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Korean Shamanism: Women's Rites and a Chinese Comparison¹⁾

LAUREL KENDALL

INTRODUCTION: THE UBIQUITY OF SHAMANIC PRACTICE

The series, "Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and shamanism" recalls from distant memory a college board examination question: "Which of the items in this series is *least* appropriate?" I would necessarily answer with my own area of interest, "shamanism". The other three "isms" are anchored, however loosely, in a corpus of written text and orthodox ritual as they float about in geographic diffusion. "Shamanism" is a researcher's category, a heuristic tool for comparing analogous practices in diverse societies (Cf. [PETERS and PRICE-WILLIAMS 1980]). We do find shamans in China, Korea, and Japan, but we also find them in Siberia, Southeast Asia, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas. Outside Europe, we would be hard pressed to find an area of the world that did not have some form of shamanism.²⁾

For some religious historians, shamanism implies a single and ancient religious tradition diffused from Siberia (Cf. [ELIADE 1964]). In this tradition, scholars do speak of "Korean Shamanism" as a discrete religion and historical stratum. Yim Sokchae and his students have discussed the limitations of this approach: The term "*mudang*" 巫堂 indicates both the hereditary priestess and the inspirational shaman. As in Okinawa, shaman and priestess perform many of the same ritual functions, a distinction obscured by the blanket use of the term "shamanism" or the indigenous title, "*mudang*". "Shamanism," as an ancient north Asian faith, intimates "primitivism" and obscures the development and complexity of Korean religious traditions [YIM 1970: 215-217; CH'OI 1978: 12-30]. In this paper, I will use the term "shama-

1) My field work in Korea was supported by the International Institute for Education, the Social Science Research Council, and the National Science Foundation. I wrote this paper during my tenure as a National Institute of Mental Health Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Hawaii.

This paper owes inspiration to George DeVos's suggestion that I say something about Chinese shamans and Taoist priests, and to Arthur Wolf's insightful remark that Korean women's active role in various rituals would be unthinkable in Chinese society. This paper owes much also to Homer Williams's editorial suggestions. I alone am responsible for its shortcomings.

2) See [KENDALL 1981a] for a survey of English-language sources on East Asian shamanism.

nism” to indicate the rituals professional shamans (*mudang, mansin*) 萬神 perform for families and households. I use the term “shamanism” to indicate a cross-culturally comparable religious phenomenon, not a regional or historical “religion.”

Anthropologist William P. Lebra provides a useful working definition of shamans: Shamans hold recognized supernatural powers that they use for socially approved ends, and shamans have the capacity to enter culturally acknowledged trance states at will (Lebra n.d. cited in [HARVEY 1979: 4]). By this criterion, the Korean *mansin*, Chinese *tâng-ki* 童乩, and Okinawan *yuta* have a solid claim to the title. Throughout East Asia, shamans have established a working relationship with gods, ghosts, and ancestors. Through possession trance, *tâng-ki, mansin, yuta*, and *itako* make manifest in their own persons entities that would otherwise exist only as religious abstractions (Cf. [AHERN 1978] for China). The dead vent their needs and desires through the shaman’s lips as shaman and client dramatize “Buddhist” and “Confucian” concern for the soul’s well-being. Shamans are also possessed by powerful gods who exorcise, chastize, bestow largess, or engender fertility. Many of the gods step down from “Buddhist” or “Taoist” pantheons.

Although the Korean *mansin* speaks with the authority of gods and ancestors, she is more than a simple functioning conduit for divine will. The *mansin* engages the supernatural. She lures gods into dwellings, exorcises malevolent beings, and cajoles and bargains with the gods [KENDALL 1979: 53]. In all of this, the *mansin* conducts her own show; she does not collaborate with a priestly religious specialist, although this arrangement holds for some other East Asian shamans. Some Japanese mediums work in partnership with temple priests or receive tutelary *kami* invoked by a sutra reading [BLACKER 1975]. In the Chinese spirit-medium cults of Singapore, a nonshaman assistant interprets the spirit language of a *tâng-ki* in trance [ELLIOTT 1955: 67]. Not only does the Korean *mansin* trance without the orchestration of a non-shaman interlocutor, she herself performs the priestly business of exorcism, blessing, and prayer.

Another noteworthy feature of Korean shamanic practice is the prominence of women. Not only are most *mansin* women, the *mansin* are for the most part ritual specialists for women. Housewives consult shamans and housewives sponsor the rituals performed by shamans. The crowd of spectators at a shaman’s night-long *kut* is overwhelmingly female. Here, men hover in the shadows, ogling the dancing shamans, or a few men, emboldened by drink, will make occasional dancing forays onto the lighted porch. The rare male shaman (*paksu mudang*) 朴수巫堂 performs *kut* ㄱ dressed in women’s clothing down to the baggy pantaloons that hide beneath a full Korean skirt. *Paksu* draw large crowds to their *kut* for the novel sight of a man performing a woman’s role.

