

# Song of green mountain



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

“ Song of Green Mountain” is one of the Koryo poems from The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Korean Poetry. Although it was my first time to read it, I previously heard about the poem when I was still attending schools in Korea and knew it was a famous poem from the Koryo period. When I first read the poem, I was not quite sure how the poem is able to reflect Koryo’s historical and social background mainly because the poem I read is an English translation of the original poem.

For example, the term “ Green Mountain” initially came to me as a naturally beautiful mountain. However, after looking into the Korean word “ Chung-San”, I was able interpret the word in a different way. As a reader of many Korean and Chinese books, Chung-San also represents something beyond the mundane world, suggesting that “ Green Mountain” is not just a naturally beautiful mountain. In the first clause, the narrator mentions that he or she wants to live on the green mountain. This indicates that there is a reason that prompts the narrator to go to the green mountain.

Perhaps, the narrator wants to continue with life from somewhere else partly because there might be something appalling in the Koryo Dynasty such as a government corrupted by its Generals or the threat of the Mongolian Invasion. The second clause of the poem is my favorite because it very well explains the narrator’s grief. Instead of singing and chirping, the birds are depicted as crying and that the narrator sees the birds as his or her company to sorrow. As discussed in the class, “ mossy plow” is an important metaphor in the third clause.

Although the narrator escaped to the green mountain, he still brought his plow with the hope of getting to where he was. A “mossy plow” represents the idea that agriculture was not happening at that time although apparently agriculture is considered the most important way to produce and obtain food. In essence, it reveals the difficulties that the people of the Koryo Dynasty were having at that time. The fourth clause portrays the loneliness of the life on the green mountain. There is no come-and-go at night, and the narrator is missing his social life. On the other hand, the sixth clause is a clause that reiterates the first clause.

However, it can be seen that the sixth clause shows the refugees constantly fleeing from one place to another place to live on. Perhaps they flee towards the sea from the green mountain in order to avoid the invading Mongolians. The seventh clause is very interesting. “The stag fiddling perched on a bamboo pole” is quite impossible in real life. The clause indicates that a miracle is happening while portraying how the narrator (or refugees) wants to escape the harsh life. In terms of interpretation, the eighth clause is somewhat similar to the seventh clause. The narrator tries to escape the harsh life by drinking.

Although the “Song of Green Mountain” reflects the difficulties and sorrows that people in the Koryo period experienced, the poem is not pessimistic at all. “Yalli yalli yallasyong yallari yalla” is the last line for every clause which sounds pretty funny. By looking at this line, we can assume that the poem was an actual song containing human optimism. The poem depicts the difficulty of Koryo people’s life during the dictatorial government of the

generals and of the Mongolian invasion as well as the Koryo people's willingness to overcome the hardship they had.