A meeting of extremes: the symbiosis of Confucians and shamans

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Chapter 14
A Meeting of Extremes: The Symbiosis of Confucians and Shamans

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1 Introduction

It is commonly assumed that shamanism was the original religion of the inhabitants of the Korean peninsula before Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism were introduced from China, where ecstatic religion, usually referred to as shamanism, also is supposed to have been a most ancient form of religion.[1] Although this cannot be confidently rejected, we have first of all to recognize that our knowledge of the original native religion of Korea is extremely limited and that we possess only scant information concerning the concrete rituals and beliefs of this religion. We therefore lack firm proof that it equaled shamanism, even if we have some evidence of the presence of figures that perhaps may be called shamans.[2] The oldest sources we have are Chinese, the earliest of them dating back to the Han dynasty, and mention a variety of cults of the peoples on the Korean peninsula, of celestial bodies and different kinds of spirits and ancestors, but hardly refer to shamans. When the presence of shamans is noted, it is in the age when the kingdoms on the Korean peninsula already had been influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. The *Xin Tangshu* (New Standard History of the Tang) mentions that in the final days of Koguryŏ a shaman in an oracle conveyed the pleasure of Chumong, the dynastic founder who was worshiped in a shrine inside a Liaodong fortress, when he was presented with a beautiful woman as a bride and (incorrectly) assured the defenders

[1] This chapter draws to a large extent on two earlier treatments of this subject of my hand (Walraven 1991–1992 and Walraven 1999). For ecstatic religion in China, see Paper 1995, and Loewe 2005: Chapter 10.

[2] For a warning against equaling shamanism too easily with the indigenous religion of ancient Korea, see McBride 2006.

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of the fortress that it would not fall.[3] We do find a few more references to *mu* 巫, usually translated as shaman, in the oldest Korean sources at our disposal, the *Samguk sagi* (Histories of the Three Kingdoms) and *Samguk yusa* (Vestiges of the Three Kingdoms), compiled in the twelfth and thirteenth century. The information they provide, however, is extremely limited. These histories are of course of a much later date than the events they record (although based on older material) and were heavily influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism. Secondly, there is no doubt that whatever the original nature of the native religion, the advent of the new faiths, with their wealth of scriptures and institutional structures, together with the changes in social and political configurations that accompanied their acceptance, substantially altered the nature of indigenous religious beliefs and practices. Even if we agree that figures that might be called shamans existed before and after the changes, we may wonder to which extent we really witness the same phenomenon on both sides of this watershed.

Although it is commonly accepted usage, we also must consider whether there is sufficient justification to use the terms shaman and shamanism with reference to Korea. One might sidestep this problem by using the terms the Chinese and Koreans have used: *wu* 巫 in China and *mu*, *mudang* 巫堂 (a term that was originally used to refer to a shamanic shrine rather than a person[4]), *munyŏ* 巫女 ("*mu* woman") or *mugyŏk* 巫覡 ("male *mu*") in Korea. For both China and Korea, there is some dispute whether these religious specialists more properly ought to be called mediums rather than shamans.[5] It is certain that if we accept Mircea Eliade's concept of a "true shaman" (someone whose spirit is supposed to leave his body through the technique of ecstasy to travel to celestial realms) one cannot refer to Korean practitioners as shamans (Eliade 1974: 22). But there is no need to cling to the definition dictated by Eliade (who in some ways was more of a theologian than an empirical researcher) and in recent decades most anthropologists have preferred definitions that emphasize the social role of the shaman as an intermediary. A characterization of the activities of the shaman I consider most useful for comparative purposes, and which accommodates the Korean mudang without problem, has been presented by Roberte Hamayon (Hamayon 1991):

> Shamanism is a symbolic system founded on a dualist conception of the world which implies that mankind entertains relations of alliance and exchange with supernatural beings that are thought to govern human beings, [supernatural beings] on whom its survival depends, [or] more generally [on which depend] the factors of uncertainty in its existence. The shaman assumes general responsibility for this system of alliance and exchange with the supernatural, which on his [or her] part demands a personal skill…[6]

[3] *Xin Tangshu*, "Dongyichuan: Gaoli".

[4] An alternative way to write mudang with Chinese characters is 巫黨. In this case it refers to shamans in the plural.

[5] For a discussion about the possible distinction between shamans and mediums, see Jordan Paper 1995.

[6] Translation as in Walraven 2009, where there is also a more detailed discussion of Hamayon's concept of the shaman.

