

Grounding History in Cheju Islanders' Travel Literature

Tommy Tran, University of California, Merced

Tran, Tommy. 2020. "Grounding History in Cheju Islanders' Travel Literature." *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 34: 46–67. <https://crosscurrents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-34/tran>.

Abstract

Cheju *kihaeng*, a small yet growing genre of academicized travel writing, looks at Cheju Island as existing in a liminal time and space or as a position. Writing amidst as well as against tourism's dominance on Cheju, *kihaeng* writers emphasize engagement with localities as vantage points from which one can not only recover long-ignored or suppressed subjectivities but also reject notions of Korean homogeneity. This article examines the books of Cheju historian and high school teacher Yi Yöngkwön, journalist Kim Hyöng-hun, and former Provincial Office of Education director Mun Yöngt'aek. Although these three authors share the overall objective of writing *kihaeng* literature from a Cheju islander's perspective, their scope and interests demonstrate overlapping and sometimes divergent approaches to grounding history in the island's geography as they respond to or criticize trends in Cheju cultural tourism since the early 2000s. These three authors' treatment of local history and what it means to identify as a Cheju person reveals multiple complex layers and anxieties about how to begin to define as well as interrogate a notion of the *Chejudodaun* (Cheju-esque).

Keywords: Cheju, Jeju Island, *kihaeng*, *tapsa*, travel writing, heritage, cultural tourism, South Korea

Cheju Utopia

At the opening of his 2015 "Iho T'e-u" exhibition, which focused on the remaining community of *chamsubu* (K. *haenyö*, women divers) in the coastal district of Iho-tong, photographer Kwon Choul (Kwön Ch'öl) discussed a paradox in South Korean perceptions of Cheju.¹ Kwon noted that although many people come to Cheju for short trips, they often leave without learning anything at all. Kwon's remarks may seem like an odd charge. An online search in Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and English of "Cheju" or "Jeju" (the now standard Revised Romanization) results in a pastiche of travel blogs,

¹ Although the official name is Jeju, I use the McCune-Reischauer romanization—"Cheju"—for the sake of consistency. *Chamsubu* is the term for women divers in the local language, Cheju.

cafe reviews, selfies, YouTube videos, and social media bildungsroman.² Kwon's point hit on a persistent contradiction in Cheju representations: Cheju is presented as a place that is somehow ever-present yet empty.

From 1965, when economic planners classified Cheju as a *t'ŭkchŏng chiyŏk* (specified region; Pu 2012, 20, 87),³ to the ongoing *Cheju t'ŭkbyŏl chachido* project (hereafter, Jeju Free International City, the official English title), various national policy iterations for province-specific development have consistently established Cheju as a key domestic tourism experiment with international potential. Many Cheju tourism photos feature the half-comical, half-imposing *tolharŭbang* (stone grandfather) village guardian statues standing in a serene unpopulated countryside or women divers at work against a backdrop of pristine sharp, black basalt rock and sapphire-blue coasts. Kwon's exhibition, by contrast, included what official tourism photos often leave out: Cheju City. Women divers were again the focus, but Kwon's photos demonstrated that Iho-tong women divers' work occupied the same time and spaces as the ever-changing city with its high-rise apartments and tourist hotels. Far from being a vestige of a lost age, women divers carry on with their daily work against and alongside tourism and urbanization. Aside from a commentary on rampant overdevelopment—which, ironically, pristine and exoticized images of Cheju helped to spur—Kwon critiqued the simulated absence of time and space in so many photographs in which “Cheju” is detached from Cheju (figure 1).

Cheju Island is one of the most visited locations in South Korea. Since 2017, it has had the dubious honor of being a destination for the world's busiest air route.⁴ The region was long shunned as barren and uncivilized prior to the twentieth century, but the supposedly pristine island became a profitable natural resource. Authorities rebranded Cheju as “the Hawai'i of Korea,” or *Tongyang-ŭi Hawai* (Hawai'i of East Asia) as early as 1966 (*Halla ilbosa* 2004, 108) to portray Cheju as a novelty getaway for the growing mainlander middle class. This characterization was also made explicit in 1985 development plans in which the National Development Institute described Cheju as a place to meet domestic tourism demands due to its “peculiar natural scenery and exoticness”⁵ (Kukt'o kaebal yŏn'guwŏn 1985, 12–13). Earlier plans had suggested liberalization with South Korea's projected economic changes by the end of the 1980s,

² An online search in March 2020 of Cheju *kihaeng* (travelogues) on the website of Kyobo Books (<http://www.kyobobook.co.kr>), South Korea's primary bookselling chain, results in a mere 25 results out of a total of 7,105 titles. A reconfigured search of Cheju *yŏhaeng* (travel) expands the results to an impressive 309. This is hardly an accurate gauge, but it does enable one to begin a line of inquiry.

³ *T'ŭkjŏng* can also be translated as “specific,” but I opt to render it as “specified” to indicate that it entailed a process.

⁴ This is the Seoul/Gimpo International Airport-Jeju International Airport route, according to *Routsonline* (<https://www.routsonline.com/news/29/breaking-news/274672/the-worlds-busiest-passenger-air-routes/>).

⁵ The translation is mine. The original phrase in Sino-Korean reads, “*t'ŭgihan p'ungmul-kwa iguksŏng.*”

but proposals for reforms to ease entry for foreign tourism and investment were not yet put into action. By the 2000s, however, national and local authorities were again exploring the prospect of liberalizing Cheju development—in the form of the Free International City project— to tap into new markets.⁶ The ongoing Free International City project’s intent is to center Cheju as a confluence of transnational tourism and investment flows by taking advantage of its geographical centrality in Northeast Asia (Tran 2017). Since South Korea’s post-1995 nationwide administrative decentralization, place-selling based on pop cultural affiliations and real or exaggerated local uniqueness has been a key strategy to uplift capital-starved local economies (Oh 2018, 10–13). Especially after the island’s 2009 opening to Chinese tourism and investment and the rise of weekend tourism via domestic budget airlines, an upsurge in idyllic media representations such as the 2017–2018 reality-TV series *Hyorine minbak* (Hyori’s bed and breakfast)⁷ have perpetuated Kwon’s wry observations.



Figure 1. High-rise buildings along the northern coast of Cheju City. Photo by the author (December 18, 2018).

⁶ See Pu (2012). In the early 1960s, the National Ministry of Construction and Transportation (now the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transportation) explored the idea of designating Cheju Island as a *chayuhang* (free port) modeled after Hong Kong. This idea was scrapped because Cheju City’s harbor lacked infrastructure and was not located along major shipping lines. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Free International City idea revived a similar concept, but the key component in this case was to make Cheju both a visa-free zone and allow for wealthy investors to secure permanent residency.

⁷ *Hyorine minbak* was premised on K-pop star Lee Hyori (Yi Hyori) and her husband Lee Sangsoon (Yi Sangsun) opening their home as a guesthouse for mainland Korean tourists and one American guest in the idyllic rural region of upland Aewöl-ŭp.