SHAMANISM AND WOMEN’S STATUS IN KOREA

Women hold this corner of religious life in an overtly Confucian society where in general, as my male informants would often remind me, “man is respected and

woman lowly” (*namjon, nyobi*) 男尊女卑. Neo-Confucian philosophers did see virtue in a compatible connubial relationship and deemed mothers the significant first teachers of children (Tu (Chapter 7)). Even so, the “Confucianization” of Korean society between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries had an overwhelmingly negative impact on the status of Korean women as daughters, wives, and shamans. The full breadth and depth of the Confucian transformation of Korean society, however, remains a topic of continuing scholarly debate. As social historian Martina Deuchler (in press) suggests, women are an excellent focus for considerations of social change. In her own work, she describes how, in an older Korea, women lived uxorilocally in the first several years after marriage. Women joined their husbands’ kin as mothers, often as matrons in charge of their own households. They inherited a share of their own parents’ wealth, and sometimes assumed, or saw their husbands or sons assume, responsibility for their own parents’ ancestor tablets. Being without a son was not a liability, nor was the birth of a daughter reason for lamentation [DEUCHLER 1977, 1980; PAK 1974; K. YI 1977: 289–292].

In the early centuries of the Yi Dynasty, neo-Confucian reformers redefined the family as an exclusive continuity of sons. Only a son, or a genealogically appropriate male substitute, could offer rice and libations to the family’s ancestors; only a son could inherit the ancestral house and lands. Daughters left their own homes and villages as brides who would serve in a house of strangers and bear sons in their midst. The young woman, ignorant of the customs of an alien house, now was trained and disciplined by her potentially hostile mother-in-law. This scenario reads like a replay of Chinese family life, although as we shall see, it leaves us with an incomplete accounting of Korean women.

Confucianization also set more rigorous standards of feminine modesty and chastity. Women, with the exception of slaves, now went abroad in veils, and upper class women were almost totally sequestered [DEUCHLER 1977]. The *mudang*, both shamans and hereditary priestesses, could not but pique the ire of the Confucian. These women sang and danced in public, performing what were for the Confucian “obscene rituals” (*umsa*) 淫祀. Moreover, paternalistic officials considered these activities fraudulent and sought to protect the credulous from exploitation. Reformers attempted, at various times and in various places, to ban the *mudang*’s activities, to discourage clients from patronizing *mudang*, and to transform *mudang*-centered community rituals into Confucian-style sacrifices (*che*) 祭 [N. YI 1976].

The female shaman’s staying power and her popularity among Korean women has been interpreted, with a twist of irony, as a consequence of women’s vulnerability within the patrilineal, patrilocal Confucian family. The birth of a son is a daughter-in-law’s first success, but a woman must raise up healthy children to anticipate a secure old age and an ancestor’s immortality. Thus, we are told, women under duress will resort to all manner of bizarre practices to secure, through mystical means, the conception, safe birth, and long life of sons. Akiba and Akamatsu thus dubbed Korean women’s rituals “motherly observances” (*Bosei chushin no gyogi*) 母性中心の行儀 [AKAMATSU and AKIBA 1938: v.2, 187, 193; KIM 1949: 145–146].

By this interpretation, the Korean *mansin* ministers to the needs of women within what anthropologist Margery Wolf calls the “uterine family”. It rural Taiwan, the uterine family is an in-marrying woman’s primary reference group. It includes her children and eventually, her married sons’ children. It excludes her husband and all other members of her husband’s household. The interests of her uterine family outweigh a woman’s dubious loyalty to the larger domestic group, the *chia* 家 into which she has married. It is only through her own sons that a woman attains security and a modicum of oblique authority within the male-centered Chinese kinship system [WOLF 1972: 32–41].

On Taiwan, as we shall see, female shamans do minister to the “uterine” concerns of Chinese women. These female *tâng-ki* are the mediums of low-ranking deities and ghosts, while male *tâng-ki* are possessed by powerful high gods. Male *tâng-ki* perform public rituals surrounded and assisted by Chinese men. Male *tâng-ki* provide many of the services that are, in Korea, the province of a female *mansin*. The different attributes of male and female shamans in these two otherwise so similar societies suggest basically different perceptions of the power and authority of men and women, the dominion of Chinese women and Chinese female specialists being far more limited. A Chinese comparison suggests the lingering religious authority of women within the Confucianized Korean family and challenges the standing interpretation of Korean shamanism as an expression of women’s structural vulnerability.

