A case study of sandplay therapy for
a 6-year-old girl sharing family problems:
‘psychological transformation’

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<Abstract>

This is a case study of sandplay therapy with a six-year-old girl with anxiety. It concerns her journey of overcoming emotional wounds and experiencing growth. We conducted 20 sessions with the client over 10 months from September 2018 to July 2019. We found that her unconscious processed family problems that nobody expressed in language. The client expressed this through symbolic play in her sand trays. Through the sandplay process, she started to overcome her psychological difficulties. We noted the link between the healing power of the unconscious and her psychological transformation. Thus, our study shows that even if only one child has sandplay therapy, it is possible to deal with family problems or members through it.

Keywords : Anxious, Family problems, Sandplay therapy, Symbolic images, Collective unconscious

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I . Introduction

Carl Jung (1981) said problems in children often disappear when the parents gain a correct view of their own problems. He emphasized that when it comes to child education, the primary object is the parents. A good way to educate children is first to educate the educator: parents or teachers who are closest to the children and thus have a direct influence on them. According to Jung, children can be a victim within a family. He said this because he considered problems in children as those of the parents. Unresolved problems of the parents can affect their children's psychological health; Issues and conflicts that parents undergo are passed on to their children. Because children are part of the parents' psychological background, they can feel the parents' unconscious even when not expressed verbally. However, Jung also mentioned the necessity of being disconnected from primitive unconscious in the case of children undergoing growth and development, as he feared that the connection could hinder the development of consciousness. Thus, if parents and other adults want to know about a child properly, they should first explore their inner world and visit the unconscious often to face the problems of their own (Wickes, 1977).

Kalff (2003) explained that creating an inner image through sandplay therapy brings amazing transformation in people and serves as an effective means to move their psyche. Being provided the opportunity to express oneself nonverbally alone would help them overcome their problems and undergo healing. Sandplay therapy functions as a bridge between consciousness and unconsciousness. Usually, paintings or other visual images are good means to move the psyche. Homeyer & Sweeney (2011) argued sandplay therapy also creates a bridge for meaningful interchanges to take place and that metaphorical expressions have a powerful energy. They explained that the sensory experience with the sand causes a loosening of the tongue. Weinrib (2004) stressed the importance of non-intervention while children are engaged in sandplay therapy, elaborating that the therapy guides them to the path toward transformation and provides a vessel for the process to take place. Psychological transformation is an unconscious process and therefore it is mysterious. In the deep layers of the unconscious is the energy to heal the psyche, and sandplay therapy can activate this healing energy. The

unconscious is a product of nature and can be seen as a dynamic phenomenon beyond the control of the conscious. It is an expression made in sandplay therapy just as thoughts come to consciousness (Jung, 1981). And the natural language of the psyche is metaphorical (Jackson, 1996). Wickes (1977) considered the unconscious a living, cosmic space in which archetypal images are buried. It engages in a constant communication with the conscious, and there is a need to understand the images that emerge from this deep place. Cooper (1978/2014) mentioned that symbols are key to entering a wider and deeper space than a human being using a symbol. When symbols are visualized, they can effectively convey the contents of the unconscious to the conscious, flowing through psychic energy of the unconscious and bringing change (Furth, 2002). Furth (2002) said the materials of the unconscious, which originate from the psyche, can remain in the psyche due to difficulties in the outside world and that these difficulties are not easily disguised when manifested symbolically. In addition, Cooper (1978/2014) said that "the basis of the psyche shared by humanity" forms the symbolic system and when this is denied, people can experience mental disorder. Often, people are reluctant to speak about the complex problems of their family. However, sandplay therapy can break down this defense and thus naturally override resistance (Homeyer & Sweeney, 2011). Furthermore, Kalff (2003) explained how the stagnant psychic development in children can be resolved (Lee, 2010; Boo, 2014; Kowen, 2017).

This paper explores the sandplay process of a six-year-old girl who shares the family problem, focusing on how she dealt with the problems while going through a psychological transformation.

II. Client And Her Family Background

The client is a six-year-old girl named Cho. Prior to coming for therapy, Cho often woke up in the middle of her sleep and cried, saying that she did not want to be separated from her mother even when she becomes an adult. Cho's behavior aroused her parents' concerns. In outer life, Cho experienced only short separations from her parents when she was

stayed at her grandparents' home. She had never been away from her parents for a long period of time.

The therapist could not read any expression on Cho's face during the first meeting. Cho did not look around observe figures on display. The way that Cho looked only ahead while walking gave the impression of an "ice princess." When coming for therapy for the first time, Cho wore a pretty white dress. She looked like a cute doll. She hardly spoke except for "yes" and "no," and mostly nodded to communicate. Overall, she was very slow and passive. She hesitated before asking questions to the therapist and also when selecting items from the therapy room. She continued to be rigid, and asked for permission to do something several times even within a single session.

Cho's mother explained that Cho was often slow at home, which frustrated the mother and made her raise her voice. The mother also reported that Cho tended to avoid situations in which there are strangers. Cho would want to quit a cram school that she enjoyed going whenever new children joined the class.

Cho's parents received much interference and intervention from their original family, even after marriage. The paternal grandparents directly pressured the couple, from marriage and childbirth to childrearing, which often resulted in verbal arguments.

According to Cho's mother, the father was introverted and did not talk much. He spent more time working than being with the family. He and his father did not enjoy a good relationship, and the conflict continued even after his marriage. The paternal grandparents were highly demanding and often intervened in their grandchildren's childrearing by offering to "help." While Cho's father was often in confrontation with them, her mother obeyed even though she was under a lot of stress.

