

There is a man looking for the perched groundwater.

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It is there within us all the while;

Draw upon it as you will, it never runs dry.

Lao tzu *Tao Te Ching*

One day in June in the long spell of the rainy season, I paid a visit to Tomita's place in Sagamihara, Kanagawa Prefecture. It takes less than one hour to Kobuchi, the nearest station to his place by Yokohama Line through Hachioji by Chuo Line from my place in Tachikawa, in the suburbs of Tokyo. It might have been a trotting from the end of Musashino, beyond River Tama to inside of Sagamino, the next field hundreds years ago.

Such a simile occurred to me because more and more greens I can see through the window of the train running west to the suburbs, which I usually take to go up to the center of Tokyo. Particularly on a rain day, a sense of time direction disappearing into dim scenery of the hill haunts me.

Tomita was staying in Tokyo returning from the United States, where he was studying at a college, for preparing his works to be exhibited at "Yokohama Triennale 2001" in September. He told me he would like to realize his plan of works on the motif of his birth land along with publishing a book based on that motif.

On a train toward Tomita's place through hills in the rain seemingly falling all day today, the rain seemed to remind me of his works always connected with rain and water.

When I first met him, he was a student traveling in India and other Asian countries carrying a stone curved cup to catch rain water to drink and taking pictures or sketching the sceneries. At his first personal exhibition in 1995, he put photos of rivers going upstream in the darkroom gallery reconstructed from a warehouse. Visitors had to carry

a penlight to see the works in the dark. At the exhibition <The Other Exiles> by the text of Trin·T·Minha (Galeria Rasen 1997), in which I asked him to take part, he exhibited positive films of his travel to Silk Road in China layered with his words and travel note titled “An Island of Imagination” from his inner mind and dreams. “An Island of Imagination” goes like this: On the very rainy morning when he was leaving for Taiwan, he found that his passport had expired. Then he thought of keeping on traveling of imagination until the day he was scheduled to return without anyone noticing it. In 1998, he came back from his stay in Quenzhou City, Fujian Province, China, he was staying at weekly mansion or at a gallery and made an experiment of talking with friends and visitors while watching the films he took at Quenzhou, drinking Chinese tea. At (Laboratory of The Senses at Sakura City Museum, 1999), he exhibited a film titled “Doublogue” in which he showed two different interview films about experience by his friend Ko Tsuji and by himself at the same time. In February, 2000, I organized “Koan” Exhibition (Galeria Rasen). There he exhibited “Sashisen” based on the vision of a spring in the desert, the part one of “Spring in Desert”. In his exhibition this time, the audience listen to the conversation about the vision between Tomita and Sawanobori who is his friend and studied oil painting at Tokyo National University of Arts, while looking at her picture titled “Spring in Desert”.

We can appreciate the flow of the water vein connected with “Spring in Desert” following his career along the time axis. Tomita’s works varies, changing the forms and appearances so flexibly with communication born with others as mediation in his travels, moves and is daily life. It is like water maintaining the power to influence the world by its flexibility, changing its forms according to the time and conditions.

I finally reached a thought that the water itself has become a coherent light motif, watching the way to “Spring in Desert” reflected on the green of the window of the train on which the rain drops gave some irregular surface. The water is a rain drop of a phenomenon along the time flowing from the present time to the future, and at the same time, it appears as an invitation to the inner world, the origin of self existence.

Once she said.....

There is a spring in myself

I was really surprised...

I had not mentioned anything before.

This appearance of someone who told him the vision of the original spring might have been a matter of great, and at the same time, predicted somehow by himself.

Because he was conscious of the existence of inner water. That's why he had his first personal exhibition as his record of searching for the origin of the river flowing on his home land. For, his expressions are not only showing the reality he gets from his own image and experience, but tries to make it act as a motif to shake the boundary between others and himself. He does not define communication to be relationship with others, but to be catalyzer for the potential human sense of sympathy born from inside. The vision of "Spring in the Desert" clearly expressed from the other should have made him intuitively know the network of between human and the world expanding slowly beyond time and space. Part Two, his hearing research about his native land started encouraged by the power of running water.....in order to touch the water vein changing its form all the time by the running sand under the surface of the earth.

Getting off the train at Kobuchi Station on the Yokohama Line, a newly set up station next to Machida, I found Tomita waving his hand under the umbrella when I got off the station though the dark platform. The gentle smile of a tall skinhead man reminded me of an itinerant priest. The traffic was rather heavy on the national road behind.

The land around here, stated as "Sagami no Oonuma" in Kojiki, the oldest history book in Japan written in 712, is located in the middle of Sagami-hara Plateau on the river terrace of River Sagami. The names of places around here such as Kobuchi, Fuchinobe, Kamimizo remind us of the topography. Once there were large bushes and farms around here. But as the development of housing construction was going on for the bedroom town of Tokyo, it is now a typical town in the suburbs with large shopping centers and super markets. It is more than 30 years since The Tomita's settled down here. Now around their house there is a quiet residential area between the national road and bushes reserved as a forest park. People around here used to suffer a lot from the flood every time it rained. The 30 years close to the end of 20th Century brought about a lot of changes, but we still find the past shadows and atmosphere along with the scent of rain while walking around there.

