

Violence and Resistance:
A Hermeneutical Dialogue between “A shoot” in Isaiah 11 and
“The Sun-moon” in Asian Narratives for Justice

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Abstract

The result of the interpretation of Isaiah 11:1-9 shows us “a shoot” as a symbolized resistance in the injustice contexts. “A shoot” is more powerful than the violence of the unjust. In addition, Asian resistance narratives are helpful references for deriving contextual meanings of the relationship between violence and resistance in the unjust society. Korean “The Sun-Moon” narrative is a beautiful discourse to announce the violence of the power and show the resistance of the powerless. The Taiwanese “The Sun-Moon Lake” legend encourages us to remember the removal of the violence of dragons for the earth community. I would like to weave the hermeneutical interpretation between “a shoot” narrative and “the sun-moon” narrative, which present the foundations of the natural world for the human and earth community. Even though violence in the unjust society prevails around the world where there are people, “a shoot” and “sun and moon” everywhere tell a hopeful message for us. In doing so, new form criticism will be used by my methodology for the hermeneutical interpretation of the biblical texts and Asian stories.

Keywords

Isaiah 11:1-9, The Sun-Moon Narrative, Justice, Violence, Resistance,
Hermeneutics

I. Introduction: Bible, a Violent Book?

Violence is an issue across the ages and in all countries of the human and earth community. If Christians act to promote justice in their own society, they can

naturally prevent violence.¹ However, to make matters worse, Biblical texts in a Christian tradition have been used for the legitimization of violence by many perpetrators of violence. For example, in 1964, three social activists were murdered in Mississippi, USA by the members of Ku Klux Klan. Edgar Ray Killen, a KKK member and part time Baptist minister,² had been charged to organize the crime. The case involved the highly intricate issues of racism and anti-Semitism. In this tragedy, segregation and hatred were based on their reading of Genesis 9:27.³ According to the leaflet of the KKK in Mississippi in 1964, the first of the twenty reasons for becoming a KKK member is “Because it is a Christian, fraternal and benevolent organization.”⁴ The White Knights are militant chapter of The KKK. The Knights who reads from the Bible must be an American Anglo-Saxon Christian. When members read the Bible, they understand it as a tool to justify their vicious actions as sacral events. The KKK’s superiority complex and their violence resulted from the interpretation of biblical passages without considering social justice in the world.

¹While John Rawls demonstrates two principles of fairness—“ How we acquire obligations,” and “The institutions in question be just”—in the theory of justice, he appropriately points out the connected concept between violence and justice in unjust social arrangements (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [Cambridge, MA: The Belkin Press of Harvard University Press, 1971], 343). Once Christians recognize violence in societies, they should make a point concerning justice.

²Roger Chapman, “Philadelphia, Mississippi,” in *Culture Wars An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Voices*, edited by Roger Chapman (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2010), 429-430.

³ From the quotes of Mississippi Burning, <http://quotes.lucywho.com/mississippi-burning-quotes-t637297.html> (accessed April 13, 2014).

⁴<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/price&bowers/klan.html>(accessed April 14, 2014).

Furthermore, the former United States President George W. Bush arrogantly used the Bible as the reference for “his global ‘war against terrorism.’”⁵ Christians who use violence to exploit non-Christians often apply their own faith and action to biblical passages without acknowledging the Bible’s passage on justice. According to R. S. Sugirtharajah, in support of nations’ colonizing tendencies, the Christian Bible offers “textual ammunition for spiritual and physical conquest” because of its “repressive and predatory elements.”⁶ A true understanding of the Bible teaches us to prevent violence and to act in justice against it.

The situation of Isaiah under the Assyrian empire empowers the Israelites to resist the powerful empire and to fight for justice. According to Walter Brueggemann, the poetic oracle in Isaiah 10:5-19 speaks of withstanding the forces of the empire whose claims “enfeebled local resistance and led to a loss of trust in YHWH.”⁷ Even though YHWH used Assyria as a rod to punish Israel, now YHWH is going to punish Assyria for becoming arrogant. Thus, Isaiah’s “Woe” to Assyria in v. 5 reminds us to remain strong against the forces of empire because of the woe of YHWH. Moreover, preventing the violence from the empire in Isaiah 11 does not generate other violence in the human community, since the ideal shalom comes from “a shoot” which is the

⁵ Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 7.

⁶R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Exploiting Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (West Sussex, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), 31-33.

⁷Walter Brueggemann, “The Faith in the Empire,” in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*, edited by Richard A. Horsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 32.

very beginning of the earth community. However, one cannot read Isaiah 11 as an unadulterated text of non-violent resistance for all the righteous human community, because Isaiah 11:10-16 relates the demolition of neighboring nations of Israel. Even though the sequence of Isaiah 10:5-11:16 represents the resistance passages of Isaiah against the empire and in support of the peaceful earth, it still has a limitation which cannot liberate itself from the ideology of Israel being chosen by God.

