



MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Gendered Violence and Women's Experiences during the Jeju
April 3rd Incident

verfasst von | submitted by

Zofia Krystyna Balawender BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2026

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 871

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Koreanologie

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Jerome De Wit MA

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Univ.-Prof. Dr. Jérôme de Wit, MA for his guidance, patience, and continuous support throughout the research and writing of this thesis. His feedback, encouragement, and expertise in Korean Studies have been invaluable and have greatly shaped this work.

I would also like to thank the scholars and researchers whose work on the Jeju 4·3 Incident and its aftermath has provided the foundation for this study. Their dedication to documenting and preserving these histories has made this research possible.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my family and friends for their encouragement, understanding, and support throughout my studies and during the completion of this thesis.

Abstract

The Jeju 4·3 Incident was one of the most violent events in modern Korean history and had a lasting impact on the people of Jeju Island. While much of the existing research has focused on the political background of the incident and the violence of the suppression campaign, the experiences of women have often received less attention. This thesis examines the experiences of women during the Jeju 4·3 Incident, with a particular focus on gender-based violence.

The central research question of this study is: What forms of gender-based violence did women experience during the Jeju 4·3 Incident, and how were these experiences shaped by the political violence of the suppression campaign and the patriarchal social structure of the time? To answer this question, the thesis draws on testimonies, official investigation reports, and academic literature. It examines different forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, violence against pregnant women, proxy killings, and forced marriages.

The analysis shows that women were affected by the violence in gender-specific ways and that their experiences were shaped not only by the conflict itself but also by their position within the family and society. The thesis argues that women were not merely passive victims of the violence but were targeted in specific ways because of their gender. It also explores the long-term consequences of the violence and examines how women's experiences were remembered, narrated, and often silenced in the decades that followed.

By focusing on women's experiences and gender-based violence, this thesis contributes to a better understanding of the Jeju 4·3 Incident and highlights the importance of including women's voices in the study of historical violence and its aftermath.

Zusammenfassung

Der Jeju 4·3 Aufstand zählt zu den gewaltsamsten Ereignissen der modernen koreanischen Geschichte und hinterließ weitreichende Folgen für die Bevölkerung der Insel Jeju. Während die bisherige Forschung vor allem den politischen Hintergrund und die Brutalität der Repressionsmaßnahmen in den Fokus gerückt hat, wurden die Erfahrungen von Frauen bislang kaum berücksichtigt. Diese Arbeit untersucht die Erfahrungen von Frauen während des Aufstands mit besonderem Schwerpunkt auf geschlechtsspezifischer Gewalt.

Die zentrale Forschungsfrage lautet: Welche Formen geschlechtsspezifischer Gewalt erlebten Frauen während des Jeju 4·3 Aufstands, und wie wurden diese Erfahrungen durch politische Gewalt im Rahmen der Repression sowie durch patriarchale Gesellschaftsstrukturen der damaligen Zeit geprägt? Um diese Frage zu beantworten, stützt sich die Arbeit auf Zeitzeug*innenberichte, offizielle Untersuchungsberichte und wissenschaftliche Literatur. Untersucht werden dabei verschiedene Formen der Gewalt, darunter sexuelle Gewalt, Gewalt gegen schwangere Frauen, Stellvertretertötungen sowie Zwangsehen.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Frauen geschlechtsspezifisch von der Gewalt betroffen waren, was eng mit ihrer Stellung innerhalb von Familie und Gemeinschaft verknüpft war. Die Arbeit argumentiert, dass Frauen keineswegs nur passive Opfer des Konflikts waren, sondern aufgrund ihres Geschlechts gezielt zu Zielscheiben wurden. Zudem beleuchtet die Studie die langfristigen Folgen dieses Traumas und untersucht, wie die Erfahrungen der Frauen in den folgenden Jahrzehnten erinnert, erzählt oder oft verschwiegen wurden.

Durch den Fokus auf weibliche Perspektiven trägt diese Arbeit zu einem umfassenderen Verständnis des Jeju 4·3 Aufstands bei und unterstreicht die Bedeutung der Einbeziehung von Frauenstimmen für die Erforschung historischer Gewalt und deren Aufarbeitung.

Notes

Terminology: This thesis uses the term “Jeju 4·3 Incident” throughout for the sake of consistency. Other terms found in the literature include “Jeju 4·3 Uprising,” “Jeju April Third Incident,” and “Jeju 4·3 Uprising and Massacre.” The use of the term “Jeju 4·3 Incident” in this thesis does not imply a particular interpretation of the events.

Names and Sources: Korean personal and place names are given in the romanization used in the respective sources or in Revised Romanization. Korean names are presented in original order (family name first), unless the individual is commonly known in Western order in English-language scholarship. Titles of Korean-language publications are given in Korean, with English translations provided in brackets where appropriate.

Administrative divisions: Korean administrative divisions are referred to using their standard romanized forms. The terms eup (읍), myeon (면), dong (동), and ri (리) are retained in romanization throughout the thesis. Eup refers to a town-level administrative unit, myeon to a township, dong to an urban neighborhood, and ri to a village-level unit.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	6
2. Overview of previous research	8
3. Methodology	11
4. Theory	13
4.1. Definition of GBV	13
4.2. Causes and Power Dynamics of GBV	15
4.3. GBV in Conflict and Its Marginalization	16
4.4. Gender and Genocide	17
4.5. Gender and Torture	20
4.6. Gendered Violence in the Holocaust	21
4.7. Conclusion	23
5. Jeju Island History	24
5.1. Time before the Tamna Kingdom	25
5.2. Tamna Kingdom	26
5.3. Goryeo Dynasty	26
5.4. Joseon Dynasty	27
5.5. Japanese colonial period	28
5.6. Jeju Women	30
6. Jeju Massacre	32
6.1. Background 1945-1947	32
6.2. Massacre	47
7. Gender-Based Violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident	60
7.1. Gendered Patterns of Violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident	60
7.2. Sexual Violence	64
7.3. Gendered Torture and Violence against the Female Body	69
7.4. Violence Against Pregnant Women	73
7.5. Violence against Women as Family Members	77
7.6. Forced Marriage and Sexual Exploitation	80
7.7. Aftermath of Gender-Based Violence: Silence, Survival, and Social Inequality	85
8. Remembering and transmitting women's experiences of Jeju 4·3 Incident	88
9. Conclusion	94
Bibliography	97

1. Introduction

The Jeju 4·3 Incident, often also referred to as the Jeju Massacre, refers to a popular uprising and the subsequent violent suppression that took place on Jeju Island, South Korea's largest island, between 1948 and 1954. It represents one of the most violent episodes in modern Korean history. During the suppression of the uprising, tens of thousands of civilians were killed and thousands of houses were destroyed by government forces, police units, and right-wing paramilitary organizations. With an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 victims, the Jeju 4·3 Incident is considered the second deadliest event in the history of the Republic of Korea after the Korean War (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003).

For decades, the incident remained a politically sensitive and largely silenced chapter of South Korean history, which made it difficult for victims and their families to speak openly about what had happened. However, there were still people who tried to uncover the truth about the events on Jeju Island. Their efforts led to the passing of the Special Act on Discovering the Truth of the Jeju 4·3 Incident and the Restoration of Honor of Victims in 1999. Since then, more research has been conducted and the incident has gradually become more widely discussed in South Korean society and academia (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003).

Most of the research on the Jeju 4·3 Incident has focused on the political background of the uprising, the Cold War context, and the actions of the state, the police, and the military. However, the experiences of women during the incident, especially the forms of gender-based violence they endured, have often remained a smaller part of this research. When women appear in research, it is often in connection with the aftermath of the incident, for example as widows who had to rebuild villages and take care of their families after the violence had ended. Less attention has been paid to what women experienced during the suppression period

itself. During the suppression period, many men fled to the mountains to avoid arrest, forced conscription, or execution. As a result, women were often the ones who remained in the villages and came into direct contact with the suppression forces. This made them particularly vulnerable to violence and shaped the specific forms of violence they experienced. In many cases, women were targeted as substitutes for male family members and were subjected to sexual violence, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse. Despite this, women's experiences have often been placed into the general category of civilian victims and were not analyzed as gender-specific experiences of violence.

This thesis therefore asks the following research question: What forms of gender-based violence did women experience during the Jeju 4·3 Incident, and how were these experiences shaped by the political violence of the suppression campaign and the patriarchal social structure of the time? To answer this question, the thesis examines different forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, violence against pregnant women, proxy killings, and forced marriages. Based on testimonies, historical documents, and academic literature, the thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of how the Jeju 4·3 Incident affected women and why many of these experiences remained silenced for decades. In this way, the thesis argues that women were not only passive victims of the conflict, but were targeted in specific ways because of their gender and their position within the family and community.

This study is based primarily on the analysis of testimonies, official investigation reports, and academic literature on the Jeju 4·3 Incident. Many of the sources used in this thesis are testimonies collected decades after the events, which means that issues of memory, silence, and representation play an important role in the analysis. Therefore, this thesis not only examines what women experienced, but also how these experiences were remembered, narrated, and sometimes silenced.

This thesis is divided into several chapters. After the theoretical and methodological framework, the thesis introduces Jeju Island, its history, and the social and economic role of women, including the haenyeo. It then outlines the political background of the Jeju 4·3 Incident and the course of the massacre. The following chapter focuses on gender-based violence and examines different forms of violence experienced by women during the suppression period. The final chapter discusses the aftermath of the violence, its long-term impact on women's lives, and issues of silence and memory.

2. Overview of previous research

Due to political censorship, research on the Jeju 4·3 Incident was severely limited in South Korea until democratization in 1987. Because of this, early research on the topic was mainly carried out outside Korea. One of the first important works is John Merrill's article "The Cheju-do Rebellion" (1980), which gives a detailed account of what happened on Jeju during the suppression period. Bruce Cumings also discusses the uprising in *The Origins of the Korean War* (1981), placing the events in the broader Cold War context and pointing to the involvement of U.S. military authorities. These early works shaped how the Jeju 4·3 Incident was understood for a long time, mainly as a political and historical event.

Another important source is the Jeju 4·3 Truth Investigation Report, published in 2003. This report is the most comprehensive official account of the incident and focuses mainly on documenting human rights violations and restoring the honor of the victims and their families (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003). While it provides a detailed reconstruction of the events, gender-specific experiences are only addressed in a limited way, for example in sections dealing with female torture.

More recent research has started to look more closely at women's experiences. Studies by Lee Jung-sook, Kwon Gwi-suk, and Han Rim-wha and Kim Soon-hee focus on women's roles in family survival, rebuilding communities, and everyday life after the violence (Lee, 2004; Kwon, 2011; Han & Kim, 2003). In particular, research on so-called "widow villages" shows how the absence of men changed the social and economic structure of Jeju, forcing women to become the main providers and caretakers (Yeom, 2023). These studies clearly show that the Jeju 4·3 Incident had a strong impact on women's lives.

This perspective is further expanded by studies that focus on life histories and long-term experiences. Kim Yu-kyung examines the life course of female survivors, while Yu Cheol-in analyzes oral life narratives and how women themselves interpret their experiences (Kim, 2019; Yu, 2004). These approaches make it clear that the impact of the violence continued long after the events themselves. However, even in these works, women are mostly studied as widows, survivors, or workers after the violence, rather than as victims of gender-based violence during the suppression itself.

In recent years, more research has started to focus directly on gender-based violence. Jang Suk-in's work on gender-based violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident provides a detailed classification of different forms of violence based on testimonies and oral history (Jang, 2024). She argues that gender-based violence is essential for understanding the nature of the massacre. Similarly, Oh Geum-suk analyzes specific cases of violations of women's human rights and also looks at why these experiences were often hidden or not talked about (Oh, 1998).

Another important perspective is offered by Kim Sung-rae, who examines the Jeju 4·3 Incident through the concept of the sexual politics of state violence. She argues that women's bodies became sites through which state power and anti-communist ideology were expressed (Kim, 2001). This shows that gender-based violence was not just random, but part of a larger system of violence.

Park Sang-ran's research on the so-called "police wives" (순경 각시 /sunkyeong gaksi) is also very important. She shows that these relationships between women and police or soldiers were often not voluntary, but based on coercion, fear, and survival strategies (Park, 2019). At the same time, her work highlights how these experiences were remembered and described in indirect ways, often avoiding explicit references to sexual violence.

Closely connected to this is research on memory, testimony, and representation. Scholars such as Kim Eun-sil and Park Sang-ran point out that women's experiences of sexual violence were often silenced because of stigma, patriarchal norms, and the political sensitivity of the topic (Kim, 2009; Park, 2019). As a result, many testimonies come from male witnesses or describe sexual violence only indirectly. John Eperjesi also approaches women's narratives from an ecofeminist perspective, showing how violence, environment, and memory are connected (Eperjesi, 2023).

Literary studies further show how difficult it is to represent women's experiences. Lee Tae-jun argues that women are often spoken about rather than speaking themselves, which limits how their experiences can be represented (Lee, 2024). Similarly, Son Young-hee's analysis of literary works about the Jeju 4·3 Incident shows how themes such as trauma and forgiveness are shaped through narrative structures that do not fully capture women's lived experiences (Son, 2021).

Another issue is that most research focuses mainly on violence committed by state forces, while violence by other actors, like the rebels, is discussed much less. This is partly because of limited sources, but it also shows how the production of knowledge about the Jeju 4·3 Incident is shaped by what is documented and what is not.

Even though research on the topic has grown, there are still some gaps. Most studies focus on political history, the Cold War, or the aftermath of the violence. Gender-based violence is often mentioned, but not always analyzed in depth. Forms such as sexual violence, forced marriage, and proxy killings are often only briefly

discussed. In addition, the silence surrounding women's experiences makes it difficult to fully understand the extent of this violence.

This thesis therefore focuses specifically on gender-based violence during the suppression period of the Jeju 4·3 Incident. It examines different forms of violence, including sexual violence, forced marriage, and proxy killings, and looks at how these were shaped by both political violence and patriarchal social structures. By doing so, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the Jeju 4·3 Incident and to make women's experiences more visible.

3. Methodology

This thesis uses a qualitative historical research approach to examine the experiences of women during the Jeju 4·3 Incident. It focuses in particular on forms of gender-based violence and on how women's experiences were shaped by both the political context of the suppression campaign and the patriarchal social structures of the time. Rather than relying on quantitative data, the research is based on the analysis of historical documents, testimonies, and existing academic literature in order to identify patterns of violence directed at women.

The analysis draws on a range of different sources. One of the most important is the Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Report (2003), which contains a large collection of testimonies, witness accounts, and historical documentation related to the incident. In addition, the study uses testimonies collected by the Jeju 4·3 Research Institute and other publications documenting the experiences of survivors. These materials are complemented by Korean academic research on the Jeju 4·3 Incident, particularly studies focusing on gender, state violence, and women's experiences during the uprising and its suppression. By combining these sources, it

becomes possible to analyze both individual experiences and broader patterns of violence.

Testimonies and oral histories play a particularly important role in this research. Many forms of violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident, especially sexual violence, were not systematically recorded in official documents at the time. As a result, testimonies often provide crucial evidence for understanding these experiences. However, they must also be interpreted critically. Personal memories may be shaped by the passage of time, trauma, or the social context in which they were recorded. In addition, many accounts of sexual violence appear indirectly, for example through witnesses or relatives rather than direct testimonies of victims. This reflects the strong stigma surrounding sexual violence and the social pressure that often discouraged women from speaking openly.

This thesis therefore pays attention not only to what is recorded in the sources but also to what remains absent or only indirectly mentioned. The limited number of direct testimonies concerning sexual violence does not necessarily indicate that such violence occurred only rarely. Instead, it reflects broader social and political conditions that made it difficult for victims to speak about these experiences. In this sense, silence itself is historically meaningful. The absence of testimony reveals the presence of social stigma, political repression, and patriarchal norms that discouraged women from speaking publicly about sexual violence.

In order to analyze these sources, this study adopts a gender perspective. A gender-based approach makes it possible to identify forms of violence that specifically targeted women, such as sexual violence, violence against pregnant women, forced marriage, and proxy killings of women in place of male family members. These forms of violence cannot be fully understood without considering gender roles and social expectations that shaped women's positions within families and communities at the time. By focusing on these gendered dimensions, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the Jeju 4·3 Incident

and its impact on women. At the same time, the research also acknowledges the limitations of the available sources. Many experiences of sexual violence were never recorded, and even in later testimonies victims often remained silent due to shame, fear of social stigma, or concerns about political consequences. For decades, the Jeju 4·3 Incident remained a politically sensitive topic in South Korea, which further limited open discussion of these experiences. As a result, the historical record likely represents only a small portion of the violence that actually occurred. Recognizing these limitations is therefore essential for interpreting the sources and understanding the broader historical context in which they were produced.

By combining the analysis of historical documents, testimonies, and academic literature with a gender perspective, this study seeks to shed light on forms of violence that have often remained marginalized in the historiography of the Jeju 4·3 Incident. In doing so, it aims to contribute to a more detailed understanding of how the conflict affected women and how their experiences were remembered, silenced, and gradually brought into historical discourse.

4. Theory

4.1. Definition of GBV

There are many definitions of gender-based violence (GBV). According to the United Nations, it is “violence against a woman because she is a woman”. Under this category fall not only physical violence but also psychological and sexual violence, threats, forced labor or marriage, forced sterilization and abortion, female genital mutilation, and all situations where women are held against their will or otherwise deprived of liberty, whether in public or private life (UN Women, 2024).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines GBV as “physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, or financial control by a person, or a group of people, that

causes harm to another person rooted in gender norms.” Moreover, victims of GBV often experience stigmatization, and many cases go unreported (Al-Tuwaijri & Saadat, 2018).

The Interagency Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) divides GBV into six core categories:

- Rape: forced penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth with a penis, other body part, or an object.
- Sexual assault: any form of non-consensual sexual contact that does not involve penetration, such as unwanted touching, fondling, or attempted rape. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is classified under this category.
- Physical assault: acts of physical violence that are not sexual in nature, such as hitting, slapping, choking, burning, or acid attacks.
- Forced marriage: marriage of an individual against their will.
- Denial of resources, opportunities, or services: preventing access to economic resources, inheritance, education, healthcare, or other services, for example, forbidding a girl from attending school.
- Psychological/Emotional abuse: the infliction of mental or emotional harm through threats, intimidation, humiliation, or harassment.

(Global Women’s Institute, 2017)

One form of GBV not directly addressed in this system is sexual exploitation, meaning abuse of power to obtain sexual acts from a person in a vulnerable position. The victim may feel unable to refuse because cooperation is tied to access to protection, food, education, or other resources. Although it may seem like they consented, it was under pressure and therefore invalid (Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium, 2004).

Therefore, to analyze sexual violence and exploitation, it is essential to define consent. In contexts of armed conflict, where individuals live under conditions of fear,

coercion, and dependency, consent cannot be considered freely given. Individuals may be forced to rely on perpetrators for survival, which fundamentally undermines the possibility of voluntary agreement. International legal frameworks therefore emphasize that there cannot be “true” consent in sexual relations between members of organized armed groups and civilians due to the coercive conditions inherent in non-international armed conflicts (Bradley & de Beer, 2021).

