A Study of the World Views in Korean Myths and Folk Tales—An Examination of the Contrary World Views—

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1. Introduction

A world view is a totalizing conception of the world that includes not only a man’s perception of space and time but also the direction of and the attitude towards life represented by human behaviors. It embraces intelligence, emotion and behaviors. Simply speaking, it is a philosophic idea of the world.

Since ‘world view’ is such an extensive and vague notion, studies by cultural scientists have had to limit and specify the issue by defining subordinate categories. And the sense of values and the concept of human beings have been explored in studying the ideas of space and time as the background of life and the behavioral system of man as the subject of life.¹

A systematic study of folk narratives has yet to be done to epitomize the Koreans’ world view. Sporadic references, however, have been made on the concept of space, time and man in folk narratives.² As a collective literature created through decades,

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1 Chang Tŏk-sun, ‘Cosmology and a Picture of the World’ (Han’ksasangdaegye I, Sŏnggyun’gwan University Korean Culture Research Association, 1973), pp 165-207

Kim In-hoe, The Koreans’ Sense of Value (Musok-gwa Kyoyukch’oltak, Mun’imsa, 1979)

__________. Research on Study of Korean Shamanism (Chimunmang, 1987).

folk narratives are the best material for studying the Koreans' universal collective mentality. The importance of studying the world view is vital not only for literary criticism but also for cultural science and all the other kinds of studies on Korea. But the expansiveness of both the issue and relative materials make it impossible for an individual to complete the research in a short period.

This paper will examine the opposite world views of myths and folk tales as a little portion of the big issue and will attempt to account for the disparity. Myths and folk tales are two of the three subordinate categories of folk narratives. They differ in the nature of their authors and social function. The contrary characteristics of these two genres have been studied in terms of time, space, and characters' acts. Nevertheless, the work has yet to be done to elicit and explain the contrast of the world views found in myths and folk tales from concrete materials.

This paper will look into a shift of space, the protagonist's acts and his or her attitude towards life. The selection of works from myths and folk tales is limited to particular types that have contrasting counterparts. I will deal with various myths ranging from those on the origin of a national ancestry to those on shamanism, while dealing with only two folk tales namely *Namु'gungwa Sŏnnyŏ* (The Woodcutter and the Angel) and *Haewa Tari doen Onui* (The Brother and the Sister who Became the Sun and the Moon). My thesis title may be too grand for a paper that analyses only a few among numerous folk tale types. But one may limit materials depending on the issue and in this case I have to narrow down the question and thus delimit data for a more productive outcome. Moreover, since the selected types are so widespread, a conclusion from their analysis is not meaningless.

2. Celestial Father and Earthly Mother vs. Heavenly Woman and Earthly Man

A common plot of Korean myths is that a man from the heavenly realm descends, has an affair with a woman in the earthly realm and reascends, leaving her pregnant with a son who will grow to be a forefather of a nation. Such a story line is shared by *kon'guk shinhw*a (myths of national foundation), such as *Tan'gunshinhwa* and *Chumongshinhwa*, and by *musok shinhw*a (shamanistic myths), such as *Ch'ŏnjiwangbong'uri* and *Shirumal*. We classify these myths as the Celestial Father and Earthly Mother Type from the viewpoint of the ancestor-to-be child. The

3 Chang Tŏk-sun and others, *An Introduction to Oral Literature* (Iljogak, 1971)
following are the plot summaries of the myths that fall into this category.

_Tan'gunshunhwa_
1. Hwanung descends from heaven to the top of Mt. T'aebaek at his father's order.
2. He marries Ungnyŏ(a bear woman), who yearns for a child, and blesses her with Tan'gun.
3. Tan'gun accedes to the throne and becomes the king.

_Chumongshunhwa_
1. Haemosu, a son of the God descends to Mt. Ungshim from heaven.
2. He marries Yuhwa, a daughter of Habaek (the god of the river) and returns to heaven.
3. Chumong, Yuhwa's son, goes to Cholbon, builds a nation, Koguryŏ and becomes the king.

