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Yellow Dragon and Yellow Corn Girl: Some Colors in Korean and Navaho Mythology

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Yellow Dragon and Yellow Corn Girl Some Colors in Korean and Navaho Mythology

Abstract: Some Korean and Navaho myths indicate the significance of the color yellow in building a strong foundation for society. For a new order such as a kingdom, a monastery and religion, even a new way of life, a yellow dragon may move to the center, but also—to spur growth of order in 12th c. and Kwanggaet'o myths—the dragon may meet his blue counterpart. Interaction between the two colors intensifies as a yellow and a blue dragon entwine in the shamanist myth of the Three Chesok Gods. Sometimes other entities bring the two colors into contact. In the very First World of the Navaho, yellow corn forms when the Blue and Yellow Clouds meet. When the Navaho finally reach the surface of this Fifth World, Turquoise Boy enters the great turquoise stone that will placed in the sky to produce yellow sunbeams for growing plants.

Guarding the center of the myongdang system used in placements of important cities, houses, deceased family members stands the yellow dragon, from earliest formations of feng shui in China a representation of imperial power. The other four creatures of myongdang protect the periphery of the yellow center: blue or green dragon to the east, red phoenix south, white tiger west, black turtle north.

A most full delineation of these guardians unfolds in Seo Dae-sook's Tongnae version of the House God myth as Songjo chooses an auspicious spot to build his first house on earth: "On the east . . . Mount Green Dragon . . . would keep the god of fire away and keep the silos full of grain. On the south . . . Mount Vermilion Bird . . . would block misfortune at the hands of the government and malicious gossip so that the country would produce court officials and scholarly gentlemen. On the west . . . Mount White Tiger . . . would confer knowledge and key government posts . . . and the ability to become a righteous wife . . . On the north . . . Mount Black Tortoise . . . would block misfortunes dealing with property damage . . . and increase . . . landholdings every year . . ."¹

Suggestions of similar protection emerge in a 12th century account of the early Korean King Chumong's reign, an account James H. Grayson calls "the first mythic structure to present material in such an orderly fashion"² with years and months specified. Nine months after rival King Songyang surrenders his land to Chumong, "in the spring, in the third month of the third year [of Chumong's reign], a yellow dragon appeared in the Kol-lyong pass. In the autumn of the seventh month . . . an auspicious cloud appeared in the . . . pass. Its colour was blue . . . In autumn of the ninth month of the tenth year, phoenixes came to rest on the beehouse."³

In this chronology, three of the possible five guardians sites receive mention—center, east and south. Appropriately for a foundation myth, the first site, center, receives the most full description of guardian with both creature (dragon) and color (yellow). The importance of this first site is emphasized by the multiplication of three's. The dragon appears nine months after Songyang surrenders, in the third month of the third year. The three's manifest themselves in three ways—year, month and time since the surrender. The second site intriguingly remains at the first as only a color (blue) appears.⁴ (The alternate assignment of blue instead of green as the eastern color is made in the Origin Myth of Life Grandmother when Birth Grandmother and her attendant bodhisattvas plant a garden in the five directions, putting blue flower seeds in the east.)

The conjunction of the two sites mimics a much older version of the same history on a stone stele in what became Chumong's capital city, Kungnae-song: "In the fortress at the summit of the mountain, [Ch'umo] established his city. Feeling sad, he commanded the yellow dragon, who came and greeted him. He led the king to a hill east of Holbon . . . then ascended to heaven."⁵ Here the actual direction is given and emphasized through an extraordinary interaction between human being and creature as the dragon takes him east.

This Kwanggaet'o monument version intensifies the event with deliberate action and compressed time. Instead of four month's lag before the first myongdang site gains the power of the second in the later account of Chumong's reign, the first site's creature moves to the second right after greeting the king.

