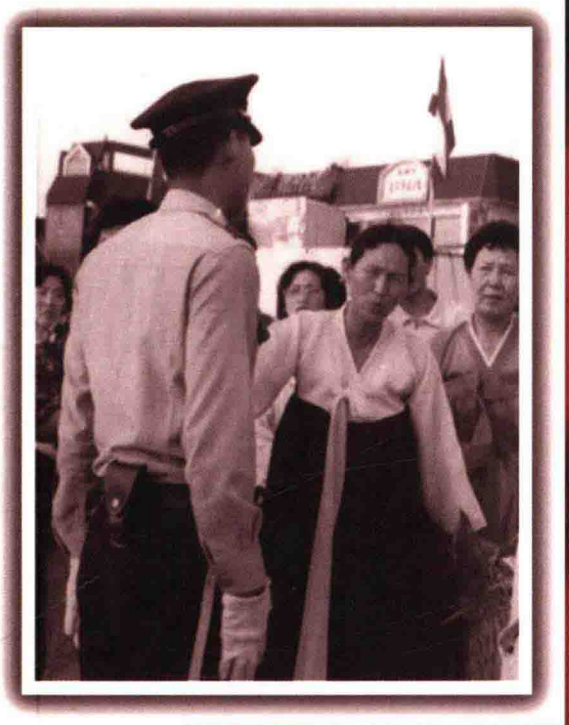

KOREAN SHAMANISM

The cultural paradox

Chongho Kim

ASHGATE

Why do Koreans use shamanic ritual even though prejudice against shamanism is universal? Why do so many Koreans employ a practice that is widely stigmatised and despised as superstition?

Shamanism has a contradictory position within the Korean cultural system. This has led to the periodical suppression of shamanism and has also, paradoxically, ensured its survival throughout Korean history. This book examines the place of shamans within contemporary society, exploring shamanism as a cultural practice in which people make use of shamanic ritual, and disputing the prevalent view that shamanism is 'popular culture', 'women's religion' or 'performing arts'. Kim also disputes the common view among medical anthropologists that places shamanism firmly within the realm of traditional medicine.

Drawing on case studies within Korea, Chongho Kim presents a study of indigenous anthropology with ethnographic material drawn from an insider's perspective and offers an engaging understanding of the appeal of this indigenous folk practice in a highly industrialised society. Directly confronting the prejudice against shamans and their paradoxical situation in a modern society such as Korea, this book reveals the cultural discrepancy between two worlds in Korean culture, the ordinary world and the shamanic world, and shows that these two worlds cannot be reconciled with each other. Kim explains that it is the difference between them that explains why shamans are necessary but also despised.

Focusing on ordinary people who make use of shamans, rather than focusing merely on the 'way of the shaman', this unique study of shamanism offers a significant contribution to the growing field of studies in indigenous anthropology and indigenous religions. Yet ***Korean Shamanism: The cultural paradox*** is not merely a piece of academic writing: it provides an enjoyable and captivating read for a wide range of readers through retelling the stories-never-to-be-told involving shamanic ritual.

Religion/Anthropology/Sociology

ISBN 0-7546-3185-0

ASHGATE

Ashgate Publishing Limited
Gower House, Croft Road
Aldershot, Hampshire
GU11 3HR, England

www.ashgate.com

9 780754 631859 >

Published in the VITALITY OF INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS series.

KOREAN SHAMANISM

Chongho Kir

ASHGATE

Korean Shamanism

The cultural paradox

CHONGHO KIM
Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology

ASHGATE

© Chongho Kim 2003

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

The author has asserted his moral right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the author of this work.

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Gower House
Croft Road
Aldershot
Hants GU11 3HR
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
Suite 420
101 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05401-4405
USA

Ashgate website: http://www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Kim, Chongho
Korean shamanism : the cultural paradox. - (Vitality of indigenous religions)
1.Shamanism - Korea (South)
I.Title
299.5'7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Kim, Chongho, 1954-
Korean Shamanism : the cultural paradox / Chongho Kim.
p. cm. -- (Vitality of indigenous religions)
ISBN 0-7546-3184-2 (alk. paper) -- ISBN 0-7546-3185-0 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Shamanism--Korea. 2. Korea--Civilization--Shamanistic influences. I. Title. II. Series.

BL2236.S5 K465 2003
299'.57--dc21

2002027803

ISBN 0 7546 3184 2 (Hbk)
ISBN 0 7546 3185 0 (Pbk)

Typeset by Manton Typesetters, Louth, Lincolnshire, UK.
Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall.

