

# Cultural Interbreeding between Korean Shamanism and Imported Religions

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## Introduction

Korea has undergone so much transformation under modernization and industrialization to an extent that tourists visiting from anywhere in the world will not feel inconvenienced for lack of modern facilities. In this modern day and age, it is not easy for foreigners to meet shamans or see shamanistic rituals, even if they try to. The same thing can even be said of educated Koreans. In contrast, shamanists or those attached to shamanism hear shamans perform their rituals anytime and anyplace. There are an estimated 0.2 million shamans in Korea, though the statistics differ according to the researchers' survey methods. This number surpasses that of all priests of any other established religions. These shamans take their position at the base or margins of Korean society, not readily visible from the surface.

Korean shamanism as a form of belief existed since the beginning of Korean history. It has enjoyed uninterrupted history until today, which demonstrates the unique characteristics of Korean shamanism and culture. Comparisons among shamanism of various regions in Northeast Asia exemplify its uniqueness more clearly. Ancient Chinese shamanism was absorbed into Taoism around the third century A.D., and its Japanese counterpart mingled with Buddhism to develop into Shintoism. Korean shamanism, on the other hand, did not lose its identity despite the nation's adoption of Buddhism and Taoism.

However, shamanism did not always enjoy a positive social position in Korean history. During the period from the Ko-choson era to the Three Kingdoms era (circa 400–500 A.D.), shamans were in a formidable position as the so-called priest-kings. Around the middle of the Three States era, with the formation of an ancient state based on iron culture, royal authority was reinforced. The roles of priests and kings were specialized, and new political ideology necessitated the official adoption of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, which had been introduced from China. Thus the shamans' roles were reduced to those who obeyed and served kings. And shamanism was placed in a situation where it coexisted with or rivaled other imported religions.

The era of Silla Dynasty (668–935 A.D.) saw shamanism in coexistence with various religions. The most prosperous religion was, among others, Buddhism, which replaced shamanism in all its old components. In the meantime, shamanism expanded its religious system by accepting the gods and ceremonies of Buddhism. In the following Koryo era (918–1392 A.D.) its coexistence with the multiple religions continued, with Buddhism having the upper hand. But towards the end of the era, Buddhism caused more and more

political and economic problems in proportion to its increasing heft, which made civil officials who were adhering to Neo-Confucian ideology move to relegate Buddhism.

Choson Dynasty (1392–1910 A.D.) made Confucianism its political ideology. As a result, shamanism and Buddhism became objects of severe oppression; shamans and monks were treated as outcasts. This did not imply that shamanism was simply pushed to the margins of society. Only men of the ruling class under Confucian patriarchy considered shamanism to be demonistic or superstitious, and enforced its repression. Women and lower class people, not to mention the royal family, all resorted to and believed in shamanism. Shamanism in its long history as the belief of tradition was deeply embedded in Korean society.

The persecution of shamanism did not fade even during the period of Japanese rule (1910–1945 A.D.). Japan, which recognized shamanism as the base of Korean religion and culture and the driving force of Koreans' energy, attempted to demolish it, only to fail. Then they shifted their policy toward distorting shamanism as a superstition and tried to control shamans. One example of this attempt is their enshrining Amaterasu-O-mikami of Japanese Shintoism at the center of shamans' private shrines. After liberation, the suppression of shamanism took on a different form. With the increasing spread of the so-called Western rationalism and Christian view of value in Korean society, shamanism was stigmatized as a superstition through school education which reduced it to a barrier to modernity that must be broken down. A typical case in point: during the New Village Movement under the regime of the late President Park, Jung-Hee, local shamanistic shrines were destroyed in a great number of places.

Shamanism, which coexisted with imported religions until the Koryo era, persisted steadily at the base and margins of society despite 600 years of ill treatment and persecution in Choson Dynasty. The élite and imported religions still treat it as a shameful, negative religious phenomenon, or folk custom. But the government recognized eight shamanistic rituals of provinces as important cultural heritages and designated them as important intangible cultural assets, as part of an effort to preserve shamanism for future generations to inherit. These two different attitudes clearly demonstrate Korean shamanism as not only a marginal religion but also a basal one.