For many self-identified islanders, current portrayals of Cheju as a space outside regular time and space (only to be subject to violent disciplining when it deviates from national interests) are continual reminders that they still reside in a *nae-ŭi singminji* (internal colony).⁸ That a sharp increase in locally centered writings and public history initiatives is occurring amidst an extreme tourism boom is no coincidence. To assert authenticity via a personal connection to local geographies is to assert a self-assured resolve to retain place-bound Cheju memory or express outright resistance to place commoditization.

In this article, I focus on three travelogues: Cheju historian and high school teacher Yi Yŏngkwŏn's *Cheju yŏksa kihaeng* (A Cheju history travelogue), journalist Kim Hyŏnghun's *Cheju-nŭn kŭrŏn kos-i aniya* (Cheju is not that kind of place), and educator and former Provincial Office of Education director Mun Yŏngt'aek's *T'amna-ro ttŏnanŭn yŏksa munhwa kihaeng* (A historical cultural travelogue to T'amna). These three books differ in their intent and style of presentation, but all respond in varied degrees to the Free International City project's effects and emphasize a sense of local authority via their *t'obagi* (native) perspectives. *T'obagi* perspectives, implicitly or directly set against mainland South Korean and non-Korean views, as well as the dominance of tourism on the island, serve to re-ground Cheju as a lived geography and give spatiotemporal basis to what they insist is the *Chejudodaun* (Cheju-esque). This article is only an initial foray into the growing corpus of Cheju *kihaeng* (academicized travelogues) and is intended to open discussions on locally centered writing in an age of fast tourism.

***Kihaeng* and the Intellectual Tourist**

Some contextual discussion on *kihaeng* and *tapsa* (field investigation) is necessary to situate Cheju *kihaeng* within South Korea and the larger corpus of travel writing. Contemporary *kihaeng* can be characterized as academicized travel guides, travel books, memoirs, autobiographies, and lay-oriented history literature all at once. The authors, as active (and conspicuously masculine) guides, provide commentary and personal accounts alongside description and reinterpretation of selected historical facts, factoids, and truisms about the events associated with sites on the itineraries. As in the case of other forms of travel literature, *kihaeng* authors depend on the authority of personal testimony to "claim validity," or at least attempt to claim validity, "by referring to actual events and places" in personalized terms (Holland and Huggan 1998, 10). Contemporary *kihaeng* literature responds to and retains Korea's long travel-writing tradition in which

⁸ Literary scholar Kim Tonghyŏn interrogates the common South Korean practice of referring to South Korea in terms of "*uri*" (ours) and observes that the assumption of collectivity in the term elides the reality that the South Korean state violently repressed Cheju in order to make it a part of this collectivity of *uri*. Although the state's violent counterinsurgency against the 1947–1954 April Third Incident on Cheju is often taken as the most glaring example of this dynamic, Kim demonstrates that such Other-ing is prominent in mainland Koreans' writings about Cheju to the extent that they parallel colonial Japanese writings on Korea. See Kim T (2016, 273–279).

literati inscribe their ruminations on their current situations and their relations to past traces in physical spaces.⁹ Authors might include classical references, poetry, and excerpts of prior travel writing as if to claim the earlier traveler-literati as spiritual forebears. On the other hand, whereas much Koryŏ (918–1392) and Chosŏn (1392–1910) travel writing, such as Pak Chiwŏn’s *Yŏrha ilgi* (The Jehol diary; Pak 2010), tended to have some relationship to official functions or developed out of brief incidental interest, as did Chŏng Un’gyŏng’s *T’amna mun’gyŏn-rok* (Observations of T’amna, 2008), contemporary travel writing is premised on making local histories accessible and encouraging broad middle-class participation. Having a didactic function, *kihaeng* authors may subtly expect readers to not only follow the itineraries but also actively develop their faculties for aesthetic appreciation. Thus, the *modus operandi* of choice for many contemporary *kihaeng* is *tapsa*.

Tapsa may utilize *kihaeng* as itinerary guides or themselves be the basis for *kihaeng*. Anthropologist Robert Oppenheim describes *tapsa* as a kind of “serious fun that shades into mountain climbing on the one end and museumgoing on the other” (2008, 83). *Tapsa* involves a form of making a local or national community via shared aesthetic appreciation, heritage consumption, and citizen custodianship. Contemporary *tapsa* developed out of several crucial moments in South Korean history: (1) the deliberate creation of a national *munhwa yusan* (cultural assets) repertoire for developmentalist nationalism under the Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi) regime (1961–1979); (2) the democracy activism that centered the *minjung* (masses) as prime actors of an often victimized yet resistant Korean nation; (3) the ambivalent reception of globalization in the late twentieth century and the fallout of the 1997 IMF crisis; and (4) the popularization of heritage discourse in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century in conjunction with local administrative moves to market local uniqueness. Oppenheim argues that the sites themselves have become crucial to shifting perceptions of national and local identities as they mediate desires as well as anxieties (2008, 13–15). One therefore performs national and local identities in the practice of engaging with sites and retrieving (or at least attempting to retrieve) collective memories. When written with *tapsa* as the primary purpose, *kihaeng* provide structured narratives that offer not only itineraries but also suggestions on how to perceive and appreciate the histories and subtle qualities of spaces.

A key figure in the development of *tapsa* and *kihaeng* was the aesthete Yu Hongjun. In his seminal work *Na-ŭi munhwa yusan tapsagi* (The chronicle of my field investigation of cultural remains; Yu 1993),¹⁰ Yu inscribed the ancient city of Kyŏngju

⁹ Emissaries and centrally appointed administrators especially authored much of the *kihaeng* literature before the twentieth century. Some Cheju examples, though all written from mainland-centered literati perspectives, can be found in literary collections included in the various *T’amnaji* (Record of T’amna) volumes. To my knowledge, there does not seem to be a broader study of pre-twentieth-century *kihaeng*-style writing in the anglophone literature.

¹⁰ This is Robert Oppenheim’s translation of the title; *yusan* can also be translated as “heritage” or “inheritance.”

with his own brand of aestheticized Korean-ness. First published in 1993, his opus grew into a multivolume series that showcased other hidden cultural assets across South Korea and came to include North Korea and Japan (Oppenheim 2008, 84). Yu was not the only actor in the making of *kihaeng* and *tapsa*. National self-reevaluation was the zeitgeist of late twentieth-century South Korea as doubt in unilinear nationalist narratives and globalization anxieties grew.

