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**Old Tradition as New Revelation:  
Magoism and its Nostalgic Ethos Expressed in Pan-East-Asian Primary Sources**

Mago [Magu in Chinese or Mako in Japanese] is the yet-to-be-known Great Goddess of East Asia whose sporadic manifestations are largely untreated if not underestimated. Her representation as a goddess of immortality in Taoism is but a partial manifestation that conceals a full recognition of her supreme divinity. While her origin remains unknown in Chinese and Japanese sources, she is patiently depicted as the cosmogonist, progenitress, and ultimate sovereign in Korean sources. Such discrepancy offers a clue to profound, untold knowledge that has been left in the dark for so long, the lost mytho-cultural-history of East Asia, buried in the halcyon antiquity of East Asia. This paper maps out a dynamic of how a host of Korean data demystifies highest antiquity especially shrouded in Chinese sources.

Intrigued by the overt female principle embodied in the *Budoji* (*Epic of the Emblem City*), I sought out a larger corpus of Mago literature. Soon I was able to document a plethora of primary sources including myths, folklore, toponyms, poems, lyrics, paintings, poetry, and religious and historical records as well as the *Handan Gogi* (*Archaic Histories of Han and Dan*) from Korea, China, and Japan. In analyzing and interpreting them, I have encountered an organic structure that holds together otherwise seemingly isolated data and named it Magoism. Magoism refers to an archaically originated gynocentric tradition of East Asia that venerates Mago as supreme divine and political authority.

The nostalgic ethos couched in various and sundry data from Korea, China, and Japan is evidence to the forgotten legacy of Old Magoism, that is, Magoism in pre- and proto-patriarchal times.<sup>1</sup> Old Magoism is distinguished from later Magoism *ipso facto* that it refers to the mythical, spiritual, cultural, and political matrix of highest antiquity banished into the hinterland of history by the rise and establishment of patriarchal [read Chinese] rules in East Asia. In short, Old Magoism represents gynocentric agency as central to not only spiritual authority but also political power. This paper demonstrates that the record/memory of Old Magoism has survived to this day in the topos of nostalgia for Mago and Magoism. The reappearance of the *Budoji* in the 1980s makes it possible to name Old Magoism the hitherto called utopian past of Grand Peace (太平) and mythic period of Korean founders known as Hwanin, Hwangung, and Dangun. With that said, this study presents itself as unconventional in redefining the gender agency of East Asian highest antiquity thus-far-nearly-always-male-assumed by patriarchal inquisitors.

A rich corpus of transnational primary data that include pre-modern texts, cosmogonic tales, legends, ritual practices, toponyms, and a wide range of cultural and literary constructs—from megaliths (large rocks) to pre-modern literature, paintings, cantos, and shamanic lyrics—directly or tangentially suggests the premise that East Asians thrived under the politico-cultural banner of Magoism for a long span of time in the past. Of course, the very concept of Old Magoism owes in large part to the *Budoji*, which offers a panoramic view of Magoism from the cosmogonic beginning to the period of magocratic [read Magoist theocratic] sovereigns in pre- and proto-Chinese times and to early Silla. Because the issue of using the *Budoji*, and the *Handan Gogi* for that matter, remains contested if not tacitly dismissed among mainstream Koreanists, this study's take on Old Magoism may be labeled a hypothesis. That said, this paper demonstrates the efficacy of the working template of the mytho-cultural-history of Old Magoism in interpreting historical materials especially of such early Chinese texts as the *Shan Hai Ching*,

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the mytho-history of Magoism, see Helen Hye-Sook Hwang, "Issues in Studying Mago, the Great Goddess of East Asia: Primary Sources, Gynocentric History, and Nationalism" *The Constant and Changing Faces of the Goddess: Goddess Traditions of Asia* ed. Deepak Shimkhada and Phyllis K. Herman (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 10-32.

*Chuang Tzu*, *Lieh Tzu*, and Ge Hong's literature on Magu in addition to the *Budoji*. In this effort, the prominent texts as well as variant and sundry data that bear testimony to the intense and recurring theme of seeking Mago and Magoism—often referred to as the Abode of Mago, the Origin of Mago, and the Reign of Mago, etc.—no longer remain anomalous but arise as evidence to what has been rendered invisible, Old Magoism.

By mentioning a gamut of transnational data, this paper, on the one level, seeks to clear out some possible false conceptions. The first misconception may be that Mago is a modern Korean invention. This is simply proved untrue upon noting a variety of data from China and Japan especially the earliest text that directly accounts for Mago written in the fourth century CE, the *Biography of Magu (Magu Zhuan)* by Ge Hong (284-364). Moreover, this study involves as Magoist data such early Chinese texts as the *Shan Hai Ching*, the *Chuang Tzu*, and the *Lieh Tzu* either dated contemporaneous with Ge Hong's or older. Endorsing them as "earliest," however, can mislead one to the idea that Magoism was germinated and disseminated by the Chinese to elsewhere, the sinocentric framework. This study showcases an antithesis to such a convention. The issue of dating Korean data including the *Budoji* remains precarious, as is the case of other apocryphal texts, especially because they testify to the mytho-history of East Asia as well as Korea that antecedes the *Samguk Sagi* and the *Samguk Yusa*, the alleged *earliest* books of Korea. A sole reliance on sinocentric data as "earliest" and "authentic" poses a serious problem in studying transnational Magoist data.

Another premature judgment may be that this study is driven by Korean nationalism. This is equally faulty in that this study places its emphasis on gynocentrism [female agency] rather than nationalism or ethnocentrism. To be accurate, the tenets of Old Magoism are rooted in pre-nationalist or pre-ethnocentric consciousness. In other words, the very definition of Magoism as a pan-East Asian *gynocentric* cultural matrix is incompatible with a nationalist perspective. The gynocentric principle of Old Magoism primarily purported in the *Budoji*'s mytho-historical account is ultimately universalist or supra-nationalist. For example, the common ancestor of East Asians, according to the mytho-history of Old Magoism, traces back to one divine personage, Hwanggung, the third generation descendent/lineage of Mago, the primal Magoist sovereign. Of course, the ethnogenetic myth of Magoism advocates kindred of all peoples as Mago's offspring. National distinctions in understanding Magoist data are inevitable, however, as history has evolved as national units. They are of great significance offering a blueprint to an overall picture of transnational Magoism.

