

Community Space Reflected in Modern Novels of the 1930s in Seoul

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Abstract. The analysis of community spaces used by a wide range of people in Seoul, in which modern culture was introduced, helps our understanding of the changed lifestyles and lives of people. The emergence of new types of community space with Western and Japanese influences could also be found. These spaces served as the background to a variety of changes, such as changes in roles and hierarchical conflicts associated with economic characteristics at that time.

Keywords: community, modern architecture, Korean modern literature, Taewon Park and 1930s Seoul

1 Introduction

The backgrounds of novels reflect their era and the daily life of the times in which they are set. This has an important role in maximizing cases or conflicts and the supporting stories of main characters. Therefore, in this study, Park Tae Won's novel '*Riverside Landscape*' was analyzed to understand the urban community space in the 1930s. *Riverside Landscape* is a full-length novel by Park Tae Won.

It is an adapted and expanded version of Jogwang, that was published in 1936 and increased version that was published in nine instalments in the same magazine that year. *Riverside Landscape* describes the lives of various ordinary people living by the riverside of Cheonggyecheon in Seoul over a period of about one year. It is divided into 50 passages and about 70 characters appear.



Fig 1. The book of the '*Riverside Landscape*' in 1930 (Source : Seoul City, 'the Cheonggyecheon 1930')

2 Preceding research analysis

Park Tae Won's novels set in the 1930s have been researched in various aspects. Various issues such as the changing sense of identity, idea of sex, fascism awareness and correspondence, political nature, the ecosystem and nature were shown in his novels. Especially, most are studies looking into the change of awareness of modern intellectuals, and change by time and space.

Also, there were comparative studies of *Riverside Landscape* with other novels for objective investigations of reality between the worldly ego and sharing ego. Especially, modern life was also shown by analyzing the characteristics of various characters in structures of opposition and repetition. However, there were minor studies that had direct links with architecture or urban space, and most of these studies were analyses focusing on the lives of ordinary people.

Therefore, this study is differentiated from existing studies, in which aspects of communities taking place in the novel are looked into and have meaning in understanding modern community space.

3 Community Space Reflected in *Riverside Landscape*

The Peace Cafe, in the middle of Jongro Street, appears at the start of 'Pitiful People' in the 13th passage of *Riverside Landscape*. It was a place of exchange in those days. Entertainment spaces of the modern era were expressed as bars with young women, late in the evening, and with tables with numbers along with box-type chairs.

One appearing character manages 'Jungi Store in the entrance of Chungjin-dong,' another character is the 'Jongro Eunbang' owner, and another character is described as a 'person who started a tea shop renting the second floor of Eunbang which is in the corner of Gwangkyo'. The images of the Chungjin-dong and Jongro of that time could be recalled.

Moreover, the landscape of urban streets along Gwangkyo Bridge and Jangkyo Bridge, and the appearance of a friend who attends the Supokyo Chapel, implies the development of church facilities. At that time, churches were developing as a representative space of community for those who lived in the cities.

The coffee shop appears in contemporary novels, and is similar to a cafe. This can be seen as a Japanese modification of the salon and facade shown in 17th and 18th-century Europe. The main character of *Pyro* (1933) witnesses a scene of discussion between young writers in a coffee shop called the Nakrang Parlour, during the daytime, and the female lead character listens to Caruso's Elogy and thinks about the manuscript.

If cafes at that time were close in their function to bars, coffee shops were places to drink tea and coffee, and where lethargic intellectuals gathered for productive exchanges of culture and discussion.

If the cafe was a place for exchange between men and modern women, the washing place at the riverside could be seen as a place of exchange for wives.

The washing place which is the main background of *Riverside Landscape* provided a meeting place for women who were in charge of housework. In the passing

conversations, a new commercial facility called the Oriental Pharmacy was mentioned, and the 'Gisaeng house', seen as a cafe space, and the daily 'alley'.

A department store appears as another place for exchange. There is a limit to considering the department store as a normal commercial space like a barbershop, linen shop, bathhouse, laundry, oriental pharmacy, pawnshop or grocery store, as referred to in the second passage of *Riverside Landscape*, 'Boy from the Barbershop.'

There is mention of a restaurant in the 'Hwasin Store', which is a former department store. An elevator makes an appearance.

The Mitsukoshi department store already had exhibition space and roof gardens, in which Hwasin Store was newly built as a six-story building after a big fire, and there was a restaurant on the fifth floor. The department store was not a place that simply sold goods at that time; it was a space where exchange took place.



Fig 2. A laundry near the Cheonggyecheon, Gwanggy in 1930, They must pay for the use of this wash place (Source : <http://news.chosun.com>)



Fig 3. Whashin Department Store, since 1937 (Source: 70th Anniversary Commemorative Photo book of Sinsegye Department Store, p.29), Miscoshi Department Store(source : <http://blog.daum.net/ysriver21/6044481>)

4 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to look into the community space of modern city people in the 1930s through Park Tae Won's novel *Riverside Landscape*.

Unlike other contemporary novels, Park Tae Won's novel does not describe long scenes in one single place like a room or a bar or a hospital, but rather describes the images of that era in the city. Also, the lives of city people are shown through various spaces where community takes place with various characters. This helps in understanding the lives of people living in modern cities in the 1930s.

As a cornerstone, this study will give guidance in analysis of various spaces shown in other work by Park Tae Won and in comparative analysis of modern architecture space and cities described in the work of contemporary writers.

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