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of the

British Association for Korean Studies

Volume 1

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SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECENT INVENTION OF TRADITION IN KOREA: AN OVERVIEW

KIM KWANGŎK

Introduction

Most Korean traditional culture was banned and left to decay by the Japanese government during the colonial period. (1910-1945) Those elements which survived, however, were once again denounced as worthless and consequently abandoned by the Korean government under the wave of modernization which swept Third World countries during the 1960s and 1970s. Despite this series of hardships, elements of traditional culture have not completely perished; they have even begun to proliferate in the 1980s. More and more traditional costumes are worn on various occasions by men and women of all generations. Traditional dishes are proudly displayed in the windows of restaurants. Young people prefer a traditional wedding ceremony to the Western style version, and more and more people are becoming interested in folk religion. It is also interesting to see that the traditional dress of *paji-chŏgori* and *turumak*, together with farmers' musical troupes and shamanistic *kut* performances are employed almost

without fail in various activities, be they anti-government protests or festivals organised by college students. We cannot say that all these phenomena are survivals or revivals of "tradition" because there are many new inventions. At any rate, all this presents an interesting contrast to the governmental encouragement of westernisation.

There could be various explanations for these phenomena. Increasing concern for tradition can be seen as a new kind of nationalistic reaction against uncontrollable westernisation, or as an indication that Koreans have become wealthy enough to appreciate non-practical elements of their life. One can also say that Koreans have become interested in their own cultural identity and tradition as they have had more and more opportunities to experience foreign culture through ever-expanding contacts with other countries and peoples.

These explanations are far from generalizations since economic wealth itself does not necessarily lead people to seek tradition, and criticism of westernization cannot simply be identified with the idea of an anti-establishment movement either. More than this, when we examine the situation meticulously we realize that certain traditional elements are monopolized or exclusively manipulated by people of a certain class or category. This leads us to suppose that the invention of tradition, or emphasis on a certain element of tradition, has a specific meaning for a specific category of people in a specific context. In this regard, the meaning of a tradition should be sought by employing a rather different methodology, namely that of setting it more comprehensively within its socio-historical context. The central idea underlying this approach is that the invention of tradition, like works of art or political theory, cannot be interpreted merely in terms of "internal structure." In other words a cultural system cannot be regarded as being unchangeable or unchallengeable. Like all cultural forms which may be treated as texts, or all texts which may be treated as cultural forms, a "thick" rather than a "thin" description is required (as C Geertz (1973) puts it). In order to understand the "meaning" of a tradition, therefore, it is

necessary to relate it to the specific social, political, economic and cultural milieu to which it pertains.

We can observe, for example, that Confucian rites are still performed as they were practised in the 18th century. Can we draw a conclusion, based on this observation, that the rites are performed today in the same manner and with the same meaning and function as they assumed in the 18th century? Or can we say that those who observe the rite today are of the same social background as the people who performed it in the past? Certainly we can imagine that the popularity and significance of the rites has fluctuated according to socio-political situations throughout history. Then we can ask why today a certain category of people tries to revive or emphasize a particular rite. Who are they? An answer to this question may not be found through discovery of a so-called "Korean cultural system." It should, rather, be sought in the context of political manipulation of a cultural tradition by people of different positions involved in a period of socio-cultural change. In this context, regional and class differences about the invention or reproduction of tradition are related to processes of social change. Through the study of the invention of tradition, therefore, we can understand the nature and process of socio-cultural transformation on the one hand and the historical consciousness shaped out of a people's experience of change on the other.

Based on this premise, the present paper attempts an overview of the revival of tradition in various fields and tries to provide some tentative explanations. This is, therefore, not a conclusion but a small beginning to a rather ambitious proposal.

The Invention of Tradition

i. *Confucian circles*

Confucian institutions were the pivot of traditional society as a whole. Contemporary Korea is characterised as a multi-religious society in which Christianity, Buddhism, and other native and foreign religions coexist, but none enjoys a predominant position in terms of the number of believers or the size of social and political influence. Therefore, Confucianism, which was the only official state religion of the Chosŏn dynasty, is now only one of these several religious sects. Most Koreans who cannot identify their religion would say that they are Confucian and this is partly true in the sense that they practise a rite of ancestor worship in the Confucian manner. Apart from ancestor worship, however, they are not aware of other Confucian rituals. Except for those who are proud of being Confucian, there are few proper adherents to Confucianism. Moreover, these adherents maintain their own closed social network and try to hang on to the status which they used to enjoy in the old social system.

From the late 1970s through the 1980s, adherents tried to strengthen their influence. A Confucian renaissance was especially prominent in the Yŏngnam region. The revival of Confucian teaching and rites were attempts made with governmental support to emphasize filial piety and loyalty to the nation.

With Sŏnggyun'gwan in Seoul as their headquarters, Confucians mounted a nationwide re-organisation and invented new traditions which they tried to popularise through various occasions. In each major city throughout the country, a local-level Confucian school, *hyanggyo*, has been maintained with the Confucian association, *Yudohoe*, under its control. The size of a *hyanggyo*'s property had decreased greatly and its activity become minimal in the sense that it was open only twice

a year for the Commemoration Rite to Confucius, his Great Disciplines, and local scholars whose tablets were kept within it. Now the Confucian schools have resumed some of their roles. Schools are used for classes in Chinese characters and special classes in traditional etiquette for young people. Some local level meetings of prominent figures and lectures for local people are held in them.

Yudohoe has broadened its field of activity by organising young people's and women's divisions, which would once have been unthinkable. Recently the association began to select filial sons and virtuous women to receive awards. *Yudohoe* also organise *kwanne*, a kind of initiation ceremony, for boys of 19. If there is anyone who wants to have his or her wedding ceremony performed in the traditional way, the *Yudohoe* also allows free use of a site and may even preside over the ceremony.

The most noticeable change is found in the *Yudohoe*'s very generous application of membership regulations. In the past, "*yurim*" was a highly prestigious social title men aspired to. Membership in the *yurim* was open to those of *yangban* (aristocratic) status who at the same time had been unanimously approved by existing members of the local *yurim* on the basis of personality and scholarship. Only those who were given the title of *yurim* were allowed to wear ceremonial robes and scholarly dress, and these prestigious robes functioned as the symbol of their exclusive privilege to engage in official matters at various levels.

Under successive governments from 1945 to 1960 dominated by Christian and American influence, Confucians lost their power and authority. Even Confucian ideology and ethics were officially criticised as a source of nepotism and even despotism. During the early stage of the late Pak Chŏnghŭi regime, Confucian ideology was harshly attacked as part of the government's ambitious national development project. Confucian ethics were criticised on the grounds that they irrationally bound people with emotional ties based on familism so that rational behaviour and individualism were almost

impossible. All the backwardness of Korean society was attributed to Confucian ideology. From the later 1960s, however, the situation changed. On the one hand the Korean-US relationship shifted as the two governments split over security and defence policies. Pak's regime sought an independent way to meet the defence problem relying on its own resources, but this was not accepted by the US. Tension between President Pak and Korean Christian leaders developed as a consequence of this deterioration in the Korean-US relationship. President Pak became more nationalistic in his handling of political issues; he began to emphasize national identity. Although he was still critical of traditional culture, he supported a national competition of folk culture. At the same time, he found that the Yŏngnam region, his political base, was a stronghold of Confucian tradition. For reasons of political strategy he changed his antagonistic attitude toward Confucian scholars. He began to emphasize filial piety and familism as the ideological base for loyalty to the nation, and he provided financial support for the redecoration and rebuilding of monuments to scholars of the past including Yulgok, T'oegye and Sŏae. The writings of these scholars were translated and studies on their philosophy were encouraged. Their shrines became sacred places where people were instructed in the proper ways to pay homage.

During the 1980s the Confucian circle became more active. The Minister of Home Affairs was elected head of Sŏnggyun'gwan and various new rituals were introduced in an effort to popularise the teachings of Confucius.

Apart from the activities cited above surrounding the *hyanggyo*, there are many other occasions for activities through which Confucians enhance their social prestige. A man's death provides the bereaved family with an opportunity to demonstrate social status and prestige. The number and nature of visitors who pay homage to the dead is an indication of the social prestige which the family enjoys. It is a singular honour if the *yurim* society agrees to conduct the funeral. Therefore, when a prominent local figure dies, all *yurim* members are informed of the death and are expected to pay a

ritual visit to the family. When the *yurim* decide to conduct the funeral ceremony all the ritual details are exempted from government regulations requiring people to simplify their rites. In such cases, the funeral is allowed to take more than three weeks while an ordinary funeral may last only three days. When a man of the Andong Kim clan who was a great national *yurim* leader died in 1987, his family at first decided to conduct a rather simple funeral, but the local *yurim* objected. They insisted that the funeral should be performed in a proper Confucian way by the *yurim*. They suggested at least nine days of mourning. However, the family was not wealthy enough to afford all the expenses. (The family are expected to provide all the participating *yurim* with food and lodging and even meet travel expenses). Usually more than 300 *yurim* members take part in a funeral. The lineage council of the Andong Kims at last conceded to provide financial help to the family and thus the latter were able to accommodate the *yurim* decision. Every detail of the funeral was filmed by the local T.V. station and it was reported on the evening news as "an unusually good example of preservation of our great tradition." Another example was a local *yurim* leader from Kyŏngnam province who died recently. His disciples and fellow Confucians of the region decided to perform an authentic *yurim* funeral and advertised it in national daily newspapers. The mourning period lasted three weeks, spread over two months. On the day of the funeral, it was reported, more than 500 *yurim* and 800 non-Confucian spectators turned up.

Another important ritual gathering is held when a family wants to erect a tablet in memory of a prominent ancestor. A stone is allowed only for a person of considerable scholarship. Therefore, the ceremony must be undertaken by the *yurim* and all members are invited to come. When a local lineage in Andong performed a rite to erect a tablet for their ancestor, a respected scholar-statesman during the late Chosŏn dynasty, more than 700 *yurim* came from all over the country. They were provided rooms and board for three days and each was given 10,000 *wŏn* as a return fare. It was a spectacular scene as 700 old men wearing ceremonial robes and hats lined up in front of the newly-erected monument stone in the fresh air of an autumn

morning. Another gathering was organised when a lineage of the Kŭm clan, which produced the current Minister of Industry, erected a monument for one of their ancestors who died about 200 years ago. About 250 local *yurim* members from the Andong area gathered to attend the ceremony. One representative of the lineage segment proudly told me, "Look at all these prominent local people! We didn't realise that our grandfather was so famous a person." The lineage spent about 10,000,000 *wŏn*. Again, a famous lineage of Usŏng Kims in the Andong area invited *yurim* from all over the country to the opening ceremony of their lineage museum to display valuables and documents relating to an ancestor. About 1,000 *yurim* members took part in the ceremony. All the above events were announced through the mass media and details of the ceremonies were broadcast by the local T.V. station. Thus, ordinary people could gain a vivid picture of what was going on at the ceremony, a picture virtually unknown to them before.

There are 18 local Confucian schools called *sŏwŏn* within the sphere of the Andong *hyanggyo*'s supervision. At present they do not exercise their original role as educational establishments. They do however continue to observe a ceremony to the scholars whose tablets are kept in each. At the annual commemoration ceremony held at each school, the *yurim* members are invited to take part. The number and status of the participants give an indication of the prestige of the school concerned. Therefore, one of the schools invited an ex-president of Seoul National University to be its head while another invited several university professors. Usually each ceremony is held at midnight, but one school held its ceremony again the following morning to allow students of a school established with the old *sŏwŏn*'s funds to participate. Students thus realised the importance of scholarship and gained a special pride from contacting Confucius.

It may be noted that in order to prepare a set of ceremonial robes one must spend 300,000 *wŏn* for a gown and another 200,000 to 300,000 *wŏn* for a hat. Therefore, *top'o* and *kat* are symbols of economic wealth on the one hand and social status on the other. Unless wearing a ceremonial gown, a man is not

allowed to take part in any ceremony. It is also interesting to see that many recently developed local festivals begin with a Confucian rite although they are not related to a Confucian institution at all. At *Tanjongje*, now held annually on the 5 April in Yŏngwŏl—where a king was put to death by his uncle—the leader of the local *yurim* assumes the role of master of ceremonies and all ceremonial processes are observed under the instruction of the *yurim*. It is the same in the case of *Kayaje*, a festival held in Changwŏn to commemorate the fact that Kyŏngnam province was the seat of the ancient tribal federation of Kaya. The festival there begins with a ceremony conducted after the Confucian pattern by the local *yurim*. People now say this is a thousand-year old tradition.

As implied by all the above, being a *yurim* member is a time-consuming job. A proper *yurim* has to spend a great deal of time in various activities that relate to Confucian institutions. At least 80 days a year have to be devoted in this way. At home he spends at least 10 days in a domestic cult for his own ancestors reaching back four generations. He takes part in ancestral ceremonies held at the lineage level for more than 10 days. He also has to be present at funerals of relatives and friends for around 10 days, and to attend regular meetings and special programmes at the *hyanggyo* for at least 20 days. From time to time, he is invited to ceremonies to erect monuments or open lineage museums, and these can last for a further 10 days annually.

In a word, Confucian activities are becoming more and more widespread among the younger generations. In the everyday life of Koreans, the general tendency towards reviving traditional culture is echoed by a proliferation of Confucian ceremonies. Here it is interesting to note that Confucian tradition is especially strong in the Yŏngnam area (Kyŏngsang province to the East of the central mountains). This is in sharp contrast to the Honam region (Chŏlla province to the West of the central mountains) where peasant movements and new folk religions have proliferated. The Confucian tradition is supported by the government in an effort to develop the idea of loyalty to the nation on the one hand and discipline of its

people on the other. It is backed up by some successful stories of adopting Confucian criticism by modernisation theorists. Korea, Japan and Taiwan, all societies strongly influenced by Confucianism, have achieved remarkable economic growth during the last two decades. Bearing in mind its low popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, the economic advances made in each country cannot be attributed in whole to the Confucian tradition. Yet it is true that some businessmen have achieved great success by manipulating a social network based on Confucian ideology. They have thereby demonstrated one important facet of Confucianism. Therefore, the government and students of business administration today attempt a positive interpretation of Confucianism. At the same time, reciprocity is established between the Confucian tradition and social order. Confucian activities are supported by the government, and the *yurim* in turn support the government. In this regard, the revival of tradition in Confucian circles is viewed in the context of their support for the establishment. And thus, through participation in the revival of Confucian tradition, people are able to recall their own prestige and their glorious past.

ii. *New religious movements*

While the Confucian tradition is booming in Kyŏngsang provinces it is interesting to see that new religious movements flourish further west in the Honam region. A remarkable increase in various sects can be noted. They are spreading throughout the whole country but are especially strong in the southwestern Chŏlla provinces. The forms of these new religions vary but they are based on more or less the same world view and belief system. The most typical example is *Chŭngsan'gyo*.

Chŭngsan'gyo grew out of *Tonghak*, the so-called "Eastern Learning" of the 1890s, and once took a leading role among the new religions. In contrast to other religious sects, *Chŭngsan'gyo* is based on a belief system which views the present as a transitional stage from the Former Order

(*Sŏnch'ŏn*) to an After Order (*Huch'ŏn*) pre-ordained by God. Believers hold that the present is a preliminary phase prior to a new world. All the difficulties, contradictions and hardships including social injustice, immorality, exploitation, violence, and disorderliness are necessary conditions of the present phase. Everything in heaven and on earth was planned by God, within a concept called *ch'ŏnji kongsa*. Although the present unsatisfactory situation is normal in that it was prearranged to create the new world, believers are expected to take part positively in the fight to eliminate present evil elements in order to achieve the new order. Therefore, fight is necessary: here revolutionary ideas come to the fore. Followers of *Chŭngsan'gyo* are taught to try to resist the present and achieve revolution in their own ways. They learn special spells and magical formulae to exorcise evil spirits or to cure sickness. There are various sects distinguished by differing strategies that aim to realise their leader's teaching. Some sects reject worldly life and go deep into the mountains where they live in isolation. Others have moved to remote agricultural areas and live in closed communities.

New religions are not well organised and most believers are poor peasants in agriculture or low-waged labourers in urban sectors. They do not, therefore, pose a serious threat to the established social order. However, it should be pointed out that they provide the oppressed and exploited, and those intellectuals sympathetic towards the oppressed, with a revolutionary ideology.

It is no coincidence that the so-called *minjung* movement (*minjung undong*) is strong where new religions proliferate. Areas with a strong tradition of peasant movements, including co-operative ventures and anti-government protests, often overlap with regions that support new religions. While the tradition-oriented Confucians in the southeast are from well-off backgrounds, it is the poor peasants who are the core of the new movements in the southwest. Their strong orientation to traditional culture corresponds to the enthusiasm of students and young intellectuals toward the *minjung* movement. These people emphasize tradition as a symbol of an anti-

establishment and sometimes anti-government movement. Their rituals may be regarded as a kind of native movement in the sense that they use a strictly native language, wear traditional costume and eat traditional food. Their behaviour should be understood in the context of social and economic history. Unlike Kyŏngsang in the southeast, Honam in the southwest was exploited by absentee landlords to the extent that peasants were unable to improve their economic status. Consequently, few of them had access to political power or opportunities for upward social mobility. They came to feel a sense of relative deprivation. They saw their poor economic condition as a result of the government's dependence upon foreign countries, especially Japan and America. This is quite understandable when we consider that agricultural products are relatively low priced whilst imported factory goods are expensive. Pressure from the United States on the Korean government to import American agricultural products has also damaged local farms. Antagonism toward Japan and America developed into anti-government sentiments because of the belief that the present regime is a kind of American puppet. As a token of their protest, they incline towards more and more nationalistic or chauvinistic attitudes.

iii. *Shamanistic movements*

Shamanism has recently become popular among college students and young intellectuals, though they do not believe in it as a religion. Folklorists and students of traditional and contemporary dancing, musicologists, and many other dilettantes have organised societies to study *kut*, Shaman rituals. Such societies hold regular meetings where film shows and introductory lectures on various shaman genres are given to the general public. From time to time study groups are organized with hundreds of participants who visit selected places throughout the country where *kut* are actually performed. In addition to these scholarly investigation, newspapers and television stations also publicise some extraordinary largescale *kut*. Books and lectures about

shamanism are now very popular and some shamans are treated as cultural heroes. It is also interesting to see that many highly-educated persons learn shaman rites as disciples or apprentices to famous shamans.