### **Nostalgic Search of Mago and Magoism in Sundry Data**

A multitude of pan-East Asian data that involves the Magoist theme of nostalgia, an intensified sentiment of seeking Mago and Magoism, remains to be documented and fully studied elsewhere. This paper traces a central structure of its theme that requires a trans-national approach to Old Magoism. The Magoist topos of nostalgia is often plainly expressed as is in the poetry of Ts'ao T'ang, Tang poet of the late 9<sup>th</sup> century, "Once Miss Hemp [Magu] has gone away, none knows when she will come again."<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, its nostalgic topos with regards to Mago remains something less of significance if not deviated in the work of Chinese Taoist experts, to be discussed at a later section. On the other hand, the theme of nostalgia appears to be deployed at a whole new level in Korean sources. With her cosmogonic origin widely reiterated in lieu of numerous mythic tales and the mytho-history of Old Magoism in the *Budoji*, the nostalgic topos couched in Korean data lends evidence to the centrality of Magoism among Koreans. National discrepancy is apparent. Mago remains an evanescent figure with regard to the nostalgic topos of halcyon antiquity in Chinese Taoist data, whereas she is only lucidly pronounced to be the cause of nostalgia in Korean sources. A throng of literature that associates Mago with Mt. Cheontae (Tiantai in

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<sup>2</sup> Edward H. Schafer, *Mirages on the Sea of Time: The Taoist Poetry of Ts'ao T'ang* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 98.

Chinese) is particularly telling of this difference. That Mago is favorably reiterated as “Mago Halmi of Mt. Cheontae” in Korean sources is precisely at point. Halmi here means “goddess” rather than “granny” or “crone.”<sup>3</sup> The phrase, “Mago Halmi of Mt. Cheontae,” is no anomalous or neutral statement but the Magoist self-definition of Koreans. It is ultimately the testimony of and by Koreans to the legacy of Old Magoism erstwhile revived in this mountain trope. The explicit designation of Mago to Mt. Cheontae collectively or figuratively speaks to the Chinese or East Asian inability to name the cosmogonic origin of Mago and much less the legacy of Old Magoism. Its significance mounts considering the legacy of Mt. Cheontae permeated in the landscape of East Asian religious traditions known as a birth place of the Buddhist sect of Cheontae and one of the major centers of southern Taoism.<sup>4</sup>

Among others, the *Sukhyang-jeon (Tale of Sukyang)* is noted for an original storyline of seeking Mago Halmi of Mt. Cheontae.<sup>5</sup> Fictionalized as the central divine personage incarnated as a crone, Mago Halmi nurtures and guides Sukhyang, the female protagonist, orphaned at a young age who has undergone a series of life’s harsh ordeals. The scenario climaxes in the concluding section where Yi Seon, spouse of Sukhyang, takes a trip to Mt. Cheontae to seek Mago Halmi and to obtain the elixir. This literature, professionally recited by a story-teller for the public, includes a tantalizing dialogue between Mago Halmi and Yi Seon, the latter who does not recognize Mago while speaking to her in person. Mago finally reveals herself and hands over to him the elixir, the legendary medicine allegedly sought by the Chinese emperors in antiquity to no avail. The story ends with the protagonists in old age who take the elixir and are taken to the air for ascension, the hallmark of transcendents. Here Mago is portrayed as no mere transcendent but the endower of the Taoist ultimate attainment. Seemingly saturated in Taoist elements, this literature may be legitimately taken as Taoist. However, the topos of Mago Halmi of Mt. Cheontae is more apt to be reframed in Magoism. *Sukhyangjeon*’s subplot that Mago Halmi in Mt. Cheontae is the originator of the elixir is hard evidence. This is the sort of content void in Chinese Taoist literature. Furthermore, that another classic novel the *Ideungsanggangrok* reiterates a similar story line of Mago of Mt. Cheontae in a Buddhist context legitimizes Magoist approaches.

It is unknown how earlier this literature was written and widely read. However, its popularity is confirmed in several ways. Reportedly mentioned in another work dated 1754,<sup>6</sup> the *Sukyangjeon* is, according to Jo Susam (1762-1849), a book counted first in the repertory of classical novels recited by professional story-tellers (*jeon-gi-su*) whose itinerary performances included designated locations in the capital.<sup>7</sup> Considering the large corpus of Mago folklore from Korea, it is quite certain that its central theme of seeking Mago Halmi made this literature the most favorite of all other classics of the time. As if to prove this point, its storyline especially of Yi Seon’s journey to Mt. Cheontae in search of Mago Halmi recurs in a canto of folk lyric, *Ujo* of Men’s Song.<sup>8</sup>

Here is a canto by Dae-yong Hong (1731-1783), renowned Neo-Confucian scholar-official from Korea. Painted in a Taoist hue, it yet makes it clear the centrality of Mago in its nostalgic ethos:

<sup>3</sup> I explained the term “halmi” in more detail elsewhere. See the footnote 1, Helen Hye Sook Hwang, “The Female Principle in the Magoist Cosmogony” *Ochre Journal of Women’s Spirituality* (Fall 2007) <http://www.ciis.edu/ochrejournal/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Mt. Cheontae, alongside Mt. Mago and Mt. Goya, is found across the present territories of Korea, China, and/or Japan.

<sup>5</sup> Literature that involves Mago of Mt. Cheontae includes a variety of genres including shamanic lyrics, folksongs, classic novels, myths, and poetry.

<sup>6</sup> *Manhwabon Chunhayngga* (晚華本春香歌). See the *Hanguk Minjok Munhwa Daebaekgwa Sajeon (Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture)*, Vol. 13, (Seongnamsi: Jeongsin Munhwasa, 1991), 342.

