

## Dark Tourism of an Ongoing Issue: A case study of the Jeju April 3rd Incident, Korea

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### Abstract

This paper aims to explore dark tourism regarding the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, which was a series of armed uprisings and counterinsurgencies on Jeju Island, South Korea, that began on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1948, and which resulted in the deaths of several thousand of the island's inhabitants. Specifically, we aimed to analyze Korean visitors' motives for visiting the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park (a memorial park on the island devoted to the incident), their reactions to the park, and how their experiences in the park affected their understanding of the incident.

A review was conducted of articles and books on the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, as well as literature on the theme of dark tourism. Further, in 2016 and 2018 fieldwork involving in-depth interviews was undertaken at the Memorial Hall in the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park, which involved *in-situ* site visits and participant observation.

Our findings suggest that the prevailing taboo socio-political situation motivates Korean to visit the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park, with many Korean tourists seeking to obtain their perspectives of contemporary Korean history,

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including the incident and its continuity. Thus, dark tourism regarding the incident plays a radical role as a mediator and social filter between the past and the present.

**Key words** : Dark Tourism, Jeju April 3rd Incident, Ideological Conflict

## 1. Introduction

Dark tourism is generally defined as “travel to places associated with death, disaster and destruction” (Sharpley 2009:12). Dark tourism was emphasized as a theme in tourism studies in the late 1990s; it then became a mainstream aspect of such studies (Light 2017). Light, who reviewed dark tourism research from 1996 to 2016, evaluated the progress in six key topics and debates: issues of the definition and scope of the concepts, ethical issues associated with such forms of tourism, the political and ideological dimensions of dark tourism and thanatourism, the nature of the demand for places of death and suffering, the management of such places, and the methods of research used to investigate such tourism.

He notes that “motivations are now reasonably well understood, although future research can continue to explore why people choose to visit such places and the extent to which an interest in death plays a role in the decision to visit such places” (Light 2017: 295). He also suggests that dark tourism research needs to focus on the social contexts of visits and requires more nuanced models. Further, light also suggests that the visitor experience will require more nuanced models of visitors.

Stone (2008) sought to describe dark tourism from a thanatological perspective, stating in his work that he “set out to enhance the theoretical

foundations of the phenomenon of dark tourism by considering it within a broader thanatological perspective, exploring, in particular, the relationship between dark tourism consumption and contemporary social responses to death and mortality” (Stone 2008:589). Further, he also noted that “dark tourism allows death to be brought back into the public realm and discourse, thus acting as a de-sequester that allows absent death to be made present.” (Stone 2008:589). In a later work, Stone (2012) argued that dark tourism represents a mediator and a potential social filter between life and death.

Meanwhile, Light pointed out that “the use of western frameworks for understandings the tourism-death relationship in other parts of the world may not be appropriate” (Light 2017: 296). In fact, many tourism studies have already indicated that the “Western” method of thinking about the relationship between the living and the dead may not be appropriate (see Light 2017; Lee et al. 2012; Yoshida et al. 2016).

Stone’s approach should be evaluated by considering dark tourism in terms of both social and cultural contexts; as Light argues: “like attempts to understand dark tourism in the context of postmodernism, the mortality mediation model insists that dark tourism must be understood with reference to its broader social and cultural context” (Light 2017:289).

Further, Sharpley points out that dark tourism should be seen as a context for exploring the relationship between the tourist and the (dark) site, and should be treated “not as a category of tourism consumption” (Sharpley 2014: 23). He also states that “research into tourist experience (emotion or otherwise) of dark sites offers a potentially fruitful avenue for future research, and dark tourism should be viewed as a context for exploring the relationship between tourists at dark sites and the (dark) events that they represent” (Sharpley 2017: 182). He suggests that tourism study should focus on the role

and the influence of dark sites/attractions as mediators between the dark events they represent and the tourists who visit them.

Based on these theories and viewpoints, this paper explores the motives behind dark tourism relating to the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, which occurred in Jeju, South Korean in 1948, considering how the socio-political context of the Korean Peninsula has influenced Korean tourists to visit this area. Further, we also focus on Korean tourists' motives for visiting the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park, a memorial park on Jeju, as well as changes in their perceptions and understandings of the incident after their visits.

## ***2. The Jeju April 3rd Incident and relevant dark tourism***

The term “dark tourism” became widespread in South Korea in the late 2000s (Todoroki 2013), and Jeju, an island, located off the south coast of the Korean Peninsula, has become a notable dark tourism destination in the country. Both foreign and domestic tourists now visit heritage sites in South Korea related to Japanese colonial rule, as well as sites related to the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, including the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park.

The Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident is regarded as one of the most tragic events in contemporary Korean history. Article 2 of the *Special Act on Discovering the Truth of the Jeju 4.3 Incident and the Restoration of Honor of Victims* defines the *Jeju April 3rd Incident* as "an incident in which the lives of inhabitants were sacrificed in the riot that arose on April 3, 1948, starting from March 1, 1947, and in the process of armed conflicts and suppression thereof that took place in Jeju-do and suppression thereof until September 21, 1954" (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2014: 688).

