otherwise. Distinct microclimates exist within Cheju also; while Sŏgwip’o’s mild coastal plains are prized for optimal subtropical fruit growing conditions, higher elevations of the *chungsan’gan* region are more suited for ranching than large-scale agriculture. One can also notice the more rugged disposition among people of the rockier Kujwa-ŭp region in contrast to the smoother speech of people in the broad plains of Hallim-ŭp.

With population pressure, excessive tourism, and rapid development, the *samjae* reemerged with a vengeance in the post-2010 years. Unlike 1910 or even the 1980s when Malcolm Anderson and David Nemeth were doing their research on Cheju respectively, concerns about climate flux and air quality has grown. In January 2016, Cheju experienced some of its heaviest snowfall with the East Asian polar vortex<sup>52</sup> with record low temperatures at -5.8 degrees Celsius.<sup>53</sup> At the same time what the bare numerical averages do not indicate is that the years 2013 to 2015 also saw anomalous drought and blazing tropical nights. A common observation among Cheju islanders is that the springs and autumns are becoming shorter and weather anomalies more extreme.

An *yijang* (village head) in the Söngsan-öp region also remarked that Hallasan, which was once visible from the sea, had been increasingly obscured with haze over the past 18 years. Coal air pollution from mainland Korea and Gobi *hwangsa* (yellow dust) are constant nuisances. With weather anomalies becoming the norm, more worry that Cheju could face either another drought or a devastating storm of the century in the coming years. On October 5, 2016, after a few years of an absence of typhoons, the island was thrashed with Typhoon Ch'aba, the strongest storm since Typhoon Nari in 2007, and was reminder of the island's vulnerability to serious tropical storms (Ch'wi CB 2016). Pyöngmunch'ön, a streambed that runs through Cheju City and was built over in the early 2000s for a road, again was a source of severe flooding damage. T'apdong Plaza, built on reclaimed land, also again was heavily battered with storm surges. Attempts to overcome Cheju Island's geography through sheer force of concrete and urban engineering had failed. This failure may foreshadow the ever-increasing potential human-

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<sup>52</sup> See <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/25/asia/asia-cold-weather-travel-disruption/index.html?eref=edition>. Significant snowfall is not altogether unknown to Cheju, however. 2011 also saw similar conditions.

<sup>53</sup> See [http://www.kma.go.kr/weather/climate/extreme\\_daily.jsp?type=min\\_temp&x=16&y=11&mm=1](http://www.kma.go.kr/weather/climate/extreme_daily.jsp?type=min_temp&x=16&y=11&mm=1) (in Korean).

induced threats to Cheju's fragile natural and human ecologies. As an island not far from the continent, Cheju is constantly subjected to both the broader Pacific oceanic environment and continental influences.

### **2.3 Histories Suppressed and Otherwise**

Cheju as a natural geographic formation shifts with the subtlety of geologic change, but the cultural geographic dimension changed suddenly in a blip of human history. "Cheju" is political before it is defined. At the May 23, 2015 opening of *Iho T'e-u*, Cheju National University Museum photographic exhibition on the women diving community of the rapidly-urbanized district of Iho-tong, photographer Kwon Chul (Kwŏn Ch'ŏl) began with his observations that so many people constantly come to Cheju for weekend trips and yet most leave the island without having learned anything. Kwon felt that this was due to desires for convenient escapism mixed with a perpetual self-deception in which visitors only come to fulfill their fantasies about Cheju. The cognitive dissonance between Cheju and not-Cheju reflects in islanders' self-identification as Korean and not-Korean. The sense of difference, even as the linguistic and practical idioms homogenize in the twenty-first century, responds to long and violent histories. The human dimensions of 'Cheju' were not simply made, but erupted with all kinds of violence like the volcanic forces that exploded it into being.

This section attempts to untangle a bit of Cheju's murky past to present a comprehensive narrative as well as provide a history of Cheju and the formation of Cheju City. Given the repeated formulae of linear narratives presented even in *Chejuhak* scholarship, the historical background is presented as histories as opposed to a history. A broader understanding of how the Cheju of today came to be necessitates a look at multifaceted perspectives, controversies, and polyvocal oral histories. This section draws from the Korean-language scholarship of Kim Sŏgik

(2011 [1955]), Kim Iru (2000), Yi Kiuk (2003), Yi Yǒngkwǒn (2004; 2005), Chǒn Kyǒngsu (2013), and Kim Tonghyǒn (2016) as well as Chosǒn Dynasty prefects'<sup>54</sup> accounts, the sparse English-language writings that exist, and Cheju provincial government-sponsored presentations. In addition, this section will include interview commentaries and oral histories from Cheju Kukche Munhwa Kyoryu Hyǒphoe (Jeju International Culture Exchange Association, hereafter JICEA) chairperson Koh Young-lim (Ko Yǒngnim), the late Subo Sǔnim of the former Kwangmyǒngsa temple, Taejǒng-ǔp local historian Kim Ungch'ol, and Ko Hǔisik, the elder brother of local politician Ko Hǔibǒm.

Cheju can be considered what local literary scholar Kim Tonghyǒn calls a *naebu singminji* (internal colony) (2016). In the twentieth century, the island's physical and human landscape was plundered and islanders were violently repressed for the sake of Korean and Japanese metropolitan nationalisms. Yet even before, violent subjugation had been a recurring feature in Cheju history. The island's experiences therefore provide ample counter-narratives to Korean nationalist historiographies that emphasize victimhood and homogeneity. Cheju experience also counters twentieth-century Japanese nationalism owing to the presence of a large Cheju minority in Osaka as a colonial legacy. In terms of *longue durée*, the Free International City ambitions, announced in 2001, have been in the making from the earliest points of continental-island contact. Whether it was mainland Koreans, the Mongol Empire, or the Empire of Japan, Cheju's suzerains recognized the island's geopolitical potential on one way or another. As Yi Yǒngkwǒn (2004; 2005) suggests, resentments against centers perhaps go as far back as the Koryǒ kingdom's (918-1392) annexation of Cheju's T'amna civilization.

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<sup>54</sup> Gari Ledyard (1971) translates the title *moksa* as 'prefect' and reserves 'governor' for the head of a province. Cheju in the Chosǒn Dynasty was under Chǒlla Province.

A general periodization, as employed in the province-sponsored *Chejudoji* (2006) comprehensive overview of Cheju Province, tends to be as follows: Paleolithic (65000?-15000 BCE), Neolithic (10000-1000 BCE), Proto-T’amna (500-200 BCE), Early T’amna (200 BCE-500 CE), the T’amna Period (500-1105), the Koryŏ Dynasty (918-1392), Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910), the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), and the Republic of Korea (1945-). This periodization is based on archeological classifications but is still subject to debate, as is the nomenclature. Chinese Han Dynasty coins dating from the first century were discovered at the former Sanjihang site of Cheju City in 1928, suggesting that trade occurred from very early times. Certain forms of material goods in Cheju do not appear at the same time as they do in mainland Korea. Cheju also has the honor of having some of the oldest ‘Korean’ pottery, being dated to some 10,000 years before present, though Kosan-ri-type pottery does not appear to exist on mainland Korea.<sup>55</sup> Due to Cheju’s geography and oceanic contacts with the peninsular mainland as well as the Japanese archipelago and continental China, newer trends – at least what the grave goods can reveal – from without took hold quickly. The recent emphasis in some writings on early maritime is very much made parallel to the island’s current globalization.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the emphasis on interconnectedness is not entirely exaggerated.

A general view in *Chejuhak* on the earliest signs of civilization in Cheju follows what Seoul National University anthropologist Chŏn Kyŏngsu refers to as the “*Han-T’am pyŏlchoron*” (Korea-T’amna Different Ancestors Theory) (2013: 15), which counters the notion that all peoples in the current nation-states defined as “*Han*” (Korean) are of the same ancestry or

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<sup>55</sup> See <http://www.mediajeju.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=135489> (in Korean). While Kosan-ri-type pottery has not been found on mainland Korea, it does seem to have counterparts in the Siberian Amur River region and in Japan.

<sup>56</sup> While other scholars are not so overt about connecting a presumed ancient globalization with a contemporary globalization, Ju Kang-hyeon (Chu Kanghyŏn) as well as Song Sŏngdae do, however, make explicit a political economic motivation for reorienting Cheju.

merged together to become a single “Korean” people. The theory is problematic in that it implies linear unbroken descent to homogeneous “Korean” and “T’amna” peoples, but Chŏn’s suggestions on the matter are worth examining. In written record, as far as many *Chejuhak* scholars including Chŏn are concerned, vague references to an island entity interpreted to be ancient Cheju are mentioned possibly as early as early as the third century *Sanguozhi*. Referring to a vague reference in the *Dongyizhuan* (Account of the Eastern Barbarians) section of the *Weishu* (Book of the Wei State), one of the core volumes of the larger *Sanguozhi* (Record of Three Kingdoms), Chŏn considers the island of Zhouhu (Kr.: Chuho) as ancient Cheju. Zhouhu islanders were described as herders dressed in animal skins that traded with the peoples of Mahan in the southwestern portion of the Korean Peninsula and had a language unintelligible to peninsular people. Perhaps pre-empting any suggestion that Cheju ancestors are related to the “Wa,” conventionally considered ancestors of the Japanese, Chŏn notes that the *Dongyizhuan* was explicit in treating both Wa and Chuho as unrelated entities.<sup>57</sup> Though the account is vague, Chŏn is hardly alone in concluding that it is likely one of the earliest historical mention of Cheju Island. A problem lies in the matter of the *Dongyizhuan*’s reliability. The *Dongyizhuan*, written and compiled deep within continental China, probably was based not on direct contact but on second- or third-hand reports.

David Nemeth (1984), however, offers the possibility that far earlier Chinese legends of the isle of immortality perhaps reference Cheju given the similarities of geographical qualities.

Another name sometimes ascribed to Cheju is Yŏngju, which refers to the island of Yingzhou in

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<sup>57</sup> See Kim TH 2016: 29. Some Japanese did take more seriously the alleged links between Japan and Cheju based on the *Koryŏsa* version of the T’amna founding myth in which three princesses from Japan came to marry the three ancestors. Although the *Koryŏsa* does state that the princesses’ kingdom was “*Ilbon*” (Japan), whether they were “Japanese” in terms of the nation-state is a moot point given that no such notion existed in early history. The name is likely more in reference to a geographic and not a national entity.



Chinese mythology. Early Korean writers had considered Cheju as the likely place for the Yōngju of Chinese myth as the island's defining peak of Hallasan is regarded as one of the *samsinsan* (Three Divine Mountains). The description of an isolated wind-swept island that is not too far from human habitation discussed in Sima Qian's *Shiji* remarkably is reminiscent of that of Cheju (184-185). A legend regarding Sōgwip'o's Chōngbang Waterfalls claims that a rock formation are Classical Chinese characters that state *Xu Fu guo zhi* (Xu Fu passed here) (Chin SG 1959: 175-176). Xu Fu (Kr.: Sō Pul) was the emissary that Emperor Qin Shihuang dispatched in 219 BCE to find the land of immortality (Nemeth 1984: 167). Considering that Xu Fu departed from the northeastern Chinese coast eastward, if Xu Fu's expeditions did in fact occur, then Cheju Island, as a large island by mainland Korea and the Japanese archipelago – two other regions that claim to have received Xu Fu – would have been along the voyage route. The Yōngju-Cheju connection perhaps is not so much a flight of fancy after all. Some islanders, however, roll their eyes at the kitsch tourist-oriented Chinese gardens and exhibition hall perched above Chōngbang Falls.<sup>58</sup>

Chōn's and Nemeth's assertions are certainly plausible, but they cannot be easily verified. Few early records survive. Adding to the difficulty is that Cheju had many names. Linguist O Ch'angmyōn (2013) observes that extant records provide contradictory etymologies and renderings of Cheju's multiple past names – Chuho, Sōmna, T'amna, T'ammora, T'angna, Tulla. Because of this, Chōn argues that using the name "Cheju" for earlier material considering that the name was a thirteenth-century creation (2013: 19). The name "T'amna," however, is the most consistently used. Thus if one were to consider the ancient Japanese *Nihon Shoki* and *Shoku Nihongi* as well as Korean histories, provided that all references do indeed point to Cheju, one

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<sup>58</sup> Some activist colleagues in Cheju are also furious that while the exhibition hall exists, no attempt has been made to set up an April Third memorial at the site. The promontory of Chōngbang Waterfall was also a massacre site.

can observe that the T'amna civilization engaged in diplomacy from 369 to 1105 (Chŏn KS 2013: 30). The *Jiu Tangshu* (Old Book of the Tang Dynasty) also notes T'amna among the foreign delegations to the Tang imperial court. A common etymology for the name "T'amna" draws from Han Ch'iyun's (1765-1814) interpretation in the *Haedong Yŏksa* (A History of the Eastern Country) that it is an old Korean term meaning "sŏmnara" (island country) (27). Chŏn's suggestion that "T'amna" possibly meant 'the people' to indigenous islanders is debatable given that no convincing evidence exists to prove that this name is indeed indigenous. But even in the exchanges noted in the *Samguk Sagi*, the island is not always recognized as "T'amna" but also as "Sŏmna" when it paid tribute to Koguryŏ.

The multiple names bring up other questions: 1) did these names actually refer to Cheju Island; 2) what did these names mean to Cheju Islanders; and 3) did Cheju Islanders use these names for themselves or were they given from outside? Aside from the origins, the most fundamental problem are determining who had been doing the naming and who had been doing the observing. Some scholars argue for the possibility that some early accounts may not actually refer to Cheju Island at all, but present-day Kangjin in South Chŏlla Province (Yi KU 2006[1997]: 162-163). Other scholars emphasize T'amna difference and independence almost to the point of nationalism, or what Yi Yŏngkwŏn (2004) mocked as "*aehyangsim*" (hometown love). At the other extreme, some scholars are firmly in denial that T'amna ever was organized as a concrete state entity yet nonetheless emphasize islander victimhood, trauma, as well as inadvertently reiterate a notion of a homogenous Cheju society. Even in anthropologists' writings, including those of Hyŏn Yongjun (2009), evidence of island elites becoming oppressive or incompetent as they domesticate themselves to mainland powers are based on mainland observations taken at face value. Immediately, the view of the periphery taken in *Chejuhak*

becomes problematic – any view of pre-twentieth century Cheju is inescapably a view of the center.

Regardless of the origin or the meaning, the name “T’amna” is frequently used to appeal to localist sentiments for varied and contradictory purposes ranging from the overtly commercial T’amna Culture Plaza project in Cheju City to protests. And indeed, far from erasing the T’amna past as, the name “T’amna” is rather conspicuously used among mainland literati that wrote of the island from Yi Wŏnjin’s 1653 *T’amnaji* (Record of T’amna) to Chŏng Un’gyŏng’s eighteenth-century *T’amna mun’gyŏllŏk* (Observations of T’amna). At least by Chosŏn, “T’amna” appears to carry the connotation of something not mainland Korea and this implication continues into the present. Reference to the “island country” or “*namguk*” (the southern country), as literary scholar Kim Tonghyŏn observes in early twentieth-century literature, augments Cheju Island’s aura of exoticism.

Based on the mainland, Chinese, and Japanese accounts, the T’amna civilization appears to have never been a major actor, an accident that ironically has allowed Cheju Island to keep its identity as a separate entity. No Myŏngho’s contribution (2005) to the T’amna debate is that sovereignty likely operated differently before the Chosŏn Dynasty. T’amna’s relationship with mainland Korea was ambiguous. The island’s retention of local titles<sup>59</sup> and different status as a tributary suggests that its absorption into Koryŏ was gradual and that the relationship was initially to both sides’ benefit. The existence of a tributary lent prestige to Koryŏ while T’amna had access to the markets of the cosmopolitan Koryŏ capital of Kaegyŏng, present-day Kaesŏng. Even after the island became a full part of whichever state dominated the Korean Peninsula, distinctions between Cheju Island and mainland Korea today attest that domination was never

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<sup>59</sup> As late as the eleventh century, the title *seja* (crown prince) still appears in the event that T’amna communicated with the Koryŏ court.

absolute. Though the *haemin chǒngsin* (seamanship) concept is problematic, Song Sǒngdae (2010) is correct to observe that Cheju does not have as hierarchical family structures as the mainland and many islanders do possess a strong individual-centered work ethic. And though reducing all Cheju *min'gan sinang* (popular spirituality) to a vague umbrella term of *musok* (shamanism) in Yi Yǒngkwǒn's (2004; 2005) and Hyǒn Yongjun's (2009) writings are also problematic, Cheju island practices as they exist to the present are indeed distinct with their own mythologies, musical styles, and ritual forms. As far as T'amna as an entity is concerned, while extant archeological remains suggest a very modest existence, to consider it a distinct civilization is not a stretch of the imagination. People certainly have lived on Cheju Island since the Paleolithic and the odd fact that T'amna appears in Chinese and Japanese accounts – perhaps by accident – with political representatives in the Tang and Asuka courts noted in the *Jiu Tangshu* and *Nihon Shoki* lends some credence that a sense of T'amna as a culture existed in one way or another.

As a quasi-national myth frequently cited as the origins of the T'amna civilization, islanders refer to the “*Samsǒng sinhwa*” (The Three Surnames Myth). The account relates that Cheju's first ancestors were the demigods Ko, Yang, and Pu and three princesses from a kingdom overseas. Ko, Yang, and Pu sprung from three lava tube holes at Mohŭnggyŏl and lived a hunting-gathering lifestyle until they came upon a mysterious crate that washed up at Yŏruni, the southeast shore of the island. An emissary magically appeared and introduced himself as a representative of a distant kingdom, which, depending on the version, is Japan, ‘Pyǒngnang,’ or one of the mainland Kaya states. Three princesses emerge along with grain seeds and livestock and the three ancestors and the three princesses establish the T'amna state. Variants of the myth are based on the fifteenth-century *Koryŏsa* (History of the Koryŏ Kingdom), *Yŏngjuji* (Record of

Yŏngju), the *Sŏngju Ko-ssi Kajŏn* (Family Account of the Sŏngju Ko Clan), and oral tradition. All versions are generally consistent, but subtle details such as the order in which the three demigods emerged and the origins of the three princesses differ.

Yi Yŏngkwŏn (2004: 48), Pak Chongsŏng (1999: 137), and Cho Tongil (1997) consider the written myth as likely a derivation of Kwangyang Shrine's *ponp'uri* (shamanic deity origin story). All note that the theme of an agricultural goddess bearing civilization from abroad marrying a hunter-gatherer native male god is strikingly similar to that of Songdang and Kwaenaegit Shrines' *ponp'uri*. These shrines stories of the goddess Paekchutto, the hunter-gather god Soch'ŏn'guk, and their son Song'goksŏng (or Mun'goksŏng) are thus perhaps related to the story of Ko, Yang, and Pu. Cho Tongil further suggests that *Samsŏng sinhwa*, ossified in writing, was perhaps the prologue to the Songdang *ponp'uri* and that the story was actually an epic myth of T'amna's first king.

The extant *Samsŏng sinhwa* versions' authenticity are debated among historians and literary scholars, due to the ambiguity over possible origins in a lost shamanic shrine *ponp'uri* (Yi YK 2004; Pak CS 1999) or patriarchal Confucian content culminating in the ritualized marriage of three men (Pettid 2000; Chŏn KS 2010). A recurring theme in *Chejuhak* scholarship is a sort of reverse Tan'gun nationalism in which the legendary exiled titan-goddess Sŏlmundae Halmang, who crafted Cheju Island with her bare hands, represents the exotic feminine origin of T'amna. Sŏlmundae Halmang, a giant mother goddess, represents the primeval feminine earth goddess original in contrast to the masculine Tan'gun or even T'amna's three demigods, who represent the end of a quasi-egalitarian matrilineal prehistory. A recurrent feature in discussions on T'amna prehistory is the tendency for utopianism. On this matter, one may consider anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss's assessment of like notions: "it can by no means be

concluded that, always and everywhere, matrilineal descent represents the primitive form” (1968: 38-39) because all forms can exist concurrently. The search for original essences inadvertently becomes a practice of justifying or denying the authenticity of the present.

Although critique and authenticity are veritable academic pastimes, non-academics are hardly disengaged from similar questions about T’amna’s origins. Ambiguity over T’amna has been remarkably productive in unintentional ways. Unanswerable questions about Cheju Island’s past enabled inhabitants to refabulate – that is, “the choosing of new myths and allusions to make a place more suited to the needs of those seeing to such transformation” (Roberts and Roberts 2007: 66) – the island as a sacred landscape. At one extreme, some Cheju Buddhists insist that “T’amora,” one of Cheju’s many names, is attested to in Buddhist literature. The abbot of Chonja’am temple related the following:

“In India in Śākyamuni’s time, before he entered nirvana, before he passed away, Śākyamuni determined transmission among sixteen arhats. Before them, there were sixteen people and amongst them the sixth, the Arhat Bhadra, travelled on a ship with nine hundred Arhats to T’amnaguk. At that time, there was no name for the country. It was about 2,556 years ago.<sup>60</sup>”

What the abbot referred to is an obscure mention in the *Pöpchugi* section of the *Koryŏ Taejangkyŏng (Tripitaka Koreana)* in which the Arhat Bhadra spread the Buddhadharma to a place called T’amollaju. The alternative history of Chonja’am can be traced to the nationalist historian Yi Nünghwa’s 1918 *Chosŏn pulgyo t’ongsa* (A History of Korean Buddhism) (Yi YK 2005: 125). Chonja’am’s namesake, “Hermitage of the Arhat,” is a homage to the interpretation that T’amollaju is T’amna and therefore Cheju. The Arhat Bhadra came to Cheju at the time of Ko, Yang, and Pu.

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<sup>60</sup> Chonja’am abbot at Pömnyunsa temple, in discussion with author, Sŏgwip’o, August 12, 2012.

Among some Cheju Buddhists in their alternative histories, the true spirit of Cheju Buddhism – vanished for nearly two centuries after Governor Yi Hyōngsang instigated a campaign of suppression against Buddhism and shamanism in his 1701-1702 term and dormant until the religion’s revival in the late-nineteenth century – was therefore *Nambang Pulgyo* (Southern Buddhism, or Theravada). Yi Yōngkwōn considers the “T’amollaju” interpretation fanciful and postulates that it was likely based on an ancient Indian term and that its similarity to “T’amna” is purely coincidental (2004: 87). Nevertheless, some islander Buddhists, including the late Subo Sūnim of Kwangmyōngsa in Chungmun, would counter that the Buddhist character of some place names in Cheju – Yerae (literally “the lion comes”), Ara (a homophone of “arhat”), Suhaeng (Sino-Korean for “Buddhist practice”) – are too conspicuous to be coincidental.<sup>61</sup> The myth is not altogether limited to native Buddhist clergy; in a chance encounter with a middle-aged taxi driver while enroute to Kwanūmsa temple, the driver repeated the same narrative. The driver considered it plausible given that the city of Kimhae in South Kyōngsang Province has as its origin myth a story of an Indian princess marrying the native King Suro, which parallels *Samsōng sinhwa*. He, like the Chonja’am abbot, reasoned that if anyone were to travel from South or Southeast Asia to Korea, they would have come upon Cheju first. This line of reasoning also dovetails existing archeological arguments that Southeast Asian elements flowed into Cheju Island via the sea. However unlikely the hypothesis, the Buddhist consecration of ancient T’amna nonetheless shows a different view of the island’s spiritual geography.

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Oak, Sung-deuk. 2013. *The making of Korean Christianity: Protestant encounters with Korean religions, 1876-1915*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press. Cheju Buddhism revived in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, parallel to the rise of Protestantism in mainland Korea. The two are unrelated but curiously parallel phenomena. Just as early Protestantism speculated a primitive monotheism in Ko-Chosōn, some Cheju Buddhists speculate a Buddhist prehistory in Cheju with the Arhat Bhadra. On the place names of Cheju, I would suggest that since most place names apparently date back to Koryō, the Buddhist-sounding place names could have been a product of the Koryō and Mongol dynasties, which both sponsored monasteries on the island.

Regardless of the view of origins, *Samsǒng sinhwa* is inscribed into physical features of Cheju Island. Aside from Honinji cave in present-day Onp'yǒng village, Samsǒnghyǒl located a short distance south of the former city walls lends to Cheju City's identity as a capital. The original Mohǔnghyǒl shrine, it was appropriated during Chosǒn Dynasty times and made into a Confucian-style ancestral shrine to which the mainland-appointed prefects honored Cheju's ancestors. The ancestral shrine function persists to the present and an entire institution centered on the descendants of the Cheju Ko, Yang, and Pu clans maintains a presentation of continuity with annual rituals based ironically on late Chosǒn ritual.

Re-assessments of T'amna's origins has also induced scholars to examine possible connections with ancient northern Korean civilization, especially as burial practices bear some semblance to early Koguryǒ practices. An interesting anomaly noted in Cheju mythology, Pak Chongsǒng notes, is that the island's *Ch'ǒnjiwang ponp'uri* (The Origin of the King of Heaven and Earth) closely resembles that of the northern Korean *Chesǒk ponp'uri* (The Origin of the Celestial Emperor). T'amna appears to have claimed a relationship with the Koguryǒ rulers' purported ancestors, the Puyǒ peoples, in maintaining tributary relations with Koguryǒ, using the surnames Ko and Pu, and utilizing a similar cosmic origin myth (1999: 131). The change to favoring closer relations with Paekche, the chief rival to Koguryǒ, appears to have been a later development when Paekche gained greater prominence. Whether this interpretation is true or not is difficult to substantiate, but continental goods uncovered in archeological excavations of tombs and village sites does indicate that islanders had incentive to seek out trade relations. Some islanders do note that one can detect some similarities in northern Korean and Cheju speech. Both peripheral to the historical centers in the Kyǒnggi and Kyǒngsang regions, northern Korea and Cheju language possesses archaic survivals.



Is the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century globalization just another phase of many past globalizations? To disregard the above suggestions or to assume their truth matter would be premature either way. Whenever such arguments arise they have the double purpose of addressing a knowledge gap and fulfilling specific needs of the time they were posed.

*Cheju in the Chosŏn Files*

However negative localist histories paint Chosŏn Dynasty rule (1392-1910), the mainland literati's obsession with the written word also meant that they also brushed Cheju Island into existence. Most that survives of the written record comes only from Chosŏn. The written records of early Cheju Island are based on a motley collection of accounts from mainland-appointed prefects, officials, and exiles. Given the terse nature of pre-twentieth century histories (and even Kim Sŏgik's *T'amna kinyŏn* written in the colonial period), far more is left unsaid beyond the bare descriptions, poetic renditions of specific landscape features, and chance encounters in the contact zone where the rare Cheju voices do appear, albeit edited to suit scholarly language. The general history is as follows.

Yi Wŏnjin's 1653 *T'amnaji* (Kim CH, Ko CS, Kim HU, et al. 2002) opens T'amna history with a brief mention *Samsŏng sinhwa* and the origin of the native rulers' title *sŏngju*. In some unknown time in the Three Kingdoms Period, the T'amna islanders Ko Hu and Ko Ch'ŏng with their younger sibling visited the court of the king of Silla and each respectively received the titles *sŏngju* (Master of the Stars), *wanggja* (Prince), and *donae* (Retainer). Their country was named T'amna (2002: 13). The myth notes that the three T'amna ancestors established their own respective domains called *Ildo* (First Capital), *Yido* (Second Capital), and *Samdo* (Third Capital). The sixteenth-century *Sinjchŭng tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* (The New Augmented Survey of the

Geography of the Eastern Country, hereafter *Yōji sŭngnam*)<sup>62</sup> indicates that these three were agglomerated into a single large ‘*Taech’on*’ (large settlement). This *Taech’on* occupied the site of Chosŏn era of the *chusŏng* (main town), which refers to present-day Cheju City. Both the *T’amnaji* and *Yōji sŭngnam* also notes the existence of *Ch’ilsŏngdo*, an altar complex created since the time of the three ancestors. The *T’amnaji* describes *Ch’ilsŏngdo* as piled rock arranged to resemble the *Pukto ch’ilsŏng* (the Big Dipper asterism) (171).<sup>63</sup> The precise location of *Ch’ilsŏngdo* has become a subject of much speculation to the point that it became seriously explored as a potential tourist asset in contemporary Cheju City, but all extant sources are either vague or inconsistent (Kim TI, Kang MG, Kim TH, et al. 2012: 165). Two aspects that do seem consistent is that this *Ch’ilsŏngdo* was near important administrative buildings and that Cheju City already was considered a re-representation of the cosmos.

T’amna became a tributary to the Paekche kingdom in 476, but after Paekche fell to Silla in 662, its rulers re-established the tributary relationship with Silla. During the early Koryŏ kingdom, which reunified the peninsula after a brief Later Three Kingdoms Period following Silla’s collapse, the T’amna crown prince Mallo had an audience at King T’aejo’s court and again the titles of *sŏngju* and *wangja* were given. Yi Wŏnjin’s account becomes extremely vague in noting that in 1105, “T’angna,” one of the island’s many names, was made into T’amna-kun (T’amna Prefecture). How and why this came to be and its possible implications are the subject of debate in the scholarship of No Myŏnggho and Kim Iru noted above.

Whatever the case of the 1105 event, the fact that T’amna functioned as a part of the Koryŏ kingdom at least from the twelfth century onward is undisputed. It was also during this

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<sup>62</sup> Vol. 38

<sup>63</sup> *Ch’ilsŏngdo* is also briefly mentioned in volume 38 of the *Sinjŭng tongguk yōji sŭngnam*.

time that the island's name was changed to "Cheju" (literally "the district over the water"). The exact time and circumstances of the change is unknown though Yi Yōngkwōn notes that it first appeared in 1223 (2005: 70). While T'amna clearly no longer sent emissaries to either the Japanese or Chinese courts, tribute and dignitaries were repeatedly sent up to the Koryō capital at Kaegyōng while the Koryō court in return bestowed or recognized titles regarding the old T'amna royalty. Some relatives of the Ko clan *sōngju* also became high-ranking members of the Koryō court such as Ko Yu and his son Ko Chogi (Chin YI 2006: 220-228).

While the historical record is vague on the details of Koryō rule, Chosōn historians as well as nationalist Korean historiography appeared to have a particular interest with the Sambyōlch'o Rebellion from 1270 to 1273 (Kim CH, Ko CS, Kim HU, et al. 2002: 15). After the Mongols forced the Koryō kingdom to capitulate, Kim T'ongjōng led the Sambyōlch'o, a special division of the former Ch'oe military dictators of Koryō, fled southward and eventually entrenched themselves on Cheju in 1271. The *T'amnaji* notes that the T'amna *sōngju* Ko Incho and Prince Mun Ch'angŭ complained to the Koryō court that the island was being pillaged. Walls and fortifications were constructed all along the island's coasts and survive today as the *Hwanhae Changsōng* (the Great Sea Wall). The Sambyōlch'o rebels sought to promote a member of the Koryō royal family as their puppet king, but found themselves under assault from both Mongol and Koryō forces.

The rebellion was crushed at its last stand at Hangp'aduri fortress in the uplands of present-day Aewōl-ŭp in the island's northwest. This became memorialized some seven hundred years later when Park Chung Hee (Pak Chōnghŭi) had the site excavated and rehabilitated as a nationalistic symbol for his military regime (Yi YK 2004: 69-71). When the Mongols occupied the island the name was reverted to T'amna in 1275. The reasons are unclear but Yi Yōngkwōn

opines that the name changes reflected both the Koryŏ kingdom's and Mongol Yuan Empire's intent to assert claims over the island (2004: 71-73). The Mongols intended to use Cheju as a staging point for a possible third invasion of Japan, but when this did not materialize the island was used as pasture land for tribute horses. A *daruhachi* (Overseer) was dispatched in 1277 to oversee imperial ranches. The island was briefly returned to Koryŏ rule in 1305, but after a rebellion, which was put down by forces led by the T'amna prince Mun Kongch'e, Mongols again asserted direct rule. An oddity of Mongol rule was that the Mongol presence remained on Cheju Island even after the Yuan Empire's fall to the Ming Dynasty in 1367. It was not until Ch'oe Yŏng's forces crushed remaining Mongol forces in 1374 that the island was effectively under the rule of the mainland Korean state. In Cheju localist historian retrospectives on Ch'oe Yŏng's feat, considered a heroic victory in mainland Korean historiography, some ponder the possibility that Cheju Islanders did not embrace the Koryŏ military operation as liberation but yet another disaster (96).

Koryŏ's military re-conquest was short-lived as its own general Yi Sŏnggye launched a coup to topple the dynasty and establish his own Chosŏn kingdom in 1392. Following both Koryŏ and Mongol fashion, the Chosŏn state dispatched officials to oversee Cheju, but it appears that the titles *sŏngju* and *wangja* inexplicably remained. These titles were changed in 1402, allegedly due to a request from their titleholders that they seemed out-of-place in the Chosŏn state (Kim CH, Ko CS, Kim HU, et al. 2002: 19-20). Cheju was reorganized in 1416 into the three districts of Chejumok centered in present-day Cheju City, Chŏngŭi County in inland present-day P'yosŏn-myŏn to in the southeast, and Taejŏng County in present-day Taejŏng-ŭp in the southwest. The three divisions remained into the twentieth century and still indirectly operate

in the island today as islanders tend to distinguish a three-way geographic difference with Cheju City, the east, and the west.

Following T'amna and Koryŏ precedents, the center of this arrangement was the walled town of Cheju-ŭpsŏng in Chejumok (Kim TJ 2006: 347). All tribute goods – citrus, horses, medicinal plants, and sea products – were inspected at Mokkwana, Cheju-ŭpsŏng's central government complex, before they were dispatched to the mainland via the ports of Hwabuk, Choch'ŏn, and Oedo outside the city walls. The ultimate destination for these goods was the Chosŏn capital of Hanyang, present-day Seoul. Manggyŏngnu, the tallest structure of Mokkwana, faces north in the direction of the Chosŏn seat of power. The pavilion Yŏnbukchŏng (the Pavilion of Longing for the North) atop a fortress wall in the port town of Choch'ŏn near Cheju City likewise faces north as a point from which Confucians could gaze toward the king from afar (Yi YK 2006: 130) Chosŏn administrations established *hyanggyo* (local schools focused on Confucian learning) in all three districts. All of Cheju and its surrounding islands were put under the jurisdiction of Chŏlla Province from the early fifteenth century. Those who lived within Cheju-ŭpsŏng were, aside from the greater protection that its formidable fortifications gave, considered more prestigious. The imposed curfews and the movement restrictions, however, was inconvenient for commoners to the extent that residents of Kŏnipp'o (present-day Kŏnipp-tong) opted to scale a dangerous cliff to get in and out of the city until as late as the nineteenth century. The closer one lived to the seat of power based at Mokkwana, the more prestige one held. Elderly rural residents still reference Cheju City as “*sŏngan*” or “*sŏngnae*” (within the city walls) in the present.

What is striking about Cheju life is the severe hardship noted in extant documentation. Due to the harsh environment making agriculture difficult and frequent natural disasters as well

as onerous taxation during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, extreme poverty characterized island life for most. In one account, famine was said to have killed seventy percent of the island (Chin KH 2012: 344). Although tax burdens were reduced to half of the mainland rate, the requirements were still onerous because high-yield wet field rice farming was almost impossible in Cheju. Many attempted to migrate to Chōlla and Kyōngsang Provinces. Restrictions on travel to the mainland were imposed from 1629 and remained in place until they were lifted in 1823 (Kim TJ 2006: 378-379).

Cheju was still somewhat a separate entity even with a more defined political apparatus in the Chosōn Dynasty. Cheju Island was effectively isolated with a combination of geographical separation and official restrictions. The *Yōji sūngnam* entry on Cheju refers to native local customs as *kōmso* (simple), local language as *nansap* (difficult to comprehend), and spiritual practices as *ūmsa* (evil spirit worship). The most well-known and reviled expression of this condescension was when the *moksa* (prefect) Yi Hyōngsang ordered shamanic shrines and Buddhist temples destroyed in his 1701-1702 appointment. Prefect Yi's suppression campaign was short-lived as shamanic practices resumed immediately after he left, but his mark has been left as a villain in oral tradition. An irony of Prefect Yi's short tenure was that the *T'amna sullyōkto* documentary paintings he commissioned to depict his inspection tour of the island has become a crucial window for folklorists into eighteenth-century Cheju Island. At the 2016 T'amna Ipch'un Kut-nori festival at the reconstructed Mokkwana, the *T'amna sullyōkto* even graces the backdrops of staged shamanic rituals, the very rituals Prefect Yi sought to suppress in his time.

Since the late Koryō Dynasty, the island was, for all intents and purposes, an open-air prison to where dissidents of the court were exiled. From the Chosōn Dynasty's establishment to

its end, some two hundred people were banished to Cheju (Hong SM 2006: 405). These exiles included high-profile scholar-officials including the Confucian moralist Song Siyöl, the great writer Kim Chŏnghŭi, and the late Chosŏn period reformer Kim Yunsik. Five prominent Confucian moralists became enshrined at Ohyöndan (Altar of the Five Worthies), which was built within old Cheju City on the hillside below the south wall.

Despite travel restrictions, Cheju was not altogether cut off from the world beyond the seas. Accidental encounters also occurred. Perhaps the most famous castaway to have reached Cheju – and Korea for that matter – was Dutch sailor Hendrik Hamel. The *Sparrowhawk*, a Dutch East India Company ship en route to Dejima, was shipwrecked on the southwestern coast of Cheju Island on August 16, 1653. The 36 survivors were held in captivity in Cheju-üpsöng for nine months and their stay in Cheju and in Korea registers as a mere anomaly in the larger Korean historical record. The official that reported the event to Hanyang was none other than the compiler of the *T'amnaji*, Yi Wŏnjin (Ledyard 1971: 21). Hamel, however, managed to escape and returned to Holland to introduce Korea and “Quelpart Island” (Cheju Island) to Europeans in his written account.

The reverse also occurred with Cheju Islanders reaching distant shores. Chŏng Un'gyöng's eighteenth-century *T'amna mun'gyöllök* (Observations of T'amna) consists of castaway accounts, hearsay, travelogues, geographic descriptions, and descriptions of Cheju's *kamgyul* species. That the work has an almost ethnographic quality for its time was an opportune accident. Chŏng came to Cheju Island with his father, the appointed magistrate Chŏng Pillyöng in 1731, and thus he had the time and luxury to travel and document the island (Chŏng UG 2008: 11). Chŏng seemed mostly interested in stories of Cheju Islanders who found themselves castaways on the shores of Qing China, Tokugawa Japan, the Ryukyu Kingdom, Taiwan, and

even Vietnam. Castaways also described lifestyles and customs of these other lands and noted European merchants in Nagasaki, Japan.

Aside from accidental encounters, direct contact with the world beyond Chosŏn was exceedingly rare. Few outsiders ventured onto Cheju Island and the island's products and trade was oriented only toward mainland Korea. Things changed, however, when the Empire of Japan engaged in its own gunboat diplomacy and forced Chosŏn to open its doors with the 1876 Treaty of Kanghwa.

### *Cheju in the Shadow of Empires*

By the end of the nineteenth century, Cheju was no longer officially closed off to outsiders. With the Chosŏn government weakened with political infighting, deteriorating economic conditions, and rebellions across the country, its sovereign territories were open to Japanese and European interests. Japanese fishermen were already exploiting Cheju's fishing grounds since the 1876 Treaty of Kanghwa and a handful of settlers were already on the island by the end of the nineteenth century (Yi KU 2003: 49). Catholicism, which was repeatedly suppressed throughout the nineteenth century, sought to reverse its fortunes only to find that turn-of-the-century Cheju Island was a powder keg waiting to explode.

French missionaries came to the island in 1899, but their conversions and extraterritoriality led to unintended consequences of a serious and tragic scale with the Yi Chaesu Rebellion of 1901. Three key factors led to a full outbreak of violence: 1) new taxes were imposed to alleviate the Chosŏn state's serious fiscal difficulties; 2) some Catholic converts worked for the local tax official; and 3) a few Catholic converts, assuming that their conversion meant French extraterritorial status, abused their connection with Catholic priests to pursue their



own interests (Walraven 2009: 5-6). Violence erupted and a young slave and member of the Sangmusa (Association for Foreign Affairs), which opposed the Catholics, named Yi Chaesu emerged as a leader in the insurrection. A slaughter of Catholics ensued. The rebels besieged Cheju-ŭpsŏng but their Chosŏn government forces with the American adviser William Sands ended their rebellion. Yi Chaesu was executed, but he had been immortalized as a valiant martyr among writers and *Chejuhak* scholars. Although the early French Catholic encounter resulted in violence, the next encounter would ironically set Cheju on a path of relative prosperity three quarters of a century later – the introduction of Japanese *onju milkam* (Jp.: *unshū mikan*, Satsuma mandarin oranges) in 1907 (Yi KU 2003: 223).

When the Empire of Japan annexed Chosŏn Korea in 1910, a process that arguably already began since 1876, Cheju Island came as part of the package. Cheju Island was unified as a single *kun* (county) administrative district and placed directly under South Chŏlla Province in March 4, 1914 (Kang TS, Kang YH, Hwang KS 2000: 19). Eventually the administrative structure would be reorganized several times throughout the period of Japanese rule, but the form of a province with a provincial assembly and *tojisa* (governor) would come to define Cheju Island's organization into the present. Like the mainland, colonial authorities performed a cadastral survey and registered landowners from 1914 to 1916 (Yi KU 2003: 57). Many did not register out of suspicion of the survey's intentions and authorities seized or bought off lands of vague ownership status. With free reign over Cheju, Japanese fishing interests monopolized the fishing markets, which came as a threat to local fishers and women divers (Ibid., 60) yet also integrated them to Japan's capitalist wage economy (Gwon 2005: 119). And as with mainland Korea, annexation and extreme repressive colonial policies prompted violent unrest.

The first outbreak of anticolonial resistance was the October 6, 1918 Mu-o Pöpjöngsa rebellion, which predated the famed March First Movement by nearly half a year. Native-born Buddhist clerics Kang Ch’anggyu and Pang Tonghwa together with a Kyöngsang Buddhist monk Kim Yönil led some 400 Buddhists and followers of Poch’ön’gyo, a native new religious movement with Buddhist-Daoist overtones, in armed insurrection in Chungmun near Sögwip’o. The uprising was quickly crushed in a matter of days since the rebels were armed with mostly bamboo spears and a handful of archaic matchlock muskets. Their story is nonetheless a source of pride in Cheju as an example of the island’s defiant nature, but given the spiritual utopian overtones of the rebellion, whether the uprising was based on the idea of a Korean nation-state is unclear. Yi Yöngkwön argues that the character of the movement was neither clearly Buddhist nor Poch’ön’gyo (2005: 294-295). Pang Tonghwa’s descendants argue otherwise, noting that islanders considered Buddhism, Poch’ön’gyo, and forms of Cheju shamanism as aspects of the same spirituality. Subo Sünim, son of Pang Tonghwa, insisted that he leaders strongly identified themselves as Buddhist clergy.<sup>64</sup>

Other protest movements and bursts of unrest occurred such as Cheju’s own 1919 March First Movement, the 1929 “Urigye” Anarchist movement, and the 1932 women divers’ uprising (Yi YK 2005: 305, 309). The 1932 women divers’ uprising has become a *cause célèbre* in Cheju as contemporary islanders and *Chejuhak* scholars consider it a representative example of the ‘strong Cheju woman’ archetype and it is colored as a purely patriotic movement. Thousands of women divers marched in protest across northeastern Cheju in outrage over unfair Japanese business practices and threats to their livelihoods. The protestors ultimately won some concessions from the Ch’ongdokbu. Though touted even today as “‘*chön’guk ch’oedae kyumo-üi*

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with author, Chungmun, Sögwip’o, August 8, 2012.

*yŏsŏng hangil undong*” (“the largest women’s anti-Japanese movement in the country”), whether the protest was nationalistic is again unclear as its main motivation was on everyday life matters (Ibid. 310).

The most curious aspect about Cheju’s experiences during the colonial period was that as a periphery of a periphery its direct frame of metropolitan reference was mainland Japan and not mainland Korea. Kim Tonghyŏn (2016) observes that Cheju was doubly exoticized: by Japanese travelers and mainland Korean intellectuals. As early as 1905, Aoyaki Tsunatarō, who had interests in promoting Cheju for colonial investments, sought to demonstrate in his travel accounts that Cheju Islanders were essentially primitive Japanese ripe for modern Japanese guidance (Kim TH 2016: 20-23). Mainland Koreans’ *kihaeng* (travelogues) of the island also portrayed it as a mysterious sacred land (34-35) or premodern and feminine (40). While Japanese projected their colonial fantasies onto Cheju and mainland Korea, mainland Koreans likewise projected their internal orientalism onto Cheju. Cheju was, in all senses of Mary Louise Pratt’s term, a true “contact zone,” a mutually transformative juncture of spatial and temporal co-presence of the colonizer and colonized (1992: 7). This characteristic transferred to Osaka’s Koreatown where Cheju islanders have a conspicuous presence.

Infrastructure projects carried out across the island, though far from the scale of Kusan or Seoul in the mainland, were intended to improve transportation and production capabilities as well as transform Cheju City into a fully functioning colonial provincial seat. The road that became the Ilchudoro, which circumnavigates the island in the present, was begun – with forced labor – in 1921 and a crude road was cut across the mountainside to connect Cheju City and Sŏgwip’o in 1934 (Yi KU 2003: 58). Direct steamship routes such as the *Amagasaki-kisenbu* and *Chosŏn-usŏn* allowed islanders access to Japan’s emerging cities and markets. Kim Tonghyŏn

notes that Cheju islanders saw the standards for modernity and high culture not in Seoul but had sought it directly in Japan itself. The Japanese government lifted travel restrictions to and from Japan and colonial Chosŏn (Jp.: Chōsen) in 1922 and direct lines between Cheju and Osaka allowed for unprecedented movement. Back-and-forth movement was so frequent that around 50,000 islanders, or one quarter of the island population, had gone to work in Japan (Kim TH 2016: 51). One Japanese writer Tsuruda Gorō noted that by 1939, 13.89% of the population was conversant in Japanese and that those proficient in the language had a better command of standard Japanese than Japanese in Kyushu! (Ibid. 53-54). Movement between Cheju and Osaka continues into the present, albeit at a diminished scale, and many islanders have relatives in Japan.

Cheju City development began immediately with Japanese annexation. The Korean Empire, the Chosŏn Dynasty's last attempt to reverse its fortunes, began a steamship line from the mainland port city of Inch'ŏn to Sanjihang, Cheju City's harbor, as early as 1894 (Yi KU 2003: 50), but it was never able to effectively carry out any development projects. In the first decade of direct colonial rule, Cheju City's streets, previously winding and tight paths between compound walls, were straightened and most of the old city walls were demolished (Kim TI, Kang MG, Kim TH, et al. 2012: 138).

Ko Hūisik, who had lived during the colonial period, noted that Japanese authorities ordered the construction of Wŏnjŏngt'ong (Jp.: Honmachi) as a main downtown thoroughfare to connect the former west gate entrance, the large public plaza in front of Kwandŏkjŏng pavilion at Mokkwana, and the former east gate entrance as a single continuous road.<sup>65</sup> Though the five-

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with author, Ildo-2-tong, Cheju City, August 16, 2014.

centuries old Kwandökjǒng survived, Mokkwana was destroyed for new Japanese administrative buildings. The old Ch'ilsǒngt'ong (the former Ch'ilsǒngkol) road, which apparently existed since T'amna times, became a central shopping street for local merchants and Japanese settlers as it connected Wǒnjǒngt'ong with Sanjihang. The pattern of urban renewal followed that of Seoul and other colonial cities (Henry 2014), and like other colonial mainland cities, Japanese authorities could not so easily erase the existing complicated settlement patterns. A 1914 Japanese survey map indicates that most of the narrow streets today, while widened and straightened at the expense of old housing and government compound walls, follow the same pattern as those before colonial projects. Colonial authorities did not fundamentally change the general shape or the spatial symbolism of Cheju City. Colonizers easily coopted existing spaces to build their own administrative structures and assert authority.

Cheju City was still the primary political center, but not immediately apparent in urban Cheju Island is that some of the earliest transformations had begun in Mosŭlp'o in the southern and southwestern part of the island, a region now hardly considered urban. Sǒgwip'o City had consistently remained small and confined despite being host to the island's earliest major tourism developments in the 1970s, but the beginnings of urban constructions had taken place in one of its sub-districts, the coastal town of Mosŭlp'o. To understand Cheju's twentieth century transformation into an urbanizing society, local historian and retired high school English teacher Kim Ungch'ŏl of Mosŭlp'o insists that one must first look at the Taejǒng-ŭp area.<sup>66</sup>

Taejǒng-ŭp, which comprises the western portion of the former South Cheju County, had long historic importance as an agricultural productive region and an intellectual heartland home to mainland scholar-official exiles including the renowned literatus Ch'usa Kim Chǒnghŭi. The

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with author, Mosŭlp'o, Taejǒng-ŭp, August 24, 2014.

main walled town of Taejŏng, however, was not the center of colonial period development but rather the nearby port of Mosŭlp'o. Somewhat like Kunsan in the mainland, Mosŭlp'o began as a sleepy small fishing community and was transformed into a substantial port town by virtue of its already-existing harbor, its proximity to relatively productive farmland, and the fact that it also hosted a strategically Japanese military institution, Alttŭrŭ Airbase. Aside from local accounts regarding forced labor, Alttŭrŭ Airbase was also notorious for having served as the staging point for Japanese bombing raids on Nanjing, China. With a substantial harbor and a strategic Japanese base, Mosŭlp'o became as important and as large as Cheju City during the colonial period. By the 1937-1945 wartime mobilization period, the Taejŏng area by Mosŭlp'o was heavily fortified in anticipation that Cheju Island would be a last line of defense against an all-out Allied invasion. A population influx also came with April Third and Korean War refugees.

Mosŭlp'o's development into a major town in some ways surpassed colonial and postliberation Cheju City. Geopolitical instability that roiled Cheju City and other parts of the island briefly allowed Mosŭlp'o to experience metropolitan culture. According to Kim, as early as the 1920s when Alttŭrŭ Airbase and the Japanese garrison were established, Japanese *Shingeki* (New Theater) dramatic arts were introduced alongside a fully functioning cinema. The cinema was moved in the postliberation period a short distance from its original location by the old harbor, but remained in use until as late as the 1980s when Mosŭlp'o lost its former prominence. Another curious feature of Mosŭlp'o's brief time in the sun was that mainland Korean performers took up temporary residence in the town upon fleeing the Korean War's ravages on the mainland some five years after Korea's liberation from Japan. *Pyŏnsa*, silent film interpreters whose jobs were to provide live dramatic voiceovers and dialogues for silent films, worked in

Mosŭlp'o during the wartime period.<sup>67</sup> In the colonial, postliberation, and Korean War times the main street through Mosŭlp'o's de facto downtown was a hive of activity. Aside from *Shingeki* practitioners in the colonial era and professional performers fleeing the Korean War, this area was also home to participants in the tragic events of April Third.

Mosŭlp'o's fate appears to have paralleled Kunsan's. After the colonial period, urban development was again concentrated in the historic capital of Cheju City. Although the Park Chung Hee era policies that favored agricultural and fisheries development were very much beneficial to Mosŭlp'o and enabled it to continue to be one of Cheju's most important towns, its importance was ultimately eclipsed. Mosŭlp'o began to decline in the 1980s as the agricultural and fishing economy became less important and stagnated with trade liberalization. Some of the colonial military installations in the area were reused for American forces, but these also fell out of use by the end of the century. Alttŭrŭ Airbase remains in ruins with most of its former airstrip repurposed for farmland. Ruins of Japanese anti-aircraft artillery placements and bunkers just outside of the former airbase and on Sŏngaksan *orŭm* have become tourist attractions in the present. Prior to the November 2015 announcement of Cheju's proposed second airport near Sŏngsan on the east side of the island, the possibility of Alttŭrŭ Airbase becoming Cheju's new airport site was up in the air since official tourism planning began.

Alttŭrŭ Airbase and its surrounding fortifications were crucial parts of the imperial Japanese war machine by the time of the Pacific War. Bombers that attacked Nanjing took off from Alttŭrŭ's runway. On February 9, 1945, facing the dire prospect of full Allied invasion, the Empire of Japan promulgated *Ketsu-nana-go sakusen* (Kr.: *Kyŏlch'ilho chakchŏn*) (Military

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<sup>67</sup> This was also the case in Cheju City, but some residents interviewed did not consider them true professional *pyŏnsa*. The point of disagreement about their professional status is that most silent film interpreters in Cheju simply read the script to the audience whereas a *pyŏnsa* would have actively interpreted the film. Kim Ungch'ŏl, however, regards the performers in Mosŭlp'o as actual *pyŏnsa* and hinted that they were professionals from the mainland.

Operation Resolution 7) in which Cheju Island was fortified as a vanguard (Yi YK 2005: 331). Fortifications such as bunkers and anti-aircraft guns were constructed across the island and the populace was mobilized for an imminent Allied assault. The remnants of these installations are still visible today. Cheju Island was fortunately spared Okinawa's tragic fate, but the island did not escape the violence that came with the chaos of the postliberation years.

### *The Internal Colony*

The creation of the separate southern Republic of Korea (South Korea) in opposition to the northern Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) emerged through multiple levels of violence. The arbitrary division of the peninsula at the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel divided spheres of Soviet and American influence as well as the internal fissures that already existed since the colonial period deepened tensions in Korea. Cheju was, as localist scholars rightly observe, in many ways a victim of the nation-state project to create the Republic of Korea (Yi YK 2005; Kim TH 2016). The culmination of these tensions to invent a legitimate nation-state to claim the entirety of the Korean Peninsula is often understood to be horrors of what is now commonly referred to as the Korean War in the Anglophone world. Cheju escaped the Korean War, but before the war broke out, it faced an insurrection and extreme state-sponsored paramilitary suppression in the wake of the April Third event. A conflict that killed 25,000 to 30,000 civilians between 1947 to 1954 in which 84.4 percent of all killings were caused by state agents and the extremist right-wing Söbuk Ch'öngnyöndan (Northwest Youth League) (Kim HJ 2014: 12), almost every native-born islander has a connection to the trauma in one way or another.

What culminated in the bloodbath of April Third was a combination of the power vacuum that ensued with Japan's sudden departure in 1945 and the confusion of the Korean Peninsula's division. Cheju became an independent province in 1946, but this also meant that taxation



increased, administrative and police presence expanded, and a military regiment was stationed on Cheju, all factors that deepened discontent. That trade with Japan was cut off after liberation also was a severe blow to Cheju's economy as overseas workers had to return to Cheju and could not send remittances. Adding to the issue were famines and epidemics. The first outbreak of violence occurred in 1947 at a March First commemorative rally when a mounted police officer struck a six-year-old child for unknown reasons, sparking the fury of the crowd. Police retaliated by opening fire, injuring eight and killing six (Ibid. 27-28). The pandemonium that came with police violence on that day is captured in local artist Kang Yobae's sketch *Palp'o* (Shots Fired). The police at this time consisted largely of mainland Korean gendarmes recruited and trained under the previous colonial administration and despite liberation, most retained the heavy-handedness for which they were despised during Japanese rule. 320 leftists attacked police and ultra-rightist paramilitaries at 2 AM on April 3, 1948. And while the National Police sought hardline counterinsurgency operations, the military under Colonel Kim Ik-ryeol (Kim Ingnyŏl) sought peace talks. Unfortunately peace talks broke down when US occupation forces sided with the police and Kim Ingnyŏl was replaced. The new leadership of the counterinsurgency operation initiated a policy of virtual total war in which all mountain villages were to be razed and all in the interior of Cheju Island indiscriminately subject to arrest, forced relocation, or outright massacre (32-33). That *chungsan'gan* (mid-mountain) and *sanak* (mountain) villages today are remarkably sparsely populated or have a startling number of April Third memorials is a testament to the tragedy that unfolded for seven years. One such example is the village of Chuksŏng in which almost no trace of the original village remains and only a handful of survivors remain scattered in nearby Ara-tong and Odŭng-tong.

South Korean state justifications for the counterinsurgency-turned-massacre were based on exaggerated claims of connections to North Korea. There certainly were leftists on Cheju, but exposure to leftist ideals came with Cheju's direct access to Japan during the colonial period and not mainland Korea. Most those who were killed were simply those caught in the crossfire. The issue was suppressed all throughout the period of dictatorial rule from the Syngman Rhee (Yi Sŭngman) regime (1948-1960) to the Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi) regime (1961-1979) and into the 1987 democratization of South Korea. It was only with the atmosphere of national soul-searching that came with liberal democracy that the April Third issue could be openly debated. Due to the efforts of political figures, survivors, local scholars, and Zainichi (Korean residents in Japan) Cheju people, who had personally fled to Japan in the fallout of April Third or are relatives of victims, that a bipartisan National Assembly bill to enact the Special Law for the Investigation of the Jeju 4.3 Events was passed (Ibid. 122-123). A truth commission was established from 2000-2003 and in October 2003, President Roh Moo-hyun (No Muhyŏn) made a public official apology to the people of Cheju Island. This would seem to be the end of decades-long suppression of Cheju Island trauma and perspectives, but truth and reconciliation efforts came under attack with the election of rightwing politicians Lee Myung-bak (Yi Myŏngbak) in 2007 and Park Geun-hye (Pak Kŭnhye), daughter of dictator Park Chung Hee, in 2012. In the present political environment of a deeply polarized South Korea full of political and economic uncertainty, the memory of April Third is under threat.

That gathering became a riot and violent confrontation when police, who were both feared and despised as remnants of the colonial apparatus, accidentally injured a townsman. Reassessing this event, Cheju islanders indicate that they were in fact loyal to the purpose of a united nation-state of Korea but this membership was at first denied to them and then forced

upon them. As one can glean in the overview of Cheju history discussed above and as Cheju experiences are interpreted among localist scholars, the outburst of the April Third Uprising is not a simple matter of left-versus-right or communist-versus-capitalist, but more the result of a long history of deep-seated resentment toward mainland rule. Resentment lingers despite increased interconnections with mainland Korea as shall be shown in the following chapters. A curious result of Cheju being thrown into the unwanted limelight in the fallout of April Third and its brief transformation as a Korean War refuge site, the Syngman Rhee regime from very early recognized the potential of turning Cheju into a future pet project of the new South Korean nation-state.

#### **2.4 – Cheju Vignette: The Peace Village<sup>68</sup>**

Kangjǒng’s activist community organized a “Peace Camp” between July 29 to August 2 2014. The event became a regular program as the anti-naval base activists sought to entrench themselves deeper. Though Kangjǒng residents and activists managed to delay the project for several years, the national government, utilizing mainland police, broke up the protestors’ occupation of the scenic basalt rock seashore known locally as Kūrōmbi. Construction commenced with a dramatic flourish on March 7, 2012 (Kirk, 2013: 100) when crews dynamited the rocks and began using dredgers to transform the entire coast into a massive artificial harbor. For activists and dissident residents, the navy’s strong-arm tactics to coerce the community to accept the naval base and Kūrōmbi’s inglorious destruction was yet another example of state oppression since the fateful events begun in 1947. Although the activist community knew they could not stop the project, they continued to maintain a “peace center” at the main intersection of

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<sup>68</sup> Kangjǒng is technically an urban *tong* and a suburb of Sōgwip’o though both locals and nonlocals alike tend to refer to it as a *maŭl* (village). I abstain from referring it to as a ‘village’ since is too heavily laden with rural implications. Kangjǒng-tong is neither fully rural nor suburban since it is both agricultural and a satellite community of a city.

Kangjǒng. Even in 2016, participants still comprise a combination of seasoned mainland Korean environmental and democratization activists, Catholic clergy, international peace activists, and Kangjǒng residents. A cloud of uncertainty had shrouded the activist community in 2014, however, since it was clear to all that tactics had to shift. That the national government ultimately pushed ahead with plans was a sign to other islanders that the movement had not succeeded.

Most of the day's events had been cancelled due to Tropical Storm Nakri's approach, but I received word that the tour and community lunch would still take place regardless. Curiosity must have overwritten rationality when I decided to make the trip out to Kangjǒng anyway. A longtime friend and gallery owner who was close to some activists sent out an announcement among her contacts that Kangjǒng activists would hold their peace camp at the height of summer and that all people regardless of nationality were encouraged to join. As I was in Cheju for a month to begin my first dabbling in what would eventually become my dissertation research, it was an opportune moment. I was not, however, alone in my curiosity about the state of affairs with the now-famous (or, to detractors, infamous) activist community. PB, a friend who expressed interest in Korean social issues, also chose to brave the stormy weather to join. On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, we took the Airport Limousine Bus from Cheju International Airport at around nine o'clock in the morning, just before the wind and rain intensified.

Until August 2<sup>nd</sup>, PB and I had only known about Kangjǒng through local friends and what information we could access via the media. Although I had visited Kangjǒng in 2011 before construction ravaged the Kūrǒmbi shore when I walked on the former Olle Course 7 hiking course there, I knew little about the realities facing that community. On the one hand, I understood environmentalists' concerns, having seen the extraordinary beauty of Kūrǒmbi and the remarkably clean waters of that area. On the other hand, I harbored some skepticism. Some

of the claims thrown about in social media from Kangjǒng activists and sympathizers trumpeted apocalyptic warnings about a global conspiracy behind the Kangjǒng base. Activists' postings on Facebook and their messages presented on their signature yellow signs with black boldface letters tended to veer into hyperbolic claims and representations. Kangjǒng was presented as a last rural utopian bastion – in the language of standard Korean, no less – under threat from a neo-imperialist US-South Korean military industrial complex. The protest activities – what was televised on Korean broadcast media at the time – ranged from peaceful human chains to occupations of building sites. Protests were sometimes theatrical and sometimes outright absurd photo opportunities for celebrity foreign activists, who seemed to have very little knowledge about the Kangjǒng issue other than that it was somehow linked to US imperialism. One of the most overt displays where the image of protest was more important than the substance was American activist Gloria Steinem's claim in a widely-circulated letter that "Jeju Island means Women's Island" (Eperjesi 2011). With American celebrity activists' involvement, it was hard as an outsider to discount the anti-activist claim that people protesting at Kangjǒng were mostly uninformed and egocentric outsiders.

There was some undeniable truth matter to the activists' claims. Cheju Island had suffered much under mainland Korean rule. Aside from the complex history of US complicity with abuses committed under various South Korean regimes, the South Korean military is, according to the Status of Forces Agreement, required to coordinate with the US military. President Obama also made as one of his term pledges the so-called Pivot to Asia in his November 17, 2011 speech to the Australian Parliament.<sup>69</sup> On the side opposite of the Kangjǒng issue, there were the bare realities of communities yearning for the development that a naval base

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<sup>69</sup> See <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>. [accessed January 30 2017]

would bring. Lurking in the shadow of Korean politics is the lingering notion that any move to support national security interests was integral to an anti-communist (anti-North Korea) ideology, the cornerstone of South Korean nationalism since liberation. Anything that the national government proclaimed was for the nation (“*kungmin wihae*”) had to be accepted regardless of the actual substance of the matter. In this aspect, vague abstraction as a rationale was a curious parallel to the more extreme of the anti-base movement. The pro-base position thus was established on the foundation of a combination of short-term economic utilitarianism and uncritical statist nationalism. Nevertheless, I had kept away from the issue as it was one that offered little room for a middle ground perspective. It was only when I returned there in 2014 that I was more cognizant the dire consequences of the issue.

Upon stepping off at the bus stop at Kangjǒng in the driving rain, the sight that astounded PB and me was how the village’s dividedness was made so plainly visible. Many houses and shops clustered along the main street into the village had yellow banners hoisted onto poles. The banners read in English “No Naval Base” and in Korean “*Haegun kiji kyǒlsa pandae*” (Absolutely Oppose the Naval Base). Interspersed among them were South Korean national flags. PB and I later learned that these were flown by those who stuck with their support for the naval base. The Peace Center where PB and I were to meet the primary contact person for the Peace Camp event was at the corner of the Kangjǒng’s main intersection. The white aluminum-sided building was completely decorated in a deliberately garish manner with improvised protest boards, slogans, and various images referencing political art (including the silhouette of a combat vessel<sup>70</sup>) and a pair of large stylized wooden *changsǔng* (mainland Korean village guardian figures).

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<sup>70</sup> This was a temporary artistic protest on Kūrǒmbi in 2011 before the construction crews dynamited the rocks. A large placard with the silhouette of a naval ship directly facing an uninhabited island across from Kangjǒng became

The outward makeshift appearance of the building gave the impression that its builders (or renovators) initially had thought that its use would be temporary only to find out that it would be occupied for a longer-than-anticipated duration. The inside was a broad open hall with a mini-library and a mini-exhibition of global peace issues from Gaza to Cambodia on opposite corners. The broad open space in the middle was slightly elevated and I could guess that it was for the customary *ondol* floor heating. Though the lingering smell of sweat and the wet brown splotches of dirt shoeprints at the entryway hinted the degree to which this building was frequented, the Peace Center was well-kept. Potted plants adorned the mini-library. Bare light bulbs hung from the exposed steel truss beams above. At a glance, one would think that this was simply a repurposed warehouse or shop space. PB and I would learn that this building was just one of several facilities intended to serve as the basis for the activist community-infrastructure. We realized immediately that Kangjǒng activists, despite their eviction from the Kūrōmbi site and the naval base's construction, were intent on maintaining a protracted campaign, come what may.

At a little after half-past ten, a young Korean woman who identified herself as “Hosu” (literally meaning “Lake”) arrived and greeted us at the Peace Center. The weather outside was growing fiercer with lashing gusts. Though she wore a full raincoat, she was still drenched from the driving rain. Regardless, Hosu informed us that the scheduled village tour would go on as planned. The only change was that it would be shortened slightly and that there would only be a few of us, enough to fill a single van. She asked that we wait another half hour to join the tour, but noted that we were guaranteed spots in that one van because we had gone to the trouble

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a representation of the project's environmental consequences. This same site was also where artists performed symbolic 'shamanic' rituals to the goddess Yǒngdūng and where Buddhist monks held a Dragon King Rite (Yongwangje) to pray for a peaceful resolution to the Kangjǒng crisis.

coming down from Cheju City amidst such weather. “Hosu” was not her actual name. She explained, in accented yet confident English, underscoring her long exposure to international activists, that everyone in the Kangjŏng community had come to using pseudonyms. Everyone – the entire village regardless of where one stood politically or geographically – was under constant surveillance by the navy, the national police, or contractors. When Hosu described life under surveillance, she was remarkably casual about it. It was so constant that it became normalized. Instead, Hosu wanted to highlight the international achievements that the activist community had made. She was not a village native, but the strength of the activists was that they could make connections both within Cheju and beyond even after the national government pushed ahead with construction. Hosu added that an Okinawan Buddhist monk and American military veterans had also joined in the previous events.

The van came around a little after eleven. When we went back out into the rain and wind, a rotund, cheerful goateed young American man greeted us and referred to himself as “Paco.” “Paco” had been involved in peace activism in Korea for some time, which gave him an insider’s view on the Kangjŏng issue. Aside from Hosu, Paco, PB, and me, three other people were seated inside the van. The first place Paco took us was Kangjŏngch’ŏn, the freshwater stream that supplied tangerine farmers and the region’s few rice farmers. Paco indicated that he wanted to show us the stream before storm waters would cause it to overflow. Since the waters were already raging by the time we arrived, we were only allowed to briefly go out onto the adjoining park by the stream and then hurriedly drive out, racing the rising waters. Kangjŏngch’ŏn, Paco noted, was the reason rice planting was possible in this part of Cheju and that activists were constantly monitoring its pollution as the naval base was being built right beside it. Although the navy pledged to protect Kangjŏngch’ŏn, most environmentalists and Kangjŏng community



members do not consider the navy trustworthy in keeping their promises. While we were escaping the flooding embankments, Paco mentioned a villager who camped himself beside the site to document the construction and its resulting damage to the coral reef – which the navy also pledged to protect – throughout the course of the project.

The second stop were the front gates of the construction site on the main coastal road that travelled on eastward over Kangjŏngch'ŏn and to Sŏgwip'o City. On a normal day, Catholic activists and clergy would hold mass in front of the gates in symbolic defiance of the navy. At times, they would directly stand in the way of construction vehicles to carry out their protest as a means to delay them as much as possible. Since this day was stormy, no construction or protest could take place and we simply drove past. Paco expressed his admiration for Catholic protestors. While Protestants and Buddhists had individually joined the protests, the Cheju diocese of the Catholic Church was the only major religious organization to openly confront the national government. Some of the Catholic activists such as 'Father Mun' had long been involved in democratization activities on the mainland before they came to Cheju. Right by the front construction site gates, Paco pointed to a small ancestral shrine flanked by the coast road and the construction site fencing. That shrine, he noted, was a concession to residents' resistance. Dissident residents refused to bow to pressure to relocate the shrine and thus the navy had to build around it. Those opposing the base did whatever they could to make construction activity as difficult as possible. In response, aside from outright physical force to remove protestors, construction crews and security personnel would periodically change the position of their main entrance, having vehicles enter from one side of the site at the far end of Kangjŏng or another.