<sup>7</sup> Jo Susam (1762-1849), Jo Susam, Chujae Giyi (*Collective Essays of Chujae, 秋齋紀異*), tr. Gyeongjin Heo (Seoul: Seohaemunjp, 2008), 92.

<sup>8</sup> Nongrak-pyeon, Ujo, Namchang Gogok. Cited in <http://gagog.co.kr/OSSB2/Root/db/gg/gg/mws1.htm> (August 12, 2008).

News of Mt. Bongrae is far beyond the water clouds,  
 where is the transcendent playing the jade flute?...  
 While anticipating Mago's letter,  
 only peach flowers are blown in the late spring wind  
 Hoary hair grew in the lapse of a half life-span,  
 rolling the dream of returning to the Sang-cheong (Highest Clarity).<sup>9</sup>

The mood of the Magoist nostalgia floods the stanza. In the years of awaiting Mago's letter in his wish of returning to the Sang-cheong, the blissfulness of highest antiquity, he finds himself mid-aged. Such literary symbols as Mt. Bongrae (Mt. Penglai in Chinese), peach flowers, and Sang-cheong (Shang-ching, Highest Clarity) appear highly evocative of Chinese Taoism. Nonetheless, placing Mago in the Taoist context is unsuccessful in that Taoism explicates neither the origin of Mago nor the mytho-history of Old Magoism, a point to be discussed in more detail at later sections.

It is not only Mago but also Magoism that is often expressed as the subject of nostalgia. In these cases, Magoism is referred to as the Reign of Mago, the Event of Mago, the Way of Mago, or the Principle of Heavenly Emblem. The brief verse from the *Goryeosa (Chronicle of the Goryeo Dynasty)*, "Reads the song recited in the palace and streets, 'Ah ah, if the Reign of Mago leaves us now, when will it return?'" no longer seems anomalous.<sup>10</sup> Here Magoism is addressed as the Reign of Mago, an expedient epithet of Old Magoism. It is true that this verse, somewhat abruptly inserted in relation to a political incident that took place in 1357, leaves room for speculations. What can be drawn for now is that medieval Koreans in the waning years of the Goryeo (918-1392) rekindled the Magoist nostalgia in the face of a political crisis. It suggests a keen historical awareness perhaps that the legacy of Old Magoism represented by the Goryeo Dynasty was being banished into the hinterland of history.

### **The Magoist nostalgia for Old Magoism reified in the *Budoji (Epic of the Emblem City)***

The *Budoji* is an indispensable text in construing the nature of the Magoist nostalgic ethos. Budo (the Emblem City), better known as Old Joseon of Korea (ca. 2333 BCE-ca. 232 BCE), colloquially used in the *Budoji* refers to the civilization of Old Magoism in its last crest. According to the *Budoji*, Budo flourished for over a thousand years in proto-Chinese times until it reached its second half period of waning. As its title indicates, the *Budoji* may be called the memorabilia of Budo, the last fortress of the gynocentric world of Old Magoism. To be more specific, as alleged to have been collated and written in the late fourth or early fifth century of Silla, it embodies the early Sillan testament to the bygone utopian world of Old Magoism. Its versatile language richly versed in yet to be known ancient knowledge of myth, symbol, history, astrology, music, number, ritual, and philosophy paints an untold panoramic view of Old Magoism anchored in the cosmogonic myth. Fully charged with the nostalgic ethos of Old Magoism, the *Budoji*, on the one hand, bemoans for the loss of Old Magoism. On the other hand, it proudly self-testifies early Sillans to be the successor of Old Magoists and renews their commitment to the Magoist mandate, to restore the Origin of Mago among the peoples of the world, bequeathed by their Magoist forebears. The lapse of time, as Budo underwent the process of disintegration due to the expansion of the newly risen monarchies, has allowed early Sillans to become the forerunner of neo-Magoists at the dawn of

<sup>9</sup> *Hanguk Gojeon Yongeo Sajeon (Dictionary of Korean Classic Vocabularies)* ed. by Sadan Beopin Sejongdaewang Saeophoe (Seoul: Sadan Beopin Sejongdaewang Saeophoe, 2001), 426.

<sup>10</sup> *Goryeosa (Chronicle of the Goryeo Dynasty)*, vol. 36, Saega, King Chunghye, quoted in JungPyeong Noh, *GoChoson-ui Jonggyo Hyeokmyeong (The Religious Revolution of Old Choson)* (Seoul: Daehan, 2003), 130.

post-Budo history. Early Sillans overcomes the pitfall of becoming the Magoist fundamentalists who rigidly insist on traditions regardless. They read time correctly that post-Budo history, unlike earlier periods of Old Magoism, is a degenerative age in which the Magoist utopian vision is ever greatly challenged to an unprecedented scale.<sup>11</sup>

To curtail the cosmogonic account and mytho-history of Old Magoism detailed in the *Budoji*, we find the following passage directly addressed to the loss of Old Magoism. Upon the disintegration of Budo, the *Budoji* states:

Alas, the Event of Mago was rendered as weird and its remnants became invisible! Yuho traveled around many peoples and preached the Way of Mago and the Principle of Heavenly Emblem. However, people were suspicious of it and did not accept it. Only the chroniclers came humbly and receive it. Upon this Yuho explain the original principle and transmitted the knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

Here Yuho is a legendary Magoist demagogue and political leader who lived in the turbulent time of Budo. Finally, the *Budoji* begins to name Old Magoism as “the Event of Mago,” “the Way of Mago,” and “the Principle of Heavenly Emblem.” Of course, they intimate the cosmogonic, ethnogenetic, and pre-Chinese history of Old Magoism. Budo, the last sanctuary of traditional confederacies and their civilizations of Old Magoism, eventually falls into oblivion in the mind of many peoples in East Asia. Its myth-history is shrunk into the pages of historical books, to be eventually lost in the course of history. This untold record, as we shall see later, sheds light on the Chinese nostalgia manifested in Taoist texts to retrieve the lost history of highest antiquity. It can be drawn that the mytho-history of Old Magoism has rendered esoteric to ancient Koreans, whereas it is largely forgotten if not mystified elsewhere.