Thus, it is necessary for readers of the Bible to encounter turn to Asian narratives and to engage in a hermeneutical dialogue to conceive of a possible biblical interpretation of the meaning of violence and resistance for righteous community. The “Sun-Moon” narratives in Asian traditional culture exemplify stories of resistance against the violence of power as a way to appreciate the human and earth community, which is toward just society. Therefore, this paper will demonstrate a hermeneutical dialogue between Isaiah 11 and Sun-Moon discourse in Asian narratives in the theme of violence and resistance that justice will prevail. This study is a process of resisting violence. In doing so, I would like to use new form criticism⁸ that equally promotes the interpretation of the confluence of multiple stories.

II. Structure: Power’s Violence and the Powerless’ Resistance

⁸For methodology, see, Hye Kyung Park, “The Confluence of the Israelite Girl in 2 Kings 5 and *Baridegi* in a Korean Myth,” *Madang* 16 (Dec. 2011): 96-97.

Isaiah 11 belongs to the larger unit of Isaiah 10:5-12:6 which can be titled “Prophetic Announcement of a Royal Savior.”⁹ Isaiah 10:5 begins with the prophetic oracle against Assyria by the use of the woe oracle (hōy ’aššûr הוֹי אַשּׁוּר). Isaiah 13:1 introduces the prophet’s pronouncement on Babylon in the formula: maššā’ bābel מַשְׁשָׂא בָבֶל. The demarcation of Isaiah 10:5-12:6 between Assyria and Babylon is determined by Isaiah’s prophetic oracles on the neighboring empires, which intruded upon the Israelites respectively. The appearance of two powerful figures indicates to request the idealized kingship of the Israelites.

In Isaiah 11:1, the royal figure presents the Davidic monarch as coming through “a shoot from the stump of Jesse.” The appearance of “a shoot from the stump (ḥoṭermiggēza‘ yīšāy הוֹתֵר מִגֵּזַע יֵשׁוּעַ) { }” in Isaiah 11:1 positions the narrative on a structural shift in the syntactical features of the passage through chapter 10:5-13:22. ḥoṭer הוֹתֵר infers the reason for the hōy ’aššûr הוֹי אַשּׁוּר and indicates the announcement of maššā’ bābel מַשְׁשָׂא בָבֶל. Thus, the metaphor of a shoot for the Davidic monarch is surrounded by the two powerful figures of Assyria in Isaiah 10:5-10:34 and Babylon in 13:1-22. Israel’s shoot grows up to resist the violence used by the powerful.

In addition, one can understand that ḥoṭer הוֹתֵר traditionally refers to David as the Messianic hope through his father’s name, Jesse, in v. 1. However, “David” does not

⁹Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. 26 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 196-217.

directly appear in Isaiah 11. The scholarship has raised questions on the issue both to find out the historical background of David and to confirm either the messianic interpretation or a hope for the new dynasty.¹⁰ For example, the verse can be identified as a post-exilic addition.¹¹ Therefore our attention to the interpretation needs to move from Jesse to “shoot” i.e., the study from diachronic study to synchronic study. The “shoot” implies the actual basis of the earth community, since every plant needs one.

A structural study comparing Isaiah 10 and 11 shows the indication of the “shoot” metaphor. The implicit inclination of YHWH regarding the tree metaphor of the non-violent kingdom initiates from Isaiah 10:33-34. In v. 33, the Lord YHWH of Hosts cuts down the tops of the tall trees,¹² and hews down the exalted ones. YHWH strikes forest thickets as the majestic Lebanese fall by a mighty (blow) in v. 34. The structure of Isaiah 11 connects with the previous chapter since the tree metaphor is a common indicator between the two chapters.

In addition, the tense of the first word, wěyāzā’ (וַיֵּצֵא), in Isaiah 11:1 is carried through yīpālû (יִפְּאֵל) in 10:34. With the *waw* consecutive used in the narrative sequence, wěyāzā’ (וַיֵּצֵא) can be translated in the future tense. The imperfect tense can reliably confirm the future idealized kinship: “a shoot will come out from the stump of Jesse.”

¹⁰Keith W. Whitlam, “Jesse” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 773.

¹¹Keith W. Whitlam, “Jesse,” 773.

¹²John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, revised edition, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 24 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 203.