Cho's mother grew up watching the conflict between her parents. Seeing how much her mother had suffered because of the marital discord, she was especially displeased with her father. As an adult, she became independent at an early age, as if to avoid her parents. Even after getting married and having two children, she still felt dissatisfied and angry at her father. At the time of sandplay therapy room, Cho's mother looked sociable and outgoing. But she explained that she was introverted and timid as a child and that her personality had changed

after she reached adulthood.

Cho lived together with her parents and a sister who is two years younger. The mother reported that unlike Cho, her sister was sociable, had a bright personality, and did well in life.

While the therapist received permission from Cho's parents to write this case paper, only her alias and a brief family history are disclosed in the paper for the purpose of protecting the client's personal information.

III. Sandplay Therapy Process

Twenty sessions of sandplay therapy were conducted over ten months, with a total of nineteen sandpictures. Sandplay therapy shows the energy flow of the psyche (Kalff, 2003). This was also the case for Cho's sandplay process, and changes that were apparent with the flow could be observed from her first sandpicture to the last. The therapist especially made sure not to involve any bias in the analytic process and tried to 'let the materials speak' (Jung, 1981). Interpretations were made based on sessions with supervisors at home and abroad.

1. Session 2: Sandpicture 1

Kalff (2003) explained that usually the first sandpicture contains both the problem and the resolution. Figure 1 is Cho's first sandpicture. While there are green apple figures in the tray, there is no feeling of abundance or warmth. Food can be a representation of care and attention. Cho did not touch or use the entire area of the sand tray. Cho was usually non-expressive, slow in her speech and behavior, and defensive. However, she did show movements in the sand and exposed the blue bottom of the tray. From a positive viewpoint, the exposed bottom may suggest that Cho was ready to listen to the story of her inner world. The marks made by figures or her fingers do not make up a straight path but rather seem to take a roundabout. This could be a choice to minimize resistance (von Franz, 1997).

Figure 1. Sandpicture 1

A fence is set up in front of where the therapist was sitting. Figures placed close to where the therapist is could reflect what the client demands from the therapist or the image of the therapist. As can be seen, Cho did not touch area of the sand near the therapist, which reflects how she views the world. Cho could have used the fence to establish a boundary between her and the therapist, which might be necessary at that period in time because of the uncertainty whether the therapist will accept her or reject her. This might also be how Cho feels about her parents. On the other hand, the shape of the fence also suggests embracement and support. If her family fails to provide these elements to her, she needs to go into the inner world to care for herself. Perhaps that is why we see someone buying lots of food from the grocery store and apples to eat in the sand tray. Inside the fence is a swing, the rocking motion of which is effective for soothing herself. Riding on a swing can be an enjoyable experience. And because of its swinging function, swing can be associated with opposite emotions.

Expressions of house in Cho's sandpictures are complex and occurs repeatedly. As a place for dwelling, the house is a symbol of protection. In rituals, the house could represent regression to the uterus (Cooper, 1978/2014). The igloo is a house built to endure the winter cold or to hunt. "Eskimos in the northern region required flexibility in residential mobility so as to adapt to changes in their living environment according to the season (Britannica, 1970/2002)." It is the outcome of the wisdom of the Inuit tribe living in a tundra area (Wikipedia, 2011). The figure placed next to the igloo is a house found in Shirakawa, Japan.

These houses are structured in a way so that they can endure the heavy snow in the region. "The roofs face west and east to get sunlight as much as possible. The villages are usually built on a north-south axis, so the angle offers the least resistance to the strong wind (Gassho-Zukuri Preservation Foundation, 2019)." Also, houses in Shirakawa Village - located on the foot of Mount Haku, "which is characterized by its difference in altitude - are an outstanding example of a way of life that has perfectly adapted to its environment and social function, which were vulnerable to damages from outside changes (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2019)." Ice represents rigidity, coldness, inflexibility and non-perpetuity. It also symbolizes stubbornness at heart, or frozen love or absence of love (Cooper, 1978/2014). Basically, life halts during cold winters (von Franz, 1997). These figures could be important symbolisms related to Cho's emotional or relational aspects. Although the two houses look different, they are both found commonly in a snowy environment.

While similar expressions were repeatedly shown in Cho's sand trays, no sandpicture was the same. Quite contrary to how she was in outer life, Cho was rather expressive when working with the sand. Although symptoms and problematic behaviors displayed by a child in everyday life may seem ineffective, they can serve the purpose of easing tension in his or her given environment. We can easily understand these behaviors and symptoms if we interpret them as a message conveying their fear, concern and displeased feelings (Zoja, 2018). The first figure Cho put in the sand tray was the igloo, which was initially placed at the center. Then she drew a winding path that starts from the igloo's entrance, moving from left to right, connecting the entrance to the sea. She gave an explanation with her finger while speaking with short phrases, but her voice was barely audible.

The sea is expressed through two areas of exposed bottom at the right near corner of the tray. The sand path that divides the two waters, which Cho made using both her hands, is a bridge. Cho explained that "the two blue bottoms of the sand tray are connected under the bridge." Expression of the sea at the right near corner area can be interpreted as the deep unconscious or the mother archetype. It would also be connected to her relationship with the family and the associated emotions. The sea suggests that Cho is open to the inner world of the deep unconscious. Cho's sandpicture overall showed that her work with the sand involves

embarking on a long path that starts from home, i.e., her sandplay journey.