Yu's influence is conspicuous in Cheju-based *kihaeng*, but the influence goes both ways. Cheju intellectuals have pointed out factual errors in Yu's text (Yi 2004, 72) and questioned his conclusions (Mun 2017, 246). Yu produced his revised 2013 volume on Cheju in response to islanders' feedback and criticism. In self-parody, he uses islanders' pejorative term for mainlander tourists by introducing his revised text as "*Cheju Hŏ-ssi-rŭl wihan 'Chejuhak'*" (Cheju studies for 'Mr./Mrs. Hŏ'; Yu 2013, 5–6).¹¹ *Hŏ-ssi* was a local metonym for the 2010s phenomenon of weekend mainlander tourism and its associated fallout of pollution, traffic congestion, and runaway gentrification. In sidestepping the charged nature of the term, Yu's reconfigured *Hŏ-ssi*, informed by Cheju studies, in this case can be compared with the *Global Soul* (2001) of British travel writer Pico Iyer, who "provides a moral alibi for the pleasures of consumption, just as critical cosmopolitanism offers a convenient cover for the addictive desire to voyage between real and imagined homes" (Huggan 2009, 25).

Cheju *kihaeng* writers follow a similar tradition of *kihaeng* writing and adopt much from Yu Hongjun, but they insistently foreground their position as bona fide *t'obagi* in order to distance themselves from even the informed mainlander tourist. What further distinguishes their intentions is that they do not stop at aesthetic appreciation and civic participation but dedicate much more discursive space to "refabulate" Cheju geographies with local perspectives that are otherwise not represented in mainland South Korean histories.¹² Cheju *kihaeng* do not fall into what literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt identified as autoethnographies, a practice "in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms" (1992, 7; italics in original). Nor do Cheju *kihaeng*, at least the ones discussed in this article, comprise anxious narratives of cosmopolitanized returnees awakened to their

¹¹ See Tran (2017). "Hŏ" refers to the Korean character on car license plates to indicate rental cars. Rental cars were frequently associated with mainland South Korean tourists. This term was short-lived as the rapid increase in rental cars and an increased number of non-Korean tourists becoming renters expanded the license plate designations to "Ha" and "Ho."

¹² I borrow Roberts and Roberts' use of the term "refabulation," which they define as "the choosing of new myths and allusions to make a place more suited to the needs of those seeing to such transformation" (2007, 66). Although the contexts are markedly different from urban Senegal and the practice is not a matter of reconfiguring an otherwise alienating space to make them familiar to an underprivileged people, I consider it useful to think of *kihaeng* authors' attempts as a form of refabulation. The authors exhume and inscribe histories onto spaces as ways to resuscitate and assert a stronger local subjectivity that is otherwise lost or even suppressed in conventional history-book narration.

liminality. Even if the books are in standard Korean, the content is deliberately locally centered; the authors expect readers to follow them on Cheju terms.

Yi Yöngkwön's *Yöksa Kihaeng* as Counter-Tourism

Among the three *kihaeng* authors featured in this article, Yi Yöngkwön is perhaps the closest match to the “counter traveler” described by English scholars Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan as a type of postcolonial sojourner who is engaged in “writing back” (1998, 20) at colonial-produced travelogues. Yi is not shy about taking a confrontational approach. He immediately makes the case for regarding Cheju as South Korea’s internal colony in his preface to *Cheju yöksa kihaeng*. Yi opines:

Up to now, there aren’t many people who have not once been to Cheju Island...Why is this so? Because of its natural environment. For certain, unlike the Korean peninsula, it is a different, exotic scene. However, as it is only through this, all that comes of Cheju travel is merely a shell. (2004, 5)

In common parlance among Cheju islanders, descriptions of Cheju as “exotic” are as sardonic as they are serious. To identify Cheju as “unlike the Korean peninsula” is to highlight its ambiguous character vis-à-vis the peninsular mainland. Such a turn of phrase may function to critique mainlanders’ willful ignorance. Yi uses this ambiguity to stress that one must see local experiences as counterpoints to inherent biases in South Korean national histories. These counterpoints de-center the Korean peninsula because it is the “history of the periphery that completely overturns” the “history of the center” (2004, 6).

The text of Yi’s *Cheju yöksa kihaeng* has the triple purpose of alternative history textbook,¹³ *tapsa* guidebook, and scholarly commentary. This work was published in 2004, not long after the first tourism boom of the 1980s and the onset of the Free International City project in the early 2000s. Concurrent with tourism’s ascent as Cheju’s dominant industry while the South Korean middle class flourished, it also emerged in the space of democratization and post-dictatorship in the late 1980s to the 2000s during which Cheju islanders could openly discuss contentious subjects such as the violent events from 1947 to 1954 (often referred to collectively as *Sasam sakön* (April Third Incident, hereafter, *Sasam*; see figure 2). Behind Yi’s intention to counter South Korean national(ist) histories are also anxieties about tourism threatening to bury the histories that islanders had only begun to recover.

¹³ The former representative of the Global Inner Peace NGO as well as a member of the Traditional Culture Institute in Cheju have noted that this book is indeed used as a textbook in Cheju history classes.



Figure 2. April Third Peace Park, Ponggae-tong, Cheju City. Photo by the author (April 3, 2018).

The direct language and sometimes confrontational presentation style of *Cheju yŏksa kihaeng* reflect Yi's background as a high school history teacher famous (or, some might say, infamous) for his unapologetic progressivism.¹⁴ The overarching purpose of his oeuvre has always been to reposition long-suppressed Cheju subjectivities as counterpoints to South Korean national(ist) history and to local embellishments that exaggerate the indigenous T'amna civilization's alleged traces for touristic ends. Writing history as a *kihaeng* offers the advantage of linearity with non-linearity, which serves Yi's objectives. The book is organized into twelve chapters arranged in temporal order from the Neolithic period into the events surrounding *Sasam*.¹⁵ Each chapter is subdivided into specific itinerary points organized along defined *tapsa* routes. This structure allows readers to follow Yi's narration in space and time, as well as in the text and physical geography. Although the chapters' itineraries are arranged as linear routes organized to highlight specific historic periods or cultural aspects, itineraries follow

¹⁴ In a discussion with my host professor Kwŏn Sangch'ŏl at Jeju National University in 2014, Dr. Kwŏn mentioned that Yi Yŏngkwŏn was also known to have raised eyebrows in a *kŭl ssaum* ("text fight," or spirited written attack) on the more conservative geographer Song Sŏngdae. Yi attacked Song's thesis that Cheju islanders possessed an almost capitalistic ethos of *haemin chŏngsin* (mariners' spirit) and pondered wryly if the same thing could be said of piracy. Yi apparently has also written an essay on this in his *Cheju yŏksa tasi pogi: Waegok-kwa mihwa nŏmŏ* (2005).

¹⁵ Following many Cheju locals including Yi, I consider the March 1, 1947 police suppression of a riot at Kwandŏkjŏng Square in Cheju City—rather than the officially recognized date of April 3, 1948—to be the technical start of the insurgency and state violence that lasted into 1954.

spatial rather than temporal sequences. Time and space bending, or at least a gesture to it, may perhaps be what Yi intended given his overt distaste for linear nationalist histories.