4.2. Causes and Power Dynamics of GBV

Understanding GBV also requires examining its causes. At its core, GBV is rooted in unequal power relations between men and women. These inequalities, which have existed for centuries, have allowed men to dominate and discriminate against women. They not only led to direct violence but also normalized it in many societies, making it difficult for women to find justice (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015, p. 5).

Violence against women is most often used to subordinate, punish, and control them. While men are more likely to experience violence from strangers, women are far more often harmed by intimate partners or family members. This highlights how gender shapes both who is targeted and how society sees the violence (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015, p. 7).

This is a problem in everyday life and societies, but during conflict situations or natural disasters, violence against women often increases. Factors such as displacement, the breakdown of social structures, and the lack of effective law enforcement create conditions where women face greater risks. Importantly, this rise in violence is not limited to acts committed by armed groups or external perpetrators, but also includes an increase in intimate partner and domestic violence during such periods (Global Women’s Institute, 2017, pp. 4–5).

At the same time, sexual violence is deliberately used by states or armed groups as a weapon of war to spread fear and control populations. Women and girls are the

most affected group, and this tactic has been used for centuries (Al-Tuwaijri & Saadat, 2018, p. 2). Françoise Vergès argues that rape has always been a weapon of war. She writes that there is “no colonization, no imperialist occupation without rape,” showing how it has been part of both war and colonial violence. Rape has also been used to suppress social movements. According to Vergès, soldiers were not only allowed but sometimes even encouraged to commit rape as part of military strategies (Vergès, 2022, pp. 14–16).

4.3. GBV in Conflict and Its Marginalization

Although GBV becomes more visible during conflict, it is still often overlooked or underplayed. Sexual violence, in particular, is frequently dismissed as “collateral damage” rather than recognized as a central weapon of war. This reflects a broader pattern in which, during political or economic crises, governments rely on patriarchal ideas that reinforce traditional gender roles and hierarchies (Sanford et al., 2016, pp. 2–3).

Societies often fail to take sexual violence seriously, treating it as part of women’s everyday suffering or as a “women’s issue” rather than a human rights violation (Colombini, 2002, p. 177). The tendency to classify sexual violence under broad categories such as “violence to life and person,” instead of naming it explicitly, further undermines its significance, even though international tribunals have recognized it as a form of severe physical and mental suffering (Bradley & de Beer, 2021, pp. 135–136).

As a result, such violence often goes unpunished, reinforcing harassment and systemic oppression. This is true not only during conflict but also in post-conflict contexts, where women, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people remain excluded from legal protection (Sanford et al., 2016, p. 4).

Reports from multiple conflicts demonstrate the deliberate and systematic use of sexual violence. During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, an estimated 250,000 to

500,000 women and girls, some as young as five, were raped, tortured, and physically abused. In Bosnia, between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped during the Bosnian War, with many cases never reported. In Kosovo, 96 cases of rape were documented against Kosovar Albanian women before and during the Kosovo War. Rape in these conflicts was not random. It was used as a weapon to demoralize enemies, enforce ethnic cleansing, and provide sexual services to combatants, enabled by the collapse of law and order and the fact that perpetrators were rarely punished (Colombini, 2002, pp. 170–171).

The case of Bosnia in 1992 illustrates how sexual violence gained international recognition. The systematic use of rape by Serbian forces as part of “ethnic cleansing” was not the first instance of rape in war, but it was the first time women worldwide organized to demand accountability. Their activism led to rape being explicitly recognized and prosecuted as a war crime, a crime against humanity, and a crime of genocide (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, p. 69).

These examples show that sexual violence in conflict is deliberate and politically instrumental, yet often ignored or left unpunished. Recognizing sexual violence as a weapon of war is therefore essential for accountability and prevention.

4.4. Gender and Genocide

Another important perspective concerns the role of gender in genocide. Many commonly used definitions of genocide are relatively narrow and focus primarily on killing. For instance, general dictionary definitions describe genocide as “the deliberate killing of people who belong to a particular racial, political, or cultural group” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). While this is correct in part, it misses other ways in which genocide destroys a community. Elisa von Joeden-Forgey explains that genocide often targets the “life force” of a group, meaning its families, reproduction, and ability to continue into the future. From this point of view, sexual violence is not accidental but central to genocide (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, pp. 61–62).

The genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia, and the systematic use of rape, show very clearly that gender can be a component of genocide. By raping a woman, the attackers directly target her reproductive system, which is essential for the continuation of the group. If the violence causes her to be unable to give birth, then the group can be destroyed in the long run, which is exactly the perpetrators' aim (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, p. 62). As von Joeden-Forgey notes: "Although direct killing is a central part of the genocidal process, it is not the whole story".

This becomes especially visible in cases of forced pregnancies and marriages. Siobhan Fisher (1996) described the Serbian policy of forced maternity as a genocidal "occupation of the womb," where women were impregnated to prevent them from bearing children of their own group. Similarly, Donald Bloxham (2005) identified forced marriage and sexual slavery during the Armenian genocide as the "colonization of the female body." Both examples show that such practices are genocidal in intent, as they aim to prevent births within the targeted group (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, pp. 71–72).

International law has also addressed this issue. In *Prosecutor v. Akayesu* (1998), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) recognized that rape and sexual violence can constitute genocide if carried out with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a specific group. While the Rome Statute does not explicitly list rape as an act of genocide, later decisions by the ICTR and ICTY clarified that gender-based violence can fall within the legal definition of genocide (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, p. 72).

Still, debates remain over whether sexual violence should always be classified as genocide. Since as already mentioned critics sometimes treat women's experiences as "collateral damage." Yet gender analysis reveals that women are often targeted precisely because of their roles as reproducers of the group (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, p. 78).

According to *Gender Violence in Peace and War*, military actors know that harming women disrupts both biological and social reproduction, and also shames men who are unable to protect them. Because of this, sexual violence can be used as a strategic tool in genocidal campaigns (Sanford et al., 2016, pp. 36–37).

Therefore seen through this lens, genocide is not only about killing but about destroying the life force of a community. If atrocities specifically target families, reproduction, and children, genocidal intent can be identified even when not all members of the group are killed. For example, in Bosnia and Rwanda, many men were killed while women were “spared” only to be subjected to systematic sexual violence. At first glance, the sparing of women could suggest genocide was not taking place. But once the gendered targeting of reproductive roles is considered, the genocidal intent becomes clear (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, pp. 78–79).

Therefore it should not be forgotten that in wars and conflict situations men are more often killed, while women are enslaved. Adam Jones points out that “there is overwhelming historical evidence for the preponderance of the practice of killing or mutilating male prisoners and for the large-scale enslavement and rape of female prisoners” (Jones, 2000, p. 187).

The reason lies in gender norms. Men are more often seen as enemy combatants, even when they are civilians. This made it easier for perpetrators to justify detaining, torturing, and killing them (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, p. 66). This same pattern appeared in later conflicts. In Bosnia, Serbian forces executed non-combatant men, while women were raped and enslaved. In Kosovo, the Milosevic regime targeted non-combatant men most heavily with arrest, torture, and execution (Jones, 2000, pp. 185–186).

The results of this gender-selective killing can still be seen today. After the 1965–66 massacres in Indonesia, some villages reported that 70 percent of the population were widows. In Cambodia after Pol Pot’s genocide, women made up 60–80 percent

of the adult population in many areas. In Rwanda in the 2000s, women made up about 70 percent of the population, with half of all households headed by women. Survivor testimonies confirm this pattern. In Bosnia, women described how Serbian forces rounded up and executed the men of their villages, leaving women to bury the dead. In Sri Lanka in 1991, women were eventually released from detention camps, while many of the men “disappeared” or were killed. Such examples show that the gender-selective killing of men, especially those of “battle age,” remains a common feature of genocide and conflict (Jones, 2000, pp. 188–189).

Finally, focusing only on numbers of dead, who are often men, can obscure genocidal strategies that target women through rape, forced pregnancy, or social ostracism. As von Joeden-Forgey emphasizes, genocide is not only a crime of killing but a crime against the generative power of a group and the institutions that sustain it, particularly the family. Gender analysis reveals these hidden aspects and shows that genocide can be carried out even without mass killings, solely through systematic sexual violence (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, pp. 78–79).

4.5. Gender and Torture

Gender-based violence is not limited to the battlefield. It has also been used during interrogations, where sexual torture and humiliation served as deliberate tools of repression and control. In many cases, these practices were directed at politically active women, with the goal of “correcting” them and forcing them back into socially acceptable roles. Torture was shaped by patriarchal and nationalistic ideas, often carrying clear gender markers (Sanford et al., 2016, p. 19).

This was evident in places such as Greece after the 1967 coup d’état and in Indonesia, where women were subjected to particularly sexualized forms of torture. Women’s genitals were frequently targeted, while men were subjected to beatings, electroshocks, and sexual assault, often as a form of humiliation. In Greece, young women, often students, were sexually victimized in police units specifically set up for

them, facing rape, attempted rape, forced penetration with objects, and electroshocks. Such practices were not random but part of an organized state project of terror, designed to attack both the political and gender identities of prisoners. Overall in many countries torture against women during interrogation is intentionally directed at the female sexual identity and anatomy, involving rape and the violation of female sexual anatomy (Sanford et al., 2016, p. 21).

Torture in these contexts often directly targeted women's reproductive capacities. Female prisoners were seen as denying the "sanctity of motherhood" by engaging in political activism. Torturers argued that it was better they not give birth at all than raise "communist children." Pregnant women were particularly vulnerable, some miscarried as a result of torture, while others were permanently prevented from having children. These patterns of gendered violence are not limited to isolated cases but are also evident in genocidal contexts, where women's bodies become central targets (Sanford et al., 2016, p. 23).

4.6. Gendered Violence in the Holocaust

The Holocaust provides a clear example of how gender shaped both the forms of violence experienced and the ways in which these experiences were later understood. The targeting of pregnant women was not unique to this case but part of a broader pattern in genocides and conflicts. Pregnancy often marked women for immediate death, as their reproductive role was directly tied to the survival of the group. In the Holocaust, for example, pregnant women were systematically singled out during selections. In ghettos such as Theresienstadt, women were forced to undergo abortions, while in labor and concentration camps, visibly pregnant women and mothers with small children were sent directly to the gas chambers. Some were given the choice to leave their children at the gas chamber and go to work in the camps but most would not leave their children alone. In this way, mothers made up a large part of the victims, not only because they were targeted, but also because they sacrificed their own survival for their children (Ofer & Weitzman, 1998, pp. 7–12).

Similarly, in other conflicts, pregnant women's bodies were attacked in brutal ways. Accounts from Southeast Asia describe women whose bellies were stabbed open so that both they and their unborn children were killed, symbolizing the destruction of reproductive capacity (Sanford et al., 2016, p. 117).

The Holocaust also illustrates how women's experiences of genocide, including these gender-specific forms of violence, were long overlooked. Since Jewish women were persecuted as Jews and not specifically as women, their gendered experiences were often ignored, with the assumption that gender was not important since they were targeted as Jews rather than as women. While gender did not define the Holocaust, women's and men's experiences differed significantly. For example, women and children made up most of those sent directly to the gas chambers at Auschwitz, but this fact is rarely highlighted (Ofer & Weitzman, 1998, pp. 347–348).

While some critics argued that focusing on gender might suggest that women were more victimized than men, research shows that men and women were affected in different ways, as the path to annihilation was shaped by experiences that specifically targeted men as men and women as women (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, pp. 64–65). Gender norms also influenced strategies of survival. In many cases, families assumed that men were at greater risk, leading men to flee or hide while women remained in ghettos, where they became the majority of the population and had to take on new responsibilities in public life (Ofer & Weitzman, 1998, pp. 5–8). Men were initially more likely to be arrested, beaten, or deported to forced labor camps, while women were often left to manage households and ensure the survival of their families and communities under increasingly brutal conditions (Ofer & Weitzman, 1998, p. 147).

At the same time, Jewish women faced the constant threat of sexual violence. Even though Nazi policy officially banned sexual relations with Jews as “racial shame”, testimonies show that harassment, coercion, and rape did occur, creating another layer of trauma that men usually did not face (Ofer & Weitzman, 1998, p. 7–8).

Part of the reason gender has long been overlooked in Holocaust studies is that questions about sexual exploitation or women's specific experiences were often seen as too trivial, too intimate, or overshadowed by the overwhelming focus on death itself (Ofer & Weitzman, 1998, p. 349).

Yet, as von Joeden-Forgey notes, genocide must be seen as a gendered process, men and women are targeted differently, and their strategies of survival differ accordingly (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, pp. 64–65).

As one historian notes: "If in the gas chambers or before the firing squads all Jews seemed alike to the Nazis, the path to this end was not always the same for women and men". This recognition does not imply that women were more victimized than men, but rather that the Holocaust cannot be fully understood without considering how gender shaped these experiences (Ofer & Weitzman, 1998, p. 350; von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, p. 79).

4.7. Conclusion

Sexual violence in war is often understood mainly as rape. While rape is widespread and deeply harmful, scholars like von Joeden-Forgey (2012) argue that this view is too narrow. Sexual violence can also include attacks on women's reproductive abilities, their dignity, and even the "life-force" of their communities.

The atrocities committed in Rwanda and Yugoslavia show this clearly. Women and girls were not only raped but also forced to become pregnant, mutilated, or attacked in ways that aimed to break up families and communities. These acts were not about individual sexual desire but were used as a strategy to harm the group, its social bonds, and its future generations. Von Joeden-Forgey calls these "life-force" atrocities, acts meant to destroy the reproductive and social strength of a population. They often happen alongside other forms of gendered violence, like torture or forced

displacement. Looking beyond rape helps us understand sexual violence as a deliberate tool of control and destruction (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, p. 74).

The impact of such violence does not end with the conflict itself. In its aftermath, women often face social ostracism, impoverishment, and homelessness due to ongoing discrimination. Many also suffer from lifelong injuries and may be forced to raise children on their own (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, 79). These dynamics highlight the long-term and gendered nature of violence and are especially important for understanding historical cases where women's reproductive and social roles were central, such as the experiences of Jeju women during and after the April 3rd Uprising. The following chapter will therefore provide the historical background of Jeju Island as a basis for this analysis.

5. Jeju Island History

Understanding the outbreak of the Jeju 4.3 Massacre requires putting the island within its longer historical and social context. Jeju was not simply a peripheral region of Korea, but a space shaped by geographic isolation, economic exploitation, and a long-standing tradition of resistance to external authority (Merrill, 1980; Hilty, 2011).

These structural conditions contributed to the perception of Jeju as politically unstable and difficult to control, which in turn contributed to the escalation of state violence in 1948.

At the same time, Jeju developed social structures that differed in important ways from those of mainland Korea, particularly in relation to gender. Women played a more visible and economically central role in Jeju society, a factor that not only shaped everyday life but also influenced how violence was enacted during the massacre (Shaikh, 2021; Kwon, 2001). This chapter therefore does not aim to provide a comprehensive history of the island, but rather to highlight those historical

developments that help explain both the start of the uprising and the specific forms of violence, especially gendered violence, that characterized it.

5.1. Time before the Tamna Kingdom

Jeju is rich in myths, many of which reflect the island's landscape and the lives of its inhabitants. One of the most well-known is the legend of Seolmundae Halmang (설문대할망), a giant grandmother figure who is said to have created Mt. Halla and the island's many oreum (volcanic hills). This myth highlights the close relationship between Jeju's natural environment and its people, as well as the importance of Mt. Halla in everyday life and cultural identity (Hyeon, 1995, pp. 91–96).

Another important founding myth describes three brothers who emerged from the ground and established the first community on the island. With the arrival of three women and the introduction of agriculture and animal husbandry, the island began to develop and prosper. Compared to the Korean founding myth of Dangun, these stories place a stronger emphasis on the role of women in the formation of society (Alawi, 2020, pp. 11–17).

In addition to these myths, archaeological evidence shows that Jeju was first inhabited around 25,000 years ago, during the Upper Palaeolithic period. Over time, settlements became more complex, particularly during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, with developments in pottery, tools, and village organization. Due to its geographic location, Jeju also became increasingly involved in maritime trade with the Korean mainland, China, and Japan, as reflected in various archaeological findings. As trade expanded and settlements grew, the need for a more structured political organization emerged, eventually leading to the formation of the Tamna Kingdom(Oh, 2012, pp. 12–36).

5.2. Tamna Kingdom

It is not exactly known when the Tamna Kingdom was established, but it likely emerged from the unification of smaller village communities. During this period, Jeju developed into an important trading partner, exporting marine and agricultural products while importing goods such as metals, rice, and salt. Historical sources, including the *Samguk Sagi* and Chinese records, describe Jeju as a distinct society with its own cultural and linguistic characteristics (Oh, 2012, pp. 45–62). Regarding tributary relations, the Tamna Kingdom is known to have paid tribute to the Baekje Kingdom from 476 CE until Baekje's fall in 660 CE, as well as to Silla until its collapse in 935 CE, Tang China, and Japan (Hilty, 2011, p. 80; Saltzman, 2022, pp. 2–3).

5.3. Goryeo Dynasty

More detailed historical records of Jeju began to appear with the establishment of the Goryeo Kingdom in 918, when the island gradually came under mainland influence. Although Jeju initially had some autonomy, this changed in 1105 when it was formally incorporated as an administrative district known as Tamna-gun (탐라군). During this period, the influence of the mainland increased, particularly through the spread of Buddhism and developments in ceramic production (Oh, 2012, p. 75).

Resistance to mainland authority became evident during the Mongol invasions of Korea in the 13th century. After the Goryeo government surrendered, rebel forces retreated to Jeju, where they continued their resistance before being defeated in 1273. Following this, the island came under Mongol control for approximately one hundred years. Due to its strategic location, Jeju developed into an important center for horse breeding and military activity. Although Mongol rule ended in 1374, its influence remained visible in the island's culture and society (Oh, 2012, p. 91; Hilty 2011, p. 80).

5.4. Joseon Dynasty

With the establishment of the Joseon Dynasty, Jeju was more closely integrated into the central state and placed under the administration of Jeolla Province. Government officials were dispatched to the island, and Confucian ideology was formally introduced. Although Jeju was formally incorporated, it remained peripheral, which shaped the relationship between the island and the central government over time (Oh, 2012, pp. 95–97, 122).

The island's population faced heavy economic burdens, particularly through taxation and labor obligations. The so-called yukgoyeok (육고역, “six hard labors”) referred to a set of demanding obligations imposed on Jeju islanders, including diving for shellfish, constructing infrastructure, and agricultural labor, often under harsh conditions and with significant risk to life. These obligations placed a continuous strain on the population and reinforced economic inequality between the island and the mainland, contributing to long-term resentment (Hilty, 2011, p. 82). Isolation further intensified this. A travel ban introduced in 1629 restricted movement between Jeju and the mainland for nearly two centuries, further reinforcing the island's isolation and limiting economic opportunities. As a result, Jeju developed not only as a geographically isolated space, but also as a socially and politically distinct region, where local conditions often diverged from mainland norms (Saltzman, 2022, p. 8).