The final stop of the tour was Kangjŏng harbor, which consisted of a small wharf suitable only for small-scale fishing and diving. By this point the feeder bands of Tropical Storm Nakri

lashed us with furious winds and heavy rain as soon as we got out of the van on the wharf. Two of the participants joining us, feeling adventurous with the novelty of a tropical storm, dared to go further up the jetty to get a glimpse of the storm surges crashing against the breakwater.

Completely drenched and barely able to hear one another over the roaring winds, Paco continued. He pointed at the other side of Kangjǒng harbor where a large section was fenced off for the naval base construction site. Painted on the walls were political cartoons that castigated the national government as justifying the project on a base of lies. One of the widely-reported incidents of the naval base protest began from here, Paco mentioned. Several protests, including Catholic clergy, took a boat at the harbor and audaciously sailed it into the naval base site.

The tour of Kangjǒng was not so much a tour of the village as it was a tour of the hotspots of the protest movement. Yet Paco and Hosu were not at all divorced from the community's day-to-day realities. Paco did corroborate media portrayals that Kangjǒng was divided. Where national media portrayals were inaccurate, however, were the finer details of the protests and their outbreaks – division occurred not because of outside activists' meddling but because of how the national government (mis)handled the situation. He reiterated that most villagers did reject the naval base, but there were people who honestly thought it would have been a positive development. Some women divers were bought off and pressured to oppose the village-wide referendum regarding the base. Because a significant minority did support the naval base (although some did later regret the decision), trust was broken and old friendships dissolved. Paco noted that before the naval base controversy, Kangjǒng was renowned in Cheju for having had the most community organizations. When the naval base hit Kangjǒng, however, eighty percent of these groups had diminished or ceased to exist entirely.

A story that Paco and Hosu related to us on August 2 was one commonly told in Kangjŏng about a man who spent his life's savings on investing in a guesthouse. Though he anticipated Cheju's tourism boom, which did indeed come after 2010, his life was shattered when the base construction began right at the scenic Kŭrŏmbi coast. The incessant noise from the constant construction also drove him mad. Due to the pressure to complete the base in accord to the national government's set schedule, construction was pushed into the late night hours on a daily basis. The man has never recovered.

Paco and Hosu rejected the pro-base argument that they and the activist community were all idealistic outsiders and troublemakers. Kangjŏng residents themselves, they pointed out, had invited them to organize on their behalf. Due to relentless repression and the economic strain from fines, residents became exhausted from protesting even while their trust in the government grew less. Also, Paco added, as most people still depended on farming for a living, they could not afford to be away from their fields for too long.

After the tour ended, we were taken to the village hall, which became a communal dining hall for Kangjŏng activists and visiting activists from other like-minded movements.<sup>71</sup> While many of the people at the activists' communal dining hall identified as mainlanders, there were equally as many Cheju islanders. Vehicles bearing the bumper stickers of Korea's minority Green Party and Labor Party filled the parking lot. Activists, dissidents, and peace camp participants came from a variety of backgrounds. Cheju local activists mingled with mainlanders and foreigners alike on equal terms and with equal respect.

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<sup>71</sup> The location of the activists' kitchen changed when activists set up a makeshift one right by the fence of the naval base. There were also container houses for long-term protestors when I returned in 2015. The container houses were voluntarily demolished in 2016 when the navy was set on destroying them to build another access road to the site. The kitchen, however, remains and is still used.

Over a plate of fresh *tchatchangmyŏn* (noodles with black bean sauce), the distinctions between Cheju Islander, mainlander, and foreigner were unimportant. Among them were renowned Cheju artist Kang Yobae and a Catholic nun known as “Sister Stella.” Sister Stella, who spoke clear English and had a patient yet determined countenance, became accidentally famous when she was the first nun to have been arrested by the national government in Cheju. Because the national government was unsure on how to handle a nun – as well as the potential negative publicity from the arrest – she was not confined for long, a matter that Sister Stella knew all too well. Sister Stella was not interested on talking politics, however. Speaking to the others in the tour group, she mentioned that because the tropical storm would be moving off soon, she was thinking of going to see Ŏngtto Falls, a dry rocky cliff in Sŏgwip’o that became a dramatic water fall only after the rain. While we spoke, another Catholic cleric who had a car suggested that he take her and anyone interested there as soon as the rains ceased. PB and I were initially tempted by the offer, but we both had to return to Cheju City by the midafternoon and politely declined. Paco and Hosu directed us back to the bus stop where we would catch the Airport Limousine.

That the bus to Kangjŏng was the Airport Limousine and that the main stop for Kangjŏng was less than a block away from the “Peace Center,” a de-facto community center for activists and anti-base residents, underscores the multiple layers of irony in the issue. The Kangjŏng base itself parallels the ironic reality of this age of the Free International City, a project with the premise of global cooperation and sustainable development that in reality was built through arbitrary executive fiat and solid concrete. The Kangjŏng naval base project had been in discussion among policymakers for some time and anti-base movements on Cheju had existed from as early as 2002 (Gwon GS 2011), but whether it would fully materialize was uncertain.

The fateful decision to declare Kangjǒng the naval base site occurred on April 27, 2007 at a regional development meeting in which about a hundred Kangjǒng residents suggested that their neighborhood be the selected site. Governor Kim T'aehwan announced the decision to designate Kangjǒng as the naval base site was on May 14 of that year despite the fact that the majority of Kangjǒng residents were neither consulted nor informed. Angered at this decision, the Kangjǒng community held a community-wide referendum on the base issue that resulted with an overwhelming majority expressing disapproval – 36 in favor with 680 in opposition. Even when most of the community rejected the base in a full proper vote, the national government nonetheless maintained its stance that the previous election was legal and pushed on ahead. Reaction within Kangjǒng was fierce and residents – mostly farmers – were the first to protest en masse. They were met with immediate police repression and government intimidation that left permanent scars.

For Kangjǒng activists, the environmental destruction and increasing inequality that has come with rapid urban and tourism development across the island is not at all separate from the naval base issue. If one were to consider the successes and failures of social movements in the long-term, any verdict on Kangjǒng would be premature. One cannot deny that the Kangjǒng anti-base movement outlived its original purpose and managed to sustain itself far longer than anyone expected. Perhaps a reason for this surprising vitality is due to Cheju's changed position in the world and the future that its political and economic establishment seeks to expand. In Kangjǒng, following the provincial slogan, Cheju does indeed go to the world and the world does indeed come to Cheju, but for reasons beyond the original Free International City planners' expectations.

## CHAPTER THREE: MAKING THE KOREAN HAWAII

“In line with Cheju Island’s image as the ‘Hawaii of Korea,’ a beach recreation-oriented infrastructure is being planned and implemented at present. . . Results to date in terms of projected revenues have been disappointing. . . Optimistic government planners have yet to question their basic premise that Cheju Island can provide the cosmopolitan foreign tourist with the recreational amenities and creature comforts of a Hawaii, and especially that Cheju Island is well-suited to year-round beach-oriented recreations.”

David J. Nemeth (1984: 366)

“It [Yŏn-tong] was pretty much same until 2011 or something. It’s almost same. It was always same. . . But now, holy! Wow! So many things happened and duty free shops. . . I saw the signs, are changing into Japanese when I was a little kid. But, when I came back I heard, when I stayed, when I was staying in a home, apartment, in my sister’s apartment in Sin [Sin-Cheju], Chewŏn Apartments. . . when I opened the window, I could hear Chinese, you know. That, like, never happened before. And then all the signs changed into Chinese.”

Jung Sinji (Chŏng Sinji), interview  
June 24, 2015

### 3.1 – Cheju Vignette: Original Cheju Woman

I arrived at Sin-Cheju a later than I expected. Though I had arranged for the interview at 8 PM at the Starbucks of the Nohyŏng-tong E-mart, I reached the Wŏn-Nohyŏng stop at 8:20. Though E-Mart was mostly quiet with only a handful of customers about, Sin-Cheju’s beehive of activity was mostly concentrated in the neighboring Yŏn-tong. It took about forty-five minutes from Cheju City Hall, about twice the time I anticipated. Traffic in the heart of Yŏn-tong was heavy even on this cold evening of March 23<sup>rd</sup>. The sidewalks and pedestrian crossings of central Yŏn-tong, the location of the Baozhen tourist promenade, was so busy that foot traffic even spilled out onto the road. Chinese and mainland Korean tourists milled about as if the cars – including the bus! – were invisible. *Ho*, *ha*, and *hŏ* characters on the license plates, which indicate rental cars, were ubiquitous. It was at the intersection before the Lotte City Hotel that the bus was stuck for a full fifteen minutes because a tourist’s rental car blocked the intersection after a wrong turn. Sin-Cheju was full of bright garish lights. Sin-Cheju was also full of young

faces, a contrast from much of Ku-Cheju (Old Cheju City) save for City Hall; the monikers of both halves of Cheju City reflected both their construction and their population.

Many of Cheju's younger generation lived in Sin-Cheju or the newly-developed districts around the city. Cheju youth coming of age in 2015 had grown up seeing the four phases of Sin-Cheju's florescence: 1) its earliest major constructions in the late 1980s; 2) the Japanese tourism boom in the 1990s; 3) the tourism bubble burst in the 2000s; and 4) the post-2010 Chinese tourism boom. Sin-Cheju appeared in a mere blip of Cheju's long history. A striking feature of Cheju life was that even the younger generations witnessed epochal changes in a compressed period. What I was interested at the time was how Cheju's youth experienced the changes that came with Cheju's transformation into a tourist hub. As it became economic and political policy to promote Cheju's uniqueness (if not exoticness), what were the thoughts of youth who grew up in this context? This question led me to arranging an interview with YK.<sup>72</sup>

YK was among the first to respond to an open Facebook request for interviews with younger Cheju people in Sin-Cheju. At the time she was finishing up schooling at the international school in the so-called Global Education City and was looking forward to a four-year full scholarship at Wesleyan University in the US. She had the distinction of being the very first Cheju person to have earned the opportunity to attend Wesleyan. With high school wrapping up and her university plans established, YK intended to spend the rest of her time reexploring her home island as well as social issues in Korea.

YK was already waiting inside the E-mart Starbucks by the time I stepped off the 502 bus. She noted that she had arrived five minutes before me, having commuted on bus from Oedo, the westernmost urban *tong* of Cheju City. YK saw Sin-Cheju's changes firsthand, having been

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with author, Nohyöng-tong, Cheju City, March 23, 2015.

born and raised in the area. YK spoke with remarkable clarity and confidence. She began our interview mentioning that she also wanted to do an ethnography of her family since her grandparents represented a paradox in the April Third Massacre – one side was implicated as a ‘socialist’ purely by association while the other was involved in the South Korean army during the Korean War. We conversed in English rather than in Korean. A natural at languages, her command of English was perfect to the point that I had first thought that she was a *kyop’o*.<sup>73</sup> Many of her experiences as well as her fluency in both English and Spanish were intertwined with Cheju’s Free International City projects: international tourism, Sin-Cheju’s development, and the Global Education City. The following is a transcription of the main parts of our interview.

*YK: I got the feeling that I’m not even going to recognize the city when I get back from the United States.*

*TT: You’re from Cheju City, right?*

*YK: I am. I am from South Korea. And I am from Cheju Island. And I was born and raised in Sin-Cheju. So this area where I was born and raised. Growing up, I remember playing in empty fields. You know how it was, right? I would go to like piano hagwöns or math hagwöns and in between those hagwöns there was always some empty places, like, you know places with bad soil. You just know that there’s going to be some construction happening sooner or later...those are still empty, you know? I remember playing on the empty fields and that was when I was about eight, nine or something. As I became twelve or thirteen, I remember those being slowly filled with buildings, shops, and things like that. But I was like, OK. But during middle school, I was really busy studying so basically my life was like home, school, home, school, home, school.*

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<sup>73</sup> *Kyop’o* is a broad term that refers to overseas Koreans including Korean-Americans, Korean-Canadians, and Korean-Australians.



*It was a repetition of all that. But then I went to high school. So first I went to Sinsŏng Girls' High School. It's a Catholic girls' high school in Cheju. And I went there and I transferred to Branksome Hall Asia, which is the international school here. And my life has become something like home-school-home-school again.*

*When you think about it, when I first went to Taejŏng area, it's in Sŏgwip'o. So I grew up at Cheju City and I suddenly moved to Sŏgwip'o for school. I didn't live there, but I still had to go there every morning. I still do now. And that whole place was kotjawal<sup>74</sup>, right?*

*TT: Ha, ha. I remember that.*

*YK: No one had access to it. Mainly because you just cannot get in. You'll never be able to get out once you get in. And I was...when I saw all of these extravagant buildings and...especially buildings designed by Westerners, not South Koreans, it just on the outlook seemed pretty different for you, for someone who grew up on Cheju Island, right? I'm used to small buildings and small people. I'm on used to fanciness of houses. Suddenly it happened. I didn't even know that buildings could have symbols with them. You know what I mean? Like, they would go around, tour me around school when I first came to that school, and they be like, "Oh, this building symbolizes flowering."*

*But the interesting thing is, first there was nothing like CU<sup>75</sup> or anything, and then the year after we had CU, and then a year after we had like small organic cafés. Things are from Seoul, you know? But still, you see pheasants flying around. [laughs] And once I was taking that bus to come back home, I literally saw butt flying around. And I was like, what the heck was that? Whose butt is that? It was roe deer butt. So basically, it's like...they need to live in*

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<sup>74</sup> 'Kotjawal' are thick ancient forests that grow on rocky areas.

<sup>75</sup> 'CU' is a nationwide convenience store chain in Korea.

*kotjawal, but people destroyed everything and they put huge, Western buildings. They don't, they do not symbolize Cheju at all.*

*And maybe for that reason, and also another reason is that most students at those international schools are all from Kangnam, Seoul, from whatever, mainland, and I became the minority in the place I grew up. Know what I mean? And I felt pretty lonely being at the school because when I tried to speak in dialect – and before I did not even know that I spoke in dialect 'cause it's my mother tongue and no one ever told me 'Oh, you speak in dialect' or whatever, like we all do. And when I first started speaking in Korean, I thought it was Korean, I didn't know if it was Cheju dialect, everyone looked at me like, 'What the heck is she saying?' I would give presentations in my Korean class and my Korean teacher would laugh at my Korean accent, because she's from Seoul and she's like one of those 'ah' cocky Seoul people.*

*...I felt like I became a stranger, I felt like, especially when I saw those Volkswagens and BMWs at my school, it makes me feel...my parents never owned such cars. My parents never spoke with that cheesy, dirty accent. [laughs] You know? They swear at me in Cheju dialect, they love me in Cheju dialect. And my teachers did the same to me, but stopped. I had to speak in English and that's good, but I when I speak in Korean, I still have to fake. And I still do fake Seoul accent, which sometimes doesn't work. And that invasion is not only in that area, it's also at City Hall. Like I stopped going to City Hall because of my studies, I just didn't have time to. Then one day, my friend from my past high school wanted me to hang around with her in the City Hall area. I think it was 2013, December...I've never seen many franchise cafés like this [referring to Starbucks] and she took me to this place called 'Sölbing.' Apparently it's a Korean desert café and I've seen such franchise cafés in Seoul, but not as much in Cheju. And it's like, I never knew that cafés could be that big and I was just shocked. The first thing I said when I got*

*there was, 'You can only see these things in Seoul, you know that?' She's like, 'Things are changing, girl.' And it's just everywhere you go. You walk around the City Hall area where there used to be a house for people, now it's a franchised beer place. Everything is franchised, you know? I don't want to see Seoul in my island. It's just like...in a way it feels like I'm slowly being moved out in this island and that's one of the reasons I started visiting Sögwip'o more often. Because it's less contaminated.*

*TT: For now.*

*YK: For now, yes.*

*TT: When they build that other part of Sinsigaji (New Sögwip'o), there goes the neighborhood.*

*YK: Yup. And it's just like...I don't know. It's so different from what it used to be when I was little, because I have so many memories from when I was little. Like, I looked in...do you know where Halla Elementary School is?*

*TT: Yeah.*

*YK: I was born in and grew up near that area. It was pretty new for people. It used to be the most expensive place in Cheju. And I kind of felt like I was closer to Seoul than Cheju people, and when I went to international school, I was like 'Heck no!' [laughs] I can never be like them! But when I was young, I remember in April, I remember my grandmother going to mountainous areas, to pick up those kosari. You know kosari? And she would bring those home, wash those things, boil them, and she would dry them out around the apartment and no one would step on them. That was the rule. It's food. No one would step on them. And everyone did that. But we don't get to see them nowadays. It's kind of sad for me, honestly. If I come back to Cheju in the future, I feel like I'm just going to live in Sögwip'o because it's more Cheju.*

*TT: How has things changed in Sin-Cheju?*

*YK: Oh, it changed a lot! You know that apartment where you see...you know where Zapatas is? Across from Zapatas, that didn't exist a few years ago. I didn't even know! Like even they're moving in! People, there's so many Chinese moving in. They're going to international schools so that's why they're living there. And I see so many coming from Seoul for the purpose of international school or for business or for whatever, but I guess it's mostly for international school. Usually one family moves in.*

*In Sin-Cheju, there usually are new phone shops coming up, especially in Chewŏn. Here's the funny thing that happened. I went into a cosmetics shop in Chewŏn – it was Skin Food – I went in to buy lipstick and I asked a lady if I could find like whatever kind of lipsticks and she didn't understand me. And I asked her, saying again, this and this and that, and she looked at me like 'I don't get you.' And I realized her accent was Chinese and I realized, oh maybe she's Chinese and maybe she doesn't actually understand what I'm saying. It made me feel like, OK, I'm speaking Cheju in Cheju and no one understands me! And I got out of the place and looked around Chewŏn and it made me feel so sad, like some shops, their signs are all written in Chinese and it's not for me but for them. You know what I mean? ...I feel that we're losing what we have. I feel sad that they buy buildings in Cheju and that they employ Cheju people. It's like Hawai'i...This island is becoming more international, but! It's losing itself. And I'm not in favor of it.*

YK's remark about Hawai'i reflects a growing distaste for Cheju's status as the "Hawai'i of Korea" invented and cultivated since the 1970s. Initially embraced as a new way forward for what was once one of the most impoverished regions in Korea, Cheju's transformation into a tourist hub had increasingly made islanders feel more alienated. "Hawai'i" was no longer a blessing but a bane and it represented everything that was wrong with the Free International City.

It was not that Cheju islanders were opposed to international exchange and more foreign and mainland visitation, but more the case that they were becoming weary of an asymmetrical relationship.

What was worse for many such as YK is that in the visible display of prosperity all around them, many people native to the island did not and could not share in it. Choices became a luxury and the ‘Special Self-governing Province’ moniker meant little to many islanders in practical reality, including those with already-international orientations. YK’s experience with the privileged upper- and upper-middle class of Kangnam, one of Seoul’s most expensive regions, within Cheju further demonstrates a gulf between islanders and mainlanders. The Free International City project brought many new novelties and international conveniences, but it continually failed to address inequalities and longstanding resentments. Cheju islanders felt that they were becoming an island within an island threatened with a rising tide of foreign and mainland capital.

### **3.2 – Honeymoons and the State**

When David Nemeth concluded his dissertation in 1984, he concluded that tourism development would not go beyond the novelty honeymoon tourism that propelled Cheju Island’s first experiments in a tourist economy. Thirty years later, this conclusion was far from reality. Tourism is now the prime mover. The sincere peasant landscape of the 1980s gave way to golf courses and guesthouses, curiosity museums and cafés, and art markets and artisan pizzas. Nemeth had indeed later realized the sheer magnitude of the changes in the past three decades upon a recent visit to Cheju (2012). Tourism and the service economy had far surpassed the island’s traditional dependency on agriculture and fishing.

Yi Kiuk's and Hong Sunyoung's works reveal that the foundations for these new constructions had their beginnings from the first major development plans after the Korean War. Unrealistic idealizations of Cheju began already in the 1950s in *Taehan nyusŭ* (Korea News), the state-created propaganda news reels shown in movie theaters, as the island, despite ongoing counterinsurgency and actual poverty, was depicted as a pastoral refuge (Kim TM 2011: 418). How plans and portrayals have changed and responded to the immediate needs of the time and how their unresolved issues have contributed to the current crises faced in Cheju Island today are what is of interest in this chapter.

The following overview of Cheju's development history in the twentieth century is a synthesis of Yi Kiuk's, Kim T'aeil's, and Hong Sunyoung's histories of rural village, urban planning, and tourism development. Though most this dissertation concerns Cheju City, the scope of its project requires a broader overview on what ideas and material factors enabled the city's rise. Included in this recompiled history are re-examinations of a few of the original 1971 and 1994 *Chonghap kaebal kyehoek* (General Development Plans) and historical summaries presented in the *Chiri* (Geography) volume of the 2006 *Chejudoji*.

Cheju was designated a specific development zone in the grander scheme of a national economic planning project with Park Chung Hee's (r.1961-1979) rise to power. The first actual *Chejudo kaebal yŏn'gu wiwŏnhoe* (Cheju Province Development Research Committee) was established in 1963 (Yang YC, Min K, Nam CY, et al. 2008: 19) with the intent to produce plans for bringing Cheju's economy up to par with the rest of the country. This was also the first time that the Korean government declared Cheju a *t'ŭkbyŏl chiyŏk* (specialized region) with a modified program.

The early development plans indicated in the *Cheju chonghap kaebal kyehoek* show that the earliest proposed tourism projects were not actually in Cheju City but in areas far away from the urban center – Söngsan, P’yosön, and Chungmun. Söngsan, with its dramatic feature of Ilch’ulbong (Sunrise Peak) as a lone crater jutting out into the sea, would become a park and marina; P’yosön would feature a *minsokch’on* (open-air folk village museum); and Chungmun would feature luxury hotels and recreation.<sup>76</sup> At most, Cheju City was to serve as an administrative center for a growing population with developments focused on only the bare infrastructural necessities. Yi Kiuk observed that although ideas for orienting Cheju Island more toward tourism had during the Park Chung Hee regime, most of the proposals were not carried out in earnest until the 1980s (2003: 195). Aside from a lack of sufficient capital on Cheju, another problem was the inherent limitations in the heavily centralized character of the Park regime that hindered a truly local application. Development in the 1960s to 1970s concentrated more heavily on agriculture and fishing, which was also reflected in the imagery portrayed in the *Taehan nyusŭ* news reels (Kim TM 2011: 415-416). With tourism as a potential avenue for later development, the primary concerns were first basic self-sufficiency.

Cheju City consistently maintained its position and developed as a defined center focused on its historic downtown until as late as the 1980s. Ko Young-lim (Ko Yöngnim) notes that in the earliest phase of domestic tourism, the strip along Sanjich’ön stream adjacent to Cheju City Harbor was a bustling place lined with motels to service ferry travelers. The activity she noticed in the 1960s and 1970s was already a sign of the Cheju to come more than forty years later though the axes of activity shifted to newly developed areas. As was the case in the colonial period, most commercial activities took place all along Ch’ilsöngt’ong and the Chung’ang,

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<sup>76</sup> See Appendix for 1985 development zone map published in *Maeil Business News*.

Che'il, Hyöndae, and Tongyang Theaters (Chin SH 2014). Cheju International Airport at Yongtam-tong, which is directly between the Sin-Cheju new town area and old Cheju City, was not fully established until April 26, 1968 with a Cheju-Pusan-Osaka route (Yi KU 2003: 206). As host to the island's main harbor, the former Kōnipp'o expanded into Cheju Harbor during the colonial period, all products from the countryside were transported into the city. At the same time, the Park regime also intended to improve transportation between Cheju City and the then-budding town of Sōgwip'o with the construction of the 5.16 Road, a road named after Park's military takeover on May 16, 1961 (199), that was completed in 1962. Travel to Sōgwip'o by bus took as long as six hours, a factor that made road improvement an utmost necessity with Cheju's eventual shift to tourism.

Government planners subdivided the province into several distinct regions of development specializing on specific purposes or products (Yi KU 2003: 213). This carries on to a lesser extent in the present as some villages grow only specific vegetables for export; for example, on a visit to rural villages, what becomes immediately conspicuous in the farm fields of Chongdal-ri and P'yōngdae-ri in Kujwa-ŭp are that carrots are their primary crop whereas Kūmsōng-ri in Aewōl-ŭp produces broccoli and potatoes. The distinction between *nongch'on* (farming village) and *ōch'on* (fishing village), though clear between the coastal communities and upland *chungsan'gan* region, was nonetheless not always strongly defined within coastal villages. Many households engaged in both activities, a practice that continues to the present where retired women divers may sometimes invest in *kamgyul* (mandarin oranges) farming.

The Park Chung Hee regime quickly realized Cheju's *kamgyul* potential and the advantages that a 'warmer' climate enabled. Cheju had at least twenty of its own native species of mandarin oranges, but it was the sweet Japanese-origin Satsuma mandarin origins introduced



via a Catholic priest in 1907 that became what islanders called ‘*taehak namu*’ (the college fund tree) (Yi KU 2003: 223-224). Much development took place in the 1960s-1970s period, but implementation of the actual various General Development Plans was not complete. Likely reasons were the fact that Cheju was the poorest province in the entire country with a GDP that was not even half the national average (189). Immediate concerns would have been the bare essentials of improving livelihoods. Plans, especially with regards to urban development and updated tourist infrastructure, were not put into full effect until as late as 1985 (195). Nonetheless, the developments in the 1960s and into the early 1980s were ultimately critical for Cheju’s eventual transition to tourism. Fishing and agriculture provided a necessary economic base and basic infrastructure in the form of ports and roads were in place.

Throughout the Park era, Cheju produced *yuch’ae kkot* (rape flower) for Korea’s domestic canola oil production, a crop that incidentally allowed for its photogenic character alongside *kamgyul*. When *yuch’ae kkot* blossom in the spring all at once, they produce dramatic fields of bright yellow flowers, which became an annual domestic tourist draw into the present (Figure 5). In the 1980s government promotions exoticized the Cheju countryside for a budding domestic honeymoon tourist market. By the 1990s, *yuch’ae kkot* fields, aside from waterfalls and Hallasan, became a favored image to represent Cheju in the state-produced *Taehan News* reels before the Korean government terminated its propaganda news in 1994.



Figure 5: *Yuch'ae kkot* field in Söngsan-öp.<sup>77</sup>

Tourism was mostly a side project, but one that the Park Chung Hee regime foresaw as a potential alternative track for development. As early as 1961, the administration enacted the Tourist Promotion Act and established the Korean Tourism Organization in 1962. The government commissioned research for the possibility of larger tourist-oriented projects in 1964. Chirisan in the southern part of the peninsula became the nation's first national park in 1967 while Hallasan earned that designation in 1970 (Hong SY 2013: 116). Between 1960 to 1970, the island saw the creation of expanded domestic ferry routes to and from the mainland, the first 18-hole golf course, and designated special tourist zones. The Korean government further upgraded Cheju Airport into Cheju International Airport in 1968 when Korean Air began offering direct flight service to Japan. Just three years after the 1965 normalization treaty between South Korea and Japan, Cheju became a destination for Japan's rising middle class.

The Park Chung Hee regime's *Saemaül Undong* (New Village Movement) in the 1970s also played an important role in tourism development. Premised on rural 'modernization' and

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<sup>77</sup> Pak, T'aesang. 2011. "Chejudo yuch'ae kkot-e ppajödürö popsida," *Ohmy News*, [http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS\\_Web/View/at\\_pg.aspx?CNTN\\_CD=A0001549941](http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0001549941) [Accessed May 3 2017].

reducing the urban-rural gap, the New Village Movement had the double purpose of developing rural infrastructure and disseminating a state-centered ideology at the expense of local practices (Ibid., 132). Cheju ‘tradition’ took sever blows in the New Village Movement as rural practices, particularly shamanism, were stigmatized. Most of Cheju’s thatched-roof huts were converted to corrugated metal.<sup>78</sup> Personal experiences among people who lived in this period nonetheless varied. In some cases, village communities quietly allowed shamanic practices to continue while in other cases such as in P’aengdae (Kr: P’yŏngdae) and Sŏhwa (Kr.: Sehwa) in Kujwa-ŭp, shamans were forced underground or spied upon. In one case, campaigns verged on the absurd as villagers were instructed to appear pleasant and smile for tourists. Even as the state allowed for easier mass mobilization, Hong Sunyoung (2013) identifies the legacies introduced in the New Village Movement as a reason for the continued top-down approaches and general passivity toward festivals and cultural productions in the post-2000s.

One of the early capstone achievements for realizing the government’s ambition for a Korean Hawai’i was the Chungmun Kwan’kwang Tanji’s (Chungmun Tourist Complex) first phase completion in 1978. Chungmun’s remote location alongside the dramatic Chusang Chŏllidae columnar basalt rock formations and the white sand Saekdal Beach had immediate advantages. It included features of Cheju’s exoticness and it was an ideal place for relaxation, which would make it an important component of the domestic honeymoon tourism of the 1980s. Though a site specifically for tourists and therefore not a place of permanent settlement, the Chungmun Tourist Complex was among the early state-planned ‘new town’ and Ebenezer Howard’s ‘garden city’-inspired type of urban experiments in Cheju alongside the 1977 Sin-

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<sup>78</sup> Though many islanders are not entirely opposed to the newer forms of roofing, some note the irony that the ‘modern’ material created new problems. Corrugated metal roofs tended to trap the intense heat of summer and were more vulnerable to strong typhoons than the typical Cheju thatched roof, which developed over centuries with the specific purpose of resisting strong winds.

Cheju (New Cheju City) project (O HS 2006: 881). As a special zone for tourism with luxury hotels, Chungmun was created as an organized self-contained unit with ample green space.

While the initial tourism projects were all in Sŏgwip'o, the agricultural and fishing development did spur population growth as well as Cheju City's growth. About 60% of investment was still directed to Cheju City in the early projects because the city was the main base for province-wide development (Hong SY 2013: 130). Cheju City was to Cheju as Honolulu was to Hawai'i. In sum, production increased over seventy-five times from 1962 to 1979, which indicates that Cheju Province was the country's fastest growing regional economy (Yi KU 2003: 13). In 1975, the national government declared tourism a strategic sector and organized government agencies specifically for its planning and management (Hong SY 2013: 117). South Korea's opening to Japan following normalized relations in 1965 also opened the door to so-called '*kisaeng*' (courtesan) sex tourism, some of which took place in Cheju. The shells of brothels remained in Cheju into as late as 2007 after the collapse of the Japanese tourism bubble, but they remain fresh in the memories of even younger Cheju Islanders who lived in the Sin-Cheju (New Cheju) new town area.<sup>79</sup>

With the onset of trade liberalization as early as 1977, the rural population began to take heavy hits in finances and demographics. Attempts to turn to growing tropical fruit in Cheju were mostly unsuccessful as Cheju, despite its 'tropical' image, was ultimately unsuitable for mango, banana, and pineapple production at a large enough scale to offset necessary investment costs. Farmers' difficulties increased when the Korean government lowered import tariffs on produce from neighboring countries and the US. By the 1980s, the agricultural population dropped from 84% in the 1960s to 44%, indicating a heavy shift toward urban areas within two

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<sup>79</sup> Chŏng Sinji, interview with author, Nohyŏng-tong, Cheju City, June 24, 2015.

decades (Yi KU 2003: 214). Most of this was concentrated in Cheju City and the urban influx put a greater pressure on the city's modest infrastructure. The *Chonghap kaebal kyehoek* (General Development Plan) had to be revised to respond to an urbanizing population, but this would also become insufficient. The greater Sŏgwip'o area, elevated to a *si* (city) in 1981 (Yang YC, Min K, Nam CY, et al. 2008: 18), on the other hand, was developed in disparate clusters scattered across the southern half of the island. Sŏgwip'o City was a city in legal terms only.

How Cheju's government and the JDI development think tank conceive of Cheju's development history is instructive. The first complete *Cheju kukche chayu tosi chonghap kyehoek* (Cheju Free International City General Plan) produced for 2002 outlines Cheju's various development plans as follows (Cheju 2003: 15-16). The first phase was the establishment of *Chejudo chayu chiyŏk* (Cheju Province Autonomous Region) in 1963. The second phase was the 1972-1981 *Chejudo chonghap kaebal kyehoek* (Cheju Province General Development Plan) produced in 1971. The third phase was the *Chejudo kwan'gwang chonghap kaebal kyehoek* (Cheju Province General Tourism Development Plans) in 1973. The fourth phase was the second General Plans. The fifth phase was the *Cheju kyŏngje palchŏn 5-kae nyŏn kyehoek* (Cheju Five-year Economic Development Plan). The sixth and final phase before the official 2001 announcement and 2002 legislative decision was the *Cheju kukche chayu tosi kibon kyeheok* (The Primary Plans for the Cheju Free International City).

The Korean government conceived of Cheju as a "free trade zone" since the Park Chung Hee regime, a factor that would become the cornerstone of the Free International City. On the other hand, the 1963 designation was merely the start of research into the concept's possibility and not an actual practice. The first concrete plans produced in 1971 established specific economic development policies for each of the island's regions and laid the groundwork for what

would become Chungmun Tourism Resort a short distance to the west of Sŏgwip'o. A more concerted shift to tourism began with an actual dedicated tourism plan in 1973. The short description of this phase claims that this is the point in which planners and officials premised tourism in terms of *kukche sujun* (world-class). In 1978, the Chungmun Tourist Complex project was initiated and the number of foreign tourists to South Korea reached a full million (Hong SY 2013: 118).

The first actual moves to make Cheju an 'autonomous' region was in the 1990s when Korea was transitioning to a postindustrial economy with a post-authoritarian system to meet the challenges of globalization. As previous plans for tourism development fell through, the Korean government allowed for Cheju to have its own separate planning with the 1991 *Chejudo kaebal t'ŭkpyŏlbŏp* (Cheju Province Special Development Law) (Yang YC, Min K, Nam CY, et al. 2008: 21). It was in this context that the first actual long-term general plans – rather than the usual short-term targets – emerged in the form of the 1994 *Chejudo chonghap kaebal kyehoek*. Greater regional autonomy afforded in 1991 and specialized planning in 1994 augmented governors' and mayors' executive power in development issues (Cheju Province 2001: 15). The shift toward political autonomy – albeit largely nominal at this time – in the 1990s increasingly included concerns regarding local identity and environmental sustainability. One perennial problem that remained, the organizational restructuring including the *Chejudo kaebal t'ŭkpyŏlbŏp* did not fully include Cheju residents in the process (Hong SY 2013: 135). On the contrary, some viewed it as an avenue for more executive power on development issues.

The 1990s plans all anticipated Cheju's economic liberalization and the Free International City. The idea of a visa-free zone with minimal regulations entered policy debate in 1998, a year after the 1997 IMF crisis devastated South Korea's economy. From this time

onward, official planning was increasingly concerned with transforming the province into a new critical nodal point for transnational exchange in Northeast Asia. The successes of the 1986 Asian Games, the 1988 Seoul Olympics, and the 2002 World Cup, made tourism a crucial sector for the South Korean economy. Tourism profits in Cheju surpassed *kamgyul* in 1986 (Yi KU 2003: 189). The general plans and Seoul-directed policies for Cheju were no longer sufficient. Transition to a liberal democracy also raised the prospects for greater regional autonomy and decentralized authority. This set the stage for the Korean government to ratify the *Cheju kukche chayu tosi t'ŭkpyŏlbŏp* (Cheju Free International City Special Law) in 2002 (Yang YC, Min K, Nam CY, et al. 2008: 21) and Cheju's change into a 'special self-governing province' in 2006.

### **3.4 – The Free International City Project**

Korea began the twenty-first century still reeling from the fallout of the 1997 financial crisis. With the industrial sector in tatters, the shift was toward a combination of high-tech, IT, and service-oriented industries. For Cheju Island, where heavy and IT industry of any sort was absent, the primary focus for economic development was tourism. The agricultural and fishing economy remained important, but was at a serious disadvantage in the face of global competition. The beginning of liberalization for *kamgyul* imports dealt a critical blow to the citrus industry in 1977 and prices faced frequent fluctuations in the years that followed (Yi KU 2003: 210). Domestic tourism, too, was considered insufficient as the national government recognized that there were many more outbound tourists than inbound tourists to Korea in the 1990s (Hong SY 2013: 118). Since Japan had not recovered from its own financial woes, the Japanese tourism bubble that propped up the 1980s and early 1990s tourism sputtered and became relatively inconsequential in the 2000s. With Korea's global turn, the Kim Daejung (Kim Taejung) regime (1998-2003) created Tourism Vision 21 to address Korea's shortcomings

in attracting more international tourists. Cheju's place in the greater scheme of things was for it to become an emerging metropolitan hub for international tourism and multinational corporate investment.

Only a year after the Korean government and local provincial authorities discussed the concept of a 'Free International City' experiment, the Kōnsōl Kyot'ongbu (Ministry of Construction and Transportation) commissioned the American consulting agency Jones Lang LaSalle in 1999. The agency's task was to research the feasibility of the project for Cheju. As the ministry was aware of Cheju's existing limitations in a lack of capital, appropriate infrastructure, and suitable governing system, such an undertaking was to be an experiment in Korean regional autonomy. Already built into the initial proposals was the idea of drawing foreign capital investment, particularly that of the rising Chinese economy.

The Free International City is sometimes nicknamed the so-called "Hongapore" project (29) to reflect its disparate influences. The Free International City and the notion of a 'special self-governing' region were purely experimental concepts in the beginning of the 2000s. No such concept existed and both were only developed as the national and local government developed them as legal definitions. Ideas were drawn from Singapore's global orientation, the one-country-two-systems approach for the Hong Kong Special Autonomous Region, and the United States' federal system. All three were not fully practical wholesale and thus the concept of 'special self-governing' status was an amalgamation of them. Article 12 of what became the *Cheju t'ŭkbyōl chachido sōlch'i mit kukche chayudosŏ chosōng-ŭl wihan t'ŭkbyōlbōp* (Special Law to Establish Cheju Special Self-governing Province and Composing the Free International City) declared that Cheju could make most of its own decisions except for foreign affairs, national defense, and constitutional law (Yang YC, Min K, Nam CY, et al. 2008: 28). The



province's internal political structure would unify the northern and southern halves into the two districts of Cheju City and Sŏgwip'o City respectively, a feature that ironically strengthened governing hierarchy and weakened representation (Min K and Pak CM 2013: 251).

With the Free International City as a designation first announced in 2001 and then ratified into law in 2002, the government commissioned planners to create a full ten-year plan for 2002-2011, which they then expanded on February 2003. The plans identified seven great projects: 1) upscale condominiums in Yerae-tong in Sŏgwip'o; 2) an expansion to Chungmun; 3) an upgraded tourist harbor for Sŏgwip'o; 4) a techno park outside of Cheju City; 5) a free trade zone by Cheju International Airport; 6) shopping outlets for Chinese and domestic tourists; and 7) ecological, mythological, and historical themed parks (Cheju 2003: 64-68). An additional feature that would come later was the Global Education City in Taejŏng-ŭp established to accommodate international schools including North London Collegiate School (NLCS) and Branksome Hall. A further modification to the project was a so-called Health Care Town to promote medical tourism. To allow for greater deregulation and decentralization to accelerate these projects, Cheju officially became Korea's first ever *tŭkpyŏl chach'ido* in 2006 after a special committee on regional autonomy, the Chŏngbu hyŏksin chibang pun'gwŏn wiwŏnhoe (Committee for Governmental Reform for Regional Decentralization), deliberated on the issue since May 2005. Cheju would allow for eventual visa-free visitation, which was formally completed in 2010 and the impetus for the post-2010 boom, and tax break incentives.

Statistically, with the major tourism and urbanization projects pushing ahead in the second decade of the twenty-first century, Cheju's boom enabled it to have the lowest unemployment rate in the country at 1.7 percent in 2012 according to the OECD and 3.5 percent in 2015 according to the Cheju provincial government. In both OECD and provincial

government stats, however, despite a relatively lower unemployment rate, Cheju continues to lag behind the rest of Korea in personal incomes despite rising cost of living. A noticeable trend in the figures between 2012 and 2015 alone is that unemployment rose slightly despite new major projects and an increased influx in tourism. This could be in relation to Cheju's rising in-migration from the mainland, but this also casts doubts on the Free International City's promises.

A nationwide turn to tourism, culture, and international exchange in nationwide governmental policy as a panacea to financial limitations prompted individual provinces to revive or invent new festivals to attract attention. Cheju alone had 51 festivals in 2006 (Hong SY 2013: 153). The number of festivals declined to 27 in 2009 after re-evaluations but rebounded to 88 in 2016.<sup>80</sup> The early years of the Free International City project instigated new re-inventions of tradition, the very things that the state initially denigrated as obstacles to development in the 1960s. With the shift to tourist promotion and increased burden upon individual localities to compete and secure investment, all regions – not only Cheju – have attempted to showcase (or outright fabricate) whatever uniqueness they possess or claim to possess. *Sammu chǒngsin* was re-invented as a utopian vision of Cheju (Yoo CI 2006) as well as the notion that Cheju had in antiquity been a maritime civilization and hence a part of an ancient globalization. “*Sammu chǒngsin*” literally translates to “the spirit of three absences,” which refers to Chosŏn scholar-officials’ observations that Cheju lacked gates, beggars, and robbers. The insistence on Cheju’s ancient centrality as a maritime state or amenability to global exchange ironically comes from the very same localist scholars who critiqued the Free International City. In the reinvention of Cheju, a mobile moneyed elite-oriented concept was simply given a politically correct face.

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<sup>80</sup> This figure is based on the list of existing officially-recognized and promoted festivals on Cheju’s government website. There are many more unofficial festivals that are community or activist initiatives.

By 2016, most of the projects proposed in the ten-year plan were achieved or ongoing. All projects, despite initial claims to sustainability and intent to improve islander livelihood, were contested. Aside from alarm raised over environmental damage and disruption to rural communities, some projects also faced legal challenges when their plans were revised to include casinos. Special economic favors given to foreign, particularly Chinese, or mainland Korean entities at the expense of Cheju islanders aroused considerable suspicion. Even islanders who had been afforded the opportunity to utilize these facilities question whether they are truly beneficial given that all remember the end of the Japanese tourism bubble.

The Free International City project is both a continuation of previous top-down planning policies that characterized previous developmental regimes and a departure. At a glance, “Free International City” appears to be one of the many catch phrases and slogans that provincial governments coined to draw attention to Cheju Island even if the words do not reflect reality. Yet the “Free International City” was the product of much deliberation and has produced real results and consequences. Whereas previous provincial development plans – all of which were determined at national government agencies, particularly Kukt’obu (the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transportation) – were implemented in short term increments Free International City’s was premised on long term goals for a more total transformation. The consequences are a different matter. Projects have been continuously expanded and changed, especially with the Vision 2030 plans. Initially a nationally-instigated project, the Free International City became increasingly localized to Cheju’s own bureaucracy, for better or worse.

Cheju islanders have debated the appropriateness of the project as well as the motivations, planning, and principles from the very beginning. Much of the revisions and day-to-

day development scandals represent the very contradictions inherent to the Free International City and the ‘Special Self-governing Province.’ New directions sought not long after such as Governor Kim T’aehwan’s so-called *Nyu Cheju undong* (New Cheju Movement) in 2007 and then Governor U Künmin’s and Governor Wön Hüiryong’s controversial green light for Chinese-backed tourism projects from 2012 onward. Despite locals’ acceptance of a more international Cheju, backlash has been constant with the ongoing parade of construction projects and campaigns.

From 2010 onwards, Cheju tourism and urbanization accelerated at an unprecedented scale. In February 1, 2010, the Cheju Provincial government – with Seoul’s blessing – revised immigration regulations to allow any national of the People’s Republic of China who invests at least 500,000,000 won (roughly 500,000 USD) permanent residency in Cheju (Yi CH 2010). Another important change to immigration law is that Chinese nationals are allowed to travel to Cheju without visa restrictions, a factor that has allowed for the enormous tourist volume mentioned earlier in this chapter. At the same time, pinpointing the massive influx of tourism purely on Chinese investment and Chinese tourists would be inaccurate; the overwhelming majority of tourist arrivals still is from mainland Korea and it is to both Chinese and mainland Koreans that islanders express ambivalence. Although Chinese tourism dropped significantly in early 2017 amidst the diplomatic spat over the US-deployed THAAD missile system in South Korea (Liu 2017), development continues under the Wön administration.

What began as a project to remake Cheju Province as a unified metropolitan city and a new proud hub of Northeast Asia has dragged islanders into a quagmire. The achievements – new infrastructure and a revived awareness of Cheju’s potentials – made in the past two decades are undeniable. These changes, however, have come at the cost of increasing controversy,

deepening inequality, growing internal schisms, and environmental degradation. The UNESCO World Natural Heritage credentials have become more an advertising gimmick than a tangible reality. Promises of wider citizen participation in a ‘free’ international city have yet to materialize. The administrative consolidation that came with the Cheju Special Law arguably enabled provincial executive autonomy rather than provincial political autonomy. Pervasive political impasse has led many islanders to regard local elections as a matter of “*kwendang*”<sup>81</sup> (personal favor exchange) rather than “*chöngdang*” (political party). Amidst general passivity toward the wider political process of the ‘Special Self-governing Province,’ a frequent observation among islanders is that votes are usually more based on regional and personal ties than actual party platforms. This is both a strong boon and a bane on either side of policies with little middle ground, a factor that became clear in some development controversies where entire communities can form strong solidarities or find themselves irreversibly divided.

Relaxed restrictions on corporate investment activity – especially in regards to mainland Korean and Chinese corporations – has also put Cheju islanders at a severe disadvantage. The Free International City’s shortcomings demonstrates the critical flaws of such an ambitious undertaking as well as the fundamental problems of top-down globalization initiatives that are being implemented across the world. With an emphasis on image and quantitative results, one must question whether Cheju has at all become more competitive compared to the project’s models of Hong Kong and Singapore. Cheju has become more vulnerable to the whims of

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<sup>81</sup> This is a common expression on Cheju. The word “*kwendang*” itself refers to earlier communal structures in which families would exchange labor with one another for favors. As a survival tactic, this served to strengthen community bonds and to ensure some sort of social safety net in the event of a natural disaster or crop failure. A feature of “*kwendang*” that Cheju islanders often note with pride is that labor exchange is not strictly within patrilineal lines and can also go beyond kinship ties. Though sometimes used with a romantic connotation to refer to a notion of early egalitarianism, in politics, “*kwendang*” has an extremely negative implication as it is used to castigate official nepotism and corruption.

multinational corporate capital<sup>82</sup> and decision-making continues to be government official-centered or based on personal ties.

The most striking characteristics of the Free International City project and Cheju City's urban revitalization push are their repetitiveness and lack of creativity. A glance at other similar attempts at culture-led development from Portland, Oregon (Shaw S. 2013) to the so-called "ubiquitous-eco-city" devised in mainland Korea (Tan Y. and Lee SH 2014) reveals the degree to which these ideas are in common currency among urbanists. The inflation of these ideas as currency, however, is potentially (if not already) destructive. Arts-centered approaches, if successful, can bring in much-needed attention, but they can also fail to resolve local inequalities or further segregate communities. Eco-city design based on the latest electronic technology likewise ultimately does not move away from top-down planning and unsustainable practices premised on constant construction and consumption. An irony – and one that many can point to Richard Florida's (2012) "creative class" or perhaps even Kevin Lynch's (1960) "imageability" – is that in the name of competitiveness, culture-led development has become a routinized exercise in following an established trend. While urban planners, urbanists, and even locally based intellectuals and culture proponents embrace culture-led transformation to varying degrees as a viable alternative, multiple cities across the world have adopted similar approaches. A serious contradiction emerges in which Cheju is a prime example – if all kinds of cities across the globe are adopting a similar orientation, wherein lies the uniqueness?

### **3.5 – Cheju Vignette: When Cheju Goes to the World**

Koh Eun-kyoung (Ko Ŭn'gyōng), a geographic education major in her early thirties, announced in the summer of 2014 that she, along with her husband Yi Kyujin, were organizing

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<sup>82</sup> A prime example is the Chinese-funded Dream Tower controversy, which will be explored further in Chapter 6.

one of Cheju's first internationally-oriented NGOs. She called it "Global Inner Peace." Although the name had a religious flair about it, the organization was to be purely nonpartisan. Each component of the name rather was about larger objectives: a global orientation, grassroots alternative sustainable development, and promotion of peace and cross-border dialogue.<sup>83</sup> Cheju, Koh wanted to emphasize, had many useful practices and experiences – such as regenerative farming and *kwendang* – that could provide another path for local development. For some time she had thought about expanding her activities, which were previously under the aegis of other organizations, but it was not until 2014 that she and her husband put a plan into action.

I first met Koh Eun-kyoung at the end of 2010 when I had the idea of going on a winding 144-kilometer seven-day excursion from Tongamsa, Cheju's easternmost Buddhist temple at the base of Ilch'ulbong (Sunrise Peak), to the southwestern temple of Yakch'önsa. I first contacted Yakch'önsa's main office where a staffperson directed me to Kwangmyöngsa<sup>84</sup> temple in nearby Chungmun. There I encountered Chayön Sünim, an articulate young nun, who introduced me to her father Subo Sünim and Koh Eun-kyoung. Koh was at the time was a coordinator for Yakch'önsa's temple-stay program and interpreter for non-Korean participants, but she was visiting Chayön Sünim to discuss Kwangmyöngsa's temple stay program. Koh was eager to advise me on my route and joined for three of the seven days when I embarked on January 2011. Although Koh, like many other women her age, shifted in between jobs due to Cheju's unstable economy, she was a remarkably optimistic person. My impression of her was that she had a rare talent for organization and negotiation.

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<sup>83</sup> See <http://blog.naver.com/gipjeju> [in Korean].

<sup>84</sup> Now known as 'Subosa.'

By 2010 Koh already had an impressive career with UN peace activities, having volunteered in Sri Lanka for several years and direct experiences in China as well as Haiti. While third-world volunteering became a resume-building trend among Korean university students, something that geography Professor Kwon Sangcheol (Kwŏn Sangch'ŏl) critiqued as mere 'voluntourism,' Koh's interest was in international aid and locally-based development. When she spoke of her idea and plan for an NGO before she and her husband registered the organization in 2014, I felt that she was no doubt the most qualified person to make it happen. Make it happen, she did.

In the beginning, it was simply Koh and Yi with a few university student volunteers, an intern, and a KOICA<sup>85</sup>-sponsored permanent staff person. Koh recruited volunteers through her own connections at Cheju National University and KOICA and was well-known among international students. Yi poured his own personal savings to completely remodel the office space to better reflect Korean and Cheju symbols. The main conference room was painted black, white, red, yellow, and turquoise after the *ohaeng* (Five Phases) in East Asian geomantic thought. As sustainability and a Cheju sensibility for resourcefulness comprised the central philosophy, Koh, Yi, and the student members collected whatever secondhand things they could find to furnish the office. As a new organization, Global Inner Peace was already involved in promoting free Korean language classes and consultation for non-Korean residents,<sup>86</sup> but the organization needed a first major event to mark its official entry onto the Cheju world stage. Koh came up with the idea of a 'Peace Walk' on September 21, 2014 to coincide with the annual UN

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<sup>85</sup> The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is what Koh described as "Korea's Peace Corps." Though far smaller than the US, KOICA performs the same general tasks of sending volunteers to advise or assist local development tasks in other countries sponsored by the Korean government.

<sup>86</sup> Language classes later came to include Spanish as a Peruvian international student volunteered to conduct them.



Peace Day. The event would take participants to key historical points pertaining to Cheju's own violent past and attempts to overcome adversity.

The Peace Walk would be Global Inner Peace's first and most important test. Yi and Koh noted that aside from funding difficulties in an island where donation-giving was still uncommon, the Cheju City government also lacked experience in working with an NGO. Koh mentioned to me once, "Many people still think Korea is a developing country." In order to get necessary support, Global Inner Peace as an organization had to turn to KOICA and even the state-funded Munhwa Yesul Chedan (Culture and Arts Foundation). Convincing the Cheju City government to approve the Peace Walk was a challenge unto itself. What came as the greatest surprise was that some officials did not know that Cheju, which has three sites registered as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, had a relationship with the UN! Yi had to make periodic visits to Cheju City offices to negotiate for use of Kwandŏkjŏng's plaza space and media equipment for the opening ceremony featuring a video statement from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon (Pan Kimun). Most of the month of August was dedicated for preparing that one event. Yi and a few student volunteers went on periodic excursions to estimate the time and distance between sites to provide a comprehensive plan for the city government.

As I was in the midst of beginning my own research on Cheju City's *wŏndosim* (Old Town) where most of the Peace Walk would take place, Koh and Yi approached me for planning a route. I did not need to add much. My role was simply to give advice on the actual walking environment through the *wŏndosim* area since they chose the sites beforehand. Aside from sharing some historical information on the select sites, all that I added to modify the route was to have the walk travel through the historic Mugŏnsŏng neighborhood and then walk along the coastal T'apdong Plaza on the way back into the *wŏndosim* center. Although the walk would take

place on a weekend when traffic would be light, Koh estimated that the event would have at least two hundred participants. Her contacts at the university and among the foreign resident community were committed to join and so rain or shine, the event would go as planned. Only a few days before I returned to the US in early September, we made a full test walk for the entire course.

The 9:30 AM to 12 PM schedule was arranged as follows. All would register at Kwandŏkjŏng plaza where Global Inner Peace volunteers and staff would initiate an opening ceremony with a recorded statement from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (Pan Kimun). The group would immediately proceed west to Sŏjabok, a Buddhist-shamanic guardian deity figure, at Haeryunsa temple in the easternmost edge of Yongtam-tong. They would head to Sŏjabok's counterpart Tongjabok on the hill overlooking the east bank of Sanjich'ŏn. In the final half of the walk, the group would visit the monuments to eighteenth-century female philanthropist Kim Mandŏk and anti-colonial resistor Cho Pongho at Moch'unghsa (memorial to patriots), the scenic Pyŏldobong hill, and conclude at 12 PM at the ruins of Konŭltong village. The walk was a chronological narrative of Cheju's experiences with uncertainty and violence starting from the T'amna period to the April Third massacre. Though it concluded with one of the lost villages completely destroyed in the massacre, Koh's intention was not to simply repeat a narrative of victimhood. Rather, Koh wanted to use it to urge participants to think of a new future where one could avert such tragedies.

I was unable to directly experience Global Inner Peace's Peace Walk, but I was pleased to see that their event was featured on the *Jeju Weekly* as well as local media outlets. Although the event had to be rushed a little to keep within schedule, Koh recounted that participation was larger and attracted more attention than initially expected. The organization's debut was more

than successful. Global Inner Peace cemented itself a place among Cheju City's various civic organizations. High school students at Branksome Hall Asia international school in Taejŏng-ŭp would form their own "Branksome Inner Peace" group as an affiliate in the year following.

The Peace Walk's success was also a critical learning experience for Global Inner Peace's student members. With only a few exceptions, they had never participated in this type of organizational activity. When I returned to Cheju again in January 2015, student members confidently referred to themselves as "*hwaltongga*" (activists). Those that formed the core membership in Global Inner Peace's humble beginnings would continue to be active, balancing their busy student lives with a newfound passion for grassroots activism. One would travel with Koh to Sri Lanka, one would become a part of a KOICA mission in Ethiopia, and others would be crucial organizing members for the 2015 UN Peace Day event held at Cheju's Stone Culture Park with the cooperation of Branksome Inner Peace.

Following their surprising 2014 success, Global Inner Peace was set on making UN Peace Day an annual event. Global Inner Peace gained much from their 2014 experiences. The change of venue to the Stone Culture Park located far south of Cheju City in the forested highlands of Kyorae allowed for larger open space and less bureaucratic processes that made organizing difficult in the 2014 event. But by the time planning and work began for the 2015 event, Global Inner Peace had already made a name for itself and attracted more volunteers. Koh was again able to utilize her expanded network. With hundreds more participants including people of various nationalities including Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Sri Lankans, and Egyptians, the half-day event had three programs – music performances following the presentation of a recorded speech from Ban Ki-moon, a walking tour through the Stone Culture Park's massive an outdoor museum of Cheju stone artisanship and volcanic rocks, and arts and

crafts booths. The most striking feature of the event was a large student-made *pangsa'tap* consisting of cardboard boxes covered in black paper and bearing the word “peace” in multiple languages. The culmination of the peace day event was when all participants linked hands to perform a circle dance around the *pangsa'tap*.

Cheju Special Self-governing Province may have established the slogan “*Segye-ka channŭn Cheju, segye-ro kanŭn Cheju*” (“The World comes to Cheju and Cheju goes to the World”), but non-governmental actors realized this objective more than official action. Global events that provincial authorities sponsored and managed were either deficient received with muted responses. The two UN Peace Day events that Global Inner Peace achieved with purely grassroots organizing stood in stark contrast to my own experience with the 2010 Global Jeju Foreign Language Festival in which foreign teachers on provincial payroll were required to attend. Although called “global,” the event simply emphasized English-speaking countries and the province’s English language programs. Aside from the uninspired programming, a display of the half-hearted nature of such events were the inaccurate information given about highlighted countries.<sup>87</sup> Unlike the province’s global events, grassroots organizations such as Global Inner Peace involved a remarkable diversity of people and was largely volunteer-driven. Global Inner Peace developed in the context of the Free International City, but its objectives and practices were ultimately different. Whereas the goal of the Free International City sought was to attract foreign investment even at the expense of residents, Global Inner Peace sought to use Cheju’s historical experiences as the basis of intercultural dialogue for grassroots participation.

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<sup>87</sup> One such example was the Canada booth where the sign was spelled “Cadana.”

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE GRANDMOTHER LAND

“...what assets we inherit from our ancestors, no matter how shabby, is what is precious. This is because the souls of the ancestors and the traces of life are imprinted in them.”

– Chin Sönggi, Cheju folklorist (2010: 26)

“This is the wisdom that sustained the history of Cheju people, a means for consolation in overcoming life in a harsh world. Mythology changes frustrated aspirations from reality into the dreams of an imaginary world. Therefore, failures are rationalized and in being consoled (through myth), one can go on in an exhausting life.”

– Yi Yöngkwön, localist historian (2005: 46)

### 3.1 Cheju Vignette – The Senjari Rangers

A group of friends were in for a rude awakening in the spring of 2014. American documentary maker Joey and several Korean friends including Jung Sinji found the ancient Sölsaemit Shrine terribly desecrated. The limbs of the *sinmok* (divine tree) were sawed off and part of the trunk was split (Figure 6). The concrete walls that surrounded the shrine were destroyed. Cloth offerings were ripped up and offering implements were smashed. All signs indicated that this was deliberate with malicious intent, but a man who lived nearby and had seemed evasive on questions regarding the shrine blamed it on “the wind.” The shrine’s last surviving worshippers were, however, certain they knew the perpetrator – a fundamentalist Christian who had been at odds with their community for decades. City officials were alerted but no arrests could be made. No one claimed responsibility nor was there sufficient evidence to indict any one individual. The last Sölsaemit Shrine worshippers insisted that this was no accident yet they declined to press charges against anyone. This was not the first time. Sölsaemit Shrine was repeatedly desecrated since the fateful events of the April Third Massacre nearly seventy years ago, when the village was razed.



Figure 6: Ruins of Sölsaemit Shrine.<sup>88</sup>

Sölsaemit Shrine was the main shrine of Chuksöng, a small village located in the rural upland regions of present-day Ara-tong and Odüng-tong of Cheju City. Sölsaemit, which literally translates to “temple springs,” was named after a spring by the shrine that once spurt pure mineral water. Agricultural development has since caused the waters to deplete and become contaminated, a fate that befell many springs during Cheju’s agricultural and urban development. Despite the loss of its full *ponp’uri* (origin myth), folklorist Mun Mubyöng recognized the shrine as one of the most ancient and powerful sacred sites near Cheju City. Sölsaemit Shrine was said to have been so powerful a *senjari* (sacred seat) that Governor Yi Hyöngsang could not destroy it in his 1701-1702 anti-shamanism campaign, a factor that makes its repeated desecration since the twentieth century all the more distressing. Though the open-air shrine’s rock walls suffered

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<sup>88</sup> Photo by Joey Rositano, Ara-tong, Cheju City, May 1 2015. Permission to use photograph was granted by Rositano.

damage during the April Third Massacre, its *sinmok* survived. Chuksŏng survivors related a fanatical Christian pastor who assaulted the god tree died from a mysterious illness shortly after his act. They interpreted it as a sign that Sŏlsaemit Shrine still had some of its power left.

Sŏlsaemit Shrine – or what is left of it – is a true *lieu de memoire*, a site of memory, to the survivors of Chuksŏng. Chuksŏng, like many other mid-mountain villages, had the misfortune of being geographically in the wrong place. Extreme right-wing paramilitary forces and South Korean military counter-insurgency operations were premised on indiscriminate scorched earth tactics targeting all mid-mountain villages. A Cheju City Buddhist monk, who had provided counseling to survivors, noted to me once that sometimes the reasons for the massacre of villages were absurd; in one case, it was simply because a village girl took offense at a mainland soldier’s sexual advances that an entire community would be declared “communist.” After the April Third Massacre events from 1947 to 1954<sup>89</sup>, Chuksŏng survivors scattered across parts of Cheju City. Most currently reside in the neighboring villages of Taewŏn, which is now a part of the Ara-tong district, and Odŭng-tong, all of which also suffered destruction and bloodshed during April Third. Chuksŏng ceases to exist as a village though its name is used for a bus stop down the road from Cheju National University’s entrance. The April Third research committee placed a commemorative monument a short distance from Sŏlsaemit Shrine’s entrance to attest to the village’s tragedy. A handful of these survivors remained in 2015, but the horrors that they had escaped nearly six decades before remained etched in memory. Going to the shrine was an obligation both to the shrine’s tutelary gods and to the memory of those lost.

The conflict over Sŏlsaemit Shrine had persisted for decades, but Chuksŏng survivors claimed that Cheju officials never had incentive to investigate the issue or press charges. Aside

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<sup>89</sup> See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for a brief history.

from consistent disinterest from sites that hold little economic or political utility, a part of the reason may have been because the shrine sits on private land. Cultural institutions such as the Chǒnt'ong Munhwa Yǒn'guso (Traditional Culture Institute) had posed the possibility of designating the shrine for restoration, but such ideas were never put into action. Regardless of repeated attacks, the Chuksǒng survivors persisted. The destruction wrought in late 2014 would seem to be the inglorious end for Sǒlsaemit Shrine.

Prior to its most recent and most devastating desecration, Sǒlsaemit Shrine's final form consisted of low gray cinder block walls and a large dramatic *p'aengnamu* (Jp.: *enoki*; *Celtis sinensis* Persoon; Chinese hackberry) tree as its spiritual axis. The shrine is partially elevated and built into a slight incline of a bamboo-forested hill. Though the most visible feature is the large *p'aengnamu*, Sǒlsaemit Shrine's god doors, or spirit pathways, are three small holes in the ground under the tree's roots. The god doors were the points from where the spirits would emerge, but the *p'aengnamu* was the crucial point of access between this world and the world beyond. Beside the shrine is a blue tarp-covered preparation shack surrounded by chicken-wire fencing. The fence was locked, the Buddhist-derived ritual objects of a *posal* were left inside and covered under years of dust layers. In the past few years, a *posal* had tended to the shrine at the request of Chuksǒng survivors to compensate for the absence of a shrine shaman. The extent to which weeds had grown up over the path and the leaf blanket over the tarp suggested that she likely came at most once a year. Outside the shrine is a concrete-lined ditch into which a natural spring empties. The water appears stagnant and is contaminated, as one can notice in its thick algae and discoloration, but if one stands close enough one can still hear bubbling water from underneath.



Chuksǒng survivors repeatedly rebuilt and maintained Sǒlsaemit Shrine despite a great many years of trials and tribulations. Until Sǒlsaemit's utter irreparable desecration in 2014, it served as an annual pilgrimage site on the first hour of the seventh day of the first lunar month, the village's primary ritual date. The land which the shrine is situated somehow became private land, now belonging to a holding company based in Seoul. The circumstances of Chuksǒng's land transfer – as is the case of many mid-mountain villages that bore the brunt of the April Third Massacre – remains a mystery. Villagers would not comment directly on how the transfer transpired, but the loss of public land in the mid-mountain areas reflects a pattern repeated across Cheju. Enormous swaths of village common land were privatized in the years following the April Third massacre(s).

The question of land title continues to be contentious in Cheju with some disputes being a part of the long legacy of April Third. This issue has created increasing anxieties as the lands of some village shrines such as Sǒlsaemit Shrine and traditional village boundaries were somehow made into private property. How sacred sites and village commons were re-defined as such remains unclear; April Third reports do not address this issue. Adding to the confusion and anxiety is that as land changes hands among different people, new disputes over legal title or with new mainland owners emerge. As if the Sǒlsaemit Shrine issue was not enough, the Odǔng-tong seniors' center, which includes Chuksǒng survivors, was engaged in a land dispute with a mainlander. The source of conflict was the center's old rock wall, which marked Odǔng-tong's traditional boundaries. Although the wall somehow technically was on private property, elderly Cheju islanders long respected traditional boundaries regardless of legal definition. The different cultural attitudes regarding land led to conflict with their new mainlander neighbor. Nevertheless, in Sǒlsaemit's case, Chuksǒng survivors felt fortunate that the titled landowner had

at least allowed Chuksǒng survivors to continue to worship at the shrine without interference. Other parts of the land were under cultivation as a tangerine orchard and tree farm, some of which were already derelict when I first visited Sǒlsaemit Shrine in January 2015.

The Chuksǒng and Sǒlsaemit Shrine issue finally made headlines at the end of 2014 and early 2015. News reports on the shocking vandalism committed against Sǒlsaemit Shrine emerged on local media outlet *Cheju-ŭi Sori*, followed by an outcry and a moment of soul-searching among Cheju residents on Facebook. Cheju Province, which officially valorizes its UNESCO credentials, had not only failed to protect one of the most salient features of its cultural uniqueness but also demonstrated astounding apathy to its vanishing practices. Despite media coverage, again no official action followed.

Due to frustrations at official and intellectual inaction, the “*Senjari Reinjǒsŭ*” (Senjari Rangers) formed immediately in January, just a short time before the Lunar New Year and the village’s ritual date. Consisting of members of the “*Igǒ nuge chissikkwa*” (Whose misdeed is this?) Facebook group – which focuses on issues regarding Cheju’s overdevelopment – including Joey and Jung, the Senjari Rangers quickly organized alongside foreign residents a series of successive events in early 2015 to raise awareness and form ideas for the future of Sǒlsaemit. Pieces of the desecrated *sinmok* were carved into bracelets at two events in Aewŏl-ŭp and in Cheju City. The group initially thought that the bracelets could be sold to raise funds to restore the shrine, but this idea was nixed when a Cheju shaman was consulted and advised the Senjari Rangers to simply use the wood as offerings to the shrine gods. Though the Senjari Rangers had limited experience in Cheju shamanism, they at least briefly brought the threats to shrines into the media spotlight. With or without institutional help, they were determined to clear up the wrecked shrine’s debris so that Chuksǒng survivors could perform their annual worship.

On February 17, 2015, Lunar New Year's day, more than a dozen Senjari Rangers met at Sölsaemit Shrine at barely past sunrise. It was a frigid gray morning. The air was moist with cold midwinter morning dew and sprinkling droplets of rain. All were concerned about the weather, but resolved to carry out their work rain or shine. Before work began, members held a makeshift re-consecration ritual. They made the customary alcohol and fruit offerings in accordance to various shamans' advice on the matter. Due to the absence of a lineage shaman, a Buddhist priest performed a short ceremony to the resident gods; in Cheju, it is not unusual for Buddhist clergy to acknowledge local deities and both Cheju shamans and local-born clergy often note their mutual respect. Work commenced immediately after. While members with power tools cut up the ruined tree and hauled it out of the shrine, others cleared away the debris from the broken walls and the weeds that covered the shrine path. The idea was to provide Chuksöng survivors a clear path and an open space to perform their annual offerings.