Cho performed the task of filling small vessels with sand inside the igloo before removing it to the left near corner. Afterwards, Cho removed the igloo and placed apples to create a grocery store. The igloo was placed in the left near corner. As explained, Cho conducted some work with the sand before relocating the igloo. Creative regression must occur before healing becomes possible. Sandplay therapy provides the condition of a womb so as to restore the damaged mother image. Once the constellation of the Self becomes activated, the damaged ego can undergo healing and therefore psychology regeneration takes place. In other words, the unconscious and the mother are symbolically equal (Weinrib, 2004).

Cinderella experiences abandonment and hardships after the death of her mother. Perhaps Cho identifies herself with Cinderella, thinking her parents do not understand her, hate her and love her less than her sister. The fruit that appear together with Cinderella in Figure 1 are apples. Although Cho did not place a Snow White figure in her tray, apple figures continually appear even after her first sandpicture. In the fairy tale, Snow White falls into a deep sleep after eating the poisoned apple that her stepmother gives her (von Franz, 1997). The trial that Snow White goes through can be associated with the pain involved in the individuation process. When connecting the apples to Cho's life situation, perhaps the atmosphere at her home was so tense that it made her freeze. Although the situation was difficult for Cho, she would gain strength and she would grow once she overcomes it. Apples symbolize knowledge and wisdom (Dictionary of Symbolism, 2019). Eating these apples may be connected to growth, through which one gains consciousness and wisdom.

Looking at the shape of the figures, the triangular roof can symbolize masculine principles or the spiritual realm (Cooper, 1978/2014). With tensions rising upward from the base, triangles are related to overcoming one's current state. This kind of situation may cause one to stumble, but it serves as an opportunity to develop the ability to find balance. We could say that there is more resistance in triangles compared to circles, squares. they face greater disturbance or interruption, which is related to "living life as it is, realizing life in an area where resistance from the reality is great." Triangles are also more dynamic and connote more irregularities compared to squares. Hence they are an appropriate scale for human beings.

Triangles have an extraordinary ability of finding balance (Riedel, 2013). Cooper (1978/2014) said an upside-down triangle represents the feminine principles and the maternal body, and can be a symbol of the sea, the natural world and the physical body. Its horizontal bar symbolizes the earth among the four elements and it often appears in the color white. The igloo is also white and can be seen as a down-pointing triangle. As for the symbolism of the mountain and the cave, the mountain is a male triangle facing up, and the cave is a female triangle facing top down (Cooper, 1978/2014). Cho went back and forth between the two houses placed next to each other. These houses played a critical role in telling Cho's story. Though still a child, Cho's individuation process would involve the process of overcoming the status quo and discovering balance and complementation to the current tension as well as integration.

2. Session 3: Sandpicture 2

Second sandpictures can appear chaotic, as they often penetrate fast into the deeper layer of the unconscious and come in contact with the raw, untouched energy (Weinrib, 2004; Cameron, 2001). This time, Cho told her story in greater detail. Cho first brought an empty apple box, a well and beds - figures that best explained Cho's story. When considering that Cho was sharing the unconscious of her parents, these figures can be associated with the collective unconscious. They can also represent the connection to the deep part of Cho's unconscious.

Figure 2. Sandpicture 2

Figure 2 is Cho's second sandpicture made during session 3. At a first glance, the picture looked crowded and disorderly. But a closer look made the therapist realize that the tray is nothing to miss.

The right diagonal half of the sand tray seems like an area for the family. Three beds are lined up next to each other: the furthest one to the right is a double bed for an adult couple and the two beds to the left are single beds. The bed at the center seems like a child's bed, given the fact that it is protected by both sides to its left and right. The bed located furthest to the left is near the door, which is connected to outside. Four people are standing at the center area that appears to be the living room. Cho explained that the married couple is her mother and father, and the one standing to their left is her little sister. She said the adult woman who is standing a bit away from the three people is the "older sister" and identified herself with her. Looking at the orientation of the people and bed figures, we can assume how the family relationship must be like at home. Beds for parents and children appear in Cho's sandpictures around twelve times. These beds no longer appear from session 15 and are replaced by cradles. We saw the right near corner connected to the sea in Figure 1. The change in the location of the beds in each sandpicture is also worth noticing. Bed is furniture for sleep, and allows one to descend to the unconscious. The beds imply that Cho is sharing her mother's unconscious. As participation mystique, this archetypal sandpicture is closer to the collective unconscious rather than the personal.

The family treasure and the crown are made of gold, a material of value. The crown, located between the double bed and the single bed, belongs to Cho's sister. The treasure placed next to the figure that she identified as her little sister is the family treasure. There is no treasure or crown for Cho. There is, however, a transparent and inconspicuous glass slipper at the center near area of the tray. We saw a Cinderella figure in the previous sandpicture. This time, there is no Cinderella but a glass slipper instead. The size of the slipper is quite big but transparent that it is almost unnoticeable, which may be related to Cho's current situation. In the old days, shoes symbolized the owner's status and thus can be seen as a symbol of one's ego identity. Cinderella loses her glass slipper while hurrying out of the ball, and she finds it with the help of the prince. It seems that Cho must also find her glass

slipper.