These structural inequalities often led to open resistance. Throughout the late Joseon period, uprisings occurred in response to corrupt officials, excessive taxation, and economic exploitation. Particularly significant were the rebellions of 1862, 1898, and 1901 (Saltzman, 2022, p. 3). While the central government occasionally responded by removing local officials, the underlying causes of unrest remained largely unaddressed (Merrill, 1980, p. 142).

The 1901 Sinch'uk uprising, which combined economic grievances with religious tensions, further showed how strong social conflicts on the island had become. These repeated uprisings are important for understanding later developments. They

did not only reflect temporary dissatisfaction, but showed that resistance had become a common way of reacting to external control. At the same time, these repeated uprisings contributed to the view of Jeju as unstable and difficult to govern. Over time, resistance became a common way for islanders to respond to external control. As Merrill notes, protest developed into a recurring pattern shaped by Jeju's isolation and local conditions. This combination of continued resistance and growing suspicion from the state became an important precondition for the events of 1948, when state authorities once again saw opposition on the island as a threat and responded with suppression (Merrill, 1980, pp. 143–148; Hilty, 2011, p. 82).

5.5. Japanese colonial period

Following the formal annexation of Korea by the Empire of Japan in 1910, Jeju became subject to the broader structures of colonial governance, which introduced significant economic, social, and political transformations. While sectors such as fishing were modernized, most of the benefits went to the Japanese and settlers rather than the local population. New tax systems and land surveys led to widespread dispossession, and many islanders lost their traditional livelihoods. As a result, unemployment increased, and new industries were not enough to provide jobs for the local population (Merrill, 1980, p. 148; Saltzman, 2022, p. 10).

As a result, many islanders were forced to seek work elsewhere, leading to large-scale migration, especially to Japan. By the 1930s, tens of thousands of Jeju inhabitants were living abroad, often employed in low-paid and unstable labor. This outmigration not only reflected economic hardship but also contributed to the fragmentation of local communities and family structures (Saltzman, 2022, pp. 9–12; Merrill, 1980, p. 148).

At the same time, Jeju's strategic location led to increased militarization. As Japan expanded its imperial ambitions, the island was transformed into a military outpost, with the construction of bases and defensive infrastructure. Islanders were frequently

mobilized for forced labor, further intensifying the extractive nature of colonial rule. By the final years of World War II, the number of stationed soldiers reportedly exceeded that of the civilian population, illustrating the extent to which Jeju had been incorporated into Japan's military system (Merrill, 1980, pp. 148–149).

These developments deepened existing patterns of marginalization and introduced new forms of control and exploitation. Economic inequality, social disruption, and militarization were closely connected and reinforced each other, creating an unstable situation. At the same time, colonial rule strengthened state control through surveillance, coercion, and the suppression of opposition (Merrill, 1980, p. 149; Saltzman, 2022, pp. 11–12).

Even though the situation was difficult, resistance still continued. Protests such as the 1931 student demonstrations and the 1932 haenyeo uprising show that opposition to external control remained an important feature of Jeju society (Merrill, 1980, pp. 148–149). In particular, the participation of women in organized resistance shows that they remained visible in both social and political life. These movements were not isolated, but were part of a longer pattern of resistance that continued into the post-liberation period (Hilty 2011, p. 82).

The end of colonial rule in 1945 did not resolve these tensions. Instead, many of the underlying problems, such as economic inequality, political instability, and social division, remained. The experience of militarization and state control also continued to shape the island. In this sense, the colonial period did not simply come before the Jeju 4·3 Massacre, but helped create the conditions under which it became possible, especially by reinforcing patterns of marginalization, control, and resistance that appeared again in the late 1940s (Won, 2022, p. 5).

The historical development of Jeju Island shows that the events of the Jeju 4·3 Massacre cannot be understood in isolation. Instead, they emerged from long-term conditions that shaped both the island's relationship with external authorities and its

internal social structure. Across different historical periods, Jeju remained a peripheral but strategically important region, which was frequently subject to economic exploitation, administrative control, and various forms of marginalization. At the same time, these conditions also fostered patterns of resistance, as the local population responded to external pressure and injustice.

Taken together, these factors help explain the dynamics of the Jeju 4·3 Massacre. Jeju's history of marginalization and resistance contributed to its portrayal as a politically unstable region, while its specific social structure influenced the ways in which violence was carried out. The following chapter builds on this by examining the position of women in Jeju society and how this shaped their experiences during the massacre.

5.6. Jeju Women

The traditional image of women in Korean society was shaped by Confucian values, which emphasized obedience, domestic roles, and the ideal of the “good wife and wise mother” (현모양처, hyeonmo yangcheo). Women were generally not expected to take part in public life and had limited access to education. However, Jeju Island shows a clear difference, as the position of women there developed in a different way due to the island's specific environmental and social conditions (Kendall, 1985).

Jeju's harsh natural environment, including infertile soil and strong winds, made survival difficult and required the active participation of all members of society. As a result, women were involved in a wide range of labor activities, including agriculture, livestock farming, trade, and maritime work. In many cases, they played a central role in supporting their families. This was reinforced by demographic factors, as many men died at sea or left the island, which increased women's responsibility within the household (Kim, 2005, p. 3299). Because of this, women in Jeju were more visible in everyday life than on the mainland. They worked both inside and outside the home and contributed directly to the local economy. At the same time,

this did not mean that women were equal. They remained part of a patriarchal system, where their access to education and formal authority was still limited (Shaikh, 2024, pp. 34–35).

A key example of this position is provided by the haenyeo, the female divers of Jeju Island. By collecting marine products such as abalone and seaweed without diving equipment, haenyeo often became the main providers for their families. Their work was physically demanding but economically essential, especially in a region where agriculture alone was not sufficient (Shaikh, 2024, p. 5).

Originally diving was a male-dominated profession known as pojak (포작), but over time, it became a predominantly female occupation, partly due to social and economic changes such as male outmigration and mortality (Kwon, 2005, p. 118). During the Joseon Dynasty, haenyeo were also part of the state's tribute system, which required them to collect marine products for the government and limited their economic independence (Yang, 2022, pp. 15–16). Under Japanese colonial rule, the role of the haenyeo changed further. Their labor became increasingly integrated into the market economy, and many worked as migrant laborers both within Korea and abroad. While this provided greater economic opportunities and increased their income, it also exposed them to exploitation and reinforced their position as a source of cheap labor (Kwon, 2005, pp. 120–122; Shaikh, 2024, pp. 18–19).

At the same time, haenyeo were not only economic actors but also capable of collective action. Through local organizations such as the jamsuhoe (잠수회), they regulated their work and supported one another. This also made resistance possible. The 1932 haenyeo uprising, in which large numbers of female divers protested against colonial policies and labor exploitation, shows that women could act as organized political actors (Shaikh, 2024, p. 19).

Overall, women in Jeju occupied a complex position. They were economically central and highly visible within their communities, but at the same time remained

structurally limited. This position made them both essential to the functioning of society and particularly exposed in times of conflict. In the context of the Jeju 4·3 Massacre, this becomes especially important. Women's visibility, economic importance, and strong connection to village life made them not only accessible but also symbolically important targets. Violence against women must therefore not be seen as accidental, but as part of broader mechanisms of control, punishment, and the reassertion of authority. In this sense, the gendered dimensions of the violence reflect not only general patterns of wartime abuse but also the specific social structure of Jeju society.

6. Jeju Massacre

6.1. Background 1945-1947

This chapter looks at the situation on Jeju between Liberation in 1945 and the outbreak of the uprising in April 1948. In this period, everyday life on the island was shaped by poor harvests, hunger and unequal grain collection, but also by the quick expansion of the police and the arrival of right-wing youth groups from the mainland. The 3·1 Shooting Incident in 1947, the general strike and the spread of torture and terror deepened distrust towards the police and the Seobuk Young Men's Association. These developments show that the Jeju 4·3 Incident cannot be understood as a sudden "communist revolt," but as the result of overlapping local grievances and Cold War politics.

During the Japanese colonial period, Jeju Island was used as an important military base because of its location. Islanders were forced to build tunnels and military facilities, and by the time Japan surrendered in 1945, about 60,000 Japanese soldiers were stationed on Jeju. These troops were under the 58th Army Command, and this heavy militarization caused severe hardship for the islanders, who were

often forced to work on construction sites for the Japanese army (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 68–70).

After liberation, most Japanese soldiers left, but at the same time many Jeju people returned from Japan and Manchuria. Because of this, the population increased from about 220,000 to more than 280,000 within one year, which caused economic and social pressure (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 78).

Before 1945, the island had imported around 40 percent of its industrial goods from Japan, but after liberation trade was tightly controlled. Shipping was interrupted, which caused shortages. Small fishing boats began crossing the Korean Strait to bring back returnees and goods, but the police labeled these trips illegal and cracked down on them, which further increased tension between the police and the islanders (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 82).

After the Japanese surrender, U.S. Army landed in Korea on September 8, 1945, when the 24th Corps under Lieutenant General John R. Hodge arrived in Incheon (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 73–74). U.S. forces reached Jeju Island on September 28, 1945, to receive the Japanese surrender. Before they arrived, the Japanese military had already destroyed most ammunition and explosives by dumping them at sea. This is important because later claims that the rebels had access to large numbers of Japanese weapons are now generally seen as exaggerated. Japanese soldiers stayed on Jeju until around late October 1945, before being sent back to Japan (Merrill, 1980, p. 150).

The political situation after liberation was complicated, and several political groups emerged. On 10 September 1945, the Jeju Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence was created, and on 23 September 1945 the Jeju People's Committee was officially established, five days before U.S. forces landed (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 86). At first, the Committee focused on maintaining order rather than acting as a full government, since it was not

officially recognized by the U.S. Military Government (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 88).

Although connected to the South Korean Labor Party, it operated relatively independently and was not strongly controlled from the mainland. It also expressed some anti-American sentiment, while still maintaining contact with American troops during the first year. The United States Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) was slow to establish a full administrative presence on Jeju, and the 59th Military Government Company only arrived in mid-November 1945. For several months, the People's Committee therefore remained the most important political organization on the island. In early November 1945, a violent clash between left- and right-wing groups left more than 100 people injured. After this, the Committee became the dominant organization on Jeju and gained control of local administration (Merrill, 1980, pp. 150–151).

The Committee showed a strong sense of independence and resisted subordination to South Jeolla Province, arguing that Jeju's connection to the mainland had effectively ended with liberation. Although it sometimes criticized U.S. policies, cooperation with the local U.S. administration was largely pragmatic, as both sides relied on each other to maintain order. In most other regions, people's committees were quickly dissolved, but on Jeju the Committee remained relatively stable, popular, and effective in governance. Because of this, the U.S. Military Government relied on it for daily administration and public order (Merrill, 1980, p. 152; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 83–85).

This situation changed after Jeju became a separate province on August 1, 1946. Before that, Jeju had been part of South Jeolla Province, but communication with Seoul through Gwangju was slow and complicated. Making Jeju a separate province simplified administration but also meant stronger U.S. control. The relationship between the People's Committee and the U.S. authorities worsened immediately

after, since the new U.S. military governor of Jeju was not supportive of the Committee (Merrill, 1980, p. 152).

This decision was also not welcomed by many residents, including members of the People's Committee. People worried that separating from the Province would make it harder to secure food and supplies because of Jeju's isolation. Others were afraid that taxes would increase since new administrative bodies had to be created. Some also wondered why the U.S. wanted Jeju to become a province and suspected that Jeju might be turned into a military base (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 97–98).

Events on the mainland made the situation worse. The October 1946 People's Resistance in Daegu, caused by workers' strikes and grain-collection protests, led to many deaths and made the U.S. Military Government stricter toward left-wing groups. On Jeju, right-wing organizations like the Halla Corps clashed with the People's Committee. Several leftists were arrested, while right-wing attackers were not punished. After this the Committee was not banned, but its activities were limited. When it lost its influence, it became more critical of the U.S. authorities and started to organize public discontent (Merrill, 1980, p. 153).

The division of Korea also made it difficult to get materials from the North. Carbon for fishing lamps and fertilizer for agriculture became hard to find, which reduced production (Merrill, 1980, p. 153). Across Korea, the U.S. authorities reappointed many officials from the Japanese colonial period, and Jeju was no exception. Pro-Japanese policemen became USAMGIK officers, and corruption grew, especially around grain collection, where U.S. officers and local profiteers often worked together. This caused a lot of resentment among the people (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 97–98).

Another important change after Jeju became a separate province was the rapid expansion of the police and their growing influence. Many policemen from the

Japanese colonial era were rehired, and the number of police officers increased rapidly. Jeju had only 101 policemen during the colonial period, but by February 1947 this number grew to 330, and later it reached about 2,000 because many officers were sent from the mainland. USAMGIK depended heavily on these forces, which gave them a lot of authority. They were better armed than the Korean Constabulary, and many high-ranking positions were filled by former colonial-era policemen. In July 1947, 75% of all policemen on Jeju were mainland forces (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 100–103). In addition, on 16 November 1946, the U.S. established the 9th Regiment of the Korean Constabulary in Moseulpo. Many officers had served in the Japanese military, often because they could speak English or already had military training (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 104–105).

In November 1946, left-wing forces were reorganized under the South Korean Labor Party (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 111). From then on, the SKLP became more active on Jeju and tried to increase the number of members. The party opened an office in Chilseongtong, the central district of Jeju-eup, and by the March 1 1947 rally it had grown to around 3,000 members. This rapid growth of the SKLP shows how strong left-wing support had become on Jeju at the time and helps explain why political confrontations increased in 1947 (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 113).

The year 1946 was also shaped by the cholera outbreak and a very poor harvest. Since Jeju's soil is unsuitable for rice, people depended heavily on barley, millet, and potatoes, and the poor harvest made the food shortage even more severe. Many islanders survived by gathering roots, seaweed, and seafood. Although grains from the mainland eventually arrived, it was not enough. Confusing USAMGIK policies made the situation worse and public dissatisfaction grew (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 118-119).

Smuggling became common, and police were often involved through bribery and corruption. High-ranking police and USAMGIK officials were also involved. The word “corruption” became symbolic of people’s frustration with both the police and the U.S. authorities (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 122).

Education also expanded after liberation. In the two years that followed, around 54 new schools were opened on the island, and the number of students grew quickly. Student movements also became more active. In 1946, students protested against the Japanese-style education system, and in 1947 their protests spread beyond the schools. These demonstrations contributed to wider political mobilization on the island and may also have influenced participation in the later 3·1 Independence Movement Day demonstration (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 120–121).

The talks between the USA and the Soviet Union about Korea’s future were not going well in 1947. The Joint American–Soviet Commission was stalled, and as the Cold War grew, Korea’s independence question became part of this larger conflict. This made people in both South and North Korea anxious, because they feared that unification might fail. At the same time, left-wing forces in South Korea were pushed on the defensive, especially after the Daegu Incident in October 1946, when leftist groups organised violent protests in many cities and counties and USAMGIK reacted harshly. Against this background, the South Korean Labor Party declared that it wanted to become a mass party and also tried to restart the Joint Commission talks, which it saw as crucial. As the anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement approached, the party ordered its local chapters to hold large-scale ceremonies and link them to the demand for an immediate resumption of the Joint Commission. This made USAMGIK nervous, because in 1946 there had already been many protests all over South Korea, often led by left-wing forces. The National Front for Democracy took the lead in preparing the 3·1 ceremonies, and USAMGIK tried to limit their impact. It issued guidelines to the police and local military government offices to

restrict the 3·1 commemorations as much as possible and strictly banned parades and demonstrations. In addition, emergency martial law was declared across the country (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 123–124).

On Jeju, left-wing forces had until then maintained a relatively moderate stance, and open confrontation with the military government had not yet taken place. By early 1947, their influence on the island had grown through the creation of sub-organisations such as the Joseon Democratic Youth League, women's leagues and the local branch of the National Front for Democracy. On 17 February 1947, they formed the “Jeju preparation committee for the ceremony of the 3·1 Protest.” Interestingly, this committee also included some right-wing figures and even executives from the police and the prosecution, which shows that at this point the ceremony still had broad support across political groups (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 124, 126).

Because of the situation on Jeju, the local police issued special instructions before March 1. On 22 February, they announced directions that effectively forbade political demonstrations. Ceremonies organised by government offices had to be held at the workplace, parades and demonstrations were absolutely banned, ceremonies had to be held within each ri, dong or eup and people from outside areas were not allowed to attend, and any ceremony required prior application and approval. At the same time, the US military governor, Major Stout, told the preparation committee that if they wanted to hold a ceremony, it should take place at Jeju West Airport, outside the town, and that no parade would be allowed. Shortly before 3·1, 100 police reserves from Chungnam and Chungbuk provinces were also dispatched to Jeju. Later, police documents explained this as a response to an “unstable situation” on the island, while another police official claimed that the dispatch was part of nationwide measures, not specifically requested by Jeju police (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 128-129).

Despite these restrictions, ceremonies and demonstrations were held across the island on 1 March 1947 to commemorate the 1919 protests. In Jeju City, the day began with a large assembly at Jeju Buk Elementary School. What started as a legal ceremony soon turned into a mass protest. According to Merrill, the meetings held to commemorate the March 1 anniversary escalated into demonstrations against the formation of a separate South Korean Interim Government and for unification of the country based on the Moscow Conference decisions and the “March 1 spirit.” A huge crowd moved towards the main square near the administration building (Merrill, 1980, pp. 153–154). The slogans that day also called for the resumption of the Joint American–Soviet Commission. Since the police had originally only authorized the assembly but not a parade, they repeatedly ordered people to go home. However, as tens of thousands of people gathered, the authorities decided to tolerate the ceremony and planned to arrest the leaders later to avoid bloodshed (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 131–132).

In the afternoon, around 2 p.m., a parade began despite the lack of official permission. The situation escalated when a mounted policeman injured a child while passing through the crowd. As tensions rose, policemen from the mainland opened fire, killing six civilians. Medical reports later showed that most victims had been shot in the back, indicating that they were fleeing rather than attacking (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 131–133).

Clashes around the 3·1 ceremonies did not only happen on Jeju, but also in other places in South Korea, and in total 16 people were killed and 22 injured nationwide. However, in the case of Jeju the authorities had a particularly hard time calming public anger, because people clearly saw the police as the aggressors and the crowd as victims. Instead of trying to ease tensions, the police concentrated on justifying their actions. They described the shooting at Gwandeokjeong Square as self-defence in the name of public order (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 134).

