

## The Meaning of Historical Deaths as Seen through the Novella Sun-i amch'on and Mourning as Politics of Human Rights\*

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### Abstract

The aim of this article is to shed light on the meaning of historical deaths, nowadays being mummified, memorialized or even denied, and to discuss what kind of mourning is needed for such deaths. To this end, the novella Sun-i Samch'on is used as a text, to analyze the meaning of historical deaths as depicted in the story from the viewpoint of the responsibility and commitment of those living, and also to see what possibilities there are in healing those who are in pain because of a tragic history. The article then goes onto pointing out, through the novella, a problematic way of approaching historical deaths and their mourning. Mourning for certain deaths is still impossible even though certain amount of historical justice have been attained and truths about historical deaths revealed, thanks to democratization - an important landmark in Korean modern history. The reason behind this impossibility is 'selective mourning', and the article proposes, as a way to overcome this problem, mourning as politics of human rights.

**Key Words** : Historical death, Sun-i Samch'on, division trauma, humanities for unification, April 3rd Jeju Incident

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## 1. Introduction: Impersonal and Inequivalent Deaths

With the end of World War II in 1945, the Korean Peninsula was liberated from Japanese colonial rule. However, politics on the Peninsula were once again swept into a turmoil in line with the Cold War regime, with the US- and Soviet Union-led Allied Forces dividing and occupying the Peninsula into the South and the North respectively, and with many overseas independence activists of various ideologies returning to Korea. When the United Nations Trust Territories were announced, the ideological conflict between the left and the right went to the extremes. The April 3rd Incident of Jeju Island was the first manifestation of such conflict. The April 3rd Jeju Incident, in which Jeju Island was branded the 'Red Island' and security forces sent in to undergo indiscriminate counterinsurgency operations on the islanders, led to the deaths of around 1,000 right-wingers, including members of the Northwest Youth Association, the Daedong Youth Association and the security force. Approximately 14,000 civilians were also killed. It was indeed "mass production of killing" (Hur, Sang-Soo 2004, 183-191).<sup>1)</sup>

However, as Han Hong-Koo says, "Deaths may all seem the same, but in reality, they are not. Depending on the relationship between the dead and myself, and because of various other factors large and small, deaths are not 'equivalent deaths' but are made to have very different meanings" (Han, Hong-Koo 2010, 416). In the case of Jeju, the dead security force members and the right-wingers were recognized as Persons of Distinguished Service to the State whereas the deaths of civilians, not to speak of mountain guerrillas, were considered to be "deaths that must not be mourned, impersonal deaths where people are killed but not

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1) There have been other tragic incidents even after the establishment of an independent government in 1948. The Bodo League incident was a major example where large numbers of civilians were killed during the Korean War. The Bodo League was created under the pretext of systematically managing leftwing forces who had converted after the Jeju Incident and the Yeosu-Suncheon Rebellion, and enrolled many peasants who had no connection to the left, simply to increase its propaganda effect. When the Korean War broke out on June 25th 1950, at least 600,000 people were executed because of the concern that members of the Bodo League could become sympathizers to North Korea. As such, the division of the Korean Peninsula evolved on the history of death, which did not stop with the armistice but still continues today. Park Jung Hee's military dictatorship abruptly came to an end due to the dictator's death and just when hopes of democracy were beginning to burst forth, Chun Doo Hwan's new military dictatorship once again shot down civilians. Around 200 citizens were killed in Gwangju in 1980.

killed” (Han, Hong-Koo 2010, 395). So, for more than half a century, “Voicing out the truth was considered rebelling against the regime, punishable by beating and torture” (Hong, Seung-Yong 2003, 296). In fact, even ‘death wails’ during funerals and ancestral rites, and not just verbalized words, were dealt with violence. So the phrase “Korea’s modern history is one of brutality where even death has been killed” (Han, Hong-Koo 2010, 389) is quite appropriate.