Shamanistic performances are largely divided into two categories. One is the so-called traditional (and thus ordinary) *kut* which has a religious purpose in the domestic sphere. The other is *kut* designed and performed for the general public as a kind of largescale artistic performance. Some famous shamans, like Kim Kŭmhwa and U Okchu, are frequently invited to largescale communal *kut* advertised through newspapers. These same shamans also give "special" performances on stage in places such as the Hoam Art Hall, Sejong Cultural Centre, or the National Theatre where people buy tickets and appreciate the performance just as they would a concert by a world-famous musician. Usually, performances are accompanied by an interpretive lecture by a university scholar and followed by comments from a newspaper columnist—the latter typically saying that the performances were very special in that they revealed genuine traditional cultural elements which cannot be easily found elsewhere. Shamans were once even invited by a government-subsidised cultural foundation to perform a *kut* to expel evil elements and induce fertility at a Christmas party for foreign diplomats in Seoul. A shaman's rites are in this regard no longer merely a religious occasion but rather a festive entertainment for common people.

Famous shamans can be paid 5,000,000 *wŏn* for a single performance. Their dress has consequently become more and more gaudy and their instruments and decorations more and more elaborate. This is in sharp contrast to shamans in rural areas, who usually wear ordinary clothes and play simple instruments. Some shamans rationalise their new equipment and decoration by insisting that these are prepared according to authentic guidance from their teachers so each *kut* concerned is properly performed. But there is no perfectly-written record to tell us what is genuine. All details depend upon a shaman's memory. No one, however, dares to raise

questions about a ritual dress made of Italian silk or shoes made of German corduroy.

Participants in shamanistic performances are also divided into several categories. Needless to say, there are religiously-orientated people who actually invite a shaman and cover all expenses for a *kut*. These are mostly peasants of low education. City dwellers and intellectuals are divided into two types in their attitudes. One group are interested in shamanism because they believe it is the basic culture of Koreans. In order to unravel the prototype of Korean culture, or to interpret the nature of Korean culture, they collect various *kut* and analyse the cultural content underlying each. A second group are inclined to understand shamanism from its political perspective. They maintain that throughout history shamanism has been a cultural and ideological device allowing the oppressed to manipulate their political responses to the dominant sector of society. This group emphasise that only shamanism has been a purely Korean religion from the beginning of history. They also maintain that shamanism has suffered at the hands of other religions as Koreans have suffered at the hands of foreign powers throughout history. Concern for shamanism is thus a central element among those interested in *minjung* culture, the popular movement which insists that true culture is the culture of the oppressed, which should replace any culture enjoyed by the dominant sector of society. Some young scholars insist that shamanism should be allowed a part in state ceremonies, as a major religion like Christianity or Buddhism, and may even insist that top place must go to shamanism because it is the real Korean religion. Therefore, college students and workers, together with those intellectuals engaged in the *minjung* movement, perceive shamanism as an ideological source for their anti-establishment struggle and a symbolic instrument with which to express protest against foreign elements in the political, social and cultural spheres of their life.

This is clearly exemplified by recently-established patterns of student rallying. Student leaders or candidates for the presidency of a university council should wear a traditional

coat, *turumak*, and their assistants or deputies traditional white clothes, *paji* and *chŏgori*. They all wear headbands in one of the five cardinal colours—white, blue, red, black or yellow. With a huge banner flanked by smaller banners in the five colours leading, a farmer's percussion troupe follows. The main banner is the so-called farmer's banner saying that farming is the "basis of the world", "*minjung* is the basis of the world", "democracy is the basis of the world", and so on. All other participants march shoulder to shoulder singing recent underground songs. The procession goes around the main campus sites and at some spots stops to perform small shaman rites to suppress evil spirits. These rites are accompanied by various festive activities known as *kut p'an*.

When the rally returns to the starting point, usually the central plaza of the campus, a central shaman rite is performed. In front of an altar with a pig's head, steamed rice-cakes and rice-wine, the master of ceremonies, usually the president of the student council, offers wine to the protective god. The identity of the gods varies according to context. Usually it is the spirit of a fellow student who died by accident while fighting riot police, who was killed by police torture, or who committed suicide in protest against the government. Shaman rites are performed in order to pacify these heroic but unhappy spirits. Students pray for the help of the spirits in support of their fight for democracy, social justice, and the liberation of the oppressed. Another rite is performed to expel the evil ghosts of dictatorship, corruption, torture and anti-nationalism, ghosts who want to sell their nation to foreign powers. This shamanistic performance is the highlight of the whole event. After a series of fierce dances and energetic prayers, students sing a series of protest songs with much shouting. Then the student representatives come forward one by one and burn paper on which they have written their desires. After rice-wine and rice-cakes are distributed to all the participants, they rush to the front gate of the campus and fight riot police. The police inevitably outnumber them in terms of discipline, quality of equipment and manpower. The police shoot innumerable tear gas canisters and the students throw stones and molotov cocktails. After several retreats and advances, the students

become exhausted, run out of stones and are dispersed by the ever-increasing police and tear gas. Within an hour, the campus becomes a silent and peaceful world filled with tear gas and pieces of bricks, coughing professors and grumbling against the police by uninvolved students.

This is an unremarkable scene, observed almost every day since 1980 in Korean universities. Student riots ruthlessly crushed by the police are not new, but the ritualised process on the part of students whereby shaman performance has become an indispensable part in a newly-established tradition. This new tradition is now imported to factory workers who organise protests in support of labour disputes. It stands in sharp contrast to the government's concept of cultural development. The government emphasizes a "Korea in the World" policy, which means that Korea should achieve the status of a first class country in terms of its quality of cultural development. When the government talks of this "first class level", however, it means that Korea should prove her ability to accommodate Western culture as in Europe, America and Japan. The government, therefore, approvingly supports the import of new Western arts and Western life styles. There are many new first class hotels with Western names and luxurious shopping centres which sell high quality imported goods. They continuously open stage shows to introduce the newest French, Italian and American fashions, and American Nights, French Nights and Spaghetti Festivals all year round. American dancing troupes, American musicians and American rock singers are enthusiastically invited, yet Korean traditional paintings were excluded at the World Exhibition of Fine Art which celebrated the 1988 Seoul Olympiad. The government appears to support the national Korean traditional dance team but it does so only when the team organises a largescale mass display like that for the opening ceremony of the 1986 Asian Games. Performances of traditional singers and dancers are supported mainly by private foundations and intellectuals who are interested in traditional arts.

The adoption of shaman performances by student protest movements can be interpreted as a symbol of protest against

the government cultural policy. This protest has a double implication. On the one hand it implies popular rejection of the foreign cultural influence stimulated by government policy, and on the other it is an anti-government movement. This does not necessarily mean that Koreans do not accept foreign culture. On the contrary, they are intoxicated by the American version of Western culture. Students are eager to learn English and to go abroad—especially to America—to further their studies. American fast food, American pop songs and an American pattern of leisure are as popular as jeans and Coca Cola in everyday life. However, college students and young intellectuals are beginning to feel that the present government is too much pro-American. They argue that the dictatorial and unlawful military regimes of Pak Chŏnghŭi and Chŏn Tuhwan managed to survive severe protest and challenge from the people because they were supported by American power. Based on this antagonism, students have begun to criticize America. They believe she has provided strong support to the military regimes. Therefore, incorporating a traditional cultural element in their rallies symbolizes antagonism against America while shaman performances symbolise challenge to the central government. Government and the establishment are seen as equal and are symbolised by the great tradition while the little tradition symbolises the marginal and exploited.

This is also reflected in the students' use of colours. In the Sino-Korean colour symbolism, red is the symbol of the south, warmth, blood, strength, life, happiness and joy. White means the west, cleanliness, land of purity, world of the soul, death, sacredness. Black means north, death, dirt, greed. Blue means east, youth, strength, challenge, manhood. yellow is the symbol of the centre of the universe, of greed, of sexual desire. Wearing white traditional garments symbolizes innocent Korean peasants, while black banners mean death to the greedy foreign invader. A yellow banner means the lustful government while a red banner symbolizes the mixture of blood of the fighters and blood of the exploited. Therefore, red, white and black are the three main colours used in protest movements.

iv. *Folk festivals*

Many forms of dances, songs, band music and festivals have been rediscovered since the 1960s. The government has held an annual folk festival competition since 1959 in which teams representing each province take part. At first, these were organised to discover hitherto unknown local genres and thus stimulate people to develop their traditional culture at the regional level. However, the competition contributed to shaping a new pattern of tradition. Since the first prize always went to a team which organised a largescale performance with short movements in a well-disciplined manner, people began to produce massive, military-band forms of dancing and musical performances in their effort to win. Many scholars criticized the competition for encouraging people to invent their own traditions while leading ignorant people to believe that such forms were genuine. As the government drove people to rapid economic development through a change in the modes of thought during the 1970s, anything which expressed an energetic, progressive, aggressive, or challenging attitude was highly praised. Therefore, even in the field of traditional folk festivals, any programme creating a similar impression would get high marks. As a result, much folk art including mask dances, mask plays, and farmer's music and dance lost its original form and structure. Yet, still today, people firmly believe that the present forms are the genuine traditional ones.

Among scholars, the debate on originality is now very sharp. For example, in the Andong area, fierce debates have been going on among professors and amateur researchers about what the original forms of the Hahoe mask play, *Nottari palpki* (crossing the bridge), and *Ch'ajŏn nori* (mob fighting using a mock chariot) are. These plays all won first prize at various national folk festivals and are thus now taken as symbols of popular culture in the Andong area.

Hahoe is a famous *yangban* (aristocratic) village dominated by a lineage of the Yu clan. It produced many prominent scholars and high-ranking officials during the

Chosŏn dynasty. The mask dance was played following communal rituals for the tutelary god of the village. Both dance and ritual were performed exclusively by the servants and tenants of the Yus. All expenses were covered by the Yus although they did not participate in any of the events. The mask dance was played by servants with dialogues that ridiculed and criticized aristocrats, scholars and Buddhist monks. The festival lasted three days, during which time the Yus kept aloof, as though they did not exist at all. From an anthropological perspective it was a kind of liminal period according to Victor Turner, or a marginal state according to Arnold van Gennep, in that ordinary social order and roles were not recognised.

The Hahoe mask dance has not been performed since 1928. Under Japanese colonial rule, Korean traditional festivals were banned and many of the *yangban* families left their homes, with their servants. At the same time, the Yus could not afford any performance due to their poor economic condition. In the 1970s, a folklorist found a man who had played in the last mask dance. He persuaded him, a servant, to reveal his class background and tell him about the mask dance. The professor wrote down what the old man described and completed the dialogue on the basis of this old man's memory. He organised a study group for the Hahoe mask dance, instructed by the old man, and the group was awarded first prize at the national folk festival. Since then, the society has developed into a large organisation with many members. They have travelled to various places to perform the now-famous Hahoe mask dance.

However, some scholars raised objections. They did not trust the old man's memory on the grounds that he was only 16 when he participated in the mask dance for the first and last time. Moreover, his memory was not good enough to recall exactly what was going on 50 years before. It was suggested that the scenario of the mask dance was actually made by the professor himself. He had collected several versions of the scenario from similar mask dances found in other places and he put the most plausible dialogue to the old man. Since the old

man was not confident, he had to consent to the professor's guesswork. Since there was no written record, the version which the professor made was accepted as the original. It became the tradition. The professor borrowed masks from the National Museum where they were preserved, and got local villagers to make suitable imitations.

In 1988, the dance was performed in Hahoe village on the 15th of the 1st lunar month. It was advertised through newspapers and local television, and was played by the preservation society with financial support from the county government of Andong. Many tourists and foreigners participated together with student of folk culture and the *minjung* movement. Some mask dancing teams from universities performed their dances as a token of friendship. It was performed in a specially prepared plaza in the village and organised by a man of the Yu family who once served as the director of the local institute of culture and information in Andong. Curiously enough, none of the Yus of Hahoe turned up to the festival. Only the village head paid a short visit, but this was because the head of the county government came.

By remaining aloof from the event the Yus intended to express their status and past prestige. They used to complain that the village, though a famous *yangban* place, had come to be recognised as a village whose customs were those of servants on the lowest step of the social ladder. As the mask dance acquired a label as traditional culture they were, nonetheless, proud of the fact that it originated from their village. The performance gave the Yus an opportunity to appreciate their glorious past, and they became proud of the fact that more and more people visited and viewed Hahoe as a source of traditional Korean culture.

The representatives of the society for mask dance still insist that their play is performed strictly according to the original scenario. "We did not alter one word of the scenario. We tried our best to keep the original form and contents." But others have made the point that the most important aspect of the mask dance is that the dialogue should be allowed its own

flexibility in order to be satirical and to criticise and ridicule the contemporary social, political and cultural scene. There can therefore be no original in the sense that the dialogue must change according to the context and situation in which it is performed today. Analysis of the words reveals that the present dialogues reflect the early 20th century, although the mask dance itself is said to have been transmitted from over 500 years ago.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the trend towards adopting and reshaping traditional elements in the field of religion and folk festivals. There are varying interpretations of these phenomena. They might result from a self-protective nationalistic reaction to the ever-increasing influence of foreign culture, or from people's struggle to find their own cultural identity in the face of foreign imports. The search for cultural traditions or the invention of traditional culture is also seen as a consequence of economic growth. That is to say that the material conditions of Koreans are now sufficiently advanced to allow appreciation of cultural life. All these interpretations are partly true but do not give enough explanation. We can find a more proper answer when we see cultural movements from a different perspective as a form of political reaction to a specific social, political and cultural situation. At the same time, we must admit that not all parts of society seek out the same meanings for tradition although they appear to accept the same nominal forms. As we have seen, tradition as perceived by Confucian circles is different from that emphasized by new religions and the cultured movements of young intellectuals both in terms of meaning and background. The former emphasise the old order and try to invent new traditions in order to strengthen their ideological inclination toward the establishment, while the latter try to emphasize the old—as traditional cultural elements—to symbolize their protest against that same establishment. The meaning of a tradition

clearly varies according to the political situation and contemporary policy. The interpretation of culture is therefore an aspect of political manipulation. In the study of Korean culture the political context should be considered.

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MINJUNG THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

WERNER SASSE

The purpose of this paper is to attempt a first introduction to what looks to me like the most interesting of recent cultural developments in the Republic of Korea. I want to talk about the emergence of a new cultural movement which I will call the *Minjung* Cultural Movement. This movement is not clearly defined in the sense of having a programme based on basic concepts, statements of purpose, declarations on the means of policy implementation, or the like. Programmes, statements and declarations of this nature are somewhat vague and cover specific sub-areas within the movement, but are not central to it. I do not know whether this is due to the fact that those participating do not have a sense of its global aspects, or whether these elements merely exist in the mind of someone—myself—looking from the cultural distance of Europe. In any case, it is not always easy to decide whether or not a certain scholar or artist should be considered to belong to this movement, and it is even difficult to state exactly when the movement began or who actually started it.

All that can safely be said is that two Korean words have recently acquired additional connotations, thus becoming the underlying concepts for an overall reframing of cultural values. They play today a decisive role in discussions on culture in general, and more precisely on current trends in theology and

literature, as well as academic work in historical, political and social science disciplines in Korea.

The two words, *minjung* and *han* roughly translate as the masses (populace, people) and grudge (grievance, regret, resentment, spite, rancour or unsatisfied desire). The two words can, if applied in a certain connotation, turn apparently divergent and sometimes seemingly chaotic cultural phenomena into a rather more clear perspective that provides a reference point for what we observe in Korea today and an indication of how it all came about.

The new connotations of *minjung* and *han* are so closely related to Korean cultural history and the self-awareness of the Korean people that practically all the scholars and artists involved who express themselves in a Western language, as well as Western translators who render Korean texts in translation, have given up the search for an appropriate equivalent and have introduced the two words into world culture by simply romanizing the Korean originals. And in certain subject areas these words may be said already to have been accepted into English and German vocabulary.

At least in theology, the two words are no longer used only when describing things Korean, but are introduced into rather more general discussions in which they are more globally valid.

Minjung used to be a fairly harmless word with no political overtones and, even in dictionaries published recently both in the Republic of Korea and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, there is no hint that this word might mean anything but an unspecified ordinary people, the folk of folk art (*minjung yesul*), the popular in popular amusement (*minjung orak*), or other quite apolitical combinations. The intellectual elite, of course, have always tried to have as little as possible to do with anything *minjung*, but their resentment has been directed more towards the crudeness and coarseness inherent in the word, very much in the way a bourgeois intellectual like myself would *not* watch a game of soccer or sit around the boxing ring on Saturday nights.

Before we continue to discuss the change in meaning of this word or the addition of more connotations, we must look at *han* in a similar way. The basic meaning of *han* is the kind of feeling one develops based on an unfulfilled wish or longing. It is the rather vague feeling such as that which presses on the breast when the object of some ardent desire is known to be out of reach. One does not quite understand or accept why this feeling came to exist and one does not know how to get rid of it.

Both terms were once uncommon, and while frequency does not cover the most important aspects of a word, it may be interesting to note that *minjung* was until recently rather more commonly used than *han*. The 1956 frequency count of Korean language usage lists *minjung* in position 1329 (out of 56069) with 179 occurrences, and *han* in position 6756 with 23 occurrences. But what were once inconspicuous words have today become something of a program by which a philosophy or a *Weltanschauung* is defined, albeit if rather loosely. And this change has taken place only in the last 15 to 20 years. It may be stressed that the development has been confined to the Republic of Korea, for the Democratic Peoples Republic has taken no part. I am not sure where to pinpoint the beginning of the development, but the background is obviously the intellectual and cultural climate that has prevailed in the Republic of Korea since 1970. Generally speaking, it has to do with a growing self-awareness and self-respect on the part of Koreans coupled to the psychological recovery from Japanese occupation, the destructive and divisive Korean war and the almost absolute dependence on help from outside which followed the war. During the 1970s the Korean people under Pak Chŏnghŭi's leadership created the economic "miracle of the *Han*" (the Sino-Korean character here is not the *han* of grudge, but the first syllable of today's name for the Republic of Korea), and the Republic of Korea made the well known great leap forward from an economically underdeveloped nation to the export-led nation of today.

Growing self-respect and pride made Koreans turn away from unquestioned admiration for and imitation of Western culture towards a search for Korean identity, a trend supported

by the government as well as by academic and literary circles, but a trend which was not confined to the élite. Pride in a long history and an indigenous cultural tradition kept alive under suppression by outside forces and strong cultural transmission from China over more than 1500 years was given back to every Korean.

The economic miracle and the search for "real Korean" culture was one side of Pak's time; growing political oppression was another, and here we see the second root of the *Minjung* Cultural Movement, because the beginnings were closely related to anti-Pak political movements. Koreans called for more democratic institutions and greater participation in political power, which in turn was one result of growing individual self-respect. Having created a "new Korea" they wanted to exert more influence on the country's future development. However, the government was not willing to grant their wish and instead tightened oppression.