The salvage operation lasted from 7 AM to 1 PM. What came as a surprise was that so many volunteered to come on New Year's Day. A greater surprise came seven days later. A few Senjari Rangers who decided to return to the shrine at just before the break of dawn on February 24 found fresh offerings, incense, and candles at the base of the *sinmok*. While Chuksöng survivors previously said they would cease their worship because of their old age and weariness of a long-protracted culture war, they nonetheless returned to greet their patron gods. Chuksöng survivors were delighted by what had happened, but also expressed caution. Their reservations unfortunately manifested.

How the story of Sölsaemit Shrine will end is unclear. The shrine continues to lie in ruins and its fate is still uncertain. Cheju provincial officials and local intellectuals made verbal pledges to address the issue of Cheju's desecrated shrines, but took no concrete steps. After brief

outrage over shrine desecration, local media quickly turned to other development scandals around the island. In 2015 alone there were far too many things to be outraged about. Chuksǒng survivors resigned themselves to the reality that Cheju authorities had little interest in giving consideration to their grievances.

In February 2016, the forest and orchards around the shrine had been completely destroyed, apparently for a new development project. The landholding company placed a sign on the old *posal* preparation shack, declaring that the structure would be demolished for restoration work on Sǒlsaemit Spring and requesting that the owner contact the company's contact number. Joey and Jung contacted the manager, who claimed that the shrine would be restored as part of a new eco-park project at Sǒlsaemit Spring, but doubts linger; the manager first referred to himself as the landholder and then as the appointed manager. The company representative twice changed his story on his role, at first saying he was the owner and then saying he was hired as the caretaker. The Traditional Culture Institute briefly became involved in surveying Chuksǒng survivors in the summer of 2015 on the possibility of building a new shrine in a separate location and perhaps combining the destroyed Odǔng-tong shrine with Sǒlsaemit. Nothing came of these meetings. In one last return to Sǒlsaemit Shrine on March 30, 2016, I found that more of the area had been flattened and cleared out, including the bamboo grove behind the shrine.

The memory of Sǒlsaemit Shrine may be bulldozed over for new tourist conveniences, a factor that has put anti-development activists on edge across the island since I first came there in 2007. But many are not so willing to hide Cheju's darker realities. Social media erupted when media leaks revealed that the new national government-sponsored textbooks would revive the Cold War justifications for the April Third massacre. Many islanders still hold a deep-seated

resentment and feel that the provincial authority and the mainland Korean government have yet to properly address past injustices.

I re-visited Sōlsaemit Shrine one last time before I left Cheju at the end of March 2016. I noticed fresh traces of burnt joss sticks and food offerings left at the base of the ruined *sinmok*. Even though there was hardly anything left, a few holdouts had decided to return to honor the spirits of Chuksōng at the shrine again after all. Memory is not something so easily disposed.

### **3.2 Island of the Gods**

Cheju Island is often fondly called among *Chejuhak* folklorists *Man p'alch'ōn sin-ūi kohyang* (the home of 18,000 gods) because of its rich repertoire of shamanic practices. Although *Chejuhak* folklorists tend to identify as atheists, their evocative – though romanticized – descriptions of Cheju shamanism bespeak a pervasive sense that Cheju is indeed a sacred land even though they may not worship the gods. Famed local folklorist Chin Sōnggi (1959; 2005) even went as far as titling one of his various Cheju folklore collections “*Kūrisū sinhwa poda kūūkhan sinhwa-wa chōnsōl*” (Myths and Legends More Profound than Greek Mythology). Though in actuality practitioners of Cheju’s indigenous religion worship only a handful of those eighteen thousand deities, the massive number of mysterious gods and spirits is a constant inspiration for re-imagining Cheju Island.

When Ch’ilmōri Shrine Yōngdūng-kut earned a place on UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, intellectuals and officials alike felt that the world had finally acknowledged and validated Cheju’s true cultural uniqueness. Ch’ilmōri Shrine Yōngdūng-kut was the first Korean shamanic ritual to have a UNESCO title. After years of joint efforts, *Chejuhak* scholars, shamans, the Munhwaje Kwalliguk (Cultural Heritage Administration), and the Cheju provincial administration successfully made their case and the

ritual was listed at UNESCO's meeting in Dubai (Yun 2010). The UNESCO honor was more a boost to Cheju local pride than South Korean nationalism. Cheju, already recognized as a World Natural Heritage site, won yet another international accolade. Changing perceptions of Cheju culture prompted shamans and localist folklorists organized themselves into associations such as the Ch'ilmöri-tang Yöngdŭng-kut Pojonhoe (Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdŭng-kut Preservation Society). In a context where cultural representation can easily be both a jealously guarded good and disposable novelty at the same time, shamans, too, were eager to maintain some control over now to define their legitimacy.

While practices and shrines were truly under siege as exemplified in the case of Sölsaemit Shrine above, the mutual tension between heritage destruction and preservation generated a need to at least maintain a symbolic essence of Cheju spirituality. A drive to designate heritage property, especially an intangible one, is often a sign that people sense a practice's impending doom in the face of urbanization, but this is only one aspect of a larger phenomenon. Conversely, heritage as a "metacultural" practice based on asynchrony produces "a tension between the contemporary and the contemporaneous...a paradox that is the condition of possibility for the world heritage enterprise, namely, the possession of heritage as a mark of modernity" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 180).<sup>90</sup> Efforts behind Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdŭng-kut, perhaps unintentionally, made heritage-making a ritual unto itself, an act of reproducing a phantasmagoria of a vanishing Cheju Island in a sacred space in sacred time. The inherent paradoxes in intangible heritage based on a notion of a rural original immediately collide with cognitive dissonances in urban reality. These paradoxes can also become more productive than heritage practice critics recognize.

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Smith LJ 2006.

Cheju shamanism as a concept is as abstruse as the word culture. *Chejuhak* scholars tend to conflate Cheju shamanism with Cheju culture. Historian Yi Yŏngkwŏn goes as far as to assert that “ultimately shamanic belief is the fundamental original religion,” which naturally “remains forever within the hearts of people” regardless of how much science and the “*kodŭng chonggyo*” (high religions) develop (2005: 232). A conclusion that parallels that of colonial-era local and foreign attempts to find an original Korean characteristic (Janelli 1986; Oak 2013), much writing on shamanism (Chin SG 2005; Hyŏn YJ 2009, Mun MB 1996) in Cheju considers it the purest expression of either “*min ’gan sinang*” (popular spirituality) or “*minsok sinang*” (folk spirituality). To emphasize shamanism as being distinct from the *kodŭng chonggyo* is to distinguish Cheju as *minjung*. Not a few *Chejuhak* scholars themselves have been a part of the 1980s *Minjung* movement.<sup>91</sup> What concerns scholars are features in shamanism that reflect awe and respect for natural forces, strong independent female characters, historical hardship, trauma, and longstanding resentment to mainland elite rule. Often left unsaid are that not all *Chejusaram* (Cheju people) are engaged in shamanism in the same manner, and that the normative representations are not necessarily how people understand their practices.

Outside commentators’ pages, Cheju shamanism is a constantly changing amalgam of practices related to – and not separable from – day-to-day life considerations, economic issues, state- and academic-determined heritage policy, and urban processes. Everyday features of urban or urbanizing life and economic exchange feature prominently in ritual (Yun 2007), whether it is ritualized bribing in ceremonies to capricious gods or shamans’ asides regarding *nouveau riche*

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<sup>91</sup> See Tangherlini, Timothy. 1999. “Shamans, Students and the State: Politics and the Enactment of Culture in South Korea, 1987-1988.” In, *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity*. Edited by Hyung-il Pai and Timothy R. Tangherlini. Pp. 126-147. According to Tangherlini, student movements drew elements from shamanic ritual and ‘folk’ tradition to challenge the ruling elite and the state in discourse and performance. This is equally the case in Cheju Island where members of the “Hallasan Norip’ae” and “Sinnarak” performance troupes such as Mun Mubyŏng and Han Chino are 1980s generation *Minjung* activists, professional folklorists, and assistants at actual shamanic *kut* all at the same time.

Chinese land speculators.<sup>92</sup> Shamanic ritual is hardly other-worldly in outlook. Exaggerated and stylized motions function to intervene in this-worldly needs for prosperity or therapeutic healing. Often mistaken for being a mostly-rural practice, shamanism can also respond to urban needs. A highly renowned shaman, Kim Yǒngch'ŏl, for example, noted that the transformation of his neighborhood into a tourist boom town also came with a greater demand for *sǒngjup'uri* (new house consecration ritual).<sup>93</sup> While some gods lost their community of worshippers, others found themselves new employment in an expanding urban economy.

A departure from *Chejuhak* that this dissertation makes is to clarify Cheju shamanism in terms of a more communally-oriented shrine shamanism. Separate private *kuttang* (shamanic ritual halls) do exist in Cheju as on the mainland, but physical threats to Cheju's shrines and ongoing cultural conflict over them have only highlighted their importance. Cheju's 346 shrines, the focus of the island's indigenous shrine shamanism, are commonly distinguished as *ponhyangdang* (village main shrines), *ilrwedang* (seventh-day shrines), *yǒdǔredang* (eighth-day shrines), and *haesindang* (sea deity shrines) (Yi YK: 2005: 236-237).<sup>94</sup> The highest ritual importance is afforded to the *ponhyangdang* while the *haesindang* service seaside communities. Shrine communities are distinguished into high, middle, and low ranks of *tan'gol* (shrine worshippers) and bear some semblance to existing village hierarchies. Shrines historically had their own *ponp'uri* (origin epic myth), but with the socioeconomic changes begun since the 1960s, most stories survive only in sparse fragments, save for the most prominent shrines such as

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<sup>92</sup>In the March 18, 2016 Hamdŏk Yǒngdǔng-kut, Kim Yǒngch'ŏl wove a brief joking remark about this into his enumeration of community peoples' wishes to the Yǒngdǔng and Yowang deities. Also conspicuous were mentions of reckless rental car drivers and tour boats.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with author, Hamdŏk, Choch'ŏn-ŭp, October 3, 2015.

<sup>94</sup> By pure accident, a friend and I came upon what villagers referred to as a 'Sodang' (Cattle Shrine) in southeastern Cheju Island. This does not appear as a specific category in the existing literature and should be researched further.



Songdang. Only the twelve *ilban ponp'uri* (general origin epic myths) of Cheju's most important deities are kept as a standard for all Cheju shamans. Loss of these narratives did not diminish shrines' importance. *Ilrwedang*, visited irrespective of personal rank on days with the number 7, are for individual worship, are among the most common types of shrines, do not require a full ritual, and are usually for women who pray to Samsŭng Halmang (Kr.: Samsin Halmöni) for childbirth, the health of children, or curing of children's skin diseases. Despite the wide availability of medical services, *ilrwedang* and *yödŭredang* remain important for general concerns about family welfare, including that of adult offspring, a reflection of the island's aging population. As they serve everyday life needs they function with or without a village *tang maen simbang*.<sup>95</sup>

The ubiquity of mainland-style shamanic decorations utilizing colorful streamers and Buddhist-derived regalia in many shrines across the island also attest to mainlander practitioners' recognition of the power of place. The fact that many shrines are located at grottoes, promontories, or near springs or running water indicate that some form of geomantic thought influenced their selection. Moving a shrine, as was thrice the case for Ch'ilmöri Shrine, occurs in extraordinary circumstances. That Nŭng and Tonomi Shrines in Cheju City or Sögwŭ Ponhyang Shrine in Sögwŭp'o are actively maintained despite the absence of a *tang maen simbang* (shrine shaman) indicate that the notion of *senjari* (sacred seat of power) remains crucial.

Some caveats come with defining Cheju shamanism, especially with regards to how it has been practiced since the earliest ethnographic recording. Shamanism as a distinct religion is ambiguous. Where Buddhism, Confucianism, and shamanism begin and end is unclear.

Academics insist upon – and politicize – distinctions, but practitioners are usually disinterested

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<sup>95</sup> In one case, a farmer decided to move a shrine into her own broccoli field to protect it for her community.

in boundaries. Cheju shamans casually say that Buddhists and shamanic practitioners go to each other's rituals. Whatever works is what matters. Native-born Buddhist clergy, unlike their mainland counterparts, share such sentiments as well. A Buddhist monk in rural Hado remarked “*sindang-to kago, chöl-to kago*” (“when one goes to a temple, one goes to a shrine”). The same worshippers of Tonomi Shrine in the Chöngsil neighborhood of Cheju City also are congregants of the nearby Wölchöngsa temple, a factor that does not at all trouble clergy. Sölsaemit Shrine's remaining holdouts likewise visit the local Buddhist temples aside from their annual shrine worship. Male-led Confucian *maülje* (village-wide ritual) held in Onp'yöng and Sanggwi-ri take place not at a Confucian altar, but rather at their respective village shrines to greet the tutelary shamanic gods rather than lineage ancestors. Antagonism between shamanism and Confucianism is not always the case in practice (Tangherlini and Park SY 1988). Although these changes could have been due to the breakdown of the countryside, practitioners are casual about mixing traditions and hold no purist pretenses. Shamans' active participation in heritage preservation societies, especially with the UNESCO-linked Ch'ilmöri Shrine Preservation Society and newly-formed K'un-kut Preservation Society, further blur already-blurred boundaries between artistic performance and ritual.

Heritage designation is an admission that Cheju shamanism faces an uncertain future. As a versatile practice, shamanism has adapted to South Korea's urbanization (Kendall 1996; 2008), but all folklorists in Cheju agree that Cheju City's rise threatens village shrine-based shamanism. Beyond academia and the small circle of shamans, knowledge and practice are not transmitted directly to much of the urbanized younger generation. Younger urbanites may refer to the extreme trance-induced ecstasy that typifies mainland shamanism, which is not the case with much of Cheju practices, or they may misidentify *posal* (mainland Buddhist shamans) as being

the same as *simbang* (Cheju shamans). In one conversation at a Taekwondo *tojang*, for example, a young man in his twenties from Hallim, a rural town in western Cheju, made the far more involved ecstatic hand waving of mainland-style shamanic dancing when Cheju shamanism was brought up. *Posal* houses, marked with the Buddhist *mancha* (Sanskrit: svastika) flag on a bamboo pole, cluster neighborhoods near Cheju City Hall and Samdo-2-tong. Their conspicuous presence indicates the growing demand for mainland shamans' services, a phenomenon that Yun also observed in her 2007 dissertation. Cheju shamans sometimes find their presence invasive and thus organize, sometimes going as far as filing complaints at Cheju Provincial Hall, to distinguish themselves and assert a semblance of orthodoxy and orthopraxis. The sense of threat was an impetus for making Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdŭng-kut urban Cheju heritage. While a set program for preservation and legitimation was long in the making, a question looms: how does one make timeless a practice almost completely dependent upon its context?

What UNESCO designated in 2009 was a version of Yöngdŭng-kut specific to Ch'ilmöri Shrine and the urban Kōnip-tong district. Yöngdŭng-kut refers to a sequence of *kut* (shamanic ritual) dedicated to the visiting Yöngdŭng and Yowang deities. These *kut* historically take place sequentially across the island within the second lunar month from 2/1 to 2/14. The Yöngdŭng and Yowang deities first approach Cheju via Kōnip-tong in Cheju City. A half-day *yowang maji* (sea god welcoming rite) takes place at Ch'ilmöri Shrine, one of the many shrines that the Yöngdŭng deity visits during the season, on 2/1 and then the *songbyölche* (send-off ceremony) takes place on 2/13. The *songbyölche* is an all-day affair, a going-away party replete with feasting and ritual song and dance at Ch'ilmöri Shrine, *saedŭrim* (Kr: *ssidŭrim*; ritual "seeding") for a bountiful sea harvest, and divinations. After Yönggam Nori, a farcical skit that involves the spirits of Korea's sacred mountains visitation to Cheju, the ritual concludes with straw offering

boats launched from Cheju City Harbor. As an island-wide ritual, villages host Yōngdŭng-kut in sequential order or concurrently until the Yōngdŭng deities make a complete loop around the island and return to Cheju City on lunar 2/13 and then depart by way of Sosŏm (Udo) island on the lunar 2/14 and leaves the archipelago completely by *porŭmnal* (the middle of the lunar month).

Expectations and procedures are consistent across the island, but each village possesses their own variants or region-specific “oicotypes” (von Sydow 1948) or “ecotypes” (Cochrane 1987). Fishermen technically are not permitted to work during the Yōngdŭng season, as is the case in the Ch’ilmŏri Shrine tradition, but interpretations differ by region perhaps due to differences in how the Yōngdŭng season winds affect each part of the island. In Sinch’ŏn, a southeastern coastal village, for example, an elderly woman diver explained, “Fishermen all go out and do work, but Yōngdŭng Grandfather, when the good Grandfather comes in, the winds come in and all return after doing their work...but if there is rain, then they don’t work...The weather today is good. The daughter (Yōngdŭng’s daughter) came, and if the daughter comes it’s good. Because the daughter-in-law is bad.”<sup>96</sup> The case is also the same in the northeastern village of Chongdal. Also unlike the Ch’ilmŏri Shrine version, Sinch’ŏn village held a simpler *insa* (greeting rite) in 2015 rather than a full *kut*.

Mun Mubyŏng (1996; 2005) notes several different variations of the same myth in historical record including interpretations of Yōngdŭng as referring to a grandfather-grandmother deity pair and a group of seven deities of seven divine imperial ranks. At Ch’ilmŏri Shrine and in Cheju City, though the other Yōngdŭng deities are acknowledged, the emphasis is weighted

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<sup>96</sup> Recorded at Sinch’ŏn, P’yosŏn-myŏn, April 1, 2015. According to versions across the island, bad weather in the Yōngdŭng season indicates that the daughter-in-law has come with Yōngdŭng and that the two are quarreling. An odd twist to the Yōngdŭng Grandfather version in both Sinch’ŏn and Chongdal is that it is a father versus daughter-in-law conflict rather than the usual mother versus daughter-in-law conflict.

more toward Yōngdŭng Halmang (Grandmother Yōngdŭng). The ritual is largely for fishermen, ship captains, and *chamsubu* (or *chōmnyō*, women divers), but Ch'ilmōri Shrine is situated in a historic district of old Cheju City whose population has largely abandoned fishing. Regardless, Ch'ilmōri Shrine's version of the ritual is considered in academic literature as the most complete intact expression (Mun MB 1996) and is showcased as such to an urban audience. The format is kept to expert-determined standards to maintain its heritage credentials, but reception to Ch'ilmōri Shrine Yōngdŭng-kut has changed over time and parallels Cheju City's development.

The sacred might have been a little camera shy in the Ch'ilmōri Shrine Yōngdŭng-kut spectacle that Yun Kyoim observed in March 2010. The ritual was held at Ch'ilmōri Shrine, which was thrice located until its final move to the side of a public city park on the Sarabong *orŭm*, with the pomp and circumstance of a state-sponsored *kugak* (traditional music) festival. And like state-sponsored festivals, the event was complete with color pamphlets to explain the ceremony's meaning in multiple languages. News agency camera operators, scholars, and journalists had an overwhelming presence, contrasting with the tiny number of Ch'ilmōri Shrine's remaining and aging dedicated *tanggol* (shrine worshippers) (Yun KI 2010: 188). Stacks of information pamphlets in Korean, English, Japanese, and Chinese were prepared but few seemed to have been distributed. The few tourists and city park visitors that did stop to watch the ritual only did so with passing curiosity. The shamans proceeded nevertheless.

Authenticity was deliberate. All participants were dressed in *hanbok* (Korean traditional attire), ritual decorations used only traditional material, and every motion of the complete ritual – all previously catalogued and carefully compiled by folklorists such as Mun Mubyōng (2005) – was followed. Yun noted an awkward point in which an elderly shaman covered her head with a newspaper to shield herself from the sun, but was asked to remove it. The display Yun described

demonstrated multiple levels of irony as if it were less a practiced tradition than an exercise of suspension of disbelief. Its urban character is obvious while presented as an animatronic diorama of a timeless premodernity. Yun also indicated that shamans, who regard their profession in practical terms, were ambivalent about their newfound status. Shamans, required to perform before an audience of strangers, were put in an unusual position where they faced a crowd uninitiated in the cultural cues necessary for the *kut*'s efficacy. Passing audience members, largely tourists or city park visitors, could only passively watch the group *Sō-u chessori* song and dance with puzzlement, not knowing that they were expected to join in serenading Yōngdŭng.

The new intangible cultural heritage titleholder status also became burdensome. Shamans felt that people misinterpret the title as implying that they had become out of reach. Because of the demands for permanence that come with heritage designation, “the ritual’s global recognition strips the shamans and their clients of the option to cease the ritual” (Yun KI 2010: 194). Many village communities have chosen to stop sponsoring Yōngdŭng-kut for a combination of practical reasons.<sup>97</sup> Heritage preservation decontextualized the ritual from its community, the Ch’ilmōri Shrine *tan’gol*, and made it into a form of state property with expert-defined standards. *Chejuhak* literature remains curiously silent on the UNESCO and *munhwaje* (cultural assets) effect. Even the most recent publications by leading folklorists Mun Mubyōng, Hyōn Yongjun, and Hō Namch’un continue to emphasize shamanism as the essential expression of Cheju culture. The years 2009 and 2010 marked the culmination of a long process already set in motion since the Yōngdŭng-kut ritual was designated a *chungyo muhyōng munhwaje* (important

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<sup>97</sup> The fact that many villages stopped sponsoring Yōngdŭng-kut cannot be considered entirely voluntary. In my own field research, the reasons that many villages gave for stopping their rituals is due to a dwindling population, limited resources, and the loss of a shrine shaman. This has not, however, stopped people from believing in the efficacy of worshipping Cheju’s pantheon. Many have instead relied on a mainland *posal* or transferred their worship to Buddhist temples, especially non-mainstream temples that allow for people to interpret Buddhist gods as shamanic gods.

intangible cultural asset) in 1980.<sup>98</sup> The urgency for designation was based on the notion that Yōngdŭng-kut and Cheju shamanism represented an original Cheju that would soon vanish under the bulldozers of development.

Fast-forward five years from the time Yun made her observations, a curious new change emerged. The ritual proceeded in 2015 and 2016 just as Yun had described it in 2010, but she may have underestimated the potential dynamism between heritage and the city. The event still involved a camera circus and festival pomp complete with local politicians making photo-ops while shamans awkwardly dealt with a glitch-ridden sound system as unpredictable as the spirits. The presence of scholars doing field research became a ritual unto itself; Mun Mubyōng was an unmistakable regular, as were graduate students from the mainland sent to do their fieldwork on shamanic narrative. Few *tanggol* remain and it was increasingly clear that Ch’ilmōri Shrine Yōngdŭng-kut was likely to become a festival detached from its primary community. But a new and significantly larger audience appeared alongside the bemused tourists, intrusive camera people, and poker-faced scholars: *wōndosim* (Old Town) revivalists, younger Cheju City residents in search of cultural roots, and mainland hipsters and émigrés. In a city where entire city blocks appear overnight and shops vanish in the fickle trade winds of tourist tastes, Ch’ilmōri Shrine Yōngdŭng-kut continued to attract attention as the representative of a lost stability. Heritage practices, like museum objects, can be understood better “not by reconstructing their ‘original’ use or context, but the contingencies of their ongoing careers” (Roberts MN 1994: 40). A scant five years after Yun’s observations, another process is at work. Cities create new needs for people to become social.

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<sup>98</sup> See <http://www.jeju.go.kr/culture/digitalContents/directory.htm?act=view&seq=5315> (in Korean).

Heritage designation can accidentally become productive even if forms of practice are kept within specified bounds. Heritage consumers, especially Cheju City residents, play an integral role, but perhaps not in the ways heritage producers, policymakers, and commentators initially conceived. Performance is never unidirectional for every instance performers and spectators produce their own concept of an original. Shamans and academic experts party to the UNESCO promotion campaign, including Mun Mubyŏng and head shaman and titleholder Kim Yunsu are aware of their paradoxical roles. Ch'ilmŏri Shrine Preservation Society had successfully lobbied for a new larger *chŏnsikwan* (transmission hall), and provided support to the Global Yeongdeung-gut (Yŏngdŭng-kut) Academy starting in 2016 to inspire local, mainlander, and foreigner interest. All this came at an opportune time as the island saw a resurgence of interest in Cheju heritage beginning in 2010. When Governor Wŏn Hŭiryong, a self-identified conservative Protestant Christian, declined to attend shamanic memorials for the April Third massacre or the ostensibly Confucian Sanch'ŏndan mountain god rites, city residents of all faiths criticized his move as disrespectful. Heritage displays can be less about advertising difference and more about locals' need for self-affirmation (Bendix 1989). An urban or urbanizing population may someday seek to satiate a taste for the authentic, a taste inculcated among middle-class people worldwide since the second half of the twentieth century (MacCannell 1989). Korea's extremely rapid urbanization change accounts for interest in idealized rural-inspired *minsokch'on* (folk villages) (Tangherlini 2008) or popularizing trends of citizen custodianship over heritage properties (Oppenheim 2008).

The 2015 and 2016 Yŏngdŭng-kut *songbyŏlche* in Cheju City, held on April 2 and March 22 respectively, were as different as they were the same. Due to too-fierce frigid winds on April 2, 2015, the ritual was held indoors at the practice hall at the entrance of Sarabong hill park less



than a five-minute walk from Ch'ilmöri Shrine. Weather in the following year was perfectly mild and sunny and thus was held directly at the shrine, which had a set of terraced amphitheater-like seating built into the hillside. In both years, preparations began at around nine; Yöngdüng-kut starts at dawn elsewhere in Cheju Island but Ch'ilmöri Preservation Society members tend to hold to a ten o'clock schedule for the sake of convenience. The Yöngdüng gods were already in Cheju anyway and all that organizers needed to do was to consecrate the ritual space and invite the gods. If a ritual had to be held indoors, as was the case in 2015, shamans addressed the gods at the shrine itself and then requested that they come indoors. Long cloth or, in Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdüng-kut's case, straw matting, arranged as a pathway guides the gods into the ritual space. Rows of handmade straw offering boats with paper sails were arrayed outside the ritual space and were filled with candies. The gods, shamans explained, have a strong sweet tooth.

For both years, the setup was the same, complete with an official banner, elaborate sound system, professional video camera equipment, and traditional pre-ceremony background fusion music reminiscent of any official Cheju City function. Stagehands adjusted the large sound system as one of them repeatedly uttered "Test, test" into the microphone to check the volume. City employees set up tents along the driveway and park walkway up Sarabong and community women, typically those of the local *puinhoe* (housewives' association), prepared outdoor stoves, pots, and cutlery to cook noodle soup, cut up boiled pork, and chop the kimch'i. It would not be until eleven, however, that the air was filled with the smell of anchovy broth and the *charijöt* (*chari* fish paste) seasoning. Before then, the air was filled with the sharp scents of burning incense and fresh sticky *tolle ttök* (flat round plain rice cakes). *Somi* (shamans' assistants) hung up long white paper tabs with the names of donors and sponsors along parallel cords behind the altar. These all dangled in a straight line before red paper strips bearing the various names of the

Yöngdüng and tutelary shrine deities in handwritten classical Chinese. Donors' name tags had ten-thousand wön bills stapled to them. Shamans and *somi* then adorned the altar with a bounty of large soft red *kkul sagwa* (honey apples), the finest pears from Naju in Chölla Province, brassware filled with white rice, and Cheju's best fried *okdom* fish. Positioned by the door was a small offering table for Munjön, the door guardian deity.<sup>99</sup> Yöngdüng-kut sponsors were intent on enticing the Yöngdüng deities with Cheju City's hard-earned opulence.

At about ten minutes after the ten o'clock starting time on the program, the background fusion music was turned down to a fade and then cut off. The gongs and drums sounded the opening of the *kut*. Titleholder Kim Yunsu, dressed in a regal red *turumagi* (men's long jacket) and *kat* (black horsehair top hat), performed the prostrations to the offering altars. His utterances fed into the microphone and out the large black speakers arrayed around the room. In the opening rite, Kim Yunsu provided the gods a complete address – “*Cheju T'ükbyöl Chach'ido Cheju-si Kõnip-tong Ch'ilmõri-tang Yöngdüng songbyölche*” (Cheju Special Self-governing Province, Cheju City, Kõnip District, Ch'ilmõri Shrine, the Yöngdüng parting rite) – as well as a short history of Cheju Island from T'amna to the present. He followed with an enormously long list of ritual sponsors. When he paused from entreaties to the gods and danced for them, either one of the two parallel rows of percussion musicians played with spirit. If Kim faced left, the left flank played and vice versa. Yowang (Kr.: Yongwang, Dragon King of the Sea) and the Yöngdüng gods had answered the shamans' invitation and desired to be entertained, along with the twenty-odd remaining *tanggol*. All around, huddled to the side of the cramped ritual hall, were dozens of camera people, reporters, scholars, and about a hundred viewers.

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<sup>99</sup> Munjön offerings are unique to Cheju. They are also incorporated in household rituals including 'Confucian' ancestral memorial rites.

Both the 2015 and 2016 followed the same format as in 2010 since heritage designation stipulated that the ritual had to maintain its consistency and not deviate from established conventions. The ritual thus had to proceed with a *p'udasi* (Kr.: *p'udakkōri*) to cast out negative energy for those seeking blessings, *saedōrim* (Kr.: *ssidūrim*) to re-seed the sea and fields, a joint song and dance of *Sō-u chessori*, and *yowang maji* (meeting the Dragon King). The *saedōrim*, the final *yowang maji*, and rice grain divinations were still directed at the remaining women divers, fishermen, and boat captains.

The set format of the ritual did not require that everything had to follow exactly. Changes and adjustments depended on shamans' own predilections, the interests of the *tanggol*, and the responses from the audience. Over time shamans became accustomed to non-*tanggol* viewers and were more open to approach them. Subtle details were open to negotiation. The deliberate use of straw matting, straw offering boats (Figure 7), stylized *kime* (paper decorations), and *hanbok* costuming gestured at an idealized past presentation, but these, along with the organized offering tables, were innovations. The resources that the city afforded ironically allowed for officiants at the Ch'ilmōri Shrine ritual to make things appear as traditional as possible.



Figure 7: Traditional offering boats made of straw and paper.<sup>100</sup>

Rural rituals in contrast from Cheju City were as practical as possible and rural residents did not at all shy from using newer materials. Pieces of Styrofoam boxes were used for the gods' pathway and offering boat in the coastal town of Hamdök for the 2016 Yöngdüng-kut; at Onp'yöng, a Styrofoam board was also used for the gods' pathway but a striking addition was an offering boat made of a rubber tub with fishermen's hand-crafted sails and a working rudder. Rural people simply used whatever material was economical. In place of *kamju* (rice alcohol) and homemade sweets, people offered bottles of Fanta orange soda and platefuls of store-bought fruit-flavored candy.

A rural and *minjung* tradition was conspicuously urban. The lively expressions of *tokkaebi* (goblins) cut into the *kime* and elaborate loose draping paper net shapes at Ch'ilmöri Shrine expressed the crafter's own creativity. *Kime* can be extraordinarily intricate but they were often simpler in rituals elsewhere on the island. Colorful *hanbok* or any sort of costuming were rare in most Cheju *kut*, because, shamans had noted, most were originally too poor. The Ch'ilmöri Preservation Society meticulously arranged their ritual space with organized offering tables and altars with decorated folding screens. Glutinous white rice imported from the Chölla region was also a later twentieth century addition in an island where most people lived on millet and barley. Whereas time went with the rituals in the countryside, Cheju City shamanic exhibitions presented ritual as outside of time. The traditional décor and costuming were deliberately made to appear as standard and timeless as possible, but such displays would have been alien to most of the island in the past when grinding poverty was the norm. Cheju City

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<sup>100</sup> Photo by author, Kōnip-tong, Cheju City, March 21, 2016.

ritual space, unlike rural ritual space, curiously paralleled a wider trend of using vintage or archaic-looking objects to express aesthetic sophistication.

Two other major innovations to Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdüng-kut that came with the heritage designation process itself, were the standardization of the Ch'ilmöri Shrine version and the addition of Yönggam-nori, factors not addressed in Yun's or Mun's writings. With Ch'ilmöri Shrine version of Yöngdüng-kut officially recognized as the most complete form of the ritual, it effectively became the standard. Islanders nowadays recognize primarily Yöngdüng Halmang (Grandmother Yöngdüng). Mun Mubyöng's research indicates that "Yöngdüng" could refer to the male-female pair Yöngdüng Halmang (Yöngdüng Grandmother) and Yöngdüng Harübang (Yöngdüng Grandfather), a regal retinue of seven deities of seven different ranks, a deified spirit from Tang Dynasty China, or Yöngdüng Halmang alone (1996: 245).<sup>101</sup> Mun himself played a key role in promoting the Ch'ilmöri Shrine version and holds what Yun Kyoim considers "a great deal of discursive power" (2010: 189). Academic interventions filtered into the rest of Cheju and the Cheju City version of the myth became the primary version for publications and media presentations. In a conversation regarding Cheju shamanism in 2012, a woman from Sögwip'o denied that Yöngdüng Harübang existed or that there were other Yöngdüng deities. Even in Onp'yöng where the Yöngdüng ritual remains strong, some women divers were unsure whether Yöngdüng was a Halmang or Harübang.

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<sup>101</sup> This was the case in Sinch'ön and Chongdal where I encountered the Yöndüng myth in 2015.



Figure 8: Yönggam-nori at 2016 Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdüng-kut Söngbyölche.<sup>102</sup>

The Yönggam-nori skit (Figure 8), which involves a farcical performance in which the shaman receives *tokkaebi* (goblins) of Korea's great mountains visit Cheju, was not originally a part of the ritual. Farcical skits are common in community *kut*, but Yönggam-nori, which became recognized as one of the defining features for the Ch'ilmöri Shrine *kut*, was added because of its elevation. Hyön Sünghwan, son of the renowned *Chejuhak* anthropologist Hyön Yongjun, explained that Yönggam-nori was not originally a part of Kim Yunsu's performance repertoire. Hyön argued that its inclusion with Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdüng-kut was actually a homage to the late An Sa-in, who performed Yönggam-nori.<sup>103</sup> Because Kim's senior An Sa-in was not recognized, Kim felt that including Yönggam-nori was a fitting tribute to the respected elder. Kim's changed status was an accidental impetus to alter the very Yöngdüng-kut version celebrated as the most complete and intact expression.

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<sup>102</sup> Photo by author, Könip-tong, Cheju City, March 21, 2016.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with author, Ildo-2-tong, Cheju City, June 3, 2016.

What further set apart the 2015 and 2016 iterations from what Yun Kyoim had described in 2010 was the atmosphere of an urban folklife festival. Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdŭng-kut acquired a following over the years. The donors and sponsors of the *kut*, whose names were written on the strips of white paper hung over the offering tables and altars, included not only the shrine's remaining *tanggol*. Between individuals' names were private or semi-private organizations and companies including Chönt'ong Munhwa Yön'guso (Traditional Culture Institute, which Mun Mubyöng himself once co-chaired with provincial arts consultant Pak Kyönghun), Cheju Mirae Pijön (Cheju Future Vision), and Cheju Süt'ori (Cheju Story). More donors' tags were added throughout the day and there were so many that the *somi* had to hook up more rows until there was a floating forest of paper around the ritual space. Shamans had little trouble in getting participation for the *p'udasi* blessing and the *Sö-u chessori* community song and dance. The intimacy of the tight space in 2015 may have pressured people to join in, but this was also the case in 2016 where people voluntarily descended from the amphitheater-like seating to participate. While one could point to the more concerted advertising and public relations went into the annual Ch'ilmöri Shrine ritual, the visible interest was more due to the changed situation for Cheju City urbanites

Amidst rapid development, rampant land speculation, widening inequalities, and an uncertain future over the fate of Cheju City's Old Town, people again sought an essential Cheju culture. Some of the wishes recited to the gods in both years included concerns over rising land prices and increasingly hazardous traffic conditions due to excessive tourist rental cars and busses on the roads. Viewers in both 2015 and 2016 included city officials, foreign residents, artists, mainland tourists, and younger islanders including a high school student working on a fieldwork project on Cheju shamanism and an independent female artist who was creating a

travel *manhwa* (comic book) about Cheju culture. *Wōndosim* (Old Town) returnees attended in part as an expression of solidarity for *wōndosim* area events and in part to reaffirm ties to the city's cultural roots. Sarabong's proximity to Cheju Harbor's cruise terminal also ensured that the ritual had a steady stream of viewers. Like 2010 an information table was set up with information pamphlets for tourists, but unlike the situation Yun described these pamphlets were more readily received. Adding to the festivity in 2016 was that it was also somewhat of a rite of passage for shaman Kim Yōngch'öl, who officiated the second half of the ritual. Kim Yōngch'öl had just inherited his mother's shamanic practice, fulfilling all training and rituals necessary that year and became recognized as a potential successor to the preservation society.

Ch'ilmōri Preservation Society's role merits analysis in the transformation of Cheju shamanism. What practitioners understand as preservation perhaps differs from what is stipulated in heritage policy. Aside from training new shamans and performers for the Ch'ilmōri Yōngdūng-kut, the Ch'ilmōri Preservation Society's other role is an organizing apparatus. Though shamans have always had informal associations in which they compare practices and form some sort of consensus on the proper way to perform them, the Cheju City-based preservation society set defined standards for the seven-year training regime for a recognized Cheju shaman. Along with training from within their respective lineages, KTH and Kim Yōngch'öl were given full recognition and formalized procedures from the preservation society in 2016. Kim Yōngch'öl, born in 1964 and a native of Songdang, admitted that he was a latecomer to his family's craft as he only took it up in his forties. Aside from being his mother's successor, the association also recognized him as the *tang maen simbang* of Hamdök. His Yōngdūng-kut performances at Hamdök and Ch'ilmōri Shrine doubled as his own rite of passage first as Hamdök's primary shaman and as the potential successor to the aging Kim Yunsu.



The Ch'ilmöri Preservation Society was active in 2015 and 2016 in appointing shamans to any village that requests a full *kut* or even a new *tang maen simbang*. While local village-based shaman lineages were vanishing, the preservation society appoint a member to preside over *ponhyangdang* where there was still a demand. Onp'yöng's presiding *tang maen simbang*, KTH, though a genuine lineage shaman, was acquired his title in this manner. With Songdang's *tang maen simbang*'s passing in early 2016, Ch'ilmöri Preservation Society's senior shamans took charge of the Sinkwaseje (Passage of the New Year) ritual there. Since preservation society members are not all shamans and include self-identified atheists, the boundaries between spirituality and performance and shamans and non-shamans can be muddled. For some rituals, these non-shaman members, who tend to be more interested in the arts than the spiritual aspect, eagerly take up the *puk* or *solswe* (a small brass percussion instrument) or perform the duties of a *somi*. As an organization, the preservation society makes more ambiguous Cheju shamanism's roles as a faith-based entity, a professional performance organization, or a cultural promotion ambassador. The lines between culture and religion are far less clear.

Cheju City affords shamans and performers unprecedented access to resources and infrastructure. Shamans tactically adjust to urban expectations while they attempt to secure the city's material advantages to maintain their practices. In 2015, the Ch'ilmöri Preservation Society considered reviving Yöngdŭng-kut in villages where the practice had disappeared such as the northwestern seaside of village of Kwidök, host to the first *haenyö hakkyo* (women divers' school) opened in 2007. In 2012, Munhwa Chaech'öng (The Cultural Properties Administration), the provincial government, and Ch'ilmöri Preservation Society organized the cross-island Yöngdŭng Param-üi Ch'ukje (Festival of the Wind) parade to accompany the annual Yöngdŭng-kut. The parade features a gigantic representation of Yöngdŭng as Yöngdŭng Halmang and

consists of a two-week-long parade events in various seaside villages across the island from Hansu-ri in Han'gyōng-myōn to Chongdal-ri in Kujwa-ūp. An unusual inclusion is Kangjōng, the site of a controversial naval base, a factor that possibly may have relation to some participating non-shaman performers' own discontent over the Kangjōng issue. As Kangjōng, too, once observed shamanic rites, the addition could easily be cast as merely cultural.

Several factors became crucial in the years after Yun observed Yōngdūng-kut in 2010: 1) Cheju City's rapid transformation into a cosmopolitan tourist city; 2) the popularization of Cheju as a *kwinong-kwich'on* (back to the land movement) destination for urban mainland Koreans; 3) the rapid and unsustainable growth of Chinese and mainland Korean tourism; and 4) the ability for what Laurajane Smith (2006) termed the "authorized heritage discourse" to take on a life of its own. With the ever-changing trends, growing sense of internal chaos, and a need for community reorientation in the face of anomie tradition can be repurposed to claim a relationship to Cheju or to reassert local identity.

In framing the discourse of Cheju shamanism, the efforts of city-based *Chejuhak* folklorists such as Mun Mubyōng to make the case for Ch'ilmōri Shrine Yōngdūng-kut may have been accidentally more far-sighted than they initially imagined. Mun's 1996 article illustrates the mutually constitutive tension between rural idealism and urban transformation. Like many *Chejuhak* scholars, Mun emphasizes the sea as having a decisive influence on Cheju culture. He sees Yōngdūng-kut, a ritual for sailors and women divers, a quintessential aspect of a disappearing authentic Cheju culture. His response to an interlocutor from Ehwa University on the pragmatics and feasibility behind preserving Ch'ilmōri Shrine Yōngdūng-kut is particularly revealing. On the viability of preserving Ch'ilmōri Shrine Yōngdūng-kut as-is despite the radical changes in Cheju City, Mun admitted the following:

“Although its representativeness (*taep ’yosǒng*) as a village festival (*maül ch ’ukje*) may be lost, it would only be preserved as an intangible cultural asset (*muhyǒng munhwaje*). Its transmission is threatened. Ultimately I think that a support system to preserve it as a village festival and active participation among Kǒnip-tong residents is necessary” (1996: 258).

Ch’ilmǒri Yǒngdǔng-kut was already considered a local heritage asset and before UNESCO, *Chejuhak* scholars were already aware of the heritage policy’s paradoxes. What they perhaps did not anticipate was that it would take drastic urban change to make heritage more readily relevant. Yet folklorists had early realized that meaning had to become urbanized. Their own struggles and internal contradictions with attempting to keep authenticity paralleled the transformation of the ritual in Cheju City the past three decades. Ch’ilmǒri Shrine Yǒngdǔng-kut had been kept to a specific format and though it still served a dwindling number of actual *tanggol*, its purpose for Cheju City has changed.

What *Chejuhak* scholars promoted and what UNESCO designated in 2009 as the most complete form of Yǒngdǔng-kut was not the ritual of a far-flung isolated village but an urban district. Kǒnip-tong has been an indelible part of old Cheju City from as far back as the Chosǒn Dynasty. While preservation of old lifeways may not have economic utility, the fact that they can be preserved – and that the debate over them even takes place – is an expression of a nation’s changed status as an industrial or postindustrial economy (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 183). As a local capital, Cheju City’s boundaries straddle the loose piled-rock walls that divide the exotic pastoral past and the cosmopolitan urban. Heritage preservation or revival for shamanism was a logical resource to legitimize the city as a Cheju space. The UNESCO-designated and legally-preserved Ch’ilmǒri Shrine Yǒngdǔng-kut, complete with decorations made with nineteenth-century materials, perhaps offers a cathartic, even if fictive, stability.

As anthropologist Laurel Kendall (1996; 2008) suggests, eulogies to Korean shamanism's supposedly imminent demise have been premature because shamanic practice adapted itself to new urban settings. While many young Cheju City residents lack a clear conception of Cheju shamanism, many do recognize its connection with island practices and some have begun expressing interest, owing to the growing number of folk festival displays and efforts to publicize Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdüng-kut. A student member of Global Inner Peace had attended the March 19, 2015 *yowang maji* ritual, which marked the beginning of the Yöngdüng ritual cycle, as did mainland émigrés who had a curiosity for the culture of their new environment. Situated within Cheju City, Ch'ilmöri Shrine's associated practices far more accessible than any rural ritual. Ch'ilmöri Shrine position as heritage generates a curious *yin-yang* process that mirrors rural village arrangements, becoming the city's de facto *ponhyangdang* with Samsönghyöl as the complementary Confucian shrine.<sup>104</sup>

Urban-rural transformations are not unidirectional despite their asymmetrical relationship. Cities accumulate ideas and resources drawn from the countryside, but the countryside comes to represent the past that cities have lost as evidenced in idealized *minsokch'on* (folk villages) (Tangherlini 2008). Adding to the irony was that what scholars considered the most complete version of a folk ritual was actually from within Cheju City, already a growing city by the time the ritual was designated in 1980. This version came to set the standards for preserving and standardizing a rural ritual. Cheju shamanism as it was practiced in previous decades is likely to disappear within two generations, but at least as of 2015 and 2016

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<sup>104</sup> Until K'un-kut Preservation Society became prominent since 2014, Ch'ilmöri Shrine Preservation Society handled many city-sponsored ritual presentations. Samsönghyöl shrine noted in Chapter 2 was recorded to have been a shamanic shrine converted to Confucian ritual. A curious and probably accidental parallelism occurs between Cheju City's loci of ritual in Ch'ilmöri Shrine and Samsönghyöl and that of many other rural towns. Rural towns may host both a shamanic ritual at the local shrine and also a Confucian ritual at a Confucian shrine.

urban residents have turned to repurposing it as they search to find new ways to make Cheju City meaningful. The future of Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdŭng-kut is contingent on whether it can continue to produce meaning.

On the other hand, one cannot discount the possibility that accidental junctures of elements in the future could give shamanic ritual new meaning. Contrary to critiques of the “invention of tradition” as a practice of mass self-deception for political purposes in works of and derived from Eric Hobsbawm’s and Terrence Ranger’s seminal 1983 text, invention can itself be a self-authenticating process (Bendix 1989). For anything to be invented, one still depends on some form of community and existing symbols (Vlastos 1998). The process therefore should not be conceived as a dialectical transformation with a single result. What occurs is a complex interplay of dependent-origination in which emotional connection and meaning are mutually regenerative. Whether the wider urban population would continue to share in Yöngdŭng-kut as heritage is open to question, but for shamans and cultural preservationists at least every performance of the ritual reifies a community. Urban reality and rural memory, both lacking inherent meaning unto themselves, function when they mutually oppose and reconstitute without complete resolution. A practice only becomes dead when the tension is resolved.

### **3.3 Spiritual Endorphins**

Since its designation as heritage Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdŭng-kut oscillated between being a ritual and a festival, but Ipch'un-kut, another rite that became urban heritage, was the opposite. Ipch'un-kut was the ritual that was a festival that became a ritual and then a festival again. Festivals in Cheju since the mid-twentieth century have largely been state- and expert-led affairs whose existence depend more on their regularity than their spontaneity. At the end of the 1990s, Ipch'un-kut, long disappeared from the Cheju City scene since the colonial period, was

carefully reconstructed for a city that lost its main original folk festival. Ipch'un-kut was, as experts understood it, a shamanic festival by the people of ancient Cheju City and for the people of Cheju City. It returned from languishing decades in the abyss, but the act of necromancy was not a spontaneous popular desire. T'amna-guk Ipchun-kut Nori (T'amna Kingdom Welcoming of the Spring Rites Festival) was the brainchild of folklorists and artists, particularly those of Cheju's Minyech'ong (Korean People's Arts Federation) and the very same people who would lead the Traditional Culture Institute. Like Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yöngdüng-kut, the energy expended to Ipch'un-kut and other indirectly- or tangentially-related practices of re-organizing and re-inventing shamanism, generated productive coincidences.

On January 17 and 18, 2015, shortly before T'amna Ipch'un-kut Nori, the Cheju provincial government sponsored an expo on Cheju shamanic culture. The Cheju Kwan'kwang Hyöphoe (JTA, the Jeju Tourism Association), the Traditional Culture Institute, and Jeju Olle Trails organized the Cheju Chönt'ong Munhwa Eksüp'o ("Jeju Myths and Culture Expo")<sup>105</sup> at the Chungmun International Convention Center in Sögwip'o City. The event was something in between a folk extravaganza with live performances and commercial exposition featuring locally-produced Cheju, or at least Cheju-inspired, goods and local firms. A third key feature was a *munhwa ch'ehöm* (cultural experience) program such as sharing in *p'atchuk* (red bean porridge), Cheju crafts, and traditional games. As a Cheju and traditional culture expo, booths also offered the traditional Cheju *ppingttök* (a buckwheat flour wrap with white radish filling), women diver-caught seafood, and the traditional-yet-not-traditional Cheju-grown coffee and *kamgyul*-flavored chocolates for the curious convention center tourist searching for a souvenir. A special addition for 2015 was that visitors were also allowed the first look at a mainland artist's

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<sup>105</sup> The title literally translates to "Cheju Traditional Culture Expo" but it is advertised as "Myths and Culture" in English.

Disney-esque reimagining of island mythological figures in the form of hand-crafted paper sculptures, which would later grace Ipch'un-kut Nori festival.

Formats for all public events across Cheju accord to set programs in part due to the longstanding practice that so-called culture events are always state-sponsored affairs since no truly independent arts council exists in Korea (Lee HK 2012). The nationwide cultural and tourism turn since the early 2000s, even with financial crises in the intervening years up to the 2010s, meant more state resources dedicated to festivals or festival-like events (Hong SY 2013). Though not entirely dissimilar in general content to the *T'amna Tæjŏn* (T'amna Grand Culture Festival) held in the summer since the late 1960s,<sup>106</sup> the Myths and Culture Expo gained prominence as part of JTA's multi-phase MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, expositions) tourism project for the years 2012 to 2015 (Ko YT 2012). 2012 also happened to be the year when Cheju hosted the World Conservation Congress also at Chungmun. At a glance, one would think it a parallel to the 2002 World Cup folk festivities held on Cheju in an attempt to capitalize on international attention (Yun KI 2002). Though official practice has not changed much, cultural promoters seemed to have learned from the past thirteen years. The audience comprised mainly of mainland Koreans and islanders. Whereas officials resorted to populating the 2002 festival by having students attend, or paying people outright, the expo attendees and audience members to the major 2015 shamanic culture events in Cheju City did so out of their own interest.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Also see Oppenheim 2008 regarding Kyŏngju in North Kyŏngsang Province. Local "culture festivals" were a product of the Park Chung Hee years. In 2012 and 2013, the T'amna Culture Festival was criticized in the media as a dismal expensive failure. In 2015, however, owing to cruise tourism combined with greater general tourist interest in Old Cheju City, the T'amna Culture Festival was noticeably far busier. A history and analysis of the T'amna Culture Festival is outside the scope of my research and I may address it in the future.

<sup>107</sup> Those who came to the events notably comprised many people involved in their own attempts to 'revive' Cheju City's Old Town and thus included artists, island returnees, and intellectuals.

The expo had all the trappings of a province-sponsored festival with only the semi-private JTA's (as opposed to the state-run JTO) stamp, the indoor convention center setting, and the more clearly commercial intent as distinguishing features. Festivals are commercial in nature with the side objective of advertising the province, but the expo shifted the focus to various private and semi-private enterprise attempting to make use of tradition as product inspirations or a product in and of itself. Nevertheless, the state and official interests linger behind. By default, even private and nongovernmental organizations and institutes apply for funding through the state-supported Cheju Munhwa Yesul Chedan (Jeju Foundation for Arts and Culture), which serves as the principle agency for organizing and distributing national and provincial funding to arts programs.

Given the tendency to use the same tried formats as well as Cheju's small size, the usual suspects were involved in anything that had to do with shamanism exhibitions. Keynote speakers included government officials who ritually heap praise onto Cheju's achievements and Minyech'ong figures who ritually pontificate explanations of Cheju's unique folk culture. As a curious survival of the Chosŏn Dynasty, state officials and non-state scholars in culture institutes-cum-*sŏwŏn* (private academies in the Chosŏn period) strikingly parallel one another even while they tend to be at odds with each other outside the expo floor. The festival component of catharsis is replaced with another rite of transition: amidst the droning speeches the audience numbly stares off into space, takes selfies, chat amongst each other, and then applauds after the speech concludes to mark the rite of incorporation when the speaker leaves the stage. Shaman Sŏ Sunsil, in contrast, has little compunction over enlivening her audiences with a cheery demeanor and verve no matter what stage she stands upon, be it a shrine *kut* or the sterile halls of an expo center. Charismatic and impressionable, any audience pauses to listen when she speaks. Sŏ



Sunsil and her association, the K'ün-kut Preservation Society, were commissioned to perform Ipch'un-kut as well as other province-sponsored shamanic exhibitions in 2015.

As the expo's showcase performers, what K'ün-kut Preservation Society would perform was something of a teaser for what was to come for Ipch'un-kut. K'ün-kut Preservation Society could not find any willing expo visitor to play the role of a woman receiving a *puldo maji* and so Sō Sunsil turned to asking Tanner, a tall, goateed American ethnomusicology student conducting dissertation research on Cheju shamanic music. He was somewhat goaded into it by Kim Tolsan, the *tang maen simbang* of Wölchöng village and Sō's close associate, since he had spent quite a bit of time recording her rituals. Kimi Kim, an artist and activist, would normally play the role in public performances, but she was not present at that time.

In a normal ritual context, a *puldo maji* is for a woman who wishes for a child. There were no real interested aspiring mothers. But this was technically not a real *kut* either. In fact, Tanner mentioned later that shamans have come to develop a new curious ritual in regards to their roles as cultural representatives. Before starting the mock *kut* shamans make a note to the gods that they were not invoking them for a real ritual, which in this case would come at Ipch'un-kut. What Sō Sunsil was looking for was simply a good sport. Tanner was already familiar with K'ün-kut Preservation Society since he was a regular to their ritual events since 2014. For added measure, Sō gave Tanner a silk *ch'ima* (traditional skirt) to drape around his waist. All he had to do was to sit at the center of the ritual space with legs outspread as Sō Sunsil, with her teeth clenching a long cloth representing a snake spirit of fertility, writhing as a snake in as exaggerated a manner toward Tanner to the rhythm of percussion music and the laughs of a small yet captivated audience. The expo provided somewhat of an appetizer for the cultural connoisseur who may attend the T'amnaguk Ipch'un Kut-nori on February 2 and 3.

Although Ipch'un-kut had a basis in history, in 2015 it was as constructed as the expo that preceded it.

T'amnaguk Ipch'un-kut Nori marks the first major ritual and festival in Cheju City around the Lunar New Year. The festival annually takes place in the heart of Cheju City's *wǎndosim* (Old Town) opening with a Confucian-style rite at Cheju City hall to kick off Ipch'un (the onset of spring) on February 4 of the solar calendar (Hong SY 2013: 10). As soon as the sun sets, a parade procession with banner bearers, percussion musician troupes, and revelers pulling a *nangswe* (Kr.: *namuso*, wooden ox) on a sled through the city streets as they try to entice random passers-by to join. The parade usually terminates at the front of the historic Kwandŏkjŏng pavilion, the site of Chosŏn Dynasty era Cheju City's original town commons, where city dignitaries perform a quasi-Confucian rite to offer alcohol and cooked pork to the spirits to wish for abundance in the coming year. The following day features public feasting at Mokkwana (the Chosŏn Dynasty governors' complex) behind Kwandŏkjŏng and the Ipch'un-kut shamanic rites with a rendition of *Segyŏng ponp'uri*, the origin epic myth of the agricultural warrior-goddess Chŏch'ŏngbi and her lover Mun Toryŏng. As the title implies, the festival is a reenactment of the ancient T'amna kings' rites for the prosperity of their island kingdom and Cheju City residents' grand festival to observe the coming of spring. The Traditional Culture Institute, Minyech'ong, and the same individuals involved in the Ch'ilmöri Shrine Yŏngdŭng-kut preservation initiative, after years of concerted efforts, completely re-created it wholesale in 1999.

T'amnaguk Ipch'un Kut-nori was in every sense an invention of tradition, but one that depended on tradition. According to Hong Sunyoung's detailed dissertation on the festival and its revival, the process to restore and reinvent Ipch'un-kut was one that began as early as 1958. Performers reenacted it as a stage performance at the Chŏn'guk Minsok Yesul Kyŏngyŏn Taehoe

(National Folk Arts Contest) (2013: 163). It would appear onstage four times as a representative tradition of Cheju – albeit one that had no actual practitioners – but it was not until 1998 that Mun Mubyŏng and local artists proposed to have it made into a festival. Mun was also involved with Minyech’ong and would found the Traditional Culture Institute a year after the festival’s successful creation in 2000.

The festival does have textual historical basis as officials in East Asian cultures from at least since the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) in ancient China performed some form of a *ch’unkyŏng* rite, which involved a ceremonial display of plowing. The ceremony was an act of sympathetic magic on the part of officials with the hope that the rest of the year would be bountiful. In the *T’amnarok*, an 1841 account, the governor noted that in place of the *ch’unkyŏng* rite Cheju islanders held Ipch’un-kut. The ritual involved a *kŏlgung* (procession of percussion musicians) involving a wooden ox to the town commons in front of Kwandŏkjŏng and the presiding magistrate would offer a feast to all who gathered. The *T’amnarok* claims that it was a tradition that had been maintained in Cheju since the time of the T’amna kings. The last time Ipch’un-kut was performed before its 1999 revival was during Japanese colonial rule. Japanese anthropologist Torii Ryūzō ostensibly included it in his fieldwork in 1914. His June 6 photographs of that year of Ipch’un-kut were clearly staged as they were taken months after the actual Ipch’un-kut, but Mun Mubyŏng felt that they nonetheless provided information on what sort of masks were used in the festival (Ibid., 157-159). That Ipch’un-kut coincided with the *sin’gugan* transitional period when gods briefly return to the heavens and allow people to break taboos provided a stronger basis for reconsidering it as historically important to Cheju City heritage. As an early ritual to mark a transitional period, Ipch’un-kut bears some functional similarity to Sinkwaseje rituals.

The revived Ipch'un-kut as well as its revival process revealed more about contemporary Cheju City cultural and identity politics than ancient T'amna or the Ipch'un rite itself. From its urban bureaucratic organizing to its deliberate re-inventedness, it was in many ways a myths and culture expo with a flair of authenticity. With Ipch'un-kut restored, Cheju City would once again hold New Year's and Yöngdüng-kut observances, paralleling its rural peripheries. Different factions clashed over festival format, timing, and authenticity, but it remains an annual affair, demonstrating Minyech'ong's and the Cheju City administration's commitment to it.<sup>108</sup> A critical problem, Hong Sunyoung argues, was that the festival organizing committee was hardly inclusive despite the festival's founding premise as a city festival. Hong's assessment remained true for 2015, but repetition combined with the contingencies of that year allowed for some accidental effects; after nearly two decades, Ipch'un-kut was becoming heritage.

Since Ipch'un-kut's heritage status has been ambiguous, Minyech'ong maintained the same program formulated since 1999 but adjusts content depending on immediate circumstances. In 2015, the parade format changed because the question of the Old Town's future gained prominence. Rather than start from Cheju City Hall in Ildo-2-tong at a slight remove from the Old Town, the opening rites began at two key points within the *wöndosim*: Tongjabok (the East Maitreya megalith) by the former east wall and Söjabok (the West Maitreya megalith) at Haeryunsa temple (Hö HJ 2015). As the two Maitreya megaliths are at Koryö era temple sites, T'aego Order Buddhist monks led the rites rather than officials in Confucian garb. Whereas earlier iterations featured only the *nangswe* and a simple *kölgung* route to Kwandökjöng, 2015 included paper floats of Cheju deities (Figure 9) displayed at the Myths and Culture Expo and a

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<sup>108</sup> Several of the conflicts that Hong noted included politicians' attempts to use the festival as an unofficial campaign opportunity, committee organization, and how to balance the desired objectives of 'preserving' its shamanic heritage and the particularities of the urban present. An irony of preservation is that the festival was re-invented at the end of the twentieth century.

more elaborate route of several groups starting at different locations and meeting at Tongmun Rotary. In a move to gesture at the festival's T'amna-ness, the procession highlighted places considered most representative of old Cheju City. The *kölgung* starting points included Kwandökjöng and the then just-completed reconstructed tavern of eighteenth-century female merchant-philanthropist Kim Mandök. The theme this year was explicitly on Cheju City's Old Town renaissance, or at least a gesture at the hopes for one.



Figure 9: Paper sculpture of Chöch'öngbi at Ipch'un-kut parade.<sup>109</sup>

Whether T'amnaguk Ipch'un Kut-nori has been much of a success since its 1999 revival continues to be debatable. Reception and participation remained modest, but its perpetuation for two decades had at least acclimated city residents to its existence. Whereas some Old Town revivalists such as Ko Young-lim lamented the apparent apathy among the Cheju National University student volunteers and the organizers' lack of imagination, other Cheju City natives

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<sup>109</sup> Photo by author, Samdo-2-tong, Cheju City, February 2, 2015.

such as restaurateur Hyun JuRyoung (Hyŏn Churyŏng) held favorable views toward it. By 2015, it became an attraction for new residents to Cheju City. Hong Sunyoung argued that since its 1999 revival, the fact that the festival was contested among community groups, shamans, culture associations, and government officials demonstrates that the festival had managed to create some form of meaning. Beyond mere political posturing and potential economic returns, there was a sense among these parties that there was a right way to go about it. In this case “traditions act both as a root of and a route to meaning” (2013: 300) and the re-invention of traditions became traditions themselves. While Ipch’un Kut organizing continued to be a top-down affair, its perpetuation and close association with the *wŏndosim* had transformed the festival into urban heritage and a stage for shamanism. Like the expo that preceded it, Ipch’un-kut juxtaposed Cheju shamanism and the Cheju folk with urban settings.

K’ŭn-kut Preservation Society seemed to have taken advantage of the festival’s obviously re-invented nature in their 2015 appearance as the Ipch’un-kut officiants. Ch’ilmŏri Shrine Preservation Society had been the primary officiants of Ipch’un-Kut since the ritual’s survival, but around the same time Mun Mubyŏng left the Traditional Culture Institute and parted ways with Pak Kyŏnghun at Minyech’ong, the festival committee turned to K’ŭn-kut Preservation Society.<sup>110</sup> The energetic and charismatic Sŏ Sunsil was a natural with curious urban viewers. In stark contrast to the awkward staged public *kut* in 2002 and 2010 that Yun Kyoim described, Sŏ knew perfectly how to adjust to her audience well.

Rather than fully reciting the hours-long *Segyŏng ponp’uri*, she provided a half-hour highlight reel filled with raunchy humor about the cross-dressing goddess Chŏch’ŏngbi’s

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<sup>110</sup> The circumstances of this issue were vaguely discussed to me and so I am not of liberty to go into detail on the reason for the schism. Hyŏn Sŭnghwan at Munhwa Yesul Chedan noted that competition over scarce funding resources had been a divisive factor in the past few years.

attempts to avoid her love interest Mun Toryŏng's discovery of her true identity. The episode used in both 2015 and 2016 was a peeing contest in which Mun Toryŏng challenged Chŏch'ŏngbi, suspecting that she was indeed a female. Chŏch'ŏngbi managed to outwit Mun Toryŏng and upstage him by secretly holding a bamboo pipe in her pants, enabling her to pee farther. Unlike the Ch'ilmŏri Preservation Society's performance in 2011, Sŏ and K'ŭn-kut Preservation Society made the *Segyŏng ponp'uri* performance a vivacious comedic skit in which the *sink'al* (divination knives) were used as a prop for Chŏch'ŏngbi's bamboo pipe. Kimi Kim, who became well-acquainted with K'ŭn-kut Preservation Society, played key roles in the 2015 Ipch'un-Kut as Chŏch'ŏngbi and in other K'ŭn-kut public events as the sassy goddess Kamŭnch'angaegi.<sup>111</sup> When shamans made entreaties to the deities for the year, they were proactive in soliciting audience members' participation for the *p'udasi* cleansing rite and included anyone who happened to be present, including tourists, rather than only *kut* sponsors. Should a non-Korean join in, Sŏ would jokingly utter the few English words she knows into the microphone. As a result, K'ŭn-kut Preservation Society highlighted Ipch'un-kut more as a public festival than a community observance.

Sŏ Sunsil utilized public events to assert her own authority in Cheju shamanism discourses as a shaman who spoke about shamanism. In the break period, she took the opportunity to speak about why audience members should have interest in shamanism. Along with reiterating folklorists' usual insistences that it was a quintessential aspect of a Cheju traditional culture that is worthy of preservation, Sŏ briefly took an unconventional approach – endorphins. Demonstrating her familiarity with popular science, she did not shy from taking a

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<sup>111</sup> Kamŭnchang'agi's myth parallels that of other mainland Korean folktales of disowned children who find material success and rescue parents from poverty. A particular twist with the Kamŭnchang'agi story is that her reason for being disowned was a sassy response in which she credited her vagina for her well-being instead of the standard response of crediting the parents.

few moments to explain its relationship to brain health. Sō explained that once a shaman and *kut* attendee enters a spiritual trance, the endorphins that are released in the brain at that moment reduces stress accumulated throughout the year and therefore promotes health. Sō further added that the benefits of *kut* had a scientific basis because the ecstatic moments that came from the percussive music, the momentary sense of community, the energetic dance all contributed to the cathartic effect. *Kut*, her explanation implied, is efficacious regardless of whether one believes in it. This explanation would be used twice again to a Cheju City and tourist audience – at the public K’ŭn-kut exhibition, which was complete with color posters that mimicked live theater bills, in front of Kwandŏkjŏng in the summer and the T’amna Grand Culture Festival. On some occasions, Sō Sunsil was also invited to give talks at Qoomja (K’umcha) salon, an arts and crafts studio and shop run by a mainlander with a deep interest in Cheju culture. In all cases, Sō was hardly shy from providing alternative explanations of Cheju shamanism distilled of its place-bound terminology and engaging a non-*tanggol* audience. While she maintains a more serious demeanor in shrine ritual in her home village of Chimnyŏng (Kimnyŏng), in the city she appeals to an urban audience not as a distant mystic but an affable every-person.

The more deliberate consumption of *kut* in 2015 and 2016 contrasts the muted reactions described in Yun Kyoim’s description of the 2002 World Cup festivities. Shamans learned to adapt to an urban audience even as culture associations and policymakers, still wedded to top-down expert-led approaches, lag behind. The activities of both K’ŭn-kut and Ch’ilmŏri Shrine Yŏngdŭng-kut Preservation Societies were clear signs that Cheju shamans have organized and are very much aware of Cheju City’s impact on the island. For those concerned with the growing sense of alienation in Cheju City’s too-rapid development and an influx of mainland Koreans and nouveau riche Chinese, shamanic exhibitions, regardless of how staged they may be, served as a



welcome reminder of the island's historical uniqueness. In February 2017, Ch'ilmöri Shrine Preservation Society managed to gain enough resources to perform Yöngdüng-kut at the southwestern village of Hansu-ri in Han'gyöng-myön and the northwestern village of Kwidök-ri in Hallim-öp, two places where the rite had long ago disappeared.

Re-invention has brought up many new questions as the paradoxes that come with heritage designation became all too apparent. While preparing for his closing role in the month-long Ch'ilmöri Yöngdüng-kut Global Academy<sup>112</sup>, one day before the event's finale on August 26, 2016, folklorist and performer Han Chino expressed ambivalence about the role of preservation as well as his own place in it. He posed the question rhetorically, "should *kut* survive just as performance?" Preservation creates new problems. The ritual process is fundamental, he argued, and so literary analyses of the *ponp'uri* or re-inventing practices based on obscure records fail to accurately represent the actual intricacies in a *kut*. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the population of *tanggol* was still dwindling. Urbanites were developing interest in shamanic culture many but did so out of their own misplaced sense of nostalgia. At worst, some desired to capitalize on Cheju's exoticism, a trend that Han derided as "story-selling." Pondering aloud about the controversies of cultural preservation itself on that Friday before the final Yöngdüng-kut Academy event day, Han pointed to two different hats on the table, a flat cap and a fedora. "If it begins like this," he said first pointing to the flat cap, "it will become like that." He pointed to the fedora.

### **3.4 Cheju Vignette: Heralding the Dragon King**

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<sup>112</sup> This program is a Ch'ilmöri Yöngdüng-kut Preservation Society-sponsored event open for a small fee of 5000 wön per class to the public. The experimental pilot program took place in the summer of 2016, but another 'global academy' was held this year in 2017 during the Yöngdüng ritual season.

The morning of March 25, 2015 was nippy with light coastal breezes and a temperature at 7 degrees Celsius. Only a few wisps of clouds hovered far above the golden sunrise over the crest of Ilch'ulbong (Sunrise Peak) in the distance. Much of the village, which spreads out along the smooth coastal plain beside the near-perfect cone of Chimibong *orŭm*, was still asleep, save for the odd mainland tourist or Southeast Asian fishery worker.