## 2.1. Dark tourism relevant to the Jeju April 3rd Incident Research

Many books have been published on modern and contemporary Korean history, especially after the issuance of a history textbook in South Korea (Kim et al. 2008; Choi and Lee 2012; Seo 2013). Intense debates over the modern and contemporary Korean history textbook took place throughout the second half of 2008 (Kim 2009). Some conservative groups and economic organizations argued that the contents of the modern and contemporary Korean history textbook should be revised because it was seen as inclined toward the left (Kim 2009:31). Kim points out that the most serious problem in the debate was that the content of the textbook was revised, and the autonomic rights of the author and the teacher were invaded by political authorities. One of the main themes of the controversy concerned the Jeju April 3rd Incident; the publication of books with various stances on the Incident has been ongoing, not only in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) but also in Japan (Ji 2011; Kim 2016; Mun 2005; Hur 2014).

After the promulgation of *The Special Law for Investigation of Truth about the Jeju 4.3 Incident and Honoring Victims* on January 12, 2000; the publication of *The Investigation Report of the Jeju 4.3 Incident* on March 29, 2003; and the opening of the Jeju April 3rd Peace Park in 2008, many scholars have been investigating the Incident as well as relevant dark tourism.

Kim (2003) categorizes the development course of literature activities into four periods: the stage of non-substantial and abstract approaches (1948-1978), the stage of disclosure of its tragedy (1978-1987), the stage of earnest protest discussion (1987-1999), and the stage of searching for new ways (2000-). Park (2007), one of the most distinguished researchers of the Jeju April 3rd Incident and one of the authors and editorial members of *The Jeju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report*, summarized the public recognition and

description of *Jeju 4.3* with review descriptions from newspapers and history textbooks from the Republic of Korea. He also attempted to determine the impact of the Korean War (1950-1953) on local Jeju society (Park 2010). Hur (2004) pointed out the limitations of *The Investigation Report of the Jeju 4.3 Incident*. Seo (2014) aimed to discuss the Jeju April 3rd incident, the 2/28 Incident of Taiwan, and the Battle of Okinawa in the context of the Cold War in East Asia.

## 2.2. Process of Revealing the Truth about the Jeju April 3rd Incident

The Jeju April 3rd Incident broke out and continued in Jeju during the US military government regime (1945-1948), and was regarded as a communist rebellion under the Rhee Syng-man administration (1948-1960), the first government after the colonial period that was ruled by Japan. Over two decades after the 5/16 Coup in 1961, “any type of discourse related to the 4.3 Incident became taboo” under the Anti-Communist Law, National Security Law, and the Guilt-by-Association System (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017a: 47).

As the Special Report summarized, “regardless of being guilty or innocent, the family members of the dead by the Military and Police Punitive Force during the 4.3 Incident were under observation and were also limited for majority of social engagements under the Guilt-by-association System” so that “Jeju people and the bereaved suffered through the Red Complex of the Guilt-by-association System with no legal grounds” (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2014: 655). The psychological damage of the bereaved still continues even after the revoke of the Guilty-by Association System in 1981 (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2014).

As we can also see in the chapter titled “Long journey to discover the truth

on the 4.3 Incident” in *A Guide to the History of the Jeju 4.3 Incident*, mentioning and discussing the incident has long been taboo (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017a; see also Memorial Committee for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Uprising and Massacre 2018).

Literature activity depicting the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident has continued under serious censure by the government of South Korea. Such literature activities can be regarded as an indirect approach to the Incident, which used to be the only way to express a desire to find the truth. The literature activity also protested the fact that the government did not admit to any wrongdoing under the Anti-Communist Law, the National Security Law, or the Guilt-by-Association System. Through pro-democracy movements in the late 1980s and the civilian uprising in 1987, the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident became a critically important subject.

The April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident was put back on the discussion table after the pro-democracy movement of the late 1980s, and “it surfaced as a critical subject among students and civilian activists after the civilian uprising in 1987” (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017a:48). The Jeju 4.3 Research Institution was launched in 1989; it “compiled testimonies of eyewitnesses and published books, which in turn has become the basis for academic discourses” (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017a:49). The *Testimonies of 4.3 in Jeju Shinmun* and *The 4.3 Talks in Jemin Ilbo* helped document testimonies on the Incident, and “local TV networks in Jeju, as well, began airing special programs related to the 4.3 incident” (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017a: 49).

The People’s Committee for Promoting the 50th Commemoration of the 4.3 Incident was established in 1997. The Jeju 4.3 Special Law for Fact-Finding and Reputation Recovery was passed in 1999 (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017a:50), and The Special Law for Investigation of the Jeju 4.3 Incident and

Honoring Victims was promulgated in 2000; the central government then carried out an Investigation. The central government established the National Committee for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju April 3rd Incident, and also formed the Task Force for Preparing the Investigation Report.

The Committee for Investigating the Truth on the April 3rd Incident and Recovering Reputation for Victims (the 4.3 Committee) was launched under the 4.3 Special Law. The Committee “initiated projects such as writing and finalizing a fact-finding report, receiving claims from victims and their families and identifying them, creating 4.3 peace park and building a 4.3 peace memorial hall and offering financial support for medical care of victims and families and for daily lives of those disabled from the after-effects” (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017a: 52). The Committee adopted The Investigation Report of the Jeju 4.3 Incident on March 29, 2003. After the publication of *The Special Act on Discovering the Truth of the Jeju 4.3 Incident and the Restoration of Honor of Victims* was published in 2003, President Roh Moo-hyun, gave an official apology speech to residents of Jeju, the victims, and their families who suffered.

