

# Nature as Unity between Humanity and Environment in Korean Travel Literature from the late *Goryeo* to *Joseon* Dynasties

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### Introduction

How did traditional Korean travellers appreciate nature when they were travelling? This is the central question posed by this paper. While literature and travel have long been recognised as intimately intertwined in the creation of a place's meaning at personal and societal levels,<sup>1</sup> it is only recently that the subject of travel and literature has been given more focused attention. With studies suggesting that there are certain relationships between literature and places, and that these particular relationships are used by the tourism industry,<sup>2</sup> one is still left to wonder how pre-tourism industry-era travellers made sense of nature when visiting places. Also, one cannot fail to see the Eurocentric nature of research into literature and travel, at least in English language publications to date. With East Asia becoming the fastest growing outbound tourist-generating region on the globe,<sup>3</sup> East Asian experience-based research on the subject of travel and literature may be a rewarding and timely investment. Researchers are aware of the long tradition of travel literature in East Asia, and acknowledge the tradition of travelogues in China dating back to the twelfth century.<sup>4</sup> This article researches twenty-six pieces of Korean travel literature

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Becker, *Thinking in Place: Art, Action, and Cultural Production* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Clare Fawcett and Patricia Cormack, 'Guarding Authenticity at Literary Tourism Sites,' *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2001), p. 686; Nuala Johnson, 'Fictional Journeys: Paper Landscapes, Tourist Trails and Dublin's Literary Texts,' *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2004), p. 91; Lily Kong and Lily Tay, 'Exalting the Past: Nostalgia and the Construction of Heritage in Children's Literature,' *Area*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1998), p. 133; and Aaron Santesso, 'The Birth of the Birthplace: Bread Street and Literary Tourism before Stratford,' *ELH*, vol. 71, no. 2 (2004), p. 377.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 'Tourism 2020 Vision,' *World Tourism Organisation UNWTO* (2012), at <http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/vision.htm>. Accessed 2/24/2012.

<sup>4</sup> David Hargett, *On the Road in Twelfth Century China: The Travel Diaries of Fan Chengda (1126-1193)* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989).

written between 1485 and 1859, and addresses the current lack of East Asian experience-based work on travel and literature. These dates represent the period spanning from the time of the oldest remaining literature in Korea and the time before its opening to the Western world. Studying this travel literature furthers our understanding of traditional East Asian travellers and the way they made the places they visited meaningful.

The current study has two aims. The first is to understand how the East Asian cultural values of Daoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism might have shaped the ways in which travellers appreciated nature when visiting places. Relevant scholarly literature on East Asian cultural philosophies has thus guided the analytic framework of this study. The second aim is to broaden and add to the currently Eurocentric enquires into travel and literature by introducing Korean-based research. Overall, this study hopes to stimulate interest in East Asian travel literature among scholars of the literature of journeying.

This article consists of three main sections. The first section provides information on Korean travel literature, a significant literary genre in pre-modern Korean society, along with details of the authors of this literature and how their travel writings have been analysed. A brief explanation of the Korean notion of nature as a unity between humanity and the physical environment, informed by Daoist, Confucian, and Zen Buddhist traditions in the *Goryeo* and *Joseon* Dynasties, follows. The subsequent section illustrates the ways in which travellers appreciated nature through their activities while travelling. The final section then contextualises the findings of this paper within the previously undertaken enquiries into travel and literature.

### **Travel Literature during the *Goryeo* and *Joseon* Dynasties**

Travellers from traditional Korean society had various purposes for embarking on their trips, ranging from solemn spiritual pursuits to the simple enjoyment of appreciating their natural surrounds. Regardless of their travel purposes, they recorded their sentiments and activities while on the road in *Ki Hang Ka Sa* or 'Travel Literature,' which invariably displayed the writers' search for natural beauty. These travellers, therefore, may be regarded as similar to today's tourists of 'leisure,' who choose to occupy their time appreciating natural beauty while travelling. Indeed, the term 'romantic gaze' has been coined in the context of Western, and particularly British, travel experience to describe travellers' search for natural beauty in solitude.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John Urry, 'The Place of Emotions within Place,' in *Emotional Geographies*, eds Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 77.

The association between travel and literature was a social tradition in the era of the *Goryeo* and *Joseon* Dynasties, as it was commonly believed that literary talents were nurtured by nature.<sup>6</sup> As a prominent literary genre, *Ki Hang Ka Sa* emerged in the fifteenth century, and was a form of Korean literature combining poetic and prose-style writing. To date, Korean scholars have found about fifty pieces of classic travel literature, and about thirty of them have been the subject of academic scrutiny. A number of the studied pieces of literature, seen by some as culturally significant, have been taught in South Korean secondary schools.<sup>7</sup>

*Ki Hang Ka Sa* was gathered for this study from various sources in South Korea, including university and government libraries and major bookshops. Twenty-six pieces of literature were collected. Due to the time of their composition, the language of these texts is different from contemporary Korean. As such, scholarly literature with relevant explanations on the former's words and expressions were also obtained to help explain the meanings of the contents of the traditional literature.<sup>8</sup> Traditional travel literature for which contemporary interpretations were not available was excluded from the current study.