In contrast to the 12th c. version, the authority of the Kwanggaet'o Ch'umo is amplified. Instead of a blue cloud appearing fortuitously in the same place a yellow dragon was seen four months earlier, the king himself manufactures good fortune by getting a yellow dragon to come. His at least momentary control of the central myongdang creature is highly unusual if not unique—a most convincing demonstration of nation-building ability. He has further certified his self-proclaimed ancestry as the son of the Hwangch'on (Ruler of Heaven) and earth spirit Habaek's daughter. The dragon reflects the same fertile combination of sky and land as the earth-colored creature rises from earth. The easy mix of two very different elements is registered most clearly in the narrative: the king commands the dragon and the dragon leads the king—a smooth, even quiet, reciprocity that presages growth of a strong kingdom.

¹ Seo Dae-seok. *Myths of Korea*. Seoul: Jimoondang Publishing Company, 2000, page 61

² Grayson, James Huntley. *Myths and Legends From Korea*. Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2001, page 81

³ page 80

⁴ Clouds precede dragons in the legend of "The Archer and the Dragon Spring" (Chang Suk-soon. *The Folk Treasury of Korea*. Seoul: Society of Korean Oral Literature, 1970, page 105), so the eastern guardian may receive double reference here.

⁵ Grayson, page 70

⁶ Yellow as the color of earth is demonstrated in the Origin Myth of the Three Chesok Gods, as discussed later.

A difference between how the center and east stations of the myongdang blend in the Kwanggaet'o Monument version and in the 12th c. version endorses Grayson's view of the monument inscription as "the official foundation myth of the state, written indelibly on stone to record for all time what the ruler wanted to present as the approved history of the origin of the state."⁷ In contrast to the later version, the yellow dragon, symbol of the stable center, not only appears at the ruler's command but actually moves himself and the ruler east. In the later version, the king is not mentioned as present and the dragon does not move. The Kwanggaet'o eastward movement of what can be at least figuratively regarded as the foundation of the new kingdom signifies investiture of that kingdom with the characteristics of the blue wood spring season. East is the primary myongdang place for growth, new life and the food to sustain it. In the Origin Myth of Life Grandmother, the blue east gives life to boys and, in the comparable narrative about the Chesok Gods⁸, it gives enough to eat. A more fortuitous sign would be hard to produce. The moment is accented by the graceful, silent transfer of authority from ruler to dragon as Ch'umo follows it eastward.

As the center myongdang position blends with the eastern one in both this early and late version of the same foundation myth, the first supernatural element—a yellow dragon—is a primary signal of success for a new nation.

With a similar positive signal, the blend occurs more completely when more separated from daily reality in the shamanist Origin Myth of the Three Chesok Gods. When an eastward wandering monk from India called Sakyamuni badgers Korean princess Tanggum-aegi into letting him share her sleeping quarters, she dreams "a blue dragon and a yellow dragon fought . . . and ascended to heaven."⁹ When recounting the dream to the monk the next morning, the princess adds the dragons were "joined together"¹⁰ as they rose. He explains that "The blue dragon represents your destiny and the yellow dragon mine."

The colors and creatures signal, as they do in the foundation myths, growth of a new order—in this case, Buddhism. Birth Grandmother made blue east where boys receive life; princess Tanggum-aegi eventually bears three sons who induce her to seek their father. The reunion turns out well as the monk and princess embrace before ascending to heaven. The sons, as their father once did, travel east from India and establish the Buddhist Yujom monastery in Korea. Because good fortune comes from following their teachings, people enshrine them in their homes as the Three Buddhist Chesok Gods.