It is noteworthy that the *Budoji* spares nine chapters (from Chapter 17 through Chapter 26) out of thirty-three chapters to reason the rise of Yo (Yao in Chinese) and his successors to political power that consequently brought the demise of Budo. Difficulty is enormous in discussing the *Budoji*'s apologia of Old Magoism against the rise of Yo mainly because much of the sophisticated system of Old Magoism remains to be explicated. Suffice it to say that the *Budoji* pins down the expansion of Yo's rule as an epochal assault upon the reign of Old Magoism in the third millennium BCE.<sup>13</sup> This is not to say that the *Budoji* simply blames the rise of a Chinese polity from the perspective of the defeated. It speaks against Yao's rule from the position of authority. In fact, Yo's rule is treated as nothing more than a dangerous misguided force soon subdued by the Budolese nonetheless at a high cost.

Yo is a pseudo-Magoist who attempts to misuse his partial knowledge of “the system of Budo's sacred cities.”<sup>14</sup> Let us say for the purpose of this paper that the system of Budo's sacred cities refers to the magocratic [read Magoist theocratic] rule of Budo. Precisely, Yao is denounced as an epochal fraud deceived by his own desire to steal “the power of Heaven,” as the *Budoji* states:

Yo did not know [the principle of] Heavenly Numbers. He divided land arbitrarily and ruled the heaven and earth according to his own desire. Taking an opportunity, he built a private altar. He

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<sup>11</sup> Without the protection of federal alliances, the united force of neighbouring Magoist city-states, early Sillans adopted the centralized governing system to cope with internal and external challenges. Jesang Bak, *Budoji* tr. by Eunsu Kim (Seoul: Doseo Chulpan Hanmunhwa, 2002), 111-6.

<sup>12</sup> *Budoji*, 90-91.

<sup>13</sup> The rise of Yao's rule is attributed to the second greatest catastrophe after the “fall” of human ancestors, the mythological disaster, which resulted in the loss of the Citadel of Mago, the paradisiacal community, and the migratory settlements of early peoples into the corners of the world. See Helen Hye-Sook Hwang, *Seeking Mago, the Great Goddess: A Mytho-Historic-Theological Reconstruction of Magoism, an Archaically Originated Gynocentric Tradition of East Asia*, Ph.D. dissertation (Claremont: Claremont Graduate University, 2005), Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Budoji*, 78.

drove out people from the land [and ordered] to raise dogs and sheep. He called himself emperor and controlled administration by himself. The world was silenced like dirt-stone-plant-trees and the Heavenly Principle regressed to vanity. He stole the power of Heaven and falsely established a tyrannical rule out of his private desire.<sup>15</sup>

The verdict is clear: A self-enthroned king/emperor is in no way justified in Magoism. Yo is ill-luminous, self-serving, and tyrannical. His rule is fundamentally incomparable to Budo's original sovereignty. Ultimately his self-motivated political authority is baseless and leads nowhere but to destruction. The culture of oppression and domination is newly implanted. The *Budoji* sees Yo's regimes as an onset of the monarchical/patriarchal rule in East Asia.

In sum, what the *Budoji* tackles with respect to Yo's rule is its historical and ontological implications: Yo's rule heralds the degenerative age characterized by monarchical rules. Unlike the conventional representation of Yao to be the sage-ruler of the bygone era of Grand Peace, the *Budoji* indicts him a monarchical ruler who has no precedent. His rise in power is the advent of a new era where the original unity upheld by the traditional rule of Old Magoism becomes unknown to the public. It writes a new history where a new ontology is prescribed. The gynocentric unity is assigned to the world of the unseen. Mago, the Original Female, is replaced by something that is incomparably egregious and inferior.

There is no subtlety in the *Budoji* saying that Yao and his successors invaded tribal political units in the southwest of Budo [read Old Choson Korea] and destroyed alliances among the Budolese city-states. Nonetheless, it is of importance to note that the *Budoji*'s objection to Yao's rule is not prompted by a particular interest based on nationalism/ethnocentrism or "feminism" of a sort. Both approaches are inappropriate, if not anachronistic, in handling the original unity that the *Budoji* sustains. I would say that a non-essentialist perspective is required in viewing gendered and nationalized implications of the *Budoji*. Of course, the language of the *Budoji* is neither gender-specific nor nationality-specific. In other words, the *Budoji* does not endorse an essentializing notion of Koreans vs. the Chinese or women vs. men. What I seek to demonstrate is that the *Budoji* sanctions against the rise of patriarchal rules yet to be called the Chinese based on the perspective of the original unity traditionally maintained by the gynocentric rule of Old Magoism. The non-essentialist linguistic of the *Budoji* is evident in the following critiques of Yao's rule:

In general, Yo's three-fold fault is derived from the desire of void action. How can one compare it to the way of real action of Budo? Void action lacks principle within and leads to annihilation, whereas real action animates principle within, which suffices the self and enables autonomous co-existence.<sup>16</sup>

We are given an untold concept that requires attention; the notion of real action(實爲), reminiscent of but distinguished from the Taoist notion of non-action(無爲). Real action stands for the universal state of unity backed by the life-affirming creative principle, whereas void action(虛爲) stands for a partial understanding of reality prompted by the desire of the self over against the non-self dictated by the life-reducing destructive principle. The void action of Yao marks a new ontology that lacks innate principle. The rise of Yo's rule means nothing less than the socio-historical undermining of the original unity. Ultimately, the *Budoji* objects to Yao's rule from the holistic perspective of Old Magoism.

### **Mt. Goya in early Chinese Texts: An Opaque Window to Old Magoism**

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<sup>15</sup> *Budoji*, 78.

<sup>16</sup> *Budoji*, 86.

The toponym of Mt. Goya (Goyasan), fossilized in early Chinese texts such as the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, the *Lieh Tzu*, and the *Chuang Tzu*, offers a tool to decipher the tantalizing whispers regarding Old Magoism. Reframed in Magoism, the records pertaining to “Mt. Goya” in these texts substantiate the memory of Magoist sovereigns, especially Budo. The etymology of “Goya” begins to be untangled: “Go 姑” in Mt. Goye refers to Mago, as is in her other names, and “Ye 射,” title of high office or high status. Thus, Goya means Magoist sovereigns representing the reign of Old Magoism.

