

**LOOPING EFFECTS BETWEEN IMAGES AND REALITIES:
UNDERSTANDING THE PLURALITY OF KOREAN SHAMANISM**

by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to show the wide spectrum of Korean shamanism, not only by exploring a body of images of Korean shamanism that has been established on the level of academic discourse, but also by illustrating the practices of modern shamans and clients. I mean by the words “a wide spectrum of Korean shamanism” that there are multiple images and realities subsumed under the title of Korean shamanism.

Not only negatively associated concepts, such as “superstition,” “magic,” “primitive” and so on, but also positive images coexist on the contemporary spectrum of Korean shamanism. Those images do not remain limited to academia, but also shape the reality of Korean shamanism, having been appropriated by governmental policies as well as by shamans themselves. I call it “looping effects between images and realities” in Korean shamanism.

In order to show the looping effect in Korean shamanism, I first analyze the historical development of the shamanism-image which has been configured within official discourses in specific intellectual and social contexts. Various identifications and classifications of Korean shamanism are placed along the spectrum of Korean shamanism anchored by two extreme images, “the negative image” and “the positive one.” I will then show how those images of Korean shamanism affect Korean shamans’ identity-making process and even the reconfiguration of Korean shamanism itself. Here, academic discourses are perceived as one constituent of contemporary Korean shamanism.

As another factor in the formation of the plural realities of Korean shamanism, I suggest the dynamic relationship between shaman and client. For over one hundred years, Koreans have

experienced radical changes in the realms of spirituality and materiality. In accordance with these changes, many fundamental values, such as modern scientific rationalism and the religious worldview, have competed with each other. In this circumstance, Korean shamans try to enforce a shamanic worldview through ritual activities, and their ritual activities are reorganized according to their contemporary clients' various desires which reflect specific situations.

In conclusion, in this dissertation, I contend that all these feedback processes, between images and realities and between shaman and client, have constructed the plurality of Korean shamanism.

Preface

Chapter 4 contains some material collected during the field research for my M.A Thesis, “Mugyo ui Sinang Silcheon’gwa Ilsangseon (The Practices of Shamanistic Belief and Everydayness).” Sogang University, 2000.

Chapter 4 contains some material published in my article, “Gangsinmu Seseupmu Yuhyeongnon-e daehan Ilgochal (A Consideration of Typological Understanding of Spirit-possessed Shaman and Hereditary Shaman).” In *Han’guk Musok ui Gangsinmuwa Seseupmuui Yuhyeong Gubunui Munje* [An Issue of Typological Distinction between Spirit-possessed Shaman and Hereditary Shaman] edited by Han’guk Musokhakhoi, 99-100. Seoul: Misokwon, 2006.

Chapter 4 and 5 contain some ethnographic data collected mainly during my field research in Seoul and Incheon: May 2006 – January 2007, May 2008 – May 2010.

My field research for this dissertation was conducted with the approval of “Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Office of Research Service,” and the certificate number for that approval is H06-80057.

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Some Remarks on Motivations, Concepts, Data, and Plan

1.1. Motivations for this Study

I began to develop an interest in Korean shamanism in 1989, when the idea was pervasive among many young university students and intellectuals that Korean shamanism, as an indigenous Korean religion, is the core of Korean culture and national heritage. Scholars and many nationalist intellectuals who gave lectures on Korean shamanism agreed with that idea, and argued that the contemporary inferior status of, and prejudice toward, shamanism was the result of cultural toadyism. In this context, with few exceptions, most literature about Korean shamanism has sought to explain it in terms of its function of transmitting indigenous and authentic Korean traditional culture and religion, while trying to find its archetype.

Following this trend, I was attracted to Korean shamanism and it became the main subject of my studies since then. In addition, through many encounters with shamans, I have developed close relationships with them, which, because of their kind attitude, led me to develop a positive image of shamanism in my mind, and I fully expected that Korean shamanism would reappear at the forefront of Korean culture. However, some experiences which I had outside the context of academia encouraged me to rethink what it is that constitutes Korean shamanism, which became the basis of this dissertation. The following episodes include what I experienced at that time:

Episode 1. Neighborhood meeting

In 2005, I had an opportunity to accompany Dani to her neighborhood meeting, which was held in the apartment where she had lived for six years. In the meeting, representatives of nineteen families all participated, and many topics were discussed. When their discussion moved to the topic of the value of the apartments, one woman who hosted the meeting stated: “I want to talk about the price of this apartment. As you all know, the price of this apartment is lower than other apartments around here. Why? It is because a *mudang* lives in this building. A *gut* is sometimes performed in Unit 101 [Dani’s residence number] in this building, and therefore everybody who lives around this village knows that a *mudang* lives here. Who wants to live with a *mudang*? That is why the value of this apartment is lower than others. We need to talk about this subject!” As a response to her charges, Dani, angry at being insulted, stated that she had performed a *gut*, not in her house, but in a *gutdang* [a commercial shrine]. Although she performed a *gosa* [small-scale ritual] at home, she was careful not to make noise. Rather she argued that the noise of the piano from the lady’s house who criticized her was even louder than the noise from her own house. Regarding this issue, nobody, except for the two people involved, offered an opinion. At any rate, the discussion was finished with a conclusion that Dani would be more careful not to make any noise. After the meeting finished, Dani told me “it is so funny that everyone, except for that lady, who lived in the building had visited me to receive divination. Moreover, some families even sponsored me to perform a *gosa*. That’s why they stayed silent while we quarreled with each other....Anyway, living as a shaman is really hard!”

Episode 2. The Buddhist Monk Hwanghoo

In 2006, a Korean public television station broadcast a program entitled ‘Lay-believers reduced to begging and a Buddhist nun that got rich.’ The program reported in detail how many ex-adherents of the Buddhist nun, named Hwanghoo, were damaged by her fraud which the program stated were no different from “shamanic” acts. The program described the way the nun had lured the adherents to her temple with advertisements of miraculous healings, and made an issue of her career as a shaman before she became a Buddhist nun. The reporter stated that those who had searched for the nun were desperate and so were easily cheated by her incredulous claims—for example, it is said that the nun recommended very expensive rituals to her adherents saying that if they did not perform them, some of their family members would die. Her claim that she was a qualified Buddhist nun also gave her credibility. However, the Buddhist denomination which she said she belonged to denied that her practices were Buddhist, and one staff

member of the denomination even denied that she was a member of it. In order to examine the origin of those magical acts, the program focused on her former religious career as a shaman. According to this narrative frame, the logical conclusion is that those acts are attributed to her former shamanic career and are just extensions of her shamanic experiences. In other words, her shamanship continued under the cover of Buddhism. She was still a shaman in the guise of a Buddhist nun, although she did not declare herself to be a shaman anymore.

The negative attitude towards Korean shamanism which was expressed by the lady at the neighborhood meeting and on the TV program was so shocking that it forced me to rethink the reality of Korean shamanism. A host of questions arose in my mind. Why did the lady attribute the price drop of the apartment to Dani's living in the building? Why were the other participants silent even though they had sponsored Dani to perform rituals for them? Why were those acts, described in episode two, supposed to originate from shamanism despite the fact that there could be magical acts even in established religious traditions?¹ Lastly, why did the ex-shaman change her religious identity to a Buddhist nun? All these questions were provoked by the issue of the relationship between what I have learned from academic discourse and what I have experienced from people who are immersed in prejudice towards Korean shamanism. To put it another way, I came to ask: "have academic discourses on Korean shamanism been an in-house game, irrelevant to the actuality of Korean shamanism; otherwise, how are they related to the reconfiguration of Korean shamanism?" This thesis is designed to answer these questions.

Many theories have been suggested to explain negative attitudes towards Korean shamanism, such as the cultural politics influencing relations between indigenous shamanism and imported ruling ideologies such as Confucianism during the Joseon dynasty, Christianity,

¹ The sacrificial ritual, called *Gumyeongsisik* which literally means "offering food for saving a life" and which the Buddhist nun often performed for the adherents, is a kind of Buddhist practice.

and, in the modern era, Western rationalism. In the meantime, Kim Chong-ho (2003) attributed negative attitudes to “cultural contradiction between shamanism and public culture in the Korean cultural system,” criticizing earlier studies (I will explain Kim’s argument in more detail in chapter two). Whether negative attitudes towards Korean shamanism could be explained by the cultural politics between imported ruling ideologies and shamanism or by “cultural contradiction between shamanism and public culture in the Korean cultural system,” I would like to suggest, for the time being, that those explanations have affected the construction of the actuality of Korean shamanism.

If negative images of Korean shamanism, constructed by the cultural politics of a particular historical context, permeated into all Koreans and formed their attitudes towards it, then the positive image of it could also be explained within a specific Korean intellectual context: Korean nationalism and the counter-hegemonic movement over the last several decades. Since Korean shamanism appeared as a subject of academic disciplines in the early twentieth century, those academic discourses have been established around the issue of finding the archetype of Korean shamanism, and are largely unconcerned with the understanding of shamanic practices in their modern forms (Kim Seong-nae 1999). In addition, some of those discourses (e.g. Cho Hung-yoon 1994; Hwang Ru-si 2000; Ju Gang-hyeon 1994) even condemn the diversity of modern shamanism for having deviated too far from the authentic Korean shamanism tradition. As a matter of course, such a search for an authentic form of shamanism could be understood within the particular historical context: Japanese colonialism as well as Westernization of Korean culture. In this context, we can say that, as the negative image of Korean shamanism resulted from cultural politics, so too did the positive image.

However, the problem is that both images have been de-contextualized from their historical contexts and have become obstacles to understanding the diversity of contemporary Korean shamanism. The shock that I experienced from the encounters in the above episodes originated from the fact that I had an essentialist position about Korean shamanism and also took it for granted that Korean shamanism is the core of Korean culture. That is to say, I had disregarded the idea that Korean shamanism as it is, whether it is classified negatively or positively, has been constructed with reference to a specific historical context, while establishing its various images and realities.

I would like to mention one more motive of this study: it is about two different ethnographic descriptions of the practices of Korean shamanism. In a recently published book, *Korean shamanism: The Cultural Paradox* (2003), which deals with Korean shamanism, Kim Chong-ho criticizes Laurel Kendall's work, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (1985), which is a source most commonly cited by Western scholars of shamanism and uses a traditional anthropological framework. The contrasting images of Korean shamanism, presented in those ethnographies, are summarized as follows: for Kim, a ritual is performed in secret without an audience, and for Kendall, a ritual is like a festival. The difference between them could be simply explained in terms of the different time and space of their research, i.e. their different ethnographic encounters. However, Kim Chong-ho criticizes Kendall's work on other grounds, which I will examine in detail in chapters two and five. Interestingly, during my field research, I could witness various kinds of shamanic practices: some of them were in line with Kim's description, but others represented Kendall's description. From these experiences, I came to realize that the assumption that there is *one* Korean

shamanism and it can be represented as a unity would be a myth.² In the sense that Korean shamanism has been always constructed and reconfigured in various circumstances and therefore has represented itself in a variety of different forms, I assume that plurality should be considered as the nature of Korean shamanism. In this context, such terms as plurality and interactions between images and realities are utilized as key terms in this thesis.

1.2. Theoretical Concepts

M. Nye (2000: 468), by coining the term “religioning,” has intended to focus scholars’ attention on “the ways in which religious identities, manifestations and power relations are produced through practice and through performance,” along with the discourses which shape and are shaped by them. I would therefore like to illuminate the ways in which modern Korean shamanic manifestations are not only produced by discursive practices but also how they help produce those discourses. Putting it another way, this dissertation intends to examine the interactive relationship between the imagery of Korean shamanism produced by discursive practices and the reality affected by and affecting those discourses.

My approach to the relationship between discursive practices and actual manifestations is

² Regarding the plural realities of shamanism, it is worth noting that J. M. Atkinson (1992) uses the plural form in the article “Shamanisms Today.” Citing M. Taussig (1989) statement that “shamanism is... a made-up, modern, Western category, an artful reification of disparate practices, snatches of folklore and overarching folklorizations, residues of long-established myths intermingled with the politics of academic departments, curricula, conferences, journal juries and articles, [and] funding agencies,” she warns against the simple assumption that there is a uniform shamanism.

mainly indebted to the concept of “looping effects,” which I borrowed from Ian Hacking’s various works, such as *Rewriting the Soul* (1995), *The Social Construction of What?* (1999), and “Making Up People” (2002). This concept, which lies behind all those works, is well illustrated in the following statement:

People of these kinds [socially constructed objects such as *author* and *brother*] can become aware that they are classified as such. They can make tacit or even explicit choices, adapt or adopt ways of living so as to fit or get away from the very classification that may be applied to them. These very choices, adaptations or adoptions have consequences for the very group, for the kind of people that is invoked. The result may be particularly strong interactions. What was known about people of a kind may become false because people of that kind have changed in virtue of what they believe about themselves. I have called this phenomenon the looping effect of human kinds (Hacking 1999: 34).

Therefore, the concept, “the looping effect of human kinds,” is a means to explain the feedback process of how the classifications of people affect the people classified and how changes, affected by such classifications, impact the classificatory system. In fact, the relationship between classification and the classified is related to the philosophical debates between nominalism and realism. Identifying himself as a “dynamic nominalist,” Hacking (2002: 106) states, “the claim of dynamic nominalism is not that there was a kind of person who came increasingly to be recognized by bureaucrats or by students of human nature, but rather that a kind of person came into being at the same time as the kind itself was being invented.”³ In

³ Hacking (2002: 106) differentiates dynamic nominalism from static nominalism. The theoretical position of the latter is summarized as followings: a) all categories, classes and taxonomies are created and fixed by human beings rather than found in nature; b) classifications may grow or be revised, but once in place they are basically fixed and do not interact with what is classified.

particular, he analyzes such concepts as gender, homosexuality, the child viewer of television, and multiple personalities, in terms of how those classificatory concepts affect the construction of such kinds of people. Here, it should be noted that he talks about human kinds, not humanity itself. He goes on to say,

Looping effects are everywhere....If someone talks about social construction of genius or anorexia, they are likely talking about the idea, the individuals falling under the idea, the interaction between the idea and the people, and the manifold of social practices and institutions that these interactions involve: the matrix, in short (Hacking 1999: 34).

As seen from this statement, the concept “looping effects” is used for indicating the dynamic interactions between name and reality. I hypothesize that this idea could also be applied to the explanation of contemporary Korean shamanism, because not only the category “Korean shamanism,” as a generalized concept for indicating some beliefs and practices held by *mudang* (shaman) and their clients, is historically constructed by the official discourse, but also modern Korean shamans are well aware of the fact that they have been the focus of attention by academics who have produced those discourses.

Korean shamans are classified and described on the level of academic discourse as well as in their communal tradition. The classification, image, and academic discourse on Korean shamanism are treated as a matrix in which a shaman not only experiences the world but also constructs his/her identity. I will examine in more detail how the official discourse affects the construction of a shaman’s identity. For the time being, I argue that the official discourse on Korean shamanism should be considered as an agent (constituent) that constructs the reality of

Korean shamanism, which differentiates my approach from other works.

My approach differs from existing studies in other ways as well. As a matter of course, in general, scholars of Korean shamanism usually mention spiritual beings, shamans, rituals, and clients as constituents of Korean shamanism. Actually, many monographs on this subject contain independent chapters for such constituents. In addition, regarding the transformation of Korean shamanism, such scholars used to pay attention to the socio-economic changes in which those constituents interacted with each other. When Townsend (2000: 328) talked about the new scholarship on shamanism in relation to “the evolution of shamanism in specific societies under various influences,” the issue of how shamanism has been classified and represented was not included. In other words, the idea or the discourse about shamanism was not regarded as a factor for its transformation—“evolution” in Townsend’s case. Of course, I agree with him in that the influences which he mentioned are very important for understanding the transformation of Korean shamanism.⁴ However, by showing how the plural images of Korean shamanism is adopted by modern Korean shamans and synthesized into their identities, I would like to illustrate the importance of official discourse on the reconfiguration of contemporary Korean shamanism.

Here, another concept, “plurality,” appeared significantly in this thesis. Hacking (1995: 21) states, “people classified in a certain way tend to conform to or grow into the ways that they

⁴ Townsend (2000) suggests that future study of shamanism, in terms of the issue of what affects its evolution, should include various influences as followings: “prehistoric and sedentarization from the invention of herding and cultivation to the present; more recent political attacks and influence by universalist religions (Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, etc); industrialization; influences of western medicine; modern technology including such forces as increasing travel by shamans and indigenous peoples, tourism or travel by westerners to indigenous peoples, internet in particular societies, and so on.

are described; but they also evolve in their own ways, so that the classifications and descriptions have to be constantly revised.” The feedback process or looping effect between the classified and the classifications is not a one-time event. Rather, it is ongoing process. Here, one thing that I would like to contend, with reference to Korean shamanism, is that “the classifications and descriptions,” which are constantly revised, do not disappear although they are revised, but function as referential frameworks while Korean shamans assimilate those classifications (official discourse in this thesis) into their never-ending struggles for the construction of their identity. That is to say, diverse classifications and discourses are configured and being reconfigured while they widen the spectrum of Korean shamanism. Chapter four describes in detail a few cases of those plural referential frameworks for making a shaman’s identity, and suggests that this plurality extends to the reality of Korean shamanism. In this context, I suggest that the various shamans’ ritual activities, which are reconfigured by the interaction between shamans and clients, could be understood in terms of the endeavors of shamans who have been classified as such.

1.3. Historical Data and Field Research

For the purpose of examining the relationship between images and realities of Korean shamanism, I employ two disciplinary methodologies: discursive analysis of the official discourse on Korean shamanism and ethnographic research. Official discourse on Korean shamanism has been established in a specific intellectual paradigm. In terms of historical settings,

I start from the Joseon dynasty because it is generally accepted that negative representations of Korean shamanism began with the Confucian scholars' endeavors for the Confucianization of Joseon society. When I treat the official discourse during the Joseon dynasty, I refer not only to *the Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, which is available online at <http://sillok.history.go.kr>, but also other sources. Although those records were not written for the explanation of shamanism itself, they are sufficient to show the Confucian scholars' attitudes towards it. In addition, since Korean shamanism became an object of academic disciplines in the early twentieth-century, rather systematic explanations on it have appeared and are used in this thesis.

In order to see how those ideas and images affect the formation of the reality of contemporary Korean shamanism, I performed field research, including participant-observation of many shamans' ritual activities and interviews. Before introducing concrete information about my field research, I will clarify my understanding of it and its representation. Although this thesis represents my field experience, I must accept the idea that my presence in the field might distort the situation. That is to say, I am skeptical about "the persistence of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience" (J. Clifford 1986: 2). As a matter of fact, this ideology postulates the strict division of subjectivity and objectivity, which results in the ethnographer's absolute authority over his/her ethnography. For the transparency of representation, anthropologists eliminate themselves from the ethnographic encounter, by which they "can deny the essential dynamics of the encounter and end up producing a static picture of the people" (Crapanzano 1980: ix). However, interpretive anthropology demystifies these unexamined postulates in construction of the ethnographic narratives and focuses on the inter-subjectivity which produces the narratives. Now, an ethnography should not be conceived "as the

experience and interpretation of a circumscribed other reality, but rather as a constructive negotiation involving at least two, and usually more, conscious, politically significant subjects” (J. Clifford 1983: 133).

The ethnographic data appearing in this work were collected mainly during my second period of fieldwork in Seoul and Incheon (May 2008 – May 2010). My first field research was performed in Seoul, May 2006 – January 2007. During this field work, I tried to observe every *Jinjeok gut* (a shaman’s seasonal ritual for the gods who descended on the shaman) performed by Dani who is a main informant in this thesis, because all the regular clients of the shaman are encouraged to participate in it. In addition to the *gut*, I accompanied her not only to a meeting for an inter-religious dialogue but also on her pilgrimage to Inwang Mountain, Seoul. The ethnographic data about other shamans, clients, and their ritual activities appearing in this thesis, except for the shaman Kim Keum-wha, were collected by me during the research period.

In addition, I refer to the material that I had collected during the field research for my earlier studies (see Kim Dong-kyu 2000). An interview with Jade, who is introduced in chapter four, is such case. Moreover, I have been long acquainted with Dani’s clients who appear here. The interviews with them are also used here as source materials. To protect the privacy of my informants, I use pseudonyms for all personal names in this dissertation except widely publicized and officially granted ones.

This dissertation contains numerous Korean names and concepts. For their transcription into the Roman alphabet, I have followed the Revised Romanization of Korean, proclaimed by South Korea’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2000.

1.4. Plan of Dissertation

This thesis is mainly composed of two parts, which will be connected to each other by the looping effect of image and reality. Part one will map out the historical development of academic and official discourse on Korean shamanism with reference to the specific paradigm. This mapping is not intended to only deconstruct the existing shamanism discourse, such as the focus on the primordial and the archaic, but also becomes a starting point to determine the interrelationship between imagined shamanism and actual shamanism. This analysis may help us to “recover and analyze the diversity and plurality that essentialism has masked, and especially to re-contextualize shamanic activities in Korean historical and political contexts” (Thomas & Humphrey 1996: 2).

In chapter two, I describe how negative images of Korean shamanism have been constructed on the level of official discourse, in terms of cultural politics between Korean shamanism and imported ideologies. Chronologically, I first illuminate how Korean shamanism was classified by Confucian scholars and alienated from the center of Joseon culture. During this period, the issue of Korean shamanism was established around the aspect of their practices and not around theological issues. In this context, deemphasizing the cosmological differences between them, I illuminated some rationales, based upon which Confucian elites made it possible to denounce shamanic practices, as follows: Confucian administrators’ desire to establish the Joseon dynasty as a civilized country based upon Neo-Confucianism; a hierarchical ritual system which Confucians believed represented and embodied the ideals of Neo-Confucianism;

Confucian administrators' concerns about social implications of shamanic practices; and lastly, the patriarchal system on which the Joseon dynasty was managed. In particular, I employ the term *eumsa* (淫祀) as a key word for understanding of how Korean shamanism was criticized in the context of Joseon culture.

Secondly, I examine how Korean shamanism has been classified into the category of superstition with reference to the modern concept of "religion" in general and Christianity in particular, since the nineteenth century among Korean intellectuals. In addition, through the examination of the Anti-superstition movement, I explain how the negative image of Korean shamanism as a superstition was enforced.

In chapter three, I analyze the historical process of the construction of the positive image of Korean shamanism. In particular, I explain the new perspective and evaluation of Korean shamanism in terms of the specific situation in which Korea could not help but to open itself to Western imperialism and Japanese colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the colonial period, Korean intellectuals held iconoclastic views of the Sino-centric Korean tradition and longed for the establishment of national self-consciousness. In this context, Korean shamanism became a national symbol which could unite all Koreans. Concretely, I introduce how the first remarkable interpretive framework, held by Korean scholars, which linked Korean shamanism to Dan'gun Sin'gyo (a religion of the God Dan'gun), was produced during that time.

In addition, I examine the issue of how Korean shamanism came to be understood as cultural capital since the 1970s. In particular, I present how Korean shamanism as a cultural capital has been appropriated not only by the Popular Culture Movement which was organized

for an anti-aristocracy and pro-democracy movement against the government but also by Korean governments according to their ideological stances. With reference to governmental policy on Korean shamanism, I analyze the process, purpose and ideological background of the Cultural Protection Law, and, especially, I suggest that the discourse of “authenticity” in relation to Korean shamanism played an important role in this social practice. Lastly, I introduce an image of Korean shamanism as a dialogue-partner in inter-religious meetings.

Part two corresponds to issues of the classified persons’ feedback to their classification. In other words, it describes how those images are actualized into a shaman’s self-identity making process and induce the reconfiguration of ritual activities. In particular, chapter four presents three Korean shamans, Dani, Unjang, and Jade, who desire to become great shamans while appropriating all possible referential frameworks. First of all, I explain the conventional way to accomplish mature shamanship as a referential model, while introducing a “super star” shaman Kim Keum-hwa who is also a Human Cultural Treasure. Then, through the analysis of the other three shamans’ life stories, I explain how they appropriate various official discourses and synthesize them into their current identities. In chapter five, I describe Korean shamans’ ritual activities such as *mugguri* (initial-divination), *gut* (large-scale shamanic ritual), and other periodic rituals. Different from the previous chapter which deals with the reconfiguration of shaman’s identity by interaction between shamans and official discourse on them, chapter five illuminates the transformation of shamanic rituals which is rendered by the interaction between clients and shamans.

Lastly, I would like to confess that, in this thesis, I do not introduce general information

about Korean shamanism such as the definition of Korean shamanism or a detailed description of shamanic rituals. As a matter of fact, general introductions about them are nearing a saturation point among academia as well as journalism, whether they are written in Korean or English.⁵ Moreover, in this thesis, I do not suggest that Korean shamanism is a closed system that has a unity or essence, which means that I am not concerned about the definitional issue which is represented by such questions as what Korean shamanism is. Rather I present it as an open practice, constantly revised by the looping effects between official discourse and shaman's utilization, between shamans and clients, and between its image and reality, in specific situations.

⁵ About the the procedures of Korean shamanic ritual, see L. Kendall (1985), Kim Seong-nae (1989), Maria Kongju Seo (2000), and Lee Yong-shik (2004). In addition to those materials which are written in English, there is a huge amount of writings about the procedures of shamanic rituals in the Korean language.

Chapter 2. Negative Images of Korean Shamanism

As seen in the episodes of a neighborhood community meeting and the Buddhist monk Hwanghoo whom I introduced in the previous chapter, Korean shamans and their practices are still considered as representative of negative aspects of Korean traditional culture, and most Korean people are reluctant to be openly involved with them. Also, a bulletin prohibiting shamanic activities on Inwang Mountain presents the weak position and the negative image of Korean shamanism in modern Korea (see Feature 1).



Figure 1. A bulletin that prohibits shamanic activities is erected at the gate of the Mt. Inwang. Ironically, near the bulletin, a newspaper box for *mudang* (shamans) hangs on the fence. Photo by author.

As a matter of fact, those negative attitudes towards Korean shamanism are not new to

the ordinary Korean people today in the sense that, on the level of public and official discourses, shamanism has generally been represented by such negative terms as “scary” and “superstitious,” and shamans as “insane,” “frauds,” and “greedy charlatans,” and so on, although those agents who have produced such discourse sometimes themselves secretly utilize shamanism.

Since Korean shamanism drew many scholars’ attention and appeared on the level of official discourses, most scholars have developed their own opinion of Korean shamanism while noting its distorted and negative image. Actually, many works on it have reported on the origin of the negative connotations associated with shamans and their practices with critical terms (see. Cho Hung-yoon 1994, 2004; Choi Jun-shik 2009; Kendall 1983; Kim In-hoe 1987; Ryu Dong-shik 1983). For scholars who have paid much attention to Korean shamanism, such negative representations have commonly been understood as the product of cultural politics between shamanism and imported ruling ideologies such as Confucianism, Western rationalism, and Christianity. Such scholars, rather than accepting the unexamined stereotypes of shamanism, have questioned the origin of those negative attitudes and generally agreed that struggles between an indigenous Korean religion and imported ideologies, which resulted in a victory of the latter over the former, has alienated and marginalized Korean shamanism away from the centre of political and religious discourse. In other words, the negative connotations of Korean shamanism have been ascribed to a competition for hegemony between an indigenous ideology and imported ideologies in the Korean peninsula. Cho hung-yoon (1999: 50-51) summarizes the marginalization of shamanism in Korean history as follows:

The Chosun [Joseon] Dynasty (1392-1910 A.D.) made Confucianism its political ideology [ruling

ideology]. As a result, shamanism and Buddhism became objects of severe oppression; shamans and monks were treated as outcasts...Only men of the ruling class under Confucian patriarchy considered shamanism to be demonic or superstitious, and enforced its repression...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 form of superstition...With the increasing spread of so-called Western rationalism and the Christian view of values in Korean society, shamanism was stigmatized as superstition through school education which reduced it to a barrier to modernity that must be broken down...The elite and important religions still treat it as a shameful, negative religious phenomenon, or folk custom...

As we can see from Cho's summary, it has been a pervading idea among scholars that the alienation and suppression of shamanism began with the Confucianization process during the Joseon dynasty, continued under Japanese colonial rule, and finally culminated in the project of Korean modernization.

On the other hand, another analysis of the origin of such attitudes and representations has been recently attempted by Kim Chong-ho (2003). In his monograph, *Korean Shamanism: the Cultural Paradox*, Kim, like other scholars, describes the reality of Korean shamanism over history as having been continuously suppressed. However, in contrast with other scholars' argument that hegemonic processes between shamanism and other ideologies caused the devalorization of shamanism, he contends that shamanism has been continuously suppressed "despite the changes in ruling ideologies throughout Korean history." That is to say, the fact that Korean shamanism has been suppressed regardless of which ideologies grasped hegemonic power convinces him to attribute the cause of suppression to the nature and function of Korean shamanism itself rather than ascribing it to the external factor of Korean shamanism. In particular,

he focuses on the cultural contradiction between shamanism and public Korean culture.⁶ Kim (2003: 189) argues that

The prejudice against shamanism which is commonly found in Korean society mainly originates from the cultural contradiction between shamanism and public culture in the Korean cultural system, rather than from the cultural politics between shamanism and dominant ideologies such as Confucianism and Christianity.

As Kim confesses from the outset, the purpose of his research is to clarify the reason why ordinary Korean people resort to shamanic services while they have despised shamans and their practices, which he calls the “cultural paradox.”⁷ While he expounds those paradoxical phenomena, the concept of the “cultural contradiction” serves as a useful conceptual tool for explaining the background of the prejudice against shamanism, and it seems to allow him to differentiate himself from other scholars who are concerned with “cultural politics.” He maintains that the cultural contradiction, on one hand, expresses the struggles between shamanism and Korean public culture; on the other hand, cultural politics represents the relationship between shamanism and imported ruling ideologies. According to his argument, the

⁶ Here, Kim Chong-ho clarifies that his discussion does not include ancient Korean societies in which, it is assumed, shamanism played a central role and was not despised, because we do not have sufficient historical documents to discuss it. Rather, he sees the notion of a shaman-king of ancient Korea—which will be introduced in the next chapter—as a historical invention constructed by scholars heavily influenced by nationalism, especially during Japanese colonial rule (Kim Chong-ho 2003: 160, 191). However, based upon archaeological discoveries and comparative methods, most scholars agree with the idea that shamanism enjoyed a central role, politically as well as religiously, before other religious teachings such as Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism were imported. See Baker (2008), Grayson (2002), and Ryu Dong-shik (1983).

⁷ Kim Chong-ho(2003: 12) summarizes such paradox in a paraphrase of a paradoxical Zen verse:

Shamanism is superstitious, so it should not be used
Shamanism is not superstition, because it is actually used
Again, shamanism is superstition, so paradoxically, it is used.

struggles between shamanism and Korean public culture cannot help but be induced by the fact that shamanism functions in the “field of misfortune,” characterized by “irrationality” that is not welcomed by public culture in the Korean cultural system. Yet, despite the reluctance to be involved in “irrational activities” such as shamanic practices, misfortune makes ordinary people resort to shamanic services due to the inexplicability of misfortune and its generally assumed association with shamanism. This paradoxical relationship is described through the analogy with “a toilet which functions to lessen the burden of life but produces bad smells and therefore is not welcomed.”

At a glance, Kim’s explanation about the origin of prejudices against shamanism seems to propose a view different from other scholars’ interpretations which have focused on the cultural politics between shamanism and imported ideologies. However, I would argue that this is not the case. Putting aside numerous factual errors in his book (M. Pettid 2004) and his misapplication of such important concepts as “irrationality” and “superstition” (B. Walraven 2005), I would like to point out his ambiguous usage of the concept, “public culture.” What he means by that concept can be found in fragments scattered throughout his book: it is sometimes substituted by “dominant culture”; otherwise, it is paired with the term “common-sense” of the Korean people (Kim Chong-ho 2003: 8). Here, it should be noted that such adjectives as “public,” “dominant,” and “ruling” connote power relationships. And, as Kim himself confesses, if “everything in Korea gains power through foreign connections,” how can we differentiate struggles between shamanism and Korean public culture from struggles between shamanism and imported ideologies? As a matter of fact, Confucianism during the Joseon dynasty, Christianity in modern Korean religious discourses, and Western rationalism in the ordinary life of modern Korean

people are not only imported from foreign countries but also have become a part of the public and dominant culture in Korean cultural system. In this sense, I argue that Kim's differentiation of the "cultural contradiction" from the "cultural politics" cannot be justified, and therefore neither can his contention of the "cultural contradiction" be a new model for the understanding of the prejudices against shamanism, which should instead be placed under the umbrella of the explanatory framework of cultural politics.

Here, it is my suggestion that the image of shamanism, produced by such cultural politics, should be regarded as a constituent of the reality of Korean shamanism today, which has widened the spectrum of Korean shamans and has constructed the plurality of Korean shamanism that I want to show in this dissertation. Agreeing with most scholars' comments on the origin of negative images of Korean shamanism, I will examine how official policies and discourses have constructed those negative images of it in Korean intellectual history, followed by an interpretive framework of the cultural politics. In particular, such frameworks as represented in the terms, "*eumsa* (licentious ritual)" in the Joseon dynasty and "*misin* (superstition)" afterwards, will be used as conceptual tools to represent and understand official criticisms of Korean shamanism.

2.1. Confucianization and *Eumsa*

As I mentioned in the previous section, the Confucianization process during the Joseon dynasty has been considered an origin of the Korean people's negative attitudes toward shamanism. Yet, prior to Confucians' opposition to shamanism, we can find many stories

alluding to conflicts between imported religions and shamanism. The fact that the Buddhism of Silla, in contrast with the cases in Goguryeo and Baekje, was confronted with strong resistance by believers in the power of local shamanic spirits is well illustrated by the long time gap—almost 100 years—from its introduction to official approval associated with Yi Cha-don's martyrdom in 527 under the reign of a king Beopheung (514-540) (Jeong & Ryu 1995; Baker 1994; Shin Jong-won 1992).⁸ In addition, many examples denote that the relationships between the two religious systems were not peaceful: all founding stories of such Buddhist temples as Guryongsa, Tongdosa, and Ongnyongsa tell how bad dragons, which were considered a kind of shaman god living in a pool, were expelled by founding monks or were convinced by them to establish a temple (Song Bong-ho 2003); and a record conveying a story that Mukhoja and Ado, who are regarded as the first Buddhist missionaries, healed a princess whom even shamans could not cure also indicates that those two religious systems were competing with each other for hegemony (cf. Baker Ibid; Kim Yong-ok 1990; Lee Peter H. 1969; Ilyeon 1997). All these stories reveal that Buddhism was competing with shamanism before the Cofucianization process of the Joseon dynasty started.

However, it should be noted that such stories of conflict reveal that shamanism was strong enough at that time to the degree that it could compete with the imported religion. As a matter of fact, it is said that indigenous Korean belief continued to enjoy its religious position while expanding its religious system by accepting the gods and ceremonies of Buddhism in those

⁸ The conflicts between Buddhism and shamanism can also be interpreted in terms of a political issue between the king and aristocrats of Silla. Buddhist ideology, which has the concept of a single body of believers all devoted to observing the way of the Buddha, was well-suited to support the new governing structure centered on the authority of the throne (Eckert et. al. 1990; Han'guk Jonggyo Yeon'guhoi 1998).

conflicting circumstances (Cho Hung-yoon 1999). Many studies of interbreeding between shamanism and imported religions reveal that shamanism had been in coexistence with various religions (cf. Kim In-hoe 1987; Ryu Dong-shik 1983; Kim Tae-gon 1981). It is during the Confucianization process in the Joseon dynasty that Korean shamanism started to be despised and suppressed unilaterally.

2.1.1. Confucianism and Other Religions

Confucianism did not hold hegemonic power from the beginning when it came into the Korean peninsula. Rather, it usually accepted a division of responsibility with other religious teachings while it taught how to behave in everyday life, both in the family and in government (Baker 2008: 46). This limited role for Confucianism dramatically changed with the establishment of the Joseon dynasty that replaced the Goryeo kingdom (A.D. 918-1392). The founding group of this new dynasty, armed with a more philosophical Confucianism called Neo-Confucianism,⁹ needed to justify its revolution and tried to eradicate what it considered as the former kingdom's negative customs. In particular, "the adherents of Neo-Confucianism not only opposed the powerful families [of the Goryeo kingdom] but also the Buddhist establishment, both on ideological grounds and because it too had amassed great estates and so was

⁹ Neo-Confucianism, which was more metaphysically oriented and had borrowed many elements from other religious teachings such as Buddhism and Daoism, not only offered ethical guidelines but also functioned as a religion. For adherents of the teaching, a moral life meant a life in harmony with ultimate reality, which was defined as the cosmic pattern directing harmonious interactions.

undermining the nation's economic foundation" (Eckert et al. 1990). Later on, Confucians' criticisms of the Buddhist establishment intensified to the degree that Buddhism itself was rejected as destructive of family mores and ruinous to the state. For Confucian literati whose main concern was how to embody an ultimate reality through an ethical life in this world, the Buddhist monastic life, which was dependent upon renouncing the mundane world, was understood as irresponsible and selfish. In sum, Confucian opposition to Buddhism during the Josun dynasty could be explained in terms of their different philosophies and the political circumstances on which the two religions depended (cf. Jeong Byeong-jo and Lee Seok-ho 1992; Han'guk Jonggyo Yeon'guhui 1998).

Then, how can we understand Confucian literati's denouncement of shamanism in the period? Like the relationship between Buddhism and Confucianism, was Confucians' opposition to shamanism based upon its different philosophy and worldview? Or, can we find other factors to produce Confucian's biased attitudes to shamanism? Answers to these questions can help us to understand how the current negative image of shamanism has been constructed. In order to understand why the Confucian elites criticized and suppressed shamanism, I will examine the official record which expresses Confucian literati's critical attitudes and the historical unfolding of state policy towards shamanism during the Joseon dynasty.¹⁰

Let me begin with a selection from a memorial of the Office of Censor-General to appeal for the destruction of *Gukmudang* (國巫堂, the State Shaman Shrine) under the reign of King

¹⁰ Here, critical records on shamanism during the Joseon dynasty, used in this dissertation, are mainly drawn from the *Joseon Wangjo Sillok* (The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty). In addition I have included comments from such famous Confucian scholars as Yi Ik(1681-1763) and Jeong Yagyong(1762-1838), whose writings about shamanism are often quoted by modern scholars, because their writings will make the picture of shamanic practices during the Joseon dynasty more colorful.

Sejong (1397-1450):

Long ago, the Son of Heaven sacrificed to heaven and earth; the feudal lords sacrificed to mountains and streams; the great officers sacrificed to the five tutelary cults; and gentry scholars and commoners sacrificed to their ancestors. In this way, there were ranks in sacrifices and they were not confused. As I see it, we have already achieved civilization by establishing rites and music and making a beautiful code prohibiting *eumsa*, all of which are stipulated in the Wonjeon (Prime Code). However, a tendency toward worshipping spirits is not extinguished yet; rather it prevails throughout our society because common people are addicted to old customs. Trusting the frivolous and absurd words of *mudang* and *baksu* [male-shaman], they believe that human life and happiness are dependent upon those spirits. They do not hesitate to sing and dance, regardless of whether they are at home or in the fields, while respecting *eumsa*. Finally, they often go beyond their limits. They have sacrificial rituals at mountains and rivers and seonghwang [a shrine for local guardian spirits], while drinking together, wasting their money, and finally going bankrupt. All of these customs are connected to their suffering when they are damaged by floods or droughts. However, worse is that this trend is not restricted to the common people. Even people from the noble class do not think of it as strange.... Some people from the noble class even make food-offerings to their ancestors at a *mudang*'s house. I wonder if their ancestors enjoy that treatment. Other people, who are more deeply involved, sometimes bring even their wife and daughters to the *mudang*'s house to pray, of which they are not ashamed. These behaviors are caused by their ignorance of how to worship spirits, and are destroying the righteous way of family-management... Making the existence of the *Gukmudang* and *mudangs*' official rituals at famous mountains sponsored by the state as their excuse, everybody is making sacrifice following their own way without hesitation. I am worried that such behavior will make it difficult to successfully govern... (Sejong vol. 34. Nov. 7th 1426. My translation)

This Confucian administrator's argument for the destruction of the *Gukmudang* could be simplified as follows: Joseon was a civilized society having implemented rites (禮) and music (樂) according to the Confucian teachings; however, *eumsa* which was thought to stand in opposition to civilization was still pervasive among *yangban* as well as commoners, morally

corrupting and economically devastating them; therefore, the *Gukmudang* which would be used as an excuse for performing *eumsa* should be destroyed. This request is consistent with the Confucian ideals of the Joseon dynasty: to enhance the purity and ideals of Confucian culture by establishing proper ritual and simultaneously to endeavor to exclude non-Confucian elements by classifying them as sources of cultural pollution.

Interestingly, however, King Sejong rejected the request on the grounds that he himself could not suddenly abolish the customs which had been followed by his ancestors.¹¹ In addition, he also quoted a phrase from the *Zhouli* (the Rites of Zhou), “without a constant mind (恒心), nobody can become a medical doctor or a shaman (the *Annals*, Sejong vol. 34).”¹² This comment of King Sejong’s implies that shamanism at the time could be understood even under the umbrella of Confucian philosophy and therefore could co-exist with Confucianism.

In relation to the co-existence of two religious systems, it is interesting to note that there is a similarity between the Neo-Confucian and shamanic worldviews. For example, the Neo-Confucian idea that human beings are linked to all other beings and phenomena in the cosmos by the great principle of the universe is also found in shamanic belief, although the shamanic view of the universe is less systematic and developed (Walraven 1991). In this context, Walraven (1991; 1999) explained the co-existence of Confucianism and shamanism during the Joseon dynasty in terms of the commensurability of those two belief systems. Walraven (1991: 38)

¹¹ As we can see from the fact that Confucius himself had emphasized the importance of treasuring and believing in the Classics, an ardent attitude toward following the ancient sage’s teachings and classical ideals is an outstanding feature of Confucianism.

¹² This comment of King Sejong does not mean that he showed a favorable attitude to shamanism. From other records in the *Annals*, we can find an instance in which he prohibited shamanic activities (Sejong 19, vol. 76) and he mandated that shamanic ceremonies for the royal family held be in secret (Sejong 20, vol. 83).

describes it as follows:

Confucians did not reject the belief in and worship of gods *per se* and shared with the *mudang* the conviction that vengeful ghosts, unclean spirits and malicious sorcery could harm men. They also shared a belief in such things as divination, portents and oracles of various kinds, lucky and unlucky days, dream prognostication and the use of written charms...In sum, if we review the attitude Confucians displayed towards shamanism, we note that they often rejected superficial aspects and social implications of *mudang* rituals rather than the fundamental assumptions of the shamanistic world view...

Moreover, the fact that there were many memorials calling for the abolition of shamanic practices during the Joseon dynasty indicates that those practices continued to be enjoyed by *yangban*, as well as common people and the royal family, even though many Confucian literati were opposed to them.¹³

Toward the latter half of the Joseon dynasty, however, their uncomfortable co-existence in the early period started to break up and shamanism finally was expelled to the margin. Choi Jong-song (2002) has analyzed this marginalization process of shamanism during the Joseon dynasty by examining how shamanic rituals were substituted by Confucian-style rituals, in particular, state rituals such as rainmaking rituals and *byeolgeunje* (別祈恩祭), a ritual for state-prosperity held on famous mountains.¹⁴ He argues that the exclusion of shamanism from the

¹³ It is generally assumed that the policy of the Joseon dynasty against shamanism was ambiguous. Despite the prejudice against shamanism, some shamans were granted the status of national religious specialists and others were considered to be artists and medical practitioners.

