

UNESCO Woman Diver, Ms. Hee Choon Becomes Human Spirit beyond the Jeju Tragedy : Hee Choon Oh's Testimony at the UNESCO, Peace Island Network in Paris and Paris Arirang

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Professor Kunihiko Yoshida and President Chang Hoon Ko

Abstract

Ms. Hee Choon Oh was a Jeju Haenyeo(woman diver) and one of the few surviving victims of the Jeju 4.3 (1948). As a Haenyeo: Jeju society was very poor at the time during the Japanese colonial period and the division of the two Korea, especially after the Korean War, so she had to work regardless of gender. It was hard to go into the sea, but it was the only thing to support my family. In retrospect, Going out to work in the sea was like a life-threatening adventure every day. While there were many emergency moments, She becomes one with the sea and forgot all the pain.

After having spent a lot of time together with the sea, I had to stop working as a Haenyeo because it was hard to take care of nine children after having heart surgery. I was able to receive Honorary Haenyeo through continuous exchanges and dedication to the society.

As a victim of the Jeju 4.3: I had no choice but to explain it why I had to do work as a Haenyeo and to understand my life. I am a woman who chose the job of Haenyeo, but I have lived through the pain of the dark modern and contemporary history of Korea. The unfair one-year prison life that I wanted to hide even from my children hurt me all my life. Over the past 70 years, sharing pain with the sea, neighbors, and family, serving the region, and hopefully waiting for a better society and justice to come. and finally It was not until 2019, 70 years after 1948, that I was officially acquitted by a Korean court. I regained my honor as a Haenyeo and was able to get rid of my deep sadness.

Key words :

Ms. Hee Choon Oh, an Honorable Jeju Haenyeo(woman diver). a victim of the Jeju 4.3. The unfair one-year prison life. I was officially acquitted by a Korean court.

Introduction

On October 18, 2021, Jihee Kim sent her idea to UNESCO through reviewing of both Chang Hoon Ko and Marie-Claude as below:

“Ms. Oh is good at walking, but she cannot walk for a long time (due to heart surgery), and there may be a UNESCO interpreter. However, since she speaks the Jeju dialect, it should be delivered in the middle [Korean ↔Jeju dialect] to help understand. and she uses a hearing aid, but there is no problem listening.

Ms. Oh was a Jeju Haenyeo(woman diver) and one of the few surviving victims of the Jeju 4.3 (1948).

As a Haenyeo: Jeju society was very poor at the time during the Japanese colonial period and the division of the two Korea, especially after the Korean War, so I had to work regardless of gender. It was hard to go into the sea, but it was the only thing to support my family. In retrospect, Going out to work in the sea was like a life-threatening adventure every day. While there were many emergency moments, I become one with the sea and forgot all the pain.

After having spent a lot of time together with the sea, I had to stop working as a Haenyeo because it was hard to take care of nine children after having heart surgery. I was able to receive Honorary Haenyeo through continuous exchanges and dedication to the society.

As a victim of the Jeju 4.3: I had no choice but to explain it why I had to do work as a Haenyeo and to understand my life. I am a woman who chose the job of Haenyeo, but I have lived through the pain of the dark modern and contemporary history of Korea. The unfair one-year prison life that I wanted to hide even from my children hurt me all my life. Over the past 70 years, sharing pain with the sea, neighbors, and family, serving the region, and hopefully waiting for a better society and justice to come. and finally It was not until 2019, 70 years after 1948, that I was officially acquitted by a Korean court.

I regained my honor as a Haenyeo and was able to get rid of my deep sadness.

In the past, I wouldn't have dreamed of visiting UNESCO. But now I want to do my part for the rest of my life. I would like to say that It is in the process

of overcoming the pain of an individual and the local community caused by 4.3.”(photo 1 & 2 : Hee Choon Oh)¹.



