

Korean myths and legends related with the name of the *East Sea*

LEE Young Choon*

The place names including sea names have been named naturally through the long history with the people, not invented artificially and instantly by a government or an individual for the political purpose. We call this true name an endonym which we should respect as a fact.

Though the *East Sea*(Donghae, 東海) was originally named for the location which is at the east of Korean peninsula, it has been a proper noun for two thousand years. It has been used by Koreans as an endonym for thousands of year. So the name *East Sea* has been very natural and familiar to Korean people through the long history.

The *East Sea* has produced a great numbers of myths and legends, some of which were transformed to lovely poems and literary works afterward. The myths has been reflected mainly in Korean folk customs and traditional cultures, which became the spirits of Korean people.

It's very important for us to realize the meaning of the myths and legends which endowed *East Sea* the sacredness. Now *East Sea* is no more a name of a sea, but a great part of Korean spirits.

There are many myths, legends, fables and other stories related with the *East Sea* in the two famous history books, History of Three Kingdoms(三國史記) and the Omitted Stories of Three Kingdoms(三國遺事). In this paper, 6 stories were selected to examine. They are ① King Munmu of Shilla became a mighty dragon after his death ② King Muyeol and A Rabbit Escaped from the Dragon King ③ The story of Cheoyong(處容), the Son of the *East Sea* Dragon ④ King Talhae(脫解) came from the *East Sea* ⑤ A Shilla Couple crossed the *East Sea* to be the Japanese king and queen. ⑥ The *East Sea* Guanin(觀音, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara).

As the myths and legends were focused on the *East Sea* gods or the dragon kings of the *East Sea*, the sacrifices rituals paid to them were also examined in this paper. The sacrifices rituals were conducted as a national level or a community level. The national level sacrifices to the East Sea were paid annually and rather formally in Confucian rituals. But the community level sacrifices have been paid usually in shaman rituals named Byealsingud(別神굿) and handed down today to be continued as a festival in many villages at the *East Sea* coast.

The *East Sea* has been naturally named through the myths, legends, fables, sacrifices, rituals, poems, novels and essays for a long time by the Korean people. The name cannot be replaced by the one which invented artificially and instantly by a government for the political purpose.

I would like to share the beautiful Korean myths, legends, poems and essays related with the *East Sea* with all of you. Though I believe each of you have your own ideas on the *East Sea*, I sincerely would like to ask you to consider it again carefully. Then we will be very much satisfied with our accomplishment in this meeting.

* Senior Research Fellow, National Institute of Korean History, Korea

1. Introduction

The place names including sea names have been named naturally through the long history with the people, not invented artificially and instantly by a government or an individual for the political purpose. We call this true name an endonym which we should respect as a fact.

Though the *East Sea*(Donghae, 東海) was originally named for the location which is at the east of Korean peninsula, it has been a proper noun for two thousand years. It has been used by Koreans as an endonym for thousands of year. So the name *East Sea* has been very natural and familiar to Korean people through the long history.

The *East Sea* has produced a great numbers of myths and legends, some of which were transformed to lovely poems and literary works late days. The myths has been reflected mainly in Korean folk customs and traditional cultures, which became the spirits of Korean people.

It's very important for us to realize the meaning of the myths and legends which endowed *East Sea* the sacredness. Now *East Sea* is no more a name of a sea, but a great part of Korean spirits.

We can see how long and how significant the name has been by examining the Korean old myths written in the history books and literary works. It would be very essential work for us to find out the name's character of *East Sea* as an endonym by the Korean myths and legends, which will be a little aid to reach the general consensus for the global naming of the sea.

It is well described in Professor Sang Tae LEE(李相泰)'s earlier research that the name *East Sea* has been continuously used by Korean people for 2000 years since the era of the Three Kingdoms. He showed us the foundations: many records of the naming *East Sea* from the year 59 BC which were described in the official history, the History of Three Kingdoms(三國史記), and the sacrificial rites for the Gods of the *East Sea* continued for more than 1400 years and the short remarks on the name in the literary works.¹⁾ In the thesis he issued for the first time the sacredness of *East Sea* which consisted in the mind of Korean people. Professor Lee also examined the old maps published in Korea, China, Japan and in western countries, to declare the name *East Sea* has been used for a long time both in Korean maps and world atlases. And he showed

1) 李相泰, <歷史 文獻上的 東海 表記에 대하여>(『史學研究』 50, 韓國史學會, 1995) -----, <조선시대의 東海 認識에 관한 연구>(『歷史와 實學』 32, 歷史實學會, 2007)

how illegally the name was stolen in the period of Japanese imperial aggression.²⁾ His pioneering studies were supported by the other scholars' following researches.³⁾

We discussed on this subject in Vancouver Conference 2011, in which I emphasized the significance of *East Sea* in Korean's lives through the ages.⁴⁾ What I raised in my paper was the evidences of the name *East Sea* used in the history, the sacrificial alters and shrines for the *East Sea* god, the inscriptions of the *East Sea* on coins in Goryo dynasty, the discourses of the theories of no tides in the *East Sea* in Choseon dynasty. Standing on these preceding studies, we need to advance our works to expand our comprehension of the *East Sea* itself and to get the meanings of it which lie dormant in the mind of Koreans.

