

Sea deity beliefs of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere: maritime traditions and cultural interaction among Jeju Island, Zhoushan Archipelago, and the Ryukyu Islands

Nam-chun Heo

Jeju National University, South Korea

Jeju Marine Life and Culture Research Team, Center for Jeju Studies, South Korea

hnc423@jejunu.ac.kr

Hyun-jeung Lee

Jeju National University, South Korea

Jeju Marine Life and Culture Research Team, Center for Jeju Studies, South Korea

naramal1031@jejunu.ac.kr

ABSTRACT: This study analyzes sea deity myths of Jeju Island (Korea), the Zhoushan Archipelago (China), and the Ryukyu Islands and Kyushu Region (Japan). The folk culture permeating this region is a common creation produced by long-term interactions among the islands via the Kuroshio Current, starting with primordial sea imagery. Jeju, on the last branch of the Kuroshio Current, was positioned to embrace the cultures of the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese archipelago, and north and south China. Jeju's people had opportunities to absorb oceanic culture, such as oceanic beliefs, myths, and rituals that moved along the maritime route. However, Jeju's historical political relations, such as conflict, negotiation, conquest, and submission, shaped and supplemented the maritime traditions. The religious system slowly changed over time, and yet the islanders maintained a sense of identity derived from the ocean. This collective identity relates to the fact that many elements of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere simultaneously existed on various small regional islands across the region.

Keywords: Jeju Island, Korea, Kuroshio Current, maritime traditions, oceanic cultural sphere, Ryukyu Islands, sea deity beliefs, Zhoushan Archipelago

<https://doi.org/10.24043/isj.55>

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Introduction

This study considers the oceanic beliefs, myths, and rituals of islands along the Kuroshio Current 黑潮海流, namely the island of Jeju 제주도 (Korea); the Zhoushan Archipelago 舟山群島 (China); the Ryukyu Islands 琉球諸島 (Japan), including Okinawa 沖繩本島; and Kyushu 九州 (Japan). Previous studies have focused on specific themes in the region's oceanic faiths and have described data collected through field studies of specific areas. In contrast, the present study conducted a comprehensive survey across topics and themes for simultaneous examination and comparison.

As Luo and Grydehøj (2017) argue, islands have long been significant within the myths and religions of mainland civilizations, not only in the Western world but also in East Asia. Within the field of island studies, however, few attempts have been made to consider the role

of islands in the religions and mythologies of islanders themselves. The present study suggests that some of the same islands that possess spiritual significance for mainlanders themselves possess local traditions positing the existence of sacred islands elsewhere, in this case within the cultural sphere formed by an ocean current. This study thus attempts to place the particularly island-rich maritime space between Korea, China, and Japan within a new form of archipelagic relationality (Pugh, 2018; Lee et al., 2017; Roberts & Stephens, 2017; Rankin, 2016).

The islands in our research belong to various states, but they share similar folklore, myths, and rituals. Their shared island geography may encourage similar perceptions and understandings of the natural environment. Moreover, although there may be a degree of universal similarity between belief systems, these islands' maritime traditions are exceptionally similar to one another due to their location in a single oceanic cultural sphere, that of the Kuroshio Current. The Kuroshio is similar to the Gulf Stream in that it is a strong western boundary current, and it is one of two major warm currents that run through the seas of East Asia. It flows past Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, and China (the southern portion of the Yangtze River 长江 in Guangdong 广东省, Fujian 福建省, and Zhejiang 浙江省 Provinces), Ryukyu in Japan, and Jeju in Korea. Its direction is northeastward, and it forms the basis for the sea routes and cultural exchanges of East Asia's coastal and island regions. Under its influence, the oceanic regions have had many opportunities for exchange, and frequent maritime interactions among them are reflected in the similar cultures and folklore throughout the region.



Figure 1: Map of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere, including Jeju and the Korean Peninsula (Korea); Zhoushan (China); and Kyushu and the Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa) (Japan). (© Adam Grydehøj, 2018; adapted from ©2018 Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO, Landsat/Copernicus, Google, ZENRIN)

Jeju is the final landmass within the Kuroshio Current and is thus an optimal location for a maritime hub encompassing the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese Archipelago, Ryukyu, and the northern and southern regions of China. Over the millennia, this regional inclusiveness nourished Jeju's unique maritime culture while maintaining the characteristics of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere. The Kuroshio plays a prominent role in Jeju's traditional oceanic faiths, myths, and rituals.

This study introduces and analyses characteristics of the Kuroshio's oceanic cultural sphere based on a review of previous literature and survey data. By identifying the islands' similarities and differences, this study clarifies the formative process and complex nature of Jeju's maritime traditions and its 'same nature, independent culture' characteristics. The islands under study have been subject to a number of both shared and distinct historical processes, which are considered here. This study is rooted in an examination of the specific nature of rituals and their evolutionary process, including a critical review of previous relevant studies.

Jeju's oceanic paradise faith and its evolution

Jeju and Ryukyu are noted in the Korean Peninsula and Japan for their cultural distinctiveness and uniqueness. These two oceanic regions have specially designated spiritual spaces. Byeongnang-guk 벽랑국 / 碧浪國, also referred to as the Three Clans Myth, exists on Jeju. Gangnam Cheonja-guk 강남천자국 / 江南天子國 (Realm of Gods Located beyond the Sea) and Ieo-do 이어도 / 이어-島 are also on Jeju. In Ryukyu, Nirai Kanai 니라이카나이 and Paipatiroma পেইপে테-로 (an island uncovered by waves in the folklore of Hateruma 波照間島, in Yaeyama 八重山諸島) are sites where deities are believed to have originated. Although they have different names, these spiritual spaces share the characteristic of being far across the sea from human settlement. We refer to these places as 'oceanic paradises'.

