

# **A Study on the Meaning of 'East Sea', especially based on the National Emotion**

**Tae Jin Yang**

**(Director, Misu Research Center, the Republic of Korea)**

## Contents

1. Prologue
2. The Han nation's view of Dong Hae
  - a. Dong Hae in traditionally handed down literature
  - b. Folk songs and Dong Hae
  - c. Dong Hae in Poetry
    - o.Si-jo
    - o.Ga-sa
    - o.Poems written in Chinese Characters
3. Dong Hae in Historical Documents
  - a. Historical documents about Dong Hae
  - b. Records of Dong Hae Tomb
4. Metaphorical meanings of Dong Hae
  - a.Elucidation of [東]
  - b.Uses in life of [東]
5. Closure

## **1. Prologue**

To create and continue a place's name there must be multiple factors implicated and consolidated. Thus, through spatiotemporal activities of mankind and development stages the originality is formed and the unique characters of each location are expressed in the names. The name "Dong Hae" is not an exception in the way it was formed.

For this reason, the name "Dong Hae", the main issue in this study, will be the appropriate word to explain how the spirit of our race lives in it and how it is related to the

history of the Han race. By ruminating over the referential fields like legends and folk songs, faiths, Ga-sa literature, histories, there is a hope lying behind this whole study which is to support the name "Dong hae" in the debate about its existence and revision.

## **2. Dong Hae in Han literature**

### a. Dong Hae in traditionally handed down literature

Traditionally handed down literature ["Gu-bi literature" in Korean] which is an opposite concept to documentary literature is also called as orally handed down literature ["Goo-jeun literature" in Korean]. The meanings of each agrees in most though decisive difference exists in the fact that orally handing down is a more limited concept than the other.

Traditionally handed down literature is more primitive and fundamental than documentary literature and has a much longer history. Among the traditionally handed down literature, 830 pieces of work related to Dong-Hae were excavated and picked out to be included in the collection of [Outlines of traditionally handed down literature] series in 1980, published by Korean Moral Culture Institute. Furthermore 130 pieces of legends were collected additionally by the Gwan-dong Folk Academy of Gwan-dong University which confirms 930 pieces about Dong-Hae still existing. If materials from North Korea about Dong Hae can be saved and added, the number will develop much more.

However the the number of the existing pieces can never be more important than the liveliness and the phase to its nation, in other words the essence of literature. In this point of view, legends related to Dong Hae ranges from King Lee Sung Gae (First King of Chosun Dynasty) and the aristocratic classes to the joys and sorrows of lower classes and mysticism about the sea. In these various kinds of forms the traditionally handed down literature could maintain to prosper and Dong Hae was taken as a mysterious and an object of veneration. (Exemplification of pieces is omitted)

### b. Folk songs and Dong Hae

Folk song is a type of traditionally handed down literature transmitted by singing. Because the folk songs are songs, it is a kind of music as well as literature. If the lyrics are not rythmical and cannot be music it cannot be a folk song as well and a folk song must be

traditionally handed down.

In another way, a folk song is a nonprofessional popular music for the people to express their feelings, ideology and life openheartedly. As the folk song is widely sung by the people the musical, literary features are of popular kinds.

Folk songs are sung by the singer for the his/her own pleasure. Folk songs can be divided as Nam-yo(by men), Bu-yo(by women), Dong-yo( by children). The reason for this kind of division is because when singing folk songs there is no need for the hearers and fixed forms because it is sung just to please the singers themselves and despite of the divisions of the song everybody can join singing without hesitation and enjoy unity.

Folk songs are more functional than any other traditionally handed down literature. In the aspects of the uses of the songs, it was used during labor, ceremonies or plays and with this function it implies a unique sense of sadness and heartfulness. The folk songs are divided into beginning & end singing, interchanging singing, solo and unison, generally 4. 4 jo.

As an example there is the "Dong Hae boating song" which can be grouped as <Ji-uh song>, <Da-ri-uh song>, <San-dae song>, <Bae-ggi song> practically and has been transmitted according to this classification.

Ji-uh Song has been sung when the fishermen rowed the boat towards Dong Hae and when rowing back towards the shore after they finished fishing. A talented fishermen with good memory would lead the chorus and the others would join him in the refrain and add to the amusement.