With this introduction, let us consider the various services Korean *mansin* provide for their female clients, then compare this profile with Taiwanese material collected by several ethnographers. I will describe Korean *mansin* and their clients as I observed them in and around a rural community in central Korea, summarizing material I have presented elsewhere in more detail [KENDALL 1979]. Observations are based on my field experience in “Enduring Pine Village,” Kyŏnggi Province, Republic of Korea, during 1977 and 1978. In this region, shamans provide the following services: divination, conception rituals, rituals for the health and well being of children, healing rituals, household revitalization rituals, and rituals to settle problematic dead. Insofar as my observations are limited to the shamans of central Korea, I use the more precise term “*mansin*” rather than the more widely known term “*mudang*”. In other parts of Korea, hereditary priestesses, also called *mudang*, perform analogous functions. Throughout Korea, monks and non-shaman diviners provide some similar services—divinations and prayers for children and the sick.

SHAMANS IN ENDURING PINE VILLAGE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION

“Enduring Pine Village” is a rural community of one hundred and thirty-six households on the periphery of Seoul. Buses running along paved roads connect the village to the market town and the capital. Traditional straw roofs have been replaced by slate tile or tin, and several of these new roofs boast television antennae. Rice production for subsistence and surplus is no longer the most significant means of

livelihood in Enduring Pine Village. Seventy households, more than half the total, do not grow rice although they may own or rent vegetable plots and raise livestock. Some of the village men work at the local military installations or in the town as semi-skilled laborers—taxi drivers, factory workers, carpenters, and stone masons. Two men from the village took contracts as drivers for a Korean construction project in Saudi Arabia. By the villagers' own definition, this is not "real country". The relative prosperity of this community in both recent and traditional times, when it was an administrative seat located at an important crossroads, have fostered an elaborate tradition of shaman ritual.

In household ritual, men honor the family's ancestors (*chesa*) 祭祀 and women make periodic offerings to the household gods (*kosa*) 告祀. Men's dealings with the ancestors are solemn and polite, periodic rites performed with a careful eye to the ritual manual. Women also deal with the dead, but under less friendly circumstances. Restless ancestors and ghosts and angry household gods bring affliction to the home—illness, financial loss, domestic strife. The *mansin* provides a direct link between her clients and their household gods and ancestors. Through divination and possession, she determines the source of present trouble.

Certain families have particularly powerful gods in their household pantheons—ancestors who held high position, ancestresses who rigorously served the spirits, Mountain Gods and Seven Star Gods who gave the family sons. Capable of good or ill, these gods demand periodic homage. Neglect brings trouble.

The dead—ancestors and ghosts—are dangerous simply because they are dead. They do not mingle well with the living and their touch brings illness or affliction. Even the compassionate touch of sympathetic ancestors brings illness to their children and grandchildren. More dangerous are familial dead who died with unfulfilled desires (*han*) 恨: grandparents who did not live to see their grandchildren, a first wife who was superseded by a second wife, a father who labored to provide for his family but died before he could taste his labor's fruit, young men and women who expired before they could marry and have children. If ancestor worship is a static show of respect, this darker side of the familial ideal makes family history a dynamic process. Longing souls mingle with the fate of the living until a shaman brings resolution.

If a housewife suspects that the supernatural lurk behind a nagging illness or a run of bad luck, she consults a *mansin*. She either goes to her own "regular" (*tan'gol*) 丹骨 *mansin* or to someone a kinswoman or a neighbor recommends. Some women consult the *mansin* during the first two weeks of the lunar new year, then perform simple rituals at the first full moon to protect vulnerable family members from anticipated supernatural malaise during the year.

Mansin, like the Chinese *t'ang-ki* and many shamans in many other societies, receive their calling when the gods descend, possess, and claim them, usually in middle life and amid a run of ill luck. The gods inspire aberrant behavior in their chosen one until her concerned kin acknowledge the divine message and a senior *mansin* initiates the woman [HARVEY 1980]. The new *mansin* can now summon gods and ancestors at will and conjure divination visions. She begins to perform divina-

tions and simple exorcisms as clients begin to seek her services. Apprenticed to her initiating *mansin*, she begins to learn the *mansin's* elaborate ritual lore and gradually builds a network of regular clients.

A divination session (*mugōri*) 巫臣里 is the first step in the *mansin's* therapy, the diagnosis. The *mansin* performs the simple divination seated on the floor of her own main room. She tosses coins and fumbles grains of rice and, as visions rise up before her eyes, she asks increasingly specific questions: "Is there a distant grandfather in your family who carried a sword and served inside the palace?" "Did someone in your family die far from home and dripping blood?" She circles in on the supernatural source of her client's problems and suggests an appropriate ritual to mollify a greedy god's demands or send a miserable and consequently dangerous soul "away to a good place". If a housewife would evaluate the skill of an individual *mansin's* diagnosis, she must know the supernatural history of her husband's family and her own kin. And if the *mansin* is convinced that there was "a grandmother who worshipped Buddha," or "a bride who died in childbirth," she tells her client, "Go home and ask the old people, they know about these things."