The day after the shooting, the police began to arrest the organisers of the ceremonies as well as other people that were connected to it. Soon, rumours spread that the arrested were being beaten and tortured. At the same time, the police issued a statement that justified the firing and insisted that the shooting had been self-defence. This made people even angrier. Left-wing groups used the situation to mobilise public opinion by launching anti-police campaigns, like putting up leaflets and collecting money for the dead and injured. The Jeju Committee of the National Front for Democracy suggested creating a joint investigation team including people from different political camps, but the police rejected this. Instead, an investigation team led by the central USAMGIK was established on 3 March (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 136).

Public anger did not calm down, and soon calls for a general strike appeared. Local branches of the South Korean Labor Party, including activists like Lee Seung-jin (Kim Dal-sam), pushed for a “peaceful but forceful” response against USAMGIK and the police. From 10 March 1947, a general strike by civilians and government employees began on Jeju. It was large in scale and affected many areas of daily life. Workers in the provincial office, harbour affairs office, weather bureau, transportation companies, public corporations, banks and shops joined the strike. Teachers and students also took part, and even translators working for the military government walked out. According to sources, workers and staff from 156 organisations and businesses joined, and a US intelligence report estimated that about 75% of Korean Military Government employees were on strike (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 138–143).

The strikers called for the disarming of the police and an end to torture, the punishment of the officers responsible for the shooting, the resignation of police leaders, guarantees for the families of the victims, an end to arrests of “patriotic figures”, and the purging of pro-Japanese policemen. They also demanded the

reconvening of the United States–Soviet Joint Commission (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 140; Merrill, 1980, pp. 154–155).

From the US point of view, the strike was “Communist-inspired”, and intelligence reports claimed that hatred of the police had been stirred up by the South Korean Labor Party. At the same time, the reports admitted that both left- and right-wing groups on Jeju participated in the strike as a protest against the killing and wounding of civilians on 1 March. None of the strikers’ demands were met. Instead, USAMGIK sent further security forces to the island, as well as a large number of extreme right-wing Seobuk Young Men’s Association members, who were known for their fierce anti-communism (Merrill, 1980, pp. 154–155; Won, 2022, pp. 9–10).

During this time, around 200 people were arrested on charges of organising an illegal demonstration and causing disturbances across the whole province. And on March 20th the police gave a statement about the 3·1 shooting at a press conference in the USAMGIK office in Seoul. They acknowledged responsibility for what had happened, but still insisted that the firing in front of the 1st District Police Station had been an act of self-defence to maintain public order (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 151).

By that time, the general strike was already weakening. According to US reports, by 19 March about 90% of Military Government employees and around half of transportation workers had returned to work, and most public offices gradually ended their participation. Schools, however, continued the strike for longer, and it was only toward the end of March that teachers and students also went back (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 151–152). While the strike was fading, the scale of police raids increased, and reached around 500 by 10 April (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 151–152).

Rumours about police brutality against those arrested continued to spread. A special crime investigation division was set up within the Jeju police, and well-known

interrogators were sent from Seoul and other provinces. The police officially denied any torture, but according to the testimonies of former detainees many people either experienced violence themselves or heard the screams of others being beaten. Some teachers and officials felt so threatened that they resigned or went into hiding, and schools suffered from a serious lack of teachers (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 153–154).

At the same time, trials related to the shooting and the strike began. Many islanders were tried for organising or taking part in the March demonstrations and the general strike, but when it came to the policemen who had opened fire, only one officer responsible for the shooting in front of the provincial hospital was expelled. By contrast, dozens of policemen who had joined the strike were dismissed, and their posts were filled by officers from other regions and members of the far-right Seobuk Youth Association. Over the year from the 3·1 Shooting Incident in 1947 until just before the outbreak of the Jeju 4·3 Incident, around 2,500 people were arrested. The jails on Jeju became severely overcrowded, to the point that a US inspection team described Jeju prison as the worst case of crowding in any penal institution in Korea (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 156–158).

As already mentioned, many of the reinforcements from the mainland had a strong anti-communist stance and came to the so-called “red island” with scores to settle. Violence against islanders intensified. The large number of policemen and members of right-wing youth groups also created another problem, since they were poorly paid, or not paid at all, and largely lived off an island that was already struggling economically. In this situation they could almost do as they pleased, using shakedowns, blackmail and other forms of intimidation. A cycle of terror and counterterror developed. Police and rightists brutalised islanders, and islanders struck back (Merrill, 1980, pp. 154–155).

One early example was an incident near Jongdal in June, when leftists killed several policemen and a large force of police and right-wing youth retaliated by surrounding

the village and executing several residents. Such tactics might have intimidated people for a while, but in the long run they deepened resentment against the police and the government (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 159–163).

Another major source of anger was the grain collection policy, which imposed fixed quotas without considering local conditions. For Jeju this was especially harsh since the island's soil is not well suited for rice cultivation. Nevertheless, Jeju was given a fixed amount to deliver, and in 1947 the new governor pushed hard to meet this quota. Administrative power and even right-wing youth groups were used to enforce grain collection. This meant that officials and policemen tried to take grain from households that were already struggling to feed themselves, which naturally led to clashes. In some villages residents resisted and sometimes physically attacked officials who refused to lower the quota. Despite this resistance, the governor later reported that Jeju had even slightly exceeded its assigned target (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 167–168).

The Seobuk Young Men's Association was one of the main actors behind the terror on the island. The Jeju branch was officially established on 2 November 1947, but members had already started coming to Jeju right after the 3·1 Shooting Incident. Most of them were refugees from the North who had fled from the North Korean Communist Party and arrived with almost no money. At first, they tried to find jobs, but from the second half of 1947 they increasingly found positions in the police, administration and schools, which explains their growing influence. They were strongly anti-communist and were openly supported by Rhee, so their "Red-hunt" against people they labelled as leftists or "anti-democratic" was often tolerated or even encouraged. For economic as well as ideological reasons they used violence against islanders, including beatings and threats, sometimes as a way to collect money for the association. It is difficult to know exactly how many members were on Jeju before the uprising, but left-wing sources speak of several hundred members on

the island, and later the head of the association claimed that hundreds were sent to Jeju on Rhee's request. One journalist summed up their role by saying that, for the members of the Seobuk Young Men's Association, Jeju was "an island of nightmares", and for Jeju people, the Seobuk Young Men's Association was "the shadow of a nightmare" (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 178–180).

A US intelligence report from early 1948 also gives an interesting perspective on how Jeju was viewed at the time. It described the island as divided into left- and right-wing camps, but pointed out that many local leaders and ordinary people did not really belong to either side. According to this report, most of the so-called "leftists" on Jeju were not committed communists, and the majority of islanders were more concerned with poverty than with ideology. The population was seen as easily influenced by propaganda from both camps, while right-wing forces tried to dominate the island through youth groups and by excluding leftists from public office. Significantly, the report stressed that Jeju's left wing was not anti-American and that recent terrorist acts had mainly been carried out by right-wing groups (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 182).

After the Joint Commission failed, the situation became even worse. On 14 November 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution for general elections for a National Assembly in Korea under UN supervision. At first, these elections were supposed to take place in both North and South Korea. But because the UN commission could not enter the North due to the Soviet Union's refusal, the plan slowly changed and turned into an election held only in the South, which was finally scheduled for 10 May 1948. Many people feared that this would fix the division of the Korean peninsula, and resistance intensified. On Jeju this was also clearly visible. Whenever relations between the United States and the Soviet Union worsened, political tension on the island also tended to rise (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 172, 183).

Many people in both Koreas opposed elections being held only in the South and tried to push the U.S. Military Government to negotiate with the North instead, but this did not succeed. While figures like Kim Gu and Kim Gyu-sik argued for talks with the North and a unified government, Rhee Syngman and the Korean Democratic Party supported the plan for a separate South Korean government together with USAMGIK. In this situation, the SKLP decided to actively try to prevent the election. To oppose the South-only elections, the SKLP organised the '2·7 Protest for Saving the Nation' and called for a nationwide general strike starting 7 February 1948. Across the South there were numerous strikes, demonstrations and attacks on police boxes; thousands were arrested (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 183–184; Merrill, 1980, pp. 162–163).

At the same time, politics in the southern zone became more polarised. The moderate coalition that the United States had tried to support broke down, and after the assassination of Lyuh Woon-hyung, one of the most important moderate leaders, the gap between Left and Right grew wider (Merrill, 1980, p. 156). On the surface, Jeju still looked relatively "quiet", but the SKLP was using this time to build up its organisation. From autumn 1947 it carried out a large recruitment drive with organisers from the mainland. By early 1948, SKLP cells existed in almost every village on Jeju, and the party enjoyed broad popular support. This strong base in a remote region with a long tradition of local resistance later had important consequences (Merrill, 1980, pp. 157–160).

During the 2·7 Protest period, the situation on Jeju was at first relatively stable under strict police control. A US intelligence report from the 24th Corps stated that on 7 February disturbances on Jeju-do were limited to illegal meetings and the distribution of leaflets. However, this changed after 8 February. On the nights of 9, 10 and 11 February, rallies and demonstrations took place in several parts of the island (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 185; Merrill, 1980, pp. 163–165). These events show that by early 1948 the SKLP on Jeju was strong

enough to mobilise people quickly, even though the island had seemed “quiet” after the 3·1 Shooting Incident and the March 10 general strike.

By this time, torture had become much more common after the protests of March 1947. The situation worsened further in March 1948, when three young men died after being tortured by the police. These deaths deeply shocked and angered the islanders. Before the 3·1 Shooting Incident torture had not been a public issue on Jeju, but afterwards many people testified that interrogations usually began with beatings. The special crime investigation division, made up mainly of policemen from the mainland, became especially feared. Many of these officers, including railroad police and those who had fled from the North, regarded Jeju people as politically suspicious, while islanders in turn saw them as outsiders “from the mainland.” This mutual distrust made the violence even worse (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 186–187, 190).

By early 1948, violence, repression, and political polarization had reached a point where an armed uprising appeared to many as the only remaining option. The decision to begin it was probably made between the end of February and early March 1948. According to later reports, the main targets were the police and the Seobuk Young Men’s Association, not the Korean Constabulary or the US Army, because people were tired of the violence these groups had inflicted on the islanders. The leaders of the uprising hoped that this would stop the elections and trigger a nationwide revolt. They did not expect that their decision would lead to such a long and brutal massacre (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 198–201).

In preparation for the planned uprising, by late March 1948, around 320 men were organized into guerrilla, self-defence, and special guard units. Based on this, the military committee of the Jeju Chapter of the South Korean Labor Party set 3 April as the day of the uprising, with a plan to occupy the Jeju Police Inspection Agency and

the 1st District Police Station and to attack police boxes around the island (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 203).

6.2. Massacre

The uprising began in the early morning hours of 3 April 1948, when around 500 men attacked 12 police stations, mainly in the northern part of the island, accompanied by several thousand supporters. Their main targets were the police and right-wing youth organisations such as the Seobuk Young Men's Association. They justified their actions with appeals to end the oppression and violence caused by the police and right-wing groups and to oppose the planned South-only elections, calling on "conscientious" policemen and officials to stand on the side of the people (Merrill, 1980, pp. 166–167; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 211–212). In response, the US Military Government sent additional police and a constabulary battalion to Jeju. Many guerrillas and village men fled into the hills around Hallasan, and during April clashes remained limited. Toward the end of the month, government forces began screening operations in the main towns, searching for alleged "Communist sympathizers." At this stage, the main fighting was between the guerrillas and the police rather than the US forces on the island (Merrill, 1980, pp. 167–168).

As the situation on Jeju deteriorated, Military Governor William F. Dean ordered a stronger response and placed the suppression under the Korea Constabulary rather than the police. At the same time, he instructed the regiment commander to contact the rebel leader and attempt negotiations before launching full-scale operations. He also stressed that prisoners should not be handed over to the police, reflecting U.S. concerns about further abuses as the May elections approached (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 243; Merrill, 1980, pp. 168–169).

As a result, Lieutenant Colonel Kim Ik-ryeol, commander of the 9th Regiment, met with the rebel leader Kim Dal-sam on 28 April in an attempt to end the fighting. Although there were many disagreements, the two sides eventually reached an

agreement. They agreed that all fighting would stop within 72 hours and that any clashes after five days would be considered a breach of the agreement. Both sides would gradually disarm, and the safety of the uprising's leaders would be guaranteed if those in the mountains came down peacefully. They also agreed to establish defector camps under military control, where the police would not be allowed to enter. If either side violated these terms, the fighting would resume immediately (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 244, 251).

The peace, however, did not last long. On 1 May, only three days after the negotiation, an arson attack in a village in the north of the island became a turning point. Members of right-wing youth groups, including the Seobuk Young Men's Association, entered Yeonmi village in Ora-ri in broad daylight and set about ten houses on fire. Despite this, the police and the US Military Government blamed the "armed rebels" and even filmed the burning village as "May Day on Cheju-do." After inspecting the site himself, Regimental Commander Kim Ik-ryeol concluded that young rightists from the Seobuk Young Men's Association were responsible and reported this to the US Military Government, but his report was ignored and the official version continued to accuse the rebels (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 252–253).

After the peace negotiations collapsed, the US Army leadership, including Military Governor Dean, ordered a full-scale offensive on Jeju. On 3 May 1948 they instructed the Korea Constabulary to launch an all-out attack on the armed rebels, and on 5 May an additional battalion was sent to the island, bringing the regiment up to three battalions in order to settle the situation as quickly as possible (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 254; Merrill, 1980, p. 170).

This was a turning point in the uprising. At the emergency meeting on 5 May 1948, Regimental Commander Kim Ik-ryeol still argued for an "open-arm" operation, but he clashed with National Police Agency chief Jo Byeong-ok, who pushed for harsh military suppression. After a physical confrontation, Kim was dismissed and the next

day Lieutenant Colonel Park Jin-gyeong was appointed as the new commander of the 9th Regiment (Jeju 4·3 Peace Foundation, 2016, p. 19).

Park was given the position because he had served on Jeju while in the Japanese army and was familiar with the island's terrain and fortifications. Officially, he was instructed to resolve the rebellion using a minimum of force, but later testimonies from his own subordinates describe his rule as extremely brutal. In court, soldiers recalled his "ruthless offensive operations" and even quoted him as saying that it would be acceptable if 300,000 Jeju people were sacrificed to suppress the uprising. Large-scale sweeps in the mountain villages under his command produced thousands of prisoners within a month and forced many residents to flee into the mountains. His operations did not stabilize Jeju but instead intensified violence and fear (Merrill, 1980, p. 175; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 275–276).

Opposition to the South-only elections was already visible during voter registration. Jeju had the lowest registration rate in the country, and preparations for the vote were repeatedly disrupted by attacks on election offices, the destruction of records, and fear among election officials. One reason the government wanted to "settle" Jeju quickly was the upcoming elections. Across South Korea, preparations were in full swing, but on Jeju they were repeatedly disrupted. From mid-April, attacks on election offices began. Polling places were raided, and election records were stolen or burned. In some cases, members of the National Election Committee were assaulted or killed. This created fear among officials, many of whom resigned. On 3 May, the entire election committee stepped down, saying conditions were too dangerous to continue (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 261–262). In response, the authorities tightened control around the elections. Polling stations and government buildings were heavily guarded, while curfews, roadblocks, and searches were used to restrict guerrilla movement (Merrill, 1980, pp. 170–171).

These attacks and boycotts effectively disrupted the elections and made Jeju the only region in South Korea where the 10 May vote failed. Rebels called on islanders not to vote and to “go up to the mountain” instead, and many villagers agreed. In two of Jeju’s three electoral districts (both in North-Jeju), turnout fell below 50%, so the elections were declared invalid, while only the South-Jeju district elected a deputy. A re-election was announced for 23 June but had to be postponed indefinitely because of the continuing unrest. Jeju thus became the only region that rejected the 5·10 elections, the two vacant seats were only filled a year later, in the by-election of 10 May 1949 (Jeju 4·3 Peace Foundation, 2016, pp. 19–20; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 261, 267–268).

The failed election made the authorities even more determined to crush the uprising, and in late May the first pacification campaign began. Lieutenant Colonel Park Jin-gyeong introduced a three-phase strategy. First, villages were turned into “strategic hamlets” by building stone walls and organising local militia units, while the constabulary moved out of its bases and the police tightened patrols in the coastal areas. In the second phase, the constabulary, together with police and right-wing youth groups, carried out large sweeps of the island’s interior, burning mountain villages and forcing residents into coastal refugee camps. In the final phase, screening centres were set up in these camps to identify suspected guerrillas and SKLP members; over the summer, more than 600 alleged party members were imprisoned as a result of these operations (Merrill, 1980, p. 175).

Because of Lieutenant Colonel Park’s brutal tactics he became deeply unpopular, not only among islanders but also among some of his subordinates, especially those from Jeju. On 18 June he was shot dead in his sleep by a subordinate. Later in court, the assassin and his accomplices testified that they had decided to kill him in order to stop his ruthless behaviour, since he was ordering the killing of their “own people” without hesitation. Shortly after his death, a new regimental commander and deputy commander were appointed and continued the same repression policies as their

predecessor. They immediately launched large search operations to track down rebels and, within a few days, captured dozens and then hundreds of suspected “raiders” (Merrill, 1980, pp. 175–176; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 286, 289).

In the following months, more than three thousand additional islanders were arrested. These indiscriminate roundups, together with rumours and testimonies about torture during interrogation, made people afraid and pushed many, especially young men, to flee into the mountains, with some joining the rebels. Reports describe “almost all villages” as empty, with so-called “mountain people” farming by day and hiding at night. During this period, guerrilla activity itself remained limited, partly because of bad weather in the rainy season and partly because of the ongoing suppression operations. During that time officials even claimed that public security was stabilising, while residents told journalists that they were more afraid of the guns “close to us” than of distant gunfire (Cumings, 1990, pp. 256–257; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 290).

After the situation seemed more stable, some mainland forces were withdrawn. However, guerrilla attacks increased again from late August 1948, showing that the uprising had not been suppressed (Merrill, 1980, p. 179). As a result, the state’s approach to Jeju became even harsher. On 17 October, Major Song Yo-chan, commander of the newly established Jeju Defense Headquarters, issued a proclamation that banned civilians from entering areas more than five kilometres from the coastline without a permit from the military and stated that anyone found there would be treated as a rebel and shot. This marked a decisive turn toward targeting mid-mountain civilian space. Because of Jeju’s geography, this order covered almost all mid-mountain villages and made everyday movements between homes, fields and the coast extremely risky, since people outside the coastal zone could now be treated as enemies. The next day, on 18 October, the coast was also blocked by the navy, and a battalion of the 14th Regiment from Yeosu was

scheduled to be sent to Jeju as reinforcements (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 332–334).