In overturning Korean histories, Yi seeks to re-center Cheju and Cheju people as the recipients and active resisters of mainland Korean, Mongol, Japanese, American, and South Korean nationalist violence from antiquity to the twentieth century. In ruminations on the sites associated with Mongol-Koryŏ conflicts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Yi argues that from a peripheral standpoint, a national hero such as the Koryŏ dynasty general Ch'oe Yŏng becomes the perpetrator of a massacre. Rather than presenting a narrative of Korean heroics against alien Mongol rule, Yi notes that Cheju islanders had intermarried with the Mongols who ruled them for a hundred years and thus likely sided with them against Koryŏ. Implied in this standpoint of the periphery is that, at worst, Ch'oe Yŏng's victory could be compared to the South Korean government's violent response in *Sasam*. Mainland Korea is recast as an outside force little different in practice from the Mongols in the thirteenth century or even the Japanese in the twentieth century (Yi 2004, 78). This version reverses accounts that portray Ch'oe Yŏng's campaign as a national restoration and counters nationalist histories that privilege Korean homogeneity (Yi 2004, 77), but it also avoids casting Cheju islanders as passive victims to far more powerful forces.

As a sort of counter-tourism, many of the sites in Yi's twelve itineraries are at first glance nondescript based on casual observation or no longer exist at all. Although Yi includes scenic parts of the island such as the Yŏngsil mountain trail up Mount Halla or Sŏngsan Sunrise Peak, his commentary is not so much about their aesthetic value as their relationship to local memories, histories, and mythologies. For example, commenting on the awkwardness of doing a history of prehistory, Yi writes:

There are a lot of times when doing *tapsa* for prehistoric sites is absurd. This is because in many instances there is nothing at all when one has to visit the site after it has been excavated. Thus, if one does not get information from a specialist, one only gets to see cabbage growing in the fields. (2004, 23)

Where there is nothing to see, traversing far out into open fields simply due to its importance in the material or written record becomes a farce. Although self-irony is a frequent trope in other forms of travel literature—especially as an alibi for the privileged writer-traveler's veiled voyeuristic desire to fetishize (Holland and Huggan 1998, 16–19)—this case differs. Yi's necessary farce serves a dual function to first highlight that one should not expect any sort of experiential awakening by visiting sites and, second, that certain things are simply not immediately knowable unless one has insider knowledge. Local knowledge is highlighted in a subsection on the Haengwŏn-Sehwa Coast Road, a popular tourist attraction due to its scenic value, where Yi instructs the reader (viewer? listener?) to consider the following:

Here for a while, let's think of the region where the Cheju *haenyŏ* anti-Japanese fight rose up in 1932. Feel it? The leading actors of that struggle were the *haenyŏ* of the coast where we now stand.... Although to us now it is a peaceful and beautiful scene, to them it was a place where they fought for their survival. (2004, 248–249)

Even where there is little or nothing at all to see except for “cabbage growing in the fields” or coastal basalt rock, the importance is not the aesthetic value of the place but its importance to Cheju islanders' development as a distinct people. Whereas ancient sites and women divers' anticolonial resistance are claimed for South Korean nationalism, Yi hits back by highlighting that these places and events had (and still have) different significances for islanders.

However, Yi is cautious about truth claims, even if they are produced by fellow islanders. For the Neolithic sites, Yi mentions the importance of getting some form of specialist knowledge. For other sites whose histories are more accessible, Yi cautions that the reconstructions and authoritative representations on official information boards must be critically assessed. At Cheju City's Samsŏnghyŏl shrine, a celebrated local historical site that features the three lava tube holes from which the ancient T'amna civilization's three mythical demigod ancestors sprung, as well as a Confucian-style shrine dedicated to their veneration, Yi reminds his readers:

If one were to come here, what comes first is to see those holes. However, if one were coming not for “tourism” but for “history travel,” it's worth looking at the memorial stones erected in a parallel manner to the right of the entrance. [In doing so], we can identify the names of several regional administrators who worked to erase T'amna's identity and replace it by spreading Confucian ideology. (2004, 43)

The Confucian ideology introduced by mainland administrators and embraced by Cheju local elites superimposed a new form of legitimation onto the shrine's previous and probably highly localized shamanic functions. Although the site is central to Cheju islander identity as descendants of the ancient T'amna civilization, Yi notes that Samsŏnghyŏl had been reconfigured several times for various ideological ends and that even Cheju origin stories must be reevaluated. As was the case with the Neolithic cabbage fields, Yi suggests via a distinction—albeit an artificial one—between *kwan'gwang* (tourism) and *yŏksa kihaeng* (history travel) that it is not enough to encounter the site and associated narratives; one must scrutinize their various possible significances. For such sites embellished as grand monuments to ancient ancestors as Samsŏnghyŏl, Yi cautions that even some forms of local knowledge may be of dubious quality and align with state-sponsored interests or simply be based on misguided

hometown love. A self-styled empiricist, Yi castigates hyperbolic Cheju localism as much as hyperbolic South Korean nationalism.

Many of the stories in *Cheju yŏksa kihaeng* tend to be about often-tragic past struggles to counter triumphalist South Korean nationalism. Yi inscribes seemingly scenic or nondescript sites with narrative after narrative of Cheju uprisings, cultural resilience, violent suppression, exiles, and reminders of abject poverty. Recovering dark pasts in this manner walks a fine line between dark tourism and excessive emphasis on victimization narratives. Taken in the context of the early 2000s, the intent is likely more to destabilize what has been increasingly portrayed as an Edenic paradise. This move serves as a provocation to contemplate the larger legacies that authoritarian nationalism has wrought and continues to obscure. Yi argues that one cannot separate the official silencing of Cheju histories from its official stigmatization as an undesirable, rebellious, and *ppalgaengi* (communist) island. From the Hangp'aduri (Yi 2004, 69–72) anti-Mongol site to the Moch'ungsa anti-Japanese monument in Cheju City (2004, 235–239), selective forgetting and remembering are conspicuous in state-sponsored monuments created across Cheju during the rule of military strongman Park Chung Hee. What was memorialized depended on the state's political exigencies and Cold War logics.

Along with the thorny issue of *Sasam*, a case in point for this selectiveness is the very belated official 1998 recognition afforded to the 1932 Cheju Women Divers' Uprising in which some participants may have had socialist sympathies (Yi 2004, 251). In contrast to the official forgetting of the Women Divers' Uprising, the Park Chung Hee era state chose to memorialize in 1977 the Christian activist Cho Pongho's failed anticolonial activities with a monument of exaggerated proportions in Moch'ungsa. Yi suggests that the *ppalgaengi* stigma against Cheju islanders' penchant for rebelliousness persisted into post-democratization times. As Cheju's darker history was finally coming to light at the time of this book's publication, Yi dared to bring up issues of state violence and responsibility. Rather than simply disavowing the *ppalgaengi* stigma, however, Yi reclaims its subversive potential to remap Cheju as a vibrant geography of resistance against homogenizing South Korean nationalism.

Yi's project to overturn histories and South Korean nationalist spatialization by means of using Cheju as a counter-geography does include some inherent contradictions. He is also overdependent on notions of the *minjung* as the motivating force of history. Yi tends to conflate Cheju's struggles as *minjung* struggles across history not only in twentieth-century uprisings—not least the Yi Chaesu uprising in 1901 (2004, 221) even though the term *minjung* did not yet exist—but even to as far back as Cheju's rule by the T'amna chieftains and then the mainland Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties. The framework recreates a binary opposition and risks totalizing impulses as a Cheju *minjung* is set against comprador or outside interlopers.