Other than those old names to show there were marshes like Oonuma (a large marsh), Konuma (small marsh), there were some old names to show there were dents, such as Deirakubo, Marukubo, Fundoshikubo and so on. They were the land made of underground water in the shallow layer of the earth named Chumizu (perched groundwater). When it rained this perched groundwater increased and the water overflowed.

*The dent we find on the earth
Surely, surely tells us where the hidden water is
Not that the dent keeps the water in it
The hidden water carved herself on the earth*

Standing in the middle of the residential area on the land used to be a dent called “Marukubo”, you can see the slight slope all around the streets. There is a ditch to arrange the amount of the rain water. Walking along the streets by the side of the primary school where Tomita spent his school days, you straight cross the Forest Park through the promenade used to be an irrigation canal. There spread a large forest with several kinds of natural trees and planted cedar trees, which we don’t often see in the suburbs of Tokyo.

More than visible changes of environment, mutability of human beings and oblivion of memories are remarkable. Particularly, the time of one generation of fifty years after the end of the World War II has progressed in such a speed as to make invalid the history and common conception superficially. It can be said that it is proof of the speed of changes that the hearings about the land in the suburbs of Tokyo sounds like ancient legends.

Memory is body fluid from the inner spring to humanity and human character as water as substance is the home of all the lives. Was it the existence of the spring that is the memory of common source of the river to make human beings to be human beings, through far and long layer of time that Tomita searched for by recalling of the memory of water in his home land?

It is possible to restore the connection between the traces of lost marsh and streams with body sense and imagination through walking around the neighborhood wet in the rain according to the sound of the names of places on the old map. And so is it that collection of legends people tell, including gaps and misunderstanding, revives another surface of water, collective memory, onto the surface of our consciousness.

In his direction, there is a legend of a giant called Daidaraboh or Dirabochi (Daidarabochi) in relation with Deira-Kubo, a place name. We have quite few legends that footprints of a giant became marshes or dents all over Japan. Oonuma and Konuma in Sagami-hara near Tomita’s house are told as “Jindaranuma story” in “Yokaidangi” by Kunio Yanagida.

Once there was a giant named Dairabochi. He wanted to carry Mt.Fuji on his back

and looked for wisteria vine for the rope, but couldn't find any. He was angry and stamped his feet hard on the ground. That's how the giant made two marshes called Oonuma and Konuma.

Oonuma appeared in the history of Yamatotakeru conquering the East in Kojiki, the oldest history book in Japan. In the legend of Daidarabochi, there is an atmosphere of existence moving around the world before the written letters, spiritually intercouring with Nature and naming the earth, far before the two written history books, Kojiki and Nihonshoki.

*What we call shadow now
Is not a part of mine
But myself is a part
It is something like a dream
Something very ambiguous
Somehow I think that way
I am not the center or the whole
Something like a shadow*

The travel named "Spring in Desert" beginning with a vision of a dream by someone else once fades out over a shadow of a person trying to scoop up the water beside the spring.

*A story is born
Because there is something living for it
Because there exists a shadow like me
Perhaps because...an ancient story
An existence ancient people noticed
We are beginning to discover now
Existence and story
Neither new nor old*

Here I remember a story of a hunting tribe, Bushmen living in the desert of Kalahari by Laurence Van del Post, titled "The Lost World of Kalahari".

The Bushmen Van del Post met would not like to tell their stories and mythos to other people. The only suggestion they told him was as follows: There always exists a dream which dreams us. It is because there exists and lives a legend to guarantee from

the ancient times that are a tribe to live in harmony with Nature among Bushmen. Those stories told with voices and songs, not with letters must have been their common and surer mind vessels with reality like land and body for them. When this resonance is transferred to letters, human beings came down from the tribe who knows the secret of Nature.

Then Dxui became water. Again and again in the unfolding of the archetypal pattern, when the new, larger life is threatened or denied, when death and disaster seem to have ended the search of the spirit for greater meaning, we find this image of water, and through water a certainty of renewal. It is so in the Old Testament; it is so in parable and baptism in the New; it recurs throughout the story of the first spirit of Africa. So Dxui was water. It is true he was not large water. The little Bushman said he was only a small water appropriate, I assume, to the image of rebeginning; but this water was blessed with the shadow of a tree whose fruit the wood pigeons came to eat. [The Heart of the Hunter]

About 50 years ago, Van del Post and his party finally reached the holy ground in the desert where the last endangered tribe of Bushmen perform the ritual. They gather round this place only when the spring comes out at the foot of the rocky mountain in the middle of Kalahari Desert.

On the rock shelf over the spring is the sanctuary without a ceiling. On the rock wall there were painted graceful paintings of animals which are symbol of Africa. They were as beautiful as the alter paintings in the church. They were like a panorama painting by "the dream which dreams us" itself.

"A dream which dreams us"The existence dreamt by the world is the one whose destiny is to live again and again the story of the beginning necessary for human beings to live as human beings. The universe, the earth, the life.....along with the time going straight on the line, is only a part of it.

There is a shadow of a person who continues to scoop the water from the spring in the desert, in order that the world itself should never forget that the world is a large story turning and circulating. In other words, the shadow is the other self of all the human beings.