Da-ri-uh song was the one they sang when they were hauling in the net. A strong fishermen would lead the chorus and the others would join him in the refrain to gather the power to haul according to the rhythm.

The "San-dae" in the San-dae song is a net attached to frame made in iron or bamboo stick. The song was sung when the fishermen dipped fishes by it and the length of this song is much longer than Ji-uh song or Da-ri-uh song. The length was because the motions to dip were very slow.

Other than these is the Bae-ggi song which was sung in the scene when the fishermen draw the net out to catch the fish. A fishermen would lead the chorus and the others would join him in the refrain.

The four types of Dong Hae boating song described above are all intended to show the joys and sorrows of fishermen in the sentimental melodies. (Examples omitted)

### c) Exorcism of Dong Hae as a folk religion

Exorcism is the only religion which remains alive, starting from the ancient times and still existing in the modern times and among them is the Byul-shin goot, one of the well acquainted exorcism which is so common in the emotions of the residents in Dong Hae coast. Dong-Hae Byul-shin goot is held by the villages regularly in Dong Hae coastland and there are types like Poong-uh jae, Poong-uh goot, Gol-mae-gi-dang jae etc. The unique point lies in the fact that though the service is held for the guards of the gods it contains the diverse aspects of human life dramatically produced. The instruments used are provided on the spot so when a master of exorcist disguises into a woman he/she borrows the skirt and towel from the audience. When a fisherman appears in the stage he/she uses a pole and acts as if he is rowing the boat and the course is always Dong Hae.

There is Gol-mae-gi-dang jae and it is held in the house where the guardian of Dong Hae and the village is enshrined. The prayers of the villagers are usually about safe fishery with abundance, fecundity, peace and prosperity. This ceremony is held every year or every other year and Gol-mae-gi Hal-mae-geri, Gol-mae-gi Hal-bae-ger can be seen.

Various kinds of incantatory, religious folk services has been conducted in addition, like Dong Hae coast Do-ri-gang-gwan play, Joong-ja-bi play and Bum-goot play etc.

As a result, it is not difficult to say that the ultimate goal for these exorcisms of the residents in the Dong Hae coast was to awe Dong Hae and to sanctify.

### d) Ga-sa literature and Dong Hae

- Si-jo

Si-jo is the only fixed form poetry in our country. Besides the time of creation, Si-jo is deeply related to the maturity of the forms of folk songs and Sok-yo. Si-jo does not limit its materials. In a collection of Si-jo named "Si-jo-chwi-ryu(時調聚類)", there are 1405 pieces and puts no limit on its materials. So it makes Si-jo the genre most common to the lives of people. Naturally, it does not forget to mention Dong Hae, the material which had become inevitable to the people.

Si-jo has undoubtful significance in the history of Korean literature and is the most advanced genre, also the most representative selection of Korean literature. Among the Si-jos, there are many on Dong Hae and one of them is the one written below which was

composed by Park Soon Woo and Jo Hwang in the Chosun Dynasty era.

Dong Hae was told wide, I can see by sight  
Moonless boating, who can say he is missing  
Strong steering seems impossible, as strong government is impossible  
written by Park Soon Woo

written by Jo Hwang's omitted here.

- Ga-sa

Ga-sa is a unique part of the Korean literature. It spring out between the stages when Korean literature was making a turn from verse literature to prose literature. The representative piece named "Gwan-dong-byul-gok" composed by Jung Chul with Dong Hae for setting, is the best of all Ga-sa than ever.

There are many pieces of Ga-sa like the author unknown [Gwan-dong-jang-yoo-ga],[Il-dong-jang-yoo-ga] and Ahn Chook's Gwan-dong-byul-gok [Gwan-dong-hae-ga] and works written by woman [Nae-bang Ga-sa] and many others. Below is a beginning part of a author unknown Nae-bang Ga-sa and Gwun Sub's [Down aside Dong Hae].

How great and clean water!

Best Dong Hae among the others

The lyrics is about a married woman watching the magnificent scenery of Dong Hae who misses her home. It was written in the early 19 C.