Photo 1 & 2 : Ms. Hee-Choon Oh at the UNESCO by Melvin Marty (November 26,2021)



Photo 3 : Ms. Hee-Choon Oh and Tim Curtis at the UNESCO by Melvin Marty(November 26,2021)

We also ask for Chair of Committee of Foreign Affairs and Unification of Korean National Assembly to request UNESCO to hold the UNESCO Woman Diver, Ms. Hee Choon Oh (91 years old) Testimony at the UNESCO. As the result, it accepts it on October 26, 2018. On October 28, Jeju delegation meet each other to confirm Ms. Oh to go to the France through medical check by her medical doctor. On November 10, 2021 Jeju delegation had a meeting to prepare something needy for a trip to UNESCO in France.

¹) Jihee Kim made a draft about life of Ms. Hee-Choon Oh after some meetings with her and her son, Mr. Sang-don Kim from September to October in 2021.



photo 4 : Korea Jeju Delegation, Jihee Kim, Sang-don Kim, Chang Hoon Ko, Jemin Song and Hee-Choon Oh at Incheon Airport by WAIS



Photo 6 : Ms. Hee-Choon Oh and his eldest son, Mr. Sangdon Kim by Melvin Marty(November 26, 2021).

UNESCO booked a room that will take a maximum of 10 people, including Mr Curtis and staffs. In addition, we would like to see with you whether we could do a separate interview, after our meeting, with Ms Oh as a living heritage bearer. Our communications team will be leading the interview, and if you are in agreement with this proposal, I will put you in direct touch with my colleagues.

Hee Choon Oh's Testimony at the UNESCO 10:00am on 26th of November, it happened interview between Hee Choon Oh and Tim Curtis with translation of Jihee Kim at the UNESCO headquarter. (Photo 1, Photo2, Photo 4, and Photo 5)



Photo 5 : Scene of Mr. Oh's interview with Tim Curtis with translator, Jihee Kim at the UNESCO by Melvin Marty (November 26, 2021).



Photo 7 : Lee, Doyun and Hee Choon Oh at the UNESCO (November 26, 2021)

Tim Curtis : How are you? Honorable Woman Divers, Madame Hee Choon Oh. We are so happy to meet you here.

Hee Choon Oh : I am 91 years old woman diver from Harae-ri, Jeju Island, Republic of Korea. My mother was the best skilled women diver who went to Daema island of Japan for diving. I learned diving skills from her.

Tim Curtis : Why you have chosen woman diver?

Hechoon : I should earn money for house management and raising 9 children because my husband were injured during military service. It was hard but natural to go into the sea, but it was the only thing to support my family.

Tim Curtis: Do you feel dangerous during diving in

the deep sea.

Hee Choon Oh : I feel dangerous every time. In retrospect, Going out to work in the sea was like a life-threatening adventure every day. I am proud that I support them through earning money activities.

Tim Curtis : Woman diver is a job eco-friendly. Why?

Hee Choon Oh : Every women divers have worked their common sea field. They should clean sea field.

Tim Curtis : When you stop diving work?

Hee Choon Oh : It was hard to take care of nine children after having heart surgery.

Tim Curtis : How about your job?

Hee Choon Oh : I was able to receive Honorary Haenyeo through continuous exchanges and dedication to the society.

Tim Curtis : What's your pride?

Hee Choon Oh : I have lived through the pain of the dark modern and contemporary history of Korea. The unfair one-year prison life that I wanted to hide even from my children hurt me all my life. Over the past 70 years, sharing pain with the sea, neighbors, and family, serving the region, and hopefully waiting for a better society and justice to come. and finally It was not until 2019, 70 years after 1948, that I was officially acquitted by a Korean court.

I regained my honor as a Haenyeo and was able to get rid of my deep sadness.

Tim Curtis : What do you feel now about your job?

Hee Choon Oh : I wouldn't have dreamed of visiting UNESCO. But now I want to do my part for the rest of my life. I would like to say that It is in the process of overcoming the pain of an individual and the local community caused by 4.3

Thank you so much



Photo 8 : Asian Delegations, UNESCO Marie Claude and UNESCO Tim Curtis Jemin Song, Jihee Kim, Hee-Choon Oh, Chang Hoon Ko, Kunihiko Yoshida, Sang-don Kim, Yangbo Kim by Melvin Marty (November 26, 2021).