These oceanic paradises places were seen as giving birth to the folklore, myths, and rituals of their respective islands. Examining the characteristics of these oceanic paradises can reveal much about islanders' psychological and historical contexts and their relationships with the sea. Jeju has a particularly wide variety of oceanic paradise beliefs, which originated in the earliest mythical imaginations of the Neolithic era and ancient times, supplemented by historical experiences and interpreted truths. Comparison between the oceanic paradise beliefs of Jeju and Ryukyu can assist in our understanding of how they evolved and of an important cultural strand running through the Kuroshio region.

First, Byeongnang-guk (Jeju) and Nirai Kanai (Ryukyu) possess the basic features of oceanic paradises. The names of these oceanic paradises reflect their mythological or ritualistic features rather than historical experiences. Byeongnang-guk clearly means 'Country of Jade-Green Waves', but the etymology and meaning of Nirai Kanai is unclear. Some people interpret it to mean 'Realm of Roots', but others interpret it as 'Place where the Sun Rises and Sets' or 'Ideal Land Far Away'. The Jeju and Ryukyu peoples refer to these idealized places using their imaginations and believe that their deities originated where the sun rises or in a faraway land across the sea.

Byeongnang-guk is an oceanic paradise of Jeju's foundation myth. In former times, Jeju was home to the ancient country of Tamna-guk 탐라국 / 耽羅國 (2337 BCE~938 CE), which was distinct from the Korean Peninsula and thus gave its people space to create a distinct foundation myth. According to that myth, Tamna-guk's three divine founders (Go 고 / 高, Yang 양 / 梁, Bu 부 / 夫) emerged from the ground. Their spouses were three princesses who drifted from Byeongnang-guk to the shores of Tamna-guk inside a large box or crate.

Early sources referred to Byeongnang-guk as Japan (李元鎮, 耽羅誌, 1653). However, this connection was made by adapting the narrative in such a way as to support historical and

rational explanations. In the myth, the three princesses brought with them the seeds of five major grains, oxen, and horses. As such, the myth explains that agriculture and animal husbandry in Tamna-guk were introduced from the oceanic paradise of Byeongnang-guk. The sea was the path by which the divine beings came to the island with the foundations of civilization.

Belief in the oceanic paradise of Nirai Kanai is spread throughout Ryukyu, but the name and location of this paradise varies significantly from island to island. It is referred to by such names as Nirai Kanai, Niruya Kanaya, Girai Kanai, Miruya Kana, Nirai, Nire, Niran, and Niro, and its location is believed to be south, east, or west of the islands. The islanders believe that this is the dwelling place of the deities who brought seeds (such as barley, millet, and soybeans) and fire to their islands. Nirai Kanai is most often mentioned in the agrarian rituals seeking to encourage abundance, which still are avidly practiced and culturally transmitted on some islands in the archipelago.

Jeju's Three Clans Myth (Byeongnang-guk) has become obsolete, in part because the coming together of the male and female deities was a mythologizing technique of the political regime of the ancient state of Tamna-guk. In contrast, the Nirai Kanai rituals persist because they relate to Ryukyu's shamanic beliefs. Nevertheless, there are clear similarities between the two mythical oceanic paradises and the deities that originated from them. It is also noteworthy that Byeongnang-guk and Nirai Kanai are longstanding systems of belief independently produced by islanders at a time when the islands were not subjected to mainland jurisdiction and suppression.

Gangnam Cheonja-guk is another oceanic paradise belief and is the place from which Jeju's shamanic deities are believed to have originated. Deities such as Yeongdeung 영등 / 靈燈 and Maljet Ttaragi of Yowang Hwangje-guk 요왕황제국말젯딸아기 arrived from Gangnam Cheonja-guk via the Kuroshio. Yeongdeung is a female wind deity who visits Jeju each year to preside over the bounty of seafood. She is associated with various sea deities, such as the guardian deities of fishers and female divers, tutelary deities who provide oceanic safety, deities of safe childbirth and parenting, and the divinity at the foundation of the Jeju's indigenous shrine religion. Gangnam Cheonja-guk is similar to Byeongnang-guk and Nirai Kanai in that it is a divine place across the sea. However, Gangnam Cheonja-guk involves belief in an oceanic paradise that developed through the incorporation of islanders' historical experiences, which distinguishes it from the oceanic paradises described above. The characteristics of Gangnam Cheonja-guk, as expressed through Jeju's shamanic myths, can be described as follows:

- (1) Gangnam Cheonja-guk and Jeju are connected by a sea route.
- (2) Gangnam Cheonja-guk is understood as the place from which deities originated.
- (3) Gangnam Cheonja-guk is where deities demonstrated their worthiness and were transformed into true deities.