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

KOREAN SHAMANISM

Why do Koreans use shamanic ritual even though prejudice against shamanism is universal? Why do so many Koreans employ a practice that is widely stigmatized and despised as superstition?

Shamanism occupies a contradictory position within the Korean cultural system. This has led to the periodical suppression of shamanism and has also, paradoxically, ensured its survival throughout Korean history. This book examines the place of shamans within contemporary society, exploring shamanism as a cultural practice in which people make use of shamanic ritual, and disputing the prevalent view that shamanism is 'popular culture', 'women's religion', 'symbolic healing' or 'performing arts'. Kim also disputes the common view among medical anthropologists that places shamanism firmly within the realm of traditional medicine.

Drawing on case studies within Korea, Chongho Kim presents a study of indigenous anthropology with ethnographic material drawn from an insider's perspective and offers an engaging understanding of the appeal of this indigenous folk practice in a highly industrial society. Directly confronting the prejudice against shamans and their paradoxical situation in a modern society such as Korea, this book reveals the cultural discrepancy between two worlds in Korean culture, the ordinary world and the shamanic world, and shows that these two worlds cannot be reconciled with each other. Kim explains that it is the difference between them that explains why shamans are necessary but also despised.

Focusing on ordinary people who make use of shamans, rather than focusing merely on 'the way of the shaman', this unique study of shamanism offers a significant contribution to the growing field of studies in indigenous anthropology and indigenous religions. Yet *Korean Shamanism: The Cultural Paradox* is not merely a piece of academic writing: it provides an enjoyable and captivating read for a wide range of readers through retelling the stories-never-to-be-told involving shamanic ritual.

VITALITY OF INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS

Series Editors
Graham Harvey, King Alfred's College, UK
Lawrence Martin, University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, USA
Tabona Shoko, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe

Ashgate's *Vitality of Indigenous Religions* series offers an exciting new cluster of research monographs, drawing together volumes from leading international scholars across a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. Indigenous religions are vital and empowering for many thousands of indigenous peoples globally, and dialogue with, and consideration of, these diverse religious life-ways promises to challenge and refine the methodologies of a number of academic disciplines, whilst greatly enhancing understandings of the world.

This series explores the development of contemporary indigenous religions from traditional, ancestral precursors, but the characteristic contribution of the series is its focus on their living and current manifestations. Devoted to the contemporary expression, experience and understanding of particular indigenous peoples and their religions, books address key issues which include: the sacredness of land, exile from lands, diasporic survival and diversification, the indigenization of Christianity and other missionary religions, sacred language, and re-vitalization movements. Proving of particular value to academics, graduates, postgraduates and higher level undergraduate readers worldwide, this series holds obvious attraction to scholars of Native American studies, Maori studies, African studies and offers invaluable contributions to religious studies, sociology, anthropology, geography and other related subject areas.

OTHER TITLES IN THE SERIES

Sacred Landscapes and Cultural Politics
Edited by Philip P. Arnold and Ann Grodzins Gold
ISBN 0 7546 1569 3

Maya Identities and the Violence of Place
Charles D. Thompson, Jr.
ISBN 0 7546 1377 1

To my late mother and my wife Misook
who suffered the most from this research

Preface

This book is a study of the place of shamans (*mudang*) within contemporary Korean society, based on fieldwork both in the small town of Soy, some 150 km from Seoul, and in the city of Seoul itself. In the book, I explore what I call the *cultural paradox* of shamanism within Korean culture: why do Koreans use shamans even though prejudice against shamanism is universal and much consultation of shamans goes on in secret? Why do so many Koreans employ a practice that is widely stigmatized and despised as superstition?

I argue that shamanism has a contradictory position within the Korean cultural system. This contradictory position has led to the periodic suppression of shamanism and has also, paradoxically, ensured its survival throughout Korean history. At the same time, it is the contradictions surrounding shamanism which generate the power of shamanic healing. There is a cultural discrepancy between two worlds in Korean culture: the ordinary world and the shamanic world. These two worlds cannot be reconciled with each other, and it is the difference between them which explains why shamans are necessary, but also despised.

Although this book is a study of shamanism, shamans and their arguments are not my main concern. Rather, I focus on the ordinary people who make use of shamans. Throughout this research, I have tried to understand their point of view as closely as possible. I have approached shamanism, not as 'the way of the shaman', nor as a belief system, but as a cultural practice in which people make use of shamanic ritual. In several respects, this has led me to very different conclusions to existing studies of shamanism in Korea and elsewhere.