_Ch'ŏnjiwangbonp'uri_
1. Ch'ŏnjiwang, the king of heaven, descends to the human world.
2. He marries Ch'ongmaengbun on earth and returns to heaven, leaving her pregnant with twins.
3. The grownup sons, Taebyŏlwang and Sobyŏlwang go to heaven to look for their father.
4. They obey their father's order to govern the earth and the underworld respectively, and return.\(^4\)

_Shinumul_
1. Tangech'ulsŏng comes down to the earth from heaven.
2. He marries Maehwabuin, an earthly woman and ascends back leaving her pregnant.
3. Maehwabuin's sons, Sŏnmun and Humun grow up and go up to heaven to meet their father.
4. They descend back to the earth after being told to rule Taehan'guk and Sohan'guk.\(^5\)

The story lines above are summarized with a focus on the purpose and direction of the hero's actions, that is, how the two spaces, heavenly and earthly, are related to the hero's movements. The two realms are not just the upper and the lower world. It is generally well-known that the heavenly realm stands for the spiritual world of gods, and the earthly realm the material world of men. What counts in this paper is not the symbolism of space itself but the meaning of space in human life that is associated with the hero's nature and behavior. The human race has survived until today by propagating themselves through the union between man and woman. The union of two sexes represents the origin of a nation, an organic entity of societies

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\(^{4}\) Hyŏn Yong-jun, _The Dictionary of Chejudo's Shamanism Data_ (Shin'gumunhwasa, 1980), pp 35-43

\(^{5}\) Achamaz Chisiro & Akiba _Research on Korean Shamanism_ Vol 1 (Osaka Hosigo Shotaeng, 1937), pp 129-132
grouped together, which in turn consist of families formed by the bond between man and woman. A nation has a territory, and the people of a nation share a certain area of land and especially a couple shares a home, the smallest unit of space. Mythical couples repeat union and separation instead of continuously living together in a shared space: the residential space differs according to sex, the heavenly realm for men and the earthy for women. This suggests that there is a connection between sex and space, reflecting the idea that the heaven is male and the earth female. If so, the mythical union and separation of two sexes mean those of the sky and the land. Subsequently, the ancestor, impregnated by the coupling of the sky and the soil, is born and grows up after they are divided. All these result in the mythical implication of the beginning of the world and the advent of the first man.

In addition, in myth men are dynamic beings while women are static. Women have a residence on earth, which she does not leave at least voluntarily. On the contrary, men go back and forth between two spaces. The trajectory of the celestial father contrasts with that of the son born on earth. Father moves from heaven to earth (marriage) and back to heaven; the son travels from the earth to heaven (union with his father) and back to the earth. Not only their starting points and destinations but also the purpose of movement are contrasted: marriage and union with father, respectively. Kôn'gukshinhwa does not elaborate the son's path: Tan'gunshinhwa has no description of that of Tan'gun and Chumongshinhwa replaces union with the father with the hero's journey from Tongbuyŏ to Cholbon. On the other hand, the trajectory of the father god appears the same in kôn'guk shinhwa and musok shinhwa. The epitomy of common lines in these myths is as follows.

1. A heavenly man comes down to the earth
2. He marries an earthly woman.
3. He returns.
   In musok shinhwa, the following parts of the son's travel are added
4. The son goes up to the heaven
5. He is given a task by his heavenly father
6. He returns

Corresponding types of folk tales call for attention. One is the familiar type of The Woodcutter and the Angel. The story is about the union of earthly man and heavenly woman and displays shifts of space corresponding to those in myth with the woodcutter ascending to heaven and the angel descending to the earth. Such a type has many variations. Tales of this type can be divided into the union type and the separation type according to the end of the story. Also there are the simple type
and the dilated type depending on whether the woodcutter’s ascension and heavenly ordeal is added or not. From the comparison of individual tales, Yi Chi-yŏng drew the lower types as follows.

- The union type
  1. The heavenly reunion type
  2. The heavenly ordeal - heavenly reunion type
- The separation type
  3. The cock’s origin type
  4. The heavenly ordeal - cock’s origin type

Type (1) ends with the woodcutter’s ascension to the heaven in a well bucket, following the angel, and his reunion with her. In type (3), left behind by the angel who ascends to the heaven in her celestial raiment, he dies alone and metamorphoses into a cock. These types are medium-or-short-length stories lacking in a heavenly ordeal. If we regard tales with a heavenly ordeal as a complete story, we have two other higher categories: the union type and the separation type. The variation lies in the ending part with the other parts in common. The following is a summary of the parts which contrast with myths especially in the shifts of space.