¹⁴ In the early period of the Joseon, excuses for the co-existence of shamanic ritual in the state ritual system were offered by appealing to the Confucian notions of *kwondo* (權道, a way of adapting to exigent circumstances and *misinbulgeo* (靡神不舉, no gods remained un-supplanted), found in the *Book of Poetry* (Choi Jong-song 2002; Keum Jang-tae 2000).

official scene was only made possible by the consolidation of legal systems as well as ritual regulations following Confucian ideals. For example, through the modification and customization of Chinese documents for the Joseon context, the codes for the national rainmaking ritual were drawn up in the thirtieth year of King Sukjong (1661-1720), the ritual was consistently performed by Confucian officials following the finalized twelve parts of the ritual, and finally shamans came to be excluded from rainmaking rituals organized by the state.¹⁵

In addition, Choi illustrates how the restriction on shamans' residence was formulated and enforced as legal systems were modified: Gyeonggukdaejeon (National Code, 經國大典, completed in 1481), which served as the major law code, restricted shamans from dwelling within the area of the city walls; yet, Sokdaejeon (Sequel to the National Code, 續大典, published in 1746), extended this restriction to the area of a distance of four kilometers outside the walls of the capital; and finally, during the reign of King Jeongjo (1752-1800), the restriction was expanded up to the south of the Han River.

In the meantime, this procedure of driving shamans out of the capital conflicted with another important role shamans performed; medical service.¹⁶ As a means of bringing shamans under control, in the early period, shamans were forced to register and were put under the supervision of the Office of Rites in charge of the sick at Hwalinseo(活人署), a kind of medical

¹⁵ Actually, prior to the reign of King Sukjong, there was a Confucian ritual prescription for state ceremonies; it is called the Gukjo-oryeui (the Five Rites of State), and completed in 1474. It dealt with rites for royal succession, funerals, and marriage, as well as with ceremonies of welcome for foreign envoys and military reviews. However, it did not expel shamanic ritual from the official scene, which is proved by a Nam Hyo-on's (1454-1492) memorial to appeal for the abolition of the title of State Shaman. See *Annals* Seongjong vol. 91, 1478.

¹⁶ Walraven (1991: 25) summarizes a very useful report from the 17th century for understanding how much Confucians were dependent upon shamans' medical services: "...even in 17th century the Confucians of Hamgyeong Province—an outlying region where changes probably came slowly—would not take medicine when ill but consulted a mudang...According to this source, Confucians had started to abandon this habit only in recent years."

center which was run for the benefit of commoners' health and located outside the city walls. While taking care of commoners' sickness, they had to pay a shaman-specific tax which was utilized to support the expenditure at Hwalinseo. However, this policy of giving shamans the rights as taxpayers could not but conflict with the ban on shamans' residence as it was extended to the borderline of the Han River during the reign of King Jeongjo. Commenting on the extension of the ban from the city wall to the Han River, Choi concludes that "as a result, the prolonged irony of taxing shamans for revenue by putting them under the supervision of the east and west Hwalinseo and yet accusing them of being unorthodox finally came to an end" (Choi Jong-song 2004: 7).¹⁷ Although we can find ample evidence that shamans continued to enter the capital to serve their patrons, the women of elite households including the royal family, they could serve them only with private rituals (B. Walraven 1999; Park Il-young 1999).¹⁸ At any rate, the abolition of the shaman-specific tax, although it was achieved temporarily, and the expulsion of shamans, even though it was in effect limited to the capital region, well illustrate how shamanism was marginalized from the center of Korean official culture, being relegated to the category of popular, unofficial, or private religion.¹⁹

As we have seen up until now, shamanic activities were criticized and denounced under the name of *eumsa* in official discourses during the Joseon dynasty, and it was along these lines

¹⁷ Although the policy on the shaman-specific tax, levied on shamans inside the capital, was abolished along with the final restriction on shamans' residence during the reign of King Jeongjo, the policy did not spread all over the country but was instead applied only within the capital.

¹⁸ According to Yi Neung-hwa (1927/2002), the queen Myeongseong Hwanghu (1851-1895), the wife of king Gojong (1864-1919), was a strong supporter of shamanism. Also, Choi Kil-seong (1969) states that the queen even gave a shaman, who she trusted, a title "Jinnogun," and tried to establish a nationwide organization for shamans, but her death ended these efforts. Also, when Lady Yun (1894-1966) was married to the crown prince in 1906, *yeotam gut*, a shamanic ritual to announce to the gods important changes in the family, was held (Kim Yong-suk 1987: 279).

¹⁹ Although the abolishment of the shaman-specific tax was continuously proposed by Confucian literati, it did not produce actual results until the time of Gabogaehyeok (Gabo Reformation) in 1895 (Lim Hak-seong 1992).

that the policy against shamanism was developed. Then, what did Confucians mean by the term *eumsa*? Why did Confucian literati try so hard to drive out shamanism from the official culture? I believe that the key to understanding why Confucians wanted to drive out shamanism is the term *eumsa*. Hence, I would like to focus on the textual and contextual meaning of the term from now on.

2.1.2. Hierarchical Ritual System and *Eumsa*

A Confucian text, *Liji*, states that sacrificing to a spirit which is not proper for one to offer to is called licentious sacrifice, *eumsa* (*Liji* book 1). Another book, the *Analects*, indicates that “to sacrifice to a spirit which does not belong to him is flattery” (*Analects*). When we refer to those texts and consider Confucian loyalty to classical teachings, we can interpret *eumsa* as a ritual which is performed by an unqualified human or towards unsanctioned objects. In other words, ‘who is worshipping whom (or what)’ was an important criteria used by Confucian literati to categorize certain ritual activities as *eumsa*.

As expressed in the memorial that I quoted in the previous section, Confucian literati were proud of accomplishing civilization through the establishment of rites and music, and made efforts to maintain political and cultural control over the basically uneducated masses. As far as they considered rites to be a measure of civilization, they tried to bring all forms of worship under the control of the state, and so each member of society could only offer worship to the gods or spirits appropriate to his social status (Han Ugun 1976).

The ritual system of the Joseon dynasty was basically constructed by the ordering of social hierarchy, and it can be traced back to the ritual tradition of Zhou China. This system was completed with the establishment of the Gukjo-oryeui (國朝五禮儀, the Five Rites of State) during the reign of King Seongjong (1457-1494), finishing a project first launched by the order of King Sejong (1397-1450). As the title indicates, it organized state rituals into five categories: *gilrye* (吉禮, auspicious rites), *hyungrye* (凶禮, inauspicious rites), *garye* (嘉禮, joyous rites), *binrye* (賓禮, guest rites), and *gunrye* (軍禮, military rites). Again, sacrifices of each category were subdivided into three classes such as great, middling, and small. In those classes, which gods could be worshipped was designated by an official pantheon. Here, it is important that the official pantheon served as a criterion to designate what could be orthopraxis and what would be *eumsa*.

Family rituals were also organized, under the title of *sarye* (四禮, four rites), with the publication and dissemination of the Zhuzi jiali (朱子家禮, Zhuxi's Family Rituals) which describes how to conduct a coming-of-age ritual, a wedding, a funeral, and ancestor worship according to Confucian standards. The four rites were meant, like the state ritual system, to extend Confucian ideals throughout the nation, with a focus on the family.²⁰ Nominally, we might say that Confucian literati's endeavors to bring the Joseon dynasty in line with Confucian ideals were accomplished with the establishment of this hierarchical ritual system. However, it should be noted that not all of the Joseon people followed the Confucian ritual system and they

²⁰ In reality, Confucian style *sarye* (four rites) were not widespread until the fifteenth century, because the *sadaebu* (gentry class) were not firmly established. Therefore, in the early period of the Joseon, Confucian literati paid more attention to the five rites of the state.

“continued to visit temples and patronize shamans to seek supernatural assistance,” which led to harsh criticism by Confucian literati of these practices (Baker 2008: 53).²¹

In order to clarify not only the Confucian concept of rites which became the philosophical basis for denigrating shamanism as licentious ritual, but also the social implications of *eumsa* practices, I will examine more records on shamanic practices during the Joseon dynasty. The memorial which appealed for the abolition of the state shaman shrine, quoted above, also denotes the reason why Confucian literati designated some ritual activities *eumsa* and prohibited those practices. It continues as following:

Although we already have sacrifices to mountains, streams, and *seonghwang* (城隍, a village guardian spirit), sacrifices to evil spirits are performed [among people]. If every sacrifice is put into the Rites Code without stipulation, I am afraid that any ghost can be worshipped. I have never heard of [respectable sources talking about] the ghosts which are worshipped by *mudang* and *baksu*. How shameful! (Sejong vol. 34: Nov. 7th 1426. My translation).

Moreover, the similar logic that unregulated rituals should be prohibited was reiterated in the memorial of the Office of the Special Counselors, in which the officials suggested Confucian views on the right way of governing.

Therefore, sages established the Rites Code upon which people properly sacrificed to heaven and

²¹ Some scholars have interpreted the Joseon people's *eumsa* practices in terms of the limitation of Confucian-style ritual; pietism and moralism of Confucian rituals could not satisfy the popular people's religious attitudes which are based upon emotionalism and pragmatism (Choi Jong-song 2002; Park Il-young 1999). Therefore, we might argue that the discrepancy between what was offered by Confucian style ritual and the common people's religious desire caused Joseon people to engage in *eumsa* practices. In addition, Im Sok-jae maintains that the common people's desire for a pure religious feeling could not be fulfilled due to the over-formalization of the Confucian-style ritual system (Im Sok-jae 2003).

earth, mountains and streams, hills, and seonghwang...I have never heard of people inviting wicked ghosts from outside [during the time of the sages]... Nowadays people hang money on the pictures of gods and invite spirits into their homes, trusting *mudang*'s words about fortune and misfortune... (Seongjong vol. 98, 9th year. My translation)

Interestingly, we can see that those Confucian administrators mentioned “evil spirits” and “wicked ghosts” when referring to the spirits which were not in the official pantheon. Although they did not clearly define what those supernatural beings are, we can infer, from such negative adjectives as “evil” and “wicked,” a firm belief that even the supernatural should be consolidated and controlled by the state. These records were concerned with sacrifices to unqualified gods and ghosts; the following statements tell us about the Confucian’s criticism of worship by unqualified people.

The *gieun* [a ritual for national prosperity] of this day is a more serious problem. Led by many female-shamans, people are praying to the gods of mountains and streams, and call it a *gieun*... How can we deceive Heaven? ...how can we let female-shamans do this? (Jungjong vol. 21, Oct. 25. My translation)

Their abhorrence of *eumsa* practices might be explained by the Confucian concept of a rite. As Zhuxi explained in his annotations to the *Analects*, a rite is an expression of the norm of the principle of Heaven. Thus, Confucian elites of the Joseon regarded a ritual as another expression of the hierarchical social order and an embodiment of the philosophy of Neo-Confucianism. And, the differentiation of social status in relation to a rite and the management of a society following the hierarchical order became an important issue for constructing a harmonious society (Ji Du-hwan 1998). In this sense, the idea that a shaman could worship

Heaven and convey its will was contrary to the Confucian concept of rite and became a radical challenge to Neo-Confucianism itself.²² The following records reveal how much Confucian scholars of the Joseon emphasized a rite in terms of a proper differentiation of social classes.

A rite is based upon a differentiation of the upper and lower classes, therefore those classes should not go outside their station even when speaking and writing (Taejong sillok vol.22. My translation).

I heard that a country had been governed by rites; when we are considering rites, there is nothing more important than differentiation of rank. Not to violate the differentiation and not to confuse the names are the right way of all times and the duty of heaven and earth (Taejong Sillok vol 26. My translation)

However, despite the official ritual system which emphasized the hierarchical relationship among worshippers, the common people of Joseon continued to violate ritual rules and continued to practice their old customs. Shamans were always criticized by Confucian elites as leaders of those unregulated rituals, and were portrayed as seducing the common people with false words. In accordance, shamans were understood not only as individual offenders of the Confucian ritual system but also as encouraging others to do so.

...People are deluded by the seductive words of *mudang* and *baksu*...Therefore, any commoner who sacrifices to the gods of famous mountains, goes beyond their station and rites... (Sejong vol.

²² The *Sillok* does not clarify which particular spiritual beings were worshipped by and descended to performing shamans at *gieun* ritual, nor does it directly mention that shamans worshipped Heaven at the ritual. However, *gungjungbalgi* (lists of articles that were used for court rituals) of the late Joseon tell us that Jeseok which is regarded as a kind of heavenly god was worshipped at *gieun* rituals by shamans. In this context, we can say that shamans who performed at *gieun* rituals worshipped Heaven, which became a radical challenge to Confucian ritual hierarchy. Regarding to *gungjungbalgi* of the late Joseon, see Choi Jong-song (2002: 134-137) and Choi Kil-seong (1989: 7-39).

45, 11th year. My translation)

According to the law prohibiting frivolous words and behaviors, may your honor let those shamans be put to death! Those shamans are like these; those who say they are possessed by gods of which we cannot verify the origin in history; and those who say they are possessed by the spirits of generals or senior ministers who died recently, calling those gods and spirits with different names as they please (Sejong vol. 101, 25th year. My translation)

Through the Joseon dynasty, Confucian literati had continuously criticized unregulated sacrifices to spiritual beings which were not in the official pantheon, calling them licentious rituals. However, despite those criticisms of *eumsa* practices, there were many factors which fostered them beyond the discrepancy between Confucian style rituals and the common people's religious desires which I mentioned above, and they can be summarized as follows: an official pantheon of the state would not include all the gods worshipped by the contemporary people; the hierarchy of deities was made to correspond to the social hierarchy; and the right and responsibility to officiate sacrifices were granted to those who exercised power, such as the king, ministers, magistrates, and eldest sons. At last, this hierarchical official ritual system curtailed religious activities, especially for the common people, who were allowed to perform a limited form of ancestor worship at home and take part in worship in village shrines (Han Ugun 1976: 153). In some senses, the Confucian views on spiritual beings and the hierarchical official ritual system based upon those views encouraged the Joseon people to practice *eumsa*.

Meanwhile, I would like to mention two distinctive cosmological features of Neo-Confucianism in relation to the notion that even the supernatural beings should be controlled by the state. Firstly, for Neo-Confucians, relational thinking was the basic principle for the

management of the universe as well as a human society. In contrast to the modern Western concept of human individuality, as many scholars have indicated, Neo-Confucianism insists that everything in the world is “in a constant state of flux” and even a human’s self-identity is determined by his/her changing roles as he/she goes through various social positions “within the constantly changing network of patterns of interaction that constitutes the cosmos (Baker 2008: 48).”²³ Here, it is important that the interpersonal relationship is hierarchically organized, and not limited within a human society but extended to the cosmological relationship. And, the extension is related to the idea that human beings are linked to all other phenomena in the cosmos by the principle of the universe, and accordingly the structure of the human world corresponds to that of nature and other cosmic phenomena (Walraven 1999: 166). This idea is connected to the second feature of the Confucian cosmology: that the universe is hierarchically constituted and even the supernatural takes one place in the hierarchical universe.

Confucian elites of the Joseon, who considered themselves to be located on a higher status than some ghosts and gods in terms of the moral cultivation, insisted that evil beings which possessed a shaman could not harm a person protected by the proper moral armor. We can find many examples of the conflicts between the spiritual beings possessing shamans and morally cultivated Confucians during the Joseon dynasty from the writings of Confucian elites such as Jeong Yagyong (1762-1836). All the stories which are conveyed in his book, *Admonitions on Governing the The People* (2010: 448-452), tell how the magistrate should behave when he encounters the wrongful practice of superstition in the district. I will quote one

²³ We can say that the concept of the universe as an entity of related elements, which is another embodiment of relational thinking, is also at the basis of the belief in divination, something else that Confucians generally shared with shamans.

such example, the story of Hong Yunseong (1425-1475), introduced in the writings of Jeong Yagyong, which reveals Confucian literati's attitude to supernatural beings.

The Seonghwang of Naju demanded that people show respect for him by dismounting from their horses when passing his shrine. Magistrate Hong stayed in the saddle, but he had not gone far before his horse fell down dead. Hong then had the horse slaughtered and the meat [which is never eaten in Korea] brought to the shrine, along with ten jars of wine. "Why have you killed my horse? Do you want to eat it, perhaps? Take it as an appetizer with the wine. If you don't I will burn your shrine!" The volume of the wine decreased somewhat, the story says, but the amount of horse meat remaining the same, Hong did as he had threatened. The god sought refuge elsewhere and there instructed his worshippers always to offer some wine to Hong before they worshipped himself...(quoted in Walraven 1991: 28)

This story signifies not only that Confucian literati who had morally cultivated themselves could not be harmed by supernatural beings but also that they enjoyed higher status than the god. In particular, the story that Seonghwang "instructed his worshippers always to offer some wine to Hong before they worshipped himself [Seonghwang is regarded as a male-god]" indicates a hierarchical relationship between Confucians and some gods and ghosts. In sum, we can summarize the attitudes of Joseon Confucian elites toward supernatural beings with the words "virtue would be stronger than these wicked powers and there was no reason to defer to them" (Walraven 1991: 27).

In this context, I have argued that unregulated interaction with supernatural beings could be understood by the followers of Neo-Confucianism as a threat to the social order and Confucian values. In addition, in the mind of such Confucian elites, licentious rituals would "interfere with the natural patterns of interaction within nature and between nature and humanity

and therefore should be minimized” (Baker 2008: 53).

2.1.3. Social Implications of *Eumsa*

The notion that the structure of the human world corresponds to that of nature and that human activities interplay with other cosmic phenomena meant that the worship of gods outside the official hierarchy or the worship of deities by unqualified people was not only a challenge to the basic ideology of Neo-Confucianism but seen as the origin of many concrete social problems during the Joseon dynasty. Many records in the *Annals* convey the Confucian literati’s concerns over social implications of *eumsa* practices as followings:

...They commit obscene activities without hesitation, waste their family fortune on boozing and womanizing, and do not control their sensual passions—all of these behaviors betray the distinction between the sexes... Also, calling slaves who are sent to *mudang*’s house for serving their master’s ancestors ‘*wiho* (衛護),’ people let them stay in *mudang*’s house and do their supposed works. If spirits of the ancestors exist, would they like to be treated like that?... (Sejong vol. 45, 11th year. My translation).

...People in my province respect *eumsa*, in particular the Naju (羅州) area is the most famous place for such practices. In addition to the state shrine, there are more than 5 private shrines on Mt. Geumseongsan. Many men and women, who live near the mountain, gather and stay there overnight, mingling indiscriminately, and in some cases husbands loose touch with their wives... (Seongjong vol. 204, 18th year. My translation).

... Gwonju says, “in my view, it is customary for the people of Gangwon (江原) to respect ghosts

and practice *eumsa*. People, with their families, often go to Mt. Taebaeksan and stay there for a couple of days, or sometimes even widows stay there for a few days. This is the most harmful custom ever. May your honor prohibit this custom!” (Seongjong vol. 236, 23th year. My translation).

As we can see from the records of the *Annals*, Confucian elites often pointed out superficial aspects and social implications of *eumsa* practices rather than criticizing the fundamental assumptions of the shamanic world view. Moreover, the disorderliness of shamanic ritual which contained the undignified noise of their drums and gongs, their ecstatic dancing—all these activities were contrary to Neo-Confucian’s aesthetic sensibilities. However, many records from the *Annals* show that the Confucian elites were concerned with the corruption of public morals more than any other problems.

It is quite well known that the distinction between the sexes during the Joseon dynasty was highly emphasized as a representation of a proper cosmological order. The relationship between men and women was expressed by cosmological terms such as *Eum* (陰, yin) and *Yang* (陽), based upon the ideology of *the Book of Changes*.²⁴ According to the *I-Ching*, a male represents the origin of cosmos, the heavenly, the active, and the strong; a female embodies the earth, the calm, and the soft. Basically, the relationship of *Eum* and *Yang* is assumed to be equal and complimentary (Kim Yong-ok 1986: 150). Since the Han dynasty of China, however, those two concepts came to be used as a conceptual tool for sexual discrimination in Confucian

²⁴ According to the *Annals*, even “sisters of a wife or brothers of a husband should not face each other.”

tradition (Cho Hye-jeong 1988; Lee Kyoung-mee 2007).²⁵

In the Joseon dynasty, the relationship between men and women and proper codes of conduct for them were regulated by the rule of *Nae-Wae* (內外, Inside-Outside), a term which Korean scholars generally have used for indicating the custom of the distinction and discrimination between the sexes during the Joseon dynasty. Although the rule was supposed to regulate the behavior of both sexes, it restricted women's behavior, in reality.²⁶ For example, prohibiting women from attending temple activities and forcing them to conceal their faces when they went out—all these regulations functioned as fetters of women's social activities which were outside the family and codified in *Gyeonggukdaejeon* (Cho Hye-jeong 1998). In general, those restrictions which would not allow women's appearance in public spaces have been attributed to the patriarchal system of the Joseon society. These restrictions on women's behavior are also found in the structure of a family compound, which was divided by *anchae* (the inner building) and the *sarangchae* (the outer building)—the former is for women and the latter is for men, and neither sex was allowed to infringe on the other's areas. Under these strict regulations for the distinction and differentiation of the sexes, such unregulated rituals—representatively, shamanic rituals—which provided a space in which many men and women would stay together during the night were unacceptable to Confucian literati and caused them to worry about their negative social impacts. Kendall (1991: 48) describes similar concerns over women's proper

²⁵ The Confucian discriminative view on men and women was established by Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒, B.C. 198-106), in his idea of *Yang Gwi Eum Cheon* (陽貴陰賤, *Yang* is Noble, *Eum* is Humble) (Kim Seung-hye 1998).

²⁶ As a matter of fact, the regulations for the distinction of the sexes were not referred to by the term, "the rule of *Nae-Wae*," in the *Gyeonggukdaejeon*. We can verify only some regulations that were imposed on women's behavior. However, it is assumed that the term was commonly used in the late Joseon dynasty, and many Korean scholars commonly refer to the customs regarding the distinction of the sexes during the Joseon dynasty with the term, "the rule of *Nae-Wae*."

behavior and the social impact of shamanic rituals.

The dancing shaman offended both the Confucian notions of women's proper conduct—constrained and sequestered—and the proper conduct of rituals according to the rules of propriety, *ye* (禮). The notion that shaman rituals, in some sense, are innately “lewd” persists into the present. I have told how an officer from the district police station threatened to arrest the mansin who were conducting a *gut* on the charge that they were ‘dancing to drum music and students were watching’ (My emphasis).

All these criticisms regarding social problems caused the Joseon government to prohibit shamanic practices. However, as I explained from the outset, the policy reflecting those criticisms could not eliminate all shamanic practices but only managed to push them out of the public scene, while situating them in women's culture. Here, I would argue that the close association of shamanism with women became another motive of negative attitudes to shamanism. That is to say, this association formed an image of shamanism as the culture of ignorant and illiterate people. Regarding this association and its negative effect on the image of shamansim, let me explain more in the following.

As is well known, during the Joseon dynasty, women were deprived of proper opportunities for education. In contrast to many educational establishments for men, public as well as private, Confucian education for women was generally limited to traditional feminine tasks and virtues.²⁷ In addition, unlike men, intellectual or learned women were not highly

²⁷ Of course, many feminists have ascribed this patriarchal attitude to women's education and works as an embodiment of the *Eum-Yang* philosophy.

esteemed.²⁸ Even the texts for women's education such as the *Samgangaengsildo*(三綱行實圖)²⁹ and *Naehun*(內訓) were published to form a basic habit of wifely virtues and indoctrinate Confucian values and a patriarchal ideology into women's minds (Cho Kyeong-won 1995). Along with the education from those texts, women of the Joseon internalized their subordinate status from a very early age by both direct and indirect methods (Y. K. Harvey 1979; M. Pettid 2000). In such limited social and educational circumstances, the following idea seems to be a natural consequence: women and their culture were inferior to male culture; and therefore they could be more easily deceived than men who cultivated themselves through Confucian teachings. At this point, a shaman would be portrayed as a charlatan who deceived those uneducated people. As a consequence, shamanism would be denounced as a culture of people who are illiterate, irrational, and inferior. In this context, I argue that the negative image of shamanism as 'the culture of illiterate and ignorant women' is a product of an official discourse which was produced by men and women who had internalized Confucian values.³⁰

Up to this point, I have described how such a negative image of shamanism as a licentious ritual had been constructed during the Joseon dynasty, focusing on Confucian elites' critical records. I have also suggested that the decisive motive for designating shamanism as

²⁸ A story that Yu Hui's (1773-1837) mother, Sajudang Lee, asked her sons to destroy all her writings except the *Taegyoshingi* is often referred to as evidence of negative attitudes to women's intellectual works. The *Taegyoshingi*, which is about prenatal education, was written for transmitting Sajudang Lee's own experiences about education to her children. It is assumed that this book was not among those she asked to be destroyed because of its topic (Kim Seung-hye 1998: 53).

²⁹ As a matter of fact, most of the examples in this book were of male behavior, but some examples dealing with stories of *yeollyeo* (a woman of chaste reputation) were published for the female education.

³⁰ B. Wilson (1983: 113-128) also suggested a similar opinion on the negative image of shamanism, commenting that "the stereotype of shamans as ignorant and irrational is an extension of the Confucian ideology about women's nature.

eumsa was due to the Confucianization process of the Joseon dynasty. Deemphasizing the cosmological differences between them, in particular, I illuminated some rationales, based upon which Confucian elites made it possible to denounce shamanic practices, as follows: Confucian administrators' desire to establish the Joseon dynasty as a civilized country based upon Neo-Confucianism; a hierarchical ritual system which Confucians believed represented and embodied ideals of Neo-Confucianism; Confucian administrators' concerns about social implications of shamanic practices; and lastly, the patriarchal system on which the Joseon dynasty was managed. From the Confucian point of view, which was oriented to constructing a new civilization by destroying old uncivilized customs, the common people's shamanic practices would be considered a challenge to the Confucian authority and regarded as a serious problem. In this context, many policies such as the degradation of shaman status to one of the eight outcastes,³¹ or referring to shamans as *yomu* (妖巫, wicked shaman), designation of shamanism as *eumsa*, and the expulsion of shamans from the royal city were carried out. As a consequence, shamanism came to be marginalized and alienated from the official culture, although it was not extinguished from the map of religions in Korea.

Before I move on to the next section, I would like to mention another issue regarding shaman's identity during the Joseon dynasty. As I mentioned earlier, shamans were categorized as one of the eight outcastes during this period. Those who were in the category of the eight outcastes could be interpreted as those who were not located in the qualified social classificatory system. In the society which was structured by a strict sense of social status, shamanship could

³¹ Eight outcastes of the Joseon dynasty are gisaeng (Korean geisha), Buddhist monk, butcher, slave, gwangdae (entertainer), craftsman, shaman, pallbearer.

not be seated in any location along the Confucian hierarchical structure and therefore the nature of shamanism that has been symbolized by the mode of “betwixt and between”—borrowing from V. Turner (1967)—as a representation of anti-structural forces which might be understood as dangerous. In addition, it should be noted that there was no concept of “religion” as a distinctive area which was differentiated from other human activities, and at the same time there was no conceptual tool to locate a shaman in a specific social status such as priesthood during the Joseon dynasty. Therefore, I would suggest that the fact that a shaman was not in the proper hierarchical category of society also encouraged shamans to be treated as outcasts.

In the next section, I will deal with the issue of how another negative term, *misin* (迷信, superstition), has emerged to identify Korean shamanism when new concepts such as “religion” and “superstition” entered Korean intellectual history.

2.2. Modernity and *Misin*

A Korean word, *misin* (迷信, superstition), which connotes things irrational, invalid, and consequently harmful, did not appear in the Korean lexicon until the modern concept of “religion” was translated into the Korean word (*Jonggyo*/宗教) to refer to distinct human experiences and activities and accepted by Korean intellectuals in the late 19th century.³² Prior to that time, as a

³² Of course, the term *misin* did not only indicate anything that could not be categorized into religion, but also was used to refer to an opposite of science. Here I would like to confine my analysis to the concept of *misin* with reference to the notion of religion.

matter of fact, religion had not been regarded as a separate field from other human activities such as education, medicine, and politics (Kim Chong-suh 2006), as illustrated by Western travelers' comments that there was no general concept of religion as a differentiated sphere from other human affairs (P. Lowell 1885; G. Gilmore 1892). However, we can find evidence that what is called "religion" was understood and treated as a distinct area of human experience before the term *Jonggyo* appeared in the Korean peninsula.

Actually, the radical change of religious culture and cognition appeared among Korean people when Christianity entered Korea in the late 18th century and introduced a new religious paradigm (Kang Don-gu 1999). In particular, religion as based upon an individual faith, upon the pursuit of individual salvation, and upon faith-based communities, that is, religion as confessional and the congregational—all these new notions of religion occurred along with the appearance of Roman Catholicism in the Korean peninsula in the last quarter of the 18th century (Baker 2006). These new ideas were welcomed by some groups within the *yangban* class as well as by commoners.³³ However, the Joseon government responded harshly to these new ideas, eventually resulting in serious persecutions of the Catholics. The persecutions were predestined in that those new ideas, such as God's authority being greater than mundane ruler's, and that a religious organization should be free from state-control, were contrary to the Confucian ideology of the Joseon dynasty, as illuminated earlier. Although the Catholics were not able to convert more than a few Koreans at that time, however, it is of significance that they introduced to the Korea the "revolutionary concept that religion is a separate sphere of human society, existing

³³ In the beginning, Catholicism attracted *yangban*, especially those from among *Namin* (Southerner) scholars, as an object of study and later many of them accepted it as their religious belief. However, after the Persecution of 1801 most converts came from among people of commoner status.

alongside rather than under the state” (Baker 2006: 266).³⁴

New ideas in the religious sphere, planted in the 18th century, grew to full bloom on the soil of the Korean peninsula following the opening of the country and the influx of foreign influence in the late 19th and the early 20th century. In Korean history, this period is called ‘the time of enlightenment’ or ‘the time of Port-Opening,’ and is generally characterized as a transition period in which the old system, based upon Neo-Confucianism, collapsed and at the same time a new world order, oriented towards Western modernity, emerged. This transition was induced by the critical domestic and international situation which the Joseon government encountered. Domestically, the Joseon government suffered from peasant rebellions, political corruption, an imbalance with aristocratic power, and, internationally, the government was threatened into incorporating itself into the international system through opening its ports to the outside world. Although the Joseon government was well aware of the momentous changes in the international environment surrounding the Korean peninsula, it did not come up with adequate responses to deal with newly emerging issues regarding the foreign relations (Robinson 1988: 18-19).³⁵

Finally, with the signing of the Ganghwa Treaty with Japan in 1876 and more treaties with the major Western powers which followed in the early 1880s, Korea was brought into the new international system. On the other hand, even though the signing of those treaties was made

³⁴ As Hans G. Kippenberg (2002: ix) states, “the issue of autonomy of religion cannot be isolated from the issue of modern society.” Regarding the issue of the origin of Korean modernization, the fact that the concept that religion is a separate sphere of human society appeared in late 18th century can mark the starting point of the Korean modernization process.

³⁵ Since the late 18th century, some progressive thinkers, who are assumed to have been in the *Shirak* school, had argued for an open-door policy towards the outside world with a view to increasing national wealth and strengthening Korea’s self-defence and self-strengthening.

in the capacity of an independent state, Korea still saw “those arrangements as secondary to the primary relationship with China” (Robinson 1988: 19). In other words, the Joseon government of that time tried to participate in the Western nation-state system while holding its unique Confucian relationship with China. From this subservient orientation to China, we can infer that the contemporary Joseon administrators still regarded Chinese culture as the prime model for their civilization.

However, the Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 destroyed the image of China as Korea’s powerful protector and forced Korean intellectuals to find a new model for establishing a strong nation-state. The Western powers, which were armed with technological advancements, were assumed to be an alternative model. In fact, from the early years of this period, many Korean enlightenment thinkers interpreted the opening of Korea as bringing “Westernization” or “civilization,” which would enable Korea to become a strong state (Lee Kwang-lin 1991: 25-29).³⁶

Although they held the common notion that Korea had to accept Western culture, enlightenment thinkers can be divided into two sub-categories according to what degree of Westernization they thought was needed: while the moderates were willing to accept Western material culture, though they rejected its philosophy and religion, the progressives—the group of modernizers known as the *Gaehwadang* (Enlightenment party) or *Jinbodang* (Progressive party)—advocated a full-scale acceptance of it. However, because of the failure of Gapshin Coup

³⁶ Not all of the intellectuals of the Joseon agreed with the acceptance of the Western culture. In contrast to the enlightenment thinkers, many Confucian scholars insisted on preserving and inculcating the orthodox Neo-Confucian teaching and rejecting the new civilization of the West. Their movements are called “*Wijeong Cheoksa* (Defend the Orthodoxy and Reject the Heterodoxy).”

in 1884 led by the progressives, the actual acceptance of Western culture was delayed until the Independence Club, established in 1896 and led by Seo Jae-pil (1864-1951), launched its activities and Western missionaries went into full-scale action.

As Korean intellectuals were oriented towards Western modernity, their activities were centered on inquiry into Western political theory and social development. Moreover, many modern Korean schools taught that Western science and the philosophy of science were central to Western technological superiority.³⁷ In the meantime, Korean enlightenment thinkers' works did not limit themselves to looking for a modernization model from the West. They also sought to diagnose problems and discover causes of contemporary national problems by inquiring into Korean tradition. Old Korean customs therefore became the objects of critical reflection. While some were criticized as obstacles to Korean modernization, others were appropriated as national symbols for inculcating patriotism—a trend, I will explore in more detail in chapter three—especially after Korea became a colony of Japan. In other words, they tried to modernize Korea by a “reflexive ordering and reordering of past and foreign religion” (G. Benavides 1998). Among those old Korean traditions, in particular, folk customs which were represented by Korean shamanism became an outstanding target for enlightenment iconoclasm.

Using the editorial pages of newspapers such as *The Independent* and *Daehan Maeil Shinbo* (*Korean Daily News*), those intellectuals propagated their belief in the harmful

³⁷ In the years following the Protectorate Treaty in 1905, education became the subject of much public discourse. In 1906, the Korean Association for Self-Strengthening proposed a system of compulsory education, but it was vetoed by the Japanese government. In spite of the rejection, more than three thousand schools opened in the two years prior to April 1909 (Haboush 1997: 296).

consequences of folk customs embodied in shamanism.³⁸

Because people are ignorant and illiterate, they would trust the unreliable and long for the unreasonable. *Mudang* and pansu play tricks to take away money from such people as weak-minded women and men, while having them worship devils. This is possible only because people are ignorant (*The Independent*, May 7, 1896. My translation).

Nowadays, as it is the New Year, everyone frequents the houses of *mudang*'s and pansu's to have their fortunes told... They [the Korean masses] are in miserable condition now... I wish they would not blame it on external factors [such as imperialistic expansion]. If they dismiss those evil customs, we can see the exit toward a better life (*Daehan Maeil Shinbo*, Feb. 9, 1909. My translation).

As a product of ignorance and weak minds, those folk practices were understood as harmful customs which caused Korean people to remain uncivilized and prevented them from seeing the way of modernization. In addition, shamans were portrayed as charlatans who took money from people by playing tricks, and there was nothing reasonable about their activities. To the enlightenment thinkers who were obsessed with the strengthening of Korea by spreading out modern Western scientific knowledge, Korean shamanism which, they supposed, was characterized by fatalism and passivity was thought to be a main culprit that had hindered the spread of modern Western science. In this sense, those customs were labeled as “evil customs”

³⁸ Not only newspapers but also a new form of literature which is called *shinsoseol* (New Fiction) became a field for criticizing Korean shamanism. For example, in such novels as *Gumageom* (*A Sword Chasing Away Devil*, 1908), *Chiaksan* (*Mt. Chiak*, 1908), and *Hwauhiyeol* (*Blood of a Flower*, 1911), *mudang* and *pansu* were portrayed as imposters and their activities were exposed as invalid and false.

that prevented Korea's civilization.³⁹

At a glance, this view is very similar to the Confucian elites' view of shamanism during the Joseon dynasty. However, there is a basic difference, despite the similarity. As I mentioned before, the elite group of the Joseon dynasty did not reject the very idea that supernatural beings such as gods and ghosts sometimes could intervene in human affairs and that shamans had a special ability to deal with the problems they caused. However, the enlightenment thinkers reject the possibility of intervention by supernatural beings into human affairs, being oriented to a mechanical worldview which was assumed to be the basis of the development of Western science. Although it was possible for them to regard shamanism as a kind of religion, they did not classify Korean shamanism in that way. Therefore, I would argue that the modern concept of religion and Western science (i.e. Western rationalism or modernity) functioned as an interpretive framework to form a negative image of Korean shamanism as superstition.

As a matter of fact, criticisms of superstition could be analyzed with reference to the power of the Western science and modernity to which Korean enlightenment thinkers were oriented, and many scholars have illuminated the relation between the anti-superstition movements and the unscientific aspects of superstition. However, it is rare for any to analyze the idea of superstition in relation to the concept of religion. Therefore, I will examine this issue and show how the concept of religion affected the construction of superstition in this section.

³⁹ It seems that labeling an indigenous religion as evil customs was not a particular phenomenon which was limited within the procedure of Korean modernization of customs. David Scott shows how certain religious manifestations in Sri Lanka came to be labeled as 'demonic' in academic discourses (David Scott, quoted in Nye 2000: 461)

2.2.1. The Concepts of Religion and *Misin*

The new word Jonggyo (宗教), used in different East Asian cultures—although with different pronunciations of the characters—, was coined to refer to the English word “religion” when the discipline of religious studies was introduced into Japan in the 19th century.⁴⁰ And, as I mentioned earlier, the concept of religion came to be used as a framework to define superstition in Korea: except for what could be classified into the category of religion, almost all old religious manifestations were defined as superstition. What, then, were their shared characteristics that differentiated them from superstition? In order to analyze what could be defined as religion and what could not be, it is necessary to examine the particular features of that concept around the time it was imported into Korea.⁴¹

It is generally assumed that the concept of religion that was imported into Korea in the early 20th century had been constructed during and after the Age of Enlightenment, i.e. was the co-product of the Enlightenment and Romanticism (Chang Seok-man 1992). As for the feature of Enlightenment thought about religion, W.C. Smith (1978: 38) describes the intellectual tendency of that time as followings: “[they] were increasingly interested in intellectual constructs,...systematic and abstract, that were to be elaborated in the religious realm,” and

⁴⁰ In Korea, particularly, this word appeared for the first time on the leading reformist newspaper of the time, the edition of November 11, 1883 in *Hanseong Sunbo* (*Seoul Thrice-monthly Reports*). Prior to that time, individual religions such as Christianity, Daoism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam had appeared in Korean intellectuals’ writings. However, there was not a concept of religion in general. Jang seok-man attributes this lack of a generic concept of religion in Korea to the fact that they did not find a firm basis for classifying those individual religions into one category (Jang Seok-man 1992).

⁴¹ Here, I agree with T. Asad’s (1993) position on the definition of religion. He (1993: 29) maintains “there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes.” Regarding the issue of the concept of religion, see Benson Salor (2000), Fitzgerald (2000), Malory Nye (2000), and Talal Asad (1993).

“gave the name ‘religion’ to the system, first in general but increasingly to the system of ideas, in which men [people] of faith were involved or with which men [people] of potential faith were confronted.” Simply speaking, the Enlightenment thought emphasized the “cognitive, intellectual, doctrinal and dogmatic aspects” of religion and, by the later 17th century, the prevailing understanding of religion was that it was a system of ideas and beliefs, a doctrine (Tambiah 1990: 5). This intellectualist tendency was not only based upon the Enlightenment thinkers’ optimistic view of human reason but also upon the assumption that “religion is rooted not in divine revelation or some form of ecclesiastical authority, but in something eminently natural and human” (W. Capps 1995: 10). As religion came to be assigned to a human capacity and became a generic concept, it was thought to be an objective phenomenon to be explained. In this context, even the idea that “beliefs about God were common to all mankind and were attainable by man by virtue of his natural reason” was asserted (Tambiah 1990: 5). In sum, the Enlightenment trend in the study of religion made it an objective or reified phenomenon and located it on the level of scientific research free from the authority of the church. This view could be summarized as an intellectualist and impersonal schematization.

Later on in the 19th century, the intellectualist tendency was challenged by Romanticist ideas that had an anti-intellectualist position which emphasized the inner experience of religious people. Hence, against the tendency to focus too much on the expressive aspects of religion such as doctrine and belief, the emotional and intuitive aspects came to be infused into the content of religion (King 1987: 283). Although Romanticism instilled new life into religion while combating the radical idea that religion would disappear along with the advancement of science in the future, its emphasis on the inner experience of religious people placed religion squarely in

the private and personal realm (Fitzgerald 2000: 28). In addition, despite the refinement of religion by the Romanticist movement, “the dominant trend in the study and exposition of religion was to infuse the static quality of the Enlightenment’s rationalism with an increasing sense of history and historical knowledge” (Tambiah 1990: 5). Here, both the static quality of the Enlightenment’s rationalism, which presumed the existence of ‘essence’ of religion, and historical knowledge and accumulated information about primitive cultures, obtained by travelers and missionaries, were closely related to the construction of an evolutionary framework upon which many religions of the world were explained and graded into higher and lower forms.⁴² And, upon this evolutionary framework, the idea that “Christian religion is superior to all other religions” was claimed “because of its unique capacity to articulate the aspirations of the human spirit” (Capps 1995: 11-12).

It is my submission that the concept of religion which affected Korean enlightenment thinkers’ understanding of religion and the classification of shamanism as superstition was based upon the Enlightenment’s rationalism and an evolutionary framework, as well as the notion that in religion there was a clear division between the sacred and the profane. In this context, Christianity, in particular Protestantism, came to be understood as the prime model of religion

⁴² In the Age of the Enlightenment, the mechanical worldview became the dominant paradigm. According to this worldview, everything in the world was believed to be explained by the law of cause and effect. When this law was applied to define religion, people believed that the origin of religion could explain all religious manifestation by the evolutionary framework. As a matter of fact, because this understanding of origins was closely related to the progress of human knowledge, many religious manifestations (or, religions), were categorized into the general concept of religion, and graded into higher and lower forms. The search for the origin of religion and evolutionary framework could be explained in this context.

which was compatible with modernity.⁴³

In fact, when the concept of religion was imported into Korea, there appeared four different positions on religion among Korean enlightenment intellectuals: anti-religion; deism; religion as a sign of civilization; and the adoption of religion to enlighten the people (Chang Seok-man 1992). Basically, because the anti-religion position dismissed any worldview which claimed supernatural intervention into the natural world as superstitious, it had no way of differentiating religion from superstition. In other words, it contended that religion and modernity were incompatible.⁴⁴

On the other hand, the last three positions on religion seem to have considered religion as a crucial part of a modern society, and the notion that rationalized religious practice is a crucial component of modernity has been imbibed throughout Asia (Keyes, Hardacre, and Kendall 1994: 4).⁴⁵ For example, a deistic position presumed the religiosity of human nature, while it asserted the impossibility of supernatural intervention into the natural world, which should be supervised

⁴³ Korean enlightenment thinkers' writings of the late 19th century show that they understood that there were differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. In those writings, the image of Protestantism was marked by the educational and medical activities of its missionaries while Catholic missionaries were seen as causing problems because of their political activities. Even though Protestantism was also involved in the sphere of politics, this image has been used as a missionary strategy by Protestants to this day (Chang Seok-man 1992). In addition, though Korean intellectuals saw Protestantism and Catholicism as having the same origin, they saw the former as having established itself, and earned a better claim to bringing modernity, by destroying the magical, or supernatural aspects of Catholicism, and because Protestants were more likely to recognize the authenticity of mechanical philosophy (Thomas 1971).

⁴⁴ Although religion was rejected by anti-religion adherents, in reality, so-called world religions such as Buddhism and Christianity was not designated as superstition and not marginalized in terms of the hegemonic process. However, the anti-religion position was strengthened by the infusion of socialism. For studies on the anti-religion and anti-Christianity movements, see Kim Hung-su (1992) and Lee Jin-gu (2006).

⁴⁵ Here, I use a term "rationalized religious practice" which seems to be contradictory itself, because "modernization theory posited that a secular 'civil' identity' with a nation-state would eventually replace 'primordial' identities with traditional local, religious, ethnic, or linguistic communities" (Keyes, Hardacre, and Kendall 1994: 4). However, I think that this term is useful for explaining the contradictory stances, which was taken by many Asian rulers for creating modern nation-states, toward religion: While they wanted to abolish the traditional ritual practices, selected ritual practices were necessary for their nation-building. Hence, I use "rationalized religious practice" for indicating the religious practices which could be accepted within the limit of modern concept of religion.

and controlled by scientific knowledge. In other words, it presumed that there was an independent sphere such as the supernatural or the spiritual which was not controlled by physical laws, and religion was situated in this sphere while not intervening into the physical world. And, the third and the last positions went one step further, seeing religion as a means to strengthen a nation,⁴⁶ and attributing the backwardness of Korea to the “unscientific and irreligious” attitudes, which they believed had already been overcome in the West. To them, to be religious meant to live a life that was oriented to self-sacrifice and welfare service for the public, not for their own benefit (Lee Jin-gu 2006).