The stimulus for growth in this shamanist myth clearly arises from a yellow and a blue dragon—i.e. the center and east myongdang guardians—joining. The growth results in children who, even after death, continue as domestic gods to exert the power of the new order they have brought east.¹¹ The interaction of dragons with people certainly deepens as the yellow dragon moves from installing kingdoms to installing gods. Where a king was led to a hill, now two dragons join together. In Kim Tae-sung's translation for Chang's *The Folk Treasury of Korea*, the bond is made more concrete by the religious man's interpretation: "The blue dragon represents you and the yellow dragon represents me."¹²

As the earthly personification of the yellow dragon—the fosterer of sustained growth—in the myth of the Chesok Gods, the monk Sakyamuni reproduces all of the actions of the Kwanggaet'o dragon: first, being commanded by a ruler (in this case the Jade Emperor) to go and deal with people; second, moving eastward from India to Korea; third, ascending with Tanggum-aegi at his life's end. In the Chang version, the yellow dragon's movement more closely resembles his Kwanggaet'o counterpart's leading the king eastward: the princess dreams the yellow dragon goes through her eastern bedroom window while entangled with her. The very meaning of the name, "Sakyamuni," as the narrator explains—"Thus Come One," anticipates the impact his coming to Korea will have on that country.

The Jade Emperor's directive to Sakyamuni to cultivate the path is interpreted by the nascent monk as an order to start a monastery, which corresponds to Ch'umo's nation-building. Like successful Koguryo, the Golden Buddha Hermitage quickly develops under its founder's leadership into a permanent center for Buddhist training in India. But Sakyamuni's founding genius manifests itself a second time after he travels east to Choson, reveals himself as yellow dragon and fathers the boys who will insure Buddhism's prosperity in Korea when they get installed in people's very homes as gods. Sakyamuni's founding activities, when complemented by princess Tanggum-aegi's, make a large contribution to the religious landscape of Korea.

The founding ability of the dragon father resonates when his dream color yellow is carried on the belt his middle, central son receives from heavenly transcendants in the cave behind Tanggum-aegi's palace, as well as when the color is brought up during the sons' naming in Sakyamuni's hermitage. Blue dragon Tanggum-aegi complemented the movement of the yellow dragon by coming west to his monastery with the fruits of his eastern trip.

The parents' serene debate over what to name their three children—more of a rehearsed dance than argument—turns yellow into "Chaebul," i.e. Second Buddha, the venerated name of what will become a Korean house god. The careful explanation Tanggum-aegi provides of the new name's morphology marks the explicit final consecration in the Golden Buddha Hermitage of what at least in some minds (notably her father's) carried a taint of illicit sex. The site for the consecration could not be more appropriate: the original locus of yellow for this myongdang-based narrative, a locus the monk established after meeting the Jade Emperor.

⁷ pages 71-72

⁸ Seo Dae-sook, page 75

⁹ page 99

¹⁰ page 101

¹¹ In "The Archer and the Dragon Spring" (see footnote 4) a yellow dragon approaches a blue one with strikingly different effect, as it seems to threaten drought and starvation. As in the Chesok story, the dragons entwine above earth, but the yellow dragon wants to usurp the blue one from its spring water home. When an archer kills the yellow intruder, the scorched land gets rain heavy enough to overflow the spring, producing fertile paddy fields for rice.

¹² page 67

The lasting effect of this consecration is described three times by the non-Buddhist mother in her quick rejection of the Buddhist leader's suggested names for their sons. Her names depend upon birth order and the name "Buddha": they will not change. His names rest upon colors of mountains that do change. She dismisses his proposed "Yellow Mountain" because they "are yellow in the ninth and tenth months. But are they yellow in the eleventh and twelfth months? Since that name is variable, it won't do."¹³ Colors of nature, of myongdang, must give way finally to the permanent spiritual order of Buddhism.

The origin myths of the Navaho as recorded by Aileen O'Bryan from chief Sandoval mirror the birth order of the Chesok Gods as the first underground worlds where life existed in America are described. As each of Tanggum-aegi's sons was born, a heavenly transcendent fastened a colored belt around him. The first-born received a blue one, the second yellow and the third white. Similarly, in Sandoval's Navaho record, the central three worlds—we are living in the many-colored Fifth World—were the Blue or Second World, the Yellow or Third World, and the White or Fourth World. The sequence coincides with the gradual ascent of the earliest earth beings through these worlds toward the surface of this new sun-filled, uppermost Fifth World we inhabit.