A strong foothold among these opposition forces (for reasons I will not discuss here) was within the church, and consequently the *Minjung* Cultural Movement still seems at its strongest when connected to Christianity. One can see an apparent contradiction between this foreign element and the rediscovery of "Koreanness" among the people. But we will later see in what sense the Christian faith in *Minjung* Theology became based on Korean tradition and Korean historical experience as much as on universal aspects of Christianity, and this in the final analysis does not lead to a contradiction.

Alongside growing Korean self-awareness, tightening political oppression, and the Koreanized Christian tradition, it is a new approach to historiography which forms a pillar in the *Minjung* Cultural Movement. Namely this is an emphasis on the socio-economical development of culture. History in the 1970s began to turn away from "nation" history, from dynastic history, from history of the upper class culture, to the history of the people, their life and cultural development. This was again a trend imported from the academic world outside Korea, but the result was to turn to specifically Korean traits in the

country's tradition rather than to imported and reshaped Chinese influences.

In a way, all the aspects I have mentioned as being basic to the *Minjung* Cultural Movement have to do with the fact that Korea rose from being a small and insignificant arena of world power play (where Korea was the victim, but where the powers had actual aims beyond Korea) to a nation playing its own role in the world theatre. In all aspects, outside influence is undeniable, and Korea has thus proved itself to have joined 20th century world culture, a nation subject to worldwide trends. On the other hand, these very trends were not only imitated but were adapted to the needs of Korea. Stress thus shifted from Korea becoming part of world culture to Korean culture becoming part of world culture.

Let me turn to *Minjung* Theology. In the 1960s modern theological trends, what we may call "Third World Theologies", "Liberation Theologies", "Progressive Theologies", and so on—all non-White-Caucasian, non-bourgeois, non-elite theologies—were introduced into Korean Christian circles, initiating a discussion between progressives and conservatives. At the same time, the works of Tillich, Bonhoeffer, Bultmann, Gollwitzer and others started to influence Korean theological thinking. In the late 1960s, industrial mission groups like the Urban Industrial Mission started to evangelize among the growing industrial labourer population. They got involved in social conflicts which had risen with rapid industrialisation and came under increasing political pressure.

Under the various "Presidential Emergency Measures" of the 1970s, these mission groups and their supporters in the academic world of theology were driven by their solidarity with the lowest strata of society towards political opposition, simply as they exerted their rights as citizens and lent helping hands as Christians. Many were jailed, some were tortured, and most leaders were kept in prison under fabricated pretexts. There is no doubt that they were deprived of their rights as guaranteed by written law. Anyone criticizing the government, anyone demanding freedom of speech, a fair trial or any other human

rights was taken for a communist and subjected to the severest punishment.

One result was that Christian academics, who mostly came from middle or upper class backgrounds, saw themselves as outcasts in literally direct contact with other outcast groups—the very poor, the unemployed, criminals, prostitutes, the uneducated, and so on. And while seeking comfort from the bible they discovered that those living in misery rather than the intellectual and political elite were the kind of people with whom Jesus had associated—not the righteous but the sinners.

The Gospel of Mark especially seems to stress this aspect, focussing on *ochlos*, the masses, the crowd, rather than *laos*, folk. *Ochlos* can indeed be interpreted as referring to a socio-historical class, which should be part of *laos* as a national and religious group, but can only be said to be so in theory, because the *ochlos* have no means of exerting the rights they derive from being members of the *laos*.

The interpretation of Mark closely fitted the situation of the Korean Christian group: although they were members of society in the supposedly democratic south of Korea, as Christians in opposition to the government they had no way of exerting the human rights to which they were entitled by that nation's law. And, as political outlaws, they suddenly discovered that in the eyes of the political elite they belonged to the same category as others who, for lack of education or low class background, had not been able to participate in the fast development of society. In this situation *ochlos*, the underprivileged, nameless and miserable, became associated with *minjung*. The suffering of Jesus Christ became associated with *han*. Suddenly the suffering of Jesus was no longer something which had happened in a faraway country almost 2000 years ago, but an everyday experience for 20th century Korean Christians. It was here that the modern awareness of being a Korean could be combined with being part of a non-Korean religious tradition without any contradiction.

Ochlos—*minjung*—was now defined as those who suffer, those who have *han*, and *Minjung* Theology was born: a new understanding of what it meant to be a Christian, and a new understanding of what it meant to be a Korean in the second half of the 20th century.

Han, originally a psychological term denoting the feeling of an individual's experience, rose to be the central concept of this new theology. It gained new, broader connotations. Originally just indignation, righteous indignation, or the feeling of unresolved resentment against unjustifiable suffering of an individual, *han* began to be seen as the collective feeling of every Korean evoked through a history of suppression by outside forces and the continuing strong foreign influence supported by the political rulers. For example, in Confucian society the role of a woman was officially one of insignificance, therefore to be a woman meant remaining uneducated and under pressure to produce male offspring. By itself this gave women a *han*-dominated life. Similarly, to be a member of a certain lower class with no possibility for upward mobility gave a person a *han*-dominated existence. The majority of Koreans through history lived in a state of *han*, and *han* thus became a socio-psychological term denoting a collective feeling—a feeling seen as basic to every non-ruling-class Korean. A psycho-political aspect was added, that caused by the memory of the repression of national independence by Japanese imperialism. In this way *han* was widened in scope to become a term designating indignation, anger, and frustration first an individual level, second on the level of subgroups of Korean society, and third even on a national level.

It must be added that from the very beginning *han* was normally seen to be basically passive: only in very extreme situations would its endurance turn to action and revolution.

Han as a collective feeling of the Korean people, the *minjung*, was again widened in scope to become an expression for a global experience. Everywhere in the world, and most especially in modern imperialist times and in the era of world-wide communication, people were seen to be in a similar situation. Cultures were suppressed, and situations existed where some structural injustice made life miserable for major

groups. While *han* may not apply to all the *minjung* of all nations, just as the experience of suffering can be seen as a global Christian experience, so there are global aspects to the *minjung* experience. It is no wonder that *Minjung* Theology is no longer an ideology confined to Korea, but has started to influence theological discussions across all Asia and beyond. At the moment, theologians like Byung-Mu Ahn [An Pyŏngmu] and Ha-Eun Chung [Chŏng Haŭn] are challenging, for instance, traditional German theological thinking, and the dialogue has been taken up seriously in Europe. Certainly, in no other cultural field I know of can such a strong influence from any Korean movement be seen, though one cannot now speak of one-way traffic.

Let me now turn to historiography. There is no influence of *Minjung* historiography on the academic world outside Korea. But historiography as part of the *Minjung* Cultural Movement is interesting in another respect. Whereas *Minjung* Theology is closely connected to Korean opposition groups, *minjung* as a basic element for viewing history is widely accepted even in contemporary pro-government circles. The reason probably lies in the fact that *minjung* historiography centres on decidedly Korean elements in Korean history, as befits the growing pride in being a Korean, but in contemplating the past it does not touch on contemporary political problems.

The parallel growth of *Minjung* Theology in anti-government quarters and of *minjung* historiography without these political overtones prompts me to consider the seemingly unconnected developments as part of a trend in contemporary Korean culture as a whole, and therefore I call it the *Minjung* Cultural Movement. Not all currents in this movement can be seen in a positive light by the eyes of the spectator from Europe, for some extreme positions have a distinctly chauvinist aura to them. However, I wish to consider present historical needs and I therefore do not want to dwell on the few negative aspects of which I am aware.

As an example of the non-political and historiographical focus on *minjung* I will take Ki-Baik Lee's [Yi Kibaek] *A New*

History of Korea, because it is readily available as a standard textbook not only in Korea but in virtually all Korean Studies programmes worldwide. What is interesting is the book's development. In 1961 a first version appeared in which the author attempted to give a general view of Korean history combining, as was the fashion of the time, the development of society with the succession of dynasties. This, then, was just as traditional historiography had done. Later, Lee judged his attempt to shift focus to the development of society unsuccessful. In a second version, published in 1967, the focus lay moved to changes in power structure, and changes in the nature of leadership groups and their influence on society. Ten years later yet another version appeared, "more neatly systemizing those elements of Korean history that earlier had fit uneasily into the model" and "so constructed as to channel the flow of Korean history into a coherent, directed current" (the quotations come from the introduction to the translation by Edward W. Wagner and Edward J. Shultz (Seoul, Ilchogak, 1984)). In this third version a confession was added as a concluding chapter, which is unfortunately left out of the English translation. In it, under the heading "The Ruling Elite and the Course of Korean History", the author states his views on Korean history explicitly. The word *minjung* is introduced and subsequently figures prominently. Its usage is not quite the same as in theology, and in a more moderate way Lee does not make outlaws out of the majority of Koreans. What underlies both usages, however, is the view that the *minjung* are not the objects of a history supposedly made by the ruling elite, but rather the subject. This shift is important and changes the perspective. If stress is laid on the ruling elite, the beginning of Korean history for instance shows a rather primitive stage, where no clear ruling class has been established, but with *minjung* as the subject this stage of *primus inter pares* rule is far from primitive. In the first interpretation, the occasional weakness of authority in Korea has a negative ring but with *minjung* as the subject this early era shows a greater possibility for the *minjung* to articulate their will. The struggles in the last century no longer belong to a troubled dark age of stagnation, but are a sign of strong

expression of the *minjung* fight for freedom. In the new perspective Korea is no longer a country with a weak power structure unable to make its way out of backwardness. Rather, Korean history starts with a sort of egalitarian paradise from which it is driven into a stage of *han* (if I use the theological interpretation) through the ready acceptance by the ruling elite of foreign influence. Putting up a brave and constant fight over centuries however, the subject of Korean history, the *minjung*, widened their influence until modern times. Now, in democratic times, or at least when democracy is the goal, the *minjung* enter their final struggle to achieve participation in power. As in theology, *minjung* as a core concept gives Korean history a coherent and directed current.

Turning to the world of literature, it will come as no surprise that in both creative writing and literary criticism the concept of *minjung* culture has stimulated a great many young Koreans. We should remember that Korean culture is a letter-loving culture, and that what happens in literature concerns wider circles than those in our culture. Growing self-awareness and self-respect coupled to solidarity with lower-class people's struggles for survival is indeed well reflected in novels and poems from the 1970s onwards. Literary criticism, in contrast, continued to centre on the more than 60-year old dispute on art-for-art's-sake versus realism, but added a search for Korean literature which was less influenced by foreign, mainly Western, trends.

The recent Korean situation in which conflicts were created by rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, trauma resulted from being a divided nation with a shared dream of unification, interpretations were sought of history meaningful for the second half of the 20th century (under strong cultural pressure from the West), and an examination was made as to how individuals could stand in this dramatically changing world—all these subjects have led to a very lively literature. Formally, the elements of satire and simple language have connected recent works with long-standing traditions of Korean folk culture. *P'ansori*, a kind of bardic tradition, and mask dance drama have seen revivals, interestingly both in

government-sponsored and academic—sometimes sterile—forms, and in popular literature. In the performing arts, spontaneity, adaptation to often quite short-lived topics of the day, direct contact with the audience through dialogue and dance, and the use of traditional motifs as disguise for criticism of the current situation have created a new oral literature both contemporary and in line with tradition. This is certainly so, though one can also observe an astonishing openness towards prejudice and a total defiance of political pressure. The combination of poetic and dramatic, and also the visual arts themselves have become a programme fostered in progressive circles. In written literature too, elements of folk culture in both subject and form have led to what has been called *minjung* literature.

A plea may be needed at this point for using this term *minjung* literature rather than "popular" literature, the latter being a translation which has sometimes been used but which is simply misleading to the English-speaking reader. The problem becomes clear in connection with the latest development in literature. From the late 1970s, Third-World literature has become an issue in Korea and, whereas modern literature had until then been dominated by the reception of and adaptation to Western literature (directly or, during the occupation, by way of Japan), a new understanding arose. There were many who moved away from prejudices adopted from the West about the primitive nature of Third-World literature, and who saw common ground between Korea and the Third-World in the experience of suffering during colonial times and the post-colonial struggle for autogenous culture and economic survival.

In light of what I have said above about the concept of *minjung* in theology and in historiography, it will come as no surprise that this struggle for indigenous culture and economic survival, reflected in a realistic and caring literature, should be labelled *Minjung* Literature. Consider the translation of the following titles of articles and books: "The Third World and *Minjung* Literature", "Literature of the *Minjung* Age". They have been translated as "The Third World and Popular Literature" or

"Literature of the Popular Age." If *minjung* is substituted, I think that at least in connection with Korean literature, and probably even beyond these limits just as in theology, the term *minjung* will become part of the English and German lexicon to offer the extensive connotations beyond those of "popular".

Turning to the subject of the history of literature, one example may suffice to show that here again the concept of *minjung* can lead to new interpretations which deserve to stand side-by-side with traditional ones. One of the most famous traditional stories, popular in several old versions and innumerable new ones including painting and film, is *Ch'unhyangga* (The Story of Spring Fragrance). It is available in several translations in Western languages.

Ch'unhyang, the daughter of a *kisaeng* (entertainment girl) and therefore of humble birth, and Yi Toryŏng, the son of a governor and therefore a nobleman, promise to marry. Yi Toryŏng has to move to the capital and leaves Ch'unhyang behind. She waits for him, faithful even in her misery. The new governor forcefully, but in vain, tries to persuade Ch'unhyang to become his concubine. When she refuses she is put in prison and sentenced to death. Yi Toryŏng returns as a secret inspector for the king. He frees her and they live together happily ever after.

The story can easily be interpreted within a traditional frame as a moral tale about female chastity and as a model of loyalty and virtue. This interpretation is certainly correct, but within the *minjung* perspective stress may also be laid on the fact that Ch'unhyang, representing the oppressed, tries to exert her rights as a female in love but is thrown into a state of *han* because of class barriers. She endures her fate with patience, and in the end her *han* is resolved. Both interpretations are naturally correct, but stressing *minjung* and *han* changes the perspective.

As a summary of this short and preliminary survey one must admit that *minjung* as a living and dynamic entity cannot easily be defined. *Han*, as a state of suffering, submission and even resignation can only be felt and explained vaguely, but

again cannot be defined. Both concepts, with their wide ranges of connotations, have become basic concepts for a cultural movement which transcends traditional borders. Both are very Korean but both are internationally applicable. They have evolved in a long cultural tradition yet are very modern, having many layers that take in the individual, the group and the nation and give a perspective for the past, the present and the future. These concepts, then, have underlain the most recent discussions about culture in both descriptive and prescriptive studies.

A footnote may have to be added on the nature of *minjung*. The concept has often been slandered in Korea as being of communist background. But the fact that many Christians have a strong *minjung* position dismisses this misconception. *Minjung* has a decisive transcendental ring. Moreover, dictatorship by itself, even dictatorship of the proletariat, is antagonistic to the *minjung* and to *minjung* politics and thinking.

The *Minjung* Cultural Movement has in less than 15 years produced many new cultural developments in almost all fields, many of which have not been mentioned here, and it has begun to influence other cultures in both what we call the Third World and the First. I am sure this movement is of great interest to scholars in Korean studies researching what happens in the Republic of Korea today, but it may also have some bearing on our own culture if we succeed in introducing it properly. After all, Chinese and Japanese elements have been added to our culture, and we may soon see some Korean words introduced. Why should the words *minjung* and *han* sound stranger than *Tao* and *haiku*?

GLOSSARY

han 恨 minjung 民衆

minjung orak 民衆娛樂 minjung yesul 民衆藝術

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2. Articles in *Korea Journal* 26/7 (July 1986) by Im Hŏn-yŏng, "The Korean Novel in the Eighties", Kim Uchang, "Lyricism to Realism: Korean Poetry Today" and Ku Chung-sŏ, "The Development of Critical Literature in the 80s." These introduce new developments in literature and literary criticism in Korea, with *passim* reference to the *Minjung* Cultural Movement.

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KOREAN PROTESTANTISM PAST AND PRESENT

KIM SŬNGGŬN

Introduction

In the one hundred years since its introduction, Protestant Christianity has grown to become the second largest religious group in Korea. In 1984, Korean Protestant churches celebrated their centennial year. Membership in the churches has rapidly grown to seven million persons, one in every six south Koreans. Presbyterians are the largest Christian denomination, with more than three million members and some current projections suggest that by the 1990s there will be more Christians than Buddhists in Korea. The influence of the Church is apparent everywhere in Korea today.

The Full Gospel (Pentecostal) Church of Paul Yonggi Cho on Yŏŭido Island in Seoul has over half a million members; 1,000 full-time staff; 50,000 house groups meeting regularly throughout Seoul; 10,000 new members a month; multiple services each Sunday; a domestic radio and television ministry and a regular religious telecast for the Korean community of

Los Angeles. It is already the world's largest church and reaches out to many lands in Asia and even Europe.

The numerical growth of Korean Protestant churches is itself compelling evidence of the American missionary contribution to Korean society. The explosive growth of Protestantism is an undeniable force in the country. However, such dynamism is often criticised as a "sleeping tiger" because the conservative churches whose influences have expanded rapidly through the Pentecostal movement invariably lack social or political concerns. For too long, described as "the most active Christian churches in Asia", south Korean churches have equated Christianity with an anti-communist political structure. Hence they served as supporters of the Syngman Rhee regime, the short-lived Chang Myŏn government, the Pak Chŏnghŭi regime and the Chŏn Tuhwan regime. In short, conservative churches supported the political status quo and failed to regain the social vitality which had characterised earlier Protestantism during days of national hardship. Whilst liberal Christians who are fighting for the recovery of the Korean church tradition are a minority group, conservative churches still boast nearly ninety-five per cent of Christian followers and continue to extend their influence at a rapid rate. As David Kwang-Sun Suh (1983) rightly points out, the major tone of Korean Protestantism was and is emotional, conservative, pentecostal, individualistic and other worldly.

Generally speaking, Korean churches have the same difficulties as churches in other countries with regard to non-Christian tradition and culture. Their major problems are syncretism, subjectivism and escapism. A prominent form of syncretism is nature worship combined with Christian teaching in which emphasis is placed on healing and ecstatic experience. Sound theological thinking is despised or ignored, leaving religious fanatics and emotion-ridden leaders with a strong sense of egotism and dogmatic subjectivism. Biblical interpretation is individualistic, not historical or theological. Some Korean Christians try to escape from the realities of life, placing their hopes on life after death; because of this their sense of participation in history and their social consciousness

is very weak. As a result, the church has lost its leadership in society. Recognising these difficulties, Korean churches since 1963 have felt it necessary to make Christianity more indigenous.

