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## **THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF KOREA AND KOREANS' TRADITIONAL VIEW OF NATURE**

Корея уни кўшни мамлакатлардан ажратиб турадиган ноёб табиий мухитига эга. Атроф-мухитнинг ўзига хослиги табиатга фақат корейсларнинг ўзига хос муносабатини шакллантирди. Корейслар Ер, Осмон худоларига, Денгиз аждаҳоларига ишонч билдирганлар. Улар инсоннинг Осмондан нузул қилганлигига ишонганлар. Корейсларнинг дунёни идрок этишларига табиатга хурмат билан муносабатда бўлиши ҳам ўз таъсирини ўтказган.

Корея имеет уникальную окружающую среду, которая отличается от соседних стран. Особенности окружающей среды сформировали характерное только для корейцев отношение к природе. Корейцы верили в Богов Земли, Небес и Морских драконов. Они верили, что человек пришел с Небес. Корейцам присуще уважительное отношение к природе, обуславливающее особенности восприятия.

Korea has unique natural environment which is different from neighboring countries. Different natural environment has formed different view of nature. Koreans developed beliefs in gods of earth, heaven and dragon kings in water. They thought that human came from the heaven. While Koreans respected nature, they thought it friendly.

**Калит сўзлар:** табиий мухит, табиатни идрок этиш, корейсларнинг табиатни идрок этишлари, афсона, шаманизм, дунёқараш.

**Ключевые слова:** природная среда, видение природы, видение природы корейцами, миф, шаманизм, мировоззрение.

**Key words:** natural environment, view of nature, Koreans' view of nature, myth, Shamanism, world view.

View of nature is influenced by the natural environment, culture and religion. Exchanging with China for a long time, Korea was affected by Confucianism and Buddhism. Since modern times they accepted Western civilization and life style, their mindset about nature has been changed. Difference of culture and nature formed Koreans' unique view of nature with common features in neighboring countries. Korea is surrounded on three sides by the sea. It was an agricultural land and the influence of the sea

could not be ignored. Though it is an agricultural country, most of it is mountainous region. Diverse and complex natural environment gave tasks to consider the various aspects of nature.

### **1. Natural Features of Korea**

Natural environment affects not only daily life but also formation of the view of nature or the art. For an example, natural environment made Japanese be interested in such as unusually small things as bonsai or garden shrinking the nature. Japanese usually live surrounded by deep forests and that gives people a feeling of living in nature such as flower beds in boxes(藤島弘純, 2003). According to Fujishima, Japanese developed short literature. It was caused by the four distinct seasons.

In comparison with Europe, the natural environment of Korea is active(이규태, 2007). European natural environment is less changeable and docile. It moves constantly and regularly. If one understands the law of movement and change, it is possible to dominant nature, they think. However, nature in Korea is exceedingly changeable with brutal cold and severe humid hot, torrential rain and drought, flood and landslide, typhoon and so on. It is changed every moment and microorganisms are also very active. Things are changed frequently. Therefore, it was difficult to develop rationalism in Korea. Many factors in the nature causing the change turned out many gods. That means that natural environment is the background of religion, philosophy and science.

Koreans made effort to relate Korean mindset to natural environment before. To overcome the intrusion of foreign powers, they reflected themselves and tried self-analysis and tried effort to get self-esteem. Complicated mountain and rivers made Koreans have the perspective of organisms that individuals and groups help each other, and on the other hand, due to the mild natural environment, Koreans had generous personality(안자산, 1922).

### **2. Earth**

Characteristics of view of nature during hunting period can be described as primitive and incantatory view that spirits inhabit mountains, rivers, rocks and trees, the sun and the moon which are unusual(申斐義幸, 2004). Gradually trying to understand the nature, they began to conform to nature from understanding the earth at first. Since two-thirds of the country is mountainous region in Korea, Koreans' belief related to the earth was faith in mountain gods and mountain worship. The birth myths of all countries emerged from Korea start from the principle that the son of heavenly god descended upon mountains and forests (김기덕, 2005).

For examples, Hwanung came down Mt. Taebaek and established city of god, and mother of Jumong who was the founder of Goguryo met king of Buyeo at southern Mt.

Taeback. Bak Hyeokgeose was found at Mt. Namsan in Silla. King Suro in Kaya was born from the egg which came down Kuji peak. Wang Keon, the founder of Koryo was a human himself, but his ancestors had lived at Mt. Baekdu and Mt. Chiri.

Mountain god faith has its roots in spirit worship that nestles in every natural object(김옥동, 2000). Divine existence such as mountain god or tiger set mystical process. That means mountain were not inanimate matter but had personality that made angry or praise to person. Mountain is never easy to deal. Human is a very small existence in the mountain. Mountain was a dangerous place to a person who was not modest in his behavior. Faith in the earth appears various features such as earth god, tutelary spirit of house, as well as mountain god and faith in mountain. It contacts with life in the concrete. The faith in mother goddess and god of earth was universal and deep-rooted faith. All the villages in Korea were surrounded by mountains and had a mountain to serve. The earth was a living creature and mother of everything. Koreans were respectful to heaven because they lived an agricultural society. However, the earth was the most important to agricultural people and it was natural that they served all existences related with earth. Investigation result about names of gods in folk beliefs shows that nature gods appeared most often and then order of earth, water, mountain and heaven(김태곤, 1991). Mountain related proverbial saying had the highest proportion among the nature-related proverbs(김동규, 1997).