An interesting fact is that Cho depicted herself as an adult. From Cho's point of view, her family perceives her as a grown adult. When someone of Cho's age uses a crown figure, it could represent love from parents. There is, however, a crown for the younger sister but not for Cho, which might mean that Cho believed she is not loved by her parents. Just as Cinderella finds love by meeting the prince, the crown could be an expression of her desire to be loved. That Cho's bed is aligned with the rest of the family bed could also be an expression of her wanting to be a part of the family. What catches one's eyes among the figures are the gigantic dark brown trapezoidal cylinder behind the figure representing Cho and the large rectangular structure that looks like a window or a door. In Korea, these types of trapezoidal cylinder structures are made of bushclover wood and used to raise young chicks. Interestingly, this material is what Cho used to create her own home in session 3. Right next to the trapezoidal cylinder structure are seven apples and a mixer. There is also a spoon that is buried in sand and can barely be seen; it looks like the spoon is not in use.

In the left diagonal area are different forms of water. Water is a symbol of the unconscious; the left half of the sand tray is usually associated with the unconscious. In this tray, there is the well water from deep underground, a flowing stream of water, and swimming pool where people can have fun. These different forms of water represent the different levels of the unconscious and the conscious. There is even an ice mountain in the left rear corner. Although Cho was still a young child, the mountain could be associated with the potential for her energy to ascend to a higher realm of the psyche. Tension is heightened between the two diagonal opposites, and the left area is frozen. The mountain represents a higher realm of the psyche as it shoots up to the sky. The potential for this connection can also be found in the two ladders. There are five bridges, including the two ladders, that connect to the mountain and the water. There are also many fences and walls—perhaps representing boundary—and also containing vessels. The representation of these figures would become clearer as therapy progresses. The fences might be there for defense purpose or to draw a boundary to differentiate something (Kwon, 2017). Or perhaps they are there because the client Cho felt that outside is unsafe. At this point, the therapist was open to all possibilities.

Cho used a bride and a groom figure to represent her parents and did so often in her future sandpictures. Marriage is a symbol of the union of the masculine and the feminine. In this sandpicture, however, the opposites are not differentiated and remain ambiguous. Perhaps this indicates the possibility that stress at home and stress that Cho experiences mostly come from the parents.

3. Session 4: Sandpicture 3

From session 4 to session 12, Cho's sandpictures were crowded with many figures. Perhaps this is an indication that her energy is in the inner world, and that there are a lot of materials in her unconscious. Later sandpictures tell us that Cho had a lot to say because she shared the unconscious of her parents. While Cho was hardly expressive in the outer world, the deep layers of her unconscious spoke otherwise.

Figure 3 contains numerous items. Multiple furniture and people in a house could be connected to a complex inner world and complex emotions. However, we do see some order compared to the previous tray. There is a bridge in the front part of the tray, and we saw a bridge at a similar location in session 3. There is, however, a difference. In session 3, the bridge seemingly connected inside and outside. And the left half of the tray, which could be called the area of the unconscious, had many water-related figures. But in session 4, the bridge is between Belle from Beauty and the Beast and Cinderella lying on a bed. Other figures in

Figure 3. Sandpicture 3

the room are a fairy with her magic wand, Jasmin from Aladdin with a bird on her hand, and a girl figure lying down on the bed next to Cinderella. In the left near corner, we also see a proper door that leads from the room to outside being used for the first time. Around the center area is a bridge that connects to outside. Compared to session 3, the thickness and the height of the fence became less, which could indicate eased defense or wariness on the part of the client. Cho even hummed for the first time during sandplay. However, the existence of the fence does also suggest that there is still a boundary to some degree.

The family members are standing around the oblong rectangle-structure at the middle of the tray. Standing inside the structure is a bride figure. According to Cho, it represents an aspect of herself. It appeared that Cho still expressed herself as someone who is older than she actually is. Cho said the bride will soon get married, which brings anticipation for a union with the masculine aspect.

In the rear half of the tray, there are people with tools such as an axe. These tools serve a certain function. The woman with an axe is the one who brought in the family treasure and the crown in session 13. Just like the sword, the axe is used to sever something. The axe symbolizes the power of the sun god and also represents the overcoming of a mistake (Cooper, 1978/2014); it could be connected to rational thinking and judgement. Perhaps it suggests coming in contact with new aspects in the outer realm. In the left rear corner is a tree stump. "Elon" is the Hebrew word for oak tree. The Bible says that the oak tree has long been considered as the "real" tree, as its stumps would regrow after they are cut, and a good supply of lumber. Even when trees are cut, the stumps remain and therefore they are the "seed of holiness" and a symbol of "sacred power" (Catholictimes, 2015). Next to the stump is a well, suggesting descent into the deep unconscious. The well represents the feminine principles and the womb of the Great Mother, and it has the power to heal through its connection to the underworld (Cooper, 1978/2014). We can see a new tree growing next to the well.

In the right near corner of the tray is a fountain. The fountain figure appears five times during Cho's sandplay process. Springs and fountains represent the mother source and provide water of life (Cooper, 1978/2014). According to Cooper (1978/2014), often located at

the center of a monastery, yard, garden and so on, springs or foundations represent the center of the cosmos and were considered as the source of eternal life.

4. Session 7: Sandpicture 4

Cho's sandplay story engaged in a treasure hunt from session 6 to 9. Marie-Louise Von Franz (1997) mentioned that the Self is often manifested in the form of a crystal or a jewel. Inside a container in Figure 4 is gold, which is a symbol of the Self. Taking that into consideration, treasure hunt can be associated with the constellation of the Self. Cooper (1978/2014) said treasure hunt has a double symbolism: Finding the earthly treasure that is hidden, or discovering the spiritual treasure representing one's genuine Self or the ego. Those seeking for the treasure often face trials and hardships and need supernatural help as the task cannot be done by human power alone. The supernatural help that Cho would need can be linked to the helper figures in her sandpicture.