Since the 1960s, dissenting elements within the church have brewed a unique Korean theology called "*Minjung* theology" The word *minjung* means "masses" or "the people of God", and *Minjung* theology is decidedly populist, even proletarian. Its association with the working class gives it a political ring that contrasts with the relatively apolitical ideology of mainstream Korean Christianity. The government sees a clear connection between *Minjung* theology, student activism, labour unrest and overseas criticism. The Urban Industrial Mission, the interfaith ministry to factory workers, is the quintessence of *Minjung* activism. *Minjung* activism is particularly popular among university students, who freely mix political and religious symbols.

Minjung theology is reminiscent of liberation theology in Latin America, but asserts the uniqueness of Korea. It holds that the history of the Korean people is a history of oppression, of sadness and frustration, which has given rise to a unique mind-set called *han*. *Han* is a pent-up anger mixed with depression over situations that cannot be changed: the unfairness and injustice of life, the disappointments and disillusionments of history and politics.

One key point of *Minjung* theology is that it is non-Marxist. This is, of course, a requirement in the anti-Communist south. By stressing the unique Korean roots of its theology and by emphasising a relationship with contemporary life in south Korea, *Minjung* theologians have avoided the taint of communism which the government and ultra-conservative churches would no doubt like to attach to it. Hence *Minjung* theologians reject the heavy reliance of liberation theologians on Marxist social theory.

The number of people involved in *Minjung* theology is tiny by comparison with the theology taught in more conservative churches. Even where *minjung* churches are well established,

the number of people connected with them are few. In a way this is a self-consciously chosen reaction to the emphasis on growth of conservative evangelicals and Pentecostals. *Minjung* activists assert that they are more interested in quality than quantity, yet the power of *Minjung* theology is undeniable.

The gospel of blessings and the gospel of *minjung*

Charles Elliott, in his *Sword and Spirit* (1989), stresses that south Korea has two faces, the face of success and the face of suffering. He, as a theologian and academic specialising in the social and economic development of the Third World, classifies Korean Protestantism into the gospel of blessings and the gospel of *minjung*. The gospel of blessings, represented by the Full Gospel Church, emphasises a God who guarantees success, while the *minjung* gospel starts by identifying Jesus with the poor and the oppressed. According to Elliott, whilst the gospel of blessings emphasises the resurrection to the neglect of the cross, the *minjung* gospel emphasises the cross to the neglect or misrepresentation of the resurrection.

The Korean Presbyterian Church, the largest Christian denomination in the country, now has four major divisions caused by the issue of fundamentalism versus modernism. Other Protestant denominations suffer from similar fractious tendencies. In general, since their centenary celebrations in 1984, Protestant churches have been troubled by growing confrontations between conservative/evangelical and liberal/activist wings and between church and state over human rights. Most Korean Christians are apolitical or politically conservative, but an articulate minority believe in a Christian struggle for economic and social justice. Troublesome though it may seem to the authorities, D.N. Clark comments that the liberal/activist minority is a sign of the vitality of Christianity in Korea. Nevertheless I would argue that the possibility of rapprochement between two seemingly irreconcilable understandings of the Christian faith is low for

four reasons: (1) shamanism; (2) American fundamentalism; (3) the Shinto shrine issue; (4) the Korean war and national division. I will discuss all four in turn.

The roots of *minjung* theology

Korea's basic religious tradition is shamanism. Traditionally the ordinary Korean looked to a shaman—a sorceress or priestess—to help him cope with his *han*. Central to shamanism is the idea that the *kut*, the ceremony of invitation to the spirits, will bestow such blessings as earthly success and a long life. On the basis of this kind of shamanistic thinking, Pentecostal churches give their people what they most earnestly search for—blessings. To people battered by economic, social and political changes in the fastest growing world economy, blessings are a means for dealing with the *han* which change itself imposes. The very speed of change brings both insecurity and opportunity. In this context the Reverend Yonggi Cho emphasises that there are three kinds of blessing which are popular in any society at any time, but which have a particular appeal in south Korea today. Like the shaman, he offers success, health, and long life.

To the shaman, misfortune and misery are the results of the activities of malevolent spirits. You have no personal responsibility, and society has no responsibility. Corrective action starts in the realm of the spirit. Here we can detect a direct parallel between this amoral, apolitical and ahistorical world-view and the conservative Pentecostal Korean churches. In contemporary Korea, conservative, evangelical Christians insist that conversion changes people, that people change societies and that without conversion, attempts at change will merely substitute one evil for another. This argument, claimed by the great majority of church leaders, is closely linked to American fundamentalism, a force which has influenced Korean Protestantism from its outset.

Early American missions gave Korean Protestant churches an American brand of fundamentalism. Missionaries, trained in conservative and fundamental theology against the background of rigidly sectarian ethical views, preached love and perseverance to Korean Christians burning with resentment over the loss of national sovereignty. At some points, there are cases where Korean Christians accused missionaries of being traitors and even threatened them with death. Certainly, missionaries led a revival movement in 1907 in an attempt to steer the Korean church towards non-politicisation and, as they intended, the nature of the Korean church switched to revival. Furthermore, missionaries, who had checked the theological growth of the Korean church, hoped to confine Korean clergy within their own theological and socio-ethical boundaries. The intellectual level of Korean clergymen was extremely low. When the first World Mission Council met in Edinburgh in 1910, the theological destitution of the Korean church therefore emerged as a major issue.

The typical missionary in the first quarter of the century was a man who still kept the Sabbath much like his New England forebears a century earlier. He looked upon dancing, smoking, card-playing, and the drinking of liquor as sins in which no true follower of Christ should indulge. In theology and biblical criticism he was strongly conservative, and he held as a vital truth the pre-millenian view of Christ's Second Coming. Thus, higher criticism and liberal theology were deemed dangerous heresies. The dichotomy of literal biblicism and the social gospel, a mark of Protestant missions in China (and for that matter, Japan), never found a place in Korea. Under the impetus of a programme directed by American missionaries for "Puritanic zeal and Wesleyan fervour", fundamentalism held sway. For example, in the case of baptised members, failure to keep the Sabbath or to attend worship regularly without legitimate excuse was considered sufficient reason for discipline, and members were debarred from taking part in the communion service.

As a result of fundamentalism, the Korea mission programme was indifferent to the social application of Christian theology. From the beginning, American missionaries consciously made the lower-class population, together with children, their sociological target for evangelism. This led to an increase in church membership and fixed Christian thought on another world. For the deprived and the oppressed, the present world was regarded as so utterly lost that it could not possibly be saved. The duty of Christianity was to preach deliverance; to exhort, baptise, and gather the elect for Christ's Second Coming. Community reform and social betterment were regarded as a waste of time and energy that could be more gainfully employed in evangelism. "What are you doing in the way of social reform?" a Korean missionary was asked. "Nothing", was the reply, "we are too busy preaching the gospel."

The non-intellectual, indeed almost anti-intellectual, approach of American missionaries became quite apparent when they began to reflect on the question of theological education, that is, the training of Korean church leaders. As is well known, the most important principle for the training of Korean ministers was a restriction on higher education. The initial low standard of theological education has hindered the educational level of Protestant missions ever since. In this regard, Yi Kwangsu, a writer of the modernist school, in 1918 addressed himself to "Defects of the Korean Church Today":

> To say that the church which founds schools despises learning sounds like a contradiction; but a real Christian treats learning with the greatest contempt, calling it 'worldly knowledge'. Arguing that it weakens faith, he regards learning as a temptation of the devil and an enemy of the soul ... In church schools no attention is paid to natural science, geography or history—the essential subjects in a modern curriculum. The most surprising thing is the opposition of church officers, pastors and elders, to 'worldly knowledge' ... Whatever the cause, to despise knowledge is a sure road to destruction. It is indeed regrettable (1918: 254).

The anti-intellectual approach of fundamentalist missionaries was the root cause of the long criticised anti-

intellectualism in Korea Protestantism. It choked the development of Protestant theology until the 1970s.

In brief, the outstanding characteristics of the early Korean church were its inherent conservatism, its lack of social application, and the low intellectual standard of Christians. In L.G. Paik's view, these features were transitory, but in contrast to his optimism it is generally accepted that these defects have remained unchanged in mainstream conservative churches.

It is generally accepted that the Shinto Shrine Issue has substantially influenced both the character and direction of the Christian movement in post-liberation times. In this context, D.N. Clark notes the negative effect of the issue in the Korean church:

> During World War II, the resisters [to Japanese shrine worship] suffered severe persecution and even martyrdom, while others who cooperated suffered comparatively little. By 1945, deep schisms had developed all across the Christian community that reflected conflicting strains of nationalism, religion and collaboration. In the emotions of the period just following the war, even questions of atonement and forgiveness became controversial. The Shinto shrine issue can be taken as a starting point for the study of the fractiousness which is so evident in the Korean church today (1986: 13).

As he suggests, when the Pacific War ended, bitter disputes erupted between those who had collaborated with the Japanese and those who had resisted. In churches across Korea the shrine issue has contributed to greater cleavage within the Presbyterian community than other Christian groups, because leaders of this denomination were more active in resisting the Japanese.

In the history of Korean Christianity before liberation, conservative fundamentalists resolutely resisted Shinto shrine worship. In contrast, liberals and Catholics as a whole acquiesced to Japanese pressure, and so lost credence in the eyes of the Korean population. Since the 1960s and especially during the 1970s, however, the latter began a political struggle against successive military regimes. Ironically, after liberation from Japanese rule, the Koryo Seminary Faction (Koryŏp'a; former members of the Non-Shrine Worship Movement) have

shown a rather conservative conformity. I would therefore dispute the assertion of a leading *minjung* theologian, Kim Yongbok, who suggests that there is a historical connection in motivation between the Non-Shrine Worship Movement in the 1930s and the recent political struggle for justice led by liberals. The ordeal of the Shinto shrine controversy in the 1930s remains an obstacle for reconciliation between ultra-conservative theology and liberal *minjung* theology.

Finally, unlike *minjung* activism, the majority of the Korean church—Catholic and Protestant—is loyal to the anti-communist government in Seoul. The government, in turn, invites and welcomes church support. The reason for this lies in the effect of national division and the Korean War on the church. After liberation in 1945, both Protestants and Catholics suffered terribly in the north. By 1949, Christian congregations in the north were shattered and persecuted by Kim Ilsŏng, a leader thoroughly opposed to the Christian faith and its supposed links to imperialism. As the 38th parallel hardened into a political boundary, Christians joined the spectacular exodus to the south. The Korean War hardened forever the enmity of Christians toward the northern regime. During the war, Christians were often killed by invading communist troops for being "running dogs" of the American and Japanese and for being enemies of the people. The missionary community also suffered as foreign workers were captured and forced to march from camp to camp. In this context we can understand why most Korean Christians support an alliance with America and are satisfied with American assurances of protection. Other liberal Christians decry the militarisation of Korea, the endless tension caused by confrontation with the north, and the tendency towards military rule. They charge that America's preoccupation with the Cold War means automatic American support for any anti-communist regime in Seoul no matter how dictatorial.

At present the Protestant church in general seems content with overall trends in Korea, including political liberalisation. No church leader speaks out against so-called democratisation—that is, the reinstatement of an elected

government. But whilst they accept the moral validity of democratisation, they are squeamish about other changes in the Korean political and economic system, such as labour's right to organise or to strike. Many conservative church leaders may not be aware of how political they are. Charles Elliott warns as follows:

> ... In Korea to talk of national prosperity, of the Japanese model, of the need for a quiescent labour force, to use the threat from the North as justification for caution in the restoration of freedom of speech and political activity is, precisely, to make religion the opiate of the masses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Christianity in Korea is controversial. I believe that the split between the gospel of blessings and the *minjung* gospel cannot be overcome easily in the near future because of the legacy of American fundamentalism, the Shinto Shrine Issue and the Korean War. The mainstream of Korean Protestantism is not likely to soon develop into an organised political force.

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THE IMPACT OF KOREAN PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY ON BUDDHISM AND THE NEW RELIGIONS

JAMES HUNTLEY GRAYSON

Introduction

The rapid development of Protestant Christianity and its subsequent impact on Korean society and culture following its introduction into Korea is one of the most significant historical facts of the past hundred years. It is my contention that the Protestant form of Christianity has not only played an important role in modern Korean history, but that it has also had a significant impact on the culture of contemporary Korea. This point of view is not uniquely mine . However, in this essay, I wish to discuss one aspect of cultural influence which has not received the attention which I think it deserves, namely the impact which Protestantism has had on the other religious traditions of Korea. Korean Protestant churches in one way or another have had an impact on Roman Catholicism and Buddhism, and their influence may be seen even in the *sinhŭng chonggyo* or the so-called new religions. Because of the degree of influence which Korean Protestantism has exercised on all of the other religious traditions, it is my further contention that the Protestant tradition may be said to have been the most

dynamic religious force in Korea over the past hundred years. Here I will use selected historical facts and a few personal observations to illustrate this latter contention. These illustrations should be understood as being only suggestive of the nature of the historical process. Further and far more specific research must be carried out to more fully demonstrate my contention.

The Advent of Protestant Christianity

Since its introduction into Korea in the mid-1880s, Protestant Christianity, predominantly Presbyterianism and Methodism, has come to constitute conservatively 18% of the total population of the Republic of Korea.[1] Seen from a world perspective, such rapid growth is virtually unique amongst Asian and other Third World churches established within the past century and a half. How are we to account for this rapid growth? There are two primary factors: the appropriateness of the time and the appropriateness of the missionary method.

i. *The appropriateness of the time*

The nineteenth century was a period of social and economic decay in Korea. Agricultural production declined; epidemics swept the nation on several occasions; the reins of government were held by and fought over by various great clans; the nation became prey to Western imperialist powers—powers who sought to bring Korea out of its hermit-like exclusion from the world scene.[2] Because of the visible sense of national decline and weakness, many young, progressive-thinking members of the intelligentsia came to reject the Confucian social structure and to look beyond the confines of traditional culture for new ideas and beliefs which could re-invigorate and renew the nation politically, economically, and spiritually. The expression of concern for national survival would seem to have come to a head during the last quarter of

the nineteenth century.[3] It was a critical period in the history of Korean culture, when people were unusually open to foreign concepts and beliefs.

ii. *The appropriateness of the missionary method*

It was precisely at the time when Korean intellectuals and others were most receptive to non-traditional concepts that Protestant missions became established in Korea. This was not, of course, the first contact of Christianity with Korea. The Roman Catholic Church had been established in Korea since the end of the eighteenth century, but conditions for the widespread and unhampered reception of Christianity did not then exist.

The first generation of Protestant missionaries who arrived in Korea during the final two decades of the nineteenth century were generally theologically conservative, filled with evangelical fervour for the spread of Christianity, and possessed with a deep concern for the social and economic situation of the Korean people. Thus, from the very beginning of missionary work, schools and hospitals were established both as symbols of social concern and as a means of evangelistic outreach. Another important aspect of the method which the first missionaries adopted was an agreement that the goal of mission work was the rapid creation in Korea of a self-supporting, self-governing, and self-evangelizing church. This latter decision, perhaps more than any other, has had a profound effect on the way in which Korean Protestant churches have developed.[4]

iii. *Other factors*

Other factors which are related to the rapid development of the Protestant churches would include the use of the Korean alphabet, *han'gŭl*, in the translation of the Bible and the rigid ethical code taught by the missionaries. The use of the Korean alphabet meant that the message of the Bible could be read by

virtually anyone. This was in contrast to the situation in China where only the highly literate could be reached easily by the written word. Consequently, the diffusion of basic Christian knowledge in Korea was facilitated by the presence of an indigenous alphabet.[5] The moral code taught by missionaries, while different in content from the traditional Confucian code, was a set of rigid ethical values and precepts which in many ways resonated with the traditional moral system. This code, firmly believed in by its expounders, would have had some considerable appeal to scholars brought up with the moral certainties of Confucianism.[6]

iv. *The effect of Protestant missions*

By 1910, roughly 1% of the Korean population adhered to Protestant Christianity. Due to its appearance at an unusually critical point in Korean history and to the emphasis which the early missionaries placed on evangelism by the Koreans themselves, Protestant Christianity had become a very visible aspect of Korean society by the second decade of the twentieth century. Following the example of the early missionaries, Korean Protestants created schools, developed programmes of evangelism and foreign mission, and were responsible for the creation of forms of higher education.[7]

Following the annexation of Korea by Japan, Korean Protestant Christians became involved with the movement for the restoration of Korean sovereignty, a political movement for which they suffered at the hands of the Japanese authorities, but which created a tradition within Korean Protestantism of Christian concern for patriotic and political issues which has never since died out. The following examples illustrate this point:

a) Some 124 persons, of whom 98 were Christians, were arrested by the Japanese authorities in 1911 on the spurious charge of attempting to assassinate the Japanese Governor-General, Terauchi Masatake.[8]

b) In 1919, nearly one-half of the signatories to the March First Declaration of Independence from Japan were Protestants. It was their insistence on non-violence which gave the March First Movement its peculiar character.[9]

c) During the 1930s when the right-wing military had control of Japan and *Shinto* nationalism had come to the fore, many Korean Protestants were prominent in the movement to refuse to worship at *Shinto* shrines.[10]

d) In 1945, during the twilight period of Japanese rule in Korea, and before the establishment of a Communist government in the north, Protestants in the northern part of Korea created political parties. These eventually clashed with the new Stalinist regime which had been established there and were suppressed as a threat to the state.[11]

e) In south Korea during the 1970s and 1980s the movement to re-establish democracy and to create a more equitable society was led by politicians and non-political figures who were not only Christian but who were predominantly Protestant. Korean Protestantism in its first century may be said to have always been in the midst of turbulence.[12]

Finally, Korean Protestants have evinced a strong concern for the condition of the less fortunate members of modern society. This trend has been especially true since the 1960s. Concern for the workers of the new industrial estate, the place of women, prostitution, child welfare and other social matters have been attacked by Protestant Christians who saw this work as an extension of their religious beliefs.[13]

v. *The dominant religious force*

The character of Protestant Christianity which has emerged over the past century has been of a vigorous religious movement that is patriotic, nationalistic, and very socially and politically aware. This religious movement has grown so rapidly that by the mid-1980s Protestantism accounted for approximately 18% of the population of the Republic of Korea.

It has grown more rapidly and dramatically than any other religious group in Korea during the same period of time. It has become, in my opinion, the dominant religious force of Korea, if not yet the dominant religion numerically. And this vigorous religion has had a considerable impact on the other religious traditions of Korea.