Before these reinforcements could arrive, however, the situation on the mainland changed again. On 19 October, the 14th Regiment in Yeosu, which had been ordered to embark for Jeju, refused to go and instead started a revolt, stating that they would not “murder the people of Jeju-do fighting against imperialist policy.” Around two thousand soldiers took part, quickly occupying Yeosu and Suncheon, and the revolt developed into a broader local uprising as left-wing groups and organisations in the area joined in. The government suppressed the revolt with extreme violence, executing many people suspected of having taken part or of helping the rebels. Later research estimates that around ten thousand civilians were killed, with most of the deaths caused by government forces. For the newly established South Korean government and U.S. military advisers in Korea, the Yeosu–Suncheon rebellion was a serious shock. This further reduced any willingness to seek compromise, and Jeju was increasingly seen as a place that had to be brought under control by force (Kim, 2014, pp. 33–35; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 334).

In early November, the Jeju regiment launched a major offensive against the guerrillas. According to military reports, between 6 October and 20 November 1,625 “rebels” were killed and 1,383 captured, while only around sixty rifles were seized during this period. Merrill notes that this high number of “enemy casualties” and the small number of weapons strongly suggest that many of those killed were unarmed civilians. He writes that “anyone unfortunate enough to be found by the government forces in the interior of the island was considered a rebel and dealt with summarily” (Merrill, 1980, pp. 183–184). At the same time, government forces began to force residents out of mid-mountain villages and relocate them to the coast, often burning entire settlements on the assumption that they might provide food or shelter to the guerrillas (Jeju 4·3 Peace Foundation, 2016, p. 30).

On 17 November 1948, President Rhee Syng-man formally declared martial law on Jeju. For islanders, this marked the beginning of the most terrifying phase of the incident. In later testimonies, survivors repeatedly recall the word “martial law”, even among elderly women who could not read Hangeul, and explain that from that moment executions without trial became part of daily life (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 347–348). A US Army intelligence report observed that, on the assumption that all residents of mid-mountain areas were helping the guerrillas, the 9th Regiment had “adopted a program of mass slaughter” against those villagers (Jeju 4·3 Peace Foundation, 2016, p. 25). Between November 1948 and February 1949, repression reached its peak. Later statistics show that about 76.5 percent of all victims under fifteen and 76.6 percent of those over sixty-one were killed during these four months (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 367).

Under Song Yo-chan, the Jeju Defense Headquarters now launched what was explicitly called Operation Scorched Earth. The order was to remove or burn any places where rebels might live, which in practice meant that most mid-mountain villages were turned to ashes. Residents in these areas were treated as potential enemies simply because of where they lived (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 367–368). At the same time, the authorities issued an Evacuation Order that forced whole communities to move to coastal villages. This policy was based on the assumption that “the majority of Jeju people” sympathised with the uprising. In the new coastal settlements, people were organised into a Village Joint Responsibility System, which required residents to watch one another and report any contact with rebels. The initial goal was to separate civilians from the armed groups. But in reality, that pushed many more people to flee deeper into the mountains, prolonged the conflict and increased the number of victims. Anyone found in the interior after the Evacuation Order could be shot on sight, and even families of those who had disappeared were labelled “fugitives’ families” and

sometimes executed (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 368, 373).

At the same time, repression also took more deceptive forms. In the so-called Self-Surrender Incidents, government forces gathered residents and announced that anyone who had “committed a crime in the past” should come forward. They promised that those who surrendered would be spared, but warned that anyone discovered later would certainly be executed and claimed that they already had a list of names. In reality, many of those who surrendered were taken away and shot. The Bakseongnae Stream Incident is a typical case: on 21 December 1948, about 200 people who had surrendered themselves, were ordered to assemble; 150 of them were taken and executed near Bakseongnae Stream, in the northern part of the island (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 375).

Another method was trap suppression. Soldiers disguised themselves as armed rebels and went from house to house asking for food, shelter or cooperation. Villagers who agreed to help were later identified and shot as collaborators. People who experienced these tactics later said, “We were afraid of bears as well as tigers,” meaning that they feared the government forces as much as the guerrillas. By day, army and police units entered villages, killed residents and burned houses, calling them rioters; by night, armed groups descended from the mountains and punished villagers as “reactionaries” if they were seen to be cooperating with the state (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 375).

By the end of December, the authorities considered the situation “stabilised,” and the 9th Regiment was replaced by the 2nd Regiment. Martial law was lifted on 31 December 1948. The new command announced a plan combining “open arms” policies with further military operations (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 386–387).

In practice, this plan quickly ran into problems. In early January, guerrilla attacks briefly increased again, showing that the uprising had not yet been fully suppressed (Merrill, 1980, pp. 184–185). At the same time, new examples of “trap suppression” showed how blurred the line between military and civilian targets had become. On 3 January 1949, police and special forces from Oedo disguised themselves as guerrillas, entered Dopyeong-ri wearing shabby clothes and carrying a North Korean flag, greeted villagers as “comrades” and gathered them in the schoolyard. It later turned out that they were not insurgents but members of the Oedo police box and a commando unit; around seventy residents were executed. And although the 2nd Regiment formally maintained an “open arms” policy, it quickly returned to harsh repression. Large-scale executions without trial continued, and thousands were arrested in the following months (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 376–378).

These operations also changed relations between the rebels and ordinary villagers. Earlier, many islanders had sympathised with the uprising or at least seen it as a reaction to police violence. By late 1948 and early 1949 they had experienced repeated raids, forced relocation, the burning of their homes and the constant threat of being shot simply for being in the wrong place. As the population was concentrated in coastal areas under tight surveillance, guerrillas found it increasingly difficult to obtain food or information. In response, they sometimes turned against communities they believed were helping government forces. After the government operations of November 1948, armed groups accused some villages of cooperating with government forces, raided them and in some cases killed residents who were on guard duty or tried to resist (Merrill, 1980, pp. 183–184; Jeju 4·3 Peace Foundation, 2016, p. 30).

During these weeks, one of the most tragic and well known massacres occurred, the Bukchon Incident on 17 January 1949. After a unit of the 2nd Regiment was attacked near the entrance to Bukchon and two soldiers were killed, troops burned the village

and killed around 300 residents, and about 100 more people who had been evacuated to Hamdeok-ri were also shot. Later testimonies describe the killings as deliberate revenge rather than the result of fighting (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 393).

By early 1949, coastal villages were enclosed by walls and placed under guard. Residents, mainly women, children, and the elderly, were mobilised to build them. This system further isolated the guerrillas and strengthened state control over everyday life. After the walls were completed and villagers were forced to stand guard, rebels became more isolated and people in coastal areas were less often suspected of helping them. However, families of those who had gone to the mountains were still targeted, and residents who stayed in or returned to mid-mountain villages were frequently killed when found by security forces. Official reports often exaggerated military success. Later investigations showed that many of those killed in operations such as the Bonggae campaign were unarmed civilians rather than armed rebels (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 393–395).

Harsh repression continued until March 1949, when large-scale operations in the mountain areas broke the main rebel forces. Survivors were forced into small groups and struggled to survive. A new Jeju Area Battle Headquarters under Colonel Yu Jae-heung combined an “open-arms” policy with a final campaign. Until 25 March, people hiding in the interior were encouraged to surrender with the promise that the past would be “forgotten” and that the state now wanted to end the violence. After this deadline, the army began a last large-scale operation and reported several thousand “rebel casualties”, “civilian losses” and “sympathisers” who had turned themselves in (Merrill, 1980, pp. 189–191; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 396).

Later publications by the Ministry of Defence and by Yu himself show that many of those who “came down from the mountain” were not committed partisans, but

villagers who had fled earlier raids and house burnings. One Defence Ministry text states that townships within about four kilometres of Hallasan had been so badly damaged by anti-guerrilla operations that around 15,000 people had to be forced back from the interior. Yu later recalled that, after rumours of the new policy spread, the total number of people descending from the mountains reached about 20,000. He also admitted that “only a few” of the armed men were convinced communists, and that most had become rebels because of the repression (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 408, 410). This final phase was therefore not only about eliminating the last armed groups, but also about pushing displaced islanders out of the mountains and back into tightly controlled coastal communities, under the constant threat of new screenings, arrests and violence (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 396, 408, 416).

To show that the government had restored control over Jeju and defeated the rebels, President Rhee visited the island on 9 April 1949. According to a government spokesman, his visit had two aims, to “view the mop-up personally” and to thank islanders for their “loyal stand against subversive elements.” Rhee gave a speech in Jeju City and later visited a refugee camp, where he told the people labelled as “captured guerrillas” to forget the past and become loyal citizens of the Republic (Merrill, 1980, p. 191).

Another way for the state to show that the uprising had been brought under control was to finally hold the re-election for the two vacant National Assembly seats. The vote took place on 10 May 1949, exactly one year after the failed 5·10 elections. In the weeks before, central government officials visited Jeju several times to prepare the ground. This time, registration and turnout were officially very high, with rates of around 96–99 percent in both constituencies, and the election passed without major incidents. At the same time, the number of actual voters was much smaller than before the uprising, which likely reflects population loss, imprisonment and the loss

of political rights for many islanders (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 414–415).

Once the rebellion was again seen as “under control,” trials for those arrested or suspected of involvement began. Many of the people who were tried had first been driven into the mountains by repression and then came down after the pacification campaign in spring 1949. By mid-May, the authorities counted over 6,000 “defectors,” of whom 1,851 were suspected of communist activities and imprisoned in camps in Jeju-eup and Seogwipo. Between 23 June and 7 July 1949, a General Court-Martial was held ten times and 1,659 civilians were brought before it. All of them were found guilty under Articles 32 and 33 of the National Defense Law (“aiding the enemy,” “communicating with the enemy,” “espionage”): 345 people received death sentences, 238 life imprisonment, and the rest prison terms of up to fifteen years (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 559–562). Processing so many people in such a short time makes it hard to believe that the court could really have examined each case carefully. Later investigations also point out that, apart from a small number of guerrilla members, most of those sentenced were ordinary villagers who had gone into the mountains to save their lives and then came down because they were told “you can live if you come down.” The state ignored this promise and applied the harshest articles of the National Defense Law to them anyway (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 563, 571). Many of those who received prison sentences were transferred to jails on the mainland. According to Merrill, Jeju prisoners continued underground political activities there (Merrill, 1980, p. 193).

Out of the 345 people sentenced to death in the 1949 court-martial, 249 were executed on 2 October 1949 at the coastal airfield near Jeju City after presidential approval. The remaining death sentences were reduced to prison terms during later reviews (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 560–562).

Even after the armed resistance had been crushed the Seobuk Youth Association remained very influential on Jeju. By late 1949, a lot of members were in the island police and held positions in local business or government, many as merchants, and they also dominated the local press, which printed only what they approved. Peasants and fishermen still needed daily police passes to work in the fields or go out to sea, showing how tightly everyday life continued to be controlled (Cumings, 1990, pp. 258–259).

When the Korean War broke out on 25 June 1950, Jeju again came under tighter control. The government ordered a nationwide crackdown, and on the island all people on existing blacklists were arrested under “preventive custody.” Another ‘safety measure’ was that in July and early August, many detainees were secretly executed near police stations in Jeju-eup, Seogwipo and Moseulpo, leading to mass executions. By mid-September 1950, executions had become less and some 200 detainees were released, officially so they could “fulfil their duties as citizens” (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 421, 424).

The war also gave new momentum to armed actions on Hallasan. Only a month after the war began, guerrillas attacked a police box and burned houses, and further raids followed as they tried to use the wartime situation to their advantage. In response, the police rebuilt anti-guerrilla units with locally recruited volunteers and civil-defence forces. At the same time, many islanders were exhausted by years of repression and more willing to cooperate with the authorities, so guerrillas depended on a shrinking circle of supporters (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 426, 429).

As time passed, this pressure also affected the rebels themselves. Inside the remaining guerrilla groups, tensions grew between those who wanted to continue the struggle and those who were ready to surrender, especially as the state revived “open-arm” policies, spread leaflets promising pardon and offered high rewards for killing or capturing leading figures. By late 1952, the police dismantled checkpoints

and guard posts and shifted to these pacification measures; only small scattered groups were still hiding in the mountains, and armed resistance on Jeju was effectively coming to an end (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 438).

Officially the end of the uprising is the 21st of September 1954 since it was the day that closure of the Halla Mountain was lifted. According to the Jeju 4.3 Incident report there were only five rebels left and they were not considered a threat so the Deputy Assistant Commissioner lifted the closure. (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 439, 443)

7. Gender-Based Violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident

7.1. Gendered Patterns of Violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident

As explained in the theory chapter, violence is often experienced differently depending on gender. The Jeju 4·3 Incident was no exception, as violence was inflicted differently on men and women. While men were more often killed, women frequently became targets of dehumanization and various human rights violations. However, due to the nature of the incident and the widespread suffering of the entire island population, women's experiences have often been treated only as a partial aspect of the overall tragedy. As a result, the specific forms of violence directed at women have received comparatively little attention in historical research (Jang, 2024, p. 67).

When looking at the sources, Kwon Gwi-suk notes that women are often referred to only as part of broader categories such as “unarmed civilians,” “elderly and women,” or “the weak.” Men were also often referred to simply as “residents,” although sometimes more specific categories such as “young men” or “young males” were used. Even though the terminology used was largely gender-neutral, the contexts in

which men and women were targeted differed significantly. And while there were far more male victims than female ones, men and women were often killed under different circumstances. Among those classified as “residents,” men were frequently victims of so-called surrender incidents, whereas women were often targeted as “family members of fugitives.” This difference in context shows that women were often executed not because of their own alleged actions, but simply because they were the wives or relatives of suspected rebels. During surrender operations there were also differences in classification. Men were often “thoroughly searched” and subjected to ideological “education,” while women, together with children and the elderly, were more often classified as refugees. These differences suggest that suppression forces applied different strategies depending on gender (Kwon, 2014, p. 182).

Because many men fled to the mountains or disappeared during the uprising, women were often left behind in the villages. As a result, repression frequently fell on women who were arrested, tortured, or executed in place of male family members. As Park Sang-ran notes, the consequences of men’s “suspicious” absence often fell entirely on the women who remained in the villages (Park, 2019, p. 308).

It is also important to note that not everyone on the island was treated in the same way. In some cases villages were able to avoid violence by cooperating with government forces. One example is a seaside village in Gimnyeong-ri, where members of the Jamsuhoi chapter and other women's organizations operated a restaurant and inns that provided food and lodging for police and army troops. According to interviews with residents, villagers supplied rice, clothing, livestock, and other resources in order to prevent violence from the troops. As a result, the village did not suffer damage related to the uprising. However, such cases were exceptions. In many other villages women supported the rebels by providing shelter, food, clothing, and communication, which exposed them to surveillance and punishment by the authorities (Han & Kim, 2003, p. 31).

Another important factor when looking at the Jeju 4·3 Incident is that direct combat between rebels and government forces was relatively limited. Instead, hatred and retaliation toward the opposing side were often expressed through violence against civilians. In many cases these civilians were women, the elderly, and children who remained in the villages. Suppression forces used particularly brutal methods in order to maximize fear and hostility toward the enemy (Jang, 2024, p. 68).

The suppression forces were also motivated by their strong hatred toward the so-called “reds.” Under the pretext of anti-guerrilla suppression, paramilitary groups such as the Northwest Youth League burned villages and massacred residents accused of collaborating with communist insurgents. Their actions were driven by strong anti-communist ideology. As one account describes, the perpetrators’ motto was: “빨갱이를 뿌리 뽑고, 그 종자를 말려야 한다”(ppalgaengireul ppuri ppopgo, geu jongjareul mallyeoya handa), meaning “we must root out the reds and dry up their seed.” This slogan reflects the intense hostility directed at those labeled as “reds” and illustrates how anti-communist ideology was used to justify violence against civilians. Within this climate of extreme anti-communist repression, violence was not only directed at suspected rebels but also at their families and communities. Women in particular became targets of various forms of gender-based violence.

In this situation, violence against women was not only a consequence of the conflict but also served a broader purpose. By targeting wives, mothers, and daughters of suspected rebels, suppression forces were able to pressure and punish entire families and communities, especially in cases where men had fled and women remained in the villages. At the same time, this violence contributed to creating fear within the wider population and discouraged support for insurgents. By targeting women in their social roles, it also disrupted family and community structures. In this way, gender-based violence was closely connected to broader strategies of control and intimidation during the Jeju 4·3 Incident. The following sections examine these forms of abuse in more detail (Kim, 2001, pp. 271-273).

Violence was not only meant to eliminate suspected opponents but also to spread fear among the broader population. Gender-based violence, including humiliation, degradation, and sexualized abuse, therefore functioned as a way to intensify fear both on an individual and a communal level. Jang Suk-in classifies gender-based violence that occurred during the Jeju 4·3 Incident into eight main types. Based on testimonies from victims and witnesses, these forms of violence show how gender-based violence functioned as a tool to create fear, exert control, and destroy social and family structures.

Type of Violence	Mechanism
Killing of pregnant women / fetuses	Attack on women as reproductive bodies; dehumanization
Sexual torture and genital injury	Creation of shame and fear within individuals and the community
Killing of family members of fugitives (proxy killing)	Destruction of family relations; psychological pressure and demoralization of the “enemy”
Sexual abuse / rape	Sexual humiliation and shame; enforced silence
Sexual exploitation (including attempts) followed by killing	Physical and psychological harm through sustained sexual violence
Gang rape	Character assassination through social stigma
Forced marriage	Violation of sexual self-determination and human rights; destruction of community
Forced sexual acts	Dehumanization; feminization of men through dominance by force

These categories illustrate the different ways gender-based violence occurred during the Jeju 4·3 Incident. Women were not only victims of the same forms of violence as men, but were also exposed to additional abuses that specifically targeted their bodies, social roles, and family positions. The following sections will examine these forms of violence in more detail, focusing on sexual violence, torture, violence against pregnant women, forced marriages, and proxy killings (Jang, 2024, p. 68).

7.2. Sexual Violence

As discussed in the theory chapter, sexual violence in conflict is rarely a random by-product of war. Rather, it often functions as a means of domination, punishment, humiliation, and social control. Françoise Vergès argues that rape has long been used as a weapon of war and occupation, while other scholars have shown that violence against women in conflict frequently targets not only the individual victim but also the wider family and community. Within patriarchal societies, sexual assault can be understood as an attack on female bodily integrity, family honor, and the perceived masculinity of male relatives who are unable to protect them. In this sense, sexual violence is both personal and political. These broader patterns are also visible in the Jeju 4·3 Incident (Vergès, 2022, 14–16; Jang, 2024, 78–79).

Although there is no evidence of centrally organized rape campaigns comparable to those documented in Bosnia or Rwanda, testimonies still point to cases of sexual violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident. It can also be assumed that such violence occurred more often than the sources suggest, since many cases were underreported and sexual violence was not easily recognized within official definitions of victimhood. As Kwon Gwi-suk points out, the Jeju 4·3 Truth Investigation Report contains only limited documentation on this issue. The main section that separately records women's suffering is the part on "female torture," which includes cases of sexual humiliation, sexual torture, and physical violence endured by women. This confirms that women experienced gender-specific abuse,

even though the small number of recorded cases makes it difficult to understand the full scale of these crimes (Kwon, 2014, p. 183).