According to songs of the simbang 심방 (shamans in the Jeju dialect), Gangnam Cheonja-guk means 'China'. Shamanic song in Jeju occurs in particular sequences. In the Nalgwaguk-sumgim 날과국섬김 sequence, the shaman says: "Gangnam Cheonja-guk is China." This is a formula by which all shamans sing the same song. It is likely that Gangnam Cheonja-guk is a compound word, in which Gangnam refers to the region south of the Yangtze River (Jiangnan 江南), while Cheonja-guk 天子國 refers to mainland China because it means the 'Realm of the Son of Heaven', a term with which the Chinese designated their country because they believed the emperor to be the son of heaven. The term thus creates a synecdoche to encompass all of China. The Jiangnan region was key to maritime trade and transport across successive Chinese dynasties. It was mythologized as an oceanic paradise in response to Tamna-guk's dependence on trade with Ningbo 寧波, which was the largest trading port in the Jiangnan region. Nam-chun Heo (허남춘, 2011, pp. 202-204; translation

our own) points out that the trade between Ningbo and Jeju is evidenced not just by ancient written records but also by archaeology:

The Wu Zhu coins 五銖錢 (ancient Chinese coins minted from 118 BCE onward) unearthed while constructing a harbour in Jeju in 1928 [were] excavated along with Wang Mang coins 王莽錢 (various types of coins issued by Wang Mang during the Xin Dynasty 新 period in China), and thus they are datable to a period that does not extend much beyond the first century CE.

Maritime trade between Jeju and Jiangnan is thus known to have occurred via the Kuroshio long before the Sadan 斜斷航路 (oblique or diagonal) route between China and the Korean Peninsula was established in the 6th and 7th centuries CE.

The political relationships among China, the Korean Peninsula, and Tamna-guk significantly influenced the development of Gangnam Cheonja-guk. In the early 12th century, Tamna-guk was annexed by Goryeo 高麗, which ruled the Korean Peninsula. During the first half of the 13th century, the Yuan Dynasty 元 frequently invaded Goryeo and intervened in its domestic affairs, and Goryeo became a vassal state of the Yuan in the second half of the 13th century. The Yuan sent governors (darugachi 達魯花赤), and it directly and comprehensively interfered in Tamna-guk's political and administrative affairs. The Yuan took control of Goryeo's governance, elevated Tamna-guk's status from county to state, and established military and civil governors on the island there. The Yuan's aim in this was to emphasize that Tamna-guk was not subordinate to Goryeo but was directly controlled by the Yuan (李元鎮, 2002, pp. 12-16). The Yuan recognized Tamna-guk as the geographical midpoint of the sea route to Japan and as the shortest route for transporting supplies from the Korean Peninsula to the Yuan. Furthermore, Tamna-guk's natural environment was well suited to animal husbandry, and its people had excellent shipbuilding skills, developed over centuries of maritime experience. Tamna-guk was in addition a strategically important place from which military expeditions could be launched.

The Yuan Dynasty used Jiangnan's ports to implement and expand its maritime policies and oceanic training (朴貞淑, 2012, pp. 567-590). Under Yuan control, Tamna-guk built the navy intended to invade Japan, reared warhorses, and provided other commodities, which were transported to Yuan from a harbour (currently called Mangjang-po 망장포 / 網場浦) in southeast Tamna-guk. Tamna-guk was under Yuan control for about 100 years. During this period, China's states referred to their rulers as Cheonja 천자 / 天子 ('Sons of Heaven') and to their locations as Cheonja-guk 천자국 / 天子國 ('Realm of the Son of Heaven'), and they exerted power over the Korean Peninsula, Japan, and beyond. Gradually, this sense of power transformed into a mythology.

Similarly, Nam-chun Heo (허남춘, 2017, p. 371; translation our own) observes the following regarding the emergence of Gangnam Cheonja-guk:

In the medieval period, since China was regarded as the center of civilization, there was a change toward increasing the authority of the deities in the shamanic myths of Jeju by claiming that the great deities were based in Gangnam Cheonja-guk, the land of the Son of Heaven in China.

The belief that China was the deities' place of origin beyond the sea did not originate in Jeju's shamanic ideation. However, when the ideas strengthened sufficiently to incorporate a hegemonic ideology within historical and imaginary experiences, the oceanic paradise came to be called Gangnam Cheonja-guk. Characteristic (2) stated above (that in Jeju mythology,

Gangnam Cheonja-guk is understood as the place from which deities originated) reflects this historical context.

Characteristic (3) is supported by another rationale derived from existing oceanic beliefs about otherworlds. This rationale unfolds as a narrative concerning deities that originated in Jeju (instead of in an oceanic paradise) but that crossed the sea to quell disturbances in Gangnam Cheonja-guk, then returned to Jeju to become deities. In this myth, Gangnam Cheonja-guk is a place in which the deities demonstrated their worthiness to become deities. The myths always include events in which the deities solve problems using their extraordinary abilities. Thus, Gangnam Cheonja-guk is the place where deities undergo deification and strengthening of their divinity (허남춘, 2017). These deities solved problems that the rulers of Gangnam Cheonja-guk could not fix, refused the local rulers' requests to remain, and returned to Jeju to become deities, suggesting that Characteristic (3) above includes islanders' hopes and dreams of eliminating domination and subordination.

The mythology of oceanic paradises increasingly added historical references and featured real rather than imaginary places. The Jeju myth of Ieo-do and the Ryukyu myth of Paipatiroma are examples of this evolution because they demonstrate the process by which the divine oceanic paradises incorporated reality. All of Jeju's oceanic paradises (Byeongnang-guk, Gangnam Cheonja-guk, and Ieo-do) share the characteristic of including the island's history of oppression by the mainland.