There are three ways in which I believe that Protestant Christianity has influenced other religious traditions. The first way is the re-invigoration of other traditions by competitive stimulation. The second way is on a formal level, by an accommodation to the Protestant ethos through the adoption of Protestant forms of worship, ecclesiastical structure, or methods of work. The third way is Protestant influence on the concepts or categories of religious belief. The adoption of Christian, in particular Protestant, religious concepts may be taken to indicate an influence of Protestantism on the structure of religious belief, if not on the actual content.

The Impact of Protestantism on the Roman Catholic Church

Although I want to discuss primarily the effect of Protestantism on the non-Christian religions of Korea, it is important to say a few words about the effect which the development of Protestantism has had on the Roman Catholic Church. Despite the long history of the Catholic Church in Korea, it did not experience the degree of rapid development which has characterized the first phase of Protestant history. The first hundred years of Korean Catholic history were dominated by a series of vicious persecutions which created a ghetto mentality within the minds of many, if not most, Korean Catholics. Following the diplomatic opening of Korea to the outside world, those laws or regulations which restricted the propagation of religion were lifted. From the 1890s, the Catholic church experienced modest but steady increases in the numbers of its adherents. However, whereas in 1914 the Protestant churches' adherents numbered well over 1% of the

population, the Roman Catholic Church's adherents numbered less than half that figure. In fact, it was not until the mid-1950s that membership in the Catholic Church measured more than 1% of the population.[14]

It is from the 1960s onward that we can note a dramatic growth of Catholicism. Whereas before this time there had only been increases in the number of adherents, from then on there were dramatic increases in the percentage representation of Catholicism within the national population.[15] There are two reasons for this. The first explanation is the influence of the Second Vatican Council, which generally opened up the Catholic Church worldwide. One effect of the liberal trends of the Council on the Korean church was the re-discovery of the necessity for evangelism. The evangelistic vigour which presently characterizes Korean Catholicism is a post-Conciliar phenomenon, taking effect from some time in the late 1960s.[16]

A major influence on Korean Catholicism prior to the Second Council may be found in the effect of the rapid development of Korean Protestantism. This is the second reason. Some time during the 1940s, adherents to Protestantism came to number more than 3% of the population. From this point onward, the numbers of Protestant adherents began to increase in geometric proportions. This gave the Protestant form of Christianity a high degree of visibility within Korean society. The aura of acceptability which now came to surround Protestantism—a result of its increased visibility, and its prestige derived from the perceived image of its patriotic and progressive character—helped to break down the ghetto mentality of Catholicism in Korea, and to restore the evangelistic fervour of the church.[17] This trend toward evangelism was reinforced by the liberal developments of the Second Vatican Council. Thus the influence which Protestantism exercised on the Roman Catholic Church was a stimulus to growth, perhaps even a competitive stimulus.

The Impact of Protestantism on Buddhism

At the end of the last century and for the first three decades of this century, most Western observers of Buddhism in Korea felt that it was in a severe state of degeneration, and a few even thought that it might soon disappear altogether. In fact this has not happened. Buddhism has revived and now claims a vigorous 30% or more of the Republic of Korea's present population.

One may point to three sources for the revival of Buddhism's fortunes. The first factor is political. Because of the sudden growth of Protestant Christianity and because of its associations with patriotic agitation for independence from Japan, the Japanese authorities made a significant attempt to improve the state of Korean Buddhism. To this end, the Japanese administration made several attempts to unify Korean Buddhism into a single ecclesiastical body under the control of the Government-General.[18] These moves for the re-organization of Korean Buddhism were also made to ensure that Buddhism proved to be no threat to Japanese colonial rule. Support was also given to various Buddhist projects and programmes, such as support for Buddhist publications. More importantly, the colonial government ensured that Buddhist temples obtained large tracts of land surrounding their precincts. This acquisition formed a capital base which has guaranteed the subsequent financial stability of Buddhism.

The second factor in the revival of Korean Buddhism was the purification of monastic practices. The revival of Buddhism cannot be wholely or even largely attributed to the efforts of the Japanese colonial authorities. It is to a large measure the result of internal developments, the revival of the purity of traditional monastic practices sought by Korean Buddhists themselves. The movement was an outgrowth of the work of Kyŏngho (1849-1912). After his enlightenment in 1879, Kyŏngho turned his attention to the question of the decayed state of monastic discipline and life in the majority of Korean temples. His persistence eventually led to the creation of a movement which substantially restored the position of Buddhism.[19]

The third factor in Buddhism's revival was the growth of the lay movement. Restoration and revival was not primarily a matter of the purification of monastic practice, however important that is. The primary source was the development of a vigorous lay movement. As significant as monasticism is within the Buddhism schema of things, Korean Buddhism has become a religion of the laity. It was the growth of lay associations, youth groups and publications for the dissemination of Buddhist knowledge which led to Buddhism becoming the significant force which it is today within modern south Korean society.

During the second, third and fourth decades of this century, a variety of lay movements were established which had among their purposes the evangelization of the populace, the education of the laity, and communal fellowship. These groups are in name and practice patterned after such groups as the YMCA and Protestant denominational youth and lay societies. Groups such as the Chosŏn Buddhist Youth Association (*Chosŏn pulgyo ch'ŏngnyŏnhoe*) and Chosŏn Buddhist Young People's Association (*Chosŏn pulgyo sonyŏnhoe*) are indicative of this trend.[20]

One can argue that this phenomenon is an example of competitive stimulation. That is, the adherents of Buddhism became aware of the decline in both their vigour and numbers while simultaneously noting the rapid success of another religious group, Protestant Christianity. Lay Buddhists then decided consciously to emulate the formal practices of Protestantism, viz, lay societies, social work, and religious publication in order to stimulate and revive Korean Buddhism. The sense of decline and the need to equal or better the recently arrived foreign religion played an important role in the consciousness of early twentieth century lay Buddhists. The revival of Buddhism may be said to have been more than a matter of the stimulus of ideas. It was a competitive movement for survival. The very fact of the rapid growth of Protestant Christianity created within Buddhism a movement to restore its own health. The means to accomplish this revival were patterned after the practices of its rival, Protestantism.

To illustrate the way in which Buddhism has utilized formal Protestant practices to spread Buddhist knowledge and belief, the following observations may be useful.

a) Buddhist high schools and colleges were founded during the Japanese period after the pattern of Protestant mission schools. The general secular curriculum in these schools was similar to mission—and state-sponsored schools, but the religious element was Buddhist.

b) Youth groups, particularly associations of high school students, were created. These groups still meet in temples under the direction of a monk with special responsibility for youth work at times similar to Protestant group meetings. These groups are in organization similar to Christian associations.

c) Some of the activities pursued within these associations are similar to Protestant practice. Music, and especially hymn signing, has formed a significant part of Protestant piety over the past century. The adoption of this practice of group singing and the appropriation of certain familiar Protestant tunes is a sure indication of the degree of influence which Protestant Christianity has had. However, for all of the formal influence which Protestantism has exercised, it should be noted that there has been very little if any influence at the level of the content of Buddhist belief.[21]

The influence of Protestantism on the New Religions

In the past century and a half there has arisen a whole new class of religions termed by Korean scholars *sinhŭng chonggyo*, literally, newly emerged religions. These religions are, without exception, a syncretism of several already existing religious traditions in Korea, and virtually all have as their substratum a reworked form of indigenous shamanism. I will discuss briefly three of these new religions, Ch'ŏndogyo (The Religion of the Heavenly Way), Chŭngsan'gyo (The Teaching of Chŭngsan), and

T'ongilgyo (The Unification Church). All of these show the influence of Christian religious practice and belief. In fact, the last mentioned shows such a high degree of admixture with Protestant Christianity that it must be termed theologically a Christian heresy.

i. *Ch'ŏndogyo*

The *Tonghak* or Eastern Learning movement which became known as Ch'ŏndogyo was founded in 1860 by Ch'oe Cheu (1824-1864) following a vision of the Taoist supreme deity Shangti which he had had during the course of a severe illness. Shangti gave to Ch'oe a magic formula written on a piece of paper which when reduced to ashes and swallowed in a liquid mixture would become potent medicine. Ch'oe was told to go out and spread a doctrine appropriate to East Asia, unlike the 'Western Learning' (*Sŏhak*) being taught by Catholic missionaries then in the country. All experience characterized by a calling by a great spirit whilst ill, and the gift of a secret curative formula, is wholely shamanistic in nature. Many of the teachings of Ch'oe however, reflect not only Far Eastern philosophy but Catholicism as well. Ch'oe and his immediate followers sometimes referred to the great being of his vision as *Ch'ŏnju*, the Lord of Heaven, which is the Roman Catholic term for God. This influence is on a formal level and does not effect the core character and teaching of Ch'ŏndogyo.[22]

The greatest amount of Christian influence on Ch'ŏndogyo is from Protestantism and it comes at a later stage in the sect's evolution. Catholic influence is slighter and occurs at an early period in the development of the group. Protestant influence made itself manifest during the first three decades this century. Again, this influence is more at the formal level rather than at the level of the content of belief. The houses of worship of Ch'ŏndogyo and their internal arrangements, the order and content of the services of worship, and the musical practices all reflect Protestant ways of worship. Furthermore, the centrepiece of Ch'ŏndogyo worship is the reading from the Ch'ŏndogyo scripture *Tonggyŏng taejon* and the exposition of a

particular passage drawn from it. This practice clearly reflects an essential aspect of the Protestant approach to worship, the proclamation of the Word of God through its public reading and the exposition of its content.[23]

Thus, in a key element, the Ch'ŏndogyo movement, which saw itself as preserving Korean virtues and East Asian philosophical concepts against the onslaught of Western religion and philosophy, came to adopt a prime practice of its rival Protestantism. The reason why this happened must be the same reason why the Buddhist lay movement adopted many Protestant practices: competitive stimulation. Protestant influence on Ch'ŏndogyo is one major piece of evidence which indicates that, by the third decade of this century, Korean Protestantism was the fastest growing, most dynamic religious force within Korean culture.

ii. *Chŭngsan'gyo*

Chŭngsan'gyo was founded by Kang Ilsun (pen name Chŭngsan, 1871-1910) following an experience he had of five grand dragons who gave him great spiritual power. His vision took place in 1900 and followed Kang's experience of the Tonghak Rebellion's failure in 1894/5. The failure of this populist movement to usher in a new era caused Kang to wander extensively in an attempt to find a way to order the social and political circumstances of Korea according to the Divine Plan. In his vision, Kang felt that he had been given an ability to communicate with the spirit world, to predict the future, and to understand the divine movements and processes of the universe. In 1902, Kang further revealed that he was not a simple messenger of the supreme deity, but that he was in fact the Lord of the Nine Heavens. Kang claimed that he had come to earth to accomplish three things: the re-ordering of the affairs of the universe, the restoration of the fortunes of the Korean state and the curing of disease.[24]

The description which Kang gave of his vision, the revelation that he was the Lord of the Nine Heavens, and his teachings all show a strong shamanistic cast. Nonetheless, certain key elements reveal a strong Christian influence. The fact that Kang latterly revealed that he was an incarnate deity is a reflection of a central teaching of the Christian Church, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Moreover, this incarnation was given a particularly Christian interpretation when Kang went on to emphasise he had come to earth to re-organise the affairs of the world. This claim is more than that of a manifest deity; it is a messianic claim. In effect, Kang claimed he was the Messiah who had come to restore his nation to its rightful condition.

There is no evidence to indicate that Kang's appropriation of key Christian teachings was done consciously. If there was Christian influence it must have been at the sub-conscious level. If this is in fact the case, it actually strengthens my argument that Protestant Christianity was then and remains a most potent and dynamic religious force in Korean culture. At the time Kang became religously active, Christianity, and in particular Protestant Christianity, had become part of the accepted spiritual ethos of Korea. Consequently, certain elements of Christian faith and teaching became available to be picked up by a charismatic religious figure. I believe further that the Christian influence exercised upon Kang must be Protestant rather than Catholic because of the comparatively higher visibility of Protestantism at that time.

iii. *The Unification Church*

The Unification Church or T'ongilgyo was formally established by Sun Myung Moon (Mun Sŏnmyŏng, b.1920) in 1954. It is claimed, however, that the Church grew out of a movement which began with a vision Mun had had in 1936. In his vision, it is said that Mun saw the Supreme Being who gave him the authority to reform the Christian Church. The Unification Church teaches that sin has been sexually transmitted to modern man from Eve: Eve had sexual intercourse with Satan in his guise as a snake. The Church further teaches that Jesus, who had been sent to redeem mankind, failed in his ultimate task because he died on the

cross before he married. If he had married a perfect woman, human sin transmitted through blood would have been washed away and the state which had existed at the time of the Garden of Eden would have been restored. As Jesus did not marry, only spiritual and not physical salvation resulted from his work on earth. Consequently, followers of the Unification Church believe that it became necessary for a second figure to come to earth who would complete the work of Jesus by obtaining physical salvation for mankind. This expected figure is the Lord of the Second Advent.

Much of the teaching of the Church focuses on this mysterious figure. Although Mun has never claimed to be the Lord of the Second Advent, all of his actions and the attitudes of his followers towards him would indicate that he is widely held to be this mighty figure.[25]

The basic elements of Mun's teaching and experience are shamanistic in character. Especially important is the vision which Mun had of a great spirit who gave him a special teaching to convey to mankind and who instructed Mun to restore the purity of the Christian Church and its teaching. This core element is unquestionably shamanistic. However, all the other elements in the teaching of Mun and his followers are Christian in form, if not in content. Thus, this type of new religion must be called a kind of Christian shamanism where the Lord of the Second Advent intercedes on behalf of his followers. The outward appearance of this group is Christian but the content of belief and the function of rituals is entirely shamanistic.

iv. *Christian shamanism*

Mun's group is not the only example of Christian shamanism. The so-called Olive Tree Church or Chŏndogwan movement of Pak Taesŏn is another example among many. It is interesting to note that several of the founders of such groups come from Protestant backgrounds or have been influenced at some point in their early years by Protestantism.

It is also important to note that the majority of new religions in which the use of Christian elements predominate in the formal aspect of the group's structure or teaching have arisen since the liberation from Japan in 1945. Comparing the occurrence of Christian elements in the new religions which have arisen since the end of the last century, we can note that such elements are less common in groups which arose around the turn of the century and increasingly common in groups which arose during the first half of this century. Most new religions which emerge now tend to be predominantly Christian in formal character. This increase in the appropriation of Christian elements is in direct relation to the increasing size of the Protestant churches in Korean society. I would argue that the dramatic growth of Protestant churches has not only made the appropriation of Christian—particularly Protestant—elements likely, but inevitable.

Concluding Remarks

The rapid growth of Protestantism during the past century has had an effect on all the other religions in Korea. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church and Buddhism, the effect was on the level of competitive stimulation. Specifically, Korean Protestant growth helped the Roman Catholic Church to break out of its ghetto mentality which had resulted from a century of severe persecution. In the case of Buddhism, the rapid development of Protestant churches not only helped create an atmosphere conducive to growth, but provided adherents with a particular method with which to revive Buddhism.

In the case of the new religions, the effect of Protestant church growth was to provide a wider range of symbols and concepts to draw upon in the creation of a new tradition. However influential Protestantism has been on other religions, its influence has never been at the level of content. Neither Buddhism nor the new religions have appropriated in a

coherent way the core complex of Christian, especially Protestant, faith. Thus, the influence of Protestantism on the other religious traditions in Korea has been superficial rather than substantive. The core elements of each non-Christian tradition have remained intact.

I hope that researchers interested in examining the religious scene in Korea—those scholars who are considering Buddhism, Korean folk religion, or the new religions—will consider the issue of the impact of the dramatic growth of Protestantism on the other religious traditions. The significant place of Christianity in modern Korea is virtually unique amongst Asian societies. Unfortunately, it is true that scholars of religion often overlook the study of Christianity in non-Western societies. This is certainly the case for Korean Christianity. The effect of Protestantism deserves to be examined more closely both from an anthropological perspective and an historical perspective.

NOTES

1. Grayson, James Huntley, *Early Buddhism and Christianity in Korea: A Study in the Emplantation of Religion* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1985), p.261.
2. A good general description of this period may be found in Lee Ki-baik [Yi Kibaek], *A New History of Korea* (Seoul, Ilchogak, 1984), pp.245-266.
3. Paik, L. George, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea: 1832 - 1910* (1929, rep. Seoul, Yonsei University Press, 1970), pp.260-262. Another source of information on this period is D. N. Clark, *Christianity in Modern Korea* (London, University Press of America, 1986).
4. Ibid, pp. 220-245.
5. Ibid, pp. 56-60, 162. Also, Ross, John, "Corean New Testament", *China Recorder and Missionary Journal*, vol.14 (November December, 1883), pp.491-497.
6. Paik, op. cit. pp.153-156.
7. Grayson, op. cit. pp.112-113.

8. Ibid, p.115.
9. Ibid, p.116.
10. Ibid, pp.118-120.
11. Ibid, pp.120-122.
12. Ibid, p.125.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid, p.126.
15. Ibid.
16. Grayson, James Huntley, *Korea: A Religious History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.210-212.
17. Ibid.
18. Kang Sŏksu and Pak Kyŏnghun, *Pulgyo kunse paengnyŏn* [The Recent Century of Korean Buddhism] (Seoul, Chungang sinso, 1980), pp.203-226.
19. Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*, op. cit. pp.203-226.
20. Ibid.
21. These remarks are based upon personal experiences and observations.
22. Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*, pp.237-239.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid, pp.241-245.
25. Ibid, pp.247-250.

WHY SHOULD KOREAN SHAMANS BE WOMEN?

KEITH HOWARD

Introduction

Why? My title may be misleading, for I have no simple answer to give.[1]

Anthony Cohen argues in an ethnography of British communities that things are rarely so simple as they seem on the surface (Cohen 1982: 292). A neat and tidy answer would therefore describe an organisational hatstand on which widely divergent motives, many different social criteria, and the odd red herring would precariously hang. That being so, I propose simply to suggest areas in which gender influences the shaman equation in Korea, namely religion, entertainment, and family life.

To start with, let me note that in Korea today the overwhelming majority of shamanistic practitioners are female, despite Clark's description of male *paksa* and *p'ansu* early this century (Clark 1932/1961) and the government's estimates that in Seoul there were 124 male shamans to 778 female shamans operating in 1975, a female dominance of 86%.[2] The usual 40% ratio of male shamans found in Cheju should also be treated as an exception, though on this southernmost island it

stems from peculiar gender roles (Yoon 1977: 202). The transvestism argued for by Campbell in male practitioners elsewhere appears irrelevant to the Korean situation (though transvestism is discarded by Mircea Eliade: Campbell 1976: 69-70; Eliade 1964: particularly 76, 258).

