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Hetch Hetchy: A View from Japan

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It was in the 1970's that the problem of the Hetch Hetchy controversy in the context of environmental history was taken up in Japan. In *General Studies on America, Volume 2: Environment and Resources* in 1976, Masashi Ikeda discussed the issue as a "confrontation between 'development' and 'preservation,'" and perceived it as the sprout of the idea of tourism in the natural environment. Regarding nature conservation administration in the United States, Ikeda paid attention to the existence of two different organizations, the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture and the National Park Service, Department of Interior, and indicated two trends of thought in the background of their creation: conservation, which Ikeda identified with Gifford Pinchot, and preservation, which he identified with John Muir. Ikeda concluded that the idea of conservation was supported in the Hetch Hetchy case, because at the time most people believed that natural resources, such as forestland, water and minerals, should "be developed and wisely used" (Ikeda, 1976: 296-7), while fewer people insisted that nature should "remain in as natural a condition as possible" (Ikeda, 1976: 297). Ikeda claimed, however, that this case was "meaningful for giving the people a chance to think about nature conservation and the recognition of the value of natural resources as a recreational resource to enjoy and not just develop" (Ikeda, 1976: 197). Moreover, Ikeda indicated that, as a result of the Hetch Hetchy controversy, a change in the recognition of nature can be observed: "Except Yosemite, there has been no other case where a dam has been constructed in a national park up to today" (Ikeda, 1976: 197).

In Japan, the Hetch Hetchy problem came to be discussed more from the perspective of civilization after the translation into Japanese of Roderick F. Nash's *From These Beginnings* and in 1989 and 1993, respectively. Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* has not been translated into Japanese yet, but his writings, as well as *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: the Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* by Samuel Hays, have been referred to in almost every document in Japan that relates to the history of environmental thought. Nash made the critique that Muir could not protect the Hetch Hetchy Valley or stop the dam because Muir did not appeal to environmental ethics in his preservation campaign. But, Nash also understood that Muir decided not to do so because Muir knew that the idea of environmental ethics was not acceptable in his time. However, Nash pointed out that Muir's position has become widely accepted over time. Moreover, in *The Right of Nature*, in

particular, Nash contemplated the expansion of ethics into natural objects beyond humans. This ethical project of Nash's has been favorably received in the field of Environmental Thought in Japan.

Although Hiroshi Matsuno, who translated the writings of Nash into Japanese, still approaches this problem from such a viewpoint (Matsuno, 2009), new methodological frames have begun to be developed in Japan. One of these has been the concept of *yosomono* (stranger), which was introduced by Shuichi Kito (Kito, 1996). Kito positioned *yosomono* as environmental activists who come from the outside. The concept of *yosomono* attempted to clarify the local politics where ecologically-minded outsiders intervene in a development project to improve the benefit and convenience of the people who live in the area. The concept, however, also has the potential to offer a viewpoint to questions never clarified in the Hetch Hetchy controversy: why should a site be protected from the building of a dam and for who is it protected? Reiko Seki criticized the concept of *yosomono*. Seki clarified that "a nature protection movement should not defend the objective value of nature" (Seki, 1999: 120). "The movement precedes objective value and arises from nature, which must be concretely experienced and actually felt by those who live there" (Seki, 1999: 122). On the other hand, *yosomono*-led-movements tend to insist on external abstractions such as the right to a good environment and values proven by academic findings as "strategies for defending the relation of nature and society" (Seki, 1999: 122). Thus, according to Seki there is no way for *yosomono* to protest against a dam other than appealing to the abstractions of the sublime of nature, social justice or principles of the establishment of national parks. That is, it is impossible to develop a movement by *yosomono* that considers the subject of "relations between nature and society," (Seki, 1999: 122) because discussions of the sublime of nature, social justice or the principles of national park establishment make either nature or society the subject but not the relations between them.

Another attempt to make a new methodological frame is the application of the concept of *satoyama* (hometown mountains), a classical land use method of Japan, in the analysis of the symbiosis of the natural environmental and human society. *Satoyama* was one modality of a phased structure of nature-society in traditional Japan. It is comprised of *okuyama* (remote mountains), *satoyama*, *mura* (village) and *machi* (city). *Satoyama* is an artificial space which people maintain in the joint management of the natural resources around a *mura*. *Okuyama* is a similar concept to wilderness, since it is a space that people seldom enter and is distinguished from the *satoyama* located by the *mura*. Therefore, *satoyama* played the role of a buffer zone between wilderness and human society.

It is important for Japanese to use and further consider these concepts, as they have originated in Japan and are significant to Japan's own distinctive history of the environment. However, similar conceptions to *yosomono* and *satoyama* have been developed in Environmental Pragmatism, which also denies the dualism of the subject and the object of

recognition. In Environmental Pragmatism, human recognition is not one of a subject that is outside of the object of nature, because the relationship between humans and nature is always interactive. Therefore, everything from wilderness to cities must be treated as existing in a "continuum" (Parker, 1996: 29). Moreover, the idea of "Nature as Culture" (Hickman, 1996) has revealed nature as man's construction and has challenged the idea of the dualism of nature and humans. Hickman insists on the fact that in ecology there is no truly wild place on the earth.