There are many myths, legends, fables and other stories related with the *East Sea* in the two famous history books, History of Three Kingdoms(三國史記) and the Omitted Stories of Three Kingdoms(三國遺事). In this paper, 6 stories were selected to examine. They are ① King Munmu of Shilla became a mighty dragon after his death ② King Muyeol and A Rabbit Escaped from the Dragon King ③ The story of Cheoyong(處容), the Son of the *East Sea* Dragon ④ King Talhae(脫解) came from the *East Sea* ⑤ A Shilla Couple crossed the East Sea to be the Japanese king and queen. ⑥ The *East Sea* Guanin(觀音, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara).

As the myths and legends were focused on the *East Sea* gods or the dragon kings of the *East Sea*, the sacrifices rituals paid to them were also examined in this paper. The sacrifices rituals were conducted as a national level or a community level. The national level sacrifices to the *East Sea* were paid annually and rather formally in Confucian rituals. But the community level sacrifices have been paid usually in shaman rituals named Byealsingud(別神굿) and handed down today to be continued as a festival in many villages at the *East Sea* coast.

2. Myths and Legends related with the *East Sea*

Most of the Korean old myths and legends were recorded in the book named The

2) 이상태, <서양 고지도에 나타난 東海 표기에 관한 연구>(『문화역사지리』 22, 韓國文化歷史地理學會, 2004)

3) 양보경, <朝鮮時代 古地圖에 표현된 東海 地名>(『문화역사지리』 22, 韓國文化歷史地理學會 2004) 李迎春, <역사를 통해 본 한국인들 생활 속의 東海>(『歷史와 實學』 45, 歷史實學會, 2011.8.)

4) LEE Young Choon, "Korean lives with *East Sea* through the ages"(R sum : *The 17th International Seminar on Sea Names*)(The Society for East Sea, Vancouver, BC Canada, August, 2011

Omitted Stories of Three Kingdoms(三國遺事), which was written in 5 volumes by a high Buddhist priest Ilyeon(一然) in the year 1281 in Goryeo dynasty. The book contained the history of three kingdoms from the 1st century BC to the 10th century, but lots of the contents are myths and legends which were omitted in the official history, History of Three Kingdoms(三國史記), compiled in the 12th Century, which contained lots of historical facts and a few myth only. The former might be called as the bible of Korean myths and legends, all the stories of which were written with myths and legends, myths of the dynasty founders, kings and queens, generals, monks and the gods of the mountains, seas and others. Some other Korean classics also tell us various myths and legends on the *East Sea*.

Reading the books, we would find there were many many gods and spirits in the ancient times in Korea as in western countries. There were gods of heaven, earth, mountains, seas, rivers, winds, clouds, thunders, agriculture and the spirits of ancestors, victims, animals, trees and all kinds of natural beings. Koreans had various sacrificial rituals to worship the gods, some of them were done by governments, others done by communities and individuals.

In the governmental sacrifices the wood tablets on which the god's names were written have been used as in Confucian rituals. In the sacrifices done by communities and individuals, usually the gods' images on pictures or sculptures have been used for worship. The images of gods and spirits which are seen in the old pictures are revealed as divine old men, Taoist fairies, tigers, dragons and sometimes Buddha and Guanin(Avalokitesvara). Usually the gods of mountains are revealed as tigers, those of seas are revealed as dragons. In China the god of west world has been imaged as a white tiger, while the god of east world has been imaged as a blue dragon, which must have influenced much to Korea. So the image of the *East Sea* god also has been revealed as a dragon, usually were called mighty dragon or dragon king.

Though a dragon is a mighty being who can fly to heaven, call out winds and rains, punish a bad one with thunder or help a good one with blessings, it has been considered to be an animal at most. So we might think a dragon is an ideal animal which has been figured in people's mind through the ages. Korean people used to imagine that dragons lived in the deep sea like the *East Sea*, sometimes they stayed in the pond or well of a temple to hear the instruction of Buddha from the monks.

Traditionally the god of a sea has been described as a dragon king in Korea. The story of the dragon king in the *East Sea* has been most popular and significant in the

Korean's mind. The dragon king was imagined as a mighty god who can make great storms and rains to destroy the villages and rough waves to sink ships in the sea. We might think he is as mighty as Poseidon in the Greek myth, but he also has a little weakness.

Generally speaking, the dragons have the figure of an animal which have the body of a snake, the head of a camel, the horns of a deer, the eyes of a rabbit, the nose of a pig, the ears of a cow, the claws of a hawk and scales of a carp. Though they have no wings, they can fly off very well in the sky. The dragons are considered to change their figures into a human or a god when they would like to. They marry each other but sometimes male dragons kidnap human girls to marry. They would have conversations with human, love human girls, beget children, get ill, be wounded and caught by human like Buddhist monks.

1) King Munmu of Shilla became a mighty dragon after his death.