1. The angel descends to the earth for a bath.
2. The woodcutter, following what a deer (or roe) says, hides her celestial garment and marries her.
3. After bearing two children, she finds her raiment and ascends
4. The woodcutter, again with the deer’s or roe’s help, ascends to heaven in a well bucket.
5. The angel’s father (the God) shoots down three arrows to the earth to test him, and the woodcutter descends back to find them.
6. He returns with those arrows and reunites with her.
6’. After finding the 3 arrows, he meets his mother, fails to observe the angel’s warning and thus has to remain on earth. He dies and turns into a cock.

6 and 6’ are the parts that determine whether a tale belongs to the union or the separation type and 1 to 5 are the common parts of each whole story. I will realign them in more general terms and compare the salient features with those of myths.

1. A heavenly woman moves to the earth
2. She marries an earthly man
3. She returns to heaven.
4. The earthly man moves to heaven

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7. See *ibid* for details of variations.
5. He meets her father and undergoes a test.
6. He moves to the earth
7. He returns to heaven.
7'. He fails to return and stays on earth

The folk tale’s parts summarized above show the path of characters in and out of the heavenly and the earthly realm, which match those in myth. The commonly shared point is that characters form a nuptial bond, going back and forth in two realms heavenly and earthly. On the other hand, differences are clear in the characters’ sex (whether the moving subject is male or female), the direction of their travel (where the subject starts from, heads for and finally settles) and their purposes (whom the subject meets and why). The following comments more concretely contrast the myths and folk tales.

First, the heavenly being in myth is a male character, while in folk tales it is a female and a male belongs to the earthly realm.

_Tan'gun's shinhwae_ has no specific mention of Hwanung as a heavenly god, but it makes clear that the residence of Hwanung and Hwann is vertically opposite to the earth. Phrases like _looked over Samwit'aebaek_ and _descended beneath the Shindansu on top of Mt. T'aebaek_ suggest that Hwanung lives somewhere above the earth. Also the line _set his heart on the place below the sky_ tells Hwanung is not an earthly being. _Below the sky_ means the earth, that is, the human world. Therefore, an earthly being would not be able to mention it as a place other than his abode.

_Chumong shinhwae_'s explanation of Haemosu as the celestial crown prince evinces his unearthliness, and Ch'ónjirwang and Tangch'ilson in shamanistic myths are sure to be celestial beings as well. On the contrary, folk tales have a woman come down from the heaven and a man dwell on earth. The angel in folk tales is more beautiful and more ideal than any woman on earth while the woodcutter is the poorest of all men. He is in want of fortune, education, and kin but is also free from any bondage. Folk tales, unlike myth, put the bride superior to the bridegroom.

Second, the ultimate destination in myths is the earth where human beings live, but in folk tales it is heaven.

Both _kön'guk shinhwae_ and _musok shinhwae_ are about the process in which an ancestor is born and enthroned. Considering that a character with a celestial father

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8 'The folk tale' here indicates _The Woodcutter and the Angel_. The name of genre is used for the individual type since it is being compared with myth, representing the whole genre.

9 Yi Pyŏng-hun trans _Samguyusa_ (Taeyangsŏk, 1972), p 78.
and earthly mother becomes the ruler of the human world, the focus of myths is more on the human world than on heaven. This can be seen more clearly in the son’s choice between two different spheres of parents. Taebỳölwang and his brother as well as Sónmun and his are born on earth and travel up to heaven to seek their father, but they do not stay there and instead come back to the earth to reign afterwards. Tan’gun and Chumong also permanently settle down on earth, build a nation and later receive religious rites as worshipped ancestral gods. It is obvious that myths are ultimately interested in the human world.

In contrast, the woodcutter and the angel in folk tales are bound for heaven. The reunion type has an apparent heaven-oriented consciousness with the woodcutter successfully passing the test, ascending and living in marriage with the angel happily ever after. In the separation type, though the woodcutter fails to climb back to the heaven and dies to be reborn as a cock, the cock’s cry towards the sky implies the same consciousness. On the whole, a heaven-oriented mind can be found more in folk tales than in myths.