Hence, it could be argued that most Korean enlightenment thinkers, such as Kim Ok-gyun (1851-1894), Yu Gil-jun (1856-1914), Choi Byeong-heon (1858-1927) and so on, considered science and religion as two wheels of civilization or modernization, except for some intellectuals who took the first position on religion.⁴⁷ However, it should be noted that they believed religion should stay in the spiritual and the private area and should not intrude into the other spheres, such as politics and economics, which should be controlled by rationality. At this point, I would argue that a crucial criterion for the demarcation of religion from superstition was constructed. It is that religion as located in the private and spiritual area could be differentiated from superstition which tried to solve this-worldly problems by appealing to supernatural

⁴⁶ This position was closely related to the later form of Korean nationalism in which Korean shamanism was used to symbolize Korean national culture. I analyze this process in the next chapter.

⁴⁷ According to Chang Seok-man (1992: 41-47), many articles of *Hanseong Sunbo* (*Hanseong Thrice-monthly Reports*) and Lee Haejo and Lee In-jik, both of who are novelists, showed an anti-religion position.

power.⁴⁸ This is evidenced by the definition of superstition which was revealed in the newspapers of the 1920s: superstition was the beliefs and practices applied by primitive people, with underdeveloped reason, which sanctified nature, on the assumption that it possessed a spirit, to overcome natural disasters and diseases with the help of supernatural beings (Kim Yo-han 2007).⁴⁹ The following reports show well how shamanism crossed the boundary between the religious realm and the material world and so was classified as superstitious:

Nowadays in the city of Pyeongyang, the number of shamans is increasing and many people sponsor those shamans to have ritual for themselves. Even in the case of measles, shamans are invited to take care of it... People ascribe the fact that so many people died from measles this year to the activities of devils, and even many women who have a religion perform a *gut*. I am told that many young women want to become shamans nowadays. I also heard that previously, even a lady who had a modern education at a women's school in the city became a shaman...Police authorities are blamed for neglecting to control this *misin* which causes the corruption of public morals and anesthetizes the common people (*DongA-Ilbo*, May 18, 1926. My translation).

...What a devil's entertainment it is! Last year, shamans' *guts* were held 385 times with total expenses for them adding up to 10,740 won! I wish people would spend that money for public welfare such as donating to the relief fund for flood victims. Nowadays in Jinnampo, Haeju, and other areas, a rumor that there will be a contagious disease in a few years is floating around and people are busy in getting cotton from a blanket, which becomes a part of a cake, and eat it because they believe it prevents the disease...Let's abandon all these superstitions in a competitive

⁴⁸ As religion came to be located on the spiritual level and differentiated from the material world, the idea that practical benefits can be obtained by practicing religion has been conceived of as magical or superstitious. According to I. Reader & G. J. Tanabe Jr. (1998), many new religious movements of Japan are portrayed as interested in material benefits obtained through magic rather than rational effort, and this implies that they are not true religions. This portrayal of new religious movement of Japan could be understood as a result of the application of Western concepts of religion. I. Readers' questioning of the applicability of the concept of religion in non-Western societies is applicable to the Korean situation (I. Reader & George J. Tanabe Jr. 1998).

⁴⁹ It is unquestionable that the criticism of superstition was enforced during the Japanese colonial period. But I think the basic viewpoint on religion and superstition has not on the level of the negative official discourse on shamanism since the criterion for the division of religion and superstition was constructed.

society, otherwise we cannot preserve our lives in these extremely dangerous circumstances
(*DongA-Ilbo*, August 1, 1925. My translation).

As shown by the above citations, shamanism was criticized on the grounds that it depended upon the help of the supernatural for solving real problems which should be treated by medicine, a material product of scientific thinking. Shamanism was not only regarded as a product of ignorance but also for corrupting public morals and anesthetizing the common people.

In addition, rather than accomplishing the task of religion assigned to it by progressive thinkers—enlightening the people and strengthening the nation, it led to the fatalism and passivity that was anathema to modernized society.⁵⁰ Murayama Chijun (村山智順 1990: 7) summarized the negative image of shamanism constructed among Korean enlightenment thinkers around the early 20th century Korea as follows: musok prevents the development of sanitary thought; it makes people use their resources in unproductive ways; it encourages people to depend upon supernatural power and to be fatalistic, which are characteristics of primitives; and therefore it causes people to lose their autonomy and the will to progress.⁵¹ The reproduction of this image of shamanism can be also found in a Korean intellectual of today, Kim Dong-gil. He maintains that “shamanic practice has done nothing to make Koreans honest and altruistic. Being unrelated to morality and ethics, shamanism is appealed to only to avoid bad luck, or bring good fortune” (quoted in Kim Chong-ho 2003: 155). In the sense that Professor Kim Dong-gil referred

⁵⁰ We can find the idea that religion should serve as a means to unify the nation and enlighten the people in the Confucian Reformists’ Movement during the Port-opening period of Korea (Lim Bu-yeon 2006: 55-79).

⁵¹ I think that although Murayama’s evaluation of Korean shamanism is criticized as a justification of Japanese colonialism in Korea by Korean scholars, his understanding of shamanism does not differ from contemporary Korean intellectuals who were oriented to Western modernity and evolutionary thinking.

to the idea that religion is different from superstition, he seems to reiterate those concepts of superstition and religion which were formed in the early twentieth century among Korean and Japanese intellectuals.

Up until now, I have examined how shamanism has been classified into the category of superstition, showing that this designation was closely related to Korean intellectuals' understanding of the concept of religion. For something to qualify as religion, Korean intellectuals thought, it should differentiate the supernatural realm from the natural realm and the religious practice should improve society by encouraging moral behavior. Whatever seemed like religion, but lacked these characteristics, was labeled superstition. In Korean shamanism, the idea that supernatural beings continuously intervene in human's affairs was sufficient for it to be denigrated as superstition, in this sense. In the next section, I would like to examine another element that has helped form a negative image of shamanism: Christianity.

2.2.2. Christianity and *Musok*

It is undoubtable that Christianity, in particular Protestant Christianity, played a crucial role in the process of spreading Western modernity among the Korean common people as well as intellectuals since Korea opened its gates to the international world. In addition to Christian missionaries' medical activities, the number of mission schools which provided modern style education was sufficient to make Korean people think of Christianity as the embodiment of the

Western civilization (Andrew Eungi Kim 2000).⁵² Also, Korean intellectuals who considered religion as the foundation of a powerful nation regarded Christianity as a crucial worldview which had served as the spirituality of Western civilization (Shin Gwang-cheol 2003: 71). In particular, many young progressives regarded Christianity and the missionaries as harbingers of progress and development, and the missionaries had the respect and tacit support of the King of Korea and the royal family (J. H. Grayson: 158), and some of the progressives even became Christian in order to display their distance from the past (Robinson 1998; Wells 1990). Once the image of Christianity came to be mingled with modernity, contemporary Korean people tended to see it as a religion of civilization, and even identified Protestantism with modern science (Lee Jin-gu 2006: 290).⁵³

In contrast to the favorable circumstances of Christianity, modernity's encounters with Korean shamans enforced the image of shamanism as an obstacle to the enlightenment of Korea. The legacy of this encounter continues today to encourage the negative image of Korean shamanism, both within and beyond the shaman group (Cha Ok-sung 1997; Son Soon-hwa 1991).

The early Christian missionaries "described Korean popular religion through a language

⁵² Protestant missions to Korea began in 1884 when Dr. Horace N. Allen was transferred from the Presbyterian Mission in China. He first came to Korea not as a missionary but as a physician. However, after earning the gratitude of the king by saving the life of a Korean prince, he finally could start missionary work in Seoul (cf. D. N. Clark 1986). It is of significance here that he approached Korean people through medical activities, which must have helped lead to the association of Christianity with Western modernity among Koreans.

⁵³ The identification of Christianity with science was later challenged by the implantation of various ideas of that time such as rationalism and socialism, which led to the anti-religion movement. Regarding the anti-religion and anti-Christianity movements, see Kim Hung-su (1992) and Lee Jin-gu (2006).

of ‘demon-worship, exorcism, and superstition’” (Kendall 2009: 5).⁵⁴ As seen from those negative terms, spiritual beings (or, other-than-human-beings), such as diverse gods, restless ancestors, wandering spirits, and noxious influences, which shamans were assumed to interact with, were converted by the missionaries’ writings into evil spirits and demons. We can find that these expressions have been continuously reproduced among Protestant missionary literature dealing with Korean religious culture, since W. E. Griffis (1843-1928) who had helped establish missionary work in Korea as well as in Japan. His writings, often referred to by later missionaries, described shamanism as “having no idols except a few fetishes and some rude ancestral images or representations of the spirits of the earth and air,” and “a gross mixture of sorcery and sacrificial ceremonies for the propitiation of evil spirits (Griffis 1888: 300). Such tropes were repeated in the works of later missionaries such as G. H. Jones (1902), H. B. Hulbert (1906/1969), J. S. Gale (1909), H. G. Underwood (1910), and C. A. Clark (1961). Korean shamanism was portrayed as “demonolatry,” “fetishism,” “nature-worship,” “spirit-worship,” and “primitive religion.”⁵⁵ It is unquestionable that all these representations connote that

⁵⁴ The early missionaries initially used the term popular religion to indicate Korean indigenous religious culture, but they gradually pulled together those beliefs and practices under the name of “shamanism.” Moreover, there was a tendency among the Western writers of this period to regard what they considered superstitious as shamanic (Walraven 1998: 63). Later on, this wholesale labeling of Korean popular religion or folk religion into one category of “shamanism” induced a debate among Korean scholars on the issue of the relationship between shamanism and folk religion. For example, a Korean folklorist Lee Pil-young (1987) insists that the term shamanism cannot include all of popular religion, but just one aspect of it. On the other hand, Cho Hung-yoon (1997) argues that shamanism is a systematic religion, different from a popular religion, and many aspects of Korean popular religion can be understood as a derivative of shamanism.

⁵⁵ In addition to those missionaries whom I mentioned above, many others left records on Korean shamanism. However, Hulbert, Underwood, and Clark are different from other missionaries, who treated shamanism here and there in their writings, in that they allotted an independent chapter for the topic of Korean shamanism in their works. In this sense, their writings are often referred to as representing the first stage of studies on Korean shamanism (Mun Sang-hee 1975; Kim Tae-gon 1977; Choi Kil-seong 1970). Also, Paik Nak-jun (1971) evaluated Hulbert’s work as the most authoritative among Korea-related literature of that time, while Min Kyeong-bae (2007) praised Clark’s work as a distinguished achievement regarding Korean religions.

shamanism could not only be understood as “bad religion” or “false religion,” but also could be located on the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder (Kendall Ibid: 4). Although it is said that they were affectionate toward Korean people and culture, and aimed to have an objective understanding of the cosmology of Korea (Cho Hung-yoon 2004: 91-92), their attitudes towards shamanism could not be favorable because their primary purpose was the conversion of the Korean peninsula to Protestant Christianity.⁵⁶

Their contempt for Korean shamanism was clearly implied by the way they described shamans and shaman gods. Basically, the early missionary writers noticed that *mudang* played an important role in the Korean’s religious life, therefore they considered research on the nature and function of *mudang* as the first step toward understanding the religious soil of Korea. In their writings, first of all, we can find that they differentiated between two kinds of Korean shamans: *mudang* and *pansu*. If a *mudang* was a spirit-medium, characterized by her affinity or friendship with spirits, then a *pansu* was a male-exorcist rather than a medium (Hulbert 1969: 421). Of the two kinds of religious specialists, the *mudang* was described as a more harmful being, as illustrated by Homer Hulbert (1969: 414).

The word *mudang* means “deceiving crowd,” and *p’ansu* means “decider of destiny.” The former name is especially appropriate. The *mudang* is always a woman, and is considered at the very lowest point in the social system.

As seen from this citation, there is no feeling of sympathy for a *mudang* in his writing.

⁵⁶ Although the early missionaries’ literatures about Korean shamanism are often criticized with reference to their missiological assumptions and prejudices based on those assumptions, it should be noted that their research became the foundation for positive discourse on Korean shamanism which I will illustrate in the next chapter.

Rather, he wrote that a *mudang* deserved to suffer from social criticisms because of her fraudulent activities. Arguably, his disdain for a *mudang* came from an incorrect analysis of the Chinese characters ‘*mudang* (巫堂)’ and deep rooted prejudice, which also made him suspicious of the authenticity of a *mudang*’s ability to communicate with spirits.⁵⁷ And, he even used an expression that “she [a *mudang*] pretends to be a sort of spiritual medium” (Hulbert 1969: 414, my emphasis). Later on, although Hulbert’s etymological interpretation of a *mudang* was not employed any more by other missionaries, the negative representations also reappeared in other missionaries’ writings, while the characteristics of a *mudang*, namely that they were women, held a low social position, and had bad reputations, were repeatedly emphasized (Cho Hung-yoon 2004a).

The missionaries’ negative attitudes to shamans were also applied to shamanic gods, which was the natural result of the authors’ identity as Christian missionaries who were armed with the doctrine of monotheism and evolutionary thinking. If such terms as “demon” and “evil” reflect those authors’ Christian identity, then the other words for describing shamanism such as “fetishes,” “nature-worship,” “spirit-worship,” and “primitive religion” denote how they were saturated with the evolutionary theory of religion.

To cite W. Capps’s (1995: 80-81) reading of E.B. Tylor, evolutionary theories and concepts, in particular the concept of animism and religion, might provide the missionaries with the possible means to apprehend the religious character of Korean people’s behavior which was different from their own religious culture, not to exclude it from religious discourses. However,

⁵⁷ A Sino-Korean word *mudang* is a composite word of two Chinese characters *mu* and *dang*. Literally, ‘*mu* (巫)’ means a person who connects heaven and earth by dancing; ‘*dang* (堂)’ indicates a house.

although evolutionary thinking encouraged them to grasp the religious character of Korean shamanism, it was also given that shamanism would not fit into a modern society. Such expressions as “a motely crew, a dismal company,” used by G. H. Jones, connoted that shaman gods were seen as survivals of the primitive culture, and this view reappeared in the Gale’s expectation that shamanism would disappear entirely within a few decades (Walraven 1998: 63-64).

In addition to defining shamanic gods in terms of their primitive characters, the authors employed an ethical standard to evaluate them. To the early missionaries, shamanic gods, except for a small minority, were characterized as evil beings which would harm human beings on a whim, and, therefore, shamanism was designated as a religion of horror from which Korean people could never escape (Gale 1909; Hulbert 1969: 413; Clark 1961: 194). The feeling of fear from shamanic gods and spirits seems to have been transmitted to those missionaries by contemporary Korean converts. Kendall, quoting Gale’s report, states, “missionaries were initially surprised when—as they described it—new converts and potential converts came to them ‘in great terror,’ asking ‘to be freed from devils and evil spirits’” (Gale 1898: 246-247, in Kendall 2009: 5).

However, it should be noted that those Korean converts’ desire to be freed from devils and the feeling of fear could have resulted from their self-negation and self-reflection against shamanism, which might be induced from the failure of shamanic ritual to meet those converts’ needs or from their desire to depend on a more powerful agent. This means that the Korean informants were already skeptical about shaman’s authenticity and power to control the spiritual beings. In this sense, it might be the case that the dark and gloomy image of Korean shamanism

was the product of uncritical acceptance by missionaries of Korean converts' confessions. Their unreflective citation is also revealed through their transmission of a story about human sacrifice in the tradition of Korean shamanism which appeared in *Korean Repository* (1896) and *Korean Review* (1903). Cho Hung-yoon (2004a: 109) summarizes the story as follows:

In the early Joseon dynasty, *mudangs* who lived around the area of Boryeong in Chungcheong Province used to sacrifice a virgin to the dragon god, while performing *Yongshin gut* (a shaman ritual for a dragon god) held for the safety of sailors' voyages. A newly appointed magistrate came and detained them, and sacrificed those *mudangs* to the dragon god one by one, saying that the god would be surely happy with a *mudang* rather than a virgin. Since then, *mudang* settled into the lowest position.

As Cho insists, it is not clear where the story came from, and actually there is no proof of human sacrifice in the tradition of Korean shamanism. However, it is important that the story was fully enjoyed and cited by those missionaries and encouraged them to see shamanism as a religion of immorality.

At any rate, regardless of the credibility of the missionaries' research, it resulted in a hostile relationship between Korean shamanism and Christianity. In the hegemonic process of the two cultures, the Korean people's desire for modernization and the association of Christianity with modernity were strong allies for Christianity during the time of enlightenment. This tendency continued to be enforced during the period of rapid economic development from the early 1960s and the end of 1980s. Andrew Eungi Kim (2000: 2) demonstrates the strong affinity between Christianity and modernity. He writes, "a disproportionate number of Christians have held positions of power and influence following the country's liberation from Japan in 1945.

From the leaders of the independence movement to the current political leadership, Christians have always been conspicuously salient in the nation's politics.”

In conclusion, it is my assertion that even if Korean shamanism was treated on the level of religious discourse by the early missionaries, it could serve only as an Other to modernity because of the interpretive frameworks of that time such as Christianity missiology and evolutionary theories. In this sense, it is not strange that many anti-superstition campaigns were led by a variety of Christian groups.

2.2.3. Anti-Superstition Movements

The anti-superstition campaigns in the history of Korea could be said to be the embodiment of the consciousness that shamanism is an obstacle to the making of a strong nation through modernization. However, as I described earlier, prior to Koreans' obsession with the modernization, there existed an anti-superstition movement. During the Joseon dynasty, it showed itself in the substitution of shaman's rituals with Confucian style ones; by expelling shamans from the capitol; and by designating a shaman as one of the eight outcastes. However, because of the limitation of Confucianism as a religion, the anti-superstition movement of the Joseon dynasty did not make a deep impression in the consciousness of the common people.

On the other hand, once modernity became the prime value for all Korean people after the late nineteenth century, the image of Korean shamanism as an obstacle to modernization has continued to be reproduced and enforced even now. During the Japanese colonial period,

shamanic practices were restricted under “the Police Offence Act,” and put under surveillance by the Government General, and shamans came to be treated as criminals. In terms of anti-superstition consciousness and activities, it seems that Korean enlightenment thinkers were more active than the colonial government. Many Korean young men’s associations, which were the main activists in the cultural movement of the 1920s, emphasized self-cultivation, dissemination of new education, improvement of customs and rural life, and most importantly for our purposes, anti-superstition campaigns (Park Chan-seung 1993: 217-304; Lee Yong-beom 2005: 170).

Generally, their anti-superstition campaigns were composed of various programs such as public lectures, seminars, and newspapers, and were intended to illuminate the harmful effects of superstitions. In addition to these moderate methods, they sometimes broke into shaman’s ritual sites and smashed shamanic objects. Lee Yong-beom (2005: 174) summarizes the characteristics of the anti-superstition campaign of the 1920s and 1930s as follows. “Some anti-superstition campaigns were carried out individually by a particular association, but mostly they were performed by many associations in league with each other, and supported by a district branch office of a newspaper.” In this sense, I would like to argue that it is the early twentieth century’s omni-directional approach to superstition, in terms of a ripple effect, that differentiates it from the earlier anti-superstition movement of the Confucian elites of the Joseon dynasty.

Such anti-superstition campaigns continued even after the Korean War and reached their peak in the New Village Movement in the 1970s. Before inquiring into the New Village Movement, it is worth noticing that the publication of textbooks for the students of elementary, middle, and high schools from the 1950s to the early 1970s functioned as a crucial means to strengthen the anti-superstitious attitudes among the students. Those textbooks even caused

students to “be ashamed of” some aspects of traditional Korean culture (Choi Gyoung-ho 1997: 73). The following excerpts from the textbooks of the 1950s well illustrate the approach of the anti-superstition campaign of that time (quoted in Choi Gyoung-ho 1997: 73-74):

Once people come to think scientifically, what is thought of as unreasonable and illogical was ostracized. Not only the fact that ghosts are not the cause of diseases but also the fact that *mudangs* are insane has been clarified... The most important way to defeat superstitions like this [shamanism] is to think scientifically, to exclude things that are unreasonable and illogical, by spreading science to all people. We must make the effort that has been wasted on superstitions and devote it to promoting a scientific life. (My translation)

These textbooks sharply distinguished superstition from religion:

The necessity of religion even in the time of science is based upon the fact that there are many things that have not been resolved by science....Religion is a thing that gives hope to humans, and coexists side by side with science. (My translation)

The New Village Movement commenced in 1970 as a symbol of the modernization of Korea, and was designed to bring national progress through the improvement of living conditions, economic growth, and the development of the mind (Ministry of Culture and Public Information 1972: 49). To put it in a slightly different manner, it could be said that this movement was a Korean particularization of Western modernity by focusing on the rationalization and scientification of Koreans’ everyday life. Here, it is needless to say that shamanism was conceived of as a representation of the pre-modern, which was characterized by irrationality and passivity. In addition, referring to the fact that South Korea maintained a capitalistic economy and pro-America stance after liberation from Japanese colonial rule, and conservative

Christianity has been very powerful since that time, we can see the socio-historical circumstances in which the official discourse of the New Village Movement justified the anti-superstition campaign against Korean shamanism.

The New Village Movement, at first, was initiated by president Park Chung Hee to establish a self-supporting economy in rural villages, but later was extended to the cities, companies, and finally to schools, and permeated into all aspects of Korean people's lives. In fact, education in the spirit of the Movement became a part of school curriculum, newspapers, radio programs, and television programs (Jeong Gu-young 2004: 9). The technological developments which paralleled the New Village Movement, especially the availability of new media absent from the anti-superstition campaigns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, allowed it to have a much greater influence in the construction and dissemination of the negative image of Korean shamanism than its predecessors. In this context, commentators writing today do not hesitate to ascribe the negative image of shamanism among the South Korean population to the New Village Movement (Cho Hung-yoon 1990, 2004b; Hwang Ru-si 2000; Choi Jun-shik 2009).

So far, I have described how the negative images of Korean shamanism, connoted in such discourses as *eumsa* and *misin*, have been constructed since the Joseon dynasty, and argued that the images were the result of the cultural politics between the dominant ideologies of each period and shamanism. Also, I have shown how those negative discourses permeated the consciousness of Korean people through a variety of official policies such as restricting a shaman's residence, designating shamans as outcastes, and carrying out anti-superstition campaigns.

During the Joseon dynasty, shamanism was criticized as *eumsa*, licentious rituals, in the

sense that it did not comply with the state ritual system. At that time the hierarchical ritual system was regarded as an index of a state's degree of civilization. Therefore, all rituals that were outside of the system could not avoid the critical discourse of *eumsa*. However, the *eumsa*-discourse did not include criticism of the theological position of the shamanic worldview itself. Rather, it has been proven that Confucian elites shared some beliefs with shamans, and their criticisms of shamanism were limited to the aspect of practice. Endeavors for the total rejection of shamanism in terms of its theology as well as practice were induced by the import of the concept of religion and modernity at the time of Korean enlightenment.

Once the concept of religion put down roots in Korean intellectual soil in the late nineteenth century, a division of true religion from false religion occurred; and the term '*misin*, superstition,' indicating all magical practices as well as shamanism, was covered by the latter. In particular, the notion that religion should not intrude into the physical world, which would be managed scientifically, such as through the law of cause and effect, became an interpretive framework to categorize what could be classified into 'religion' or 'superstition.' In these intellectual circumstances, shamanic practices, characterized by their endeavors to obtain worldly benefits through relationships with supernatural beings, could not help being stigmatized as superstitious. In addition, the evolutionary theories of religion strengthened the negative images of shamanism; they were seen as survivals of primitive culture and representations of Korean backwardness. Moreover, I showed how evolutionary thinking, held by Protestant missionaries as well Korean modernizers, became a weapon to criticize Korean shamanism. In the end, I described how all these negative connotations and their justificatory frameworks were particularized through anti-superstition campaigns in the modern history of Korea.

However, it should be noted that the spectrum of Korean shamanism is not filled only with negative discourses. On the other end of the spectrum, we can find many positive ones surrounding Korean shamanism. The positive connotations and the analysis of the history of their construction, which appears in the next chapter, will demonstrate how wide the spectrum of views on Korean shamanism is, and will show why in modern Korea we encounter a wide variety of shamanisms.

Chapter 3. Positive Images of Korean Shamanism

In contrast with official discourses which de-valorized Korean shamanism as licentious ritual and superstition, some scholars have helped to construct a positive image of shamanism by emphasizing its significance in the history of Korea.⁵⁸ Although such scholars have used different terms according to their disciplines and methodologies, they are unanimous in insisting that musok is the core of Korean culture and hence represents Koreanness. This view itself was not intended to raise the status of musok. However, it is of significance because it brought musok into the space of academic and official discourses and led to musok being evaluated in a more complex way, rather than simply labeling it as a superstition. Therefore, I would argue that this new discourse has made it possible for shamanistic agents to (re)construct their self-image and to appropriate such discourses in terms of their image-making process. This new perspective and evaluation of musok has its root in the situation in which Korea could not help but open itself to Western imperialism and Japanese colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Threats from abroad and the continued internal failure to keep pace with the new world order of the late nineteenth century forced Korean intellectuals to take iconoclastic views of the Sino-centric Korean tradition and at the same time encouraged them to develop national self-

⁵⁸ The emergence of this new perspective does not mean that Korean shamanism is now respected by elites and the public. Rather, I would like to point out that, of the wide spectrum of Korean shamanism, if the discourses of shamanism as eumsa and misin takes their places on the one side, then discourses which designate musok as the core of Korean culture tend toward the opposite side. In order to expound on the variety of Korean shamanism in contemporary Korea, it is necessary to inquire into both sides of this spectrum.

consciousness. Their critiques of Korean tradition, in particular, were centered on Korea's political and cultural subservience to China, Confucian social ethics, and native Korean folk culture (Robinson 1988).⁵⁹ In enlightenment writing spaces such as *The Independent*, we can read many articles which portrayed Chinese as the worst people in the world (1897. 7.1), who should be expelled from Korea (1896. 5.21)(quoted in Jeong Sun-tae 2005: 181-182). In addition, such Confucian concepts as filial piety, social harmony, and hierarchical social relations that had long been core values during the Joseon Dynasty were criticized, and many folk beliefs and practices were labeled as superstition and therefore became the target of criticisms, as I described in the previous chapter.

Along with harsh criticisms of Sino-centric Korean traditions and folk beliefs and practices as obstacles to the modernization of Korea, many scholars were trying to search for 'Koreanness' by inquiring into ancient Korean history and indigenous Korean culture, which laid the groundwork for the reevaluation of Korean shamanism. If the hostility to Chinese culture and critiques on Sino-centric traditions and superstitious folk beliefs were expressing "a basic condition of modernity which presupposes an act of self-conscious distancing from a past or a situation regarded as naïve" (R. Styers 2004: 4),⁶⁰ then, I think, the scholarly interest in Korean shamanism is an act of rediscovering what is valuable from *the* past or *the* situation.⁶¹ However,

⁵⁹ Criticisms of traditional Korean folk culture were another feature of enlightenment iconoclasm, which I described in the previous chapter.

⁶⁰ Korean nationalists made every effort to discover the value of their own history and language in order to establish a new nation-based identity at this time. The criticisms of the official usage of classical Chinese and the Korean vernacular movements initiated by Ju Shi-gyeong are also best understood in this context (Robinson 1988; Shin Gi-wook 2006).

⁶¹ In addition to the interests in Korean shamanism, Korean intellectuals tried to establish a new nation-based identity and solidarity by looking into their own history and language. For information on their research on history and languages, see Shin Gi-wook (2006).

the value of Korean shamanism to Korean intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was no more than the idea that it could function as a national symbol which could unite all Korean people into one nation.⁶² Furthermore, early Korean modernizers who were obsessed with rationalism were skeptical about the usage of folk beliefs such as Korean shamanism for nation-building. It was not until the 1920s that academic work on Korean shamanism studies shifted to new interpretive frameworks.

In 1910, in spite of all attempts to make Korea an independent and powerful modern nation, the signing of the Korea-Japanese Treaty of Annexation made Korea a Japanese colony. The iron –fisted rule of the Japanese colonial state suppressed Korean intellectuals’ nationalistic activities until the nation-wide movement of March 1st, 1919, which, though suppressed, led to a change in the colonial government’s rule over the Korean peninsula.⁶³ Among the various colonial policies which followed the period of iron-fisted rule, the cultural assimilation policy deserves to be inquired into because it encouraged Korean scholars to study shamanic practices

⁶² According to C. Eckert (1991: 226)’s argument, there was no consciousness of “Koreanness” and no notion of Korea as one nation prior to the 19th century. He states that “there was little, if any, feeling of loyalty toward the abstract concept of ‘Korea’ as a nation-state, or toward fellow inhabitants of the peninsula as ‘Koreans.’” In this sense, it is plausible to insist that the notion of one Korea or ‘Koreanness’ was the product of a particular historical situation.

⁶³ The change of colonial policy in the Korean peninsula was also due to the change of the political circumstances in Japan. In company with the inauguration of a new Prime Minister, Hara Takashi (原敬), who had advocated “Nation Extensionism (内地延長主意)”, the iron-fisted rule which had been promoted by the military authorities in the colony was criticized even in Japan (Choi Seok-young 1999).

and the history of Korean shamanism more closely and carefully.⁶⁴

The cultural assimilation policy was intended to transform the Korean people into loyal citizens of Japan and entailed not only the suppression of Korean national sentiment but also the use of major cultural tools to maximize the effects of the policy. The study of old Korean customs by colonial part-time researchers of the Office of the Governor-General was one of those cultural means to support the hypothesis that Korea and Japan had the same origin, a theory upon which the cultural assimilation policy could be based. At the start of this research, Korean folk religion received more attention than any genre of the verbal arts, or topics such as family organization and material culture, which had long been studied by folklore researchers (Janelli 1986).⁶⁵ Korean shamanism, in particular, which had still been regarded as licentious ritual and superstition and therefore supervised by the colonial Governor-General according to the Police Offence Regulations in 1912, also had its name on the to-be-studied list of the part-time researchers' and was finally defined as a Korean "indigenous faith" in 1923 (Choi Seok-young 1999).

Interestingly, the idea that musok is a Korean indigenous faith was appropriated in different directions depending on scholars' political positions. To Japanese colonialist scholars who researched Korean shamanism, such as Dori Ryujo (鳥居龍藏), Akiba Dakashi (秋葉隆),

⁶⁴ In contrast to the methods of governing the colony, used in the period of iron-fisted rule, the change in the policies of the colonial regime allowed Korean intellectuals to establish nationalist movements at this time unless they involved direct political activities. M. Robinson calls the Korean nationalists' movements in this period "Cultural Nationalism." Because the cultural nationalists could not directly express their hopes for immediate Korean independence and viewed the Korean masses as ignorant of the new values necessary for the creation of a modern nation, they only advocated mass education and enlightenment to prepare for the future independence of Korea. The publication of two major newspapers, the East Asia Daily (*Donga-ilbo*) and the Korea Daily (*Chosun-ilbo*), and other journals are illustrative examples of their activities.

⁶⁵ About the theoretical and historical background of assimilation policy inside Japanese academic tradition, see Janelli & Yim (1989: 3-42).

Akamatzu Chijo (赤松智城), and Murayama Chijun (村山智順), Korean shamanic beliefs and practices were understood as “survivals” of Japanese primitive Shinto. A “survival,” conceptualized in *Primitive Culture* by E. B. Tylor (1871), indicates cultural elements or complexes that once made a certain sense within the contexts in which they were developed, but have outlived their contexts and become harmful superstitions. Also, it is well known that the existence of survivals had functioned as a barometer of civilization and as a justification for colonial rule. Following this hypothesis, Japanese researchers also used these practices and beliefs to justify Japanese rule in Korea, which they thought still stood on the lower rungs of civilization.⁶⁶

In contrast, most Korean scholars who resisted the Japanese cultural assimilation policy had a nationalistic orientation. They focused on the originality and centrality of Korean shamanism in East Asian culture. Although Korean scholars did not deny the argument that their contemporary shamanic practices and beliefs were a sort of survival, they did not connect those survivals to Japanese primitive Shinto but to an independent Korea’s national origin and archaic faith. Based upon this idea, they tried to stir up national consciousness. In this sense, Kim even contends that Korean shamanism studies in the period began “*strategically*” out of a concern for Korean independence and the recovery of sovereignty, and developed into one branch of the cultural nationalistic movement (Kim Seong-nae 1999). Also, this close relationship between the origin of Korean shamanism studies and its historical background helps us to explain the long lasting nationalistic tendency of Korean shamanism studies which is often criticized by modern

⁶⁶ The idea of understanding musok in relation to Japanese primitive Shinto was initiated by Dori Ryujo who worked for the colonial Office of the Governor-General as a part-time researcher in the 1910’s, and it continued with Murayama Chijun who had worked on the subject from the 1920’s to the 1930’s (Choi Seok-young 1999).

scholars (e.g. Choi Kil-seong 1989; Cho Hung-yoon 1994; Choi Chung-moo 1987; Kendall 2009).

Such views of Korean shamanism as an indigenous Korean faith and the attempt to connect it to ancient Korean history, held by Korean nationalist scholars, are a radical deviation from the previous official discourses, and they have made the spectrum of Korean shamanism wider and wider since then. In the following sections, I will describe how these perspectives and endeavors have been particularized in the history of Korean shamanism discourses and identify on which interpretive frameworks they have been established to represent Koreanness. At the same time, I will investigate academic discourses which I believe not only represent Korean shamanic cultures but also are one constituent of the complex of modern Korean shamanism. In other words, although the historical development of academic discourse on Korean shamanism, which I treat here, can be understood as an objective representation, it is my contention that those academic discourses should be understood as a constituent element in the construction of Korean shamanism while at the same time they are appropriated by shamans and clients. In this context, I used terms such as constituent and agent to indicate the academic discourse.

3.1. Shamanism and Korean Nationalism

The first remarkable interpretive framework, held by Korean scholars, was to link musok to Dan'gun Sin'gyo (a religion of God). This framework consists of two basic ideas: one is that the Korean race originates from Dan'gun; another is that Dan'gun Sin'gyo which is assumed to

be a religion of GoJoseon (Ancient Joseon) was continued through musok. The compatibility of the two ideas in a single framework seems to be a product of a particular historical circumstance which is characterized as a struggle between Japanese colonialism and Korean nationalism.

Let me discuss briefly the idea that Dan'gun is the originator of the Korean nation and culture. In fact, that idea had appeared much earlier than its recurrence in the nineteenth century. It has been argued that since the idea had appeared for the first time in a historical document in the late thirteenth century when Goryeo suffered from a Mongolian invasion, it recurs and was reinterpreted whenever Korean national identity was threatened (Park Hye-ryung 1999; Yun Yi-Heum 1994; Yim Jae-hae 1992).⁶⁷ In other words, Dan'gun has functioned historically as a focal point of national unification during crises.

Likewise, we can understand Korean nationalists' attempts to interpret Dan'gun as the national progenitor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a manifestation of this phenomenon.⁶⁸ However, such endeavors were challenged by Japanese colonialist historiography. Around that time, Japanese historian circles produced many studies which insisted that Dan'gun and GoJoseon were not important because they were only fictional stories or legends and not objective history. For example, Imanish Ryu (1872-1932) commented on the Dan'gun myth in this way:

⁶⁷ The earliest historical documents which contain the Dan'gun myth, the *Samguk yusa* and the *Jewang ungi*, were written in the 13th century: the former was written by the Buddhist monk Ilyon; the other, by the Confucian scholar Lee Sunghyoo. Although the details of the Dan'gun myth in each document differ, both refer to Dan'gun as the progenitor of GoJoseon, a kingdom said to have existed over 1,400 years earlier.

⁶⁸ The operative phrase, 'Dan'gi' which dates the beginning of the Korean nation from the time of Dan'gun calculated from his purported descent from Heaven in 2333 B.C, appeared increasingly after 1905 in literature by Korean nationalists. Schmid (2002) parallels the recognition of Dan'gun around the time with the rediscovery of Huangdi (The Yellow Emperor) in China and the usage of the sun goddess Amaterasu during the Meiji period to define the imperial line in Japan.

...As Dan'gun worship has suddenly been in vogue among Joseon people, some believe Dan'gun to be a divine founder of Joseon and to have established religious institutions such as Dan'gun'gyo and Daejonggyo. However, the Dan'gun legend was not the same as it is now. Also, the title Dan'gun did not exist in the past. This legend has just been improved...Because there are currently groundless rumors that it is authentic, I have come to write this article. (quoted in Lee Pil-young 1994: 887-888)

Moreover, Japanese colonialist scholars were skeptical of the historical document, *Samguk yusa*, which contains the Dan'gun myth, due to the fact that there is no record of Dan'gun in earlier documents such as *Samguk Sagi* (1145) or *Wiseo* (*Weishu*, 550-557) which is quoted in the *Samguk yusa* (Lee Pil-young 1994; Hyun-key Kim Hogarth 1999). In the end, the Joseon History Compilation Committee came to decide to exclude Dan'gun from Korean history (Lee Sang-shi 1990). As could be expected, this colonialist historiography reflected the idea that Korean history cannot be older than Japan's and Korea did not originate from Dan'gun but had begun as a colony of China or Japan, which justified Japanese colonial rule over the Korean peninsula (Lee Pil-young 1994).

Contrary to Japanese historiography which focused too much attention on the examination of the genuineness of historical documents and described the Korean race and culture as subordinate to China or Japan, Korean nationalist intellectuals insisted on the independence and originality of Korean history and culture through the interpretation of the Dan'gun myth.⁶⁹ In order to unearth the significance of Dan'gun in Korean history, they drew

⁶⁹ Lee Pil-young contends that this biased usage of bibliographical studies on the Dan'gun myth by Japanese scholars proves their colonialist intentions (Lee Pil-young 1994).

from a wide variety of methodologies, including mythology, anthropology, and folklore. For example, Shin Chae-ho, a famous nationalist historian of the period, did not understand Dan'gun only as a national founder or hero who had conquered and ruled over a wide swath of northern Asia, but also as a religious figure who had supervised a form of heavenly worship commonly practiced in that region. With reference to the tradition of heavenly worship, he seems to assume a culture area which unified various nomadic tribes in northern Asia (Lee Pil-young 1994). Also, Choi Nam-seon, indicating the similarities between shamanisms among Korea's neighboring ethnic groups on continental Asia and Korean shamanism by reviewing ethnographical literatures and using etymological methodology, argued that there had been a sort of prehistoric connection among these societies. Janelli (1986: 32) summarizes Choi's argument as follows: "a powerful prehistoric kingdom had developed in the territories of modern-day Korea and Manchuria...the culture of this society later spread to nearby peoples...and Korea's origin myth of Dan'gun reflected the kingdom's political system in which the roles of shaman and king were combined."

Korean nationalist scholars, on the one hand, tried to establish an independent Korean ancient history by emphasizing the significance of the Dan'gun myth. On the other hand, they saw great importance in the assumption that there was an indigenous religious institution which had worshipped the Three Gods (Hwanin, Hwanung, and Dan'gun) and possessed practices and customs according to the divine teachings of Dan'gun. Their interests in Korean indigenous religion might be understood in terms of the value of religion around that time. Because there existed an idea that religion was a sign of civilization which functioned as a foundation for

national strength,⁷⁰ some held that to prove the existence of an indigenous religion—they called it Sin'gyo or Sudugyo—and its continuity was also to prove the originality and independence of Korea. Hence, in a sense, we can argue that the interpretive framework that links musok to Dan'gun Sin'gyo shows a dynamic process of how the concept of a religion was acculturated into the field of Korean nationalist academia in the colonial period.

However, early nationalist discourses on Dan'gun Sin'gyo did not extend to the understanding of their contemporary common people's shamanic practices. As we can see from *Sindanminsa*, which were written by the nationalist historian Kim Gyo-heon, they presumed that the teaching of Sin'gyo had declined along with Korean history and only a few people knew its teachings by the time of the Joseon dynasty (Schmid 2002: 195).⁷¹ To them, the pure Korean religious teaching was to be rebuilt by historical research, not to be found among the contemporary masses. In a sense, it could be a major dilemma for nationalist intellectuals who were searching for a modern rationality to regard their contemporary common people's shamanic practices and beliefs, which had been considered to be pre-modern and superstitious, as important (Robinson 1988: 35-36; Kim Seong-nae 1999: 148-149). It was in the 1920s when Korean shamanism was designated as an indigenous faith by colonial discourse that Korean intellectuals started to study shamanic practices and beliefs in relation to Dan'gun Sin'gyo in earnest.

The studies of Korean shamanism in the 1920s, which were led by Yi Neung-hwa and

⁷⁰ As for Korean intellectuals' reactions to the concept of religion at that time, see Chang Seok-man (1992).

⁷¹ Kim Kyo-heon was the second patriarch of Daejonggyo, a religion which claimed to be following the teaching of Dan'gun, from which we can infer that his vision of the decline of Sin'gyo through Korean history might be a historical rationale for its foundation.

Choi Nam-seon, are different from the early radical nationalist studies of Korean indigenous religion in that, in spite of the difference in the direction of the study of Korean shamanism between them, both regarded *mu* (巫), a native term indicating a shaman among their contemporary people, as a priest of Dan'gun Sin'gyo.⁷²

Yi Neung-hwa (1869-1943) is sometimes criticized as pro-Japanese due to the fact that he had worked for the colonial government on the editorial staff of the Joseon History Compilation Committee since 1922. However, his involvement as a member of the Committee became a motive for him to study Korean shamanism.⁷³ This is evident from the fact that his writings on Korean shamanism did not appear until after he was appointed as an editorial staff member of the Committee.⁷⁴ Hence, we can explain the motives by which he began his study of Korean shamanism from both external and internal factors.

Like his contemporary intellectuals, he thought that Confucian culture, imported from China, could not be the essential glue that had bound together all Korean people since the establishment of the Joseon dynasty and criticized it as the principal offender which had alienated the Korean common people from the yangban. His comments on Confucianism represent these criticisms: "That Joseon took Confucianism as a prime value solely for a small

⁷² Im Sok-jae (1986: 14) clearly states that the interpretive framework of Korean shamanism in connection to Dan'gun was established by these two scholars.

⁷³ Lee Yi-hwa (1993: 241-247) designates Yi Nung hwa as pro-Japanese because he distorted national history and contributed to the establishment of a colonialist historical view.

⁷⁴ His first writing about Korean shamanism titled *Joseon Sin'gyo Wollyugo* (An Essay on the Origin of Joseon Sin'gyo) appeared after he was appointed as a staff member on the Committee. There, he tried to illuminate the objective value of *Samguk yusa* as a research material and to prove that the Dan'gun myth was a national tradition. Before he became interested in Korean shamanism, almost all of his writings were about Buddhism. His writings on Buddhism could be numbered as follows: approximately 120 works (1915-1924); app. 20 works (1925-34); 3 works (1935-43). The fact that he had worked for a Buddhist magazine for 10 years during the first part of his career might help explain the large number of writings on Buddhism during that time (Yang Eun-yong 1994: 45-65).

minority of yangban, and all the historical records are just for and about them; hence they are not relevant to common people. Thus, Confucianism is a yangban's religion, not a common people's one" (Yi Neung-hwa 1928: 39-40, quoted in Seo Young-dae 1993: 26). The religion of only one class cannot unite all Korean people nor represent Korean culture as a whole. He argued that only shamanism was indigenous to Korea and even other imported religions could not help but absorb shamanic elements in order to implant themselves into Korean soil. Thus, he maintained that we could not understand Korean culture and religion without considering Korean shamanism (Yi Neung-hwa 1927/2002).