The scarcity of evidence must also be understood through the social conditions in which survivors lived. In strongly patriarchal settings, victims of sexual violence often remain silent because disclosure can bring stigma, shame, rejection, or the fear of being considered “dishonored.” During the Jeju 4·3 Incident, this was intensified by the political taboo surrounding the massacre itself. Speaking about one’s experiences could invite suspicion, social exclusion, or renewed danger for family members. Women therefore faced what Park Sang-ran describes as a form of “double silence”: the silence imposed by anti-communist repression and the silence surrounding sexual victimization. For this reason, the limited number of testimonies cannot be taken as evidence that sexual violence was rare. Rather, silence itself forms part of the history of violence (Park, 2019, p. 303).

Even with limited documentation, the surviving testimonies suggest that the threat of sexual violence was widespread enough to shape women’s everyday behavior and sense of safety. One testimony recalls that there were many well-dressed and stylish women at the time, but that women deliberately made themselves look unattractive out of fear. Other accounts similarly note that women avoided going outside whenever possible or restricted movement to times when they were accompanied by relatives. Such responses show that even where rape was not openly discussed, the possibility of sexual violence structured women’s mobility, appearance, and daily conduct. Control was therefore exercised not only through direct assault, but also through fear, anticipation, and self-policing behavior produced by insecurity (Oh, 1998, pp. 240–241).

As already mentioned the number of testimonies describing sexual violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incidents are relatively limited. In addition, many of the available sources repeatedly refer to the same incidents. One of the most frequently cited incidents occurred near the distillery in Seongsanpo, where a warehouse was reportedly used

as a site in which women and young girls were repeatedly subjected to sexual violence. Witnesses recalled that screams could be heard continuously from inside the building. According to these testimonies, the assaults were committed by members of the Seobuk Young Men's Association. Some accounts further state that the perpetrators continued to abuse the victims' bodies after rape by inserting objects into them while laughing. These acts demonstrate an extreme level of dehumanization in which women were reduced to bodies over which perpetrators could exercise unrestricted power. The cruelty described in these testimonies suggests that sexual violence was not only about gratification, but also about domination and the destruction of personhood (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 605; Lee, 2004, p. 30–31).

A similar pattern appears in the Tosan-ri mass killing incident of December 1948. According to testimonies, civilians from mountain villages had been relocated and were being held in a temporary detention camp. Soldiers reportedly entered the camp at night over the course of about one week and selected young women without children, who were then taken away and repeatedly raped. Many were later killed. This case illustrates an important dynamic identified in conflict studies: where civilians are detained and stripped of protection, sexual violence can become a direct expression of military domination. The victims' inability to refuse or escape was itself part of the mechanism of violence. Their later killing further suggests that sexual violence and mass killing could operate together rather than as separate phenomena (Park, 2019, pp. 323–324; Jang, 2024, pp. 80–81).

Many testimonies also indicate that sexual violence was directly connected to murder, especially in cases where women resisted assault. One testimony recorded by Oh Geum-sook describes an incident in which a soldier attempted to rape a young woman but shot her when she resisted. According to the account, several young women had been gathered together and the soldiers selected those they considered most attractive. When one woman refused their demands, she was

immediately killed. Other sources show that young and unmarried women were particularly vulnerable. In the so-called Geumak woman murder case, a young woman described by witnesses as beautiful was brutally killed by soldiers. Although later remembered mainly as a political execution, witness descriptions suggest that attempted sexual assault may also have played a role. These cases show that refusal itself could become punishable by death, revealing the coercive logic underlying such violence (Park, 2019, p. 312; Oh, 1998, p. 243).

Young and unmarried women appear repeatedly in testimonies as especially vulnerable targets. This reflects a wider patriarchal logic in which youth, beauty, and presumed chastity were treated as qualities available for violation. At the same time, unmarried women often possessed less social protection than married women embedded within larger households. Their vulnerability during the Jeju 4·3 Incident therefore cannot be separated from pre-existing gender hierarchies that shaped women's social value and exposure to violence (Park, 2019, p. 312).

Particularly revealing are testimonies describing detainees who were forced to engage in sexual acts with one another in public. Soldiers or police reportedly selected male and female prisoners, beat them, and compelled them to have intercourse in front of villagers or other detainees. Women were in some cases stripped naked, tortured, or burned on their genitals. These acts were not only assaults on the individuals involved. They also functioned as public spectacles of domination. By forcing victims to violate deeply embedded norms surrounding chastity, modesty, and sexual morality, perpetrators weaponized patriarchal values in order to humiliate both the victims and the wider community. Women were violated through exposure, bodily assault, and attacks on chastity, while men were feminized and degraded through coerced sexual performance. In this way, gender norms themselves became instruments of violence (Jang, 2024, pp. 84–85; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 604–605; Oh, 1998, p. 242).

Testimonies naming perpetrators such as Tak Seong-rok and Kim Jae-neung further suggest that sexual violence was not limited to a few isolated incidents hidden from authorities. Rather, certain actors were repeatedly able to commit abuse within an environment of impunity created by the suppression campaign. Witnesses described Tak Seong-rok as exercising near-total authority over civilians, raping women, forcing some to become his “wives,” and participating in killings. Such cases indicate that sexual violence could be embedded within wider structures of unchecked coercive power rather than resulting solely from individual misconduct (Kwon, 2011, pp. 74–75; Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, p. 475).

Kwon Gwisuk also emphasizes the importance of recognizing victims of sexual violence as victims. Without such recognition, sexual violence can easily remain hidden or treated as a source of personal shame rather than as a crime. As Kwon notes, acknowledging these experiences makes it possible to understand sexual violence not as something that individuals or society must conceal, but as a form of social crime and collective harm that should be publicly recognized. This silence and lack of recognition helps explain why sexual violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident remains difficult to fully document and why many cases only appear indirectly in historical testimonies (Kwon, 2011, p. 75).

Taken together, the available evidence suggests that sexual violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident was not incidental. It functioned as a means of terror, punishment, humiliation, and social control. Women’s bodies became sites through which suppression forces asserted power over families and communities. Existing patriarchal norms made such violence especially effective, since shame and stigma often silenced victims afterward. The historical invisibility of sexual violence should therefore be understood not as proof of rarity, but as one of its lasting consequences.

7.3. Gendered Torture and Violence against the Female Body

As discussed in the theory chapter, torture in conflict settings is not only used to extract information. It can also function as a political technology of domination, punishment, and terror. Feminist scholarship has further shown that torture is often gendered: women and men may both be tortured, but the methods used frequently target socially meaningful aspects of the body, including sexuality, reproduction, and gender identity. In this sense, torture is not merely physical violence, but also an assault on dignity, bodily autonomy, and social personhood. These broader patterns are clearly visible in the Jeju 4·3 Incident.

Although the Jeju 4·3 Incident Investigation Report does not focus extensively on women's experiences, it does include a short section specifically dedicated to "female torture," indicating that women were subjected to distinct forms of abuse during the suppression campaign (Kwon, 2014, p. 183). The existence of this category is itself significant. It suggests that some forms of violence directed at women could not simply be subsumed under general categories of repression, but involved specifically gendered practices.

Torture is generally considered a crime against humanity under international law, yet it occurs in many conflict situations. There are different forms of torture, one of which is sexual torture, meaning the infliction of physical pain in ways that provoke sexual humiliation. This is considered one of the most inhumane forms of violence. Although the Jeju 4·3 Incident Investigation Report does not focus extensively on women's experiences, it does include a short section specifically dedicated to "female torture," indicating that women were subjected to distinct forms of abuse during the suppression campaign (Kwon, 2014, p. 183). The existence of this category is itself significant. It suggests that some forms of violence directed at women could not simply be subsumed under general categories of repression, but involved specifically gendered practices (Jang, 2024, p. 74-76).

The stripping of clothing served not only as a physical preparation for torture, but also as a deliberate method of humiliation. Being forced to stand naked in front of male interrogators deprived women of privacy and self-protection while creating intense vulnerability. Testimonies describe how interrogators mocked women's bodies while inflicting both physical and psychological suffering. In some cases, women were also forced to remain naked in semi-public or public spaces, further intensifying the degradation. Under such conditions, some victims eventually gave false confessions simply in order to end the torture. This demonstrates that humiliation itself formed part of the coercive process rather than being incidental to it (Lee, 2004, p. 23).

In addition to forced nudity, the torture inflicted on women often specifically targeted female body parts. During interrogations, interrogators frequently focused on areas such as the breasts and abdomen. Testimonies report that women were beaten, suspended from the ceiling, or subjected to electric shocks applied to sensitive parts of the body. In one testimony, a woman was tortured by having electric wires wrapped around her nipples while interrogators demanded information about the whereabouts of her relatives. Such acts show that women's bodies were deliberately transformed into sites of punishment. Violence was directed not only against the person, but against body parts culturally associated with femininity, sexuality, and motherhood (Lee, 1999, p. 67).

These patterns strongly resemble what scholars of gendered torture have observed elsewhere: women's sexual anatomy is often targeted because perpetrators understand it as a site of vulnerability and symbolic power. The aim is not simply to cause pain, but to destroy bodily integrity and force submission through shame. In Jeju, such practices reveal how anti-communist repression intersected with patriarchal assumptions about women's bodies (Sanford et al., 2016, pp. 19–23).

Testimonies also show that sexual torture was not always remembered explicitly as sexual violence. As Park Sang-ran notes, many women recalled their experiences

mainly as general torture rather than emphasizing the sexual humiliation involved. In several testimonies, women described being beaten or subjected to water torture while hanging upside down, while the forced nakedness was only mentioned indirectly or with hesitation. This suggests that the sexualized nature of the torture was often difficult to articulate, even decades later (Park, 2019, p. 313).

One testimony illustrates this hesitation particularly clearly. A woman who had been detained at Hallim police station described how she was tied up, beaten, and hung from the ceiling during interrogation. While recounting the event, she repeatedly hesitated and said that she did not want to talk about it because it was “so embarrassing.” At one point she referred to the experience as the “humiliation as a woman,” indicating that she had been stripped of her clothes during the torture. Even though she eventually described parts of the experience, her hesitation shows how deeply shame continued to structure memory more than fifty years later (Park, 2019, pp. 314–315).

Park Sang-ran further argues that this pattern appears in many testimonies by female survivors. Women often narrated their experiences as general human rights violations, while the sexualized aspects of the violence remained partially silenced. This may be connected to the stigma surrounding sexual abuse in patriarchal societies, where victims are often blamed or associated with sexual dishonor. As a result, references to sexual violence in testimonies remain relatively rare, even where other evidence suggests that such abuse occurred more frequently during arrest and interrogation. Significantly, witnesses describing female torture often emphasized first that the woman had been naked, suggesting that nakedness itself was remembered as central to the violence (Park, 2019, p. 317).

There were also extreme cases of bodily mutilation that show how torture specifically targeted women’s reproductive bodies, particularly the breasts. One testimony describes a young woman captured by suppression forces whose breasts were cut off while she was still alive. Witnesses stated that the pain was so unbearable that

she clawed at the ground until her fingernails were torn out. Whether remembered with symbolic embellishment or literal precision, the testimony reveals how women's breasts could become targets because they were associated with femininity, sexuality, and motherhood. Violence against the female body thus communicated domination through destruction of socially meaningful anatomy (Oh, 1998, p. 239).

The severity of torture was often even greater when women were related to men who were suspected of supporting the guerrillas or were members of the South Korean Workers' Party. In such cases, women were not treated as individuals but primarily as the wives or sisters of alleged "communists." In one recorded case, the wife of a guerrilla propaganda officer was tortured in an attempt to obtain information about her husband's whereabouts. During the interrogation, members of the Northwest Youth League burned her breasts with fire while she was naked, subjecting her to severe abuse. This illustrates how women's bodies were used as pressure points through which authorities sought to punish and reach male suspects (Lee, 2004, p. 24).

Men were also victims of sexualized torture during the Jeju 4·3 Incident. In testimonies involving male victims, this more commonly appeared through genital injury, mutilation, or forced sexual humiliation. Such acts symbolically attacked masculinity and reproductive capacity. The comparison is important: women and men could both be sexually tortured, but in gender-specific ways that reflected different social meanings attached to male and female bodies (Jang, 2024, p. 76).

Taken together, these testimonies show that torture during the Jeju 4·3 Incident was not only a method of interrogation. It also functioned as a form of gendered violence. Women were stripped naked, humiliated, and subjected to torture that specifically targeted parts of the body associated with femininity and reproduction. Acts such as electric torture, beatings while naked, burning of breasts, and bodily mutilation demonstrate that women's bodies were deliberately used as sites of punishment and intimidation. At the same time, many women were targeted because of their

relationships to male relatives suspected of political disloyalty. Torture therefore operated simultaneously through anti-communist repression and patriarchal power. This gendered logic becomes even more visible in cases where pregnant women were targeted, which will be examined in the following section.

7.4. Violence Against Pregnant Women

As discussed in the theory chapter, pregnant women and women with small children are often among the most vulnerable groups in situations of armed conflict. Pregnancy can mark women as physically vulnerable, less able to flee, and dependent on others for protection. At the same time, feminist scholarship on genocide and conflict has shown that pregnant bodies may be targeted for an additional reason: they are associated with reproduction and the future continuation of a community. Violence against pregnant women can therefore function not only as violence against an individual, but also as an attack on what perpetrators perceive as the future of the enemy group (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, p. 61–72).

This broader pattern is also visible in the Jeju 4·3 Incident. During the suppression campaign, anti-communist ideology framed suspected rebels and their families as “reds,” extending guilt beyond individuals to kinship networks and future generations. As Kim Eun-sil argues, surviving families were often objectified as “bodies of the red,” meaning bodies that had produced and might continue to reproduce the so-called red race. Within this logic, women’s bodies were not viewed simply as individual bodies, but as gendered bodies carrying the potential to reproduce future enemies. The pregnant body in particular became a symbol of the possible continuation of the enemy population (Kim, 2001, p. 272)

This perception was closely tied to fears surrounding reproduction. Because pregnant women were seen as carrying the potential future members of the enemy group, violence against them could be understood as an attempt to prevent the continuation of that group. As a result, attacks on pregnant women often targeted

both the woman and the unborn child. In this sense, violence against pregnant bodies did not only represent physical violence but also reflected a broader logic in which women's reproductive bodies were treated as symbols of the enemy community itself (Kim, 2001, pp. 279–280).

As Jang Suk-in points out, violence against women's bodies often carries meanings that extend beyond the individual victim. By attacking women, who were often perceived as the most vulnerable members of society, perpetrators simultaneously attacked the identity and continuity of the entire community. In the context of the Jeju 4·3 Incident, the killing of pregnant women and fetuses therefore represented not only physical violence but also an attempt to destroy the perceived future of the "enemy" population (Jang, 2024, p. 74).

Other studies note that the torture and killing of pregnant women during the Jeju 4·3 Incident were closely connected to the so-called "Red Complex," a strong anti-communist paranoia that associated women's reproductive bodies with the continuation of communism. Within this framework, the pregnant body was perceived not simply as an individual body but as a symbol of the reproduction of the enemy community. Violence directed at pregnant women therefore functioned both as punishment and as a symbolic attempt to eliminate the possibility of future "reds" (Lee, 2004, p. 27).

This ideological perception of pregnant bodies as carriers of the enemy population is also reflected in several testimonies describing violence against pregnant women during the Jeju 4·3 Incident. Numerous reports describe cases in which pregnant women were subjected to interrogation and torture that resulted in miscarriages. Testimonies frequently mention that women pleaded with interrogators that they were pregnant, yet the torture continued regardless. These accounts suggest that pregnancy did not provide protection during interrogations. Instead, pregnant bodies were treated as disposable or politically suspect, while the consequences of torture

were borne by both mother and unborn child (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 604–605, Jang, 2024, pp. 71–74).

One example is the testimony of Cha Gyeong-gu, who was detained and tortured for fifteen days while pregnant. During the interrogation she was forced to kneel with a club placed behind her legs while investigators repeatedly stepped on it. Despite begging for mercy and explaining that she was pregnant, the torture continued and she ultimately suffered a miscarriage. This case demonstrates that pregnancy could intensify vulnerability rather than mitigate violence, since bodily weakness itself became exploitable under conditions of unchecked power (Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee, 2003, pp. 604–605).

Other testimonies describe cases in which pregnant women were directly killed by suppression forces. A witness from Tosan-ri recalled that troops patrolling the mid-mountain region stabbed a pregnant woman in the abdomen with a spear before shooting her. In another case, a woman named An Gi-jeong was shot and killed while she was pregnant. These accounts show that pregnancy did not provide any form of protection; instead, pregnant women were often treated with the same or even greater brutality (Oh, 1998, p. 244).

Some testimonies describe especially extreme acts of cruelty. One witness recalled how a pregnant woman whose husband had fled to the mountains was stripped naked during interrogation. A rifle barrel was heated in a stove and then thrust into her lower body. Afterward, gasoline was poured over her and she was burned alive. Whether every detail can be independently verified or not, the testimony is historically significant because it reveals how survivors remembered violence against pregnant women as a form of total bodily annihilation directed at sexuality, reproduction, and personhood simultaneously (Jang, 2024, p. 74)

Another well-known example is the Bihak-dongsan execution incident of December 1948. According to testimonies, three policemen stripped a pregnant woman naked,

hung her from a large hackberry tree, and repeatedly stabbed her with bayonets and iron rods until she died. Witnesses reported that villagers were forced to watch the execution while the perpetrators shouted that they should “watch carefully.” By forcing the community to witness such violence, the perpetrators expanded the process of dehumanization beyond the individual victim and turned the killing into a public demonstration of power and intimidation (Jang, 2024 p. 71-73).

There are also reports of women being killed during childbirth. One testimony describes the case of a pregnant woman whose husband had fled to the mountains. She had returned to her natal home in order to give birth when members of a local anti-communist youth group entered the house. According to the testimony, two members declared that “the seed of the mountain rebels must be wiped out” and dragged the woman outside, where she was repeatedly stabbed with an iron rod and killed while still in labor. When a relative later arrived, the woman had already died and the partially delivered baby was still lodged in her body. The language used by the perpetrators is particularly revealing: it explicitly linked childbirth with the need to eradicate future enemies, making reproductive destruction the central motive of the act (Kim, 2001, pp. 279–280).

Taken together, these cases suggest a broader pattern in which pregnant women were specifically targeted during the suppression of the uprising because their bodies were perceived as capable of reproducing future members of the enemy population. Pregnant women were tortured during interrogations, suffered miscarriages as a result of beatings, or were killed because they were believed to carry the future of the “red” population. In this way, violence against pregnant bodies functioned not only as physical violence, but also as a symbolic and political attempt to eliminate the perceived reproduction of the enemy community. Seen through the theoretical lens of gender and genocide, these acts reveal how attacks on women’s reproductive capacities can become central to campaigns of collective destruction

rather than incidental by-products of conflict (Kim, 2001, pp. 279–280; Jang, 2024, p. 71–74; von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, 78–79).