Public discussion on the April 3rd Jeju Incident became possible only after the 1987 Pro-Democracy Protests. The issue was raised within the academia and various social groups, and after the 1987 presidential election, politicians and the media also started to take interest. Based on such public sentiment, the Special Act for Investigation of the April 3rd Jeju Incident and Recovery of the Honor of Victims was passed in December 1999, and in March 2003, 60 years after the incident had taken place, the *April 3rd Jeju Incident Investigation Report* was adopted, identifying the incident as a ‘human rights violation instigated by the state’s security forces’. Then eventually in 2004, President Noh Moo-Hyun made a formal apology on behalf of the state.

But it was Hyun Ki-Young who spoke out much earlier about the deaths of the Jeju Incident through his 1978 novella, *Sun-i Samch'on* (Uncle Sun-i)<sup>2)</sup>, published in the *Quarterly Changbi*. The story reveals covered up historical truths through the protagonist reminiscing on the incident on the occasion of the death of a character called Sun-i Samch'on, who had lost her<sup>3)</sup> two sons during the incident. The novella also shows that the Jeju Incident continues to traumatize the islanders even after thirty years, counting from the year of the work’s publication. Because the work was published during a period when all discussion about the Jeju Incident was forbidden, it raised quite an uproar.

One can then question the significance of Hyun’s work, when the truth-revealing process of the Jeju Incident has been completed and the President has given his apology. While some have pointed out that the process of revealing the truth

2) *Sun-i Samch'on* has been translated and published in English – *Aunt Suni* translated by Song Jong Do, Seoul, Kak Press, 2008.

3) Sun-i Samch'on (Uncle Sun-i) is a woman. However, the reason why ‘I’, a male, call her samch'on (uncle) is because on Jeju Island, there is a “tradition of endearingly calling distant adult relatives as ‘samch'on’ regardless of their actual gender” (Hyun, Ki-young 1978, 146).

showed limitations (Lee, Jae-Seung 492-493), the novella is well worth reading because it widens the horizon of understanding of present day readers living on the still divided Korean Peninsula about the trauma caused by the division and the historically tragic incident it gave birth to. It also informs us on ways to heal that trauma. Furthermore, one of the core themes of the story can be said to be 'death'. In this regard, the novella offers much insight when contemplating on today's issues, in light of the fact that historical deaths are still often negated and mourning limited by the divisionist ideology.

Therefore, this article will, first, look at how the deaths of the Jeju Incident are remembered through the lens of Hyun Ki-Young's *Sun-i Samch'on*. However, the article will not focus on the depiction of events but rather on how understanding of death evolves throughout the story's narration. Such analysis will not lead to accepting Hyun's perspective on death as it is. Nor will the article interpret death from the conservative view of the Korean society. Instead, it will attempt to critically read those parts that show limitations in interpreting the deaths of the Jeju Incident, whether those limitations are as a result of a blank left by the author or because some things just could not be said. The aim is to discuss how we should remember the deaths of the incident, in light of the conditions we face today. The article will not try to point out the limitations of the novella itself. Rather, Hyun's novella acts as a text and a mirror that reflects the way we face historical deaths, including the Jeju Incident. By critically viewing our reflection on the mirror, the article will then seek to discuss what kind of mourning is required of historical deaths.

## 2. Responsibility for Historical Deaths and Repeated Negation

The Jeju Island, off the southern coast of the Korean Peninsula, is always modified by the word "beautiful". Today, Jeju is visited not only by many domestic but also international tourists, becoming a globally famous tourist destination. But for Sangsu, the protagonist of *Sun-i Samch'on*, although Jeju is his hometown, the island is a place he wants to avoid and remain distant from as much as possible. For him, it is the 'island of death' - the site of a massacre. The story starts with

Sangsu going home for the first time in 8 years to attend an ancestral rite commemorating his grandfather. For him, the 8 years was a period of his 'trying' to run away from his memories of the deaths of the Jeju Incident, which had taken place when he was a child. However, the short 50 minute flight from Seoul to Jeju takes him back not just 8 years or even 30 years, but beyond that, to a "dead village" looking just like a "a pile of ashes burnt down by the military's extermination operation thirty years ago" (Hyun, Ki-young 1978, 146). Sangsu had left that Jeju to live on the mainland, but his memory has not been able to detach itself at all from that time and space in 1949.