Previous studies have mainly focused on shamans and their views. However, I argue that shaman-centred studies are unable fully to comprehend the cultural paradox of shamanism. Shamans and their clients interact in a cultural environment, the central feature of which is the contradiction between shamanism and public culture. For this reason, this study is not focused on shamans, but on ordinary people, with the problems they refer to the shamans, and the ways in which they use the framework of shamanism to manage their problems.

Classical definitions of shamanism, following Mircea Eliade, again tend to focus on the shaman and on his or her technique and mental experience. I define shamanism in a quite different way: among the many forms of ritual in Korea, shamanic ritual is the only form in which the *spirits speak*. It is the speech of the spirits which gives shamanism its intrinsically paradoxical character. For a spirit to speak is nonsense for ordinary Koreans, but somehow this nonsense is necessary. Shamans are experts in dealing with matters which do not make sense in public Korean culture – with problems which cannot be solved within its framework. Shamanic healing is a kind of paradoxical healing in which the irrational is treated with irrationality.

I also argue that there is a close relationship between shamanism and the experience of misfortune: misfortune is one of the main themes of shamanism, and shamanism is a *cultural domain of misfortune*. The experience of misfortune is the main reason why people become involved in shamanic practice. Even in cases of illness, what is really being dealt with is not the illness as such, but the state of misfortune which is manifesting as the illness. Misfortune cannot be dealt with by biomedicine or herbal medicine, and this is why people seek shamanic healing even though biomedicine is readily available. Medical practitioners work in the field of health, but shamans work in 'the field of misfortune'. This is why I argue, in contrast to many previous authors, that shamanism should *not* be regarded as a sort of traditional medicine. The utilization of shamanic healing cannot be understood simply in terms of 'medical pluralism'.

The principal book-length English-language studies of Korean shamanism so far are the works of Youngsook Kim Harvey and, particularly, Laurel Kendall. Youngsook Kim Harvey's *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* (1979) is an illuminating study of the lives of six individual Korean women who became shamans and, while it illustrates some of the attitudes to shamans and the prejudice against them, it throws little light on the central question of my study – that is, why do Koreans use shamans despite the disrepute in which they are held?

The works of the well-known American anthropologist Laurel Kendall, including her two books, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Ritual Life* (1985) and *The Life and Hard Times of a Korean Shaman: Of Tales and the Telling of Tales* (1988a), are also based essentially on fieldwork with shamans, and present a shaman-centred view of shamanism and its significance in Korean culture. Kendall's works have attained considerable popularity. They are widely used in teaching anthropology and religious studies, and have helped create a significant level of interest in Korean shamans among researchers and students in these fields. However, I believe that her approach involves a basic misunderstanding of shamanism and of how it is regarded by ordinary Koreans. As a Western feminist, she romanticizes Korean shamanism, seeing it as a kind of 'women's religion' suppressed by patriarchy. Her views have been largely unchallenged within Western academic literature so far, and I see the contrast between her perspective and mine as a major point of interest in my book.

In addition, I feel my book could attract strong interest from medical anthropologists. This is a fast growing subdiscipline in anthropology, and many universities now offer courses in this area. I see my work as an important challenge to the existing paradigm in medical anthropology, which places shamanism firmly within the realm of traditional medicine.

I also see my book as a significant contribution to the growing field of studies in indigenous anthropology. As an indigenous anthropologist, I underwent a particular form of stigmatization and danger in entering the culturally constituted domain of misfortune in Korea through my research, and this led to my developing a unique methodology and epistemology. My book will be of interest to those concerned with this growing field, and also to the wider range of people interested in the subjective and personal dimension in anthropological writing.

There is also considerable interest in shamanism among so-called 'New Age' enthusiasts, with the works of Carlos Castaneda and Michael Harner and the

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

autobiography of the Oglala Sioux 'medicine man' Black Elk attracting many millions of readers. While the perspective I offer is, in many ways, a challenge to New Age romanticizing of shamanism, my book could be of interest to this body of readers, designed as it is not only for academics but for a wide range of readers.