Furthermore, the comparison between 10:33-34 and 11:1 illuminates the counterpart image of tree in the deterioration of power and the rejuvenation of the powerless: “the tall and lofty trees of Lebanon” and “the shoot from the stump of Jesse.”¹³ Both the descent of Assyria in 10:5-34 and the rise of the Davidic monarch are described in a “diptych” form from the redaction result to present the two passages’ counterpoint.¹⁴ The tendency of the power transformation unyieldingly is carried through “the Lord YHWH of hosts” after *hinne(h)* the introductory indicator¹⁵ in Isaiah 10:33. The *hinne(h)* signifies the extreme comparison between “tree of Lebanon” and “the shoot from the stump of Jesse.” The strong tree’s violence can be removed by the weak shoot which does not acquiesce in the face of violence. Verse 2 presents the shoot as originated by YHWH whose spirit will rest on him.

Isaiah 11 consists of two distinct passages: vv. 1-9 and 10-16. The two parts begin with *yīšāy* which functions as the indicator of both the demarcation and unity of Isaiah 11. The first part describes the peaceful kingdom sprouted from a shoot from the stump of Jesse. The kingdom is designed by YHWH for both the human and earthly communities. Once the kingship facilitates the leadership from “a shoot,” the leader serves justice in the human community (vv. 1-5). Righteousness and faithfulness shall be the belt of the leader (v. 5). The shoot metaphor invites the



¹³Willem A. M. Beuken, “The Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse: An Eschatological or a Now Event?” *Calvin Theological Journal* 39 (2004): 88.

¹⁴Willem A. M. Beuken, “The Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse,” 90.

¹⁵Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 200.

readers to imagine the green leadership which is dignified by the side of YHWH, since the metaphorically righteous activation is cognized by “YHWH’s direct gifts and action.”¹⁶ Verse 2 punctuates the potentiality of the ideal leader by “The spirit of YHWH, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH.”

Moreover, the idealized kingdom expands to include the animal world. The earth community based that has been raised from on the sprout of “a shoot” in v. 1 is now designed as a paradise where neither predator nor prey exists (vv. 6-9). The idealized ruler of the kingdom will be appointed by YHWH over both the human and earth communities. War and violence will be removed from human society and the animal groups within “the tradition of a future golden age.”¹⁷

Verse 10 reclaims Jesse—the root of Jesse (šōreš yīšāy[] )—to emphasize the idealized situation of the Israelites in vv. 10-16. Even though Jesse functions as the indicator of the paragraph, the tone of this section changes in the comparison with vv. 1-9. The transformation occurs from a peaceful paradise in any community to the stability that will be realized by the chosen Israelites. In addition, verse 1 begins with “a shoot from the stump” in order to depict the strong relationship between Jesse and

¹⁶ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 208.

¹⁷Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary vol. 19 (New Haven: Yale University, 2000), 263.

the ideal leader, verse 10 uses *šōreš yīšāy* (שׁוֹרֵשׁ יִישָׁאֵי) for setting up the global empire in

saying,

“In that day,

The Stock of Jesse that has remained standing

Shall become a standard to peoples—

Nations shall seek his counsel

And his abode shall be honored.” (JPS)

šōreš yīšāy (שׁוֹרֵשׁ יִישָׁאֵי) (translated in “descendants of Jesse”) probably is the shortened

form of *ḥotermiggēza‘ yīšāy* (חֹתֶרְמִיגְגֵּזָא' יִישָׁאֵי) {חֹתֶרְמִיגְגֵּזָא' יִישָׁאֵי}.¹⁸ While Jesse functions as the relevant

proper noun to connect v. 1 and 10 as one unit of Isaiah 11, the use of *ḥotermiggēza‘ yīšāy* clarifies the

intention in regard to the dissimilar position in the entire human community.

In general, YHWH recovers the scattered Israelites from the neighboring nations around Egypt and Assyria (vv. 11-12, 15). Verse 13 predicts the peaceful unity that will exist between Ephraim and Judah when neither jealousy nor hostility will prevail in the affirmation of non-violence. However, verse 14 describes the impact of the Army of Israel on Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Ammon. These territories once belonged to the Davidic Empire.¹⁹ It should be natural for the Israelites to recall their lands. However, before David’s entry into the land, there must be found their living o ancestors in the lands. Any kind of empire carries violence into the land. Thus, this

¹⁸J. Renz, “*šōreš yīšāy*” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 500.

¹⁹Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 201.

verse does not delineate the pacific and righteous community that is the theme of vv.

1-9. From the perspectives of the Philistines, v. 14 marks a recurring imperialism.