So Sangsu comes home after a long time, only to face the death of Sun-i Samch'on. She had killed herself on her farm just before Sangsu arrived in Jeju. On the occasion of Sun-i Samch'on's death, Hyun Ki-Young takes the readers back to the past and interprets the meaning behind her present death. The death of Sun-i Samch'on, the sole survivor of a shooting thirty years ago, is not independent from the deaths of the past. Through the voice of Sangsu, Hyun tells us, "Bullets shot from type 99 rifles in the fields 30 years ago have pierced the center of your heart only now, after meandering through twists and turns and being deferred for the last thirty years" (Hyun, Ki-Young 1978, 146). In other words, Sun-i Samch'on had already died once thirty years ago on "December 18th on the lunar calendar" - on the same day as Sangsu's grandfather.

Sun-i Samch'on died a postponed death. Biologically her body had not died but was 'alive-dead', shot and killed with her two young children and many villagers thirty years ago, on the day her village was exterminated for being communist or sympathetic to communism. She died on her own field, the very place where villagers were killed thirty years ago, and the part that describes how only the snow where she lay dead had melted seems to symbolize that the place had been left vacant precisely to accommodate her dead body, had she also died thirty years ago.

The important thing here is that neither the death of Sangsu's grandfather, who represents those who were killed during the Jeju Incident, nor the deaths of Sun-i Samch'on and many others who died after a life traumatized by Jeju Incident could be 'historicized'. Because everyone had died all at the same time, on the day of their commemoration and ancestral rites, the entire village is filled with death

wails, and those wails, for Sangsu and those alive, sound eerie because their deaths have not been able to register their meaning and be symbolized. It is like the father who appears as a ghost in Hamlet, symbolizing the onset of trauma. Death suddenly takes the characters to a space of ‘incomprehension’, having been hidden from everyday life. That space does not follow a linear flow of time and is a space of repetition where the past and the present are indistinguishable. It is a space that is articulated into the present through metaphors and metonymies.

“As soon as dawn broke, crows would fly down onto the roofs to eat pieces of sacrificial food thrown at them in bowls that used to contain wine for the departed souls. Those crows felt like an omen, not because people said they were ghosts or messengers from the other world but because the shiny bluish black of their wings was similar to the color of the uniforms worn by the Northwest Youth Association officers who came to arrest the villagers” (Hyun, Ki-young 1978, 146).

It seems such ominous feeling was due to ‘mourning’ being forbidden for the deaths of the Jeju Incident. Mourning is a process in which, during a certain period, one’s libido towards the object of loss is withdrawn, and the state of loss is accepted. However, when sufficient mourning does not take place, a person can fall into a state of melancholy, losing self-confidence, showing lethargy and thus making the treatment of trauma difficult. The scene where Sangsu feels discomfort at the sight of crows because they remind him of the Northwest Youth Association officers shows the readers that when a person comes face to face with some sort of symbolic association, he or she traumatically re-experiences the shocking and tragic emotions of the past.

However, as shown by Jung Weon-Ok’s research that people active in revealing truth behind suspicious deaths can transform themselves from depressed subjects into political subjects, who refuse to stop mourning, remain faithful to the dead and seek to realize social justice (Jung, Weon-Ok 2014), the state of melancholiness does not simply lock and bind a person in an isolated space of trauma. Although the deaths of the Jeju Incident are horrendous and painful memories, facing them leads people to make their first attempt at retroactively historicizing the event.

So the novella, first of all, goes back to that terrible day. The military and the police tell villagers to gather at an elementary school to listen to a speech, crowding in about 1,000 people. Then they tell their own officers, the members of the Daedong Youth Association and the National Association for the Rapid Realization of Korean Independence, and their lineal family members, to leave the crowd. People intuitively start feeling a threat to their lives and there is chaos. At that moment, people realize their villages are on fire. There is crying and screaming, and people try very hard to escape but are prevented from doing so due to the ruthless beatings by clubs and rifle butts. Groups of 50 to 60 people are dragged to outside the school fences, and the shootings continue until dusk.