Photo 9 : President, Dr. Chang Hoon Ko and Ms. Hee Choon Oh by Melvin Marty (November 26, 2021).



Photo 10: Youth group with Ms. Hee Choon Oh with Dr. Chang Hoon Ko by Melvin Marty (November 26, 2021).



Photo 11 and 12 : Global Delegation for Woman Diver, Ms. Hee Choon Oh's Testimony at the UNESCO by Melvin Marty (November 26, 2021)



Photo 13: Janna Monges, Ms. Hee-Choon Oh and Jihee Kim interviewing for Paris Arirang by Melvin Marty(November 26, 2021).

2021 Peace Island Network in Paris: Women Diver Testimony, Healing the Persisting Wounds of Historical Injustice and Peace Education

Its rationale says that “ The UNESCO Haenyeos (Jamnyeo or Jamsu)¹, who have harvested shellfish, abalone, and seaweed with their original diving skills offshore, and in the deep sea for over 1700 years, have created and accumulated their achievements and challenges along the way. They were generally disregarded and the Haenyeos worked as alienated groups in small island societies. They have dominated their profession because they are more physically suited for it than men. They can dive as deep as 15 to 20 meters and stay under water for around three minutes without the aid of breathing equipment. Politically, they organized voluntary associations, called Jamsuhoi, that decide local village issues through democratic voting and decision-making. Through their power, they were able to maintain a four-month long uprising (January–April 1932) against Japanese Imperialism’s illegal management of marine products of their sea villages. Economically, they were able to support their households and educate their family members through income gained by selling products to markets. It was evaluated that they greatly contributed to improving the prosperity of villages and the island economy as a whole. Since 1895, the Haenyeos regularly went abroad seasonally, to earn money at sea in such regions as China, Japan and the Korean peninsula. Their migration and settlements, especially on the Korean peninsula and Japan, are

highly accepted for their special skills, and the higher economic value of the products they catch in those areas.

Culturally they created and developed their folklore, traditional rituals, and festivals that commemorate their hard work and wandering, Gypsy-like life in the deep sea; a little different from the mode of Korean p’ansori music. The Haenyeos also have a gender component that contributed to developing the potentials of Jeju Island family value system as an integrated family model upon the combination of big and nexus family systems in their home. Through these discussions, this paper argues the Jeju Haenyeos serve as an example of equitable gender roles in small island societies, different from or beyond the scope of traditional Korean Confucian stereotypes.²

On November 26, 2021, we share Ms Hee-Chun (91 years old), a Jeju woman diver and Jeju 43 survivor of South Korea for her making an interview at the UNESCO. She represents as a victim and survivor of the massacre which involved several countries as well as a witness of the historical heritage. Ms. Oh knows as honorable Jeju woman diver was recognized by UNESCO in 2016, and that Jeju Government tries to register Jeju 4.3 Victim Family List to UNESCO as one of MoW List in 2023, so, she wants to represent all of wishes of Jeju 4.3 victim family and survivors as honorable Jeju woman diver if she can do it. Of course, she hopes her testimony will contribute to not only social healing wounds of historical injustice but also registration issue of Jeju 4.3 Victim Records or List as one of MoW in the nearer future.

It was wonderful that Marie-Claude made for the online conference as part of Peace Talks series in Paris, on June 10, 2021 and as a follow up to the 2021 World Peace Island Forum: 6+1 Culture Forum in Jeju. A blending conference on Education, Peace, Sustainable Development and process of designation of Jeju 4.3 Victim Records as UNESCO World Program of Memory MoW. This is constructed from her perspective as Doctor in anglophone studies and gender and development studies, main IFBPW representative to UNESCO, member of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the CCNGO-

2) Chang Hoon Ko. 2007. “A New Look at Korean Gender Roles: Jeju(Cheju) Women as a World Cultural Heritage,” (Asian Women Vol.23 No. 1.