This definition completely bypasses the question whether the "personal skill" involves ecstasy or possession. Mudang are able to mediate between our world and the invisible on behalf of others because a very personal experience allows them to become possessed by deities and spirits, and thus may be included in the category of shamans. The term medium is less apt, because it suggests a passive role and the possession of Korean shamans is voluntary and completely controlled by the shamans themselves. Unlike cases in which a medium is controlled by another practitioner who directs the proceedings (as, for instance, is seen more frequently in Japan or Vietnam), in Korea it is generally the possessed shaman who takes the lead in every step of the ritual (Walraven 1993b).[7] It is also makes more sense to speak of shamans rather than mediums if we consider the various functions Korean shamans have. On the basis of their ability to communicate with the supernatural they do not only transmit the words of deities and spirits (although this is an essential part of their activities), but also act as diviners, priests who conduct sacrifices, guides who conduct the spirits of the dead to a place of rest, healers and counselors, and, not to forget, entertainers of gods and men alike (Kendall 1991–1992).

2 Shamanism in Coexistence with Confucianism and Buddhism

While it is very difficult to say anything with certainty about the shamans of the very earliest stages of Korean history, it appears likely that before Buddhism and Confucianism were introduced in the Three Kingdoms shamanic ritual occupied a more or less prominent place at the center of power, and then in later years was gradually pushed out of the realm of state ritual and increasingly came to serve the needs of individuals and their families, or of non-elite and marginal groups. This was a very slow process that extended over many centuries, but its direction is clearly discernible in the longue durée. It may also be described as the creation of popular religion as opposed to elite forms of religiosity or Weltanschauung. Yet one should remember that shamanism never became the exclusive domain of popular religion, which also included certain practices within Buddhism and even Confucianism (Dix 1977; Yi Yong Bhum 2015), not to mention traditional beliefs that existed independent of the practices of the shamans (even if they are often labeled as "shamanic" or "Daoist" merely because they do not agree with the preferences of the elite).

[7] Cf. Ching 1993: 43. In the twentieth century scholars have classified Korean shamans as possessed shamans, *kangshin mu* 降神巫, (predominantly in the northern part of the country) and hereditary shamans, *sesŭp mu* 世襲巫 (mainly in the south). In the latter case, the mudang tend to be the persons who control mediums (often family members of the deceased). The distinction has been relativized in recent research and is difficult to attest in older sources. The sixteenth-century diary *Mukchae ilgi* 默齋日記, however, seems to contain instances of both types of possession (Yi Pokkyu 1999: 63–65).

One important factor in the changes that came with the introduction of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism was the spread of literacy. With their scriptures these systems of thought stimulated the acquisition of a competence in reading and writing in Koguryŏ, Paekche and Shilla, even if this required great effort as it simultaneously involved learning the foreign language of Chinese.[8] With the scriptures, moreover, came a new source of authority, which did not rely on personal charisma (a typical characteristic of a successful shaman) and allowed the literate to build their influence and power on the foundation of an impressive extended canon of writings, a storehouse not only of accumulated wisdom and ideas, but also of aesthetic values and the charisma of tradition. There is no reason to assume that shamans would, in principle, not be capable of gaining access to this written culture, but in practice those who devoted vast amounts of time to learning how to handle written Chinese would absorb the values of the systems they studied and be discouraged from following any inclination toward the following of shamanic tradition they might have. They would also become involved in more complex, hierarchically structured social configurations that would discourage a reliance on the spontaneity of direct access to the world of the spirits that is characteristic of shamanism. This access can be acquired by persons from whatever social status, however lowly, through a very personal "calling" in the form of the so-called shamanic illness (interpreted as the instrument through which the gods force a person to accept the call).

In this way shamanism in the end turned into predominantly oral "popular religion" and the rituals of the shamans became representative of the less privileged layers of society, and of women irrespective of social class, in short of those who could derive less solace from elite culture than upper-class men. Another way to describe the divergence is to say that shamanism served the personal needs of individuals and their families, while Confucianism predominantly served larger established social and political structures and emphasized the duties of individuals and families within these structures. The role of Buddhism was more ambiguous. It could do both, attracting persons who valued scriptures and a philosophy that went beyond individual desires, while also allowing devotion and prayer for the fulfilment of urgent personal wishes. Because of the latter it was closer to shamanism and therefore it is not surprising that shamans adopted numerous elements of Buddhism for their own purposes.[9] In this way Confucianism and shamanism gradually turned into the two opposite poles of Korean society, with Buddhism in an intermediate position.

Most commonly popular beliefs involved prayers for certain benefits in this world, prayers for happiness. Members of the elite, who would be inclined to favor the common good as it was promoted by the ethical prescriptions of their own faith or ideology, tended to reject such beliefs, which they judged to be selfish (while

[8] Chinese characters were sometimes used to write Korean, but this was quite cumbersome because of the very different nature of the Chinese and Korean languages and little was written in this way.