I, as the President, holding the responsibility of government, accept the Committee’s suggestion and truly extend my official apology for the wrongdoings of those national authorities in the past. (Memorial Committee for the 70th anniversary of the Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre 2018: 35)

This was the first official apology made by a president of the Republic of Korea. In 2004, 4.3 conservative groups petitioned the constitutional court to cancel the president’s apology speech. Jeju Island was represented as an



“Island of Peace” in 2005 based on the central government’s vision for representing peace through overcoming its dark history.

### **2.3. Protests of conservatives**

Yang (2014) summarized the process of the establishment of *The Special Law for Investigation of the Jeju 4.3 Incident and Honoring Victims*, as well as conflicts between the 4.3 Committee and conservatives regarding interpretations of the Incident. Crucial points will be illustrated here. In 1999, 23 conservative groups got together with the Assembly for a Thinking Constitution to protest the establishment of *The Special Law for Investigation of the Jeju 4.3 Incident and Honoring Victims*, asking to repeal the law. Kim Young-kab, a member of Congress, declared that the special law denied the history and legitimacy of the Republic of Korea. The 4.3 Committee began in 2000 with the following members: prime minister, minister of judicial affairs, national defense minister, the executive branch minister, health and welfare minister, planning budget minister, governor of Jeju province, representatives of victims’ families, scholars, lawyers, the former army general, and representatives of a citizens’ group.

Conflicts between the 4.3 Committee and a group of the former army general (*seonguhoe*) became prominent. A leader of the *seonguhoe* demanded the suspension of the law, stating that the report (draft) contained crucial mistakes that damage the honour and legitimacy of the Republic of Korea by defining military force and police suppression operations as wrongdoings on the part of national authorities.

In 2000, the conservatives argued that the decision of the 4.3 Committee defining and discussing victims and their families violated the constitution by neglecting congress’s role. They stated their concern, which was that deaths

from riots were being glorified as suffering. Finally, a constitutional court presented the standards. However, the conservatives demanded stricter standards, whereas representatives of victims' families held a meeting with indignation in 2001. A draft of standards for screening victims was approved in 2002. The draft basically accepted victims using a wide range of definitions, but the main members were those who participated in the 4.3 uprising and protested against punitive forces (except for armed guerillas). Further, in the case of this exception, verifiable corroborating facts were required to be submitted.

The conservatives argued that a crucial mistake in *The Special Law for Investigation of the Jeju 4.3 Incident and Honoring Victims* defamed the legitimacy of the Republic of Korea and damaged the right to the pursuit of happiness, freedom of conscience, and right of property. However, the constitutional court dismissed the request.

In 2008, conservatives demanded a repeal of the report, the cancellation of the park opening (including the memorial hall), the abandonment of victim decisions, and the combination and reorganization of the 4.3 Committee before the opening of the Jeju April 3rd Peace Park and the Memorial Hall. The request has not been approved because the report is based on the court's decision.

#### ***2.4. Public Recognition and How It Has Changed***

Last year, there were April 3rd ceremonies in Jeju. Seventy years have passed since the incident occurred. However, debates still take place over interpretations of the Incident, even after the publication of the *Special Act on Discovering the Truth of the Jeju April 3 Incident and the Restoration of Honor of Victims*. This section examines social cognition and its changes using

newspaper descriptions and textbooks on contemporary Korean history based on previous research (Park 2007) as well as on Korean history books.

According to Park (2007), the US military government viewed the Incident as involving a commando group attack, mobs, and a riot protesting the 5/1 general election that needed to be suppressed. Newspaper perceptions differed based on their political positions, but recognition and descriptions began to increase in neutral publications starting on June 1948, and the term "4.3 Incident" was introduced and used generally. However, the government of the Republic of Korea recognized 4.3 as a rebellion after the founding of the government on August 14, 1948. After the 4 · 19 Revolution in 1960, 4.3 was again perceived as an "incident", but the recognition of 4.3 changed after the 5/16 coup that is, the start of the military based regime of Park Chung Hee.

4.3 was not depicted at all in history textbooks in the first and second school curriculums. 4.3 came to be described as an "armed revolt of communists that occurred in Jeju-do (province) after the instigation North Korean Communists" in history textbooks in third and fourth school curriculums, starting in 1976 and 1979 (Park 2007: 187). No other perceptions were allowed, and discussion was fundamentally prohibited.

The democratization movement in 1987 attempted to find the truth about the prohibited contemporary history of South Korea, including 4.3. Uprising and resistance were brought up in education halls and civic society. Even after the democratization movement in 1987, the description of 4.3 in history textbooks in the fifth and sixth school curriculums, which began in 1990 and 1996, did not reflect the recognition that viewed the Incident as an uprising in civic society.

After the publication of *The Investigation Report of the Jeju 4.3 Incident*, public recognition of 4.3 returned to "incident" again. This can be found in the

description of the Incident in seventh school curriculum as follows:

After August 15, people in Korea wanted to construct one government on the Korean peninsula, but this dream could not come true under the Cold War. Under this circumstance, bloody situations occurred amongst the people who did not agree with the 5/1 General Election, which means the South Korean government was constructed along with military forces including the police. The Jeju April 3rd Incident and the Yeosu Suncheon 10/19 Incident are representative examples. After the 3/1 Commemoration Celebration, the 3/1 Shooting Incident occurred with firing by the police reserve. General strikes to protest the 3/1 Shooting Incident and request for punishment for whoever was in charge of the incident started. However, military forces suppressed these strikes with no concern for public sentiment. Several thousand people were imprisoned. This influenced the Jeju April 3rd Incident in 1948. Several hundred leftist people led an armed uprising. However, military force and police conducted extreme repression operations and devastation to the mountainous villages. In this process, the villagers were killed. The Jeju April 3rd Incident finished in 1954, but the islanders' wounded hearts are not yet healed.