The return of violence in vv. 11-16 allows Asian readers to open a hermeneutic dialogue between the biblical passages and Asian stories. C. S. Song insists Isaiah's vision in Isaiah 11:2-9 is not an illusion in an archetypal world. It is possible to make the vision true in a re-creation of God even outside the tradition of church doctrine in the West.²⁰ Thus, Asian stories regarding violence and resistance reflect a properly hermeneutical interpretation of Isaiah 11, since "Asia should be respected and dignified as a 'test' in which the Word is also found incarnate."²¹ For the Asian readers of the Hebrew Bible, the references to hermeneutical dialogue between the biblical traditions and Asian heritages are inexhaustible. The dialogue between the biblical passages and Asian narratives is a scholarly study of the process of violence and resistance toward justice in any earth community.

The Sun-Moon story is a widespread narrative with multiple versions throughout Asia.²² In one version it presents the origin of the Sun and Moon in the natural world.

²⁰C. S. Song, "Story liberates the deep meanings in the Christian Bible," in *The Conference of Religions and Cultural Archetype*, April 25, 2014, FCCRC, Tainan City Taiwan, 13.

²¹Archie C. C. Lee, "The Bible in Asia: Contesting and Contextualizing," in *Mapping and Engaging the Bible in Asian Cultures: Congress of the Society of Asian Biblical Studies 2008 Seoul Conference*, edited by Young Mee Lee & Yoon Jong Yoo (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2009), 21.

²²Jong-Seong Park, "A Comparative Reading on A Types of Brother and Sister Who become Sun and Moon- From Romania to North-East Asia, and to Korea," *Hankookmunhak Nonchong* 44 (Dec. 2006): 5-32.

Cf. For the stories of the brother- sister marriage, see, Archie Chi Chung Lee, "When the Flood

In another version it observes the marriage between brother Sun and sister Moon in the Sun-Moon story that treats the marriage as a taboo. A Sun-Moon story of the Korean folkstitled “Brother and Sister who became Moon and Sun” shows us how violence committed against little ones who later become Sun and Moon in the natural world. The story I would like to summarize is as follows:²³

Once upon a time, a destitute mother lived with a son and a daughter. Every day, the mother went out to work from her house to the house of a rich family. Because she needed to work outside the home, the children were left at home by themselves. One day the mother was jubilant because the lady of the rich house gave her delicious food for the two children. The mother stepped lightly along in thinking of her children’s happy faces. On the way to her home, a tiger came to her, asking for the food. The tiger threatened to kill her if she did not give the food to the tiger. She was forced to give the food to the tiger. However, the request of the tiger did not end by taking the food; he also killed the mother.

Now the tiger tried to devour the brother and sister. The tiger disguised himself as the mother by wearing the mother’s clothing. The tiger approached the children who stayed in their room. The children, at first, did not believe the tiger was their

Narrative of Genesis Meets Its Counterpart in China: Reception and Challenge in Cross-Textual Reading,” *Genesis*, edited by Athalya Brenner, Archie Chi Chung Lee, and Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 81-97.

²³“Brother and Sister Who become Sun and Moon,” edited by Dong In Sohn, Joonyeon Lee and In Hak Choi, *Tiger Bites a Rock*(Seoul: Sahgejeol, 2006), 58-74.

mother because they could hear its harsh voice and see its hairy paws through a small rip of the door. After putting flour on its paws, the tiger said to them: “My voice was not normal because I have caught a cold. And my hands looked so wild, because I have diligently worked for you, my babies. Look at my hands. Now my hands appear so soft. Can you open the door for me?”

Both brother and sister were going to trust the tiger as their mother saying, “We are hungry, mom. Can we have some food?” The tiger said, “Yes, of course.” As the tiger outside the room turned toward the kitchen, the brother saw the tail sticking out from under the edge of the tiger’s skirt. The brother was afraid of the tiger and he and his sister climbed up a poplar tree in the backyard. The disguised tiger asked them how to climb up the tree. The brother answered, “If you have sesame oil, it will help you.” The sister said that “If you use an adze, you can easily climb up.” The tiger was about to devour the brother and sister who were on the branch of the tree. The brother prayed to the divinity, “Please, send us a steel rope if you want us to live. If you do not want us to live, you will send us a rotten one.” As a rope was descending from the sky, both brother and sister were saved from the tiger’s threats. Tiger, also, prayed for having the rope equally from the divinity. However, tiger received a rotten rope from the sky and it fell on the field of millet. Because of the blood of the tiger, the part of the field looked red. The sister became the sun, while the brother became the moon in

the sky.

The structure of the Sun and Moon story has been differently studied in comparison with Isaiah 11. One may study the structural analysis between Isaiah 11 and its surrounding chapters in the Hebrew Bible. However, the Sun and Moon story is an independent folklore without a redactional intention in a book. Moreover, the narrative itself has been transmitted through different versions.²⁴ Nevertheless, the characters—mother, brother, sister, and tiger—commonly appear in the multiple versions.