In the Omitted Stories of Three Kingdoms(三國遺事) many mythic stories of dragons and dragon kings were recorded. As Shilla in the era of three kingdoms was located at the *East Sea* and the capital Gyeongju was very near to the sea, most of the myths and legends of dragon kings were wrote in the history of Shilla, not much in the history of Goguryeo and Baekje. Of the stories, most interest and significant one is the description of the great king Munmu's death, who became a mighty dragon to guard his country afterwards.

King Munmu(文武王) who united the three kingdoms in 676 AD died in 681. Before his death he left a will to have a Buddhist funeral by cremating his body and to bury the remains in a rock in the *East Sea*. He pledged he would be a mighty dragon of the *East Sea* to guard his country and stamp out the vexing Japanese pirates in the sea. His will was considered to be made because he had suffered much from the harassment of Japanese pirates during his reign. A high monk was worrying and advised the king not to do so because the dragon is just an animal. The king said "I was blessed with being a king for a long time. It's OK for me to be an animal after my death as long as I can guard my country and my people."⁵⁾

His will was carried out. His body was cremated and the ashes were buried in a big

5) 『三國遺事』卷2, 紀異第二, 文武王法敏

rock in the *East Sea*, which has been called Daewang-am(大王岩), the rock of the great king, or the Tomb in the sea. The rock is located near the seashore of Gyeongju city, which was called the “entrance of the *East Sea*”. So the people believed that he was transformed to a mighty dragon in the *East Sea*. His son King Shinmun(神文王) built a memorial temple Gameun-sa(感恩寺) for him near the Tomb in the Sea in 682 AD. Next year King Shinmun visit the temple to celebrate the completion and worship his father. After the functions, he saw a small bamboo island was floating to come near to the seashore beside the Tomb. Suddenly from the island came a dragon messenger who was sent by his father, the mighty dragon, and conveyed the best regards and the presents to the king. The presents were a suit of armour which was made of dragon's scales and a bamboo flute which could cease all the troubles of national defence and the natural disasters when it was played. The king accepted them to keep in the royal depository as a national treasure. Whenever they played the bamboo flute which was called “the flute of ceasing surge”, the enemies were destroyed, the storms were ceased and the surges got calm. For the sake of the treasure Shilla could attain the longevity of pesce.⁶⁾

Nowadays we can see and visit the rock tomb in “the sea and the remains of the temple Gameun-sa(感恩寺)” at the seashore named “the entrance of the *East Sea*”. The tomb was examined scientifically but not excavated in 1960s, which told us it had been constructed artificially to be a tomb of a king. The remains of the temple was excavated by the archaeologists in 1960s, in which many astonishing things were revealed. They are the treasures and the bones of Buddha in the two pagodas, many foundation stones, and a large but low basement which was connected to a small stream to go through the sea. Most significant was the unique basement which had never seen on earlier occasion in Korean Buddhist temple. The historians presume the basement was constructed for the rest of the mighty dragon King Munmu who sometimes visit the temple to hear the Buddha's instructions.

Korean myths always have the historical backgrounds. In this myth we would know Shilla was suffered much from the Japanese pirates though the three kingdoms were unified by Shilla. The “entrance of the *East Sea*” where the king's tomb and his memorial temple were built was the key point for Shilla to depend their country from the Japanese enemies. On the mountain near the tomb, there are also the most famous Buddhist temple Bulguk-sa(佛國寺) and Seokgul-am(石窟庵), which was built in 8th

6) 『三國遺事』卷2, 紀異第二, 萬波息笛

century to wish the peace and welfare of the country. We would know how important the place was to the people of Shilla.

2) King Muyeol and a rabbit escaped from the Dragon King

A story which is a mixture of history and fable was recorded in the History of Three Kingdoms(三國史記). When King Muyeol, the father of King Munmu, was a prince named Kim Chunchu(金春秋), he was sent to the neighbour country Goguryeo as an envoy to make a negotiation of alliance in the year 642. But he was arrested there by the king of Goguryeo and was compelled to return the lost territory. He refused the demand and was cast into a prison waiting to be put to death. At last he offered a bribe to a high official of Goguryeo to get advice to be free. The official told him a fable of a rabbit and a turtle.⁷⁾

Once upon a time a Dragon King of the *East Sea* was ill and he was prescribed to eat the rabbit's liver to be cured. The dragon king sent his official the turtle to a land to get it. The turtle met a rabbit and tempted him to visit the sea palace which was so rich and luxurious with every treasures. The rabbit was tempted and misled to the sea palace of the dragon king. When the rabbit heard that he should dedicate his liver to the dragon king, he was very surprised but hit an idea of trick. The rabbit told the dragon king that he left his liver at home, so he should go home and fetch it willingly. The dragon king was tricked and agreed to leave the rabbit. And thus the rabbit escaped from the dragon king.

Hearing the fable, Kim Chunchu(金春秋) met the king and promised to return the lost territory to Goguryeo when he went home. The king believed the promise and allowed him to go home. And thus Kim Chun-chu escaped from Goguryeo and never returned the territory.