Because this term is pronounced differently in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese (read Goye, Gosa, Guya, Guye, Kushe, Koya, Koye, or Kosa), readers should note the congruence of its logographic characters (姑射). According to my documentation, there are at least two places named Mt. Goya in Korea, one in Milyang, Gyeonnam, South Korea, and the other in Gaecheon, Pyeongnam, North Korea. In particular, Mt. Goya in Milyang, South Korea, has a fragmented story called Goya because its appearance resembles the image of Mago Halmi pulling a ship. The nautical motif in Mago folktales is no oddity, as it is often associated in other regions of Korea.<sup>17</sup> In addition, other toponyms like Gosa-cheon (Goyacheon, *ya* is often misread as *sa*, Stream of Goya), Gosa-ri (Town of Goya), and Goryeh Maeul (Village of Goryeh) within the vicinity add to its little-known socio-historical importance.<sup>18</sup> Mt. Goya in Japan is noted for its historical importance as a sacred place where Kukai (774-835), founder of the Japanese Shingon Buddhism, preached and retired.<sup>19</sup>

Japanese sources offer a critical linkage between Mago and Mt. Goya. Mt. Goya is known as Mt. Hakoya in the *Tale of the Heike*, a renowned saga. Read as Mt. Hakoya, Mt. Magoya 麻姑射山 self-evidently identifies the name Mago [read Mako in Japanese].<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, its English translation “the palace of former-emperors” appears to be drawn from the dictionary definition that is more informative. The *Japanese Language Dictionary* defines it two-fold: (1) Mt. Hakoya (麻姑射山) derives from *Chung Tzu*, which mentions Mt. Guye; (2) it indicates the palace of former-emperors.<sup>21</sup> That Mt. Hakoya derives from the *Chung Tzu* is another crucial clue to unlock the mysterious if not mystified account of the *Chuang Tzu*, to be discussed shortly.

The *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, reputed to be one of the earliest texts of China, spits out the fragments of old memory associated with Mt. Goye:

*Chao Hsien* (Korea) [Choson or Joseon in Korean] is east of Lieh Yang, south of Hai Pei (sea north)... *Lieh Ku She* [read Lieh-Guye, a series of Guyes] is on an island surrounded by the sea and river. *She Ku Land* [read the State of Yegu] is in the sea, and belongs to *Lieh Ku She*... *P'eng Lai Mountain* [read Mt. Penglai] is in the sea [italics and bracketed words are mine].<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The rock of anchored ship (배맨바위) is otherwise called the rock of Halmi located in Gochang. Also, Mt. Ami (Mother), Sunchang, where Gomo Sanseong (Mountain Citadel of Mother Goddess) is located, is also known as the mountain of anchored ship (배맨산). See Hwang (2005), 262.

<sup>18</sup> *Sinjeung Dongguk Yeoji Seungram*, (New Edition of Korean Encyclopedia), Vol. VI, (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Chujinchoi, 1969), 591-592.

<sup>19</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Asian Civilizations*, Vol 4 (Editions Jean-Michel Place, 1978), 382. See also *Japan Biographical Encyclopaedia & Who's Who* (Tokyo, Japan: The Rengo Press, LTD. 1960), 721-2.

<sup>20</sup> *The Tale of the Heike (Story of the Heike)*, tr. by Hiroshi Kitagawa and Bruce T. Tsuchida (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975), 226. This saga involves the Heike family (1131-1221) in Japan.

<sup>21</sup> *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* (日本國語大辭典, *The Japanese Language Dictionary*), 1976.

<sup>22</sup> *Shan Hai Ching: Legendary Geography and Wonders of Ancient China*, Hsiao-Chieh Cheng, Hui-Chen Pai Cheng, Kenneth Lawnce Thern (Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China: Committee for Compilation and Examination of the Series of Chinese Classics, National Institute for Compilation and Translation, 1985), 197.

Due to the particular choice of transliteration of logographic characters, such words as “Chao Hsien (Korea),” “Lieh Ku She,” and “She Ku Land” appear confusing at first glance. However, it is evident that “Ku She (Guye)” in Lie Ku She (a chain of Guye mountains) and “She Ku (Yegu)” in She Ku Land (State of Guye mountains) written in the same characters, refer to Mt. Guye. Because the account of the *Shan Hai Ching* is notorious for its fragmentary nature whose meaning is often interrupted by an irrelevant content inserted between the sentences, it is difficult to construct a reliable estimation of the above. Thus, I cautiously draw attention to the fact that Lieh Ku She (a chain of Guye mountains) is described as an isle-state surrounded by the seas and/or rivers, to be reiterated by the *Lieh Tzu* to which I shall return shortly. Also the references of Chao Hsien (Choson in Korean) and Mt. P’eng Lai (Mt. Bongrae in Korean) in relation to Mt. Guye are by no means haphazard, a point which will be clearer in what follows.

Even crude indicators of Mt. Goya suffice to remind one of the architectonic structures of Budo that the *Budoji* describes. Despite the relevance of the *Budoji*’s account on the mytho-history of Budo, covered in five chapters, to this point, its discussion remains unmentioned in this paper due to the lack of space. I shall only mention here that Budo is a particularly constructed confederated polity including the three mountain isle states whose legends are widely spread among East Asians of the later day. One of them is Mt. Bong-rae [Penglai in Chinese] and the *Budoji* states, “Many tribes gathered the fruit of five-fold auspiciousness that is pine nuts in the peak of Wongyo of Mt. Bongrae. They brought back home this five-fold auspiciousness otherwise called the sea pine of Bongrae (Bongrae Haesong).”<sup>23</sup> Budo, among others, involves sacred intercultural conferences/celebrations called Sinsi (Divine Market/City) held every ten years and Josi (Morning City/Market) and Haesi (Sea City/Market) held annually.