(Park 2007: 193)

After the promulgation of the Special Law and publication of the report, recognition and description of the Incident in history textbooks changed as depicted above. The descriptions in books focusing on contemporary Korean history now vary with the stances of authors (see as Kim et al. 2008; Seo 2013). The perception of 4.3 differs from the author's point of view, whereas

recognition and use of the term “incident” generally began to be used after the report was published.

### ***2.5. The Jeju April 3rd Incident as an ‘Ongoing Issue’***

Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation, which has been assembled after the promulgation of *The Special Law for Investigation of Truth about the Jeju 4.3 Incident and Honoring Victims* in 2000, regards the Jeju April 3rd Incident as ‘uprising and massacre’, which is ongoing as written below (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation, 2018:35-36).

The April 3rd Uprising and Massacre is not over yet. Sadly, the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre is not yet resolved. Many obstacles are still found in different parts of the country. Even though Koreans impeached former President Park Geun-hye, tooted corruption continues to exist. This applies to the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre. No one was punished for the vicious and tragic past as a perpetrator. Worse yet, it is not even clear who the said perpetrators are. For a long time, those who are responsible for the massacre denounced the spirit of the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre as “communism” instead of apologizing for what they did. No proper acknowledgement was given to those who were killed while protesting against the division of a country and war. They are simply mentioned as “victims” or even considered as offenders against state power. They were even framed as “reds” and as is clear, being called “reds” justified all illegal actions against them. “What Jeju islanders wanted to achieve was a united and peaceful country without the threat of war.” Unfortunately, their efforts failed and now, the Korean peninsula is one of the countries with the highest risk of a possible war. The political

situation is unstable because we do not know when a war might break out. If a unified country had only been established 70 years ago, these tensions and anxiety would not exist. This is why the April 3rd Uprising and Massacre is an ongoing issue.

However, this understanding is controversial. First of all, the term “uprising” which Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation uses is not a general perception in Korea. According to a recent survey about the characteristics of 4.3 (Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017b:10), perceptions of 4.3 vary, as Figure 1 shows. Overall, 69.9% of Jeju residents and 38.5% of other Koreans recognize 4.3 as a “massacre of civilians” while 7.8% of Jeju residents and 20.8% of other Koreans recognize 4.3 as “incident”. Further, 5.5% of Jeju residents and 19.5% of other Koreans recognize it as “uprising” while 13.4% of Jeju residents and 8.2% of

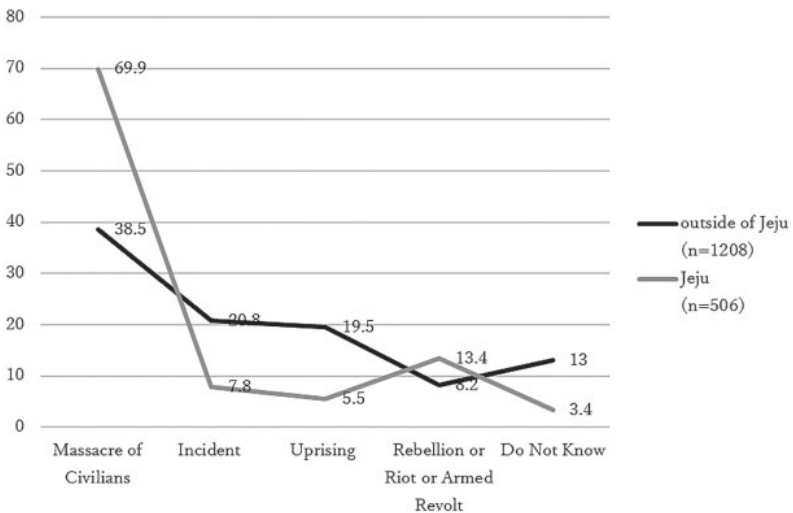


Figure 1. Perception of the Jeju April 3rd Incident (%)

Source: Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation 2017b:10

other Koreans recognize it as a “rebellion, riot, or armed revolt”.

The recognition of 4.3 as a “Massacre of Inhabitants” far exceeds the other perceptions of “uprising”, “incident”, “rebellion, riot, or armed revolt” though there is a clear gap between Jeju residents and other Koreans. It is also obvious that there are varying degrees of recognition across Korean society.

As previously mentioned, there are significant debates regarding recognition of the incident. Koreans can find the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident difficult to discuss because recognition of the incident is considered an ideological action. Moreover, the division of the Korean Peninsula has also influenced attitudes toward the topic. The perception of the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident as a “massacre of civilians” can be understood in this context. Focusing on a result without identifying or specifying wrongdoers is a way of avoiding criticism. The term “ongoing issue” can be used to describe a situation such as this, in which conflicting points of view prevail.