Gwun Sub's (167-1759) Ga-sa of travels

Walking through white sand to Dong Hae

sited on the vacant field

confused east and west how I know the others

- Poems written in Chinese Characters

Poems in Chinese are poems which were composed in Chinese before it was put in Korean and the number is difficult to estimate also difficult to estimate the books published.

There are many examples in Dong-mun-sun, Dae-dong-si-sun, Dong-guk-yuh-ji-

seong-ram, Gwan-dong-ji and others.

In this paper a famous piece which talks about Dong Hae and has incantatory features will be introduced.

The author of "Dong-Hae-Song" is Mi-soo, Huh Mok who lived in mid Chosun era. It was when he was 67 years old when he wrote this. Taoisimist mysticism is reflected to calm the roaring sea, Dong Hae and it is organized in 1 gu(句) 48 gu 192 ja(字). The main theme is to soothe the people who suffer from frequent floods and encourage them not to fear the disasters beyond man's control while he ruled the region. This was a written prayer to be recited in the religious service for the god of Dong Hae to calm down the angry waves of Dong Hae. The written prayer was inscribed in the stonemonument and as a legendary story spread out that after this there were no ocean disasters, people took it as a magical word and kept it in their houses to avoid the calamities and as a result it became a folk belief and origine fo many other legends.

As it has been described above, Dong Hae appears not only in the legends and folk songs but also in the various genres of Korean literature like Si-jo, Ga-sa, poems in Chinese etc. This proves the fact that Dong Hae has been essential energy to build the emotions of Koreans.

### **3. Dong Hae in Historical Documents**

#### a) Historical documents about Dong Hae

In the series of first founder King Dongmyungsung in Go-gu-riuh Bongi, Samguksagi, there is a sentence reading "The god came down to meet him and said, by the hands of his children he tends to build a nation and ordered to move to the coast of Dong Hae" and the time is about B.C 59.

According to Bubmunjo of King Munho in the second volume of Samgukyusa, the King was buried under a large rock in Dong Hae by his last will. The King had told Ji-ui Buddhist priest that he would become a dragon to defend the country and Buddhism. Whilst the priest said that he doubts the use of a dragon which is merely a beast the King replied that it has been long since he treasured the wealth and honours of life and it would be too grateful if only he could be reborn as a dragon to be a little help for the peace of this country.

In Man-pa-shik-jo of the same book in Samgukyusa, King Shinmun constructed temple Gam-un-sa for his father Moonmu the Great. In the establishment note, King Moonmu wished to build a temple to defend the country from the enemies but died before completion and became a dragon. In his behalf, the son King Shinmun made a hole headed east in a stone. It was for the dragon to let him freely move in the temple. It is written that the temple was called Gam-un-sa and the place where King Moonmu was buried in the sea is Daewangam(rock of the Great in Korean) and the place which resembled a dragon was called Yi-gyun-dae.

Records about Dong-hae can be seen 13 times in Samguksagi and 14 times in Samgukyusa and in Korea-sa it continues to be referred in the 11th year of King Taejo's reign (A.C 928), the 1st year of King Shinjong's reign (A.C 1197), the 6th year of King Myungjong's reign (A.C 1176) and so many more in the Chosun era.

#### b) Records of Dong Hae Shrine

According to Korea-sa Ji-ri-ji, Donghae Shrine was in Kangwondo Yangyang. In 1st volume of Shin-jeung-dong-kuk-yeo-ji-seong-ram, it says that an altar was made in Yangyang for Dong hae, Naju for Nam hae, Poongchun for Nam Hae and the other altar for the Yalu river were in Ui-ju, for Tuman river in Kyouunwon.

The altar in each side of the sea were also referred in Yuh-ji-do-suh, and shrines are described to be in allsides of Korea and in Dong Hae was a tomb, an altar in Suh Hae and shrine in Nam Hae. The tomb seems to have had higher phases than others and it's ceremony was a national event. The tomb of Dong Hae was set on top of the embankment and the water flowed under, which reminds the King Moonmu and his patriotic acts to defend Shilla.