In this sandpicture, a young girl finds the "first-place treasure." "She found the first-place treasure because she is diligent," said Cho. Judging from her language expressions, Cho seem to have excellent observation ability for a six year old. This ability probably allowed her to keenly observe her parents. She seemed to know the truth of what goes on between her parents. Up until session 7, Cho's sandpictures continuously showed what was happening in her inner world.

Figure 4. Sandpicture 4

Animals begin to appear in Cho's sandpictures from session 7. There are a total of seven trays with animal figures. As can be seen in Figure 4, a bunch of animals seem to be coming out from a certain space. "Only the owners get to ride on the animals," commented Cho. This remark may be related to forming a relationship with her instinctual energy. In other words, the animals are not repressed but are tamed to be ridden. Cho also said, "These animals are not fake," which suggests that the instinctual energy is not fake. In addition, the older sister and the younger sister figures are together in the right rear corner of the tray. Also, the woman figure in the right center area is washing her hands. Judging from this, it seems that Cho overcame her jealousy towards her little sister.

5. Session 9: Sandpicture 5

In the sandpicture made in session 8, Jasmine is freeing a sparrow caught in a net. The fact that five princess figures were all together in session 4 but now Jasmine has separated from the group can be significant. Usually expressionless, Cho had separated her emotions from pain and spent most of her time in the inner world. She could closely observe her parents and their relationship and read the "truth" in it. Also, given that her sister's bed was placed between her parents' and Cho's, Cho was probably jealous of her sister. Cho also probably said the treasure is a "family treasure" because she could not bear seeing the treasure belonging to her sister only.

Figure 5. Sandpicture 5

The picture is the opposite of Cho's presence in outer life, in which she did not voice out her emotions and expressed her inner world. But now, the Jasmine figure represents a new aspect of Cho. Through the Jasmine aspect in her, Cho would be able to develop compassion for her sister and her parents. It would become possible for her to gain courage and find her own voice. Sandpicture 5 contains all these possibilities.

Jasmine, Belle and Cinderella are together in the right rear corner. We could say that they represent various aspects of Cho. Jasmine is again trying to free a sparrow. In the near half of the tray, a flamingo is drinking sacred water from a fountain. The fact that the animals are together in one place, although not at the center, could mean that there is currently a focus in this tray. Riding on the animals seems to indicate that Cho could differentiate and control her instinctual energy. She also nurtures and cares for her instinctual energy by feeding them food and water and keeping them warm. We can also see a phoenix in the right near corner feeding on tree leaves.

6. Session 10: Sandpicture 6

During this session, Cho was waiting for Christmas. We have already seen the appearance of a Christmas tree in Figure 5. Christmas trees are usually evergreens. They represent the coming of the New Year, thus heralding a new beginning (Cooper, 1978/2014). According to Cooper, Christmas trees represent regeneration and immortality. They are the

Figure 6. Sandpicture 6

"Tree of Paradise" that lights up at night and provides presents and candles. Each candle on the tree represents individual soul, as well as the sun, moon and stars that shine on the branches of the "Cosmic Tree." Gold and silver decorations as well as bells can be found on the sacred pine tree.

The phoenix at the center of the near half of the tray is embracing a lion couple with its wings. Often called the "king of all animals, lions are powerful animals. They draw a clear boundary between its family and the outer world. Male lions engage in fights to protect female lions and can be exclusive. Around this time, a friend of Cho came over to her house to play and Cho told her to "clean up" after herself. The entering of the lion family appeared to represent a new aspect in Cho. The Phoenix dies at night and is born anew from the ashes every morning. Ancient literature from Egypt as well as Greece and Rome described that the phoenix can live up to more than 500 years. This mythical animal is a symbol of miraculous vitality, as when it reaches the end of its life, it burns up and is born again (Britannica, 1978/2002).

Cooper (1978/2014) believed that the king and the queen, symbols of masculine principles and feminine principles respectively, represent the supreme sovereignty of the mundane world. Thus, the parallel orientation of the king and queen figures would symbolize a complete union, two aspects of a whole, and completion. In Figure 6, the king and the queen couple-connected to central principles, governing principles and totality-need to come down from the castle. It is necessary to be able to live one's life in a genuine manner rather than being forced to live otherwise.

7. Session 11: Sandpicture 7

Many plants and animals could be observed in session 11. The tray depicts a zoo, as told by Cho. It appears, however, the animals are mostly young or small and thus need to be protected and cared for. Cho elaborated that a lotus flower is on the sea water, and there was a volcanic eruption where there is a stone. Plants are a symbol of wholeness. They grow upward toward the light, but they are also attached to the underground and therefore are in a relationship with the ground. Just like plants, when we human beings can form a relationship

Figure 7. Sandpicture 7

with our unconscious, we can become who we truly are (von Franz, 1997). In the right half area of the tray are a security guard, a cook, two firefighters, two police officers, and others as well as buildings.

It was around this time that Cho went on a month-long trip with her grandparents. She had never been away from her parents for so long. After the trip, Cho reported, "I followed them alone and it was fun." Separation anxiety could no longer be observed from her. At the beginning of session 11, Cho also talked about what happened with her and her friends. After the session 11, Cho's mom said "I used to hate her and was frustrated before. But now she's much brighter and smiles more often." She also added that she and her husband are also making efforts in line with the changes in Cho.

The Aerial figure from the Little Mermaid can be seen as a new aspect in Cho: The aspect through which she finds her own voice and voices out her opinions with courage and confidence. The Jasmine figure who was freeing a bird is also a new attitude developed by Cho. In addition, Cho counted the number of chairs in her sand tray and brought a matching number of human figures. This shows that her relational energy is becoming activated, allowing her to form relationships with other people.