The *Lieh Tzu*, one of the earliest Taoist texts on a par with the *Chuang Tzu* and *Dao De Jing*, takes the toponym of Mt. Guye into a whole different level, as it states:

*The Ku-ye [read Guye] mountains stand on a chain of islands where the Yellow River enters the sea. Upon the mountains there lives a Divine Man [Woman], who inhales the wind and drinks the dew, and does not eat the five grains. His [Her] mind is like a bottomless spring, his [her] body is like a virgin’s. He [She] knows neither intimacy nor love, yet immortals and sages serve him [her] as ministers. He [She] inspires no awe, he [she] is never angry, yet the eager and diligent act as his [her] messengers. He [She] is without kindness and bounty, but others have enough by themselves; he [she] does not store and save, but he [she] himself [herself] never lacks. The Yin and Yang are always in tune, the sun and moon are always temperate, breeding is always timely, the harvest is always rich, and there are no plagues to ravage the land, no early deaths to afflict men [people], and animals have no diseases, and ghosts have no uncanny echoes [Female and gender-generic words as well as Italics are mine].*<sup>24</sup>

Here Mt. Goye is portrayed as a chain of mountain-isle states where the divine ruler resides. Not only the description of Mt. Goye as “a chain of islands” but also its geological location “where the Yellow River enters the sea,” is evocative of the account from the *Shan Hai Ching*. It is implied that the divine person of Mt. Guye is the sage ruler of highest antiquity.

I have juxtaposed female and generic terms in parentheses. In fact, the above passage itself is gender-suggestive in the statement that the divine ruler of Mt. Guye has a body like “a virgin’s.” Once perceived as female, the divine person on Mt. Goya begins to be reconfigured in Magoism. This divine ruler appears to indicate the Magoist female sovereign of bygone antiquity. In sum, the above may be viewed as a mnemonic utterance to the lost civilization of Old Magoism codified in the toponym Mt. Guye.

Expectantly, the above account of the *Lieh Tzu* is taken into the context of Taoism by Taoist

<sup>23</sup> *Budoji* 64.

<sup>24</sup> *The Book of Lieh-Tzu*, A. C. Graham tr., (London: John Murray, 1960), 35. Hereafter referred to as the *Lieh-Tzu*.



scholars. Ann Birrell's assessment of Mt. Guye in relation to the paradise of immortals in the east is one example, as she states:

Here [in the aforementioned account of *Lieh Tzu*] the paradise is in the east and consists of islands inhabited by immortals known as *hsien* and *shen*, or transcendent beings. These terms emerged in the post-Han era, and a considerable literature--part mythological, part legendary, part lore, and part fiction--grew up around the concept of the *hsien*-immortal. Examples are among a proliferation of such books are *Biographies of Immortals (Lieh hsien chuan)* and *Biographies of Holy Immortals (Shen hsien chuan)*, ascribed to Liu Hsiang (79-8 BC) but now thought to date from the fourth to the fifth century, and to Ko Hung (A.D. 254-334).<sup>25</sup>

While Mago remains unknown in her cosmogonic origin in Taoism, the idea of utopia appears rootless. The paradise *in the east* is no neutral expression: Used with the topos of Mago, it comprises a mythological trope that symbolizes the Taoist utopia.<sup>26</sup> Needless to say, it is a notion reminiscent of the primal paradise of the Citadel of Mago reified as Budo, a mid third millennium replica of the Citadel of Mago. While Taoist approaches apparently face an impasse to the origin of this divine sovereign of Mt. Guye, the scheme of Magoism cures the Taoist aphasia of highest antiquity and names it the mytho-history of Old Magoism.

This line of thought suggests that such Taoist concepts as *hsien* (仙, transcendent) and *shen* (神, deity) ultimately refer to Old Magoists. It is plausible to posit that Birrell's account, "a considerable literature—part mythological, part legendary, part lore, and part fiction—grew up around the concept of the *hsien*-immortal," is nothing less than a revival or survival of Old Magoism in the post-Han period of China. The remote memory of Old Magoism re-emerges among the Chinese in a new attire to be called Taoism. Here Old Magoists are recaptured as "transcendents (the *hsien*-immortal)." At this point, it is only patent that Taoism itself is an embodiment of the Magoist nostalgia, a branch of neo-Magoism. Nonetheless, the Taoist reification of the old is not quite akin to the original one for it displaces Mago from the centre and instead plants Laotzu in her place, a topic to be partially dealt in this paper.

As to the sage ruler of halcyon antiquity, Russell Kirkland takes a critical stance on gender opening to a plausibility of the sage ruler to be the female. Esteeming that the *Chuang Tzu* does not offer historical materials regarding women, he turns to other Taoist texts and writes: "The *Tao Te Ching*, in its full form, even advocates 'feminine' behaviours for rulers, though the historical rulers of the day were never women."<sup>27</sup> His insight is far-illuminating, when he states, "[T]he passages in question seem to imply that what is wrong with our normal attitudes and behaviour is their excessive 'masculinity.' Yet, when inspected closely, these teachings [of the *Tao Te Ching*] do not truly essentialize women or men, for they are addressed to all readers, and apply to how anyone's life can be shown to be following a good or bad course." For one thing, such reading of the *Tao Te Ching* helps understand the *Budoji*'s criticism on Yao's rule. Here Kirkland appears to project the Chinese historical framework onto halcyon antiquity. Of course, the sinocentric perspective that he assumes seemingly hinders him from moving forward beyond the points made above. Also he has two different lenses to look into the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Tao Te Ching*. While shifting "historical" data on women in the *Chuang Tzu*, he endorses an ahistorical tool to catch the "feminine" characterization of the sage ruler in the *Tao Te Ching*. Is it because he did not see the "feminine" elements in the *Chuang Tzu*? In measuring gender implications in the *Chuang Tzu*, one needs to rid oneself of the essentialized notion of "the feminine." Can one spare a flash of light that the *Chuang*

<sup>25</sup> Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 185.

<sup>26</sup> Chinese mythology has another layer of the paradise in the west, which indicates the abode of the Hsie Wang Mu.

<sup>27</sup> Russell Kirkland, *Taoism: The Enduring Tradition* (New York, London: Routledge, 2004), 128.