Content analysis was used to study the literature.<sup>9</sup> Using the contemporary translations of the travel literature compiled by Korean literary scholars, patterns were sought in the classic travel literature. For this paper, the activities undertaken by the travellers were the particular focus in trying to understand the ways in which the travellers appreciated nature in the places they visited. It is for this reason that analysis is focused more on the activities of travellers that reflected how nature was appreciated, rather than looking for the numerical frequency of certain expressions or words in order to gauge their

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<sup>6</sup> Tae Joon Kim, *Korean Travel Literature* (Seoul: Ewha Womens University Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Eun-yeol Yeom, 'On the Experience of "Space" in "Kiheang Gasa",' *Classic Literature and Education* (Korea), vol. 13 (2006), p. 89; Han-gi Jeong, 'A Study on the Description of Natural Scenery and the Meaning of Literature Education in Nineteenth Century Keumgangsan Kihaenggasa,' *Classic Literature and Education* (Korea), vol. 14 (2007), p. 63; Becker, *Thinking in Place*, p. 12; Fawcett and Cormack, 'Guarding Authenticity at Literary Tourism Sites,' p. 686; Johnson, 'Fictional Journeys,' p. 91; Kong and Tay, 'Exalting the Past,' p. 133; Santesso, 'The Birth of the Birthplace,' p. 377.

<sup>8</sup> Kang-Hyun Choi, *Anthology of Korean Classic Travelogues* (Seoul: Kook Hak Resources Publishing, 1996); Seon Kim, *Correctly Reading and Appreciating Korean Classic Literature* (Seoul: Ye Moon Dang Publishing, 1994); Young Jin Park, *Two Hundred Essential Korean Classic Poems* (Seoul: Time Publishing, 1996); Seok Dal Yoon and Nam Ho Lee, *Kum Kang Travelogues* (Seoul: Spirit of Writers, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Ole Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969).

level of importance. The Korean notion of nature, as informed by Daoist, Confucian, and Zen Buddhist ideologies, has been the guiding framework for examining how cultural influences were embedded in the travellers' appreciation of nature. Of the twenty-six pieces of travel literature studied, fourteen reflected particular Daoist, Confucian, and Zen Buddhist notions of nature. Table 1 illustrates the travel literature studied in this paper.

**Table 1:** Studied *Ki Hang Ka Sa*, or 'Travel Literature,' of the *Goryeo* and *Joseon* Dynasties

Assigned number for studied Travel Literature	Year of writing	Author	Title
1.	1349	이 곡 (Lee, Gok)	동유기 (Dong Yoo Gi)
2.	1485	남 효온 (Nam, Hyo-Onn)	유금강산기 (Yu Geum Gang San Gi)
3.	14??	성 현 (Sung, Hyun)	동행기 (Dong Hang Gi)
4.	1556	백 광홍 (Paek, Kwang-Hong)	관서별곡 (Gwan Seo Byul Gok – A Song from Gwan Seo)
5.	Between 1552-1562	정 철 (Jung, Chul)	성산별곡 (Sung San Byul Gok)
6.	1580	정 철 (Jung, Chul)	관동별곡 (Gwan Dong Byul Gok – A Song from Gwan Dong)
7.	1615	이 형운 (Lee, Hyung-Yun)	유금강산기 (Yu Geum Gang San Gi)
8.	1617	조 우인 (Cho, Oo-In)	틀새곡 (Tyul Sae Gok – A Song of Crossing Border)
9.	1622	조 우인 (Cho, Oo-In)	관동속별곡 (Gwan Dong Sok Byul Gok – Another Song from Gwan Dong)
10.	1671	김 창협 (Kim, Chang-Hyup)	동유기 (Dong Yu Gi – Chronology of a Travel to the East)