8. Session 12: Sandpicture 8

Fences and walls, which had characterized Cho's sandpictures, disappeared from session

Figure 8. Sandpicture 8

12. The expression of boundary that had continued for eleven sessions was finally gone.

It looks as if things that were frozen are beginning to thaw. This sandpicture represents the beach. Cho first brought three clam shells and began building a house in the right half of the tray. There is a child taking a dump. In the right rear corner, there is a well with a tool inside, flowers and plants, and a snow crystal. "When the crystal is gone, all of these will be gone and it will rain a lot. And I don't like that," said Cho. People who are visiting the beach traveled there by riding on the animals. The bride and the groom couple are the mother and father, and they are looking at the blonde girl wearing yellow clothes. First the yellow girl was a child born from the mother and father. But later Cho changed her orientation and the girl became a child of the king and queen. In this tray are a newborn, a child playing sports, a child watching what's going on, a child playing tag, a child taking a dump and a child born from the marriage between king and queen. It is in this session that Cho builds a house from scratch for the first time. There is also a cake and automobiles. The child figure taking a dump appeared before in session 8. It seems that the act of taking a dump is connected to a resolution between Cho and her sister. Thus the process appears not to have influence anymore. The child building a house with a tool and digging up the lotus flower as well as cars and a bicycle in the left near corner shows us that Cho's ego became stronger. There is also a music box in the same corner. Cho enjoyed playing with sand as she listened to the music from the box. There are tools inside the well. The house in the right rear corner is the same one used in Figure 1.

With the boundaries gone, figures are scattered all over the sand tray. But instead of looking disorganized, the tray gives the impression that these figures have finally escaped from the space in which they could not breathe and are now mingling with nature. From the next session, Cho begins to concentrate on creating a house.

9. Session 13: Sandpicture 9

Perhaps it is because the fences that were used for defense and boundary are being used to build a house, but Cho no longer seemed anxious and frozen. Instead, her energy was being used in a constructive way.

Cho meticulously chose every single material to create the new house on the right. The materials were the fences that had been used to draw a boundary between the house and outside since session 3. As mentioned beforehand, they remind us of how the Inuit was afraid of coming in contact with people outside (Cooper, 1978/2014), and the Japanese living in mountainous areas had limited exchange with the outside world. Based on the principle of consistency, Jung said that all energies have a certain level of consistency (Furth, 2002). We can see that as the fences are being used to build a house in Figure 9, the fences outside become smaller and lower. Furth (2002) said that when there is tension, there is much psychic energy between the conscious and the unconscious. Butterflies are a symbol of transformation as they go through the process of metamorphosis (Cooper, 1978/2014). The butterfly sitting on a

Figure 9. Sandpicture 9

small fence therefore implies transformation. We can see this transformation in the way Cho uses her energy: She used to use most of her energy for defense and boundary against the outside world but now she is using it for her own. In this sandpicture, Cho's hands became the tool for building the new house. She paid extra attention as she created the house and after being finished, she let out a big sigh, grabbed the table and sat down, saying, "I'm done now. Phew." Her statement indicated the amount of care she had put into building the house. Whenever a figure fell down, Cho tried to make them stand again. She did not give up easily. She used strings of silver pearls and strings of golden stars to adjoin the frames of the house. The house is "not scary" and "even thieves run away" when they come in. In session 12, Cho said the following in relation to the snow crystal figure: "When the crystal is gone, all of these will be gone and it will rain a lot. And I don't like that." We can relate this comment to the ambience at Cho's house and her parents' emotion in outer life.

Cho created a space for the house by placing low fences around it. The matt in front of the house would represent the "medial space" that connects the house to the outside world. The first floor of the house is identifiable by the wooden, cylinder-shaped structure that appeared in Cho's first sandpicture. The second floor is characterized by multiple squarish structures. Cho finished her creation by adding some decorations. In the mother-like unconscious, the constellation and activation of the Self are necessary (Weinrib, 2004). That Cho made a square-like structure on top of the trapezoidal cylinder figure could be connected to the possibility of the development of a healthy ego, which builds on the Self. Overall, square-shaped structures are prominent in this sandpicture.

Aside from the house, we can see the glass slipper, the "treasure," and the crown that were used in session 2 being used again in Figure 9. The glass slipper is located close to where it was placed before but this time, Cho's father is in it. Next to the father is Aerial, and in front of him is Belle. Cho first said Aerial is the older sister but later said she is the mother. In other words, the person who cannot express herself verbally could be Cho or her mother. Ariel also used to represent Cho's little sister in session 3. In the left near corner, Jasmine is freeing a bird and a butterfly is sucking honey out of a lotus flower. In Hinduism, honey is food for the sacred bird "Hamsa," which feeds on the lotus of wisdom

(Godmuseum.net, 2019). This bird can also be found on a crystal ball from the Shilla dynasty¹⁾, and it represents “spirit or liberation from restrictions” (Cooper, 1978/2014). In the left rear corner, Cinderella is watching a butterfly in a botanical garden. Cho tried to put the crown on the head of the woman wearing yellow, located on the right side of the tray, and then placed the crown on top of the family treasure. This shows that there is family treasure. The crown, which is the “family love” that Cho deserves, is the family treasure. The dancing figure in the right near corner can dance to the beat, and creating such sandpicture requires “dancing” to the beat of the Self (von Franz, 1997). The treasures that were empty and separated in session 2 are being filled and coming together in this sandpicture.