Nevertheless, Yi utilizes his unapologetic localism as a tool to keep perspectives grounded. However problematic his slippage into totalizations may be, he remains consistent in referring to immediate contexts as concrete vantage points for critiques of

the past or present conditions. Like postcolonial travel book writers elsewhere, Yi flips the archival scripts at the locales where they were purported to have occurred, which entails a practice of taking that research “back to its point of origin at the confluence” (Holland and Huggan 1998, 59). *Cheju yŏksa kihaeng*, perhaps unintentionally, turns the Free International City project's premises on its head. Although Cheju's culture, history, and geography are identified as cornerstones, its triumphalist character posits Cheju uniqueness as little more than a selling point for speculative investment. In overturning grand narratives, Yi's *kihaeng* reveals the reverse side of the Free International City's futurist slogan “*Segye-ka channŭn Cheju, segye-ro kanŭn Cheju*” (The World comes to Cheju and Cheju goes to the World), which betrays a history of violence. When the world indeed came to Cheju, it was often through violent means.

Kim Hyŏnghun and Critical Localism

The idea of the problems of the world coming to Cheju becomes even clearer by the time *Media Jeju* editor Kim Hyŏnghun wrote his *kihaeng* in 2016. Mass tourism, especially with Cheju's opening to nouveau riche Chinese investment after 2009, remained worrisome for many a Cheju *t'obagi*, but weekend mainlander tourism, once perceived as a sustainable alternative to massive resorts, proved just as destructive. Whereas in previous decades tourists followed packaged routes and flocked to widely publicized and state-sponsored tourist sites such as Sŏngsan Sunrise Peak or the Chungmun Tourist Complex, the 2010s saw the “*Hŏ-ssi*” phenomenon. Group tourism declined, but individual mainland South Korean tourists in rental cars sought out distant parts of the island in ever-increasing numbers. Kim wrote in conversation with a context in which desires for self-discovery in an ostensibly pure Cheju geography ironically accelerated urbanization.

One can glean from the title, which translates as “Cheju Is Not That Kind of Place,” that Kim Hyŏnghun wrote *Cheju-nŭn kŭrŏn kos-i aniya* with the express intent of “writing back” (Holland and Huggan 1998, 20) at popular portrayals. Kim writes in his preface, “To those who come to Cheju with a sense of romanticism, to those who come to Cheju thinking this is like a fantasy island, and more so to those who want to live in Cheju for a long time, I want to reveal the real form of Cheju” (2016, 7). Although Kim's intentions parallel Yi Yŏngkwŏn's in that he includes historical commentary and stories to dispel any notion that Cheju is a homogeneous empty space, Kim's book is not intended to be a complete project to overturn histories. Kim is more interested in emphasizing Cheju as a lived environment in the way a *t'obagi* understands it. Emphasis on appreciation for the simple and the lived environment as opposed to focusing on the aesthetics of viewing, which is a key part of *tapsa* as a middle-class activity, is a distinguishing feature of Kim's interests. What Kim is writing against in his specific choices is a rapidly deteriorating situation in which even the most remote parts of Cheju Island face the threat of overdevelopment and gentrification.

Cheju-nŭn kŭrŏn kos-i aniya is subdivided by theme rather than the defined *tapsa* itineraries chosen by Yi. Kim Hyŏnghun's book features five sections: "Stone, the Beauty of Cheju," "Let It Be, As It Is Now," "Have You Been There?," "People and Cheju," and "Things I Want to Say." Kim selects sites based on their relevance to these themes rather than with any intention to create a comprehensive "course"; thus, sites may be close together or at opposite ends of the island. One could take Kim's book as a sort of *tapsa* guide, but the absence of any linearity suggests that Kim intends the reader to use the book as an inspiration rather than a comprehensive itinerary. Many sites in Kim's *kihaeng* (with a few exceptions, such as Mount Halla and Yongnuni Orŭm) are not well-known tourist destinations or do not even have much of a documented history. Sites are featured for their mnemonic value. Whereas *Cheju yŏksa kihaeng* doubles as an anti-textbook and anti-tourist guide, *Cheju-nŭn kŭrŏn kos-i aniya* is a mix of travel journal and editorial with the intent to foreground local knowledge. Though not as confrontational as Yi Yŏngkwŏn, Kim is still concerned with setting the historical record straight, especially when it relates to questionable historical site restoration, such as the Hwanhaejangsŏng coastal fortifications (2016, 59), the disruption wrought by urban development (2016, 27), and place commoditization (2016, 85) since the early 2000s. An attempt to describe Cheju places with Kim's own local knowledge (backed with occasional recourse to established scholarly material) and lifestyle experience takes precedence over providing a full counter-history. The goal is to find what is *Chejudodaun* about Cheju and to understand that "Cheju Island must be Cheju-esque" (2016, 299). The notion of *Chejudodaun* is hardly unique to Kim as it is a constant subject of inquiry among islander intellectuals, including Yi (though he does not refer to the idea directly). Kim does, however, attempt to figure out how, when, and where to begin to define such a messy concept. Whereas Yi hints that to find such an answer would be to engage with times and spaces that contain the sufferings of a vaguely defined Cheju *minjung*, Kim seems to suggest that it can be found in an appreciation for how islanders have historically interacted with the landscape and its scarce resources for their living.

A transcendentalist undercurrent runs through Kim's insistence on earthiness, which also drives his critique of exaggerated self-exoticization undertaken to satisfy personal and business fantasies. In a jab at islanders' inferiority complex over Cheju's lack of grand things, Kim tells the reader, "Toss the question of why we don't have a culture like Greece or Rome. There's no need to be upset" (2016, 46).¹⁶ In this regard, the *Chejudodaun* is everything that is inseparable from the island's harsh geography. Kim argues that the *mugigyŏ-ŭi kigyŏ* (artless art; 2016, 61) of Cheju statuary to the rough *onggi* (earthenware pottery) made from local soil are themselves the "faces of the haggard and coarse Cheju people" (2016, 250). This viewpoint has the potential to over-exoticize the raw and indigenous, but Kim appears to anticipate this danger by

¹⁶ One might wonder if Kim also intends this as an indirect poke at Cheju folklorists, who tend to claim that Cheju's repertoire of oral narratives rivals those of Greece and Rome. Chin Sŏnggi, for example, included as the subtext of his *Chejudo chŏnsoŏljip* (Collected legends of Cheju Island, reprinted in 2005), "Myths and legends more profound than Greek mythology."

imbuing otherwise beautiful things and sites with mundaneness. Even a visually spectacular site such as Sojŏngbang Falls, the lesser sibling of the touristed Chŏngbang Falls, is simply an accessible site (out in the open without an entry fee) for locals to cool off in the worst of the island's fierce summer heat. The site becomes a mnemonic device as Kim weaves together an account of the traditional worship of the agricultural goddess Chach'ŏngbi on the midsummer day of Paekchung and his own encounter with an elderly local taking time to pause at the falls to escape the heat (2016, 180–185). The *mugigyŏ-ŭi kigyŏ* of *Chejudodaun* here is not so much aesthetic appreciation as a mix of the enjoyment of memory, storytelling, and practical knowledge.