The importance of land is shown in comparison with Japan. According to Japanese myth, there was sea when heaven was opened, and then Creator made the land over the sea. Japanese separated the world into three parts, on the other hand, Koreans divided it 2 parts and emphasized the earth(노성환, 2010)

The earth in the west seems to indicate a negative meaning in contrast with heaven. In Greek mythology, the earth was a place where the god Hades ruled, Christianity introduced the idea that sinners go to hell under the earth. For Koreans, the earth is the place where life is born and occupies an equal position with the heaven. The earth is the object of worship and is the existence like a mother.

### **3. Water**

Water was absolutely necessary to agricultural people. The fields were spread around the rivers and streams. Many rivers were flowing in land of Korea and the land was surrounded by the sea on three sides. Therefore, Koreans had belief of dragon(김기덕, 2005). Dragon in the west deals with fire, but dragons in Korea manages water. Dragon kings live in the east, south and west sea. Imugi living in the river becomes dragon later. Dragons control cloud and make rain. They also protect wells. The following is an oral statement of a shaman:

*Dragon king of the east sea, dragon king of the west sea, dragon king of south sea, dragon king of north sea,  
Dragon kings of four seas,  
Have enough sacrifices  
And make the water taste good (손진태, 2012).*

Farming and fishing are greatly influenced by weather. Sam seonghyel myth in Jeju Island tells of the importance of the sea. It is said that 3 families came from 3 holes which were connected to the sea. Everything had come from the sea and many things were achieved through the sea(손종흠, 2004).

Water was absolutely necessary for the agricultural society, but it is rather a fearful existence than kind for Koreans. The sea and the rivers in Korea are difficult to predict. Rivers caused great damage with their too much or too little amount of flowing water, and the sea was the place where fishermen risked their lives because of ever-changing weather. They thought there lived a greater existence than human such as a dragon or dragon king in the sea. They tried to calm down the sea with sacrifice. Comparing to China, it is different that they spent a lot of effort to govern water. They tried to adjust the water acts with the power of men.

#### **4. Heaven**

The heaven was an important objective of faith for Koreans believe that all creations were born by the harmony in heaven and earth. Understanding of the land developed understanding of the heaven, and understanding about heaven brought faith of the heavenly gods(김기덕, 2005). In Tangun myth Hwanin was a being who ruled the heaven, his son Hwanung came down to earth with Pung, Usa, Unsa who were very important for farming. They controlled the weather. Traditionally, movement of meteorological phenomena and the celestial body had a very important role in politics and became an opportunity for the development of astronomical observations. Astronomical observation was inevitable in agricultural society and necessary for enactment of calendar. In the west, astronomy was developed by experts from the philosophical point of view, rather than real life(이용범, 1993).

They thought that meteors were signs heralding the death of an important person. A big star was fallen before Admiral Yi's last battle in Choseon dynasty. On the contrary, before Admiral Kang Gancheon was born in Koryo period, a big meteor appeared(박성래, 2005). Koreans had the idea that all the people had their own stars, and heaven is deeply involved in the birth and death of life.

Meteor was used to predict not only birth and death of persons but also farming and forecast. If a meteor fell from east to west, it would rain next day. If a meteor fell down to

the sea, they would not fish next day. Meteor falling to land predicted bad harvest.

The heaven was also the home of humans. According to the birth myths of nation, the founders of dynasty were born by marriage of heavenly god and goddess of the earth. The father of Tangun was a son of heavenly god and mother was a bear from the earth. Parents of Jumong were son of the god of heaven and daughter of god of water. A shaman sang that human came from the heaven:

*Once upon a time, Maitreya held a golden tray in one hand, a silver tray in other hand, and prayed to the heaven. The worms fell from the heaven: 5 on golden tray and 5 on silver tray. They grew up and golden bugs turned to men, silver bugs turned to women(손진태, 2012).*

The heaven gave birth to and brought up human, and was not only the objective of respect but also the best religious ideal.

## 5. Conclusion

Koreans have attitude of a sacred nature. They have lived in ever-changing atmospheric phenomena and affected by influence of mountain, sea and river. However, comparing to neighboring countries such as China and Japan, the nature of Korea can be relatively mild despite its diversity and variation. Natural environment in China has vast and more diverse natural environment. Yellow River and Yangtze River, center of culture and life for a long time, are much longer and wider than rivers in Korea. Therefore, it has caused large-scale natural disasters. Chinese treats nature as a practical objective. Issues in controlling rivers related to political power, and they tried effort to regulate them with constructing canals and embankments for a long time. Japan is an island country belonged to the Pacific Rim and heavily influenced by the sea. There exist earthquake, volcano and pass Typhoons frequently. Japan also has steep mountainous terrain and often higher than Korea. Nature is mysterious and fearful for Japanese. Due to high humidity and precipitation, forests are full of moss and gives a dark impression. The nature in Japan is so deep that it is difficult to understand and to commune.

Though the nature was sacred existence as the origin of life, it was neither fearful nor dark away from human in Korea. Nature was not only the foundation of life but also a place where sustained living. It existed near from people, was familiar and became a space playing in it comparing to China or Japan.

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