The Ieo-do myth directly incorporated Jeju's historical relationship with China. According to the myths collected by Seong-gi Jin (진성기, 1993), Ieo-do is the place where a man named Go Dongji 고통지 was stranded as the sole survivor of a voyage to China to present a tribute of horses. Go Dongji arrived in Jeju on a Chinese fishing boat, accompanied by a woman he had met in Ieo-do, who became a village deity. The woman's name was Yeodot Halmang 여돏할망 (Yeodot is a variant of Ieo-do) (진성기, 1993, pp. 34-36). Toru Takashi (高橋亨, 1974, pp. 54-55) says that Ieo-do is where ships sent to China with cattle, horses, and other products were permanently docked during the Yuan Dynasty's rule of Jeju. The protagonists of these myths arrived in Ieo-do because of Chinese oppression.

This historical context was incorporated into the myth during its cultural transmission. In the myth, Ieo-do is midway on the sea route between Jeju and Jiangnan, and ships carrying tribute were said to sometimes stop there. Ieo-do thus serves as the oceanic paradise that people encounter before reaching Jiangnan. The people who stopped at Ieo-do rarely returned to the human world, and the people of Ieo-do who accompanied the rare returnees were considered deities. This aspect of the myth shows the blending of the islanders' history of their ordeals with their mythical oceanic paradises. Thus, the belief in a paradisaal place beyond the sea became the foundation for the belief in oceanic paradises as accessible to humans. Although Ieo-do was not strictly a divine place, it was a haven for people who were shipwrecked, and it was a paradise in which people escaping the oppression of foreign powers could live forever. However, the myth of Ieo-do also expresses islanders' fears of being lost or abandoned at sea, and it comforts them with the belief that those who are lost at sea are living happily on Ieo-do. The Ieo-do myth thus concerns a liminal space that is neither human nor divine.

The Ryukyu myth of Paipatiroma illustrates the process of a mythical oceanic paradise's transition in thought from the divine to the human and from paradise to refuge. Yong-ui Kim (김용의, 2012, pp. 240-244; translation our own) states that "Paipatiroma is a paradise mentioned in the myths of Haterujima, an island in the Yaeyama Islands, and it is based on the historical invasion of Okinawa by the Japanese feudal domain of Satsuma." According to Kunio Yanagita (柳田國男, 1940, p. 133), in the past, Okinawans found it so difficult to bear the harsh taxes imposed upon their home that they fled by sailing across the sea and founded Paipatiroma as a place of refuge. Similar to the myth of Ieo-do, the islanders' struggles under

the oppression of invading powers significantly influenced the evolution of the myth. However, Paipatiroma is an oceanic paradise built by humans, whereas Ieo-do is a natural oceanic paradise of deities. The composite nature of the Ieo-do myth allows us to examine the transition of the oceanic paradise motif from myth to legend.

Oceanic paradise beliefs, which began with islanders' mythological ideation, as they embraced the sea as a place of reverence, gradually commingled with history and reality. At a certain point, hegemonic ideology was incorporated into the myths and existing beliefs to eventually dominate as a functional rationale that reinforced the deities' divinity. The oceanic paradise beliefs prevalent in the myths became entwined with the people's lived experiences, which created oceanic paradises in the human world. Ultimately, this motif mingled with the islanders' intense hope of escaping oppression, which left its mark on island legends.

Jeju's flotsam faith and its relationship to the Kuroshio Current's oceanic culture

In coastal and island regions, there is a tendency to regard things that drift on the sea (flotsam) as divine. Yong-joon Hyun (현용준, 2002, pp. 514-515) notes that the flotsam motifs usually found in the Jeju myths are also common elsewhere, such as on Tsushima Island 대마도 / 對馬島, Kyushu, Ryukyu (Okinawa), Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam. These regions have similar flotsam myths that relate deeply to their founders' origins. All these mythical motifs are in cultures strongly influenced by the Kuroshio.

The island regions of the southern lanes of the maritime routes between Korea, China, and Japan feature myths with similar narrative frameworks, which suggests a path of transmission. Furthermore, these motifs have limited reach into the mainland areas of these three countries, which is useful for distinguishing between mainland and oceanic paths of transmission. Therefore, if a group of sea routes along which highly similar myths or beliefs propagate were defined as a particular oceanic cultural sphere, and if its characteristics were investigated in detail, it might be possible to identify some of the ways in which myths and beliefs were transmitted within the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere.

There are two types of flotsam myths. One type concerns a divine being that drifts ashore and becomes a progenitor or founder deity. The other type concerns a divine being that becomes a tutelary deity associated with the fishing industry or other activities. This section of the paper examines and compares myths based on the premise that flotsam motifs in the foundation myths originated from folk beliefs concerning flotsam.