The Pak Lineage

Much of my discussion below relates to the lineage of Pak1.[3] Pak is a male dancer, musician, and shaman (locally called a *tan'gol*) who in 1980 was appointed a Human Cultural Asset (*in'gan munhwajae*) by the Korean government for his performance of a shaman ritual, *Ssikkim kut* (*ssikkim* => *ssikkida* = to wash; *kut* = ritual).[4] The Paks have, for living memory, resided on Chindo, an island of 65,000 inhabitants at the southwestern tip of the Korean peninsula. I have traced seven shaman generations which preceded Pak1, though my information comes only from living members of the lineage. The Paks claim to belong to a single clan: bearing in mind history this is not unexpectedly the Miryang Paks. Their clan seat lies to the east in Kyŏngsang province. Descent, as is the norm in Korean society, has been patrilineal. Similarly, the inheritance of property has followed the same path. Inheritance has partly involved the rights to perform rituals in a geographic area (the *tan'gol p'an*; for definitions and descriptions see Kim T'aegon 1982: 224; Howard 1990: 162). An exceptional case occurred in ego's parents' generation, where an aunt inherited the family area. The area focused on the island's central administrative centre, Chindo-ŭp, and Pak's father accordingly set up a new *tan'gol p'an* further west in Chisan district.

Clan exogamy has been practiced, but endogamy has been the unspoken rule, with marriage taking place within a small group of families—sub-lineages of Kim, Ch'ae, Kang, Han, and Yi—involved in entertainment or shamanism. The five Kim spouses identified in the Pak 1 lineage were thought to have

come from a single sub-lineage. This, as I will later show, suggests endogamy by necessity rather than choice. Further, those women who have married into the Pak lineage have tended to become shaman practitioners. Several of them, however, insisted uterine inheritance determined that they should become shamans. Han 1 in 1984 thus continued to operate as a shaman in a limited way, and Kim Soshim remained active until shortly before her death in 1983. Husbands have tended to serve as accompanists. Pak Manjun, Pak Pŏmjun, and Pak Chonggi are consequently all remembered as musicians, a feature which in itself suggests considerable overlap between the occupations of musicians and shamans.

Shamanism in Korea

The folk pantheon of Korea is complex and diverse, combining practices labelled by scholars as 'shaman' (*mu*, *musok*, *mudang*, and so on) with Confucian codes, Buddhist hagiography, and animism. Non-agnatic spirits ensure peace in the world beyond. Direct ancestors are called on for help both here and beyond. There seems to be a consensus amongst scholars that the indigenous phenomena constitute a religion and that in some forms (*musok*, but not superstition as *mishin*; the distinction appears to be recent) they should be described as shamanism. If so, they are akin in some way to Siberian shamanism, North American and African tribal practices. They also become comparable not just with the practices in China recounted by Jordan (1972), Ahern (1973) and Wolf (1974) and in Okinawa by Lebra (1966), but also with other systems of belief such as those discussed by Marwick (Africa, 1952), Spiro (Burma, 1967), Bascom (West Africa, 1969), and Harwood (Safwa, 1970). It ought to be plain that at the global level there is some doubt whether shamanism is either a single and distinct religion or a social complex that can be validly studied cross-culturally. Mircea Eliade's monumental and standard work on the subject, because it presents an ideal

typology for shamanism as a religion rather than a synthesis of extant syncretic systems, may yet prove weakly founded (Eliade 1964, but see also Campbell 1976: 86-7).

To Eliade and I. M. Lewis, a shaman has mastered the "technique of ecstasy." To William Lebra, a shaman has "[1] recognised supernatural powers which are utilized for socially approved ends or goals, and [2] the capacity to enter ... culturally defined trance states" (Eliade 1964: 4; Lewis 1971: 9; Lebra, cited in Kim-Harvey 1979: 4). We may go further to agree with Hultkrantz: a shaman is an intermediary, exhibiting behaviour which supports the belief that he or she is inspired by spirits (Hultkrantz 1978: 30). Boudewijn Walraven is a little more circumspect when he states a Korean shaman does not know ecstasy (Walraven 1983: 243). He thus stretches Lewis' distinction in which a shaman controls spirits while clients may be controlled by spirits (Lewis 1971: 54). Walraven says that in Siberia but not Korea shamans may completely lose consciousness (1983: 258). In 1983 I witnessed one ritual which seemed to suggest otherwise. In Inch'on, a shaman was rescued from a trance that had left her lifeless only through the lengthy and ceaseless administrations of a small team of women.

To the definitions I must add the observation that there are two distinct types of shaman in Korea. Only one type has been adequately considered by the literature.[5] This type consists of the shamans found in central, northern, and some eastern regions who experience some type of possession, initially through an illness (*shinbyŏng*) interpreted as a calling, and later in rituals seen as some form of trance. The second type, characteristic of the southern Chŏlla provinces, have no need of ecstasy since they inherit or buy rights to practice in a defined geographical area. The Pak lineage belongs to the latter group, and my first-hand knowledge of Korean shamanism is based primarily on such non-ecstatic practitioners. To Eliade, the latter constitutes "family shamanism", and "is only a plagiaristic aping of the ecstatic technique of the professional shaman" (Eliade 1964: 253). To Lebra, talking about Okinawa, a hereditary specialist is a 'priestess' rather than a 'shaman' (Lebra 1966: 74-83). Im Sŏkchae, perhaps influenced by Lebra, suggests that all Korean shamans should be called 'priests' (Im 1971: 213-217).

Such a distinction may be flawed when the boundary between the two types becomes blurred. Eliade discards too readily the lack of ecstasy among the Nuba in a manner that suggests practices which do not follow his definitions should be considered decadent. Mary Douglas, in contrast, offers a plausible view that allows the use of *mu*, the Korean shaman stem, for both types of practitioners. Unlike Lewis, she starts with the premise that religion is a fair representation of social reality (Douglas 1966: particularly 74 and 80). Therefore, where society is weakly structured, so trance will feature. Douglas considered trance the antithesis of organized society, just as charismatic outpourings are frowned upon in Church of England cathedrals (see also Douglas 1973: 19-39). The implication is that shamans will move from ecstasy to control as society becomes more organised.

Gender and Religion

Amongst scholars working on Korean religion, Jung Young Lee argues extensively that shamanism is for women while Confucianism occupies men. It is unfortunate that his work is so inaccurate (Lee 1975, 1976 and 1981; for criticism of the latter see Walraven 1983: 248-256), but the gender division influences the writings of many others. According to Ch'oe Kilsŏng, "In shamanism, the female shaman holds the most important position. This is because male shamans merely assist while females perform in front of guests" (Ch'oe 1981: 125). In Chindo, men (usually accompanists) prepare the paper props for a ritual, cutting out spirit figures, checking the altar, and constructing a suitable imitation bier if the body has already been interned. Women act as intermediaries with the spirit world. Other men supervise offerings at the altar as the ritual progresses, checking that wine libations are replaced

after each section and ensuring that incense continually burns. Only men act as accompanists. They play a mix of melodic and rhythmic instruments, they sing counter melodies to the female shaman, as she dances they improvise *shinawi*, and as she rests they provide musical interludes.

The picture is very neat, too neat. It reflects the Korean propensity for dichotomy. In Korean writings Confucian propriety is placed against a robust and earthy folk tradition; *ŭm* [Ch: *yin*] and *yang* contrast positive and negative forces or earth and heaven, dark and light, weak and strong; the aristocracy, *yangban*, counter illiterate commoners, *sangmin*; pious women contrast drunken monks (Akamatsu and Akiba 1938; Brandt 1971; Dix 1987). Favoured dichotomies often hinge on a male/female distinction, so that a religion practiced by women is likely to be presented as uneducated, superstitious, and improper. There is thus a basic contrast between *chesa*, the confucian formal ancestral rites carried out by men, and *kŏsa*, offerings made by women to household deities. Confucian texts written during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) denigrate shaman rituals as *ŭmsa*, a term that implies the obscene. Shamans were consequently considered women of casual virtue (YI 1976). Court women were banned from visiting the corrupting houses of shamans in 1431 (Deuchler 1977: 22). Ming dynasty codes adopted in 1471 prohibited "calling down heretical gods" (Young 1980: 78). Yet an uneasy alliance prevailed: shamans were taxed by the authorities.

In Chindo, several rituals today considered backward and undesirable in the past centred on women. In *Tŏkkaebi kut*, cloth covered in menstrual blood was used during periods of widespread illness to attract goblins so that they could be expelled from a village (Chŏng 1983). In *Myŏngsan kut*, a ritual carried out during times of drought, women were instrumental in exhuming the bones of malevolent local ancestors and scattering them across the countryside.

Significantly, in shaman rituals women appear more prepared to don a spirit's clothes and dance than men.

Koreans consider that spirits possess women more readily then they do men. Such a notion is not uncommon elsewhere and may indicate that the capacity to have babies makes women receptacles for human spirits. In Korea, the story of Pari Kongju, the abandoned princess who represents the first shaman in the tales of most contemporary practitioners, confirms such a view. The legend is documented by Kim T'aegon (1966) and, in Western languages, by Park Byeng-sen (1973), Covell (1983: 75-78) and Kendall (1985: 154), and an excerpt is given by Walraven (1985: 82). Similarly, a spirit who speaks through the mouth of a living Chindo person will today invariably speak through a woman. In July 1983 a son was sent to the other world in a ritual held in the Chindo village of Koya. As the son's spirit was washed his sister, who had died a decade earlier, spoke through an old woman. She complained that nobody had ever given her a proper *Ssikkim kut*. The shaman and her accompanists listened attentively. They told the family to prepare new clothes and a special altar; they arranged for the sister's ritual to be held the following night.

Shamanism is not only for women, however. The Christian established church, arguably, has greatest appeal in Britain and Korea to women, yet is governed by men. And in shamanism there are a few male practitioners. I have already cited data from Cheju; the Human Cultural Asset appointed for that island's *Ch'ilmŏri tang kut* is male. Two Human Cultural Assets for *Chindo ssikkim kut* are male. A male shaman recently worked with scholars at Wŏn'gwang University in Iri and one of today's most promising young shaman dancers in Kyŏnggi province is male. Men are also important sponsors in Chŏlla province death rituals. At rituals they assume elements of Confucian rites. In Chindo *Ssikkim kut* the male sponsor, a descendant of the deceased, is initially enclosed within a roped-off compound. From there he welcomes both human guests and invoked spirits.

Yet the stereotype remains. In contemporary mask dramas it also features. In theses on shamanism, it fits case studies like a glove (for example, Young 1980: 281-286; Kim-Harvey 1979). It also appears in the works of the writer Kim

Tongni, particularly his short story *Munyŏdo* and novel *Ŭlhwa*.[6]

Ŭlhwa concerns a shaman who adopted this name after a shrine where a grandmother spirit first spoke to her. Fate was against Ŭlhwa. She came from a poor background and, falling pregnant outside marriage, in shame had escaped with her mother to anonymity in a new village. There she became a second wife when her mother died. Her new husband also died, and Ŭlhwa was blamed for not looking after him. Next, her son became critically ill. He began to recover after a shaman ritual, but Ŭlhwa immediately fell ill. It was then she began to have visions: the gods descended. Accepting her fate, Ŭlhwa became a shaman.

The stereotype goes further than this, for Ŭlhwa is destined to kill her only son. He returns as a Christian ten years after Ŭlhwa gave him to a Buddhist temple. In the meantime, Kim tells us that Ŭlhwa has been dragged down by sorcery. She has lost her looks and spends each day drinking and indulging in affairs. She has moved into a house whose previous occupant, a diviner, murdered a child. Her daughter hardly speaks; it is suggested she is mentally ill. In contrast, the local church elder Pak Kunshik comes from an aristocratic *yangban* background and has been active in the resistance against Japanese rule. He observed proper Confucian filial piety when his father died. Ŭlhwa's son begins to work at the church. There, he is recognised as the child from the first illicit affair. His paternal family has no other male offspring and so, particularly since they too are *yangban*, he is asked to take up his rightful inheritance.

Ŭlhwa eventually burns her son's bible in a ritual to exorcise his 'Jesus devil' and, as he tries to retrieve it, she stabs him.

In sum, the basic gender distinction is that women actually interact with spirits, but never men. Women approach particular spirits and ask for their help. Men, in contrast, show filial respect as they carry out the proper observances for

ancestors, but no ancestor is not allowed to become an active force.

Gender and Entertainment

Korean women who sing and dance in public have bad reputations. Terms such as *kisaeng* and *sadang* today denote little more than prostitutes, though *kisaeng* were once so influential at the court that King T'aejong (reigned 1401-1408) outlawed their sons (Howard 1986: 14-26). Some *kisaeng* are remembered for their artistic achievements (Byong Won Lee 1979: 75-86; McCann 1974: 40-43) and, during the earlier Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392), women entertainers participated as singers and dancers in the government's *Kyobŏn* department during state *p'algwanhoe* and *yŏndŭnghoe* ceremonies (Kim Woo-ok 1980: 45-50). The Japanese ethnographers Akamatsu and Akiba talk of *kwŏnbŏn* training institutes in Namwŏn and Kwangju. Out of ten trainees in Namwŏn, four had shaman backgrounds; out of 21 in Kwangju, ten came from shaman families (cited in Kim Woo-ok 1980: 51-53). In Chindo, the first Human Asset appointed by the government, Yang Hŭngdo, likewise spent most of her life as a *kisaeng*. A fine long narrative (*p'ansori*) singer, Han Aesun, in 1983 identified her natal village to me by stating it has been famous for music because its many aristocratic *yangban* encouraged *kisaeng* to visit.

As with shamans, the stereotype may sometimes run true. Although I claim to be an ethnomusicologist, I fell for it at one *hwan'gap* (60th birthday) celebration in Puan, North Cholla province. I had been invited to play the drum, and I remember talking to a girl who came to dance. She wore a T-shirt on which was printed "Total wholesale property." And so she was.

In rituals around Seoul the male Official Spirit (*Taegam*) descends. The shaman dons appropriate dress and performs *taegam nori*, asking for money from her audience, always

unhappy with the meagre offerings, and joking crudely. Kendall has pointed out that, acting as the Official, the shaman fills men's wine cups (Kendall, forthcoming). Oops! by doing so she suggests the behaviour of *kisaeng*, out to pleasure men. Clearly this is not appropriate behaviour for an important spirit. Yet the relationship between *kisaeng* and shamans does not run through to performance style. Simply put, while women are central to a shaman ritual, they are not important when a *kisaeng* sets out to entertain men. And, possession by spirits, whether it be an initial illness or a later trance, belongs only to shamans.

Many published accounts demonstrate the relationship. Some scholars suggest that repeated exposure to music and dance renders a woman potentially vulnerable to possession by the spirits, that is, to a calling as a shaman (Choi 1987: 129). Chatterbox Mansin (*mansin* = shaman) has a sister-in-law who was observed at one ritual slapping her children because they were moving in time to the drum (Kendall 1985: 63). Yongsu's Mother, a shaman, was an enthusiastic follower of rhumba and jitterbug in her youth (Kendall 1988: 80-81). Suwŏn Mansin initially took a performing arts degree (Kim-Harvey 1979: 184). Hi-ah Park, a Korean now active as a shaman in the States, was a dancer researching at the University of California when she was "possessed" by the gods (Kim and Ch'oe 1983: 84). An inaccurate story about Hi-ah Park, incidentally, affected my own doctoral research. Shamans suddenly became reluctant to talk with me. Remembering Park, they declared that I might also "steal" their knowledge to perform rituals in Britain.

The example from Choi (1987) is potentially misleading. From my perspective, I would prefer to trace any link between shamans and *kisaeng*, or more broadly shamans and musicians, in their social background, not in music or dance. Both traditionally belonged to the same low status group below commoners, *ch'ŏnmin/ch'ŏnin*.[7] They were, in effect, outcasts. One obvious explanation for their status was they neither owned nor rented land, but such a notion reflects the cash economy which developed half-way through the Chosŏn dynasty. The *ch'ŏnmin* comprised a hereditary group whose roots stretched further back. From an eleventh century Koryŏ statute forwards, *ch'ŏnmin* were legally unable to move up the social ladder or take any civil service examination (Yi 1980). *Ch'ŏnmin* were defined in terms of occupation: musicians, shamans, butchers, and so on.

The link between shamans and musicians is a shared social background and, until recently, a requirement to work only within their status group. In addition, the link reflects a shared knowledge and interest in music, dance, and ritual. Hence, the similarity between *shinch'ŏng*, institutes for the shamans of particular areas, and the 18th century musicians' *chaein ch'ŏng* in Kyŏnggi province.

By becoming a *kisaeng*, the daughter of a shaman could escape poverty and train herself for a marginally more rewarding life. She might find a husband outside the shaman fraternity, or more likely could become a concubine or second wife to a wealthy *yangban*, whereas in the locality of her parents she could descend no lower down the social scale. In Chindo, Chŏng (Pak 1's second wife) had trained as a dancer on the mainland. On her marriage, she agreed to learn shaman rituals. Similarly, members of the Pak lineage remembered the musical skills of several male ancestors (Pak Chonggi was the most famous; Howard 1990: 196-198). And the Ch'ae and Kang families were represented both as musicians and as shamans by Chindo informants. Recently, one Ch'ae and one Kang have been appointed Human Assets for their accompaniment as *Ssikkim kut* rituals.[8] There has thus been much movement between one occupation and the other. Kendall (forthcoming) cites examples from other scholars: Ch'oe Kilsŏng, who describes the mother of one informant as "a shaman who had been a famous *kisaeng* in Kyŏngju" (1981: 132), Wilson, who talks of a shaman who "had been a *Kisaeng* in her 20s" (1983: 69), and Loken-Kim, who mentions "a pretty child from a shaman family who trained and followed a *kisaeng* life" (n.d.: 2).

The link becomes stronger with the realization that employment potentials for women interested in music have been restricted. Until the late 19th century, and then only with the support of Shin Chaehyo, no woman was trained to sing *p'ansori*. Since *p'ansori* represented the height of vocal music outside the court, no woman could enjoy any prestige as a 'great singer' (*myŏngch'ang*). It was also inappropriate for upright women to play instruments either in rural society or amongst the aristocracy. In the Korean countryside today it is still men who make up village bands, and at parties men alone play *kayagŭm* (12 string half-tube zither), *ajaeng* (here, an 8-string bowed half-tube zither), *taegŭm* (vertical flute), or *t'ungso* (horizontal flute). In contrast, low status *kisaeng* and female shamans are seen in pictures from the 17th century onwards playing instruments. And, from our knowledge of this latter period, it seems reasonable to suppose that earlier extant artefacts which depict music and dance portray women of similar status (for examples, see Pratt 1987: plates 106-7 and 113-117).