As much as he emphasizes the *Chejudodaun*, Kim occasionally steps back to reconsider it with ambivalence. After all, popularized desires for Cheju's hidden beauty made remote villages overnight sensations for Yu Hongjun's "*Hŏ-ssi*." Kim expounds necessity in recognizing beauty in the mundane but also expresses caution that any act of appreciation must be done with self-awareness. Such discomfort is indicated in his excursion to the southeastern seaside village of Taep'yŏng (2016, 85), where he observes the increasing presence of tourists who visit because of its isolation and rough beauty. In this part of the book, Kim poses the question of whether such appreciation is a good or bad thing as hotels emerge on a once-remote coastline. One wonders if this might be the reason the last section of his *kohaeng* is a ten-page essay entitled, "Things I Want to Say."

Ambivalence lingers throughout *Cheju-nŭn kŭrŏn kos-i aniya*, but in the final sections Kim directly attempts to distinguish his notion of the *Chejudodaun* from the weekend tourism that has driven space consumption. The "Places that are not Cheju" are locations he derides as *k'ap'ech'on* (cafe villages), such as the seaside village of Wŏlchŏng (298–301; figure 3), as well as the so-called T'amna Culture Plaza project within the *wŏndosim* (old town, literally, "original city center") of Cheju City (2016, 302–308). Wŏlchŏng became a viral sensation because of its purportedly pristine character, whereas the latter became a key project due to its association with Cheju City's ancient past as the T'amna civilization's capital (and its convenient proximity to a cruise ship terminal). Mainland South Korean and Chinese interest in consuming Cheju spaces brought as much disruption during the 2010s as did previous state-led projects to make manifest "the Hawai'i of Korea." To clarify how his appreciation for the *Chejudodaun* is distinct from any other form of desire for spatial consumption, Kim iterates that the kind of quick weekend tourism and ensuing gentrification that Wŏlchŏng's changes represent are an anathema to local sensibility (2016, 300).

Kim is also aware of the potential dangers inherent in his attempt to define the *Chejudodaun* based on association with the land. If one assumes that the *Chejudodaun* is something mystical and virtually unknowable, this assumption undermines the premise of his *kohaeng*'s title, "Cheju Is Not That Kind of Place." The notion of Cheju objects as "artless art" has its own danger of crude localism at best and blood-and-soil associations at worst, factors that prompt the reader to pause at various points in Kim's narrative. Kim is careful to note at the beginning that he is "originally not a Cheju

person” in absolute terms, yet his forebears “all became Cheju people” (5–6) through long acculturation, and toward the end he reiterates that pure origins are impossible (2016, 299). Interspersed throughout the text are comments on the nonnative origins of many important Cheju things, from the three demigod princesses who married the T’amna ancestors (2016, 173) and the agricultural goddess Chach’ongbi (2016, 181) to the fact that women divers traveled as far as Japan to work (2016, 202). Kim also evaluates as *Chejudodaun* the originally foreign “Quonset Point” structures (2016, 248)—colloquially known as “*T’esip’on*” (after Ctesiphon, in reference to that ancient Mesopotamian city’s archway)—at the historic Isidore Ranch founded by the Irish Catholic missionary Fr. Patrick McGlinchey. Kim clarifies his distinction between an *ijumin* (migrant) and a *wŏnjumin* (native)¹⁷ by arguing that in order to become the latter, one must “first know the land” (2016, 285). An entire section in the book is dedicated to opening spaces for non-islanders to participate in the *Chejudodaun* and, by extension, become Cheju people if they make the effort to engage responsibly with the island’s geographies, memories, and turbulent histories (2016, 284–297).



Figure 3. The Wŏlchŏng coast. Photo by the author (August 8, 2014).

¹⁷ *Wŏnjumin* generally has the same meaning as *t’obagi* in that they both refer to “natives.” The former is written in literary Chinese characters that translate literally to “original-residing-people,” whereas the latter is a more colloquial term.

Mun Yöngt'aek and Finding the Present in Past Spaces

Unlike Yi Yöngkwön and Kim Hyöng hun, Mun Yöngt'aek does not directly address tourism. Instead, his 2017 *kihaeng* focuses on the national crisis of confidence in the South Korean republic that immediately followed the Sewol Ferry disaster on April 16, 2014.¹⁸ What makes the issue particularly poignant for Mun, an educator and former administrator in the Cheju Provincial Office of Education, was that about two hundred and fifty of the victims were high school students en route to Cheju. This tragedy was not the first; another Cheju-related ferry disaster had occurred in Mun's own lifetime when the Cheju-Pusan Namyöng Ferry sank in 1970 (Mun 2017, 6–7). These traumas, as well as the immediate failures of the South Korean state's response to the Sewol tragedy, demonstrated for Mun a need to reflect on history and use history as a means for civic participation and community-building.

Contrary to its title, *Tamna-ro ttöna-nün yöksa munhwa kihaeng* is less a travelogue and more a loose collection of essays and *tapsa* itineraries. The book has no clear organization, but there are two distinct categories of content: *tapsa*, which form the bulk of material, and essays on cultural history. In the first *tapsa* chapter on Ch'agwi-hyön, a historic region in the island's western extremity, Mun Yongt'aek suggests that the point of a *tapsa* in an otherwise remote and obscure place is to learn history from the point of view of the island (Mun 2017, 55), which aligns closely with the other *kihaeng* authors. The third chapter focuses on the Hansup'ul Historical Pilgrimage Trail opened coincidentally around the time of the Sewol Ferry tragedy. As Mun was instrumental in the Hansup'ul program, this section is one of the longest in the book, providing historical details and commentary on how the sites are significant to Cheju memory. The fifth chapter is a short straightforward *tapsa* itinerary of Confucian sites within old Cheju City and appears to be intended only for use as an itinerary guide. The sixth chapter, another fairly substantial section, shifts toward Mun's home region of Haengwön on the northeastern coast of Cheju. Mun weaves together a series of apparently disconnected events that occurred in this area, such as the deposed and exiled King Kwanghaegün's arrival at Ödüngp'o, a historic port along the coast of Haengwön-ri, in 1637 (2017, 216; see figure 4), a brief account of his Japanese-born diver mother (222), *Sasam* (227–233), and the village tutelary deity shrines (238). The Udo *tapsa* (as well as mention of the other islets of Kap'ado and Marado) in the seventh chapter serves as a culmination of his interest in locally centered cultural history. In a gesture toward Chosön-era *kihaeng* literature, Mun offers his own version of the "Eight Views of Udo" with an added "Plus Two." Almost as an extension of Yi's counter-tourism, taking it to the next logical step, Mun emphasizes a need to explore Udo to better grasp Cheju from its own peripheries.