This fable tells us an instruction that we should not believe the promises of diplomats in the cold-hearted international relations, which has been proved in the world history many times. But hearing the fable, no one would blame the rabbit's trick but would laugh at the foolish dragon king who rule the *East Sea*. However he was a foolish dragon, he seemed to be very humane and rather familiar to Koreans with the name *East Sea*.

7) 『三國史記』卷 41, 列傳 第一 金庾信 上

3) The story of Cheoyong(處容), the son of the *East Sea* dragon

The King Heongang(憲康王, reign 875 - 886) of unified Shilla once went on a picnic with his followers to the seashore of Gaeunpo(開雲浦: present Ulsan city), the gateway to Gyeongju and enjoyed much. All of a sudden they lost their ways in the dark cloud and fog. The king was embarrassed very much and asked the weatherman what phenomenon it was and what they should do. The weatherman answered it might be the mysterious freak of the *East Sea* dragon and they should do good duties to escape from the troubles. According to the advice the king ordered to build a temple for the dragon. As soon as the order was made, the dark cloud and fog was disappeared and the weather began fine again. The king named the place Gaeunpo(開雲浦) which meant a cloud disappeared port.

The *East Sea* dragon was very pleased to get a temple and revealed himself with his seven sons to meet the king and praised him with every songs and dances. After the meeting the dragon let one of his son Cheoyong serve the king. So Cheoyong followed the king to the capital city Gyeongju, and became a high official to serve the king. The king built another temple for the *East Sea* dragon in the city and let Cheoyong marry a beautiful girl.

Unfortunately a devil saw the beautiful wife and longed her. One night Cheoyong wandered about the downtown under the moonlight to enjoy. At midnight he came home and saw the bedroom in which the devil commit adultery with her wife. But he never got angry to the devil, but sang a song and danced by himself in the front yard. The libretto of the song was recorded in the Omitted Stories of Three Kingdoms(三國遺事).

In the capital city under the bright moonlight,
wandered about the downtown to enjoy till midnight.
Came home to see four legs in the bedroom.
Two are mine, but whose are the other two?
Originally was mine,
What can I do, if they were stolen?⁸⁾

8) 『三國遺事』卷2, 紀異第二, 處容郎望海寺

The devil was frightened when he realized the situation and was deeply impressed with Cheoyong's generosity. The devil apologized him sincerely and pledged never to appear again wherever Cheoyong's figure is seen. This story was so famous that the Korean people used to put the figure image of Cheoyong at the gate or entrance of their house to prevent the devils. The dance of Cheoyong(處容舞) has handed down for more than one thousand years and is played today in Korea. The dance is played by the dancers who wear the unique mask of Cheoyong for the purpose of preventing the devils. The images and the mask of Cheoyong are easily obtainable in Korea today. The figure is very strange and grotesque, not similar to Koreans but similar to western people.

In the 8th century Ulsan city at the seashore of the *East Sea* was the main harbour of Shilla and the gateway to the capital Gyeongju. So there came many trading vessels boarded with the valuable items from China, Japan, India and even from Arabia. We can see the old Arabian things in the Gyeongju museum today. So many historians regard Cheoyong was a son of Arabian merchant, maybe the captain, who sailed to Shilla to trade. As his figure was very strange to Koreans, the Shilla people must have believed he was the son of the *East Sea* dragon.

4) King Talhae(脫解) came from the *East Sea*

It is the story of King Talhae, the 4th king of Shilla and the founder of a royal family Seok clan in the 1st century. In the reign of King Namhae, the second king of Shilla, a strange ship with a crowd of magpies arrived at Ajinpo, a seashore of the *East Sea* near the tomb of King Munmu. An old woman stopped the ship in which she found a male baby in the box with many treasures and slaves. She brought the baby to her house and cared for seven days, when he grew up as a boy. He told her his background story.

“I came from Yongseong kingdom, which is at the distance of a thousand miles north east from Japan.⁹⁾ The kingdom has been ruled in due order by 28 dragon kings who married human girls. My mother queen bore me as a big egg at seven years after her marriage. My father dragon king told that bearing an egg was ill omened, and to let the egg put in a ship to make a voyage to any country which had affinity to be a king. When the egg started the voyage, a red dragon followed and guard the ship all the way. Arriving at this country I was born from the egg.”

9) The official history recorded he came from Dapana kingdom.(『三國史記』卷1, 新羅本紀1 脫解尼師今)

His name Talhae meant “hatching from the egg,”¹⁰⁾ and the family name Seok clan meant magpies. After the talking, the boy climbed Mt. Toham with two followers and stayed there for 7 days. Then he moved to the capital city Kyeonju and lived there. King Namhae found the boy Talhae and knew he was very brave, wise and able, let him marry his eldest princess. Afterwards Talhae was honored to be a prince and became the prime minister, who was very competitive with Prince Nore, the son of King Namhae, to succeed to the throne. But he conceded to Prince Nore because he was younger.