The story begins with “Once upon a time” which is a typical form of introduction to folklore. It goes on to reveal the information about the characters in the narrative: “A mother lives in a deep mountain with her two young children: a son and a daughter.” The very beginning of the story explores the family’s status as woman and children. The description of the characters and their environment intends to reveal to the readers the situation of a weak family who is exposed to a high risk of violence because the children had neither father nor social protection in unjust society. The story’s first part tells of the family hardship because the mother must work for the rich family, which reveals the absence of a father in her family.

In the announcement of Isaiah 11, one may see the expectation of the righteous

²⁴See Jung-Sook Song, “Comparison with the Alternative Versions of the Korean Fairy Tale, ‘The Sun and the Moon,’” *Hankook Toseokwan Jungbo Hakheojee* 36 no. 1, (2006): 47-69.

leader because one can read the condition of the just leader in the fear of YHWH (vv. 3-5). Isaiah's hope for the righteous ruler represents the absence of the righteous leader "who will not judge by what his eyes see." In verse 1, the righteous ruler springs up from a nature-centered metaphor, "a shoot." Because the absence of righteous kings in the history of Israel may cause the disaster of Israel, "a shoot from the stump of Jesse" is anticipated to fill the absence of the just leader. Meanwhile, the lack of strong family member in the Sun-Moon narrative causes the problem of the violence from the outside. At the same time, the solution against the violence is intrinsic to the weakness of the children who recognize the violence and resist it.

Tigers popularly appear in the Korean folklore in three types: tigers who are valorous, transforming, and foolish.²⁵ The tiger is the violent figure in the Sun and Moon narrative. "A deep mountain" in the introduction indicates the appearance of vigorous animals. The tiger in the narrative gradually reveals its violence and cruelty to the family. It does not devour the mother at the first encounter. However, it takes by force her food, then her arms, legs, and life. The violence of the power hierarchically and evolutionally imbues the powerless with a false sense of safety. The powerless might think that "If I endure the violence this time, the powerful will not expose me to the violence again." However, one of characteristics of violence in

²⁵Hee Kyung Yeom, "A Character of Tiger in the Folktale of Brother and Sister Who become Sun and Moon," *Tonghwa and Beonyeok* 5 (2003): 5-38.

the human community is its repetition either intentionally or unintentionally. The continuation of tiger's demands and repeated acts of violence against the mother in the narrative structure reflects the repeated cruelties in the human community. To remove the violence requires us to resist it at the first opportunity.

When the tiger disguised himself with the clothing of the mother, he tried to deceive the children with soft and seductive language. The tiger symbolizes not only a powerful creature in the animal world but also the fierce power in human society. The tiger's behaviors in the narrative show us the characteristic use of power against the powerless. Adult humans are absent from the presence of this brother and sister. The little ones are vulnerable because of the lack of justice. However, they swiftly recognize the dangerous situation as shown in the suspicious they ask of the power figure. In addition, both brother and sister have the wisdom and courage to mention the sesame oil. They make the tiger appear foolish. This is the way of their resistance with their wisdom.

According to John Rawls, civil disobedience appropriately establishes the democratic authority in a nearly just society because it can remove the nature and limitations of majority rule.²⁶ Civil disobedience wisely testifies the cases of injustice without violent action. In the folktale, the resistance of brother and sister tries to avoid

²⁶John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 363.

the use of violence against the tiger who commands blind obedience. Moreover, brother and sister wisely reply to the tiger with disobedience to express a recognition of justice. The ability of wisdom is to imagine hope for the people, even though the powerless do not have power but they have hope to remove the violence of power.²⁷ Resistance against violence originates not from another power but from the powerless. The resistance of the powerless can block the vicious cycle of violence.

The spirit of YHWH in Isaiah 11:2 fundamentally erects the righteous ruler. The shoot will be imperious or hazardous without the spirit. It functions as a measure of the relationship with YHWH. In addition, the divinity in Sun-Moon narrative saves the little ones by providing the rope. The rope indicates the strong connection with the deity who is willingly saving the little ones from the dangerous injustice power. However, the tiger receives the rotten rope from the deity. The deity does not acquiesce to the violence and is on the side of the resistance. The structural analysis of these two texts highlights the power's violence, and the effective resistance of the powerless for justice. Both "a shoot" and "brother and sister" look too small to prevail against violence. However, the peaceful and just earth community must grow up from these tiny lives.

²⁷Hee Kyung Yeom, "A Character of Tiger" 10.

III. Genre: The Radical and Just Resistance in Poem and Folktale

The genre of Isaiah 11 is poetry,²⁸ while the Sun-Moon narrative is folktale.