The shrine of Dong Hae was decided as Joongsa(中祀) in the early Chosun era and the King himself would send incense and a written prayer in February and August by the Lunar calendar every year to for the ceremony. In 1722 the 2nd year of Kyongjong's reign and 1752 the 28th year of Yongjong's reign, it was repaired by the official of Yang yang, Chae Peng Yoon and Lee Sung Uk, in 1800 the 24th year of Jungjo's reign it was repaired.

However the ancient shrine of Dong Hae became abolished by the folk culture liquidation policy of the Japanese imperialism in 1908, the 2nd year of Soonjong's reign. This time roughly coincides with the time when Japan started writing "Dong Hae" as "Sea of Japan".

After the restoration of independence of Korea national sentiments towards "Dong Hae" was awoken and from 1993 the reconstruction was started and "Jung-jun" was restored and "Yang-yang-do-ho-bu Dong-Ha-eshin-myo-bi" which was cut in to halves was restored to recall the sacredness and to be awed.

### c) The interpretation of Dong(東)

Historically or emotionally Korean nations has affection in the name "Dong Hae". The name is often misunderstood as a concept of bearings but it is a result of lack of understanding the historical meanings to the nation.

Dong Hae is a symbol of the idea, passion, determination of defending the fatherland and symbol of enthusiasm to overcome and fight against natural disasters so it can not be the same to it's general concept of bearings.

Even if Dong(東) was analyzed by it's shape, 東 is a composition of Il(日)and mok(木) so it means the direction of the sun when all creations start to live and it also means the sunrise. According to Um-yang-oh-heng-sul(陰陽五行設) which has been a meaningful basis to Korean culture, 東 has the feature of 木 and closest to spring among four seasons and blue among five colors.

Dong(東) also has a significant role in the proprieties and conciousness as can be seen in Choon-chu-jwa-si-jun the host was taken polite when he sit straight towards the East.

In the wedding ceremony Dongsangrey(東床禮) is a still living custom and it is originated from the respect for Dong(東). The leader of the wizards in mountains which often appears in many legends an folk beliefs was called Dongwangkong(東王公), and as the legend of the God of Dong Hae still exists it proves that "Dong Hae" is not a concept limited to bearings.

Numerous written proofs of sentiments of Dong(東) are in Dong-guk-tong-gam, Dong-guk-yuh-ji-seong-ram, Dong-guk-jung-woon, Dong-guk-moon-hun-bi-go, Dong-ui-bo-gam, and in so many which dealt materails with extreme rationality.

## **4. Closure**

To the Korean people Dong Hae does not only have the meaning of territory but it

has been thought sacred by them. From the ancient times, the Korean people has worshiped Mt. Baek-doo in the inland and Dong Hae in the sea.

For these reasons the national affection towards Dong Hae is incomparable with any other people. IN the same sense the national anthem starts with "Dong Hae and Mt. Baek-doo". This kind of sentiments occurred a sort of religious belief and awe naturally and it affected the literature and music and brought about ceremonies related to Dong Hae.

Before I conclude I hope the debate upon the name of Dong Hae starts from trying to understand the Korean nation's feelings towards Dong Hae in the future.

The most conspicuous factor of an area to discriminate itself from any other is the name. In other words the name of a place is ideal when it is able to identify itself from other places by its name. However it is not always available in every places because of disagreements and indefiniteness in the names and one of the typical examples is the debate between Korea and Japan upon the inscription of Dong Hae. Some might try to exemplify other names but those were used extremely temporarily and were only used by specific persons on their own will. For an example, instead using of using the general word for sea, Hae(海) some tried Yong(瀛), Myong(溟) and wrote as Dong Yong, Dong Myong and sometimes Chang Hae(滄海) which means "clear blue water" or Chang Yong, Chang Myong. There was a time when Chosun had a second name "Chung Gu" and inscribed Dong Hae as "Chung Hae" but it was not used as an official name for Dong Hae and had been originated by the scholars' own inclination and pedantry. Like in "Dong Hae Song" "Yong Hae" instead.

Consequently the debate on the inscription of Dong Hae, yet unconcluded should be dealt with thorough consciousness about the historical, human geographical conditions and the nation's sentiments built through eternal historical backgrounds. For the name "Dong Hae" cannot be substituted by any other name by historical and motional reasons to the Han nation.