To "the Place of the Ancients," what white people call Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, Sandoval came in late November of 1928, over seventy-five years ago. He believed Mesa Verde the center of the old cultures, what in myongdang is the place of the yellow dragon. Sitting there, he began telling the record of his people to Aileen O'Bryan, who had known this first of the four chiefs of the Navaho for years. He said he had been told these stories by his grandmother and he wanted "coming generations . . . to know [the] truth."¹⁴ For 17 days he revealed the record, often stopping, chanting a prayer and sprinkling corn pollen on the O'Bryan's manuscript, on his nephew the interpreter, and on O'Bryan. He indicated that the stories were the source of the ceremonies and chants led by Navaho medicine men. On this point, Seo Dae-seok's observation in his *Myths of Korea* that the shamanist myths, like the Origin Myth of the Chesok Gods, "originated in ancient rituals"¹⁵ suggests an intriguing reverse path of development, from ceremony to story.

According to Sandoval, the first, and deepest, of the four subterranean worlds was a small, floating black island with four corners. Over each corner appeared a cloud of one color—black, white, blue, or yellow—which contained the elements of this Fifth World. The Black Cloud was the Female Being where life slept. The White Cloud was the Male, the Dawn. "On the western side of the First World"¹⁶—later to become the Land of Sunset—the Blue Cloud met the Yellow Cloud, forming First Woman and a perfect ear of yellow corn.

As in the Korean Origin Myth of the Three Chesok Gods, the joining of yellow and blue proved most productive, launching two entities crucial to the Navaho people's survival. First Woman became a central orchestrator of her people's history. In one version of her story, she directs manufacture of the sun and moon from quartz, using its leftover pieces of stone for stars. She also comes up with a way to permanently block an ocean from submerging the Navaho homeland.

But most important will be her use of the entity created with her out of the meeting of Yellow Cloud with Blue Cloud: a perfect ear of yellow corn. Like the yellow and blue dragons in the Chesok story, whose sons can eliminate famine if worshipped, these two Clouds produce a substance that will become a food staple for First Woman's people. She will replicate the meeting of her cloud parents when she takes the corn and discovers how to make food from it. The scene will recall the monk Sakyamuni's sons replicating their father's action in a reverse time sequence by heading back to Korea and founding a monastery, in contrast to his building a monastery before his trip to Korea.

First Woman's discovery of corn as food occurs appropriately in the middle Yellow or Third World in Sandoval's record of his people, reflecting the pivotal foundation position of yellow in the myongdang system. In this central world four chiefs are recognized—a traditional base of Navaho leadership—and six sacred mountains. The mountains stand in primal shapes that will assume more concrete form above the surface of Earth where four of them guard the cardinal directions, protecting the two most sacred middle mountains.

Surrounded by these first mountain shapes, the subterranean beings finally settle into a self-sufficient existence, finding relief from continual migration. First Woman plants the seeds of her yellow corn, her husband First Man plants his white corn, and their harvest is great.¹⁷ In a sequence like the meeting of the Chesok yellow and blue dragons, "After the harvest the Turquoise Boy from the East . . . visited First Woman."

The bond of yellow and blue through male and female human forms again proves productive. When her husband finds her with the boy, she explains "she had used her own fire, the turquoise, and had ground her own yellow corn into meal." She has discovered how to produce food, using the essential foundation color of yellow with the fertility color, blue. Like blue dragon princess Tanggum-aegi, through the color combination she becomes an embodiment of fertility.

And like Tanggum-aegi's father, First Man recoils at the discovery of what seems an unconventional liaison. For four days he does not speak, eat, drink or leave his dwelling. Then First Man has the intruder, Turquoise Boy, prepare food for him. After he eats, he and the rest of the men cross a river to live away from the women—unlike the Chesok sequence in which the woman is moved away. First Man's reactions seem typically Navaho—quiet, self-contained, even pacifist.