Another motive, external in nature, might also have been present. As mentioned earlier, when he was appointed as one of the editorial staff members of the Committee, Korean shamanism had already been recognized as an indigenous faith of Korean people by Japanese colonial scholars. Yet, in contrast to the colonial discourse which tended to regard Korean shamanism as a survival of ancient Shinto, he connected it to an ancient Korean faith, Dan'gun Sin'gyo. This connection, on one hand, might be explained in terms of his nationalistic claim against Japanese assimilation policy. On the other hand, as Janelli (1986: 33) states, Yi's basic assumption that a pure Korean religion could be found among folk culture is very reminiscent of Japanese nationalists' claim for Shinto.⁷⁵ Whether his interest in Korean shamanism was motivated by resistance against the colonialists' interpretation or by a desire to imitate Japanese nationalists' claim for Shinto, it is undeniable that his works were to some degree affected by

⁷⁵ As for the similarity between Yi's interest in Korean shamanism and Japanese nationalistic claims for Shinto, see Kasulis (2004). He describes Atsutane's (1776-1843) interests in Japanese folk beliefs and practices as follows: "Therefore, he reasoned, if one wanted to recapture the 'ancient way' of the Japanese, one could draw on Japanese folk values, ideas, and practices..." (Kasulis 2004: 120).

Japanese scholarship.

At the opening of an essay *Joseon Musok Go (An Essay on Korean Shamanism)* which is assumed to be his culminating work in Korean shamanism, Yi Neung-hwa stated that the Joseon *minjok* (nation) had possessed Sin'gyo since ancient times and that Hwanung and Dan'gun themselves had been considered to be gods or men of divinity.⁷⁶ This statement does not seem to be different from his contemporary nationalist historians' assumption about the existence of Sin'gyo. However, he went on to write that “*mu* was respected because he/she as a priest offered worship to gods and performed rituals to Heaven. Hence the term *mu* became a title of the king in Silla (called Cha-cha Ung), and we can see the existence of the title of *samu* (師巫, a master shaman) in Goguryeo” (Yi Neung-hwa 2002: 10). In addition, he described how other historic rituals and priests in Korean history also followed customs handed down from Sin'gyo, which were none other than *muchuk sinsa* (巫祝神事, a shaman's ritual activity). Therefore, Yi Neung-hwa (2002: 12) clearly states:

Those who want to conduct research on the origin of Joseon Sin'gyo, on the philosophy and religion of Joseon, and on the historical change of Joseon society cannot but inquire into *musok*.
(My translation)

Although his basic concern with Korean shamanism might be said to be a by-product of his endeavors to establish a Korean religious history (Jo Nam-uk 2005), it is of significance that

⁷⁶ *Joseon Musok Go* is evaluated by modern scholars as the first scientific work in the sense that it proposed to illuminate the history of Korean shamanism for itself, different from the preceding documents which have fragmentary comments on Korean shamanism used to explain other phenomena (Seo Yong-dae 1993). Originally, this book was written in Chinese characters, but it was translated into Korean in 2002 by Lee Jae-gon. In this dissertation, I refer to the Korean version.

he understood contemporary shamanic beliefs and practices as having been inherited from Sin'gyo. His method of linking Korean shamanism to Sin'gyo is based upon an etymological methodology. Let me give an example:

A title of a king in the period of Silla was Cha-cha-Ung (次次雄) and the last syllable of it "Ung," which indicates *mudang*, is assumed to originate from the divine city of HwanUng (桓雄). At the divine city, an ancient shaman established a Dan (an offering altar) and performed a ritual to Heaven, hence the shaman was called Dan'gun. Dan'gun was a king who had divine rights... The first syllable "Cha" of Cha-cha-Ung has the same pronunciation of the Cha of Chada (means being cold) whose Chinese character is Han (寒)... Therefore Cha-cha-Ung is none other than HwanUng...and he himself is another Dan'gun. (Yi Neung-hwa 2002: 32. My translation)

In addition to the relationship between Dan'gun and *mudang*, many shamanic terms used by the common people of his day were explained by this methodology. Beginning with the connection to Dan'gun Sin'gyo, Yi mainly focused his essay on historical records about musok and current-day shamanic customs. Though historical records constitute the greater part of his essay, it is hard to describe it as simply a collection of source materials. Rather, I would argue that those descriptions are not an arrangement of raw facts but a historical negotiation through an interpretive framework.⁷⁷

As mentioned before, there was the idea, in his day, that *musok* was not simply regarded as a superstition, but was a living tradition of Sin'gyo. In a sense, he might want to fill Sin'gyo

⁷⁷ Choi Kil-seong (1970: 132) criticizes Yi Nung-hwa's work on shamanism as lacking in academic methodologies and as simply a collection of historical literature, indicating that his work has been used as basic material for later Japanese scholars of Korean shamanism. However, if we keep the interpretive framework used in his work in mind, we can see that it was more than a collection of historical materials. Shin Kwang-cheol (1992) argues that Yi's citations of Chinese and Korean texts are not merely "material-collection" but are oriented to establishing "the history of Korean religion."

with the content of *musok*, because the assumption of the existence of Sin'gyo could be fortified by showing its continuity with contemporary times. Through an interpretive framework that links *musok* to Dan'gun Sin'gyo, Korean shamanism came to be re-evaluated as a significant cultural heritage which holds an indigenous faith and carries Koreanness.

If Yi Neung-hwa contributed to the diachronic expansion of the spectrum of Korean shamanism through historical research, we can say that Choi Nam-seon treated it synchronically. In contrast with Yi's historical concern with Korean shamanism, Choi does not appear to have directly been motivated by a desire to illuminate the history of Korean religion. Rather, he paid his primary attention to indigenous Korean traditions and their influence on surrounding peoples in the ancient past, by which he believed that he could show the sovereignty and supremacy of the Korean nation. In doing so, he could find the value of the Dan'gun myth and establish Pulham Munhwaron (A theory of Pulham Culture).

Pulham Munhwaron can be simply summarized as follows: firstly, there was a hidden culture which consisted of an oriental civilization along with Indo-European culture and Chinese culture; secondly, that culture spread through a large part of Eurasia from the Black Sea through the Caspian Sea, Tienshan, and the Altai Mountains down to Korea, Japan, and Okinawa; and lastly, the core element of this culture is the faith in a Heaven which is represented by the sun and personified by a God, with ancient Joseon holding the central position in that culture.

The key method through which he built his theory of Pulham culture was the phonetic similarity of words found among the cultural sphere: *park* and *taigar*. His focus on those words seemed to be induced by the fact that there were many lofty mountains whose names included *paek* in Korea, China and Japan. According to his linguistic inquiries, the word *paek*, including

local variations, is a derivative of the original word form *park* which meant divinity and Heaven in the past. On the basis of the original meaning of the word *park*, he insisted that to name a mountain with the word *paek* was to sacralize it. The many mountains in Korea containing the word *paek* proved Korea's centrality in the cultural sphere.

In the sense that there was faith in Heaven and a sacred mountain among the people of this cultural sphere and that the Dan'gun myth represented the belief system, Choi advanced a view that myth could reveal the key to the understanding of the nature of this culture. Basically, he believed that the term Dan'gun (Tan'gun) originated from taigari or taigar in ancient Korean, meaning "head" in modern Korean. He, in his article Pulham Munhwaron published in 1927, stated that "it is no doubt that taigar meant Heaven in the past if it is compared to other words in the same language family, for example, in the cases of tangri in Turkish and tengri in Mongolian" (Choi Nam-seon 1927/2008).⁷⁸ Continuous linguistic research on the term and its transformations convinced him that Dan'gun was the title for shaman-rulers of ancient Korea. Choi (2008: 116) wrote:

The word Dan'gun, derived from taigari or its variation, originally meant Heaven but came to indicate a religious and political leader who represented Heaven. (My translation)

In addition to the linguistic interpretation of the word Dan'gun, he argued, with the help of mythological analysis, that the worldview expressed in the Dan'gun myth represented and preserved a basic structure of the belief system common to the pulham cultural sphere.

⁷⁸ Pulham Munhwaron was originally published in Japanese in 1927, and translated into Korean in 2008. I refer to the Korean version in this dissertation.

According to him, the descent of Hwanung, Dan'gun's father, from heaven was evidence of an ancient Korean's belief in the existence of three realms—the Sky world or Upper world, the Middle world, and the Lower world, a common feature in Eurasian shamanism (Choi Nam-seon 1927/1973: 535).

Choi's argument that Dan'gun was a shaman-ruler of ancient Korea and that the belief-system centering around him still remained in Korean shamanic tradition became a foundation of his assertion that Korea occupied a central position in this great cultural tradition.

The word *Tanggul* or *Tanggurae* still means a shaman in some parts of modern Korea, and as I described earlier the word *Taigam* which is a derivative of it (*taigar*) is still regarded as a supreme god in the Korean folk pantheon. (Choi Nam-seon 2008: 117. My translation)

Here, Choi argues that Korean shamanism had transmitted the essence of the antique belief system of the pulham cultural sphere, based upon the idea that a specific area in which the survivals of the primitive culture are densely distributed and mostly found represents the whole culture which includes but is not limited to that core area. Choi's insistence on the centrality of Korean culture in the pulham culture was constructed in this context.⁷⁹

Ironically, this idea might also be used to place Korea on a lower level of civilization in terms of evolutionary thinking, as I described earlier. However, although Choi was one of the

⁷⁹ Choi Nam-seon's argument that Korea occupied the focal point of the cultural sphere is debatable. Allen (1990: 800) disputes Choi's assertion in the sense that the indigenous religious traditions were more likely to be retained in the tribal societies of Manchuria and Mongolia, and even Japanese Shinto might be a better example of Pulham culture because it had survived independently from foreign religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism. On the other hand, Janelli (1989: 28-29) points out that the plausibility of Choi's assertion derives from the geographical location of Korea and the hypothesis of "Age-area" which defines the centre and the peripheries in terms of the density of a cultural element.

scholars who were influenced by evolutionary ideas, he only followed them in part. As Walraven (1998: 70) states, “where the oldest phase of evolution originally had a negative connotation of primitivism Choi retained a positive evaluation of antiquity, which was part and parcel of Korean tradition.”

In the meantime, the idea that Dan’gun was a shaman-ruler and Korean shamanism had carried the essence of the religion led him to write an article on shamanism, *Salmangyo Chagi* (An Essay on Shamanism) in 1927. Here, he introduced the basic notions of shamanism in northeastern Asia, based upon Czaplica’s and Dori Ryujo’s research. Although he did not treat Korean shamanism itself, the fact that the essay was published along with Yi’s *Joseon Musok Go* in the same journal reveals that his basic concern was ancient Korean religion. At the outset of the journal, he states:

Gyemyoung is published to help us establish Joseonhak (Korean Studies), by illuminating the nature of Joseon culture, especially Joseon religion... *Salmangyo Chagi* was written to explore the ethnological relationship of ancient Korean religion to the common religion of northeastern Asia, and *Joseon Musok Go* is intended to illuminate how ancient Korean religion has been embodied in folklore... (Choi 1927: 3, quoted in Janelli 1989: 35-36).

Like other cultural nationalists, Choi believed that Korea was not ready to be independent and hence had to cultivate itself to catch up with other modern nations. The basic assumption of cultural nationalism that to know about Korean people and culture is a realistic and possible preparatory stage in order for it to gain independence in the future explains his interest in the establishment of Korean Studies. Also, because Choi assumed that a religion is the “internal life and basic spirit of a people, and therefore a prime representation of the culture” (Choi Nam-seon

1973: 189), he considered the investigation of religion as the first step to establish Korean Studies. Operating under this premise, he tried to clarify the relationship of Korean indigenous religion to the shamanism of northeastern Asia.

By introducing northeastern Asian shamanism in connection with Korean *musok*, Choi did not only synchronically expand the spectrum of Korean shamanism but also supported his theory of pulham culture. As mentioned before, he believed the Dan'gun myth to be a key to the understanding of the nature of the cultural sphere. However, with only the linguistic analysis of the term Dan'gun, he could not fully explain the nature of the culture or even Dan'gun himself. In his thought, since shamanism was common to the pulham cultural sphere, it could fill up the content of the pulham culture and make it possible to interpret the Dan'gun myth. The following would be the main motifs of the myth: belief in three layered worlds in shamanism; belief in a shaman as a mediator between the worlds; belief in the shaman's ordeal to achieve shamanship; and the characteristics of a shaman's magical equipment and services. In addition to those main motifs of the myth, other notions of shamanism provided him with the necessary grounds to justify his theory of pulham culture. Hence, it is said that *Salwangyo Chagi* was written in order to support the theory of pulham culture (Janelli 1989: 37) and shamanism could provide him with an interpretive framework to understand the structure and worldview of the Dan'gun myth (Lee Yeong-hwa 2003: 107).

The idea that shamanism was common throughout northeastern Asia and had continued as the essentialist core of Korean religious belief led Choi to believe that *musok* should be re-evaluated. His lecture at the YMCA in 1924, in which he stated that a shaman would not be treated contemptuously in foreign countries, showed how positively he evaluated Korean

shamanism (Janelli 1989: 35). Yet, it is not easy to calculate how much his insistence on the value of Korean shamanism had changed its negative image as a superstition or licentious ritual among the common people. However, I would argue that his positive perspective on *musok*, when combined with Yi's research, formed a basis for the official discourse on Korean shamanism as a source of national culture.

3.2. Symbolism of Resistance and Dominance

3.2.1. Rituals of Resistance: Minjung Movement

It is unquestionable that the interpretive framework linking *musok* to the Dan'gun myth has contributed to forming the positive image of Korean shamanism as a part of national culture.⁸⁰ The idea that shamanism was the carrier of authentic Korean tradition led to intensive field research of *mudangs* and their rituals—*gut*—and to massive collection projects of shamanic songs and myths. In addition to both scholars mentioned above, Son Jin-tae (1900-1950?), who is regarded as a founding father of Korean folklore scholarship, is well known for his collection of a wide range of shamanic songs during the colonial period.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Also, we can say that this framework is dependent upon Korean “ethnic nationalism” in the sense that Dan'gun has been regarded as the founding father of the Korean ethnic group.

⁸¹ We cannot overlook the value of Japanese scholars' research on Korean shamanism in terms of the quality as well as the quantity of their collections. By 1937, Japanese scholars had produced 26 series of survey reports on Korean shamanism. Undoubtedly, their encyclopedic value, stemming from the immensity of the compilations, remains to this day incomparable, in spite of the harsh criticism of their colonialist intentions (Kim In-hoe 1981).

Son's view of *musok* was basically dependent upon an evolutionary model of the history of religion and the importance of the clear division of modern academic disciplines, according to which he insisted that Korean ancient religion could not easily be categorized into shamanism. In order to support his argumentation he not only analyzed the worldviews of Korean ancient religion and Siberian shamanism, but also inquired into the social functions of the priests of these two religious systems. As is well known, early anthropological positions on the development of religion divided animism, which was basic to shamanism, from polytheism which was supposed to have appeared later. Accordingly, the two religious systems, which represented different stages in the evolutionary scheme, should not be identified with each other. In concrete terms, although a *mudang*'s social function was similar to that of a Siberian shaman, the worldviews of the two belief systems—each of them are represented respectively by animism and polytheism—might be proof of their difference from each other. In sum, he concluded that Korean folk beliefs and practices which had transmitted the ancient Korean religion should be considered to be a primitive magico-religion in terms of religious studies, even though they might be understood as a kind of shamanism, sociologically speaking (Son Jin-tae 1927). In other words, he tried to differentiate *musok* from Siberian shamanism by arguing that although Korean ancient religion shared some elements in terms of its function with Siberian shamanism, their worldviews were different from each other, because the former was based upon polytheism which would be located on the higher ladder in an evolutionary scheme than the latter which was founded on animism.

This conclusion is assumed to have been induced by the strict application of academic discipline and theory. As shown from Son's careful application of academic disciplines such as religious studies and sociology to the understanding of religious phenomena, he seems to have

yearned for “scientific” research on Korean folk culture and ancient religion. In the preface of one of his works (Son Jin-tae 1948), he defines folklore as “a science that focuses on a national culture,” differentiating himself from other existing Korean nationalist researcher groups, and objectifying himself as “a scientific researcher.” In this context, we can say that his effort to adopt a scientific position on *musok* helped pave the way to the positivistic trend that characterizes the contemporary study of Korean shamanism.

In addition to the strict application of academic disciplines, we can find almost all of his modern ideas such as evolutionary, materialist, and diffusionist thought in his works dealing with the history as well as the folk culture of Korea.⁸² Among those ideas, Marxism in particular seems to have played an important role in establishing the second interpretive framework to construct the reality of contemporary Korean shamanism, and I would call that framework a “representation of dominance and resistance.” While labeling Son’s interpretation of *musok* as “*Minsok Jonggyoron* (theory of religion as folk customs),” Kim Seong-nae (1999: 154) evaluates Son’s class-based understanding of Korean shamanism as follows: “By identifying *mugyo* [*musok*] with the concept of *minsok* [folklore] indicating social customs of the Korean common people, not with ‘*minjok* [nation]’ which was used in terms of ethnicity, [this framework] demystified *mugyo* which has been understood as an ancient mythological being and made it understood as a historical reality.” In other words, we can say that he paved the way to look into shamanism as practiced among living people, not in a mystified ancient history.

Moreover, to Son Jin-tae, the term *minjok munhwa* (national culture) did not mean the culture of all ethnic Korean people but a common people’s culture which was differentiated from

⁸² In this context, Janelli (1986: 38) does not even hesitate to call his methodology “eclectic.”

the aristocratic culture. Considering that nationalists of his day employed the term *minjok* to indicate ethnic Koreans, his understanding of the term was peculiar. He thought that only the common people could represent Koreanness due to the fact that the survivals of ancient Korean culture which had not been polluted by interbreeding with foreign cultures were still practiced among them only.⁸³

In the sense that he made an issue of the life of the common people as the subject of history as well as the transmitter of Koreanness, he is valorized as the first scholar who discovered *minjung*—the common people or the oppressed masses. Son's emphasis on *minjung* as the transmitter of Koreanness could not be explained only by Tylor's concept of survivals but also by the influence of Marxist ideas of class struggle as the engine of historical change. His interpretation of some of the social folk customs and religious beliefs of his own day as survivals of prehistoric communism would be good examples of the combination of Engels's thesis of primitive communism and Tylor's concept of survivals.⁸⁴ Even though he did not directly refer to Marx nor Engels, as a student of history in Japan during the 1920s and a prominent intellectual of the time when various competing ideologies, including socialism, appeared, Son Jin-tae could

⁸³ Here, we can also see a Tylorian understanding of cultural evolution. For a detailed study of Son's intellectual pedigree, see Janelli (1986).

⁸⁴ In particular, he interpreted *pumasi* or *dure*, which meant cooperation in agricultural work in turn among different households, as a survival of communal food production; the prevalence of the mountain deity in Korean folk religion was viewed as a representation of a hunting and gathering stage. More examples are described in Janelli (1986: 38).

hardly have been unaware of Marxism (Janelli 1986; Ryu Ki-seon 1995).⁸⁵

When Korean shamanism began to be described as a socialist worldview, *musok*—in particular, *gut* (shamanic ritual)—has begun to be interpreted as a representation of the Korean common people’s consciousness of community and resistance. This view of *musok* was reappropriated by young intellectuals under the banner of *Minjung Munwha Undong* (the Popular Culture Movement) in the 1970s and 1980s. They adopted shamanistic elements as political symbols of the anti-aristocracy and pro-democracy movement. Many associations with the purpose of studying popular culture and reviving Korean traditional arts were organized by college students and academics and other professionals. Some students in those societies did not hesitate to serve apprenticeships under shamans who were considered the transmitters of genuine Korean traditional arts and spirit which were assumed to be included in the *gut*-ritual. At college campus festivals, they performed shamanic rituals along with masked dance and peasant music. Kim Kwang-Ok (1994) analyzes this appropriation of Korean shamanism in terms of the relationship between politics and religions in Korean history. For example, Kim (1994: 218) states that even though “religion lends a space for the oblique expression of otherwise inexpressible political discontent,” Korean Christian leaders have advocated a pro-establishment ideology since the 1st Republic because of their conservative nature and the many benefits they

⁸⁵ As a matter of fact, Korean nationalism up to the 1920s was characterized by the idea that Korean society should continuously evolve along the path followed by Western democracies which was believed would prepare Korea for independence. Therefore, the primary focus of cultural nationalism was “nation building, the preparation of the groundwork for an eventually successful demand for independence within this context.” However, along with socialist ideas, some nationalists envisaged a new way of analyzing “the present conditions and the future of Korea, which changed the nature of the debate among nationalists over how to obtain independence and over what form the new nation could assume” (Robinson 1988: 117-118). For inquiry into early Korean socialists’ criticisms on Cultural nationalism and cultural nationalists’ reactions to Korean socialists’ criticisms of moderate nationalism, see Robinson (1988) and Shin Gi-wook (2006).

received from government. Therefore, he contends that anti-establishment movement could not but turn to shamanism for the elements with which to produce a powerful counter-ideology. Whether or not this trend of studying and appropriating Korean shamanism was the product of a dynamic relationship between politics and religion of the time, the class-based understanding of Korean shamanism brought it closer to the lives of Korean people through the public performance of shamanic rituals.

Resonant with the popular appropriation of shamanistic elements and the desire to have a subjective interpretation of Korean shamanism, the Institute of *Minjok Gut* (National Gut), whose members were mainly drawn from activists in the Popular Culture Movement of the 70s and 80s, published a book entitled *Minjokgwa Gut* (*Korean Nation and Gut*) in 1987. This book describes well how the Popular Culture Movement activists saw Korean shamanism and its rituals. Starting with the questions, “what is *gut*?” “what does it mean to us today?” the editor criticizes existing works which have denigrated the nature of *musok* as mere divinatory activities by following the interpretation of the imperialists and the colonialists, and asks for “total restoration of “*gut*” culture that can only be obtained by a subjective and independent perspective (*Minjokgut hoe* 1987: ii).⁸⁶

Then, what is the total restoration of *gut*? The editor declares that an authentic *gut* is “to break down the wall which has blocked the true way of the Korean *mingjung*’s life, and to advance the life of liberation and the unification of the nation” (*Minjokgut hoe* 1987: ii). To these

⁸⁶ Even after the liberation of Korea, the colonialist vision still permeated the popular understanding as well as the more limited scholarly interpretation of Korean folk tradition. And Korean shamanism was still regarded as a superstitious survival of the pre-modern times following the vision. For example, the term *musok*, which connotes the idea that shamanism was superstitious and vulgar, was widely used and never challenged in academia until the appearance of *Minjung Munhwaron*.

Popular Culture Movement activists, Korean shamanism was not restricted within the practices centering around shamans but extended to all the activities of the Korean *minjung* who had desired to recover the true life, and was assumed to be based upon the communal life which was enjoyed by the traditional Korean peasant society, with a consciousness of resistance against oppressive forces such as imperialism and colonialism.⁸⁷ In this context, they gave more significance to the community *gut* than the private *gut*. They maintained that most private *guts* in contemporary Korea, easily observable at *gutdang* (the commercial shrine for a shaman's rituals), do not embody the authentic nature of Korean shamanism but just a corrupted and vulgar form of it (Ju Gang-hyeon 1994; Cho Hung-yoon 1993, 2002).

Yet, the historical context in which they studied is characterized by such concepts as the urbanization, modernization, and Westernization of Korea, which indicates that the peasant's life was being destroyed and the community *gut* that had supported it was not performed in its traditional context. Thus, the Korean shamanism portrayed in their works was often criticized as “an ideological construct” or “a genuine invention”, even though they themselves proclaimed that their movement conveyed the “concreteness” of the lives of the *minjung* (Kim Seong-nae 1989: 223). In other words, even though they tried to understand Korean shamanism in the context of actual lives of *minjung*, they confined themselves within their own fantasy of *minjung*. Regardless of those criticisms on the image of Korean *mudangs* as the revolutionary or cultural heroes, the idea that Korean shamanic rituals—in the guise of ritual—have made it possible to

⁸⁷ The activists in the Popular Culture Movement did not hesitate to refer to key peasant revolts in the past by using a shamanic term, *gut*. For example, the Donghak—literally means Eastern Learning—peasant rebellion held in 1894 was called Donghak *gut* or *Nali gut* (the insurgency *gut*), or sometimes *Uibyeong gut* (the righteous army *gut*). Also, many other folk dramas and theatres were named with the term *gut* when they were staged, although there was no shaman in the performances.

convey and express the oppressed people's political consciousness has firmly taken its place on the spectrum of Korean shamanism.⁸⁸

3.2.2. Musok as Cultural Capital: Human Cultural Treasures

The idea that Korean shamanism could be used as an ideological means to express political consciousness was not initiated by the activists of the Popular Culture Movement. In fact, when young Korean intellectuals from the Movement expressed their political consciousness by using shamanistic elements, the official recognition of shamanic ritual as performing art and the elevation of the status of shamans had already begun with the enactment of the Law for Conservation of Cultural Property.

The establishment of this Law, enacted on January 10th 1962, cannot be understood without considering the particular historical and political situation in Korea. The historical situation in which this Law was promulgated was similar to the situation when Korean nationalist scholars during the colonial period suffered from Japanese colonial government's assimilation policy that threatened to destroy an independent Korean culture. Similarly, at the time of the enactment of the law, there were fears that pure Korean traditions might be destroyed

⁸⁸ The idea that shamanic rituals made it possible to convey and express the oppressed people's political consciousness is based upon the assumption that shamanic rituals, in particular community guts, have functioned not only to present but also to evaluate community among the villagers. Ju Gang-hyeon (1987: 37) maintains that *daedong gut* [big solidarity ritual] is "a framework for presenting the people's faith and is a revolutionary performance presenting the people's desire, while it is dependent upon the strong solidarity which demands horizontal relationships..."

in the process of Westernization. More than that, the time when this Law was enacted was the critical formative period for the new military government, which faced the difficult task of legitimizing the power it had obtained in the coup d'état of 1961.

The military revolution took place a year after the Rhee government was overthrown as the result of the Student Revolution in 1960. If we consider the idea that “the politics of South Korea have been characterized by two expanding and opposing forces,” then the period of 1960-1961 could be distinguished as a victory of opposing forces over the authoritarian framework (Eckert et al. 1990: 347). Even though the victory was not long-lasting due to the military coup, the experience of the Student Revolution was so intense that it was “very much romanticized as the victory of the folk esprit” and even formed and represented “the Zeitgeist of the period.” The victory of the folk or *minjung* over the hegemonic power also meant Korea’s independence from the dominant Western culture and economy, and the intellectual mood around this time could be designated as “romantic nationalism” (Choi Chung-moo 1987: 68).

Military rule, which had not existed in Korean history since the fourteenth century, needed to legitimize its power. The intellectual mood of the elite group who led the Student Revolution was still under the influence of Confucianism that had looked down upon the military class since the Joseon dynasty (Eckert et al. 1990: 347). In this regard, the government’s emphasis on folk culture could be understood as a strategy to transform the military dictator into a Confucian sage ruler. The strategy actually endowed the new government with effective means to invoke the image of a legitimate ruler. Considering the effect of Confucianism in Korean culture, it is understandable that the military government tried to portray its image as one which was much closer to the life of the Korean common people. For example, “pictures of General

Park, the leader of the new government, in an undershirt and working pants with legs rolled up to his knees planting rice with farmers” and many stories on his “commensalism” with farmers were repeatedly reported by media. All these images might be placed within the framework of the way of the sage king (Choi Chung-moo 1987: 69-70). Along with making and spreading those images, the enactment of the Cultural Property Protection Law became an effective means to transform the military government into the legitimate ruler by portraying itself as conforming to the image of a legitimate ruler as a protector of Korean traditional culture.

The Cultural Property Protection Law begins: “this law is meant to encourage Koreans to improve their cultural life and contribute to developing the global human culture as well, by preserving [traditional] cultural assets [the tangible as well as the intangible] and thereby continuing the national culture” (Law No. 961). As inferred from the stated purpose of the law, it is assumed that preserving traditional cultural assets is regarded as a way of preserving national culture. Here, one might find the vestige of the cultural nationalist movement in the colonial period and be reminded of how Korean shamanism was grasped by those nationalist scholars; it was considered to be a key symbol to unite all Koreans into a nation and to express Koreanness.⁸⁹ However, in terms of the impact on the actual change of the image of Korean shamanism among the public, the establishment of the Law and subsequent governmental support manifested different results from the works of nationalist intellectuals in the colonial time. At least, the Law made it possible for many shamans and their rituals which were

⁸⁹ The fact that Im Sok-jae (1903), who had led Korean folklore scholarship after Korean Independence, played an important role in establishing the Law at the request of the military government shows two important points: the continuation of the colonial era’s impact on the making the law; and that the establishment of the law was relevant to the politics of this time.

designated as Cultural Properties to present themselves periodically to the public, not as superstition-workers but as Living Human Treasures.⁹⁰ Eunsan Byeolshinje, designated in 1966 as Intangible Cultural Property, was the first of 21 shamanism-related rituals to be categorized as Intangible Cultural Properties as of 2009.

Another feature of the official discourse that produced the law is the premise that, as we can infer from such phrases as “to preserve” or “to revitalize,” there is an unchanging or archetypal ‘essence’ of folk tradition, although some aspects of the cultural properties might be subject to historical change. Due to historical events such as the Japanese colonization and the Korean War, many Korean folk traditions had been destroyed. Furthermore, the process of Westernization and urbanization of Korea fostered the consciousness of crisis that Korean tradition would disappear sooner or later. Therefore, the request for excavating and determining the archetype of Korean tradition was regarded as an urgent and basic work in order to “preserve” it.⁹¹

Based upon the premise that there is an essence of traditional culture, the official discourse—in particular, on cultural items related to Korean shamanism—tried to discover an archetype of each ritual and forced the Living Human Treasure to maintain it without any changes. Here, it is important to note that the archetype was not preserved and excavated but “invented”—a term developed by Hobsbawm (1985)—through the cooperation of folklorists’

⁹⁰ If a shaman—sometimes shamans—is designated as a Living Human Treasure, then the shaman receives several benefits including a raise in social status and a boost to his/her teaching and performing career. In return for these benefits, the shaman must hold periodic public performances, both at a government organized festival and overseas.

⁹¹ The trend of scholarly works focusing on preserving and excavating folk cultures is called “Restore Folklore,” and this orientation to the archetype of traditional culture has taken a central position in Korean folklore scholarship (Shin Ho 2001).

research collections and performers' memories. By the request of the government, a large scale folkloric research project, which including musok, was conducted throughout the entire nation by Korean scholars for ten years from 1968. Although the results of this research have been criticized as amounting only to superficial descriptions and not rich enough to replace Japanese scholars' works on Korean shamanism conducted during the colonial period (Kim Seong-nae 1999: 181), it shows how seriously musok was seen and how it was considered to be a core part of Korean national culture in the official discourse. Along with the revival of the National Performing Arts Competition in 1961, the project served as an opportunity to rediscover folk performance items, and many shamanic performances were held in public, and thereby could be designated as Intangible Cultural Properties (Yun Gwang-bong 1993; Yang Jong-sung 2003).⁹² Now, the shaman who was designated as a Living Human Treasure able to perform a Cultural Property was an officially qualified man/woman who would preserve and represent the authentic Korean shamanic culture.

On the other hand, it has often been argued that the Cultural Property Protection Law made the identity of Korean shamanism more ambiguous in the sense that it has put too much emphasis on the artistic aspect of Korean shamanism (Kim Chong-ho 2003; Yang Jong-sung 2003). The religious aspect of Korean shamanism, which was discovered and enhanced by nationalist scholars during the colonial period and is regarded as one of the most important factors that allowed for shamanism to survive in Korea despite a long history of suppression, has been excluded from the spectrum of Korean shamanism. As a matter of fact, the Korean

⁹² Most of the judges of the Competition were members of the Cultural Properties Committee, therefore the Competition was assumed to be a forum for the designation of Cultural Properties.

government has not treated Korean shamanism as a religion, which is verified by the fact that the Bureau of Religious Affairs has not put *musok* on the list of the religious organizations in the Korean peninsula.⁹³ Besides, we can clearly see the government's position on Korean shamanism from the statement of Han Man-yong, who had served as a member of the Cultural Properties Committee for a number of years:

Shaman rituals and dance are our tradition, but is [there] artistic value in shaman performance? I doubt it. 'National [Intangible Cultural Asset]' means we should keep and disseminate and educate the people, but should we teach shaman ideas, shaman music and dance to our children? I don't think so. Shaman rituals can be kept in documents or films and archives, and I think this is enough (quoted in Howard 1990)

This connotes that Korean shamanism is not a religion alive in our daily lives but just a “thing” which should be kept in documents or films. Korean shamanism without religious aspects has been commercialized and considered to be a cultural commodity. In this regard, the impact of the Cultural Property Protection Law is evaluated negatively and criticized by many scholars. However, it is significant that the Law produced an image of Korean shamanism as a vehicle of the “original form” or “authenticity” of Korean tradition and has helped many Korean shamans to consider themselves to be representatives of Korean traditional culture.

Up until now, I have described how Korean shamanism, as a set of social practices, has

⁹³ In 2008, the Bureau of Religious Affairs classified religions in Korea as follows: Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Won-Buddhism, Jeungsan gyo, Cheondo gyo, Daejong gyo, and miscellaneous. Even in the category of “miscellaneous,” we cannot find the title of *musok*. Yet, we can find a slight change in the Korean government's attitude toward Korean shamanism from the report of 2008. Here, the items relating to Korean shamanism are introduced in the category of “V. Memorial hall/Museum of Religions” and “VI. Festivals of Religious Culture.” Refer to *Religions in Korea; the year 2008*.

been represented as cultural capital that can be used for *minjung*-resistance as well as state-dominance. Both positions have improved the image of *musok* and widened the spectrum of Korean shamanism, but this was only made possible by extracting and emphasizing only a few aspects of shamanism. However, another important aspect of Korean shamanism was left behind in this strategic appropriation; Korean shamanism as a “religion.” Understanding Korean shamanism in terms of religiosity was initiated by Korean theologians who were concerned about the inculturation of Christianity into Korean culture and enriched by the discourse of religious pluralism. In the following section, I would like to describe how the interpretive framework labeling Korean shamanism as Korean spirituality or religiosity was produced and situated on the spectrum of Korean shamanism.

3. 3. Shamanism as a Religion: A Dialogue Partner

By describing Korean nationalist scholars’ position on shamanism in the colonial period, I have already explained the motives and the process by which Korean shamanism came to be understood as an indigenous Korean religion. In contrast to the intellectual motives and backgrounds of the colonial period in which the notion that *musok* is a Korean indigenous religion was configured, the new understanding of Korean shamanism in terms of the religiosity or the spirituality of Korean people was initiated by religious specialists such as Christian theologians and historians of religion and was enforced by the discourses of religious pluralism. If the early nationalists’ attitude towards Korean shamanism was motivated by a historical quest

for obtaining national independence and building national pride, then the idea that Korean shamanism would represent Korean spirituality or otherwise be one of many religions in the Korean peninsula was produced in an intellectual mood relatively free from the consciousness of national crises. Another factor which made for the rise of this position on Korean shamanism might be explained through an examination of how the concept of religion has been approached: if the early nationalists saw “religion” as an integrating force for all Korean people, then the later scholars tried to treat religious phenomena with the notion of religion as *sui generis*, based upon the idea that religious phenomena should not be explained by other things and not be subsumed into other cultural realms.⁹⁴

The first indicator of the scholarly endeavor to identify Korean shamanism as a “religion” was to make a new Korean word, *mugyo* (巫教, the teaching of *mu*), and this term is generally preferred over the term *musok* (巫俗) by Korean religious intellectuals.⁹⁵ Basically, this term *mugyo* is a compound word of *mu* (巫), indicating a shaman, and *gyo* (教), meaning a teaching. In order to understand the connotations of this term, it is necessary to explain how other religions of Korea have been translated and literally interpreted. Let me give some examples: Christianity is translated as Geuriseudo-gyo; Buddhism, Bul-gyo; and Islam, Islam-gyo. As we can see from these examples, almost all religions of Korea identify themselves as a religion by adding the

⁹⁴ Here, the notion of “religion as *sui generis*” means that there is an essence or homogeneity of all religions which allows us to disregard history and sociopolitical context in which religious phenomena appear. I myself do not agree with this notion. Here, I use the idea just to explain that there appeared an academic trend that treated religion as an independent scholarly subject among Korean intellectuals. For criticisms of the notion, “religion as *sui generis*,” see McCutcheon (1997) and Fitzgerald (2000).

⁹⁵ Since Yi Nung-hwa labeled shamanic practices and beliefs *musok* in 1927, this term has been used for a long time to indicate shamanic customs without any revision by Japanese scholars as well as Korean scholars. There have been other words designating Korean shamanism such as; Sin’gyo, *musok jonggyo*, *muism*, etc.

word “gyo.” Even the term Jong-gyo, the translation of “religion,” means “a prime teaching,” literally.⁹⁶ In this regard, the term mugyo is an active expression that Korean shamanism is also a religion rather than merely social customs.

Ryu Dong-shik (1983: 16), a Christian theologian who is known as the first scholar to use the term mugyo, states:

[Korean shamanism] has been usually called *musok*. However, the term has a connotation that *mugyo* is merely social custom. Therefore, this expression does not adequately reflect the findings in the history of religious phenomenon and the idea of religion as *sui generis*. *Mugyo* is a part of shamanism, a primitive religion that stretches over northeastern Asia and inland Eurasia. Yet, it has particularly Korean characteristics which have developed through Korean cultural history. Hence, *mugyo* should be used as a proper noun for indicating Korean shamanism. In sum, *mugyo* is the term to reflect the idea that Korean shamanism is religious phenomena rather than merely social customs (My translation).

As shown from this statement, he clarifies his position on the understanding of religious phenomena that makes him different from other scholars interested in Korean shamanism. In contrast to many Korean folklorists who have treated Korean shamanism as just one aspect of social customs by using the term *musok*, he insists on the usage of *mugyo*. This new name reflects the firm consciousness that many historians of religion—and needless to say, Christian theologians—have had, namely that religious phenomena cannot be reduced to other cultural

⁹⁶ The way of naming religion by using “gyo” might be a product of the modern concept of religion which was influenced by Enlightenment thinking of the West.

elements even though a religion is embodied in a particular sociopolitical context.⁹⁷ Although the autonomy or uniqueness of religion has induced many debates among contemporary historians of religion and anthropologists (cf. Asad 1993; McCutcheon 1997; Saler 1993; Fitzgerald 2000), it is unquestionable that the notion has put down deep roots among Korean scholars of religion and has affected the general concept of religion among the Korean people. For support of their insistence on the autonomy of religion, the danger of reductionism was frequently mentioned in the department of religious studies, and, representatively, the stories of the blind men who try to describe an elephant only by touching it and of the natural scientist who analyses an elephant by looking through a microscope have often been used as metaphors to criticize reductionism.⁹⁸ In this intellectual climate, the word *mugyo* has helped put Korean shamanism into religious discourses, leading to its comparison with other religious traditions.

Similarly, another alternative term for Korean shamanism, *mu*, might be explicable within the notion of religion as *sui generis*. The anthropologist Cho Hung-yoon (1994: 43-44; 2002: 19) criticizes the term *musok* with a more trenchant voice:

The word having been used the most widely and frequently is *musok*. Etymologically, this means *mudang*'s customs. In the Joseon dynasty, Confucian literati used this word to devalue the belief connected with *mudangs*. The term '*sok*' connotes being vulgar... Yet, this word has been in common use by Korean scholars as well as Japanese [colonialist] scholars since then... However, it is a religion and [therefore, the word *musok*] should not be used anymore because we have come

⁹⁷ Here, I do not mean that Korean folklorists do not regard *musok* as a religion. Yet, by calling *musok* *mingan shinang* (folk belief), they seem hesitant to categorize it as a systematic religion. In contrast, the scholars introduced here try to see Korean shamanism as a systematic religion, not as one aspect of *min'gansinang*.

⁹⁸ In relation to the autonomy of religion, the story about an elephant was made famous by M. Eliade. A blind man who touches only the elephant's legs would think that "an elephant's shape is like a pillar!" This reduction would be shaped by the part that the blind men touched. Likewise, some aspects of a religion cannot explain the religion as a whole. Therefore, this metaphor contends that we should not reduce a religion to other cultural levels.

to know the true meaning the word connotes (My translation).

In the sense that Cho also insists on the religiosity of Korean shamanism, he seems to stand on the same position with other historians of religion. Yet, he even criticizes the usage of the word *mugyo* in the sense that it is also “awkward.” Rather, he suggests using the more neutral term *mu*, because “*mudang* or *baksu* (male-shaman) themselves have used that term to identify themselves. His preferences for the term “*mu*” over “*mugyo*” might be explained in terms of the anthropological position which seeks to avoid ethnocentrism and so prefers native terms over general categories. To him, the word *mugyo* might be an unreflective application of a Western concept to Korean shamanism. Actually, he criticizes his contemporary scholars’ unquestioning applications of Western concepts and methodologies to the study of Korean shamanism, while reviewing the history of Korean shamanism studies (Cho Hung-yoon 1994: 89-123).⁹⁹ On the other hand, Cho’s contribution to forming an interpretive framework which deploys Korean shamanism as a religion is not confined to making a new word. More importantly, he developed the image of Korean shamanism as a systematic religion by comparing its constituents to some necessary elements of other established religions. Although other Korean scholars have also mentioned the religious nature of Korean shamanism in terms of its view on gods, the world, human beings, and other religious issues, they seem to have ended up only listing fragmentary information about shamanic symbols and customs—in a sense, they have only carried “exegetical and operational meaning,” in V. Turner’s words (1967). Therefore, his research

⁹⁹ However, most Korean scholars of religion seem to prefer the word *mugyo* over *mu*. Park Il-young (1999: 17), a historian of religion, justifies his usage of *mugyo* as follows: “...it is common that a title of religion is settled by others rather than made by the adherents of the religion. Like other religions in Korea which have “-gyo” for their religious identity, Korean shamanism should be called by the name of “*mugyo*.”

deserves to be further highlighted here.

Cho Hung-yoon (1994: 58), first of all, defines *mu* as follows: “*mu* is, in sum, to solve human problems through the coordination of human beings, gods, and *mudang* in a ritual called *gut*.” Here, we can see that he is trying to link three necessary constituents of Korean shamanism to the prerequisites of a religion in general, and they are none other than human beings, gods, and ritual. In the system of Korean shamanism, like other religions, there is a priest, called *mudang*, who serves a community and other lay-believers, called *dan’gol* (regular clients); there are many gods who are worshipped and conceived of as transcendental beings; and lastly there are many ritual systems in relation to the degree of seriousness of the problem in households, societies, and even a whole nation. Not only does he list the three elements, but also he clarifies the systematic aspect of *mu* with a triangular image, each vertex of which is occupied by gods, a shaman, and a *dan’gol* respectively. From the interaction of the triangular elements, he developed his basic idea of the religiosity of Korean shamanism, which lies on “the recovery of harmony” between the three elements¹⁰⁰; and shaman rituals as a field of reconciliation, which, regardless of their scale, operate as a meeting area for those elements to come together and restore a harmonious relationship. In addition to the explanation of *gut*-rituals, other notions such as *dan’golpan* (a community of *dan’gol* which a shaman is responsible for) and many shamanic myths were analyzed and matched to each expressive aspect of religious experiences, which was based upon Joachim Wach’s proposition that religious experiences tend to be expressed through three

¹⁰⁰ In contrast to Cho Hung-yoon’s connection of Korean shamanism with the concept of “harmony,” a historian of religion Park Il-young (1989; 1999) defines the religious nature of Korean shamanism with the term of “*Jaesu*.” *Jaesu*, in common usage, simply means “a good luck for obtaining money, health, and longevity,” but in the context of Korean shamanism it means a “recovery of harmony” or “ultimate salvation.”

dimensions—theoretical (or religious ideas), practical (or behavioral), and social (or institutional).¹⁰¹ At any rate, his explanation of the nature of Korean shamanism with the image of triangle is so deeply entrenched in religious discourses that almost all of his contemporary Korean religious scholars have appropriated the image when they commented on the religious structure of Korean shamanism (cf. Park Il-young 1999; Cha Ok-sung 1997; Kim Seong-nae 1998a; Choi Jun-sik 1998/2009).