### The Imaginal Realm of Korean Shamanism

Two good examples of the imaginal realm of Korean shamanism are arguably the myths of Tan-gun and Pari-kongju ('abandoned princess'). The former, the myth for the foundation of Korea, contains the prototype of Korean shamanism, and the latter reflects on thoughts concerning the otherworld.

The plot of the *Tan-gun* myth goes as follows: Hwan-in, the god of heaven, found that Hwan-ung, son of a concubine, was desirous of the human world and sent him down to the earth. Then Hwan-ung descended under Sindansu ('sacred altar tree') at the top of Mt. T'aebaek, leading a group of gods including P'ungbaek ('wind god'), Usa ('rain god') and Unsa ('cloud god') to establish Sinsi ('city of god') there. Meanwhile a bear and a tiger, which lived in a cave, always prayed to him that they might become human. *Hwan-ung* gave them mugworts and garlic, and told them not to expose themselves to the sun for 100 days while they eat only the two plants. The bear, who did as he had been told to,

turned into a woman after 21 days. Ungnyo ('bear-turned woman') prayed under the *Sindansu* every day that she might get married and have a baby. *Hwan-ung* answered her prayer by transforming himself into a man and marrying her. A son was born to them and named Tan-gun-wanggom. Tan-gun founded and governed a country. Later, he retired into Mt. Asadal and became a mountain god.

In this myth, *Sindansu*, the place where a god descended from the heaven, is the central axis connecting heaven and earth, and the cosmic tree as M. Eliade grasped with keen insight. The place where *Ungnyo*, the animal-turned woman, prayed for marriage and pregnancy is also the tree. The transformation process of *Ungnyo* shows the typical structure and symbolism of Naeringut ('initiation ritual'). The ordeal in the cave, symbolic of death, is Sinbyŏng ('possession sickness of a future shaman'), or a rite of passage. The prayer under *Sindansu* after the passage represents the process of initiation, where she takes *Hwan-ung* as her Momjusin ('body-governing god'). *Ungnyo* accordingly symbolizes a shaman.

The character of *Hwan-ung* requires notice. He appears as a son by a concubine of *Hwan-in*, labeled as the God of the Korean nation. His descent from heaven to the human world should be interpreted as an 'abandonment'. Being abandoned is symbolic of death. Here lies the mythic principle of initiation that creates rebirth from death. The divinity of *Hwan-ung* shows that the gods of Korean shamanism are those who 'condescended to after being abandoned'.

On the other hand, *Ungnyo* reveals how Korean shamanism recognizes human beings: it grasps man as beings who are animal incarnations. Through an ordeal and the suffering of death, humans proceed to become shamans who have some connections with gods. Between the abandoned heavenly god and *Ungnyo Tan-gun* is born. He is at once son of heaven and the national father of the Korean race, who after founding and governing a country becomes a mountain god. Here the mountain is the place that reaches the heaven through the cosmic tree. Since *Tan-gun's* retirement, Korean shamanism has believed that the mountain is where the ancestors bestowed with the authority to give Song ('family name') and Pon ('place of origin for a lineage') return and are buried in Ponhyang ('ancestral home'). And that the ancestors are the *Ponhyang* mountain gods.

The source of this myth of *Tan-gun* is the chapter of Ko-chosŏn in *Samguk-yusa* compiled by the monk Iryon (1208–1289 A.D.). Its survival up to the present is attributed to his efforts in compiling what were handed down in records from ancient times. Iryon writes in the historical book that another name of *Hwan-in* is Chesŏn (skr. Indra, chin. Dishì), an evidence that Korean Buddhism identifies *Hwan-in*, the heaven's god of Korean shamanism, with Chesok-ch'on (skr. Sakra devanan Indra), the guardian god of Buddhism, who lives at Tori-ch'on (chin. Daolitian) on top of Mt. Sumi (chin. Xumishan: Mt. Sumer).