I have deliberately used a mixture of styles in the book. Much of the main text is in a relatively traditional academic style, although I have attempted to ensure readability throughout. The ethnographic data, however, is mostly presented in a more personal style, in which my role as an indigenous anthropologist – a theme which runs throughout the book – is highlighted. I demonstrate how the 'cultural paradox' I was studying impacted on me as a native Korean, through the personal and emotional difficulties I encountered while working on this topic. These include the feelings of shame associated with researching this topic and the sense of indignity I felt while doing menial work for a shaman. But the main effect was a sense of ongoing puzzlement as I confronted the paradoxical nature of shamanism in its numerous guises. In the book, I describe this uniquely personal set of experiences, harnessing it to the gradual unfolding of the ethnographic argument. I provide dense ethnographic material from an insider's unglamorized perspective to help the reader to understand the appeal of this indigenous folk practice in a highly industrial society.

This book is a revised version of my doctoral thesis, which was awarded a PhD in social anthropology from the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, in 2001. During my PhD work Geoffrey Samuel was my supervisor, and some of his comments are quoted in the text. Although it took so long for him to recognize the importance of my work, I am grateful for his support in the final stage of writing the thesis. For this research project I received some financial assistance from the University of Newcastle, the Australian National University, Ansett Airlines and the Royal Anthropological Institute.

'We are thinking of reporting you to the police!' This was the threat voiced by a young man of the village where I stayed during an early stage of my fieldwork. As the threat implies, the fieldwork on shamanism was not easy, and I often faced difficulties. However, many people of the village helped me throughout my fieldwork, although I cannot reveal their real names here (the reason is explained in Chapter 3). I appreciate their friendship. At a later stage I was able to establish a very close rapport with almost all of the village people, and even with the young man. I think that this was a paradoxical result of the threat mentioned above. The young man's nasty attitude towards me at that time not only brought me sympathy from his neighbours, but the threat also made me reflect on the fieldwork's progress. I found that my research had been so much focused on the directly related groups that the rest of the group, including the young village man, had been by and large ignored. In this sense, I am grateful for his early warning.

As I carried out the fieldwork in my home country, it involved many of my relatives and friends, for whose help I am grateful. My special thanks go to the following people: my brothers (Jong-Chan and Jong-Chul Kim), sisters (Sun-Hee and Jong-Sook Kim), aunt, parents-in-law, brothers-in-law (Chul-Jeung and Hun-Jeung Kim), friends (Hee-Se Lee, Mi-Ae Park and Sang-Ho Lee). However there is a person to whom I cannot say thank you, even though this study is owed so much to her – my mother. She passed away before this research was completed. In

addition, I would like to express my appreciation to my late father, Jae-Gon Kim, for his support during my anthropological studies in Korea.

Also, I wish to thank the people who helped me on various occasions during this research. They are Robert Wood, Edwin Sjiariel, Cesar Rivas, Young-Hee Yun, Myung-Hwa Han, Eun-Sook Hyun, Hae-Ryong Choi, Christian and Sandra Breton, Young-Ae An, Peter Khoury, Yamuna Fielder, Ken Lee, Jim Wafer and Penny Warner-Smith. The Buddhist priest of the Korean community in Brisbane, Serjoo Seunim, was of great help in the final stage of the research. In addition, I would like to thank the Ashgate publishing team, especially Sarah Lloyd, Linda Cayford and Jacqui Cornish.

My greatest debt is to my wife, Misook. During this study, taking me nearly ten years, she had to make a living for the family on her own. Together with her financial assistance, her encouragement has enabled me to finish the research. I am also grateful to my children, Hyein and Hyesang, for their forbearance.

Romanization of Korean Terms

Korean terms are romanized according to the new system recently announced by the Korean government (see *JoongAng Ilbo*, 5 July 2000). Because the old system has been in use for a long time, this new system has some exemptions. First, personal and company names are allowed to keep their previously used romanizations. Consequently, I use the form '*JoongAng Ilbo*' (for the name of a Korean newspaper), although it would be '*Jungang Ilbo*' according to the new system. I also retain the old names of some Korean cities, following another exemption in the system, according to which road signs using the old system do not have to be changed until the year 2005. (I use English pseudonyms for some villages in order to protect my informants.)

I have not changed personal names either. For example I use 'Hung-Youn Cho', instead of 'Heung-Yun Jo', the spelling of his name according to the new system, since this author has publications in English, under the form 'Hung-youn Cho'. To be consistent, I also use the spelling 'Hung-Youn Cho' when referring to his publications written in Korean. The same applies to other authors.