[9] E.g., *Koryŏsa* kw. 111, "Yŏlchŏn 24: Yu T'ak," about a shaman who said she was the heavenly ruler Indra.

conveniently ignoring the benefits they themselves might receive from the elite system). Confucianism in particular tended to propagate self-cultivation (*sushin* 修身) or the development of personal virtue (*sudŏk* 修德), as opposed to praying for happiness (*kibok* 祈福) in whatever form. This sometimes leads people to assume that popular beliefs and shamanism have no ethics and in this respect are inferior to religions that are fully equipped with formalized ethical prescriptions. It is true that popular religion does not possess explicit ethical commands, nor is self-cultivation its primary aim, but that does not mean that its practices are amoral. As anthropologists will readily agree, there are no societies or subcultures without ethical norms. The difference is that the ethics popular religion promotes tend to be those of society at large (or a particular sub-group). In most cases the morality implicit in them will be based on the principle of reciprocity, which is also at the foundation of most systems of formalized ethics.

One consequence of the virtual elite monopoly on writing, particularly writing in literary Chinese, the predominant form of writing until the final years of the Chosŏn period, was that most documents we have about the religious beliefs and practices of the common people have a strong bias in favor of the views of the educated ruling class. This is particularly strong with regard to shamanism. Consequently, we are presented with a highly prejudiced view of the shamans and possess, for instance, very few traces of the rich oral literature of the shamans predating the twentieth century. This literature included narrative songs about the origin of shaman deities, which folklorists started to record only in modern times. In their motifs and structure these songs sometimes resemble the myths concerning the origin of the rulers of the ancient Korean states and therefore they may be assumed to be the tail end of a very long tradition, which goes back to the Three Kingdoms. Fieldwork by modern folklorists and anthropologists has been useful to overcome some of the prejudices against shamanism and gain a deeper understanding of the practices of the mudang, but when it comes to a reconstruction of ancient shamanism this has obvious limitations.

3 Shamans in the Three Kingdoms and Unified Shilla

While the use of the term shaman is defensible if one adheres to Hamayon's definition, it is useful to dwell briefly on the origin and use of the term *wu*, or as the Chinese character for this word is pronounced in Korean, *mu*. The ideogram depicts two persons who stand between two horizontal lines (linked by a vertical line) that are assumed to represent heaven and earth, or the world of man and the supernatural.[10] This accords perfectly with the shaman's role as an intermediary between the

[10]The two horizontal lines joined by the vertical line of course constitute the character *kong* 工 (work, worker), but that meaning seems less apt for the explanation of the character. The term "supernatural" is used here for want of a better alternative. Actually heaven, too, generally was seen as part of the natural order.

two sides of the universe (Hamayon's dualist conception of the world). As long as only this aspect of the shaman's role is regarded, it also makes sense to consider Tan'gun 檀君, the (mythical) founder of what is considered to be the oldest Korean state and the grandson of the ruler of Heaven, as a shaman, although otherwise there is nothing that links him to shamans as they are known in later Korean history. However, pioneering scholar of Korean religions Yi Nŭnghwa, who in 1927 published a concise study of shamanism that still is useful in many ways, saw the shamanism of his own times as a remnant of the original religion of the Korean people, going back to Tan'gun, which he called *shin'gyo* 神教, "divine teaching."[11] This was an idea that was current at the end of the nineteenth or in the early twentieth century and went together with the suggestion that some contemporary aspects of shamanism were due to a degeneration of the cult that originally had focused on Tan'gun (*Mudang naeryŏk* 1996). As there is no evidential basis for this, this is best considered an invented tradition. The idea that secular and spiritual power were initially not separate is plausible, but in the absence of additional evidence caution is advisable in characterizing Tan'gun as an early shaman.

What is crucial in a discussion of the relationship of shamanism and Confucianism in the Three Kingdoms and later ages about which we have more information is the aspect of power in connection with the intermediary role of the shaman. Before the introduction of Buddhism and Confucianism, the leaders of the Three Kingdoms quite likely combined political and spiritual power. In the case of Shilla, *ch'ach'aung* or *ch'ach'ung,* the old appellation of King Namhae, is glossed explicitly in the *Samguk yusa* as a term of respect for *mu*, and it is said that the *mu* were revered by the people because they served the spirits (*kwishin* 鬼神).[12] In later years, however, there was a division of roles. The identification of kings with shamanic figures became anathema, and yet the idea of the monarch as an intermediary between heaven and earth remained. In the elite conception of the cosmos in East Asia as it developed over time the ruler, the emperor or the king, became the exclusive link between Heaven (generally seen as an impersonal force) and the world of man. The ruler might delegate this role to his officials but would not tolerate its appropriation by others. To a large proportion of the population, however, who would not have a substantial stake in the establishment, this made the distance to the numinous much too vast to soothe anxieties concerning Hamayon's "factors of uncertainty in their existence." Here lies the simplest explanation of the continuous practice of shamanic ritual in spite of growing oppression, as the shamans offered an attractive and, I would argue, satisfying shortcut to the intervention of the supernatural on their behalf (Walraven 2002), which as will be shown below, in moments of need was not disdained by the elites either.