## ***2.6. The Jeju April 3rd Peace Park***

The Jeju April 3rd Peace Memorial Hall and the Jeju April 3rd Peace Park opened in 2008, and the park received over 600,000 visitors in four years (Jang and Choi 2011; Kang and Lee 2011). The number of visitors, especially non-local visitors (Korean, outside of Jeju), has increased, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. In particular, there was a significant increase in the number of Korean visitors to the park (both as individuals and in groups) from 2014 to 2016, while the number of foreign visitors remained comparatively low (see Figure 3).

April 3<sup>rd</sup> was designated a memorial day by the central government in 2014. These changes could be regarded as a direct approach to the Incident in terms of helping Koreans to easily approach incidents, including by way of dark tourism.

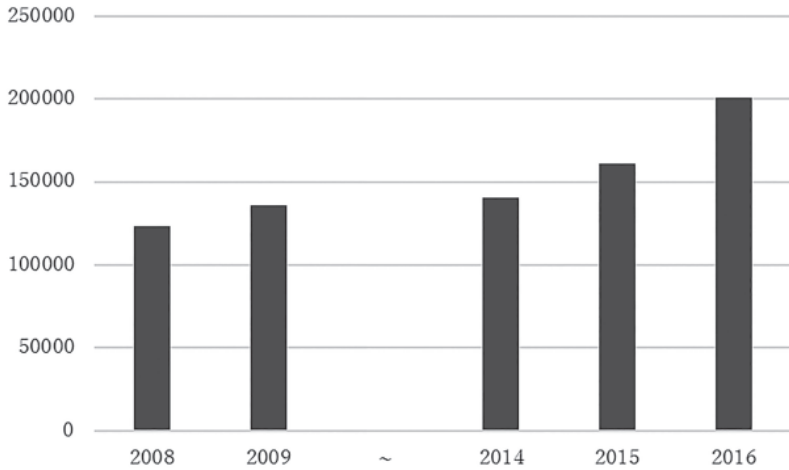


Figure 2. Status of Visitors (2008-2009, 2014-2016) (Unit: Person (s))

Source: Jang and Choi 2011:66; Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation homepage

Notes: 2008-2009 Visitors to the Jeju 4.3 Peace Park, 2014-2016 Visitors to the Jeju 4.3 Memorial Hall

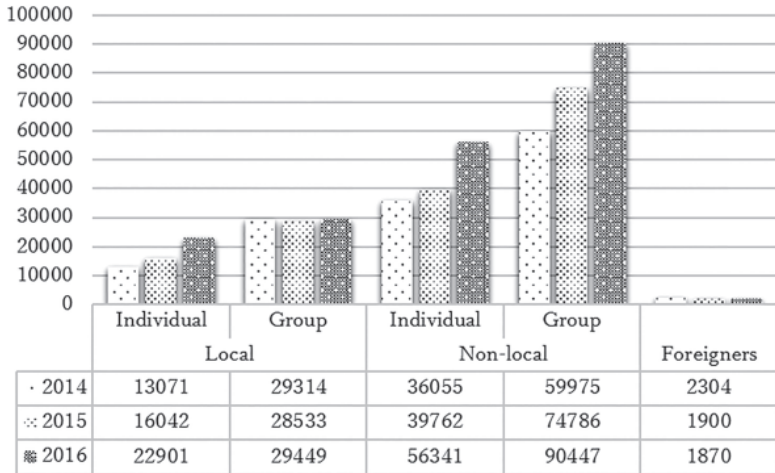


Figure 3. Status of Visitors (2014-2016) (Unit: Person (s))

Source: Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation homepage



The Jeju April 3rd Peace Park has also been highlighted since its opening in 2008 (Jang 2012; Kim 2014; Hong and Yook 2015; Jun and Park 2016). Moreover, tourism motives have been analyzed using quantitative methods (Kang and Lee 2011; Jang and Choi 2011). According to Kang and Lee (2011), learning (“to learn something about the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident”) was overwhelmingly the most popular motive for visiting the park and the second popular most reason was obligation (“felt obligation to understand the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident”). Jang and Choi (2011) categorized Korean visitors into the historical-value-seeking group and multipurpose group based on factor analysis and cluster analysis. They determined that the historical-value-seeking group showed more interest in history, and its members were more liberal than those in the multipurpose group. Obligation accounts for visits to the park, and many residents of Jeju were included in this group. Meanwhile, the multipurpose group was motivated by social reasons such as strengthening relationships between family members or friends. Many people in this group were visiting the park for the first time, and they found an overview of the park and understood it using guidebooks. The members of this group were relatively conservative and the group included more tourists from outside of Jeju compared to local tourists (residents of Jeju).

This result links to other research results that divided groups based on different motives such as learning and obligation, social reasons (e.g., bringing their friends or relatives with them, spending a meaningful day out) and curiosity, or compulsory educational programs (Kang et al. 2012). According to this research, learning and obligation and social reasons and curiosity were significantly related to the six dimensions of cognitive experiences (personal concern, related issues, the April 3rd Incident) and affective experiences (the April 3rd Incident, the environment at the park, the circumstances of Korea).

However, compulsory educational program motives were not related to any visitor learning or emotional experience dimensions. In particular, tourists whose reason for visiting the Jeju April 3rd Peace Park was learning or obligation "tended to think more about issues related to the April 3rd Incident, such as ideological conflict or Korean contemporary history in general, than focusing solely on innocent victims or survivors of the April 3rd Incident and recollection of personal memories of the Incident" (Kang et al. 2012: 261).