There are numerous shrines on Xiazhi Island 蝦峙島 of the Zhoushan Archipelago. Shengtang-miao 聖塘墓 (Shengtang Shrine), Suofang-dian 杪枋殿 (Suofang Hall), and Huangsha-dian 黃沙殿 (Huangsha Hall) enshrine as deities items that drifted ashore off the sea currents. These items include caskets, spirit tablets, and cabinets (曲金良, 2007, p. 4). The oceanic beliefs of Xiazhi consider caskets and cabinets as storage boxes or sacred objects, and spirit tablets serve as substitutes for spirits, thereby providing spatial images. Kyung-yup Lee (이경엽, 2007, p. 163) discusses the myths surrounding these items in detail, with the Shengtang-miao origin myth explaining how a 'wooden cabinet' drifted across the sea and was then worshipped as a deity. The deity rewards worshippers with the promise of abundant fishing and prosperous business dealings. The myth began as one person's faith, but the deity's miraculous powers soon became widely known, and the belief spread throughout the island. As a result, the Shengtang bodhisattva 聖塘菩薩 ('bodhisattva' is a general term for 'deity' in East Asian religions) became a deity of ships, fishers, and abundance. Shengtang-miao is the most widely venerated and influential shrine on Xiazhi, to the extent that, when an epidemic spread across the island, the islanders prayed to the bodhisattva enshrined in Shengtang-miao for the health and safety of their villages.

Flotsam motifs are ubiquitous in the folk beliefs and shamanic myths of Jeju. A specific ancestral deity is worshipped by each individual Jeju family, most commonly through the family's job or occupation, which is transmitted from generation to generation, with believers accepting the (occupational) circumstances as fate. Flotsam from shipwrecks is sometimes believed to be shipwrecked souls and is worshipped as ancestors. Sometimes, gourd bottles that have drifted along the sea currents from Japan become household deities, and sometimes wooden debris washed ashore from the sea is used in a household and later worshipped as a guardian deity of that household or family's occupation (interview with Jeju simbang Seo Sunsil, 30 May 2017).

In the shamanic myths of Jeju, all the deities who arrived on the island from the sea were inside wooden boxes or cases made of stone and iron (mythical materials). This mythical narrative is a typical formula for most of Jeju's transmitted bonpuri *본풀이* (shamanic narrative songs). Furthermore, the deities that drifted ashore are differentiated as male or female. The female deity is either an exiled disobedient daughter of the Dragon King (in shamanic myths) or is a snake deity (in the Chil-seong Bonpuri *칠성본풀이* / 七星-본풀이, the story of a snake worshiped as a God in Jeju folk belief) who was discovered and venerated by fishers and female divers after she drifted ashore. The function of the daughter of the Dragon King gradually changed from that of a tutelary deity of oceanic abundance and fishery to that of a goddess of childbirth and childrearing. The snake deity was originally an occupational deity who guarded fishers and female divers, but the myth was conflated with beliefs that deified snakes, and she was eventually established in diverse areas as a deity who bestows wealth.

Regarding the male deity, the belief is that he was a human inside an iron box that drifted to the Dragon King's palace. He married the Dragon King's daughter, and then he returned to Jeju, where he was transformed into a deity. The male deity's function remains unclear, although he is an enshrined deity worshipped in the village of Gimnyeong *김녕*. This coastal village has a long history of dependence on subsistence fishing.

A typical tutelary deity of fishers, named Ebisu *えびす*, is worshipped throughout Japan. This deity is not mentioned in either the *Kojiki* *古事記* or the *Nihon Shoki* *日本書紀* and is thus predominantly a folk deity (김용안, 2009, p. 462). The islanders believe that Ebisu brings prosperity, not only in fishery but also in commerce, and that he confers blessings upon all aspects of human life. In some regions, whales, flotsam, and other items from the sea are identified with and deified as Ebisu. Hiruko *ヒルコ* is an Ebisu tradition, in which Hiruko is the abandoned firstborn child of Izanami *伊邪那美* and Izanagi *伊邪那岐* (the parents of all deities and creator gods, who gave birth to the islands of Japan), mentioned in the *Nihon Shoki*, which mainly chronicles the political lineage of the economic and political center of Japan. Because Hiruko was a bad child or lacked feet and had a body like a leech, his parents cast him into the sea on a boat of reeds (金英珠, 2014). Hiruko's abandonment caused him to be conflated with Ebisu, a phenomenon that mostly occurred in the Honshu *本州*, Kyushu, and Ryukyu regions. In these regions, the Ebisu faith remains robustly transmitted, and it is inferred that the conflation arose from the deep connection between the flotsam motif in the Hiruko myth and the Ebisu faith. Nishinomiya *西宮* is the mythical place where Hiruko became a god, and it remains the center of the Ebisu faith to the present day. The flotsam motif thus reversed the role of Hiruko from that of a deity cast away from the center to that of a leading deity of folk religion.

Setting aside the foundation myths, the flotsam motif of boxes, boats, and similar items always depicts the deities as related to fishing. Initially, the deities presided over fishing, but their spheres of influence gradually expanded. The chronicles of regional progenitors and national founders were originally based on the stories of sea deities worshipped by the islands' fishers. Bearing in mind the ways in which the foundation myths were compiled, it is possible

to reconstruct the process by which flotsam motifs strengthened their bases in folk belief, which lent itself to the emergence of the foundation or progenitor myths. Deities that drifted ashore appear to have been venerated across the Kuroshio region.

There are two types of flotsam beliefs: (1) an item of flotsam *per se* may be an object of worship, and (2) a deity's story may be associated with an item of flotsam to produce a narrative. A reasonable inference is that islanders' mythical imaginations, which conceived of the deities as arriving from beyond the sea, created the flotsam beliefs and that these two types blended to create the deities' epic legends. When the mythical origin stories of these deities from diverse regions are explained in terms of an archetype, similarities become evident. In Jeju, flotsam motifs are incorporated into and transmitted through related beliefs as well as through numerous shamanic and foundation myths, which demonstrate the lasting importance to the islanders of items that are washed ashore.