Third, while myths center on a father-and-son relation, folk tales are more concerned with a conjugal tie.

The mythical matrimony, a union for reproduction has more to do with the bearing of successors than love between husband and wife. Ungnyö in want of a bridegroom prays for a child under the Tansu. This part of Tan’gun shinhwa suggests that marriage is a means to conception. Were love itself more important, she would use more emotional expressions or pray for her union with Hwanung. In Chumong shinhwa, Haemosu, at the sight of Habaek’s three daughters, tells his retinues he can take one of them for a queen and have a descendent.10

Besides, the mythical man leaves the woman immediately after he impregnates her, and returns to heaven. There is no description of the mythical couple missing each other. This proves the minor importance of love between them. However, the tie between father and son or mother and son is strong. When Chumong leaves Tongbuyö, his mother, Yuhwa does not forget to encourage and warn him. Obviously, they are devoted to each other. In musok shinhwa, the son moves to the heavenly realm to seek his father. It is not the reunion of a separated couple but that of father and son. In myths, a relationship between parents and children carries more weight than a nuptial link.

In folk tales, things are just the opposite. The woodcutter does not marry the

angel for a son. His happiness lies not in future descendents but in his marriage itself. This is conspicuous in the woodcutter’s dejection following the angel’s ascension. He laments her loss and wishes to see her, not the children, again. Marital love matters more than parenthood.

Fourth, myths are mainly concerned with communal life, as in a nation, and folk tales with individual happiness in the family.

Hwanung, in Tan’gunshinhwa, founds a holy city and rules and educates the world, undertaking 360 works for humanity such as agriculture, life, disease, punishment, the question of good and evil. His reign implements the Honggin’gan (to benefit mankind broadly) spirit for the prosperity of community and not for individual pursuit of happiness. Chumong also strives to build up a nation and conquer neighboring tribes to solidify its prestige rather than to pursue his personal well-being and happiness. Heroes of musok shinhwa also do things to benefit all mankind: for example, adjusting the number of the sun and the moon.

On the contrary, heroes in folk tales only pursue individual happiness in their family, making no contribution to the good of a community. The woodcutter’s union with the angel or his loss of her has everything to do with his bliss and misery and nothing to do with others’ well-being.

The differences above are noteworthy because they reflect the disparity between the world view of myths and that of folk tales. Both genres are subordinate categories of Korean oral literature. Why are there two different outlooks on the world in Korean folklore?

The explanation comes from the generic, social and temporal differences between them. Still, since not all folk tales display a world view contrary to that of myths, regarding the dissimilarity in world view totally as generic has its limit. Therefore, we need to know more about the characteristics of folk tale types.

As is well known, The Woodcutter and the Angel is the Korean type of the Swan Maiden Tales widespread across the world. It is mainly found in East Asian nations. Examples are China’s Haknyŏshŏlhw a (The Crane Maiden Tale), the Mongolian legend of the Burayat tribal origin and Japan’s Iguichŏnsŏl (The Feather Robe Tale). Much has been written about the plausible origin of this The Wood Cutter and the Angel tale, the possible time of creation, the comparison of the Korean version with other countries’ versions and the comparative structural analysis of its varied versions in Korea by Son Chin-t’ae, Ch’oe Sang-su, Chŏn Yong-ch’ŏl, Sŏng Ki-yŏl and Yi Chi-yŏng.  

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11 Son Chin-t’ae, Research on Chosŏn National Folk Narratives (Ŭlyumunhwasa, 1947), pp. 193-198 Ch’oe Sang-su, A Comparative Study of Swan Maiden Tales (Munokhakbo, 1957) Kwon Yong-
Nevertheless, a comparative study has yet to be attempted on the world views of the story, especially in contrast with that of myths. This paper focuses on the issue and from now on will examine several tales each of which respectively represents versions from India, China, Mongolia and Japan.