However, visitors whose purposes included social reasons and curiosity "were not likely to have a strong interest in learning about the incident or other issues, given it had no significant relationship with the dimensions of the April 3<sup>rd</sup> incident, and a relatively weak positive relationship with the dimension of related issues (e.g., ideological conflict of Korean contemporary history)" (Kang et al. 2012: 261). This result indicates that tourists have experienced the cognitive dimensions of related issues, such as ideological conflicts in Korea's contemporary history, even if there are differences in the extent of their motivations (with the exception of those who attend because of a compulsory educational program). Further, they indicate that learning and obligation are benefits for visitors.

Our research can provide valuable information regarding the motives and experiences of tourist visiting the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park, and their interrelationship. No previous work has examined the motives and experiences of tourists in terms of the socio-political context of the Korean Peninsula. Further, how tourists recognize the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident and its associated ideological conflict also remains uninvestigated.

### 3. Methodology

This study conducted a literature review of articles and books regarding the contemporary history of the Korean Peninsula, especially those related to the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident and dark tourism. Further, the results of surveys and reports, including the Investigation Report of the Jeju 4.3 Incident were reviewed.

Additionally, we designed a questionnaire and semi-structured interview in an attempt to determine the experience of visitors to the dark tourism site, and how their visits influenced their interpretations of the events in question. The questionnaire included four sections; the respondent's profile, tour plan, recognition of the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident and the personal impact of their visit, and their recognition of 'death' and the division of the Korean Peninsula.

The study population comprised visitors to the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park. Fieldwork was undertaken at the park in March 2016 and December 2018, comprising *in-situ* site visits, participant observation and interviews. Interview data were collected on December 2018 at the Memorial Hall. A total of 37 respondents provided data during the fieldwork. The questionnaire was originally developed in Korean and the interviews were approximately 5 to 15 minutes in duration.

### 4. Findings and Discussions

#### 4.1. Respondents' characteristics

This study examined 37 visitors; 36 were from places other than Jeju, and one was a resident. All 37 agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews. The questions for the first and second sections covered the respondents' travel plans and their experiences in Jeju, which was designed to obtain an overview

**Table 1. Respondents' characteristics.**

Age	Male	Female	Sum
10s	1	1	2
20s	4	5	9
30s	3	0	3
40s	4	3	7
50s	5	3	8
60s	4	3	7
Over 70s	1	0	1
Total	22	15	37

of the visitors' motivations. The questions for the third, and fourth sections concerned how their recognition of the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, death, and the division of the Korean Peninsula changed after their visit, which aimed to gain an understanding of the visitors' dark tourism experiences in the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park.

All 37 respondents' interview data were used in this analysis. Male respondents (22) outnumbered their female respondents (15), while overall ages ranged from teenage years to 80s. For both male and female respondents, the 20s age group had the highest frequency while 70s had the lowest.

The respondents' frequency of visiting Jeju Island and the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park was determined by separating respondents into four groups: those who were visiting Jeju Island for the first time, those who had visited Jeju Island before, those who were visiting the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park for the first time, and those who had visited the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park before. Table 2 shows the group profiles in this regard.

This prior segmentation helped us to differentiate dark tourism visitors to Jeju and the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park in terms of visit frequency. Table 2 shows the respondents' visit frequency to Jeju Island and the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park. In our

**Table 2. Visit frequency.**

Variables	First visit	Revisit	Total
Jeju	2	35	37
4.3 Peace Park	31	6	37

sample, two respondents were visiting Jeju for the first time, while 35 respondents were revisiting Jeju. Meanwhile, 31 respondents were visiting the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park for the first time, while six were revisiting the park.

#### ***4.2. Motives and experiences of the Korean visitors***

Many respondents mentioned that they were visiting the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park in an attempt to find and understand the truth about the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, while others stated that, as Koreans, they felt obligated to see the site of the incident.

Q: Why did you decide to visit the park?

A: Here? Well [...] I could not access the information anywhere else. I checked some sources and searched for information about the incident, and I found this place [the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park]. So, I felt that I should visit here.

Q: Has your visit to the park affected your opinion of the incident?

A: Here, there are many more details available, particularly regarding the process of the outbreak and the number of casualties. It made me feel sad. It is difficult to confront such a sad history.

[man in his 30s, A]

Q: How has your visit influenced your understanding of the incident?

A: It has had a strong influence. First of all, there is the number of victims.

There is a big gap between what we were taught in school and the facts provided here. Most of the civilians (residents) of Jeju Island who were not directly involved in the incident and did not wish to participate in the uprising could not avoid engaging in the incident because of pressure from both sides. That resulted in a huge number of casualties, which surprised me. I had thought that the Namro-dang (the Jeju Chapter of the South Korean Labor Party) and the Seobuk Organization (a right-wing organization) had large numbers of members, which caused the high number of casualties, but this was not true, and it upset me.

[man in his 30s, B]

Most visitors to the park reported that they had some knowledge of the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, but did not fully understand it. They admitted that visiting the park helped them gain a more in-depth and “correct” understanding of the incident. However, a limited number of visitors said the visit did not have a significant influence on them. Instead, they discussed their own experiences with Jeju residents they had met during military service and in their workplaces, which allowed them to learn about the incident despite the current social-political situation that obscures the truth. Nevertheless, most respondents admitted that their visits influenced their understanding of the incident, and many mentioned that their interest had been piqued by media reports, including the news of a ceremony held on 2018 to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the incident, in which Moon Jae-in, the current President of the Republic of Korea, participated.