When King Nore was dead in 57 AD, Talhae became the 4th king of Shilla. He ruled his country very well and established his family as to be one of three main royal clan in Shilla. He died in the year 80 AD and was buried a small mountain. One day a divine spirit told people to pick up his bones to bury again in the East Mountain Mt. Toham. People believed Talhae became the god of East Mountain and worshiped him with the annual sacrifice ritual.

It's rather unbelievable that King Talhae came from north east of Japan in 1st century AD. But it might be true that he was an immigrant leader with iron weapons. He might have sailed a long time when he arrived at the seashore of Shilla from the *East Sea*.

5) A Shilla couple crossed the *East Sea* to be the Japanese king and queen.

In the year 157 AD(4th year of King Adala of Shilla) a fisherman Yeono and his wife Saeo lived at the seashore of the *East Sea* in Shilla. One day when Yeono was working on a rock in the sea, the rock(might be a whale) moved rapidly with Yeono to go across the *East Sea* and reached Japan. The Japanese people chose him their king because they knew he was an extraordinary leader. In Shilla his wife Saeo was looking for her husband at the seashore to find his shoes on a rock in the sea at last. As she jumped on to the rock(might be a whale), it moved rapidly to Japan, and she could meet her husband, who made her a queen.

On the other hand in Shilla the sun and moon in the sky was disappeared at all, which made the counrty all dark. King Adala looked for advices from an astronaut, who told that it was caused because the spirits of the sun and moon moved to Japan and

10) 『三國遺事』卷1, 紀異第一, 脫解王

they should ask Yeono and Saeo to return to Shilla again. So the king sent an envoy to Japan to ask King Yeono and his queen to return to Shilla. But King Yeono said, “As my movement to Japan was the holy order of heaven, I cannot return to Shilla now. But my queen weaved a beautiful silk cloth on which the sun and moon were embroidered. You might take it and carry out a sacrifice ritual in Shilla to recover everything well.” So the envoy came back with the silk cloth and advised the king to carry out the sacrifice. As the function was over, the sun and moon appeared again as they used to be. The King Adala designated the silk cloth a national treasure which was kept in the royal warehouse named queen's store. The sacrifice place seemed to be in Yeongil(迎日) or Dogiya(都祈野) at the seashore of the *East Sea*.¹¹⁾

Historians would assert this story was made from the phenomenon of the solar and lunar eclipse in the reign of King Adala. It might be true because the official history of Shilla and China wrote there were the solar eclipse in 166 AD(the 13th year of King Adala).¹²⁾ Anyway the important is that this story told us many Korean and Japanese crossed the East Sea for the purpose of immigration, mainly from Korea to Japan. And some Koreans happened to be the king of Japanese local kingdoms which were prevailed widely at that time. Considering that these affairs were all proceeded in the *East Sea* area, we would say the sea was in the domain of Shilla.

6) The *East Sea* Guanin(觀音, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara)

In Korea Buddha and the Buddhist Saints as Guanin, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, have been believed and worshiped as a god. Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was not a Buddha's disciple but a legendary messenger of Buddha in India, the name of whom was translated as Guanin(觀音) or Guansein(觀世音) in the East Asia. As he/she has been believed to be very merciful and mighty to save and to help people, he sometimes has been more popular than Buddha himself. A cave in the temple Naksansa(洛山寺) located at the seashore of the *East Sea* in Gangwon province is famous and popular to be able to meet Guanin.

In 7th century the great Buddhist priest Eoisang(義湘, 625-702) came back to his home country Shilla after the graduation of studying Buddhism in China. As he heard

11) 『三國遺事』卷1, 紀異第一, 延鳥郎 細鳥女

12) 『三國史記』卷2, 新羅本紀 第二 阿達羅尼師今 吳 『後漢書』卷7, 桓帝 延熹 9年 正月

there dwelled Guanin in the cave, he visited there to pray for seven days to meet Guanin. At last there came dragons and angels to guide him through the cave. As he worshiped at an altar, a beads of rosary was dropped from somewhere and a magic pearl was presented from the *East Sea* dragon. He came back with the treasures and prayed for seven days more, Guanin revealed himself. Guanin told him to build a temple at the place where two bamboos were growing up in the mountain.

When priest Eoisang came out from the cave, he saw two bamboos were growing up in the mountain of the cave. He built a temple at the place and engraved a statue of Guanin whom he just met to worship. The statue of Guanin was called the *East Sea* Guanin which was very famous to be effective to pray. Priest Eoisang named the mountain as Mt. Naksan which was originated from Mt. Boddha-laka in India, where Bodhisattva Avalokitevara has been believed to dwell. He put the treasures in the temple and went away to make another pilgrimage.¹³⁾

As the original statue of the *East Sea* Guanin has not been preserved today, a new imitation statue was enshrined in the Naksan temple. But there come many Buddhists and tourists to pray and to visit everyday. Now many Buddhist temple near the *East Sea* in Gangwon province have enshrined many statues of the *East Sea* Guanin.