1 India's myth of The King Pororabwas

Once upon a time King Pororabwas in northern India, while hunting in the Hymalayan forest, saved two Apsaras (the spirit of water) who were being kidnapped by a ghost and wooed one of the maidens, Urubwash. She accepted his proposal on one condition ‘the king should never show his naked body’ and married him. Meanwhile, Gandhavans, her companions plotted to bring her back and stole two antelopes that had guarded her. Urubwash lamented at the loss, crying “Is there anyone brave enough to bar it?” The king pursued the antelopes' kidnappers in such a hurry that he forgot to put on clothes. Gandhavans flashed a light on him with lightning. So Urubwash saw his bare body and instantly vanished. The frustrated king wandered around, seeking for her until he found her among the swans in a lake and asked her to return with him. But she said he had to be a Gandhavan first. When he begged the Gandhavans to let him join them, they said, “Though there is fire on earth, you do not have the holy fire that can make you equal to us”. They gave him a ceremonial tray that contained the holy fire and told him to burn an offering in it to be one of them. The king came home with the fire but carelessly lost it. Where the fire was stood a tall oleaster and a new samisu replaced the tray. He consulted The Gandhavans again and they said, “First, make a pore in the samisu and a cudgel out of the oleaster and turn the cudgel in the pore to kindle fire”. The king learned how to make fire as they said, became their kin and lived with Urubwash happily ever after.\(^{12}\)

This story is a fire-origin myth of a tribe in northern India and is classified as a type of Swan Maiden Tale. Kwon Yŏng-ch'ŏl presumes the former half of the tale to be the prototype of all of its kinds and in his theory argues that it is the oldest form created in the era of animistic-Totemic religion, which later spread into the world to generate Swan Maiden Tales.\(^{13}\) I, however, doubt if it can be classified as one of such tales. The essence of Swan Maiden Tales is the union and separation of a man and a woman: a man marries a swan maid by concealing her feather robe and she later finds it and leaves him. The King Pororabwas lacks an element and thus is not

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ch’ŏl, Research on Mt. K’umgang’s Angel Story (The Collection of Theses Vol. 1 from Hyos’ong Women’s Univ., 1969)


12 Summarized from Kwon Yŏng-ch’ŏl, op. cit., pp. 200-201

13 Ibid., pp. 201-202.
a prototype. Then, the affiliation of the story with Korea’s The Woodcutter and the Angel is minor. Nevertheless, the Indian myth is still noteworthy for the ending of the male-female union and its mythical function of telling about the origin of fire.

2. China’s Kyŏnu and Chiknyŏ Tale

Kyŏnu, who lived with a cow in the human world across the Milky Way, hid the celestial raiment of Chiknyŏ, a granddaughter of the heavenly emperor (or the Sŏwangmo), following what the cow said, while she took her bath in the Milky Way. Unable to ascend, she married him and stayed on earth, bearing him a son and a daughter. But the emperor sent his servant to bring her back. Kyŏnu followed her to heaven but was interrupted by Sŏwangmo. The cow told distressed Kyŏnu how to climb to heaven and died. Kyŏnu, again following the cow’s advice, headed for heaven disguised in the dead cow’s hide. Sŏwangmo hindered him from advancing but he continued his steps. The emperor, moved by his perseverance, allowed him and Chiknyŏ to meet once a year on July 7.14

This is a legend of the origin of two stars—the Altia and the Vega as well as that of ch‘ilsŏgil (July 7 in the lunar calendar) and ojakkyo (a bridge of crows and magpies). It has the same story line as the reunion type of The Woodcutter and the Angel. There are also some differences: Kyŏnu is a peasant living with a cow and Chiknyŏ is forced to ascend by the emperor’s order, leaving the children with her husband.

However, the union of earthly man with heavenly woman effected by hiding the celestial garment and the reunion with an animal’s help classify it as the same type as The Woodcutter and the Angel.

We must add, however, while this story is a legend equipped with evidence and might be a myth if supplied with a ritual, The Woodcutter and the Angel is a mere folk tale.

3 Mongoha’s tale of Burayat’s tribal origin

A hunter saw three swans flying to a lake, followed them and saw them turned to women. While they were swimming, he hid a feather robe and married its owner. After having 6 children, the swan lady fed her husband tarasum, a strong liquor, put on her celestial robe and escaped through a hole for smoke passage in the ceiling. Before leaving, she said to her daughter, “Every January, pour the horse milk and tea for me and scatter red tobacco.” The swan maiden was a daughter of Esege Malan, a god, and the Burayats dwelling around Lake Baikal were the descendants of her 6 children.15

14 Summarized from Chang Ki-han, Chines Myth (Úlyumunhwasa, 1974), pp 167-172
15 Summarized from Son Chin-t’ae, op cit, pp 196-197
There is no doubt that this is the myth of Burayat's tribal origin. The marriage between the hunter and the swan maiden is a mythical element accounting for the origin of the Burayates. And what she asked her daughter to do is a ritual, which means she was already worshipped as an ancestral goddess.