Q: How has your understanding of the incident changed since you visited

the park?

A: As you know, media is not neutral, some media describe events from a right-wing point of view, while other media adopt a left-wing point of view, so I felt that, to access the truth, I needed to come here and see for myself. In reality, the media does not deeply investigate such incidents, instead of focusing on ideology. Through my visit, I was able to gain an understanding of the Jeju residents' (the civilians') real feelings about the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident.

[man in his 40s, C]

In terms of acquiring knowledge about the event, most Korean visitors mentioned that they had not had an opportunity to learn comprehensively about the incident in school. In history textbooks, the incident was either not mentioned at all or was described as the result of rebel-led actions. Therefore, it is natural for Koreans who feel that they have insufficient knowledge of the incident to visit the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park to attempt to discover the truth for themselves. It is also possible to consider the influence of the conflict between the 4.3 Committee and conservatives, as well as the Korean Modern and Contemporary History textbooks issue of 2008.

Many of Korean visitors attributed the incident to “government misconduct,” and felt that many years of public indifference towards the incident, which continued up to the simultaneous promulgation of *the Special Law for investigating the Truth about the Jeju 4.3 Incident and Honoring the Victims*, obligated them to visit the site. They also mentioned that incidents such as this (i.e., caused by government misconduct) should not be repeated. Moreover, they attributed the misconduct not just to the governments of the 1940s and 1950s, but also the governments that suppressed the incident for

many decades, making it a taboo subject.

Q: How has your understanding of the event changed since you visited the park?

A: It has changed a lot. Well [...] how can I explain this? [...] The incident occurred because of government misconduct. We were taught in history that, it was caused by the reds (communists), by soldiers [...]. There are so many cases of ideologists using the incident to support their regimes, so I thought that we should think about it from the perspective of civilian distancing ourselves from ideology. Conservatives will criticize this opinion, and I know that ideology is crucial in our lives but matters of life and death should be considered from different points of view; this is my current opinion.

[woman in her 50s, D]

Q: What do you think of the incident, after visiting the memorial hall?

A: This kind of incident should not have happened. It was a tragedy caused by government misconduct, in which civilians were victims. Koreans need to correctly understand this incident to prevent similar incidents occurring in the future.

[man in his 60s, E]

Q: What do you think about the division of the Korean Peninsula?

A: It is regrettable. In fact, there was a period during the 2000s when we could visit Kungang Mountain (in North Korea). During the Roh Moo-hyun and Kim Dae-jung regimes, I thought similar areas would become more accessible, but this did not happen. I do not want a one-nation



state, but rather free accessibility. For instance, I want to visit Kaesong (North Korea), but this has become impossible, the political situation is so suffocating. Some of my friends think that “reds” are quite powerful in certain parties. This can be attributed to the one-sided education provided by the government. I think that the truth cannot be revealed unless the existing education process is changed. In the recent past, it was believed, without real evidence, that all reds (communities) are bad. After visiting the park, I now feel that we need to find or make a better life for everyone, without dividing the left and the right.

[woman in her 60s, F]

Q: Have your experiences during your visit changed your perspectives of your daily life?

A: I feel that I need to think more seriously about things I do not understand, not to base my opinions only on media reports and to try to identify “fake news” for myself. I grew up in Seoul, and when I was young I was taught that the incident was caused by a communists’ revolt. However, here I learned the truth. In general, when you get older, you become conservative, but I think I have become more rational, neither left nor right, but ethnological.

[F]

Interpretations of the incident varied depending on respondents’ stances or overall understanding. However, if we regard as “darkness” the long-existing taboo socio-political situation concerning the incident, it can be concluded that this climate has encouraged Koreans to visit the site to seek the truth for themselves, and also instilled a sense of obligation in them in this regard. In

fact, some respondents admitted that, although they had only visited the park because of peer pressure from companions, they now felt that every Korean should visit the park in order to learn the truth of the incident.

#### ***4.3. Recognition of the link between the Jeju April 3rd Incident and the division of the Korean Peninsula***

After visiting the park, some Korean visitors discerned a link between the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident and the division of the Korean Peninsula.

Before, I had never thought that this [the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident] had been influenced by the division of the Korean Peninsula, but there are some connections between the two.

[man in his 30s, A]

Q: How has your understanding of the incident changed since visiting the park?

A (G) : Learning the details has both confused and shocked me. Before visiting the park, I just thought, based on what I learned through the media, that the incident was shocking, but now that I am here, I find it really sad.

A (H) : Now, I have a correct understanding of the incident, but it is also very sad, both because it occurred and the huge numbers of casualties.

Q: What do you think of the division of the Korean Peninsula?

A (H) : The division of the Korean Peninsula [...]. As you know, we are not directly influenced by the division, we have only been taught about it in history books and Korean history textbooks, I don't really consider the issue deeply.

A (G): Neither do I [...]. I learned about it in a history textbook when I was young. Here, the Korean Peninsula is in a situation of division, and war can occur at any time [...]. I remember when I was young, I was so scared by news of attacks by North Korea.

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Q: Has your understanding of the division changed as a result of your visit to the park?

A (G and H) : No

A (G): I realized that ideology and division influenced the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident. Before visiting the park, I just thought the incident was a really horrible tragedy.