11.	1695	박 권 (Park, Kweun)	서정별곡 (Seo Jung Byul Gok – A Song for Conquering the West)
12.	1698	노 명선 (Noh, Myung-Sun)	천풍가 (Chun Pung Ga – A Song of the Heavenly Winds)
13.	1704	권 섭 (Kweun, Sup)	녕삼별곡 (Nyung Sam Byul Gok – A Song from Nyung Sam)
14.	1739	박 순우 (Park, Soon-Woo)	명촌금강별곡 (Myung Chon Geum Gang Byul Gok – A Song from Myung Village of Geum Gang)
15.	1749	정 은유 (Jung, Eun-Yoo)	탐라별곡 (Tam Ra Byul Gok – A Song from Tam Ra)
16.	1752	신 광수 (Shin, Kwang-Soo)	단산별곡 (Dan San Byul Gok – A Song from Tan San)
17.	1763	김 인겸 (Kim, In-Kyum)	일동장유가 (Il Dong Jang Yu Ga)
18.	1776	이 용 (Lee, Yong)	북정가 (Pook Jung Ga – A Song of Going North)
19.	1796	이 방익 (Lee, Pang-Ik)	표해가 (Pyo Hae Ga – Drifting in the Sae)
20.	17??	이 만부 (Lee, Man-Boo)	금강산기 (Geum Gang San Gi)
21.	17??	이 중환 (Lee, Joong-Whan)	금강산 (Geum Gang San)
22.	1845	은진 송씨 (Song-origin of the surname: EunJin)	금행일기 (Geum Hang Il Gi – Diary of Returning Home)
23.	1853	김 진형 (Kim, Jin-Hyung)	북천가 (Book Chun Ga – A Song of Moving North)
24.	1859	무명씨 (Unknown)	관동장유가 (Gwan Dong Jang Yoo Ga – A Song of Extended Travel to North)
25.	1875	조 희백 (Cho, Heui-Peak)	도해가 (Do Hae Ga – A Song of Crossing the Ocean)

26.	1894	조 윤희 (Cho, Yoon-Hee)	관동신곡 (Gwan Dong Shin Gok – New Song of Gwan Dong)
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The traditional travel writers had two distinctive characteristics. Out of the twenty-six travel writings studied, only one was authored by a woman, and she was travelling with her husband to visit their son in a different part of the country. This gender bias is a distinctive characteristic of such travel writing, reflecting the cultural characteristics of traditional Korean society; the social discouragement for women to travel appears to have been quite efficacious in Korea. A separate literary genre called *Kyu Bang Ka Sa*, or ‘Literature from the Women’s Chambers,’ existed during the same time as *Ki Hang Ka Sa*.<sup>10</sup> Considering that this genre was the primary source of literature written by women, despite the popularity of *Ki Hang Ka Sa*, one may observe the social expectation that works written by women should reflect their domestic role which, in turn, could be said to actively discourage the notion of a travelling woman in classical Korean society.

Korean travellers came from various professions and included high government officials, scholars, retired officials and writers, and invariably represented the upper class of society. This representation indicates that travelling in the classic eras of Korea was strictly for the social elite. These were members of society who could afford to spend the time and resources necessary for the extravagance of travelling. The luxurious conditions they enjoyed while on the road have been recorded in the travel literature. For instance, servants accompanied the travellers on their trips to ensure comfortable passage. Many of the travel pieces mentioned herein refer to the need for servants, and the sense of comfort and extravagance they lent to the travel experience. This way, travellers did not have to forgo their taste for delicacies on the road, because they could simply tell their servants to find the necessary ingredients, such as abalone (Studied travel literature #3). Being attended by servants on their journeys, travellers did not have to compromise on the many aspects of their opulent lifestyles. Certain travel literature noted that travellers were carried in palanquins when they did not feel like walking (Studied travel literature #6; Studied travel literature #22), and that the servants were expected to carry these palanquins in harsh weather (Studied travel literature #17). While extravagant and comfortable journeys were possible for

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<sup>10</sup> Seon Poong Kim, ‘A Study of Boudoir Songs in Kang Neung,’ *Korean Journal of Folklore Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1976), p. 1; Young Cheol Kwen, ‘Introduction to Gyubanggasa,’ *Korean Journal of National Culture*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1990), p. 217; Jae Goon Whang, ‘A Study on the Background of Thought in Gyubanggasa,’ *Journal of Korean Language and Literature Education*, vol. 41 (1982), p. 31.

such travellers, conditions for the servants were sharply dissimilar. Carrying their masters in harsh weather, the servants often lost their toenails and suffered severe frostbite (Studied travel literature #22). The travel conditions experienced by the servants contrast with, and further highlight, the social superiority of the travellers who wrote the travel literature studied. In order to understand whether dominant East Asian cultural values about nature shaped the travellers' ways of appreciating the natural world, the three main East Asian cultural philosophies of Daoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism, and their conceptions of nature, will be explained in the following section.