I also do not follow the new system for some Korean terms which have become known in Western literature in their old forms. For example, the Korean word for shamanic ritual should be romanized as *gut* according to the system, but I retain the form *kut* which is commonly used in existing studies of Korean shamanism. *Chesa* is another example. However, I use *jeom* instead of *chŏm* for the Korean divination practice. To avoid confusion, I provide a glossary of terms I use in the book:

byong	illness
chesa	Confucian-style ritual
gongsu	shaman's possessed speech
jeom	divination
jeomjangi	diviner
kut	shamanic ritual
kut dang	shamanic ritual shrine
kwisin	spirit/ghost
malmothal sayeon	stories-never-to-be-told
mudang	shaman
sinjangdae	Spirit Stick

Won is the Korean currency. One Australian dollar was equivalent to 600 *won* in 1995; one US dollar to 800 *won*.

Korean names, which usually consist of three syllables as in 'Hung-Youn Cho', are cited in Western order (surname last) for the convenience of Western readers.

Since a small number of Korean surnames are shared by large numbers of people, but the repeated use of full names would disturb the readability of the text, I abbreviate first names, as in 'H-Y. Cho' where the name needs to be distinguished from some other Cho.

Quotations from Korean-language publications are translated into English, as are the dialogues of my Korean informants. I have tried to keep to their modes of expression even though the translations may be a little awkward in English.

Dramatis Personae

Pseudonyms are used for my Soy neighbours, as given below. Their ages are in the Korean age counting system. Koreans describe a newborn baby as in its first year, and add a year with each New Year. Consequently, the Korean age is one or two years more than the equivalent Western age.

Neighbours in Willow Village (see Map 2, 'Soy as a social space')

Chisun's Grandmother (60)
My landlady. Her ritual is described in Chapter 4, which is the longest chapter.

Chisun's Great-Grandmother (83)
My landlady's mother-in-law. She was 'killed' by her daughter-in-law in the shamanic ritual described in Chapter 4.

Inho's Mother (59)
My nextdoor neighbour on the left-hand side. She was always jealous of my good relationship with Chisun's Grandmother. Inho's Mother was called 'Mother', because her son Inho did not marry and had no child. She was one of the people who created my nickname, 'Spy'.

Gilsu's Mother (39)
My first landlady, who forced me to leave her home because of my research topic. Her prejudice against shamanism is described in Chapter 5, 'Against Shamanism'.

Kumho's Grandmother (68)
My nextdoor neighbour on the right-hand side. Because of her first son's misfortune, she held a shamanic ritual in secret (Chapter 2).

Daljung's Grandmother (60)
Chisun's Grandmother's best friend, living 20 metres away from our house. She often came and chatted with Chisun's Grandmother.

Taeho's Mother (67)
My nextdoor neighbour but one on the left-hand side. She was still called 'Mother'. Her husband was impotent and their adopted son, Taeho, did not have a child, either. These traumatic experiences led her to hold a shamanic ritual (Chapter 2).

Pilsok's Grandmother (61)
Ex-shaman. Like Inho's Mother, she was also jealous of my good relationship with Chisun's Grandmother.

Minbae's Grandmother (66)
My nextdoor neighbour but one on the right-hand side. When her son was in jail, she held a shamanic ritual in secret (not described in the book).

Sunmy's Mother (56)
Because of her husband's and daughter's illnesses, she often asked me for a lift.

Neighbours from the Next Village (Big Village)

Soh Bosal (54)
A shaman from Big Village. Several rituals performed by her are described in the book.

Oki's Mother (58)
In Chapter 2, 'Ritual without Audience', I describe the ritual conducted for her in secret on a mountainside on a freezing night.

Muno's Mother (55)
Her son Muno suffered from mental illness, so she often asked me for lifts for Muno's treatment. Shamanic rituals for Muno are described in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5.

Anse's Grandmother (58)
'A swindler is coming!' This was what she whispered to her friends when Soh Bosal appeared. But she was also one of the shaman's regular clients. Oki's Mother and Muno's Mother and Anse's Grandmother lived very close to each other in Big Village.

Neighbours from High Village

Mirim's Mother (43)
An amiable lady, who lived in High Village. She held a shamanic ritual because of her husband's illness. See Chapter 2 and Chapter 5.

Chulsu's Grandmother (76)
A lady in High Village. She was often beaten by her alcoholic son, so she put him in a psychiatric hospital. Her negative attitude toward shamanism is described in Chapter 5.

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com