7.5. Violence against Women as Family Members

Another important form of gender-based violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident was the targeting of women as wives, mothers, daughters, or sisters of suspected insurgents. As discussed in the theory chapter, violence in conflict often extends beyond direct combatants to those socially connected to them. Family members may be punished in order to extract information, produce fear, and weaken the social networks that sustain resistance. In patriarchal societies, where women are often identified through family relationships, such violence can become highly gendered. Women may be targeted not because of their own political activity, but because they are perceived as extensions of male relatives.

This pattern is clearly visible in the Jeju 4·3 Incident through what Jang Suk-in describes as the proxy killing of fugitives' families. When men fled to the mountains or went into hiding, suppression forces frequently targeted those who remained in the villages. Entire households could be classified as "fugitives' families" if even one member was suspected of joining the armed groups. As a result, wives, children, and elderly relatives were subjected to harassment, torture, forced relocation, or mass execution in place of absent men. Because the majority of those remaining in villages were women, children, and the elderly, they became the principal victims of this policy (Jang, 2024, pp. 76–78).

In many cases, women were killed not because of any demonstrated involvement in the uprising, but simply because they were the wives or relatives of suspected rebels. This reflects a broader logic of collective punishment in which kinship itself became criminalized. The families of those who had joined armed insurgents were treated as politically contaminated and therefore legitimate targets of violence. In practice, this often overlapped with other forms of gender-based violence, including

sexual humiliation, torture, and rape. Violence against women was thus embedded in both anti-communist repression and patriarchal understandings of women as bearers of family identity (Jang, 2024, pp. 76–78).

Kwon Gwisuk also notes, although some women actively participated in the uprising, in most cases men fled to the mountains or went into hiding. In these situations, suppression forces frequently tortured or executed the family members who remained in their homes. Women therefore experienced multiple layers of suffering. They were exposed to direct violence while also bearing the emotional, economic, and social consequences of losing husbands, sons, and brothers (Kwon, 2011, pp. 71-72).

Not only that but women were also subjected to humiliation and persecution because they were identified as the families of fugitives or executed men. Their houses were often burned down, and many families were forcibly relocated to camp-like settlements where they lived under extremely harsh conditions. In these places they faced hunger, cold, and continued surveillance, and were frequently beaten by auxiliary police if they were suspected of disobedience. Even after the violence subsided, these experiences continued to shape social relations within communities, creating tensions and conflicts between families, villages, and political factions. Violence therefore did not end with physical survival, but continued through displacement, stigma, and social fragmentation (Kwon, 2011, pp. 71-72).

Violence against the families of fugitives often took the form of physical abuse intended to force women to reveal the whereabouts of male relatives. Witnesses recalled that suppression forces frequently beat women while demanding that they produce their husbands or sons. Young wives were beaten and ordered to hand over their husbands, while older women were forced to reveal the location of their sons. Members of the Northwest Youth League reportedly used rifle butts to strike women in the head and face during these interrogations. Violence therefore did not end with

physical survival, but continued through displacement, stigma, and social fragmentation (Lee, 1999, p. 69).

One reason for these acts of violence, aside from hatred toward the so-called “reds,” was to exert psychological pressure on men who had joined or might join the armed insurgents. By targeting the families of fugitives, suppression forces aimed to instill fear, humiliation, and guilt in those who had fled to the mountains. In this sense, violence against family members functioned as a counterinsurgency strategy designed to compel surrender, discourage recruitment, and sever support networks. The family became a battlefield through which state violence was communicated (Jang, 2024, p. 78).

Several testimonies illustrate how suppression forces dealt with the families of those who had gone into hiding. In one case, the families of fugitives were rounded up and confined in a warehouse. Instead of shooting them, the perpetrators placed explosives inside the building and blew it up, killing everyone inside. This incident demonstrates the degree to which kinship groups could be treated collectively as expendable enemies rather than civilians (Jang, 2024, p. 75).

Other testimonies describe how women were arrested, tortured, or killed because of their relationship to male family members. In one case, a mother-in-law and a younger sister were detained and brutally beaten on suspicion of maintaining contact with a son who had gone into the mountains. After severe torture, the woman was taken away and killed on the same day. In another testimony, a woman was arrested together with her husband because they had hidden a relative who was being pursued by the authorities. She was taken away while carrying her newborn baby on her back and was eventually executed together with the child. These cases show how familial association alone could become grounds for lethal punishment (Jang, 2024, p. 77).

Another frequently mentioned case concerns the wife of a man who had fled to the mountains. While waiting for her husband's return, she was monitored by a policeman who raped her. She was later accused of adultery, publicly stripped, and forced to reenact sexual acts before a crowd. The violence ended with her execution, when a grenade was inserted into her genitals and detonated, destroying her body. This case illustrates how violence against women who were identified as the wives of rebels could combine sexual humiliation, public punishment, and execution (Kim, 2001, pp. 280-281).

By targeting wives, mothers, and other female relatives, suppression forces attacked not only individuals but also the familial and social structures connecting insurgents to their communities. Women became especially vulnerable because many remained in the villages while male relatives fled. As a result, they were tortured, displaced, humiliated, or killed in place of husbands, sons, and brothers. Violence against women as family members therefore demonstrates how kinship itself became a basis of systematic gender-based violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident.

7.6. Forced Marriage and Sexual Exploitation

Another form of gender-based violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident was forced marriage and coerced intimate relationships. As discussed in the theory chapter, conflict often produces conditions in which women's bodies and reproductive capacities become objects of control, exchange, or appropriation. Scholars of genocide and wartime violence have shown that forced marriage is not merely a private or domestic matter, but can function as a mechanism of domination, social restructuring, and sexual access under coercive conditions. In Jeju, the collapse of ordinary legal protections through arrests, killings, displacement, and surveillance created precisely such an environment (von Joeden-Forgey, 2012, pp. 71–72; Sanford et al., 2016, pp. 36–37; Colombini, 2002, pp. 170–171).

Some women were compelled to marry members of the police, soldiers, or the Northwest Youth League. These marriages were often not based on consent, but resulted from threats, intimidation, dependency, or the disappearance of male relatives who had been killed, imprisoned, or had fled to the mountains. While other forms of sexual violence occurred throughout the whole span of the Jeju 4·3 Incident, cases of forced marriage appear to have increased especially in the later stages of 4·3, after March 1949, when armed resistance declined and local systems of coercive control became more entrenched (Oh, 1998, p. 237).

As Jang Suk-in points out, forced marriage is itself a form of rape, since it turns the victim into a sexual object through coercion and against her will. In many cases, it was also accompanied by other forms of violence before and after the marriage. Women were often subjected to sexual coercion, assault, or threats before being forced into such relationships, and in some cases they were later abandoned or even killed. Forced marriage therefore did not simply mean a coerced marital union, but often formed part of a wider pattern of sexual exploitation and violence (Jang, 2024, pp. 81-82).

Scholars have identified several motives behind these marriages. Oh Geum-suk points out that there were two main motives behind many of these cases. One involved men selecting women they found sexually desirable and compelling them into marriage. The second motive was economic. Some members of the Northwest Youth League and mainland police officers sought to establish themselves on Jeju by marrying daughters of wealthy families in order to secure financial stability and gain a foothold on the island. Many members of the Northwest Youth League were refugees from northern Korea who lacked stable economic foundations after migrating south, which further encouraged attempts to establish themselves on the island through marriage. In numerous cases, these men already had wives on the mainland, which further illustrates that these marriages were not genuine unions but rather a form of coercion and exploitation (Oh, 1998, p. 245; Jang 2024, p. 83).

For many families on the island, however, agreeing to such marriages was sometimes perceived as a survival strategy. In the violent conditions of the suppression period, refusing the demands of members of the Northwest Youth League and the police could place both the woman and her family in immediate danger. As a result, some families felt forced to give their daughters in marriage in order to avoid retaliation or execution. One testimony describes how a father who refused to give his daughter to a member of the Northwest Youth League was arrested and executed. These cases illustrate how coercion and violence shaped the decisions of families, leaving them with very limited choices (Lee, 2004, pp. 32–34).

In other situations, these marriages were even arranged strategically by families themselves in an attempt to obtain protection. Yet even where these unions reduced immediate danger, they were rarely based on the woman's own wishes. Instead, they often permanently altered the course of her life and forced her into relationships with men associated with violence against her family or community. This demonstrates how women's autonomy could be sacrificed in order to secure collective survival (Lee, 2004, pp. 32–34)

As Kwon Gwisuk also notes, daughters were frequently told that the survival of their entire family depended on them. In this way, women were compelled to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their relatives. Many of those forced into such marriage lived unhappy lives, and the consequences often extended to the next generation, demonstrating how forced marriage during the Jeju 4·3 Incident was shaped both by military violence and by the patriarchal family structure of the time (Kwon, 2011, p. 74).

Oh Geum-suk further emphasizes that these marriages also reflected a distorted perception of women as tools for securing social or economic status. In some cases, women were forced to marry the very men who had raped them or killed members of their families. Even when such marriages allowed families to survive the immediate

violence, they often condemned the women to a lifetime of suffering and social isolation (Oh, 1998, p. 252).

In some cases, however, forced marriages could also save the lives of others. One testimony illustrates this tragic dynamic particularly clearly. A man recalled that he survived only because his fiancée agreed to marry a member of the Northwest Youth League. The marriage was arranged on the condition that his life would be spared, even though the man she married had previously attempted to rape her. In his testimony, the survivor explained that he remained alive thanks to her decision, but also expressed deep sorrow that she had to live an unhappy life because of it (Oh, 1998, p. 246).

Another phenomenon closely connected to forced marriage during the Jeju 4·3 Incident was the so-called “순경 각시” (singyeong-gaksi), which can be translated as “police wife.” The term referred to women who had relationships with soldiers or police officers. However, it did not only apply to formal marriages. Rather, it also included de facto unions, temporary relationships, and situations that in reality amounted to sexual coercion or rape. Because these relationships were usually formed under conditions of coercion and fear, they can be understood as another form of gender-based violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident (Park, 2019, pp. 301; 318).

Many of these so-called “police wives” were women who had previously been detained or interrogated. In such situations, entering into a relationship with a police officer could sometimes function as a strategy for survival. As Park Sang-ran points out, detained women were highly vulnerable and therefore more likely to be forced into such relationships, which often overlapped with sexual torture or emerged as a consequence of it. In this sense, the phenomenon of the “police wife” illustrates how sexual violence was embedded in the broader system of repression during the Jeju 4·3 Incident (Park, 2019, p. 318).

One example is the case of Yang Gyeong-suk, who was detained and severely beaten during interrogation. According to her testimony, the beatings were so severe that her hands became too swollen to remove her clothes. After her release from prison, she entered into a relationship with a married police officer who visited her often. She later explained that once the relationship began, the beatings stopped and her situation became easier. In this sense, the relationship functioned as a strategy to escape further torture. Nevertheless, she later expressed regret about the relationship, which resulted in the birth of a child and remained a painful memory throughout her life (Park, 2019, p. 319).

In other cases, these relationships developed into long-lasting marriages. For example, Kim O-bae also became a “police wife” after being imprisoned. Unlike Yang Gyeong-suk, she entered into a formal marriage with the police officer and continued to live with him even decades later. However, she explained that she had agreed to the marriage primarily out of fear of death if she refused. Even many years later she still felt uncomfortable speaking about the circumstances that had led to the relationship, indicating the lasting emotional burden associated with such experiences (Park, 2019, p. 320).

Taken together, these examples show that the category of the police wife cannot be understood simply as romance or ordinary marriage between women and police officers. Rather, these relationships emerged in contexts of extreme coercion, political vulnerability, and structural violence. The term itself often concealed experiences that were in reality forms of forced marriage, sexual exploitation, or strategies of survival. At the same time, the language used to describe these experiences is historically significant. As Park Sang-ran argues, women often referred to themselves as police wives rather than explicitly naming rape or sexual violence. Shame, fear of secondary victimization, and the political sensitivity of accusing state forces likely contributed to this terminology. Neutral language

therefore obscured coercion and contributed to the long silence surrounding these experiences (Park, 2019, pp. 321–322; 326–328).

In this way, forced marriage and the phenomenon of the police wife demonstrate how sexual violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident extended beyond direct assault. It also operated through coerced intimacy, dependency, and the appropriation of women's bodies as instruments of survival, punishment, and political control.

7.7. Aftermath of Gender-Based Violence: Silence, Survival, and Social Inequality

Another important aspect when examining sexual violence during the Jeju 4·3 Incident is the silence surrounding these experiences. Many women who suffered sexual abuse or torture did not speak openly about what had happened to them. Interviews with survivors indicate that victims often suppressed their experiences because such acts were socially condemned and difficult to acknowledge even to themselves. Within a strongly patriarchal context, sexual violence was understood not only as harm to the individual woman, but also as a source of shame for her family and community. As a result, many women remained silent in order to protect family honor and avoid social stigma (Yang 2008, pp. 126–128; Kim, 2001, pp. 284–285).

This silence was further reinforced by the broader political context. For decades, the Jeju 4·3 Incident remained politically sensitive, and survivors feared that speaking about their experiences could lead to accusations of communist sympathies and possible consequences for their families. In many cases, testimonies about sexual violence were therefore given not by the victims themselves, but by male witnesses, relatives, or neighbors. As a result, women's experiences of sexual violence often appear only indirectly in the historical record (Kim, 2001, pp. 281–282; Park, 2019, p. 310).

How this history is remembered depends heavily on who is in power. For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recently sparked heavy criticism when its conservative-appointed chairperson argued that executing people without a trial could be justified during wartime (Koh, 2023). This shows that the memory of the Jeju 4·3 Incident is not just a historical debate, it is an ongoing political battle where official recognition shifts with every change in government.

As Jieun Chang argues, many women experienced a second form of victimization after the violence itself, as their suffering remained outside public recognition and was often treated as a private source of shame rather than a matter of justice (Chang, 2009, pp. 193; 199).

The long-term consequences of this silence were profound. Many women suffered lasting psychological and physical effects, including nightmares, chronic pain, anxiety, and illnesses such as hwa-byung. Some women described sensations of blocked chests, heart palpitations, or unnamed illnesses that persisted for decades, linking bodily suffering to unresolved grief and anger (Lee, 2004, pp. 58–59).

Women also carried lasting bodily injuries caused by torture, beatings, gunshot wounds, and sexual violence. In some cases, pain, mobility problems, or chronic illness continued for decades. Because the Jeju 4·3 Incident remained politically suppressed for many years, survivors often had limited access to recognition, compensation, or proper medical treatment. As a result, physical suffering frequently became part of women's everyday lives, while they were still expected to work and care for their families (Kwon, 2011, p. 85; Kim, 2016, pp. 339–341).

At the same time, silence did not simply mean the absence of speech. For many women, experiences of violence were internalized and expressed through feelings of shame, contamination, and degradation. One survivor described her life after 4·3 as *chujeop* (추첩), a Jeju dialect term conveying dirtiness, defilement, and shame.

This suggests that violence was experienced not only as physical harm, but also as a lasting transformation of the self (Kwon, 2011, pp. 82–83).

This silence did not remain limited to individual experience, but became embedded within the wider social structure of Jeju society. As Won Ahum notes, the term sokseom (속섬) expressed the need to remain silent, endure, and avoid drawing attention to oneself. Survivors passed this attitude on to later generations as a strategy of survival in a context where speaking about the past could still carry political and social risks. In this way, silence became not only a personal response to trauma, but also a collective practice that shaped family life and community memory (Won, 2016, pp. 16; 29).

The aftermath of violence was also visible in everyday life. The large number of male deaths and disappearances created a significant demographic imbalance on the island. According to data, women significantly outnumbered men, and nearly half of married women became hol-eomeong (홀어머, widowed mothers). As a result, many women were forced to assume primary responsibility for both economic survival and family care (Kwon, 2011, pp. 66; 79–80).

The absence of men fundamentally reshaped household life. Women who had previously shared labor within the family now had to take on all responsibilities alone. Survivors often described their lives as consisting only of work. They gathered firewood, produced charcoal, sold goods, farmed, and performed physically demanding labor in order to sustain their families, often despite injuries or long-term effects of violence (Kwon, 2011, pp. 79–81).

Women were also responsible for children, elderly family members, and injured relatives. They therefore carried a double burden, securing livelihood while also providing care. In the absence of meaningful state support, the social and economic consequences of violence were largely transferred onto women within the private sphere (Kwon, 2011, 85).

Despite these conditions, women played a central role in rebuilding communities after the destruction of villages. Through cooperation and mutual aid, they reconstructed homes, shared resources, and supported one another in everyday survival. Women were therefore not only victims of the aftermath, but also important agents in the reconstruction of Jeju society (Kwon, 2011, p. 81; Yang, 2008, pp. 127–128).

However, this increased responsibility did not lead to greater equality. Even though women became central to economic survival, patriarchal structures remained in place and were in some cases reinforced. The loss of male family members increased the value placed on sons and male lineage. In some communities, surviving men were treated with particular care and symbolic importance, reflecting how demographic loss could strengthen rather than weaken patriarchal norms. Women, meanwhile, continued to be defined primarily through their roles as mothers and caregivers (Yeom, 2023, p. 529; Kwon, 2001, pp. 125–126).

In this sense, the aftermath of the Jeju 4·3 Incident did not simply create temporary hardship. Violence continued long after the massacre itself through silence, stigma, bodily suffering, overwork, and the persistence of unequal social structures. Women carried much of the bodily, emotional, and economic burden of survival and reconstruction, while their suffering often remained marginalized or unspoken.

8. Remembering and transmitting women's experiences of Jeju 4·3 Incident

This section examines how women's experiences of the Jeju 4·3 Incident, especially gender-based violence, were omitted, silenced, and later transmitted through testimonies, memory narratives, scholarly research, and ritual practices. It focuses

especially on the works of Kwon Gwi-suk, Jang Suk-in, Park Sang-ran, and Kim Seong-nae, who each approach the silenced and gendered dimensions of the Jeju 4·3 Incident from different perspectives.

As already mentioned in the overview of research, the topic of the Jeju 4·3 Incident has for a long time been dominated by a male-centered perspective, especially by focusing on political conflict, ideological division, and the overall number of victims and losses. This can also be seen in the Jeju 4·3 Incident Investigation Report, which is one of the most important and official publications on this topic, but only addresses the gender aspect briefly in a small section titled “female torture.” The report does not go into much detail about gender-based violence during the massacre. As Jang Suk-in points out, women were often regarded as part of the category of the elderly and weak, rather than being classified as a distinct victim group. Because of this, women’s specific experiences of violence were not fully discussed within the broader history of the Jeju 4·3 Incident (Jang, 2024, p. 67).