*Tzu* percolates the gynocentric thought of highest antiquity?

Now let us turn to the record of Mt. Guye in the *Chuang Tzu*. The following account closely resembles the account of the *Lieh Tzu* with some new elements:

[T]here is a Holy Man [Woman] living on faraway Ku-she Mountain, with skin like ice or snow, and gentle and shy like a young girl. He [She] doesn't eat the five grains, but sucks the wind, drinks the dew, climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas. By concentrating his [her] spirit, he [she] can protect creatures from sickness and plague and make the harvest plentiful. I thought this was all insane and refused to believe it. This man [woman], with this virtue of his [her], is about to embrace the ten thousand things and roll them into one. Though the age calls for reform, why should he [she] wear himself [herself] out over the affairs of the world? There is nothing that can harm this man [woman]. Though flood waters pile up to the sky, he [she] will not drown. Though a great drought melts metal and stone and scorches the earth and hills, he [she] will not be burned. From his [her] dust and leavings alone you could mold a Yao or a Shun! Why should he [she] consent to bother about mere things? ...

Yao brought order to the people of the world and directed the government of all within the seas. But he went to see the Four Masters [Mistresses] of the far away *Ku-she Mountain*, [and when he got home, *sic*] north of the Fen River, he was dazed and had forgotten his kingdom there [Female connoting words and Italics mine].<sup>28</sup>

Since the first part of the above account closely resembles that of the *Lieh Tzu*, which is dealt above though in a hasty manner, I will focus on the additional part here. By juxtaposing Yao and Shun with the sage ruler on Mt. Guye, the *Chuang Tzu* underscores the latter's sublime nobility. An inherent difference is unequivocally placed between Yao and Shun on one side and the divine ruler on Mt. Goya on the other. The statement, "From his [her] dust and leavings alone you could mold a Yao or a Shun!" epitomizes this outrageously devious thought considering the conventional façade of Yao and Shun as sage rulers of antiquity. Only when situated within the context of Magoism does such thought begin to unveil ancient knowledge that a monarchical [read patriarchal] ruler is in no way comparable to Magoist sovereigns, a point discussed earlier. The rhetoric of the *Chuang Tzu* echoes the *Budoji's* apologia for the political principle of magocracy over the monarchical rule of Yao as discussed earlier. Yao's visit to the four divine beings (read Magoist sovereigns) on Mt. Guye no longer appears anomalous in light of the *Budoji's* account that Yao, contemporaneous with Dangun, founding sovereign of Budo, attended Budo's sacred conferences in the beginning of his political career.

### Ge Hong's Biography of Magu

It is unknown how much of the Magu zhuan (Biography of Magu) written in the *Shenhsien zhuan* (*Hagiographies of Immortals*) by Ge Hong (284-364) is originally attributed to his authorship.<sup>29</sup> As to its earlier versions, Robert Ford Campany suggests three fragments from the "*Arrayed Marvels*, a late-second or early-third century collection of anomaly accounts credited to Cao Pi (187-226)."<sup>30</sup> In this light, the present text of Ge Hong is no longer seen as his own creation. Evidence is present that there were several versions of the story already available for a wide range of scholars and poets in Tang times of China. While studies of Magu in Taoism remains marginal if treated, it is fair to say that Ge Hong's Magu

<sup>28</sup> *Chuang Tzu*, Burton Watson, tr. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), 27-8.

<sup>29</sup> I followed the dating after Amy McNair and other sources, while another date, 283-343, is used in Robert Ford Campany, Anne Birrell, and others.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Ford Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth* (University of California Press, 2002), 268.

Zhuan stands out for its detailed account to be widely reiterated by later day Chinese and East Asian intellectuals. Despite its inability to name Mago's supreme divinity, it deserves to be counted, mysteriously indeed, as one of the most renowned texts on Mago account from China.<sup>31</sup> Ironically, this text further mystifies Mago as the pantheon of Taoism is solidified.

Highly dramatized, Ge Hong's literature on Mago depicts a heterosexual encounter of the two transcendental beings, Wang Yuan and Mago.<sup>32</sup> In the house of Tsai Ching who hosts the two's rendezvous, Wang Yuan, entered in advance, calls for the arrival of Mago. They both clad in iridescent attire descend from the heavenly realm in the sound of heavenly music. Wang's superior status to Mago is explicitly marked with a double-sized train of attendants accompanied upon his entry. Mago appears as a beautiful woman of seventeen or eighteen in age with her hair done up while some loose strands hanging down to her waist. Mago demonstrates her spiritual power by way of turning rice into pearls or sands varied according to the version of the record. Interestingly, a seemingly minute if not irrelevant anecdote, an obvious deflection from the central theme of Mago or even the encounter, has invoked a wide circulation among the literati in future generations in East Asia: The phrase, "as delightful as being scratched by Mago" that refers to her talon-like nails, is an example favourably cited by such prominent Taoists as Li Tai-bo [Li Bo].<sup>33</sup> Mago is also allegorized as "a back-scratcher" for male scholars to express their pedantic sentimentalism.<sup>34</sup>

The rendezvous climaxes in a brief dialogue between the two, which alludes to Mago's mysterious origin and high status in antiquity if read carefully and literally. It goes as:

Mago said, "After I met you last time, I have seen that the *East Sea* changed thrice to *mulberry fields*. When I went to *Mt. Penglai* this time, the water level was lowed half the time when *the conference of immortals* was held. In my opinion, it will become land not long after." Replied Wang Yuan in awe, "As ancient sages said, sea water evaporated into the air [or ancient sages made dust in the sea]." [Italics are mine].<sup>35</sup>

Taoists scholars take a note of this conversation with its contingent symbols—East Sea, mulberry fields, and Mt. Penglai—to a variant degree. Robert Ford Campany writes, "As Joseph Needham has pointed out, this passage [the dialogue] contributed to the formation of a Daoist geological trope: the notion that, over vast eras, geological changes can render seas into land and can submerge land under seas." With Mago defocused in the formation of "a Daoist geological trope," he lists three literary instances that reiterate the passage: Poems of Li Bo, Yan Zhenqing, and Guo Pu. Of course, these are only a few of many examples which this paper has selectively mentioned in relation to the nostalgic topos. Among them, stories related to Li Bo, as mentioned above, are noteworthy: One episode shows a close resemblance to Mago Halmi tales from Korea.<sup>36</sup> From this, we can carefully infer that other folk tales of Mago found in Korea were already available to Tang Chinese intellectuals like Li Bo. Yan Zhenqing's take on this passage left

<sup>31</sup> See Hwang (2005), Chapter 10 and Campany, 268-79.