10. Session 14: Sandpicture 10

Santa Claus, whom Cho had waited for since session 10, finally appears. This sandpicture offers a numinous experience. Often, changes come with the help from a transpersonal power (Cameron, 2001). After session 13, we see the father figure in a more relaxed state in everyday life. The father figure in this picture, who is sitting in the right near corner, wakes up early in the morning while others are still sleeping to read books and also engages in various activities. Reading can be connected to the thinking or the rational aspect. The right half of the tray is Korea, where there is Cho's family. The left half of the tray is the Artic region, and we can see penguins, cats and mice in it. Mice and cats are normally incompatible, but Cho said the cats here do not eat mice. All the animals appear as families. There are four penguins, four cats and two mice. In every animal family, one of the members is inside and thus cannot be seen. Santa Claus appears for the first time in Figure 10. His sleigh, which is the well, is connected to the deer with a silver string. This particular group of figures left a deep impression on the therapist. Cho said Santa prepared lots of presents. Perhaps the presents are something that are important to Cho, and there are hints about them in Figure 11.

People in folktales and mythologies can be thought of images in the deep layers of

1) An ancient dynasty that lasted for 992 years, from 57 BC (the founding monarch Hyeokgeose) to 935 AD (The 56th ruler Gyeongun). (Source: Korean National Culture Encyclopedia).

Figure 10. Sandpicture 10

the psyche. When going deep into the human unconscious, we encounter the collective unconscious and this is where the archetypes are rooted (von Franz, 1997). The same applies to the archetypes that we see in sandpictures. We gain power by discovering the treasures of our inner resources, with the help of archetypal energies. Cho engaged in the treasure hunt play in four sessions, and she anxiously waited for Santa Claus in two sessions. And in this process we see fairies and Santa.

After chaos, we often see a movement toward centralization and organization (Cameron, 2001). We can see centralization occurring in sandpicture 11 of session 15, which is the area where the Santa was going to. The sandpicture depicts a kindergarten. There are teachers for every age group, and they are taking care of the children. The “first-place treasure” that was discovered by the most diligent child in session 6 appears. “There is a gigantic treasure and money. The teacher is playing the piano and singing at the same time. The song is magic. This song makes the magic key appear and you can open the magic,” said Cho. We see a sizzling sun figure on the right, and a rectangular matt to the left of the flower bush. This matt appeared often in Cho’s sandpictures, with its location changing bit by bit.

11. Session 15: Sandpicture 11

In session 15, Cho first put in a school figure on the left side of the tray and then

Figure 11. Sandpicture 11

brought a young couple kissing next to a windmill in the right near corner. "My sister Sue went to kindergarten today and they're having a graduation. I made this imagining what her kindergarten would look like. And there's my kindergarten, too," said Cho. She placed a sizzling sun figure next to the school and then later moved it to the right side of the tray. "This is the sun, and this place is the kindergarten my sister used to go when she was a baby. How can I make this into a round shape?" Then Cho added, "I have a good idea. I can make it in a way when my sister eats! This is the kindergarten cafeteria. Children eat their meals in here. There are these stuffs (pointing at the beds) in this school. The sun shines on the children. Sue! This is my sister (looking at the babies), and there are three teachers. These are the baby teachers (left rear), older children teachers (right near), and mom and dad teachers (right rear). They're here because the babies might get hurt!"

In the left near corner is a chef working in the kitchen. Next to it are treasure chests. "If you put the three together, it becomes something huge. There's a heart inside a chest. That heart needs a crown!" Cho put jewels inside the hexagonal treasure chest on the left, and a butterfly fairy in the one on the right. "Treasures are usually something precious. When the fairies transform, their clothes change and they turn into heroes. Even a hundred of them can transform." Cho placed a big, round crystal ball under the flower bush at the center, called it a "precious treasure" and said there is money inside. "The teachers have the key. When the teachers play the piano and sing, the song makes the magic key appear and you can open the magic with that key." The beds in this tray are the ones used in session 2.

Children on the beds are being cared for by the teachers. Cho hummed the entire time while creating this sandpicture. She carefully placed food figure on the plates, put them on the cart and said the teachers will spoon feed the children because they are still babies. Cho added that this is her sister Sue when she was "zero-year old" and laughed.

12. Session 16: Sandpicture 12

The yellow rectangular matt used often in Cho's sandpictures appears again in session 16. This time, it is at the center of the tray and two people who look like a mother and her child are sitting on it. After moving from place to place in different sandpictures, the matt is now finally at the center. In the left half of the tray are people looking at or buying clothes. There is another mother-child figure in the right near corner. Cho explained people who sell clothes can take a rest on the bed at the center. Kalff (2003) said healing and transformation can take place at the mother-child unity stage. Neumann (2002) also said healing can occur in the mother area and thus things can become anew.

March came around and Cho's mother expressed her concerns over the new school semester. But Cho replied, "I can just make friends," as if it is no big deal. As a matter of fact, Cho began to say hello to other people first in outer life. She used to avoid others and did not make any responses when being greeted, but now she could naturally joke around and smile with them. Even in the therapy room, Cho would actively seek for help when not being

Figure 12. Sandpicture 12

able to reach figures that are placed high on the shelf. She could communicate with the therapist comfortably, showing no signs of anxiety. And she no longer hesitated. She did not rush herself but looked relaxed, humming and telling her stories first. "Today's the day when the prince and the princess marry. I need a prince! Prince, prince, prince." She brought a prince figure, put a cape around it, and shouted, "Cape!"