When Isaiah uses the poetic genre, he is concerned with the “positive attributes of the new king’s rule with special emphasis on the justice of the king’s decisions and the people.”²⁹ According to John Watts, Isaiah uniquely employs the genre of poetry to describe “the peaceable kingdom.”³⁰ The poetic genre certainly confirms Isaiah’s vision toward the peaceful and righteous place. For example, in Isaiah 35: 9, “No lion shall be there, No ferocious beast shall set foot on it—These shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk it” (JPS). The poetic expression in Isaiah 35:10 asserts that Zion is a new joyful and blissful place. The specific relationship between the proclamation of Isaiah’s creative vision and the use of poetry helps us to approach his idealized vision in an aesthetic manner.

Hans-Georg Gadamer mentions a poetic characteristic in a quotation of Scheiermacher, “poetic utterance is not subject to the already described criterion of agreement concerning the thing meant, because what is said in poetry cannot be separated from the way it is said.”³¹ In Isaiah 11, Isaiah evokes the new aesthetic

²⁸John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 208.

²⁹Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 203.

³⁰John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 208.

³¹Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second, Revised edition, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2006), 187.

construct through the poem. This emphasizes the new paradigm of the peaceful world which springs up from the new concept.

Whereas one begins to notice power's violence through the study of structure and setting in Isaiah 10:5-12:6, one also notes freedom from violence in the world through the study of genre in Isaiah 11:6-8.

“The wolf shall sojourn with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the kid;
The calf, the beast of prey, and the fatling together,
With a little boy to herd them.
The cow and the bear shall graze,
Their young shall lie down together;
And the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw.
A babe shall play
Over a viper's hole,
And an infant pass his hand
Over an adder's den.” (JPS)

Is this scene possible in the world? It is an implausible holy safari.³² If one reads the pronouncement of Isaiah without the poetic construct, one ironically observes the removal of the right to life of the lion who needs to eat meat. In the lion's side, eating straw is beyond the range of possibilities. On this poem, eating meat after slaughter is an example of violence. Poetic style allows us to imagine more than a normal life. The poem reminds us that a non-violent community never occurs in an easy or automatic way.

³²Hae-kwon Kim, “A Reading of Isaiah 11 in the Context of the Divided Korea with Focus on a Reunification Theology of Isaiah in His Messianic Prophecy,” *Madang* 10 (Dec. 2008): 50.

This community must be built by human efforts as the result of the subverted phenomena such as the transformation of the lion's appetite. It is easy to envision violence in the human community, because violence is found everywhere there are people.³³ Sometimes, violence is regarded as much as a routine of life as lions eating meat. However, Isaiah raised a question, "Why do lions need to eat meat?" Now, we need to answer the question "Why do people like to commit violence in the human and earth community?" Once violence has been accepted as a common procedure for a way of life, it is difficult to achieve the non-violent world. Isaiah's passion toward the peaceful and righteous kingdom by using poetry enables us to proclaim a resistance as radical as the beasts giving up their prey. Isaiah's poetry has power to eradicate violence by demanding justice through a righteous king.

The Sun-Moon story is a folktale. Saga is an alternative term for folktale in the study of form criticism. Saga means "a long, prose, traditional narrative having an episode structure developed around stereotyped themes or objects."³⁴ In addition, it has an oral tradition presenting "historical fiction, imaginative reconstruction of the past" and three types: primeval saga, family saga, and heroic saga.³⁵ Scholars classify the Sun-Moon story as the primeval saga, since the story tells the origin of sun and

³³James H. Cone, "In Search of Definition of Violence," *Church & Society* 85 no. 3 (Jan.-Feb. 1995): 5-7.

³⁴George W. Coats, *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* vol. 1, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 319.

³⁵Rolf P. Knierim and George W. Coats, *Numbers*, vol. 4, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 359.

moon.³⁶ Even though one may read that “brother and sister” became the Moon and the Sun at the end of the story, one has been already informed that the sun exists in the middle of the story, in saying “One day it became sunset.....” The narrator of the story already recognizes sunrise and sunset in the natural world. Thus, it is insufficient to read the story as the etiological interpretation of sun and moon. Rather, this story belongs to a heroic saga. Both brother and sister are the driving characters of eliminating the tiger with their courage and wisdom through the help of the deity.

The Sun-Moon story as a folktale has a ripple effect. This story has been told to children in their storytelling time since it has rested on the oral tradition. While children listen to the story, they stay in the fantasy that the tiger can speak in the human language. If a man appears to murder the mother, the story remains a criminal case. However, the tiger in this folktale evokes attention on the children who are willing to learn justice.