Tonjit-tang, a shrine where locals pray to the Sŏnwang (Lord of Ships) deity, located on a jagged basalt rock formation on the rocky shore directly to the west of the wharf and beach displayed signs of recent activity. There were scattered ritual food and drink offerings including bottles of soju, a can of orange Fanta, tangerines, rice, and carrots, the village's specialty crop.<sup>113</sup> Fresh white, red, yellow, and blue cloth tied to the shrine's short bonsai-like tree mingled with other older strips of cloth offerings of yesteryear. Below the altar and stuck into the dirt- and sand-filled openings in the rock were the remains of burnt-out joss sticks and candles. Much of the food offerings had not yet decomposed. Worshipers must have visited the shrine just before the designated main ritual day. A well-known local Buddhist cleric Su'am Sŏnim had invited Tanner, Joey, and me to visit when we expressed interest in Chongdal-ri's practices.

The Yŏngdŭng ritual season was extremely important to Chongdal-ri, a community with a substantial community of women divers. The strength of the Chongdal-ri women divers' community has attracted both Korean and international attention, meriting photographs in *National Geographic*.<sup>114</sup> Like their counterparts in villages across Cheju, they hold a ritual for

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<sup>113</sup> The association of carrots with this region is exaggerated in comical ways, including a cartoon carrot painting on nearby P'yŏngdae-ri's village hall and a golden carrot sculpture in Chongdal.

<sup>114</sup> See <http://proof.nationalgeographic.com/2014/11/06/instant-south-koreas-haenyeo-free-divers/>

the sea deities at the *ŏch'on'gye*<sup>115</sup> office or their *t'alŭijang* (workstation),<sup>116</sup> a practice that had become the norm since the 1990s; only a few communities such as the more remote village of Sinch'ŏn still held them entirely at the shrines because of matters of convenience. Aside from respecting residents' concerns about noise, the concrete workstation facilities are much larger, more comfortable, and convenient for women divers', who are now mostly over 50. Rural Cheju still observed the Yŏngdŭng season, but in remarkably different ways from the many folklore writings on Ch'ilmŏri Shrine Yŏngdŭng-kut.

At Chongdal-ri, it was not a Yŏngdŭng-kut that they chose to observe, or even an abbreviated *insa* like Sinch'ŏn. Like some other communities where a *tang maen simbang* no longer exists, Chongdal-ri residents transferred their worship to a Buddhist temple. The women divers' association sponsored a *yowangje* (or *yowang kido*) ceremony, a Buddhist ritual for the Dragon King god. Though *posal* shamans are known to sometimes perform *yowangje*, Chongdal-ri kept to a more orthodox Buddhist ritual in enlisting the services of Kŭmbungsa (Temple of the Golden Roc) in the neighboring village of Hado. But because ritual is very context-dependent in Cheju, what transpired did not entirely follow the same script as every other temple. Adding to this was the fact that their officiant of choice was Su'am Sŭnim, who himself had relations involved in shamanic practice.

Unlike a full shamanic ritual, which could last for an entire morning to a full day, Buddhist rituals go by a regular temple service schedule. Temple rituals tend to start from around 10 AM and conclude by 12 PM, depending on the size of the congregation (as blessings to

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<sup>115</sup> *Ŏch'on'gye* literally translates to the cooperative of people involved in fishing and diving work, but they are technically under the village administration.

<sup>116</sup> *T'alŭichang* literally means "changing place" or "changing room" where women divers keep their wetsuits and equipment, but these places also double as workstations for them to process their catch and sell them to Suhyŏp, the nationally-sponsored and almost always male-led fisheries cooperative.

congregants' families are read aloud) or whether a family requested a memorial service. Standard in T'aego Order Buddhist *sasi pulgong* (morning service), all congregants begin with following the monk's recitation of the *Ch'önsugyöng* (Thousand Hands Sutra). The monk or nun leading the ritual then performs prayers on behalf of temple congregation members and then leads with ritual veneration of the *sinjung* (Sanskrit: *deva*; deities) and the *Maha panya paramilta simgyöng* (Heart Sutra). How a *kido* (worship) is distinguished from a *pulgong* (Buddha recitation) service are the specific added chants: the use of reciting "Yowang Taesin" ("Great god, the Dragon King") for *yowang kido* or the *Sansin'gyöng* (the Mountain King Sutra), which enumerates the various forms of the mountain gods, for *sansin kido*. These aspects are standard for all *kido* across Cheju and Korea in general. On the other hand, because only scriptures and format are standardized and not the entirety of the ritual, local monks and congregations insert their own interventions for practical aspects of the ritual. *Sansin kido* at Hwach'önsa temple in Hoech'ön, for example, is performed at the Osökbul (Five Stone Buddhas) shamanic shrine that adjoins the temple and is accompanied with a *maülche*.<sup>117</sup> Some congregations also appear to have their own shrines around Hallasan. What is presented on the offering tables in all Cheju *kido* tends to follow that of what would be presented at a Confucian ritual for mountain deities or a *kut* for sea deities – *tolle ttöök* (plain flat, round rice cakes), honey apples, Korean pears, white rice, candy, soju, dried *okdom*, and the oddly obligatory bottle of Fanta.

*Kido* (worship) rituals in general are not at all unique to Cheju or Korean Buddhism, but the subtle aspects and the meaning of *kido* in Cheju differs depending on the temple's

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<sup>117</sup> Some Cheju researchers were surprisingly unaware, if not in denial, that Hwach'önsa temple and Hoech'ön village annually held *sansinje* at the altar. Hoech'ön villagers do not consider it unusual to perform a Buddhist rite at a Cheju shrine. The presiding monk at Hwach'önsa in 2015 was a young monk from Seoul, but noted that due to the influence of Su'am Sünim and Pokhye Sünim, those appointed to Hwach'önsa, regardless of their origins, are expected to respect Hoech'ön's particular spiritual practices.

congregations. Korean Buddhism emphasizes the basic principle of attaining Buddhahood, but does not eschew shamanic deities per se. In Buddhist temples across Korea, rituals designated as *kido* are specifically for the Yongwang (dragon king), Sansin (or Sanwang Taesin, the mountain gods), and Ch'ilsǒng (seven stars) deities. These deities appear – often as curious attendees to Śakyamūni Buddha's lectures on spiritual techniques – in various forms under various names in prominent Mahāyāna Buddhist sūtra such as the Lotus and Diamond Sutras, but deity worship holds an extremely ambiguous place in Buddhism.

Ambiguity enables Buddhist clergy and self-identified Buddhists local to Cheju to redefine the role of the gods in a manner that is compatible with Cheju spirituality. Unlike other mainland-origin clergy, Pokhye Sūnim, a monk from Kangjin in South Chōlla province, at Changansa temple in the Cheju City district of Todu-tong, expressed his admiration for what he felt was a brilliant application of Korean Buddhism to a Cheju-specific situation. The early twentieth-century monks in Cheju, he noted, were unavoidably deeply a part of their own community practices and thus looked at their own traditions with a Buddhist lens and vice versa.<sup>118</sup> Chiwǒn Sūnim, a native of the southeastern inland village of Sǒngūp and monk of Porimsa near Ch'ilmǒri Shrine in Cheju City, mentioned that locals tended to interpret the Ch'ilsǒng deities in terms of Cheju's snake deities. With the existing ambiguities toward deities in Buddhism, even standardized ritual could accommodate to local beliefs. Some Cheju clergy have hinted that their predecessors themselves were involved in Cheju shamanism in one way or another as they expressed pride in the relatively harmonious relationship between the two religions. In an echo of the Wǒnhyo, one of Korean Buddhism's great seventh-century

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<sup>118</sup> Interview with author at Todu-tong, Cheju City. March 18, 2015.

forefathers, Su'am Sūnim explained that there were multiple paths to becoming enlightened, and thus Cheju indigenous religion was not at odds with Buddhism.

*Yowang kido* in Chongdal-ri (Figure 10) follows the format of a standard Buddhist service, but several additions make it distinct from others even within Cheju. While protective *tarani* (Sanskrit: dharani; Buddhist incantations) written in red ink in the shape of a pagoda were pasted behind a makeshift altar below the sea-facing wall at the back of the workstation, a long white cloth was tied from the window on the wall to lead to offering table. In the same manner as the steamers and cloth used in shamanic ritual, this “*sin-ŭi kanŭn kil*” (god path) is for the Yowang god to enter the room. Before the ritual chanting begins, a separate box of offerings with incense is prepared outside the door. The box, the women said, was for the Cheju wind god Yōngdŭng Harŭbang. Unlike other temple chanting services, the *Ch'ōnsugyōng* chanting and the 108 recitations of Yowang's name had a distinct musical quality, a peculiarity to the Kūmbungsa congregation.



Figure 10: Buddhist Yowang rite at Chongdal-ri.<sup>119</sup>

At the conclusion of the ritual, following the custom of the Yōngdūng-kut *songbyōlche*, the women divers gathered paper packets of rice to toss into the sea as a final offering to Yowang. They had to throw the packets a strong swing to ensure that they sunk into the water. A packet that does not sink indicates that Yowang rejected the offering. Throwing it at the right angle with the right force was not cheating per se, but simply a way to goad Yowang to accept a gift. Afterward, the women poured soju into the sea. They were careful to prevent any plastic or empty bottles from falling into the water. As pollution concerns were growing in Cheju amidst the island's urban transformation and as more women divers were becoming aware of the changes to the sea environment, Chongdal-ri's women divers were cautious about plastic pollution. Even the use of paper packets was an environmental choice – traditional Korean paper would biodegrade whereas plastic wrapping, which is used in some other villages, would not. The ritual was a unique combination of a specifically Cheju Buddhist attitude toward deities, local shamanic spirituality, and contemporary eco-awareness. These same women would dive as soon as the waters calmed and they would also attend the Yōngdūng-kut of the neighboring village of Hado-ri.

The first time I heard about Su'am Sūnim was in 2013. Both mainland-origin and local clergy spoke of a monk in northeastern Cheju who knew much about spiritual practices unique to the island. The first person to mention this person was Cheryang Sūnim, a nun from Ch'ungch'ōng province at Kokwansa temple in Chochōn whose extroverted personality enabled her to meet many of the island's local clergy. Su'am Sūnim, the monk she recommended that I meet, was not only one of the few senior clergy to have intimate knowledge about Cheju

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<sup>119</sup> Photo by author, Chongdal-ri, Kujwa-ŭp, March 25, 2015.

practices but also happened to be “*Cheju-ŭi kajang ttokttokhan sŭnim*” (Cheju’s most intelligent monk). Possessing a PhD in classical Chinese literature and an expert in *Hwaŏmgyŏng* (Sanskrit: *Avatamsaka Sūtra*), other Cheju Buddhist clergy consider his erudition unparalleled. Su’am Sŭnim nonetheless maintains a humble disposition and is critical of material excess that has come to dominate contemporary Korean life. For those local to the region, he is known more for his close personal connection to the community’s history. Su’am Sŭnim’s father was murdered by the Northwest Youth league for attempting to provide refuge for people fleeing the massacre. A lesser-known piece of his father’s history is also that he may have produced paintings and calligraphy for a former main shaman of nearby Haengwŏn village. Whereas some mainland clergy are intent on distancing shamanism from Buddhism, Su’am Sŭnim allowed for continuity between Buddhist practice and Cheju spirituality.

That Buddhist *kido* appears standardized (as well as an apparent prejudice in folkloristics toward Korean Buddhism as being a foreign import) on the outside could be the reason for local researchers’ general disinterest in them. Yet what the *yongwang kido* in Chongdal-ri demonstrates is that practitioners inscribe multilayered meanings upon a ritual. When Kŭmbungsa temple held *sansin kido* (or *sansinje*, the mountain god ritual) in the same year, the ritual was held at a shrine near the historic site of Pŏpchŏngsa temple and a gods’ pathway was arranged for the mountain gods. At the conclusion of that ritual, Su’am Sŭnim led his congregants in bowing to the four directions and then finally to the god of Hallasan itself.

Chongdal-ri and Kŭmbungsa temple may represent what is in store for what remains of Cheju’s indigenous religion. In several other coastal villages and towns where a village shaman no longer exists or where the community was so irreversibly disrupted in the fallout of April Third such as Chuksŏng mentioned in the opening of this chapter, worship in Buddhist temples



compensated for the loss of community *kut*. The remaining fishers and divers at P'yosŏn, paradoxically the town with a large folk village museum, also opted for a Yowang ceremony. What happens in the Cheju countryside is both mentioned and kept silent in *Chejuhak* literature.

Yi Kiuk's (2003) research in the 1990s revealed that rural economies became intertwined with global markets from as early as the beginning of the twentieth century and that 'traditional' economic practices were irreversibly altered. Folkloristics, still largely based on a salvage operation, on the other hand, almost appears to be reluctant to engage with the transformations. One such example is the anthropologist Hyŏn Yongjun's 2009 *Cheju saramdŭl-ŭi sam* (The Lives of Cheju People) in which the book offers in-depth descriptions of rural lifestyles, but only offers a short single chapter on the fallout of urbanization. As a conclusion to his book, Hyŏn opines that he hopes his description of Cheju rural culture – ironically a culture that Yi Kiuk demonstrates has long ceased to exist – would inspire an urbanizing Cheju people to reassess the values lost with change. Yet rural village residents ironically are far more keen to urban change than urban residents and none are shy about admitting that they do in fact live better with contemporary conveniences. At Onp'yŏng village's 2016 *maŭlje*, for example, ritual officiants were not shy about saying that they simply printed classical Chinese writing off a computer because it was far easier than finding a local literatus to write by hand. These adaptations in themselves conversely demonstrate a will to keep tradition meaningful for as long as possible. The discrepancy between urban traditional displays and actual rural practice reflects the parallax views of both: a desire for a lost abstract authenticity in the city and a desire to keep authentic practice in the countryside.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CULTURAL CONTENT

“Life in the original ‘urban village’ of ethnic and working-class neighborhoods before the 1960s was a re-creation of tradition. In the gentrified and hipster neighborhoods that have become models of urban experience since then, authenticity is a consciously chosen lifestyle and a performance, and a means of displacement as well.”

Sharon Zukin (2009: 4)

“But in a way, I appreciate the emergence of...fancy desert cafés or such delicacies here in the island or some museums like Arario Museum. But at the same time, there needs to be something happening on this island to preserve this culture...most of us want to go to Seoul, be more Seoul, but once they realize what Seoul actually is like, like how I realized it in my international school, they’re going to regret it.”

YK, interview  
March 23, 2015

### 5.1 – Cheju Vignette: The Artisans

The interior of the Wave Café featured a refurbished semi-industrial workshop look, a favored décor choice for coffee shops from Pasadena, California to Osaka, Japan. The same sort of aesthetic was also increasingly popularized among such establishments across mainland Korea and on Cheju island, marking a sharp departure from the gaudy European-inspired alpine lodge-cum-Disney teacup ride featured in the Café Benes or Angelinus chain shops. The utilities pipes overhead were left exposed, the polished stone flooring was bare, and the walls were plain concrete with only indie band or exhibition posters to adorn them. In contrast to its many counterparts in Cheju Island, Café Wave was one of the few cafés that featured an indie rock ambience and did not blare K-Pop over the loudspeakers. Wave Café appeared around 2014 in the youth-oriented Taehak-ro area by Cheju City Hall. It was not the first of its kind, but was among the early establishments in this area to feature artisan hand-dripped coffee. Unlike many similar establishments around the island, it was also a Cheju native and a largely Cheju local clientele that made Wave Café.

YC operated Café Wave alongside his girlfriend YY, who ran the business whenever he had side jobs for friends and acquaintances. As has been the case of many other younger islanders, YC, originally a law student, did not enter a profession of his major. His choice not to follow the rat race that characterized the ultra-competitive Korean job market was in part due to the realities of limited prospects and in part due to a disinterest in participating fully in it. YC, YY, and their friends similarly represented a small yet growing group of younger Cheju islanders that intentionally detach themselves from the usual expectations of linear career paths and eventual domesticity foisted upon their generation. Even amidst Cheju's economic boom, prospects for younger islanders was not great. YC admitted that he was neither interested in a regimented full-time job nor any long-term ambition. Nicknamed the "Prince of Namwŏn," his family was said to have become prosperous through their *ttŏkchip* (Korean rice cake) business in the Sŏgwip'o area. Though he came from rural Cheju, he, like many other younger islanders, had highly urbanized preferences and navigated between their rural backgrounds and cosmopolitan urban present.

As had been the case with many similar establishments, the café was an extension of YC's tastes and personality. YC was a connoisseur of artisan coffee and craft beer. His coffee beans were deliberately selected for their quality and whenever he desired craft beer, he would travel up to the mainland or Japan to seek craft breweries. Spent beans or even beans considered inferior were used to fill the cigarette ashtrays or indoor plant pots. The popularity of his place grew from 2015 and into 2016 due to its convenient location in one of the busiest parts of Cheju City. Most of 2015, his clientele tended to be university students, Cheju City government staff, locals and mainlanders who come specifically for the higher quality coffee, and North American and European expatriates and scholars who craved a straight black hand-dripped cup of joe. The

attention to quality and the ambience were initial draws. Café Wave also was a de facto meeting place for YC's and YY's circle of friends with like tastes and interests.

I met Vickie Ko, a professionally-trained barista, at Wave Café at a “Senjari Rangers” event held there in early 2015. Ko was at the time in between jobs and passing the time working on handicrafts and developing her skill in the art of coffee preparation. As a friend of several “Senjari Rangers” members, she offered to show how to make bracelets from the damaged trees at Sölsaemit Shrine. Joey mentioned that she was one of the few people of her generation to maintain ties to her home village's shrine. She had her own special way of honoring the grandfather deity – with artisan coffee.

Ko was a friend of YC and YY and, like YC, she was a Cheju islander of rural origin with an urban outlook. Vickie Ko came from the village of Wölchöng in Kujwa-ŭp, a region known for its hardy inhabitants and stubbornly independent spirit. Though part of Cheju's earlier millennial generation and a resident of Cheju City, Ko spent much of her childhood in the countryside. She continued to identify strongly with her native village and shared in the resentment toward the many mainland café owners that set up shop by the beach there.

Ko was constantly striving to further develop her skills and knowledge. She explained her interest in coffee as follows:

“Originally, a long while ago, I was a kindergarten teacher. Since I was a teacher, I wasn't allowed to drink alcohol or smoke. Couldn't drink and couldn't try cigarettes, but I could have coffee or tea. Because it had to be those, at first when I tried coffee it had a unique taste among drinks that I could have and it gets me into a conversation like this....I first went to a private coffee school and had some thoughts about making a café. But then I thought when the course ended that though it'd be of course fine that I trusted the person here making coffee by dividing (the beans), putting it in, putting whatever on top of it, and then push a button to make it come out. Then the coffee isn't cheap, you know. Even if its 'cheap,' because this is an age when it goes for four, three, five thousand wön, the coffee price isn't cheap. I thought that getting money that way selling coffee in that manner isn't right. And as I thought that it should be done properly as long

as one does it, I continued to gradually wonder about coffee and started a group. Having done that, I got to go to a competition. I got to be a competitor and I don't know if it was just my luck or skill but I got top prize. One million wŏn.”

Like many baristas in Cheju, Ko did not initially consider coffee and coffee making a potential art or profession. It became such over time through her own realization of her abilities. It was not merely a matter of finding a niche in a time of bleak economic prospects for Korean millennials. Critical of café owners who overprice their machine-made products and lack of consideration for coffee as an art form, her choice of taking up the craft was a break from the incessant immediacy and mechanical conformity demanded in mainstream Korean employment. Though artisan coffee was a foreign import, Ko positioned herself as strongly rooted in Cheju and at times in opposition to many *kwinong-kwich'on* (“back to the land”) mainland Koreans who migrated to the island since the 2000s.

Ko's dedication to coffee culture and how it should be presented is that of a self-identified artisan. She was a part of the emerging coffee culture in Cheju, but distinguished herself and criticized those who simply use automated espresso machines and sell marked-up coffee at the expense of locals. Aside from the cultural conflict and environmental damage that the many cafés brought to the countryside, especially her home village, Ko considered many of them disingenuous. She noted that though some baristas were genuine, so many others simply treat it as a source of income to subsidize their metropolitan lifestyles.<sup>120</sup> Being a barista was for her an art that she could claim as her own and not just a means of following a trend.

The wider phenomena of Cheju islanders taking up cosmopolitan culture and adopting it as their own paralleled the in-migration of metropolitan mainland Koreans, but Cheju islanders

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<sup>120</sup> The difference between 2007 and 2015 in the visibility of coffee shops in Cheju Island as a whole is staggering. During 2007, they were concentrated largely in Taehak-ro by Cheju City Hall and central Yŏn-tong in the Sin-Cheju area. In 2015, one can encounter a coffee shop every ten minutes walking along the Olle walking course number seven, which stretches 14.7 kilometers along the coast of Sŏgwip'o.

continued to hold to their Cheju identity and community. Many younger Cheju islanders were embracing culture imported from the mainland or from abroad, but they also felt it prudent to do so on their own terms. Their choices also reflected the tensions and paradoxes of contemporary urban Cheju. While mainlanders brought their cosmopolitanism to the Cheju countryside as they sought to escape metropolitan Korea, many Cheju islanders engaged it in the spaces of Cheju City. In the contact zone of Cheju City where the island and the mainland (as well as the wider world) intersect, islanders took to new cultural trends while they maintained their self-distinction as locals from their mainland counterparts.

## **5.2 – Creative Economy**

The *Pijŏn 2030 Haengbok-han Sŏm Cheju* (Vision 2030, A Happier Island of Cheju) provides a glimpse to what Cheju’s planning think tank was already considering before the post-2010 boom and the ensuing culture-led development. The pamphlet was a report and proposal produced for the Government Administration and Home Affairs Committee in July 7, 2009. In this report the Cheju Palchŏn Yŏn’guwŏn (Jeju Development Institute) painted a rosy prediction of Cheju Island having achieved the rank of one of the world’s top 100 tourism destinations and boasting a GDRP four times the 2009 average (Chwa YC 2009). Media coverage of the presentation observe that the JDI report and suggestions aroused immediate skepticism among Cheju Provincial Assembly members. Nevertheless, the outline rode upon the coat-tails of larger allegedly green and sustainable urban development trends in Korea, namely the “ubiquitous,” shortened to *yubi* (UB) in the report, high-tech and eco city idea that gained prominence in the 2000s (Yigitcanlar and Lee, 2014).

One other aspect that the report did correctly predict is in a specific section on improving tourism quality: cultural tourism. In the section on tourism trends, the report states, “In order to

procure a ‘creative destination’ brand, there is a need for a system that can actively reflect the important ideas of tourism policies and a dynamic network that can connect various agents in areas such as business, tourism, and academia” (Jeju Development Institute, 67)<sup>121</sup>. By 2015, a “creative destination” brand was no longer mere daydreaming. *Ch’angjo kyŏngje* (creative economy) became state official policy. State support meant that the Free International City and its associated projects with *tosi chaesaeng* (urban revitalization) could overcome the issue of limited investment due to private sector disinterest combined with Cheju’s lack of local capital. With new interest in Cheju culture, booming tourism from mainland Korea and China, and the T’amna Culture Plaza pushing ahead, the provincial government invested more resources into stimulating arts, tourism, and entertainment-based sectors. The culture-oriented promises that the Wŏn Hŭiryong administration promised brought opportunity as well as conflict. There were new programs and resources indeed, but what was available was still limited and far less than existing demand.<sup>122</sup>

Aside from global market integration and increasingly metropolitan tastes, *tosi chaesaeng* premised on cultural consumption and content-based industries and tech startups in Korea are also connected to the *ch’angjo kyŏngje* policy shift begun since the 2000s. *Ch’angjo kyŏngje* broadly refers to economic policy practice that fosters information- and knowledge-based industries with emphasis on innovation and ‘culture’ (Lee HK 2014). The proliferation of festivals and frequent turn to place-branding in Korea began as administrative attempts to

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<sup>121</sup> Author’s translation and emphasis. “Creative destination,” however, is written in English in the original report.

<sup>122</sup> A frequent complaint among arts organizations and NGOs that I encountered in Cheju between 2014 to 2016 was that they had to dedicate much time and energy producing funding proposals for the Cheju government and the state-supported Munhwa Yesul Chedan (Culture and Arts Foundation). All of these organizations were in competition with one another for the same type of funding.

provide some stimulus to budding *ch'angjo kyŏngje*.<sup>123</sup> As corrective to growing youth inequality and unemployment, the Park Geun-hye regime declared individual entrepreneurship based on *ch'angjo kyŏngje* as a solution, but did not clarify what this meant in actual practice. *Ch'angjo kyŏngje*, despite its emphasis on creativity and individual entrepreneurship, is itself a legacy of previous developmental state economic planning (Kim CW 2014).

The emphasis on individual culture- and tech-based urban entrepreneurship was hardly new to the Park regime. Policy shifts have their roots in the ostensibly liberal presidency of Kim Young-sam (Kim Yŏngsam) (1993-1998) and his post-IMF successor Kim Dae Jung (Kim Taejung) (1998-2003). Kim Dae Jung's regime especially prioritized a new push for tourism and culture-based industries (Hong SY 2013; Lee HK 2014). Already a well-established national policy concept for an economic corrective from the regimes of Kim Young-sam to Lee Myung-bak (Yi Myŏngbak), the Park regime articulated, albeit vaguely, *ch'angjo kyŏngje* articulated as a distinct term for economic policy (Lee HK 2014: 448). The Park regime's lack of clarity at the outset ironically also meant that other sectors of the economy could claim their own creative roles to gain some form of legitimacy or state support. Business and the arts and culture sectors paradoxically depended on the state even as the state de-regulated. Anything and everything could be called creative provided that things were framed convincingly as such.

Successive national and provincial regimes since the 1990s intended to use the post-IMF globalization and neoliberal-oriented reforms to promote competition through commercialization, but their actual effects produced striking paradoxes. Though independent media did emerge arts and culture programs were not entirely separated from the state. On the

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<sup>123</sup> See Hong SY 2013 and O YJ 2014. Cf. Zukin 2010. Though completely different locales, the urban regeneration via cultural consumption in New York City that Sharon Zukin describes parallels that of cities in Korea.



contrary, as what became the case in Cheju, while artists, intellectuals, cultural organizations, and NGOs compete with one another for state-managed grants. The middle class is still considered a socioeconomic status rather than a cultural identity and arts connoisseurship and artistic capital are not seen as a defining characteristic (Lee HK 2012: 327). What is produced as cultural content can sometimes lack distinct content. With an overabundance of officially-sponsored festivals in Cheju, place branding can hold more stock than the actual content.

Where the political economy of creative work differs in Cheju from Seoul's independent media enterprises is the degree to which creative workers depend on state-sponsored programs. Seoul's more developed culture sector allows for some semblance of independence, but according to journalist Kim T'aeyŏn,<sup>124</sup> most local media on Cheju receives provincial subsidies in one way or another. Nearly a hundred media agencies operate in Cheju. Most of registered media agencies listed in the Ministry of the Interior's most recently published roster indicates that 74 agencies, many of which are internet-based media, were registered from the early 2000s.<sup>125</sup> These subsidized media companies in turn organize state- or city-sponsored festivals or cultural programs.

NGOs and cultural organizations likewise rely on grants to operate. In some cases, these organizations become visible mostly through festival or festival-like activities. Funding for the arts and culture in Cheju and the rest of Korea is still tied heavily to governing apparatuses and thus while arts foundations are semi-autonomous, arts grants are still under tight budgetary

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with author, Ildo-2-tong, January 7, 2016.

<sup>125</sup> See <https://www.data.go.kr/dataset/15011758/fileData.do> [accessed March 21, 2017].

constraints and can be subject to state monitoring.<sup>126</sup> While civic participation is more common in Seoul, Koh Eun-kyoung of the NGO Global Inner Peace noted in 2014 when she first registered her organization that Cheju still did not have an active donation culture. Although NGOs may have differing long-term objectives beyond arts and culture, due to a continued lack of private donation they also are subject to be engaged in some way in cultural production or dissemination to acquire grants.

How *ch'angjo kyŏngje* functions as a concretized abstraction owes as much to Korea's internal contradictions of political economy as the global cultural turn (Lee HK 2014). How it functions is a *tajitu* or even dependent-origination operation in which elements function only in their codependency and mutual constitution. As a policy trend among provincial governments that lack development capital but were intent on attracting investment, it existed in relation to neoliberal globalization while its actual implementation contained elements of previous state-directed initiative and non-democratic control. More than a stimulus for individual self-help in a state less willing to play a redistributive role in addressing precarity, policy functioned in part as a creative application of control over artists and a creative alliance between corporate capital and the state. Due to a long history of strong state controls and management, the media industry was relatively underdeveloped. The independent companies that managed to emerge were understaffed and ill-equipped (Kim CW 2014: 565). Overemphasis on educational credentials also far outpaced actual job growth, which results in an ever-growing population of precariat youth. In his research in Seoul, Kim Changwook notices that freelancing is common and that

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<sup>126</sup> See [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/10/116\\_215931.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/10/116_215931.html). The other side of the Park Geunhye regime's *ch'angjo kyŏngje* promotion is that her administration also exercised state authority on monitoring political dissidents among artists.

freelance workers are hired at lower salaries with oral contracts (567). This situation is also the case in Cheju Island.

Regarding her occupation as a freelancer, Jung Sinji remarked, “That’s a great position to be, especially in Cheju, especially in Korea.”<sup>127</sup> But she quickly added after a chuckle, “Poorest as well.” Jung had previously found herself at odds with local production companies and officials eager to capitalize on her ideas without due credit and compensation. Her sentiment demonstrates the ambivalence of freelance work in Cheju and she was hardly alone in a time and place pursuing culture-led *tosi chaesaeng* in competition with other Korean and East Asian cities. On the one hand, freelance work for major production companies’ or state-sponsored programs’ projects allowed people unparalleled individual input. The possibility for more personal control over creative directions attracted many younger people or those passionate about putting their own personal stamps on the process of creating content. On the other hand, freelancers are aware that they are in a far weaker bargaining position. To be a freelancer was to be a temporary contract worker.

*Ch’angjo kyŏngje* seems to have been implemented a bit later in Cheju though, by virtue of being a tourist destination, elements had certainly existed before the post-2010 boom. When did Cheju become “creative”? Cheju governor Wŏn Hŭiryong, a member of the Park’s Saenuri Party, quickly applied the notion of a creative economy especially as divisions deepened under his administration’s watch. Whether the idea was sufficiently conceived (or at all successful) is still difficult to gauge, but none could deny that *tosi chaesaeng* and a cultural turn accelerated immediately since Wŏn took office. Although the political economy of creativity and its origins

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with author, Nohyŏng-tong, June 24, 2015.

is beyond the scope of this dissertation, looking at the quantitative and qualitative changes from 2007 to 2015 can provide some insights on its real and potential effects.

In 2007, *ch'angjochŏk* (creativity) and *munhwa* (culture) were rarely-used words to describe Cheju Island. If one were to limit the word culture to music, performance, ritual, and activities geared toward producing objects for visual and personal delight, then Cheju certainly did have culture in the early 2000s, albeit far less visibly touted than productions of similar sorts on mainland Korea. What differed between 2007 and 2015 was the degree to which “*munhwa*” and “*ch'angjo*” made local news as key words. The terms *munhwa* (culture), *munhwa k'ontench'ŭ* (culture content) and *ch'angjo* (creativity) became frequently regurgitated in the wider *tosi chaesaeng* projects.

As a cursory glance and example of this phenomena, one can do an online archive search of *Halla ilbo*, one of Cheju's local news agencies, from January 1, 2007 to January 1, 2008 – the year of Governor Kim T'aehwan's “Nyu Cheju Undong” (New Cheju Movement). The words “*munhwa*” and “*ch'angjo*” appear 697 and 14 times respectively in the news. “*Ch'angjo*” by itself literally means “create” and can be applied broadly, but after 2010 the word tends to become more associated with concepts of creativity or cultural production. A notable concept that appears often in relation to both words in 2007, however, is “*maül mandŭlgi*” (Jp.: *machi zukuri*; town community-building). *Maül mandŭlgi* was a concept that came into currency in the early 2000s as Korean planners reassessed the problems of stagnant local economies as well as alienation and anomie. “*Munhwa k'ont'ench'ŭ*” (cultural content) appears only once in the whole year in a concluding article to a series on reassessing Cheju's traditional culture and language by Chin Sŏnhŭi in October 19; Chin, notably far ahead of her time, emphasized the need to

reconsider Cheju's existing cultural assets as the basis for creating new meaningful "cultural content."

Moving into the second decade of the twenty-first century, the search results on the three catchwords in question are considerably different. The number of times "*munhwa*" appears in 2010 barely changes at 704, but "*ch'angjo*" appears nearly three times as much with 41 results. The first result in the 2010 result is a November 12 article that examines use of *chǒnt'ong chawǒn* (traditional [culture] resources) in Italy and mainland Korea. "*Munhwa k'ont'ench'ũ*" appears 13 times in 2010 and in the articles where it does appear, local branding has become an increasing concern. Five years later in 2015, the change is extreme – "*munhwa*" appears 6,021 times (a more than eightfold increase from 2007), "*ch'angjo*" appears 657 times, and "*munhwa k'ont'ench'ũ*" appears 166 times. What is also telling about 2015 is that a search for the specific phrase "*ch'angjo kyǒngje*" (creative economy) appears 446 times. The term was nonexistent in 2007 yet the concepts that form the basis of it were already in the making.

In Cheju especially, actual practice blurs the boundaries between the public, private, and civil society. Due to a general lack of capital, governing authorities continued to play a central role for funding, a factor that produced as many positive and negative results, unintentional or otherwise. Public and *min'gan* (private) distinctions exist only in discourse. Fully cognizant of Cheju's resource limitations, islanders considered this arrangement to be natural while many also strongly criticize official missteps. Perhaps because of the strong developmental state since the Park regime as well as a wide appreciation for European social democracy, cultural organizations

expect that their officials act impartially for the betterment of the public<sup>128</sup>, even if many among the public do not value arts.

The Cheju Munhwa Yesul Chedan (Jeju Federation of Culture and Arts) functioned as a primary distributor of state funding for Cheju's disparate cultural organizations and initiatives. According to Hyŏn Sŭnghwan<sup>129</sup>, the Cheju provincial government provides funds to JFAC and the organization divvies it up to other organizations for culture-related programs including festivals, concerts, workshops, performances, community murals. Almost all major culture events and *tosi chaesaeng* programs, despite theoretical emphases on grassroots spontaneity, receives state-managed grants in some form. This is not to say that all things are government-directed or are not grassroots. On the contrary, many of the same people involved in the *ch'angjo kyŏngje* may be at odds with officials and officials within local and national government may have varied sympathies. Dependency or semi-dependency on state-managed funding forces cultural organizations and individuals to engage official functionaries in forms of tactical (de Certeau 1984) maneuvers to acquire the resources they need while negotiating for some autonomy. Officials and organizers do, after all need someone to produce the *munhwa k'ontench'ŭ* (cultural content) that the state programs – as well as urban residents – demand.

Do people engaged in culture constitute a class? Some do vaguely identify as such, but the notion of class, and much less a creative class, is rarely explicitly stated. A common observation among Cheju islanders is that before the post 2010 boom, it was rare to encounter an islander who was very poor or very rich. Like the rest of Korea, “class” is an extremely

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<sup>128</sup> Another influence that one could consider is a long-existing and rich tradition of political philosophy premised on responsible virtuous governing in forms of Korean Confucian thought in Korea in general combined with lingering late-twentieth century expectations for political autonomy balanced with economic equity in Cheju.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with author, Ildo-2-tong, June 3, 2015.

ambiguous concept. Especially in Cheju, class can be a far less a meaningful category than geographical origin. Proximity to Cheju City and the administrative center of old Cheju City carried more social capital. A common sentiment among Cheju islanders who lived through the 1980s and saw its transition into a mostly-urban society is that most of Cheju island prior was somewhat “middle” class. Unlike the application of the term on the Korean mainland, which tended to refer to so-called white-collar workers and educated people, this use of the term “middle class” in Cheju based on the actual material conditions of households rather than a particular mindset and set of norms and standards. What made someone “middle class” in Cheju was whether that person had their own land or house. The idea of a defined “creative class” had yet to have currency in Cheju outside of the community of mainland migrants – many of whom come from educated or well-to-do backgrounds – and planning literature. Though Cheju residents identified the existence of a wealthy elite based in Seoul, people were more apt to identify themselves in terms of geography and profession.

Uneasy fit and questions about the concept itself aside, the closest to a “creative” class of people in 2007-2016 Cheju Island were those of the following: 1) “culture content” creators for the island’s multitude of programs as a main source of livelihood; 2) people with a university-level education; and 3) a humanities or IT orientation. Where the concept of a creative class or creative economy differed in Cheju from other applications of the so-called “creative class” is that people identified as such in this dissertation were not necessarily all urban in origin. Arts programs such as arts residencies also existed in the countryside communities, notably Kasi-ri and Samdal-ri, in an attempt to uplift local economies. Yet many of those who identified themselves as “creative” did not wholly earn their keep on successful sales to an arts-hungry upper-middle class. Such a hunger was not prevalent in Cheju. Government grants and subsidies,

rather, were important for “creative” productions to be viable. Those who did not receive government grants engaged in various side businesses or performed side jobs as freelancers in order to maintain themselves. Freelancing itself in many cases involved province- or Cheju City-sponsored projects.

A further limitation of defining a specific class of cultural producers is that professional barristers, craft brewers, restaurateurs, and guesthouse owners arguably also were contributors. Service workers in artisanal or upscale establishments were crucial to creating a sense that an urban “culture” exists or is at least in the making. Given perennial problem of youth precarity in Cheju and in Korea in general, “creative” producers sometimes also doubled as service workers or small business proprietors. Another strikingly Cheju distinction among self-identified creative islanders is the strength of their local sense of community within Cheju City. Many of these same people know one another and may visit each other’s events or businesses out of solidarity. While Cheju “creative” people may engage as middle-ground people between other islanders and mainland Korean migrants, their loyalties, especially in situations of conflict with the national government, tend toward a sense of being an islander.

The sort of culture policy Wŏn Hŭiryong administration sought to fulfill was ambiguous. One aspect that was clear was that the emphasis on tourism and the shift to the so-called *ch’angjo kyŏngje* would drive new urban development. A focus on culture, even while incoherently articulated, was something that appealed to – and perhaps at times domesticated – those who would have been ardent critics of Governor Wŏn’s policies. It was a chance for the creative class to take part in envisioning Cheju City with at least some material support. But at the same time many of these same participants were at odds with Governor Wŏn’s and the Saenuri Party’s larger political project.



The individuals and groups discussed in the following section were directly or indirectly a part of the larger changes that came with *tosi chaesaeng*. All were periodically encountered and interviewed between August 2014 to March 2016. The following summaries are from single focused interviews regarding the specific issues of *tosi chaesaeng* and their experiences of Cheju City's changes since the end of the 1990s and the onset of the Free International City project. Most had some connection to each other in some form, but they also come from a broad cross-section of Cheju City.

### **5.3 – City of Culture**

A common idea among those who regard Cheju as a first-reference homeland was the importance afforded to local lived experience and memory as the basis of Cheju-ness. And what could be described a form of *'assabiyah* (“group feeling” or solidarity) remained consistent among cosmopolitanized islanders. In some cases, a Cheju islander identity strengthened after returning to Cheju and confronting its urbanized realities. Attitudes toward mainlanders were not necessarily hostile, but community connections or at least place identification could hold precedence over other factors, hence the “Korean yet not Korean” paradox. Cheju islanders encountered did not all identify as part of a single group and do have international friends, but their own networks were all locally-based. Far from making these individuals insular, a strong sense of Cheju connection provided a foundation for establishing one's relationship to one's past and to the wider world. As a fully-functioning site of memory, Cheju City's physical spaces had a mediating function even for those who came from its countryside peripheries.

How Cheju City functioned as a reference point for both rural and urban Cheju identities and how islanders understand themselves in relationship to its spaces were similar across generations. The Space What team, Park Eunhee, Martin Shin, Paik Youngsung, and Kim

T'aeyŏn felt that any lasting positive change for Cheju City and a genuine creative transformation ultimately depended on authenticity. Though student artist CHY held much contempt for localism, she nonetheless shared with her older counterparts a sense that authenticity depended on honest reappraisal. Authenticity as they understood it was not simply holding to a frozen past memory, but rather continuous communication between living memory and the present. For the city to produce meaning, it would have to unfold as an ongoing story in which residents and visitors alike are characters and not clean slate for construction interests or a Lego block set for unscrupulous investors. Aside from being a restaurateur, Chwa Sŏngbo, the outlier of the group discussed above, had in common with both Bagdad Café owner Hyun JuRyoung and Sinarak performer Han Chino an independent locally-fostered philosophy based first on immediate local experience. The three individuals engaged in continuous dialogue with other philosophies – Chwa with the Supreme Master Ching Hai's Quan Yin method, Hyun with her encounters with other cultures in her many travels, and Han with Sartre and Lukacs – but their aesthetic point of departure was always Cheju. Hyun JuRyoung was an adventurous world traveler, but her personal design choices emphasize what she considers the best features of Cheju aesthetics.

*Paik Youngsung (Paek Yŏngsŏng) and Art Scenic*<sup>130</sup>

Paik Yongsung (Paek Yongsŏng) was recruited to oversee public forums, exhibitions, and performances at Art Scenic, one of several arts studios such as Kandŭrak Theater and O-i granted rent subsidies at Pyŏngmun-kol. Paik was a Cheju returnee. He spent much of his time outside of his home island after his university education in Seoul. Like many returnees involved

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with author, Samdo-2-tong, November 6, 2015.

in the *wōndosim* revival, Paik was of the generation that attended primary and secondary school in the 1970s but went to university outside of Cheju. Paik majored in Korean literature in Seoul with a particular interest in poetry in his undergraduate years, visual culture studies in his MA program, and philosophy and aesthetics for his PhD. In 2015, he was still technically in his PhD program and needed to write his dissertation. Where Paik differed from other returnees was that he had direct professional experience in curating, exhibition, performance, and cultural research. This enabled him a position at the Art Scenic studio. He returned in 2014 for JFAC's community arts project initiative related to *tosi chaesaeng*, liked what he saw in the program, and felt that he had the opportunity to make a positive contribution to his hometown.

As part of the generation for whom the *wōndosim* was still very much alive, Paik recalled Ch'ilsōng-t'ong's heyday as Cheju City's center for entertainment with its movie theaters, cafés, and *tijej tabang* (literally "DJ coffee house," or music cafés). What Paik described in his recollections of Ch'ilsōng-t'ong corroborated how others characterized the area – a local urban entertainment hub full of vitality where one could see the latest trends of the day. Originally from Ora-tong, a once largely-rural district of Cheju City, Paik jokingly described his life in Cheju City changes as an evolution of several historic eras all rolled up into one:

"It was a 'pre-modern' scenery. It was good. I think it was fast. This is a bit of a joke, but, particularly individually...do you know *kusōkgi*? *Kusōkgi sidae* (Paleolithic Age)? *Sinsōkgi* (Neolithic)? Paleolithic was raising livestock, pigs. Neolithic was farming, *nōngōp* (agricultural work), agriculture. And then...it was modern. I lived straight into the postmodern age."

Aside from professional opportunities and the chance to make change through the arts, one of the reasons for Paik to return to Cheju City were personal connections to the *wōndosim*. Compared to the rest of the island, the *wōndosim*'s changes were far less sudden simply because

developers and investors neglected it in the rush to expand Cheju City. While other areas became unrecognizable, including his former home in Ora-tong, which became an apartment complex, the *wŏndosim* evoked clear memories. Regarding his choice to base himself in Samdo-2-tong, he said, “Behind here, when I was young, there were many places I had frequented. There is much memory...Because I want to be interested in what I do if I want to vitality through culture, I worked here at Art Scenic.”

Art Scenic studio was the creation of Kim Bomi (Pomi), who was also a Cheju islander. Paik became involved by chance in a 2014 cultural diversification program. He first encountered Kim when he recommended Salgoce, a group of French and Japanese jugglers and street performers. “Cheju is a small place, you know,” he remarked, “So it was natural.” With Kim busy and Salgoce in need of a manager, Paik became involved. He described his role in Art Scenic as an “artistic director” in which he not only was tasked with organizing events and performances but also manage grants for the artists’ residency program in the studio. In 2015, Art Scenic’s budding residency program included mainland Koreans and international artists and performers. Art Scenic also hosted a modest *wŏndosim* revitalization forum and various small-scale exhibitions. Aside from Art Scenic’s programs, Paik also gave special lectures to school students.

More than ten art spaces operated in Cheju City and these places were intended to serve as centers where artists and performers can be in contact with residents, create community programs, and other community-based projects. Paik noted that these art spaces tended to have three major functions: artists’ residency, “cultural education,” and festivals. Art spaces were a primary workspace for those invited to the artists’ residency program. Artists chosen or recommended by the studio to the Cheju City administration gain some support to reside in

Cheju and work with the studio for three to six months, produce their own works, participate in community-oriented programs, and put their productions on exhibition. Part of the community programs that these art spaces managed was a broad “cultural education” for elementary and middle school students. There were twenty-seven of such programs in 2015, all of which various “teams” managed, depending on their particular expertise. Since Cheju City had numerous small-scale festivals, arts spaces were the primary sources for content such as stage performances and craft flea markets.

The Cheju City administration granted abandoned shop spaces to artists and cultural organizations on fully-subsidized rents for three-year contracts. Successful applicants in Cheju City’s programs, like Art Scenic and its neighbor O-i, renovated these abandoned spaces on their own to turn into galleries, studios, performing arts spaces, or cafés. Paik admitted that after the three-year term is completed, he does not know what will happen to these spaces, if the city would renew their contracts or if they would simply close. It was possible that Art Scenic would have to pay regular rent after contract termination. Though Art Scenic’s future was not certain in 2015, Paik iterated that he would still be involved in the *wōndosim*, regardless of whether it would be at Art Scenic or elsewhere, because the city still lacked specialists with curating and art direction abilities. Since he maintained a significant international network, he figured that his services as a “bridge” would also be needed as interest in arts and culture in Cheju City as well as internationalization expands.

Paik’s larger vision for his part in *tosi chaesaeng* was to emphasize the *wōndosim*’s space and to emphasize voluntary participation through what he called “subjectivation,” or getting more people aware of possibilities of expression through the arts. Since such concepts still did not have much currency at the time, Paik felt that it would be a gradual process though not

impossible if there were more programs. Later in 2016 and early 2017, Paik would continue his arts outreach and travelled to Taiwan and to Indonesia for ideas and contacts.

*Kim Jeonghee, Moon Joohyun, Yun Sunee, and “Space What”<sup>131</sup>*

Space What’s rise was as remarkable as its name. A group of three friends – Moon Joohyun (Mun Chuhyŏn), Kim Jeong-hee (Kim Chŏnghŭi), and Yoon Sunhee (Yun Sŏnhŭi) – established it in April 2013 as an arts and crafts space and a café. Space What was one of the more successful and influential autonomous responses to the *tosi chaesaeng* projects that culminated in the T’amna Culture Plaza. The name began as a deliberate double pun in both Cheju Korean and English. In Korean, the café was called “*Watchip*.” *Wat* is a Cheju word referring to an open field and *chip* is the Korean word for house. The English name “Space What” was created as a pun on the Cheju word “*wat*.” The initial goal for Space What’s three founders was to convert one of the *wŏndosim*’s significant and architecturally unique buildings into a place for arts and crafts. It would be an indirect challenge to the T’amna Culture Plaza project’s near-total destruction of *wŏndosim* city blocks. The three founders would later refer to themselves as the “Lab What” design studio. Their studio’s specialty was to repurpose cultural references for new productions such as design using Chejuŏ (Cheju language) or new interpretations of Cheju imagery.

The building that housed Space What was constructed in the 1980s but had its own storied history. Space What’s building initially served as a clinic, a coffee shop, and the original space for Ppparagi, a locally well-known *pingsu* (flavored shaved ice with fruit, cake, and red bean) shop. The building’s immediate environs included the Film Culture and Arts Center (the

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with author, Samdo-2-tong, March 19, 2016.

former historic Korea Theater) and the old Ch'ilsöng-t'ong commercial street. Taking advantage of the location, the Space What founders organized the monthly Maengöröng P'öljang arts and crafts market accompanied with outdoor mini-concerts and performances.

Space What began when Moon Joohyun met “King’i” (Kim Jeong-hee) at the Sögwip’o Art Market, an arts and crafts outdoor market along Lee Jungseop (Yi Chungstöp) Street. They discussed their own ideas about making their own kind of interesting, “*pae bürünün*” (fulfilling), and “*silhömchök*” (experimental) art space. Yun Sunhee met both in the same area for the same purpose.

Moon Joohyun, a Sögwip’o native, originally majored in architecture and thus already had an interest in the relationship between people and their living environments when she and her friends started Space What. She went to university in Cheju City and graduated in 2009, but mentioned that she did her program in about six years. In contrast to Cheju City, her hometown of Sögwip’o lacked a university and consistently remained small with much more gradual urban development until the sudden changes in recent years. Moon mentioned that having something like a Starbucks in Sögwip’o was unthinkable because it was such a quiet town just a few years ago but in 2015 the city became unusually busy. She recalled that when E-Mart first appeared as a major retailer in Cheju City, it was such a novelty at the time and there were even shuttle busses from Sögwip’o. By chance, she became involved in urban cultural projects and in doing so gained more interest in these projects than architecture. Her first major project was at Sögwip’o’s Ch’ilsimni Street for an outdoor night festival. Since the previous festival was more for older people than for youth and children, she felt it was a missed opportunity and thus wanted to get more arts involvement to diversify the festival content. Her interests were not thus focused

purely on Cheju City per se, but the *wōndosim* and *tosi chaesaeng* issues happened to be related. Moon's wider interests involved local histories and local storytelling.

Yun Sunhee went to university at Cheju International University specializing in interior design, but noted that it was extremely arduous and boring work and wanted to find something more interesting. Her previous job was at the horse race track as a member of the *sisōl t'im* (facilities team). Unlike her two partners, Yun referred to herself as “*wanchōn ch'ontong*” (complete country bumpkin) as she was from, Sōngŭp, a *chungsan'gan* (mid-mountain) country town in P'yosōn-myōn; her parents were ranchers. It was not until 1999 when she graduated middle school in P'yosōn that she experienced urban life when she came into Cheju City to attend Chung'ang Girls' High School in Ildo-2-tong. At that time everything about the city was a novelty. The most lively and memorable places in the 1990s were the Cheju City Hall area and Chung'ang-ro. The *wōndosim* fell into decline in the 2000s. She met “Yudal” (Moon Joohyun)<sup>132</sup> at Sōgwip'o Art Market. Impressed with the art market and fond of creating things, Yun wondered if she could do something like it. Space What was a welcome opportunity.

Kim Jeong-hee, like Moon, was also a Sōgwip'o native who majored in architecture. A lingering problem in Cheju architecture, she said, was that even into 2015, though architects have attempted experimental designs, there was still no representative form that could be called a distinctly 'Cheju' modern style. Cheju had no extant indigenous monumental forms or large-scale structures. Kim still resided in Sōgwip'o and commuted to Cheju City for her work, and thus her connections to Cheju City *wōndosim* are less strong. But as Cheju City was still the island's main center in every sense of the word when she came into the city for shopping and

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<sup>132</sup> “Yudal” is short for *yurang hanŭn tal*, which means “wandering moon.”



entertainment. In her tween years in the 1990s, the then-new T'apdong Plaza was a place for roller skating and biking. Sŏgwip'o was undergoing its own transformation at the time with its own *sinsigaji* (New Town) by the World Cup Stadium. How Kim became attracted to the concept for Space What was her personal interest in *manhwa* (Jp.: *manga*, visual novels or comics) and creating content. While in architecture she had to work unreasonably long hours, which led to her decision to resign from her job. What she intended to do in Space What was to produce publications that made matters of design and architecture simpler and more accessible to the average layperson.

Though the Space What team was at times contracted to city-sponsored programs, they held ambivalent views toward *tosi chaesaeng*. An observation on the *tosi chaesaeng* issue that all three shared was that it was too focused on the “hardware” rather than the “software.” Moon said that it would be more successful if *tosi chaesaeng* used more programs to build community and local networks to get more public feedback on what sort of city that residents want. Pointing to the infrastructural projects outside of Space What, Moon added that these ambitious constructions were more a nuisance than a help to people who lived and operated in the *wŏndosim*. Yun said that simply building things without any thoughtful programs may not guarantee that people would continue to have an interest in the area in the future. The other problem highlighted was the over-reliance on Chinese group tourism. Since much Chinese tourism to Cheju was via packaged group tours, large groups were simply bussed here and there where they gather like *meddugi* (locusts) and buy out anything and everything off shop shelves with little rhyme or reason. Though tourists on packaged tours do buy things, they appeared to have little regard for local culture and bought mostly from corporate duty-free shops. None of Space What's members saw this kind of tourism as sustainable. With cruise tourism after 2012 in

the *wōndosim* area, Kim observed that since cruise arrivals were typically short-term, they frequented only the areas closer to the terminal. Few ventured into Space What or this part of Samdo-2-tong.

Only a within three years after Space What's appearance, it became a vibrant art and performance space. Space What worked along with other non-governmental, private, and city-run programs and establishments for festivals and any sort of activity intended to draw people physically or mentally to the *wōndosim*. Since their founding, they became known for their trademark crafts based on refashioned Cheju-specific objects such as Cheju's *chorangi* horses and citrus fruit put in dialogue with other like trends around Korea and the world. Decorative posters, for example, made use of vintage style presentations reminiscent of 1970s or 1980s print flyers. Their most notable periodic event was the Maengōrōng P'oljōng (Chejuō for 'Sell and Buy') market, which brought together arts and crafts vendors and live performers of local and nonlocal origins. And in the fall and winter of 2015, with funding from the Samdo 2-tong district office and the help of Jung Sinji, the Space What trio produced the *Samdo-2-tong Kongganch'aek* (Book of Samdo-2-tong Spaces). Research, design, and compilation spanned more than half a year and what resulted was a colorful book filled with maps, photographs, histories, and stories of the people with connections to this district.

### *Ildo-1-tong Warang Warang Muhwa Norit'ō*<sup>133</sup>

“Warang Warang Munhwa Norit'ō” was a community arts program under Ildo-1-tong's “Culture House.” The Ildo-1-tong Culture House recruited YUJ a Seoulite who had moved to

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<sup>133</sup> CHY, Interview with author, Samdo-2-tong, March 12, 2016. Though the Warang Warang Munhwa Norit'ō project had concluded in January, we met by chance at a *hottōk* fry cake vendor at Tongmun Market in February. CHY agreed to do an interview as she was still on university break. I was no longer in contact with the other program attendees right after its conclusion as all others had gone to other pursuits.

Cheju, to facilitate the event from October 31, 2015 and into January. The program initially was intended to run into the end of December by around *Tongjinnal* (winter solstice – December 22), but as the final ‘culture map’ poster projects took longer than expected, it was extended. The starting group consisted of about a dozen members including B&B P’an guesthouse owner Sin Ch’angbŏm and artist KMS. Sin later dropped out due to other matters and though KMS would lead the *wŏndosim t’apsa* (historical survey tour) for Ch’ilsŏngdae on November 21 his attendance was also limited.

Warang Warang Munhwa Norit’ŏ began as a brainstorming group for a local-based artistic intervention held every Saturday, but participation was not always consistent beyond six core group members. And though the Culture House initially called for an exhibition to showcase participants’ productions for a ‘culture map,’ its result was anti-climactic. The final day consisted little more than a group presentation of posters for the *wŏndosim*. Although YUJ had mentioned the idea of possibly doing another like event, it was not brought up afterward. At a glance, the program seemed to have reflected three wider problems of culture projects in Cheju: 1) unclear objectives that start from abstract ideas; 2) lack of sustained interest perhaps due to the emphasis on abstract ideas of culture; 3) a lack of participation among youth; and 4) disconnect from local realities. Whether this event had been fruitful for the individuals involved is difficult to assess. The participants’ thoughts on the matter are not clear, except for one member who agreed to a full interview.

CHY was a Cheju National University student majoring in art and the sole student participant in the Warang Warang Munhwa Norit’ŏ program. She fostered an interest in professional illustration since doodling had long been her hobby and especially enjoyed Japanese *manga* drawing styles. On break from university, she was drawn to Warang Warang Munhwa

Norit’ō with the initial promise of a potential exhibition. Opportunities were far and few and she wanted to get as much exposure as possible. CHY was an active contributor to discussions and suggested new approaches to culture without falling back on clichéd tropes about Cheju. In one meeting, she mentioned a game she and her friends played in their middle school years in which they would have “color days.” How this worked was that if one friend suggests a “red day,” they would all dress up in red, go to a place with red coloring, and eat red-colored food. CHY felt that since locals tend to associate Cheju with drab colors, this could make people more appreciative of what actually exists on the island.

Unlike many in Cheju’s budding arts world, CHY did not find at all attractive the many productions that highlighted the island’s rural past. Having worked part-time as an illustrator for calendars, CHY was wearied of Cheju clichés. While other artists, Korean and non-Korean, readily cartoonified *tolharūbang* (stone grandfather) and *chorangi* horses, CHY found them *ch’onsūroun* (country, or unsophisticated). Experience with Cheju’s publishing world and its uninspired character made her jaded. Even more distasteful to her was the arbitrary use of Cheju language for her illustrations when there was no connection.

One thing that CHY did find attractive about old Cheju was the concept of Ch’ilsōngdae, which she decided to use for her project in Warang Warang Munhwa Norit’ō. At first, she and a ceramist proposed to do a joint project. The ceramist would create a plate and CHY would paint a celestial representation of the Ch’ilsōng asterism. Unfortunately, by December, YUJ announced that the final project for the event would be a ‘culture map’ poster and that there would be no exhibition. CHY nonetheless produced the painting and poster as a concept. CHY was hesitant to fault YUJ for Warang Warang Munhwa Norit’ō’s anti-climax and suggested that

it could have been the problem of the Ildo-2-tong Culture House, but she was irritated at the miscommunication.

Though still a student, CHY was already concerned about finding future full employment. Cheju Island, she noted, was hardly an ideal place for artists despite multiple arts programs enacted in 2015. What made life difficult for young artists, was that she lived in what young Koreans have come to call “Hell Chosŏn.”<sup>134</sup> She had become disillusioned with both Korea and Cheju, critical of widespread misogyny, a pervasive sense of entitlement among Korean men, and the empty localism in Cheju cultural representations. She sardonically remarked that she did not have much Korean pride except that Korea has beautiful traditional costume. Her goal after university would be to find employment in Eastern Europe where *manga*-style artwork would still be a novelty. At the same time, she also expressed annoyance at the island’s overdevelopment. Before high-rise hotels took over T’apdong Plaza, young people once frequented a small amusement park to ride the swinging Viking ship as it provided a spectacular view of the sea. Nowadays, CHY noted, wherever she and her friends go in Cheju City, they wonder where one could see the ocean unobstructed. The city may have grown larger and more prosperous, but she was doubtful local young people and artists such as herself could ever have much of an opportunity here in the fringes of “Hell Chosŏn.”

*Hyun JuRyoung (Hyŏn Churyŏng), “The Doors,” and Bagdad Café*

Cheju City’s first rock club “The Doors” was due in large part to the efforts of an adventurous local woman, Hyun JuRyoung (Hyŏn Churyŏng). Because Cheju lacked a place for

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<sup>134</sup> “Hell Chosŏn,” a commonly-used phrase among youth, is a double reference to the English word “hell” and the older name for Korea, which also implies a stringent caste-based ultraconservative society in which social mobility is virtually impossible except for the most privileged. The sentiment heightened especially with the continued failure to produce long-term employment under the Park Geun-hye regime’s *ch’angjo kyŏngje* and the administration’s mishandling of the tragic Sewol ferry disaster in 2014.

rock music, which was not mainstream in a music market where pop dominated, Hyun had established “The Doors” with two other friends in 1995. The original “Doors” club was in the basement of a Pyŏngmun-kol brick building by Hyangsadang. It was a perfect place because the basement location meant that the club’s founders could play music as loud as possible and it was, at the time, located near a city hotspot. Hard rock was still a novelty in the 1990s as South Korea was gradually becoming more open to new influences. But by 2000, Hyun parted ways with the other “Doors” founders and the *wŏndosim* was already in decline. The establishment of “The Doors” was two decades ahead of its time. Hard rock and Indie rock would not gain a sufficiently large following in Cheju until around the 2010 tourism boom.

After “The Doors” experiment, Hyun’s free-spirited character prompted her to pursue other ventures. Hyun founded Bagdad Café, which she named after the film “Bagdad Café,” first as a café that served drinks and light beer near the former Academy Theater.<sup>135</sup> The establishment later became Cheju’s first Indian restaurant when she moved to Ildo-2-tong. Although the name had no relation to India, her purpose for keeping the name was to continue to gesture at the film’s ideal. Hyun was familiar with northern Indian flavors and insisted on maintaining authentic cooking while using local produce as much as possible. She had – at great expense – ordered a tandoori oven from India and hired Nepalese chefs who were trained in the kitchens of Delhi’s finest restaurants. Bagdad Café thus has the unusual distinction of being one of the few restaurants in South Korea of a distinct upscale Delhi style. What also sets Bagdad Café apart from other Indian restaurants in Korea was Hyun’s refusal to decorate it with loud Hindu Indian décor, or what Hyun dismisses as being like a “*mudangjip*” (shaman house), and

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<sup>135</sup> This is now the CGV Cinema near Chungang-ro.

instead emphasize a mix of comfort and simplicity. Hyun reasoned that overdecoration would be a sign that the restaurateur was not investing in ingredients.

In contrast to many of the creative community in Cheju City, Hyun was not an artist or designer by training. She developed her own sophisticated aesthetic philosophy and became well-known to local aesthetes. An absence of training was perhaps her advantage. Hyun was not constrained to conventions or theoretical baggage. The basis for her aesthetics emerged from her curiosity for any kind of new experience, but her adventurous character was not cultivated in a habitus of cultured learning. Though she self-identified as “middle class” and a “*si-ŭi ttal*” (“daughter of Cheju City”), Hyun experienced much of her childhood in the relatively poor neighborhood of Sinsŏn Moru, never pursued any advanced degrees, and had no interest in marriage. It was rather her financial acumen combined with a down-to-earth approach to life that enabled her globetrotting. Her extroverted personality also allowed her to learn English at a communicable level and form close relationships with the island’s budding international community.

Rather than live abroad for an extended period, Hyun chose to remain and set up her own business. Like other “*si-ŭi ttal*” of the 1960s-1980s generations she possessed a fiercely independent spirit, an astute foresightedness, and a strong appreciation for Cheju’s own distinctive qualities. She explained that her experiences abroad also allowed her to become more aware of what made Cheju’s aesthetic qualities distinct and thus she developed her own sense of *Chejudaun* (Cheju-esque) aesthetic independent of the ongoing cultural commentary on the island. During the late 1980s, before the massive construction projects and ever-climbing high-rises and before the *wŏndosim* fell into disrepair, what became the “old” city was colorful and vibrant. The architecture was nothing special, but the paint was still fresh, the streets were lively,

and they fit the Cheju environment well. This, she emphasized, should be the basic idea for any cultural program in Cheju City. She added that it would not take much to beautify the *wōndosim*. All one needed was a bit of imagination, a recognition of Cheju Island's historically humble character, and an idea for matching the buildings with its surroundings.

*Kim T'aeyōn*<sup>136</sup>

Kim T'aeyōn was a reporter for the internet-based news agency Jeju Sori (Cheju-ŭi sori). Kim, like many her age, was often busied with multiple tasks of reporting, editing, and organizing festival programs due to her status – being one of the younger employees at Jeju Sori and a woman. She seldom directly complained about her work, but hinted at the demanding nature of her job. At the same time, the rigor was expected. Most newspapers and news agencies in Cheju, she noted, were constantly faced with financial constraints due to their oversaturation and dependency on what little cultural funding was available via the province. Kim expressed pride, however, that while most other media startups deliberately plagiarize from major news outlets or each other, Jeju Sori maintained its integrity and stuck to original content.

One of the busiest times for Kim and Jeju Sori was around the annual Seomun (Sōmun) Market Festival held in the spring. It was not unusual for a technically independent media agency to organize and host a city-sponsored event. Jeju Sori created a festival in part to gain access to the province's cultural funding and in part to enhance its reputation in the larger *tosi chaesaeng* project in drawing visitors to the historic Sōmun Market. The 2015 festival was postponed until June because the MERS scare that year put an abrupt halt to all activities. The festival included a *nongak* procession with performers from the local amateur *nongak* group, a televised cooking

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with author, Ildo-2-tong, January 7, 2016.



show in which two celebrity TV chefs were invited for a cook-off to showcase Cheju-inspired food, a “*tamunhwa*” (multicultural) competition for foreign brides singing Korean trot music, live music, a crafts market, and a walking tour of the historic Handugi neighborhood in English and in Korean. The international emphasis in this year’s festival enabled Kim to make use of her existing networks of expat friends on the island. That the festival had a financial side to it and that it was largely for show were quite explicit, but Kim considers that it also would be a long-term benefit for that part of the city.

A native of Cheju City from Samdo-1-tong, Kim was born and raised in the *wōndosim*. The historic Mugŭnsōng neighborhood where her maternal family lived also left a lasting impression.<sup>137</sup> On how she developed an interest in the *wōndosim* and *tosi chaesaeng* issues, she recounted:

“My mother, grandmother, grandfather all lived at Mugŭnsōng, but at that time I didn’t know what the name ‘Mugŭnsōng’ meant when I was young. It was just ‘Mugŭnsōng.’ I had just thought of it as a place where my relatives lived. But then I found in writing that it meant ‘old city walls’ and that was interesting and impressive. There are actually old buildings there. And they looked beautiful. They were 1950s and 1970s buildings that weren’t apartment buildings and they looked beautiful. And because of that, I went out on a *kūndae kōnch’uk sanch’aek* (modern architecture excursion) to write an article about them.”

Although much of Mugŭnsōng’s existing architecture is less than a century old, its graceful redbrick facades represented a kind of stability. The individual detached houses possessed a personalized beauty that contrasted with the large white or beige apartment blocks that came to dominate Cheju City’s skyline.

Like many others of Cheju’s millennial generation, Kim had witnessed sudden spurts of urban development that took off during the 1990s including Sin-Cheju’s first full florescence, the

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<sup>137</sup> Mugŭnsōng was home to Cheju City’s politicians, lawyers, businesspeople, and educated elite until Sin-Cheju’s ascendancy.

Japanese tourism bubble, the beginnings of the Free International City project, and the *tosi chaesaeng* projects. The compressed nature of Cheju City's changes meant that even those who grew up in the 1990s witnessed the city's complete transformation from a quiet provincial town into a cosmopolitan city within less than a generation. And like many in her generation, Kim also was concerned that the city's development would eventually end only with all of Cheju Island covered in concrete like the ongoing T'amna Culture Plaza project that threatened the ambience of her old neighborhood.

### *Han Chino*

From March 29, 2016, longtime scholar-activist Han Chino began a special article series called "Modün kōsūl sinūro samda" ("All things become the 'Three Abundances' by the gods"). The purpose of the article series was to introduce Cheju mythology and his own interpretations in relation to the immediate problems facing Cheju Island. He opened the first article as follows:

"I am a Cheju *t'obagi* (native). I'm a complete 'sōmnom' (island yokel), who has never left Cheju. And I'm also a 'ttanttara' (a jack-of-all-trades performer). When I'm not occupied with writing lyrics, I occasionally take to the stage. Because of that, I idly remark as a joke that I'm a 'Cheju-born performer that the world tossed out.' This article series starting from today will be a composition of an island yokel jack-of-all-trades performer who fostered his youth deep in Cheju's old thing. As I'm gladly grateful to 'Jeju Today' news for giving a page to this absurdly lacking third-rate writer, I'll allude to Cheju's old stories in a one-by-one analysis of today's problems."

In contradistinction to both mainland Koreans and foreign residents or visitors, self-identified Cheju islanders tend to refer to themselves proudly as "*t'obagi*" (a word that combines a Sino-Korean ideogram referring to the soil and a Korean word that implies embeddedness) or other ironic self-deprecating terms such as "*sōmnom*." A longtime activist who experienced the heavy hand of the state firsthand, Han had a deep love-hate relationship with his homeland.

The first article in Han's series was an interpretation of the *T'amna sullyōkto* documentary paintings produced in 1702 to commemorate the infamous governor Yi

Hyöngsang's inspection tour around the island. Han drew parallels between Cheju's continued subordination to global forces in the twenty-first century to mainland Koreans' subjugation of the island during the Chosön Dynasty period. Han remarked that Cheju's former "*Samda*" (Three Abundances) took on new meaning as the island faced an uncertain future. His introductory article continued, "The 'three abundances' of stones, wind, and women for which Cheju had been known has changed to a 'new three abundances' of cafés, pension houses, and mainland migrants. And this even has changed to Chinese, Chinese capital, and Chinese language. These changes were unimaginable across the generations of people who have lived in Cheju."