### **Daoist, Confucian, and Zen Buddhist Traditions regarding Nature during the Goryeo and Joseon Dynasties**

Daoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism constitute the main cultural and religious foundations of traditional Korean society and remain dominant in Korea today.<sup>11</sup> Although Daoism came to Korea from China in the fourth century CE, the Daoist idea of immortality originated in Korea. The Chinese philosophical branch of Daoism was particularly popular during the *Goryeo* Dynasty period (918-1392 CE).<sup>12</sup> Since then, Daoism influenced the development of both Confucianism and Zen Buddhism in Korea.<sup>13</sup> In Daoism, the universe is produced through the work of the opposite elements of *yin* and *yang*, recognising the essential paradox of the world. *Yang* is the positive element of being, and *yin* is the other, or negative, element.<sup>14</sup> The Daoist conceptualisation of nature that signifies a unity between humanity and the physical environment<sup>15</sup> is evident in the *Dao De Jing*,<sup>16</sup> as the extract below illustrates:

Only knowing 'the eternal' can one embrace all,  
Only embracing all can one be impartial.  
Being impartial means you can be all-encompassing under Heaven,

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<sup>11</sup> Chaibong Hahm, 'The Ironies of Confucianism,' *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2004), p. 93.

<sup>12</sup> Kwang Soon Do, 'A Historical Study of Korean Taoism,' *Journal of Taoism Studies* (Korea), vol. 7, no. 1 (1991), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Paula Hartz, *Taoism* (New York: Facts on File, 1993); Marietta Stepaniants, 'Chinese Tradition: Taoism,' in *Introduction to Eastern Thought*, ed. James Behuniak (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), p. 186.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Saso, *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1972); Kyung Rim Shin, 'Developing Perspectives on Korean Nursing Theory: The Influences of Taoism,' *Nursing Science Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 4 (2001), p. 346.

<sup>15</sup> James Miller, 'What can Daoism Contribute to Ecology?,' in *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, eds Norman Girardot, James Miller, and Xiaogan Liu (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2001), p. 73.

<sup>16</sup> Jiyu Ren, *The book of Lao Zi* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1993).

By being all-encompassing under Heaven, you can be one with Nature.

(Chapter 16)

It is not certain, however, when Confucianism came to Korea from China, although it is known that respected Buddhist monks studied Confucianism before they studied Buddhism during the *Silla* Dynasty. Korea has one of the longest and richest histories of Confucianism, with its first research institution, the *Taehak* or National Academy of Confucianism, established in 372 CE.<sup>17</sup> While Confucian values have been present in Korean society for longer than Buddhist precepts, it was not until the *Joseon* Dynasty (1392-1910 CE) that Confucianism was adopted as the nation's dominant philosophy. Over these 500 years, when Confucian teachings dominated, the dynamics of rulership created many factions in the dynasty.<sup>18</sup> Having influenced the development of Neo-Confucianism, the tradition of Daoism can be seen to inform the Confucian concept of nature. Accordingly, the Confucian view of nature recognises an organic relation between humanity and the physical environment. Confucianism largely rests on the belief that all elements of the universe are intrinsically interrelated as one organism, particularly because human beings and nature have an identical origin.<sup>19</sup>

The exact year of the arrival of Buddhism on the Korean peninsula appears to differ among scholars. However, it is generally agreed that the introduction of Buddhism took place during the Three Kingdoms Era of the *Goguryeo*, *Paekjae*, and *Silla* in China. It first arrived during the *Goguryeo* era, followed by the *Paekjae* and *Silla*.<sup>20</sup> While the exact date of its arrival cannot be agreed upon, the first arrival is believed to be between 369 and 372 CE. When the three Kingdoms became united under the *Silla* in 668, Buddhism flourished under the *Unified Silla*, developing nine major schools of 선 or *Sŏn* (Korean Zen) thought. In the subsequent *Goryeo* era, Buddhism was adopted as the ruling philosophy of the Dynasty (918-1392), and flourished for over 470 years. Research on the history of Korean Buddhism informs us that the

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<sup>17</sup> Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Key Yang and Gregory Henderson, 'An Outline History of Korean Confucianism: Part I: The Early Period and Yi Factionalism,' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1958), p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> Do Hoon Kim, 'A Study on the View of Human Being and Nature in "No-Ja" and "Hwangje-Naegyeong",' Unpublished Masters Dissertation (Kyung Hee University, Korea, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Kyong-bo Seo, 'A Study of Korean Zen Buddhism: Approached through the Chodangjip,' Unpublished PhD Dissertation (Temple University, 1969); Frederick Starr, 'Korean Buddhism,' *The Journal of Race Development*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1918), p. 71.



religious tradition of Buddhism in Korea has had various schools, but that they were unified into a single 조계 (*Chogye*) or 선 (*Sŏn*, Korean Zen) school. To this day, 선 (*Sŏn*, Korean Zen) is still the dominant school of Buddhism in the country.<sup>21</sup> The Zen Buddhist concept of nature is described using the model of 'relational dimensions.'<sup>22</sup> Describing all things in the universe as being related, and hence relational, this concept is attributed to the teaching of emptiness in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The teaching of emptiness suggests that all properties in the universe are interrelated.