Education2030 coordination group, UNESCO key mechanism for reflection, dialogue and partnerships for the implementation of SDG4. We keep in mind of repeating words by Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, in 2015 that “Education has the power like none else to nurture empowered, reflective, engaged and skilled citizens who can chart the way towards a safer, greener and fairer planet for all.”³



Photo 14 : Marie-Claude and Ms. Hee Choon Oh by Melvin Marty (November 26, 2021).

Douglas Yates emphasizes that this conceptualization of peace and conflict allows us to imagine different kinds of work, different kinds of peace(positive), and different kinds of conflict resolution (reconciliation). In order to change violence into peace one needs to act on behavior, and that is done through “peacekeeping” (for example, UN peace operations enforcing a ceasefire agreement between two belligerent parties). In order to change thinking of dispute in terms of violence one needs to act on attitudes, and this done through “peacemaking” (for example, finding a political settlement between the belligerent parties, one that both kinds can agree upon). In order to change the structural context of conflict, one needs to do “peacebuilding” (for example, implementing policies for poverty alleviation, or providing justice to victims of the conflict) This conceptualization of peace and conflict allows us to imagine different kinds of work,

3) MC Machon-Honoré . 2021. “Education, Peace, Sustainable Development and Process of Designation of Jeju 4.3 Victim Records as UNESCO World Program of Memory,” WEIS 11-3 (September 30, 2021).

different kinds of peace (positive), and different kinds of conflict resolution (reconciliation). In order to change violence into peace one needs to act on behavior, and that is done through “peacekeeping” (for example, UN peace operations enforcing a ceasefire agreement between two belligerent parties). In order to change thinking of dispute in terms of violence one needs to act on attitudes, and this done through “peacemaking” (for example, finding a political settlement between the belligerent parties, one that both kinds can agree upon). In order to change the structural context of conflict, one needs to do “peacebuilding” (for example, implementing policies for poverty alleviation, or providing justice to victims of the conflict). That’s rationale why we are together to organize 6+1 Culture Forum in Paris in November 2021⁴.



photo 15 : Peace Island Network Zoom Conference in American Graduate School in Paris by Melvin Marty (November 29, 2021).



Photo 16 : Douglas Yates at the Peace Island Network Zoom Conference in American Graduate School in Paris by Melvin Mary (November 29, 2021).

4) Douglas A. Yates. 2017. “Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding on Jeju Island,” WEIS 7-3 (September 30, 2017).



Photo 17 : Peace Island Network Zoom Conference
Participants in American Graduate School in Paris
(November 29, 2021)

We watch 7 minutes video titled as “Jeju Arirang : Islanders Heal the Persistent Wounds of Historic Injustice by Wonseop Koh and Sejun Im. Mr. Jemin Song introduced its contents briefly before screening:

“The main point is why and how to make a documentary film, “ Jeju Arirang: Islanders Heal the Persisting Wounds of Historic Injustice.” As the Jeju 4.3 Tragedy happened under American Military Rule on April Third of 1948, students want to show how Jeju islanders heal the persisting wounds at their village. Firstly we invite UNESCO woman diver, Ms. Hee Choon Oh into the video. Her life witnesses her life enduring an illegal trial and prison days under martial law under the American Rule. Secondly we also get testimony from Mr. Seungmun Song about facts about the Ori Village Fire Incident on May 1, 1948, which was clearly manipulated by a hard liner group of U.S. Military. Thirdly we learn why the U.S. government says something truthful about the role of the U.S about the Orari Incident in 1948.”

Marie-Claude evaluates the November 26, 2021 event as a whole:

“ I hope Ms Oh has been able to rest after such a moving and eventful day as well as Kenny who arrived the very same day from Japan. I am happy

and grateful that the process went very smoothly and all stakeholders looked contented and contributed to the success of this historic day for the JEJU Haenyeo Community and WAIS. I was also pleased also to meet the whole delegation as well as Mr Yang Bo Kim, whom I am including in the loop.

Special thanks again to Honorable Ms Oh who was really impressive and so tuned to UNESCO’s environment and to all of you who contributed to the warm and friendly atmosphere of the meeting.