The core of Hyun Ki-Young's *Sun-i Samch'on* lies in narrating the deaths of the Jeju Incident based on historical truth. By reminiscing on that day, the story tries to reveal, based on testimonies of 'memory', the fact that the massacred people were neither leftwing nor communist spies but mere civilians. In fact, majority of those massacred were the elderly, women and children, and those who managed to run away had no choice but to remain hiding because, although they had nothing to do with communism, if they did not go into the mountains, they would be considered reactionaries, and if they remained in the village, they would be considered communist sympathizers. Thus, the novella concludes that the Jeju Incident was an organized genocide committed against civilians by the military and the police. Such a fact is now accepted to be true, as revealed by many recent research. However, when the novella was first published, it was considered highlighting an error committed by the state and therefore prescribed to be anti-state, which is why Hyun himself had to twice suffer imprisonment and torture by the military and the police.

The important aspect of the novella is that it questions the 'way' death is defined, transitioning the frame of interpretation. In other words, the novella tries to show us that the deaths caused by the Jeju Incident were not 'punishment' for leftists but rather that it was an unjust 'sacrifice' of people wrongfully judged by the state to be communist, within a history of national division. It is a form of a struggle around what the truth is - a form of counter-memory or anti-memory against remembering the Jeju Incident as suppression of a communist riot. As Foucault argues, truth cannot become truth by itself. Truth can become truth only

when it is placed as the truth. So, the novella is ‘verbalizing’ (logos) that the essence of the Jeju Incident is that it was state violence committed against innocent civilians during a period of chaotic transition towards a divided state, and that those who were killed were victims of such violence.

More importantly, the novella is meaningful in the sense that what could only be expressed through sounds of crying (phone) during an oppressive era has now been formalized through language. This linguistic formalization, performed despite the continuous fear of having to expose oneself once again under premonition of more violence, can be interpreted as ‘commitment’ towards one’s relationship with the dead, committing oneself to relieving the mortification of the dead and comforting them. Isn’t this how Derrida saw Hamlet? Faced with his father’s ghost, Hamlet says, “The time is out of joint” vis-à-vis ‘righteousness (être-droit) of time’. “He even curses the fate that would have caused him to be born to set right a time that walks crooked. He curses the destiny that would precisely have destined him, Hamlet, to do justice, to put things back in order, to put history, the world, the age, the time upright, on the right path, so that, in conformity with the rule of its correct functioning, it advances straight ahead (tout droit) and following the law (le droit).” Insofar as this being his fate, the basis of Hamlet’s existence is “to put a dislocated time back on its hinges and to put it back right, to turn it back over to the law ... to do justice for a fault, a fault of time and of the times” and the moment he recognized this fate, it becomes his ‘responsibility’ to put history back on its righteous path. (Derrida, Jacques 2006, 23)

Seen from this angle, the novella is trying to say that it is the ‘responsibility’ of the living to bring justice to the deaths whose truths have been distorted and concealed by state oppression under the regime of national division. The story is telling us that, as in Hamlet, this responsibility has to be borne because although one can try to run far away from death, one is destined to always painfully return to one’s original place. Also, if one does not fully carry out that responsibility, then one will never become free from the repetitive suffering. So paradoxically, only those who, though living, face historical death by directing their lives not towards life but towards death will be able to heal their wounds. The problem is that those destined to bear that responsibility cannot be limited only to the



survivors of the Jeju Incident because, fundamentally, the cause of the deaths lies in a historical and social structure i.e. the division of the country. As mentioned before, as long as the official discourse on those deaths remains unchanged, the deaths will continue to be considered as punishment for ‘communism = evil’, incapacitating the process of revealing the truth, recovering the victims’ honor and healing of their trauma. Doesn’t the process of revealing the truth behind the Jeju Incident show this well? It was the 1987 Pro-Democracy Protests and the ensuing demands made by the society (including the efforts of the Jeju people) that led to the presidential apology.