This review of the dominant cultural traditions informed by Daoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism highlights that nature was perceived as a unity between humanity and the surrounding environments in traditional Korean society.<sup>23</sup> Nature was perceived as a construct of human culture in Daoism, and this philosophy influenced both the Confucian and Zen Buddhist concepts of nature, where humanity and the physical environment are considered to be a unity *forming* nature. This philosophically East Asian notion of nature can be observed in the *Ki Hang Ka Sa* featured in this study. The way in which the travellers understood the significance of the natural places they visited was through forming a unity, particularly between human elements and physical environments.

### **Nature as a Unity between Humanity and Physical Environments**

When the classic Korean travellers appreciated physical environments during their travel, this appreciation was most often associated with certain elements of humanity, such as Daoist cultural legends, familial histories, or in terms of the traces left by celebrated figures from literature and the arts. To the classic travellers, the beauty of physical environments would best make sense when equated or described in relation to culturally meaningful legends.<sup>24</sup> That is, to

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<sup>21</sup> Joon-sik Choi, *Buddhism: Religion in Korea* (Seoul: Enwa Womans University Press, 2007), p. 169.

<sup>22</sup> Simon James, 'Zen Buddhism and the Intrinsic Value of Nature,' *Contemporary Buddhism*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2003), p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> Ven Sunyana Graef, 'The Foundations of Ecology in Zen Buddhism,' *Religious Education*, vol. 85, no. 1 (1990), p. 42; Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York: Knopf, 1971); Hector Sabelli, 'The Union of Opposites: From Taoism to Process Theory,' *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, vol. 15, no. 5 (1998), p. 429.

<sup>24</sup> I have described in another research paper how the pre-modern travellers appreciated nature; see Young-Sook Lee, 'Myth, Spirituality and Religion in Travel: Pre-Industrial Korea,' *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2006), pp. 97-106, for more discussions and descriptions on pre-modern Korean travellers. An extract from the article (p. 97) appears below: 'Legend said that the founder of the *KoRyo* dynasty, *TaeJo*, visited a valley in *KumKang* Mountain and, while he was walking past the valley, he

truly appreciate physical environments, relevant human elements had to be discernable. For example, *Paek*, who was sent by the King to govern a southern area of the Dynasty in 1556, recorded the beauty of the place as he arrived in the area. In describing the scenery of the spring season around the rivers and valleys of the region, the traveller was inspired to apply the notion of the Daoist hermit with mystical powers, and recorded in his travel literature that:

... It appears as though [the] Daoist hermit in Heaven is playing the heavenly instrument and descends the beauty down to us...  
(Studied travel literature #4).

For the traveller, the beauty of physical environments can best be described using this Daoist legendary figure that plays a musical instrument. Placing emphasis on the physical environment visited, the literary use of such legendary figures draws attention to the heavenly beauty that the traveller perceives in the atmosphere and associated aura of the place. In this way, an impression of nature is formed in the mind of the traveller through the combined influence of the physical environment and human mythologies. In another piece of travel literature, written by *Park* in 1695, the beauty of the physical environments encountered on his journey to today's Beijing was described using another Daoist legendary figure, *Jung*. According to legend, *Jung* studied the Daoist way of being in harmony with the universe and eventually turned himself into a Daoist hermit. After one thousand years as a Daoist hermit he turned himself into a crane, and would visit places of heavenly beauty on earth. The traveller in his writing searched for *Jung*, as he thought that the beauty of the place he visited was so heavenly that *Jung* must

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noticed the immense beauty of *KumKang*. The beauty he glimpsed was so heavenly that he did not want to leave the valley all his life. So he cut his hair and wanted to become a Buddhist monk. This meant that he could live on the mountain, admiring the heavenly beauty all his life. Whether this was a true event or not did not appear important to any of the classic travellers. Whenever the travellers were in *KumKang* Mountain, they visited the valley and appreciated the legend, completely immersed in its charm. Many travelogues over the centuries have used the legend of *TaeJo* as subject matter: "It is said that a long, long time ago, TaeJo of KoRyo was passing this valley ... viewing the beautiful clouds from the valley, he wished to become a monk, cutting his hair to appreciate the view in the mountain all his life ... this is why the valley is called 'Dan Bal Ryung' or 'Cutting-Hair Valley'" (Lee 1615); "... [O]n 'Dan Bal Ryung,' or 'Cutting-Hair Valley,' the rocks where TaeJo of KoRyo stopped his palanquin are still sitting there..." (Lee 17??); "... [A]ccording to the legend, this valley was named 'Dan Bal Ryung' or 'Cutting-Hair Valley' ... because the TaeJo of KoRyo cut his hair on this valley, looking towards KumKang Mountain..." (Cho 1894). Over the centuries, the place was appreciated mainly because of its mythical/legendary charm. The travellers mentioned little about the beauty of the valley itself, whereas they regularly praised its mythical/legendary charms.'