¹⁸ The Sewol Ferry sank off the southeastern coast of the Korean peninsula en route to Cheju Island, killing more than three hundred passengers and crew.



Figure 4. Coast near Ödüngr'ö, Haengwön-ri. Photo by the author (March 11, 2016).

Due to the diffuse character of the book, Mun's overall objective is at once straightforward yet difficult to grasp. Beyond an interest in making history public, Mun's purpose in his *kihaeng* is as ambiguous as his stated intentions. As stated in the preface, his conceptual justification is a call to "maintain a historical consciousness...a process of finding identity" (Mun 2017, 6). This objective comes up again, though not in direct terms, in the third chapter when Mun pauses his narrative to ponder, "Were we truly unable to avoid the great catastrophe of the Sewol Ferry?" (2017, 93). At a glance, the meaning of "historical consciousness" appears straightforward: learn from the past by engaging in it, especially in the practice of *tapsa*. Yet unlike the other *kihaeng* authors, Mun does not have a clear program, leading one to wonder if he opted to leave it open-ended.

In Mun Yongt'aek's book, the learning process, too, does not seem to have as strong an emphasis on the kind of rigorous (and sometimes almost positivistic) empiricism emphasized in Yi Yöngkwön's and Kim Hyönghun's works. In a chapter in which he explores the novelty of the possibility that he may be a descendant of T'amna era nobility, Mun opines:

Regarding the lives of Cheju's ancestors, I suppose that combining historical fact and imagination would be a more meaningful lesson. Therefore, what we call historical fabrication ("faction"), which comes

from putting together the word “fact” with the word “fiction,” seems to be the focus of the drama that is written. (2017, 64)¹⁹

Whereas Yi and Kim, who both favor the power of living testimony, express deep skepticism about the trend of attempting to recover distant pasts such as the T'amna era, Mun seems to be more comfortable with the contradiction that history itself is ultimately a form of fabrication. This looser approach to history and opening for creativity is somewhat at odds with his sometimes straightforward and apparently uncritical assessment of the written record, but perhaps Mun would rather leave it to the *tapsa* participant to find some form of “wisdom for living” (Mun 2017, 6). Having a goal that is not so much an act of recovering truths but something of a communion with the past for community-building and self-discovery, Mun's approach to *tapsa* is almost ritualistic. The title of his featured *tapsa* program, the Hansup'ul Historical Pilgrimage Trail, curiously uses a word that typically has a spiritual connotation, *sullye* (pilgrimage), rather than *tapsa*.

Mun appears almost apolitical, or at least cautious, with regard to sensitive topics. On the one hand, he gives the impression that he is not writing back at anyone and his interest is in learning history for self-cultivation rather than for the collective resistance as Yi and Kim prefer. On the other hand, Mun's social commentary can be rather subtle. In an indirect criticism of Cheju's drastic changes by the 2010s, he claims, “Although ‘Three Abundances and Three Lacks’ is yet another name by which Cheju is known, it is a name forgotten on the main island.... In Udo, it is hard to come upon a house with a front gate” (2017, 259).²⁰ Gates in Cheju can be taken as metonyms for the island's disappearing communal character, increased outsider presence, increased crime, and a general sense of distrust. Mun may paint Udo, a small island off the eastern coast of Cheju, in romanticized terms, but this observation reveals discomfort at what tourism has brought to the main island. Writing in a time of resurgent nationalism across the globe, Mun is also anxious about the dangers of nativism. As an opening to making the case that Cheju should be “glocal” (2017, 321; written in English), Mun expresses dismay at resurgent British chauvinism in Brexit in 2016. Although Mun acknowledges divisions between mainlanders and Cheju islanders, he argues that prosperity has always depended on diversity and engagement and that Cheju has a long history of immigration. He implies that the founding myth of T'amna itself is a story of immigration and successful integration.

Despite his vague notion of “historical consciousness,” Mun is no less interested than Yi or Kim in keeping Cheju histories grounded in their contexts and locally centered perspectives. He did, after all, surprise Cheju's education world in 2016 when he voluntarily decided to relocate to the remote island of Udo. In what is for the most part a nonconfrontational book, Mun at one point calls out a “mistaken historical

¹⁹ The words “fact,” “fiction,” and “faction” are written in English in the original text.

²⁰ This is expressed as *Samda Sammu* in Sino-Korean. The phrase refers to the “three abundances” of wind, stones, and women and the “three lacks” of gates, robbers, and beggars.

consciousness” in Yu’s interpretation of the expression “*Ch’ol obaek, tang obaek*” (Five hundred Buddhist temples, five hundred shamanic shrines; Mun 2017, 246). Yu argues that although the five hundred shrines may be close to the truth, the five hundred temples claim is mere fancy; by contrast, Mun argues that the phrase is valid and must be understood from the perspective of local practitioners because islanders mix both traditions. At other points he reiterates locally centered interpretations. Like Yi, Mun considers Ch’oe Y’ong’s suppression of the Mongol rebellion as not simply a heroic nationalistic victory but disastrous for Cheju islanders (2017, 143). Also, in the first chapter, Mun concludes a *tapsa* with a quip in which he detects a glimmer of the Japanese military installations built during the colonial period (1910–1945) in the AEGIS warships stationed at the controversial Kangj’ong Naval Base (2017, 57). Since Mun rarely goes into more extended discussions on these points, they do not form an overtly critical “view of the periphery” or a *t’obagi* take on the *Chejudodaun* à la Kim Hy’onghun, per se. Nevertheless, Mun’s choice to find a historical consciousness for the present in past spaces resonates with the critical localist perspectives that characterize the other *kohaeng*.

Cheju Re-Centered

The *kohaeng* by Yi Y’ongkw’on, Kim Hy’onghun, and Mun Y’ongt’aek speak to differing critical junctures facing Cheju in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, but their interests parallel one another. All three convey a sense of urgency, which Mun encapsulates in the brief remark, “The future of a country that does not learn from the past is gloomy” (2017, 96). Mun wrote in the shadow of a specific trauma that brought nationwide soul-searching and the collapse of self-confidence. Yi’s *kohaeng* was produced during the early 2000s, when the prior taboos on Cheju’s violent history were dissipating and the grandiose futurism of the Free International City and a rising tourism industry risked obscuring unresolved issues. Kim wrote against the over-tourism crises of the 2010s that came with a boom in weekend visitors and popularized desires to consume Cheju spaces. All three authors thus express the need to find solutions to contemporary failures through engaging with local histories, memories, and geographies.