Along with the attempts to qualify Korean shamanism as an independent or systematic religion, many associations for inter-religious dialogue have invited shamans to their programs and so Korean shamanism began to be compared to other religions. It is needless to say that this trend reflects the intellectual mood of thinking of Korean shamanism as a qualified religious system like other religions. Moreover, there is a distinct way of comparing Korean shamanism with other religions in Korea, which is to identify Korean shamanism as the indigenous religious ground on which other established religions have been formed and transformed. In particular, the syncretism of Korean shamanism and other religions has been illuminated based upon the idea that Korean shamanism is the oldest and the most powerful religious tradition in Korea, and has been interwoven into its two thousand years of history (Yun Yi-heum 2001; James Huntley Grayson 1998).

When a religion is diffused or transmitted from one culture to another culture, that religion generally does not only have an effect on an autochthonous religion but is also affected by the indigenous religion. Likewise, in the encountering process of the two religious cultures,

¹⁰¹ In addition to Joachim Wach, he also mentions other scholars who tried to define religion in a broad sense. In particular, he directly mentions P. Tillich's "ultimate concern" and C. Geertz's "a system of symbols" when he seeks to prove the religiosity of Korean shamanism.

the blending of the beliefs, practices, and imagery are natural results, which we call syncretism. Actually, the notion of syncretism has endowed Korean intellectuals with a useful theoretical tool for understanding the Korean religious situation in general. In this context, almost all of the scholarly works on Korean shamanism have devoted space to deal with the issue of the syncretism of *musok* and other neighboring religions (cf. Ryu Dong-shik 1975, Kim Tae-gon 1979, Kim In-hoe 1987, Park Il-young 1999, Hyun-key Kim Hogarth 2000). For example, the syncretism of Korean shamanism with other Oriental classic religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism was proven by describing the historical formation of a shaman's pantheon, myths, rituals, and other elements. Conversely, shamanic elements shown in other religions were studied. Rituals such as Palgwanhoe (the Festival of Eight Vows) and Yeondeunghoe (the Lantern Festival) in the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392), and *sansin'gak* (shrine of the mountain god) in Buddhist temples have been good cases for proving those syncretistic phenomena. Yet, it should be noted that even though the relationship between Korean shamanism and other neighboring religions were explained by the notion of syncretism, it is also argued that Korean shamanism has still kept its unique identity under a syncretistic surface (Kim In-hoe 1987).¹⁰² The consciousness of the unique identity which is assumed to differentiate Korean shamanism from other religious traditions has functioned to form an image of Korean shamanism as a dialogue partner of other established religions in Korea.

In addition to the research on the syncretistic phenomena of Korean shamanism and other religious traditions, the idea that Korean shamanism can also be a dialogue partner has led to it

¹⁰² I do not like to use "syncretism," because the term implies that there is a fixed boundary of shamanism. As Dr. Baker suggested to me, if shamanism could be regarded as an "open religion," and diversity is an essential aspect of shamanism, then the term "syncretism" is not useful to understand the diversity of Korean shamanism.

being considered to be a religion that should be treated with other established religions in studies dealing with religious issues such as in the books, *What is Death?* published in 1990 and *What is Salvation?* published in 1993. The first book is organized and edited by the Korean Association for History of Religion which is the largest Korean scholarly religious studies organization; the second was put out by the Institute for Religion and Culture, most of whose contemporary members were graduate students in the department of religious studies. Here, it is significant to note that the contributors of the books are mostly from a discursive community which produces and consumes religious discourses. This reveals that the issue whether or not Korean shamanism is a religion is not problematic any more in religious academics and that religious academics commonly accept the idea that the religious symbolism of Korean shamanism is significant enough to be compared with other religious traditions as a partner. Moreover, the fact that Korean shamanism is deployed with other religions to discuss central religious issues implies that Korean shamanism qualifies as an independent agent capable of participating in inter-religious dialogues.

In terms of inter-religious dialogue, the works on the relationship between Korean shamanism and Christianity deserve to be illuminated here because they enforce the image of Korean shamanism as a religion by two facts: the dramatic change of the position of Korean Christianity on *musok*; and its leading role in the formation of the concept of religion in Korean history as well as its active participation in inter-religious activities in Korea. As a matter of fact, works on the relationship between them had appeared long before the issue of inter-religious dialogue became an outstanding issue in religious discourses in Korea in the 1980's. Needless to say, besides the early Western missionaries' publications, the prominent novelist Kim Dong-ni's

popular fictions such as *Munyeodo* (1938/1978) and its revised version *Ulhwa* (1978), are good examples. The relationship between Korean shamanism and Christianity in his stories is portrayed as antagonistic, and it is assumed that the hostile relationship represents the intellectual mood of his day: Korean shamanism embodied the waning destiny of traditional culture; conversely, Christianity was regarded as a vanguard of a powerful Western culture which was thought to be a model for a new Korean culture. In other words, Kim Dong-ni portrayed his consciousness of the reality of Korea with the metaphor of the conflict between *Ulhwa* and her son, a Christian (Choi Chung-moo 1987). More examples of their hostility were described when I dealt with the configuration of negative images of Korean shamanism in the previous chapter, therefore suffice it to say here that the antagonistic position of Christianity towards Korean shamanism has characterized their relationship for a long time.

However, in contrast to some Christian theologians' view of Korean shamanism as an obstacle to be overcome to spread the Gospel, other Christian theologians have argued that Korean shamanism should be situated as a dialogue-partner to contribute to world peace through learning from and supporting each other. Park Il-young (1997: 54) presents the necessity and orientation of inter-religious dialogue between them with the notion of "gegenseitige Mission." He believes that through mutual missionary works and mutual support, the two subjectivities in dialogue can deepen their own sacredness as well as their partner's. Applying this framework to the relationship between Korean shamanism and Christianity, he analyzes the commensurability

of Jesus and Princess Bari in terms of “kenosis.”¹⁰³ In addition, pointing to the communal nature of *gut*, he argues that Korean Christianity should learn the spirit of *communitas*, the strong solidarity among *minjung*, from the dialogue with Korean shamanism. The necessity of the dialogue between them can also be found in the speech of Son Soon-hwa, a Korean female pastor, given at the ‘Lecture of Inter-religious Dialogue,’ at the Seton Inter-religious Research Center.¹⁰⁴ She asserted that it is not easy to have a good relationship between the two religions if Christianity is only interpreted according to its formal definition. Only if we can see the true meaning of becoming a Christian, can we be open-minded to each other and become “Dao-mates” who goes together practicing love and searching for freedom and liberation. Building upon this idea, she went on to compare Korean shaman’s life and experience of affliction and healing with Jesus’ kenotic life (Son Soon-hwa 1998).

In addition to this kind of theoretical efforts among scholars, we can find more active programs aiming at widening and deepening the understanding of each other to the public. The lecture series at the Seton Inter-religious Research Center is a very good example. Basically, it was designed for promoting the the inter-religious dialogue by transmitting more information on Korean traditional religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and *mugyo*. As a matter of fact, it is reported that the inter-religious dialogue movement in Korea came into existence and was continued through the efforts of the Christian Academy in 1965. However, it was when the

¹⁰³ Park Il-young (1999: 227) presents the similarity of both stories as follows: “...in the process of descending to the lowest level from the highest position, the leading actor and actress [Jesus and the Princess Bari] experience and overcome all their sufferings and finally accomplish everlasting liberation and ultimate peace and freedom...”

¹⁰⁴ This lecture series started in 1994 with the topic, Zen Buddhism and Christianity, and continues to the present. The center was established for improving the inculturation of Catholicism and inter-religious dialogue. The website of the center is <http://www.setondialog.or.kr>

Korean Conference on Religion and Peace (KCRP) was organized in 1987 that the movement became more systemized and organized than before. These organizations' particular activities could be roughly summarized as follows: firstly, hosting and sponsoring various meetings for dialogue and academic seminars for improving the understanding of neighboring religions; secondly, putting forward coordinative works for the development of Korean religious culture; thirdly, visiting the historic sites of neighboring religions and participating in their official ceremonies; and lastly, collaborative works on domestic social issues as well as international ones (Byeon Jin-hong 2004). Among these activities, the dialogue with Korean shamanism might be deployed in the first two categories, and the first dialogue program that hosted a shaman as a dialogue partner was realized under the title of the "Assembly of Young Religious People" sponsored by KCRP and the Christian Academy in 1997. Since then, the participants of the Assembly have kept in contact each other, and it is unquestionable that these kinds of programs have contributed to making an image of Korean shamanism as a religious partner.

Up until now, I have illustrated the widening or pluralizing process of the spectrum of Korean shamanism, describing the main interpretive frameworks to situate it in Korean culture. I have presented such key terms as "nationalism," "culture," and "religion" for characterizing each framework. Yet, while I introduce those different understandings and positions on Korean shamanism, I do not use the term "shift." I do this in order to avoid the misunderstanding that the constructed images about Korean shamanism have a linear history. Also, as I summarized at the introduction, in this chapter I have shown the process by which the positive official discourses on Korean shamanism have unfolded. In the sense that almost all of the official discourses have

been produced by academies and not by shamans, it is easy to mistakenly come to the conclusion that Korean shamans and their clients are just passive consumers of the discourses. Yet, a number of cases which will be introduced in the following chapters in part II will show that they are not just passive consumers of these discourses but also active appropriators.

Chapter 4. Reconfiguring Korean Shamanship

4.1. A Scene from a *Naeringut*



Figure 2. Yeosu is waiting for her spirit mother to toss a fan and a brass-bell, spreading out her skirt. Photo by author.

When Yeosu, a 23 year-old-female shaman-initiate, finally found a fan which was hidden under the cushion an hour-glass drummer was sitting on and a brass bell in a bundle concealed under the skirt of a shaman assisting the ceremony, all the people who participated in the ritual applauded her performance as showing clairvoyant inspiration. Dani, her expected spirit-mother who presided at the *naeringut* (an initiation ritual), tossed her the fan and the brass-bells. The fact that Yeosu found such shamanic paraphernalia solely through her clairvoyant powers, and

was subsequently given them, confirmed publicly her destiny and will to follow the shaman's way.

In the Korean shaman's initiation ritual, this scene could be evaluated as the most dramatic moment symbolizing the novice's transition from "the dark night of the soul" to being an agent "bringing the other troubled souls into light (Choi Chung-moo 1987: 113). In fact, when this dramatic performance was completed, other participants said that "ah... finally, we gave birth to a *saekki mudang* (a baby shaman)."

In the meantime, I could feel a paradoxical ambience in which joy and sadness were combined and conveyed in their words, as seen in the picture below, which displays the ambiguous emotions expressed by the shaman-participants there.



Figure 3. A shaman Dani is washing Yeosu's hair with a bundle of pine tree needles soaked in clean water.
Photo by author.

In this scene, Dani sat behind Yeosu, facing the same direction and rubbing the top of her head with a bundle of pine tree needles soaked in clean water, while she sang *mansebaji* (a kind of shamanic prayer):

Let's go to let them know/let's go to be called in/white people on the black earth/When caring for them/with purified mind/love and care for them/even for enemies/...

Follow my way when you are going to open the closed door/the way you are following/rough and long way to go/.../the way is covered with jagged stones/it is a thorny road/go over mountains and cross rivers/...

Put forth your strength and take courage/fight against all ordeals and overcome/.../be not at a loss/bear it in your mind/...

Go seeing high/you go thinking deeply/do not look away/the way, filled with high and low places, with depths and shallows/brace yourself up/..

Though you grow tired from all hardships/and your struggles drag you down/pick yourself up/you will fall, but stand up/though you might fall again/overcome and stand up once more/...though you keep falling down/you can keep getting back up until the end... (Nov. 16th 2006. My translation).

This shaman-song conveys the difficult nature of a shaman's life by comparing it to a long and bumpy road. As I already described in chapter two, becoming a shaman in Korea is far from being celebrated because of the ceaseless sufferings he or she must endure, made even more difficult by social prejudices and self-sacrifice. Choi Chung-moo (1987: 164) describes this paradoxical moment as follows: "It is an occasion of celebration in the sense that it ends the suffering of souls in chaos. Yet, bringing the suffering soul into light only thrusts the neophyte into social death." At that moment, the shaman-participants' painful memories of their own might be brought forth by Dani's chanting, which might cause them to not only applaud but also sympathize with Yeosu.

At any rate, it is unquestionable that an initiation ritual is the most crucial event in the process of establishing shamanship in Korea. Referring to the J. Grim's scheme that illustrates the process of becoming a shaman—"calling, sickness-withdrawal, and emergence," I suggest that an initiation ritual functions as a critical point dividing the destined shaman's "emergence" as a religious personality from the liminal period (Grim 1983: 168-179). In addition, it not only functions as a means to publicize to the participants the initiate's capability to execute the shaman's role, it also gives a shaman-novice who has suffered from inexplicable diseases, physical as well as psychological, an interpretive framework to transform those sufferings into meaningful experiences (Lee Du-hyeon 1996). With an initiation ritual, the shaman-novice can organize his/her past life experiences in a meaningful framework of shamanship.

However, it should be noted that the initiation ritual does not guarantee the mature shamanship of the initiate. In order to reach that status in Korea, a shaman should, first of all maintain continuous communication and strong solidarity with the supernatural beings which descended on him/her. For example, praying in mountains, believed to be full of good *giun* (氣運, energy), as well as in his/her private shrine is generally assumed to be the best way to build up a shaman's spiritual power.¹⁰⁵ The following two examples, which are excerpts from my field notes, illustrate well how important it is for a shaman's spiritual power to maintain communion with gods:

¹⁰⁵ As Choi Chung-moo (1987: 153) describes, many Koreans believe that the spiritual power of shamans wanes as years go by. Hence, the newly initiated shaman's divination is assumed to be exceptionally sharp. In this sense, Korean shamans should refresh their spiritual power through many religious practices. In addition to praying in mountains, *Jinjeok gut*, a ritual for gods who are enshrined in a shaman's shrine, is also mentioned as a means to recharge the shaman's spiritual powers.

After Jeongmi, who is a 29 year-old female shaman and one of Dani's spirit-daughters, finished her seven-day prayer in Inwang Mountain, she told me that "you should study *mudang*'s experience like this. Now, I am so overwhelmed with joy that I cannot express how I feel. Even though it has not been long since I performed my initiation ritual, I know how to pray and how much important it is..." It seems to me that she was very proud of herself as a *mudang* who kept contact with her guardian spirits by regular mountain pilgrimages.

Another female shaman, Seongmi, who is 33 years old, once came to Dani's shrine to consult her about her current problem: that she could not see things shamans were supposed to see. According to her confession, when she used to face a client to convey the gods' messages, she could not be sure that she does it right. She even questioned herself on her identity, "I am not sure if I am a real shaman." To this problem, Dani advised her to pray at Inwang Mountain for 21 days. Later on, Dani told me that "as you know, nowadays, I am not satisfied with the senior shaman who has performed as my partner for a *gut*. I hope Seongmi will join me someday, but not now. The basic requisite of a *mudang* is to see something and unearth the client's problems. *Mudangs* must always pay attention to what their gods are saying and want from them...although a *mudang* is not a god, she should try to understand the hearts of the gods and spirits who descended on her."

As a mystical experience characterized by "ineffability", shamans' communion with supernatural beings gives them a strong feeling of identification with those beings, and those experiences might be an important element for them to hold onto their shamanship despite social prejudices. Dani often confessed to me that she could not quit praying in mountains even though it was very hard training for a fragile woman, because she could not forget the feeling of fullness whenever she was "in the stage of full concentration"—in her words—in prayer. Here, I would like to define the shaman's enduring communion with gods and spirits as a *vertical* factor for achieving mature shamanship.



Figure 4. A shaman Dani is praying on the mountain Inwang. A fan, on which all gods are painted, is unfolded and candles, incense, *soju* (Korean wine), and clean water are offered. Photo by author

However, the vertical factor which characterizes the relationship between a shaman and supernatural beings or a shaman's mystical experience cannot be a unique impetus for shamans to endure their difficult lives. As P. Vitebski (2001: 96) states, "the shaman's experience is never just a personal voyage of discovery, but also a service to the community." In other words, a shaman is a religious personality who is and should be defined by his/her sociological roles.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, shamans I have encountered often confessed that their identity as a shaman was strengthened as they experienced the efficacy of the rituals which they held for clients. This is well illustrated by the following recollection of Dani's experience:

I cannot say that there is no god! A couple of days ago, I held a *gut* for a young lady who was in

¹⁰⁶ In this sense, it is said that a shaman exists to serve a community, which explains the meaning of "self-sacrifice" that I used to describe the enduring sufferings of shamans at the outset of this chapter.

trouble with her boyfriend. Her boyfriend was a French guy and her ambiguous attitudes toward international marriage made him confused... Well... she might not commit herself to him until then... Frankly speaking, I was a little bit worried whether or not that the *gut* would actually work for their marriage, even when I performed it in the morning. Actually, she was supposed to meet the guy at 3 pm at that day to obtain his decision. After she left the *gutdang* (a shrine for *gut*), the only thing we could do was to just keep performing... Around 6 pm, she appeared with a big smile! ... They settled the conflict. Yesterday, she called on me to express her gratitude to the *harabeoji* (gods and spirits) and for my performance... Whenever clients appreciate *gut-deok* (ritual efficacy), I really felt that my *harabeoji* are around me. (My interview in 2009)

Considering that Dani has been a shaman for 35 years, can perform all kinds of shamanic rituals by herself, and had long-term training under her spirit mother (who acted as her spirit teacher) in the traditional manner, she may well be called *keun mansin* (a great shaman or a mature shaman). The fact that even she, as a great shaman, still confirms her identity as a shaman through the relational experience with clients indicates how the spiritual communication between a shaman and supernatural beings are supported by the sociological roles of shaman. The insistence of many scholars of shamanism that a shaman's ecstatic experience should be interpreted within the framework of social idiom might be explicable in the same vein (Hamayon 1993; Kehoe 2000). In this sense, it could be said that, from the first moment of an initiation ritual to the completion-process of mature shamanship, a destined shaman's experiences is given a special significance only when his/her mystical experiences were "utilized and practiced in the communal context, when his [/her] private symbol is accepted as the culturally recognized symbol system" (Choi Chung-moo 1987: 122). Here, I would like to argue that a shaman's vertical relationship with spiritual beings should be supplied by his/her association with other shaman-colleagues and clients who are in need of the shaman's service, and I will call it a

horizontal factor which functions to stabilize a shaman's identity. To express it another way, a shaman's identity is a continuous process of construction through the circulation of horizontal and vertical experiences.

Traditionally, establishing a solid shamanic identity or aspiring to become a mature shaman, in terms of a shaman's horizontal relationship, includes long-term training, under his/her spirit-father/mother, in order to master shamanic skills such as *muga* (shaman's song), dances, and other knowledge for performing a variety of rituals. By achieving those skills, a novice shaman can show "aesthetic felicity" to other shaman colleagues and act as a team member in their rituals, and by showing ritual efficacy to clients, the shaman can display his/her spiritual power to the public as well as to him/herself (Choi Chung-moo 1987: 153).

However, the horizontal circumstances surrounding modern Korean shamans has changed so much that the traditional model does not satisfy scholars as well as young Korean shamans as explanations of their activities that establish their shamanship. In Laurel Kendall's (2009) recent monograph on Korean shamanism, three paths followed by modern Korean shamans are introduced as follows: "the traditional way; the young shamans' easy way that excludes rigorous training procedures; and the active way to make new shamanship, by becoming a leader of shamanic associations or self-styled authors of their own experience." Although it is hard to classify all modern Korean shamans according to her description, it is significant that she introduces a variety of ways to describe shamans' identity in modern Korea

without any prejudice against the new ways.¹⁰⁷ In other words, we can say that there exist many referential points to be employed by shamans, which I attribute to the fact that the spectrum of Korean shamanism has become increasingly wider.

Then, what are the referential points available for Korean shamans in modern Korea? How are those references appropriated by Korean shamans nowadays? In this chapter, I would like to show the semantics of shaman's identity and the relationship between the image of Korean shamanism produced by official discourse and the reality of Korean shaman's identity-making process through the analysis of some shamans' autobiographical literatures and interviews with several shamans conducted during my fieldwork.

In particular, I introduce stories of three Korean shamans, who I myself had contact with, in this chapter. In those stories, which are constructed reflectively by encounters with me, a researcher, each of them illustrates the following of a different model. Although all the shamans who reconstructed and told me the stories have different backgrounds and different orientations, they have in common the desire to become a great shaman while appropriating all possible referential frameworks. In order to clarify the difference between their appropriating practices and the conventional way, I would like to first introduce an ideal type of the traditional way for becoming a great shaman first through looking at an image produced by shamanism scholarship and then by analyzing the story of Kim Keum-hwa, "a superstar shaman."

¹⁰⁷ In reality, not only for Korean scholars who take a nationalist position or regard shamanism as a cultural vehicle carrying Koreanness but also for some shamans who consider themselves as "a traditional shaman," the new ways of making modern shamans' identity, deviated from the traditional way, are criticized.

4.2. “Traditional” Model for Mature Shamanship

It is generally assumed that the process of becoming a mature or great shaman in Korea is traditionally, given the fact that a neophyte decides to accept shamanship as one’s destiny, composed of two essential experiences: one is the candidate’s experiences until he/she has an initiation ritual; the other is to train and master shamanic skills.¹⁰⁸ In psychological terms, this position shift from the former to the later might be represented as the shift from “involuntary possession” to “voluntary possession,” terms borrowed from I.M. Lewis (1971). In particular, the first of these two parts can also be divided into two sub-constituents: the one is a calling from spirits and gods, which is represented by experiences of an altered state of consciousness and suffering from divine illness (sometimes, economic crises are also assumed to be caused by the spirits and gods and serve the same purpose as divine illness), which forces the neophyte to submit his/herself to the spirits or gods; the other is an initiation ritual, called a *naerimgut*, which should be supervised by a senior shaman. This *gut* publicizes the neophyte’s rebirth as a novice-shaman, as I described at the outset of this chapter.

Discussions of a shaman’s spiritual experience, whether it is called ecstasy or possession, has led scholars to debate the origin and identity of Korean “shamanistic”¹⁰⁹ beliefs and

¹⁰⁸ Generally, it is said that there are two types of shamans in Korea: spirit-possessed shamans and hereditary shamans. Categorization into one type or another is based on the experience of ecstasy or possession and transmittance of shamanship—the first of the two types becomes a shaman by the calling of spirits and gods, and the second, by inheritance. The number of hereditary shamans is decreasing according to the deconstruction of communal life caused by industrialization and urbanization of Korea. In this chapter, I will only focus attention on shamans who had experiences of spirit-possession.

¹⁰⁹ I use the quotation mark deliberately, in order to differentiate shamanic from shamanistic. Here, “shamanistic” contains elements which could be categorized under the rubric of the broad definition of shamanism.

practices in relation to Siberian shamanism;¹¹⁰ and on the other hand, to form a typology of Korean shamans, who are categorized as either hereditary shamans or spirit-possessed shamans, although the line between them is being blurred by changing social conditions (Lee Yong-beom et al. 2006).

The shift in the consciousness of a shaman is surely a key part of a Korean shaman's identity, particularly that of the spirit-possessed variety. Of central importance is how the shift is controlled and how it is recognized and contextualized by the community to which a shaman belongs. If the power to enter the altered state of consciousness is an innate competence or a gift from the gods, then control of it is restricted by cultural and social conditions. As Atkinson (1992: 311) puts it, "to analyze shamanism primarily as a trance phenomenon is akin to analyzing marriage solely as a function of reproductive biology." In addition, it does not explain the whole meaning of the Korean shamans' idiom which denotes the process of becoming a great shaman: "spiritual power comes from gods, the skill to use it comes from humans." Therefore, let me move onto another feature of mature shamanship.

Another requirement for becoming a mature shaman is mastery of all the skills necessary to practice shamanic works such as divination and ritual performance. Actually, this is a crucial element which can differentiate a shaman from other shaman-like practitioners of modern Korea such as *jeomjaengi* (a diviner) and *dokkyeong* (a male-exorcist). Ruth-Inge Heinze (1991: 9) insists that

¹¹⁰ Kim Seong-nae (1999) summarizes the debate on this matter into three positions: firstly, *Musok* is a Korea-specific belief system totally different from the shamanism of northern origin represented by Siberian shamanism; secondly, Korean *musok* has two different and regionally divided cultural systems; and lastly, Korean *musok* is a variation of northern shamanism.

The major difference between channels, mystics, prophets and shamans is that the former may be able to convey the encounter with the “Divine” while shamans facilitate its manifestations in the Here and Now and actively participate in the dynamic relationship between the explicate and the implicate order.

In addition to facilitating the divine in the Here and Now, various skills for a shaman’s ritual performance are necessary to clothe shamanic “conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic”—using Geertz’s (1960: 90) words.

These skills are learned from the shaman’s spirit-mother/father who supervised the novice’s initiation ritual. Conventionally, it is said that the novice is trained under a spirit-mother/father by strict apprenticeship.¹¹¹ Cho Hung-yoon (1990: 42), who has focused attention on the traditional aspects of Korean shamanism, describes a shaman’s apprenticeship as follows:

A shaman should be as filial to one’s spirit-parents as to one’s birth parents. For example, if a novice-shaman holds a *gut*, one must prepare a seat of honor for one’s spirit-parents. When the *gut* is done, the spirit-mother should receive a share [of what the shaman was paid]. At festive days such as New Year’s Day and Thanksgiving, and at a spirit-mother’s *Jinjeok gut* which is a ritual for the spirit-mother’s helping spirits, the disciple should visit and render services such as housekeeping to her as her family members do. When the spirit-parents pass away, *Jinogi gut*, a ritual for the dead, is also performed by the disciple. This is a traditional etiquette of serving spirit-parents, and it is rare nowadays to find a shaman who maintains it as it used to be done (My translation).¹¹²

¹¹¹ Besides the apprenticeship under a god-mother, it is often said that some shamans learn skills such as talisman-making, dancing, and hour-glass drumming directly from gods in dreams. Also, it is not unheard of for a novice-shaman to search for a famous shaman to learn from them (Cho Hung-yoon 1990).

¹¹² We can see a similar description in Park Il-young (1999).

A conversation with a shaman often reveals the crucial impact of apprenticeship in the formation of her worldview and lifestyle. Dani also told me proudly that she mourned for three years after her spirit-mother passed away.¹¹³ In addition, in order to show the continuity of her current lifestyle with the tradition a shaman must follow, she often recalls how her older spirit-sister, who was in charge of her apprenticeship after her spirit-mother died, had managed a harmonious relationship with her husband whenever she herself has trouble with her spouse.

Choi Chung-moo (1991: 59) also states that “living the life of a shaman seems to be the major part of training.” While helping to offer food prepared for deities, the novice can learn the character and function of each deity. By serving a drink for a client who is in need of a spirit-mother’s divination service, the spirit-daughter can take a seat beside a divination table and learn divination skills. Inferred from the above cases, it is thought that all of the spirit-mother’s behaviors and words could serve as models available to the novice for constructing self-identity. In this sense, Kim In-hoe (1993: 229), while discussing the educational aspects of Korean shamanism, even contends that through this apprenticeship a spirit-mother’s personality and attitude towards life is transmitted to her disciples. In the following section, I would like to show how Kim Keum-hwa’s shamanic career exemplifies the traditional way of becoming a great shaman through inquiring into her autobiographical writings.

¹¹³ Traditionally in Korea, a three-year-mourning is observed when a father or a mother passes away.

4.2.1. Kim Keum-hwa: an Icon of Korean Shaman

It is unquestionable that, for a few decades, a Korean female shaman Kim Keum-hwa, a Living National Treasure, has become an icon of Korean shaman, and “also been given undisputed authority to determine the authenticity of regional folk culture,” as well as being a model for a mature shamanship in Korea to other contemporary shamans (Choi Chung-moo, 1991: 53). As Kim Chong-ho (2003: 195-199) shows, she appears in many academic writings as well as various journals.¹¹⁴ Although her name, in those writings, was presented somewhat differently, we can recognize that those pseudonyms indicate Kim Keum-hwa herself, if we look into the stories conveyed in them. In addition to her appearance in academic writings, she has not only performed shamanic rituals innumerable times in public settings, domestic as well as international, but also presented herself in both academic and interreligious seminars. For all the progress she has made so far, it is safe to say that she deserves to be the icon of Korean shamanism in our day.

Kim Keum-hwa was born in 1931 in Hwanghae Province, a southern province in what is now North Korea. As a destined shaman, she also endured typical shamanic sufferings such as hallucinations and physical illness. However, her maternal grandmother, who was a well-known shaman in the area, did not welcome Kim’s destiny and did not even allow her to be present at a place where *guts* were performed, at first. However, continuous sufferings and other signs

¹¹⁴ Such anthropological writings as Cho Hung-yoon (1990), Choi Chung-moo (1987, 1991), Covell (1983, 1986), Guillemoz (1992), Kim In-hoe (1987), Kim Seong-nae (1989), Kim Tae-gon (1988), Howard (1990), Hwang Ru-si (1986), Vitebski (2000), and so on include discussion of the shaman Kim Keum-hwa. Two autobiographies and one *muga* (shamanic song) collections were published under her name.

indicating Kim's destiny as a shaman led her grandmother to perform an initiation ritual for Kim. When Kim was 17 years old, she held a *heojugut* (a *gut* for removing mischievous spirits) in February and a *naerimgut* in July, respectively.¹¹⁵

Before performing *naerimgut*, Kim had to walk around almost 30 villages near her natal village for two months in order to obtain brass and rice by begging and giving divination services to the people of those villages. This practice is called *soigeolip* (brass-begging; brass collected in this activity would be used for making shamanic paraphernalia) and has the function of publicizing the shaman-candidate's identity. At any rate, along with the initiation ritual, this marked the beginning of Kim's shamanic career. However, although she describes her initiation ritual as a dramatic event in her life, she pays more attention to the post-*naerimgut* training process rather than the *naerimgut* itself in her autobiographical writings. She (1995: 104) describes it as following:

Not all the initiates who have *naerimgut* can be a mudang. The initiate has to train in various procedures while serving his/her spirit-mother for at least four or five years. The training is not done like in a classroom, therefore the initiate has to master all the techniques by watching and hearing what other senior shamans and his/her spirit-mother do. Unless the initiate masters the twelve procedures of a *gut*, he/she will remain just *seon mudang* (immature shaman) or *jeomjaengi* (diviner)... The first time when I was invited to a *gut* as an assistant shaman, I was taught how to fold the gods' costume... (My translation).

Kim states that she could learn those procedures quickly, because she had had many

¹¹⁵ In a broad sense, a Hwanghae Province-style initiation-ritual is composed of three subsidiary rituals: *heojugut*, *naerimgut*, and *soseulgut*. *Heojugut* is for chasing away all mischievous spirits, in order for an initiate to be prepared to receive clean spirits; *naerimgut* is for receiving those gods and spirits; lastly, *soseulgut*, literally meaning soaring gut, is held for the shaman-novice's spirits, having descended to the novice, to be encouraged and raised up.

chances to see those rituals when she was young. Moreover, her grandmother was a strict teacher although other people including senior shamans usually praised her. For example, she would say “don’t do anything half-heartedly although you’re accustomed to it! Don’t look here and there, just keep your eyes downcast when you perform... You have to master *mansebaji* (shaman’s invocation song) only by listening, but it is not mastered quickly...it needs a long time...” All these admonitions continued after she came back from other shamans’ rituals.

However, unfortunately, Kim could not learn all the procedures of a *gut* from her maternal grandmother, because her grandmother was too ill to perform rituals at that time. Instead, she had the opportunity to be taught by other senior shamans. Yet, her apprenticeship under other senior shamans was different from young shamans’ relationships to their spirit-parents of today which is characterized by the “fluidity and instrumentality” (Kendall 2009: 105). Being a disciple of another shaman is possible only under the original spirit-mother’s permission. Kim clearly states that “no spirit daughter could choose another spirit-mother without first securing the permission of her original spirit-mother” (quoted in Cha Ok-sung 1997: 37; requoted in Kendall 104-105). Hwang Ru-si (1995: 21) describes the moment when Kim came to be a disciple of another shaman as follows:

One of those senior shamans, recognizing Kim’s potential, asked Kim’s grandmother, “I will think of you as my older sister... You are not healthy enough to teach your granddaughter, therefore I would like to teach her if you don’t mind” (My translation).

The servile life of a proper disciple was not easy for Kim. She (2007: 99) writes in the latest autobiography, “I also went through hard training procedures... The stern senior shamans’

disciplines were much bitterer than my hard married life.” In particular, she (1995: 105/ 2007: 101) describes in detail her training experiences as following:

Whenever I was present at a *gut* place, I could not fully focus on the performance itself. I had to massage the legs of senior shamans for one or two hours when they finished their segment, and had to serve some snacks for them at proper time. In cold days, I warmed up their shoes in my chest. Also, I had to prepare clean water for their washing, and had to take care of their sleeping arrangements (My translation).

All these descriptions denote that the spirit mother and senior shamans indulged “in tyrannies akin to those attributed to a traditional mother-in-law.”¹¹⁶ But the stern relationship between spirit-mother and spirit-daughter might function as a means to transmit the “original” or “authentic” form of ritual.

Both Kim’s autobiographies and other literature describing her life state that her training was completed before the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953), which means that her apprenticeship was done within only three years. Generally, it is said that at least a five or six year-training period is necessary for a shaman-novice to become an independent shaman. Moreover, one of Kim’s disciples told me that Kim requested her to stay at her house for five years until the novice came to be an independent shaman. In this sense, someone might be skeptical of Kim’s claim to have learned the necessary skills in a relatively short learning period in view of the fact that she required her spirit daughters to undergo a longer time of apprenticeship than she herself underwent. However, by saying that she “had been exposed to the

¹¹⁶ Kendall attributes the spirit-mother’s absolute power to the desperation of god-descended women in the past.

rituals since her childhood,” her autobiographical narratives “highlights her own charismatic power, the only culturally accepted criterion Korean scholars have recognized for ‘true’ shamans of the North” (Choi Chung-moo 1995: 59). Considering that Kim’s life story in her autobiographical writings is a negotiated reality, produced by the combination of her identity as a Living Cultural Treasure and her memories, and supposing that the autobiographical narratives are a means to reflect on her current life, it does not matter whether the comment on the length of her post-initiation training is true or not in terms of her image as a great shaman.

As a Living Cultural Treasure, Kim’s life story should be consistent with the “traditional” image produced by official discourses, because that title was given to her based upon the assumption that preserving traditional cultural assets is regarded as a way of maintaining national culture and that the original form must be preserved unchanged. Kim’s self-consciousness as a cultural transmitter is expressed well by the publication of *Kim Keum-hwaui mugajip* (*Kim Keum-hwa’s Shaman Song Collections*) in 1995. At the preface, she states that she has been worried about the possible destruction of all the valuable songs, jokes, and narratives in shamanic culture because of the enduring oppression of shamanism since the New Village Movement, which led her to write the book. In this sense, it is more important that Kim’s life narratives have been formed along with the expectation of what a traditional shaman should be and have, as a model of a traditional and authentic shaman, affected other junior shamans in the formation of their own identities.

Here, it should be noted that Kim Keum-hwa was not a passive receiver of the official image of shamanism but an active consumer who appropriated the traditional image of shamanism in order to make herself a transmitter of traditional culture. Kim participated in the

National Folk Arts Contests five times, making an effort to gain attention by adapting shamanic rituals in the form of festival, and at last won government recognition in 1972 for her boat song, originally sung in a fishermen's ritual for a big harvest. A chronology describing her performing activities, international as well as domestic, shows well what great efforts she made to establish her identity as a shaman who preserves traditional Korean culture. As Choi Chung-moo (1995: 58) states, Kim Keum-hwa "has set the model of success for a shaman's life." Following her model, many young shamans try to join the local culture preservation groups and gain official recognition by making ties with Living Cultural Treasures and the media.

Then, how about other contemporary shamans who are not designated as a Living Cultural Treasure? Do they consider the traditional way of achieving mature shamanship represented by that title as a unique means for them to construct their identity? The socio-cultural condition of the transmittance of shamanism tradition has radically changed over the last several decades in Korea. Accordingly, many scholars and shamans complain that the traditional apprenticeship has almost been completely destroyed. Then, how can contemporary Korean shamans learn a shaman's skills? If the referential model available to a novice shaman disappears along with the destruction of apprenticeship, what will take their place?

4.3. Actualization of the Official Image into a Shaman Identity: Three Shamans' Stories

Although it is not easy to find strict apprenticeship among contemporary Korean shamans, there are still many newly born novice-shamans who aspire to become a great shaman. Some of

them may search for a kind of shaman's educational institution to learn how to carry out shamanic works and to understand the meaning of their life as a shaman. A training course for them given by the Association for the Preservation of Shamanism (*Musok Bojonhoe*) and a shaman school opened for both laity and shamans by the Korean Shamanism Research Institute—each of them was introduced by Guillemoz (1998) and Choi Chung-moo (1991)—are two such schools.¹¹⁷ Also, by browsing a website which offers services related to shamanism and reading a shaman's autobiography or scholarly works, a novice-shaman can learn how other shamans have established their career and developed their special abilities. Kim Seong-nae (2003: 287), analyzing shamans' online activities and designating their career building as “individual-oriented,” describes this trend as follows:

According to the self-portraits described on their internet sites, neo-shamans tend to build their careers by learning from all kinds of popular psychology and religious literature by themselves, rather than by following the classical way of long-term discipleship under the guidance of teacher shamans or spiritual parents.

Such materials offered in internet websites can provide models of identity that are culturally available to a novice-shaman at any particular historical moment and influence what is included and what is excluded from the process of a shaman's self identity construction. In this respect, mature shamanship is not something transmitted from a spirit-mother to a spirit-daughter, but a constructed reality which is achieved through the integration of a wide range of signs and

¹¹⁷ The Association for the Preservation of Shamanism (*Musok bojonhoe*) still exists and offers lectures for novice shamans. Recently, *Hanguk Mugyo Daehak* (Korean *Mugyo* College) was established in 2007 and has worked on various activities such as developing doctrine for shamanism, writing a shaman sacred text, teaching ritual skills, etc. The executive committee of this college is composed of shamans, scholars, and graduate students.

symbols which are found in a variety of sources.

The following life stories of Dani, Unjang, and Jade will show how many referential frameworks are available, and how they are utilized and synthesized into their identity-making process. In particular, it is very interesting to note that Dani's identity-making process paralleled the history of modern academic discourses on Korean shamanism. I argue that this was not an accident but made possible by Dani's social sensitivity and appropriation of those discourses. Compared to the other two shamans, Dani's story is more colorful. This might be due to the fact that Dani's shamanic career is longer than the other two. It is possible that the other two shamans' life and their identity-making processes may become more variegated as they follow their aspirations to become great shamans.

4.3.1. Dani: Synthesizing "Tradition," "*Minjung*," and "Priesthood"

When I first met Dani in 1997, now a 44 year-old female shaman, I was in a seminar for graduate students in the Department of Korean Studies, Ewha Women's University. Dani was invited to the class because she was known as a "*minjung-mudang*" (*mingjung* literally means people, but it is a concept that connotes concern for the lower classes and oppressed), who had performed many rituals for the dead who were victimized by the ideological conflicts after the Korean War, and known for her active participation in interreligious dialogue meetings. In the classroom, she narrated her initiation story and other mystical experiences in her shamanic life.

Later on, I had many opportunities to observe various rituals which she presided over,

and her clear pronunciation of shamanic songs was impressive to me because I had found it difficult to understand the mumbling voices of the old shamans and their Hwanghae Province dialect. Since then, I have developed a close relationship with her, and therefore had many opportunities to see her narrating her life story to an audience, including academic researchers, journalists, and film-makers. Although the details of her life story were a little different depending on an interviewer's questions, the core of it was consistent. In the following section, I structured her life story chronologically and divided it using subtitles so as to show the relationship between her life story and official discourse on shamanism.

A. From Initiation to Apprenticeship under Imundong Mansin

Dani was born in 1967 into a family who had moved from North Korea at the time of the Korean War. At first her family settled in Gunsan, in northern Jeolla Province, but after her father's business failed they moved to Seosan, in southern Chungcheong Province, where she was born. Around the time her father died, she contracted measles at the age of five. Although she could overcome measles with medical care, she had a long drawn-out illness—whether the illness was affected by the measles or not is not clear in her memories—which could not be diagnosed by the Western medicine paradigm. Later, the illness was identified as a shamanic illness when she turned eight. Although she had long been called “*magwi halmeom* (a witch)” by children of her age earlier because she “acted like a grown-up and showed unusual behavior to them,” the following episode demarcates a crucial event that led others to recognize her shaman-destiny.

What I clearly remember is that...it was when azaleas covered the entire mountain...When I sat on a wooden veranda, I had a vision that an old man in a white robe and black hat riding a white horse called my name. So, I said, "yes!" and came close to him... He gave me a long knife, a fan, and a bundle of brass bell. Holding out both arms, I received them. Strangely, as soon as I grabbed them, my body began to tremble. Turning to him, I asked "Why am I trembling after receiving these objects?" But the old man had already disappeared. While I was trembling, an old woman living next door came to my house in order to see if I was still alive. She said, "Why are you trembling?" I told her what had happened to me. When my mother came back home, the old woman told her what she saw and said that my illness was spirit-sickness and I would become a mansin.

In addition to this hallucination, two more visionary experiences were interpreted by the old neighbor as a sign of shaman-destiny. At first, her mother disregarded the old woman's interpretation, and she did not trust other shaman's divinations that predicted that Dani would become a great shaman. But the following episode, which was reconstructed from her mother's recollection, explains why Dani's mother finally accepted her daughter's shaman destiny.

One rainy day, I was happy because my mother did not leave to sell fish. She was doing laundry outside, while I was playing by myself inside the room. All of sudden, I said to mother, "Mom, you are not going out today! Therefore, I am going out to find the knife which father had used." Then, mom was embarrassed and said, "What are you talking about? There is nothing like that!" One more time, I replied, "I am going out to find it, otherwise I will die." "Then, die!" mom shouted and went back to the laundry. But as there was no sound from inside the room, my mother came in and recognized that I was on the brink of death. Quickly, she apologized to the deities, "Please, forgive me. I am a stupid human...that's why acted the way I did... Forgive me." It sounds funny but, as soon as she apologized, I woke up....My mother took me to a general store. While she was carrying me on her back, I said, "Mom, my sickness will not be cured at a hospital...I have to have an initiation ritual." Anyway, Mom bought a knife and a fan to me at the general store. Being back home, without any instruction, I put the knife and the fan on the table

and went out to wash my hair, and kowtowed facing them. Seeing all this, my mother thought that “Ah...the gods really are descending on my daughter!”

Actually, Dani confessed that her father was also a shaman and installed a small shrine although he did not perform rituals. According to her, right before her father died, all the paraphernalia that were enshrined in her father’s altar had been buried in a mountain. Dani told me that she did not know the burial place, and did not even know the fact that those objects had been buried. However, she found them before the initiation ritual although nobody taught her the burial location.

At any rate, Dani finally had an initiation ritual on the day of *Dano* (the fifth day of May in the lunar calendar) under the supervision of Chilseongne eomma who was a refugee from Hwanghae Province. After the ritual, Dani started to learn shamanic works under her spirit mother. She recalled that the apprenticeship was not so hard, which she attributes to her young age.

At the age of 14, she moved to Seoul with help of the president of a Korean business conglomerate who was impressed by her accurate divinations. The client, at first, asked her to be a shaman who prays only for him. But her mother strongly opposed the request saying, “she will become a great mansin. She was not born to be your secretary shaman.” Now, the unyielding mother who had stubbornly resisted her daughter’s shaman destiny became a strong supporter of Dani’s mature shamanship. At any rate, in Seoul, Dani encountered two great shamans, Okju and Imundong Mansin, respectively, who would have an important impact on her shamanic career. The first encounter with the shaman Okju was at a cultural festival known as the Gukpung 81, or “Wind of the Nation,” where Okju presided over shamanic performances for the public. Dani

went there just to watch, but the 15 year-old girl, who could perform Hwanghae Province-style ritual, roused Okju's interest, and so Okju tried to get Dani to come on stage although it was their first encounter.¹¹⁸ A few days later, Dani was invited to Okju's house, where her shamanic potentiality was tested. According to Dani, Okju "hunted" her as her disciple because she was attracted by her clairvoyance. When I asked her what she had learned from Okju, she recalled the apprenticeship under her as follows:

There is nothing that I learned about *gut* from her. My *gut* style is transmitted from a mansin, Jo Cheolmul, who was the spirit mother of my original spirit-mother and very famous among shamans who performs Hwanghae Province-style *gut*. But the teacher Okju's ritual style was totally different from the things that I had learned from my original spirit-mother... However, I was really impressed by the way she encouraged clients to sponsor a ritual, and the way she consulted them. She was a genius...All the clients whose status was higher than the teacher finally succumbed to her oratorical power...Whenever she was in her shrine to consult a client, she asked me to bring a bowl of water. She let me sit beside her and learn how to give divination...She really gave a clear divination... Also, I learned how to prepare offerings. She always prepared a sumptuous feast for *guts* which she presided over. That was different from the teacher Imundong eomma [Imundong Mansin].