The mysterious Navaho scene—especially the identity of the Turquoise Boy and First Woman's explanation—receives some clarification from the Chesok story. In both narratives, blue resides in the east and a male visits a female in a socially inappropriate

¹³ Seo Dae-seok, page 113

¹⁴ O'Bryan, Aileen. *Navaho Indian Myths*. New York: Dover Publications, 1993. page vii

¹⁵ xx

¹⁶ page 2

¹⁷ page 6

setting. The fertility potential carried by blue dragon Tanggum-aegi arises in First Woman's producing edible corn meal from the first harvest. The Navaho version of the productive meeting of blue and yellow suggests a switch in the gender links to color, with male as blue and female as yellow (through her corn). It remains only a suggestion, since the Turquoise Boy gradually is viewed as hermaphroditic. And instead of the yellow dragon Skayamuni traveling to the blue dragon, the Turquoise Boy travels to the yellow corn site, underscoring the fertility of that particular geographical location rather than of a particular woman.

In another change from the Korean arrangement, the location of food production has shifted westward from the blue east indicated by Sakyamuni's prayer bead tree and Birth Grandmother to, in this Navaho context, the yellow center. The central placement underscores the vital importance of food production for the agricultural Navaho people and the color assignment matches the Korean pivotal color, being yellow. In the Navaho's Third World, as will happen with the sun's creation in the Fifth World, the yellow foundation is invested with the productive power of myongdang's eastern blue.

Since First Man has already associated himself with white through his type of corn, the Navaho chronological sequence in discovering how to make corn meal, places yellow in the middle, with blue first and white last: Turquoise Boy comes to the yellow corn woman and they are discovered by her white corn husband. When the forced separation of sexes ends in the Yellow World of the Navaho, First Man confirms the gender links for yellow and white as he instructs everyone to bathe: "The men must dry themselves with white corn meal, and the women, with yellow."¹⁸

For Navahos, blue instead of white can, when set beside yellow, restore the harmony they always want. The First People suddenly have to leave the Yellow World in which they had learned to live because Coyote steals the Water Buffalo's two children and the land is inundated with water—perhaps a reference to an inland sea that may have covered much of the North American continent eons ago. In order to placate the Water Buffalo, Turquoise Boy fills a basket with turquoise. Upon the blue stones, he places four kinds of pollen in succession: first, blue flower pollen; second, yellow corn pollen; third, yellow iris pollen; fourth, crystal river pollen. Coyote places the basket between the Water Buffalo's horns. On top of the basket he places one of the children, the boy, he stole. The gift carries enough power that the buffalo recedes, even though one of her children remains kidnapped. The double layers of blue and of yellow make a return to equilibrium possible, generating the spirit of forgiveness.

The girl, who is not returned, goes through a naming reminiscent of the scene in the Golden Buddha Hermitage. Sandoval briefly describes it: "She would be known as the Blue, Yellow, and White Clouds or Female Rain. She would be the gentle rain that would moisten the earth and help them to live."¹⁹ With yellow in the middle again as a bridge between the other two, the sequence of colors—with the change of green to blue—mirrors the Chesok one. As in the Korean version, the colors are explicitly linked to three distinct varieties of a natural formation, clouds replacing mountains. Since the Navaho will continue to depend more directly upon Female Rain for prosperity than upon a more purely transcendental Buddhist god, she keeps her cloud designations. Her importance can be appreciated in her threefold name that contrasts with the division of colors in the Chesok story between three sons. Her gender allows her more easily, more naturally to turn herself into several entities.

Linking yellow with blue produced future gods in the Chesok myth; in Navaho mythology the connection has solar ramifications. Just before the Navaho leave their Fourth World for this one, a new creature—badger—comes forward, claiming "he had been formed where the Yellow Cloud had touched the Earth."²⁰ The narrator Sandoval adds, "this Yellow Cloud turned out to be a sunbeam." This sunbeam may be imagined as the "yellow streak below the mouth"²¹ of the Navaho sun when it is constructed in the Fifth World out of a round, man-sized turquoise stone that Turquoise Boy is asked to enter.