However, this process of revealing the truth and apologizing can cause one to mistakenly assume the Jeju Incident to be a one-time event in history. The event was definitely a major event in and of itself, caused by divided nation, but it repeated itself directly, albeit with some differences, through the Yeosu–Suncheon Rebellion, and then again after some period of time, through events such as the April 19th Revolution and the 1980 Gwangju People’s Uprising. Ironically, nowadays, the achievements of democratization are being downplayed, so mourning is sometimes even denied. Also, mourning of social deaths - while not massacres in the literal sense - caused by neoliberal capitalist logic and politics is being constrained or is even ridiculed and used as mere amusement, within an anti-communist frame. What, then, is the reason such circumstances are repeating themselves in the past and in the present? The fundamental reason is that the Korean Peninsula is still divided into the South and the North. But it may also be because the attitude towards social and historical deaths and the method of mourning both are deeply rooted in certain problematic way of thinking.

### 3. Selective Mourning and the (Im)Possibility of Mourning

Kim Eun-Ha says that the fight over memory regarding historical deaths has seen certain amount of success and thus “should have led to social mourning, but paradoxically, mourning has become impossible. Why?” she asks. She succinctly explains, “It is because the struggles from below have been expropriated

by the seemingly democratic state as the official memory of state bodies, and the victims are buried in the memories of a sanctuary” (Kim, Eun-Ha 2015, 112). In other words, mourning over historical deaths (for example, the special legislations passed in regard to the Jeju Incident and the Gwangju Uprising) took place through the exchange of equivalents between sacrifice and compensation, and mourning was degraded into a political tool. Thus, she maintains that mourning did not take place within the relationships with others. If so, what does Kim exactly mean by ‘mourning’? Here is rather a long quote.

Mourning is not only a political task of rectifying an oppressive political reality that caused unjust deaths but is also about bearing responsibility through ‘responsiveness’, i.e. being responsible about the requests and appeals made by others. Mourning comes from the fact that humans have the ability to respond and that humans exist inside the responsibility of ‘responsiveness’. Here, responsibility refers to overcoming an isolated solitary world, a silent world, and entering relationships with others. It means, then, that mourning is not about memorializing and thereby exorcizing the victims, but about bringing the victims into the horizons of one’s life (Kim, Eun-Ha 2015, 110-111).

According to Kim, historically, mourning “has disabled our ability to come in contact with the reality of events experienced by the victims” because “the will, braveness and other abstract mentality of victims were emphasized, leading us to avert the fear or conflict of humans facing violence and embodied memories” (Kim, Eun-Ha 2015, 112). Thus, she proposes that ultimately, one has to move mourning into an ethical frame by “forming a mind that deeply empathizes with and is considerate towards the pain and suffering of others.” Her argument cannot be but very relevant in today’s world where people have become insensitive not only towards the suffering of others facing historical tragedy, but also towards one’s own pain because that tragedy has become so prevalent throughout society at large. Furthermore, by framing this issue as an ethical one, she has provided a platform upon which to formulate the issue from a socio-cultural perspective.

However, it seems somewhat limiting to view the cause of impossibility of

mourning to be merely the lack or absence of an ethical mentality, in light of the fact that in cases such as the exchange of fire in the West Sea by North and South Korean military, the sinking of the Cheonan warship, or the shootings on Yeonpyeong Island, which are officially recognized by the state but still commemorated as deaths, people seem to empathize with the pain and suffering of the victims and mourn the dead more deeply than for the Jeju Incident or the Gwangju Uprising. In fact, if we consider these examples, it seems that not 'all' mourning have become impossible but rather that 'selective' mourning is arbitrarily taking place. In short, certain circumstances have led some deaths to be mourned and some not. Although mourning has become possible for some historical deaths thanks to the achievements of the past democratization process, there has also been retrogression to the past and now some deaths are once again being negated.

In other words, it seems that retrogression, denial and subversion of democratization achievements happen because, as mentioned earlier, deaths, for which mourning takes place, are not considered equivalent but are 'selected'. Based on the dichotomy of 'enemy versus ally', only the deaths of the 'ally', and not those of the left, are selected to be worthy of mourning. Without regard for factual truths behind a certain death, a person deemed to be leftwing will not be allowed to be mourned for, and also, at times, some deaths will be denied or see the withdrawal of their mourning process, making mourning impossible altogether. On one hand, such impossibility can be because of a divided and oppressive state monopolizing the power of security forces. But it is also because this kind of mourning equation is embodied in the minds of people to be unquestionable and is taken on voluntarily. Even in *Sun-i Samch'on*, which calls on the readers to bear responsibility over the distorted and covered up deaths of others, only some deaths are selected to be worthy of mourning. Let's look at the dialogue between the protagonist Sangsu and his uncle, who used to be a member of the Northwest Youth Association.