The myth belongs apparently to the same type as *The Woodcutter and the Angel* in that hiding the celestial robe leads them to marriage and its finding results in their breakup. Noting that it is the oldest ever known among its kind and the angel's ascension through the ceiling is not possible in Korean houses but only in the past of Mongolian nomads, Son Chin-t'ae assumes Korea's *The Woodcutter and the Angel* came from Mongolia. He believes the Mongolian story to be the origin of the type.

Soŋ Ki-yŏl compared a broad range of inherited stories in East Asia with one another, concluding that this story had its origin in the inland north on the following basis: the angel's bathing place is a pond, a lake, a river or a brook, all far from the sea; the animal character is a deer, a roe, a racoon, a buffalo, an ant, a bird, a wild boar, a monkey or a fresh water fish; the hero is either a hunter or a woodcutter, both related to the woods.\(^\text{16}\)

It is plausible and persuasive that this story has its origin in the Northern inland areas such as Mongolia and Siberia. One thing observable is the contrariety between the Burayat origin myth with earthly father and heavenly mother and the Korean with heavenly father and earthly mother. Furthermore, the hunter hero reveals it to be the myth of a hunting-and-gathering tribe and the heroine's request for a ritual relates the priesthood with a female. Also the number of children represents the tribal sacred figure, 6.

Because of these dissimilarities, Swan Maiden Tales from the inland north failed to be accepted as myth in Korea and instead were changed to a folk tale.

4. Japan's *Feather-Robe* Tale

In kūngangguk Ihyanggun Hohyang, Ihyang-domi saw eight swans turn to maids and take a bath in Ihyang Sogang. And he had his white dog steal a feather robe and married the youngest. Two sons and two daughters, Ûim-Chiyu, Naji-dŏngmi, Ishiri-bimi, Nashun-bimae, were born to be ancestors of tribe. Later, the angel found her robe and flew back to heaven. Ihyang-domi, alone, sighed his life away. Where the angel took bath is called *Sinp'o*.\(^\text{17}\)

The tale above attracts attention due to its preserved mythical nature. As a myth

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\(^{16}\) Soŋ Ki-yŏl, *op. cit.*, p 104

\(^{17}\) Summarized and translated from *Emperors' Annals* Vol 10, Art. 7th year, Kwon Yŏng-ch'ŏl, *op. cit.*, p 170
of a tribal origin with the birth of an ancestor from the union of a hunter and a heavenly maiden, it has the closest kinship to the Burayat myth. This fact supports the possibility of the story being carried to Japan from Mongolia. The dilemma is that Korea, a likely bridge for the diffusion, does not have a tale of the same story line. Every variation of The Woodcutter and the Angel collected across the Peninsula has the angel ascend with her children To be a myth, the story should leave either a son or a daughter of the angel on earth to become a progenitor. Neither the reunion type lacking in mythical physical evidence nor the separation type with no sacred cock and no record of a rite helps prove it to be a myth.

Why did this mutation occur in Korean data? The answer has something to do with the explanation of why The Woodcutter and the Angel displays a different world view from that of myth.

The Woodcutter and the Angel is a modified version of Swan Maiden Tales, a myth of an earthly father and celestial mother created among northern nomads and spread to the Peninsula, losing its mythical nature and mutating to a folk tale in the process. The already existing myth, Tongmyŏng shinhwā with celestial father and earthly mother, is the reason. Then, the earthly father and heavenly mother of The Woodcutter and the Angel is not typical in Korea. But the difference may have made the story’s circulation easier by evoking a reaction to the mythical world view and the admiration for a heavenly woman. Unlike myth, folk tales are open to modification, reflecting the laymen’s feeling for life and narrated for the sake of entertainment. Eventually, mixed with admiration for heaven, adoration of an angel and the desire of rewarding good behaviors, The Woodcutter and the Angel has become a legend and was later settled, with a more interesting addition, as one of the folk tales superior in literary value.