If we extend the critiques of dualism by Environmental Pragmatism, by Kito's yosomono and by the classical concept of satoyama, we can see that they also deny the dichotomy between preservation and conservation. Consequently, it is necessary to reconsider the Hetch Hetchy controversy, as it is the origin of this binary conception, and to reexamine discussions in the Hetch Hetchy controversy about the ideal National Park System.

After the plan to construct the dam in Yosemite National Park was proposed, this problem aroused the passions of residents of the San Francisco Bay area and nature-loving folks all over the United States for 13 years. However, this case was neither a controversy about nature conservation nor a controversy, as has been assumed by many environmental historians, over the protection of a national park. Also, it was neither a confrontation between a preservationist campaign to stubbornly refuse the modification of a natural spectacle and a progressivist project of building a governmental dam on government land to protect citizens from the profiteering of privately run water systems; nor was it a conflict between conservation and preservation. The City and County of San Francisco planned two dams in Yosemite National Park; although the preservation movement fought against permission for a dam in Hetch Hetchy Valley, it acquiesced to the building of one at Lake Eleanor. Moreover, the controversy was not about the utility of the dam; there was no major discussion about economic rationalities or efficient usages of water related to the construction of the dam in Hetch Hetchy Valley.

What was actually fought over in this case was the value of the natural spectacle of a national park. For the people who opposed the construction of the dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley, the value of Yosemite National Park would be ruined if a dam was built in the Hetch Hetchy Valley. The issue was not the modification of a natural spectacle but whether the value of the natural spectacle would be diluted. In the case of Lake Eleanor, the change in the natural spectacle was not so clear, because there did not seem to be a big difference between a natural lake and a reservoir in the eyes of most people. That is, a central concern of the discussion regarding the value of a natural spectacle revealed itself in discussions related to the aesthetics and beauty of reservoirs. Engineers appealed to the public's idea of beauty by calling the reservoir a lake and by distributing images created by composite photographs of the future "lake." In contrast, the anti-dam camp was not able to craft an argument that

effectively denied the engineer's publicity campaign, because many people, including congressmen, senators and even some people in the anti-dam movement, saw beauty in the artificial lake. That is, it was necessary for the preservationists to clarify the very difference in the axiology of landscape, but they failed to do so.



Composite photograph showing the beauty of the "lake," extracted from Freeman, 1912: 10

On the other hand, the Secretaries of the Interior related to this case were concerned with a different aspect of this problem. They were interested in the point of whether national parks were to be sites where dams could be developed. Secretary Richard Ballinger's approach to the Hetch Hetchy controversy symbolizes this point. Secretary Ballinger allowed dam development on both sites of Lake Eleanor and in the Cherry Valley above the Hetch Hetchy Valley, but he suggested excluding Lake Eleanor from Yosemite National Park and withholding permission for dam construction in the Hetch Hetchy Valley. That is, the Secretary believed that dams should not be allowed to be developed in national parks even though the Secretary agreed on the necessity of the dam for supplying San Francisco's water. This suggestion of the Secretary institutionally tried to define the concept of national parks and protect the Hetch Hetchy Valley without considering the value of the nature.

Finally, the U.S. Congress decided that the Hetch Hetchy Valley, Lake Eleanor and Cherry Valley were to be developed together regardless of the intentions of Secretary Hitchcock and Secretary Ballinger, who had both tried to keep dam development away from national parks. Both Secretary Fisher and Secretary Hitchcock had doubts about the law authorizing that the Secretary of Interior is responsible for the development of large-scale

dams in national parks. Therefore, they did not grant authorization of the dam through the office of the Secretary of the Interior but entrusted the vote to Congress instead. As a result of the decision of the Secretaries, the construction of dams in Yosemite National Park for the water service of the City and County of San Francisco was approved through new individual legislative proceedings without referring to the existing Right of Way Act. Secretary Fisher, who made the final decision regarding the Hetch Hetchy dam, avoided establishing the precedent of adapting the Right of Way Act for constructing a large-scale dam development within national parks, and this result, although it played the defining role in the relation between national parks and dams, did not offer any answer concerning whether it was possible for the Secretary of the Interior to authorize the development of large-scale water projects by authority of the Right of Way Act.

The U.S. National Park Service, which unitarily manages all national parks, was founded in 1916 after the Hetch Hetchy controversy. Even though a trend of thought similar to Environment Pragmatism exists also in Japan, as described previously, problems concerning national park and nation forest systems have not been discussed enough in Japan. The Hetch Hetchy controversy is an important case for concerning the problems of these systems from a view outside the dualism of conservation and preservation.

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