The sun provides energy for plants to grow; the Chesok Gods—as someone years after the death of Sakyamuni's three sons implies—can stop famine if victims pray to them. This power of theirs resides formally in their eastern location for the myongdang system. When their yellow dragon progenitor planted a prayer bead, a five-branched tree grew. "On the branch . . . to the east, the prayer-bead fruit . . . always blessed people with enough to eat."²² In both Navaho and Korean worlds, the meeting of yellow and the eastern color blue yields food. The Korean story supplies a less capricious way than relying upon sun (and its complementary natural force, rain) to acquire food—namely, prayer. Tanggum-aegi's preference for stable Buddhist names instead of variable, mountain-associated color ones is validated.

Following Sandoval's record, soon after the First People climb into this Fifth World, yellow and blue have become set in their present locations of west and south for the Navaho, a permanent displacement of the Asian color geography. This shift could have been anticipated when Sandoval described the first activity or motion in the First World. Four clouds appeared over the four corners of the primordial floating island. The second movement evolved in the East, where the Black Cloud and the White Cloud met. At that moment, given the Navaho proclivity for harmonic balance, complementary action on the other side of the island by the other two clouds seems inevitable: Yellow Cloud meets Blue Cloud in the West.

The western placement of yellow solidifies into a mountain in this sun-filled Fifth World of the Navaho. First Man and First Woman place a Holy Boy and Holy Girl in each of the six sacred mountains that define the Navaho homeland. Yellow Corn Girl is put in the West Mountain, Dook oslid, which is fastened to earth with a sunbeam—like badger. First Man and Woman decorate the mountain with, among other things, yellow corn and cover the mountain with a yellow cloud, emphasizing perhaps a primordial foundation for their actions. The bright yellow warbler's plumage is chosen as the symbolic feather of the mountain. On its summit they place the two pale blue eggs of this bird in a basket—an intriguing reminder of how productive the meeting of yellow with blue has been. The

¹⁸ page 8

¹⁹ page 10

²⁰ pages 10-11

²¹ page 15

²² Seo Dae-seok, page 75

only trace of yellow in the sacred Center Mountain, Dzil na' odili, is the sun's rays anchoring it to earth; Sandoval does not mention any colors.

This Fifth World shift of yellow from its central place in the Navaho sequence of worlds may be most easily understood from what the contemporary Navaho novelist, Irvin Morris, says on the opening page of his 1997 book, *From The Glittering World*: “the eastern sky glowed white, it was considered dawn . . . when the southern sky glowed blue, it was considered day . . . when the western sky was yellow, it was considered evening . . . when the northern sky turned black, it was considered night”²³ His choice of verbs underlines the particularly firm identification of yellow with west. The western sky did not—as the other sections of sky—“glow” or “turn” into a color; it “was” the color. The distinction recalls the dominance of yellow in the myongdang system as central locus. After climbing up into this last World, the First People carved out a sun to move through the sky. This piece of stone made the now well-known sky changes Morris describes in his recent novel.

An earth-based myongdang with yellow as the imperial center has transformed into a sky-based system that reflects the Navaho view of how we entered this world. After a long, arduous climb through world upon world, the Navaho understandably place much significance on the sky. Over and over again they have escaped mass destruction by finding or desperately drilling a hole in the sky.

The shift of yellow from central locus, however, does not disrupt its primal connection to the Navaho food staple, corn. Yellow Corn Girl resides inside the West Mountain, to some extent maintaining the Asian grounding of yellow as the central earth element. In the Origin Myth of the Three Chesok Gods, orphaned Sakyamuni unknowingly begins his journey to transformation as yellow dragon by building “an altar of yellow earth” and praying to the “wise heavenly god, god of the mountain, god of the earth”²⁴ for guidance. The Navaho story—filled with several pages of actual chants to each of the sacred mountains—imbues a product of earth with yellow rather than earth itself. By putting Yellow Corn Girl inside the mountain, the Navaho has returned the precious food and its powerful color to their source, the earth from which the monk built his first religious foundation, an altar.