A (H) : Yes, I also understood that after visiting here. I had no idea that the incident was related to the division of the Korean Peninsula. Here, I found that the incident had influenced it to some extent, but I did not really think about it in-depth.

[female friends in their 20s, G and H]

G and H, respondents in their 20s, admitted that they did not know the complicated background of the incident, and that, as a result, the incident was not easy to understand in-depth. H understood that the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident influenced the division of the Korean Peninsula (although it is natural to think the division influenced the incident). However, despite recognizing the link between the incident and the division, she felt her understanding was limited. In contrast, other visitors clearly mentioned the link between the incident and the division, with one respondent even using the word “ongoing.”

Q: What are your thoughts about the incident?

A: I was initially interested in what I believed to be a historical incident, but after visiting the park I found that it is an ongoing issue. How can I explain it [...]? I felt extremely solemn. Visiting places such as Tombstone Park for the Missing caused me to think that the effects of the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident persist. It became a chance to rethink the grief experienced by both the bereaved families and the other Jeju residents.

Q: What do you think of the division of the Korean Peninsula? Has your visit changed your understanding of it?

A: My understanding of the division has not changed, but the division was a cause of the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, and the division has continued even after the incident.

[man in his 60s, I]

However, some respondents did not want to think of the link between the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident and the division of the Korean Peninsula. This was largely due to a desire to take a more careful approach to their interpretations of the incident, or to their representations of their political stances.

Q: What do you think of the division of the Korean Peninsula?

A: I have an interest in the issue; I cannot deny that I have an interest.

Q: Has your understanding changed since visiting the park?

A: I would not directly connect the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident with the division of the Korean Peninsula.

[man in his 40s, J]

Q: What do you think of the division of the Korean Peninsula? Has your understanding changed since visiting the park?

A: I have a huge interest in the division of the Korean Peninsula, but I don't like to think that this [the April 3rd Incident] and the division of the Korean Peninsula are linked to each other.

[man in his 50s, K]

Q: Has your understanding changed since visiting the park?

A: Not really, I would like to understand both sides' perspectives of the incident but, unfortunately, I cannot accept information without references. I found the representation in the memorial hall confusing because it cannot be understood without references; I feel it lacks primary materials. I did not understand the representation.

[man in his 50s, L]

As the above statements show, there are various interpretations of the link between the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident and the division of the Korean Peninsula. In other words, recognition of a link between the incident and ideological conflict, or the experience of ideological conflict, varies between individuals.

The reasons for these differences in understanding could be related to successive governments' creation of a taboo socio-political situation surrounding the incident, and their use of ideological conflict to support their own regimes. If Korean visitors wish to understand the incident "correctly", they must discard the perspective of ideological conflict. However, concurrently, if Korean visitors try to understand the incident without considering the ideological conflict that exists on the Korean Peninsula, they may fail to find the truth. This is an irony regarding both interpretations of the

incident and Korean contemporary history.

On the other hand, viewing the incident through the victims' perspectives is not sufficient to discern the entire story. As we can see from the visitors quoted below, interpreting such incident solely from the victims' perspectives may not be sufficient to understand the incidents and Korea's contemporary history.

Q: How do you feel after visiting the memorial hall?

A: Every time the regime or government changes [...] there is uncertainty because there is no fixed contemporary Korean history. When I came here this spring, I saw high school students and interpreters explaining the incident enthusiastically, but the high school students were only hearing the victims' side, not the full, complicated story.

[woman in her 50s, D]

## 5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to explore Koreans' dark tourism regarding the Jeju April 3rd Incident focusing on their motives for and experiences of visiting the April 3rd Peace Park. Previous research has revealed that a desire for information and a sense of obligation are the main reasons for visiting the Jeju April 3rd Peace Park and that many tourists experience an ideological conflict. However, these motives and experiences have not previously been discussed in socio-political contexts. Our findings suggest that the taboo socio-political situation that persists in South Korea motivates Koreans to visit the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park. Most of the Korean visitors we interviewed admitted that their motives were information and/ or a sense of obligation as Koreans, and they felt that

they had begun to gain a more in-depth and “correct” understanding of the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident after visiting the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park. Further, many respondents regarded the incident as having been caused by government misconduct, which reinforced the sense of obligation for Korean visitors.

However, there is a paradox regarding interpreting the incident and the link between the incident and the division of the Korean Peninsula. Many respondents tried to distance themselves from the ideological conflict in their interpretations of the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident, but contemporary Korean history cannot be free from ideological conflict, as it has been widely used politically. Many Korean visitors recognized that the situation on the Korean Peninsula has not changed since the incident; namely, the ongoing ideological conflict that divides North and South Korea. In fact, for some Koreans, interpretation of the incident is regarded as an ideological stance, which is a characteristic of an “ongoing issue.”

Although the Korean visitors did not all have the same understanding, dark tourism, including visiting the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park, helps Koreans to re-experience the ideological conflict of the Korean Peninsula, and it is clear that visiting the Peace Park causes Korean visitors to rethink contemporary Korean history, including the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident and its continuity, from their own perspectives.

In conclusion, dark tourism regarding the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident plays a radical role as a mediator and social filter between the past and the present. This tourism is based on the incident itself, the taboo socio-political situation, and the “ongoing” ideological conflict, which includes debates regarding interpretations of the incident and the division of the Korean Peninsula.

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