Neo Shamans, Nurtured by Traditional Shamans in Korea

Dong-kyu Kim
July 8th, 2016

Preliminary version. Please do not reproduce or quote without the consent of the author.
We scholars really hate 짜뽕굿 (hodgepodge ritual). You have to keep in mind that if you want to be a great shaman, you should follow the fixed order of the ritual. You should keep the TRADITION!

Seeking 'the original,' 'the true,' and 'the authentic', not giving any attention to transformation, adaptation, and creative adjustment in Korean shaman's practices.
A bulletin that prohibits shamanic activities is erected at the gate of the Mt. Inwang. Ironically near the bulletin, a newspaper box for mudang hangs on the fence.
Contradictory Images of Korean Shamanism

- **Negative:**
  - Obstacle to Modernization, Superstition, Magic, Primitive Religion, Religious Practices Based on Horror, Religion of Ignorant Women
  - Mad Man, Charlatan, etc.

- **Positive:**
  - Core of Korean Culture, Traditional Religion, Icon of Resistance, National Heritage
  - Transmitter of Traditional Religion, Intangible Cultural Property (Human Culture Treasure)
Korean Shamanism As Indigenous Faith

- Finding "Koreanness" from Korean Shamanism
- Originality and Centrality of Korean Nation and Culture
- Independent Korea’s National Origin
- Enhancing National Pride
- Linking Korean Shamanism to Dangun Myth and Dangun Shingyo (a Religion of God)
- Yi Nung-hwa (1869-1943), Choi Nam-seon (1890 -1957)
Korean Shamanism As Cultural Capital

- Law for Conservation of Cultural Property in 1962
  “This law is meant to encourage Koreans to improve their cultural life and contribute to developing the global human culture as well, by preserving traditional cultural assets and thereby continuing the national culture (Law No. 961)”

- A large scale of folkloric research project was conducted throughout the entire nation from 1968
- Shaman, a Protector image of Korean "Tradition"
- "Tradition", Criterion for Legitimizing the Authenticity
Autobiographies of Kim Keum hwa
Superstar shaman
Official holder of Intangible Cultural Property No. 82
Born in Hwanghae Province in North Korea
Spirit-illness at a young age
Lost her father at 13, fled North Korea during the Korean War
Divorced twice
Brother died of pneumonia, etc.
Strict apprenticeship under spirit-mother/teachers
“Not all the initiates who have naerimgut can be a mudang. The initiate has to train in various procedures while serving his/her spirit-mother for at least 4-5 years. The training is not done like in the classroom, therefore the initiate has to master all the techniques by just watching and hearing...Unless the initiate masters the 12 procedures of a gut, he/she will remain just seonmudang (immature shaman) or jeomjaengi...”
Traditional Way to Learn: Apprenticeship

- Living the life of a shaman serving spirit-mother seems to be the major part of training:
  - As kitchen helper preparing food for different deities, the novice learns the cosmology and different functions of the deities
  - Watching the master's divination and ritual performance, an apprentice acquires ritual knowledge, performing skill, and social skills
- Training is more important than the trance/ecstatic experience
Dramtic change, accepted her shaman-identity as a transmitter of “cultural tradition” while neutralizing the spiritual aspects of shamanism by emphasizing the artistic elements over the supernatural and placing it within a context of preservation rather than development.

- Became an embodiment of tradition
- Initiating more than 200 disciples
Kim Keum hwa, on Media
Jade's Story

- Initiation ritual, 1997
- “For six months since the initiation ritual, my life as a shaman was the same as other shamans do, I performed Kut and made divination for clients...Then one day, I went down to Jeonnam University following a professor Kim. I had spent eight months there studying and meeting many people...Most of them were artists.....Artists, and those who are superior to me in terms of spiritual power...they might be called “Shaman Syndrome People” who have innate shamanic energy. They develop the energy into the direction of art, I think...(My interview, 2000)
- Want to be a soul-mate in "Shamanism-Community"
타지마할 남의 블로그

은광여자고등학교 졸업
경희호텔경영전문대학 관광전문계 졸업
중앙무형문화재 제2조호 김학유의 손자로부터 신남령 교실 빌고 무녀로 입은(입교)
무업(무당) 자유가교가(교황실보 외 다수)로 활동
한국사이니즘학회 회원
형가인 국제사이니즘학회 학장
전 서울시 문화정책 지문 위원
자서전 '집 없는 무당' 출간
독일 헤부르크 조형예술대학 비주얼 컬럼니지학과/다큐멘터리 영화 전공(석사)
(Hochschule für bildende Kunst Hamburg, Visuelle Kommunikation / Medien)
Professor Gerd Roscher (작가주의적 영화), Michael Haller (미디어학),
Stephan Sachs (영화제작)로부터 지도 받음
스위스 칼 울 연구원 영성 사립학교 수학
(C. G. Jung Institut Zürich, Berufsbezogene Fortbildung
- Ihre Anwendung seelsorgerischer Tätigkeit)
독일 헤부르크 조형예술대학 비주얼 컬럼니지학과 전공심화과정
(Aufbaustudium: Meisterstudent 과정) 졸업
상하이 국립대에서 신아미나 김금화 선생과 술을 마시고
독일 다큐멘터리 감독협회(AGDOK, Arbeitsgemeinschaft dokumentarfilm) 회원
영화감독, 시니어 사이니즘 장관가

이메일: avantgardeschaman@yahoo.de
</FONT>
Features of Neo-shamanism in Jade's

- Decontextualizing and Universalizing
- Psychologizing and Individualizing
- Democratizing

Cf. "Shaman's role is founded on the idea that he alone is equipped to serve the interests of the society on the ecstatic level (Hultkranz)"

- Not a leader of "Shaman Syndrome People" but a soul mate
A Swiss woman's initiation story

- Andrea's interpretation, "Many spirits are hovering around you!" without mentioning spirit-illness
- Indications of shaman-destiny: "Why all these difficulties kept befalling me?"
- Initiation ritual in 2010 along with several foreigners, under the supervision of Kim Keum hwa
- Experienced water around her, the wing of a black and white crane touching her cheek, a wild animal dancing with her, bright light moving toward her, and the feeling of something entering her body, with made her shudder and shake.
Meeting with Dani, a disciple of Kim Keum hwa
Visiting Switzerland, 2013 to receiving Swiss Mt. gods
In Gurten Mt., Dani got visions of people dressed in white, dancing in a circle by a fire under a full moon
"They must have been priests like us, shamans, before Christianity came into this area"
Swiss woman, Connecting the dancing people with Celts
Food offerings for Swiss Mt. Gods, from Swiss!
Feld a need to find her own Swiss identity within the context of Korean shamanism, turned to her own cultural context of Celts.
Food Offerings
Ritual at Alps
Still struggling to make her shaman-identity

- Cut off all contact with shaman community
- Stopped meeting with Dani who would require of a traditional apprenticeship with the words, "make yourself small!"

"I'm forty years old....I want to be exactly who I am. I am a Swiss, not a Korean!"
Reading Autobiographies and Scholarly Works; Browsing a Website – “Individual Oriented” Career Building

“According to the self-portraits described on their internet sites, neo-shamans tend to build their career by learning from all kinds of popular psychology and religious literature by themselves, rather than by following the classical way of long-term discipleship under the guidance of teacher shamans or spiritual parents (Seong-nae Kim)”
Shaman Image, Work of Kim Ju hyeong
Korean Shaman in the Republic of Tuva
Conference cyberproceedings are published for documentary purposes. The view expressed are the author's and do not necessarily represent CESNUR's opinions.