Han was a member of the Sinarak performance troupe, a group known for using Cheju folk and historical idioms. He was also a well-known longtime performer of Cheju's musical arts, a script writer for live theater, and a member of the Ch'ilmöri Yöngdüng-kut Preservation Society. Han recorded, photographed, or assisted at every major Ch'ilmöri program and performed in the opening parade for T'amnaguk Ipchu'n Kut-nori. Though a frequent sight at the various folk festivals, Han never gained much of the material benefits that had come with the provincial government's new push to promote Cheju culture. Adhering strong to principles and insistent on maintaining somewhat of a Bohemian lifestyle, Han avoided the trappings of well-to-do society and engaged in environmental and local rights activism. Although his erudition was distinct, his straightforward character and self-deprecation was a quality that he shared with many others who have seen and were left confounded by the island's rapid changes. Cheju language continued to serve as a semi-exclusive inside language among friends. He also held with great disdain romanticized refashioned Cheju stories and themes, or what he derided as "story-selling."

Despite his impressive erudition in many forms of critical theory ranging from Sartre to Lukacs, Han stubbornly kept to Cheju. He despised air travel, a factor that paradoxically had enabled him witness the island's changes continuously from the ground level.<sup>138</sup> Frustrated at what he considered Cheju islanders' and Koreans' failure to reflect on politics and development as well as Cheju's history of being caught in the crossfire of geopolitics, Han said, "I don't hate Japan. America is my second most-hated country. But the country I hate the most is Korea." Han did not hate Americans per se (as Han has several close American friends), but was furious over the US state foreign policy with regards to Korea and Northeast Asia. His noting that he "does not hate Japan" expressed his own rejection of blind Korean nationalism that easily served as convenient distractions from immediate issues. As a scholar, Han instead preferred to find a more nuanced decolonization of discourse and a coming to terms with history that had yet to happen in Korean debates over the colonial past.

*Park Eunhee and Via Art*<sup>139</sup>

Park Eunhee, owner of Via Art gallery, was a Cheju returnee with a strong connection to the *wōndosim* as the daughter of Taedong Hotel's owners. Taedong Hotel where Park's Via Art was located was considered a historic building as it was established in 1971 during the nearby Ch'ilsōng-t'ong's heyday as the downtown shopping street. It consistently remained a virtual landmark along Saenmul-kol and was one of the six remaining hotels from the original twelve. Whereas many other buildings around it fell into disrepair and abandoned, the hotel was remodeled 15 years ago (around 2000) and continued to be family-owned.

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<sup>138</sup> This changed in 2017 when he was among the Kangjōng delegation to visit a Hawaiian activist community. He had also discovered that a distant relative had visited Hawai'i in 1901.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with author, Ildo-1-tong, April 21, 2015.

Park attended elementary school in the *wōndosim* during the 1970s and had left Cheju for Seoul in 1987 to major in art and curating. The changes she saw in Cheju City when she returned in 2009 came as a shock. On her family's ties to the area, she recounted:

“This was a place to live, but it also had everything. One studied here, played with friends, there was no shortage of things and it was interesting...In this neighborhood, my mother lived here since she was young, married here, we were born here, and we continued to live in this area by Ch'ilsōngt-ong.”

Park added that only a two or three people – at that time already in their 80s – native to the area remained at Saenmul-kol street as the *wōndosim* declined. As of 2015, she was still the only returnee to reside in the area. While she was neutral toward the tourism influx and welcomed some of the changes, she also felt that the *wōndosim* was in danger of falling under the influence of big capital investors – notably the Arario Museum – seeking take advantage of the area. A meaningful *wōndosim* revitalization, she argued, could not be successful if it only involved remodeling the area. Real results could come only if the *tosi chaesaeng* project considered the *wōndosim* as a place to live and a locality with its own character.

When Park returned, she was involved in the opening exhibition for the Cheju Provincial Art Museum and worked as a lecturer. It was not until July 2012 that she opened the Via Art gallery. One of her early contributions to the larger arts-led revitalization issue was a children's art program. She had considered the idea since the time she worked at other art galleries and in 2014, she applied to the city to establish an education program. After she acquired approval in March 2015, Park organized a 10-month project to introduce children to the *wōndosim* of their parents' time. The program managed to acquire eleven participants through advertising and applications from interested parents. The participants were elementary school children of the fourth to sixth grades from the *wōndosim* area and Sin-Cheju and their task was to engage in

citizen journalism in collecting stories and information through interviews and pictures. Park explained that what distinguished this from *tapsa* was that the project would culminate in newspapers and videos.

Park became involved in organizing an art fair for the Saenmul-kol neighborhood on December 1, 2014. The fair was initially an independent effort as it did not directly receive provincial and city funding support.<sup>140</sup> It spanned a week and made use of the existing hotel spaces during the low season for tourism as makeshift exhibition galleries for artists, mostly young artists new to their field, to display their works to potential patrons. Starting in May 2015 the Saenmul-kol neighborhood hosted an art market for at least one Saturday every month. In the beginning, Park initially recruited artists first through outreach to artists residing in Cheju, existing connections in Seoul, and then an online application site. Those who participated were assigned rooms in the participating Saenmul-kol hotels and hostels for their exhibitions through a “*chaebi ppopki*” (lottery) system. Most of the participating artists in the first program were Cheju locals or at least based in Cheju.

The 2014 fair was successful and it was again organized for 2015 as an annual program. With more experience and exposure, the program for 2015 was arranged for the last week of October and exhibitions were opened from morning to evening. Aside from practical matters, Park’s intention behind using hotel space was to highlight the Saenmul-kol’s past. Saenmul-kol was Cheju City’s original hotel street during the 1970s and into the 1980s when the primary point of entry into Cheju from the mainland was still Cheju Harbor’s ferry terminal. Saenmul-kol

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<sup>140</sup> Park mentioned that the provincial government had expressed interest, but constantly delayed and deliberated on funding requests.

had lost its prominence, but the art fair would at least bring people back, even if briefly, to what was once one of Cheju City's busiest neighborhoods.

*"Martin Shin" and B&B P'an*<sup>141</sup>

Martin Shin began B&B P'an Guesthouse in March 11, 2011 as one of the early attempts to re-purpose old yet architecturally-distinct houses as guesthouses in the *wōndosim*. Re-purposing housing was a growing trend among mainland migrants, but Shin himself was a Cheju returnee. Dissatisfied with life as an engineer in Seoul and having separated from his wife, he returned to Cheju to set up B&B Pan and contemplate ideas on *wōndosim* revival.<sup>142</sup> The changes he had seen in Cheju City were so extreme, that B&B Pan developed as a form of protest against the deliberate effacement that came with *tosi chaesaeng* and the T'amna Culture Plaza project.

B&B P'an Guesthouse was one among many dozens of low-cost guesthouses catering to independent tourists traveling on a budget but Shin had the specific goal of using the building as a base for participating in grassroots *tosi chaesaeng*. B&B P'an occupied the space of what was once the home of a well-to-do local family. The building, designed by Japanese architect Hosaka Ryūichi, was built in 1968 in Japanese Modernist style. Due to its excellent construction, the building remained fully intact after its owners vacated it in 2005. Shin was unable to purchase the building, but instead procured an eight-year lease contract with the owner. He took it upon himself to renovate the entire building according to his vision and managed to keep most of its original features intact, including the Japanese-made sliding patio doors and insect screen. Shin remarked that the sliding doors were of such high quality that he had no need to replace them

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with author, Samdo-2-tong, August 3, 2014 and June 13, 2015.

<sup>142</sup> See Shin's blog on <http://blog.naver.com/jazznclimb> (in Korean). Shin provides accounts of his ideas and his guesthouse in his Naver blog.

despite their age. The guesthouse was intended as an example in practice of how to reconcile tourism development with preservation.

Shin called his long-term vision the “Mugŭnsŏng Renaissance.” His idea was to first convince absentee landlords of the nearby Mugŭnsŏng neighborhood to lease their abandoned houses to artists and intellectuals. As many of the landowners had moved to Sin-Cheju or newer upscale areas around the city, much of Mugŭnsŏng was left derelict. Shin’s idea was that independent artists and intellectuals could gather and work together to transform the neighborhood from the ground up without damaging its unique architectural features. Mugŭnsŏng, Shin argued, was a perfect location because of its proximity to Cheju Harbor, Cheju International Airport, and shopping areas all within a fifteen-minute radius. In this arrangement everyone could benefit – artists and intellectuals could have affordable studio space in a historic neighborhood for an affordable, the city government would not have to expend much resources, visitors could come for a unique experience, and the landlords can turn out a profit on their unused houses. The herculean challenge Shin faced was to convince landowners to lease their houses rather than hand them over to developers who sought to cash in amidst the *tosi chaesaeng* boom.

Another component of this “Renaissance” plan was to reconsider what made Cheju spaces unique and how they can be made relevant to Cheju City residents and tourists alike. Two results of Shin’s re-explorations were his June 12, 2015 “*Siment’ŭ Kkot*” (Cement Flowers) photo exhibition in the gallery room of “Like It” Bookstore on Ch’ilsŏng-t’ong and accompanying June 19 *tapsa* in Hamdŏk. Since Shin returned to the island, he had gone out to re-explore the island in search of unique features that could inspire a local-based approach to redefining a Cheju aesthetic. The highlight of the photo exhibition and *tapsa* were floral patterns



etched into cement, a decorative practice that individual builders used as their signatures during the 1960s before construction work became professionalized in Cheju. What Shin intended to show was that the beauty in Cheju's houses were their subtleties and simplicity, aspects that could be applied to rethinking the *wōndosim*. Though the "Cement Flowers" *tapsa* drew less than ten attendees, Shin's emphasis on subtle aspects of Cheju houses nonetheless became known to other *wōndosim* organizations.

2015 ended with a bit of uncertainty and the "Mugŭnsōng Renaissance" plan hit a tough roadblock. An attempt to procure a contract for an old house in Mugŭnsōng fell through when the landlord abruptly broke off negotiations. His post-B&B P'an project plans were dashed. He briefly joined the Warang Warang Munhwa Norit'ō program, but stopped after the first month. At the last interview in early 2016, though he continued to photograph parts of Cheju Island, he admitted that he did yet have any concrete future plans.

### *Chwa Sōngbo and Loving Hut / Namaste*<sup>143</sup>

Chwa Sōngbo established Cheju City's first true vegan restaurant between Chung'ang-ro and Chung'ang Cathedral. He probably may not be counted as one of the creative class, but like Hyun JuRyoung, he was a local that developed his own philosophy outside of such a habitus. Aside from his rare surname,<sup>144</sup> he was also a rare personality in Cheju – a committed vegan. Chwa attended Nam Elementary School in the 1970s and was thus of the generation that recalled when many of Cheju City's roads were still dirt paths, houses still had thatched roofs, and most buildings were less than two floors high. He felt that the changes to Cheju City were a terrible

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<sup>143</sup> Interview with author, Ido-1-tong, January 26, 2015.

<sup>144</sup> "Chwa" (Ch.: Zuo) is uncommon among Koreans in general and is a clear marker for Chinese ancestry. Chwa Sōngbo noted that the Chwa of Cheju trace their ancestry to Chinese who were brought over during the period of Mongol rule eight centuries ago to work on the tribute horse ranches.

mistake. Paving over Cheju, he argued, made people more separate from the earth. The loss of physical connection with natural origins was what he considered was the cause of so many of Cheju society's physical and spiritual ailments. Chwa had previously worked on a naval weather station on Marado, an island off the coast of southwestern Cheju and South Korea's southernmost inhabited point, but left his job apparently over discontent with his employer.

Chwa became a vegan after experiencing bouts of incurable ailments. It was only after giving up meat that he fully recovered. He started his shop "Namaste" in his father's building in 2005 initially as a café that sold both drinks and vegan goods. The shop was the first of its kind in meat- and fish-loving Cheju Island. It became a restaurant and part of the Loving Hut<sup>145</sup> franchisee when Chwa became interested in the Supreme Master Ching Hai's vegan new religious movement and adopted the "Quan Yin" method. Chwa ran the business with his mother's help but then in 2014 a Korean-Chinese, who had also turned to veganism, worked at the restaurant.

Chwa was not involved in the ongoing cultural trends in Cheju City. Whereas the neighboring Samdo-2-tong and Ildo-1-tong districts were active in the *tosi chaesaeng*, little change came to Ido-1-tong. Since the Ido-1-tong neighborhood saw little of the resources poured into *tosi chaesaeng*, while they noticed radical changes to nearby streets, shopkeepers in this area including Chwa were largely indifferent if not dismissive of the *wondosim* revival. Though separated by just a street, Ido-1-tong continued to stagnate. As business was no longer viable,

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<sup>145</sup> "Loving Hut" is an international chain linked to Supreme Master Ching Hai, a woman of Chinese-Vietnamese origin who created a meditative method called the 'Quan Yin' method. Although a franchise, every "Loving Hut" differs depending on the owner.

Chwa took on work in transporting construction materials and ultimately closed his shop at the beginning of 2016.

Culture-led development by 2016 was as consequential as it was ineffectual. There were indeed results, but the connection between ‘culture’ and the wider urban population had yet to be coherently articulated, much less established. Chwa’s lack of connection to the wider *tosi chaesaeng* as a small businessperson was remarkably common in Cheju City. This was even the case among people involved in culture. The skepticism toward cultural policies that CHY and Han Chino expressed were not the exceptions but rather the norms. Yet their skepticism as artists differed from shopkeepers and residents who find themselves caught in the waves of change whether they wanted it or not.

The *ch’angjo kyŏngje* and culture-led revitalization were both premised on economic inclusivity, but the result was at best mixed and at worst exclusionary a factor that locals of various stripes readily acknowledged. Since *tosi chaesaeng* began, Cheju City had become a far more expensive city. With a few exceptions, artists and non-artist residents tended to live in separate worlds though they shared the same city. Cheju City’s *wŏndosim* case highlighted as well as repeated the same issues faced in other cities around the world pursuing similar projects. Though the scale greatly differs, the fundamental problems of that culture-led development examined in Sharon Zukin’s (2010) case study of New York City repeats in Cheju City: creative spaces, if left ultimately to the whims of affluent investors, inadvertently can lead to exclusionary gentrification in which disadvantaged residents find themselves priced out. Creative people could bring diversity for a brief time, but once their subsidies run out and the city caves to pressure from developers, the increased land values that came with artists’ interventions easily

could become a gold mine for real estate and construction interests. Cheju City's creative people, having existing ties to the city, were all too aware of the potential consequences but finding a way to maintain a delicate balance was a constant challenge.

A frequent concern voiced even in casual conversation among small private non-franchise stores was how much new developments were pushing the city forward while leaving longtime residents behind. Overdependency on tourists as cultural consumers raised problems for those who had initially looked forward to the T'amna Culture Plaza's potential opportunities. Employees at cafés at T'apdong Plaza observed that as soon as the tourist season ended, they found their establishments virtually empty and barely scraping by on normal days. Another problem with redevelopment and *tosi chaeseng* is that they encouraged spiking land prices and costs of living. In December 2015, A shopkeeper in the historic neighborhood of Mugünsöng, once an affluent neighborhood that fell into decline after Sin-Cheju's ascendancy, commented in a conversation over the neighborhood's ongoing redevelopment, "Development is fine in itself, but if regular people can't afford to live here, then how will things be?" In March 2016, after more than twenty years of being in Mugünsöng, her store was completely gone. The T'amna Culture Plaza and its associated projects had indeed upgraded the area's infrastructure, but it did not upgrade some of the livelihoods of those that it intended to bring back into the city's economic miracle.

Though premised on sustainability, whether culture-led *tosi chaesaeng* is itself sustainable remains in question. In Cheju City, creative spaces emerged in the old city due in large part to short-term city subsidies, a factor that allows for some measure of flexibility for cultural programs while preventing possibilities for concrete place-based – rather than abstract identity-based – community-building. One of the most striking repetitions in these cultural

events intended to bring about community participation such as Samdo-2-tong's annual "Fringe Festival," which celebrates the district's arts promotions, is how little of the community was involved. At the 2015 "Fringe Festival" open forum, for example, those who attended did not comprise largely Samdo-2-tong shopkeepers and residents, but artists and intellectuals from across the city and Cheju Island. *Tosi chaesaeng* and the *ch'angjo kyŏngje*, for better or for worse, enabled for some degree of networking among creative people, perhaps in part due to their greater dependency on these short-term programs. The distinction between creative and the city ultimately persisted. They were, like Governor Kim T'aehwan's failed 2007 "New Cheju Movement," community projects without the community.

Arts programs and the province's sponsoring of the *ch'angjo kyŏngje* within Cheju City cannot yet be said to have successfully closed the cultural gaps between islanders and mainlanders. Some Cheju City residents, including youth such as YK mentioned earlier, rather find them pretentious if not exploitive of Cheju. On the emerging organic and handicrafts markets, many of which involve mainland creative people, YK remarked that it was not only derivative but absurd that a Cheju islander would have to pay extra for things that their ancestors already did. Echoing Han Chino's criticism of "story-selling," YK also felt that commercial use of decontextualized Cheju iconography was insulting and an example of mainlanders' condescension of her island roots.

The specified targets in the planning for cultural development were a curious a continuity of the five- or ten-year planning set during authoritarian rule. Arbitrary goals could easily become self-undermining. Corporatist planning that demands results within set timeframes ultimately stymied more thoughtful consideration on the consequences of overdevelopment, the viability of certain projects, and longer-term goals for sustainable development. The short-term

programs allowed for what limited resources Cheju possessed to be spread out, but they did not appear to produce more permanent employment opportunities. Creative talent tended to find themselves frequently competing for limited contracts in which they had little material bargaining power. While Cheju identity and a sense of Cheju-ness – however vague – grew among creative islanders, their attitudes toward and participation in the larger *tosi chaesaeng* project and issues were ambivalent.

As the third decade of the twenty-first century approaches, Cheju City still may have opportunities for change because of its idiosyncratic character as both a center and periphery. The possibilities for change could become strong should communities re-cement local solidarities for concrete goals with a shared definition for what constitutes a *Chejudaun* (Cheju-esque) city. Unlike mainland cities, given the difficulty for absolute anonymity in Cheju, a sense of mutuality persists among Cheju islanders though divisive competition and politics challenges local ties. Whether its political, cultural, and economic leadership would eventually seize upon them or simply fall back into previous semi-authoritarian practice remains in question.

#### **5.4 – Cheju Vignette: David and Goliath**

The *Jeju Weekly*, a province-funded English and Chinese language newspaper oriented to foreign residents and tourists, announced that it would host the “Dolkorom Tok” (Tolk’orum T’ok; Kr.: *talk’omham t’ok*) for the morning of November 24. The newspaper invited all foreign and local residents to take part in what was intended to be an open forum in which select foreign residents highlighted their activities on the island and Cheju officials would respond to inquiries regarding Cheju’s future direction. “Dolkorom” was a Cheju word meaning “sweet” and was juxtaposed with the English word “talk” rendered in Korean *han’gŭl* spelling. Mixing Cheju and foreign aspects – or at least the appearance of it – had been commonplace since the end of the

1990s and the beginning of the Free International City. The Dolkorom Talk was immediately premised on the concept of the creative city and questions on how foreign residents could contribute to it. As an open forum, expats and Cheju City residents submitted questions or concerns to the *Jeju Weekly* organization and the *Jeju Weekly* staff to present to visiting officials. But what came as mildly ironic was that the forum was unironically called “sweet talk.”

I found the timing of curious as Joey and I had just investigated two instances in which mainlanders knowingly destroyed Cheju sacred sites and Cheju officials did nothing aside from make vague statements about culture. I was initially disinterested, feeling that it would simply be full of platitudes and therefore not a useful use of my research time. It was also a cold day with drenching rain and I wondered if the weather would deter people with a vague interest. Hyun JuRyoung as well as another colleague, Agnes, expressed interest in going to see what it would be about. Hyun was familiar with *Jeju Weekly*'s founder Song Junghee (Song Chōnghŭi) and then-editor Darren Southcott, a British expat, and she also felt it was her obligation as a Cheju City citizen to learn more about what the city leadership had planned. 2015 was, after all, a tense political year rife with one controversy after the other.

The Dolkorom Talk opened with officials' usual gleaming praise for Cheju's achievements and pledges for action. Governor Wōn Hŭiryong came personally to the opening, but excused himself thirty minutes into the program on the account of his busy schedule. His representative, a tourism official, would remain to take whatever questions would come at the end of the session. The *Jeju Weekly* invited four presenters with the overarching theme on how foreign artists could contribute to making Cheju a creative island and what foreign artists would need from the Cheju provincial government. Three – a Lithuanian woman, a Frenchman, and a Vietnamese-Haitian man – were artists and one was an American eco-entrepreneur. Even before

the start, some questioned the premise of the Dolkorom Talk, which may have accounted for its modest turnout of less than fifty people. Some had gone with a feeling that it was more or less simply for show, but that they should at least offer their concerns to the Cheju government while supporting the four expat presenters. One feature that was strikingly common among the presentations – a factor that some audience members found troubling – was the prevalence of an essentialized view of Cheju culture. Almost anything Cheju was reduced to beaches and stylized *tolharŭbang* (stone grandfather).

At the end of the presentation, the promised open forum for audience questions was only restricted to five minutes as the talk was kept within a tight schedule. Cognizant of the limitations, *Jeju Weekly* editor Darren Southcott selected the most common questions collected before the talk to present to Governor Wŏn’s representative. Of the five questions, two were indirectly critical of the trajectory of Cheju’s development. One was a question on whether Governor Wŏn’s administration would make good on pledges to restrict development from damaging the island’s natural beauty and cultural heritage sites, which local and expat residents alike have pointed out were under threat, while the other was a question about the absence of special visas for professionals. As Governor Wŏn himself had left early to another engagement, his representative could only reiterate of the governor’s pledges. All he offered was a vague promise to “research” the impact of development and visa policies.

The Dolkorom Talk’s Q&A session came to a close quickly and the scheduling allowed for only one more question. This final question, however, was the exclamation point of the event. When *Jeju Weekly* finally opened the floor to the audience, a young English-speaking Korean who referred to himself as “David,” a self-described as a pianist, took his opportunity to speak up. He did not shy from expressing his frustration with the entire Dolkorom Talk and the Cheju



provincial government.<sup>146</sup> His final question was a challenge to the presenters and to the government: why did Cheju need to expend its limited resources to become an island of culture? Cheju, he argued, already had its own culture, its own complicated history, and its own unique features. He further posed the challenge of and how creative people and officials would account for the disconnect between cultural promotion rhetoric and the real rampant destruction. A brief awkward silence followed. Several audience members, expats and Cheju locals alike, applauded David's remarks. Hyun and AS were thoroughly impressed and later noted to me that they had wanted to pose the same question themselves.

The *ch'angjo kyŏngje*, *tosi chaesaeng*, and the Wŏn administration's promises for culture-led sustainable development had allowed for new opportunities and sparked new conversations, but its viability was in question. Due to a continued problem of a mismatch between actions and stated objectives as well as a lack of consistent and coherent projects, the success of culture initiatives were uncertain. The Wŏn administration did appear to negotiate with the national government for a more streamlined artists' visa. Nevertheless, the vague responses at the Dolkorom Talk signaled to some of those present that there was still little concrete idea of what exactly Cheju City was supposed to become. Despite the collapse of the Chinese package tourism bubble since the beginning of 2017, issues of overdevelopment, seriously deteriorating air quality, and trash overflow did not change.

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<sup>146</sup> I have spoken with "David" on more than one occasion, but as he is indirectly related to the activists engaged in protests against major developments on the island, I am obliged to ensure his anonymity.

## CHAPTER SIX: PARALLAX URBAN DREAMS

“Cheju Harbor was always bustling with people who leave for the mainland or to go to school, or those who go on school outings (*suhak yŏhaeng*) or return home from abroad. The smooth rounded basalt rock (*maektol*) seashore before it was reclaimed as T’apdong offered great street food to children. The very delicacies “*king’i*”<sup>147</sup> and top shell (*pomal*) were caught from the crevasses in the rock and boiled and eaten from silver nickel kettles.”

Ko Young-lim (Ko Yŏngnim), “A Letter to Cheju City’s Past Children”  
*Cheju Maeil*, January 21, 2015

“Hometown is an intimate place. It may be plain, lacking in architectural distinction and historical glamour, yet we resent an outsider’s criticism of it. Its ugliness does not matter; it did not matter when we were children, paddled our bikes on its cracked pavements, and swam in its pond.”

Yi-fu Tuan (1977: 144-145)

### 5.1 – Cheju Vignette: Visible City

Kwon Choul’s (Kwŏn Ch’öl) second major exhibition in 2015 was already intended as an intellectual challenge to Cheju residents, but more provocative by accident. After his successful *Iho T’e-u* exhibition on urban women divers, Kwon Choul, along with people he met in the course of the Iho project,<sup>148</sup> decided on drawing attention to a controversy that ignited yet again that year, Yasukuni Shrine in Japan. The timing was perfect. August 15, 2015 would mark the seventieth anniversary of liberation from Japan. Both Koreas and China were seething over the Abe Shinzo administration’s nationalist overtures in promoting revised textbooks that would downplay Japan’s colonial and wartime actions. Within Korea itself, controversy brewed over Park Geun-hye’s (Pak Kŭnhye) regime’s intentions to create nationalized history textbooks that

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<sup>147</sup> Standard Kr.: *ke* (crab).

<sup>148</sup>The group called themselves “Iho Tewoo Allies” on Facebook, but it was largely Kwon and CSJ that did the organizing.

some charge would sugarcoat the previous authoritarian regimes, including that of Park's dictator father.

Kwon wanted to make a statement about the legacy of authoritarianism and South Korea's celebrations of an incomplete freedom. In his introductory remarks to the *Iho T'e-u* exhibition opening on May 23, Kwon mentioned that he recalled the infamous Sampoong (Samp'ung) Department Store collapse due to shoddy construction on June 29, 1995, around the time he left Korea to pursue work in Japan. When he returned to work on his *Iho T'e-u* project in Korea and saw the Sewol ferry tragedy unfold, he felt that "nothing had changed." "Seventy years of liberation of what?" was his verbal challenge for the *Yasukuni* exhibition. Kwon and colleagues he met during the *Iho T'e-u* project organized a special exhibition scheduled on August 15 and 16. The event would also include artistic performances that climax with Kwon setting ablaze the Yasukuni pictures to protest the shrine and to literally keep alight the lingering memories of colonization.

Kwon chose arresting images of visitors' performances of the controversial Shinto shrine such as pictures of families bringing their children dressed in military uniforms to salute the former wartime flag of the Empire of Japan. He had two intentions: 1) to expose the darker reality behind shrine's official line as a place to commemorate Japan's war dead; and 2) to provoke people to think more deeply about liberation and the unresolved colonial past. Kwon would be present at the exhibition to invite viewers to speak on the issues. To make the message more pointed, Kwon Choul applied to have an open-air exhibition at Cheju Mokkawanaji (Figure 11), the site of the Chosŏn governor's complex that was demolished for the Japanese colonial administration. The street before Kwandŏkjŏng pavilion and Cheju Mokkawanaji located at the

west side of the *wöndosim* (Old Town) was also the flashpoint for March First Movement rallies in 1919 and then in 1947.



Figure 11: Cheju Mokkwanaji.<sup>149</sup>

Kwon Choul's invitation to Cheju City to contemplate about the wider meaning of liberation at the historic heart of Cheju City almost did not happen. Late on the night of August 14, while I was working on the next *Wöndosim Yet'gil T'amhöm* (Exploring the Old Town City Streets) itinerary on the theme of Cheju City's colonial past for Cheju Kukche Munhwa Kyoryu Hyöphoe (Jeju International Culture Exchange Association, hereafter JICEA), Jung Sinji sent me an urgent message: Kwon Choul's project was being derailed. Jung was working with Kwon Choul to organize the *Yasukuni* exhibition, but the online news media *Chemin ilbo* had published an article that questioned its appropriateness for liberation day. What the articles failed to mention was that the exhibition was a critical portrayal of Yasukuni Shrine. Articles on the exhibition changed throughout the day and provided conflicting information. Whether it was a matter of miscommunication was unclear. Jung wondered if it was a matter of a personal

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<sup>149</sup> Photo by author, Samdo-2-tong, July 23, 2014.

vendetta. Whatever was the case, the Cheju City government abruptly decided to stop the exhibition. In response, Kwon's group would push on ahead regardless. Jung messaged me saying that she needed someone to translate the exhibition message. She had already translated it into Japanese and had found someone to do a Chinese translation, but she needed an English translation. The record had to be set straight for locals and mainland Koreans as well as for the island's foreign visitors and residents.

At around ten the next morning when Kwon scheduled the exhibition to open, Jung sent another urgent message to all friends and posted a video onto Facebook. The video showed a confrontation between Kwon and Cheju City officials, who tried to bar his entry into Cheju Mokkwanaji. Kwon and his colleagues demanded entry as per their agreement with Cheju City officials some weeks before, but officials physically stood in the way of the gates and pushed out anyone who approached a mere few paces from the threshold. Though they admitted that the city had given permission earlier, they insisted that it had to be revoked and provided no clear explanation for the retraction. The reaction on the "*Ige nugö chissikkwa*" Facebook group was fierce, as members felt that it only revealed city officials' failure to look more carefully into the matter. Chöng called on all friends and supporters to come to the exhibition.

Kwon Choul and his supporters decided that they would hold their exhibition in front of the Mokkwanaji gates and Kwandökjöng, exposed to the blazing heat and rough winds and right at the sidewalk where busses drop off tour groups visiting the *wöndosim*. They set up all photos on flimsy tripods that were too frail in the Cheju winds; no one expected Cheju City officials to be so adamant in renegeing on their approval at the last minute. Everyone involved – about ten who rotated throughout the day – had to rush from out of the shade of the Mokkwanaji ceremonial gateway's eaves to reposition the photos every few minutes. Though local activists in

Cheju City came throughout the day in solidarity with Kwon, how tourists received it was unclear. Chinese and mainland Korean tourists paused to look at the photos, but none expressed much visible emotion. There was no hostility. Some went through with amused expressions, apparently baffled at how nationalist Japanese could so blindly hold onto a failed experiment. The expected controversy ultimately did not happen.

The city officials became caricatures of themselves. After the initial scuffles and after Kwon decided to have the exhibition on the sidewalk, officials had nothing else to do. They lingered by the gate to make sure that Kwon did not enter Mokkwanaji, but the photos were already set up outside. Occasionally, some of these officials helped secure the photos and tripods blown down in the wind gusts, but others stood around, looking at a loose piece of stone pavement puzzling over how to repair it. They took turns sticking whatever pebbles they could find under the pavement block to stabilize it. Officials were present until Kwon and Jung decided to fold up the exhibition for the day at 6 PM.

The next day, Cheju City went back on their retraction and allowed the *Yasukuni* exhibition to take place at Mokkwanaji. The change might have been a combination of a result of both a backlash among the artistic and activist community, and a matter of convenience. Liberation Day fell on a weekend and thus the holiday observances were extended into Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup>. Mokkwanaji was again open for free to the public. Jung invited me to rejoin them and I was interested in seeing how they arranged the exhibition within the reconstructed complex. Having been acquainted with Kwon's work at the *Iho T'e-u* exhibition, I had a hunch that there was a bit of sarcasm injected in the choice of Mokkwanaji as a site. Mokkwanaji as it stood was historic – and even designated as such in the official registers since 1993 – and yet it also was

not. Kwon's statement was straightforward, but perhaps by accident his choice of Mokkwanaji exposed a deeper issue in Korea that the Cheju City *wōndosim* issue embodied.

With the sole exception of Kwandōkjōng, which stood, albeit with periodic and equally controversial modifications, since the fifteenth century, Cheju Mokkwanaji was a near-complete reconstruction. Some charged that it was a fabrication. It was able to piggyback on the realness of Kwandōkjōng, which remained a potent *lieu de memoire*.<sup>150</sup> Mokkwanaji was not altogether false per se, as much concerted excavation went into recovering the site and the buildings were based on the 1702 *T'amna sullyōkto* documentary paintings,<sup>151</sup> but its reconstruction and presentation were subject to question. As I looked more closely at the architecture, Jung pointed at the cement-plastered roof ridges and joints. "What do you think about it?" she asked me. I responded that cement was an odd choice of material for an eighteenth-century building. "It's just for show," she said dismissively as she then pointed at the little signs that barred entry. She noted the bizarre irony that such care was put into treating an almost-completely reconstructed site as if it were the real thing.

Ko Young-lim, who had also come to join Jung and Han Chino that day, said with equal irritation, "It's Disneyland!" Ko gestured at the elaborate *tanch'ōng* (colored pattern decorations) on the roof and roof support beams, Ko added that it looked more like Kyōngbokgung, the royal palace in Seoul, than something Cheju would ever have had. Han meanwhile, smirked at the criticisms of Mokkwanaji as he furtively sipped a cup of Indonesian coffee that Chōng had brought. Drinks were technically not allowed near the reconstructed building where we all

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<sup>150</sup> See Nora 1989.

<sup>151</sup> In 2013 when I visited in the summer, there was another ongoing excavation at a site behind Mokkwanaji where archeologists uncovered a detached part of the complex. The information boards that were placed there noted '*pokwōn saōp*' (restoration work), which indicates that Cheju City may eventually reconstruct the building.

gathered to escape the blazing late-afternoon heat. Han mentioned that officials did not want to have any food or drink spilled anywhere in the complex as it would attract bugs. After he took another sip, he pointed at the foundation stones and the cement-paved ground. Han mentioned a rumor he heard at the time of Mokkwanaji's restoration. Archeologists found T'amna era remains underneath Mokkwanaji, but because of budgetary constraints, a tight schedule, and official disinterest, they had to cover it all up to rebuild the Chosŏn era Mokkwanaji. I had heard the rumor before. Irrespective of its veracity, it reflected the teller's irritation with the pervasive tendency to cover up the past for fanciful re-creations.

Cheju City officials were protective of a fiction while less willing to engage in the real. Mokkwanaji was a quasi-sacralized place without a pronounced sense of spiritual connection to Cheju City, except in its meticulously re-constructed mythology for an urban population that has no memory of the early Chosŏn Dynasty. Aside from Ipch'un-kut, no major festival events took place within it. A common reason given was that it was to protect the wood buildings from potential fires. At the same time, as Chŏng had pointed out, the buildings were complete reconstructions. Aside from their questionable accuracy, it seemed a terrible waste to simply leave such a large complex as what Ko criticized as a static TV "drama set" instead of a place for Cheju City residents. On any given day, unless there was a *wŏndosim tapsa* (historical survey tour), the handful of visitors to the site were almost always non-resident tourists. Although the two sites were adjacent, local Cheju City residents still colloquially referred to the area as Kwandŏkjŏng, which was open to the public and intimately connected to living local memory, rather than Mokkwanaji.

Cheju Mokkwanaji's reconstruction, like the restored Chosŏn monuments in Seoul (Henry 2014), physically erased Cheju's tumultuous twentieth century to create an idealized past



that never was. Before the 1991-1998 excavations and the 1999-2002 reconstruction (Samdo 2-tong 2003), the site included colonial era buildings as well as examples of postliberation architecture. Parallel to the debate over the Ch'ŏngdŏkbu (Governor-General) building in Seoul, some locals in Cheju argued that the colonial traces should have been kept as reminders of Cheju's past tribulations. Living memory, the Mokkwanji project detractors argued, was more important than restoring the Chosŏn past, especially given the immediacy of twentieth century traumas. Effacing colonial traces also came with erasing the harsh violent realities of the postliberation period. The repressive governing apparatus that the South Korean state employed were adaptations of the same measures used under colonial rule. This factor contributed to the first outbreaks of violence in 1947 that would become the 1948 April Third uprising and subsequent counter-insurgency massacres. Chosŏn Dynasty rule embodied in Mokkwanaji was hardly all benevolent. Destroying these earlier twentieth century remains to restore a Chosŏn monument was therefore an act of selective forgetting. Kwon's critique – as well as Jung's, Ko's, and Han's criticisms of Cheju Mokkwanji as it stood in the present – emphasized the issue that Korea had yet to adequately confront its difficult history.

The *Yasukuni* exhibition went off without much further attention beyond artistic and intellectual circles, but its presentation at Mokkwanaji and city officials' attempts to block it exposed multiple layers of irony. Kwon Choul and his colleagues sought to use Mokkwanaji, a flashpoint of repeated conflict, as a site to bring attention to Korea's and Cheju's contested twentieth century history. Yet Mokkwanaji, long a locus of governing authority for both mainland Korean and Japanese regimes, somehow became official heritage sites and therefore too sacred to be used as part of the re-examination of the lingering unresolved conflicts of colonialism. While Cheju Mokkwanaji was the most conspicuous example, the T'amna Culture

Plaza project under construction on the east side of the *wōndosim* served a similar function. Mokkawanaji's reconstruction represented the past to validate a narrative of Cheju City's present as a harmonious capital. Signs of violence were almost completely erased, reduced to play torture devices adjacent to traditional seesaws before the reconstructed magistrate's office. The T'amna Culture Plaza, with an explicitly contemporary form, projected the achievements of the present into the T'amna past.

## 5.2 – Finding Polaris

What exactly was Cheju City supposed to be? In two volumes co-edited with other scholars and architects, Kim T'aeil posed two critical questions. In the 2007 volume *12-in 12-saek Cheju tosi kōnch'uk iyagi* (12 Persons, 12 Perspectives of Cheju Urban Architecture Stories), Kim asked in a title header, "Chejunūn innūn'ga (Is there Cheju [in Cheju City])?" The later 2012 volume, only two years after the beginning of the 2010 tourism boom, he asked again in a title header "Cheju tomin-ūi samūn choajōnnūn'ga (Is life good for Cheju residents)?" Kim T'aeil wrote as an architect and urbanist, but his sentiments about the jarring sense of alienation that came with Cheju City's rapid development was widespread in 2015 and 2016. For Cheju P'orum Ssi (Jeju Forum C) and JICEA, the problems were not simply architectural. *Tosi chaeseng* (urban revitalization) exposed the continued disconnect between Cheju's immediate realities and what every new development campaign promised.

From a distance, what the city's leaders intended Cheju City to be was as hazy as the thick fog-covered summit of Hallasan. Something was always being built and what was built left a jarring impression that things existed simply for the sake of existing. A short distance south of the tightly-clustered redbrick and graceful tile-roof 1980s Korean-Western fusion architecture of the formerly upscale single-family homes of the southern Ildo-2-tong and northern Ara-tong

were *pilla* (villa)-style three- or -four- story multi-unit homes lining often-empty suburban streets alongside towering luxury apartments. The villas, all clustered together with matching height, matching architecture, and subtle differences in building or tile material were like nursery rhymes: they repeated in short phrases strung together and were conducive to sleep. Cheju City locals colloquially named the suburbs *Perach'e* after the Verace Apartments. *Perach'e* contained upscale coffee shops and pricey European-style bakeries.

Sin-Cheju (New Cheju City) was the other half of the Cheju City odd couple. Yŏn-tong, the center of Sin-Cheju was a jumble of massive almost-identical beige-white apartment blocks and ever-climbing glitzy tourist hotels and loud colored signboards. The muffled bouncy Korean *t'ŭrot'ŭ* (trot) and crooners of yesteryear that emanate from the Ku-Cheju (Old Cheju City) *tallan chuchŏm* (karaoke bar) give way to an admixture of K-Pop and Chinese pop roaring out of shop or upscale karaoke lounge loudspeakers in Sin-Cheju. Whereas Ku-Cheju (Old Cheju City) may seem like a montage of 1970s-1980s aspirations and failures mixed with speculative opportunism, Sin-Cheju was a curious visual and visceral tango of something in between Le Corbusier modernism and neoliberal fantasia. At some point, planners and officials threw up their arms and allowed for chaos to ensue. Sin-Cheju was a city in a constant hangover following the 2010 visa-free party where bright colored signs in the Simplified Chinese script of mainland China scream out over Yŏndŏng-ro and the Baozhen promenade. But all things can and usually rapidly pass in Cheju City.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> See <https://koreaexpose.com/thaad-latest-bit-backlash-china-tourism/> [Accessed March 6, 2017]. The THAAD controversy sparked economic retaliation towards Korea. Although economic nationalism and anti-Korea sentiment may lead to plateauing tourist numbers, Hong Sunyoung noted to me in late 2015 that Chinese tourism was already projected to slow down in Cheju as international tourism tends to operate in cycles.

When Kim T'aeil questioned whether there was “Cheju” in Cheju City, his question was one about the city’s imageability. “Imageability” was a concept that urban planner Kevin Lynch developed in his 1960 magnum opus *The Image of the City*. This idea did not gain prominence as a planning focus in Korea until decades later. Kim T'aeil’s work drew upon Lynch’s premise (2012). Lynch argued that one experiences a city depends on its “imageability,” or qualities that evoke a strong image within an observer (1960: 2-9). “Imageability” as a concept for urban space is indirectly linked to quality of life and social connectedness. Cities with positive imageability influence a greater sense of connection as residents identify more strongly with their locale or find it easier to consider their relationship to the locale. Since the 2000s, retrospective looks at Cheju City’s “*kyöngkwan*” (scenery) in its post-1960s developments have considered the monotony of the city’s new developments as a failure and a physical manifestation of its loss of cultural autonomy (Kim TI 2007). The Cheju-ness of the city gave way to national political economic exigencies. As a point of departure for the future of the city, city residents sought to re-examine past foundations in finding the primary components of what makes things *Chejudaun* (Cheju-esque) (Kim HS 2007: 241).

A crucial factor missing in Lynch’s assessment of urban imageability, especially as this idea is adopted in inner city revitalization programs, is how integral heritage functions in and for urban discourse and practice at multiple levels. A sense of place, as Yi-fu Tuan (1977) notes, is intimately tied to a person’s bodily sensations in space coupled with a sense of time. Visceral response informs personal attachment as much as the visual. Heritage, like place, is a fiction of stability made real. Heritage according to Laurajane Smith is “a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present” (Smith LJ 2006: 44). Physical sites and remains, though not always necessary as seen in

residents' use of Cheju City's walls as an invisible mnemonic, function as "cultural tools" to facilitate the process for meaning-making. Even if the orientation differs, culture-led development in operates on the same continuum and in tension with the intentions behind Park Chung Hee regime's (1961-1979) heritage programs. At one extreme, the Park regime's rehabilitation of select monuments in the city of Kyōngju functioned to "fulfill a glorious cultural past, a temporality of continuity and the actualization of potential" (Oppenheim, 2008: 27-28). At the other pole of heritage practice, constructing indigeneity based on local experience can function to challenge colonial process (Smith LJ 2006: 294). Making heritage is neither a conservative nor utopian practice. Anyone can employ it for any purpose and any politics.

In an emerging urban center such as Cheju City, the boundaries between heritage destruction and reconstruction are blurred. The internally productive feature of heritage is that it only becomes heritage when there is a shared perception among people that a particular space or practice is threatened. This irony was not at all lost on *wōndosim* revivalists, regardless of whether they supported *tosi chaesaeng* or not. In the T'amna Culture Plaza project to revive the *wōndosim*, one person's restoration project could be another person's cultural erasure. What became *tosi chaesaeng* in Cheju City emerged from an contradictory and sometimes volatile alchemy of civic activism, localist boosterism (or what Yi Yōngkwōn mocked as *aehyangsim*), political opportunism, emerging heritage consciousness, environmental constraints, and an ever-intensifying transnational inter-city competition within Korea. How would Cheju City distinguish itself as a competitor to Hong Kong and Singapore, the two models that inspired the Free International City?

Once one arrives in the city, deplaning at Cheju International Airport or disembarking at Cheju Harbor, there is no long transition like the airport expressway to Seoul from Incheon

(Inch'ŏn) International Airport or an endless nondescript harbor container yard like Pusan. One is already there right at the front of one of the two extremes of Cheju City – the moneyed glitz of Sin-Cheju immediately outside the waxed floors of the refurbished airport or the derelict Old Town beyond the un-weeded *haenyŏ* statue plaza of the Ferry Terminal. One can glance at Cheju City and mistake it for many other hastily-built boomtowns on mainland Korea, though the multi-language tourist signs right outside the entry points promise something else. The need for a new image for Cheju City to match its newfound prosperity were prime motivators for Governors U Kŭnmin and Wŏn Hŭiryong to support two controversial projects – the Dream Tower and the T'amna Munhwa Kwangjang (T'amna Culture Plaza).

Outgoing Governor U Kŭnmin ignited a firestorm in the summer of 2014 when he approved the so-called Dream Tower. His final major act as governor preserved his infamy with citizens already disenchanted with his controversy-riddled tenure.<sup>153</sup> Residents of Nohyŏng-tong and the Cheju Hwan'gyŏng Yŏnhap (Cheju Environmental Alliance) lobbied for years against the mothballed project. They argued that the tower would further damage the environment, exacerbate traffic gridlock, and obstruct sunlight and views of Hallasan. The original plans for the project – a joint venture of the mainland Korea-based Lotte and Tonghwa corporations with the financial backing of the Chinese state-owned Shanghai Greenland Group – consisted of twin 62-story 218-meter towers at Nohyŏng Ogŏri, one of the busiest intersections of the Sin-Cheju (New Cheju City) area (Yi SN 2014). Tonghwa Development first introduced the twin towers plan in 2009 (Yang MS 2009). The tower's proponents argued that the Dream Tower would become Cheju City's icon of urban achievement, just as the 63 Building has become for Seoul.

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<sup>153</sup> As a way to emphasize his bafflingly long tenure despite allegations of corruption, residents especially disenchanted with U Kŭnmin, who served as governor for a total of two decades, sometimes remark with much irritation that he is the longest-serving governor since the Koryŏ Dynasty.

Early reports before the 2010 tourism boom seem somewhat muted on the Dream Tower issue, but tensions and concerns intensified after 2013. Sin-Cheju became ever more crowded with high-rises and the Cheju City government was relaxing building height limitations. In a summary glance at *Cheju-ŭi Sori* (Jeju Sori) news archives regarding the Dream Tower, articles on the issue appear five times a week or more for every month starting from March in 2014 alone. Once completed, the tower would have an overwhelming presence and dwarf almost everything in and around Cheju City. The sheer scale of the tower would effectively thrust a “phallocratic element into the visual realm” in order to “convey an impression of authority” (Lefebvre 1991, 98).

The project repeatedly faced temporary moratoriums during U Kŭnmin’s tenure and after his exit, but Governor Wŏn Hŭiryong granted final approval in 2016 with the stipulation that the project planners shave off a few floors. The builders set a 2019 timeframe for completion, but whether Greenland Group would hold to their investment commitment could eventually be in question given tensions between China and South Korea in 2017. The revised plans reduced the buildings to a pair of 38-story hotel and luxury housing towers along with the addition of a casino.<sup>154</sup> A pro-neoliberal politician of the right-wing Saenuri Party, Governor Wŏn’s moves to appease corporate capital in the name of growth was unsurprising. What baffled the tower’s critics more than Governor Wŏn’s capitulation were the casino combined with revelations that Cheju City would be required to invest 11,700,000,000 wŏn (or roughly 10.1 million USD) in public funds for an infrastructure readjustment project. The project would stand as a testament to the alliance between transnational corporate interests and the Cheju City and provincial

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<sup>154</sup> The tower will also include five underground levels, making an actual total of 43 floors.

governments. When completed, it would become a capstone for the Free International City project begun in 2001.

The Dream Tower controversy's unlikely yet arguably interconnected counterpart emerged from the rubble of Cheju City's *wōndosim* (Old Town) twenty minutes to the east in the form of the T'amna Culture Plaza. In 2012, the Cheju City and Cheju provincial governments put into action their ambitious urban *chaesaeng* (revitalization) project to stimulate a long-stagnant sector of the city. The T'amna Culture Plaza, as a centerpiece of this project, was billed as an attempt to completely transform a 45,845-square-meter swath of the *wōndosim* for new upscale services (Hong CP 2013). Entire historic neighborhoods were demolished to make way for large plazas flanking the Sanjich'ōn stream and eventual upscale café and tourist shop rows. Aside from stimulating the local economy through an ambitious infrastructure project, the Cheju City and provincial governments intended the T'amna Culture Plaza to create an attractive environment for short-term mass arrivals from the nearby cruise ship terminal. The main infrastructural components of the project were originally intended to conclude in 2014 (Chwa YC 2012), but work had since stalled as its scope expanded along with conflict. The project, which was one of Governor Wōn's major political promises, remained incomplete and divisive in 2017.

To justify the "T'amna" and "Culture" nomenclature, the overall plan included several proposals to reconstruct (if not fabricate) pre-twentieth-century sites, including Ch'ilsōngdae, in conjunction with decorative features that gesture at an idealized T'amna past. To justify the "T'amna" namesake, although constructions almost all related to Chosōn period sites and had no direct relation to the T'amna civilization, the larger plaza included the enormous Kim Mandōk Memorial Hall, Kim Mandōk's tavern, restoration work on the city walls, and a small park with a



representation of the Big Dipper asterism. The enormous Kim Mandök Memorial Hall, which is a museum to an eighteenth-century female merchant-philanthropist, and the folk village-like Kim Mandök Kaekchut'ö (tavern site) (Figure 12) were criticized as distorted representations of a cherished local heroine.<sup>155</sup> Whereas the Dream Tower in Sin-Cheju was a transnational corporate capital-driven venture, the T'amna Culture Plaza in the *wöndosim* was government-instigated. Its exaggerated T'amna-ness, even if confined to stylistic gestures, represented a perspective of the past in a built narrative of linear progress. Like many other projects of its kind in Korea and around the world, the prospect for potential economic returns mixed with the need to satisfy an increasingly discontent urban population were as strong motivators as administrative self-aggrandizement. Authorities intended the T'amna Culture Plaza to allow everyone to have their cake and eat it too, but the ingredients and distribution in practice were a different matter.



Figure 12: Reconstructed Kim Mandök's Tavern.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> The exact site of Kim Mandök's tavern is still debated. Some argue that Kōnipp'o, where the reconstructed tavern stands now, was historically too insignificant a port for Kim Mandök to have made her fortune. It was likely that her tavern was in Hwabuk, the island's main port located at a remove to from of Cheju City's old east gate. Because of pirate attacks until the 17<sup>th</sup> century and travel restrictions until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main harbors for fortified towns in Cheju were located at distance.

<sup>156</sup> Photo by author, Kōnipp-tong, Cheju City, January 19, 2015.

Cheju City faced the same questions that challenged other mainland Korean cities and urbanites. By the end of the previous century, former economic models, and by extension urbanization practices, were no longer viable. Decentralization, though limited in South Korea in contrast to the US federal system, came with the reforms begun to address the country's shift to a postindustrial economy more dependent on finance and the service sector. In contrast to earlier decades, 1990s liberal-democratic reforms across South Korea allowed for more locally oriented decision-making and concerns. Provincial regions and cities were still beholden to Seoul's interests, but they increasingly had to compete with one another for coveted investment capital as the Seoul administrations relinquished their responsibility. Local administrations had to conceive of new measures, if not gimmicks, to draw investment such as place branding with intent to take advantage of the Korean Wave phenomenon (Oh YJ 2014). Amidst this maelstrom, with local needs at stake, citizen-oriented organizations emerged and became more active in pressuring local government to consider equitable use of resources, alternative development strategies, and to assert their own rights to their cities. Competing needs, however, also led to internal fractures at all levels.

Where Cheju City differed was, aside from its very recent transformation, several multilayered and intersecting factors: 1) its *axis mundi* function as a historic local capital for more than a millennium; 2) its local role as a primary access point for mainland Korea and international exchange; and 3) its persistent small town-like qualities in social interactions despite urbanization. On the surface, local attention afforded to the *wōndosim* would appear to be just a sign of urban trends making their way into Cheju Island, but in contrast to other rapidly-built cities in Korea, Cheju City's *wōndosim* centrality is as real as imagined. The conundrums of redevelopment and *tosi chaesaeng* Cheju City residents face were a combination of the issues

faced in Kunsan and Kyōngju; the former (Kim HJ 2014) was a small city rapidly built-up for economic purposes such as Kunsan and the latter (Oppenheim 2008) was an ancient capital that lost its prominence. Cheju City experienced development during both colonial Japanese rule and the arguably neo-colonial mainland authoritarian regimes. While it consistently maintained its position as a local axis far longer than Kyōngju, which lost its role since the tenth-century rise of the Koryō Dynasty, different regimes repeatedly effaced and re-made Cheju City for their political projects.

O Hongsōk estimated that Cheju City, “arose as a city that was founded as a population center from having held the function as the administrative base since the T’amna period” (2006: 876). At least until the end of the 1970s, the city grew in an outward spread with an urban geography radiating from the *wōndosim*. Cheju City planning during the Park Chung Hee (1961-1979) and Chun Doo Hwan (Chōn Tuhwan) (1979-1987) regimes were largely focused on basic housing and infrastructure with modern necessities. Tourist accommodation and entertainment amenities were included, but a major shift to Cheju City as a tourist city coincided with the rise of tourism as a critical sector in the Korean economy.

City planning for Cheju City as well as Sōgwip’o (882-889) followed the then-favored South Korean adaptation of American planner Clarence Perry’s adaptation of Ebenezer Howard’s “garden city” concept (Jung IH 2013). The basic ideas of the design on mainland Korea and on Cheju was a further adaptation of Howard’s emphasis on decentralizing conurbations into compact self-contained towns and Le Corbusier’s experiments with concentrating populations within dense high-rises.<sup>157</sup> Though incongruent concepts, Korean

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<sup>157</sup> cf. Jacobs 1961. Though Jacobs overtly (and, some would argue, rightly) critiques the premise of the adapted “garden city” concept, her analysis of the design demonstrates its paradoxical and at times oxymoronic combinations of Ebenezer Howard’s anti-city ideas with Le Corbusier’s skyscraper- and automobile-focused

architects and urban planners attempted to adjust both to satisfy the needs of creating a modern Korean city to fulfill the Zeitgeist of the 1960s-1980s developmental era. The early urbanists such as Kim Swoo-geun (Kim Sugŭn) (Jung IH 2013) and Kim Chungup (Kim Chungŏp) (Gelézeau 2012: 56)<sup>158</sup> were eager to adopt Le Corbusier's ideas of reconciling modernism with regionalism, but they also were unable to pursue much experimentation due to the exigencies of state demand and Korea's limitations. An example of the difficulty of application was one of Kim Chungup's designs, used for Cheju National University's early headquarters building. The building featured ship motifs to better reflect Cheju, but the island's salty sea air corroded its steel reinforcements and the university eventually abandoned and demolished it in the 1990s.

The large-scale self-contained apartment blocks therefore developed as a combination to reconcile multiple competing and contradictory needs: socioeconomic exigencies, self-sufficient blocks based on Perry's neighborhood-unit theory<sup>159</sup>, the town-like community of Howard's "garden city," Le Corbusier's efficient high-rises, and a representation of a Korean modernity. A compromise to keep some aspects of Howard's and Le Corbusier's original ideas were the internal parks within apartment complexes and the green space left adjacent to these developments. The self-contained city block designs that Jung Inha examined in Seoul's Park Chung Hee era urban experiments are visible in the Chungmun Tourist Complex and in Cheju City, especially with the earlier forms of Sin-Cheju centered on Yŏn-tong. Cheju City's growth

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"radiant city." Korean planners and architects, many who had studied under North American and European urbanists including Le Corbusier, such as Kim Chungŏp, who designed buildings in Cheju, adapted these ideas to Korea.

<sup>158</sup> Kim Chungup had worked with Le Corbusier from 1952-1956.

<sup>159</sup> Perry actually created the idea for American suburbs, but Korean urbanists adapted the concept to calculate urban boundaries. The premise behind the neighborhood-unit theory, which derived from Howard's garden city, was a self-contained unit with a population scale based on the number of people an elementary school could service.

ultimately pushed these designs to their limits as new the city expanded outward and the former green buffer zones filled with new developments.

Starting from the late-1990s, especially considering the 1995 Local Autonomy Law and the crisis of the Sampoong Department Store collapse that year, previous urbanization practices began to lose their credibility (Jung IH 2013). Until the end of the previous century, state-affiliated planners emphasized building large dense mega-blocks that melded Korean modernist planning and the Park Chung Hee regime's state-directed growth-oriented objectives (Hong Sh. 2013). Measures geared to fulfilling planning targets within the various five- and ten-year planning approaches that the state utilized ultimately were unable to resolve inequalities, overcrowding, and a restless urbanized population. A further shock came with the 1997 IMF crisis. As a new point of departure and an attempted corrective, the Kim Dae Jung (Kim Taejung) regime (1998-2003) turned to high-tech industry, tourism, and arts productions. Environmental degradation with urban over-density combined with the diminished reliability of heavy industry became an impetus to consider sustainable development. The 2005 Ch'onggyech'ŏn stream restoration project in the dense heart of skyscraper- and apartment-filled Seoul represented a new approach to urban redevelopment.

Previous urban planning methods fell out of favor and cities' pressures on the environment became both local and national concerns. With the rise of international tourism since the 1988 Seoul Olympics, cities needed to devise new ways to distinguish themselves. Because of the dispersed nature of new development projects that favored suburban expansion or satellite cities, many *wŏndosim* in Korean cities decayed. Local governments adopted *tosi chaesaeng* (urban revitalization) as a favored urban architectural, economic, and policy trend beginning in the early 2000s (Kim HC 2013; Kim HJ 2014). Similar projects were already

ongoing in many deindustrializing cities outside of Korea such as New York City (Zukin 2010) or Kanazawa in Japan (Sasaki 2010) in the 1990s, but gained prominence in South Korea after 2000 when focus on heavy industry was no longer viable.

The basic premise of *tosi chaesaeng* was to refurbish stagnating old downtowns in cities such as Kunsan (Kim HJ 2014) or even Seoul (Cho MR 2010) without completely demolishing the built environment for completely new construction. As a form of culture-led development and balance to so-called new town construction, city governments premised *tosi chaesaeng* projects such as Cheju City's T'amna Culture Plaza on the expectation that they would spur sustainable economic activity via cultural tourism, arts, and small-scale local entrepreneurship. The concept of *tosi chaesaeng* itself envisions Korean versions of Bilbao (and is in large part inspired by Bilbao's successes), but old habits, especially policymaking that favors construction cabals, were hard to overcome.

Paradigm shifts did not mean complete breaks from previous urban practices. Government direction, corporate investment, and real estate interests were still centrifugal forces in inner city redevelopment. While Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn was premised on ecological restoration, then-mayor Lee Myung Bak's (Yi Myŏngbak) political objectives took precedence over environmentalists', heritage preservationists', and small business concerns (Cho MR 2010: 157). The underside of Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn's lively urban oasis image today was the issue that large corporations benefited at the expense of low-income residents and merchants, a possible fate for Cheju City as well. Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn's completion nonetheless marked a precedent for a different path to urban development based on restoring old inner cities and dilapidated downtowns. Predating Lee Myung Bak's defining project was Cheju City's own 2000 restoration project for Sanjich'ŏn stream, which was first reclaimed for urban development in the 1960s (Cho YJ, Chin

KO 2003: 41). While the earlier restoration projects drew support from local committees, the 2012 T'amna Culture Plaza would again feature Sanjich'ŏn's redevelopment as a water feature for a curated urban display. Government decision-making alongside corporate investment interests continued to exert heavy influences in Korean urban development.

With a changed perspective for urban space, Korean architectural experts and planners in the 2000s began to take seriously the concept of urban "imageability," Japanese *machi zukuri* (village-building), and the culture-led development embodied in Richard Florida's (2012) notion of the "creative class." What remained a consistent problem in all urban experimentation projects across Korea and in Cheju Island was the fundamental question of for whom and for what were these projects executed (Kim HC 2013: 13). Since the Republic of Korea's inception, collectivity was often based on an abstract and not necessarily lived notion of peoplehood.

Because Cheju City's developments from the 1960s to 1980s were based on the Korean-adapted garden city type, Cheju City experienced the same problems as its mainland counterparts. As population grew, these dispersed areas soon expanded further and into one another, putting increased environmental, economic, and infrastructural pressure. Cheju City's skyline with multi-story hotels and rising apartment mega-blocks made it appear bland in contrast to Hallasan's majestic peak looming behind. Although Cheju Island's role as Korea's prime tourism destination and internal Other was overdetermined, Cheju City's identity as a city was under-determined. To add to the complication, Cheju City existed as an effective yet amorphous black hole. People gravitated to Cheju City as the countryside collapsed, but a clear downtown ceased to exist when administrative and commercial functions were split between the two halves of the city. Finding Cheju City's Polaris point as well as the basis for a new paradigm

for sustainable urban development turned attention, expert and non-expert alike, back to the *wōndosim*.

The name “*wōndosim*” came as a neologism since the early 2000s,<sup>160</sup> but islanders have long recognized the area as Cheju City’s true original center. Its centrality is made explicit in the other older monikers of *sōngan* (within the city walls), *kudosim* (old city center), and Wōn-Cheju (Original Cheju City). What is called “*wōndosim*” refers specifically to parts of the Ildo-1-tong, Ido-1-tong, Samdo-2-tong, and Kōnip-tong districts, all of which were within or in the vicinity of the Chosŏn era city walls (Figure 13). Most of the walls themselves no longer exist, having been destroyed during the colonial period for urban expansion and as a quarry for building material to build Cheju Harbor. They continued to define the *wōndosim* in their absence and such recognition cut across generational lines. General settlement patterns, shapes, and street layouts of this area survived into the 1980s despite new major road developments that resulted in the broad multi-lane parallel and perpendicular avenues of Kwandōk-ro/Tongmun-ro, T’apdong-ro, and Chung’ang-ro.

T’amna, Koryō, Chosŏn, Japanese, and Republic of Korea administrators all situated their capitals in the same general geographic. Irrespective of how different administrations built or demolished the city walls differed, their focus on this one area for more than a millennium was the primary reason for the *wōndosim*’s striking juxtapositions and idiosyncratic layout. Just outside the city’s former south gate one can find Samsōnghyōl shrine, formerly known in Koryō and T’amna times as Mohūnghyōl, the three lava tube holes from which the ancestors Ko, Yang, and Pu sprung. The Koryō Dynasty rulers sponsored the two Buddhist temples of Mansusa to the

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<sup>160</sup> KCH, MCH, and YSH. Interview with author, Samdo-2-tong, Cheju City, March 1, 2016. KCH noted that a reason *wōndosim* became used more than *kudosim* was because ‘original city center’ had a more positive connotation than ‘old city center.’



east of the city walls and Haeryunsa to the west. Scholars tended to assume that the two Maitreya stone figures, Tongjabok and Sōjabok, which still serve as devotional figures for fertility or prayers for safety at sea, were created at the same time as the two temples since both are located in the temple site grounds (O Sōng 2004). Although Kōnipp'o in present-day Kōnip-tong was not the city's primary port during the Chosŏn Dynasty period, a 1928 Japanese archeological excavation of Sanjich'ŏn stream uncovered Chinese Han Dynasty coins, confirming that some form of trade had existed from as early as the T'amna Period (O HS 2006). Yi Wōnjin's 1653 *T'amnaji* also notes the existence of a place called Chinjisōng, which translates to "old city" or "old fortress," as being the site of an earlier settlement; Chinjisōng became known as Mugŭnsōng. T'amna's rulers, the *sōngju*, had their primary abodes in the *wōndosim* and the three contemporary district names of this area – Ildo, Ido, Samdo – correlate to the ancestors' domain names. Local boosters' current claims about Cheju City's ancientness are thus not entirely exaggerated.



Figure 13: Map of Cheju City's *wōndosim* with city walls (in red).<sup>161</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Ha Chuhong. 2015. "Chejusōng-kwa Cheju yet'gil," in "Cheju wōndosim 'yet'gil' pojon, 'uri chōngch'esōng seunŭn il," February 22, *Media Cheju*, <http://www.mediajeju.com/news/articleView.html?idno=169995>.

As had been the case in colonial Seoul (Todd 2014), Japanese authorities were intent on assimilating Cheju City through institutions and physical infrastructure. One of the first things that octogenarian Ko Hŭisik, the elder brother of former politician and Cheju P'orum Ssi (Jeju Forum C) leader Ko Hŭibŏm, mentioned in an interview on colonial Cheju City was that the Japanese altered the roads.<sup>162</sup> The old commercial main street of Ch'ilsŏng-kol (Seven Stars street) was straightened and widened to become Ch'ilsŏng-t'ong, which forms the main walking street through the present-day Ch'ilsŏng-ro Arcade. Two other main roads north and south of Ch'ilsŏng-t'ong were created straightened parallel and perpendicular layouts. The most important of these roads was Wŏngjŏng-t'ong (Jp.: Honmachidoori), which connected the east and west sides, a function that carried into the 1980s as the east and west bus terminals were both located on this road – the former near Tongmun Market and the latter near Kwandŏkjŏng. Wŏnjŏng-t'ong's construction came at the expense of the former town commons in front of Kwandŏkjŏng. Cheju City's walls were destroyed in part to allow for the city to physically expand and to provide building material for Cheju City Harbor.

Throughout the colonial period, Japanese settlers maintained a presence in the busiest parts of the *wŏndosim*. Ko Hŭisik noted that their main shops were along Ch'ilsŏngt'ong and that they dealt primarily in fabrics. A building that once served as a *ryokan* (Japanese-style inn) built to cater to colonial officials remains near Kwandŏkjŏng today.<sup>163</sup> Settlers converted Hyangsadang, a Chosŏn era meeting hall dedicated to feasting and archery a short distance across Kwandŏkjŏng, to a Japanese temple in 1916 (Cheju Taehakgyo Pangmulgwan 1996: 79).

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with author, Ido-2-tong, August 16, 2014.

<sup>163</sup> KYL1. Wŏndosim Yet'gil T'amhŏm tour. Samdo-2-tong, August 6 2014.

Japanese settlers gained colonial government approval to establish a Shinto shrine in 1931 near the present-day Kisangch'ōng (Meteorological Administration) (Ibid., 373).

The Japanese colonial authorities and the early Republic of Korea administrations all re-used the same built environment as their predecessors, adding their own stamps of presence and rule but did not fundamentally change the city in form in function. Near the site of the former T'amna period seat of the Sōngju rulers, the mainland Korean dynasties built their own administrative structures of which the fifteenth-century Kwandōkjōng is the most enduring example. The colonial era city's features would remain functional into the later part of the twentieth century as the same thoroughfares and facilities would be re-utilized or expanded. Cheju City's City Hall was built slightly west of Kwandōkjōng in 1958, just after the former Cheju-ūp (Cheju Town) was upgraded to Cheju-si (Cheju City) in 1955 (Ibid., 15). This area continued to function as *sōng'an* (within the city walls), a euphemism for the city as habitation expanded in concentric demi-circles around it before Koreanized garden-city style development gained traction.

*Halla Ilbo* news reporter Chin Sōnhŭi wrote the *wōndosim* as a “rare place in which one can not only see natural surroundings but also traces of Cheju people's lives from up close” (2014a). Both the Koryō and Chosōn city walls were built in accord to topographical features and after the walls' disappearance, the city core remained consistently concentrated within the Sanjich'ōn and Pyōngmunch'ōn floodplains encircled by inclines and low promontories. Because of the area's shape and geographical limitations, certain patches of nature, though now polluted with urban refuse, along Sanjich'ōn and Pyōngmunch'ōn as well as the coast – at least before the T'apdong Plaza project – were left open to the elements. A narrow footpath in a shrub-flanked ditch, the former pathway into Cheju City at the south gate, remains and is often

re-visited for local *tapsa* events. One can traverse the entire twentieth century in just twenty minutes of brisk walking the full length of the *wōndosim* confined within the former east and west gates near Tongmun Rot'ōri (East Gate Rotary) and Sōmun Sagōri (West Gate Intersection). Neither the east nor west gates remain, but they function beyond their physical absence as geographic mnemonics. Depending on who one asks in the area, the large basalt stone, which now doubles as a stand for a flowerpot for a house beside the BBQ place near the YMCA, was or was not the West Gate's last remaining stone.