In this legend we meet the *East Sea* and the dragon who is the assistant of Guanin. The rosary and the magic pearl was preserved as mystic treasures to guard the country and the Buddhism in the temple for a long time, which were not handed down today. The legend tell us that the faith for the *East Sea* god was combined with Buddhism in Shilla dynasty. And it made the Sea more sacred in the mind of people.

3. Sacrifice rituals paid to the *East Sea* god

In ancient times in East Asia, sacrifice rituals were paid to important mountains, rivers and seas at a national level or a community level. The national level sacrifices to the *East Sea* were paid annually and rather formally in Confucian rituals. But the community level sacrifices have been paid usually in shaman rituals named Byealsingud and handed down today to be continued in many villages at the *East Sea* coast.

13) 『三國遺事』卷3, 塔像第四, 洛山二大聖

1) National level sacrifice rituals for the *East Sea* god

According to the official history, the national level sacrifices to the *East Sea* have been conducted from 7th century in the unified Shilla. But the regular ritual was established as the shrine was built for the *East Sea* god in Goryeo dynasty in 11th century.¹⁴⁾

Paying rituals to the seas were on the second level of the ritual scale in the national ritual system. For these rituals, altars for sacrifice were constructed in various places. The altar for the *East Sea* was located on the coast at Heunghae in Gyeongbuk province. The location of the altar for the South Sea was on the coast at Dongrae in Pusan city, for the West Sea on the coast at Gunsan and for the North Sea at Samcheok city.¹⁵⁾ Except the altar for sacrifice for the West Sea, all altars were located on the East Coast of the Korean peninsula in today's terms. So one can say three out of four rituals paid to the seas in the Shilla era were paid to the *East Sea*. In the Shilla dynasty there were three locations of altars for sacrifice, one was on the north coast of the *East Sea*, one on the mid coast, one toward the south coast. We can see people of Shilla had great faith and inspiration from the *East Sea*.

In the Goryeo dynasty the paying of rituals to mountains, rivers and seas continued, they were excluded from the national ritual system at the beginning. However at a later stage they were reinstated as a third level ritual.¹⁶⁾ The rituals for the *East Sea* was carried out a little further north at Yangyang(襄陽) in Gangwon province(江原道), where a shrine was constructed instead of an altar for sacrifice. They named this shrine 'the shrine for the *East Sea*' or 'the shrine for the Dragon King of the *East Sea*.' The reason they built the shrine at Yangyang was that it was located directly east of Goryeo's capital Gaekyeong(開京).

In 1414 the national ritual system was reorganized by king Taejong(太宗) of the Joseon(朝鮮) dynasty. Here rituals to the seas including the *East Sea* rituals were elevated to the second level as important rituals. Twice every year, in February and August the king would send officials to conduct the rituals.¹⁷⁾

The shrine for the *East Sea* was located on the east coast at Yangyang the same as in the Goryeo dynasty.¹⁸⁾ the shrine for the South Sea to the south of Naju in Jeolla prov-

14) “元宗元年，陞知襄州事。別號襄山。有東海神祠。屬縣一。”(『高麗史』 권58, 志 12, 地理 3, 東界 襄州)

15) 『三國史記』 권32, 雜志 1, 祭祀

16) “四月戊申，合祭己卯年幸三角山，所過名山大川于開城及楊州”(『高麗史』 권 63, 志 17, 禮 5, 吉禮小祀, 雜祀)

17) 『太宗實錄』 14년 8월 21일 辛酉.

18) 『世宗實錄』 地理志, 江原道 襄陽都護府

ince, the shrine for the West Sea to the west of Pung Cheon in Hwanghae province, however rituals for the North Sea were abolished. The silk gifts to the seas at the rituals were distinguished by color, dark blue for the *East Sea*, red for the South Sea, white for the West Sea.¹⁹⁾

Not only were the rituals for mountains, rivers, seas, including the God of the East Sea conducted at the locations mentioned but also they were conducted jointly at Seoul, Weungu-dan(園丘壇, Tiandan 天壇 or Nam-dan 南壇) altar for heaven and Sancheon-dan(山川壇, Didan 地壇 or Buk-dan 北壇) altar for earth.²⁰⁾ Although the rituals at Wungu-dan altar were abolished after king Seong-Jong's reign, however the rituals at Sancheon-dan altar continued until the Joseon dynasty perished. Especially during persistent droughts rituals for the rain were conducted here.²¹⁾

After 1456 the shrine for the *East Sea* at Yangyang was moved to Gangleung(江陵) for a while and rituals were conducted there. The shrine for the West Sea was moved to Incheon, the shrine for the South Sea was moved to Suncheon and rituals were conducted there. The reason the shrines were moved was to align directions with the newly moved capital, Seoul.²²⁾ After that the shrine for the *East Sea* was moved to Jeongdong (accurate East) in Gangleung for a while, then it was moved back to Yangyang in 1536.

On the shore at a small village near Samcheok city, there is a small shrine even today called Haesindang(海神堂, shrine for the sea god). Considering this shrine, one can assume that there was also a separate shrine in Gangleung. One can also see there were other small shrines in various places along the east coast for rituals to be paid to the sea gods.