As a foreigner, I was hopeless. When a *mansin* asked me if I had "an aunt or uncle (*samch'on*) 三寸 who died young," I wrote home hoping to unravel a bit of family history. No such ghost, my mother wrote, "unless one of your grandmothers had a secret life." The *mansin* I worked with said, "We don't know how you foreigners do things in America." When I brought a Chinese-American friend for a divination, this same *mansin* acknowledged their affinity as "East Sea People" (*Tongyang Saram*) 東洋사람 and would not let unclaimed ghosts slip by. The *mansin* asked if there was someone in my friend's family who died away from home? Someone who died in childbirth? An ancestor who was an official? My friend explained that her father had been kidnapped as a boy in China and raised by foster parents, that he knew nothing at all about his own family.

The *mansin* would not accept a dead end, "When you're home for a visit, ask your mother. When the two of you are sitting around chatting, she'll tell you these things." My friend again explained that her mother had already told her all she could about the family. Her father's origins were a mystery. Now the *mansin* grew concerned, appalled that a Chinese mother could send her married daughter off to set up housekeeping in a foreign land without telling her about the family ghosts and ancestors.

I offer this anecdote because it illustrates a *mansin's* insistence that women are responsible for the supernatural well being of their own and their children's households. Supernatural history is knowledge a housewife uses to protect her family. But are the housewives' concerns an attribute of status or of vulnerability?

Some of the rituals *mansin* perform for their female clients are, indeed, "motherly observances" for the conception and rearing of healthy children. Brides unable to conceive seek out the *mansin*, either on their own initiative or led by an anxious mother or mother-in-law. The *mansin* invokes the Birth Grandmother (*Samsin Halmōni*) 三神할머니 and lures this god into a gourd dipper full of grain [KENDALL 1977]. The woman who would become pregnant holds the dipper in her hands until

it begins to shake, indicating the Birth Grandmother's presence. She carries it home and places it in the room where she sleeps with her husband, the room where she will conceive and give birth.

The Birth Grandmother also protects infants. For three days after a birth, the attending mother-in-law or, occasionally, the woman's own mother offers seaweed soup and rice to the Birth Grandmother. On the *mansin's* advice, the family might make a special offering to the Birth Grandmother (*Samsin Me*) 三神메 during the final stage of pregnancy. If the infant is sickly, the mother or grandmother makes a similar offering at the shrine combined with an exorcism to drive off afflicting ghosts.

The Seven Stars (*Ch'ilsŏng*) 七星 protect growing children and help them progress in life. Women continue to enlist their aid on behalf of grown sons. When a *mansin* divines that a child has a short life fate, she suggests "selling the child away" (*p'arabŏrida*) 팔아버리다 to the Seven Stars. The child's mother or grandmother dedicates a length of white cloth (*myŏngdari*) 命다리 in the shaman's shrine. The child now calls the *mansin* "mother" and the *mansin* jokingly refers to the child as "my adopted son". Once a woman has dedicated a child, she should visit the *mansin's* shrine and honor the Seven Stars on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month. The *mansin* invokes the Seven Stars who divine for and promise blessings to each member of the woman's family. Women make similar offerings during the first two weeks of the lunar year (*Hongsu Megi*) 横數메기. Worship at the shrine on Seven Star day and in the lunar new year implies a special relationship (*tan'gol*) between a woman, who represents her household and her household gods, and a *mansin*, who maintains a shrine.

Illness attributed to hovering ghosts can be cleaned up with a simple exorcism, and some housewives exorcise family members without consulting a shaman. "Parents have to be half shamans (*pan mudang*) 半巫堂 to raise up their children," my landlady told me when she deemed her daughter's cough and fever worthy of aspirin and an exorcism. My landlady flourished a kitchen knife at invisible baleful forces in the air above her daughter's pillow, then lured them into a gourd dipper filled with millet. She carried the dipper a safe distance from the house and cast the contents out. A *mansin's* exorcism follows this same form but with more drama; the offending shades speak through the *mansin's* lips and vent their grievances.

Persistent illness implies that individual affliction is merely symptomatic of a deeper malaise within the house. In the *mansin's* words, "The ancestors are hungry and the gods want to play." The family should sponsor an elaborate shaman ritual, a *kut*, to feast and entertain them. Financial loss, domestic quarrels, and illness can inspire a *kut*. This ritual addresses more than a woman's uterine concern for healthy children; through *kut*, the housewife seeks prosperity, health, success, and tranquility for the entire household: children, husband, parents-in-law, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren.

A *kut* revitalizes the house. First the *mansin* purify the dwelling, then they invite the gods and ancestors inside. They exorcise sick or unlucky family members. Throughout the night, gods and ancestors appear throughout the house and possess

costumed shamans. They vent their grievances, provide divinations, and shower blessings on each member of the family. At the end of the *kut*, the *mansin* casts lingering ghosts far away in the fields beyond the house gate.

Some communities sponsor village-wide *kut* to honor the tutelary gods and purge the community of baleful forces (*Sōngwang kut*, 城隍 ㄸ *Todang kut* 都堂 ㄸ). The *kut* follows the form of a household *kut* with the tutelary god replacing the House Lord who lives in the roofbeam of each house and appears in household *kut*. Ancestors from any village house can be summoned up to speak through the *mansin*. Women represent each village household, petitioning the village gods as they would petition their own gods in a household *kut*.