Except in Cheju and the southeast of the Korean peninsula, there is little evidence today that women commonly provide the musical accompaniment for shaman rituals. In *Ŭlhwa*, the shaman lives with a man who carries her props to, and prepares the stage at, rituals. I have noted similar things in Chindo. That this is so, and that men provide musical accompaniment subservient to female shamans, appears to invert normative gender relations in a Confucian society. Not surprisingly, then, male accompanists and men who co-habit with female shamans come in for much scorn. In some places, they are considered lazy good-for-nothings (Rutt 1961:8). To that intrepid traveller Isabella Bird Bishop, "A man sometimes marries a [shaman] but he is invariably a fellow of the base sort who desires to live in idleness on the earnings of his wife" (Bishop 1897: 425).

Gender and Life

Could it be that female shamans have carried off something of a domestic coup d'etat? In 1983, experienced Chindo shamans charged between 40,000 *wŏn* and 60,000 *wŏn* a ritual. Male accompanists usually got rather less. In addition, female shamans asked for gifts from clients during a ceremony. Some money was given ostensibly as spirit money to gods, but some was a direct reward for the shaman's performance. Shamans also received an obligatory *mal* (18.039 litres) of rice which, during the ritual, was both offered to ancestors at the altar and sat as the base of the dead's spirit pole (*sŏndae*). Shamans expected to perform a minimum of six ceremonies a month, yet the average monthly farming income was little more than 200,000 *wŏn*. Although this may not have been true in the recent past, by the 1980s they therefore enjoyed an economic independence almost unique amongst Korean women. Shaman families had less need for agricultural land yet they had more disposable income. More importantly in the Confucian-oriented Korean society, the purse strings were held by the customarily weaker marriage partner.

The story of Pari Kongju is an example of female filial piety. Thrown out by her sonless parents, she searches the underworld until she finds an elixir to restore them to life. To Kendall, the story pairs with male filial piety. Before males can conduct *chesa* ancestral rites, females (shamans and their clients) lead the dead to the other world (Kendall 1985: 154). Confucian piety extends beyond here, however: in ascending order the Korean must respect first sons, fathers and rulers.

Shamans, far from matching the male-orientated system, break the rules.[9] They are considered unreliable mothers or wives, notorious spendthrifts, drinkers, and loose—they are thought likely to conduct illicit affairs. I have already noted that shamans and *kisaeng* often become concubines or second wives. In Kim's novel, Ŭlhwa has one husband and several

lovers. She begins to shake and tremble after sex, a pure sign that her spirits have lost their patience with her indulgence. Other examples are plentiful in Kendall's work. Sŏngjuk Mansin was troubled when her husband returned after 20 years. When he tried to sleep with her, her jealous gods departed in indignation. Yang Mansin could not find a husband, so she stopped her rituals and became a fortune-teller. Her spirits forced her back to shamanism. Yongsu's Mother lost one husband young, and from then on the spirits refused to let her take a second spouse.

In Chindo one important element is added: shamans may live with men, but they do so reluctantly. Kim 1 said she was forced into shamanism because her husband and father-in-law were always too drunk to tend their few fields. Over on the mainland near Haenam, her own father had been no more understanding of her shaman mother. Yi 1 lived at the other end of Sangbojŏn village to his wife, yet they performed as shaman and accompanist at local rituals. Their daughter, Yi 2, left her first husband because he forced her to perform rituals while he enjoyed himself. By 1983 she had a new husband, her accompanist at rituals. She rarely lived with this husband, however, since his first wife and family lived miles away on the other side of the island.

The stereotypical shaman is controlled by, or responsible to, particular spirits. Her spirits require looking after, so her household may be neglected. Kim Tongni therefore makes much of the unkempt state of the shaman's house and garden in *Ŭlhwa*. It might be that shamanism attracts women who do not fit the expected (traditional) housewife and mother role well. I find such an idea tempting in the light of recent publications on *Minjung*. Entertainment of the masses, it is suggested, until recently centred on local rituals. The rituals provided a cathartic release from pent-up tension caused by adherence to life styles and behaviour imposed by an elite aristocracy (Cho 1987).[10] If this is so, then shamans can hardly be expected to follow that same etiquette.

It seems that where hereditary shamanism is involved family life must move further away from the Confucian norm. There is evidence that, amongst such families, a daughter may be more prized than a son. And, usually in Korea, failure to produce a son is unlikely to provide grounds for divorce. Again, there is a problem with this line of argument, namely, the nationwide practice of exogamous marriage. In the Pak lineage this is plain: family descent is described in terms of male ancestors and inheritance of the so-called *tan'gol p'an* in terms of daughters-in-law. I indicated earlier that women who become wives in shaman families must be prepared to train as practitioners. Pak 1's first wife, from central Korea, had been reluctant to perform rituals according to several island informants. This, they said, lay behind her dismissal; by the 1980s she lived in Seoul. It appears that, at least in Chindo, only women from the same social group, that is shamans and musicians, have normally been prepared to enter such a marriage.

Eliade, Lewis, and Douglas have all noted that women are marginal members of society (see Campbell 1976: 79-81). Women are subject to the control of men in social institutions. To Lewis, shamanism is a revolt against inequality. To Douglas, trance reflects the marginal nature of shamanism's adherents. Douglas extends the argument from here to demonstrate common boundaries between pollution and danger—the danger of a possessing spirit and the symbols of pollution which women exhibit in their physical make-up.

And so I must move to consider traditional Korean views of women's physical identity. It comes as no surprise that menstrual blood carried an image of pollution, as witnessed in *Tŏkkaebi kut*. At the same time, giving birth brought danger from pollution. In Chŏlla province, the after-birth was burnt, women were isolated, and the household where a child had been born was declared off-limits. The latter is normally said to prevent disease from entering (Han 1977), but it equally avoids pollution escaping. The behaviour of village bands is informative here. First, and in common with many accounts of communal labour teams (*ture* and *p'umashi*), intercourse was prohibited

between husbands and wives during the period when the band was operational. Second, during village cleansing rites such as *maegut*, households where a birth had recently taken place were avoided; people from such a household were not allowed to play with the band. Amongst the membership of bands, spirits were considered polluting, and those who came in close contact—particularly the *chorijung*—accordingly wore masks that disguised their identity.

Physical make-up clearly suggests that shamans should be women. Women are the receptacles for human spirits through birth. The Korean syllable for womb/stomach, *pae*, sounds synonymous to that for boat. This leads to a number of puns but, and more importantly, a boat is the vehicle in which the dead travels to the other world in *Ssikkim kut*. Women, inherently polluted, cleanse their bodies through menstruation. The metaphors for spiritual cleansing and spirit possession clearly need far more elaboration, but I shall leave that for future study.

Conclusion

My conclusion is to transform the organisational hatstand of my introduction into a wardrobe. Most Korean shamans are women because of a number of disparate criteria, not all of which need be present in any given case. From life, the pressure on men to act publicly within the constraints of Confucian ideology is greater than that on women. From life, too, it may be that women who cannot fit the behavioural straight-jacket find in shamanism a release. From life a woman inherits social status, but perhaps from musical knowledge, exposure to performance, and practical expertise comes the ability to entertain. The ideology of pollution is part of both religion and life. But solely from religion comes a closeness to soul, that is the ability to move into trance, the potential to become a spirit vessel, and the knowledge that allows a woman to invoke and listen to spirits.

NOTES

1. This paper is really an exploratory account. I carried out fieldwork in South Chŏlla province and the island of Chindo between 1982 and 1984 sponsored by the British Economic and Social Science Research Council. Additional data was collected on subsequent trips. Other scholars have worked far more extensively than me on this topic; since writing the preliminary draft of this paper I have read, and am particularly indebted to, Laurel Kendall's forthcoming paper.

2. This figure should not be considered a true ratio. It reflects male membership in a government-sponsored association. Women are less likely to join such associations. The figure is taken from 1976 Economic Planning Board statistics. More recent *Korea Statistical Yearbooks* do not give figures for shaman practitioners.

3. The lineage chart has been published elsewhere (Howard 1990: 194).

4. For details of the Korean Intangible Cultural Asset system see Howard 1988: 935-961. The composition of the Asset *Ssikkim kut* team and its development are also considered in Howard 1990.

5. Walraven points out "the truth that much of the literature so far consists of oversimplifications", a reflection on the colourful texts by Covell, Huhm and Lee as much as on Korean language accounts (Walraven 1983: 258; see also Covell 1983; Huhm 1980; Lee 1981).

6. A translation by Hyun Song Shin and Eugene Chung of Kim Dong-ni's [Kim Tongni] *Ŭlhwa* has recently appeared, titled *The Shaman Sorceress* (1989).

7. There is a nice story that illustrates the *ch'ŏnmin* status, about a musician who tried to pass himself off as a *yangban*, recounted by Crane (1978: 30).

8. Kang was never appointed a Human Asset, but merely as a future Human Asset (*in'gan munhwajae hubo*). He died in 1988.

9. It is not infrequent that Confucian codes are both strengthened and threatened. Consider the basic stories in the *p'ansori* repertory: *Hŭngboga* tells of the meanness of an elder brother—the inheritor of family property—but also of the eventual rich reward of his younger brother; *Ch'unhyangga* tells of the faithfulness of a wife, but she is the daughter of a *kisaeng* who has illegally married a *yangban* man far above her status; *Sugungga*

describes the proper relationship between subject and king, but in the story a hare (as subject) deceives the Dragon King.

10. See also Hyun 1981 for a similar case, though Hyun is concerned primarily with mask dance dramas.

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KOREA: THE LAND OF THE *KYE*

DIETER EIKEMEIER

Korea, misnamed the Land of the Morning Calm, could much more appropriately be called the Land of the *Kye*. For even in the past, the number of Koreans who ever had the opportunity to enjoy calm mornings must have been small, and their numbers much have become even smaller as Korea became one of the most densely populated areas in the world, a country plagued by noise. There are reasons to believe that at any time between the mid-1920s and the early 1970s, an average of 10% or 12% of the Korean population were involved in *kye* affairs, with their numbers perhaps reaching a peak of 20% early in the period. The number of *kye* members was no smaller than that of Korean Christians during the same period. If we consider Christianity an important part of Korean life during the past decades, the same must be said of the *kye*, though of course Christianity and *kye* affect people in quite different ways.

What is a *Kye*?

I here talk about *kye* as collective enterprises that are concerned with the raising and spending of material means—which today means money. By emphasising the concern with money, I do not take fully into account the Korean usage of the

term *kye*. Koreans tend to apply the term to any association that is not a parish, a modern western-style club, a labour or political union, or not primarily based on kinship. The term *kye* may be, and often is, applied to associations which are not characterised by any particular dealing with money and even to associations which outwardly appear to have purely convivial motives. There are two reasons, however, why I nevertheless emphasis the concern with money. In the first place, it appears to me that associations called *kye* which at some points in time are purely social in character may become instrumental in acquiring and spending money at other times. In my view, *kye*, at least potentially, have always been to do with money. Korean observers appear to be either unaware of this potential or tend not to talk about it. The reason for their silence may be that involvement in a *kye* is often accompanied by a loss of money. Since any loss is unpleasant and not to be readily talked about, Koreans may feel it best to avoid discussing the material origins of *kye*. Secondly, it is only by including and even placing uppermost the financial concerns of *kye* that a study reveals the clues to wider aspects of the economy, society and culture of Korea. This, after all, is the ultimate purpose of such a study.

People who start a *kye* do so by raising money from among their own ranks and thereby form a capital stock. The stock, or part of it, is then lent out for a limited period of time—usually six months. At the end of the term, the money will be re-collected together with interest. By giving loans and collecting interest, a *kye* continually increases its assets. *Kye* business may thus be basically said to be an effort to obtain financial gains.

In terms of membership, *kye* are small associations. Most *kye* will comprise not more than twenty to twenty-five people. Many will only accept household heads as members, who then act on behalf of their households. This is why the number of people actually affected by *kye* is much larger than that of actual members. A *kye* membership will meet at regular intervals to draw up balance-sheets and to take decisions on the future use of assets. Such meetings invariably coincide with the end of a loan term. From among its own ranks, a *kye* will

elect three or four officers who run the *kye* business for a certain period and then step down to be replaced after new elections. *Kye* are thus egalitarian and democratic in nature.

I should add here that membership of an individual *kye* is never composed entirely of kin. *Kye* may serve the interests of kin groups, as at least one type actually does, but only in an indirect way. In recent times it is apparent that *kye* have never been instruments of one single kin group. Even the *kye* that do serve the requirements and interests of kin groups are unions of several such groups, each of which is represented by one member. Rather than being kinship associations then, *kye* are unions of people who share a common social and economic background or who are age peers.

I have not so far said what *kye* do with their gains. In short, they use them for the acquisition and maintenance of anything that can be bought and kept with money, including money itself. In the light of this, I suggest a subdivision into three categories. In the first category, *kye* will give money to anybody who for whatever reason is in need of it and whom the *kye* members deem able to pay back in a prescribed time. Such *kye* are in fact small-scale loan banks. They respond to the needs of people who are either unwilling to turn to the public banking system or who have no chance to obtain money from that system. Naturally, such *kye* were essential to the economic life of Korea when there was no public system, or when public banks were less developed than today. These *kye* were more or less urban affairs and were often run by women.

In the second category, *kye* spend their gains on ends which are collectively pursued by members. Such collective ends are chosen from a large variety which comprise such divergent activities as the organisation of picnics, the arrangement of communal festivities, the purchase and the raising of oxen, swine, or poultry, the purchase and maintenance of tools and agricultural machinery, and the maintenance and common exploitation of woodland.

In the third category, *kye* are mutual insurance ventures. Such *kye* make allocations to their members or member

households only, and do so not at regular intervals but at times when a member is in need of an extraordinarily large amount of money. Typically, such allocations are made when a household holds a marriage or funeral.

In the sort of short description such as I have just given I cannot do justice to the breathtaking sophistication that often governs the rules and actual business conduct of all *kye*. Nor can I describe the risks that often go with *kye* ventures. However, with regard to the ends which *kye* pursue, there are certain peculiarities which I do not want to let pass unnoticed. I summarise the peculiarities with the term "versatility". So far, I have studied in detail one *kye* only involved in the pursuits to which the term fully applies; I have described the *kye* and summarised my findings in an article which appeared in 1986.[1] Unfortunately, almost none of the people who have studied *kye* so far have given any attention to the phenomenon of versatility. The failure to do so is responsible for the current confusion about what *kye* are. I touch briefly upon this versatility because I believe it is a far more widespread and interesting phenomenon than most people are aware of, and because it accounts for much of the effectiveness and viability of *kye*.

It is not only that *kye* pursue a variety of purposes. Within one and the same *kye* people may pursue more than one end, possibly in more than one of the categories I have listed, and they may pursue them at one and the same time. In the regulations of the one *kye* into which I have made a detailed inquiry it is stated that the allocations made are meant to cover the expenses for marriage and mourning ceremonies. In the light of this, the *kye* could be rated as a mutual insurance venture. In fact, however, the *kye* once also bought and raised two oxen and could therefore be considered an association under the second of my categories. Throughout all of its recorded history, that is between March 1962 and April 1970, the *kye* also gave private loans to its members continuously, the reasons for which have mostly not been recorded. The *kye* was thus also a private bank. This was actually its main function. As a matter of fact, 68% of the allocations made were

private loans, which means that less than a third of the allocations were spent on other things. Indeed, the aims for which the *kye* appears to have been established ranked last!

Generally speaking, the reason for such versatility is this: *kye* are solutions to extraordinary, often unique situations, sometimes even to crises of an individual or group. Such situations vary, change or altogether disappear. And so do the *kye*. This means, among other things, that *kye* may change their aims or pursue a variety of aims at once. Since the desire to respond to extraordinary situations appears to be the basis of all *kye*, I believe that versatility, too, is a general characteristic of *kye*.

The place of *kye* in the economy, society, and culture of Korea

i. *Kye contribute to refute the idea of Korean familism*

In the first place, *kye* help us to avert our eyes a little bit from the family in Korea and thereby to gain an altered and more appropriate view of Korean society as a whole. It is a widely held opinion that the family is the focus of every Korean's concern and attention. By saying this is so, people usually do not only want to emphasize that Koreans in their economic dealings act on behalf of their families, nor that they do so to the exclusion of any other institution. Usually, people want to emphasize that the family and its common wealth is the only reliable source for one's individual material well-being.

ii. *Kye are vehicles of egalitarianism in Korean society*

Kye in a certain sense diverge from standards that have become widely acknowledged as characteristic of Korean society. There can be little doubt that that society has over the past few hundred years, and indeed up to the present time, been a highly atomised society divided by status and age. While

this is true, it is also true that people like to join hands and do things together. They are often compelled to do so out of sheer economic necessity. Since people may draw much satisfaction from uninhibited face-to-face relations and egalitarian co-operation, some kind of egalitarianism is found in every society, however strict its hierarchical order. Given the Korean division along the lines of status and age, the egalitarian response in Korea has been to establish collective associations that are organised on the basis of compatability of economic means, social status, and proximity of age. Perhaps any combination of the three has been involved. The *kye* have been the foremost means of expressing this egalitarianism in Korea, and they thus help to determine the limits of societal division in Korea.

The membership of a *kye* consists of people who share a common economic and social background. Members can be, for instance, housewives, farmers, grandmothers, or small businessmen. People tend to establish *kye* groups amongst their age-peers or amongst those of roughly similar age. Age-peerness, apparently, is the factor which may be considered the most Korean aspect of *kye*. Associations which are in many ways similar to the Korean *kye* have been fairly widespread throughout the world—including Europe—and through all ages until the recent past. No non-Korean association, however, seems to place a similar importance on age-peerage. In turn, the very existence of age-peerage in Korean *kye* demonstrates how decisive this was and is in Korean society.

In a wider sense, the outlook of *kye* is the outlook of the so-called "common folk." At least in the recent past, most *kye* have been unions of lower-class people. Their members share the experience of having no real access to the privileged ranks of élite society. What unites them, then, is the fact that each person has to spend his or her life in the shadow of privilege as it were, and so each is roughly equal in his or her social position. Such circumstances make *kye* affairs of the commoner and endows their unions with the spirit of egalitarianism and self-regulation.