Jeju's Yeongdeung faith and its relationship with the Kuroshio oceanic cultures

Jeju has a body of oceanic beliefs that comprise the Yeongdeung faith. Korean folklore studies typically regard this faith as part of the general folk religion found throughout the Korean Peninsula. The Yeongdeung faith venerates Yeongdeung as a wind deity who visits the Korean Peninsula on the first day of the second month of each year, based on the traditional lunar calendar, and remains there for 15 to 20 days before returning home.

We argue, however, that there are distinct differences between the Yeongdeung faiths of Jeju and the Korean Peninsula. In the mainland version, Yeongdeung descends from heaven and grants abundance in agriculture or wellbeing to families. In Jeju, Yeongdeung arrives each year from an unknown world beyond the sea, variously referred to as Gangnam Cheonja-guk, Oenunbagi-seom 외눈박이섬 ('One-Eyed Monster Island'), and Yowang Hwangje-guk 요왕황제국 / 龍王皇帝國 ('Dragon King's Empire'). The most important difference between Jeju and the Korean Peninsula is that Jeju's beliefs specify a place of origin. Moreover, Yeongdeung is a wind goddess who presides over abundance in Jeju in contrast to the mainland version, in which she sows seeds of seaweed, fish, and shellfish into the sea. Before the development of advanced navigation, wind was the indicator of sea currents. As such, Yeongdeung controls the abundance of seafood in Jeju. The Yeongdeung ritual in Jeju is more communal than on the mainland. This ritual is the Yeongdeung-gut 영등굿, which is performed at numerous Jeju community shrines at the time when Yeongdeung is supposed to visit. A suitable study of the Yeongdeung faith in Jeju should consider its interactions with other parts of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere, the Korean Peninsula, and other local myths of Jeju, and it should investigate its religious nature in terms of similarities and differences. This could enhance our understanding of the complex evolution of Jeju's Yeongdeung faith.

Relationship between the Nirai Kanai faith and the Yeongdeung faith

Nirai Kanai (Ryukyu) is a mythical oceanic paradise similar to Gangnam Cheonja-guk (Jeju). The deities that live there bring abundance to the human world. This abundance has been deified and is referred to as yuu 유-우. Kazumi Takanashi and Hye-yeon Lee (高梨一美, & 이혜연, 2004, pp. 397-402; translation our own) summarize this concept:

Ryukyu is divisible into four areas, listed from north to south as Amami [奄美], Okinawa, Miyako [宮古島], and Yaeyama. The yuu concept is distributed across all these areas. [...] It generally refers to abundance in agriculture, fishing, or hunting, but it can also mean crop yields, fish hauls, etc., and also the wealth, happiness, or prosperity that can be obtained because of abundance. Thus, it is a wide-ranging and

inclusive concept of abundance that is not limited to agriculture, fishing, and hunting. [...] Nonetheless, the origin myth positing a divine world beyond the sea that is the source of abundance, and stating that village life began when grain seeds were brought from there, is widely distributed throughout Ryukyu.

Ryukyu's Nirai Kanai faith closely resembles Jeju's Yeongdeung faith because the both involve: the deity presiding over abundance visiting the island from across the sea at regular intervals, communal rituals, and similar forms of rituals (the making of boats, welcoming or sending off of boats, and offering of prayers). In the Nirai Kanai faith, the visiting deity brings elements of civilization (including fire and the seeds of five major grains) from across the sea. This means that the abundance granted by the visiting deity pertains to other types of abundance, such as happiness, prosperity, agriculture, fishing, and hunting. In comparison, Yeongdeung's field of activity in Jeju is limited to the abundance provided by the sea.

Stories related to the provision of grain in Jeju are not found in the Yeongdeung mythology, but they are present in Segyeong Bonpuri *세경본풀이*, which is a Tamna-guk foundation myth concerning a common deity. The Tamna-guk foundation myth, as described above, involves three princesses arriving on Jeju with the seeds of five major grains and livestock to meet the three deities that founded Tamna-guk. Segyeong Bonpuri is a deity myth that chronicles the life of the goddess of agriculture (Jacheong-bi), which as noted above, is also known as Segyeong. This goddess resolved a crisis in Gangnam Cheonja-guk and brought the seeds of five major grains from there. In this myth, Gangnam Cheonja-guk is part of heaven.

Jeju's local deities are usually believed to have arrived from across the sea or to have emerged from the ground, and Gangnam Cheonja-guk is usually believed to be beyond the sea. However, Segyeong Bonpuri introduces a new place, in heaven, with the result that this myth's framework contains transitional elements. This contrasts with the original sources of the Yeongdeung faith (the motifs in the foundation myth of Tamna-guk). Moreover, research indicates that the foundation myths of Tamna-guk and Segyeong Bonpuri both emerged from the narrative structure associated with Songdang Bonpuri *송당본풀이*, which is the shrine deity myth of Songdang village *송당* and the source of all shrine beliefs in Jeju (현용준, 1983; 장주근, 1986; 허남춘, 1994; 허춘, 1994; 김현선, 2005; 권태효, 2005).