In some communities, men, not women, honor the tutelary god by making offerings in a solemn, Confucian-style ritual (*Sansin che*, 山神祭 *Tong che* 洞祭). Scholars consider these male rites a product of Korea's Confucianization during the last dynasty [N. Yi 1976; Dix. n.d.: 32-33, *et al.*]. In Enduring Pine Village, women and *mansin* hold a *kut* for the tutelary god (*Todang kut*) and men honor the Mountain God (*Sansin che*).

Ghosts are a common source of affliction. The family's own ghosts bring trouble as a sign of their own netherworldly discomfort. Seeking to pacify all of its supernatural denizens, a family might send its unquiet dead to paradise in a special ritual appended to the end of a *kut*. For an extra fee, shamans escort souls out of hell and along the road to the Lotus Paradise (*Kungnak* 極樂). While performing an act of devotion and succor, the family also distances the dead, sending their potentially dangerous influence away from the house.

This quick and cursory sketch suggests that in and around Enduring Pine Village, "shamanism" implies a professional *mansin* who invokes and is possessed by the gods, ghosts, and ancestors of client households, and a housewife, usually the senior woman in the household, who deals with the supernatural on behalf of her house. Housewives honor the household gods and occasionally exorcise the sick. They monitor supernatural malaise through a *mansin's* divination and confront their own gods and ancestors when a *mansin* conjures them up in ritual. Recall my landlady's remark, "Parents have to be half shamans to raise up their children." Shaman and housewife perform analogous tasks for the same spirits. Possession trance is the *mansin's* special skill; she uses it to contend with the gods, ancestors, and ghosts of several client households. "Shamanism", in this context, can be considered a professional elaboration upon the beliefs and rituals contained in Korean household religion as described by Kwang-kyu Lee (Chapter 12).

Rituals for conception and for the successful rearing of children do seem to reflect the "uterine" concerns of a mother or a grandmother who must buffer her position in a patrilocal kin group through the loyalty of sons and grandsons (Cf. [WOLF 1972]). But the full range of ritual tasks Korean women perform with shamans suggest a matron's broader ritual authority within the household. Women's rituals revitalize the whole house and everyone who dwells within; sometimes women's rituals revitalize

the entire community. Women tend the family's gods and send the family's restless dead to the Lotus Paradise.

This system bears comparison with Okinawan religion. (See Chapter 4). Okinawan housewives perform priestly functions within the home, consult shamans who divine the cause of supernatural malaise, and hire shamans and priestesses to perform special healing and revitalizing rituals for households and communities. In traditional Okinawan society, each administrative unit had a reigning priestess who was the administrative chief's sister. Okinawa provides a clear dichotomy of sex roles. Men, as household heads and rulers, wielded temporal political authority. Women of equivalent status held, in complement, unambiguous religious authority in household, community, and kingdom [LEBRA 1966]. In Korean families and lineages, the senior male heir performs ancestor worship as an attribute of his special status among agnatic kinsmen. Other men participate as an attribute of their status as "sons". Formal ancestor worship, once consciously encouraged as a vehicle for Confucianization, is the only component of Korean family religion to have been accorded both official encouragement and public esteem. Other ritual tasks, the activities of housewives and shamans, have therefore seemed less important to the scholarly observer and have readily been interpreted as no more than the particularistic concerns of women. A comparison with the more limited role of women in Chinese family religion should suggest that Korean women do hold considerable ritual authority within the Korean family.

RITUAL AND STATUS: A CHINESE COMPARISON

Chinese religion strikes familiar chords. As in Korea, the Chinese shaman is one among a variety of divination specialists. Possessed by powerful gods, the *t'ang-ki* exorcise and heal. Possessed by ghosts and ancestors, they negotiate reconciliations between the living and the dead. Here, too, shamans deal with problems that arise in the context of household and community religion. But within this scheme, we find the ritual roles of men and women rearranged. In Chinese households on Taiwan, men honor the "high gods", the kitchen god who governs the household and the village tutelary or local cult divinity. Women supervise the ancestors' day to day care, feeding them as women feed the rest of the household. Women also "traffic with the residents of the world of the dead" as observers or mediums in seances.³⁾ They deal with "low ranking supernatural spirits" like the Bed Mother (*Cu-si: Niu-niu*) 註生娘娘 who brings sons or cures a sickly child. Women's minor goddesses thus minister to the self-interested "uterine" preoccupations of mothers and grandmothers within the larger family [AHERN 1975: 205; FREEDMAN 1979: 283; JORDAN 1972].

Students of Chinese society have interpreted this division of ritual tasks as an expression of the relative authority of men and women in Chinese households.