Observing these sacrifice rituals, we can say the *East Sea* was not a mere natural being but a mighty god which was attracted and worshipped by Korean people. Though it's a general convention for many people to worship natural objects in the premodern ages, the sacrifice rituals paid to the *East Sea* was a very unique and significant culture for Korean people.

19) 『世宗實錄』五禮志 吉禮序例 神位

20) 東海神을 배향한 園丘壇의 제사의식은 『世宗實錄』 10년, 1월 15일 戊辰 條에 자세히 실려 있다.

21) 『世宗實錄』五禮志 吉禮序例 神位 및 <時旱北郊望祈嶽海濱及諸山川儀>

22) 『世宗實錄』 2년 3월 28일 정유.

2) Community level sacrifices for the *East Sea* god

There have been many sacrifices for the *East Sea* god in the villages, towns and even cities on the east coast. The sacrifice rituals which are usually conducted by the shamans are called 'Byeolsingud', the '*East Sea* Byeolsingud', 'sacrifice for the dragon king' or 'sacrifice for good harvest'. There are small shrines of community god and goddess for the sacrifices in the villages. But no shrines were built for the dragon kings because they are always there in the *East Sea*. The purposes of the sacrifices are to pray for the welfare of the village, good harvest in the sea, safety of the ships and to prevent the natural disasters and all kind of devils. The rituals are interesting, profuse and joyful enough to be a big community festivals. They have been done for more than a thousand years and handed down to continue even today. The sacrifice rituals of the east coast villages were designated as Korean cultural relics to preserve by the government.

The sacrifices 'Byeolsingud' on the east coast are a kind of village rituals, but very different from those of inland. The latter is done only for the village god and conducted usually in Confucian rituals, but the former is done as an integrate sacrifice for many gods such as the village god, the house god, the dragon king, the ancestral spirits, Buddha, the shaman's god and others. So the rituals would be practiced in sequence for several days. The main sacrifice has been presented for the dragon king, the *East Sea* god. So the village sacrifices are practiced in long term usually a week and more, so they need a large amount of funds which was raised by the village members according to their property. The functions look like amazing village festivals lasting several days with wines, foods, musics, songs, dances and dramas.

The formalities of the village sacrifices in the east coast are various and not unified but they have similarities in outline. The rituals begin with the exorcise of purgation and then many sacrifices would be rolled on in sequence for several days. The general order would be the sacrifice for the village god, the exorcise of the reconciliation to gods with human, the sacrifice for Buddha, the sacrifice for the ancestral spirits, the sacrifice for the house god, the sacrifice for the god of heaven, the exorcise for Shimcheong who was a filial daughter drawn in the sea for her blind father, the exorcise of bronze jar, the exorcise for the smallpox spirits, the exorcise for the shaman's god and at last would be the sacrifice for the dragon king which is done in a great scale. The scale means the significance of the function. So we can say dragon king of the *East Sea* has been the main god of the people living in the east coast for a long time. In reality a sac-

rifices and a exorcise are not distinguishable and conducted in same ways by the Shaman. But the terms are sorted out to call a big one as sacrifice, a small one as exorcise in this paper.

Though a village sacrifice has been changed its character to be a village festival in late days, it was originally a religious ritual. A folk culture has contained the history, literature, thoughts and the spirits of a country. We would see the significance and the meanings of the *East Sea* to Koreans through the sacrifice rituals for the dragon kings of the *East Sea*.

4. Conclusion

The *East Sea* has produced many myths, legends, fables, stories, sacrifices, rituals and even exorcises. And the stories produced the histories and literatures to make the name *East Sea* eternal and immortal. The place names including the sea names are named naturally through the long history with the people, not invented artificially and instantly by a government or an individual for the political purpose. We call this true name an endonym which we should respect as a fact.

The *East Sea* has been naturally named through the myths, legends, fables, sacrifices, rituals, poems and essays for a long time by the Korean people. The name cannot be replaced by the one which invented artificially and instantly by a government for the political purpose. We all know the so called Japanese Sea has been called the North Sea for a long time by the Japanese people, which would be admitted to be an endpoint. But the name Japanese Sea was firstly named by the individual Catholic missionaries in China for their direction distinguishing to Japan, which was enough to be a exonym. And it was officially named by the imperial Japanese government for the political purpose of territorial expansion in late 19th century. According to the research of Dr. Sangtae Lee, even saying the official name, it originally was named to call the east sea of Japan, a part of the Pacific Ocean, then moved to the East China Sea and then to the East Sea for their political purpose, the imperial ambition of territorial expansion.²³⁾ I believe a sea name is a fixed one in the history and not a moving one like a floating weed on the political waves. I would like to ask them if there is any historical or cul-

23) "Japan tried to name 'East China Sea' as '*East Sea*' " * R sum : The 17th International Seminar on Sea Names"(The Society for East Sea, Vancouver, BC Canada, August, 2011)

tural back ground with the name of Japanese Sea. Has it have any myths, legends, fables and other stories through the ages? None!