The myth of Princess Pari, recited at a part of *Mangja-ch'ondogut* (a shamanistic ritual for the dead), is typical of a shaman epic of the otherworld. A rough synopsis of the story is as follows. A king marries but begets only daughters in succession, until a seventh was also a girl. Angered, he gave an order that the baby should be abandoned. Princess Pari was thrown away in a box made of jade. An old woman and an old man took pity on her and rescued her. They raised her to become a lady. Years later, the king and the queen fell victim to a fatal disease due to the guilt of having abandoned their youngest princess. They consulted a fortuneteller, who said that medicines had to be sought and brought from the otherworld. A favor was asked of the other six princesses, but all of them

refused with excuses. So there was no choice but to ask Princess Pari. The princess, who recognized that she owed her existence in this world to her parents, willingly accepted the request and set out for the cure. The princess overcame every ordeal in the world beyond with the help of Sinson (a Taoist hermit with supernatural powers) and Sip-taewang ('ten kings'), until she met Mujangsung (a Taoist supernatural being). She secured the medicines by bearing him seven sons before she left for this world with all her family. On her way out, she came across a funeral bier containing her dead parents, and brought them back to life using flowers and medicinal water. Princess Pari volunteered to be a shaman to lead the dead to the heaven.

The whole structure of this myth shows the initiation of Princess Pari. The preconditions of her becoming a shaman are death and ordeals. Her visit to the otherworld for the medicine means no other than death. The princess, who is reborn having gone through both, and is given the power to restore the dead to life, and thereby to resurrect her deceased parents, is reminiscent of the ceremonial of initiations. With this official exercise of the authority of resurrection, she is socially recognized as a medium to lead the dead to the otherworld. She is considered the ancestor of shamans by shamans and shamanists in Korea.

In every part of *Mangja-ch'ondogut*, the aria 'Be reborn in Paradise' is sung. Most of the resurrecting medicines in the aria are flowers: Ppyo-sari ('bone-restoring') flower, Sal-sari ('flesh-restoring') flower and Sum-sari ('breath-restoring') flower. Flowers are symbolic of birth and rebirth in Korean shamanism. Buddha, the Ten Kings and the hell of Buddhism, and the supernatural beings of Taoism, make their appearances in the myth of Princess Pari in the section of the otherworld, but they are just auxiliary roles or backgrounds. Much of the description in the myth dwells on the carpet of flowers spread over Korean mountains and fields. Princess Pari resurrects the spirits of the dead by bringing the flowers of rebirth from the flower carpet of Korean *Ponhyang* ('ancestral hometown'). Koreans believe the spirits are born in the carpet, and that they live together with descendents. This is one of the reasons why the Koreans still have *Mangja-ch'ondogut* performed today: they like to sing songs of flowers and the epic of Princess Pari offers plenty of that as sung by shamans.

## The Encounter of Shamanism and Buddhism

Historians generally attribute the introduction of Buddhism into Korea to the reign of King Sosurim of Koguryo Kingdom (372 A.D.), when Sundo (chin. *Shundao*) from Qianqin brought in Buddhist statues and scriptures. Twelve years later, Paekje Kingdom adopted the religion, preached by Marananta (chin. *Maluonanta*) from Dongjin in the reign of King Ch'imryu. Buddhism was introduced into Silla much later in the first half of the fifth century, when Ado entered the state via Koguryo with the religion. But the promulgation of Buddhism did not go beyond individual missionary work. It was not until a century later, the 22nd year of King Pophung (627 A.D.) that Buddhism was officially recognized with the martyrdom of Yich'adon.

Ironically, it was Silla, who witnessed Buddhism's prosperity and development the most who was the last to adopt Buddhism. Silla, as such, unified the three states. The Buddhism of Silla has since been the basis for Korean Buddhism. Sillanians' early view of

Buddhism is an important topic directly linked with the character of Sillanian Buddhism. Silla-bulgukt'o-sol (the theory that Silla is basically a land of Buddha) demonstrates their thoughts about Buddhism.