have visited the area (Studied travel literature #11). Similarly, the Daoist paradise where the hermits are believed to live was compared to the beauty of the visited place. *Kweun* travelled to see his uncle, who was the governor of a southern region of the Dynasty in 1704. When he arrived in *Sam Cheuk*, a southern region of the Dynasty, he wrote a piece of travel literature, where he recorded:

... [I]f anyone from the ancient time visited this place, they would not have been able to say [that] the Daoist paradise is more beautiful than here...

(Studied travel literature #13).

For such travellers, the appreciation of nature involved unifying the physical environment with Daoist cultural legends in a description of the places visited. 'Verifying' the true beauty of nature, these two elements had to be united to reveal nature's true presence.

In addition to the legendary charms associated with physical environments, traditional travellers would search for traces of their family members in order to have personally meaningful experience of the places visited. Indeed, they often wrote about the extraordinary passion they felt as they discovered traces of their family members' presence. *Lee*, who travelled to *Geum Gang* Mountain sometime in the 1700s, was overjoyed when he found the names of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather in the landscape:

... [T]he names of my great grand fathers ... the name of my father ... they were all carved on the eastern side ... with the live spirits of our family...

(Studied travel literature #21)

Finding the spirits of their family was very important to the traditional travellers, as their desire to leave their own names, near those of their family members, demonstrates. For example, another *Lee*, who travelled to *Geum Gang* Mountain in the eighteenth century, wrote about his disappointment when he and his travelling companion could not carve their own names on the same piece of rock where their family members had carved theirs:

... [A]fter finding the names of my great grand-fathers and father I wished to leave my name near there on the same rock ... as Chang was the grandson of Sir PuyunKong, he also wanted to write his name right under ... Sir PuyunKong's carving ... but there was not enough room ... it was a great pity ... Chang managed to find another piece of rock near the carvings of the family, so we ran over to the rock and wrote our names...

(Studied travel literature #20).

As is evident in the examination of the Korean traditional travel literature, the beauty of physical environments would be made more meaningful to the travellers when it was contextualised within human narratives. This highlights

the East Asian cultural tendency to view nature as being a unity between humanity and physical environments. This cultural trait can still be observed at various sites on the *Geum Gang* Mountain, which recently have become politically sensitive tourist sites that are the subject of negotiation between North and South Korea. Those sites recorded in the traditional travel literature are thus still visited today, and the remains of the visitors' names from the *Goryeo* and *Joseon* Dynasties are still kept intact. Today, however, writing or carving names on the sites is prohibited.

In addition to searching for and adding to the traces of family members, travellers would search for and respond to literary traces from previous visitors of renown. For example, *Lee*, travelling to *Geum Gang* Mountain in 1615, searched for evidence of the classic arts. When he found the trace of a famous old painting, only then could he truly appreciate the beauty of the visited place:

... [L]ooking and searching on the old wall of the temple, I found the painting by OdoJa on the broken side of the wall ... I felt his spirit was coming alive from the place...

(Studied travel literature #7).

As *Lee* was looking for this painting, he was, in fact, searching for traces of a spiritual resonance of the classic arts, and this search provided the site with significance and meaning. When the outline of the painting was encountered, it was the discovery of the artist's spirit that moved him most; which, in turn, made the visited place one worthy of praise. Similarly, commemorating three outstanding pupils of *Wha Rang Do*, a major education system of the *Silla* Kingdom period (57-935 CE), traditional travellers would look for the presence of these pupils at the visited physical environments. History shows that three outstanding pupils of *Wha Rang Do* left six letters on a piece of rock, and discovering these traces became the focus of many travellers' journeys:

... [W]e wanted to see the six remaining letters here...

(Studied travel literature #2).

The search continued over several centuries. Following the above search in 1485, another traveller searched for these six letters in 1859, and found them:

... [T]he famous six letters on the rock ... as [I] have been hearing to date[!] ... [A]lthough [they] started to fade, the carvings are still evident...

(Studied travel literature #24).

By encountering the historically significant trace left by the respectful pupils of *Wha Rang Do*, the traveller's appreciation of the surrounding physical environment was enhanced. Searching for the traces of classic arts, however, was only one integral part of appreciating such places; travellers would also *respond* to these remaining literary traces. After finding the six remaining

letters from *Wha Rang Do*, *Nam* responded to an old poem that had been left by a previous visitor:

... [A]s I just finished the four-word poem on the pillar, in response to the earlier written poetry on the pillar, there came [a] big wind on the water...