An appeal to collective memories of suffering generates oppositional counter-narratives that reestablish Cheju as a place distinct from mainland South Korea, but it also carries its own risks. Drawing considerably from *minjung* historiography, a project of speaking from and for the margins, is a shared goal of the three authors. This endeavor enables them to emphasize the value of countering mainland-centered nationalist narratives through practices that involve engaging histories at the ground level in Cheju spaces, yet it also risks setting up a binary insider-outsider framework. Holland and Huggan observe that a nagging issue in counter-travel literature is that “oppositional narratives cannot escape being haunted by an array of hoary tropes and clichés (originary, primitivist, exotic, etc.) any more than they can hope to distill

'authentic' encounters from their commodified sources" (1998, 198). Asserting Cheju difference in these *kihaeng* likewise runs the risk of reifying exoticism in the quest to define the *Chejudodaun*. Whereas Yi is too focused on overturning histories with his notion of a perspective (not always *perspectives*) of the periphery, Kim's and Mun's commentaries in their *kihaeng* at least acknowledge the potentially hazardous rabbit hole down which such thinking can lead.

Further, the three *kihaeng* come with their own gender troubles. They maintain an androcentric perspective as the default, a factor that is also conspicuous in mainland *kihaeng* such as those by Yu Hongjun. That *kihaeng* maintain a masculine gaze is not at all new in the genre, as the travel writing from which contemporary *kihaeng* draw inspiration are works by Chosŏn-era male literati. Literary scholar Kim Tonghyŏn observes that Cheju is equated with the feminine in literary representations (2016, 140–142), even in locally centered writing. Remarkably absent from the *kihaeng* are Cheju women's own narratives, so these "mothers of Cheju" (Kim H 2016, 200) become faceless representatives of the island. Paeans to the self-sacrificing mother figure—especially to the legendary titan-goddess Sŏmundae Halmang, who crafted the island from her hands—create the stock character of a nameless Cheju grandmother. Yi Yŏngkwŏn not only establishes a link between the 1932 Cheju Women Divers' Uprising and the self-sacrificing mother figure of Sŏmundae but also describes the Cheju term *halmang* (K. *halmŏni*, grandmother) as "a goddess who possesses the energy of creation" (2004, 49). Although Mun Yŏngt'aek does include a paragraph-long biography for his diver mother (2017, 222), portrayals of Cheju women as archetypes dangerously approach the practice of feminizing Cheju itself, a commonplace trope that Kim Tonghyŏn (2016, 40–41) observes in mainland Korean and Japanese writings (23–25) about Cheju. That these authors tend to use the mainland-origin term *haenyŏ* rather than the local term *chŏmnyŏ* or *chamsubu* (both literally mean "diving woman") further troubles these valorizations.

At least the three *kihaeng* authors admit discomfort with attempts to totalize Cheju experience or overly emphasize a connection to Cheju soil. Kim Hyŏnghun offers that even a foreigner (specifically a Chinese in the situation to which Kim refers) could be accepted as a local if he or she makes a concerted effort to connect the land with its histories and memories. Yi Yŏngkwŏn's intent is to directly address that which is glossed over or omitted in mainland South Korean history textbooks; thus, his project is a response and is not to be taken as a full account. Mun Yŏngt'aek avoids attempting any grand narrative of Cheju and instead emphasizes *tapsa*'s potential for community-building among islanders as well as with newcomers.

Although attempts to distinguish *tapsa* from tourism and *kihaeng* from tourist guides are prone to slippages, the three authors make such distancing a tactical choice, given the pervasive influence of tourism on the island. They acknowledge the contradictions in their respective texts. *Kihaeng* writing and the physical practice of *tapsa* are means for islanders to reclaim Cheju geographies and the histories and memories imbued in them. Despite the unprecedented scale of tourist visits from the

mainland, Cheju continues to occupy a curious, ambiguous position: an internal Other within both the territorial and conceptual sphere of contemporary South Korea as a perceivable and imaginable nation. Kwon's critique highlights the underlying paradox that mainland tourists and well-to-do Chinese can simply hop over to a nearby island, satisfy a taste for the *Chejudodaun*, and come away with a perception of having encountered the Other without, in fact, encountering them.

References

- Chöng Un'gyöng. 2008. *T'amna mun'gyönnok: Pada pak-üi nölbün sesang* [Observations of T'amna: The wide world beyond the seas]. Chöng Min, translator. Seoul: Hymönisüt'ü.
- Halla ilbosa [Halla daily news]. 2004. *Cheju kwan'gwang bansegi* [A half-century of Cheju tourism]. Cheju: Halla ilbosa.
- Holland, Patrick, and Graham Huggan. 1998. *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Huggan, Graham. 2009. *Extreme Pursuits: Travel/Writing in an Age of Globalization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Iyer, Pico. 2000. *Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kim Hyönghun. 2016. *Cheju-nün kürön kos-i aniya* [Cheju is not that kind of place]. Seoul: Namu palchönso.
- Kim Tonghyön. 2016. *Cheju, uri an-üi singminji* [Cheju, our internal colony]. Seoul: Künnurim.
- Kukt'o kaebal yön'guwön [National Development Research Institute]. 1985. *T'ükchöng chiyök Chejudo chonghap kaebal kyehoek: Kyehoek-üi kijo mit yoyak* [General development plan for the Cheju Province Specified Region: Basis of the plans and summary]. Cheju: Jeju Province.
- Mun Yöngt'aek. 2017. *T'amna-ro ttönanün yöksa munhwa kihaeng* [A historical cultural travelogue to T'amna]. Cheju: Gak.
- Oh, Youjeong. 2018. *Pop City: Korean Popular Culture and the Selling of Place*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Oppenheim, Robert M. 2008. *Kyöngju Things: Assembling Place*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Pak Chiwön. 2010. *The Jehol Diary: Yörha Ilgi of Pak Chiwön (1737–1805)*. Translated by Yang Hi Choe-Wall. Folkestone, UK: Global Oriental.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge.
- Pu Man'gün. 2012. *Cheju chiyök kaebalsa* [Cheju regional development history]. Cheju: Cheju Research Institute.

- Roberts, Allen F., and Mary Nooter Roberts. 2007. "Mystical Graffiti and the Refabulation of Dakar." *Africa Today* 54 (2): 51–77.
- Tran, Tommy. 2017. "Axis Mundi: The City and Geographies of Identity in Cheju Island, South Korea." PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles.
- Yi Yŏngkwŏn. 2004. *Cheju yŏksa kihaeng* [A Cheju history travelogue]. Seoul: Hankyŏre sinmunsa.
- . 2005. *Cheju yŏksa tasi pogi: Waegok-kwa mihwa nŏmŏ* [Another look at Cheju history: Beyond the distortions and embellishments]. Seoul: Sinsŏwŏn.
- Yu Hongjun. 1993. *Na-ŭi munhwa yusan tapsagi 1: Namdo tapsa ilbŏnji* [The chronicle of my field investigation of cultural remains, volume 1: Field exploration of the southern regions]. Seoul: Ch'anggakkwa
- . 2013. *Na-ŭi munhwa yusan tapsagi 7: Tolharŭbang ŏdi kamsugwang* [The chronicle of my field investigation of cultural remains, volume 7: Where did the stone grandfather go?]. P'aju: Ch'angbi.

About the Author

Tommy Tran is a lecturer in History at the University of California, Merced.