The Ado-kira chapter of *Samguk-yusa* has it that Ado's mother told him the following story: Kyongju, the capital of Silla, had seven temple sites, all of which were those of the past-Buddha, or pre-Buddha era. She said that it was a land where Buddhism would prosper long. As predicted, as many temples were found one after another, and three treasures of Silla appeared: King Chinp'yong's Ch'onsa-ogdae (a jade belt granted by the heaven), Hwangryong Temple's Chang-yuk-chonsang (sacred images of Buddha) and at the same temple a nine-storied pagoda. In the year of his accession to the throne, King Chinp'yong visited Nae-chesok Palace. Then an angel of the heaven granted him a jade belt, saying that he was doing as the ex-emperor had told him.

*Samguk-yusa* relates the following story about the second treasure: King Ayuk (Ashoka) of India tried to cast the sacred images of Buddha only to fail miserably. And the results were the same in many other countries including southern India and China. So he loaded a ship with gold and silver and models of three sacred images, and set it afloat on the sea, praying that it might arrive in a country with predestination. The ship reached Silla, where the metals were successfully cast into the images.

Later the monk Chajang, who studied abroad in China, visited Mt. Odae (chin. *Wutaishan*) and heard from Manjusri Bodhisattva how significant the construction of the images had been: *Hwangryong* Temple is originally the place where Sākya Buddha and Kāśyapa Buddha gave a lecture, and it still has the stones on which they sat. The ship set afloat with metals including gold loaded by King Ayuk of *Ch'onch'uk* (India) reached Silla over 1,300 years later, and at last a gilt-bronze image of Buddha was made and enshrined in the temple. It is because predestination exists between *Hwangryong* Temple and Buddha.

Before he came back home from *Tang*, Chajang was told by a supernatural being that all the countries would yield to Silla if he built a nine-storied pagoda. The pagoda was constructed under instructions from Empress Sondok who had accepted his suggestion, and Chinsin-sari (skr. *Sarira*: 'Buddha's bones') which *Manjusri Bodhisattva* had given him was enshrined there.

The theory of *Silla-bulgukt'o* sets up *Tori-ch'on* (skr. *Trāyastriṃśa*) at Mt. Nang in Kyongju. Empress Sondok asked her subjects to bury her at the southern part of the mountain, *Tori-ch'on*, with the prediction of the date of her death. Ten years later, the Empress was buried there. *Sach'onwang* ('the four heavenly kings') Temple was built below her tomb. *Tori-ch'on* lies above *Sach'onwang-ch'on*. According to Buddhism's cosmology, it turns out that her tomb located in *Tori-ch'on* is upheld by the four heavenly kings.

Historians prefer to interpret Buddhism as a method to reinforce the royal power in relation to the domestic and foreign political situation of Silla at that time. Silla was under threats of invasion from both *Koguryo* and *Paekje*. Therefore, they had to domestically strengthen the unstable royal authority and somehow encourage the people who felt restless. To answer such a situation, historians argue that Silla judged the establishment of religion to be a clever scheme to solve all the problems.

The views of those historians who keep an eye mainly on the political crisis and the solution process seem too narrow and secular. It seems that they regard religion as just an ideology and underestimate the intelligence of the average citizens. They show disregard for the tradition of a religious and cultural basis for Silla's Buddhism as distinguished

from other states. Silla's world of religious, cultural imagination is not appreciated at all, nor the foundation on which Silla adopted Buddhism, let alone the contextual understanding of religion and culture.

Kirim Temple with its majestic history stands on Mt. Hamwol, Hoam-ri, Yangbukmyon, Kyongju. It was built during Empress Sondok's 13th reign year. This temple has a legend, which an old chronicle recorded. The story goes as follows:

Kwang-yu the sacred of Imjong Temple in Pomma (Brahma) Country works on the maintenance of a flower garden, leading 500 disciples. The sacred, who has heard that Great King Sarasu of Soch'on Country is benevolent and likes to give alms, dispatches Sng-yol Brahman, one of his disciples, to seek those who will support the temple in the maintenance. Hereupon, the king picks up eight royal concubines and sends them. The sacred sends the Brahman again to Soch'on Country with a message telling the king to participate in the job himself so that he can accumulate virtue. He hesitates. Queen Wongwang tells the hesitating king that she will join him, and so three people leave for Imjong Temple.

