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Atrocity-Spectacle: Cheju, Cinema, and the Idea of Unrepresentability



Steven Chung

Associate Professor, East Asian Studies Department
Princeton University

The atrocities known variously as the Cheju 4.3 (April 3rd) massacres, uprising and resistance, are marked by the idea and practice of unrepresentability. This paper addresses the problems of historical representation in response to three interrelated developments in Cheju's political scene. The first is the gradual but by no means even shift, since the late 1990s, in the range of knowledge about the 4.3 atrocities and the degree to which it could be spoken and disseminated publicly. The second is the furor surrounding the construction of a massive naval base in Kangjŏng, a small farming and fishing village on the south coast of the island, seen as only the most recent instance of South Korea's enslavement to American political and military interests. The third is the proliferation of artistic practices, in particular film and video work, which bridge the history of 4.3 and the ongoing struggles in Kangjŏng. The paper focalizes these questions and developments into two disparate questions. First, what is the position of filmmaking within both the ideas and practices of 4.3's unrepresentability? And second, what can be the work of filmmaking in efforts to attain not only truth and reconciliation, but also justice and healing, for the 4.3 atrocities?

Steven Chung is associate professor in the East Asian Studies department at Princeton University. He teaches across Korean and East Asian cinemas, critical and film theories, and Korean and diasporic literatures. His first book, *Split Screen Korea: Shin Sang-ok and Postwar Cinema*, was published through University of Minnesota Press in 2014. Chung is currently at work on a project tentatively entitled, *Cold War Optics: Asia*.

3:30-5:00 PM, Thomson Hall 317

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