Considering the above, how can the complex and multifaceted nature of the Yeongdeung faith in Jeju be explained? It is possible that this faith, as with the original faith of Ryukyu, included the abundance of agriculture as well as the abundance of the sea? According to Yong-joon Hyun (현용준, 2002, pp. 57-60), when the simbang announces "I have brought upland a dry-field rice plant or foxtail millet seeds" while performing the Yeongdeung-gut ritual, this means there will be a bumper crop that year. That the Yeongdeung faith also relates to abundance in agriculture is evidenced by the fact that the simbang who performs the Yeongdeung-gut ritual frequently mentions that Yeongdeung visits a wide region bringing the seeds. Furthermore, Yeongdeung-gut ceremonies, such as Ssi-deurim *씨드림* (seed giving) and Ssi-jeom *씨점* (seed divination), which involve the supposition that millet seeds germinate seafood and predict the seafood harvest of a given year based on the way these seeds are scattered, are well-preserved traditions in Jeju. Jeong-sik Kang (강정식, 2005, pp. 103-104) states that Yeongdeung-gut is sometimes performed in Jeju's mountainside villages, where agriculture is the dominant occupation, and the ceremony has left traces throughout the island, even in places where it is no longer performed.

The unique nature of the place where Yeongdeung-gut is performed cannot be overlooked. Jeong-sik Kang (강정식, 2005, p. 5) states:

Even though Yeongdeung is not a shrine deity, she is received in the shrine, and

Yeongdeung-gut is performed as a shrine ritual, and, what is more, the ritual must be performed at the main village shrine even though there are individual sea-related shrines or separate shrines devoted to sea deities.

Shrine deities remain near their believers' homes to oversee all aspects of their lives. There are thus designated places where these deities live on the land, and the rituals performed at these places are danggut 당굿 (shrine rituals). Shrine rituals for Yeongdeung are performed in all communities of believers, even though she is a deity who visits at a specific time each year and has no fixed residence. These aspects of the Yeongdeung faith demonstrate that Yeongdeung might function as a deity who grants abundance in numerous ways and is not limited to the sea.

In Jeju's shamanic tradition, Yowang Segyeong 요왕세경 is a deity related to the sea (Yowang 요왕 means 'sea', and Segyeong 세경 presides over 'sea-fields'). This pertinent case shows the process by which the Segyeong faith expanded relative to the Yeongdeung faith and how the former encroached upon the latter's domain. Similar to Yeongdeung, Yowang Segyeong is a deity who controls the bounty of the sea. As can be deduced from its name, this deity is derived from Segyeong, whose role of presiding over agricultural abundance expanded over time to include the abundance of the sea, thereby usurping Yeongdeung's role. In contrast, in the independent rituals and related myths of Yeongdeung, Yowang Segyeong is only associated with the sea by the word 'Yowang', and the myths related to this deity merely borrow the myths of the agrarian deity with little modification. It is in this context that we can understand the performance of the seed-giving ceremonies and seed divination performed both in the agrarian Segyeong-nori 세경놀이 rituals and the Yeongdeung-gut rituals.

In summary, a female deity arrived from across the sea with the seeds of five major grains. Under the influence of the Korean Peninsula, a female deity who descended from the heavens with these seeds usurped her place. Yeongdeung thus lost the power to control the abundance of all natural things and was eventually limited to the abundance of the sea.

Relationship between the Avalokitesvara faith and the Yeongdeung faith

In addition to her other functions, Yeongdeung is venerated in Jeju as the tutelary deity of fishers and female divers, and she is believed to guard ships and boats. She is sometimes understood through comparison with Avalokitesvara, a Chinese maritime guardian deity. Avalokitesvara is a Buddhist bodhisattva who relieves the suffering of mankind and leads them toward reincarnation. Avalokitesvara has assumed various roles to suit worshippers' circumstances and needs, including geographical location and livelihood. It should be noted that Nanhai Avalokitesvara 南海觀音 (Avalokitesvara of the South Sea), who has gained prominence around the island of Putuoshan 普陀山 in the Zhoushan Archipelago, is revered as a maritime guardian deity. Putuoshan is regarded as Nanhai Avalokitesvara's home. Hwa-seob Song (송화섭, 2010, pp. 197-210; translation our own) explains this connection:

It is possible to say that the tales of Yeongdeung Halmang [영등할망] and Seonmundae Halmang [설문대할망] in Jeju are versions of the origin tale of Avalokitesvara circulated by envoy ships and seafarers stopping in Jeju as a port of call on their journeys back and forth between Kyushu in Japan and Mingzhou [明州] in China. [...] Given that the ships passing through the southern leg of the Jeju sea lane departed from the ports of Mingzhou or Putuoshan and Luojiashan [珞珈山] in the province of Zhejiang, China, Yeongdeung Halmang is an incarnation of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.

If Hwa-seob Song (송화섭, 2010) is correct, the Yeongdeung faith in Jeju developed and grew along the Kuroshio's southern maritime trade routes. From China, the Kuroshio's points

of departure include Putuoshan and the port of Mingzhou in Zhejiang Province.

Putuoshan is the only one of the four sacred mountains of Chinese Buddhism to be located on the coast. The island's rise in reputation and its foundation myth as a sacred site are closely associated with its strategic location relative to diplomatic and commercial maritime transport between China, Korea, and Japan (Bingenheimer, 2016; 주장현, 2006, p. 17). Putuoshan's Nanhai Avalokitesvara faith has been officially sanctioned since 1214. Before then, it was a faith in a tutelary deity held by a group of merchants engaged in maritime trade (程俊, 2006, p. 111). It seems unlikely that this faith amounted to much more than that, even at the time when it exerted a strong enough influence to reach the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Tamna-guk existed in Jeju long before this propagation transpired, and its foundation myth already included stories of deities voyaging across the sea with the seeds of five major grains.