However, the apprenticeship under Okju lasted only eighteen months. One day, a famous Korean folklorist, who knew Dani's original spirit mother and came from Dani's hometown, convinced her to accompany him to Imundong eomma's place where a *gut* was going to be held by saying, "Let's go to watch a *gut*, and there I will introduce a shaman who I know well. Today,

¹¹⁸ Yun Kyo-im (2008: 31) describes the political purpose of this festival as follows: "Gukp'ung 81 was sponsored by the Jeon military regime (1980-1988) in an attempt to deflect attention from the first anniversary of the democratic movement in Gwangju (a city in southwest Korea)." As I explained in chapter two, Jeon Du hwan also justified his dictatorship by promoting those festivals, as the former dictator Park Chung Hee had done.

she is performing the same style of *gut* as your original spirit mother did.” Yet, recognizing that the performing shaman was a rival of Okju, Dani, at first, was hesitant to enter the place. But because of Imundong’s repeated urging, Dani could not but enter the ritual room. Dani told me what she felt during Imundong eomma’s performance:

I was surprised when Immundong eomma performed *Chilseong geori* [a ritual for the Big Dipper]...it was identical with my spirit mother’s *gut*... Moreover, her dancing on a knife blade was really attractive, she was dancing like an angel. So I thought that ah, ‘I will perform the *Bisu geori* [a ritual for Generals in which segment the shaman stands and dances on a knife blade] like her when I become a great shaman!’ That’s what I thought at the moment.

In addition, Imundong asked Dani herself to perform the *Seongju geori* (a ritual for a house-guardian spirit) in front of senior shamans, folklorists, and photographers. When Dani finished her performance, the entire audience applauded and Imundong eomma said to her, “You have learned very well. How about joining me? I will buy you a Hanbok (Korean traditional clothing).” Around that time, the two shamans, Okju and Imundong, were competing with each other for the honored title of Living National Treasure. As might be expected, Okju was furious to hear that her pupil performed for her rival, which ended up causing the end of Dani’s apprenticeship with her.

The new apprenticeship under Imundong eomma did not create psychological conflict in Dani’s mind. Rather she felt comfortable with the relationship, because, in Imundong eomma’s

guild,¹¹⁹ she could meet all the shamans who were in the same spirit-line as herself.

I couldn't feel any conflict in my heart. Rather, it was the fact that Okju's ritual style was totally different from mine that created an emotional conflict. But I could see my spirit-aunts in Imundong eomma's place... Between those aunts, there could not be conflicts.

The new spirit teacher regarded Dani as a real daughter, and saw to it that she came to live in her neighborhood. Dani visited the new teacher's shrine and was given private lessons from her. Through the lessons, she could absorb and polish all the shamanic skills needed for performing a *gut*. In addition, around that time, Imundong eomma wanted to publish a book which explained Hwanghae Province-style *gut* and shaman songs and so dictated shaman songs to Dani, which greatly helped Dani to memorize them. In this way, Dani became Imundong eomma's most promising apprentice.

B. Separation from Imundong Masin to Becoming a *Minjung mudang*

During a large scale-ritual for a bountiful catch of fish at Hwasu Port, in the city of Incheon in 1983, which Dani's spirit teacher presided at, Dani occupied the attention of the whole audience, among whom were many young students, artists, journalists and professors. One day, several college students visited Dani and asked her to train them to perform a *gut*. They were members of a group which was established for learning and performing Korean mask dance

¹¹⁹ In order to perform a Hwanghae Province-style *gut*, at least three shamans should cooperate with each other. These shamans usually make a team and the team lasts as long as the relationship between them is not broken. Choi Chung-moo (1987) called the team a "guild."

and peasant music—later, they came to be the founding members of the Institute of *Minjok Gut* (National *Gut*) which I introduced in chapter three— and were supposed to perform a *gut* as a year-end celebration in an art gallery. Yet, three weeks were too short for the students to master all the skills for performing the *gut* even though they were familiar with shamanic culture, hence Dani herself came to perform for them.

It was my first performance with students, and the event led me to connect closely with the persons engaged in the *minjung* movement... I was acquainted with one of them before I came to know the others. He was a well-rounded person in terms of folk songs and *gut* performance. Whenever I performed a *gut*, I almost always danced to the rhythm of his hour-glass drum... I performed a *gut* even in Myeongdong Catholic Church.¹²⁰ It was held for a dead old homeless woman. I met Cardinal Kim there, he told me ‘be a great masin!’... Imundong eomma did not know what I would do at that time... When my performance for the repose of the deceased, Park Jong-cheol¹²¹, was revealed to the media, she came to know what I had done... Actually, she did not like it.

However, the fact that Imundong mansin did not like her pupil to perform those rituals and to go along with those students was not the direct cause of the severance of their relationship. After Imundong eomma became a Living National Treasure, many shaman candidates gathered from everywhere to study with her. As the number of Imundong eomma’s disciples increased, Dani, who had enjoyed the privilege of being Imundong’s successor, became an object of envy and sometimes fell into a trap set by the lies of others. Moreover, there was a rumor that Imundong eomma offered a bribe to those who were responsible for designating Living National

¹²⁰ Myeongdong Catholic church, in Seoul, has been known as a stage for political and social activities. In addition, it functioned as a refuge for persons engaged in conflicts against the dictatorships.

¹²¹ Park Jong-cheol (1964-1987), who was one of student-protestors against Jeon Du-hwan’s dictatorship, died of excruciating torture in 1987. It is generally said that his death became a cause of the Struggle of June.

Treasures around that time, and Imundong eomma thought Dani was the source of that rumor.

Although Dani insisted on her innocence, the teacher did not listen to her. This led to a misunderstanding between Dani and Imundong eomma, and Dani, disappointed by her teacher's distrust, finally decided to leave her.

In addition to the distrust from her spirit-teacher, there was another reason for her decision to leave. At that time, Dani started to build her own identity as a *minjung mudang* (a shaman for the people) through the cooperation with students who were engaged in the *minjung* socio-political movement. After Imundong eomma was certified by the government as a Living National Treasure, the number of her official performances on large stages for an upper-middle-class audience increased, and more and more clients in need of her services came from a higher economic background. To Dani's eyes, the teacher's old regular clients, who could not pay as much as the new clients, were increasingly alienated from her teacher, which conflicted with Dani's belief that a truly admirable shaman should be compassionate toward the deprived rather than searching for fame. At any rate, independence from her spirit teacher led Dani to engage earnestly in political movements and establish her identity as a *minjung mudang*. Regarding the experience of this period, she recalled it as following:

It was really new world, a new culture to me. Until then, I thought that "*gut* is just a ritual held in a house or *gutdang* (a commercial shrine) for a client who paid for it." But being with the students, I could feel something that was political in *gut*... To perform a *gut* which contained political meanings, I had to read many books. One day, I questioned a friend, "What does *minjung* mean?" Juho, a senior member of the group replied, "*minjung* is similar with *mudang*... *mudangs* are humans who help others in their lives. *Mudang* performs a *gut* for people who are ignored. Through *gut*, *mudang* can resolve grievances of the dead as well as the living. You are the one who can do this work." I was happy to hear that I could do those things, and he recommended a few

books to read... Through reading those books and joining in their seminars, I developed a critical mind against the contemporary military dictatorship... What I heard, saw, and read was all about resistance to the government and changing society...

As I described in the previous chapter, cultural activists and many intellectuals, including student protestors, adopted shamanistic elements as political symbols of anti-aristocracy and pro-democracy activities under the banner of the Popular Culture Movement around this time. Along with them, Dani was in the middle of the struggle for democracy, while performing rituals. In addition to performing a *gut* in the university festival as a symbolic struggle against military dictatorship, Dani performed it to lay to rest those who died in the struggle for democratization, which she thought was what a true shaman had to do for the deprived. If Dani's spirit mother Imundong eomma became a national hero who represented the 'authentic' and 'traditional' shamanism created by the state, Dani established her identity as a national hero created by oppositional political groups.



Figure 5. At Seoul National University, 1986, Dani is dancing a *Salpuri* (resolving grievances) dance for the dead who died during pro-democracy protests. This photo was kept by Dani, and was the only one that is preserved in her album. According to her, the rest of the photos which recorded her activities around that time were burnt by her elder brother who was angry with her activities.

C. From *Minjung mudang* to *Saje* (Priest) of Traditional Religion

However, Dani's gods warned her to stop those political performances of lachrymator because shamans' equipment such as an hour glass drum and a gong, which should be treated as holy things, were sometimes trampled down and damaged by the police. In addition to the violation of the sacred nature of those objects, many rituals for the dead who had died in the anti-government movement were in danger of polluting the deities.

I was supposed to have a performance with the students a few days later. Three days before the performance was to be held I could not speak even a word... It's like my throat was clogged...

The gods were so angry with my stubbornness that they closed my word gate... One of my friends came to my house and begged forgiveness from the deities, offering clean water... Only after I gave in, I could speak. That's all... It was my last performance with the student protestors...

The suffering of speechlessness induced by the wrath of the gods finally stopped her from living a *minjung mudang*'s life, but the acquaintance with many intellectuals during the period gave her another opportunity to rethink her shaman identity.

One female theologian who had become acquainted with Dani during her early twenties and wrote about Korean shamanism in her doctoral dissertation visited her after becoming a professor at a Christian college in Korea. One day, the theologian invited Dani to her class and asked her to give a lecture to her students, which resulted in the discharge of the professor from the college. However, the relationship between Dani and the theologian was not broken by the incident, but led to Dani's connection to priests of other religions, theologians, and scholars who were engaged in inter-religious dialogue movements.

As I described in the previous chapter, inter-religious dialogue in Korea came into existence through the efforts of the Christian Academy, and became more systemized and revitalized when KCRP (the Korean Conference for Religion and Peace) was organized in 1987. Their first dialogue program, the Assembly of Young Religious People, invited a shaman, Dani, for the first time as a dialogue partner in 1997. Her invitation was based upon the idea that Korean shamanism is the core of Korean religious culture and could build harmony between different religions in Korea. Through those meetings, Dani's self-consciousness of her identity as a priest of a Korean indigenous religion was strengthened.

In 2006, I accompanied Dani to a dialogue program in a meditation center, Yesudoweon

(Garden for the Jesus Way) that was managed by a Protestant pastor, where she gave a speech on her life as a shaman and had a dialogue with other participants. She started her speech with the issue of how she became a shaman and came to know the pastor. I already knew how gods had descended on her through earlier research into her life story. But, she described other experiences that she had not stated earlier in my presence.

I think I have special ties to Christianity. When I was young, I saw a strange scene. I was playing at a neighbor's house. The landlady had been out of her mind for a long time...so a pastor visited her to conduct an exorcism. I saw a green-colored light radiating from the hand of the pastor...I said, "Mom, green-colored light is radiated from that man's hand." The pastor asked who I was. I replied, "I am a *mudang*." The pastor told me, "Oh...you can see the light? I bet you cannot but be a *mudang*."

She went on to speak about her dream:

I think I am a strange *mudang*. You know, I am just *mudang*. Can you image a *mudang* who dreams of Peter, the Cross, and the Ten Commandments? I am not sure when it was, but in dream, a Cross came down from sky to my skirt. In another dream, Peter walked with a cane toward me saying, "Study with those guys!" In a dream the following day, letters in the sky was inscribed onto big stone-plates. I didn't know the meaning of the letters on the plate but later I thought that it was like the Ten Commandments... Through these dreams, I came to question myself, "Have I taken the right way as a priest?"... I don't want to be a *munhwajae* [a Living National Treasure]... It might sound funny but I have many friends who are priests of other religions. Some of them asked me even to perform a *gut* and *gosa* [a small-scale ritual]...

Though Korean Christians are often criticized as being too conservative and having a self-righteous attitude towards other religions, the most active participants in inter-religious dialogue gatherings are from Christianity. Those who led Dani to rethink her identity as a *saje*

(priest) were theologians. Moreover, the academic discourse on Korean shamanism locating it as the core of Korean religious culture was induced by a theologians' group. Those images in her dream may reflect the connection Dani has had with Christian theologians.

In order to communicate with other people who did not know Korean shamanism, she had to resort to religious terms which would be familiar with them. As Hacking (2002: 108) states, "if new modes of description come into being, new possibilities for action come into being in consequence." Similarly, it is my suggestion that the religious terms which Dani used for communication to others could influence her thinking about her shaman identity.

Now, Dani does not hesitate to say, "Who am I? I don't want to be second, I will be the best!" In order to become the best shaman, Dani decided to form her identity as a priest. If Dani's identity as a *minjung mudang* was formed according to the mainstream socio-political discourses based upon class-consciousness, her notion of shaman-priest goes beyond the category of class and socio-political position. After she finished her speech at the meditation center, she was asked a question about "the right way" she mentioned and about the crucial message of shamanism. She replied,

I think the right way in shamanism is to pray for my offspring's success... and to endeavor not to harm others... I also think that the core message of shamanism is the peace of a family, the happiness of a village, to respect life, and to live a healthy life... Is there anything more important except those things in our lives?"

It seems that such criticisms of Korean shamanism as concentrating too much on obtaining practical benefits and worldly happiness do not intimidate her. Rather, she remarks that

“All the people have their own sufferings regardless of their backgrounds, whether or not they have money... I just want to be a *mudang* who can give them hope.”

It is unquestionable that Dani’s self identity as a shaman has been transformed within the context of South Korean socio-political circumstances. According to Harvey’s research (1979), “a strong goal orientation” and “keen sensitivity to intuitive cues of others” are mentioned as shaman’s attributes. Choi Chung-moo (1987) also indicates social sensitivity as a requisite for becoming a great shaman. In a sense, we can say that the transformation of Dani’s shaman identity in accordance with the contemporary socio-political mainstream discourse was a product of her social sensitivity and strong goal orientation to becoming a great shaman. However, if “new modes of description” which had been enriched by the discourse had not provided her with a referential framework for establishing her identity, could she have formed it in that way? I believe her various shamanic identities resulted from the “tactics”—a term, borrowed from Michel de Certeau (1988)—to appropriate the official discourse on shamanism while Dani was in search of a mature shamanship.



Figure 6. Dani is dancing holding a knife in Bisu (Jakdu) geori, held in Seongnam Art Festival, 2007. Photo by author.

For several years, Dani sometimes performed a *gut* on large-scale stages such as a local art festival, and at the same time she has officiated at a ritual for the heavenly gods as a leading priest with other people on Cheomseongdan, located on top of Ganghwa Mountain, Incheon. She is not confused by the multiple shaman identities that she has reconfigured through her life. Rather, it seems that her various identities have been synthesized into her present identity. She is always ready to re-present her identity in accordance with her circumstances.

Up until now, I have demonstrated how a shaman's identity has been formed in a dynamic relationship with vertical factors such as the socio-political context and official discourse. I adopt the term “dynamic” because I consider those contexts and discourses not just to be products of shamanic activities, but also a model for shamanic identity. The following two shamans' stories, which contain their learning experiences and show how they developed their self-identities as a shaman, will show how official discourses—in particular, academic

discourses—were utilized by them to establish themselves as shamans. Especially, these stories will show how academic discourses such as the traditional and the (post)modern, which seem to be paradoxical to each other, are synthesized into the reality of their self-identities.

4.3.2. Unjang: A Mugyo Priest

I first met Unjang, a 44-year-old male shaman, in a commercial shrine where I observed Dani's *gut* in the spring of 2006. I was introduced to him by a man who was operating an internet portal site for Korean shamanism and visited Dani to observe the *gut*. Because I had seen the operator before a couple of times, I asked him to introduce a shaman informant for my dissertation. I was fortunate that Unjang happened to be accompanying him. He was in blue jeans and cap carrying a backpack, and with a camera hanging on his neck. He seemed to be a student who was interested in shamanic ritual. We made an appointment for an interview and, a few days later, I visited his place.

His house was a two-story building, the first floor which was occupied by a living room which also served as a waiting area for clients, a bedroom, and a washroom. In the second floor were enshrined his gods, where he would conduct shamanic works. He started the interview with his recent activities, one of which was the establishment of a *mugyo sajedan* (an Organization of Shamanism Priests) which was composed of five shamans around the age of forty. He states, "A shaman who is over the age of fifty tends to be too stubborn and not to hear young shamans' voices. That's why we restricted the age." The organization was designed to carry out, among

other activities, volunteer work and teaching Hanyang *Cheonsin gut* (a traditional Seoul-style ritual).

Then, he went on to talk about learning experiences under his spirit-father Lee Ji-san, a famous Seoul shaman. At first, I expected him to tell the story of his spirit sickness, because I thought spirit sickness was regarded as a justification for the unfortunate destined career choice of a shaman. At the same time, I supposed that things that Unjang mentioned first might be the more important factors to him in terms of his contemporary shaman identity. Moreover, because the interview was conducted without any fixed format, I could interrupt whenever I wanted. But I tried not to break into his narrative unless a question struck me. In the following section, I will compare his identity as shaman based upon the interview of that day with that in his book, entitled *Gwanu's Hanyang Cheonshin Gut*, published in 2005.

Unjang designated himself as a *mugyo saje* in his book which contains an autobiographical narrative and an explanation of the Hanyang *Cheonsin gut*. In this work, he shows his pride, as an authentic transmitter of Hanyang *Cheonshin gut* and a *mugyo* priest. He even told me in the first interview, “My name? I forgot my name after I became a *mugyo saje* (priest). Just call me Unjang!” This identity and pride is expressed clearly in his book. In its preface, he explains why he decided to write it: to correct negative prejudices against Korean shamanism and to transmit the traditional and authentic procedure of the *Cheonshin gut*. Different from other autobiographies of Korean shamans, his book is filled with many paraphrases and quotations from scholars’ works. The first conversation I had with him shows well how he has been longing for systematic knowledge about Korean shamanism.

At the beginning of this year, I was hurt by news that shaman Kim Keum-hwa's *gut* which had been planned to be held in front of the Blue House was canceled because of strong opposition from other established religions. It made me gloomier that we shamans did not do anything to support her collectively...In order to have *mugyo* recognized as a religion, we need to establish an educational organization. Those that graduate from the organization should be united...that's why I made a *mugyosajedan* [the organization of mugyo priests]...I am always ready to teach any shaman who wants to learn *Cheonshin gut* from me, but we [members of the organization] do not interfere in another member's life as a shaman. (My interview in 2006)

He confesses that the most important factor in understanding his role as a shaman originated from his spirit father, who he is very proud of having trained under. His spirit-father, Lee Ji-san, is one of the most famous shamans and is well known among Korean scholars for his flamboyance and the traditional nature of his ritual performance. The chance to be introduced to his spirit-father was given by his cousin who was enthusiastic about Korean traditional arts and was acquainted with Lee. Unjang (2005: 35) describes the apprenticeship under his spirit-father in his book as follows:

My spirit-father, with a mother's mentality, taught me how to perform a ritual and how to follow the way of a shaman. When I made a mistake in performing a ritual, he pointed out the mistake and explained gently what I should do. But he was a very strict teacher when I deviated from the right way of shamans. I think it was the grace of Heaven to have him as my spirit-father (My translation).

Although his spirit-father is remembered as a benign and respectful teacher, the process of learning is not the same as that found in a shaman school. He told me that "there is nothing that is easily learned. I've learned it just by watching. It is the old shaman's teaching style!" Moreover, he also alluded that there were some conflicts between the two. At a glance, this

memory which is revealed in my interview may seem to contradict his spirit-father's mother-like figure in the book. However, due to the fact that the book was written to improve the image of Korean shamanism and the apprenticeship under a famous shaman can still guarantee the authenticity of his shamanship, the different images of his spirit-father in the book from the one in the interview makes sense.

Up to now, we have seen how the apprenticeship under the spirit-father embodying the traditional authority of shamanism is positively reconstructed in his memory. We might call this positive memory a strategy of identification in establishing his own self-identity. However, his memory of the traditional apprenticeship is reconfigured not only positively, but also negatively. I would like to call this negation a strategy of differentiation. In Unjang's case, this strategy is also used to make an independent identity for Unjang himself, which is expressed by the memory of the conflicts between the two.

After he had been an apprentice for about three years, he had a chance to perform a *gut* on behalf of his spirit-father who was in poor health at the time. Unjang tried to do his best not to sully his spirit-father's honor, but his endeavor brought about a contrary effect, in particular a sort of jealousy from his spirit-father. He recollected the harsh and cold comments on his performance after he completed his segment: "Oh my god! When did you steal all of my skills?"

From then on, the opportunity for him to watch his spirit-father's performances decreased. He gave an example: While the spirit-father was performing inside, he was asked to count how many dried pollacks were on the altar for a tutelary deity outside. At first, he thought there must have been a special meaning of the numbering of the dried pollack. But as he was asked to do it over and over again, he realized it was just to prevent him from watching the spirit-father's

performance. In the end, Unjang decided to secretly tape-record the spirit father's performance, through which he believes that he mastered what he had to know for mature shamanship. He said to me, "even though I can imitate him, I cannot steal the wisdom of age accumulated by so many experiences. I cannot still understand why he was jealous of me." At any rate, in addition to this conflict, some troubles with the spirit father's family spelled the end of his apprenticeship. During the interview, he expressed his resentment at his spirit father's unfair treatment while he compared it with the publication of his book.

This book costs just 12,000 *won* (about 10 dollars). Almost all those who know my training experiences said to me, 'Are you crazy? Why did you give out so cheaply what was so hard for you?' That's it! That's why I wrote it! Because I have learned it so painfully, I just wanted to hand it out. However, I am confident that someone may imitate me by reading this book, but they cannot take the core of my experiences (My interview in 2006).

We might understand the act of writing and revealing how to conduct the *Cheonshin gut* to the public as an endeavor to differentiate himself from his spirit-father. At a glance, he seems to consider the closed education system, such as the apprenticeship, to be an obstacle to keeping pace with other established religions in terms of power relationships, and to negate tradition in constructing his self-identity. However, the tradition which is embodied by the memory of his training under his spirit-father still stays with him. Note that strategies of both identification and differentiation are only possible when they are based upon his interpretation of the tradition, and these reconstructed memories, whether positively or negatively, are still referred to in the formation of his shamanship.

Then, can we say that only tradition is available for the construction of his self-identity

and his orientation to become a mature shaman? He, as I mentioned at the outset of this section, prefers to use the term *mugyo* rather than *mu* or *musok*, all of which are native terms corresponding to Korean shamanism. In particular, the term *mugyo* carries a strong connotation that Korean shamanism is a religion, neither a superstition nor a traditional custom. In this respect, Unjang agrees with modern scholars such as Cho Hung-yoon (1994) and Ryu Dong-shik (1983) who insist on the religiosity of Korean shamanism.

According to Unjang, *mugyo* satisfies three requirements which all religions are supposed to have; a priest, a doctrine, and a communal ritual. And each of them corresponds to a *gyeja* (*mudang*, shaman), a *muga* (shamanic song), and a *gut* (ritual). Here, he shows different views on what constitutes a religion from Cho Hung-yoon (1994: 23-24), who Unjang seemed to know well through reading his publications.¹²² The fact that Unjang regards doctrine as a necessary element of a religion seems to reflect the general concept of religion that is linked with terms such as evolution and Enlightenment thought among Korean people since the early twentieth century, which I have already described in chapter two. In this sense, it is assumed that Unjang's self-designation as a *mugyo*-priest is none other than his recognition of what elements must be included in order for something to be a religion. And, revealing the way of performing *Cheonshin gut* to the public might be understood as a consequence of his view that shamanism is a religion. In this context, Unjang's desire to establish systematic knowledge and doctrine of Korean shamanism—both of which are introduced in his book—was explained as his duty.

¹²² Cho Hung-yoon (1994) explained, in his class as well as in his books, the traditional apprenticeship between spirit mother and spirit daughter by using the story of Lee Ji-san, Unjang's spirit-father. As for the concept of religion, Cho (1994: 23-24) maintains that necessary constituents of a religion are thusly: supernatural beings, a priest as a mediator, and the believer group. As an anthropologist, he has criticized the Western concept of religion which is based upon Christianity, evolutionism, and Enlightenment thought.

4.3.3. Jade: A Soul-Mate

In the year 2000 when I visited Jade who had an initiation ritual in 1997, I was impressed by the fact that her shrine was very different from that of other Korean shaman's. It consisted of grotesque and gloomy-colored statues on the cabinet in the living room; a white wall on which no images of gods were hung; and two white-colored candleholders, an incense-burner, and a bowl of clean water for the gods. For those who are familiar with other Korean shamans' shrine, hers was quite strange.¹²³

She started her story with how she identified her life as a shaman differently from other Korean shamans.

For six months since the initiation ritual, my life as a shaman was the same as other shamans. As others do, I performed *guts* and made divinations.... Then one day, I went down to Jeonnam University following a professor Kim. I had spent eight months there studying and meeting many people...Most of them were artists....Usually, as you know, other shamans just meet housewives... me? Curiously, I often met other kinds of people. Artists, and those who are superior to me in terms of spiritual power...they might be called "Shaman Syndrome People" who have innate shamanic energy. They develop the energy into the direction of art, I think... (My interview in 2000)

I asked her to tell me more about "Shaman Syndrome", because such terms as "the energy of concentration" and "Shaman Syndrome," which I have never heard from other Korean shamans I have been acquainted with, reminded me of one feature of the Neo-shamanism

¹²³ All shamans whom I am acquainted with do not put things such as "grotesque and gloomy-colored statues" in sacred spaces because they believe that they bring noxious influences and may become the residence of evil spirits.

movement: neo-shamans do not insist on the authority of priesthood; rather, they just help a patient to develop his/her innate spiritual power for healing. She went on to say,

...an important requisite of “Shaman Syndrome” is the energy of concentration. When we shamans are climbing on *Jakdu* (a knife blade) as a *mudang*, we have to concentrate all the energy in us, then we feel that our bodies are lighter than usual. In my case, I felt something rising up from my abdomen... Artists who I have met said to me that they also have similar experience when they are concentrating... I express this energy of concentration with the word, shaman energy... A novelist who I know is even better than the typical shamans in terms of the power to foresee the future. Hence I often learn many things from him. Actually, I once suffered from a sense of inferiority... Anyway, I call them “semi-shamans,” and “Shaman Syndrome People.” (My interview in 2000).

She said to me that she wanted to make a “shamanism-community” with those artists and spiritually energetic people, and hoped to become a “soul-mate” of many people. Also, as a “soul-mate,” rather than serving a client who is in need with traditional shamanic rituals, she wanted to help the client to communicate with gods without her mediation. By focusing on her experiences with special clients, she implied that she was searching for a different way to become a mature shaman, and so justifies her new identity making process.

She went even on to differentiate herself from her spirit-mother:

My spirit-mother’s method is the same as it used be fifty years ago, but now the world has changed. Her way is traditional shamanism, ... but because my spirit-mother is a Living Cultural Treasure, if she recommends a *gut* to all the clients, then the client follows her recommendation without any doubt. In my opinion, to recommend a *gut* to all the clients without any condition is not right... Some clients should have a *gut*, but others do not have to.... Just a small scale ritual is enough for them. I am not possessed by neokdaesin, yet. Therefore, I cannot make a divination regarding dead ancestors, which is why I cannot obtain a desirable result from a *gut*... (My

interview in 2000)

The image of her spirit-mother as an authority who can make “the client follows her recommendation without any doubts” is sharply contrasted with Jade’s own identity as a soul mate who does not have any power to coerce the client. We can see here that the spirit-mother’s shamanic way, which represents tradition, is negated in Jade’s self-identity making process. She even criticizes her spirit-mother by saying that the world has changed, and that performing a *gut* is not always the best solution. Moreover, because she has not received neokdaeshin, a spirit who is believed to lead a dead soul to a shaman during a *gut*, her *gut* is not effective.

However, not all shamans recommend a *gut* to clients as she contends. In fact, there are many kinds of rituals of different scales, and the choice of a ritual is dependent upon the seriousness of the problems a client is facing. She, having been a shaman for two years and having studied shamanism with scholars in seminars, could not be ignorant of this. Here, we can say that describing her spirit mother as a shaman who ‘recommends a *gut* to all the clients’ is a strategic emphasis of selected memory to establish her new identity by differentiating herself from her spirit-mother. Also, the absence of neokdaeshin, seemingly a defect, is excused by her stressing her relationship with artists, who have taken its place. She relies on artists to establish her new identity in terms of the relationship with the spirit.

In addition, her negative memory of apprenticeship at the spirit-mother’s house supports the strategy of differentiation from the tradition.

I wanted to go down to my house after having the initiation ritual, but I was forced to stay at my spirit-mother’s house regardless of my will... My life there? Without a morning coffee break, I

was always busy doing housekeeping. That was my daily life... As time went by, I came to feel uncertain about my destiny... (My interview in 2000)

The memory and evaluation of life at her spirit-mother's house did not confirm her destiny as a destined shaman. Rather, it made her uncertain about it. This shows a different evaluation from what is remembered by Lee Ji-san whom I mentioned above. Lee evaluates positively the daily life of housekeeping at the spirit-mother's house in the sense that such work provided the foundational knowledge necessary for performing a *gut* (Kim Heon-seon 1997: 34). However, housekeeping has a totally opposite effect in Jade's memories.

In her narration so far, we can find two strategies of affirmation and negation. By affirming the relationship with special clients such as artists, and by negating the spirit, *nokdaeshin*, and her spirit-mother, she justifies her new identity as a shaman. Then, can we say that she is cut off from tradition? Given that she deviated so far from it, can we still call her a shaman, or a *mudang*?¹²⁴ By looking at her autobiography we can answer these questions and see how she is still connected to the tradition of Korean shamanism.

Like Unjang, she also published a book. However, it is more like an autobiography than a manual on how to perform a *gut*. A summary of her experiences of divine illness, as described in her book, can help us see how she is connected to traditional Korean shamanism. The story starts with her mystical power to know the sex of the unborn children of pregnant village women when she turned the age of four. It goes on to the memory of pain from an unidentified illness when she was in middle school; from working hard to make money due to the failure of her parent's

¹²⁴ Even though she identified herself as a soul-mate of her clients, she still used the term *mudang* when I interviewed her.

business when she was in high school; and from medical treatment for throat cancer caused by teaching German as a part time job. In her memory, the most terrible divine illness happened in 1997. During a seminar for bakers, she fainted and bled from her vulva. She was taken to the hospital but the cause of her bleeding could not be identified. Even convalescing at home did not give her peace. She could not sleep well because she often had nightmares about ghosts. She went to the hospital because she had terrible headaches but even an MRI could not locate the cause of her pain. In the end, she decided to have an initiation ritual and accept her destiny as a shaman.

Through her memory of divine illness, it is verified that she has also experienced the typical symptoms that other shamans had in the process of accepting their destiny.¹²⁵ A life story is constructed with the memory of past experiences through the use of signs and symbols. The signs and symbols are meaningful only when they are relevant to the understanding of the subject's present life and to the orientation of the subject to self and the world. Jade's painful story of divine illness constructed in her memory, as typical occurrences in the story of a shaman, seems to represent how the traditional image of a shaman is still being referred to as a meaningful frame.

Interestingly, Jade's appropriation of traditional factors is not limited to utilizing those signs and symbols of divine illness, but also includes the mythical time of the Dan'gun era. She told me that her guardian spirits wanted her to start "shamanism Renaissance." She defined it as follows:

¹²⁵ According to Kim (1989: 337-8), the symptom of a Korean shaman's divine illness could be categorized as follows: appearance of spirits and gods in a dream and a physically abnormal condition. The latter is subdivided into seven symptoms.

Like shamanism of the Dan'gun era, it is pure shamanism... Giving divination and performing *gut* is just one part of pure shamanism... *mudang* as a spiritual master can lead people... The first thing that he [her guardian spirit] wants me to do, as part of the shamanism Renaissance, is the recovery of intuition and emotion of authentic human beings... That's why I am studying first...(My interview in 2000).

The issue of whether concepts, such as the Dan'gun era and “pure shamanism” which was suggested by M. Eliade (1964), can historically be proved or are a myth constructed by modern scholarship is not important here. The issue is the nationalistic discourse that Dan'gun established a divine city on the Korean peninsula and was a shaman-originator was accepted as a meaningful framework by Jade in constructing her own identity. Consequently, as with two other shamans' stories, we can find that Jade utilized all the possible referential frameworks such as traditional shamanism, the Neo-shamanism movement, and positive images of Korean shamanism produced by nationalists, while constructing her mature shamanship.

Up until now, I have described how modern Korean shamans appropriate official discourses in constructing their identities through reading their life stories. It is my suggestion here that the plural images of Korean shamanism which have been constructed on the level of official discourses were synthesized into their identities, which makes the plural reality of Korean shamanism. Conversely I can surmise that the plurality of Korean shamanism will produce other discourses on it because the looping effect between the classification (e.g. the existing discourses on Korean shamanism) and the classified (e.g. the plurality of Korean shamanism) is expected to be an open-ended process. In particular, from our three cases, we have

learned that tradition is, whether it is negated or affirmed, still being referred to as a meaningful framework by shamans as they understand their destined lives as such and seek to establish their orientation to mature shamanism.

In addition, we have noticed that our two shamans are using another framing model for constructing their self-identity. Dani is ready to present herself as a *minjung mudang*, a traditional *mudang*, or a priest of Korean traditional religion to anyone in need of her services. Unjang adopts a modern concept of religion that emphasizes doctrinal teaching and organization, and, in representing shamanism as such, made his *gut* manual available to the public and established the organization of *mugyo*-priests. For Jade, rather than being confined to the role of spirit-medium whose position is betwixt and between, she wants to make a ‘shamanism-community’ with spiritually energetic persons—it does not matter whether or not they are shamans—and become a soul-mate to them. Also, rather than performing traditional shamanic rituals for a client who is in need, she wanted to render the client able to communicate with the gods without her mediation. Her story, in a sense, reminds us of the basic issue of ‘Neo-shamanism’ or ‘urban-shamanism’ which is appealing to some because of its ‘democratic’ or communal qualities that ‘bypass institutionalized religious hierarchies’ (Atkinson 1992: 322).

At a glance, the plural and complex reference models in their stories seem to provide us with an inconsistent and divided self image. However, it must be noted that both the unified story and the coherent self are myths of identity. In this respect, it is more helpful to approach their autobiographical story-telling as a performative act and a process of self-making (Smith & Watson 2001: 47). In addition, we might apply a ‘complex adaptive model of cognition and narration’ to explain the plurality of their stories (Pek 2007: 121). In conclusion, the stories

should be understood in terms of an endeavor to construct self-identity in reference to the changing world.

Then, can we explain the plurality of modern Korean shamanism only with interaction between a shaman and an official discourse on shamanism? As I argued earlier, it should be remembered that our three shamans' life stories that were reinterpreted by themselves were reconstructed in the context of ethnographic encounters—whether the encounter is made externally between a researcher and them or, internally between potential readers of their autobiographies and them—for justifying their current self-identities. Moreover, I labeled the feedback process witnessed between an official discourse on a shamanism and shaman's self-identity as looping effects between images and realities. Considering that looping effects are everywhere and a shaman's self-identity is a product of an open-ended process of the looping effects, we might extend this interpretive framework to the relationship between shamans and clients.

It is unquestionable that a shaman takes a central role in the formation of the culture of shamanism, and has been at the center of the previous research in this field. However, whatever identity a shaman has, the shaman has to be more concerned with clients' needs, and thus they regard their identity as someone who solves the problems of others, as being of great value.

Almost all Korean shamans make their living through their shamanic services such as divination and ritual performances. In addition, a shaman's encounter with clients through ritual services is another important horizontal factor to construct his/her identity and Korean shamanism itself.

Just as modern Korean shamans have been affected by continuously changing discourses, so modern clients who are in need of those shamans' services have been exposed to those discourses

and, it can be assumed, their desires and demands from shamans vary. In this sense, I would like to insert one more factor in the plurality of Korean shamanism: it is the interaction between a shaman's identity and the clients' needs. In the following chapter, I would like to pay attention to this interactive process between them which occurred inside of a ritual as well as outside of it.

Chapter 5. Reconfiguring Shamanic Rituals

5.1. Contrasting Pictures of Utilizing Shamanic Services

We have seen that the official discourse on Korean shamanism, as a horizontal factor forming and strengthening a shaman's identity, has influenced the reconfiguration of modern Korean shamanism by widening its spectrum, while at the same time it has been adopted and synthesized into a shaman's identity. Although the official discourse could be defined as one aspect of a shaman's horizontal relationship with the surrounding world, another horizontal factor should be explored in order to understand the diversity of modern Korean shamanism: the relationship between a shaman and the community he/she serves. I assume that the plurality of modern Korean shamanism is a product of the various desires of modern clientele, which is represented through the context of a ritual and results in the transformation of the ritual itself.

Regarding the relationship between a shaman and a community, it is well known that, from the moment a shaman-candidate shows symptoms of spirit sickness, the candidate relates him/herself to the community. Just remember that a village woman interpreted Dani's illness as symptoms of divine calling! In other words, a shaman's abnormal or mystical experience could be interpreted as such only within the cultural framework which allows shamanic practices. Almost all Korean shamans make their living by their shamanic services, such as divination and ritual performances for clients. Different from so-called world religions, Korean shamanism does

not have any self-sustaining organization which supports a shaman's practical life.¹²⁶ Although a shaman's self-satisfaction through communion with divine beings could encourage them to keep their shamanship, what is more important is their solidarity with those beings and their conviction that their spiritual power should be actualized into services for clients who are in need. The accuracy of divination and the efficacy of a ritual, which should emerge in the interaction between shamans and clients, are crucial factors for proving a shaman's spiritual power.¹²⁷ In this sense, I would argue that what a shaman does could define what a shaman is; and that the dynamic negotiation between shamans and clients should be illuminated in order to explain the (re)configuring process of Korean shamanism.

Just as the official discourse on shamanism has broadened its image and the socio-political circumstance surrounding shamanic culture has changed over the last several decades, so too has the way Koreans utilize a shaman's services. Most clients who enjoy an urban life style do not seem to follow the conventional way of utilizing shamanic services.¹²⁸ Regarding the way modern Koreans utilize shamanic services, Choi Chung-moo (1987) states that:

...urban clients in the fast pace of city life want to waste no time in learning the source of their

¹²⁶ Actually, there are various kinds of organizations of Korean shamans in modern Korea, as I explained in the previous chapter. But, they are not organized for sustaining shamans financially.

¹²⁷ In addition to the accuracy of divination and the efficacy of rituals, clients may choose a shaman based upon the shaman's ritual style. But tradition-bound clients who choose a particular shaman according to the ritual style do not disregard the efficacy of a ritual. According to Choi Chung-moo (1987), a shaman's fidelity to a particular style of ritual "assures them the sense of efficacy because their belief in efficacy has been shaped in that convention."

¹²⁸ According to Ruth-Inge Heinze (1991: 3), the reasons for clients' visits to a shaman are clustered around the following issues, which appear to be rather worldly: 1) health problem 2) family problems (relationship between spouses, between parents and children, and with in-laws) 3) professional concerns. She indicates three minor areas which may require the assistance of shamans: 1) fertility 2) longevity 3) wealth in general. These issues are reiterated in Yi Yong-shik's research in Korea. Yet, he (2004: 162) adds two more issues to these: "determination of favorable locations, e.g., for a house or a store" and "offering divine blessings for various reasons." I also found, through my own research, that those issues would be treated by shamans' services.

misfortune or the outlook of their future. In an urban setting a majority of a shaman's clients are newcomers and their relationship does not outlive the initial divination...

Even if a relationship initiated by divination continues on to sponsoring a *gut*, the *gut* cannot guarantee the client's long lasting loyalty to shamanic belief or may end up only forming a fragmentary relationship with the shaman who performed it. Sometimes, a *gut* is regarded simply as a commodity which can be bought by paying money. Kendall (2009: 122) confesses her surprise when she observed a *gut* which was performed without a client who sponsored it as following:

More surprising, the clients deliver a bundle of cash, bow, and then return to work, leaving the Fairy Maid to perform their *kut* [*gut*] without them. Ms. Kim has seen this before and it seems to be a trend, but a *kut* without client interaction is a first for me, and I am astonished by this reduction of the ritual to pure commodity, sufficient that it be paid for and performed...

Interestingly, both descriptions of modern shamanism practiced by urban clients are contrasted with the following scene, which Kendall (1985: 74) described three years previously in her observations of house-centered religious practices, in particular, *mugguri* (or, jeom: divination), in the context of rural lives.¹²⁹

...This is the peasants' winter slack season and the women are in a holiday mood when they come to the *mansin's* [shaman's] house. Most arrive in groups. Waiting their turn, they bunch together in the hot-floor inner room. If the wait is long, they play cards, doze, or listen to other divinations...

They coach the young matron who does not yet know the vocabulary of women's rituals. Not for

¹²⁹ Although this monograph was published in 1985, it was based upon Kendall's field research which had been conducted at a village of northern Gyeong-gi Province in the late 1970s.

them, the confidential atmosphere of the Western doctor's or analyst's office. The confessional's anonymity is missing here. The women enjoy each other's stories and accept each other's sympathy...

In addition to this citation, Kendall's work is full of portrayals that denote the clients' active participation in shamanic practices. She begins her monograph, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (1985), with a description of the Chŏn family's *gut*. In her description, the active participation of village women is emphasized, and they are portrayed as being familiar with what is happening in the *gut*. They enjoy an ecstatic dance dressed in a shaman's costume, a dance called *mugam*, in-between formal segments. Kendall states that she came to understand a *gut* as "a living and loud event with some mistakes, much skill, clumsy moments, copious wine, and considerable laughter" (Kendall 1985: 19-20). In other words, the *gut* is described like a party in Kendall's work.

As seen from these contrastive descriptions of the way clients' utilize shamanic services, it is unquestionable that the radical socio-economic changes of Korea, resulting from the modernization and urbanization that have occurred over the last several decades, have reconfigured Korean shamanism in various ways. Actually, it seems that both of these contrary images of shamanic rituals coexist. Considering that a client is assumed to be an important agent who contributes to reconfiguring Korean shamanism through interaction with a shaman, we need to analyze how they utilize shamanic services, through which I will locate them not only as receivers of shamanic services but also as producers of the plural reality of shamanism.

In particular, I would like to pay attention to the interaction between shamans and clients

which is constructed within various ritual contexts such as *mugguri* (divination)¹³⁰, *gosa* (small-scale rituals), *gut* (large-scale rituals), and periodic rituals performed annually in a shaman's private shrine, based upon my own observations. Some clients may go through all these ritual experiences and become regular customers, called *dan'gol* or *sindo* (lay-believers, 信徒), but others may stop visiting the shaman services after having their initial divination segment. Whether a client becomes a *dan'gol* or remains a random customer, the initial ritual segment in which the two agents encounter each other is divination. Accordingly, a shaman uses many strategies in an attempt to make "this initial contact the beginning of a more lasting relationship" (Choi 1987: 144).

5.2. *Mugguri*: The Initial Negotiation between a Client and a Shaman

As much anthropological literature has demonstrated, a ritual conveys cultural fundamentals such as the ethos and world view of the ritual participants, while it "generates or regenerates a given view of the world, and engenders commitment to existing institutional structures and modes of social relationship" (Ortner 1978: 4). In general, a ritual normally begins with some problematic situations, stated or unstated, and then arrives at solutions which embody the "fundamental assumptions and orientations" (Ortner 1978: 4). As a matter of course, we can say that, from the moment when people recognize something as a problem to the moment of

¹³⁰ Whether it is a large scale or a small scale ritual, all the shamanic rituals contain divination. In those contexts, divination is called *gongsu* rather than *jeom* or *mugguri*. Therefore, I used the term "initial divination" to indicate an independent practice of divination, which should be differentiated from divination in the context of a *gut* or a *gosa*.

performing a ritual to search for solutions to the problem, a ritual contains cultural assumptions and orientations. In this sense, a ritual has been regarded as a field on which cultural dynamics are crystallized and revealed.