<sup>32</sup> The full text of Ge Hong's literature is available in the work by Robert Ford Campany. See Campany, 259-70.

<sup>33</sup> Wolfram Eberhard, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought* tr. by G. L. Campbell (London; New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 175.

<sup>34</sup> Seong Hyeon, the 15<sup>th</sup> century Korean Confucian scholar-bureaucrat, cites the phrase that intimates his pleasure of learning felt as being scratched by Mago in the back. Seong Hyeon, *Yongjae Chonghwa (The Collective Work of YongJae)* (Seoul: Sol Chulpansa, 1997), 14-15.

<sup>35</sup> Ge Hong, the *Shenxian Zhuan (Biographies of Immortals)*, cited in the *Taiping Guangji (Extensive Records of the Grand Peace Reign)* Vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 369-370.

<sup>36</sup> In this story, he meets a crone who sharpens an ax to make a needle and engages a conversation with her. <http://cybergosa.net/mago1.htm> (August 19, 2008).

permanent evidence in his stele inscription read the Records of the Transcendent Altar on Mt. Magu. Here Yan equates Mt. Penglai with Mt. Magu and asserts geological evidence that Mt. Magu was a sea lifted up in the past saying, “Even in stones and rocks on lofty heights there are shells of oysters and clams to be seen. Some think that they were transformed from the groves and fields once under the water.”<sup>37</sup>

Edward H. Schafer in his elegant literary interpretation of the topos expressed in Ts’ao Tang’s poetry esteems that Magu is “only the agent of a distinguished resident of P’eng-lai,” that is Blue Lad, “King of the Elysian Isles.” Schafer goes on to assess Mago as a Taoist nymph symbolized as a crane who helps male [as seeker is heterosexually engaged in romance with his female nymph] aspirants cross the sea to Mt. Penglai mountain-isles, where they discover the secret of becoming transcendent beings.<sup>38</sup> Schafer notes further to say, “Miss Hemp exists chiefly as a stock figure to remind us of the periodic slow draining of the Watchet Sea [East Sea] and its filling. She is almost a personification of cosmic time, measuring off the thousands of years that pass between each flooding.”<sup>39</sup> Here Magu is treated as a literary symbol indicating the lapse of cosmic time. This appears to be somewhat contradictory if not underestimating of what he writes about the cult of Magu in the same book.<sup>40</sup> There Schafer lists various centers of “the cult of Magu” in present China. One may as well wonder how but a literary symbolic figure happens to be widely worshipped by the populace.

Taken to the scheme of Magoism, Ge Hong’s Magu episode paints a more wholesome picture. Magu’s dialogue that she witnessed the sea-change of the East Sea turned into mulberry fields thrice throws light on her origin in highest antiquity rather than her longevity. Furthermore, her next utterance, “When I went to *Mt. Penglai* this time, the water level was reduced as low as half the time when *the conference of immortals* was held” elevates her to the status of sage rulers like Yao himself. We need to be reminded of the *Chuang Tzu*’s statement that Yao visited the divine ruler in Mt. Guye. Yao is incomparably less luminous to this young-woman-looking divine ruler. In any case, we can only infer that the passage as a whole may have triggered on the part of the audience a ceaseless tantalizing enquiry as to Mago’s origin in highest antiquity alongside the forgotten civilization that involves Mt. Penglai.

That she regularly attended “the conference of immortals” in Mt. Penglai echoes the *Budoji*’s account of Budo remarked earlier. Together with the East Sea and Mt. Penglai, Magu’s ancient origin adumbrated in Ge Hong’s account lends credence to the hermeneutic that this account bears a distant memory of Old Magoism, particularly Budo. In other words, beneath the surface is located the arcana that Magu originates in the mytho-history of Old Choson unnamed or unknown in Chinese mytho-historiographies. She represents reality/authority of ultimate spiritual and political significance. Because Taoist texts hitherto-known do not directly associate Magu with her cosmogonic origin, a Magoist hermeneutic may be called a hypothesis. It is a matter of speculation why or how the cosmogonic origin of Magu is fundamentally blocked in Taoist literature. Nonetheless, the Magoist interpretation of Ge Hong’s text explains why this text of variant versions favorably, authoritatively, and hauntingly recurs in

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Needham, *Science* 3:599, 600 cited in Campany, 262.

<sup>38</sup> See Schafer, 40; 93-4. Schafer’s account of the episode of Magu in the context of Ts’ao T’ang’s poetry, despite seemingly identical as Ge Hong’s, does not acknowledge its original author Ge Hong. It is possible that this piece is unknown to him. While his exegesis of this tale is immersed in romantic longing of heterosexual lovers, it remains to be examined how much of it is attributed to Schafer apart from the poet himself. See Schafer, 40; 93-4.

<sup>39</sup> Schafer, 94.

<sup>40</sup> Schafer, 94-5. His account of mountain centres of Magu covers only a partial picture whereas Eberhard documents a detailed list of topological centres such as Mt. Magu or caves of Magu across China as well as fragmented folkloric data to say that even her legends “do not help much in identifying her. See Wolfram Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 123-6.

the work of numerous Taoists as well as Confucius and Buddhists of East Asia throughout generations, a point to be discussed in detail elsewhere.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Buddhists are not exceptions in engaging in the discourse of Magu. The fact that Mt. Goya is a founding place of Japanese Shingon Buddhism is an instance. Campany also notes “Buddhist authors also availed themselves of this trope (Durt, “Archaeology,” 1237).” See Campany, 262.