(Studied travel literature #2).

*Lee*, who found traces of the painting on the broken wall of the temple, also responded to an ancient poem that was left on the wall:

... I responded to the poem on the wall, which was from a long[,] long time ago...

(Studied travel literature #7).

As well as responding to old writings at visited places, travellers would also expect that their writings would be discovered by other travellers of future generations, and that future generations of travellers would share similar sentiments. *Kim*, who left 동유기 (*Dong Yu Gi*) or 'Chronology of a Travel to the East,' was convinced that the people of future generations would have a great passion to seek to be connected to the past, particularly when they appreciated visited places:

... [W]e wrote our names ... anyone who finds these writing[s] in thousands years of time will greatly regret that he was not born in the same era with us...

(Studied travel literature #10).

As the travellers searched for, and responded to, literary traces of renowned previous visitors, appreciation of the visited places was enhanced. This, in turn, reflects the East Asian reading of nature that is comprised of elements of human culture and physical environments.

Even when there was no mention of legends, traces of family members, or art and literary connections, travellers would still seek unity with the visited physical environments by leaving their own names on the landscape. Carving or writing during travel was frequently recorded in the travel literature studied. For example, *Nam*, travelling to *Geum Gang* Mountain for 35 days in 1485, recorded in detail the places that he visited, the people that he met, and the natural beauty that he encountered. While visiting the culturally significant mountain, he wrote his name on both natural and human-made environments, such as rocks and Buddhist temples:

... [W]riting [my] name on the rocks while climbing the mountain

... we walked a long way...;

... I entered the temple and wrote [my] name on one of the pillars...

(Studied travel literature #2).

Another traveller recorded his name on a piece of rock he came across, and on the pillar of a temple he visited:

... I wrote my name on the rock then came down from the valley...;

... [R]eaching Pyo Hyun Sa Temple, I wrote my name on one of the pillars of the temple...

(Studied travel literature #7).

Writing their names on the places visited was, for the travellers, more than just something 'to do.' Indeed, it appears that the act of recording their names at these sites was a way of uniting with the visited physical environments. As seen in the following extract, another traveller recorded the importance of leaving his name, where he even risked his life to carve his name there:

... [T]he wind was so fierce that I nearly felt blown away ... therefore as soon as I carved my name, I came down...

(Studied travel literature #10).

The traditional travellers appear to have placed a great deal of import on leaving traces of themselves at the place visited, as it was a way to unite with the physical environment. Feeling that they were one mere speck in the great continuity of time and space, these travellers were keenly aware of how 'small' their lives were in the context of the totality of the universe. *Noh*, who travelled to various parts of the country and left a piece of travel literature named *천풍가* (*Chun Pung Ga*), or 'A Song of the Heavenly Winds,' displays this in his writing:

... [W]riting my name on the rock ... I thought [that the] life of [a] human is just like a one-night's dream...

(Studied travel literature #12).

This act of leaving names or responding to the existing traces of humanity left at visited places became a means of communicating with people from different times.

These travellers' acts of writing or carving their names at the visited physical environments, however, may be seen as 'graffiti' to modern Westerners, who may associate the activities with vandalism or defacement of the original object. Carving poems or names may be viewed to be damaging the physical environment, as preserving pristine environments is a central theme of conservation in the West.<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, to the traditional Korean travellers, these activities appear to be a way to connect with the past or the future through the medium of the physical environment. Indeed, this activity of writing or carving their presence onto the landscape was the traveller's sincere effort to be unified harmoniously with the visited environments, in accordance with Confucian interpretations of human changes to the physical environment. Confucian philosophy holds the view that making changes to both natural and

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<sup>25</sup> Gunhild Setten, 'Farming the Heritage: On the Production and Construction of a Personal and Practised Landscape Heritage,' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2005), p. 67; Ken Taylor, 'Cultural Heritage Management: A Possible Role for Charters and Principles in Asia,' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 10, no. 5 (2004), p. 417.

human-made environments constitutes the human effort to be in harmony with other elements of the universe, where nature is formed through the unity of humanity and the environment. As human life and culture changes with time, both natural and human-made environments, according to Confucianism, need to change also; changing with humanity is deemed harmonious. A Confucian perspective on this point, however, rejects the perceived potential for this view to advocate the exploitation of the environment:

The human transformation of nature, therefore, means ... an integrative effort to learn to live harmoniously in one's natural environment .... The idea of exploiting nature is rejected because it is incompatible with the Confucian concern for moral self-development.<sup>26</sup>

As pointed out, the Confucian concern with self-development does not aim to alter (or 'improve') physical environments, or nature, *per se*. Rather, self-cultivation is undertaken with the aim of improving our humanity.<sup>27</sup> According to Confucian philosophy, this is necessary in order to be harmonious with the universe; an idea which is equally resonant in Confucian education ethics.<sup>28</sup> The ultimate goal of self-cultivation is to find a way to bring humans in harmony with all elements of the universe.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the travellers' act of leaving traces of themselves at these sites should be interpreted as an effort to improve humanity; forming a unity with the surrounding environments of the places visited.