The tiger is a representative of violence which threatens the powerless in aggressive and chaotic ways. In addition, the tiger symbolizes a violent male who raped and murdered the mother.³⁷ The appearance of the tiger represents complete confusion and disorder to the fatherless family who is easily exposed to violence. The

³⁶ Hyen-Sul Cho, “The Character of Creation Myth in ‘the Sun Sister& the Moon Brother’ Type of Folktale,” *Bikoyminsokhak* 33 (Feb. 2007): 107-130.

³⁷ Hyen-Sul Cho, “The Character of Creation Myth in ‘the Sun Sister& the Moon Brother’ Type of Folktale,” 122-123. Even though I do not mention the rape of the tiger in this paper, one version of this story tells us the situation.

revelation of the deity who is a righteous supporter for the resistance of the little ones is one of significant elements of the fantasy. The fact that the final death of the tiger opens our eyes to have the hope that the violence of the unjust will be curbed after they attempt resistance. Thus, brother and sister become the heroes of the story, even though they were powerless.

When one desires to have other Sun-Moon narratives, one can have them from the Asian traditions. The story of Sun-Moon Lake in the Taiwanese Tsao legend shows us the heroic saga. Once upon a time, Da-jian and She-jie were a hardworking couple on a farm.³⁸ Suddenly people around the couple became afraid because the sun and moon disappeared. Two colorful dragons were playing with the sun and moon like a yo-yo. Da-jian and She-jie dug the Alishan (Ali Mountain) to find golden scissors and an axe. They could subdue the dragons with the tools. After eating the dragon's eyes, they throw the sun and moon back to the sky. The earth was restored to its normal operation. Nowadays, Tsao holds "Toss Ball Dance" along the lakeside to memorialize the couple.

One may point out that the legend of Sun-Moon Lake provides the reason for the dance near the lake. However, the readers of the story are excited about the journey of the couple to find the treasures in the mountain and subdue the dragons. The dragons

³⁸<http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/8/12/23/n2372095.htm> (assessed May 7, 2014).

were the violent figures who destroyed all crops by taking away the seasonal cycle.

Without the heroic actions of the couple, the sun and moon remain as the toys of the dragons. Digging the mountain and fighting with the dragons are the independent actions of resistance of the couple. Sun and moon are the very essence of nature that no one can exclusively possess. Our stories remind us that any violence against the natural order should be removed by courage and resistance of the couple.

IV. Setting: The Victims of Violence in Unjust Societies, Yesterday and Today

The superscription of Isaiah includes the kings' names—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—to notify his historical background from ca. 792 to 686 B. C.E.³⁹ (Isaiah 11:1). However, Isaiah 11 does not exactly demonstrate the diachronic evidence of any of the kings named above. The multiple studies on Isaiah 11 pursue the different time lines. For example, in a study of the meaning of “a shoot from the stump of Jesse,” Isaiah 11 refers to King Josiah's reformation in the Josianic redaction.⁴⁰ Likewise, one may observe the setting of this chapter from chapters 5-10 and 14:24-27 “in the period following Sargon's campaign to put down the Philistine revolt in 713-711 but prior to Sennacherib's campaign of 705.” During the reign of

³⁹John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 15.

⁴⁰Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 209-210.

Hezekiah, Assyria defeated Samaria (2 Kings 18:1-12). Judah, also, was under threat from Assyria (2 Kings 18:13-19:19). Isaiah tried “to dissuade Hezekiah and Judah from attempting a military confrontation with the Assyrians”⁴¹ (cf., Isaiah 14:24-27). In addition, the attack mentioned in Isaiah 10:27-32 delineates that the campaign of Sargon who “would likely have passed by Jerusalem on his way to Egypt in order to intimidate the city, gather supplies and support, and thereby prevent Judah from joining with Egypt and Philistia.”⁴² When the empire’s troops passed by the cities, the residents could not avoid violence and became the victims of the campaign. Isaiah also recognized the sacrifice of the people in the land of Judah.

The return of the remnants in Isaiah 11:10-16 is an understandable metaphor for those who experienced the exile directly or indirectly. The comforting words fundamentally based on the recognition of the history of empire’s violence. However, YHWH will set up a highway for the people out of the empires such as Assyria and Egypt (v. 16). There is hope for the victimized, since they were saved on YHWH’s highway.

In the study of the Sun-Moon story, it is difficult to research its origin, because it has been told in the oral tradition for a long time. However, the written document of the Sun-Moon story has been published in “Chosun Dong Wha Jip (The Collection of

⁴¹Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 209.

⁴²Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 206.

the Fairytales in the Chosun Dynasty) by the colonial Japanese government in Korea in 1924. Even though the story originated in Korean folktale, the story was written in Japanese for the Korean children in the colonial time. The educational policy of the colonial government has been involved, while they planned to publish the book.⁴³ Publishing the well-known stories of the Korean children is an easy method of teaching the Japanese. This is historical proof that the Sun-Moon story has been widely spread in the Korean peninsula.