Saying that *kye* manifest an element of egalitarianism is not only to accept that Korean society has been less strictly hierarchical and divisive than many scholars have led us to believe. It also suggests something which is political in nature. Here, I am referring to a belief that appears to be fairly widespread in south Korean government circles and which, once again, has to do with familism. This belief comes down to the statement that Koreans are all too prone to limit their outlook and activities to their family and are neither willing nor able to co-operate with people beyond the family circle. From this it has often been concluded that Koreans have not yet reached the stage of maturity required before they can practice democracy. More, it is assumed that democracy can only be established after Koreans have absorbed a proper spirit of co-operation. *Kye* offer proof that in one sense this reasoning is ill-founded. They show that Koreans do have the willingness and ability to co-operate with each other beyond the family sphere, even though the spirit of their co-operation may be limited to unions formed on the basis of common background.

iii. *Kye are significant phenomena in pre-modern Korean society*

My third point has to do with *kye* as phenomena in pre-modern society. This is a point both close to my heart and to my professional outlook, because my reasoning will in part take me into the field of Korean culture and Korean mentality, carrying me a little beyond the confines of economy and society. My reasoning brings me to suggest in sharp profile that the society to which *kye* essentially belong is a pre-modern one. My use of the term "pre-modern" does not imply a mode of social organization which belongs to the past in the sense that it is to be considered totally abandoned today. Rather, I indicate a mode which, although it has its roots in the past and once dominated the total of a given population, continues shaping portions—notably lower-class groups or isolated and remote communities—of present-day Korean society. In my

conception, then, the survival of *kye* becomes a standard by which one can determine the modernity of Korean society.

Historians and cultural anthropologists seem to widely acknowledge that in pre-modern societies festivity and material abundance are closely related. *Kye* are significant phenomena in per-modern Korea because in a certain sense they generate both abundance and festivity. They generate affluence which is consumed at times of celebration, or they partly transform their actual meetings into festivals. Thus, they not only reconfirm the intimate relationship between the two elements, but also help prove that the society in which they exist is essentially pre-modern. Further, they thus prove themselves significant elements of Korean pre-modern society.

To illustrate my point I first of all have to say a few words about the ephemeral nature of abundance in pre-modern societies. Affluence and abundance may appear to be too preposterous as terms to circumscribe a state that would already have been attained if a people had enough to eat and drink. Something as primordial as to be seated at a richly laid table is already far from being a regular sight in the average pre-modern society. And it also seems to me that the members of pre-modern societies are not thought of as constituting a unified body corporate. As a consequence of this, little thought is given to the possibility that the common wealth of a society can, or perhaps even should, be distributed in such a way that even the meanest members are guaranteed a modest stable livelihood. Korean pre-modern society is no exception to the rule, despite the Confucian rhetoric of charity and attentive caring. A decent livelihood, let alone abundance, is more of an exception than the rule in the lives of common people. It is its exceptional character that brings abundance close to festivity. Since both features are exceptional, the idea must easily have intruded into the minds of people to bring the two together through deliberate action. This must have occurred throughout the world, for it is apparently impossible to dissociate festivity from good eating and good drinking. This is true even in our modern western societies, where material insecurity has receded into the distance.

It is at this point that *kye* once again come into my vision. As I said earlier, *kye* generate affluence to be consumed at times of festivity. Two occasions stand out conspicuously amongst the many festivities of Korea, those of marriage celebrations and mourning ceremonies. Both affect each individual, and they do so in one way or another several times in his or her lifetime. Both are also functions that attract not only kin but people from the surrounding neighbourhood or village. All who come expect to be well wined and dined. This means, amongst other things, that both occasions are costly affairs, the expenses of which may easily exceed the means available to a single household. I hardly need to add that the bulk of the costs are for food and drink: the mere fact of festivity makes people expect to be treated in a manner they cannot enjoy in normal daily life.

It is therefore no surprise to observe that *kye* are established to help member households cover the expenses incurred at times of marriage and funerals. A substantial portion, if not the majority of Korean *kye*, have always been ostensibly for marriage and mourning. Hence, they are mutual insurance ventures. Between the mid 30s and early 70s of our century the number of such *kye* amounted to about 56% of the total, with around 45% of all association members. Such percentages are not merely impressive proof of the place of marriage celebrations and mourning ceremonies in the Korean festive world. They also demonstrate the close links which festivity and abundance have, and to the important service *kye* have rendered to such functions to support both rituals and occasions at which food and drink could be enjoyed. It is interesting to note that one of the two Chinese characters for rendering *kye* contains the "omen" radical, used in many characters connected with ritual and religion, while the other contains the "grain" radical.[2]

Conclusion

I conclude by referring to what I regard as one of the consequences of the intended purposes of the *kye* discussed so far. I have noted that *kye* bring together affluence and festivity to the extent that *kye* business meetings easily turn into festive functions. This regularly happens as business passes over to the enjoyment of a good meal and eventually into collective merriment. Significantly, even purely business-minded *kye* often invest part of their gains in the eating and drinking which concludes a meeting. Indeed the festive function may be the main incentive for members to attend. It is also of note that many *kye* hold their meetings at times which coincide with communal festivals or public holidays, and therefore with periods already marked for relaxation and enjoyment.

NOTES

1. Dieter Eikemeier, "Law, contract, and covenant: aspects of a mutual insurance venture." In *Anthropology of Law in the Netherlands* 116, *Essays on Legal Pluralism* (Dordrecht, Floris Publications, 1986), pp.260-287.
2. The two characters are 契 and 癸

THE RISE OF *CHUNGIN* AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

LEE SŎNGMU

The Concept of *Chungin*

During the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) there was a social status group, the *chungin* (lit. "middle people"), lower than the aristocratic *yangban*, but higher than the commoner *sangmin*. The term *chungin* was not only used as a general name for this status group, but also had several other meanings:

1. *chungin* could have a moral connotation to designate people of mediocre character;
2. *chungin* could mean people who were only moderately wealthy;
3. Professionals (*kisulgwan*) who lived along Seoul's central street—the translators, physicians, mathematicians, lawyers, *ŭm-yang* specialists, calligraphers, calendar specialists, and painters—were called *chungin*;

4. the descendants of *sadaebu*, who for generations were active as professionals, were also called *chungin*;

I concentrate in this study only on the social meaning of the term, that is, on *chungin* who are socially placed between the aristocracy and the commoners. In a narrow sense only professionals were actually called *chungin*. The broader meaning of the term was mainly used in the second half of the Chosŏn dynasty, but I believe it does no harm to use this meaning for the whole dynasty.

The Development of the *Chungin* Class

I have shown elsewhere that the *chungin* became an independent social class at the beginning of Chosŏn.[1] How did this happen? The roots of the *chungin* were in the *yi* of the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392). *Yi* were an independent group that stood in contrast to the civil and military aristocracy and included various administrative specialists. Moreover, one group of *yi* formed the *namban* (*nam* = south; *ban* = class or order) who, together with the *tongban* and *sŏban* were called the *samban* (*tong* = east; *sŏ* = west; *sam* = three). The term for each "*ban*" group reflects a descending order of official positions —*namban* through *tongban* to *sŏban*.

In the course of the establishment of a *yangban* bureaucracy in Koryŏ the *yi* gradually declined until they led only a parasitic existence. This existence became marked particularly towards the end of the dynasty. Their promotion to the ranks of aristocracy was blocked, and those in the *namban* changed their name to *namhang*, that is, those who provide a road for the protection of appointees entering government office. Their root was downwards, and by the beginning of Chosŏn the *yi* had deteriorated into the *chungin*. *Chungin*, as a lower ruling elite, came to be differentiated from the *yangban*, the higher ruling elite. This differentiation occurred gradually and marked the expansion of the ruling

class. It thus had considerable historical significance. In this paper, it is necessary to investigate in some detail the process by which the *yi* became *chungin*.

First I want to digress slightly and investigate the transformation of another group, the *hyangni*. The *hyangni* were the source of the *yangban* bureaucrats of Koryŏ, but they were also the local rulers of small administrative units to which no magistrates were dispatched by the central administration.[2] Their semi-independent existence proved an obstacle in the centralization of Koryŏ. Through the examination system and the office of *sori* a number of *hyangni* became officials, but a policy to suppress them was imposed which, when strengthened, meant that their position weakened. By the end of Koryŏ, the admission of *hyangni* to the civil service examinations was restricted, and those who passed the examinations were no longer exempted from corvee labour. Consequently, the occupations of the *hyangni* group became despised.

The anti-*hyangni* policy was strengthened further at the beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty. Except for those who had passed the civil *mun'gwa* examinations or had acquired special merits, all *hyangni* who held office below the third rank were ousted; their ownership of land (*oeyŏkchŏn*) which had been granted by government was nullified and their salaries were stopped. Moreover, with the district and area reorganisations of *kun* and *hyŏn* and the forced migration of people to the northern frontier regions, many *hyangni* left their original *pon'gwan* (the places of their lineage's founding ancestors) and moved to other localities. The *hyangni* had been prominent in their localities, but they were now up-rooted and expelled to distant places where they became post station attendants. The local *yangban* who remained behind founded associations known as *yuhyangso* and *hyangya*, and these were critical of *hyangni* influence. The measures against *hyangni* proved decisive. They lost their standing as local strongmen and were demoted to administrative officials. And thus the *hyangni* gradually became *chungin*, distinct from the aristocracy. In fact, most post station attendants, literally named cattle

herders, resembled *hyangni* but were even lower on the social scale.

Those who held the position of *sŏri* officers in Koryŏ received grades sixteen to eighteen in the office land system (*chŏnshigwa*), and there were no obstacles set in their way to stop their advance to the ranks of *yangban*. However, with the gradual enlargement of a *yangban* bureaucracy, their position also began to deteriorate. After the implementation of the rank land system of *kwajŏnbŏp* in 1391, land was no longer given to *sŏri* officials. They were no longer appointed as magistrates, and were made to wear a white pointed hat (*kat*) that further emphasised inferior social status.

With the beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty, prejudice towards *sŏri* officials intensified. They were at first given the office of *ch'aejik* and awarded a salary, but from 1466 this ceased. Moreover, the *sŏri* were divided into two groups: the higher ranking *noksa*, who could become local magistrates, and the lower *sŏri* who could only hope to become officials of the lowest rank as post station attendants (*yŏksŭng*) or ferry-point guards (*tosŭng*). Even *noksa* were given lesser posts as army officers (*kapsa*), however, but because the bi-annual quota was only ten men, most were given sinecures without salary or prescribed duties.

The period in office necessary for advancement was made unusually long: for *noksa* and *sŏri*—514 days and 2,600 days respectively. In comparison, a *yangban* official of rank seven and below needed to serve for just 450 days before he could advance one grade. Thus, the *sŏri* could not escape from the lowest ranks of officialdom. In such a situation, there were few *sŏri* aspirants, even though each township had to supply them from among the students of local schools every three years. Consequently, discrimination was the main reason why the *sŏri* became differentiated from the aristocracy as they too sank to *chungin* status.

The professional class, too, began to be differentiated from the *yangban* from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards. During Koryŏ they had enjoyed a salary and were

ranked as grades fifteen and sixteen (the *chŏnshikwa*). Even during the first half of Chosŏn, sons of *yangban* pursued the same occupations and occupied the same grades. But from the second half of the fifteenth century such technical appointments were turned into *ch'aejik* positions which no longer received awards of land. Professionals were still treated as civil officials, but they were no longer allowed to attend court standing alongside local gentry. Rather, they had to stand with the *sŏban*. It was thus made difficult for technical experts to advance into the ranks of the aristocracy. The *yangban*, in their turn, no longer wanted to be appointed to such low grade posts and eventually came to despise the occupations which accompanied them. Consequently, technical offices gradually became hereditary duties held by the professional groups.

From the beginning of Chosŏn the secondary sons of *yangban* concubines (*sŏŏl*) were subject to discriminatory treatment. They could not take civil service examinations and thus could not be appointed to *yangban* offices. Only the commoner secondary sons of officials of second rank and above (*sŏja*) could be appointed to technical offices, whereas the sons of slave mothers (*ŏlcha*) could receive only minor appointments. Since the secondary sons of officials below the second rank were not granted protected appointments, they stood little chance of getting any official position. At first, they were only prevented from holding important *yangban* offices, but after the promulgation of the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* national code in 1485 descendants of secondary sons were completely barred from office. This selection process was supported with appropriate Confucian morality by the aristocracy. Many of the descendents of *yangban*, as *sadaebu*, thus also moved to the *chungin* group.

From this brief account it can be seen how at the beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty the ruling elite began to separate into two groups, the *yangban* and the *chungin*. The latter consisted not only of the various groups discussed above, who had separated through a gradual process of differentiation through discrimination from the ruling elite, but also rich commoners who advanced into their ranks. The latter group

were also an important element in the growing *chungin*. By becoming students at local schools (*hyanggyo*) or military personnel (*sŏnmu kun'gwan*), people of commoner stock attempted to escape from active military duty. Such students had the possibility to become interpreters or *sŏri*. The fact that after the second half of the fifteenth century commoners entered local schools in order to avoid military service shows that this was one path for social advancement. The same was true with military personnel. Wealthy commoners who were neither *yangban* nor *sangmin* were not given military tasks and thus came to be regarded as *chungin*. There were quotas for students at local schools, but any commoners who made substantial contributions would be admitted. There were also other methods by which commoners could become *chungin*, for example through the contribution of grain, military success, or the falsification of household registers (*hojŏk*) and genealogies (*chokpo*).

The rise of the *chungin*, which had begun with the diversification of the ruling class at the beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty, became even more pronounced with the development of trade and a monetary economy towards the end of the dynasty.

The Composition and Nature of the *Chungin*

The composition of the *chungin* class was more complex than that of other social status groups. Some *chungin* were similar to *yangban*, yet some were lowborn (being born as *ch'ŏnmin*). The reason for this variety lay in the fact that the compensation received from the state and the social appreciation of *chungin* depended on a great number of services which had been rendered. Although in Chosŏn social status was a prerequisite for office, the actual holding of office was in turn a criterion for determining social status. It is therefore true to say that the social complexity of the *chungin* was a function of their occupational complexity.

The social differentiation within the *chungin* group was well expressed by the restrictions placed on the holding of offices. Professionals could advance to senior third rank (*tangsang*), but local officials (*hyangni*) had no official ranks (they in fact corresponded to fifth rank) and *sŏri* held the lower seventh rank. Among the professionals, translators, physicians, mathematicians, and legal experts belonged to an upper group (*tangsang*), but astronomers, painters, and Taoist practitioners remained in a lower group (senior seventh rank). The lowest technical posts, for example musicians, were manned by outcast *ch'ŏnmin*; these were not *chungin* occupations.

The secondary sons of *yangban* were also differentiated from sons of commoner mothers—who could hold offices as professionals -, and sons of slave mothers—who could only hold minor posts. Of course, office and rank restrictions depended on the kind of offices that an individual's forebears had held.

The *hyangni* were advisors to local magistrates, and here there were also several categories: the *hojang* could, in place of the magistrate, visit the king at the beginning of each year; some *hyangni* were in charge of the six departments of a magistrate's office (the *yukpang hyangni*); the *saengni* fulfilled all kinds of odd duties. Because the latter's duties were low, some scholars think that all *hyangni* occupations were low. Seen from the *yangban* point of view this is true, but seen from a commoner point of view the occupations are far from low.

Among *sŏri* officials there were also two categories, as we have seen. Even though the higher *noksa* denoted an office usually held by *sŏri*, it was possible to advance upwards from this position by taking the appropriate exams to *yangban* offices. No such upward mobility was possible for the lower *sŏri*.

There are similar differentiations amongst other social groups who belonged to the *chungin*. Because the composition of the *chungin* class is so complex, it is difficult to find a common denominator for all members. While the *yangban* constituted the upper ruling class in charge of policy

formulation, the *chungin* formed a lower ruling stratum that took care of administration. Their positions, therefore, did not come up to those of *yangban*, but were markedly higher than those of commoners. Moreover, the *chungin* began to clearly rise above commoners from the fifteenth century onwards, and by the end of the Chosŏn dynasty they had come to form a separate social status group.

During the Chosŏn period then, the *chungin* played an important role in the Korean bureaucratic system. The elite *yangban* left administrative tasks to *chungin* while they themselves enjoyed poetry and other literati arts and suitably glorified the Confucian rule of the kingly way. Because of this, the administrative tasks of *chungin* gradually became hereditary, and the *chungin* were more and more differentiated both institutionally and ideologically. *Yangban* did not intermarry with *chungin*. On the other hand, the *chungin* came to live like parasites on the *yangban* and, protected by the latter's authority, engaged in illegal activities. As their knowledge and economic power developed in equal measure to that of the *yangban*, the *chungin* continually tried to liberate themselves socially from the ruling aristocracy. And, because their administrative tasks were important for the state, their position became firmly entrenched and their practical knowledge became important in modernizing society. Consequently, they became the forerunners of Korea's modernization and the first willing recipients of Western culture.

Through the long administrative experience of *chungin*, their behaviour became refined, their life-style improved, and they increasingly looked after their self interest. Their writing-style, poetry and prose, and their attitude towards life—in short their culture—developed separately from that of the *yangban*.

NOTES

1. Lee's book contains more extensive details on social stratification from the Koryŏ period forwards. See Lee [Yi] Sŏngmu, *Chosŏn ch'ogi yangban yŏn'gu* (Seoul, Ilchogak, 1980).

2. According to Lee Man Gap [Yi Man'gap] *hyangni*, as the later *hyangban*, were gentry who had moved to the countryside but who held no official positions. Lee divides social stratification into seven groups from aristocratic *yangban* down to the outcast *ch'ŏnmin* below *sangmin*. See Lee Man Gap, *Sociology and Social Change in Korea*: 5-8, 34-35, 143 (Seoul, Seoul National University Press, 1982).

GLOSSARY

ch'aejik	遞兒職	chapkwa	雜科
chŏnshigwa	田柴科	chokpo	族譜
ch'ŏnmin	賤民	ch'ŏnyŏk	賤役
Chosŏn	朝鮮	chungin	中人
hojang	戶長	hojŏk	戶籍
hyangni	鄕吏	hyangyak	鄕約
hyanggyo	鄕校	hyŏn	縣
kapsa	甲士	kisulgwan	技術官
Koryŏ	高麗	kun	郡
kunyŏk	軍役	kwajŏnbŏp	科田法
Kyŏngguk taejŏn	經國大典		
namban	南班	namhang	南行

noksa 祿事
oeyŏkchŏn 外役田
ŏlcha 孽子
pon'gwan 本貫
sadaebu 士大夫
saengni 色吏
samban 三班
sangmin
sŏban 西班
sŏja 庶子
sŏnmu kun'gwan 選武軍官
sŏŏl 庶孽
sŏri 胥吏
tangsang 堂上
tongban 東班
tosŏng 渡丞
yangban 兩班
yi 吏
yŏksŭng 驛丞
yuhyangso 留鄉所
yukpang hyangni 六房鄉吏