The queen, who is pregnant, becomes sick on the way and is forced to give up her journey. After consulting her husband, she lets herself and the unborn baby be sold as domestics to Elder Chahyon. The king, who orders the baby to be named Allagguk if it is a boy, leaves her behind and sets out again on his way to the temple with Brahman. Meanwhile, the Elder Chahyon punishes Won-gwang when the queen refuses to sleep with him. And her son is not spared from his wrath, but he overcomes them with the help of heavenly beings. When Allagguk reaches adulthood, he presses his mother about the identity of his true father. He eventually flees in search of him but is caught by a servant of Elder Chahyon. In his second attempt at escape he reaches a river, but crosses it by the grace of heaven and sets out on finding Imjong Temple.

When he finally meets his father they weep aloud. Allagguk requests an audience with the sacred. He tells him that his mother has been killed by Chahyön and asks that she be brought back to life. The sacred gives him five flowers – Hyolgi ('blood'), Kolgi ('bone'), P'iyuk ('skin and flesh'), Myongjon ('life') and Nüng'on ('speech') as elements for her resuscitation. Allagguk, with directions and flowers from the sacred, recovers all the bones of his mother after much difficulty and resurrects her with the flowers. Then Amita Buddha and Bodhisattvas of all the heavens descend to Imjong Temple aboard a dragon vessel and rejoice together with numerous sacred. And it transpires that Kwang-yu is Sākya Buddha, Wön-gwang Avalokiteśvara, Allagguk Mahāsthama, and the eight royal concubines the eight Bodhisattvas.

In another old chronicle of the temple, the name Wönang is used instead of Won-gwang. The chronicle also writes that Great King Sarasu was originally Amita Buddha, with an explanation that Kirim Temple was built on the site of the former Imjōng Temple. In this respect, the Imjong Temple of Kwang-yu the sacred lies in the land of Silla and it is the place where Sākya Buddha once resided. And Great King Sarasu of Sōch'ön Country, the incarnation of Amita, comes to Silla under instructions from the sacred. The theory of Silla-bulgukt'o works well so far.

However, removing all the proper nouns from this myth reveals the central structure of the story related to the flower garden in the imaginary realm (otherworld) and it is in this realm that the dead gain rebirth using the flowers. The imagination of the flower garden of life or the repair or maintenance of the garden cannot be found in Buddhism. It

is no other than the world of shamanism, whose creativity had already been confirmed through the myth of Princess Pari, that bears the same structure as that of *Allagguk*. The belief of *Bulgukto* is based on the imaginal world of the flower garden rooted in Korean shamanism.

Shamanism as a faith took hold of Silla's imagination before the emergence of Buddhism. It was onto the foundation of Shamanism that Buddhism was engrafted. For the people of Silla, the Buddhist realm did not differ greatly from that of shamanism. This perspective allowed Korean shamanism to accept the gods of Buddhism as part of its own, and which led the people to worship them as such even to this day. The Buddhist gods are enshrined in many shamanistic shrines. Bearing witness to this amalgamation, Ch'onsin ('the god of the heaven') in shamanism is enshrined under the name of Chesok or *Pulsa*, meaning Buddha.

The legend of *Kirim* Temple demonstrates Silla's acceptance of Buddhism by the imaginal world of Korean shamanism. Symbols of Korean Buddhism have since been installed inside temples and shrines for the gods of Korean shamanism, such as Sansin-gak ('shrine for mountain god') and Samsong-gak ('shrine for three sacred gods'). Buddhists enjoy visiting these shrines and offering prayers. As related above, Korean shamanism and Buddhism coexisted with some mutual influences, but on the whole the two religions have enjoyed a peaceful relationship since they met. That is why this section is titled 'encounter'.

The imaginative tales of early Buddhism gradually changed with time. As Chongt'o-sinang ('the belief of pureland') begins to spread widely, there were alterations to the story of *Allagguk*. Such as that Great King Sarasu goes west to *Soch'on* Country to meet Buddha. The direction of east in the original tale was inverted to the west of Silla. Other shifts were *Allagguk* after restoring his mother to life leaving for Kugnak-chongt'o ('paradise pureland') led by Sasib-pal ('forty eight') dragon vessel symbolizing the forty eight vows of *Amita Buddha*. As Buddhism was politically systematized as a religion of guarding-fatherland during the eras of Silla and Koryo, the imaginal world of Buddhism assumed a new phase. Among Buddhists who practiced privately these shifts remained dogmatic, but to society at large Buddhism as a state religion guarding the fatherland prevailed.