Kwon Gwi-suk also emphasizes why this omission matters in the process of truth-seeking and official remembrance. According to Kwon, gender research is important in studies of war and genocide because it criticizes earlier male-centered research and helps create a fuller understanding and transmission of past experiences of violence. In the case of Jeju, the Truth Commission Report became an authoritative official record of the incident after decades of truth-finding movements. However, Kwon argues that gender-related content in the report is minimal and that the report does not clearly reveal the context of women’s experiences. Although the report includes some testimonies and cases related to women, women are usually not treated as a distinct group, but are included under broader categories such as “residents,” “civilians,” “the weak,” or “victims.” Because the investigation mainly focused on identifying civilian deaths, missing persons, and lasting disabilities, other forms of harm, especially sexual violence, everyday suffering, and women’s reconstruction labor, were more easily excluded from official

history. In this sense, Kwon's work shows that the truth-finding process itself needs to be analyzed from a gender perspective, because official memory can both reveal women's experiences and leave them in the background at the same time (Kwon, 2014, pp. 171–172, 179–185).

This slowly started to change in the late 1990s, when researchers began collecting women's testimonies and tried to illuminate the incident from a female perspective. According to Jang, research adopting a gender perspective has steadily increased since then, especially through studies dealing with women's experiences, trauma, oral testimonies, widowed women, women's memory of the Jeju 4·3 Incident, state violence, women's human rights, and the political nature of sexual violence. In doing so, feminist perspectives from women's political theory and gender politics began to fill gaps in Jeju 4·3 research that had previously lacked such approaches. Some of the most important scholars in this field are Kwon Gwi-suk, Jang Suk-in, Kim Seong-nae, and Park Sang-ran, whose works examine the silenced and gendered dimensions of the Jeju 4·3 Incident from different perspectives (Jang, 2024, p. 67). Their work can therefore be understood not only as academic research, but also as a form of memory activism, because it gives voice to experiences that were marginalized in official history and public discourse.

Park Sang-ran also argues that research on the Jeju 4·3 Incident has largely focused on the event itself, ideological conflict, and overall human and material losses, while women's specific suffering has not been sufficiently illuminated. For Park, this is especially important because women experienced not only general human rights violations, such as illegal arrest, imprisonment, torture, and murder, but also sexual violence, including sexual torture and rape. Since sexual violence was mainly borne by women, Park describes the Jeju 4·3 Incident as a blind spot in the history of women's human rights (Park, 2019, p. 303).

Jang Suk-in also notes that, within the socio-cultural context of Jeju and Korea, where sexual violence has long been perceived as a "women's issue," revealing,

remembering, and publicly discussing such violence has been taboo. This shows why it is important to look at the Jeju 4·3 Incident from a gender perspective. From this perspective, gender-based violence was not merely an attack on women, but also an assault on socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity, used to maximize fear among enemies and assert the perpetrators' dominance. At the same time, Jang points out that this research remains difficult because the number of documented cases and testimonies by victims and survivors is still insufficient. However, the fact that these events remained buried as an "unspeakable truth" for over fifty years also shows the deep scars left by gender-based violence itself (Jang, 2024, p. 88).

Therefore, Park tries to look at the incident through women's memory narratives and testimonies. However, she also shows that women's narratives often omit direct references to sexual violence. This does not mean that sexual violence was not important, but rather that it was often too difficult to remember and speak. Park argues that the sexual aspect of violence appears to have been erased from women's memories of the violence they experienced. Yet precisely this point of forgetting, namely the omission of sexual violence, becomes one of the most meaningful aspects of women's suffering during the incident. In this sense, silence and forgetting should not simply be seen as absence, but as part of the way women's traumatic experiences were shaped by political fear, social stigma, and the gender culture of Jeju and Korean society (Park, 2019, pp. 310–311). This can also be seen in the term "police wife," which weakens the explicit meaning of sexual violence and shows how women's experiences were often remembered through more indirect or socially acceptable language (Park, 2019, pp. 327–328).

Kim Seong-nae also points to the difference between women's silence and men's testimony. She discusses a case in which a male witness and a female survivor recall the same incident of torture, but emphasize different aspects of it. The male witness, as an observer of another person's suffering, clearly states that the woman

had been hung upside down naked and beaten. The female survivor, however, does not mention her nakedness, but instead focuses on the fact that she was hung upside down, beaten, and survived after the charges against her were dropped. According to Kim, this difference shows the limits of representing sexual torture and sexual violence. For the female survivor, the central point of the testimony is not the sexual violation itself, but survival. Her pain remains connected to her own wounded body, and therefore cannot be expressed in the same way as by someone who witnessed it from the outside (Kim, 2001, p. 282).

At the same time, Kim emphasizes the importance of women's testimony. For her, speaking about one's own victimization is a form of struggle, because it allows women to confront the pain and death that had been silenced by patriarchy and state violence. By speaking about their experiences, women reclaim authority over their own lives and deaths. Kim therefore argues that the testimony of women's suffering bodies is one of the most direct ways to make visible the innocent sacrifice of the Jeju population as a whole. This is because, within the anti-communist state, violence against those labeled as "Reds" was carried out not only through collective violence against Jeju residents, but also through patriarchal violence against women's bodies (Kim, 2001, p. 291).

Kim's work therefore broadens the question of testimony by showing that women's memories were not only transmitted through spoken accounts, but also through silence, ritual practices, and collective survival. This is especially important because many surviving women remained silent about their personal suffering for decades. According to Kim, the widows who survived the massacre, explained their silence by saying that their lives after the incident were more painful than death. As widows, they shared the same painful memories and therefore did not need to speak or listen to each other's stories, because they already knew them. In this sense, silence did not mean that memory was absent. Rather, memory was shared collectively and embodied in the everyday lives of the surviving women (Kim, 2021, p. 88).

Rituals therefore became another important space for remembering and expressing trauma. Since 2002, the collective endurance of the *horeomeong* has been publicly acknowledged and ritualized in the *Sasam Haewon Sangsaeng Gut* (사삼 해원상생굿 / 제주 4·3 해원상생굿), which is performed every April at massacre sites. Through these rituals, the traumatic memories of the widows became connected to the public commemoration of the victims of the Jeju 4·3 Incident. However, Kim also emphasizes that this reconciliation remains only partial, because traumatic memories cannot be fully represented. This idea is also visible in Kim's discussion of gut (굿) rituals, where the suffering of the victims is voiced through the shaman, especially through yeongeulrim (영계울림), the words transmitted by the shaman as the body of the spirit. Kim argues that these ritual voices become a form of testimony to the suffering, because they place the weeping of the dead and the testimony of living survivors beside each other. In this sense, ritual does not replace historical testimony, but creates another way of expressing grief, resentment, and wounds that were difficult or impossible to speak about directly (Kim, 2001, p. 290; Kim, 2021, pp. 89–90).

Kim further connects memory to women's everyday survival after the massacre. In the widow villages, the sunureum (수눌음), a traditional mutual aid network, became crucial for rebuilding houses and reconstructing village life. The rebuilding of shamanic shrines for Halmang, the Grandmother Deity, was also part of this process, as surviving women prayed for the protection and survival of their children (is this sentence really needed). In this way, rituals and mutual aid were not only religious or social practices, but also ways of transforming painful memories into solidarity and survival. Through these practices, women became important actors in preserving and transmitting the memory of the Jeju 4·3 Incident, even when their experiences were not fully included in official narratives (Kim, 2021, pp. 88–90).

Taken together, the works of Kwon Gwi-suk, Jang Suk-in, Park Sang-ran, and Kim Seong-nae show that women's memories of the Jeju 4·3 Incident were transmitted in

ways that often remained outside official history. While Kwon and Jang reveal the limits of official narratives and the need for a gender perspective, Park shows how silence and forgetting became meaningful parts of women's memory narratives. Kim further broadens this understanding by showing that memory was also transmitted through bodily suffering, rituals, widow solidarity, and collective survival. In this sense, these scholars do not only analyze women's experiences of the incident but also take on an activist role by making silenced memories visible, challenging male-centered and state-centered narratives, and advocating for women's trauma to be recognized as part of the broader history of the Jeju 4·3 Incident.

9. Conclusion

Jeju Island has historically differed from mainland Korea due to its geographical isolation, distinct culture and dialect, and repeated history of resistance. As a result, mainland authorities often treated the island as politically suspicious and marginal, rather than as an equal part of the national community. During the Jeju 4·3 Incident, these long-standing perceptions merged with Cold War anti-communism, leading to the collective labeling of many islanders as "reds" or potential enemies of the state.

This thesis has shown that the violence of the Jeju 4·3 Incident was not gender-neutral. Women were targeted in ways shaped both by anti-communist repression and by patriarchal ideas about gender, family, and the female body. Violence against women carried meanings beyond the individual victim, as women were closely associated with chastity, motherhood, and family honor. Sexual violence, forced nudity, torture, humiliation, forced marriage, and violence against pregnant women were not only forms of physical abuse, but also mechanisms through which power and domination were expressed.

In particular, the female body became a site through which political violence was articulated. Women connected to suspected rebels were often perceived not only as individuals but also as symbolic bearers of future generations. This helps explain the severity of violence against pregnant women, whose bodies were associated with the reproduction of the so-called “enemy population.” At the same time, sexual violence functioned as a form of communication to the wider community, signaling exclusion from legal protection and from the boundaries of the legitimate national order. Through the violation of women, perpetrators also asserted control over families and undermined male authority, turning gendered bodies into instruments of political terror.

Sexual violence also functioned as a message to the wider Jeju community. As studies of wartime rape have shown, the target of such violence is often not only the woman herself, but the group to which she belongs. In Jeju, rape, humiliation, and coercion communicated that islanders were outside the protection of the law and outside the boundaries of the legitimate national community. By violating women, perpetrators dishonored families, humiliated male relatives who could not protect them, and demonstrated their own power and masculinity. In this sense, women’s bodies became a medium through which the subjugation of Jeju itself was enacted.

At the same time, the violence did not end when the killings ended. Many women lived with trauma, shame, silence, widowhood, poverty, forced relationships, and years of physical suffering. They often became responsible for rebuilding households and communities, while their own experiences remained hidden or socially unrecognized. The long silence surrounding sexual and gender-based violence became itself one of the lasting consequences of Jeju 4·3.

Overall, the Jeju 4·3 Incident shows that mass political violence cannot be fully understood without attention to gendered dynamics. Women were not only secondary victims of a broader conflict, but were targeted in ways shaped by their

positions within family and society. Gender-based violence was therefore not a peripheral aspect of the suppression, but one of the central mechanisms through which terror, exclusion, and state domination were carried out. Recognizing these experiences is essential for a more complete understanding of Jeju 4·3 and for addressing the historical marginalization of women's voices in its memory.

Bibliography

- Alawi, H. (2020). *Jeju Island, the Three Clans myth, and women divers: Female importance in Jeju's cultural history* [Master's thesis, University of Michigan]. Deep Blue. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/156011>
- Al-Tuwaijri, S., & Saadat, S. (2018). *Gender-based violence in fragile, conflict, and violence situations: Five key questions to be answered* (HNP Knowledge Brief). World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/30592>
- Bradley, M., & de Beer, A. (2021). The collective responsibility of organised armed groups for sexual and gender-based violence during a non-international armed conflict. *Stellenbosch Law Review*, 32(1), 129–154. <https://doi.org/10.47348/SLR/v32/i1a6>
- Chang, J. (2009). *National narrative, traumatic memory and testimony: Reading traces of the Cheju April Third Incident, South Korea, 1948* [Doctoral dissertation, New York University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Colombini, M. (2002). Gender-based and sexual violence against women during armed conflict. *Journal of Health Management*, 4(2), 167–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097206340200400206>
- Cumings, B. (1990). *The origins of the Korean War: Vol. 2. The roaring of the cataract, 1947–1950*. Princeton University Press.
- Eperjesi, J. (2023). Jeju women's testimonial narratives: Ecofeminism, environcide, and the April 3 incident. *Feminist Studies in English Literature*, 31(1), 175–209. <https://doi.org/10.15796/fsel.2023.31.1.007>
- Global Women's Institute. (2017). *Gender-based violence research, monitoring, and evaluation with refugee and conflict-affected populations: A manual and toolkit for researchers and practitioners*. George Washington University. https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs6206/files/download/s/GWI%20manual%20ENG%20_FINAL_a11y.pdf
- Han, R., & Kim, S. (2003). Jeju women's lives in the context of the Jeju April 3rd uprising. *Asian Women*, 17(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.14431/aw.2003.12.17.1.21>
- Hilty, A. (2011). *Jeju Island: Reaching to the core of beauty*. Korea Foundation.
- Hyeon, G.-E. (1995). *Hallasan 1* [한라산 1]. Munhak-gwa Jiseongsa.

- Inter-Agency Standing Committee. (2015). *Guidelines for integrating gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery*.
- Jang, S.-I. (2024). 제주4·3과 젠더기반폭력 [Jeju 4·3 and gender-based violence]. *동서연구*, 36(1), 63–93.
- Jeju 4·3 Incident Truth Investigation Committee. (2003). *Jeju 4·3 incident truth investigation report*.
- Jeju 4·3 Peace Foundation. (2016). *A guide to the history of the Jeju 4·3 incident*.
- Jones, A. (2000). Gendercide and genocide. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2(2), 185–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713677599>
- Kendall, L. (1985). *Shamans, housewives, and other restless spirits: Women in Korean ritual life*. University of Hawai'i Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824844837>
- Kim, D.-J. (2005). *Historical aspects of Jeju women* [In Korean: 역사적 측면에서 본 제주의 여성 / A study on history of Jeju women]. In *Proceedings of the 2005 Annual Conference of the Korean Society of Civil Engineers* (pp. 3299–3303). Korean Society of Civil Engineers.
- Kim, E.-S. (2009). 국가폭력과 여성: 죽음정치의 장으로서의 4·3 [State violence and women: 4·3 as a field of necropolitics]. *문화과학*.
- Kim, E.-S. (2016). 4·3 홀어머니의 ‘말하기’와 몸의 정치 [The “speaking” of 4·3 widowed mothers and the politics of the body]. *한국문화인류학*, 49(3), 313–359.
- Kim, H. J. (2014). *The massacres at Mt. Halla: Sixty years of truth seeking in South Korea*. Cornell University Press.
- Kim, S.-R. (2001). 국가폭력의 성정치학: 제주 4·3 학살을 중심으로 [The sexual politics of state violence: Focusing on the Jeju 4·3 massacre]. *문화과학*, (2), 263–292.
- Kim, S. N. (2021). Memory politics and the emergence of a women’s sphere to counter historical violence in Korea. In J. Boesten & H. Scanlon (Eds.), *Gender, transitional justice and memorial arts: Global perspectives on commemoration and mobilization* (pp. 75–96). Routledge.
- Kim, Y.-K. (2019). 제주4·3 여성 생존자의 생애 과정 연구 [A life-course study of female survivors of the Jeju 4·3]. *한국사회복지질적연구*, 13(3), 103–121.

- Koh, K. (2023, October 16). Head of Korean truth commission suggests war entails summary executions. *The Hankyoreh*.
https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/1112308.html
- Kwon, G.-S. (2005). Changing labor processes of women's work: The haenyeo of Jeju Island. *Korean Studies*, 29, 114–136.
- Kwon, G.-S. (2011). '아방도 없고 허난 밥도 없고': 제주 4·3의 여성사 ["Without a father, there was no food": A women's history of Jeju 4·3]. *4·3과 역사*, (11), 71–83.
- Kwon, G.-S. (2014). 제주4·3의 진상규명과 젠더 연구 [Truth-seeking of the Jeju 4·3 and gender research]. *탐라문화*, 45, 169–198.
- Lee, J.-J. (1999). 제주 '호미' 마을 여성들의 생애사에 대한 여성학적 고찰: '4·3' 경험을 중심으로 [A feminist study on the life histories of women in Jeju 'Homi' village: Focusing on the 4·3 experience]. Ewha Womans University.
- Lee, J.-S. (2004). 제주 4·3 항쟁과 여성의 삶에 관한 연구 [A study on women's lives in the Jeju 4·3 uprising] [Master's thesis, Sungkyunkwan University].
- Lee, T.-J. (2024). 제주4·3 소설 속 여성의 말하기와 재현(불)가능성: 탈식민 페미니즘으로 본 현기영의 <도령마루의 까마귀>, <거룩한 생애> [Women's speech and the (im)possibility of representation in Jeju 4·3 fiction]. *인문연구*, 108, 143–176.
- Merrill, J. (1980). The Cheju-do rebellion. *Journal of Korean Studies*, 2, 139–197.
- Oh, Y.-S. (2012). *Jeju National Museum*. Jeju National Museum.
- Oh, G.-S. (1999). 4·3을 통해 바라본 여성인권 피해사례 [Cases of women's human rights violations viewed through the 4·3].
- Ofer, D., & Weitzman, L. J. (1998). *Women in the Holocaust*. Yale University Press.
- Park, S.-R. (2019). 제주4·3에 대한 여성의 기억서사와 '순경 각시' [Women's memory narratives of Jeju 4·3 and "policeman's wife"]. *Journal of Korean Culture*, 45, 301–333.
- Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium. (2004). *Gender-based violence tools manual*.
- Saltzman, M. (2022). *A history of Jeju* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan]. Deep Blue. <https://doi.org/10.7302/6252>
- Sanford, V., Stefatos, K., & Salvi, C. M. (Eds.). (2016). *Gender violence in peace and*

- war: *States of complicity*. Rutgers University Press.
- Shaikh, M. (2024). A comprehensive study on the haenyeo of Jeju Island: Tradition, sustainability, and women's empowerment. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*.
- Son, Y.-H. (2021). 리사 시의 『해녀들의 섬』에 나타나는 제주 4·3과 해녀들의 실존 [Jeju 4·3 and haenyeo in Lisa See's *The Island of Sea Women*]. *새한영어영문학*, 63(4), 37–55.
- UN Women. (n.d.). *FAQs: Types of violence against women and girls*. Retrieved May 4, 2026, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/faqs-types-of-violence-against-women-and-girls>
- Vergès, F. (2022). *A feminist theory of violence: A decolonial perspective* (M. Thackway, Trans.). Pluto Press.
- von Joeden-Forgey, E. (2010). Gender and genocide. In D. Bloxham & A. D. Moses (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of genocide studies* (pp. 61–80). Oxford University Press.
- Won, A. (2022). *Tale of Soksom: Landscapes of memory in Jeju, South Korea* [Doctoral dissertation, Carleton University]. Carleton University Institutional Repository.
- Yang, J. A. (2008). Women's narratives from Jeju Island. *Theology Today*, 65(2), 234–246.
- Yang, I.-S. (2022). 제주해녀 생애사 연구 [A life-history study of Jeju haenyeo] [Master's thesis, Jeju National University].
- Yeom, H.-J. (2023). 제주 4·3 홀어머 마을의 여성 생애사 연구: 서방 이신 여성의 사례를 중심으로 [A life-history study of women in a Jeju 4·3 widows' village]. *탐라문화*, 74, 519–547.
- Yu, C.-I. (2004). 구술된 경험읽기: 제주 4·3 관련 수형인 여성의 생애사 [Reading narrated experience: Life histories of female prisoners related to Jeju 4·3]. *한국문화인류학*, 37(1), 3–39.