3. The Ancestry of Men and the Origin of the Sun and the Moon

Korea’s myth about human origins is Ch’angsega, a shamanistic myth from Hamhŭng.

Once upon a time when Minŭk, with a silver tray in his one hand and a gold one in the other, chanted a congratulatory incantation to heaven, bugs fell down from the sky, five on the gold tray and five on the silver.

The bugs grew, the gold ones to be men and the silver, women. The gold and the silver bugs wed one another and children were born between them.18

18 Son Čun-t’ae, Remaining Korean Mythical Songs (Hyangt’omunhwasa, 1930), p 8
The myth implies that man’s home is the sky, that men are not the Creator’s instant invention but have evolved through a considerable period and that all men are equal.

We need to ponder what the trays symbolize and where the bugs are from.

The gold tray is yellowish and circular and the bugs destined to be men come down to it. Then, the tray stands for the sun and the gold bugs are solar spirits. By the same token, the silver tray represents the moon and the silver bugs, lunar spirits. Ch’angsega says that mankind originates from the spirits of the sun and the moon descending to humans and becoming the progenitors of men and women.

There is a contrary folk tale: Haewa Tari doen Onui (The Brother and the Sister who Became the Sun and the Moon).

Once upon a time, a poor mother of three children met a tiger on her way home from her work in a village over a mountain. The tiger threatened her with death to take the rice cakes she was keeping for her children. Eventually the tiger ate her and then headed for her house, disguised in her clothes. The two elder children barely escaped to a tree, after the youngest was attacked by the beast pretending to be their mother. Spotting the children on the tree, the tiger climbed it, by chipping it with an ax. The frightened children prayed for a rope, which was sent down from heaven in reply to their prayer. Going into heaven, the sister became the sun and the brother, the moon. The tiger also entreated God for a rope and this time the rope given in reply was decayed. The beast fell to its death in a millet field. The red color of millet leaves is the relic of the dead tiger.19

The tale above is an interesting fable widespread across the nation and has approximately 30 variations with titles such as Why Millet Stems are Red and The Origin of the Sun and the Moon. Since my concern is not with how the tiger was defeated but with the children’s transformation to the sun and the moon in the latter part, I will omit the variations.

Similar tales of escaping from a beast like a tiger, a wolf or a lion are found in China, Mongolia, Japan and other regions. Japan in particular has almost the same story.20 On the other hand, tales in other countries do not have the part about the children’s transformation. In this light, the metamorphosis is a reflection of the Koreans’ world view.

The folk tale of the sun’s and the moon’s origin is in sharp contrast with the myth

19 Summarized from Son Chun-t’ae, Research on Korean National Folk narrative, pp 155-157
20 See Song Ku-yŏl, Comparative Research on Korean and Japanese Folk Tales (Ilyogak, 1979), pp 180-187
of mankind's origin in the characters' orientation and the nature of space

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver bugs (women)</td>
<td>The moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>The sun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the figure above, the myth and folk tales are opposite in their world views. The myth has descending development from the heaven to the earth and the folk tale, ascending evolution from the earth to the heaven. The gold tray in the myth corresponds to the moon in the folk tale, and the silver tray, to the sun. Again, they are connected to men and women. In other words, myth seeks the origin of earthly beings in heaven, while folk tales say that heavenly beings have their roots in earth.

Now, how can we comprehend the opposite views? To answer this question, we may start by reviewing the folkloric nature of *The Brother and the Sister who Became the Sun and the Moon*.

It is mythical in that it tells a story about the origin of two heavenly lights. It raises the possibility of a folk tale that was originally a myth. But, as already mentioned, the mythical part is typically Korean. Furthermore, a universal version of a story is generally closer to the prototype than a unique one. Considering the basic principles of the transmission and modification of stories, the part which tells about the children's transformation into the sun and the moon is better seen as a later attachment. Otherwise, the story should begin without the existence of sun or moon. But the mother in the tale leaves home in the morning and returns in the evening, which assumes an existent daily cycle and thus the presence of the sun. Besides, without the two lights, the world would remain in the dark, but no part of the story raises a problem of darkness. A myth should broach a problem in communal life and depict a hero's act to solve it. The tale involves only an individual escape and no act to relieve others of their ordeals. Moreover, the salvation has no close connection with the function of the sun and the moon. In other words, the birth of the heavenly bodies has no role in removing the tiger.