The Buddhist imagination, including the myth of the flower garden and rebirth, however, never became extinct. There is a possibility that the story of Prince Allagguk was published in the era of Koryo. Other subsequent documents with the same myth which were published and circulated are *Allagguk-taeja-kyong*, 'the sutra', and *Allagguk-chön*, 'the old novel'. The legend was also handed down in the form of shaman epics like *Agyangguk-wangja-norae* and *Igong-ponp'uri* which are still recited at shamanistic rituals in *Cheju* Island today. This shows the paths by which the imaginal world of Korean shamanism and Buddhism sustained their strong life in the substrata of society.

## Taoism and Korean Shamanism

Given the active interchange between the Three States (Silla, Paekje and Koguryo) and China, one can easily assume that philosophical and religious Taoism reached Korea about the middle of the era of the Three States. Records indicate the formal introduction of Taoism took place at the end of the era of Koguryo State. In the reign of King Yongryu

of Koguryo (624 A.D.), Emperor Gaozhi of *Tang* sent a Taoist with Ch'onjon-sang ('statue of the heavenly high') and had him teach *Taodejing* ('scripture of Taoism'). Later in the reign of King Pojang (643 A.D.), eight Taoists and *Taodejing* were imported from *Tang* at the instance of Yŏn, Kaesomun who held real power. The king had Buddhist temples changed into Taoist ones, and had the Taoists perform *Chaech'o* ('Taoist ritual') for the country. With the fall of Koguryo, Taoism – which had a prevalent following in the royal family and the people – met its doom.

There is no record indicating that Taoism was performed as a national event in the era of Silla State's *Chaech'o*. Then with the beginning of Koryo Dynasty, Taoist rituals for keeping off calamities and summoning blessings were frequently performed. It is thought that at the beginning of Koryo Dynasty, many people of Palhae (chin. Bohai), who constituted a foundation for Koguryo, brought Taoism with them when they moved to Koryo after the fall of their country. In the time of King Yejong, Pogwŏn-kung, a Taoist temple, was built and various Taoist events were held there. Over ten Taoist priests were stationed at the temple, but they were so undutiful that they worked only during the day and retired to their private rooms at night.

Much smaller than the institutional practice in Koryo, the Taoism inherited in early Choson Dynasty generally centered on the royal house. The government set up *Sogyogso*, enshrined many Taoist gods including Oghwang-sangje (chin. *Yuhuangshangdi*: the highest of the heavenly gods of Taoism) at altars, and had various *Chaech'o* performed for the country and the royal family. However, during the reign of King Chungjong (1518 A.D.) *Sogyogso* was closed down following Confucian officials' relentlessly violent opposition.

Korean Taoism of early Choson Dynasty was scaled down to mainly carrying out rituals for the royal house without forming a religious order. The royal house, which had Confucian or Buddhist rituals performed with shamanism as their basis, reserved the services of Taoism to be performed as needs rose. For example, when the drought was severe or something bad happened to the royal family, kings had Buddhists, Taoists and shamans perform their individual rituals. Korean Taoism had such a limited and weak position that it did not much influence Korean shamanism. It did not go further than some Taoist gods like Oghwang-ch'onjon ('the Supreme Being of the Heaven') or Ch'ilsong ('the Big Dipper') being adopted by shamanism. Korean shamanism identifies *Ch'onjon* with *Ch'onsin*, or Hanonim ('the God').

The belief of Kwansong-chegun (chi. *Guanseng-dijun*) of Taoism, imported from China during the Japanese invasion (1592–1598 A.D.) in the middle of Choson Dynasty, had a greater influence on Korean shamanism as opposed to its predecessor. The soldiers of Ming who had been sent to help Choson during the war transported the belief of Kwanje (chin. *Guandi*), the formidable god of Taoism, as the Chinese generals believed that they would recover from serious injuries and win the war by the grace of *Kwanje*. With the spread of such a belief, many people, including the women of Confucian families, scrambled to worship him.