I would like to share the beautiful Korean myths, legends, poems and essays related with the *East Sea* with all of you. Though I believe each of you have your own ideas on the *East Sea*, I sincerely would like to ask you to consider it again carefully. Then we will be very much satisfied with our accomplishment in this meeting.

요약

바다 이름을 포함한 여러 地名들은 오랜 역사를 통하여 거기에 산 사람들에 의해 자연스럽게 命名되는 것이지, 어떤 정부나 개인에 의하여 정치적인 목적을 가지고 인위적으로 또 즉흥적으로 붙여지는 것이 아니다. 우리는 이러한 진정하고 유서 깊은 이름들을 'endonym(토속 이름)'이라고 부르며, 역사적 실체로서 존중해야 하는 것이다.

동해는 한반도의 동쪽에 위치한 바다로 본래 방위에 의해 명명된 것이기는 하지만, 수천년의 역사를 경과하면서 고유명사화 되었다. 그것은 한국인들이 2천년 이상 사용한 토속 이름으로서, 고유하고 친숙한 이름이 된 것이다. 동해는 한국인들의 오랜 역사를 통해 많은 신화와 전설을 낳았고, 문학 작품으로 형상화되기도 하였다. 이를 통해 동해는 한국인들의 민속에 투영되고 정신 속에 자리 잡으면서 문화의 실체가 되었다. 동해가 신화와 전설을 통해 또 그것이 문학적으로 묘사되고 여러 형태의 제의를 통해 그것이 신성성을 갖게 되었다는 것은 특히 중요하다. 이제 그것은 단순히 하나의 바다 이름이 아니라 국민정신의 일부가 된 것이다. 이 이름이 얼마나 유구하고 의미심장한 이름인가는 한국의 여러 가지 신화와 전설들을 검토해보면 잘 알 수 있을 것이다. 이는 '동해'의 endonym적 성격을 결정하는 것이며, '동해' 표기의 국제화를 이루는데도 매우 중요한 기초가 될 것이다.

이 연구에서는 주로 『三國史記』와 『三國遺事』 등 고대의 사서에 기록된 많은 동해 관련 신화와 전설 등을 검토함으로써 동해가 우리 민족의 의식 속에 어떻게 정착되고 있는지, 그리고 그 역사 지리적 의미가 무엇인지 탐구해 보고자 하였다. 여기서는 대표적인 6가지의 신화와 전설들을 검토해 보았는데, 그것은 ①동해의 龍이 된 文武王 ②武烈王과 龍宮에서 탈출한 토끼 ③동해 龍王의 아들 處容 ④동해에서 온 脫解王 ⑤일본의 왕과 왕비가 된 延烏郎과 細烏女 ⑥東海 觀音 이야기 등이 그것이다. 이들은 삼국시대인 1 - 7세기의 신라에서 만들어진 것이며, 모두 동해와 관련된 역사적 배경 속에서 이루어진 것이다. 그리고 대부분의 경우에는 자료의 원문에서 '東海'라는 고유명사가 사용되고 있다.

이상의 신화와 전설들은 주로 동해의 神과 龍王에 관한 이야기들이 주가 되고 있으므로 이 연구에서는 동해의 신에 대한 제사 의례들도 함께 살펴보았다. 동해 신에 대한 제사는 국가적 차원에서 올리는 제사가 있고, 민간에서 올리는 마을 제사가 있는데, 전자는 주로 유교적 의례에 의해 매년 정기적으로 거행되었고, 후자는 주로 현지의 세습 무당들에 의해 굿의 형태로 행해졌는데 이는 마을의 축제가 되기도 하였다.

동해는 이러한 신화와 전설, 우화, 제사와 굿 등을 통하여 자연스럽게 붙여진 이름이다. 그것은 결코 어떤 정부나 개인에 의하여 인위적으로 또는 즉흥적으로 붙여진 이름으로 대체될 수 없다. 이른바 '日本海'라는 것은 오래 동안 일본 사람들이 北海라고 불러왔던 것이다. 그것은 17세기 이후 중국에 파견되었던 카톨릭 선교

사들이 지도 위에서 일본을 식별하기 위해 처음으로 붙여졌던 것이다. 19세기 후반에 일본 제국주의 정부는 일본 동해 해역을 지칭하는 이름으로 사용하였던 이 이름을 후에 南中國海에 사용하다가 최후로 우리의 동해에 덮어 씌웠는데, 이는 말할 것도 없이 그들의 영역 확장 야욕을 실현하기 위한 것이었다. ‘日本海’란 이름이 무슨 역사적 문화적 배경을 가지고 있는가? 그 이름에도 오랜 역사를 통해 생긴 신화나 전설, 우화나 다른 이야기들을 가지고 있는가? 결코 그렇지 않다.

필자는 이 연구를 통해 동해에 관련된 아름다운 신화와 전설, 시와 문장, 민속 문화를 세계인들과 향유하고 싶었다. 사람들은 동해에 관해 저마다 주견들을 가지고 있겠지만 나는 이 문제에 대해 모든 분들이 다시 한 번 주의 깊게 재고해 주기를 당부하고 싶다.