"Uncle, at the time, how many real communists do you think there were among the 300,000 Jeju people?" "Well, excluding the, say, 10,000 unarmed commie guerrillas, how many would that be? I think there were about 300 armed guerrillas." I felt

a surge of anger at his words. “What on earth are unarmed communist guerrillas? How can you call unarmed people communist guerrillas? They are people who lost their homes and had to live hiding in caves at the foot of Mount Halla because their villages, in the mountains, were burnt to the ground.” Uncle seemed surprised at my indignation and glanced at me. “Nephew, I think you are right. I saw them with my own eyes. We were on an operation in a cow field. We heard a baby cry and searched inside a thicket. We found a cave and about 20 unarmed commie guerrillas hiding there.” “I said they were not unarmed guerrillas but people who lost their homes!” I corrected Uncle’s words sternly (Hyun, Ki-Young 1978, 146).

In fact, the process of revealing the truth and recovering the honor of victims of the Jeju Incident did not include ‘all’ deaths. Of course, shedding light on the historical facts behind the incident and appeasing the souls of those who were unjustly killed are valuable in and of themselves, but the fact is that only ‘civilians = law abiding people’ were included in the process. In other words, the leftwing (or those who were suspected to be leftwing) are still denied mourning. The deaths of ordinary citizens, as law-abiding people, were considered worthy to be mourned as victims, but in order to support the legitimacy of such mourning, the deaths of the left were considered ethically justifiable, as a form of punishment and revenge based on the equation ‘communist = evil’.<sup>4)</sup>

Lee Jae-Seung asks, “It is questionable whether one can differentiate reasonable killing and unreasonable killing.” According to Lee, genocide cannot be justified based on political tendencies, and the logic that it is okay for the left to die violates the concept of human rights (Lee, Jae-Seung 492-493). Yang Jeong-Sim also criticizes, “For the last 50 years or so, anti-communist ideology was used to justify state violence, whereby all forms of violence and killing were condoned if the

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4) Of course, under the regime of national division, speaking out about the deaths of the leftwing is extremely dangerous, as evident by the rhetoric poured out by the conservative circles when the President made a formal apology. At that time, and even until now, the conservatives’ criticisms of the apology range from the mild – the deaths of civilians during the Jeju Incident were very unfortunate but the apology can mix up the deaths of the civilians with those of the left and thus erode away the identity of the Republic of Korea – to the strong – the Jeju Incident was an attempt to suppress communist riots and President Noh Moo-Hyun, by apologizing on behalf of the state, has revealed himself to be a sympathizer of the South Korean Workers Party.

target was suspected to be communist. This argument was embodied not only in the state but also in the minds of the general public so that they take such deaths for granted” (Yang, Jeong-Sim 2000, 281).

The arguments of Lee and Yang manifest, on one hand, how we presently view human rights, on the other, what dangers such view can bring in the future in regard to historical deaths. They show us that this kind of perspective can lead to a brutal and implicit way of thinking, where indiscriminate violence would be committed, tolerated and win sympathy at any time in the present or in the future, as a result of human rights not being guaranteed to all humans and some not being recognized as members of our society or as citizens purely because of their ideology. All in all, as Agamben argues, political and ideological differences can lead a person to be ‘excluded’ from ‘what is normal’ and the human rights of that person, as a ‘non-human’, to be ‘denied’. Denial of human rights is different from violation. Violation premises that rights are given in the first place but that those rights are damaged or limited by some external force. However, in the case of *Homo Sacer*, who is like bare life without any political or legal rights, a person is completely exposed to violence (Agamben, Giorgio 1998). For a human who does not have any rights, mourning cannot be established in the first place.