Thank you also for the gifts and this very rewarding day which makes my commitment to UNESCO and BPW as well as my advocacy for the role of women for sustainable development and peace meaningful and alive.

Congratulations to the Young team including Jihee, Janna and Melvin for their professional facilitation and effective work ! “

“ I wanted to sincerely thank you again as well as Ms Doyun Lee, Ms Félicie Kertudo and your team for taking some of your valuable time to meet and interview Ms Hee-Chun Oh from the Haenyeo community and permit the delegation from WAIS to accompany her.

We all appreciated the moving and historical visit of the Honorable Ms Oh to UNESCO Headquarters for the first time in her life time as a role model of resilience from the Jeju Haenyeo Women Divers whose tradition was inscribed on the list of the intangible cultural heritage in 2016.

Her testimony is quite significant of the role of women in the history, economy and ecology of the island and the intergenerational dialogue, underlining the importance of transmitting the Haenyeo Women Divers’ knowledge and heritage to the younger generation, in line with UNESCO’s priorities.

We are grateful for this unique opportunity which bears evidence more than ever to the *raison d’être* of UNESCO, its priorities and its long standing ‘Soft Power’ amid multiple ongoing challenges.” (December 1, 2021 : email from Marie-Claude to Tim Curtis).

Professor Kenny(Kunihiko Yoshida) mentions that “ Thank you very much for your kindness and efforts to

make this memorable event come true, Hoon(Prof. Ko), Marie-Claude. With regard to UNESCO, Ms. Oh is really a bridgemaker in many ways to tell us a lot of cultural and social issues, while we are facing a deadlock in negotiating with American politicians regarding reparations and reconciliation. I'm very much moved by Ms. Oh's moderate way of making testimonies despite her lots of predicaments. I hope UNESCO will break the ice and change the situation after several decades in the past.

Due to the delay in arriving at CDG Paris Airport yesterday morning, I arrived at the UNESCO Headquarter blg. a quarter to 10am. I almost missed our important meeting with Mr. Tim Curtis without your help, Doyun and Felicie! Thanks for everything!"



photo 18 : Peace Island Network Zoom Conference in American Graduate School in Paris by Mevin Marty (November 29, 2021).

Kim Ho-rim(Professor of Korea University), director of the World Association for Island Studies adds his comments:

Honorable Madam Oh Hee-chun's UNESCO testimony ended successfully. Excitement and joy come together.

As it was a difficult event in the midst of the corona pandemic, Professor Ko Chang-hoon and I came up with various ideas to prepare the event, communicated, and contacted the Korean National Assembly. It was a pity that I could not go to the Paris site for personal reasons, but I was proud to hear about every situation of the event, even in Korea.

I think Madam Oh Hee-chun's UNESCO testimony gives us four implications.

1. The lives of islanders who can become political scapegoats.
2. The life of an island woman who can become an economic victim
3. A life that can become a social scapegoat due to occupational stratification.
4. Changes in perception of technology: Technologies undervalued in the past can change over time into respected technologies.

I think the testimony of Madam Oh Hee-chun (a woman, an elderly, the oldest sea hunting profession, and a human rights victim) is a self-portrait of our past and present.

I would like to express my gratitude to President Marie-Claude Machon-Honoré, President Ko Chang-hoon et al., for helping the testimony was held : 1) with face-to-face event to be kept historically, 2) at UNESCO which represents global fairness and reliability, 3) in Paris, a symbol of Tolerance."

American journalist, Donald Kirk says that " Certainly expanding Cultural Heritage in Jeju is needed. I was just there. Planes filled from Seoul with people looking for relaxation in the midst of pandemic, no sign of awareness of events of more than 70 years ago. You mention the need to "continue negotiations with the I.U.S.," but what negotiations? I was not aware of any negotiations. Who's negotiating with whom?