Therefore, the tale of the sun's and the moon's origin must have been
incorporated in the process of transmission. Then, the question is why the addition was made.

Myth with its sacredness allows no criticism, based on the collective consciousness of the community that believes it. Once established, a mythical idea becomes a rule of the group and tends to restrict free thinking. It also speaks for the believers' pride. It is handed down through rituals as a story that contains their outlook on the world.

On the contrary, a folk tale has no function of regulating the society. It survives because of its popular appeal and is open to addition as well as revision to make it more interesting. Still, comprehension is a prerequisite for evoking men's interest, which ties the later alteration somehow to the original view. In this regard, we find an answer to the question why the change of a folk tale has unfolded in the opposite direction to myth. Since the worship of the sun and the moon in the sky produced myths that sought the origin of mankind in the heavenly bodies, people could understand the reverse and were attracted to contrary folk tales.

Not all types of folk tales reverse the idea of myths. But not restrained by religious faith, they are free to do it. The mythical content, spared from any argument in the form of myth, could be criticized in a folk tale. Folk tales accommodated the possibility dismissed by myths, thus virtually building a world in which two possibilities co-exist.

A folk tale stems from real life, and contains desired experiences that reflect ordinary people's ideals. Myth, linked to the ruling ideology, naturally provokes reaction from laymen. Comprehending the psychology of folk tales, readers explains its world view which sets the human earthly realm over the heavenly one, inversing the god-oriented mythical view that subordinates men's earth to Heaven.

4. Conclusion

So far I have examined the opposite world views of myth and folk tales and provided an account for the reversal in world view.

In Korean myth, the birth of an ancestor is recounted as the outcome of a marriage between heavenly man and earthly woman. This is a common characteristic of myths including kŏng'guk shinhwâ such as Ta'n'gun shinhwâ and Chumong shinhwâ and musok shinhwâ such as Ch'ŏnjiwangbonp'uri and Shirumal. On the other hand, The Woodcutter and the Angel, a type of folk tale, depicts a union between earthly man and heavenly woman.

Ch'ansega, a musok shinhwâ is a story of mankind's origin that says the spirits of
the sun and the moon fell to the earth to grow to be men and women, who later married each other for procreation. Opposing such a mythical idea, the tale of *Haewa Tari doen Onui* finds the origin of the sun and the moon in earthly siblings.

The subordination of the earth to heaven in myths is reversed in folk tales that attempt to account for heavenly bodies with a focus on the earth. Myths are interested in the rule of a nation, reflecting the collective consciousness, while folk tales lay more emphasis on individual happiness, implying the laymen’s longing for a utopia.

My search for what brought folk tales into being has progressed in two ways: One way was studying the typical uniqueness of folk tales and the other, looking into the difference of two genres. It was shown that, *The Woodcutter and the Angel*, originally a foreign myth, underwent a change to a folk tale, while being imported to Korea, in an attempt to avoid the conflict with earlier local myths. In addition, *Haewa Tari doen Onui* was shown to embody a reversal of the mythical world view.

Consequently, the world view of folk tales, different from that of myths derives from the desire to complement and criticize the partial view of myth through folk tales, which are open to change and lacking in the social and moral function of myths.

(Translated by Park Seon-young, Korea Foreign Language University)

**GLOSSARY**

| Ch’angsega  | 創世歌         | musok shinhwa | 巫俗神話      |
| Chiknyŏ   | 繭女           | *Samgugyusa*  | 三國遺事      |
| Ch’iljangil | 七夕日        | *Samwit’aebak* | 三危太伯      |
| Chumong Shinha | 朱蒙神話       | *Shindansu*   | 神檀樹       |
| Hwanin   | 桓因           | Sip’o         | 神浦         |
| Hwanung | 桓雄           | Tan’gun       | 檀君         |
| kŏng’guk shinhwa | 建國神話   | Tongbuyŏ     | 東扶餘       |
| Kyŏnu   | 牽牛           | Ungnyŏ       | 熊女         |