We are then faced with the question of how we are to approach human rights, in relation to remembering historical deaths and rendering them politically meaningful. In questioning the idea of selective human rights, Balibar’s concept of “idealistic universality” seems appropriate as a counter-argument. According to Jeong Jeong Hun, idealistic universality refers to “infinite, unconditional and thus absolute dimension” of human rights. “Human rights are unconditional and infinite in the sense they cannot be limited and no exceptions are allowed.” Also, “Human rights are absolute in the sense they are rights that must be realized for all with neither exception nor reservation” (Jeong Jeong Hun 2014, 259-260). Such argument has nothing to do with asking, from a pluralist perspective, for all political positions to be accepted. He is suggesting that we need to accept, as the major principle of human rights, the fact that ‘no-one’ should indiscriminately be exposed to violence and death. Therefore, the impossibility of mourning is the result of the absence of human rights of this universal nature and of the prevalence

of restrictive and abstract concept of human rights.

Therefore, mourning for historical deaths today must go beyond simply humanistically empathizing and feeling sorrow for others' deaths. Although moral and ethical sensitivities are important, mourning for historical deaths must be understood within the context of political praxis of rewriting present day human rights through those who are dead. Only then will we be able to refrain from digging the corpses out of their graves to execute them all over again, and from reversing the achievements of democratization. Furthermore, we will be able to stop such historical tragedies from repeating themselves in the future.

#### **4. Communication and Solidarity between the Living and the Dead**

We have been following the narrative of *Sun-i Samch'on*, interpreting the process of remembering and mourning a death to be one of carrying out our responsibility to rectify what had gone wrong in history. We have also seen that, as long as such wrongfulness continue, we will repeatedly and constantly face and suffer from the trauma left by past tragedies, and that therefore, remaining committed towards that responsibility is the path to possibly healing the trauma. The problem is that not all deaths are allowed to be mourned, and so some historical deaths are denied, despite the achievements of democratization. I have thus argued that only when we contemplate mourning from the perspective of human rights as idealistic universalism, can we become free from future dangers brought by structural violence.

Remembering historical deaths and mourning them based on the concept of universal human rights are nothing other than forming a structure of communication between the dead and the living. The dead asks the living to remember its death so that the same kind of tragic history does not repeat itself while the living accepts that request and vows to put it to practice. The living takes upon itself the burden of the dead's suffering, and like the messiah in pain, answers the call of the dead by fighting back, in the name of human rights, the injustices of violence and massacre.

However, insofar as the dead, far away from the space of existence, appears from the crevasses of the present lived by us today, strictly speaking, the dead is summoned by the living. Isn't that what we witness today?

State violence in today's world is not perpetrated en masse in one particular locality, like the Jeju Incident or the Gwangju People's Uprising, but rather within specific areas of our lives. As in the cases of the Yongsan Tragedy and the Ssangyong Motors Workers Strike, the state responded to demands for housing rights and livelihood rights by sending in security forces, and we eventually had to witness many deaths. What is more serious is that such state violence is perpetrated in tandem with social violence. For example, there are those attempting to revive the Northwest Youth Association, responsible for many deaths during the Jeju Incident, and also those who voluntarily act as proxy for state violence by accusing as 'commies' the people demanding the truth behind the sunk ferry headed for Jeju and related deaths to be revealed.

It is very difficult to explain these phenomena with just one type of logic, but what is certain is that where there is state and social violence, there is no sign of democratic values that had been won through historical deaths. So, tragically, the desperation of the need to listen to the voices of the dead is only getting bigger. Jung Weon-Ok's words, "The dead wander around us as others, as traces of state violence and as ghosts, with memories to hand down to us. If, by forging a relationship with them, we can live more just and less painful lives, then doesn't the imperative to talk to them first and listen to their voices lie with us?" (Jung, Weon-Ok 2014, 229)

Trying to remember historical deaths is not simply about recording them as history. It is an attempt to make the present, in its path towards the future, be based on conditions where one can breathe and live without suffocating, by transforming the past into the present. It is here at juncture that we can find the necessity to provide ourselves with a strategy for social praxis so as to be able to remember historical deaths within the concept of human rights.<sup>5)</sup>

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5) While theoretical research is important in relation to this issue, more ideas need to be generated in educational and cultural fields as well. For example, though not very developed in Korea, a form of 'dark tourism', which is traveling to places where historically tragic or terrifying events took place, can be one example.

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