In the meantime, in order for a ritual to provide solutions, it is necessary that the ritual participants, performers as well as clients, share a common value system through which the participants manage their lives. In this vein, we can say that official discourses which defined shamanism as a vehicle of traditional Korean culture were established upon the idea that a ritual represents cultural dynamics. In other words, the idea that a shamanic ritual is not just full of magical techniques but also expresses a world view of the Korean people provided a theoretical framework for the designation of shamanic rituals as Cultural Properties. In this manner, a shamanic ritual, in particular *gut*-ritual, has been addressed as a focal point for understanding Korean shamanism by many scholars.

Compared to *gut*, the practice of *mugguri* (*jeom*, divination) has not received much attention from scholars of Korean shamanism when they treat shamanic rituals. At a glance, a scene portraying the practice of an initial divination between a shaman and a client does not seem much different from a counseling procedure by a modern professional counselor, when it is compared to a *gut* which is full of music, dancing, incantation, and symbolic objects. However, I argue that a shaman's *mugguri* is also a ritual practice which shows the "fundamental

assumptions and orientations” of the Korean people¹³¹ and should be treated as such, because it not only consists of some ritual elements which mark the time and space in which it takes place as special, such as invocation songs and the utilization of shamanic equipment, but also it is performed based upon a shared cultural expectation that invisible forces affect human affairs.¹³²

When Dani receives a client in her private shrine for making a divination, she starts with an invocation song following a particular rhythm, while shaking a bundle of old coins in her right hand and holding a fan in her left hand:

Sabasegye/Namseom bujung/Haedong/Daehan minguk [The world of suffering/ The world in which humans live/ eastern land cross the sea/ Korea]...

Cheonjisinmyeongmin/Ilweolseongsinnim/Okwhangsangjenim/Ch'eonjiilwoldosinjangnim /Manseongsunim [Gods of Heaven and Earth/Gods of Sun and Moon/The Great Jade Emperor/All Guardian Spirits]

Aljago watseumnida/Deutjago watseumnida/Burwoncheoli osinsonnim/ Silsueopsi Bareun gongsu naeryeojusipsiyo [Came here to know/ Came here to listen/ Client from far away/ Without any mistakes, send me an accurate divination]

Starting from informing her gods of the particular location of the ritual place, Dani

¹³¹ Chang Yun-shik (1982: 40) states that Korean shamanism is a folk existentialism in the sense that it represents Korean people's worldview and self-understanding. According to him, shamanism contains the idea that Korean people "assume limitation of human capacity to control their own affair" and their consciousness of their limitations necessitates the external help from supernatural beings. In this context, we can say that shamanism expresses the "fundamentals and orientations" of Korean people.

¹³² It is said that divination which is called *gongsu* during *gut*-performance is different from divination in the setting of *mugguri*. Also, the roles that gods play in each setting are different. Barbara E. Young (1987: 280-281) differentiates them in terms of the density of shamans' possession-experience and the client's way of communicating with the gods: in the first setting, "a spirit diviner speaks with a particular spirit's words, and client may address questions and comments directly to this spirit"; but in the second setting, "spirits maintains a less visible presence," and clients "address their questions to the diviner, not directly to the spirits." Moreover, L.B. Antonetta (2001: 33) shows how clients experience the difference between *mugguri* and *gongsu* in terms of reliability. According to her, clients consider that *gongsu* during a *gut* is as much more "truthful and detailed" because it presents the clients' situation more correctly.

articulates why she calls them into her shrine by singing the invocation. In addition to her request for the gods to descend, this invocation song functions as a marker that a divination segment has begun and that Dani is no longer an ordinary woman but has just been transformed into a religious personality.¹³³ After tossing the coins in her hand on the divination-table, she transmits divine messages to the clients by reading the arrangement of the coins and also by interpreting the visions that occur in her mind.

However, it is assumed that the ritual sanctity which is produced by a shaman's religious personality and the ritual features of the divination does not guarantee the client's loyalty to the diviner and the ritual. Basically, the segment of divination is constructed by the formation of questions and answers. When a vision occurs in a shaman's mind, the shaman first transmits what he/she can see and then asks the client how that vision could be applicable to the client's particular situation. For example, a shaman used to say when she saw, in her vision, an image of a lady, "I can see a lady who is crying with a sorrow outside the door. Is there a family member who died before she got married?" As to the kind of questions, a client may agree or may not: if the answer is positive, the shaman tries to continue to divine in relationship to the image of the lady. Otherwise, the shaman may change the subject with the coins shaking.

As Kendall (1987:76) has stated, shamans' clients are neither docile nor passive. In other words, the divination is not always accepted as it is (transparently) by a client. Clients visit shaman's shrine with some ambivalence: on the one hand, they hope to find answers and solutions to their problems from divination; on the other hand, they anticipate that the shaman may recommend an expensive ritual as a solution. Hyesu, who is 52 years old and has been one

¹³³ Actually, the same invocation song is sung when a shaman performs a Hwanghae Province-style gut.

of the old *dan'gols* of Dani, told me her experiences and attitudes toward a shaman's divination before she became Dani's *dan'gol* as follows:

I happened to accompany my friend who was afraid of visiting a shaman by herself... When she received divination from the shaman, I could see all problems the shamans' divination had... I know that almost all shamans recommend every client to sponsor a *gut*, and I have seen those cases too many times. Therefore, I usually disregarded their divination. That's how I used to be in the past... (My interview in 2006).

It is unquestionable that the negative image of shamans and shamanism affected Hyesu's attitude toward shaman's divination when she accompanied her friend. In particular, a charlatan-image of a shaman who forced every client to sponsor a *gut* was a part of her psychological distance from shamans' divination. While I observed Dani's *gut* at Yaksuam (Mineral Water Hermitage) *gutdang*—a commercial shrine for performing *gut*—in Seoul, I could see a male shaman performing a *gut* for his client in the front yard of the *gutdang*. A woman, who worked for the *gutdang* while serving shamans who rented rooms, whispered to me, “Hey! See the *baksu* [the male shaman]! That *gut* is the third *gut* for the same family. He already performed *guts* twice for the family before doing this *gut*.” Dani also told me,

I bet that *baksu* will not last long. That's not the way a true shaman takes. Although he could not find some problems when he performed the first *gut*, and they encouraged him to recommend the second *gut* and the third *gut*, he should not have recommended a *gut* again. Holding three *guts* imposes too heavy burden on the client. *Gosa* [small scale ritual] might be enough in that case! Because of such shamans, we will be blamed as charlatans.

Here it is not important whether or not the *baksu* followed “the way a true shaman takes”

when he encouraged the client to sponsor those *guts*, because I am not concerned about the issue of evaluating him as a shaman. What is important for this study is that it is the client who finally decides to sponsor those *guts* despite their great expense.

Then, what makes a client not only sponsor a *gut* but also become regular customer of a particular shaman although there is a negative image of shamans and shamanism? It is generally assumed that, though a shamanic idea that invisible forces interfere in human affairs is deeply seated in ordinary Koreans' consciousness, this idea does not seem to be very powerful in the everyday life of Korean people. Rather, such ideas as rational thinking and individual free will dominate there. In some sense, it seems that shamanic ideas which are expressed through the practice of divination conflict with their modern consciousness. D. A. Kister (1997: 17) writes about the danger of divination as followings:

Divination is open to the danger of the denigration of one's human critical faculties, the abnegation of personal responsibility, and the loss of personal freedom in favor of a dependency on supernatural powers, cosmic forces, or philosophical theories of an ambiguous nature...

As a matter of course, those dangerous features of divination have been criticized as a vehicle which produces a tendency that makes people want to be lucky, not encouraging them to be diligent and autonomous in their lives.

At the same time, however, he maintains that divination can offer "the possibility of inner transformation and personal growth." In particular, he states that, psychologically, the client can achieve "inner harmony" through acceptance of the realities of his/her situation as clarified by "the distancing perspective that divination can give (Kister 1997: 17)." The psychological effect

of distancing one's own perspective during *mugguri* is also illustrated well by Hyesu's recollection of her experiences of Dani's divination.

In my opinion, there is no *mudang* who cannot talk about the client's past. Their divination about the past is quite accurate... But to recognize accurately what is happening around me and what I am thinking about now is more important than to talk about the past. ... It was attractive to me, actually. Well... as you know, I think *mudang* also plays the role of counselor... She said to me "hey, your mother-in-law is just an old woman...How much longer will she live? Treat her with respect!" (My interview in 2000).

That Hyesu was particularly impressed by Dani's divination of her immediate situation, or, to put it another way, her psychological state indicates that she could introspect her current situation by distancing herself from it. At the same time, Dani's divination reminded her that she should act in accordance with her social role as a daughter-in-law. Actually, when she visited Dani, she suffered from serious troubles because of her mother-in-law's abrasive character. She was on the brink of divorce because of the problems she caused. Dani's divination provided her with an opportunity to rethink her reality, and the following experiences of *gut* helped her to accept her hard marital life as bearable. She used to say jokingly, "I could not have lived for five years if I had not fallen for Dani's sweet talk!" At the end of the interview, she clearly stated the main reason why she used to visit Dani's shrine as follows:

In my case, I always feel comfortable when I visit here... A good divination sign makes me happy, and even bad divinations are also helpful because they make me more careful with everything in my routine life. You know...we usually lose sight of what is going on around us because of the too rapid pace of life. We don't know how to reflect on our daily life (My interview in 2000).

Dani once told me that the basic difference of divination-style between her and other shamans who could not guide a client to sponsor a *gut* was how they started the segment of divination:¹³⁴ Compared to other shamans who prefer to start divination with the enumeration of the possible causes of a client's problems, such as the anger of ancestors and spirits, and bad *unse* (運勢, a fate), Dani would go directly to the problem itself and then console the client in his/her misfortune, and only then at last explain the causes of it. For example, after finishing an invocation song, she would begin to speak to her client with empathetic words such as "how have you lived such a tough life?" A 28 year-old lady told me how she felt when she heard such words:

I was in a really difficult situation when I visited her. Conflicts with my boyfriend and troubles in my work place...all those problems have harassed me. It seems like I was alone in the world... Well, I don't know, but I didn't like to speak about such pain even to my friends... When I heard eonni [Dani]'s words, I cried unconsciously... (My interview in 2000).

As inferred from the lady's statement, to most clients who visit her with painful life stories, her empathetic attitude would make them open their mind and strengthen the plausibility of her divination. It seems that Dani knows well how to win in her negotiations with her clients, which likely builds a strong foundation for a client to accept the shamanic worldview and interpretive framework which could function to explain and treat the client's painful realities.

Another client, a business woman who ran a restaurant, told me about her first impression

¹³⁴ It should be noted that Dani does not encourage all clients to sponsor a ritual such as *gut* or *gosa*. Only a client who, it is believed, will obtain benefits from the ritual will be encouraged to sponsor it.

of Dani's divination as follows:

I think her divination is really accurate, which is totally different from other shamans whom I have met so far... And, she did not speak about gods... When some shamans give divination, they used to say that "this *harabeoji* [gods] talk in this way...and that *harabeoji* talks in that way..." How can I know who is this *harabeoji* and who is that *harabeoji*? But, she [Dani] did not talk about those complicated matters. She just says what seems be necessary...She said to me that "it is your *palja* [fate]. But your mind is blocked by miscellaneous spirits who reside in your building. They should be chased away." I liked that. She seemed to have firm conviction about her divination. It was attractive...that's why I came to sponsor her to perform a *gut* (My interview in 2000).

Actually, the woman had already visited other shamans before she met Dani. But those shamans' divination style was not persuasive enough to move the client. Rather, their complicated words made her suspicious of the accuracy of their divination.

On the other hand, Dani did not talk about gods or about those gods' omnipotence. Rather, she clearly differentiated some problems which resulted from the intervention of those spiritual beings and might be resolved by performing a ritual from others that arose from a client's fate and could not be treated even by performing the ritual. Here, I would like to indicate that two effective strategies were concealed in the practice of Dani's divination: one is simple and straightforward talk that excludes ambiguous words which could not be understood by a client; the other is to differentiate what a ritual, which Dani recommended the woman to sponsor, can do from what it cannot do. Actually, Dani told me that a lengthy explanation would not only bore a client but also make him/her suspicious on the shaman's divination. She said again, "If you are not confident with your words, then who can trust you?" In other words, she prefers to use simple and straightforward talk to prove that she is certain about her divination.

In addition, her divination that some matters which bothered the client could not be treated by a ritual was not simply to indicate the limitation of shamanic rituals. Rather, it could function to emphasize the efficacy of a ritual which Dani would perform for the client. To put it another way, she can guarantee the efficacy of her ritual by clarifying the limitation of the ritual efficacy: if the ritual is beyond the limitation, she will never suggest the client sponsor it. In this sense, I would argue that both strategies, operating complementarily, have the function of making Dani's divination accepted as trustworthy and finally lead the client to sponsor a ritual.

In contrast with some clients that keep their close relationship with a particular shaman through sponsoring rituals, others remain random customers. However, before we look at the features of their utilization of shamans' services, it should be noted that the same customer who is a random customer to a particular shaman could become a regular customer to another shaman. This means that there is still the possibility that they will become regular customers of a particular shaman.

During a period of my field research in 2008, a thirty-old woman, named Kiyoungh, whom I came to know through the introduction of a friend of mine asked me if I could introduce a trustworthy shaman after she heard that I had studied Korean shamanism for a long time. Although I met her several times, she did not tell me why she wanted to meet a shaman and what the problem she had at the time was. At any rate, I gave Dani's number to her and she visited Dani's shrine a few days later. Unfortunately, I could not accompany her when she received divination, but I did hear the story of it from Dani as well as from her. She said to me:

Well... what do you want to know from me? There was nothing special... I'd never gone to a

shaman's shrine. It was my first time... Frankly speaking, I have fertility issues, but I don't care about it. I am satisfied with my current life. But both my husband and parents-in-law are different. They seem to really want to have a baby... I have tried artificial insemination several times, but it didn't work so far. That's why I wanted to meet Dani... I wanted to know if I can be pregnant or not and to know the reason why we have not been able to have a baby. She divined that it would be hard for us to have a baby in terms of my husband's fate... that is why we don't have a baby. But she also said to me that there is a baby in my *saju* [fate]. Therefore, she recommended me to keep trying the procedure of artificial insemination. That's all... Tell her that I am still making every effort to have a baby... (My interview in 2008).

The prescription that she took from Dani's divination was simple: it was that she had better keep trying artificial insemination.¹³⁵ Dani told me, "Performing a *gut*? No! Except for the problem of having a kid, she does not have any problems. I just told her that she had to go to the hospital with the same mind as she would pray to gods. That's it!" Dani did not suggest any ritual solution to her problem, because the problem did not result from the intervention of angry gods or ancestors. It was the matter of her husband's fate,¹³⁶ therefore there was nothing that the shaman could do on behalf of the client.

Actually, I have observed many cases in which Dani divined, "*gut* is useless for you." She went on to say, "You have to go through this problem. I know you are a Christian. Just go to church and pray... that is all you can do now." Such cases denote that some suffering cannot be immediately cured by shamanic treatments, although there might be explanations of the cause of

¹³⁵ The cause of her barrenness was not explained in the modern medical framework, and artificial insemination could not guarantee her a pregnancy.

¹³⁶ *Saju*(四柱) is literally translated into Four Pillars which indicate the time, day, month, and year of someone's birth. Based upon the *saju* of a client, a diviner can usually read that person's fate. Although shamans can divine by interpreting visions sent from gods, they usually refer to a client's *saju*. It is generally assumed that reading fate by referring to *saju* originated from the Chinese *I-Ching* and was later transmitted to Korea. Many Korean diviners have their own versions of *saju* reading, which are simpler than the original *I-Ching*.

the problems based upon a shamanic worldview. Of course, it could be argued that the very explanation of causes of afflictions might be a kind of solution in the sense that inexplicability itself constitutes unbearable suffering for humans. As Clifford Geertz (1973: 70) states, “the problem of suffering,” as a religious problem, is how to make of suffering “bearable, supportable—something as we say, sufferable.” Likewise, Kiyong was given an explanation of her barrenness, which might make it possible for her to understand her current problems as bearable and therefore provide her with the motivation to keep undergoing the procedure of artificial insemination.

However, it should be noted that the psychological effect of Dani’s divination is an academic interpretation, not something that Kiyong herself felt at the time. It was reflected by her saying, “there was nothing special.” Possibly, she expected to obtain visible solutions from the divination rather than expecting to know the cause of her barrenness. In this context, she might be representative of one of the typical urban clients who, as I cited in Choi Chung-moo’s description above, “want to waste no time in learning the source of their misfortune.” Besides, we might argue that when there is a gap between a client’s expectation and a shaman’s divination, in particular, when the divination cannot suggest alternatives for the client who expects to obtain practical benefits, the segment of divination could not function as an initial stage for the client to accept the shamanic worldview.

Up until now, I have described *mugguri* practice as an initial stage of determining the subsequent relationship between a shaman and a client. Also, I showed that, although the accuracy of divination might be the basic element of making a client a *dan’gol*, another factor such as a shaman’s divination style is also important for the formation of their relationship. The

divination style, which is preferred by clients as well as shamans and can be characterized as clarity and simplicity, as in the case of Dani, might be a particular construction of interaction between a client and a shaman and represents a feature of modern Korean people's life.

In addition, I argue that the compromise between a client's desire to obtain a practical benefit and the solution suggested by a shaman in response to that desire is another important factor for forming a subsequent relationship between them. If there exists a visible solution according to the shamanic worldview and it is persuasive enough to move the client, then the client goes one step further toward forming a *dan'gol*-relationship with the shaman. Therefore, the fact that a client decides to sponsor a *gut* means that shamanic ideas and values are accepted as a significant interpretive framework. In this sense, a shaman's divination-stage might be understood as a field of competition for many ideas and values which coexist in modern Korea.

If *mugguri* is an initial field for various ideas and values to compete with each other for interpretive hegemony, the subsequent ritual activities, such as a *gut* and other ritual activities at a shaman's shrine, could be defined as a process that strengthens the value of the shamanic worldview among clientele. In particular, a *gut*-performance has been receiving more attention than any other ritual activities because, it is assumed, it not only represents shamanic belief system but also includes all the basic elements of other shamanic rituals. Therefore, in the following section, I would like to describe how shamans and clients interact within the context of a *gut*-ritual and how the interaction between them affects the reconfiguration of the content and style of a *gut*.

5.3. Gut-performance, Being Transformed



Figure 7. A picture of Yaksuam *gutdang*. Most *guts* are performed today in commercial shrines located far from villages. Photo by author.

As a matter of course, many shamans and scholars of Korean shamanism have criticized the contemporary *gut*-performance as a corrupted deviation from the archetype of authentic *gut*.¹³⁷ In particular, the academic discourses that I introduced while analyzing the history of positive images of Korean shamanism represent such a critical position. The cause of this corruption has been attributed to the materialistic and this-worldly desire of unqualified young

¹³⁷ As for the meaning of the Korean word *gut*, there are many interpretations: Yi Nung-hwa (1927) interprets *gut* as based on an indigenous Korean word '*gutda*' (nasty, foul or unfortunate), because of the fact that many *guts* are held for solving problems caused by misfortune, such as illness and death. In this way, *gut* has been identified with '*han-puri*' (grievance-solving). In contrast, the meaning of the word *gut* is interpreted by G. J. Ramstedt (1949) with reference to the Tungusian '*gutu*,' the Mongolian '*qutug*' and the Turkish '*qut*,' all of which mean 'happiness' or 'good fortune.' This interpretation is endorsed by Cho Hung-yoon (2004) and H. K. Horgath (2009), because the purpose of holding a *gut* is ultimately to bring happiness and good fortune.

shamans who do not want to follow the hard training course under traditional shamans (Hwang Ru-si 1998). All those criticisms express concern about the need to distinguish authentic shamanism from inauthentic forms, and, in fact, became a foundation for the establishment of the Cultural Protection Law, as I explained in chapter three.

However, I would argue that the transformation of *gut*, in terms of its content and style, is a natural phenomenon, because *gut* has traditionally reflected the desires of the clients who sponsor it, and these contemporary changes, in fact, reflect the needs of modern-day Koreans. The Korean people who are potential sponsors of *gut* have experienced radical socio-economical changes during the past 100 years, which have naturally affected the reconfiguration of Korean shamanism and, in particular, are reflected in ritual practice. Regarding the changing aspects of *gut*, Sin'gal Baksu, who performs a Seoul-style *gut*, told me that:

Basically, Seoul *gut* is *yangban gut*, therefore we [shamans who perform Seoul *gut*] consider *beopdo* [authentic tradition of Seoul *gut*] as important and we are proud that we perform this style *gut*... But as you can see, many Seoul *mudangs* invite a *beopsa* [a male exorcist] nowadays to their *guts*. That's okay! They can invite *beopsa* in the case that the client comes from Chungcheong Province because it is a tradition of the area. But nowadays, he [*beopsa*] is invited in order to reduce the time of the *gut*. Many parts of an authentic *gut* are abbreviated because of time... Even some clients ask us to invite a famous *beopsa*... Clients do like to sit in *gutdang* and most of them do not know what is going on although they watch the *gut*... Sometimes, *dangju mudang* [a chief *mudang*] is not pleased when too many members of a client-family appear at *gut*...because the *mudang* has to give *gongsu* [divination] to all the members... (My interview in 2009).

In his statement, we can find some changing aspects of contemporary *gut*-rituals such as, in comparison to the past, the reduction of time spent on the ritual and the clients' indifference to

the ritual process. In particular, he gives an example of the tendency of time-reduction with the appearance of *beopsa*. Differing from a *gut*, which needs at least three shamans and musicians and takes at least eight hours to complete, a ritual led by a *beopsa*, which is done by chanting various scriptures while he plays musical instruments by himself, is simpler and does not require a client's active participation.¹³⁸

However, he seems not to be cynical about the change of ritual which is attributed to the clients' requests. Rather, he states that a shaman's capability for adaptation to change is conceived as a condition of mature shamanism. According to him, a mature shaman knows how to effectively reduce the time spent on ritual without harming the important parts of it. He went on to say that:

The way to reduce the time spent on ritual is, for example, to abbreviate some verses from *muga* [shamanic songs]. Actually, we [a mature shaman] need at least one hour and twenty minutes to complete *Jinogi malmi* [a shaman's song for sending a soul to the other world]... It is because we know which verses could be abbreviated without harming the original significance of the *muga*. For example, we would remove the part which portrays a boat which goes to Hell, and we sing only the part in which a boat for Heaven appears... You know... We perform *Jinogi gut* to send the soul to Heaven not to Hell... Although we abbreviate it, clients cannot know that. They just nod when a *mudang* says it is good or bad... That's it! (My interview in 2009).

A mature shaman can reduce the length of a *gut* by abbreviating unnecessary elements from *muga*. On the contrary, immature shamans do not know what to exclude and what to include while they perform *gut*, therefore their *gut* tend to drag on. To say it another way, a

¹³⁸ It is well known that there are no scriptures in Korean shamanism, and scriptures which are chanted by *beopsa* originate from other religious traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism.

mature shaman, in his understanding, could be defined as a shaman who can synthesize a contemporary client's desire and the authentic tradition of *gut*. At any rate, we can infer from his statement that contemporary clients as well as some shamans do not like to spend a long time in a *gut*.

The reduction of the ritual time could not only represent but also affect a client's attitude toward a ritual. Many clients seem to be unfamiliar even with the rituals which they sponsor, therefore they could not even engage in the ritual process as active participants. Hyesu told me how ignorant and indifferent she was to the particular meaning of a *gut* although she had been a regular customer of Dani for four years. She explained:

I never knew that picking up a red-colored flag is good. I only realized that the red flag is good four years after I came here. I don't know what is going on when Dani performs *gut*...and she does not talk about them... A couple of days ago, I came to know, "Ah! So that's what that means!" through watching a TV program in which Dani's spirit-teacher performed a *gut*... ¹³⁹ (My translation in 2000).

In fact, she attributed her ignorance of ritual knowledge to her lack of an opportunity to watch a *gut*. She said,

As you know, I sponsored a *gut*...it was my first experience in my life...I can just remember some of what the *gongsu* Dani said... except for that, I forgot everything else. And as you know, Dani

¹³⁹ Five color-flags, called obangsinjang-gi, are used for divining the luck of the person picking a specific flag during shamanic rituals. It is assumed that five colors—red, white, blue, green, and yellow—symbolize five directions which are the residences of Five Spirit-Generals. Among those colors, red means good luck and white means purity. Both colors indicate that the picker's luck is good. But selecting the remaining colors of blue, yellow, and green means that the picker or the picker's family will experience anxiety. As a matter of fact, clients' picking up a flag is generally used in every *gut* ritual regardless of regional variations of *gut*.

holds *Jinjeok gut* [*gut* for gods and spirits who possess a shaman, sponsored by the shaman] twice a year... Where can I see a *gut* performed? I have seen a *gut* just a few times... That's it! I am not a genius...(My interview in 2006)

Hyesu's experience in a *gut* is contrasted with the image of an active client in Kendall's ethnography (1985) which describes a *gut* held in the 1970s. In that ethnography, not only the sponsors, the Chŏn family, but also all the guests are described as participating actors in the *gut* who completed the ritual drama. For example, a female participant who "capers around the porch, waving the bill [money] in her hand as she dances to tease the Official" could not have behaved as such, if she had not known the deity's character and the mood of the segment of the Official which is supposed to be full of jokes and bargaining. In other words, it could be said that such behavior was a representation of the client's familiarity with the ritual, and played an important role in the ritual performance. In sum, Kendall defines the participants in the *gut* as followings:

Not passive spectators, these women formed a concerned chorus. They importuned the gods and commented on the unfolding drama. They found almost everything funny that did not make them weep. They approached the gods and ancestors much as they approach life—with a sharp tongue, a sense of humor, and a good cry.

In fact, Kendall's writing shows well the festivity of *gut* and the active participation of clients in the past, features of *gut* that are typically represented in academic writings.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ The festivity of a *gut* is well expressed even now when the *gut* is a village-scale ritual. However, it is significant that the *gut* which Kendall describes was a private ritual for healing.

5.3.1. Gongsu-Centered Gut: Weakening of the Entertaining Function

Generally, it is said that a *gut* is structured by three parts: invoking the gods, entertaining the gods, and sending off the gods. Likewise, each *geori* (segment) of the Hwanghae Province-style *gut* is constructed based upon that structure. The outline of it could be roughly summarized as follows: First, a shaman asks gods to descend on the particular ritual place while singing *mansebaji* (shaman's song for ushering the gods) in which information about the segment, such as the names of the gods who are assumed to play a role in the *geori*, the particular ritual time, place, and the name and birthday of each member of the sponsor-family, etc., is provided. Secondly, when a shaman is possessed by gods who have been summoned, he/she dances and sings, which is believed to be performed by the gods who possess the shaman. After they are satisfied with the performance, those gods give divinations and blessings to the clients. Finally, the gods who were invited are sent off by singing a short *mansebaji* which is called *nalmanse* (sending-off songs).¹⁴¹

Actually, we can say that all shamanic rituals are constructed by the systematic organization of these parts. Yet a *gut* is differentiated from other shamanic rituals in that entertainment is emphasized to such a degree that a *gut* can be referred to by another Korean phrase, *gut-nori* (gut-play). Regarding the entertainment aspects of a *gut*, Hwang Ru-si (1998: 190) states as follows:

...Because a *gut* is basically a play, even a private *gut* shows the festivity of a community *gut*. For

¹⁴¹ A detailed description of Hwanghae Province-style *gut* was written by Lee Yong shik (2004).

example, when a *gut* is held for sending the soul of a mother-in-law to Heaven, the *gut* becomes a public trial. When the soul of the mother-in-law scolds her daughter-in-law through the mouth of a shaman, some village-participants would blame the [ill-treatment of] the daughter-in-law while others try to soothe the soul...Through this process, all the village members come to be united. If a *gut* is not a field of play, uniting the village people into one is impossible... (My translation).

In other words, the significant meaning of *gut* results from the unification of participants, as they take a part in the ritual formation. In this context, it is safe to refer to *gut* as a “social drama” to use V. Turner’s (1982: 75) words.

As a matter of course, when a *gut* is held, various theatrical elements such as singing, dancing, and joking are performed in order to amuse gods and spirits. In order to understand the entertaining feature of *gut* with reference to such theatrical aspects, I think it is useful to introduce an opinion that differentiates a ritual from a piece of theatre. According to R. Schechner (1977), each category of ritual and theatre can be distinguished using the criteria of efficacy and entertainment. Hogarth (2009: 51) summarizes his distinctions as follows:

According to him, efficacy and entertainment are opposed to each other, but they form a binary system, a continuum. Thus the basic opposition is between efficacy and entertainment, not between ritual and theatre. A performance is called ritual or theatre, depending on the degree to which it tends towards efficacy or entertainment. According to his continuum, ritual aims for results, while theatre puts an emphasis on fun. The former links the audience to an absent other, while the latter is performed only for those here... In the former criticism is forbidden, while in the latter it is encouraged. The former represents collective creativity, while the latter individual creativity.

In contrast with his differentiation of ritual and theatre, a *gut* “incorporates both ritual and theatrical elements, which are virtually indistinguishable in it” (Hogarth 2009: 51-52). Moreover,

it is said that the gods will bless the participants only when they are satisfied with such entertainments. Therefore, we can say that a *gut* is performed for both purposes: entertainment and efficacy.

However, it should be noted that although a *gut* is believed to be performed for entertaining those deities, it also functions as entertainment for human-participants. Importantly, as shown in Kendall's ethnography, participants enjoy themselves while dancing *mugam*, joking with gods and spirits, and singing songs along with shamans. As figure 8 shows, a *gut* has been described as a ritual drama in which deities, shamans, and clients cooperate to accomplish the purpose of the ritual.

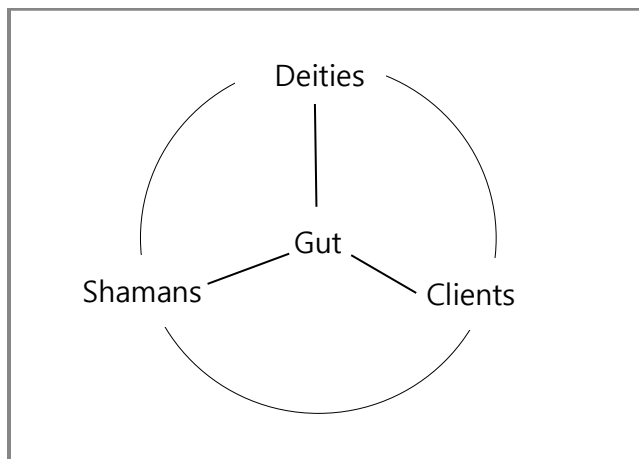


Figure 8. A diagram illustrating the cooperative relationships among deities, shamans, and clients in a ritual setting.

As a matter of fact, I could get a sense of how *dan'gols* or sponsors of the past engaged in a *gut* when I observed Dani's maternal mother's behavior at Dani's *Jinjeok gut* in the autumn of 2006. Although she could not involve herself in all the procedures of the *gut*—from the

preparation of food offerings to paying the rental fee of *gutdang*—because of her old age (she was 83 years old at the time), she still took a seat at a corner of the ritual space while observing, evaluating, and sometimes complaining about her daughter’s and other shamans’ performances.

Let me give some examples of her behavior in the *gut*:

1) When a shaman, Yongi’s Mother, finished her segment, *Chobujeong/Chogameung geori* (the segment for inviting all the deities into the assumed seats), there was an intermediary pause before starting *Chilseong geori* (the segment of the Big Dipper God). While Dani and other people chatter with each other, Dani’s mother stood up and said, “Where is *Chilseong jangsam* [a white-colored robe]? It is time to dance *mugam*. *Sanghalmeeoni* [*janggu* player]! Play the *janggu* [an hour-glasses drum].” After kowtowing to the offering table, she danced for about 10 minutes.

2) In addition, in the segment of *Sasin harabeoji* [Envoy Grandfather], one of deities who was conceived as having made Dani famous and rich and therefore was regarded as powerful, she herself treated the deity with *insam* (Ginseng) wine and a dish of minced raw beef that the deity would like. Actually, she seemed to know correctly what to do to follow the order of the *gut*. When a guest praised her, saying “You still know everything in spite of your old age,” she told her, “Sure, I have done this for more than thirty years!”

3) On the second day of the *gut*, Dani performed *bisugeori* [*jakdugeori*: a segment for the Blade-riding General] in which almost all *dan’gols* and guests appeared. Before and while Dani danced in front of *Chilseongdan* [stage of the Big Dipper. The blades were put on top of the stage], Dani’s mother kowtowed devotedly toward the offering tables, the four directions and the stage. Likewise, other people also kowtowed toward the offering table, and prayed with two hands together. After Dani stood on the blades, she gave divination to the spectators. Then, she danced on the blades for a while. At the time, Dani’s mother opened her arms and started to dance with Dani, and then shouted to the people who stood there while praying with their hands, “Hey! Do not stand there like statues. We have to dance with the *Janggunim* [General].”

In addition to such activities as described above, she tried to intrude herself into almost

all segments of the *gut*, while cautioning shamans not to omit anything. Because *Jinjeok gut* is held for giving thanks to gods in company with all *dan'gols*, it is more like a festival than a *gut* for private healing. Therefore, Dani's mother's *mugam* dancing and other interruptions could be understood as a way for participants' to enjoy the festival. However, Dani would restrain her mother's from interfering too much, saying, "Mom, don't do that! Now you're making everything for *mudangs* difficult! I am the *Mudang*, not you! Please, sit down there and just watch like the others."

Then, how about other participants' behavior in the *gut*? Of course, there were various roles that other participants were assumed to play in the *Jinjeok gut*. For example, some long-time *dan'gols* had volunteered for cooking some food-offerings such as Korean pancakes and vegetables at Dani's house one day before the *gut* started. During the *gut*, they served dishes to the guests outside the ritual site. Besides, all *dan'gol*-families had to bring some offerings to the deities, such as a pack of rice (about 18 liters), two candles, a bottle of wine, and a skein of thread. When they put those offerings in front of the offering-table, Dani informed the deities of their arrival while they kowtowed. In addition, they would reply to the questions which were asked by possessing spirits when Dani gave *gongsu* (divination) to them.



Figure 9. A scene from *chilseong geori*: a shaman, in a white robe and a peaked hat, sings *mansebaji* and prays for the *dan'gol*-families, while looking at a white piece of paper on which *dan'gol*-families' names and addresses are written. In the first row, three women are kowtowing toward an altar while a shaman prays for their families. Photo by author.

In contrast with the active behavior of Dani's mother, however, all these activities were carried out passively in accordance with the immediate instruction of other assisting shamans. They were not encouraged to dance *mugam*, and I could not see any sign that "they approached the gods and ancestors much as they approach life—with a sharp tongue, a sense of humor, and a good cry" as Kedall's informants showed in the Chŏn's family *gut*. Moreover, it should be noted that their activities, if any, were not done inside the ritual context. The fact that their activities were restricted outside the context of a formal ritual implies that the ritual was no longer an open drama which was constructed by active involvement of all participants. By means of a dotted line between *gut* and clients (cf. Figure 10), I illustrate the decrease in a client's role in a contemporary *gut*.

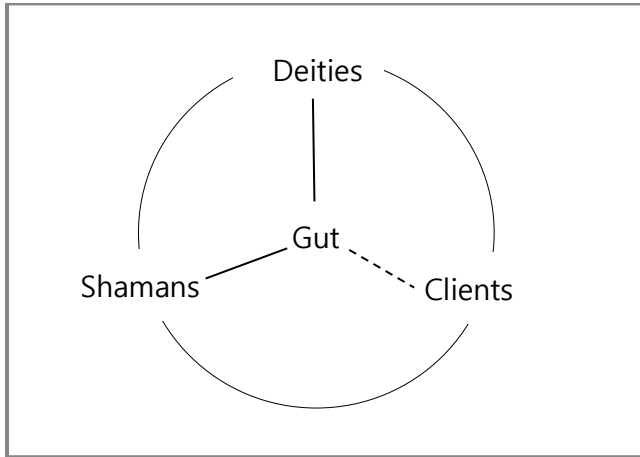


Figure 10. A diagram illustrating the transformed (modern) relationship between deities, shamans, and clients in a ritual setting.

Then, why did Dani try to stop her mother's interference, although she knows well that all the participants in a *gut* would be assumed to also be agents who help construct a *gut* (cf. Figure 8)? It seems that this trivial conflict between them represents the current reality that is emerging in *gut*-performance. At any rate, it is my contention that the reason behind the conflict could be found in Dani's consciousness of the relationship between her and her *dan'gols*. Actually, her consideration of the *dan'gols* ran the whole gamut from the choice of the dates for the *gut* through the ritual. When she fixed the dates to perform her *Jinjeok gut*, she took seriously into consideration how many of her *dan'gols* could be present in her *gut*. In particular, she included Saturday and Sunday into this period because most of her *dan'gols* work during the week. During the three days of her *Jinjeok gut*, she encouraged *dan'gols* to be present at least when she would perform the *Chilseong geori* and *Jakkdu geori*. Different from other segments, these two segments are regarded as the most important parts of her *gut* because, during them,

Dani prays for, and provides divination to, all *dan'gol*-families. Commenting on the changes in the Hwanghae Province-style *gut*, Hong Tae-han (2008: 16-17) states that a modern shaman does not spend much time singing *Taryeong muga*, which was sung for entertainment. Instead, a contemporary *gut* is constructed around *gongsu*.

Likewise, in Dani's *gut*, it was only when they received divination that the participants paid attention to the ritual. As I described, in contrast with old *dan'gols*, represented by Dani's mother wanting to enjoy herself while participating in all the segments, Dani's *dan'gols* did not seem to know how to enjoy themselves during the *gut*. It is because, as Hyesu states above, they did not have many opportunities to see a *gut*. At most, they could witness one twice a year, to which a variety of reasons could be attributed. For example, except for some community *guts* which are sponsored by a local government, such as Gangneung Dano Gut¹⁴², almost all private *guts* are held in commercial shrines which are located far from a village, with only a few people being invited.

At any rate, an important issue, here, is not to define whether rare opportunities result in clients' indifference and ignorance to the ritual or the rapid pace of urbanites' life induces it, but to indicate the fact that *dan'gols*' indifference to ritual has affected its content and style, in particular the weakening of the *gut*'s function as entertainment. We can say that Dani's recognition of this tendency was reflected in her attempts to restrain her mother's desire to actively engage in and enjoy the *gut*. In this respect, I argue that the weakening of *gut* as entertainment is a result of shamans' active adaptation to the desire of clients.

¹⁴² Gangneung Dano Gut takes one part of Ganeung Danoje Festival, which is held in Gangneung, a city located in the east part of Korean peninsula, and is designated as "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO.

5.3.2. Jjambbong Gut: Blurring of the Locality of Gut

Along with the weakening of its entertainment function, another transformation of *gut* can be seen in the blurring of the locality of a *gut*-style. It is well known that there are many regional variations of *gut* in the Korean peninsula. Each provincial *gut* has been differentiated by the unique style of performance, such as the tone of *muga*, music, and symbols used in it. There is a saying, “paldogusi da dareuda” (all *guts* of the eight provinces are different from each other). Even in the same province, different styles of *gut* are performed. For example, under the title of Hwanghae Province-style *gut*, which has been transmitted and performed among North Korean refugees, *guts* of each county such as Yeonbaek, Haeju, and Ongjin were different from each other in terms of the formation of geori and their performing style (Yang Jong-sung 2008: Kim Keum hwa 1995). Likewise, Hanyang-style (the former name of Seoul) *gut* has been divided into three versions: Gupabal-bon, Nodeul-bon, and Gaksimjeol-bon.

However, it seems that the uniqueness and the particular style of each local *gut* could not remain as such because of changes in the circumstances around it. Representatively, the destruction of *dan 'golpan* (a congregation of regular customers) and community culture along with the wave of urbanization can be mentioned as some of the main reasons for the blurring of distinctive styles of *gut*. Unjang once told me that three versions of Hanyang *gut* were performed in the past, but, one of them, Nodeul-bon version, which was performed as a community ritual, is not frequently practiced and transmitted because of the destruction of community culture since the modernization of Korea. He says:

... A variety of factors have caused the regression of the Nodeul-bon version [of Hanyang *gut*]. Among them, I think, the main factor is that the community ritual led by a shaman was replaced by a Confucian style of *Dangsanje* [title of village ritual performed in Confucian style] ... In this situation, *mudangs* who have learned and performed Nodeul-bon version could not make a living with their service. Thus, some of them perform other versions, such as Gupabal-bon and Gaksimjeol-bon... (My interview in 2006).

Another example, which shows the transformation of a *gut* in a new setting, is offered through explaining when and how *Changbu geori muga* (shaman songs which are sung in the segment of *Changbu*) had been inserted into the Hanyang *gut*. Kim Heon-seon (1997) insists that the formation of *Changbu geori*, performed for the spirit of *Gwangdae* (a traditional entertainer) and performed by even a non spirit-possessed person, in the Hanyang *gut* should be understood with reference to the changing performance-culture during the late Joseon Dynasty. Kim (1997: 85) maintains:

...*Changbu geori muga* was constructed for the purpose of increasing the quality of musok. Considering the fact that a variety of performing teams gathered in Seoul, it came to be the center of culture, and so it might be argued that the transformation of musok was a natural consequence at the time. In particular, *pansori gwangdae* [a story-singer], who were from Jeolla Province, came to gain popularity among residents in Seoul, which might have caused *mudangs* who had lived in the area to experience the crisis....Therefore it is my contention that *Changbu geori muga* should be understood as the result of shamans' endeavors to adapt their *guts* to new circumstances (My translation).

As we can see from the above cases, the transformation of a *gut* might be explained by the endeavors of the agents of musok, such as shamans and clients, to adjust to a particular situation. Accordingly, it is said that “*musok* has existed in direct relationship with the everyday

life of the community in concrete historical and social conditions” (Kim Seong-nae 1998b: 41).

However, it should be noted that there is a strong notion of fossilized or “authentic” forms of local *guts* among *mudangs* as well as scholars, in contrast with the idea that such forms have been constructed over a long time in connection to a particular historical situation. Such forms are utilized even as a criterion to evaluate whether a shaman is genuine or not. Actually, I remember that not only shamans whom I met during my research but also shamans who published their life stories used to say that they inherit and perform the “authentic” style of a local *gut*.

Regarding the “authentic” form of a *gut*, many scholars seem to agree with the idea that the current formation of a *gut* was fixed in the early 19th century in reference to the historical record, the *Mudang Naeryeok*. Yet, I would like to contend that the designation of Intangible Cultural Property along with the phenomenon of “superstar shamans” who have often appeared in the mass media serve today as more powerful references for the “authenticity” of a local *gut*. It can be seen in the fact that Hyesu mentioned that she came to know the meaning of a *gut* when she watched one performed by a Human Cultural Treasure on a TV program. The mass media, that does not have regional limitations, becomes an important vehicle for conveying the image of an “authentic” *gut* today.

However, as a matter of fact, in contrast with most shamans’ insistence that they perform an “authentic” style of a local *gut*, various elements of a local *gut* are mixed up when a *gut* is actually performed. In most cases, such a *gut* is generally criticized by shamans as well as scholars as a *Jjambbong gut* (hotchpotch *gut*) which is performed by a “phony” shaman who did not inherit a proper ritual education from his/her spirit-parents. Here, Kendall’s interpretation of

the talk about the “phony” and “authentic” is useful to understand the importance of the idea of the *Jjambbong gut* which I will explain. Kendall (2009: 113-114) states:

...Talk of phony shamans today versus whatever they [shamans who criticize phony shamans] might have been ‘in the past,’ ...resembles the sort of talk engendered wherever modernity drives its harsh “wedge between cosmology and history” (Anderson 1991, 36), historicizing legend and making memory into nostalgia. ‘Authentic’ and ‘phony’ are will-o’-the wisps...