As a team composed with Jihee Km, Melvin Marty, Jemin Song, and Janna Monges, they screened a documentary titled as " Jeju Arirang" to the audience. They were missioned by Dr. Chang Hoon Ko to realize the documentary entitled << Paris Arirang: UNESCO Woman Diver, Ms. Hee Choon Becomes Human Spirit beyond the Jeju Tragedy. On behalf of them, Janna wrote about it (Email to Jihee Kim : December 27, 2021):

"Culture has an incredible impact as it serves a greater role than it might at first appear, from educating to putting a new light of truth on some parts of history. The research for truth was one of the leading points we had when we realized the documentary. As UNESCO uses culture to promote and build peace all around the world, the opportunity we were given to realize this documentary with them

helped us greatly in showing Ms. Hee Chun Oh's story. We tried to show and embrace several aspects of her life and who she is, not only as a Jeju haenyeo, a cultural bearer, but also as a survivor of a tragedy that took place in South Korea. Not only did we work together very well, but seeing Ms Oh gave us great hope for the hardships our generation may face, whether it be cultural, environmental, or the fight for the emergence of the truth. Ms Oh Hee Chun's story presents many aspects of humanity, from culture to environmental conservation and she sets an example of hope and possibilities. We were honored to be given this opportunity and work with her, and look forward for what may emerge from this documentary."



photo19 : Peace Island Network reception
(November 29, 2021) by WAIS



Photo20 : Peace Island Network reception
(November 29, 2021) by WAIS



Photo21 : Ms. Hee Choon Oh, Mr. Kim Sang Don
and translator Kim Ji-Hee

Conclusion

Paris Arirang: UNESCO Woman Diver, Ms. Hee Choon Becomes Human Spirit beyond the Jeju Tragedy.

Douglas Yates says that "I was so glad that all of the events which you had planned came to fruition. You have really succeeded in moving things forward with UNESCO, as well as documenting the testimony of a victim of the Jeju 4.3 incident for the World Register. The next step will be to settle on our "messaging" of the portfolio. Marie-Claude Manchon Honoré has made several pertinent remarks, and Donald Kirk has as well. We can try to incorporate their suggestions into the final project. I hope you were able to appreciate that Janna Monge is really committed to Jeju, and will certainly make a good documentary out of the interview. It is so good to have a new, younger generation getting involved, especially French youth, to carry the torch forward... In short, everything to go well for the Jeju conference. I believe it was a success." In the end, professor Ko, Chang Hoon concluded that Korean and French students are creating "Paris Arirang: UNESCO Woman Diver, Ms. Hee Choon Becomes Human Spirit beyond the Jeju Tragedy," from November 24 to 30, 2021 in Paris, France collaboratively under the pandemic. It seems to us just to become a small miracle to our youth generation.



photo 22 : Lunch at the UNESCO (November 26, 2021) by Mevin Marty.

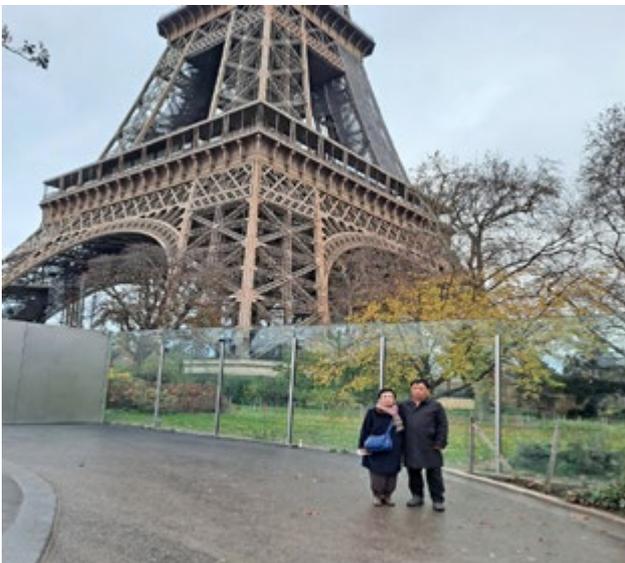


Photo 23 : Jeju 4.3 Survivor Ms. Hee Choon Oh and his son Mr. Sangdon Kim at the front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris Kim, who are longing for Jeju 4.3 Victim Records for UNESCO Word Memory of Program in a nearer future (November 28, 2021) by Chang Hoon Ko

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