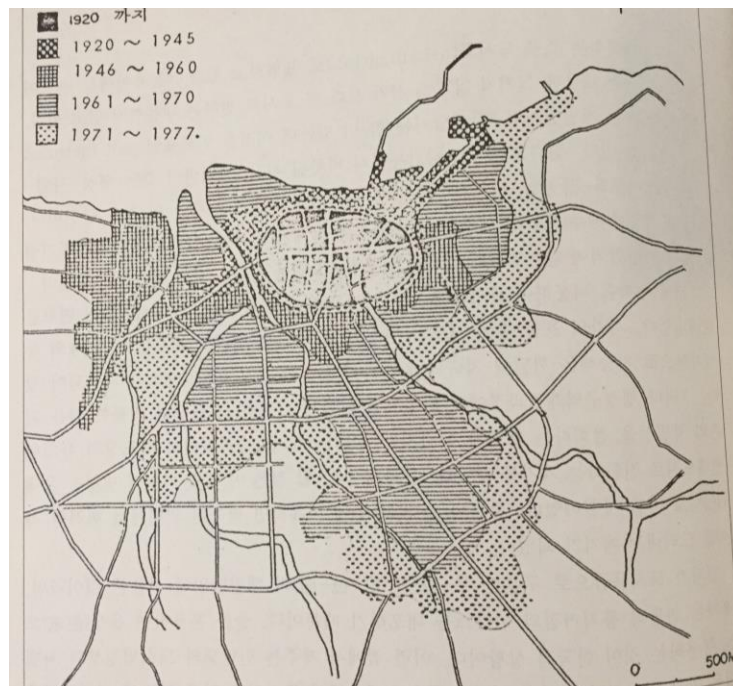


Figure 14: Map of Cheju City's expansion from 1920 to 1977 (O HS 2006: 876)

From outside Sōmun Sagōri in the coastal neighborhood of Handugi, one can see the figure of the Sōjabok Maitreya figure standing in the site of the Koryō era temple site of Haeryunsa, which became one of the first Buddhist urban missions in 1939.<sup>164</sup> The male Sōjabok

<sup>164</sup> Unless noted otherwise, names and dates of places mentioned below were collected via conversations with *wōndosim* residents carried out between August 2014 to March 2016. All information was fact-checked through

gazes due east in the direction of its female counterpart Tongjabok, who returns his gaze from the former temple site of Mansusa outside the east walls. If one walks from west gate, heads straight on Kwandök-ro, the former colonial era Wönjönt’ong, and turns left onto the north side of Pyöngmok-kol street are traces – or at least the memories – of the first Japanese administrative structures in 1915, the first traveler accommodations (T’amna Inn), and the first locally-established elementary school in 1907 (Puk Elementary School) all by Kwandökjöng. But if one disregards traffic laws entirely, dodges tour busses that stop in front of Mokkawanaji or the Robero Hotel, crosses Kwandök-ro and goes south on Pyöngmok-kol, one encounters the first protestant church from 1908 (Söngnae Church), the first cinema from 1944 (Hyöndae Theater), the first Chinese-Korean school from 1953 (Cheju Hwagyo Primary School), the site of the first Catholic girls’ school from 1901 (Sinsöng Girls’ School), and the first Catholic cathedral from 1930 (Chung’ang Cathedral). At around half past ten or just before eleven, one might encounter a *tapsa* (historical survey tours) group passing through here.

Though now long fallen into disrepair to the point that City Hall ordered the building off-limits, older residents remember fondly Hyöndae Theater and their time spent watching silent movies first screened there or the macho action movies that came in the 1970s. Most were not entirely sure whether to classify the silent film interpreters that once worked there as authentic *pyönsa* (interpreter). When talking about it at the Chungang-ro street corner Coffee People café, Mr. Hong, who once called this neighborhood home, in August 2014 had a brief exchange with another elderly man who insisted that they were real *pyönsa*. To that Mr. Hong said that they did not exactly interpret, but only read the script and story. But there was no dispute that Hyöndae

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consulting the 1996 *Cheju-si Yett’ö*, the 2003 Samdo-2-tong local history *Cheju-üi haeksim Samdo-2-tong*, Chin Sönhüi’s 2014 “Wöndosim iyagi” series for *Halla ilbo* news, and Lab Wat’s 2015 *Samdo-2-tong konggan ch’aek*.

Theater was where everyone went for a night out, or for students to hide out in the dark, until its closure in 1978 (Figure 15).



Figure 15: The former Hyöndae Theater, 1944-1978.<sup>165</sup>

One could walk a bit further into this neighborhood and onto Iat-kol street to find the restored Hyangsadang, which takes its late-nineteenth century physical form after a tumultuous twentieth century existence. The Cheju University Hospital, which sits upon the site for the first public hospital in 1910 (Chönnam Volunteer Clinic), was the main reason, aside from Chung’ang Cathedral and Tongmun Market not far away, for residents to come down to the area until it was finally closed in 2009. Under the basement of a brick building behind Hyangsadang was Cheju City’s first rock club, “The Doors,” which opened in the 1990s. Though “The Doors” closed after its founders went their separate ways, it was ahead of its time. “The Doors” pre-empted – and formed out of spontaneous will without official support – the later attempts at infusing into the *wöndosim* new modes of cultural enjoyment. The building, like its neighbors,

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<sup>165</sup> Photo by author, Samdo-2-tong, Cheju City, August 6, 2014.

became refurbished in 2011 as Café O-i a performing arts studio and a café, which the city granted five-year rent subsidies as part of the latest cycle of *tosi chaesaeng* attempts.

Should one proceed on east on Kwandök-ro, cross Chung’ang-ro, and onto Tongmun-ro, the other half of the former Wŏnjŏngt’ong, to Sanjich’ŏn stream, while en route to Tongmun Rotary one would pass the stairwells to the Underground Shopping center completed in 1983 (Kim HC 2016). Chung’ang-ro, which runs in a long straight line from the edge of T’apdong south toward Ara-tong, was, Mr. Hong had noted in 2014, a relatively newer road built in the heyday of the developmental state. Before that, it was Hanjit-kol, which runs parallel to it and is now little more than a sleepy neighborhood road. A “Youth Film Festival” mural from the 1990s remains on the side of the four-story “Good Morning” *hanŭiwŏn* (Korean traditional medicine clinic) building. Its message reads in colorful Korean script, “*Welk’ŏm t’u Hanjit-kol.*”

Beyond the Chung’ang-ro intersection, one can see the tip of a white obelisk. As the centerpiece of Tongmun Rotary, which retains its name despite having lost its form after being absorbed into the expanded Sanjich’ŏn Plaza in 2016, the obelisk commemorates Korean War dead arises from a manicured island of green. A salty sea air wafts from the north with the horn of a ship coming to port along with a rotting stench emanating from the muddy algae-green waters of Sanjich’ŏn. Dr. Ko Young-lim was always baffled at its over-restoration. After an exasperated exhalation, and pointing at the newly-built wooden deck, the dirtied water, and the pipes that irrigate water to fill the channel, she reiterated aloud, “It’s a *kŏnch’ŏn* (dry stream bead)! It’s a *kŏnch’ŏn!*” Sanjich’ŏn, before multiple attempts to tame a stream that did not need to be tamed, it was little more than a creek that served as a natural spillway way for Cheju’s torrential monsoon rains or a place for laundry or for children to cool off on hot summer days.

To the right and beside Tongmun Market's main row of street food carts where vendors grill sizzling *hottŏk* (fried sweet cakes), one would see a dramatic building reminiscent of the bow of a ship, the shell of the former Tongyang Theater. Aside from movies produced for the domestic market, until its closure, Tongyang Theater also included major imported feature films such Disney's *The Lion King*. One could disregard all pretenses to healthiness and follow the sweet smell of *hottŏk* or the boiling fish broth filled with *odeng* (fish cakes on a stick) positioned amongst traditional medicine, fresh garden vegetables, small home furnishings, and tourist souvenir vendors. Or one could continue pursuing curious instincts and turn left onto the east side of the stone wall-flanked Sanjich'ŏn stream, up a hill, behind a local interpretation of Frank Lloyd Wright's "Falling Water" building<sup>166</sup> (Figure 16), atop the ruins of Cheju City's east walls the solar panel-capped broad figure of the Kisangch'ŏng first established in 1923. Kisangch'ŏng, the current director noted before zealously taking visitors to the state-of-the-art yet under-visited weather science exhibition hall, was situated here because this was the highest point that overlooked the city. Dr. Ko Young-lim added that the site where Kisangch'ŏng's newer facilities stand was once Chung'ang Methodist Church built in 1950 of Cheju basalt.

About a three-minute walk tucked between a small alleyway is the dark gray basalt stump of a long-felled *tolharŭbang* (stone grandfather) guardian figure where the East Gate once stood. An outdoor alleyway market flanks a covered portion of this road before one reaches the expanded four-lane thoroughfare of Mandŏk-ro leading to Cheju Harbor. Kimchi and produce

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<sup>166</sup> Information provided courtesy of Dr. Ko Young-lim of JICEA. Published documentation on this building was difficult to find and so Dr. Ko directly asked a local architectural expert as well as the head of the Cheju City Yang clan. The building consists of two parts – a simple concrete building below and the Modernist-style home atop. The bottom was originally the P'yŏngan Mokje (P'yŏngan Wood Building Materials) factory and warehouse of a family that moved to Cheju in the fallout of the Korean War. When the family became prosperous they built their home atop their business. The building was sold some time ago when the family moved. Dr. Ko and I were unable to acquire permission to see inside the house.



vendors, comprising islanders who moved to the city in the 1960s from the countryside, tell a curious researcher in a *tapsa* that this alleyway was once the main road out of “the city,” big enough for two horses!



Figure 16: The former P’yŏngan Mokje house.<sup>167</sup>

Everything about the *wŏndosim* was original. Despite the neighborhood’s decay after the 1980s, it remained one of the most recognizable parts of the city. The newly-established, destitute, and conflicted Republic of Korea simply expropriated former colonial sites. What occurred in postcolonial Seoul (Todd 2014) was similar in Cheju City with the key difference that it was a Korean administration that sought to put its own neocolonial stamp on the area. The same buildings and organizational structures were used but under new flags. One of the most important structures in the First Republic period (1948-1960) was the original Cheju City Hall built in 1958 after Cheju City was finally given the legal status of a *si* (city) in 1955 (Kim CH, Kim YJ, Mun CH, Yun SH, Chŏng SJ 2015: 15). A building in the same style of architecture

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<sup>167</sup> Photo by author, Ildo-1-tong, Cheju City, December 1, 2016.

built in Ildo 2-dong – then the open farm and tomb fields of Kwangyang village – became Cheju’s first *toch’ōng* (provincial hall). The former was built in a style of early Korean modernist architecture, using simple unadorned white concrete walls but featuring a central clock tower at the entryway and capped with a Korean-style blue-tiled hipped roof; this building was destroyed after Cheju City Hall moved Ildo 2-tong and *toch’ōng* moved to Sin-Cheju, reflecting the *wōndosim*’s loss of prestige and the birth of a new conception of Cheju City. But this decline would happen gradually, a contrast from the new town developments’ rapid rise. Paik Youngsung (Paek Yōngsōng), an art director for the “Art Scenic” performance studio, described the *wōndosim*, despite its dilapidated state, as a snapshot of the past.<sup>168</sup>

In a group interview of five young college student members of the Global Inner Peace NGO, when all were asked to draw a map of Cheju City and highlight what they thought were the most representative aspects of the city, one pattern was consistent in their drawings and explanations – Ku-Cheju (Old Cheju City) represented “Cheju City” (Figure 17)<sup>169</sup> Younger Cheju islanders had a vague sense of the *wōndosim* as establishments catering to younger demographics mostly shifted up to Taehak-ro in Ildo 2-tong, but there was still a general perception that the older parts of the city are what make Cheju City. All pointed to the Taehak-ro<sup>170</sup> area around Cheju City Hall, but three at least referred to Chung’ang-ro or T’apdong – all parts within or near Ku-Cheju. Sarabong (Figure 18) featured prominently in three of the five maps. One student noted that since Cheju Harbor was expanded, Sarabong’s coastal view was

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<sup>168</sup> Interview with author, Samdo-2-tong, November 6, 2015.

<sup>169</sup> Group interview with author, Ildo-2-tong, Cheju City, February 10, 2015.

<sup>170</sup> The place around Cheju City Hall is colloquially called either “sich’ōng” (City Hall) or “Taehak-ro” (University Road) though Cheju National University itself is located about thirty minutes south in Ara-tong. This road is a part of Chung’ang-ro, but its nickname is because university students frequent this neighborhood’s eateries and bars. The place, located in Ildo-2-tong, is technically a part of Ku-Cheju despite much of it being a post-1960s development.

permanently marred and so she no longer went to the park. Nonetheless, the peak has come to represent Cheju City and the *wōndosim* adjacent to it continued to at least retain its symbolic significance.



Figure 17. KEA's map of Ku-Cheju.

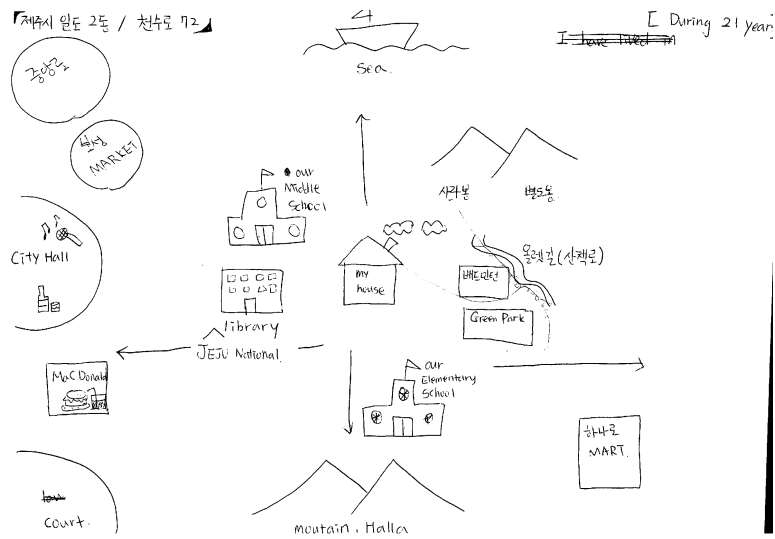


Figure 18: HSJ's map of Ku-Cheju.

Post-1980s developments were absent from students' maps despite the fact that they were born in the late 1990s. Taehak-ro was formerly the open farm fields and tomb sites of the former Kwangyang village when the city government relocated Cheju City Hall to the former provincial government hall in 1980 and the government built a new provincial hall in Sin-Cheju. Global Inner Peace founder Koh Eun-kyoung recalled that the *wōndosim* was still an active commercial and entertainment center during her undergraduate years. And for younger university students and youth who grew up as Sin-Cheju was developed, due to Taehak-ro's close proximity, the *wōndosim* was at least in the shadow of the changing city. The mini-amusement park at T'apdong Plaza was one of the few reasons for youth to visit. That it fell into disrepair and earned a negative reputation accidentally allowed for it to remain in geographic imagination.

Neglect did not mean complete divestment. Successive government administrations poured (or some might say, wasted) enormous resources on redevelopment. Various projects between the 1990s to the early 2000s did not have an overarching long-term goal. Before the T'amna Culture Plaza took center stage in the *wōndosim*, the local governments of the province and Cheju City along with cultural organizations such as Minyech'ong and the Traditional Culture Institute made a few attempts to revive the area. T'amnaguk Ipch'un Kut-nori discussed earlier was one such example as well as the T'amna Taejōn (T'amna Grand Festival) held at T'apdong Plaza. The disadvantages of festivals were that they were fleeting, rarely provided long-term economic returns, and Cheju's later festival oversaturation dampened their efficacy. The first major physical redevelopment projects were the massive three-phase T'apdong Plaza reclamation project completed in 1991, the 10,200-square meters open-air Haebyōn Concert Hall completed in 1995, the Pyōngmunch'ōn stream reclamation project from 1991 to 2005, and the massive Cheju Mokkwana project (Kim CH, Kim YJ, Mun CH, Chōng SJ 2015: 19-23).

None of the projects spurred much of a revival. The infrastructural improvements became a bane to the city in the event of major typhoons; stripped of natural defenses due to the T'apdong Plaza and Pyöngmunch'ön reclamation projects, flooding and storm surges frequently menaced the coastal and downstream neighborhoods. Aside from T'amnaguk Ipch'un Kut-Nori and Cheju Mokkwanaji, the major projects did not clearly articulate a *wöndosim* nor were they successful in reversing the area's negative image. The area continued to lag far behind Sin-Cheju in quality of life and basic services, a factor further exacerbated when the Cheju University Hospital moved to Ara-tong in 2009.

With the new tourism boom after 2010 and the cruise ship terminal opened in 2012, there was no question that the *wöndosim* would eventually face redevelopment. The premise of the Free International City project was, after all, to create a world class tourist hub. What redevelopment entailed was a key point of contention (Kim, Kang, and Kim 2012, 94–95). Cheju City already had name-recognition simply by being on Cheju Island. Kim T'aeil identified, from an architect's perspective, the problem as a combination of *kyönggwan* (landscape), economics, city planning failures, and the city's overall lack of clear visual identity. Along with unchecked urban sprawl, the other problem that confronted *tosi chaesaeng* practice was a matter of origins. With so many origins, which origin would be the source for its rebirth? Since the early 2000s, intellectuals, architects, and artists attempted to find an answer to the perpetual riddle of how to define *Chejudaun*. Former governor U Künmin promoted the idea of the Sanjich'ön Night Market, a project that was stalled due to a lack of private investment and interest at the time (Chwa YC 2012). The T'amna Culture Plaza was therefore only part of a trend two to three decades in the making.

What comprised the city's authentic experience was not only an architectural concern. For local and mainlander *wōndosim* shopkeepers left out of Cheju's Free International City miracle, the T'amna Culture Plaza was a chance to return to lost prominence. None, including the project's critics, denied that the refocused attention on the *wōndosim* was bringing its gradual revival. For better or for worse, *wōndosim* revivalists found themselves divided on how to participate in – or resist – the T'amna Culture Plaza project. Would a *Chejudaun* city be based on a revived and reconstructed T'amna capital – authenticated via the local research organizations' efforts – or would it be based on the chaotic jumbled stones and bricks of its tumultuous modernity? But most of all, what, exactly was the *wōndosim* of Cheju City? For some in favor of reconstructions such as Pak Kyōnghun, a chief member of Minyech'ong and chair (after Mun Mubyōng's exit) of the Traditional Culture Institute, authenticity was in a distant pristine past. For others such as Dr. Ko Young-lim of JICEA, the *wōndosim* was an organic culmination of lived experience and memory. The dynamic relationship of these two contrasting perspectives, which were at once at opposition and yet both based on a notion of an authentic right to urban space, form a critical force for the *wōndosim* and Cheju urbanism debates.

Renewed interest in the *wōndosim* came amidst shifts in global urban trends in which planners, administrations, city residents, and developers turned back to the old downtowns. The Cheju Palchōn Yōn'guwōn's (Jeju Development Institute)<sup>171</sup> estimated that Cheju City's expansion exceeded infrastructure and environmental capacity by the end of the 1990s. Stated in their *Che-2-ch'a Chejudo chonghap kaebal kyehoek* (Second Phase of the Cheju Province General Development Plans), one of the chief roles for the revised plans was “Elevating quality of life through living environment improvements and local cultural inheritance, development,

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<sup>171</sup> The JDI was formally established as a development think tank in 1997.

etc.” (JDI 2001: 2). Since new expansions were planned and executed in Sin-Cheju and newer development zones south and east of Ku-Cheju in the 1970s and 1980s, the *wōndosim* lost its centrality in physical and immaterial aspects. Population in the four core parts of the *wōndosim* – Ildo-1-tong, Ido-1-tong, Samdo-2-tong, and Kōnip-tong – in 2012 was a reported total of a mere 32,294 (Cheju 2013: 78-79), a decline from the 1992 figure of 43,882, or a roughly 27% decrease. The *wōndosim*’s dilapidation became a source of local embarrassment and it earned an inglorious reputation as the city’s “red light district.”

Special editorials on the *wōndosim* began to appear in local news outlets as the T’amna Culture Plaza project commenced. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2014, journalist Chin Sōnhūi of Cheju’s *Halla Ilbo* newspaper began a series of twenty articles exploring the multiple histories hidden in the *wōndosim* and the activities of JICEA. The editorial series was intended to publicize lesser-known histories and inspire alternative ways of seeing and engaging old city spaces. In the last article of the series published on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, she concluded that continued disregard for remaining traces demonstrates an urgent need to reconsider heritage preservation criteria. Chin’s *Halla Ilbo* editorial proposed a form of visual citizenship in which shared memory and practices of seeing stories within *wōndosim* constitute a form of community-building by the eyes. Chin’s concept of Cheju City heritage and imageability did not privilege a distant past but instead focused on living memory and the *wōndosim*’s distinctive features. In exposing the layered histories of the *wōndosim*, her editorial challenged heritage discourses embedded in the T’amna Culture Plaza’s premises. Chin challenged her readers to see stories within the existing aged walls, tight winding neighborhood alleyways, and the *wōndosim*’s multilayered shapes.

The T’amna Culture Plaza came at the most opportune time when groundbreaking began in 2012. The discourses of Korean and Cheju cities spread beyond small intellectual and official

circles. *Tosi chaesaeng* was a project that could appeal to anyone. All wrapped into one package were the Wŏn administration's promises for real urban redevelopment using the latest trends in inner city design, expanded tourism and local entrepreneurial opportunities, concerted state support for artists and designers, and a chance to revive the city's T'amna-ness lost since the Japanese colonial rule. Though an amorphous project that attempted to accomplish everything from cultural promotion to urban stream management, what remained consistent was the search for a sense of origins.

Origins that the Wŏn administration and local boosters sought, though superficially articulated, quickly became an issue of how to interpret the past and to what end. While some dreamed of an urban village community that repurposed the physical remains of the *wŏndosim*'s earlier heydays for creative reinterpretation, others dreamed of simultaneously reinventing a cosmology of the past to promote an aesthetic utopia. For some, especially those who turned their sights on remaking a cosmic T'amna capital, re-creation would not be reinvention per se but restoration.

One of the key "T'amna" projects was to begin an "investigation of T'amna's Ch'ilsŏngdae path" for the possibility of recreating a themed road based on the long-lost Ch'ilsŏngdae altar complex (Kim HH 2015c). Ch'ilsŏngdae (also called Ch'ilsŏngto), was, according to the 1530 *Sinjŏng Tongguk Yŏji Sŏngnam*, a series of seven sacred sites or altars arranged in the form of the Puktu Ch'ilsŏng (Seven Stars of the Northern Ladle, a.k.a. the Big Dipper asterism). The complex theoretically comprised the cosmic axis of the T'amna capital (Yi WJ 2002: 171), hence their attraction to contemporary imagination. Folklorist Mun Mubyŏng raised the possibility that worship of the snake deities associated with Ch'ilsŏng may have begun as T'amna state rituals. Ch'ilsŏngdae would have been birds-eye view of the cosmic seven stars



on the ground and thus replicate the world of the gods onto the earth (Mun MB 2012). Similar symbolism appears to have been replicated in Cheju domestic worship with the Anch'ilsöng (Interior Ch'ilsöng) guarding the *kop'ang* (Kr.: *ch'angko*; storehouse) and the Patch'ilsöng (Field Ch'ilsöng) guarding the *anköri* (main house) from outside (Kim HJ 2007). While Cheju islanders historically considered Ch'ilsöng an important cosmic symbol, the Ch'ilsöngdae complex's precise locations were uncertain.

The city and provincial governments entrusted the research and interpretation to the Hallasan Saengt'ae Munhwa Yön'guso (Hallasan Ecology and Culture Research Center) (Kim YH 2011). The implication of rehabilitating a long lost cosmological symbol of the city for its twenty-first century aspirations was to represent Cheju City as a major point in a greater regional constellation of emerging cities and economies. Cheju City's exotic magico-shamanistic Ch'ilsöngdae also would set the city apart from its mainland counterparts. Whereas other cities had to position themselves in a constellation of global nodal points, Cheju City, Ch'ilsöngdae promoters suggested, itself was a constellation. Adding to the appeal to the Ch'ilsöng image was, aside from its virtually universal appeal as a cosmological symbol, its key function as a the asterism from which one can locate the Pukgüksöng (Polaris, the North Star). But like the premises of *tosi chaesaeng* for the *wöndosim*, Ch'ilsöngdae is a historic object or set of objects long lost or transformed and re-made as if its re-imagination were the real object itself.

Ch'ilsöngdae was among the most contested in intellectual debate over the search for Cheju City's authenticity. A problem from the start was that all extant sources, even those of Kim Sögik, one of the last who saw Ch'ilsöngdae's remains, are inconsistent. Hong's interpretation produced a skewed shape of the asterism. The only information somewhat consistent in all extant sources is that three points consisting the 'ladle' of the asterism were at

Ch'ilsöng-kol (also known as Ch'ilsöng-t'ong or Ch'ilsöng-ro) road. Other views of Ch'ilsöngdae's location, such as that of local artist Kang Minsoo (Kang Minsu), interestingly drew from David J. Nemeth's reading of the Cheju City landscape mentioned in his 1984 dissertation.<sup>172</sup> Kim T'aeil's own re-assessment proposed a different arrangement. In all cases, there was no consistent agreement. Nevertheless, the seventh and final stone marker to re-represent the Ch'ilsöngdae site was erected in 2011. Kim T'aeil agreed with rehabilitating Ch'ilsöngdae as a symbol. As part of the wider *tosi chaesaeng* project, the city had earmarked 897,000,000 wön for a theme street. As journalist Kim Hyöng-hun said, the government had essentially "created something out of nothing" (Kim HH 2015c).

Just as Chosön era restorations in Seoul inadvertently highlighted colonial contours (Todd 2014), the T'amna Culture Plaza likewise reinforced the colonial city's physical structure more than the Chosön and T'amna past. The colonial administration's major projects in the *wöndosim* included Cheju Harbor by the former Könipp'o where the reconstructed Kim Mandök Kaekchut'ö stands, an expanded Sanjich'ön Plaza along the former Wönjönt'ong, and the refurbished Ch'ilsöng-ro Arcade made to cater to high-end retailers. All components accidentally re-use the colonial city infrastructure: Cheju Harbor rather than Hwabuk port, Wönjöntong rather than the former town commons before Kwandökjöntong, and Ch'ilsöngt'ong rather than Ch'ilsöng-kol. Even the city walls reconstruction projects, in drawing attention to absence and

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<sup>172</sup> In the November 21, 2015 *wöndosim tapsa* that Kang led for the "Warang Warang Munhwa Norit'ö" program sponsored by the Ildo-1-tong administration, the Ch'ilsöngdae survey went in accord to Nemeth's 1984 mapping. The map in Nemeth's dissertation does not actually mention seven specific locations and instead is a diagram drawing of its shape in relation to Kwandökjöntong, but local intellectuals such as Kang have proposed specific sites along this route. One problem is that Yi Wönjin's short description indicates that Ch'ilsöngdae predated Chosön and hence basing its position on a structure built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century seems odd as it conforms to the shape of the Chosön era Cheju City rather than the Koryö or T'amna era settlement.

attempting to resuscitate a pre-colonial past ex nihilo, display an attempt at selective forgetting that buries yet builds upon twentieth-century traumas.

The T'amna Culture Plaza was a mixed package from the start and exposed Cheju City's endemic paradoxes. Its groundbreaking excited shopkeepers about new prospects and stirred discussions, but its incoherent T'amna-ness have also aroused bemusement, derision, and ambivalence. As the project commenced, a few shopkeepers grew weary of the plaza's constant changes, construction delays, and the realities of instability in a tourism-driven economy. The projected fallout following China's economic retaliatory measures against South Korea following the US deployment of THAAD in 2017 may put Chinese tourist-dependent businesses in jeopardy. The T'amna Culture Plaza, despite an ostensibly new paradigm, repeated the same problems as the T'apdong Plaza project: a failure to attract much business investments, rising costs with ever more ambitious constructions, a lack of clear identity, and a continued lack of resident participation (Kim HH 2017).

The challenge city residents and civic groups faced was their asymmetrical confrontations with corporate-allied administrations for what David Harvey (2012) and Sharon Zukin (2010) called the "right to the city." In the Cheju City *wōndosim* issue, in residents' and policymakers' search for the city's Polaris, the impetuses for conflict and change included not only the issue of control over urban space and memory, but also the question of heritage. What Harvey missed and Zukin indirectly alluded to was that the right to the city was not only a right to claim urban space but also a right to claim urban time in the form of heritage.

Origins expressed in the T'amna Culture Plaza were at once concrete and vague. What the project's promoters in the Cheju government, planning agencies, and cultural organizations sought to revive did indeed exist at one time. The search for origins was a combination of

contemporary opportunism for urban development exigencies and a stretch of imaginings for irretrievable origins. Hastily built restorations<sup>173</sup> curiously attempted to resuscitate a Cheju City of the Chosŏn period, a time when T'amna had long lost sovereignty to mainland Korean rule, as a representation of an original T'amna capital. Whereas literary theorist Walter Benjamin wrote of the “angel of history” as a being whose face was turned to the past, but was forever blown forward with progress’ storm (1968; 2007: 257), the yearning to recover T'amna attempted to cast chains upon this Angelus Novus and demand that it make whole a single past from indeterminable shards. Where a real continuity existed was that contemporary Cheju administrations sought to create an *axis mundi* in the function and physical space of the city.

#### 5.4 – Reimagining the City

Amidst the T'amna Culture Plaza, *tosi chaesaeng*, and *ch'angjo kyŏngje* controversies, a specifically urban discourse has been emerging in response as well as opposition. Whereas Cheju anthropology and folkloristics premised Cheju identity on a holistic notion of an idyllic rural past, on the streets of Cheju City the question of urban Cheju became a primary concern. The city’s reach was everywhere present on the island by 2015. A pristine rural original did not exist. That people across generations could claim the *wŏndosim* and Ku-Cheju as original was what made the area such a contested geography. Because personal connections to the past were more readily retrievable, this tiny part of Cheju City functioned in every meaning of the term a site of memory or “*lieux de memoire*” (Nora 1989). All within relatively the same period multiple groups including Jeju Forum C, Global Inner Peace, and the Cheju Green Party emerged or

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<sup>173</sup> The Cheūgak tower at the south wall was restored only within less than a year in 2015. The project was criticized among some local cultural experts and activists because reconstruction was based on too short a research and planning period.

became more active in calling for citizens as well as foreign residents to claim their right to take part in the urban discussion.

*Wōndosim* native Ko Young-lim (Ko Yōngnim) emerged as one of the most vocal advocates for rethinking community-building and revitalizing the *wōndosim* based on living memory. Her vision led to the formation of Cheju Kukche Munhwa Kyoryu Hyōphoe (Jeju International Culture Exchange Association, JICEA). Event flyers, online postings, and banners for JICEA's old city walking excursions always had the following signature phrase: "*Kiōk-ūi hyōnjang-esō tosi-ūi mirae poda*" ("looking at the city's future from sites of memory").

Although several organizations already operated in the area, JICEA was one of the first organizations to explicitly address the *tosi chaesaeng*. JICEA began its own form of urban *tapsa* (historical survey tour) that its members referred to as *t'amhōm* (exploration). Ko developed the idea for JICEA in 2012 but officially founded the association in 2013 beside Sanjich'ōn at Saenmul-kol.<sup>174</sup> Under Ko Young-lim's leadership, the association's chief focus was to ring residents of different generations together to consider grassroots approaches to re-imagine Cheju City's past and potential. A Cheju National University French professor with a strongly independent personality, Ko studied in Strasbourg, researched the Cheju dialect in Osaka's Tsuruhashi Koreatown, and was involved in women's activism in Seoul. A Puk Elementary alumnus and one of the 1970s generation, she had direct experience in the area's earlier heyday as Cheju City's downtown. Ko was also a member of the proud Cheju City Ko clan, which claimed descent from the *sōngju* lords of T'amna. Ko returned to Cheju in 2007 after some

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<sup>174</sup> See Tran 2016. In the *Cross Currents* article, JICEA's founding was written as 2012. The organization actually registered in September 2013. This date confusion is due to one factor: when I met Ko Young-lim in August 2012, she discussed having her group of friends and acquaintances form a new association in response to the T'amna Culture Plaza.

decades abroad and was astounded with the city's rapid changes and what she saw as egregious cultural destruction. By 2013, she became one of the most vociferous figures to critique cultural policies and urban heritage paradigms.

JICEA's earliest membership included Ko's friends and colleagues who were mostly the late 1960s-1970s generation. Though relatively small with fifty local and ten foreign members, the association's activities had a far-reaching impact in Cheju urban discourse, even while authorities did not take on their suggestions. JICEA's concerns regarding the old city were soon communicated across generations. Ko's students and their friends and siblings became important members and staff. In 2015 and 2016, whereas other groups comprised largely of middle-aged and educated middle-class people, who already had some cultural stake in the *wōndosim*, JICEA was one of the few active *wōndosim*-based organizations to have had active student membership. Since 2013, members and affiliates included old city natives, Cheju returnees from the mainland or abroad, academics, journalists, café owners, artists, guesthouse keepers, and university students. Students comprised their own subgroup within the association with their own leadership, who frequently communicated and coordinated with Ko.

Activities were almost entirely *wōndosim*-based. At a glance, JICEA had a heavy emphasis on introducing French culture – due in large part to Ko's own expertise – but these were ultimately tied to the objective of drawing attention to the *wōndosim* as Cheju City's historic function as the island's center for urban culture and education. Part of JICEA's mission was also the *kyoryu* (exchange) factor of their moniker. Ko insisted that future community depended on being grounded firmly onto a solid foundation of understanding the past, a sentiment that she shared with other *wōndosim* groups such as the Lab What team and Art Scenic.

Since the association's beginnings, Ko and JICEA engaged in or initiated four types of activities: 1) *wōndosim* historical survey excursion walks known as the Wōndosim T'amhōm; 2) French film screenings and group discussions; 3) community forums regarding urban revitalization; and 4) arts exhibitions. The French Film Festival and French Film Night were made possible with public funding and the French Embassy's support, but the Wōndosim T'amhōm was unique that it operated purely on participation fees. JICEA's insistence on autonomy as well as occasional defensiveness, however, did limit its size and scope of activities as well as its membership. Autonomy was sometimes a source of friction with former colleagues, who sought more collaboration with other organizations.

Wōndosim Yet'gil T'amhōm ('Explorations of the *wōndosim*'s old streets,' hereafter Wōndosim T'amnōm) was JICEA's cornerstone program (Figure 18). Ko conceived of the project before she officially registered JICEA with the Cheju provincial government. She began the program out of a sense of emergency as *tosi chaeseng* projects began. Whereas other *tapsa*, particularly those Jeju Forum C, took broad general excursions across Cheju, Wōndosim T'amhōm was among the first to critically engage the city. The city as a concrete reality, not simply an abstract Cheju-ness, was the subject of inquiry.

The Wōndosim T'amhōm's initial purpose was to highlight immediately contested or threatened sites of memory. As construction crews broke ground for the T'amna Culture Plaza and demolished the first buildings, the Wōndosim T'amhōm program called to question the project's fundamental premise. Ko criticized it as an act of cultural erasure and a blatant fabrication of T'amna identity created on the rubble of actual *lieux de memoire*. Ko personally led many of the excursions, but the program eventually came to include periodic guest presenters and more JICEA student staff participation. From its inception, turnout varied from as low as

five to as many as thirty. Participants were typically Cheju locals but included mainlanders and international residents interested in Cheju history. For Ko, a primary measure for a T’amhöm event’s success was not numbers but whether content elicited much group discussion.



Figure 19: Wöndosim Yet’gil T’amhöm Course Map.

Several key points set the Wöndosim T’amhöm apart from *tapsa*. The former was derived from the latter, but Ko deliberately chose the word “*t’amhöm*” (exploration). Oppenheim, in his Kyöngju case study, described *tapsa* as a form of “serious fun” that involves of “seeking out, viewing, studying, and sometimes documenting artifacts, relics, and historical sites” (2008: 83). Through *tapsa*, participants asserted a form of citizen “custodianship over ancient objects,” (Ibid., 104) as they established contact with the real traces of the past. *Tapsa* became a favored intellectual pastime in Cheju – especially for the Chönt’ong Munhwa Yön’guso, Minyech’ong, and Jeju Forum C – as much as in Kyöngju. Group historical surveys were far more accessible and enjoyable means for residents to engage historical traces and learn about Cheju without constraints to lecture rooms and academic jargon. Where Wöndosim T’amhöm’s differed was



that it functioned as a practice of citizen critical urban geography rather than citizen archeology or an expression of T'amna quasi-nationalism. Because of its urban setting, Wōndosim T'amhōm had less emphasis on discovery. What drove the program instead were explorations and narratives of the same spaces and sites through using different memories, testimonies, and biographies. An advantage that Wōndosim T'amhōm possessed comes from Cheju City's own peculiarity. Unlike a major cultural city such as Kyōngju where distant royal pasts were visible, Cheju City history was subject to constant dispute and interpretation.

Itineraries in successive Wōmdosim T'amhōm events were usually similar and sometimes identical. Each iteration differed through different narratives and details depending on the day's theme. Sometimes Ko or the guest guide based themes on immediately relevant issues in Cheju City politics and society. Compared to the *tapsa* of other organizations, JICEA's Wōndosim T'amhōm were more frequent and consistently kept within the *wōndosim* area. The furthest these *t'amhōm* ever strayed were Kōnip-tong and Yongdam-tong.

While Wōndosim T'amhōm began in the manner of a serious *tapsa*, they eventually had what Ko called a "picnic atmosphere." Guides and participants frequently engaged in discussions that lengthened the program beyond the usual 10 AM to 12 PM schedule. As guides and participants included old city natives and acquaintances – if not former neighbors or fellow Puk Elementary School alumni – histories mixed with personal accounts and everyday banter. Rarely was it the case that nearly all involved were unfamiliar with the city's past. International residents, too, had some connection to Cheju City as many had local friends or long-term interest about their new locality. Due to the more intimate nature of Wōndosim T'amhōm, the program could easily become a full-day affair.

The Wöndosim T'amhöm's confined geographic enabled more flexibility in contrast to other *tapsa* programs that were confined to set schedules because of their wider scale. Itineraries could change in the middle of a program should a guide or participant have an interest or specific recollection about a certain place or another. Sometimes a participant might suddenly become inspired about a memory of place and the entire itinerary could shift elsewhere. The May 24, 2015 excursion, for example, began with a specific itinerary concentrated in the center of the *wöndosim*, but the walk went on a long detour to the Tongjabok megalith because one participant's family temple was once located at the site. At other times, before the Samdo-2-tong district office destroyed the Ch'ilsöng-t'ong street piano<sup>175</sup>, Ko would conclude with a piano performance of Chopin and a rendition of the Cheju folk song "Nöyöng Nayöng" (You and I).

Some points in the itinerary were not actual visible physical remains but chosen purely on their importance to the wider stories of Cheju City experiences. This was a feature in other Cheju *tapsa*, but the sites chosen in *tapsa* often related to major distant historical events. The vanished sites in Wöndosim T'amhöm were still accessible to memory or at least oral histories passed to descendants. The March 29, 2015 excursion in observance of the upcoming April Third anniversary, for example, included a designer clothing shop. The shop occupied a space one floor below what was once the Cheju City office of the ultra-rightwing paramilitary Northwest Youth League.

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<sup>175</sup> This occurred on the night before July 30, 2015. The Samdo-2-tong district office had actually sponsored the Ch'ilsöng-t'ong Street Piano, which a local patron donated for part of the wider global "Street Piano" campaign. Cheju's entry was intended to be South Korea's second. It was abruptly destroyed after a few complaints about noise, but this generated controversy among Cheju's intellectuals, artists, and *wöndosim* revivalists. Two issues that came up were anxieties about a perceived pervasive ignorance toward global cultural trends in Cheju and the more mundane matter that the district office failed to communicate over the issue.

Primary highlights consistent in all walking courses were two colonial era houses of the Ko and Yang families, Cheju Puk Elementary School, Hyöndae Theater, the last remaining colonial *ryokan* near Kwandökjöng, the Pak family’s traditional Cheju thatched home, and the Ch’ilsöngt’ong commercial street. The Pak family house was the pride of the JICEA event because unlike other *tapsa* programs, Ko’s familial relationship to the house’s owner allowed for the group to see an actual surviving – and still occupied – eighteenth-century house (Figure 20).<sup>176</sup> Itineraries did include major historic sites such as Kwandökjöng and remnants of Cheju City’s fortress walls, but Ko and guest guides discussed them in terms of their relation to twentieth-century events, oral histories, or personal recollections. Whereas *tapsa*’s usually intended to acculturate participants to a visual lingua franca of T’amna-ness, the Wöndosim T’amhöm attempted to redefine one’s relationship to the city’s twentieth century transformation. In discussing the stories of the city, the participant in effect became a part of its next chapter.



Figure 20: The three-centuries old Pak Family thatched house.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ko mentioned that the Pak house has been under threat for some time as mainland investors attempted to buy it to make a café.

<sup>177</sup> Photo by author, Samdo-2-tong, Cheju City, April 26, 2015.

Two main points of JICEA's urban discourse were communicated via Wöndosim T'amhöm: 1) the basis of Cheju City identity should be its still-retrievable lived experiences and oral histories; and 2) the *wöndosim*'s irregular layered physicality is not urban blight but rather physical testimony of its radically different historical experience from that of the Korean mainland. This perspective argues that Cheju City already has an imageable feature because the accumulation of Cheju City's tumultuous experiences are all still present. Rather than attempt to reinvent an image based on a lost T'amna original, Ko and JICEA argued that the city should simply rehabilitate what still existed as an access point for the city's past, present, and future. Ko and JICEA members thus harbored strong skepticism toward pre-twentieth century historical reconstructions. Their distaste for T'amna reinventions at the expense of historic neighborhoods in the T'amna Culture Plaza project occasionally put them at odds with other cultural and historical associations and organizations.

JICEA was not necessarily opposed to what Laurajane Smith (2006) calls the "authorized heritage discourse" in principle as they supported UNESCO standards, but they tactically used heritage as a means to challenge the authorizers of said discourse. Speculative reconstructions, they argued, a failure of proper heritage practice. Emphasizing *noblesse oblige*, Ko contended that Cheju's elites and authorities were by default expected to act beyond their own interests and therefore responsible for enacting policies with posterity in mind (2015).

Heritage discourse had become divisive among Cheju City's multiple and multiplying associations. It was not long that JICEA's vision of the city based on *lieux de memoire* clashed with competing visions. When the Kisangch'öng announced their decision to expand their facility in 2014, Pak Kyöng hun of the Chönt'ong Munhwa Yön'guso called for plan revisions. Pak, who had by then become an influential figure in Cheju City's culture world and the Wön

administration, insisted that the plans allow a space for the Chosŏn era Kongsinjŏng pavilion's reconstruction<sup>178</sup> (Yi TG 2015). The Kongsinjŏng was estimated to have occupied a part of the east wall and where the Kisangch'ŏng now stands. This put Ko in conflict with Pak. Ko felt that the pushed plan changes came ultimately at the expense of the Chungang Kamni Kyohoe, a Methodist Church made of Cheju volcanic rock first built in 1928 at the same site.

The debate demonstrated how *wŏndosim* actors employed aspects of the same heritage discourse for competing positions. Conflict was not only between civic groups and the Cheju administration but also amongst these groups themselves. Ko's and JICEA's position continued to argue that modern heritage sites could be defined as such because aside from their architectural uniqueness they were directly verified in both memory and actual record. Lost pre-twentieth-century buildings such as Kongsinjŏng, they charged, were based on estimation if not speculation. Pak Kyŏnghun's and the pro-Kongsinjŏng position insisted that confirmation was possible based on consistency in historical record. Age ultimately took precedence and as the Kongsinjŏng site earned official designation, the city allowed for the church's demolition.<sup>179</sup> Disagreements on how to define Cheju City heritage assets continued.

One result of JICEA's impact was the Cheju National University student-organized ch.064 (Channel 64) art exhibition in May 2015. The exhibition consisted entirely of student-produced work and was held in a newly-opened Ch'ilsŏngt'ong book shop with a small exhibition room for emerging local artists. Student artists presented an artistic archeology of the Cheju City of their parents' generation. Some works re-contextualized otherwise mundane

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<sup>178</sup> The site for Kongsinjŏng is disputed though reconstruction has been decided. Chosŏn governors actually moved the original Kongsinjŏng to a different location in 1823.

<sup>179</sup> One surprising result of the issue, however, was that Meteorological Administration officials decided to turn to JICEA when they began to discuss ideas about repurposing one of the historic buildings on their campus.

objects such as work gloves perhaps to highlight the ongoing construction and destruction. The largest exhibition piece was a slideshow projected onto a white wall. The slideshow consisted of a series of images of a single section of the *wōndosim* seen from the top of the Kongdōk Tongsan steps at the edge of the promontory that overlooks the old Kōnipp’o neighborhood. The image started with a monochrome outline of the neighborhood and ended with an almost photoreal representation of the same location in full color. The initial monochrome traces are all that reminded the viewer that this was a composition. The transitions from the monochrome outline to full color were gradual and layers of colors appeared as if they reflected the Wōndosim T’amhōm itself.

Ko and JICEA persisted with arguing for Cheju City residents to re-evaluate the worth of their actual sites of memory such as the Ko Family House, which is a rare mix of colonial era Cheju and Japanese architecture, and Kūmsōngjang, which was one of the early hotels at Saenmul-kol. But even those who in principle agreed with Ko’s and JICEA’s revaluation of contemporary sites had differing approaches. While a sense “that the government is taking care of everything” (Saeji 2014: 528) with regard to heritage has settled in much of Korean society, this was far from the case for emerging urban culture associations such as JICEA. Heritage protection was but one step. The goal was still to inspire citizen – as well as international resident – participation and collective ownership.

JICEA experienced its first major victory in when their efforts led to the provincial government’s decision to designate the Ko Family House (Figure 21),<sup>180</sup> the Kūmsōngjang hotel, and three other buildings in its vicinity as local heritage assets (Kim HH 2015b). The area upon

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<sup>180</sup> While Ko is related to the owner of the Pak thatched house, she is not directly related to this particular Ko. Ko is a very common surname in Cheju.

which these five buildings occupied were originally set to be demolished for a city square intended to celebrate Ch'ilsöngdae. The early colonial-era Ko Family House was built with imported Japanese cypress and merged both Cheju and Japanese architectural features, boasting a Cheju *anköri-bakköri* dual house arrangement and Japanese shoji and tatami.<sup>181</sup> The house's owner wanted to maintain the house as he realized that it was a cultural treasure, but lacked resources and support. It became a part of almost every Wöndosim T'amhöm. By April 2015, administrators were finally convinced that these buildings were necessary to keep the old town character of the refurbished *wöndosim*.



Figure 21: The Ko family house built in the 1920s.<sup>182</sup>

The conflict over the *wöndosim*, however, remained unresolved. *Wöndosim* interests still clashed with each other as much as they did with the Cheju City and provincial authorities,

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<sup>181</sup> KHB1. Interview with author. Ildo-2-tong, August 9, 2014.

<sup>182</sup> Photo by author, Ildo-1-tong, Cheju City, August 5, 2014. The Japanese-style sliding doors shown are originals from the colonial era.

especially as the T'amna Culture Plaza project grows more ambitious. Not long after the government changed course in the Ko Family House issue, the Arario Museum founder and Seoul socialite Kim Ch'ang'il ignited controversy when he weighed in on how to preserve the house. Kim suggested that he could purchase both the Ko Family House and Kŭmsŏngjang to transform it into a part of his larger Arario Museum complex, which was known for its signature bright red outer frames (Fig. 9) (Kim HH 2015a). Kim's Arario Museum already claimed two historic motels at Kŏnip-tong and the former Primus Theater by T'apdong Plaza and repurposed them into modern art museums. The suggestion prompted a social media backlash as quick as it was fierce, especially in the Facebook group "*Igŏ nuge chisikkwa?*" What further angered some locals was the way in which Kim casually mentioned in an interview on an unrelated matter that he could easily call up local administrator to get things done. Some remarked that it the Arario Museum's bright red casing seemed to give the impression that its founder simply intended to impose himself onto provincial cities.<sup>183</sup> Social commentator Kim Hyŏnghun blasted the move as tantamount to making the *wŏndosim* as a virtual "*Arario myujiŏm konghwaguk*" ('Republic of Arario Museum').

The outcry over the Ko Family House and Kŭmsŏngjang may have prevented any such move, but it did not entirely spare the Ko Family House from indignity. Starting in early 2016, Cheju City initiated construction work. What should have been a restoration instead became remodeling. The house's basalt *toldam*, a characteristic part of Cheju houses, was cleared away and new building materials were used. The treatment afforded to the house paralleled that of the 1970s Koryŏ Motel, which was converted into studio apartments, near Kwandŏkjŏng. Ko was

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<sup>183</sup> Confidentially speaking, a member of JTA mentioned to me that Arario Museum also took part in *wŏndosim* planning discussions, something that irritated several locally-based organizations.



furious that Cheju City authorities could not distinguish restoration from remodeling. The future use for the Ko Family House, too, remains subject to debate. Despite government promises, JICEA members and affiliates remained wary of the possibility that provincial officials could easily renege on their promises and sell the buildings off to the highest bidder. The years 2015 and 2016 indeed were full of scandals.

Although the *wǒndosim* continues to be a battleground of ideas into 2017 as the unfinished T'amna Culture Plaza transforms into a complicated chimera of different things, one result that Ko and JICEA could at least claim is that their efforts refocused the debate. As had been the case in the mainland city of Kunsan, preservationists criticized state-sponsored effacement of old city spaces as “deliberate collective amnesia, and a blatant disregard for postcolonial history inscribed in Korean memories” (Kim HJ 2014: 601). The T'amna quasi-nationalism and the various reconstruction projects erased sources of past shame – the ruins of Korean and Japanese colonialism as well as failed urban development promises – to reinvent an idealized past in the present. The T'amna Culture Plaza's planners and builders recast Cheju City as an achievement and a miracle born at the base of Hallasan bereft of the volcanic tumult and violence that the old city made bare upon its crumbling walls. For Ko and JICEA, to see the old city at the street level in all its imperfections and organic chaos was not only to challenge grand narratives of linear progress but also reveal the cracks in such edifices. A strong future could not, after all, be situated on the hot air of imagination alone.

### **5.5 – Cheju Vignette: Paint the Town Red...Literally**

Cheju City awoke to an unusually red-eyed day on August 4, 2015. Thick red paint covered stretches of winding alleyway paths in the old Kōnipp'o neighborhood from the Arario Museum and the Kōnip-tong Citizens' Center to the rear of the Kim Mandōk Memorial Hall.

What had irritated some *wōndosim* revivalists is that the paint also covered Kongdōk Tongsan, a historic set of steps over the path up the steep sides of Kōnip-tong's promontory. Kongdōk Tongsan is the beloved legacy of nineteenth-century philanthropist Ko Sōhūng, who donated funds to create a safe path for Kōnipp'o youths who sought an alternate route out of the walled city. The paint was such a garishly bright red that it was strikingly reminiscent of where it physically started – the Arario Museum. That was when the suspicions began.

It was about half past ten and already an outdoor summer morning sauna when I was wandering around the *wōndosim* to think about the content for a second guest lecture and tour I would give for JICEA in observance of the coming Liberation Day. I figured that I would wander about for a while, get ideas, maybe hear something from locals, and then drop by Chwa's place for lunch. When I checked my social media feed, I noticed that journalist Kim Hyōnghun had posted an article on *Media Jeju* showing pictures of Kongdōk Tongsan covered in red. Kim's article mentioned that he had talked to some locals in the area who were unsure about what had happened and an employee who took his call at the Kōnip-tong district office did not seem to know the reason either. A few locals, Kim mentioned, wondered if it had anything to do with the Arario Museum (Kim HH 2015d). Baffled at the situation, I decided to go see it for myself since I was already in the area.

There were only a handful of people out and about even though it was already the tourist season as there was still not much of a reason for people to visit Kōnipp'o even in August 2015. A friend had earlier mentioned to me that the folk village-like Kim Mandōk tavern had failed to attract tourists. Right by the second Arario Museum close to the Kim Mandōk Memorial Hall, a dry cleaner, an older man with cropped graying hair, was chatting with a delivery man on a motor scooter. I paused to ask them if they knew anything about the "*pulgūn saek kil*" (red-

colored path). The dry cleaner said that it had been in the works for some time, but he did not know the reason. Then he glanced at the Arario Museum near us and said, “Maybe it’s related to that there museum?” He did not have any strong opinion about it either way. This sort of thing has been happening for a while in this neighborhood. He then asked me if I liked it. I responded in the negative.

The suspicion toward Arario Museum, something that I also admittedly harbored at the time, seemed to have been common. The association was easy to make – a garish red path that began right by the museum and leading to the *wōndosim*’s newer constructions. It was no surprise that Cheju City residents would have taken it to be a publicity stunt even though there were no clearly established facts of the situation at the time. But Kim Hyōnghun posted an update by the afternoon. Arario Museum had confirmed that they had received complaints about the path, indicating that people suspected them of being behind the red-painted road. It was not their doing and they also raised the issue with the Kōnip-tong office.

The *tongjang* (alderman) of Kōnip-tong finally returned Kim’s inquiry and explained that the red road was a part of their larger “Storytelling Street” project begun since late June of that year. The “Storytelling Street” was intended to highlight the chief story behind old Kōnipp’o’s back street, the story of Ko Sōhūng whose memorial tablet remains nestled at the side of the promontory beside the steps and path he helped create. What was not explained was why the district had chosen to paint this “Storytelling Street” in bright red when all they needed to do was to make Kongdōk Tongsan the focus. An added curiosity was that the previous *tong* office worker’s lack of knowledge about the district’s decision demonstrated that there was insufficient communication even within the administration. The debacle became a footnote on residents’ mind as either an odd episode or yet another example of baffling official behavior. Perhaps

because the garish red had become such an eyesore that in September the district repainted the entire “Storytelling Street” in green paint. It did little to improve the appearance.

When I spoke to Ko about it, she mentioned that she, too, initially thought Arario Museum was behind it and hence she immediately alerted Kim Hyŏnghun, who then investigated the matter.<sup>184</sup> Ko and JICEA have been in conflict with the Arario Museum since Kim Ch’angil hinted that he had his sights on the Ko Family House and Kŭmsŏngjang. And even while some praise the Arario Museum for bringing art spaces to the *wŏndosim* and investing in arts promotion, others are wary of what could be their larger motivations. Not a few felt that the fact that every Arario Museum is encased in a loud red frame signals overt pretension.

While one can write off the initial conspiracy theorizing about the Arario Museum’s involvement as a particularly Cheju tendency to be suspicious of mainland elites, such suspicion was not always unfounded. The Arario Museum organization was known for buying up old town properties to make into upscale modern-art private galleries, a first step in gentrification. Such concerns were not only related to the Arario Museum but the wider deep-seated resentment toward mainlanders combined with anxieties over the prospect of wealthy investors’ threatening local rights to the city. Conflicts of interest – over culture as well as over property – between Cheju islanders and mainlanders were frequent. And among Cheju islanders, the issue of how to represent culture continued to be a problem of communication even when multiple means were available. Cheju City operates in contradictory ways as it is both a city of strangers and a small town of neighbors. People talked to one another but past others.

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<sup>184</sup> This might be the reason why the red street story seems to only appear in *Media Cheju* even though other Cheju City residents had talked about it. YEJ of Warang Warang Munhwa Norit’ŏ also made a comment about how absurd the street turned out, indicating that she also was aware of how the bizarre debacle unfolded.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: ALL ROADS LEAD TO CHEJU CITY

### 7.1 – Cheju Vignette: The Wind Goddess Rises

The gods and ancestors were displeased. At 10 AM on a sunny and mild December 21, 2015, just before the winter solstice, the three Cheju’s demigod ancestors – Ko, Yang, and Pu – descended upon the T’amna capital with hundreds of protestors following them. Leading their devotees, they gathered before the Cheju Provincial Government Office to call out the leaders of the human world who had betrayed them. “*Kyōlsa, pandae!*” (Resist to the end!) they shouted in unison to the beat of the *ching* and *puk*, “*Kyōlsa, pandae!*”

It was a month after Yonhap News announced that Kukt’obu (the National Land, Transportation, and Infrastructure Ministry) had decided upon building a new airport on the east side of the island near the coastal tourist town of Sōngsan’o. On a televised broadcast Yonhap News announced – with a tourist promotion video of an untrammelled Cheju Island accompanied with elevator music – a small single-runway airport at Sinsan village intended to further share Cheju’s beauty with an eager world. But that was not the whole truth. Given the speed of social media in South Korea, leaked images of the wider plans circulated online. It was an airport indeed, but an airport plus more. More shocking was that Kukt’obu had not communicated with the residents of the chosen region despite claims of having conducted research for some time.

Having grasped the wider implications of the project, residents of nearly all southern villages of Sōngsan-ŭp raised alarm. The ancestors manifested themselves in the form of three elderly women village leaders in white traditional robes and long white wigs. They donned red bandanas with the words “*Kyōlsa pandae*” and clutching a broad red and black banner that read “*Na-ŭi kohyang Onp’yōng-ri! Ttōnal-su ōptta!*” (My hometown is Onp’yōng! We must not leave!). Scattered in the crowd were other costumed figures – a villager in a Buddhist monk’s

garb and a golden Buddha mask striking the *moktak* in rhythm with chanted slogans and male village leaders in the same white *hanbok* normally worn for annual *maŭlje* rituals. About a hundred police officers stood spaced some five to ten paces apart in long chains around the protest group as well as both sides of the broad thoroughfare that ran from Sin-Cheju Rotary to the provincial administrative complex. Government officials and office staff looked on from behind the police cordons. A few recorded or snapped pictures of the protest on their phones, a few watched with blank faces, and a few others smirked at the sight.

The ancestors and the protesting residents of four villages – Onp’yŏng, Sinsan, Nansan, and Susan – gathered before a blue truck that carried bullhorns and loudspeakers (Figure 22). Male village leaders, including one who had studied aviation, took up the microphone, one after the other. Everyone expressed their indignation at the national government’s unilateral decision, skepticism over the alleged site research in which locals were not consulted, and outrage at the provincial officials’ easy capitulation to Seoul. The main event, however, was when one of the three ancestors climbed onto the back of the truck to express the anger of Cheju’s patron spirits. As she spoke into the microphone entirely in eastern Cheju language, she identified herself as “Yŏngdŭng Halmang,” deity of the spring wind and protectress of fishermen and women divers.

In a calm, yet enraged voice, Yŏngdŭng Halmang demanded a response from the authorities on why they chose to desecrate a land sacred to Cheju’s ancient forebears. All at once, she was a senior villager, an avatar of Cheju’s ancestors, and Yŏngdŭng. The gods may have allowed for unusually spring-like conditions on this December day, but it may have been to allow for their devotees to freely voice their rage. Their presence at the protest was to show that neither the ancestors nor gods – much less their descendants and devotees – were happy with the

national and provincial governments. An authority of the world beyond was challenging the authority of the human world in Cheju, Governor Wŏn Hŭiryong.



Figure 22: Protesting villagers dressed as the ancestors.<sup>185</sup>

Though the protest earned a spot on local televised news and full coverage on internet-based media, particularly *Cheju-ŭi Sori* and *Media Cheju*, there was little coverage on the mainland aside from the center-left *Hankyoreh*. The governor did not respond directly to demands for answers, promising instead for eventual talks. Yet no talks between the four-village coalition and head officials were held that day. The Wŏn administration only again repeated the same reasoning from national authorities – it was a matter of national prosperity and they had to follow the dictates of the state. Governor Wŏn promised compensation, but that did little to allay anger for it raised suspicions that his administration had already surrendered to the Seoul

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<sup>185</sup> Photo by author, Yŏn-tong, Cheju City, December 21, 2015.

establishment. Some were feared a deeper conspiracy that he, a member of Park Geun-hye's Saenuri party, had been in league with Kukt'obu from the start.

Talk of a new airport surfaced periodically since the late 1980s during the first major tourism boom, but there was neither sufficient official consensus nor public support. The current tourism boom cycle, however, has pushed all of Cheju's existing infrastructure to its limits. The provincial government, perhaps wanting to avoid antagonizing the Seoul establishment, also has been reluctant to report details on opposition to the second airport project. Absent in early reports was that the second airport project would not only encompass half of Onpy'ong village's land but also potentially damage Honinji,<sup>186</sup> a sacred cave where the three demigods and princesses consummated their marriages.

While villagers hoisted anti-airport signs across the main thoroughfares in their region, the occasional tourist passer-by would pause to glance and then move on to snap more pictures of Cheju's disappearing scenic countryside. Nevertheless, the residents of the four affected villages remained in high spirits. The national and provincial governments' failure to engage in dialogue as well as apparent mainlander indifference only proves what the villagers had suspected from the start. Their resolve after December 21 strengthened, but they knew that their odds of victory were extremely slim in a country that favored development at all costs.

## **7.2 – The Government has Landed**

Until the second airport announcement, the four villages of Onpy'ong, Sinsan, Nansan, and Susan had long been at a relative remove from either Cheju City or Sogwip'o (under which the four villages are attached in terms of administration). Tourism development to exploit

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<sup>186</sup> See Yonhap News, 2015, "S. Korea to build 2<sup>nd</sup> airport on Jeju Island to handle rising traffic," *Yonhap News*, November 10. <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2603000000.html?cid=AEN20151110002100320> [Accessed June 2, 2016].



Söngsan's natural assets, particularly Söngsan Ilch'ulbong and its proximity to the scenic Udo island, had been planned since the 1984-1985 *Cheju chonghap kaebal kyehoek* was produced, but port and tourism facilities were largely concentrated within the county seat of Söngsanp'o. The four villages of Onp'yöng, Sinsan, Nansan, and Susan to the south of Söngsanp'o remained agricultural.

Onp'yöng was the most accessible of the four, being on the Iljudoro road and on the 702 East Iljudoro bus line, but getting there takes at least forty-five minutes to an hour by car and an hour and thirty minutes by bus from either one of the island's urban areas. Sinsan sat directly to the south of Onp'yöng. Nansan and Susan were both adjacent to Onp'yöng but not easily accessible via bus; aside from car or taxi, rare *ümyöñ sunhwan* (rural circuit) or *chungsan'gan* buses go at hourly intervals between seven AM to eight PM. The region's remoteness was a mixed blessing also. The four villages did not experience the heavy rental car traffic headaches that had come to plague other more popular villages such as Wölc'höng and Söhwa in Kujwa-üp.

Onp'yöng functioned as a chief village in the periphery of a periphery. The village was the largest of the four and the most affected in any change regarding tourism and development, especially the scheduled airport project. It sat at about a fifteen-minute bus ride to the south from Söngsanp'o. On most days of the year, one can see the broad concrete resort hotels on the coastal face of the Söpchik'oji cape at Sinyang-ri and the rocky silhouette of the Söngsan Ilch'ulbong volcanic crater that juts into the sea. A few guesthouses, coffee shops, and Italian food eateries faced the *pille* (rocky coastline) and the village's original *ilrwedang* (shrine for shamanic worship on the seventh lunar days), but these were all owned by recent mainland migrants. Retired women divers had no interest in them. Elderly people considered the new establishments a nuisance, especially when the handful of tourists who stayed in Onp'yöng had all-night

parties.<sup>187</sup> Few hints of hostility towards mainland migrants were expressed in discussions with residents from this region (and some did express gratitude that mainland migrants joined village protests against the second airport), but a stark separation between local and non-local existed due to limited communication and language and cultural barriers. Native Onp'yŏng residents expressed no interest in tourism. Most shrugged at a suggestion that villagers establish their own establishments to compete with mainlanders. More often than not, regarding guesthouse and café tourism, after a moment's pause, older Onp'yŏng residents replied that Cheju people did not do that sort of thing.

The main village of Onp'yŏng itself was largely concentrated between the coast road along a jagged volcanic basalt coastline and the main Iljudoro road. Large gnarled trees continued to stand at the center where the larger of the village streets meet, a common feature in many Cheju rural communities, their roots and the base of their trunks covered in cement. Though roads had all been paved and repaved, they wound around clustered compounds and old rock walls. Because of the tight space and awkward nature of the roads through the main village, driving just beyond thirty-five kilometers an hour can easily lead to embarrassing auto accidents.<sup>188</sup> The village office's old radio and bullhorn tower – a relic of the 1970s' and 1980s' mass mobilization days and nowadays often used to broadcast typhoon warnings and civil defense drills – continued to be the highest structure to overlook the village. The village office itself was unmistakable; it was a plain pinkish structure three stories high and its austere boxy appearance stands in sharp contrast to the rock wall-ringed vegetable patches, small gardens, and low Cheju-style compounds that surrounded it. Right across the village office was a small well-

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<sup>187</sup> Interview with author, Onp'yŏng, Sŏngsan-ŭp, January 8, 2016.

<sup>188</sup> The taxi I rode in with Joey on the way to Onp'yŏng got into an accident in March 2016 because neither driver on the narrow road would yield.

tended park with a lotus pond, monument epitaphs to fallen soldiers, and a plaque that recounted Onp'yŏng's ancient links to the T'amna ancestors. Next to the park was a small walled vegetable patch with a pair of 1970s 4H monuments – a stone wheel with the 4H clover and a stone stele capped with a carved 4H clover – was left amongst the shrubs as if the village community was unsure of what to do with it.

Like most other distant rural villages, Onp'yŏng depopulated greatly since Cheju City's first major urban boom in the 1980s and many young people migrate for better opportunities on the mainland, particularly Seoul. The village had only one elementary school, which residents note is dangerously close to the runway of the proposed airport, and one middle school both located a stone's throw distance away from one another by the Iljudoro road. High school-age youths commuted to other high schools around the island, the closest ones being at the larger towns of Sŏgsan and P'yosŏn. Younger people under forty were exceedingly rare. Aside from the students, most of the village's young people have gone to Cheju City, Sŏgwip'o, or even up to Seoul. As was the case with most rural communities across Cheju, elderly couples or even lone widows and widowers continue to farm on their own. Such a practice was not entirely a product of Korea's rapid economic changes and urbanization. Parents fending for themselves or relying more on neighbors than immediate family was not considered unusual in Cheju's *kwendang* culture where mutual aid extended beyond kinship groups to friends and neighbors. The same people who visit the village's *noindang* (senior citizens' center) and *pokchi hoegwan* (welfare office) continue to farm their own tangerine or vegetable fields, and stubbornly refused to move into the cities. Given the circumstances that came at the end of 2015, not a few tangerine farmers expressed regret that they pressured their children to migrate up to the mainland.

For the most part, Onp'yŏng was a quiet village. It was not entirely isolated but the interactions between the city and the village were less conspicuous than other parts of Cheju where more residents and mainland tourists traveled to and from the city on a daily basis. The summer parking lot effect in which the entire stretches of the coastal road shoulders turn into virtual parking lots did not yet occur here. Olle trail walkers and tourists in rental vehicles passed through every now and then, but the area had yet to see much of the weekend tourism that popularized other coastal communities. Onp'yŏng's main claim to fame was the fact that Honinji, the site where (according to versions of *Samsŏng sinhwa*) Cheju's three demigod ancestors consummated their marriage with three foreign princesses, was within its administrative borders. In early 2016, there were only a few scattered mainland migrant-owned coffee shops, eateries, and guesthouses including a new coffee shop built in gray stone adjacent to the village office. It was a noticeable contrast from 2007 or even 2010 when no such places existed, but locals often had little to no interest in tourism. Tangerine farming had long been the main source of income.<sup>189</sup> Remains of the Koryŏ and Chosŏn Dynasty Hwanhaejangsŏng fortification walls still stood against the cold gusts and rough ocean waves. The interior of Onp'yŏng, known to locals as the site of the Yŏruni settlement where the Mun and Ham clans settled some six to eight hundred years ago, was a *chunggan'san* (mid-mountain) region with rolling hills and dense forests scattered between the many tangerine and *mu* (white radish) fields.

Visitors were extremely rare, but in the rare event that outsiders to visit residents at the village office or at their homes, most were quick to offer a cup of coffee and tangerines, the village's prized crop. In one instance in November 27, 2015 when a research colleague asked for permission to photograph, retired women divers at the *noindang* rearranged the inside of the

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<sup>189</sup> Interview with author, Onp'yŏng, January 12, 2016.

room, placed a fruit centerpiece on the table, and posed for the camera. While tourists had yet to flock to the village en masse, the elderly women were well aware of their local fame. Onp'yŏng was a frequent field for anthropologists because of its traditions and magazine photographers because of its astounding beauty. The women spoke of their difficult and impoverished past with a hint of pride, but the issue that troubled them the most was how long they could hold onto their families' lands. When one started talking about the issue of compensation, a more senior woman abruptly cut in and said that mere compensation was out of the question.