3) Elliott [1955], Freedman [1979: 311-312], Potter [1974], and Wolf [1974] are among those who have discussed Chinese women's prominence in soul raising.

Women, a potentially divisive force within the family, are brought under the ancestors' dominion. Honoring the kitchen god, men represent the household before a supernatural authority associated with "domestic discipline" [FREEDMAN 1979: 283]. The emperor's analogue within the home, the male head presumes to address Heaven indirectly via the kitchen god [FEUCHTWANG 1974: 118]. In Chi'nan, Ahern notes, "Unless they are menstruating, women are not barred from worshipping...(at the high gods' festivals) and they sometimes participate if the men of the household are absent. But men almost always make it their business to be home at those times" [AHERN 1975: 205].

The allocation of men's and women's roles in household ritual is reflected in the different services provided by male and female *tâng-ki*. According to Jordan, "There seems to be a tendency...for female *tâng-ki* to be associated often with purely local divinities who answer individual petitions at private altars in the medium's home, whereas male *tâng-ki* seem usually to operate by visiting the family of the petitioner or guiding village affairs in the village temple. The distinction is not hard and fast and exceptions occur in both directions" [JORDAN 1972: 69 fn.]. The gods who possess the predominantly male *tâng-ki* are the powerful deities of local cults who give divinations and defend the family and village from malevolent ghostly incursions. Most of the female *tâng-ki* seem to be the mediums of "little maids" or "little gods", local or undistinguished ghosts who demand acclaim by seizing their own *tâng-ki* [JORDAN 1972: 54-86, 166]. Many of these *tâng-ki* are kin to their possessing goddesses [JORDAN 1972: 166]. Similarly, in the Hong Kong New Territories, the Cantonese *mann saeg phox* 問醒婆 is assisted by her own dead children [POTTER 1974: 226-228]. Not only are the little gods *tâng-ki* primarily women, they serve a female clientele. From Jordan, "The term little god...is used to refer to divinized spirits of local people, whose oracles are consulted primarily by women for information on the rearing of children and other of the family's affairs that are entirely or largely under the government of women" [JORDAN 1972: 141 fn.]. Among their tasks, they divine the source of ghostly affliction and arrange "ghost weddings" for souls who die unwed and are thus eternally unsatisfied [JORDAN 1972: 140-141, 169-170].

But if women bring their "womanish concerns" to the little god *tâng-ki* and other female specialists, they seem to consult other *tâng-ki* when the problem merits more powerful supernatural intercession. Conception is most immediately women's concern, and Wolf reports, "In every *tâng-ki*'s session...there is always a worried looking middle-aged lady who has come to ask what to do about a daughter-in-law who is not showing signs of pregnancy." In the northern Taiwan community where she worked, a male *tâng-ki* was reputed to be particularly good at solving problems of infertility "in pigs and brides" [WOLF 1972: 149-150]. A female healer, a *Sian-si:-ma* 先生媽, calls back startled children's wandering souls, and mothers sometimes perform the same ritual for their own children [AHERN 1975: 206 fn., 1978: 27]. In Chaochuang, northern Taiwan, if a mother deems a child's complaint more serious than "soul loss", she may bring the child to the high god's *tâng-ki* [GOULD-MARTIN

1976: 107, 122]. High gods have more power and high gods tend to possess male *tâng-ki*.

In rural Taiwan, men represent their households in most other dealings with the high gods' *tâng-ki*. Jordan reports that in Bao-an, men assist the male *tâng-ki* and Taoist priest (*âng-thâu-â*) 紅頭仔 in celebrating the cult god's birthday, purifying cult members' houses, and defending the community against malevolent ghostly incursions [JORDAN 1972: 53–57, 120–128]. Similarly, men hold the divinely-animat-ed god palanquin (*kiō-â*) 轎 in divination sessions and ghostly battles. Jordan remarks, “Women do not perform this task in Bao-an or in any seances that I have seen elsewhere. Other lines of evidence suggest to me that this is probably not because they are prohibited from doing so, but rather because in some sense it is men's work, rather like building cabinets or fixing plumbing in America” [JORDAN 1972: 64 fn.]. But these same tasks—seeking divination and participating in rituals for the supernatural defense of home and community—are in Korea the concern of women and female shamans much as pickling cabbage is women's work. Similarly, the *mansin*'s intercession on behalf of souls in the underworld is, on Taiwan, a task performed by the male Taoist priest. Although Chinese women converse with souls in seances, the recent dead need a different, more powerful sponsor to see them safely through the perilous nether regions. According to Ahern, “Because the road to the underworld is beset by dangerous monsters and unknown obstacles, the deceased might succumb to some fatal disaster long before arriving unless he receives help” [AHERN 1973: 223]. The priest bargains with the earth god and guides the soul, just as in Korea, women and *mansin* bargain with the Death Messenger (*Saja*) and lead the dead out of hell.