## **Conclusion**

This paper studied twenty-six remaining pieces of traditional Korean travel literature from the late *Goryeo* to the late *Joseon* Dynasties, in order to understand how traditional travellers interpreted the places they visited, and to

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<sup>26</sup> Mary Evelyn Tucker, 'The Relevance of Chinese Neo-Confucianism for the Reverence of Nature,' *Environmental History Review*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1991), p. 55.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Shusterman, 'Pragmatist Aesthetics and Confucianism,' *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 43, no. 1 (2009), p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Confucian education ethics emphasise the practice of moral virtue to be a righteous man, who always acts according to justice through the notion of *yi* (righteousness). In order to realise the *yi* (righteous) state, people should employ the correct ways of doing things or *li* (propriety or rites, rules of proper conduct). This is all for the realisation of harmony among the elements of the universe. See Qianfan Zhang, 'The Idea of Human Dignity in Classical Chinese Philosophy: A Reconstruction of Confucianism,' *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2000), p. 299.

<sup>29</sup> Antonio Cua, 'Virtues of Junzi,' *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2007), p. 125; Mary Evelyn Tucker, 'Religious Dimensions of Confucianism: Cosmology and Cultivation,' *Philosophy East & West*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1998), p. 5; Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*.

determine the extent to which dominant East Asian cultural values influenced the travellers' modes of appreciation. Traditional Korean travellers were influenced by literary aesthetics in their experiences of travel, as they recorded their experiences, and their appreciation of nature, in *Ki Hang Ka Sa*, or 'Travel Literature.' Travellers made sense of the physical environments they visited by associating them with certain aspects of human culture and history, such as Daoist legends, art and literature, or remnants of their own family members' presence. Traditional travellers also wrote or made carvings as evidence of their presence at the places they visited. Viewed from the Confucian cultural position of society, the act of carving names or poems, in order to leave traces of themselves, can be interpreted as the travellers' sincere efforts to come into harmony with other elements of the universe. This, in turn, reflects the Daoist, Confucian, and Zen Buddhist worldview that all elements are related and essentially identical, which contributes to the East Asian idea that nature constitutes a unity between humanity and the physical environment. The way in which travellers endowed the places they visited with special meanings highlights the influence of East Asian culture on the appreciation of these places.

The findings of this research can also be applied to wider contemporary research on literature and travel. The meaning of places in published studies has been centred on the *creation* of 'authentic' sites for the tourism industry.<sup>30</sup> What can be observed from traditional Korean travel literature is that *conforming* to common, or evident, modes of relationship between humanity and the environment was more important and prevalent than the *creation* of new meanings when visiting such places. Travellers *conformed* to the power of legendary charms, the resonance of classic arts and literature, and the traces of previous family members on sites, by searching for what was remaining from humans in the environments visited. This tendency towards *conforming* rather than *creating* might be due to the non-commercial aspect of travelling in traditional Korean society. The presence of the commercial Western concept of tourism in Korean society did not become noticeable until after the Korean War of 1950-53, where the *creation* of commercial travel activities began to be more prevalent.<sup>31</sup> The studied travel phenomena thus represent traditional Korean ways of travelling before the Western influence of Korean society.

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<sup>30</sup> Fawcett and Cormack, 'Guarding Authenticity at Literary Tourism Sites,' p. 686; Johnson, 'Fictional Journeys,' p. 91; Kong and Tay, 'Exalting the Past,' p. 133; Santesso, 'The Birth of the Birthplace,' p. 377.

<sup>31</sup> Young-Sook Lee, 'The Korean War and Tourism: Legacy of the War on the Development of the Tourism Industry in South Korea,' *International Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2006), p. 157.



Indeed, few commercial activities in travel today could explain the reason why travellers appeared to *conform* to sites of ‘authenticity,’ rather than attempt to *create* them. Moreover, future study on East Asian travel literature should also take a closer look at the significant Zen Buddhist attention on small flora and fauna, as well as on lifeless things and non-sentient beings, that travellers sometimes used to make sense of nature while travelling.

Finally, this paper affirms that the act of travel is a way of reflecting the philosophical values of a given society, regardless of temporal or geographic location. Based on the philosophical and cultural parameters of a given time and place, the representation of such philosophies vary. More research into the travel philosophies of East Asia and other parts of the world is called for in order to better understand the philosophies of travel in different cultural and temporal domains.