In addition, the edition of 1924 changes the title to “The Tiger’s Divine Punishment.”⁴⁴ In comparing it with the original title, “Brother and Sister who became Moon and Sun,” the revised title reminds readers of sin and punishment in a strict community rather than the peaceful achievement of family in the earth community. Thus, “The Tiger’s Divine Punishment” provides less chance to foster resistance through the metaphor of brother and sister.

Whereas colonial education used the story to teach Japanese to the Koreans, the story itself could represent the colonization’s plunder like the tiger’s demands to the mother.⁴⁵ For example, Oriental Development Company owned the land in 11,000

⁴³Min-jeongBaek, “The Characteristics and Compilation Background of the Three Collections of Traditional Fairy Tales in Colonial Choson,” *Ehmoonyoungkoo* 73 (Sept. 2012): 200-201.

⁴⁴Jung-Sook Song, “Comparison with the Alternative Versions of the Korean Fairy Tale, ‘The Sun and the Moon,’” 53-54.

⁴⁵Jung Seh Park, “Historical Reality and Minjung’s Hope Reflected in the Korean Fairy Tale, ‘the Sun and the Moon,’” *Shinhaksahsang* 94 (1996): 196-201.

Jungbo⁴⁶ in 1910, 73,000 Jungbo in 1916, and 100,000 Jungbo in 1920. The exploitation of Japan gradually expanded to the land in Korea, as the tiger in the story increasingly took control of the victimized.

Nevertheless, the true tragedy occurs today in Asan, Korea. High school students died on their class trip on April 16, 2014. As a ferry has sunk, almost three quarters of the 11th graders of Danwon high school passed away.⁴⁷ The young lives were victimized by the adults who perhaps unconsciously exploited the community. The students were innocents like the brother and sister in the story. Their death was the result of the accumulation of violence which minimized the significance of life and justice in the human and earth community.

In a report, a boy and a girl tied together their life vests in the capsized ferry.⁴⁸ They needed a true life rope from God. The students became sun, moon, or many stars in the sky. Both curbing violence and doing justice are now for the responsibility of the survivors in the human society. The young students sadly resist through the sacrifice of their life and expose violence in the Korean society. The setting of the

⁴⁶Cf. 1 Jungbo=9,917.4 m².

⁴⁷<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/01/world/asia/a-korean-city-in-shock-grieving-hundreds-of-young-lives.html?action=click&module=Search®ion=searchResults&mabReward=relbias%3As&url=http%3A%2F%2F&r=0>(assessed May 8, 2014).

⁴⁸http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201404240603445&code=940202 (assessed May 8, 2014).

Sun-Moon story which the young generation is the main character enables us to curb violence, yesterday and today.

V. Intention/ Conclusion

Making freedom from violence in the earthly human community is a duty of the Christians who facilitate the integrity of the creation and justice peacefully. For the Asian biblical theology, it is necessary to analyze the narratives which prevent the world-wide violence and fight for justice. Preventing violence begins in the discovery of the stories in the Bible as well as Asian narratives, and in interpretation of the multiple stories, theologically. Bible and the narratives are interested in justice and resistance against violence. Both the Bible and Asian stories are the references for the Asian readers and more.

The result of the interpretation of Isaiah 11:1-9 shows us “A shoot” as a symbolized resistance in the unjust contexts. “A shoot” is more powerful than the violence of injustice. In addition, the Sun-Moon stories in Asian narratives represent the resistant motives that are helpful references for deriving contextual meanings of the relationship between violence and resistance. Multiple stories are ready to be interpreted in the theological understandings regarding violence in the human and earth community. The Korean “The Sun-Moon” narrative is a beautiful discourse to

announce the violence of power in unjust society and show the resistance of the powerless through the revelation of the deity. The Taiwanese “The Sun-Moon Lake” legend encourages us to remember the removal of the violence of dragons for the earth community.

Both “A shoot” and “The Sun-Moon” belong to the most important nature, since the human and earth community will be shaking without them. Isaiah 11 and the Asian narratives prevent the disappearance of these natures because human violence unjustly may take them away. A hermeneutical dialogue between “A shoot” narrative and “The Sun-Moon” narrative through the mutual interpretation of the texts enables us to create an artistic way that the resistance of the little ones can curb violence and fight for justice. Even though violence prevails around the world where there are people, “A shoot” and “Sun and Moon” in the foundations of nature for the human and earth communities are revealed everywhere and tell a hopeful and righteous message for us. No violence springs up from courageous resistance.

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