In short, two categories of Taiwanese *tâng-ki* accomplish the work of one Korean *mansin* in Enduring Pine Village: possession by powerful gods who drive off malevolent supernatural entities, bestow blessings, and issue pronouncements, and possession by ancestors and ghosts who have urgent business with the living. Another possible generalization, Chinese women seem to use *tâng-ki* to further the interests of their own uterine families while Chinese men join forces with *tâng-ki* and male Taoist priests to perform other significant ritual tasks in the interest of home and community, tasks that are, in Enduring Pine Village, the work of women and female *mansin*.

Ahern suggests that in the Chinese scheme, pollution beliefs provide a symbolic rationale for women's subordinate ritual and social status. Menstruation and birth pollution render women ritually “unclean”, and unclean women deal most directly with unclean spirits, with dead souls and “little low goddesses” who are tainted by association with childbirth or death. She notes, “The common relegation of women to the worship of the low, unclean end of the hierarchy is appropriate because women are so frequently unclean themselves. Conversely, the near-monopoly by men of the clean, high end of the hierarchy is appropriate because they are much less often unclean” [AHERN 1975: 206–207]. Ahern concludes that pollution beliefs are consistent with women's place in the Chinese kinship system. Death,

birth, and menstruation as a "minor birth" pollute because they rupture the integrity of bodies and families. Women's greater perceived uncleanness is a function of women's position in families, "It is because the kinship system is focused on male lines of descent that women are depicted on the boundaries breaking in as strangers. It may be events that are polluting rather than women *per se*, but polluting events are events that intrude new people or remove old ones in a male-oriented kinship system" [AHERN 1975: 213].

Korea again poses a contrast. Here, too, women intrude as strangers into a male-oriented kinship system. Here, too, menstruation, birth, and death pollute, and pollution imposes a temporary ban on ritual activity. Women do not worship the household gods or make offerings in the shaman's shrine when they are menstruating or when they have had recent contact with childbirth or funerals. Neither do households sponsor *kut* after a recent birth, when they are in mourning, or when one of the women is menstruating. Menstruation offends Korean gods: a particularly good *mansin* will, when possessed, denounce a "dirty woman" for presuming to appear at a *kut* in a state of pollution. But menstrual and birth pollution are temporary conditions, not an inherent sully. When they are not immediately polluted, Korean women worship the gods and female *mansin* are possessed by them [KENDALL 1981b].

While pollution beliefs undoubtedly reinforce the ritual dichotomization of the sexes in Taiwan, pollution beliefs, in and of themselves, do not provide an explanation sufficient to account for a contrasting arrangement of ritual roles in Korea. The social assumptions that underlie the pattern of pollution beliefs and ritual roles in each of the two societies will provide a more solid basis of comparison.

The Chinese consider women "narrow-hearted" and fractious; to further the interests of their own children, wives tug against the familial loyalty of brothers [WOLF 1972: 164-167]. While brothers, and not brothers' wives, may actually initiate household division (*fen-chia* 分家, brothers' wives are commonly perceived to be the source of domestic strife [FREEDMAN 1979: 21f., 46f.]. Ahern suggests that Chinese pollution beliefs cast a negative shadow over women's capacity to bear sons, the source of her power and danger within the Chinese family [AHERN 1975: 123-124].

Korean household division carries less potential volatility. The senior heir inherits the house and a major share of the household lands. Secondary sons establish independent households on or soon after their marriages. Family division is gradual, sequential, and inevitable. The scheming wife has no part in the process; she is neither a necessary catalyst nor a ready scapegoat. Following Ahern, if Korean women lack Chinese women's ascribed negative powers, Korean women need not bear Chinese women's onus of dangerous pollution. Conversely, we might now ask whether Korean women's ritual activities imply a positive perception of women's power and authority in families. Here are some alternative possibilities.

Korea might simply be the mirror image of China, with men's and women's roles rearranged but the relative significance of men's and women's rituals preserved intact. Ancestor worship is esteemed today as an expression of filial piety; the ritual

practices of women and shamans are an embarrassing superstition. But who levels this judgment? In the tradition of East Asian literati, the Chinese elite have scorned Taoist priests, *tâng-ki* and Buddhist monks no less than the Korean elite have scorned Buddhist monks and *mansin*. Elite disdain fosters local defensiveness. People in Bao-an were no more comfortable with Jordan's initial inquiries about *tâng-ki* than Enduring Pine Villagers who giggled with embarrassment through my early interviews [JORDAN 1972: 69; KENDALL 1979: 281–282]. Yet both Chinese and Koreans hire shamans to deal with gods, ancestors, and ghosts. At issue is Korean women's special prominence in these activities.