13. Session 17: Sandpicture 13

In session 17, Cho talks about a story of birth. The woman of the couple in the left half of the tray is pregnant. A small child figure next to them is the child in the woman's belly. There is also a large egg next to them. At the center and in the rear area of the left half are food and large traditional cooking pots. The pair of cooking pots look like breasts being embraced by the arms. Inside the center pot are a corn and green vegetables. There is also a basket in front of the couple. Just like vessels, baskets symbolize the containing function of the mother. Apples and other foods are not on the ground but on a table and a cart. The right half of the tray also tells a story of marriage and birth. The king and the doctor will soon become married. Together with the king, the doctor goes to the clothing store at the rear center, buys a clothes, gets married and gives birth to a child. Sometimes the child gets hurt while fooling around but nevertheless is cared for by the king and queen. The two couples on left and right are both giving birth to a "new baby." Around this time, Cho's

Figure 13. Sandpicture 13

mother reported that she observed significant changes in Cho, especially the way she clearly expressed her opinions.

14. Session 18: Sandpicture 14

There is plenty of food for the entire family to eat in Figure 14. Eating food together can be related to the functions of restraining oneself with a social conduct or using tools. Sharing food is a fundamental bonding ritual in which we affirm our common identity as members of a family or group (Jackson, 1996). To the left of the table with food is a fairy giving her blessing. Her magic wand is pointed to the diagonal opposite where there are the table, well, waterfall, slide and piano. The older brother and the younger sibling are playing in the water park. The water park later turns into a place for practicing the piano, and the two siblings have fun playing the piano. Then the mother calls them to come and eat, and the entire family sit down together to have a meal. Cho invested a lot of time and effort to prepare the food on the table. We can see that the right side of the tray is connected to outside. As a matter of fact, Cho took three months off from sandplay therapy after this session, and she experienced no difficulties in adapting to the environment at her new kindergarten.

Two more sessions were conducted after this, and Cho's sandplay process terminated with a total of twenty sessions. Three months after the termination, the mother told the

Figure 14. Sandpicture 14

Figure 15. Source: "Aberdeen Bestiary." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aberdeen_Bestiary

therapist, "I thought she was originally a calm, quiet child, but these days she even behaves like a boy." The different Cho reminded the therapist of a phoenix.

IV. Conclusion

Through her sandplay process, Cho went on a psychological journey and descended deep into her unconscious. Cho's first sandpicture gave an overall summary of the journey she would have to embark on, and her second picture elaborated the difficulties she faced in reality. From session 7 to 11, Cho gradually freed herself from a state of repression. In session 12, she dived into a deeper realm of the psyche. She engaged in a detailed constructive work in session 13, and finally met long-awaited Santa Claus in session 14. We saw centralization taking place in session 15, the appearance of the mother-child relationship in session 16, a new birth in session 17, and a family meal in session 18. The later sandpictures showed Cho's adaptation to outer reality. Before sandplay, Cho's anxiety was manifested in the form of tension and freezing. But once her unconscious came to surface, the problematic symptoms disappeared and she began to adapt well to outer reality.

Family issues that Cho was not even aware of were also dealt with through sandplay therapy. This case is an example showing that even repressed family unconscious can be

revealed through the symbols in sandplay and undergo healing (Jung, 1981; Wickes, 1977; Copper, 1978/2014; Kalff, 2003; Wenirib, 2004; Furth, 2002; Homeyer & Sweeney, 2011). Cho's sandplay process was mostly about the story of her family, including problems of her parents. By dealing with these problems, Cho developed new aspects in her. Near the end of the therapy, Cho's grandparents apologized to Cho's parents for reconciliation, and Cho's parents had the opportunity to look into their own issues. Though still young, Cho gained the power to separate herself from her parents' issues and endure difficulties.

Cho's sandplay process involved drinking the spring water, getting help from the phoenix, obtaining the lotus flower and discovering the treasure. She built a house suitable for her and was aided by the fairies and Santa Claus so safely as to conclude her psychological journey. The unconscious contains the energy of life (von Franz, 1997) and because Cho communicated with her inner world, it was possible for her to be "born anew" and undergo a psychological transformation. In other words, her feelings of alienation and anxiety died and instead the power and courage to express herself and confront her environment were created. Archetypal images in fairy tales and mythologies are in the deepest layer of the psyche (von Franz, 1997) and so do images in sandplay therapy. Archetypal stories, in which the ego experiencing darkness and depression dies and the conscious is extended in the psyche, can be the process of alchemical transformation just as the phoenix in ancient mythologies rise from the ashes, or darkness, toward light (Marks, 2013).

This case illustrated that the child of the family shares the unconscious of the family - i.e., the collective unconscious - and thus knows about family issues even when not mentioned verbally by the parents. The case also informed us that not only the child has to undergo an individuation process suitable for her age but also the parents. Furthermore, Cho's sandplay process elaborately depicted not only Cho's psychological works but also her parents' problems. The collective unconscious made us realize that it is a much deeper and broader realm. Just as Kalff (2003) testified, sandplay therapy is a powerful medium that functions as a bridge for psychological transformation.

This research would like to make the following suggestion: Further studies involving cases in which the child shares the problem of the family ought to be conducted in a more

comprehensive manner in the future. It would also be important for cases with other themes to closely observe the psychological transformation that occurs within the sandplay process. This research raised the possibility of finding ways to deal with problems of the family or individual family members through the sandplay process of a child. Hopefully, its findings will contribute to expanding the use of sandplay therapy in various areas.

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