The Chesok myth stresses the efficacy of yellow earth as both Sakyamuni's and Tanggum-aegi's mothers climb famous mountains to pray for offspring. As Sakyamuni will do, they both construct altars “out of yellow earth”²⁵ and petition mountain and earth gods earnestly for a hundred days. As soon as each queen returns home, she dreams that her future child tells her that the mountain and earth gods have sent the child to be born of her. Each queen immediately shows signs of pregnancy.

Like the Navaho record, the Chesok myth intensifies female association with mountains. When Tanggum-aegi's father finds out a monk slept in his palace while he was gone, she is put inside a mountain. Although the circumstances and identities of the women differ considerably, the color yellow through its connection with earth—especially with mountains—exerts its power again. Like the Yellow Corn Girl, Tanggum-aegi is identified as a holy being, a “heavenly transcendent.”²⁶ Like the Yellow Corn Girl, she carries an expectation of fertility. Put into a cave actually dug out for her, like a plant growing in the ground, after only seven months she bears sons during a day-long downpour. The attending heavenly transcendents place a yellow belt around the central second son. He and his two brothers become the gods who, if venerated like the Yellow Corn Girl, can provide their people with food. The enclosure of the female in both the Korean and Navaho mountain can guarantee subsistence.

For the Navaho, according to Chief Sandoval, yellow alone can suggest yielding food as they review the succession of seasons. In May, the eighth month in the Navaho year, Sandoval says, “the Yellow Wind shakes the earth and it thunders . . . It is the time to plant.”²⁷ For Sakyamuni, the same combination of wind and yellow signals a time to plant. While he is praying constantly at his altar of yellow earth in the heart of the mountain where he buried his parents, “one day a violent gale arose and a single prayer bead dropped down in front of him.”²⁸ Sakyamuni chooses a “good patch of earth,” plants the bead and the five-branched tree grows, bearing—among other things—the fruit that always supplies enough food.

Both Korean and Navaho sources can link yellow to the fertility requisite in building a strong foundation for society. The myths examined here describe the installation of new order—a kingdom, a monastery and religion, even a new way of life. To accomplish this, the yellow myongdang dragon moves to the new center of the order, but also—to spur growth of the order—the dragon meets his blue counterpart. Sometimes entities other than dragons bring the two colors into contact—a boy, a woman, clouds, or corn.

In the 12th c. and Kwanggaet'o myths from Korea, the yellow center of earth achieves this growth through contact with the eastern myongdang color blue. A yellow dragon leads the founder east or a blue cloud appears in the same place the yellow dragon was seen.²⁹

Outside these foundation narratives, interaction between the two colors intensifies as a yellow and a blue dragon entwine in the shamanist myth of the Three Chesok Gods. When the blue dragon woman is imprisoned inside yellow earth, she manages to give birth.

The centrality of yellow to the ancient myongdang never diminishes, even when it appears far east of Asia in the dry land of the Navaho. In their very First World, yellow corn forms when the Blue and Yellow Clouds meet. And blue in one of its purest forms on earth as turquoise remains a pivotal stimulus to sustained growth. Turquoise Boy comes from the east to the site of the first harvested

²³ Morris, Irvin. *From the Glittering World*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997, pages 3-4

²⁴ Seo Dae-seok, page 74

²⁵ page 80

²⁶ page 114

²⁷ O'Bryan, pages 17-18

²⁸ Seo Dae-seok, page 74

²⁹ This productive combination of yellow with a blue cloud recurs in the Navaho First World as mentioned later.

yellow corn and the first cultivated food is produced. When the Navaho finally reach the surface of this Fifth World, Turquoise Boy enters the great turquoise stone that will be placed in the sky to produce yellow sunbeams for growing plants. Blue and yellow have joined each other in the southwestern sky of America, after the yellow and blue dragons ascended from the ground.

Thomas N. Grove