We can agree that Putuoshan's Nanhai Avalokitesvara faith spread to Jeju and influenced the local Yeongdeung faith. However, the Avalokitesvara narratives are distinctly different in character from those related to the Yeongdeung faith generally accepted on Jeju. Moreover, Nanhai Avalokitesvara bears greater similarities to flotsam traditions of deities that drifted ashore than to traditions of deities that visit regularly, given that Putuoshan's foundation myth revolves around a sacred statue getting stuck on the island in the course of transit between the Chinese mainland and Japan (Bingenheimer, 2016, pp. 80-81). Yeongdeung's primary ritual function of providing abundance from the sea and land are more similar to the visiting deity faith of Ryukyu than to the Yeongdeung faith of Jeju. Yeongdeung's name and some of her attributes (wind goddess and regular visits) are the same as those found on the Korean Peninsula. It is thus unreasonable to regard Putuoshan's Nanhai Avalokitesvara as the prototype of Yeongdeung. It is more logical to understand the relationship between the two deities as involving a blending of similar faiths through maritime exchange.

The relationships between the Yeongdeung faith in Jeju and the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere can thus be summarized as follows. First, Jeju's Yeongdeung faith is an outcome of various combinations of sea deity beliefs in the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere. In essence, the Yeongdeung faith is similar to the visiting deity beliefs of Ryukyu. Jeju and Ryukyu are each located where the Kuroshio Current branches out, and these islands historically used the Kuroshio to interact with one another. Later, the Yeongdeung faith and Putuoshan's Avalokitesvara faith were transmitted through maritime exchange and influenced one another. Indications of interactions with mainland Korea are also evident in the Yeongdeung faith. Study of these traditions can thus elucidate the uniqueness of Jeju's belief system, which incorporates balanced elements of oceanic and mainland cultures.

Conclusion

This study has reviewed and compared oceanic beliefs, myths, and rituals across the Kuroshio region, with a focus on Jeju. It has examined similarities and differences in the evolutionary process, investigated the basis for Jeju's resemblances to other places, and shown the uniqueness of parts of Jeju's oceanic culture. The consciousness that underlies the folklore that permeates the coasts and islands of this region is a shared creation, produced by long-term interactions along the Kuroshio, beginning with the primordial imagery of the sea.

Because Jeju is on the last branch of the Kuroshio, it was able to incorporate ideas from the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese archipelago, Ryukyu, and northern and southern China. The people of Jeju could thus absorb oceanic beliefs, myths, and rituals along the current. The islanders used this culture in establishing their own system of faith and folk rituals. However, the islanders' historical experiences of interaction with external entities, such as conflicts, negotiations, conquests, and domination, shaped their oceanic traditions. In this process, the existing mythical system slowly changed even as its foundations remained strong. It is nevertheless important to note that many folk elements of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural

sphere emerged independently on small islands around the region and are characteristic of the 'same nature, independent culture' circumstances found throughout the region.

Similar oceanic paradise faiths exist in Jeju and Ryukyu. In Ryukyu, most of the oceanic paradises are similar, but Byeongnang-guk, Gangnam Cheonja-guk, and Ieo-do all formed in different manners and different context. Our comparison has revealed that the oceanic paradise beliefs gradually emerged from the islanders' mythical imaginations, which revered the sea, and gradually blended with history and experience. However, more clues are available on Jeju to examine the beginnings and subsequent transformation of the oceanic paradise faiths and related myths. Regarding the Ieo-do folktales, most of the narrative elements relate to the sea deity faith.

The coastal and island regions of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere produced and shared flotsam motifs and faiths that emerged from the islanders' mythical imaginings that deities arrived from beyond the sea and from the narratives of deities that wandered the sea. This faith's status increased in strength and influence over time, and elements of it were borrowed and added to foundation and progenitor myths. Jeju has numerous motifs related to shamanic myths and foundation myths as well as individual beliefs related to flotsam. The disseminated cultural elements became the foundation of Jeju's popular faith through a continuous process of differentiation and integration.

Jeju's Yeongdeung faith is a mixture of the various faiths of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere. Its essence is the visiting deity faith of Ryukyu, which was later transmitted to the Southern Sea region of Putuoshan in China, influencing Buddhist folk beliefs surrounding Avalokitesvara. Even the interactions with the Korean Peninsula could be derived from this faith. Yeongdeung is thus an appropriate subject for discussing Jeju's unique characteristics regarding mutual acceptance of oceanic and mainland cultures and its construction of a system of faith organized around diverse elements.

Oceanic culture spread throughout the Kuroshio region, but the process was never unidirectional. Culture ebbs and flows like the ocean current, and it aggressively develops, shapes, and resembles the characteristics of humans who explore the sea. The concept of 'same nature, independent culture' is thus accurate for describing Jeju in the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere. The findings of this study offer ways of expanding global recognition of Jeju as the home of the gods and the living folk culture of South Korea as well as ways of initiating discourse on Jeju's identity relative to many of the coastal areas and islands of the Kuroshio oceanic cultural sphere.

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