We might consider women's gods equivalent to the baser "little gods" or "little maids" of Taiwan, not on a par with the powerful gods that possess Chinese male *tâng-ki*. A few of the *mansin*'s gods do, indeed, resemble the "little gods". *Hogu* is an envious maiden who died before or immediately after her marriage. *Tongja* 童子 or *Tongja Pyölsang* 童子別星 are children of the house or wives' siblings who died in childhood, commonly of smallpox or measles.⁴⁾ By force of mischief, some of these otherwise insignificant beings win a place in the family pantheon and gifts of bright clothing, pocket money, and treats to pacify their caprice. They appear in the *mansin*'s *kut*, but they make only cameo appearances amid a battery of more powerful, gods. *Mansin* claim the full range of spirits the high and little god *tâng-ki* of Taiwan divide among themselves. Powerful gods in the *mansin*'s pantheon heal, revitalize, and defend the house. The General (*Changgun*) 將軍 and the Warrior (*Sinjang*) 神將 drive out ghosts and noxious influences with a flourishing of knives and a pelting of millet. The Birth Grandmother (*Samsin Halmöni*) 三神할머니 inspires conception in a reluctant womb. The gods' greed, a part of the drama and comedy of a full dress *kut*, is an attribute of the gods' power—power to repel malevolent incursions and power to work good or ill in the house. The gods sing songs of self praise while they demand yet more tribute at a *kut*, "I'm so wonderful, I just can't say."

These may be empty boasts, though, for are not the ancestors and ancestor worship far more important in Korean religious consciousness than these greedy, flamboyant gods? A simple dichotomy of men and ancestors versus women and gods flounders on the notion of restless ancestors and ghosts. The Janellis remind us that in Korea, as elsewhere in Asia, the term implies not only proper patrilineal forebears and their wives but also a range of dead relatives including maternal, collateral, and affinal relations [JANELLI and JANELLI n.d.]. Any among these ancestors may grow restless and potentially dangerous [KENDALL 1979: 192–235]. The Janellis found that men and women share notions of ancestral malevolence and methods of propitiation

4) A few of Barbara Young's urban inspirational diviners claimed the aid of Child Gods (*tongja*) and one informant gave her a grisly account of how a would-be diviner secures a dying child's soul to do her bidding [YOUNG 1980]. A similar account may be found in Kim Tongni's popular novella, *Ulhwa*. Diviners who use children's souls as messengers seem similar to the little gods' mediums on Taiwan and to the Cantonese *mann saeg phox* who is assisted by her own dead children [POTTER 1974: 226–228]. But the diviners in Young's study do not claim to be *mansin* nor do they provide the *mansin*'s range of services.

although a husband and a wife may argue about a particular ancestor's malevolent potential [KENDALL 1979: 12-13]. Dealing with restless ancestors and ghosts is women's work. Women consult *mansin*. *Mansin* summon up the ancestors to expiate their grievances. *Mansin* muster the gods to protect family, household, and community from ghostly malevolence. Women and *mansin* protect the ancestral soul in hell and lead the soul to the Lotus Paradise. *Mansin* perform the combined functions of high and lesser god *tâng-ki* and Taoist priests in Taiwan. Utilizing female specialists, the women of Enduring Pine Village perform not only "motherly observances", they undertake those ritual tasks which in Taiwan would be the prerogative of a male household representative and a male specialist.

It would be naive to ignore the tremendous moral weight of Korean ancestor worship as the quintessential expression of filial piety and rationale for such homilies as "man is respected and woman lowly". Social historians remind us, however, that these sentiments took root in Korea only in recent centuries. Women lost status and prerogatives with the loss of daughter inheritance and the shift to patrilocal residence. The Korean bride was now as vulnerable as the Chinese bride. But when brides alone are considered, the foregoing discussion of shamans and housewives makes no sense at all. The women who worship household gods, consult shamans, and sponsor *kut* have passed through the ordeal of young womanhood to become the matrons and managers of their own homes, and they have attained this position without the trauma of Chinese family division.

In Korean families, the heir's wife is chosen with particular care, since she will one day be mistress of the main house. She should be a good manager and a scrupulous housekeeper. She should also be even-dispositioned and patient since she will serve her mother-in-law until the senior matron's death or retirement. Secondary sons' wives establish their own households on or soon after their marriages. The managerial acumen and behind-the-scenes assertiveness of the Korean wife, once she acquires her own household, is acknowledged in both early missionary and traveller accounts and in more recent ethnography. It is as the female head of an independent or successor household that a woman begins to make offerings to her own house gods and to consult *mansin* for herself, her husband, and her children.

CONCLUSION

The Confucian overlay is the most obvious and most often studied aspect of Korean religious life, but the foregoing discussion suggests that in Enduring Pine Village, the Confucianization of family life and family ritual is incomplete. Women's ritual concerns betray a greater range of authority and responsibility in household and family life than the motherly preoccupations of their Chinese cousins. Nor have pollution beliefs so completely relegated women and female shamans to exclusive dealings with the tainted and low ranking supernatural. These differences can be attributed to differences in family structure and to different perceptions of the role of women in family dynamics. A more detailed consideration of women might further

enhance our appreciation of the distinctly Korean features of Korean family life.

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