So the first Nam-kwanwangmyo ('southern shrine for King *Kwan*') was built south of Hanyang in 1598. It was followed by Tong-kwanwangmyo ('eastern shrine for King *Kwan*') established in 1602 by royal order, followed by the construction of Kwanwangmyo in the vicinity of Hanyang and in other locations nationwide. As the worship of *Kwanje* spread, the shamans who enshrined him as their *Momju* ('body-governing') god began to gradually increase in number. In late Choson Dynasty, these shamans established themselves as



*Chonnae*, a class comparatively high in rank in the shaman society, in the capital and Kyonggi province. To please the gods concerned with *Kwanje*, they made a special section of a ritual designed with *Kwanje* as the central figure. This easy adoption of Chinese Taoism was due to Korean shamanism's wide scope that enabled it to embrace various religions without difficulty. Korean shamanism did not limit its realm of worship only to native gods as ancestors of Koreans; it graciously looked to foreign gods as beings who had helped Korea during wars. This natural assimilation of Taoism into Korean shamanism explains the lack of special organization of the Korean order of Chinese Taoism, despite the fact that the two religions have maintained a long and intimate relationship in Korean history.

### The so-called Shamanization in Korean Christianity

The Korean Catholic Church boasts that it was founded in 1784 by Koreans themselves, not by missionaries. A century later, the first Protestant church appeared in Korea. It is often repeated that Christianity was not so positively received in countries other than Europe, and that native societies suffered from enormous culture shocks and conflicts in the course of missionary work. In contrast, many Koreans appreciated and viewed the import of Christianity positively and expressed thanks for God's blessing as the work of redemption.

Korean Christianity has since made great strides, and the census conducted in November 1985 found that there were 6,480,900 Protestant and 1,860,500 Catholics. Composing 37.7 per cent and 10.8 per cent respectively of the total religious population in Korea. Especially in 1970s, as the movement of the Holy Spirit mushroomed, Korean Protestant churches greatly increased in number and became bigger in size, which in turn brought about a larger Protestant population. Among others, *Sunbogum-chung'ang-kyohoe* ('Pure Gospel Central Church') has grown to be the largest single church in the world.

In relation to this phenomenon, the academic and journalistic world voiced concern about the shamanization of Korean Christianity. It was the Holy Spirit movement of the Protestant Church that they particularly questioned. They pointed to the frequent revival service, prayer meetings at dawn, all-night prayer meetings, enthusiastic services that often resulted in cries and shouts. Other points they made were the churches' claim to healing power and glossolalia, and their leaning towards materialism and the worship of wealth. My survey has shown that those who take notice of these problems are mostly Protestants or protestantism-disposed scholars, and that they hold a prejudiced, deeply narrow and insufficient understanding of Korean shamanism.

Strictly speaking, this subject must be approached from the angle of acculturation. The introduction of Christianity into Korea signifies a contact between two very different societies and cultures. With contact, each makes a selective adoption of the cultural factors befitting the purposes and living conditions of the other, which may call for many kinds of changes for both sides. When Christianity was introduced into Korea in late Choson Dynasty, there were various religions: Confucianism was the mainstream religion with both Buddhism and shamanism in the fringes. Therefore, the religious culture of Korea with which Christianity came into contact in the course of its assimilation was not limited to shamanism.

It was only after several attempts at suppression by the Confucian government that the Catholic and Protestant Churches took their roots in Korea. Then they gradually grew with the support of European and American Western-style modernization, which resulted in their current ranking with Confucianism and Buddhism as established religions. Today, only a few Korean Christians have been converted from shamanism. It is awfully biased and wrong that shamanism is held directly responsible for the deviation of Korean Christianity. Such phenomena stem from Koreans' way of thinking and religious mindset formed from the shamanic culture in its long history.