From mid November onward, many in Onp'yŏng knew that with or without consent, Kukt'obu would push for groundbreaking. Promises for bilateral negotiations with residents of the southern Sŏngsan region ultimately became closed-door meetings. In lieu of dialogue, Kuk'tobu and the Cheju provincial government officials simply re-iterated their rationale for the airport. At most officials offered monetary compensation and apartments in Cheju City for residents forced off their land, a bargain that elderly villagers found unacceptable if not insulting.<sup>190</sup> Neither side was willing to back down and Onp'yŏng residents were all too aware that they were at a severe disadvantage. A frequent headache for the previous *yijang*, whose term concluded at the beginning of 2016, was having to listen on a regular basis to provincial officials' repeated insistences that the airport was in his village's interests.

The prevailing idea in Onp'yŏng was to hold out as long as possible with a balance of normalcy. Everyday resistance perhaps served as a tactic to avoid early fatigue from what many anticipated would be a long-drawn-out confrontation. Not long after the initial furor of the airport controversy, Onp'yŏng began preparations for their *maŭlje* (village ritual) in earnest. The

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<sup>190</sup> Group interview of eight women with author, Onp'yŏng, Sŏngsan-ŭp, Sŏgwip'o, November 22, 2016.

*maülje* was scheduled from February 12 to 14.<sup>191</sup> One must wonder, however, if the impending crisis heightened this level of dedication. Permission for foreigners to witness Onp’yöng’s *maülje* was uncommon yet village elders readily granted it upon request. But to keep consistent with practices, elders and the *yijang* urged that foreign guests observe the *pujöng* (ritual taboos) three days in advance to visit the *maülje*. Any who came into space cordoned off for ritual was required to abstain from pork consumption and any contact with blood or semen.

Cheju scholars long considered the rituals of Onpy’öng and its neighbors among the most authentic in Cheju Island. Shamanic and Confucian rituals continued to be community-wide affair and sources of local pride. The village leadership selected only men whose zodiacs were compatible with the current phase of the sexagenary cycle for *maülje*. Ritual preparations involved a clear gendered separation of labor. Dressed in white traditional clothing and *kat* (ceremonial horsehair top hats), chosen village men observed *pujöng* and sequestered themselves in a room in the village hall for three days. Village leaders and elders selected three men – distinguished into three ranks – as officiants and two younger men (in their thirties in this case) as assistants. Their wives or female relatives prepared meals and were expected to visit the village shrine in their own time. Women did not enter the officiants’ room, which was rearranged to resemble the inside of a traditional house. The sliding door into the room was a threshold; only those who observed village practice or had a special invitation from the village leadership could enter. All who entered performed a single ceremonial prostration to the three officiants. At the end of the first ritual day, the officiants promptly locked themselves in their room with only each other (and several bottles of alcohol) as companions. They emerged on the third ritual day at midnight, the hour of the gods, to lead a procession to the village shrine to offer prayers,

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<sup>191</sup> 1/5-1/7 on the lunar calendar.

consecrated food, and libations. No villager could speak out of turn during ceremonial offerings. *Maülje* was common across Cheju, but with variations. This region's peculiarity was that beef was not considered taboo, which some locals suggested was due to its history as a cattle ranching region. A *swedang* (cow shrine) was located on the current borders of Onp'yöng and Nansan villages where ranchers once went to pray for the return of lost cattle by tying pieces of string around branches.<sup>192</sup>

*Maülje* has closer connections to Cheju shamanism than it does with imported forms of ancestor veneration though at a glance it would appear little different from mainland Confucian ceremonies. Male Onp'yöng residents sometimes use the term *chesa* interchangeably with *maülje* and *kut* (shamanic ritual). Though clearly gendered roles are prominent in Onp'yöng, there are many overlaps. The climax of the ritual was a ceremonial visit to the village's *ponhyangdang* (village main shrine) rather than a separate *p'ojedan* (Confucian ritual altar), which had been the case in many other villages. Whereas *chesa* (ancestor rituals) emphasized reverence to the ancestors, *maülje* is a greeting to the gods.<sup>193</sup> In Onp'yöng, *kut* and a village-wide festival historically were held on the third day of the *maülje*. Village men intoned in a serious Confucian manner Sino-Korean prayers not to their own direct paternal ancestors but to the goddess Mengho Pu'in, Onp'yöng and Sinsan village's patron goddess.<sup>194</sup> According to

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<sup>192</sup> Nansan villages were uncertain about the name of this shrine as it has long been out of use. Some colloquially referred to it simply as the 'cow shrine.' Further research on this is needed.

<sup>193</sup> See Park and Tangherlini 1988. Park and Tangherlini describe a new year's *p'oje* at a village not far from Onp'yöng. Although *p'oje* is still a common term, such rituals tended to be called *maülche* in my fieldwork in 2015 and 2016.

<sup>194</sup> Mun Mubyöng (1991) noted an interesting parallel between Onp'yöng's patron goddess's myth and *Samsöng sinhwa* in that there were three goddesses exiled to Cheju in Onp'yöng's shrine *ponp'uri*. These goddesses have different names and different backstories from the *Samsöng* myth but there may be a possible connection in the distant past. Onp'yöng and Sinsan have long – and mutually competing – claims that their shores were the landing sites of the three princesses in *Samsöng sinhwa*. Another unique aspect of this region is that local versions of the myth name Küm-gwan, which appears to refer to an ancient polity in southeastern Korea, as their origin.

village mythology, the Onp'yŏng and Sinsan region was where the third of three exiled goddesses took residence after arriving the shores of Cheju about a millennium ago (Mun et al. 1991: 52). Onp'yŏng's particular case is that not only does it have an active *ponhyangdang* with its own *ponp'uri* still known to its residents, but the village can also boast connections to *Samsŏng sinhwa* as the landing site of the three goddesses.

None considered it contradictory that Onp'yŏng claimed two separate founding myths nor was anyone too concerned about replicating tradition in the precise manner. When asked about how the officiants were chosen, the chief officiant pointed to paper taped to the wall with names and lunar birth years printed from the *maül hoegwan* (village office) computer. He chuckled and added that nowadays there is no longer a need to go through the trouble of writing out classical Chinese characters in calligraphic script. The outward display of tradition and the performance of it as such, however modified, was intentional in every aspect. It was not so much an act of perpetuated self-deception as historian Eric Hobsbawm (1983) had suggested of tradition, but rather is a combination of constituting, reconstituting, and reinforcing the idea that a proper order of things exists and was being performed around an ideal. A sense of normalcy was necessary in the extraordinary situation that Onp'yŏng residents faced. Tradition was a ready resource in times of duress.

The Sŏngsan airport project itself came as a surprise to most in Cheju, including provincial officials.<sup>195</sup> For most, news did not come from their own officials, the provincial authorities, or even a Kukt'obu statement. Islanders learned only fragments of the issue from televised news. As a measure of damage control, Governor Wŏn Hŭiryong personally came out to the Sŏngsan region to address residents. His visit did not convince people about the merits of

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<sup>195</sup> Interview with author, Susan 1-ri, Sŏngsan-eŭp, Sŏgwip'o, December 25, 2015.



the airport. A Susan 1-ri guesthouse keeper said, “Many residents here in Susan 1-ri opposed it. Led by the *ch’ōngnyōnhoe* (youth association),<sup>196</sup> they had an opposition movement...the governor had come here, but a great many opposed.” Among other residents in the area, some suspected collusion between Kukt’obu, construction interests, and the governor’s administration. That Cheju City dispatched officials on a regular basis to the village offices to goad local *yijang* (village head) into convincing their residents to accept the Kukt’obu decision deepened local apprehensions and distrust.

The project titled “*Che-2-konghang*,” which simply means “the second airport,” would directly affect five villages in the southern half of the easternmost district of Sōngsan-ūp – Onp’yōng, Sinsan, Nansan, Susan, and Kosōng. Indirect effects in the form of air pollution, noise, and the potential aerotropolis that would be built to service transit passengers would also impact the nearby villages of Sinyang to the east, Samdal and Kasi to the west, Sinch’ōn to the south, and Ojo to the north. In the initial Yonhap News report on November 9, the airport was depicted as a single small landing strip at Sinsan-ri. The reasons for the region that Kuk’tobu gave were that Cheju International Airport – hemmed in between the two halves of Cheju City – would be over capacity by 20 million passengers with 32.11 million travelers. Siting the new airport in the southern Sōngsan region would result in the least environmental damage compared to other available options (Yonhap 2015). The commission ruled out land reclamation because of the cost and considered the Korean Air Lines airstrip near Kyorae unsuitable due to weather conditions in the mid-mountain area. The actual details were clarified on the 10<sup>th</sup> when both national and local media revealed that the base estimated scale would be about 4,958,000 square meters of land, that the runway would stretch 3,200 meters, and that 70% of the airport would

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<sup>196</sup> Though called “youth association,” members often are in their 30s.

actually encompass nearly half of the lands of Onp'yŏng village. The total land area of the second airport, not including additional infrastructure and necessary facilities to service it, would be larger than the existing Cheju International Airport as Kukto'bu admitted that the second airport could be expanded in the future (Wi 2015).

The reasons that Kukt'obu gave were not convincing to residents of the affected area. Although there was talk of an airport project for some time, people expected that such a project would be an expansion of the international airport into Todu-tong or that such a project would take place at the abandoned colonial era (and Korean Air Force-owned) Alttürü Airfield. Villagers dismissed the excuse for not using the Korean Air Lines air strip because eastern Cheju, too, is known for fickle weather and fierce winds. That the commission ruled out land reclamation off the coast of Todu-tong puzzled airport critics because Governor Wŏn's administration had proposed to initiate an equally controversial and enormous project of the sort to expand Cheju Harbor. The other issue aside from the personal matters of farmland being appropriated and the fallout of jet noise and pollution was that construction would threaten a cave and groundwater in the area.<sup>197</sup>

Though the news itself was startling, longtime and native residents in Sŏngsan were not surprised about the manner in which Kukt'obu and the Cheju provincial government acted. Sŏngsan residents were all too aware that the state could easily make unilateral decisions. They had seen it in the past when they themselves took part in state-instigated campaigns, but they also saw it again when the naval base was thrust upon Kangjŏng in the southwest. The protesting villagers were not anti-development per se. Many had experienced the radical economic changes

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<sup>197</sup> Villagers had long known that a cave system existed under the southern Sŏngsan region yet it was only in 2016 that researchers for the airport project admitted that the cave and groundwater could be impacted, a factor that further deepened suspicions about the project.

from the Park Chung Hee era, but questioned the manner and the purpose behind the airport. Onp'yŏng and Sinsan villagers, who comprised mostly of tangerine farmers, iterated that despite the periodic tourism booms across Cheju, none in this region had ever seen much of the profit. They questioned, was not this age, three decades after the end of dictatorship, the age of representative democracy? Did rural villagers, as citizens of the Republic of Korea, not have their own rights? Villagers' protest posters argued that it was not about prosperity but about basic rights to their homelands.

The issue was one instance of many in which there was a sharp cognitive dissonance between urbanized and rural Cheju. Having become what Ibn Khaldūn distinguished as "*hadāri*" (city-dweller)<sup>198</sup>, more Cheju residents, living a more convenient and atomized lifestyle perceived less a sense of existential threat from development. Environmental concerns aside, an already convenient life in the city could become more convenient with a second airport in terms of travel and of economic opportunities. Solidarities existed in urbanized Cheju, but tended to lean toward the abstract. In idealized Cheju pasts that performers displayed in Cheju City performances the two were one in the same, but in practice, when it came to development, rural villages were either distant or empty land for urban overflow.

The reaction in Cheju City began with shock but quickly muted. Economic prospects became more attractive. Only the tiny Cheju Green Party, consisting of some two hundred members, and the Cheju Hwan'gyŏng Undong Yŏnhap (Environmental Movement Alliance) were vocal on the issue. Some city residents, having seen the packed crowds at Cheju International Airport, felt that Kukt'obu's decision was logical and that Cheju perhaps did need another airport. The Wŏn regime's promise for rebalanced development, after all, was what

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<sup>198</sup> See Kayapinar 2008: 385 regarding the distinction that Ibn Khaldūn made between nomadic peoples and settled populations.

earned its initial popularity among Cheju voters. For some others in the city, living far away from Sŏngsan and assured they would not experience any of the direct consequences, felt that this was simply how things have always been in Korea. If the state and the city demanded it, it would be done. There were some others in Cheju City that dismissed rural residents' concerns and pondered if they simply were raising a racket to extort more compensation money from the state. Cheju City and the countryside were already separate despite their interconnectedness. It was a striking reversal of the urban sentiment that rural residents were insular and concerned only with their own affairs.

Rural residents did not fully accept urban life though they adapted to its presence and its influence on their everyday lives. As Qin Shao analyzed in a case study on redevelopment in Shanghai (2013), the trauma of domicide does not simply entail dispossession of the material object of the home and land but also involved violent ruptures with deeply embedded emotional connections and communities fostered over time. This appeared to some extent in the *wŏndosim* issue, but the matter was collective citizen ownership for posterity. That some urbanites, perhaps accustomed to moving from apartment to apartment in the city's every-changing housing arrangements, were unable to sympathize fully with the Sŏngsan villagers revealed a difference between how the city life transformed conceptions regarding ties between a location and the person. Urban residents apparently saw Cheju identity as more an overarching abstract concept whereas the protesting Sŏngsan villagers saw it as a concrete physical bond perpetuated. Though dissimilar from Ibn Khaldūn's *badawī* (Bedouin or nomadic people) in lifestyle, where rural residents paralleled people of the outside was that what perpetuated community were immediately identifiable and constantly personal bonds. Community '*asabiyyah*' was reenacted in everyday practice and not simply an overarching concept. In their December 21 protest

mentioned earlier in this chapter, rural residents, taking on the garb of the ancestors who sprung from the Cheju earth itself, also posed a direct challenge to the legitimacy of authorities based in Cheju City.

Though Onp'yŏng at least officially became involved in tourist promotion, most Sŏngsan residents further expressed that they were for the most part disinterested in tourism, a business involved in selling an abstract locality. Having earned a decent living through their tangerines, few had any incentive to participate in the tourist economy. One Onp'yŏng villager, a retired woman diver who turned to tangerine farming, argued, "If you don't have your own land in Cheju, could you be a Cheju person?"<sup>199</sup> With stories of skyrocketing land prices abundant in the wake of the post-2010 tourism boom, as many people feared that they would be priced out of their own island as there were those enticed at the prospects for quick money.

Residents of Onp'yŏng and Sinsan, the two regions that would be most affected, were very much knowledgeable about the wider world. Many villagers' adult children worked in Cheju City or the mainland and though most people had never participated in any sort of demonstration, a few had some experience in the 1980s movements. Several senior women divers had experience travelling to the mainland and to Japan. One retired woman diver who started diving at eighteen went back and forth to Ammyŏndo off the coast of the Ch'ungch'ŏn region in the mainland for seven years. A reason she stopped doing rounds to the mainland and decided to remain in Cheju was a traumatic accident there in which a diver was lost at sea.<sup>200</sup> The previous *yijang* of Onp'yŏng in 2015 had worked on a fishing ship that travelled across the Pacific from East Asia to Latin America. His worldly experience was a handy resource in

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<sup>199</sup> Group interview with author, Onp'yŏng, Sŏngsan-ŭp, November 27, 2015.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with author, Onp'yŏng, Sŏngsan-ŭp, January 8, 2016.

Onp'yŏng's Honinji festival, which included traditional folk weddings for international residents.<sup>201</sup> Despite the governor's pledges for equitable resettlement and compensation, many were aware of the high costs of living in Cheju City and the uneasy fit for them in an urban environment. Onp'yŏng residents were also aware of changes in Cheju's natural environment in the past two decades. The Onp'yŏng *yijang* noted that eighteen years ago, one could clearly see Hallasan's crest from the sea yet this became less and less the case with smog.<sup>202</sup>

One instance of a remarkable awareness of the world was an interview with a middle-aged farmer activist, who opened his discussion in this manner:

“While modern society is said to be global, as it is immersed in the world of American-style capitalism, harvesting work becomes convenient and one clings to money. Within that, the whole world...it's not like the civil war in Syria but a conflict within the Western world...As for me, I was born in this house, raised in this house, inherited this land from my ancestors, lived as a farmer. My way of life is my values (*kach'ikwan*), and so I don't use letters well. But Korean society's world of one-upmanship (*igijuŭi*), my existence within Korean society, isn't a famous existence, but is just the existence of me doing hard work, doing labor, and just living in society. When you look at it, living on farm work like this is difficult. And because people can't live like this, they sell off their land for their livelihoods.”<sup>203</sup>

Despite his humility, this farmer, who also cared for his granddaughter, was well-versed in geopolitics as evidenced in his complex references and ease in conveying his thoughts. Cheju City's cosmopolitan reach had deeply penetrated into the Cheju countryside and the changes and hardships that came with the trade liberalization that Yi Kiuk (2003) had analyzed in the 1980s and 1990s. Liberalization forced many to integrate with the trends of global trade. In a largely resource- and capital-poor island, price fluctuations easily went to either extreme of devastating

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<sup>201</sup> The Cheju City-based NGO Global Inner Peace had also worked along with Onp'yŏng village for this effort.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with author, Onp'yŏng, Sŏngsan-ŭp, December 25, 2015. A peculiar disconnect I noticed was that while Onp'yŏng residents recognized smog over Hallasan, some urban people were in denial that smog could exist on Cheju.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with author, Onp'yŏng, Sŏngsan-ŭp, January 12, 2016.

failure or an auspicious windfall. In the airport issue and in farmers' discontent with Korean economic policy, Onp'yŏng residents used the very language of the city to critique it. Because one's way of life became one's "values," as the farmer had mentioned, simply leaving it as if it were merely an occupation was no easy task. "Values" were what set rural residents in distinction from their urban counterparts.

Contrary to provincial authorities' reported claim that there was a *kaldŭng* (divide) in opinion in the affected villages of the larger Sŏngsan-ŭp district, *yijang* (village heads) in Onp'yŏng, Sinsan, and Nansan<sup>204</sup> all reported unanimous opposition. In interviews conducted between November 2015 and March 2016, all *yijang* consistently noted that around ninety percent of their respective villages opposed the airport plan. Three fears were common among residents: 1) the airport project would give the state more license to seize land under the pretext of eminent domain; 2) the loss of locally owned lands and the prime sources of incomes would force people into dependency; and 3) that the project would permanently damage the environment. According to Sinsan resident KWB, during his village's first candlelight village protest on December 12, 232 residents – including schoolchildren and mainland-origin café and guesthouse owners – participated; that spontaneous grassroots protests occurred only shortly after the announcement was not immediately covered in mainstream Korean media.<sup>205</sup> For most, it was the very first time any participated in any form of protest. As both the provincial and national governments continued to renege on promises for bilateral negotiations, many more protest actions followed, including rallies at the Sŏngsan-ŭp office.

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<sup>204</sup> The airport project will affect Onp'yŏng, Sinsan, Nansan, Samdal, Susan, and Kosŏng villages. Kosŏng is the only village that did not join the coalition. Due to limited time, I was unable to speak with the Samdal and Susan village leadership though I was able to speak with a few Susan residents.

<sup>205</sup> Interview with author, Sinsan-ri, Sŏngsan-ŭp, Sŏgwip'o, December 18, 2016.

The issue that Kukt'obu announced and set their decision on such a project was suddenly behind mostly closed doors further made it suspect. It was not long before local residents and media noticed that the airport project itself was considerably larger and that it would do irreparable damage to Onp'yŏng. The project announcement set off immediate land speculation with realtors setting sights on the Sŏngsan region and advertising the advantages of buying land near the future second airport. What came as an indignity for some on social media and eventually became a rallying call for residents was the proximity of the airport to the historic cave of Honinji, the site where three princesses from abroad consummated their marriage with T'amna's three ancestors.

Residents appealed to a notion of shared heritage immediately after the project's announcement. Whenever asked about the beginnings of their village, residents in the southern Sŏngsan region unhesitatingly responded, "*T'amna kaeguk-ŭi yŏksa...posimyŏn twaeyo*" [One can consider it the history of T'amna's founding].<sup>206</sup> Though Onp'yŏng maintained a claim to antiquity, the administrative boundaries and the name of present-day Onp'yŏng were the result of Japanese colonial policy in the early twentieth century. The name "Onp'yŏng" itself was a Japanese creation. How residents reconciled this commonly-known fact with a re-invented tradition of unbroken continuity was through Honinji. Onp'yŏng as an administratively-defined village was relatively recent, but Honinji and *Samsŏng sinhwa* were not.

As proof of antiquity Onp'yŏng residents point to a pre-Japanese name indicated in Chosŏn Dynasty maps. The region's oldest name, according to Onpy'ŏng's *yijang*, was Yŏruni, a Cheju pronunciation of Yŏnhon-ri.<sup>207</sup> Yŏnhon-ri referred to Yŏnhonp'o, which literally meant

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<sup>206</sup> Interview with author, Onp'yŏng-ri, Sŏngsan-ŭp, Sŏgwip'o, January 22, 2016.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with author, Onp'yŏng-ri, Sŏngsan-ŭp, Sŏgwip'o, December 18, 2016.



“*kyŏlhon-ŭro ikkŭrŏdŭrin p’ogu* [the harbor where one is led to marriage]” (Yi 2004: 44).

Speaking of the area as a *kohyang* (hometown), residents referred to their respective village as home to “*na-ŭi abŏji, abŏji-ŭi abŏji, harabŏji*” (my father, father’s father, [father’s] grandfather).<sup>208</sup> The pieces were assembled together for a complete, comprehensible, and logical tradition in the following manner: 1) when records noted that the Mun and Ham clans settled in the region some 600-800 years ago they did so in a place called Yŏruni; 2) Yŏruni referred to a place where one was ‘led to marriage’; 3) the undefined marriage had to be in reference to some far more ancient event; 4) *Samsŏng sinhwa* referred specifically to an eastern shore and culminated in marriages; and thus 5) Yŏruni was none other than the same eastern shore mentioned in the myth. The Cheju Ko clan, the claimants to ancient T’amna royal lineage, was based far in the center of Cheju City, but Onp’yŏng, Sinsan, and Nansan villages put forth their own claim based on *Samsŏng sinhwa* as a sort of pre-history. Antiquity expressed in the village shrine *ponp’uri* represented an ancient history that built upon an already-sacred site. The fact that Honinji was within Onpy’ŏng’s boundaries legally put the site of T’amna history under the village community’s custodianship.

Use of Cheju language and symbolic idioms in lieu of standard Korean in protests were deliberate. Onp’yŏng and its immediate neighbors pushed back against Kukt’obu’s and the provincial authorities’ claim to national legitimacy with ritual legitimacy, cultural legitimacy as custodians, and political legitimacy as legal guardians. In rejecting outright compensation promises and economic rationales, southern Sŏngsan residents established for themselves a moral high ground vis-à-vis the city in utilizing culture and dedication to the ancestors. They set development in the name of a contemporary administration for the purpose of a possibly short-

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<sup>208</sup> Interview with author, Sinsan-ri, Sŏngsan-ŭp, Sŏgwip’o, December 18, 2016.

term market trend against an ancient past and an irreplaceable bastion of Cheju's indigenous culture. Through the gods and ancestors, Sōngsan protestors emphasized "marks of 'essential' cultural difference" in order "to keep out the colonizer from the inner domain" (Chatterjee 1993: 26). Cheju Island may not be exactly a colony in the same sense as colonial India was to the British, but the mutual operations of Other-ness and self-Otherness increasingly became pervasive in disputes, especially in cases where there were clearly asymmetrical relationships.

The December 21<sup>st</sup> demonstration was not the first time Cheju locals invoked ancestors and shamanic deities to protest development. In the southwestern village of Kangjōng, from 2011 to the present, anti-naval base villagers and protestors – of local and mainland origin alike – cited the long history of Korean oppression of Cheju Island, particularly the 1948 April Third massacre (Gwon 2011). The Kangjōng protest movement developed more sophisticated artistic expressions and performances, which featured Cheju gods and revived traditional percussion music. Many Kangjōng protestors hailed from various backgrounds, including former 1980s *undongkwōn* (democracy movement activists) and referred to larger geopolitical issues such as the US-South Korea military alliance, but protestors sometimes staged performances in terms of a periphery-versus-metropole Cheju-versus-mainland conflict. Since 2012, Kangjōng – as well as the April Third Peace Memorial Park – was been an important stop for the annual island-wide Yōngdūng Parade, which featured Yōngdūng Halmang papier-mâché sculptures and newly-created performances (Ko 2016). Reviving past memory and spiritual figures unique to Cheju Island to protest large-scale development projects, which were often decisions of mainland-based corporations or a small group of upper-level local bureaucrats, became a common practice for islanders to express discontent. Activists involved in Kangjōng turned to invoking the island's ancestors or pantheon to voice anger at further destruction committed on behalf of development.

Tradition provided a sense of continuity even when continuity was not real. Furthermore, a distinct sense of Cheju-ness became real despite the fact that the majority of the island was no longer conversant in the local language and symbols.

Two features distinguish the Söngsan area protests from Kangjǒng, however. First, the current spate of protests remained local-centered<sup>209</sup> whereas Kangjǒng – though the conflict did begin as local – quickly acquired support from both mainland and transnational activists and organizations. Coverage of the Söngsan issue received scant coverage in national and international media and the movement was entirely grassroots. Second, while protestors reutilized or re-invented local traditions' meanings to distinguish Cheju locals from outsiders or urbanized Cheju people, many Söngsan protestors themselves were ardent practitioners of Cheju's indigenous religion. Cheju's deities and ancestors in the Kangjǒng protests had a largely symbolic function. In these aspects, Söngsan protests paralleled that of other recent locally-based anti-overdevelopment demonstrations such as Wahül and Taehül where villagers became embroiled in a land dispute with a developer seeking to construct a cement factory in early 2016. As in Söngsan, Wahül and Taehül residents cited both environmental concerns and the potential for development to threaten local heritage, particularly Wahül's ancient *ponhyangdang* (village main shrine). Former *undongkwǒn* activists in Cheju City as well as activists in Kangjǒng commented on the airport issue and expressed moral support, but the core of the anti-airport movement in Onp'yǒng and its immediate neighbors were all from within the region and kept their movement local.

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<sup>209</sup> A tiny minority of village residents were involved in the *minjung* and farmers' movements since the 1980s, but in visits and interviews from the end of November 2015 to the end of March 2016, the majority of people were not politically active until the second airport issue emerged.

From the very beginning of the anti-airport protests, the residents of Onp'yŏng, Sinsan, Nansan, and Susan immediately identified it as a threat to Cheju's ancient T'amna heritage. Appeal to heritage in other disputes such as Kangjŏng came over time. Sŏngsan area residents argued that their land was the very region where the ancestors' consorts arrived from abroad<sup>210</sup> eons ago. In many parts of rural Cheju, culture was deployed as a favored weapon against establishment authorities, whether they were based in Seoul or Cheju City. Protest acts were sometimes even referred to as *munhwaje* (culture festivals) rather than *siwi* (protests) or *temo* (demonstrations). The December 21 protest, the first large-scale demonstration for Sŏngsan area residents, was festival-like in its presentation. Villagers took the roles of the ancestors and gods castigating the Cheju government for betraying them. The use of locally-specific symbols and Cheju dialect in protest reversed the insider-outsider relationship between the city and the countryside. Rural residents reasserted their own claims to authentic Cheju identity against both mainland Koreans and Cheju City. The Sŏngsan villages, not the provincial capital of Cheju City, retained its Cheju tradition.

Onp'yŏng people were not at all oblivious to the changes or the manufactured character of tradition. In tactically repackaging tradition, Onp'yŏng residents fulfilled an economic need to participate in Cheju's burgeoning festival economy in conjunction with "demands for self-representation and self-identification made urgent by the establishment of colonial hegemonies" (Philips and Steiner, 1999: 4). How tradition is understood and how it functions in Onp'yŏng and its neighbors problematizes Hobsbawm's (1983) distinction between elite tradition and popular custom. Communities under duress could reconfigure existing symbols into new assemblages to cope with asymmetrical power relations or to resist external pressures. As historian Stephen

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<sup>210</sup> The Kŭm'kwan kingdom in the Onp'yŏng version of *Samsŏng sinhwa*.

Vlastos noted, one must be aware that “even when elites make tradition ‘just as they please,’ the practices and ideas they authorize have a tendency to take on a life of their own” (1998, 4).

*Samsǒng sinhwa*, though often criticized as a late-Koryŏ and early-Chosŏn elite invention among contemporary intellectuals, was taken seriously as part of the foundational story of Onp’yŏng and Sinsan. Taken as ancestors in general rather than ancestors of the ancient elite, non-elites could easily identify with the figures of *Samsǒng sinhwa*. When the ancestors descended on the provincial office on December 21<sup>st</sup> their chosen avatars were not the actual clan heads but a trio of senior women farmers.

Despite the political shakeup with the April elections, distrust, pessimism, and divisions continued to fester within Cheju. Despite residents’ spirited resistance, there was not yet any sign that Kukt’obu would modify their plans to mitigate damage. Cheju’s political establishment pushed for changes, but not in favor of the villagers’ position. Not long after the airport’s announcement, there was talk of adding a high-speed railway to connect Cheju International Airport and the second airport as well as an airport city in the forested highlands west of Onp’yŏng (Jeju Weekly 2016). Some possible issues that could slow the airport’s construction was a recent estimate that the government would have to relocate as many as 2200 graves spread across a vast region (Kim J. 2016) and environmental and safety concerns regarding a cave underneath the proposed runway site (Jeju Weekly 2017). In the latter case, villagers’ and environmentalists’ suspicions grew regarding the government’s claim that they had conducted thorough research. Villagers in this region long knew about the caves and how researchers could have missed them was dubious. Some suspicions floated on social media that the airport could have some connection to inner circles within the state’s political establishment.<sup>211</sup> The possibility

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<sup>211</sup> One possibility was that the strangely rushed and closed-door nature of pushing the airport project could have had some connection to the inner circle of Ch’oe Sunsil, whose unlawful involvement in political decision-making led to

that this issue could become a confrontation like that of Kangjŏng has grown with reports that the Korean Air Force is considering the prospect of using the second airport as a new base of operations (Jeju Weekly 2017).

Many protesting residents admitted that the government would be unlikely to budge. Successful resistance movements against state- and corporate-backed development projects were exceedingly rare in South Korea. In Cheju, people had a lingering pessimism that open forums were merely shadow puppet plays. From the very beginning, anti-airport residents described their struggle with the phrase “*kyŏlsa pandae*” (resist absolutely). When asked about what he thought about the eventual outcome of the issue, a Sinsan-ri resident half-jokingly and half-seriously cocked his head to the side (pretending as if someone were pulling his ear), pressed his wrists together, and said that it would end when all would be dragged off to jail.<sup>212</sup>

### **7.3 – Coffee, Novelties, and Authenticities**

Mainland tourists’ desire for a pristine Cheju hinterland accidentally became the very thing that drove urbanization. Excessive mainland-to-Cheju flights overcrowded Cheju International Airport, giving the government more justification for its designs on the Sŏngsan region. The early Yonhap TV News announcement, complete with a dramatic video montage that featured Hallasan, of the second airport was unironically advertised the project as a means to share Cheju’s natural beauty. Perceptions of Cheju as a rural hinterland – and its perpetuation – engaged in tension with the island’s actual cosmopolitan urbanization. Though cause and effect were not entirely one-to-one as many other factors were in play, Cheju’s popularity among mainlanders coincided with socioeconomic crises that afflicted the Korean metropole.

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the ultimate downfall of Park Geun-hye on March 10, 2017. Such connections are yet confirmed at the time of this dissertation writing and could simply be wishful thinking to find additional grounds to halt the project.

<sup>212</sup> Interview with author, Sinsan-ri, Sŏngsan-ŭp, Sŏgwip’o, March 11, 2016.

Overcrowded, heavily polluted, and over-competitive, Seoul was losing its appeal; Cheju was the last frontier.

Contrary to the publicized dilemmas over Chinese tourism, more than three quarters of all tourist arrivals to Cheju continued to comprise mainland Koreans seeking an affordable weekend escape to the Korean Hawai'i. Cheju was at once exotic and accessible, a ready magnet for discontent mainland urbanites, despite the existence of far more rural locations in other parts of Korea. Individuals, particularly younger educated mainlanders, have contributed as much to major developments potentially leading to urban development and gentrification in the countryside. The Cheju-Seoul/Gimpo (Kimpo) air route became the world's busiest when it registered 11 million journeys in 2015 alone (Smith 2016). This was made possible since the post-2010 boom with the rise of budget carriers that offered cheap and constant flights every five to ten minutes between the two destinations.<sup>213</sup> Once a relatively-removed location that required some effort to travel on the generally expensive flag carriers Korean Air and Asiana, Cheju became an easy and cheap destination for Seoulites. Although mainlanders descended upon Cheju to escape Seoul, packed and carried a piece of Seoul with them. Where Cheju City residents had some means to organize, even if they still found themselves at great disadvantage, communities the countryside, which has long experienced decline since the end of the 1980s, were left to fend for themselves. Mainland penetration, already pervasive, became easier because islanders often lacked the means to challenge competitive land bids. Pursuing the good life in the countryside does not mean that one gives up metropolitan conveniences.

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<sup>213</sup> See Jeju International Airport official site <https://www.airport.co.kr/jeju/main.do>. When one travels to this airport, one can notice that a frequent problem is the over-scheduling of flights combined with a terminal not designed for high volumes of travelers, leading to excessive delays.

While riding a van with a pair of middle-aged women on the way back to Cheju City from a temple food cooking class in Sōgwip’o in the late spring, a conversation on one of Cheju’s cafés came up. One of the women remarked in wonder that there were so many coffee shops in Cheju these days. 2015 was indeed a protracted spring for a blossoming coffee connoisseurship as fresh new establishments opened across the island to those seeking their caffeinated nectar. In a place where sugar- and cream-filled foil tubes of Maxwell mix coffee dominated, the Americano coffee emerged as a staple for every new establishment.

The van was meandering through the newer upscale suburban area that straddles the Aratong and Ido-2-tong area, a neighborhood people colloquially referred to as “*Perach’e*” in reference to the large upscale Verace apartment complex. The entire neighborhood sprung up in only a few years; in 2007 it was mostly farm fields and forest land and in 2010 *Perach’e* was only the apartment complex itself. The other rider observed that café coffee was about three thousand five hundred to four thousand wōn (or about three to four USD) per cup. The driver then exclaimed that coffee was basically the same price as a meal. It was a wonder, she added, that any of these places could at all survive financially. There were far too many cafés all across the island. Neither the driver nor her friend could understand why anyone would want to spend so much money on coffee alone. Though both women were Cheju locals, after driving from Sōgwip’o through the mostly-rural and forested 5.16 road over the side of Hallasan to Cheju City, the sudden appearance of a polished new suburb crowded with cafés bearing European names was still a jarring experience. An even more baffling matter was how and why cafés, once largely limited to the Taehak-ro and Jaewon (Chaewōn) Apartment areas of Cheju City and the Lee Jungseop (Yi Chungsoᄅp) Street in Sōgwip’o, came to saturate Cheju so quickly. At a glance, one would think the fastest growing crops in the countryside were neither *kamgyul* mandarin



oranges or *kamjŏ* (Kr.: *koguma*, sweet potatoes), but *k'ap'e* (cafés) and *kest'ũhausũ* (guesthouses).

Coffee shops characterized the post-2010 cityscapes of Cheju City and Sŏgwip'o. They also were scattered across the countryside with a penchant to congregate at the seaside. Younger native Cheju residents turned to refining a local form of café culture to express an alternative urbanization for the island, but countryside cafés, along with guesthouses featuring Cheju décor or local names, were a business of choice for many mainland migrants. Cheju City and rural residents expressed ambivalence toward them, ranging from acceptance to outright hostility. These establishments were so pervasive that they also became the content of local jokes including to those who did not patronize them. At Yŏngdŭng-kut in Sŏhwa on March 20, 2016, for example, when the presiding head shaman of Sinyang village prepared instant mix coffee for attendees, she joked that she was offering premium coffee and that attendees had to pay three or four thousand wŏn. Sinyang village, because of its scenic Sŏpjik'oji cape and its proximity to Sŏngsanp'o, experienced radical and controversial<sup>214</sup> transformation to a tourist magnet since the early 2000s. Some Cheju locals welcome the new variety that comes with these establishments while others see them as threats.

The rapid growth of cafés as well as artisanal food establishments and guesthouses that catered to an urban and cosmopolitan clientele was due to, ironically, the “*kwinong-kwich'on*” (literally “return to farming, return to the village,” or “back to the land”) trend across Korea. Longing for the countryside and dissatisfaction with urban life came at a juncture in the early twenty-first century when precarity was commonplace, when urbanites increasingly rejected

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<sup>214</sup> See <http://www.jejudomin.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=39494>. The Pogwang Cheju company was prosecuted for attempting to cover up damage done to a sensitive cave system on Sŏpjik'oji in 2013. Since the early 2000s and in part due to its popularization with the TV drama “All In,” Sŏpjik'oji saw an influx of tourism and tourist developments.

homogenizing spaces, and when corporate culture lost its luster. In escaping metropolitan areas, many mainlanders opted to exile themselves to Cheju in a 360-degree reversal of Chosŏn and twentieth-century sentiments. While the population in Cheju's rural *ŭp* (town) and *myŏn* (township) districts was on the decline between 2000 to 2009, the trend reversed from 2010. After 2010, migration to Cheju exceeded migration to the mainland due a combination of Cheju City's expansion, increased desires for life on Cheju among mainland urbanites, and new potential opportunities that came with the post-2010 tourism boom. At least 56 and 59 percent of *kwinong-kwich'on* residents were involved in some form of agricultural or primary industry in greater Cheju City and Sŏgwip'o City respectively, but the remaining 44 and 41 percent in both areas are largely involved in service or tourist business (Pu HJ 2015: 232). What the reported numbers, which geographer Pu Hyejin also questioned<sup>215</sup>, do not reveal was the broader scope of the effects. Unlike individual farms, cafés and guesthouses depended on regular visitation. When people set up new tourist establishments across the countryside, they brought in more than themselves. Their presence drew many curious urban visitors and accidental tensions with their new neighbors.

The term "*kwinong-kwich'on*" referred to two categories of urban-to-rural migrants in which the latter describes urban migrants with agricultural pursuits and the latter was a broad category of people who move back to the land (Ibid., 226-227). Many were from major Korea metropolitan areas, especially Seoul and usually were educated middle-class professionals, but all came from different backgrounds and had different motivations. Their migration to the Cheju countryside paralleled that of the reverse migration within Korean cities in which younger

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<sup>215</sup> In a personal communication with Dr. Pu Hyejin in 2015, Dr. Pu noted that available statistics are also misleading because many *ijumin* do not always register with their local *ri samuso* (village office) or *tong samuso* (district office). The ease of transportation to and from the mainland also makes absolute numbers difficult to track. She estimated that the actual *ijumin* presence may be far larger than reported.

professional suburban or upscale apartment complex dwellers returned to the inner cities. In both aspects of the *kwinong-kwich'on* phenomenon, a primary motivation had been the allure of escaping metropolitan life for an idyllic quiet country living. Yet far from simply returning, as Pu Hyejin observed, many of these *ijumin* (migrants) introduced new organizational and economic forms that induced – or at least were in the process of inducing – radical changes to the countryside. While *ijumin* may have sought to escape metropolitan life, they also accidentally brought the very cities that they escaped with them. The Sōgwip'o-based association for *ijumin* involved in *kwinong-kwich'on*, for example, was not integrated with local community networks. Though founded by and for *ijumin* to assist with adapting to the Cheju countryside, it had a distinctly urban character that contrasted from the near-familial organizations in rural communities. The *ijumin* association brought together disparate groups of people, but was separate from existing village networks.

Whereas rural organizations tended to be homogenous in personal affiliations, *ijumin* associations were for people scattered across broad geographic areas (236) and thus must operate with intent to rationalize disparate interests into a single organization. Pu noted that the *ijumin* association in Cheju was based on shared interest rather than immediate community or personal ties. Because *ijumin* establishments attracted many short-term visitors on a regular basis, their presence unintentionally put strain on local infrastructure. Otherwise quiet rural locales transformed into bustling tourist towns at peak season. The chief occupations and establishments that *ijumin* to the Cheju countryside pursued tended to be tourism and service sector-related and oriented to decidedly urban – and especially mainland tourist – clientele. In the anti-overdevelopment social media group “*Igō nuge chissikkwa?*” (“Whose misdeed is this?”), complaints about disruptive and environmentally destructive swarms of weekend tourists in

rental cars were as frequent as angry posts about development scandals. Although many urban islanders conceded that these small-scale establishments had less deleterious effects than large-scale developments, rural islanders saw them as nuisances.

Researchers conducted several studies of the *kwinong-kwich'on* phenomenon from policy, demographic, and geography perspectives (Pu HJ 2015: 228-229), but two factors required further examination: 1) rural villagers' own responses and; 2) their interactions or refusal to interact with *ijumin*. Although the commodification of country landscapes for tourism and ex-urbanite self-fulfillment brought new vitality and money to decaying countryside regions, the ambivalences and tensions that emerged with local populations resembled that of Cheju City's *wōndosim* issues. Rural villagers were not mere spectators to change brought with the prospect of incidental or accidental urbanization, but attempted to push back against the city or at least reshape their relationship with it.

New and persistent divisions put to question one of the fundamental objectives of the Free International City – Cheju's total transformation as a new metropolitan and globalized hub – as well as the premises of spreading cosmopolitanism in culture- and tourism-led entrepreneurship. Using whatever means available, aging and diminishing village populations sought to redefine their own identities and power, however limited, on the basis of the very authenticities that urban Cheju and the urban mainland sought to domesticate. In these interactions, including deliberate decisions to accept or refuse direct contact, Cheju rural villagers asserted their own claim to space. They set insider-outsider distinctions and boundaries

between urban and rural. Due to time limitations of the 2015-2016 research period, nearly all perspectives discussed in the following were in relation to those of Cheju islanders.<sup>216</sup>

*Wŏlchŏng, Kujwa-ŭp*

In Pu Hyejin's (2015) brief example of Wŏlchŏng-ri, a conspicuous change that came with *ijumin* was that their presence radically altered the structure of the village. The neighborhood by Wŏlchŏng beach was mostly registered as agricultural land or farm households in 2008, but they were bought out and converted to tourist and service establishments from 2011. *Ijumin* café, guesthouse, and restaurant establishments were mostly not based on any large-scale development and utilized remodeled structures, but it was their re-use of space that made all the difference. Their proximity along the beach effectively transformed the coast of Wŏlchŏng, an agricultural and fishing village, into a defined tourist enclave. Most establishments are close to Wŏlchŏng's *ri samuso* yet clustered in virtual geographic separation from the rest of the village community. Wŏlchŏng's mostly-ageing villagers may visit the *ri samuso* and its attendant *pokchi hoegwan* but ignored the row of Mediterranean-inspired forms of cafés and eateries. Farmers shared the same space as young and mostly-mainland weekend tourists who flocked to Wŏlchŏng's picturesque beach, but neither actively communicate as if they traversed in their own separate space bubbles.

Wŏlchŏng's transformation surprised its own residents. Located in the central coastal area of Kujwa-ŭp about an hour to the east of Cheju City, the village was relatively remote from Cheju City. Its main center sits by the coast is roughly a kilometer from the Iljudoro road, which circumnavigates the island along the coastal communities, and its sole bus stop. Wŏlchŏng's

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<sup>216</sup> Agnes Sohn, a colleague at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, concurrently conducted her own field research on the *kwinong-kwich'on* phenomenon in Cheju City from the perspectives of mainland *ijumin*. Her dissertation could be considered in counterbalance to my Cheju islander-centric presentation.

larger and more well-known neighbor Kimnyŏng long overshadowed it, but the two villages maintained a long rivalry and occasional fishing grounds disputes despite intermarriage. Wŏlchŏng gained some of the benefits of its neighbor's UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. As the larger lava tube system including Kimnyŏng's Manjanggal also snaked under areas technically a part of Wŏlchŏng, the village of Wŏlchŏng, too, was integrated into the UNESCO Geoparks system as well as the Olle trails. As one of the few remaining villages to have a presiding *tang maein simbang* (village head shaman),<sup>217</sup> Wŏlchŏng's rareness attracted academics' and photographers' attention. What could be considered the beginning of its transformation is when it became host to the *Korae-ka twel* "hippie"<sup>218</sup> café.

*Korae-ka twel* was a veritable legend unto itself. Three women founded the café as "Island Zorba" in reference to the film *Zorba the Greek*.<sup>219</sup> According to rumor, the three had a disagreement and went their own separate ways, with each creating their own establishments. The joint collection of alternative spaces and eventual dissolution was a pattern that repeated in Cheju. The ones that remained often tended to be the most committed to their initial vision. The owner that remained in this case was a woman commonly known to friends and acquaintances as Kimi Kim.

Kim's background was also subject to rumor. She was noted to have briefly lived in the US and was the daughter of a Seoul-based designer who was a Zainichi Cheju singer in Japan.

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<sup>217</sup> Wŏlchŏng's *tang maein simbang* Kim Tolsan is also a member of the K'ŭn-kut Preservation Society.

<sup>218</sup> Cheju City residents colloquially refer to the people involved in *Korae-ka twel* as "hippies" even though the café caters to a middle-class clientele, but this nomenclature is not entirely inaccurate either. Kimi Kim, one of the key figures, is a known environmentalist activist, performance artist, designer, and cultural revivalist all at once. She was active among Kangjŏng activists and though details of her background are unclear, it seems that she has some connection – possibly familial – to Cheju Island.

<sup>219</sup> As this was outside of the main research in 2015-2016, this information was provided by people acquainted with *Korae-ka twel* rather than the founders themselves. More research on the Wŏlchŏng situation may be done in the future.

Her café changed its name when in 2013, again according to hearsay, she suddenly proclaimed “there would be a whale.” The prediction became true as a whale unexpectedly beached on Wölchǒng beach. Whatever truth existed behind the various rumors, it was nonetheless known that her personality was indeed distinct from many others her age. Kim often responded to queries in straightforward yet sometimes puzzling speech. When asked about her roots, she answered in a vague manner and stated that she was a Cheju person but did not specify if she meant that in a literal or figurative sense. Her open eccentricity contrasted with her strong organizational capabilities, which enabled *Korae-ka twel* to become one of the most successful establishments in Cheju where many similar places had a life cycle of less than five years. Whereas other *kwich'on* people turn to the countryside to escape, Kimi Kim maintained local ties. She was involved in the Kangjǒng and local environmentalist movements and she was a visible member of the K'un-kut Preservation Society, in which she occasionally played the roles of the goddesses Chǒch'ǒngbi and Kamunchang'aegi in.

*Korae-ka twel* became such a popular destination for young mainland Korean tourists that any quick Google or Naver search immediately turned up a multitude of personal travel blogs. Many other café establishments followed as mainlander tourists found the beach an attractive alternative to already-popularized sites such as Chungmun Saektal Beach in Sǒgwip'o and Hamdǒk Sǒ-u Beach outside of Cheju City. Unlike *Korae-ka twel*, which re-used an existing abandoned building, many new establishments were entirely new constructions that were built in Spanish and Mediterranean style villa architecture. Kim's views on the Wölchǒng developments were ambiguous, but her involvement in local environmental activism suggested a deeper commitment to Cheju. Her activities in Cheju echoes other mainland-origin Kangjǒng anti-naval

base activists and environmentalists, who eventually set up their own tourist establishments as they became involved with longer-term commitments.

Not all welcomed Wŏlchŏng's new additions. Some complained over the new traffic, pollution, and rising land prices. While an explosion of Cheju countryside-related selfies appeared in the Korean blogosphere, Cheju Islanders were ambivalent about the commoditization of their island. To be sure, many *ijumin* were sincere about their efforts to escape metropolitan life and start anew on Cheju. Many Cheju City residents found the new artisanal cafés and restaurants pleasurable as they brought variety. On the other hand, Cheju City residents who still maintained personal connections to the countryside, were uneasy about the changes. The negative aspects of urbanization, particularly expanded infrastructure and more tourism establishments, spilled into their old villages. Wŏlchŏng native Vickie Ko, for example, was involved in Korea's emerging coffee and café culture, but she continued to strongly identify with her home village. When asked about Wŏlchŏng's transformation, she responded:

“I don't know the opinions of everyone in the village, but I heard this from my relatives. Nearly all people in Wŏlchŏng are farmers. They have busy lives, having to get up early to go out to work in the fields, and then they go home to sleep early, and though development might be improving things, it's always noisy, you know. There are many cars, parking is a problem, there's a lot of trash, a lot of noise, and because of the brightness of lights, I heard it's hard for people to sleep... There's a lot about the Wŏlchŏng issue out in the news, many *ijumin* come to Cheju, but though it's fine that they come to live and make a living, they don't communicate with villagers... Many older people call them '*oejinomdŭl*' [outsider bastards].”

Younger Cheju islanders held ambivalent views about the urbanization of the countryside. Though they have enjoyed the novelty that *kwinong-kwich'on* people brought, they also sympathized with their parents' and grandparents' irritation. While the cultural gap between younger islanders and mainlanders was far less pronounced, the gap nonetheless exists. A point



of contention was not so much mainlanders' presence as their use of Cheju space and imagery and their commoditization.

How other Wölchǒng residents viewed their village's transformation into a magnet for urban weekend tourists was ambiguous. Many did not openly talk about it in public and some appeared jaded in regards to outsiders, but several echoed the sentiments that Ko and her relatives expressed. A middle-aged Korean-American woman, who returned from the US to set up her own guesthouse on her family's old property, expressed surprise mixed with mild reservations about the *ijumin* presence. Having initially expected the quiet that once characterized Wölchǒng, she was astounded to see it turn into a bustling beach getaway town. She felt fortunate that the land remained in her family and that she did not have to pay now-exorbitant prices. Where rural villages became popularized real estate speculation followed.

A part of the distrust toward *ijumin* in Cheju was the broader historical suspicion that islanders harbored toward the mainland. Some doubted whether these newcomers were genuine about their intentions in Cheju. Others expressed irritation that *ijumin* seemed unaware of their wider impact on Cheju life. In 2015 and 2016, islanders frequently complained how much the post-2010 tourism boom was more a bane than a boon. Already in 2014, a Taekwondo master from Aewöl-ŭp, which appeared to host the most *ijumin* according to the population statistics mentioned in Pu Hyejin's research (2015), mentioned that at first Cheju islanders were excited about Cheju's changes into a tourist hub but then people started to realize the fallout that came with the higher cost of living and disruption to island life. CHY's remark about obstructed sea views mentioned in the previous chapter hinted at irritation at coastal overdevelopment even among Cheju City residents. The *yijang* of Kūmsǒng,<sup>220</sup> which neighbors the tourist town of

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<sup>220</sup> Interview with author, Kūmsǒng-ri, Aewöl-ŭp, May 25, 2016. Kūmsǒng is the immediate neighbor of Kwakchi, a coastal village that transformed into a busy tourist town like Wölchǒng. Kwakchi was already known to locals for its

Kwakchi in Aewöl-ŭp, expressed his fears that he and his neighbors may find themselves priced out of their own homes and forced to work for *ijumin* and wealthy Chinese. Residents in Kwakchi also were furious about *ijumin* and tourists crowding their village but felt that they are no longer in a position to resist. The Cheju islanders who remained, after all, were mostly ageing farmers, women divers, and fishermen.

Whether *kwinong-kwich'on* would continue in the long term was difficult to predict. The ubiquity of cafés could become like the 2010 year-long popularity of gelato in Cheju: a passing trend that fades out as fast as it appears. Many islanders doubted that these *ijumin* would stay. With declining quality of life, rising cost, increasing environmental degradation, and a jaded local population, *ijumin* sought the idealized Cheju life may find themselves utterly disappointed. Yet even if the trend passes in Cheju where much of the countryside is increasingly pulled into the gravitational fields of Cheju City and Seoul, the impact would be long-lasting. *Ijumin*, in escaping urban life, accidentally furthered the wider goals of the Free International City: the total urbanization of Cheju Island as a new nodal point for tourism and capital movement. In the wake of spiking land prices, islanders were concerned about what would happen if *ijumin* were to leave their over-priced land and establishments. Who would take over after they leave? Would mainland corporations or perhaps even Chinese investors follow? *Ijumin* who were aware of the paradoxes that came with their activities, too, were uncertain if others would settle permanently in Cheju. Precarity and uncertainty characterized Korea's past two decades.

*Sŏhwa, Kujwa-ŭp*

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beach, but it rapidly changed after the post-2010 tourism boom and the village expanded the beach artificially to accommodate ever-increasing numbers of tourists. Kŭmsŏng remained largely ignored, but residents noticed that Kwakchi's changes were spilling over into their village in terms of land prices and vehicle traffic.

Some *ijumin* attempted to create their own authenticity in Cheju along with a sense of community and possible points of contact with their new islander neighbors. The most visible of these attempts were the many arts and crafts market that occur periodically around the island. Many art markets were city-sponsored such as the art market at the Lee Jungseop (Yi Chungso) Street in Sŏgwip'o City and some were local initiatives such as Maengŭrŏng Pŏlchang at Space What and the Saemmul-kol art market in Cheju City. But in some cases, art markets were the result of combined *ijumin* and islander cooperation. Kangjŏng's *Marché* was the product of the activist community there, comprising of both mainlander activists residing long-term in Kangjŏng and Cheju islanders. The largest and most well-known of these art markets in 2015 and 2016 was the monthly *Pellongjang* held in the seaside town of Sŏhwa, the main center of Kujwa-ŭp.

O Hyŏn-mi, one of the organizers involved in *Pellongjang*, arrived in Cheju 4 years ago from Seoul and joined with other *ijumin* to find a way to self-organize.<sup>221</sup> Like many of her peers, O felt that mainland migrants to Cheju needed to form a sense of broader community as they were scattered across the island and had difficulties adjusting to Cheju life. On how the market started, O said:

“There are many people who move to Cheju. When the market started, people who came gathered together, selling what they made, what they don't use, like in a market. Meeting together, we thought of setting something up, and that's how it was. Initially it was five people, six people...it began like a meeting of neighborhood friends, but actually it was for community, a community for *ijumin* who come into Cheju...it came together naturally.”

O actually resided in Kasi-ri in the southeast part of the island, but *Pellongjang* allowed for a participation of *ijumin* of disparate regions. O and the early *Pellongjang* members did not appear to have had an initial larger plan other than a relatively casual get-together. The market's growth

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<sup>221</sup> Interview with author, Sŏhwa, Kujwa-ŭp, August 12, 2015.

and appeal was organic as members gradually became more acquainted with each other and their networks expanded. Many migrants do come and go in just a few years, but some have decided to commit to having a longer-term and more fulfilling life in the Cheju countryside. But even for those who did stay for a longer term, the relative isolation also meant that there are few chances for face-to-face communication. Compounding the issues are that many mainlanders felt isolated from their respective Cheju communities due to the cultural gap and frequent instances of miscommunication.

The name “*Pellongjang*” referred to a Cheju word meaning in Standard Korean “*chamsi watta, chamsi sarajida*” (come in an instant, disappear in an instant). The reason for the name was first to use a Cheju word to give it local flavor and second to reflect the market’s brief character. The art market took place only for one to two hours and so vendors appear as quickly as they disappear. Its briefness was perhaps to minimize inconveniences for Söhwa residents while maximizing its novelty for both participants and visitors.

*Pellongjang* had both its positives as well as its negatives for Söhwa, factors that O Hyön-mi readily acknowledged. On the one hand, for Söhwa residents, *Pellongjang* brought tourists on a periodic basis and thus made lively an otherwise sleepy rural town. O was also cognizant of the disruptions that the market could bring to the community and attempted to work with her cohorts to consider ways to work with the Söhwa administration. On the negatives, she noted:

“Many cars flock here to use up parking space that could have been used for villagers’ shops. A villager would think, ‘this is my village, but why do these people come here and inconvenience me?’...a plan was made at the village office and moved the market up to the harbor. But at the harbor, we came to an understanding with the boat captains and we could also use the pier.”

O further explained that communication and negotiation with Sŏhwa residents was ongoing and that the *Pellongjang* operators were cautious to inform the village office as well as the *ŭp* office of activities. She emphasized the need for continuous dialogue to defuse any tensions and resolve problems that may arise.

Though similar to the other existing art markets around Cheju, *Pellongjang* was not directly related to them. All art markets around the island, O said, were autonomous and region-specific. *Pellongjang* was initially open to any *ijumin* who wanted to participate, but because the organizers felt that it became another generic flea market, they developed it with the concept and design of an art market. How participants acquired approval was that they would offer a concept, take a picture of their product, and explain it to the organizers on an “*Int’ŏnet’ŭ k’ap’e*” (online messaging board). A commonality shared amongst all vendors and their products was that they adhered to using mostly locally-produced natural materials including local wood, local crops, seashells, and material used for Cheju’s *kalot* (persimmon-dyed cloth). *Pellongjang* included *ijumin* of a broad spectrum across a broad geographic area, but its basic principles were to be as local as possible and to encourage participants to form a more meaningful relationship with their new home.

#### *Kangjŏng-tong, Sŏgwip’o City*<sup>222</sup>

Kangjŏng developed an art market that arose out of unusual circumstances and was the result of a motley group of longtime mainlander and islander activists involved in the anti-naval base protests. The area became the source of unwanted attention due to the controversy behind circumstances that led up to the naval base construction and repeated state repression. The

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<sup>222</sup> Research in Kangjŏng was limited since this project began. That I met activists and became more aware of their activities in the Kangjŏng issue was in large part due to significant overlaps in their roles elsewhere, particularly in Cheju City. What is offered here is a collection of scattered observations that may be the starting point for more examination on the matter.

tensions and internal divisions over the naval base issue combined with its newfound attention as a perceived frontline position in the wider Korean, East Asian, and global anti-war movements led to unusual results. Conflict had maintained Kangjǒng's appearance as a rural village, despite not exactly being completely rural or completely a village. The background to the art market, which organizers called *Marché*, was embedded in Kangjǒng's ambiguous identity.

Kangjǒng's status, as a rural locale, like many of the regions associated with Sǒgwip'o was classified as one of the urban *tong* districts while at the same time remains largely agricultural. Only a handful of tourist establishments existed to take advantage of its picturesque basalt rock coastline – much of which was destroyed to make way for the naval base completed in December 2015. Kangjǒng was a short distance from the edges of Saesǒgwi (New Sǒgwip'o) and the major tourist complex of Chungmun, but much economic activity continued to be based on agriculture. The village was one of the main stops on the Airport Limousine route. Kangjǒng straddles the border of being rural and being a suburb of the greater Sǒgwip'o City.

Disruption that came with the base as well as the activism and state force around it created a situation in which Kangjǒng was effectively urbanized in practice yet this very change cemented its image as a resistant rural periphery. Before the fallout of the naval base controversy, many note that Kangjǒng had the most community associations in the region. The divide-and-rule tactics that the government employed (Gwon GS 2011; Kirk 2013) turned a village of neighbors into a district of strangers. When the naval base became a cause célèbre for former *Minjung* Movement activists from Cheju City and mainland Korea, Kangjǒng saw an influx of a wide variety of people and it was not long before international activists took up the Kangjǒng cause. Activists noted, however, that they came at protesting villagers' invitation and

that their depiction in mainstream media as outside meddlers was a gross misrepresentation.<sup>223</sup> Kangjǒng residents became resigned to the navy's presence after relentless force from the state, but they, activists claimed, were appreciative that someone would continue to act on their behalf while they were busy with managing their farms. The presiding *yijang* of Kangjǒng, an outspoken critic of the naval base, was elected to his position perhaps because of villagers' lingering discontent.

At the same time, Kangjǒng's village character inadvertently enabled the fissures that formed around the base issue to deepen. The first images of Kangjǒng in the beginnings of the anti-naval base activity were of middle-aged and elderly farmers openly protesting the government. The protests cemented the image of Kangjǒng the resistant peripheral village rather than Kangjǒng the semi-suburban *tong*. Kangjǒng's anti-naval base movement had since the base's groundbreaking become a cosmopolitan hub for international visitors – albeit of the activist persuasion – fulfilling what the Free International City project had initially failed to do. Its image as a periphery was immortalized and hence novelties such as art markets, theatrical protests, and high-profile activist visits from international celebrities such as Gloria Steinem and Oliver Stone. That international attention created for a romanticized image of Kangjǒng did not seem to bother activists.<sup>224</sup> On the contrary, the impression of Kangjǒng as an authentically Cheju village provided a sense of an ideal worth preserving. Kangjǒng was a village that became urban in connections and a periphery that was integrated into global movements. Yet these

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<sup>223</sup> Interview with author, Kangjǒng-tong, Sǒgwip'o, August 2, 2014.

<sup>224</sup> See Eperjesi 2011. Eperjesi's article includes a discussion of Korean-American writer Paul Yoon's short story that deals with an allegorical representation of Cheju as caught in Cold War politics. The depiction of Cheju as such has attracted significant international attention. Steinem is quoted as concluding her letter with "Jeju Island means Women's Island." In an odd twist, a known American feminist activist feminized Cheju as a primitive exotic Other. Cheju islanders do critique mainland Koreans for associating Cheju with romanticized feminine images, but it was striking that celebrity activists such as Gloria Steinem, Noam Chomsky, and Oliver Stone were not equally critiqued. The difference, likely unintentional, reifies Cheju as a subaltern periphery that does not speak.

ironies contributed to cementing its identity – or at least the image of its identity – and the practices that made it a living frontline against foreign powers’ geopolitical overreach and Korea’s runaway development. The *Marché* that developed out of the Kangjǒng activist community was the culmination of this *yin-yang* dynamic.

The initial *Marché* made use of the multiple talents that this diverse group of mainland and local activists, including those involved in Wǒlchǒng’s *Korae-ka twel* and Cheju City’s Sinnarak performance troupe, brought to Kangjǒng. It was first held at beside the locally well-known Kangjǒngch’ǒn stream, which represented a last bastion of an unspoiled Cheju environment. For practical reasons, the *Marché* was then moved to the civilian portion of Kangjǒng’s harbor. The market gained popularity and as the navy stepped up its restriction of access to space around the base’s vicinity. In both cases, the market was tactically planned to be adjacent to the steel fences of the naval base. Under duress from constant surveillance, harassment, fines, jail sentences, and strains on finances, the activist community at Kangjǒng turned to organic farming and producing hand-made crafts as a means to sustain themselves and the ongoing protest movement.

Hit with lawsuits from the government and in need of finances to continue their activities, which somehow outlasted their initial purpose of stopping the base’s construction, Kangjǒng activists gradually transformed themselves into more fully functioning community members. Islander activists became engaged in real *kwinong* (“return to farming”) while mainlanders engaged in a real *kwich’on* (“return to the village”). As an expression of practicing their ideals, many turned to producing rice, a crop notoriously difficult to grow on Cheju due to the island’s ferocious winds and porous volcanic soil. Kangjǒng was one of the few areas in Cheju Island that possesses natural conditions conducive to rice agriculture and this feature became a cause



for Kangjǒng activists who took up rice farming. Though not entirely practical and more symbolic as Cheju-grown rice was unable to compete with the better-quality Chǒlla rice, the move was an expression of an ideal that activists would re-build the community from the ground up. At the *Marché*, activist-turned-farmers sold their raw harvest, still left unhusked, for people to purchase a piece of a longstanding rebellion. By the time the Ch'usǒk harvest moon holiday approaches, the Kangjǒng community even advertises a gift package comprised of local organic products on their *Kangjǒng saramdŭl* (Gangjeong People) Facebook group. The commodity exchanges were overt, but this did little to weaken a sense of rebellious authenticity among participants, the producers, and the buyers. Rather than escape metropolitan life as *kwinong-kwich'on* people sought, Kangjǒng's mainland and islander activist community sought to directly confront its presence from the periphery and on the periphery's terms.<sup>225</sup>

The *Marché* quickly became a busy event, first a draw for people sympathetic to the Kangjǒng cause and then eventually a tourist attraction. Whether the *Marché* had any impact on visitors' politics or perceptions of the naval base or development issues on Cheju was difficult to assess. A few came as part of their broader interests in anti-militarization activism in East Asia, but many visitors and participants were of a similar demographic to those who attend other art markets such as *Pellongjang*. Several participating market vendors and performers visited the *Marché* as part of their travels across the island and the country to seek more exposure for prospective patrons. Though highlights of *Marché* events often featured experimental performances related to interpretations of Cheju culture and the impact of the Kangjǒng base upon local society, most participants' contributions to the market had little or nothing to do with

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<sup>225</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GJpeoples/search/?query=%EC%B6%94%EC%84%9D> [in Korean]. The advertisement parallels those of big retailers. The community explicitly makes clear that the purpose of the Ch'usǒk gift package is to keep them afloat.

the Kangjǒng issue. Aside from the largely-symbolic Kangjǒng community-produced organic rice, many of the crafts ranged from handmade jewelry made from locally-gathered seashells to homemade tarts. What began as a political assertion of community sustainability and a statement that activists were prepared to continue their resistance long after the naval base's completion, gradually became an art festival where the boundaries between protest and cultural consumption blurred.

The long-term effects of Kangjǒng's *Marché* remain to be seen, but one thing that was remarkable was that the Kangjǒng movement continued to be visible. Activists retained the ability to challenge the state into 2016 despite their greatly diminished strength since 2014. They still protested at the gates, made solidarity visits to other anti-militarism movements in Korea and abroad, and the Kangjǒng issue had yet to fade from islanders' minds. Kangjǒng's suburbanizing character and the movement's urbanizing aspects had not, at least for the activists and the participants at the *Marché*, undermined its legitimacy as a part of rural Cheju. The *Marché* was an extension of Kangjǒng, forming a reputation as a rebellious yet resilient community since 2010, transforming into a locus of alternative and non-mainstream culture. Despite the *Marché*'s (and arguably, Kangjǒng's) shift into a quasi-tourist attraction for well-to-do and younger Koreans, a curious outcome of the overtly market-based exchanges was that the organizers are still able to project an image of nonconformist authenticity. Though there was little in actual substance that differed from other art markets such as *Pellongjang*, the Kangjǒng *Marché* organizers effectively used their space – the market was not simply any market, but a Kangjǒng market. In the commodity exchanges at Kangjǒng, a visiting buyer provided some relief to a community hit with multiple expensive lawsuits from the national government while purchasing her or his part, however small, in an act of rebellion. The implications were not lost

on Kangjǒng activists. Though their slogans and long-term goals could appear utopian, they were not impractical in conducting their movement, which perhaps accounted for the movement's unusual longevity.

On the other hand, the *Marché* organized under the Kangjǒng activist community, regardless of their intentions, too, continued the commodification of the Cheju countryside. Many of those who participated at the Kangjǒng *Marché* were not native Cheju islanders and include the same *ijumin* who participate at other arts markets and events around the island. While one may have the temptation to dismiss pro-base people as conservative or merely pro-government, this paradoxical nature of Kangjǒng's activist-led *Marché* did lend credence to anti-activist sentiments. *Marché* continued to be limited in that they catered to mostly tourist and urban tastes. Again, rural Cheju islanders seldom visited these events nor did they have any apparent interest in them. The art markets reinforced social distinctions. This was in part ultimately due to an economic necessity in an island where rural residents were still disinterested in cultural consumption. The other issue behind local disinterest was the continued failure to resolve the divide and defuse tensions between urban and rural. Potential points of contact became re-drawn boundaries. *Ijumin* and urban Cheju residents were not fully at fault for communication required more than one party to be engaged. A pervasive problem lay with continued urban-rural tensions and the growing political economy of Cheju City in conjunction with the expanded reach of Seoul that came with the new infrastructure and tourism.

In making the Cheju countryside's lost horizons accessible to an eager urbanized population, all country roads lead to Cheju City. Many urbanites' yearning for a phantasmal image of the past or the exotic did not cause them to abandon the trappings of the city. What the countryside lacked, urban newcomers brought. To regard rural residents' occasional hostility

toward *ijumin* and tourists as a result of Cheju islanders' insularity is therefore insufficient. Such defensiveness was rather a reflex of their own awareness of what Cheju's changed status could mean for them. The taste for coffee, novelties, and commoditized rural authenticity meant that the city would soon domesticate Cheju's last wilds.