The same idea could be applicable to the *Jjambbong gut*. In a sense, we can say that the concept of an “authentic” *gut* as an archetype is a logical fallacy because a particular style of local *gut* is a historical product of a concrete socio-cultural condition, as I mentioned regarding the issue of how *Changbu geori muga* was inserted into the procedure of the Hanyang *gut*. In this respect, it is my contention here that *Jjambbong gut* results from the compromise of contemporary clients’ indifferent attitude towards a specific style of a *gut* and shamans’ active adaptation to it in order to make their ritual efficacious.

Basically, as I described earlier, a ritual is performed to induce a desirable result. It is said that conforming to a particular style of ritual is also closely related to its ritual efficacy (Tambiah 1973; Bloch 1974). When this idea is applied to Korean shamanism, it is verified in the case of “traditional-bound clients,” who assume that a “shaman’s fidelity to the convention assures them the sense of efficacy” (Choi Chung-moo 1987: 142). It might be argued that their belief in the efficacy of a ritual arising from its correct performance has enforced the local tradition of a *gut*. Then, we might ask if this idea is still operative or not, when it is applied to understand the shamanic practices of contemporary Korean clients who are not familiar with the ritual and could

not know what is going on in it. If a shaman's fidelity to the convention does not constitute a main factor for a client selecting a certain shaman, nor a factor which makes a ritual efficacious, then what functions as an alternative criterion for selection?

Above, I indicated that a modern *gut* tends to be organized around *gongsu*. *Gongsu* which is given during a *gut* is differentiated from *mugguri*-divination in the sense that the former is accompanied by intensive spirit-possession, and is considered more "truthful and detailed" than the latter (L. Antonetta 2001: 33). If we suppose that *gongsu* serves as a more effective vehicle to convey a shamanic worldview, it should be clothed by "such an aura of factuality," in the words of C. Geertz (1973: 90), or should be sanctified by divine authorities. Actually, a *gut* is a performance in which gods present themselves by possessing a shaman, and it is safe to say that all the constituents of the performance contribute to the construction of sanctity or factuality of divination at least in the case of a *gongsu*-centered *gut*. To say it another way, to perform a *gut* renders a shaman's *gongsu* more "truthful and detailed" than the *mugguri*-divination. In this context, it is my contention that that *Jjambbong gut* functions as an alternative for the belief that the efficacy of a ritual comes from the correct performance of local guts based upon tradition. In the following section, I will illustrate how *Jjambbong gut* is constituted.

Among shamans and scholars of Korean shamanism, there is a saying, "Jeolla provincial *gut* is famous for the segment of ancestral spirits; Hanyang *gut* is well known for the segment of Officials; and the most spectacular segments of Hwanghae provincial *gut* are Generals and Gunung." I heard a similar phrase from Ddori Baksu, who is 50 years old now and performs the Hwanghae provincial *gut*, when I observed *Jinogi gut*—held in 2006, a *gut* for sending a soul to Heaven—where he was invited as an assistant shaman. During a pause in between the segments

of the *gut*, he approached me and said,

Jeollado *yukjabaegi* [Jeolla provincial folk song] rhythm is the best to make clients cry, and Hanyang *daegam* [Officials] are the best to cheer up the mood, and *Jakdu geori* and *Gunung geori* in Hwanghae provincial *gut* are the best to show the power and dignity of the gods. Therefore, I often use the *yukjabaegi* rhythm and melody when I perform *josang geori* [segment of ancestors] and play [perform] Hanyang *daegam* when I “extort” *byeolbi* [additional money]... (My interview in 2006).

During a *gut*, it is generally expected that a shaman transforms her personality in accordance with the gods and spirits who descend on him/her, which affects the emotional changes of the human-participants. Although it is argued that a *gut* is not carried away by one specific feeling but is balanced by all the feelings, such as joy, sadness, and wrath, a particular emotion is expected to be induced in specific segments. The segments mentioned by Ddori Baksu provide such case: *Josang geori*, in which dead souls speak through a shaman’s mouth, is dominated by poignant emotion; the dominant feelings in *Jakdu geori* and *Gunung geori* are dread and awe because the former is believed to show Generals’ divine power to chase away all evil spirits by standing on blades, while the latter is performed for the souls of people who died accidentally and are believed to be threatening beings due to their unresolved grudges; and, in *Daegam geori*, all the participants are cheered up by laughing at the Officials’ comical face and gestures. Of course, we can say that a performing shaman’s competence in each segment is very important for transforming participants’ emotions, but the structure and constituents of each segment also have the corresponding importance.

At any rate, we can say that the idea that *Josang geori* of Jeolla Province is the best

among other local styles of *Josang geori* means that it is the most efficient way to induce sorrow among participants who are not even familiar with a *gut*. The fact that Ddori Baksu would “play Hanyang *Daegam*” and utilize the melody of yukjabaegi, although he knows how to perform Hwanghae provincial style of *Josang geori* and *Daegam geori*, could be understood in this context.

The same logic is useful for understanding the reason why a shaman who performs the Hwanghae provincial *gut* would be invited to the ritual field where a Hanyang *gut* is held. A shaman, who is called Suja and had been in Dani’s performing guild, told me that she used to be asked by Hanyang *mansins* to help them by performing *Gunung geori* (a ritual for the soul who died violently and is believed to hold a grudge) in the Hwanghae provincial style:

Nowadays, I often come to Seoul to perform *Gunung geori*. Most of them [shamans who invite her to their *gut*] perform Hanyang *gut*, and, as you know, Hwanghaedo [Hwanghae provincial] *gut* is very difficult to master. That’s why they call me... You know, I just perform one segment there but they pay me almost the same amount of money which I make from performing all day long with other Hwanghae provincial shamans ... It is more economical for them [Seoul shamans] to invite Hwanghae provincial *mansin* than for they themselves to learn it.... And, most of all, *Gunung gut* is so spectacular that it can make unreal spirits become real [eopneun gwisindo mandeuleonaenda]... (My interview in 2008).

In the segment of *Gunung* in the Hwanghaedo *gut*, a shaman’s performance is much more violent than any other segments. For example, food, drink, a pig’s intestines and blood, and other offerings are put together in a basket for *Gunung*-spirits in this segment, in contrast with the offerings to other deities who are supposed to be present in other segments. Those latter offerings are laid out on a table. In addition, a shaman dramatizes the grudge and hunger of *Gunung*-spirits

by eating those mixed offerings while painting them on her face. A shaman's blood-painted face and vehement gestures that indicate the grudges of the descending spirits are stimulating enough to make the *gut* take on a dreadful mood and to encourage clients to believe those spirits are present in the ritual place. From here, we can say that the feeling and belief resulting from *Gunung geori* is extended throughout the whole procedure of the *gut*, and makes the *gongsu* during the *gut* appear to be truly real.



Figure 11. A shaman performing *Gunung geori*. Photo by author.

As I have described, many elements of a local *gut* are used in different performing conditions, and such *guts* are labeled as *Jjambbong gut* today. And to the clients who are indifferent to the aesthetics and meaning of ritual performance, performing a more spectacular scene which induces immediate reaction from those clients could be an efficient way to clothe the shaman and his/her performance in an aura of divinity. In this sense, we can say that

Jjambbong gut results from the compromise between shamans and clients, and functions as an alternative to the belief that the efficacy of a ritual comes from the correct performance of local guts based upon tradition.

However, it should be noted that not all *Jjambbong guts* are constructed for maximizing emotional transformation among participants. In contrast with such *Jjambbong guts* as are performed by shamans who already mastered their own local *guts*, some *Jjambbong guts* might be produced by shamans with insufficient learning. Yet, even these forms of *Jjambbong gut* could be understood with reference to the interaction between shamans and clients as far as clients are in need of their ritual services. Actually, it could be argued that frequent complaints made by “traditional” shamans’ and scholars of Korean shamanism about “phony” shamans’ *Jjambbong gut* reflects how popular those shamans are among contemporary Koreans who are in need of shamanic services. At any rate, we can say that *Jjambbong gut*, in company with the tradition of “authentic” local *gut*—whether the “authentic” local *gut* exists in the sphere of old shamans’ strategic discourse to valorize their authenticity or in the folklore scholarship which produced the positive image of Korean shamanism, it is a fact that many shamanic rituals are performed today under the title of “authentic” local *gut*—has become one outstanding aspect of the shamanic ritual field, while making the ritual area more pluralized.

Up to this point, I have described two outstanding features of a modern *gut*: one is that a *gut* is organized around *gongsu* while entertaining functions have decreased; the other is the increasing rise of a new style of *gut*, called a *Jjambbong gut*, which goes beyond local tradition. Regarding those features, I attributed the origin of them to the interactive process between shamans and clients within the specific context located between clients’ insufficient ritual

knowledge, indifferent attitudes and passive position toward a *gut*, and shamans' endeavors to make their ritual seem more efficacious to those clients.

At this point, we might ask if *Jjambbong gut* itself can strengthen and enforce the shamanic worldview among modern clients. Although the *Jjambbong gut* is intended to make the shamanic worldview "really real," is the temporary and fragmentary experience in the *gut* satisfying enough to convey that worldview among the clients? If not, what else could be suggested as a subsidiary means to accomplish this? In fact, in addition to a *gut*, there are many other ritual activities in Korean shamanism, and such activities help clients who have a long-lasting *dan'gol*-relationship with a particular shaman. In the following section, I will explain those activities, in particular post-*gut* ritual activities, which have not been reported on by scholars of Korean shamanism, while focusing on their meaning and function.

5.4. Other Ritual Activities

As I have described, a temporary experience during a *gut* does not seem sufficient to strengthen the shamanic worldview for clients who are not already immersed in it. Although clients could solve their impending problems by sponsoring a *gut*, their lives are still destined to keep facing unexpected difficulties. In this existential living condition, shamans, through their services, have a plenty of room to become involved in their clients' lives. In addition to a *gut*, shamans' other ritual activities have provided them with specific explanations of the origins of those difficulties and have provided *jeongseong* (devotional activities) as a way of overcoming

them.

Most of those activities which are carried out in shamans' private shrines could be distinguished based on when they are performed periodically or temporarily. Periodical ritual activities are held on special days such as *Ipchun* (the first day of spring), Buddha's Birthday, *Dano* (the first day of the fifth month of the year according to the lunar month), *Chilseok* (the seventh day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar), and so on. In addition to rituals on those days, regular customers are supposed to visit shamans' shrines on every first and fifth day of the lunar month.

Among those days for ritual activities, some shamans do not perform any special ritual on Buddha's Birthday as it is not included in the traditional shamanic ritual system. That was also the case with Unjang, at least during my research period.¹⁴³ He told me that he, as a shaman, did not want to celebrate Buddha's Birthday because it is not a tradition of Korean shamanism but a tradition of Buddhism. Actually, Dani, who celebrates the day, knew that some shamans would not offer any ritual service to clients on that day but she stated that her clients wanted her to perform a ritual and hang a lotus lantern on the day. I will treat this issue later in more detail. For now I want to stress that, as I described in the introduction, because I am not concerned about the generalization of shamanic rituals, but interested in showing the plural reality of modern shamanism, in particular through focusing on the interaction between shamans and clients in this chapter, on how even some ritual activities, which are not shared by all shamans, and different opinions, which are found among shamans, about those rituals, could be good examples that

¹⁴³ Actually, it is not clear if Unjang will not celebrate Buddha's Birthday in the future. If he comes to agree with Dani's statement, he may change his mind and offer a ritual service on the day. Moreover, the personality of a divinity who descends on a shaman could also change the shaman's position.

show the plurality of Korean shamanism.

5.4.1. *Ipchunpuri* and *Hongsumegi*

Ipchunpuri (an exorcism on the day of *Ipchun*) is a small scale ritual in order to expel a malevolent ghost or a bundle of noxious influences on the first day of spring which used to be reckoned as February 3rd or 4th on the solar calendar. Clients or a member of the clients' family who are caught in *samjae* (three years of misfortune, 三災) are encouraged to participate in this ritual. In this sense, it is also called *samjaepuri*.

During those three years, it is believed that those who are caught in *samjae* tend to be more vulnerable to supernatural malevolence, which might result in all kinds of unfortunate accidents. Actually, I have observed that many shamans whom I know attribute the origin of their clients' misfortune to the fact that they did not escape the bad effect of *samjae*. In addition to shamans, many ordinary Korean people are well acquainted with the word “*samjae*” although not all of them ascribe their misfortune to its influence. At any rate, it is certain that the concept of *samjae* has functioned as an interpretive framework for the explanation of misfortune in Korean culture. In the following, I would like to describe how this *samjaepuri* ritual was performed based upon my observation at Dani's private shrine in 2009.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Basically, *Ipchunpuri* is supposed to be performed at a shaman's private shrine on the *ipchun*-day, but, under specific circumstances, it could be held at a commercial *gutdang* on another day. Dani's *Ipchunpuri* for the years 2006 and 2007 were held at Yaksuam *gutdang* on Sunday because of her neighbors' complaints about noise from the ritual.

In that year, Dani performed *Ipchunpuri* along with *Hongsumegi* (or *Hoengsumegi*) which was also held for clients who it was predicted would meet with sudden disasters that year.¹⁴⁵ In general, right before and after the beginning of the Lunar New Year, *dan'gols* used to visit a shaman's shrine to see the new year's luck (*illyeon sisnsu bogi*), to determine whether or not they were in danger of such disasters and so if they needed that ritual performed for them. Nineteen *dan'gol*-families of Dani participated in the ritual: ten clients visited for performing *samjaepuri* and nine clients came for *Hongsumegi*. To the ten clients, who were born under the signs of Snake, Chicken, and Cow among the twelve zodiac animals, the year of 2009 was “*nalsamjae* (departing *samjae*), the third year of the three years of bad luck.”¹⁴⁶

As a matter of fact, Dani's performances for clients who were in *samjae* and who were divined to be vulnerable to sudden disasters during the coming year were not different from each other in terms of their contents and formations. For the ritual, all clients were requested to bring their undershirts, on which their names and *saju* were written, along with a dried pollack, candles, rice, and wine. Among those items, it is believed that the clothes of the clients who were in *samjae* are a substitute for the clients themselves, and that they are supposed to carry away the clients' bad luck when they are burnt after the ritual. Other offerings are dedicated to deities in Dani's shrine.

On that day, the nineteen clients plus six other members of their families gathered together. Except for three young ladies, most of them had known each other for more than five

¹⁴⁵ In principle, *Hongsumegi* is supposed to be held in between the third day and the fifteenth day of the first month of the year according to the lunar calendar, but it is considered acceptable to have it another day so long as it occurs that month.

¹⁴⁶ Those clients who were born under the Sign of Snake, Chicken, and Cow are in *samjae* during years with the signs of the Pig, Rat, and Cow, which would correspond to 2007 to 2009.

years and had become well acquainted. Waiting their turn in the living room or kitchen, they wrapped the dried pollack with cloth and five-colored fabric. After Dani finished praying for the peace and good luck of the client's family and giving divination inside her shrine, she came out of the shrine and led the client to the front door of her house (Dani's shrine is located inside her house). When a client sat down facing the outside, Dani sang a *muga* for chasing away all malevolent forces. The last part of the ritual was signaled by throwing the pollack out onto the ground, and it is believed that if the head of the pollack is facing towards the outside, all malevolent forces have been chased away. However, Dani also warned that although the ritual was completed, it could not extinguish all the bad forces which were destined to act upon her clients. She stated:

Although we completed the Hongsumegi, you cannot escape perfectly from bad *unse* [bad fate]. This [ritual] will help you to avoid from colliding head-on with the bad *unse*. Whatever we do, bad luck leaves a trace of itself.

To this statement, other *dan'gols* added their own experiences. Hwani's Mom, who was 53 years old then and had known Dani for thirteen years, said,

Right...I am not quite sure...but it was when I was here for Ipchunpuri a few years ago... Dani divined, "Something might happen to Hwani's Dad that will astonish him. You have to convey my message to him...But don't worry it will be surmounted with only a slight trace left. Some days later, I heard that Hwani's Dad had escaped barely from a collision with a motorcycle which suddenly cut in front of his car. At that time, I said to myself and him, "Ah! *Harabeoji* [divinities in Dani's shrine] took care of us."

At any rate, along with the warning, Dani gave the client a few sheets of paper-talismans, some of which are supposed to be kept by the person who is in *samjae* and others are supposed to be attached to the wall. Through looking at those talismans, I could determine which clients were in *samjae* and who were divined to be in bad luck that year. In addition, I could see how *invisible* bad forces could be particularized in the Korean people's real lives. Those talismans which were made the previous night included *samjaebu* (talisman for protecting from bad influence of *samjae*), *hongaekbu* (talisman for the prevention of accidental disasters), *gwanjaeguseolbu* (talisman for protecting from lawsuits and malicious gossip), *mansadaegilbu* (talisman for bringing excellent luck), and *jaesudaegilbu* (similar to *mansadaegilbu*).

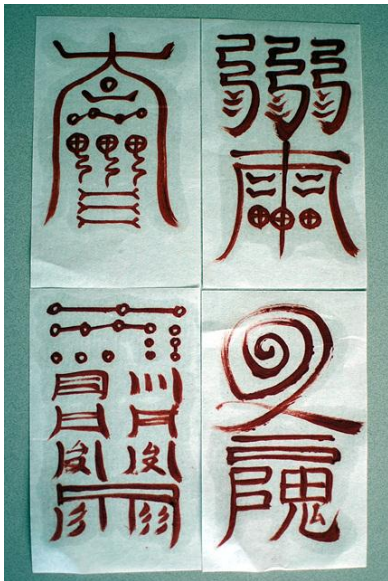


Figure 12. *Samjaebu* is on the left at the top. *Gwanjaeguseolbu*, *mansadaegilbu*, and *hongaekbu* are arranged in a clockwise direction. Photo by author.

In contrast with *mansadaegilbu* and *jaesudaegilbu*, which were given to all clients, other talismans were given to clients in specific situations: *samjaebu* was given only to clients that

were in *samjae*, *hongaekbu* was for clients who were divined to be in danger of suffering from sudden accidents on the road, and *gwanjaeguseolbu* was mainly for clients who managed their own business. Yet, some *dan'gols* who were not in the year of bad luck wanted to take *gwanjaeguseolbu* and *hongaekbu*. For example, Hyesu insisted that she had to receive both of them because of her job: she explained that she drove around the areas of Seoul and Gyeonggi Province meeting customers and would be often targeted with malicious gossip by rival agents. At last, Dani had to make more talismans than she had prepared in order to meet her clients' requests.¹⁴⁷

Regarding such seasonal rituals, which were originally practiced in an agricultural context, in an urban setting, Akamatzu and Akiba (1991: 185) contend that they are transformations of the agricultural ritual and therefore they represent the rurality of Korean society. Their argument is criticized as a way of justifying Japanese colonial rule in the Korean peninsula (e.g. Kim Seong-nae 1988). Yet I am not concerned about the issue of whether those ritual practices show the rurality of Korean society or not. Rather, I would like to indicate that those rituals, while marking the start of the year, still make it possible to organize modern clients' lives in terms of the shamanic worldview and encourage them to tune themselves to the rhythm of shamanic cosmology. Other ritual activities in Dani's private shrine could be understood in this context as well.

¹⁴⁷ As a matter of fact, it is assumed that those two talismans, which are believed to prevent lawsuits, malicious gossip, and accidents on the road, represent all possible unhappy events of the common life of the Korean people. According to Kim Choong-soon's analysis of *Tojeongbigyeol*, a famous divination book, those two unhappy events make up a quarter of all items that one should be careful about (Kim Choong-soon 1991).

5.4.2. Chopailmaji and Chilseongmaji

While the *Ipchunpuri* and *Hongsumegi* were restricted to clients who were assumed to be in specific situations where such rituals were necessary, every *dan'gol* of Dani was invited to the *chopailmaji* and *chilseongmaji* rites. *Chopailmaji* is a composite word made up of “*chopail*” which is a Korean word indicating the eighth day of the fourth month according to the lunar year, Buddha’s Birthday, and “*maji*” which means “welcoming.” Because it is believed that divinities who are worshipped on those days are vegetarians, all the food offerings prepared by Dani consist of such items as rice cakes, wine, and boiled vegetables.



Figure 13. Client-gathering at Buddha’s Birthday Celebration in Dani’s place. Photo by author.

In general, seven to ten days before the ritual, Dani lights the lotus lantern and attaches a

piece of paper, upon which the name, address, and *saju* of each member of a client's family is written. As a matter of course, the form of the ritual in the year 2009 was not much different from the ritual on the day of *Ipchun*. As she did on *Ipchunpuri*, Dani prayed for a client inside her shrine while beating a gong. Because of the long relationship between her and her clients, she knew their main interests, which was what she prayed about. The following prayer, which was sung for Hyesu, illustrates the basic format of her supplications:

Jo's family living in Jongamdong...May *Narachan daeju's* [male head of the household] film business be always prosperous! May each movie of his hit the jackpot! Hongssi [Mrs. Jo] *giju* [a shamanic term indicating a housewife] works for an insurance company. May she meet good customers...Please help her to maintain a good relationship with her mother-in-law...

After finishing the supplications, she gave divinations to the client. Yet, the main divinity who was worshipped and was supposed to send divinations to Dani in this ritual was more restricted than those who were supplicated in *Ipchunpuri* and *Hongsumaegi* rites. The divinity who was supplicated in that ritual was *Chilseong-Jeseok*.¹⁴⁸ It is believed that this god is in charge of child-birth and longevity. This god is also sometimes simply called “*Chilseong*” or “*Jeseok*” by shamans. Many scholars have attributed the existence of *Jeseok* in a shaman's pantheon as being the result of the interbreeding of Buddhism and shamansim (Cho Hung-yoon

¹⁴⁸ Although I use a grammatically singular form to indicate the divinity who is worshipped in *Chilseongmaji*, the divinity is also expressed by the plural form, because under the name of *Chilseong*, which literally means Seven Stars, or the Big Dipper, many kinds of *Chilseong* such as *Sabu-Chilseong* (*Chilseong* of four-direction sky), *Seokham-Chilseong* (*Chilseong* in rock), *Gongjung-Chilseong* (*Chilseong* in the air), and so on, are included in this designation.

1990; Park Il-young 2000).¹⁴⁹

The same divinities are honored with ritual hospitality on the day of *Chilseong*, the seventh day of the seventh month. The special ritual that takes place on this day is called *Chilseongmaji*. If a hanging of a lotus lantern differentiated *Chopailmaji* from other rituals, cooking and offering *Chilseong-mi* (“*mi*” is steamed rice) to the gods along with a bundle of thread make *Chilseongmaji* different from other rituals. Except for that, the content of ritual activities does not differ significantly from the others that I have described above.

In the meantime, clients, it is believed, who “sold their children” to the *dan’gol*-shaman by offering *myeongdari* (a roll of cloth that is offered for an offspring’s longevity) to the deity should participate in this ritual. Because this god is believed to preside over human longevity, a child who is divined to have a short life would be “sold” to the gods, by which, it is thought, the child’s lifespan will be increased as an offspring of *Chilseong*. In this sense, those offspring of the deity are also asked to join the ritual.

Although the ritual on the day of *Chilseong* has been performed in various ways by shamans as well as by Buddhist monks for a long time in Korean history, some shamans do not offer any such ritual service to their clients, according to Dani’s statement. She said to me:

I heard that many shamans do not perform *Chilseongmaji* today. Even my spirit-teacher did not do it... Well it might be irritating for them (shamans who do not perform *Chilseongmaji*) to gather all *dan’gols* because they have to give divination to all of them. It is very hard work... But my

¹⁴⁹ The god of *Jeseok* is a Buddhist divinity who is considered to live in Trāyastriṃśa which is located on top of Mt. Sumeru. However, in the context of Korean shamanism, this divinity is portrayed as a kind of heavenly god who controls childbirth and great harvest. In addition to that, many examples such as Buddha statues in some shamans’ shrines and *Sanshingak* (a shrine for the Mountain God) in a Buddhist temple indicate the interbreeding between Buddhism and shamanism.

original spiriti-mother, Chilseongne eomma, did it. She even performed a *Chilseong gut* on that day... I am one of her *sinddal* [spirit-daughters], which is the reason why I am carrying it [*Chilseongmaji*] out... Now, it is my tradition... (My interview in 2009).

Dani's insistence that there is a reason she felt obligated to perform this ritual service on that day could be understood in relation to her comment on *Chopailmaji*. According to her, it was not only because of some divinities in her shrine which came from a Buddhist tradition, but also because of her clients' request.

Actually, *gongsu* during a *gut*-performance a significant role among ritual elements for clients because it not only clarifies the cause of impending crises from which a sponsor suffers but also promises solutions in the form of comprehensible words. Moreover, many clients hold their *dan'gol*-relationship with a particular shaman because they believe that the content of *gongsu* would be actualized in their lives. In this sense, we can say that the importance of *gongsu* is gradually increasing in all kinds of shamanic ritual.

One more thing that I would like to mention is that *gongsu*, especially in periodic ritual activities, take a more important role in strengthening a shamanic worldview, in that clients' experiences with a particular shaman's spiritual power could be transmitted to others. In particular, the informal dialogue among clients, which is possible only in the context of client-gathering rituals that I have introduced earlier because a client's personal interpretations of her experience are shared in them, help other clients to strengthen their trust in Dani's words which convey the shamanic worldview.

Up until now, I have explained shamanic ritual activities which have not received much

attention from scholars of Korean shamanism, and have suggested Dani's ritual services as an illustrative example. It is assumed that through the practice of periodical rituals that are marked on the lunar calendar, Dani tried to organize her clients' everyday life under a shamanic worldview while negotiating between traditionality and her client's desires. Actually, the importance of these ritual activities lies in the fact that modern clients' experience of shamanism cannot guarantee the continuous relationship between them and a shaman. In this circumstance, it is my contention that those periodical ritual activities cause clients to transform their fragmentary experience of the shamanic worldview into a meaningful interpretive framework for understanding their everyday life. As a matter of course, in addition to those rituals that I introduced here, other rituals such as visiting a shaman's shrine on every first and fifteenth day of each month of the lunar year could also be mentioned as a means to encourage clients to hold a shamanic worldview.

However, it should be noted that not all shamans provide the same ritual services for their clients as Dani does. As I mentioned above, Unjang does not celebrate Buddha's Birthday. Similarly, he did not make a room for clients to gather in his private shrine. He said to me that, instead, he used to perform those seasonal rituals only with his spirit-disciples. He also stated that his *dan'gols* would not like to encounter other clients in his shrine.

Then, how can we understand the different ritual practices between Dani and Unjang? Can we say that either of them is inauthentic or wrong? Here, it is helpful to cite Geoffrey Samuel's question regarding Kim Chong-ho's research on shamanic rituals which was totally different from Kendall's:

Why is there such a difference between the kuts [guts] which Kendall describes—large public affairs with all the female neighbors invited, a kind of party and general entertainment for the local women—and the ones you describe—small, furtive, secretive, shameful?...Could there be some real difference between her field situation and yours? (In terms of when she worked, and where she worked, for example?) (Kim Chong-ho 2003: 82)

As an answer to this question, Kim Chong-ho (2003: 82-93) criticizes Kendall's work with the following argument: The distorted situation, arising from her appearance as an American in the field, allows her to be able to watch the exceptional ritual case in which village women participated actively. Because she had this opportunity to watch a public gut, she was led to overemphasize it and this extraordinary situation led her to romanticize Korean shamanism. Hence, it cannot represent the way Korean people utilize shamanism. All these criticisms seem to be based upon his "superior" position as a native anthropologist (M. Pettid 2004: 148). Here, I do not evaluate whether Kim's argumentation is justifiable or not, although I do not agree with him. However, it should be noted that he assumes a unique image or that there exists only one way to utilize shamanic services among Koreans.

As shown from the cases of Dani and Unjang, even shamans who face similar circumstances—both of them live in Seoul and they are of similar age—offer different ritual services in accordance with their clients' needs. Here, it is necessary to be careful not to generalize "Korean shamanism" as a whole. Rather, I would like to suggest that we need to pay more attention to the plurality of Korean shamanism. By the interaction with various clients' needs and by the utilization of plural images of Korean shamanism, Korean shamanism(s) continue(s) to be reconfigured.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

There is a saying, “seongsuboneun hanarado jejaboneun gakbonida” (although shaman-gods are one, shamans are all different), among Korean shamans that explains the plural realities of Korean shamanism. Supposing that plural representations of shamanic practices are not restricted to a particular time but have always defined the reality of Korean shamanism, we might argue that Korean shamanism has never been actualized as a single unity. Rather it takes plurality as its nature. In addition, seeing Korean shamanism in terms of its plurality seems to make it possible to answer the question, “How can Korean shamanism survive in a modern society?” In fact, this question presupposes the idea that Korean shamanism represents magical beliefs and practices of a pre-modern society. Therefore, it has been asked in another way, “How can we understand the co-existence of magical practices with rational (scientific) thinking in modern Korea?” The answer might be sought from the different modes of analogy in human cognitive structures, i. e. two different types of analogical thought and action in Western science and primitive magic. According to Tambiah (1990), magic and science which are represented by “participation” and “causality” should be understood as “complementary orientations to the world.” Therefore, although their co-existence could become a surprise to the evolutionist who supposes that “there is a universal development from magic to religion or from religious mysticism to secular rationality” (Lessa and Vogt 1979: 353), it now comes to be interpreted as an indispensable mode for human’s life in the world.

Meanwhile, we may find the *raison d’être* of shamanism in modern Korea from the social

and psychological functions of shamanism in modern Korea. The following quotation from Stoffel's (2001: 342) article, which analyzes the relationship between the economic crisis of 1997 and Korean shamanism, will suffice to show such functions of shamanism in modern Korea. Stoffel writes: "Through consulting shamans, people find personal stability, a peaceful, comfortable heart and receive support to resolve economical and familial problems. Shamans did not act subversively but rather acted in accordance with the mainstream of the society by re-integrating the destabilised person. That is why, on a macro sociological level, their activities contribute to the stability of a society in a situation of crisis."

However, in this thesis, I did not approach this question in terms of the relationships between magic, religion, and science because I do not think that Korean shamanism can be defined as one of them in terms of a monistic approach. Rather, I tried to answer the question by utilizing the concept of plurality. Accordingly, the issue of what constitutes contemporary Korean shamanism or how plurality is constructed became the focus of this research. Based upon the idea that the plurality of Korean shamanism is constructed by continuous feedback processes between classification and the classified, I first tried to explain the historical development of classifications within a specific context and then presented how those images and classifications, as referential models, were appropriated by shamans' self-identity making process and affected the reconfiguration of their ritual activities.

Concretely, I presented the historical process of classifying Korean shamanism with some key words which still appear in Korean society, such as "*eumsa*" (licentious ritual) during the Joseon dynasty; and "superstition," "a national symbol," and "an indigenous Korean religion" since the colonial period. To Confucian elites during the Joseon dynasty, who were oriented

toward constructing a new civilization by establishing music and rites according to the Confucian teachings and destroying old uncivilized customs, shamanic practices were considered a challenge to their authority and regarded as serious problems. In particular, in terms of the hierarchical ritual system which Confucian elites believed represented and embodied the ideals of Neo-Confucianism, shamanism which contravened the ritual system could not be accepted as proper ritual behaviour. In addition to the ritual aspect, Confucian elites criticized shamanic practices as inducing moral corruption and economic bankruptcy among the Joseon people.

The desire to accomplish true civilization reappeared in the discourse of superstition. To the enlightenment intellectuals of Korea during the time of Port-Opening, civilization meant the modernization of Korea according to Western rationality. In this sense, such concepts as science and religion became the prime values for organizing Korean people's everyday lives, while Korean shamanism came to be devalued as an obstacle to modernization. In particular, the worldview of Korean shamanism, which presumes the intervention of spiritual beings into the physical world, could not be categorized into any of the categories in the modern classificatory framework. Therefore it came to be subsumed under the title of magic and superstition. In practice, many anti-superstition movements, which were carried out in the colonial period and even in the 1960s and 1970s, played a central role in the formation of negative images of Korean shamanism among the common Korean people. During the Japanese colonial period, Japanese colonialists restricted shamanic practices under "the Police Offence Act" and treated shamans as criminals. Besides, Korean enlightenment intellectuals also carried out anti-superstition campaigns while developing programs such as public lectures, seminars, and newspaper. After Liberation, through the publication of textbooks for the students of elementary, middle and high

schools from the 1950s to the early 1970s, the formation of negative images of Korean shamanism was strengthened. It is unquestionable that those anti-superstition movements which were directed toward shamanism had a crucial impact on the formation of the shamanism-image among the Korean people.

If the negative discourse on Korean shamanism could be subsumed under the concept of civilization—whether it is understood as Confucianization or Westernization, then the positive image of it is more relevant to the construction of the “Koreanness” or to nationalist movements. Ever since the idea that Korean shamanism is an indigenous Korean religion appeared in official discourses in the late nineteenth century, it has continued to be reproduced in Korean intellectual history. Based upon that idea, on the one hand, Korean shamanism came to the forefront of the resistance movement against the ruling power; on the other hand, it was appropriated by ruling groups to justify their hegemony. In particular, Korean shamanism was utilized as a symbol of resistance against Japanese colonialism and modern policies which were oriented toward Westernization and urbanization. Moreover, it was also appropriated by Korean military governments as an effective means to transform themselves into legitimate rulers, giving them the image of the protectors of Korean traditional culture. In this historical process, such images of Korean shamanism as a traditional culture and an indigenous religion put down deep roots.

When we consider those images in relation to the reality of contemporary Korean shamanism, it is important that although such classifications and images were constructed and played a role within a specific historical context, they have survived and functioned as a constituent of Korean shamanism and have affected the formation of its reality. This is why I argue that the academic discourses on shamanism are not an in-house game but constitute the

actuality of modern Korean shamanism. Also this is why I regard the feedback process between them not as a paradigm-shift, but as a widening or pluralizing process affecting the spectrum of Korean shamanism. That is to say, I tried to re-contextualize various images of Korean shamanism, which were de-contextualized from their original contexts and became obstacles to understanding the diversity of contemporary Korean shamanism, into the modern historical context by showing how those images are appropriated by contemporary shamans.

The stories of three Korean shamans (e.g. Dani, Unjang, and Jade) showed well how such classifications had affected the construction of their shaman-identity. Among those classifications, in particular, the notion of an authentic tradition of Korean shamanism, which was actually constructed by a particular historical consciousness in order to find genuine Koreanness, commonly functioned as a significant framework for them to establish their identities. Other academic discourses on “religion” and “neo-shamanism” also appeared as referential models, serving the same purpose. The three shamans already experienced the negative attitude towards shamanism before they decided to accept their shaman-destiny. Note that almost all Korean shamans used to confess that they first resisted accepting their shaman-destiny, which made them suffer even more from divine-sickness! They are still struggling against the negative images of shamanism even after accepting their shamanship as their vocation, as I showed in the episode of Dani’s neighborhood meeting. In this context, such referential models as a transmitter of “the authentic tradition of Korean shamanism” which conveys Koreanness, a *minjung mudang*, a priest, or a neo-shaman as an alternative to the modern religious authorities can endow them with a significance of their shamanship.

In the meantime, although the plural and complex reference models in their stories might

seem to provide us with an inconsistent and divided self image, their stories showed how they were effectively synthesized into their identity without any conflict. In this context, we can expect that various referential models or classifications will continue to be reproduced by the looping effect between shamans and those discourses, while further pluralizing the reality of Korean shamanism.

The plurality of Korean shamanism was also explained in terms of the variety of shamans' ritual activities. Based upon the assumption that the plurality of modern Korean shamanism is a product of the various desires of modern clientele, is represented through the context of a ritual, and results in the transformation of the ritual itself, I examined how modern clients' desires and life styles are reflected in the transformation of various shamanic rituals such as *mugguri*, *gut*, and other periodic rituals. Modern clients who appeared in this thesis were presented as rather passive participants when they were compared to past clients as imagined in the nostalgic memories of old shamans.

However, modern clients are still active consumers of Korean shamanism in a modern situation in which many ideologies are competing with each other. The outstanding features of modern *gut*-performance that I have described, such as *gongsu*-centered performance and *Jjambbong gut*, could be understood in this context. These two features, I argued, were results of Korean shamans' active consciousness of their clients' attitude towards Korean shamanism: their indifference to the ritual itself and their primary concern about the practical benefit from sponsoring a ritual. In addition to the examination of *mugguri* and *gut*-performance, I tried to grasp the meaning of various periodic shamanic rituals which have not received adequate attention in existing studies. As shown in the cases of *Dani* and *Unjang*, not all rituals are

commonly shared by all Korean shamans. For Unjang, who emphasizes his priesthood as a fully Korean shaman, the celebration of the Buddha's Birthday may be problematic to his identity. Yet for Dani, who has actively participated in a variety of meetings for inter-religious dialogues, a ritual on the day of a religious saint does not seem to conflict with her identity. Moreover, under circumstances in which various ideologies compete with each other, Dani has to encourage her clients to maintain the shamanic worldview in their daily lives, which, I argue, is actualized into the periodic ritual services.

In this dissertation, I have shown that the plurality of Korean shamanism has been established not only by the looping effects between a variety of images of Korean shamanism, which has been constructed by academic discourses, and Korean shamans' self-identity, but also by dynamic interactions between shamans and clients. Going one step further, I argue that this plurality is the nature of Korean shamanism. Various shamanic beliefs and practices—sometimes inconsistent among contemporary Korean shamans—cannot be understood through a lens that sees Korean shamanism as a single unity and assumes there is an authentic or pure form of Korean shamanism. From such a perspective, contemporary Korean shamanism would be devalued as deviant. However, when we accept plurality as the nature of Korean shamanism and pay more attention to the dynamic interaction between the various actors that constitute its reality, we can finally start to understand contemporary Korean shamanism.

Nowadays, we witness many shamanic traditions from all over the world revived through persecutions of them. Many theoretical positions of those revivals, which have functioned to produce novel images of shamanism, seem to presuppose the single unity of shamanism or the authenticity of their shamanic traditions. However, it is puzzling that various representations of

shamanism, contrasted with the theoretical premise of a single unity, are continuously encountered. Here, I think that my research can give a comparative perspective to attempts to understand the plural realities of shamanisms in different contexts.

I believe that the interpretive framework, “looping effects between images and realities,” which was applied to understand the plural realities of Korean shamanism, is applicable to the understanding of other shamanisms in different contexts. We can find many records of experiences of persecution and revivals of shamanism that are similar to what happened in Korea in other shamanic traditions from all over the world. In particular, it is well known among shamanism scholars how seriously many shamanic traditions of Siberia, Mongolia, and Manchuria were suppressed and persecuted for a long time until recently (cf. Balzer 1996; W. Heissig 1996; M. Hoppal 1996; C. Humphrey 1996; Shi Kun 1993).

Various efforts to repress the shamanisms of Eurasia could be compared to the Korean case. Let me give an example from the case of Sakha Republic. It is reported that upon encountering severe repression in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Sakha shamans curtailed their practices or “went underground” while continued shamanic healing in secret. Also, just as Korean shamans were regarded as criminals under “the Police Offence Act” during the Japanese colonial period, a few Sakha shamans “were hauled off to jail.” Moreover, “shamans were called greedy charlatan deceivers, who took people’s savings, daughters, and last horses for their own pleasure” (Balzer 1996: 7-8). Likewise, C. Humphrey recollects the difficulty conducting research on the shamanism of the Mongols, Buryats, Tuvans, and others in the 1960s-1980s, as people of that time “were ashamed of it and frightened to acknowledge it.” She also points out that “shamans in Siberia, Mongolia, and Manchuria were imprisoned and killed by Communist

governments” (C. Humphrey 1996: 1). In the same vein, Shi Kun describes how in China, “even from 1949 to the late 1970s, shamanism studies were virtually prohibited, shamanism being regarded as a superstition that had to be eradicated” (Shi Kun 1993: 47). Just as official policies on Korean shamanism constructed negative images of it as a licentious ritual and a superstition among the Korean common people as well as *mudangs*, so did policies enacted by Communist governments. From such expressions as “people were ashamed of shamanism” (C. Humphrey 1996: 1) and “shamanism was ridiculed during the forties for its ineffectiveness in eastern Mongolia” (Heissig 1996: 249), we can surmise that these official discourses and policies played a key role in the construction of negative images of shamans and shamanism in those areas.

Recently, however, we can witness the resurrection of shamanic practice “in the new soil of post-Soviet cultural chaos and eclecticism” (Balzer 1996: 11) and after “China’s ‘open-door’ policy” (Shi Kun 1993: 47). Balzer (1996: 12) describes the resurgence of shamanism in this area as follows: “Contrasts within the last ten years in public reception of shamanism are great enough to cause concern among some members of the Sakha intelligentsia about a new wave of ‘charlatans’ riding on the renewed popularity of folk medicine. While in 1986, some families hid shamanic ancestry from their children for political reasons, by 1990, many were bragging about it or even inventing it.” Also, Shi Kun (1993: 47-57) parallels the revival of shamanic practices among ethnic minorities all across the China “from the early 1980s with the veritable revival of shamanic studies.” According to Kun’s analysis, for Chinese scholars who have researched on shamanism such as Fu Yuguang and his colleagues, shamanism is considered to be “the foundation for the emergence of civilization,” “an important body of knowledge accumulated through history,” and should “be preserved and cherished.” It is not hard to anticipate that these

new discourses will not only construct novel images of shamanism but also affect the reality of shamanism in those areas.

As I described in this dissertation, Korean shamanism, like other shamanisms in different contexts that I introduced above, has not only survived many persecutions since the Joseon dynasty, but has also been re-evaluated in positive discourses. I argued that both experiences of persecution and re-evaluation functioned to widen the spectrum of Korean shamanism from “authentic” shamans to phony shamans or “traditional” gut to hotchpotch gut, which I labeled as the plurality of Korean shamanism that was produced by looping effects between images and realities. As a matter of fact, Balzer reports the new trend which is found in the Sakha shamanism today. He (1996: 12) states, “In press accounts and an enthusiastic Sakha rumor mill, shamans and ‘extrasenses’ have often been confounded. Some would-be shamans have gone to Moscow and Kiev for further ‘extra-sense’ training.” Actually, a shaman’s searching for learning shamanic works from other sources is not unique to this area. As some modern Korean young shamans are learning how to perform a ritual from books published by other shamans and scholars, it is also reported that many publications including ethnographic texts on the Lakota rituals and worldview have been used by the Lakota people (R.A. Bucko 1998; S. Owen 2008). It is not hard to anticipate that various shamanic traditions even in the same area will appear, while making the spectrum of shamanism wider and wider.

Regarding these new phenomena, many criticisms might be offered among scholars who insist on the preservation of an archetype or authentic form of their shamanism. However, before we devalue those new phenomena as deviants or unauthentic, we need to rethink what shamanism consists of. As I argued in this dissertation, the relationship between shaman and

client should be considered as an important constituent of the reconfiguration of shamanism. Balzer (1996: 12) states that although most Sakha think that there are only a few “true” shamans today, some Sakha patients do not differentiate the curing abilities of traditional shamans from lesser curing skills which are performed. Also, in an ethnographic writing about Malay shamanism, we can read an episode in which a “traditional” shaman failed to heal a client because of the indifference and ignorance of the client’s family to the traditional ritual procedure (C. Laderman 2001: 42-63). In that writing, contrary to the failure of the “traditional” shaman’s ritual, a female shaman who does not follow the “traditional” way is portrayed as more successful in healing her clients.

As we have seen from the Korean case, many urbanite-clients are indifferent to the “traditional” ritual style. Rather, they are more interested in the practical effectiveness of ritual. Otherwise, some people still express their hostility to shaman and shamanism like the lady in Dani’s neighborhood meeting. As Korean shamanic rituals are reconfigured according to clients’ various needs and attitudes, we can expect that there will be continuous transformations in shamanic rituals following the experience of persecution and the resurrection of shamanisms all over the world. In addition, it is interesting to see how academic discourse will be appropriated by shamanism-practitioners while affecting as well as being affected by the looping effect. Here, I expect that the interpretive framework, looping effects between images and realities, will give a theoretical model for the understanding of reconfigurations of shamanic traditions from all over the world, synchronically as well as diachronically.

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