Koreans were afflicted by the antagonism between ideologies after the liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, followed by the fratricide of the Korean War (1950–1953) that led to the division of Korea into South and North. This tragic history continued into period of dictatorial and military regimes. And at the same time Korea saw rapid industrialization and Westernization. These confusing social changes forced Koreans to turn to religion for direction, and gave a violent manifestation to their religious mind that had been formed on the shamanistic religious tradition.

The Catholic Church faced a relatively small resistance from Korean shamanism compared with the Protestant Church. Catholicism's greater success in contextualizing itself in Korean society was based on its longer missionary experience and efforts in East Asia compared to the latter. On the contrary, the Protestant Church was antagonistically aggressive towards Korean shamanism from its initial beginning by stigmatizing it as superstition or the worship of ghosts, and cried out for its eradication. Protestants pressured their family members to convert, spoke ill of shamans, destroyed their shrines and even tried to separate their *Momju* ('body-governing') gods from them by force.

Thus most shamans take a particularly negative, resistant attitude toward the Protestant Church. With the exception of some ministers or theologians, the Church on the whole deeply lacks any effort to contextualize. As seen in the discussion of the shamanization of Korean Christianity, it has been rooted firmly in this country, and believers have a religious mindset which is traced back to Korean shamanism. It makes me wonder if the Korean Protestant Church has no understanding of acculturation, or if they are endeavoring to deny it.

### **The situation and character of Korean Shamanism**

It is often said that religion in Korea is characterized by the coexistence of multi-religions. Since the era of Three States, the religions imported from China have coexisted with a native one and developed without much conflict or collision. Now, almost all the world's established religions and professed 'New Religions' are prevalent in Korea. The word 'disorder' rather than 'coexistence' may be a better description of the situation. This unique phenomenon is based on shamanism. But other religions don't recognize it as a religion; shamanism is always excepted from the government statistics.

It is not difficult to confirm the aspects of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism in the various rituals performed in Korean shamanism today. The rituals, which show complicated, elaborate structures compared with those of other religions, have splendid costumes, sacrificial tables, music, dances and shaman songs. It goes without saying that

those religions played a role in these developments. However, it is hard to find Christian elements in them.

No other imported religion was more influential than Buddhism. The religion had a remarkable influence on the adoption of gods and the formation of *Mangja-ch'ondogut* ('ritual for the dead'). Gods and symbols of Taoism were also introduced into shamanism in large number. As for Confucian elements, some sacrificial rituals were adopted. The imaginal realms of Buddhism and Taoism were far from being heterogeneous to Korean shamanism. Shamanism might be considered as an ancestor-worshipping religion. It made a formal adoption of some ancestral ritual of Confucianism which harmonized with the spirit of its own, although it was severely oppressed in Chosŏn Dynasty whose political ideology was Confucianism.

When a foreign religion encounters a native one in the course of landing in a new soil, it is influenced in two different ways: direct and indirect. Buddhism's adoption of gods and symbols from shamanism is classified into the category of direct influence. On the other hand, Confucianism and Christianity were indirectly colored by shamanism. Korean Christianity makes much of prayers and experiences and emphasizes fanatical services and the grace of healing and prophecy. Koreans have devoted Confucian ancestral worship, which is evidenced by 'Great racial migration' at *Solnal* (New Year's Day by the lunar calendar) and in *Ch'usok* (harvest festival on 15 August by the lunar calendar). It is considered that such a phenomenon was also the product of the indirect influence from shamanism, the foundation for the Korean religious mind. The indirect influence of shamanism on Confucianism and Christianity occurred when it was pushed around, persecuted and distorted by Protestants and Catholics.

Korean shamanism today is surely a marginal religion. At the same time *kut*, the shamanic ritual, though hidden, is performed in almost all parts of the country, at least thousands of places every day. *Kut* is a festival and a myth as well as a religious ritual, where Koreans meet and converse with gods and ancestors in possession and harmony. People play with them while drinking and dancing. This is the way myths which have lasted since the beginning of the Korean race are able to repeat themselves forever. The myth of flowers and rebirth is unfolded, and Koreans return to their ancestral hometown.

This shows the tenacity and strength of Korean shamanism and tells the greatness of its spiritual world. They all lead to a natural understanding of the source of Koreans' endurance to counter countless distresses and sufferings for such a long history.

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