#### 6.4 – Cheju Vignette: World Unnatural Heritage

Yerae-tong made the headlines in the early fall of 2015. On March 23<sup>226</sup> of that year, the Supreme Court of Korea ruled illegal the JDC (Jeju Development Corporation)-initiated and Berjaya Resort-owned tourist complex, known as both the “Berjaya Resort” and “Airest City.” A coalition of environmentalists and Yerae residents filed a lawsuit against both the state-backed JDC and Malaysia-based Berjaya for violation of contract. Although the project was initially termed as a “*hyuyanghyōng kōju tanji*” (condominium residential complex), the Supreme Court's review of the plan found that the actual constructions were that of a “*yuwōnji*” (amusement park). Villagers were hence improperly compensated for the lands that were sold to JDC and Berjaya and both corporations had violated land use laws in incorporating a casino. The casino feature was a particularly contentious feature among Cheju islanders wearied of casinos catering to a *nouveau riche* Chinese clientele appearing across the island following 2010. Already from the beginning the luxury condos were exclusionary, dedicated to a mobile upscale “creative class.”<sup>227</sup> Some residents in Yerae supported the project, but others were incensed over the egregious destruction of Yerae's dramatic cliff sides, promontories, and the green ravine that flanked Yeraech'ōn stream. The Supreme Court order for halting the 74,205 square-meter project, which was already 60 percent completed (Southcott 2015), was hailed as a local victory,

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<sup>226</sup> See <http://jeju.ekfem.or.kr/archives/2080>.

<sup>227</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1vu4vFEn30>. The video published on YouTube is a joint advertisement by JDC and Berjaya. Note the explicit use of the term “creative class.”

albeit a pyrrhic one. The issue came back into the spotlight months after the Supreme Court order when Berjaya Resort sued JDC for breach of contract. The response from Governor Wön's administration? Seek changes in local laws to enable the Berjaya Resort construction to continue.

Kang Min-cheol (Kang Minch'öl), one of the landowners, who brought the JDC and Berjaya to court, pressed with the issue in hopes to publicize the larger problems of overdevelopment and corporate interests in Cheju.<sup>228</sup> Among the twenty-two plaintiffs, Kang was one of a few native Yerae residents. Kang, a *kamgyul* farmer and environmentalist, on the other hand, insisted that he had nothing to gain materially from challenging the project. One of the four holdouts – as eighteen others dropped out – Kang is the sole islander; the three others were mainlanders attempting to increase compensation. In response to critics suspicious of his motivations, Kang noted that his land on the zoned Berjaya complex was a mere 140 *p'yöng* (roughly 462 square meters) far too small and insignificant for any substantial compensation. Kang sacrificed his own money and resources for legal fees. The opposition was thus based on the principle of bringing attention to wider questions about Cheju's future. Kang argued:

“Of course, going out to the fields and doing farm work is hard. Whether it [selling the land] would offset things doesn't seem to be the case...like in other countries where there are big developments, the natives are left with lowly things...even if the development is done well, it's no guarantee.”

Especially concerning for Kang was the prospect of having both luxury housing and an illegal casino in Yerae. Aside from bringing about steep increases in cost of living, the casino, especially one that caters to well-to-do Koreans rather than foreigners, could bring about broader and more immediate disruptions.<sup>229</sup> Kang, along with other Yerae residents, established the

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<sup>228</sup> Interview with author, Yerae-tong, Sögwip'o, November 13, 2015.

<sup>229</sup> Though Chinese-oriented casinos are frequent targets of overdevelopment critics, the prospect of a Korean-oriented casino was concerning for Yerae's case because whereas foreigners do not stay permanently a Korean clientele would have longer-term implications.

Yerae Ecological Village, some years before independently of the Cheju City-based environmentalist coalition. Yerae was among the first communities to have a purely local environmental education center despite its small population. Although Kang and allies among civic groups had won the Supreme Court case, the environmental damage was already done and the provincial government, eager to attract capital, could find its way around the legal system to allow the project to resume.

When I returned to Cheju, for dissertation research, I was already acquainted with Yerae. It was where I was placed when I was in the TaLK (Teach and Learn in Korea) program in 2010. The village was everything that one would imagine a Cheju rural village would be, even though it is in legal terms a group of adjacent urban *tong* – Sangye (Upper Yerae) and Haye (Lower Yerae) – of Sögwip’o City (Figure 23). Located in the south-southwest of the island, weather conditions were generally mild and the sea breezes made even the steamiest summer days bearable. The main town was hardly a town. Aside from Yerae Elementary School, a pair of banks, a few small-scale tourist lodgings, the *tong* office, small convenience stores, and a Chinese eatery, this urban *tong* could easily pass for a hamlet of the mid-mountain region. Yerae Elementary’s student population was barely a hundred fifty though the area’s relative prosperity also meant that the school had some of the better facilities in Sögwip’o. My command of Korean was miniscule the first time I came, but already I noticed anti-development banners hung on the fences by the main road. Yerae, I had heard, lost a battle to resist the Lotte Corporation’s designs on building a large tourism complex on the side of its territory facing the Chungmun Resort Complex.



Figure 23: Coastline of Ha-ye in 2011.<sup>230</sup>

Since the news of the Supreme Court ruling, Joey, who had been wondering about the situation on the south side of the island, suggested that we visit Yerae. In light of the Sölsaemit Shrine issue, we had been looking to find other shamanic shrines that were under threat. Aside from the much-publicized Kangjǒng situation, we knew little about matters in Sögwip’o. Because of the greater Sögwip’o area’s fictive appearance as mostly untouched rural land, controversies regarding urbanization fallout tended to focus on the north. We heard that Pöphwan-tong’s shrine was moved because of development, but heritage site destruction in the south was not a frequently encountered topic even as the broader Kangjǒng controversy was fresh on many residents’ minds. The Airst City project in Yerae caught our attention as we wondered about how its construction impacted local culture. In Cheju folklore and anthropology, Yerae, we remembered, had a claim to fame for its *ilrwedang* (seventh day shrine) possessing two deity figurines. The original figurines were lost in the upheaval of April Third, but an unknown donor replaced them some years later. According to the Traditional Culture Institute’s

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<sup>230</sup> Photo by author, Yerae-tong, Sögwip’o, January 2011. The grass-covered promontory seen straight in the distance is where the controversial Airst City would be constructed in 2014.

record on shrines in the Sōgwip'o area, Yerae had several shrines though it no longer has a *tang maein simbang*. Considering the size of the Airst City project and its location, Joey and I were certain that at least one of the shrines must have been affected if not destroyed.

Joey and I finally went to Yerae on October 16. Although autumn was creeping in as the boiling summer heat was slowly subsiding, it was still a balmy and humid day under a clear sky. We arrived at just slightly before noon. A mostly quiet community, Yerae appeared to have no busy hours. The most activity was from the elementary school and the occasional bus that shuttles between its terminal points at the coastal village of Taepyōng and the center of Sōgwip'o. After a lunch of *chajangmyōn* (black bean noodles) at the small Chinese eatery where we were the sole customers, we decided to randomly query residents about the village's shrines and local practices. As a traditional Cheju shaman no longer lived in Yerae, the people we encountered on the street had little to say about it, though they did point to the *ilrwedang* and noted that there were indeed several shrines. Save for the *ilrwedang*, where these other shrines were, many did not remember. It was years ago when they last had a ritual. People here turned to a mainland *posal* (Buddhist-style shaman) to make up for the absence of a *simbang*. Finally, residents pointed us to the house of Mr. Ma.

The house was of substantial size, suggesting that the owner had some success with *kamgyul*. We first knocked on the door to several times to know response, but as we were leaving, we noticed Mr. Ma at the back porch. He had just got off the phone when we approached. Since Joey and I decided that we might as well take some pictures of the *ilrwedang*, we asked Mr. Ma if he knew of the location. Though Mr. Ma did not know who we were, we immediately piqued his interest. Of course he knew where it was, he responded, because his mother had performed rituals there before. At first Joey and I did not think too much about it as



most rural islanders had relatives that made offerings at local *ilrwedang* for one reason or another. But then Mr. Ma mentioned that other shrines existed around Yerae. Joey asked about them, to which Mr. Ma responded that Yerae did have a *ponhyangdang* (village main shrine), but that part of it was destroyed for a mainlander's hotel. It immediately brought to mind similar situations in Söngsan and Ojo-ri where mainland landowners did not honor local traditions toward leaving historic village shrines untouched.<sup>231</sup> We asked if Mr. Ma knew where these other shrines were and how long would it take to walk to them. Mr. Ma promptly grabbed his car keys without hesitation and said that Yerae was a broad area and it would take us too long to see all the shrines in one day without transportation. He offered to take us to the shrines. How was it that Mr. Ma knew of the shrines? He answered plainly that it was his mother who performed rituals for both Yerae and the neighboring region of Chungmun. She, who passed away in 2006, was Yerae's last *tang maein simbang*.

Along the way, Joey and I learned from Mr. Ma that Yerae's geography was considered sacred. It is one of the few places in Cheju that can boast having been mentioned clearly in Koryö Dynasty histories. Most of the Yerae covered in a wash of green, filled with farm fields and *kamgyul* orchards. It was most known for its dramatic basalt rock cliffs along the sea-facing edges of its promontories and the great conical figure of the Kunsan *orŭm* (parasite cinder cone). The *orŭm*, which has two small "ears" like that of a lion's, was also the area's namesake, which literally translates to "the lion comes." Though the ears are noticeable, the lion's face is difficult to find, especially as the face of the *orŭm* is densely forested. Yerae residents, however, can indicate it with relative ease. Mr. Ma mentioned that when a Buddhist monk not from the area

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<sup>231</sup> Unlike the Sölsaemit Shrine case, these shrines were destroyed for economic reasons. Sölsaemit Shrine seems to have been a rare instance of a mainland-islander culture war.

built a small temple on the side of the *orŭm*, the local spirits and the spirits of those who died in the April Third massacre were disturbed. The entire region was hit with a drought for a year.<sup>232</sup>

The first shrine that Mr. Ma showed us was tucked between rock wall-bordered fields. It was long abandoned and not even *posal* come to tend to the shrine. Nevertheless cloth offerings, traces of candle wax, and emptied soju bottles of yesteryear were still visible around the *sinmok* (spirit tree) and rock altar. Mr. Ma did not recall the purpose of this particular shrine since he did not inherit his mother's craft. He mentioned that a foreign research team consisting of Europeans and Japanese had come to record her rituals on video tape, but he knew nothing of what became of them. Joey and I concurred that if those tapes were still around, then they probably would be an extremely valuable resource. Mr. Ma mentioned that he had donated his late mother's ritual implements to researchers, but his one regret was that he never found out what happened to those recordings. A neighbor noticed in the shrine from over the walls of his field and asked us what we were doing there. We answered that we were looking at a shrine. The neighbor, a mainlander, was surprised. "Oh, is that a shrine?" he asked, bewildered. When the mainland farmer went back to work, Mr. Ma quietly noted to us that there were more mainlanders these days and many of them did not know about Yerae, or the shrines for that matter.

We proceeded on to the *ilrwedang* the ruins of the *ponhyangdang*. The *ilrwedang* was encased in a barn-sized structure with a corrugated tin roof. In this balmy October day, the concrete and the tin roof made the inside like a steaming hot sauna. Because it was so hot inside, Mr. Ma and I preferred to stay outside, simply looking inside from the door while Joey took pictures. Even from out the door, the heat radiated from within made us sweat. The path before it was paved with cement, as was the old rock altar. Cement was shaped into a broad altar that

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<sup>232</sup> Interview with author, Yerae-tong, Sŏgwip'o, October 16, 2015. Interestingly in 2013, Cheju was hit was indeed hit with an oddly dry summer. It is unclear if Mr. Ma was referring to this year.

pressed against the back wall. Matting covered the floor. In the middle at the back wall was a case bearing two hand-carved wooden figurines representing the grandmother and grandfather spirits. Around them were Buddhist altar goods, comprising of lotus-shaped candle stands, Buddhist bells with vajra-shaped handles, and even paper inscribed with dharani (Buddhist incantations) in red ink. A *posal* had taken over care of the shrine, but this did not bother Yerae residents. Someone, anyone, had to consecrate it.

The *ponhyangdang* was close to the center of Yerae. To my surprise, it was just below the small hotel beside Yerae Elementary School where I worked five years prior. The whole time I had no idea it was there. The *ponhyangdang*, situated at a small grotto in the hill, was destroyed for a mainlander-owned guesthouse directly behind it. Tucked in a natural recess with a rock wall and featuring a large gnarled tree, even in its damaged and abandoned state the *ponhyangdang* had a dramatic appearance that Joey compared to something out of a Miyazaki film. Mr. Ma explained that when the hotel expanded, they destroyed part of the shrine and cut part of the *sinmok*. As was the case in Ojo-ri and Söngsan, the mainland landowner knew that the structure and tree comprised a shrine but damaged it anyway. Though remaining shamanic practitioners in Yerae no longer used the *ponhyangdang* and turned to using the *ilrwedang* as a de facto main shrine, Mr. Ma was visibly irritated at its inglorious treatment. That was when we began to turn our attention toward the Airst City complex. Did a shrine exist on that site?

At this point Joey asked about whether women divers in Yerae observed Yöngdüng-kut as it seemed in this impromptu tour that all of Yerae's shrines were inland. Mr. Ma took us to a cape that extends from lower Yerae. On the path toward the cape's lighthouse, he abruptly made a turn into the bushes. Though wearing plastic slippers, Mr. Ma trekked over the overgrown path with astounding ease as if it were second nature. He led Joey and I to a stout bush at the cliff side

that faced the bay. There were cloth offerings tied to the bush as well as emptied soju bottles piled around it. The women divers worshipped here now, Mr. Ma explained. This was not actually their original shrine, but they had chosen to perform their supplications here at a remove from everything and overlooking the sea where they worked. Their original shrine was right by Yeraech'ön right at the edge of the Airst City construction site (Figure 24).



Figure 24: Unfinished Airst City complex.<sup>233</sup>

To conclude our tour, Mr. Ma took us to the bridge over Yeraech'ön. This bridge we stood upon was completely new. We looked at the shells of unfinished condos. The entire side of the promontory, which I remembered to be a spectacular rocky cliff side, was torn up. Mr. Ma pointed at a building at the intersection. The person in there was a school friend and one of the reasons for the construction to halt, Mr. Ma said. He, along with others, brought the JDC and Berjaya to the court when they discovered that the land was being used for an illegal project. But looking at the unfinished site, the damage was done. Mr. Ma took us down a stairwell at the side of the bridge into the ravine, which had been turned into a park in anticipation for the Airst City. Mr. Ma guffawed at the sight. Yeraech'ön was artificially filled to look like a river when it

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<sup>233</sup> Photo by author, Yerae-tong, Sögwip'o, October 16, 2015.

was never much more than a stream. All of this was for show. Then he pointed at a little space before the construction site wall. Joey and I did not see anything. But that was precisely the point. That spot was the site of the sea deity shrine, which Yerae's women divers had prayed at for generations and where Mr. Ma's mother performed Yöngdüng-kut.

Mr. Ma expressed lament that much of the village's sacred spaces were left derelict or were destroyed outright for tourist facilities. He was also dismayed that the Sögwip'o branch of the *munhwajaech'öng* (cultural properties office) did nothing to protect them. The thoughts of other residents in Yerae regarding the region's sacred landscape is unfortunately beyond the scope of this dissertation's research (and it is probably the case that Mr. Ma simply has a distinct way of seeing the landscape given his heritage), but other residents in Yerae did also recognize that the Berjaya Resort construction had violated the region's unique topography. Kang Min-cheol, who incidentally was the same person that Mr. Ma had mentioned too, confirmed Kunsan's function as a symbol of Yerae as the region's guardian lion spirit. Kang was a Protestant Christian, but, perhaps due to his acquaintance with Mr. Ma, was aware of Yerae's spiritual topography and recalled the destruction of the sea deity shrine with the Airst City construction. The Airst City project and the JDC's mismanagement did much to damage Yerae in the name of the Free International City. Trust among Yerae residents was broken, Yerae's spectacular natural features were irreversibly damaged, and its sacred heritage sites were destroyed.

The Supreme Court ruling was indeed a victory, but possibly a temporary one. There were, wafting with the weeds that grew over the unfinished construction site, questions over what to do with the site and if the government would again push to allow the project to continue. Regardless, the damage was done. Before we left the site, Mr. Ma paused to peer over the

concrete fencing of the overpass bridge. Mr. Ma gazed down at the ravine to where the shrine once was, the place where his mother had appealed to the Yōngdŭng deities on behalf of Yerae's women divers years ago. No trace of it was visible as the erasure was total. It only remained in his memory.

## CONCLUSION

Sixteen years after its announcement in 2001, the Free International City had been an extraordinarily successful failure. Cheju City had indeed become a tourist hub. The Cheju Tourism Association reported record-breaking arrival numbers for every year beyond the initial 2010 tourism boom. In sheer tourist volume and capital investment the Free International City would seem like a phenomenal success at first glance. None dispute that the changes since its beginning had allowed for many new possibilities. Underneath these new developments deep-rooted conflicts simmer and the potentials for catastrophic ecological and economic disruptions if not outright failure become more pronounced. Though premised on long-term planning, the Free International City's results materialized through unsustainable practices of which the permanent damage from the Airst City debacle is a prime example. Moving into its second decade, along with growing inequality and underemployment, Cheju Island faces greater soil and water contamination, trash overflow, and heavier air pollution. Once the touted as the cleanest region in Korea and the island without thieves and beggars, the Cheju of 2017 experienced the same crises as other urbanized regions on the peninsula.

After nine years of observing Cheju and two years of intensive fieldwork, I concluded that all that had become "Cheju" culture and identity by 2017 were inseparable from the Free International City and Cheju City's urbanization. A nostalgic representation of an original Cheju culture paralleled discontent within Cheju and in mainland Korea over the failed promises of

metropolitan life. Likewise, the underlying form, accidents, successes, and failures of the urban present cannot be understood without respect to residents' – local, mainlander, and foreigner alike – spatial and conceptual interventions. Urban Cheju was not simply made in building and bureaucracy, but also lived in the artisan cafés of Taehak-ro and the street food carts of Tongmun Market.

At the basic level, I verify three specific results: 1) my research reaffirms Yi Kiuk's (2003) earlier observations that Cheju's integration with the global capitalist economy since the early twentieth century left nothing untouched; 2) that the rural imaginary presented in folklore studies as well as the presentation of shamanic authenticity are inseparable from Cheju City's emergence as cosmopolitan city; and 3) that Cheju City functions as an axial space in and around which islanders externalize aspirations and apprehensions for a local present and metropolitan future. For better or for worse, urbanization presented inescapable challenges for Cheju islanders to reconfigure everything about their lives in Cheju. Cheju City is a microcosm of ongoing global urban controversies such as culture-led development, rights to the city, heritage ownership and authenticity, and the clashes between local and transnational and city and countryside.

Change also comes with continuities that inform or complicate new decisions. The city as a physical form, economic locus, and conceptual entity enabled and mediated conflict as much as creative interventions. Past traumas remain strong, but memory also is the impetus for creative interventions. As the nodal point to Seoul and the first magnet for a population that dissociated from agriculture, ranching, and fishing, Cheju City became a centrifugal factor in re-inventing cultural authenticity. Folklorists and shamans' associations based themselves in the city where new resources enabled them to create infrastructures for cultural preservation. Though divorced from previous contexts, the ability to present shamanism, even if idealized, as culture was a mark

of Cheju distinction that appealed to urban residents who had a growing sense of dislocation. Displays of rural folk practice became a self-authenticating practice.

The definition of the city itself became integral to remaking Cheju space. *Tosi chaesaeng* and *ch'angjo kyŏngje* began as government initiatives to push Cheju City on the course to a desired goal of establishing it as a star among the world cities constellation. Urbanization based on culture-led development possessed numerous flaws such as an overt elitism and a failure to include a broader spectrum of urban inhabitants, but also generated lively discourses and practices. The issue of a Cheju urbanism became a public question as the need to defend or rehabilitate sites of memory became urgent. The skirmishes over collective ownership, bureaucratization, or privatization of the past led to a full cycle of historical change in which people within and without the *wŏndosim* reconceived the old capital as a defined axis to Cheju Island and the Cheju individual as subjects of history. What drove conflict as well as creative reinventions or reinterpretations was the matter of where that historical cycle begins. Past tensions and memory were constant in shaping new interventions and conceptions.

The “Hawai’i of Korea” moniker became reality, but not in a way that the Park Chung Hee regime or even the post-dictatorship administrations had conceived. Cheju became a highly-developed tourist hub with transnational recognition as mainland Koreans and nouveau riche Chinese flocked to its shores as the ideal vacation getaway. With Cheju’s greater integration with a global tourist economy came more noticeable divides between newcomers and visitors and self-identified island natives. Many mainland Koreans who dreamed of their romanticized pristine frontier of Cheju found themselves subject to local suspicion (if not hostility) while they accidentally urbanized the very countryside they sought. The appeal of Cheju’s green appearance became the very pretext for government-supported large-scale development as well as the wide



proliferation of private tourist establishments. The romantic image of an internal exotic periphery became key, though not primary, aspects that accelerated urbanization as the desire to possess Cheju, whether in the form of actual land or the experience of being there, drew around fourteen to fifteen million visitors a year. With more direct contact mixed with apprehensions over the possibility of being absorbed into a larger metropolitan Korea, some Cheju islanders distanced themselves from mainland compatriots or took a directly confrontational stance.

I began a re-evaluation of my findings based on Paul Wheatley's theory of the *axis mundi* as it pertained to the classical capital and an application of Wŏnhyo's concept of interpenetration based on Huayan and Madhaymaka philosophy. My analysis was based on examining how various phenomena in urbanization trends were interrelated across a broad spectrum of life with intent to show that subtle policy shifts have wide-reaching and often unintended effects. I attempted to examine the city not as a clear center but rather a functional axis around which people configure their positions as they establish fields of action and self-understanding. Ambitious urbanization projects, which are likely to become the norm by the middle of the twenty-first century, can be understood through their immediate impact on the streets within the city and peripheral communities that may soon be overtaken by them. Another component I sought to examine was the emotional dimension, which Ibn Khaldūn called *'asabiyyah*, and how mutuality or lack thereof shaped the ways residents in Cheju interacted with one another and with mainland Korean and foreign migrants. The new infrastructure and changed physical and political economy that came with Cheju City's rise as a cosmopolitan tourist city interpenetrated every aspect of Cheju life. What becomes a "Cheju" city likewise depends on residents' interactions with space.

Cheju City presented a case for why qualitative urban research and planning should take into account as crucial – rather than peripheral – the interpenetration of urban change and urban experience as well as the formation or dissolution of emotional bonds. What raw data of tourist arrival milestones cannot reveal is the extent of environmental and human causes and consequences as well as Cheju islanders’ varied initiatives and responses. Individuals or groups of actors created new means and philosophies for internationalization and sustainability not always because of the Free International City but in many cases in spite of it. The new infrastructures and opportunities that the project afforded generated as many fortuitous as unpalatable accidents. Where some public displays or extravaganzas brought only limited attention, others inspired lasting connections. Where projects threatened sites of memory or entire livelihoods, solidarities emerged. Where old originals faced erasure, authenticities were made. The operations were mostly asymmetrical, but no one thing or action ever existed independent of anything else. The positive and negative results of the Free International City and the expansion of Cheju City itself had an undeniable impact on every aspect of Cheju life and self-understanding.

In the *longue durée* of things, what kind of Cheju the Free International City will make is still difficult to determine. The original planners’ vision of taking Cheju beyond domestic budget tourism and remaking Cheju as a hub for international – albeit mostly-Chinese – visitors came into fruition in 2010. Not long after major developments were complete, however, a series of crises such as the 2015 MERS scare and the 2017 China-South Korea spat over THAAD put to question the overall project’s viability. Political upheavals of 2015 to 2017 enabled surprising developments, but what transpired in these years exposed as many continuities as they did ruptures. The candlelight revolution that swept Park Geun-hye from power in 2017 in South

Korea on the one hand and the surge of new right-wing movements in the United States highlighted the fundamental problems of personal identification or lack thereof. Park's fall began with her inability to connect with many South Koreans. The new right-wing movements were invigorated with an emotional identification of peoplehood. New civic groups emerged in Cheju to attempt to remedy alienation, but a strong coherent civic group coalition did not form despite shared interests. As Ibn Khaldūn observed, strong coalitions cannot form unless all parties involved strongly identified with one another. Dynamism is driven through interpenetration.

As things stand, I cannot imagine that the current development ambitions can be sustainable on such a constrained geography with limited resources and a great store of discontent. Development projects are still in progress or at least slated for eventual construction. Yōngdūng-kut rituals have revived in the communities of Kwidōk and Hansu-ri, but their viability is still uncertain given dwindling numbers of Cheju women divers and fishermen. The T'amna Culture Plaza enters its fifth year and the promises for wider participation and urban cultural renaissance have yet to be realized. The second airport is becoming more controversial, but even Onp'yōng and Sinsan residents felt that they had an extremely slim chance to challenge arbitrary state decision making. Cheju faced one environmental issue after the other in 2017, but the goal of having a full million inhabitants in Cheju City remains policy. Despite promises for reviewing the island's development trajectory and urban planning objectives, there is little sign that Governor Wōn's administration would change course.

At the same time, many islanders, as well as mainland Korean and foreign residents, have begun to create their own initiatives and to assert their role in shaping change. Even if top-down in practice, urbanization is never completely unidirectional. Cheju residents face extraordinary challenges, but though the dreamers and activists among them may not always succeed, their

attempts to influence the course of urban development and cultural practice may reverberate. At the very least, the concept of urban space as a space of expression and collective ownership of urban heritage as an ideally inalienable right from its citizens has disseminated throughout Cheju City. What urban artificers from the Japanese colonizers to the Park regime failed to appreciate was that the actual function of urban or urbanizing space still depends heavily on how people directly use it. The future of Cheju and the direction for Cheju City is uncertain. The future as it appears at the time of this dissertation's completion is neither bright nor hopeless.

## APPENDIX

### A.1 Maps and Geographical Features

#### Geography

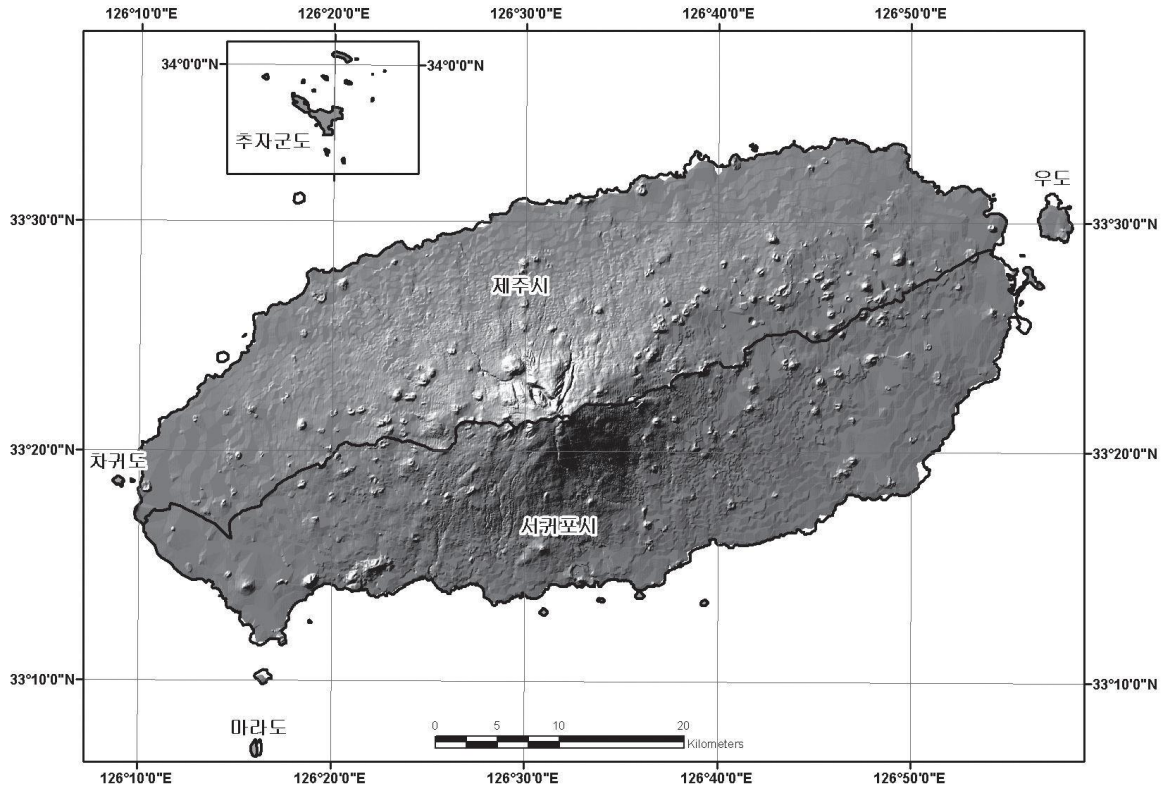


Figure 25: Cheju Island monochrome topographic map.<sup>234</sup>

<sup>234</sup> Kukt'o kyot'ongbu chŏngbowŏn. 2013. *Cheju t'ŭkbyŏl chach'ido-ŭi yongyŏk*. In *Han'guk chiriji Cheju t'ŭkbyŏl chach'ido*, 10.

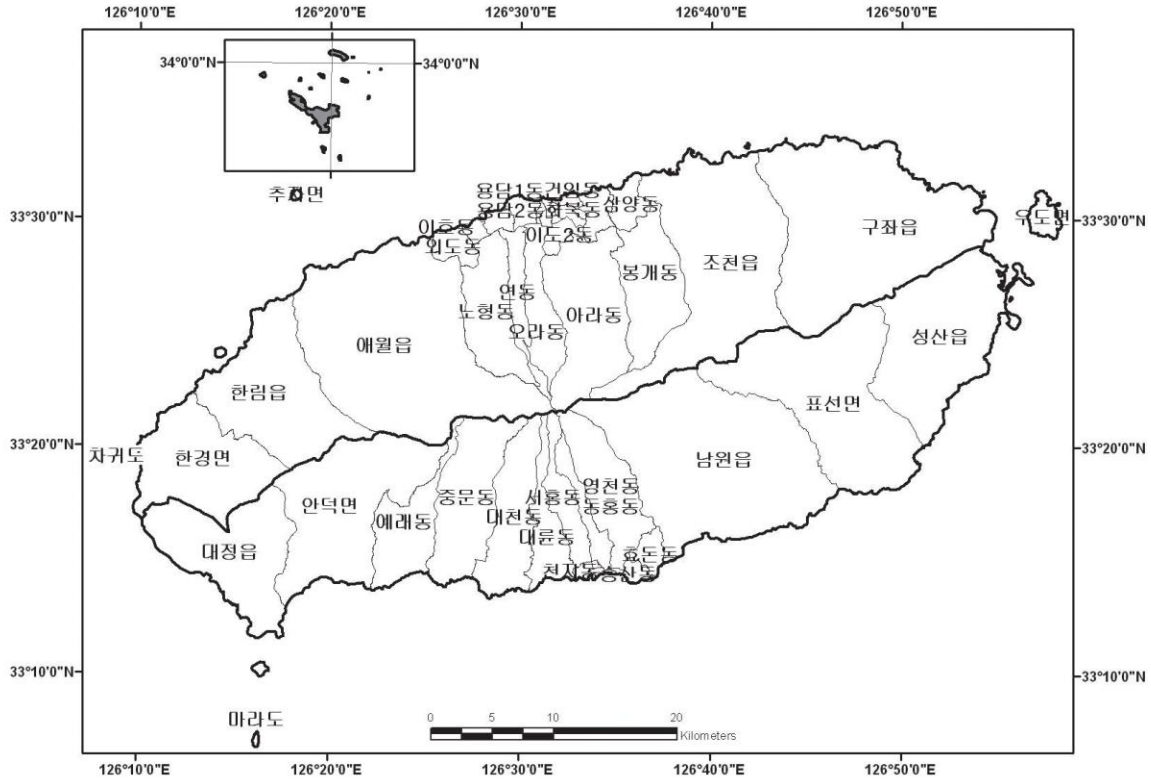


Figure 26: Cheju Administrative Boundaries after 2007.<sup>235</sup>

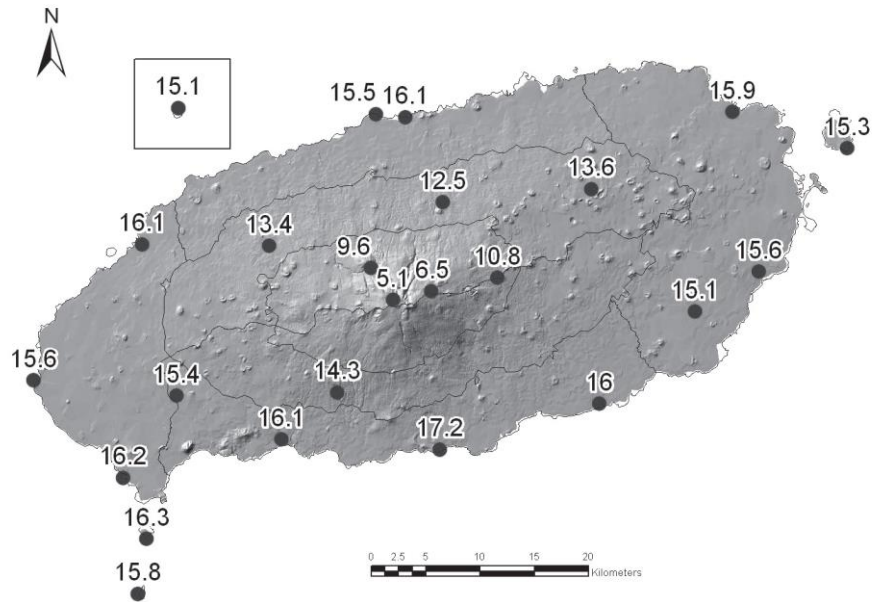


Figure 27: Average Temperatures in Celsius.<sup>236</sup>

<sup>235</sup> Kukt'o kyot'ongbu chŏngbowŏn. 2013. *Cheju t'ŭkbyŏl chach'ido-ŭi haengjŏng kuyŏk punp'o haengjŏng kuyŏkdo (2008-nyŏn-hyŏnjae)*. In *Han'guk chiriji Cheju t'ŭkbyŏl chach'ido*, 12.

<sup>236</sup> Kisangch'ŏng. 2013. *Cheju t'ŭkbyŏl chach'ido-ŭi yongyŏk*. In *Han'guk chiriji Cheju t'ŭkbyŏl chach'ido*, 45.

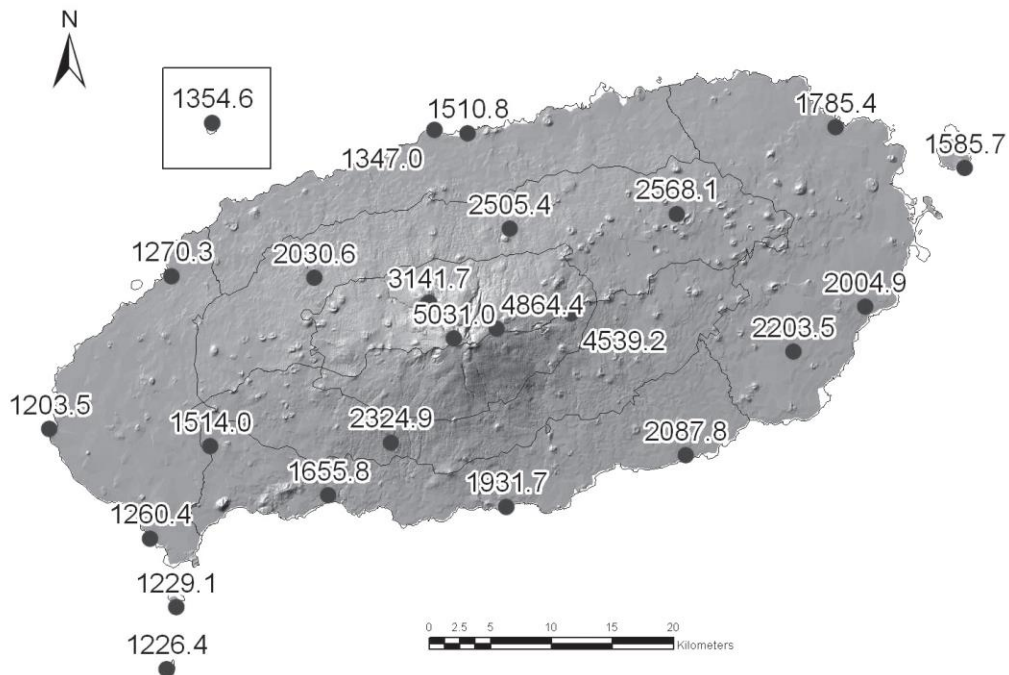


Figure 28: Average Precipitation in Millimeters.<sup>237</sup>

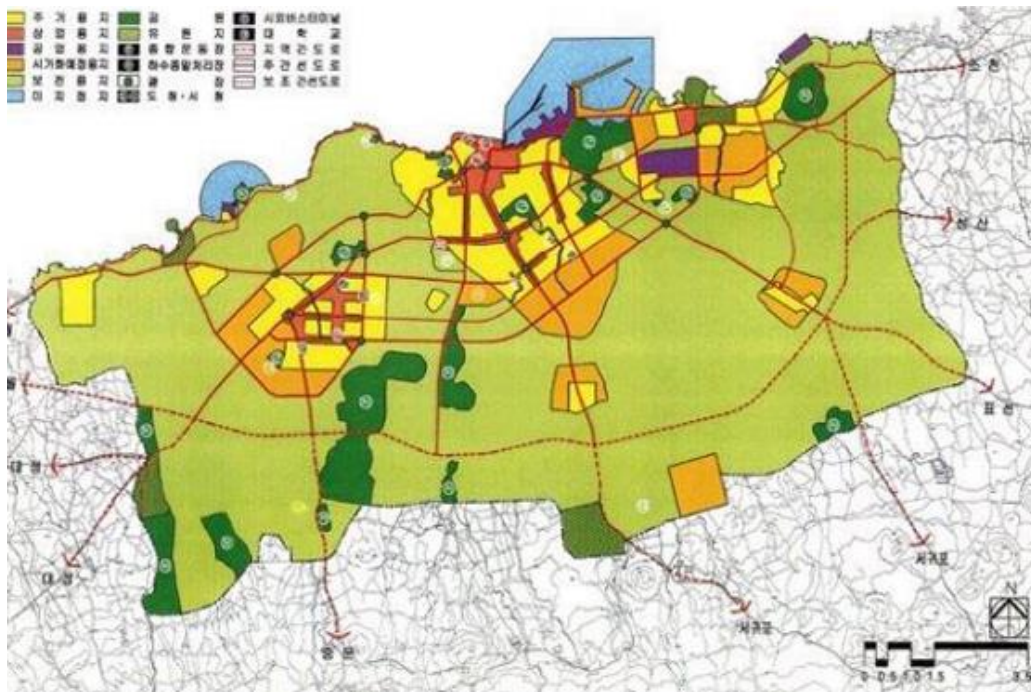


Figure 29: Cheju City 2021 Concept Map.<sup>238</sup>

<sup>237</sup> Kisangch'ong. 2013. *Cheju t'ukbyöl chach'ido-üi yongyök*. In *Han'guk chiriji Cheju t'ukbyöl chach'ido*, 47.

<sup>238</sup> Ha Chuhong. 2016. "2021 Cheju tosi kibon kusangdo," *Media Cheju*, August 3. Accessed May 28, 2017. <http://mediajeju.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=186604>.

## A.2 Tables and Statistics

Statistical data collected and provided here are between the years 2001-2016. 2001 data is included when available. All data can be found on the *t'onggye yebo* (statistical almanac) of the Cheju Provincial Government website [www.jeju.go.kr](http://www.jeju.go.kr). Older data uses older file formats and thus are not always accessible. Tourism data is derived from the JTA statistics available at <http://www.visitjeju.or.kr/web/bbs/bbsList.do?bbsId=TOURSTAT>.

Although most data were digitized with a systemwide upgrade after 2010, some older data is incomplete or no longer easily accessible. Cheju's entire northern half and southern half were consolidated into the Cheju-si and Sŏgwip'o-si districts respectively after 2006, but to maintain consistency I combined the 2001 figures. "Urban" refers to all districts classified as one of the contiguous city *tong* within the pre-2006 administrative boundaries. Note that figures presented do not equal the total; the remaining amounts not listed are of miscellaneous categories not of primary interest in this dissertation. Other information is derived from the 2006 *Chejudoji* and the *Che-2-ch'a Chejudo chonghap kaebal kyehoek*.

### *Timeline of Cheju History*

Era	Han'gŭl	Hancha	Years
Proto-T'amna Period	탐라시대 초기	耽羅時代 初期	200 BCE – 200 CE
Early T'amna Period	탐라시대 전기	耽羅時代 前期	200-500
Late T'amna	탐라시대 후기	耽羅時代 後期	500-1105
Koryŏ Dynasty	고려시대	高麗時代	918-1392
Yuan Dynasty Rule	원나라	元나라	1275-1367
Chosŏn Dynasty Rule	조선시대	朝鮮時代	1392-1910
Japanese Colonial Period	일제강점기	日帝強佔期	1910-1945
April Third Uprising	사삼 사건	四三 事件	1947-1954
Republic of Korea	대한민국	大韓民國	1948-

### *Cheju Development History*

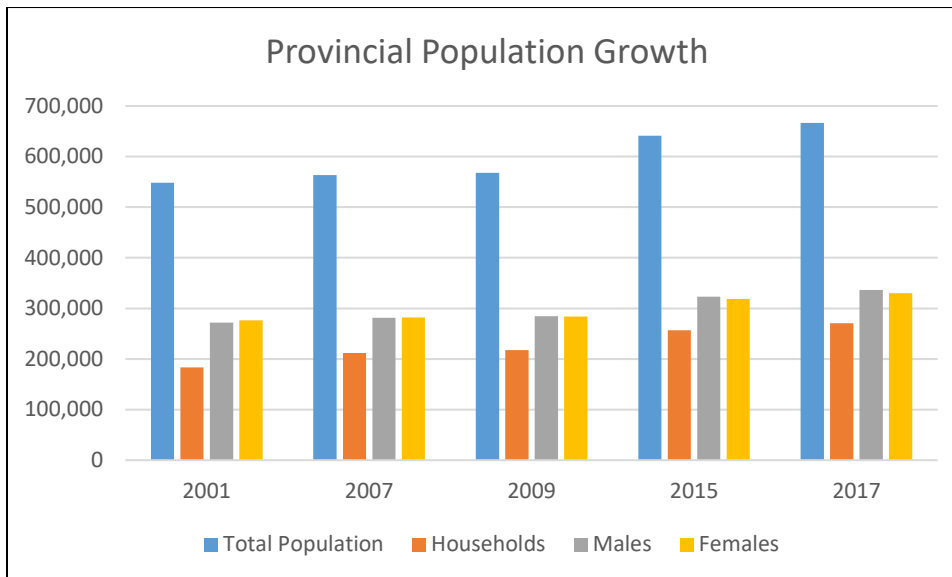
Development Program	Han'gŭl	Years
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Cheju Free Trade Zone	제주도자유지역 설정 구상	1963
Cheju General Construction Plan	제주도거설종합계획	1964
Cheju Special Region Designation	제주도특정지역 지정	1966
Cheju Special Region General Construction Plan	제주도특정지역 건설종합계획	1967
Cheju Province General Development Plan	제주도 종합개발 계획	1971
Cheju Province General Tourism Development Plan	제주도 관광 종합 개발 계획	1973
Initial Assessment for the Cheju Special Region Development Plan	제주도특정자유지역 개발 구상을 위한 기초조사	1975
Special Region Financing Plan	특정지역재정비 구상	1976
Free Port Plan	자유항 구상	1980
Proposal for the Cheju Special Region General Development Plan	특정지역 제주도 종합 개발 계획안	1983
Assessment for Establishing the Free International Trade Region	국제자유지역 설정 조사	1983
First Phase Cheju Province General Development Plan	제 1 차 제주도 종합 개발 계획	1985
Reexamination of the Jeju Province General Development Plan	제주도 종합 개발 계획의 재검토	1989
Supplement to the First Phase Jeju Province Special Region General Development Plan	제 1 차 제주도 종합 개발 계획 보완계획	1990
Cheju Province General Development Plan	제주도 종합 개발 계획	1994-2001
Supplement to the Cheju Province General Development Plan	제주도 종합 개발 계획 보완계획	1997
Cheju Province Five-year Economic Development Plan	제주 경제 발전 5 개년 계획	1999
Research for the Free International Basic Plan	제주 국제 자유도시 개발 타당성 및 기본계획	2000
Second Phase Cheju Province General Development Plan	제 2 차 제주도 종합 개발 계획	2001
Cheju Free International City	제주 국제 자유도시	2002

Cheju Free International City General Plan	제주 국제 자유도시 종합 계획	2002-2011
New Cheju Movement	뉴 제주 운동	2007
Cheju Vision 2030	비전 2030	2009
T'amna Culture Plaza	탐라 문화 광장	2012
Dream Tower	드림 타워	2014
Cheju New Harbor Proposal	제주신항	2015
Cheju Second Airport Proposal	제 2 공항	2015

*Cheju Special Self-governing Province Provincial Population*

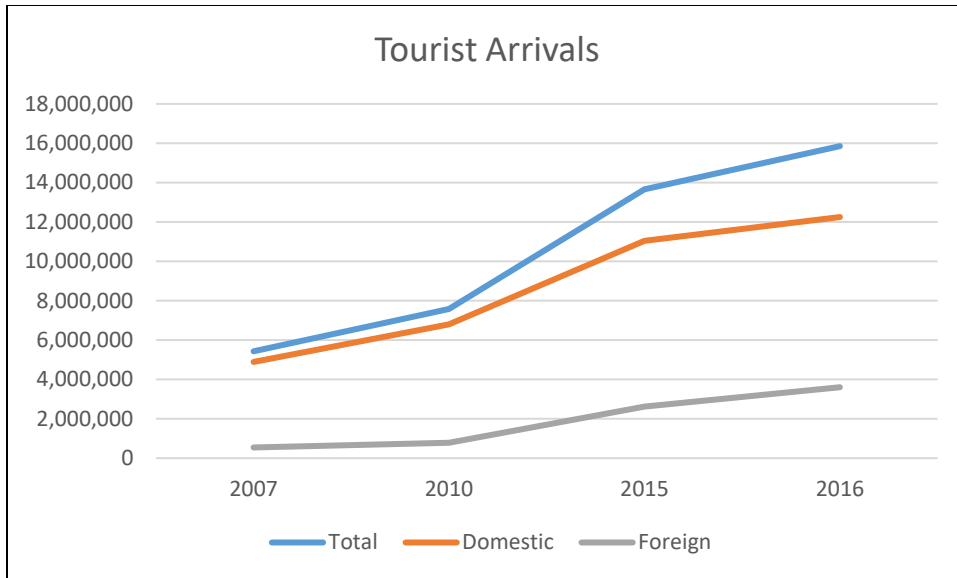


Year	Population	Households	Male	Female
2001	547,964	183,248	271,907	276,057
2007	563,388	211,850	281,576	281,812
2009	567,913	217,711	284,256	283,657
2015	641,355	256,928	322,954	318,401
2017	666,552	270,354	336,231	330,291

*Cheju Special Self-governing Province Foreign Population*

Year	Total	Male	Female
2001	1,075	513	562
2007	4,130	2,330	1,800
2009	5,250	2,937	2,313
2015	16,960	9,526	7,434
2017	20,382	11,120	9,262

*Tourist Arrivals*



Year	Total	Domestic	Foreign
2007	5,429,223	4,887,949	541,274
2010	7,578,301	6,801,301	777,000
2015	13,664,395	11,040,135	2,624,260
2016	15,852,980	12,249,959	3,603,021

#### *GDRP (per billion won)*

Year	Total
2000	4,810
2007	8,069.60
2010	10,899
2015	15,432

#### *Per Capita GDP (per 1000 won)*

Year	Income
2004	13,952
2007	16,042.90
2010	17,350
2015	26,280

#### *Migration*

Year	In-Migration	Out-Migration
2001	96,251	96,577
2007	83,294	86,222
2009	76,575	77,590
2015	97,580	83,323

*Registered Mainland Migrants*

Year	Total
2002	23,030
2007	21,615
2009	20,902
2015	38,544

*Employment (per 1000 persons)*

Year	Total	Primary Industry	Manufacturing	Service / Other
2002	271	62	13	195
2007	289	63	8	218
2011	291	62	10	219
2015	333	55	13	265

*Construction Permits Approved*

Year	Buildings	Land Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
2002	4,791	1,785,290
2007	3,536	1,146,243
2009	4,000	1,426,626
2015	12,302	3,971,776

*Provincial Budget (per million won)*

Year	Total
2001	1,798,748
2007	2,970,867.56
2011	3,306,836.03
2015	4,738,392.90

*Cheju City Population*

Year	Population	Households	Male	Female
2001	385,305	129,143	190,795	194,510
2007	408,364	153,042	203,436	204,928
2009	414,116	157,704	206,700	207,416
2015	470,778	185,874	236,068	234,710
2017	486,015	194,198	244,212	241,803

*Cheju City Foreign Population*

Year	Total	Male	Female
2001	790	377	413

2007	2,906	1,552	1,354
2009	5,250	2,937	2,313
2015	10,902	5,845	5,057
2017	13,177	6,932	6,245

*Cheju City Urban Population*

Year	Population	Houseolds	Male	Female
2001	285,097	94,368	140,662	144,435
2007	312,572	115,727	154,701	157,871
2009	318,962	119,601	158,043	160,919
2015	366,701	142,005	181,955	184,746
2017	376,530	147,319	187,206	189,324

*Sŏgwip'o City Population*

Year	Population	Houseolds	Male	Female
2001	85,320	28,344	42,438	42,882
2007	83,111	31,507	41,680	41,521
2009	83,533	32,222	41,779	41,754
2015	94,065	38,500	47,350	46,715
2017	99,979	41,379	50,505	49,474

**A.3 Chinese Character and Korean Hang'ul Terms**

*Buddhist Terminology*

Romanized Term	Han'gūl	Hancha	Sanskrit	Meaning
<i>ch'e-yong</i>	체용	體用		Essence-Function
<i>Ch'ŏnsugyŏng</i>	천수경	千手經		Thousand Hand Sūtra
<i>Hwaŏmgyŏng</i>	화엄경	華嚴經	<i>Mahāvaiṣṭya Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra</i>	Avatamsaka Sūtra
<i>kido</i>	기도	祈禱		prayer
<i>Maha panya paramilda simgyŏng</i>	마하 반야 바라밀다 심경	摩訶般若 波羅蜜多 心經	<i>Mahā Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya Sūtra</i>	Heart Sūtra
<i>posal</i>	보살	菩薩	<i>bodhisattva</i>	Bodhisattva or mainland Korean Buddhist shaman
<i>Sansin</i>	산신	山神		Mountain God
<i>sasi pulgong</i>	사시 불공	巳時 佛供		Hour of the Snake (9-11 AM) prayer

<i>sinjung</i>	신중	神衆	<i>deva</i>	deities
<i>tarani</i>	다라니	陀羅尼	<i>dhāraṇī</i>	Dharani
<i>t'ong</i>	통	通		Interpenetration
<i>Yongwang</i>	용왕	龍王		Dragon King
<i>yŏn'gi</i>	연기	緣起	<i>pratītyasamutpāda</i>	Dependent-Origination

*Political and Economic Terminology*

Romanized Term	Han'gŭl	Hancha	Meaning
<i>ch'angjo kyŏngje</i>	창조 경제	創造 經濟	creative economy
<i>Ch'ŏngnyŏnhoe</i>	청년회	靑年會	Youth Association
<i>Ch'ongdokbu</i>	총독부	總督府	Japanese Government-General
<i>Puinhoe</i>	부인회	婦人會	Wives' Association
<i>k'ŏlch'ŏ</i> <i>k'ont'enč'ŭ</i>	컬처 콘텐츠		“cultural content”
<i>kun</i>	군	君	administrative term: County (after 20 <sup>th</sup> century); Prefecture (before 20 <sup>th</sup> century)
<i>kwinong-kwich'on</i>	귀농-귀촌	歸農-歸村	“back to the land”
<i>minjung</i>	민중	民衆	“the masses”
<i>myŏn</i>	면	面	administrative term: Township
<i>nongch'on</i>	농촌	農村	agricultural village
<i>ŏch'on</i>	어촌	漁村	fishing village
<i>ŏch'on'gye</i>	어촌계	漁村契	fishing cooperative
<i>pyŏnbang</i>	변방	邊方	periphery
<i>pyŏnbang-ŭi sisŏn</i>	변방의 시선	邊方の 視線	“view of the periphery”
<i>ri</i>	리	里	administrative term: Village
<i>si</i>	시	市	administrative term: City
<i>sinsigaji</i>	신시가지	新市街地	new town
<i>to</i>	도	道	administrative term: Province
<i>tong</i>	동	洞	administrative term: Neighborhood
<i>tongjang</i>	동장	洞長	alderman
<i>tosi chaesaeng</i>	도시 재생	都市 再生	urban revitalization
<i>ŭp</i>	읍	邑	administrative term: Town
<i>yubi</i>	유비		“UB”: ubiquitous eco-city

*Cheju-si Place Names in Standard Korean*

Official names use the Revised Romanization system. Note that Hallasan and the Hwanhaejangsŏng walls are actually in both the Cheju-si and Sŏgwip'o-si district.

Place Name	Official Name	Han'gŭl	Hancha
<i>Cheju t'ŭkbyŏl chach'ido</i>	Jeju Special Self-governing Province	제주 특별 자치도	濟州 特別 自治道
<i>Cheju-si</i>	Jeju City	제주시	濟州市
<i>Aewŏl-ŭp</i>	Aewol-eup	애월읍	涯月邑
<i>Chongdal-ri</i>	Jongdal-ri	종달리	終達里
<i>Chung'ang Kamni Kyohoe</i>	Jungang Methodist Church	중앙감리교회	中央監理教會
<i>Chung'ang Sŏngdang</i>	Jungang Cathedral	중앙성당	中央聖堂
<i>Haengwŏn-ri</i>	Haengwon-ri	행원리	杏源里
<i>Haeryunsa</i>	Haeryunsa Temple	해륜사	海輪寺
<i>Hallasan</i>	Hallasan	한라산	漢拏山
<i>Hallim-ŭp</i>	Hallim-eup	한림읍	翰林邑
<i>Han'gyŏng-myŏn</i>	Hangyeong-myeon	한경면	翰京面
<i>Hansu-ri</i>	Hansu-ri	한수리	翰洙里
<i>Hwabuk-tong</i>	Hwabuk-dong	화북동	禾北洞
<i>Ido</i>	Ido	이도	二徒
<i>Iho-tong</i>	Iho	이호동	梨湖洞
<i>Ildo</i>	Ildo	일도	一徒
<i>Kisangch'ŏng</i>	Korea Meteorological Administration	기상청	氣象廳
<i>Kongdŏk Tongsan</i>	Gongdeok Dongsan	공덕동산	功德童山
<i>Kongsinjŏng</i>	Gongsinjeong	공신전	供辰亭
<i>Kŏnip-tong</i>	Geonip-dong	건입동	建入洞
<i>Ku-Cheju</i>	Gu-Jeju	구제주	舊濟州
<i>Kujwa-ŭp</i>	Gujwa-eup	구좌읍	舊左邑
<i>Kŭmbungsa</i>	Geumbungsa Temple	금봉사	金鵬寺
<i>Kŭmsŏng-ri</i>	Geumseong-ri	금성리	錦成里
<i>Kwandŏkjŏng</i>	Gwandeokjeong	관덕정	觀德亭
<i>Kwidŏk-ri</i>	Gwideok-ri	귀덕리	歸德里
<i>Mokkwanaji</i>	Mokgwanaji	목관아지	牧官衙地
<i>Nohyŏng-tong</i>	Nohyeong-dong	노형동	老衡洞
<i>Samdo</i>	Samdo	삼도	三徒
<i>Samsŏnghyŏl</i>	Samseonghyeol	삼성혈	三姓穴
<i>Sanch'ŏndan</i>	Sancheondan	산천단	山川壇
<i>Sanjich'ŏn</i>	Sanjicheon	산지천	山地川
<i>Sarabong</i>	Sarabong	사라봉	沙羅峰
<i>Sehwa-ri</i>	Sehwa-ri	세화리	細花里
<i>Sin-Cheju</i>	Sin-Jeju	신제주	新濟州
<i>Sŏmun</i>	Seomun	서문	西門

<i>T'amna Munhwa Kwangjang</i>	Tamna Culture Plaza	탐라문화광장	耽羅文化廣場
<i>T'apdong</i>	Tapdong	탑동	塔洞
<i>Todu-tong</i>	Dodu-dong	도두동	道頭洞
<i>Tongmun</i>	Dongmun	동문	東門
<i>Udo</i>	Udo Island	우도	牛島
<i>Wŏlchŏng-ri</i>	Woljeong-ri	월정리	月汀里
<i>Wŏnjŏngt'ong</i>	Wonjeongtong	원정통	元町通
<i>Yongdam-tong</i>	Yongdam-dong	용담동	龍潭洞
<i>Yŏn-tong</i>	Yeon-dong	연동	連洞

*Sŏgwip'o-si Place Names in Standard Korean*

Place Name	Official Name	Han'gŭl	Hancha
<i>Sŏgwip'o-si</i>	Seogwipo City	서귀포시	西歸浦市
<i>Pŏphwan-tong</i>	Beophwan-dong	법환동	法還洞
<i>Hach'ŏn-ri</i>	Hacheon-ri	하천리	下川里
<i>Hanon</i>	Hanon	하논	大沓
<i>Honinji</i>	Honinji	혼인지	婚姻池
<i>Hwanhaejangsŏng</i>	Hwanhaejangseong	환해장성	環海長城
<i>Ilch'ulbong</i>	Sunrise Peak	일출봉	日出奉
<i>Kangjŏng-tong</i>	Gangjeong-dong	강정동	江汀洞
<i>Kosŏng-ri</i>	Goseong-ri	고성리	古城里
<i>Namwŏn-ŭp</i>	Namwon-eup	남원읍	南元邑
<i>Nansan-ri</i>	Nansan-ri	난산리	蘭山里
<i>Onp'yŏng-ri</i>	Onpyeong-ri	온평리	溫坪里
<i>P'yosŏn-myŏn</i>	Pyoseon-myeon	표선면	表善面
<i>Sinsan-ri</i>	Sinsan-ri	신산리	新山里
<i>Sinsigaji</i>	Seogwipo New Town	신시가지	新市街地
<i>Sŏngsan-ŭp</i>	Seongsan-eup	성산읍	城山邑
<i>Sinch'ŏn-ri</i>	Sincheon-ri	신천리	新川里
<i>Susan-ri</i>	Susan-ri	수산리	水山里
<i>T'ae'hŭng-ri</i>	Taeheung-ri	태흥리	泰興里
<i>Yerae-tong</i>	Yerae-dong	예래동	猊來洞

*General Terms*

Romanized Term	Han'gŭl	Meaning
<i>Chejudaun</i>	제주다운	Cheju-esque
<i>Chejusaram</i>	제주사람	Cheju person
<i>ch'ehŏm</i>	처험	experience
<i>chesa</i>	제사	ancestor rites; occasionally conflated with <i>kut</i>



<i>Ch'ilsǒng</i>	칠성	Seven Stars of the Northern Ladle (Big Dipper)
<i>Pukgŭksǒng</i>	북극성	Polaris (North Star)
<i>Chosŏn</i>	조선	Chosŏn Dynasty
<i>chungsan'gan</i>	중산간	Mid-mountain region
<i>chungyo muhyǒng munhwaje</i>	중요 무형 문화제	Important Intangible Cultural Asset
<i>haenyŏ</i>	해녀	women divers
<i>ijumin</i>	이주민	migrant
<i>insa</i>	인사	greeting; abbreviated ritual for a visiting deity
<i>Ipch'un</i>	입춘	Approach of Spring
<i>Kŭmgwan</i>	금관	Kŭmgwan Kaya (present-day Kimhae)
<i>Koryŏ</i>	고려	Koryŏ Dynasty
<i>kudosim</i>	구도심	old city center
<i>kyǒngkwan</i>	경관	landscape
<i>kǒlgung</i>	결궁	percussive music procession
<i>kut</i>	굿	shamanic ritual
<i>kuttang</i>	굿당	private ceremonial space for shamanic rituals
<i>maülje</i>	마을제	village-wide ritual
<i>min'gan sinang</i>	민간 신앙	“popular religion”
<i>minsokch'on</i>	민속촌	folk village
<i>minsok sinang</i>	민속 신앙	“folk religion”
<i>munhwa illyuhak</i>	문화 인류학	cultural anthropology
<i>munhwaje</i>	문화제	cultural asset
<i>noindang</i>	노인당	senior citizens' center
<i>oejiin</i>	외지인	outsider
<i>p'aengnamu</i>	팽나무	<i>Celtis sinensis</i> (Chinese hackberry tree)
<i>pokchi hoegwan</i>	복지 회관	welfare center
<i>pujǒng</i>	부정	taboo
<i>p'ungǒje</i>	풍어제	prosperity rite; often conflated with <i>kut</i>
<i>pyǒnsa</i>	변사	silent film interpreter
<i>Silla</i>	신라	Silla kingdom
<i>sinch'e</i>	신체	object where shamanic deity can enter
<i>sink'al</i>	신칼	ceremonial knives for divination
<i>sinkwaseje</i>	신과세제	Lunar New Year ritual to greet patron gods
<i>sinmok</i>	신목	holy tree at shamanic shrine
<i>songbyǒlje</i>	송별제	send-off rites for a visiting deity
<i>sǒng'an / sǒngnae</i>	성안 / 성내	“within the city walls”
<i>T'amna</i>	탐라	T'amna civilization
<i>t'amhǒm</i>	탐험	“exploration”
<i>tanggol</i>	당골	shamanic shrine patrons

<i>tapsa</i>	답사	historical survey tour
<i>t'obagi</i>	토박이	“native”
<i>toldam</i>	돌담	rock walls
<i>tolle ttök</i>	돌레 떡	round flat rice cake
<i>tokkaebi</i>	도깨비	goblin
<i>undong</i>	운동	“movement”
<i>wöndosim</i>	원도심	“original city center”
<i>yukji</i>	육지	mainland (in reference to peninsular Korea)

#### A.4 Chejuö Terms and Local Place Names (with Annotations)

The following words and terms were still commonly used in Cheju. Most place names have been replaced with standard Korean forms, but some are still pronounced according to local speech. As Chejuö varies by region, spelling and pronunciation roughly rendered here may not conform to the Cheju City dialect, the de facto standard. Vowels marked with an asterisk indicate it is intended to be an ‘*arae a*,’ which is pronounced as a sound in between the *a* and *ö* in Korean.

##### *Proper Names (Chejuö)*

Chejuö Place Name	Standard Korean	Hang’ül	Hancha
<i>Alttürü</i>		알뜨르	
<i>Ch’ilmöri-tang</i>		출머리당	
<i>Chindürü</i>		진드르	
<i>Chimnyöng</i>	<i>Kimnyöng</i>	짐녕	
<i>Chöngt’ürü</i>		정트르	
<i>Handugi</i>	<i>Taedok Maül</i>	한두기	大瀆
<i>Hanjil-kol</i>	<i>Hanjit-kol</i>	한짓골	大路洞
<i>Kaksi-tang</i>		각시당	
<i>Kotchit-tang</i>	<i>Ko-ssit-tang</i>	고셋당	
<i>P’aengdae</i>	<i>P’yöngdae</i>	팽대	坪岱里
<i>Pyöngmok-kol</i>	<i>Pyöngmun-kol</i>	병목골	
<i>Mugünsöng</i>	<i>Chinsöngdong</i>	무근성	陳城洞
<i>Saemi</i>	<i>Hoech’eon-tong</i>	새미	回泉洞
<i>Sinsönmoru</i>		신선모루	
<i>Sö*hwa</i>	<i>Sehwa</i>	서*화	細花

<i>Sölsaemit-tang</i>		설새맷당	
<i>Sön-ssi Ilwöl-tang</i>	<i>Hyön-ssi Ilwöl-tang</i>	선씨 일월당	
<i>Tonjit-tang</i>		돈짓당	
<i>Yölli</i>	<i>Yerae</i>	열리	猯來
<i>Yöruni</i>	<i>Yönhon-ri</i>	여루니	連婚里

### General Terminology

Romanized Term	Han'gŭl	Meaning
<i>ækmaegi</i>	액매기	ritual action to throw out misfortune
<i>anköri</i>	안거리	interior house of a Cheju walled compound
<i>bakköri</i>	박거리	outer house of a Cheju walled compound
<i>charijöt</i>	자리젓	A fish paste made from <i>Chromis notata</i>
<i>chö*myö</i>	점*녀	women divers
<i>chorang</i>	조랑	pony
<i>halmang</i>	할망	“grandmother”
<i>hanöraegi / ch'öllaeagi / turaegi / tö*raegi / turöraegi</i>	하늘애기 / 천래기 / 두래기 / 더*래기 / 두르래기	<i>tricosanthes kirlowii var. japonica</i> , a type of wild gourd vegetable used as a charm to ward colds or eaten as a traditional medicine
<i>harübang</i>	하르방	“grandfather”
<i>ilrwedang</i>	일뤼당	7 <sup>th</sup> -day shrine
<i>kime</i>	기메	decorative paper at rituals
<i>kotjawal</i>	곶자왓	dense primeaval forests
<i>kwendang</i>	퀼당	communal mutual exchange of labor or favors
<i>kwiyangp'uri</i>	귀양풀이	postmortem ritual to send off spirit
<i>nangswae</i>	낭췌	wooden ox used in Ipch'un festival
<i>okdom</i>	옥돔	<i>Brachistegus japonicus</i> fish
<i>olle</i>	올레	narrow path between rock walls leading to a house, field, or shrine
<i>orüm</i>	오름	parasite cinder cone

<i>p'ach'i</i>	과치	Cheju expression to refer to something that seems malformed or imperfect
<i>pille</i>	빌레	rock formation made of rapidly-cooled lava
<i>p'oje</i>	포제	Confucian-style village ritual for village gods
<i>ponhyangdang</i>	본향당	village main shrine
<i>ponp'uri</i>	본पुर리	origin myth for Cheju gods
<i>simbang</i>	심방	Cheju shaman
<i>somi</i>	소미	Cheju shaman's assistant
<i>Söngju</i>	성주	title of T'amna rulers
<i>söngjup'uri</i>	성주풀이	shamanic ritual to consecrate new building
<i>saedö*rim</i>	새더*림	ritual seed-spreading to pray for good harvest or fishing
<i>saemi</i>	새미	spring
<i>senjari</i>	센자리	seat of divine energy
<i>swedang</i>	쉐당	“cow shrine”
<i>tang maen simbang</i>	당 맨 심방	village main shaman
<i>uyöng</i>	우영	household vegetable patch
<i>yö*düredang</i>	여*드레당	8 <sup>th</sup> -day shrine
<i>yowang maji</i>	요양 맞이	ritual to greet Dragon King
<i>yukjikköt</i>	육지것	derogatory term for mainland Koreans

### *Cheju Pantheon*

Cheju has an enormous pantheon with each specific shrine having its own set of patron spirits. The ‘universal’ deities, however, are all mentioned in the twelve *ilban ponp'uri* that all Cheju lineage shamans are required to know. The following are only a handful of these many deities.

Romanized Name	Han'gŭl	Function
<i>Chö*ch'öngbi</i>	자*청비	Cross-dressing warrior goddess of agriculture
<i>Ch'önjiwang</i>	천지왕	Sky god of Cheju pantheon
<i>Ch'ongmaeng Puin</i>	총맹부인	Earth mother
<i>Kamünjang'aegi</i>	가문장애기	Heroine of <i>Samgong ponp'uri</i> , Goddess of fortune

<i>Paekchutto</i>	백주또	Patron goddess of agriculture and civilization
<i>Sansin</i>	산신	Mountain god
<i>Samsŭng Halmang</i>	삼승 할망	Goddess of childbirth
<i>Sobyŏl</i>	소별	Lord of the human realm
<i>Soch'ŏn'guk</i>	소천국	God of hunting and ex-husband of Paekchutto
<i>Taebyŏl</i>	대별	Lord of the spirit realm
<i>Yŏngdŭng</i>	영등	Deity of the wind
<i>Yŏmna</i>	염라	King of the underworld
<i>Yowang</i>	요왕	The Dragon King

### A.5 Classical Arabic Terms

Romanization	Classical Arabic	Translation
<i>ibn Khaldūn</i>	ابن خلدون	Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406)
<i>'ilm</i>	علم	knowledge
<i>'ilm al-'umran</i>	علم العمران	science of civilization; ekistics
<i>'asabiyyah</i>	عصبية	solidarity, tribalism
<i>badawī</i>	بدووي	“Bedouin,” nomadic
<i>ḥaḍārah</i>	حضارة	sedentary, urban

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