[11] Yi Nŭnghwa's study of shamanism, "Chosŏn musokko," originally appeared in the periodical *Kyemyŏng*. The best modern edition, with translations of the original *hanmun* text, an introduction and copious annotations, has been prepared by Sŏ Yŏngdae (Yi Nŭnghwa 2008: 71–72, 509). Ch'oe Namsŏn, too, put forth the theory that Tan'gun was a shaman in his efforts to show that ancient Korea was the center of a North-East Asian cultural sphere.

[12] *Samguk yusa* kw. 1, "Namhae-wang".

The sources at our disposal, which we should remember were redacted in the later Koryŏ period, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, provide little information about the transformation of the king from a shamanic intermediary to a Confucian ruler, and hence we may assume that this took place quite early. The *Samguk yusa*, however, contains an intriguing passage that might make us wonder to what extent this may have been due to the bias of the sources. The record concerning the 49th king of Shilla, Hŏn'gang 憲康王 (r. 875–886), is best known for the story of Ch'ŏyong 處容, the son of the Dragon King, who by his father was sent to the capital of Shilla to assist the king and there got married to a woman who was so beautiful that she was repeatedly preyed upon by concupiscent supernatural beings. The song Ch'ŏyong sang to make a demon leave his wife's bed is often cited as an early example of a shamanic chant. What follows this episode in the narrative of the *Samguk yusa* is, however, even more interesting in the present context.[13] While Hŏn'gang is on his way to a pavilion in the countryside, the deity of South Mountain appears to him, dancing and singing. This was not visible to the king's entourage, but the king himself danced and sang to make it visible to the others. Later the Deity of the Northern Peak appeared to the king, and the Earth Deity during a banquet in the palace. In the *Samguk yusa* all this is regarded as presaging the fall of Shilla (predicted in the song of the Mountain God, but not understood at the time) and as explaining the origin of an exorcistic dance performed at court, but it is obvious that the king, although he apparently failed to understand the meaning of the message, in crucial ways acted like a shaman: while dancing and singing he transmitted the words of a deity thanks to a special, personal connection with the supernatural. It is an intriguing passage, although the evidence is insufficient to conclude that at the time the rulers still commonly acted as shamans.

From the evidence we possess we may infer in any case that even in the early days of the Three Kingdoms, Koguryŏ, Paekche and Shilla, there already was a diversification of tasks, with certain tasks of the shamans being taken over by other functionaries. If the earliest rulers indeed also acted as shamans, the emergence of shamans as a separate group may have been one example of this. There are indications that initially these shamans were not seen as beings whose status was so low that they could not transmit the will of deceased kings. When a shaman claimed to convey a message from the Koguryŏ King Kogukch'ŏn 故國川王 (r. 179–197) this was taken very seriously and action was taken accordingly.[14] Later in Korean history shamans who presumed to channel the words of kings after their demise risked severe punishment. There was a differentiation of functions in other respects as well (Ch'oe Chongsŏng 2002b).[15] This was certainly the case in the realm of ritual, where Buddhist monks assumed a leading role. The performance of ritual also became part of the duties of court officials. In this respect the influence of Confucianism was important. Sometimes monks also acted as healers,[16] in

[13] *Samguk yusa* kw. 2, "Ch'ŏyong-nang Manghaesa".

[14] *Samguk sagi* kw. 17, "Koguryŏ pon'gi" 5, 8th year, 9th month.

[15] Also see Sŏ Yŏngdae 1997, and Ch'oe Sŏgyŏng 1996.

[16] E.g. *Samguk sagi* kw. 5, Sŏndŏk yŏwang, 5th year, 3rd month.

competition with medical officials of various stripes. For divination, the court employed *ilcha* 日者or *ilgwan* 日官, who predominantly explained the meaning of unusual natural phenomena, largely on the basis of knowledge introduced in writing from China, whereas shamans would rather use their spiritual power to divine the causes of illness. The *ilgwan* also occupied themselves with astronomy, the calendar and timekeeping, thus further distinguishing themselves from the shamans. In spite of the differentiation in functions, however, shamans still were accepted at court and took part in official rituals.

4 Koryŏ

In the Koryŏ period (936–1392) the ongoing trend toward greater literacy was accelerated by the establishment of a system of education and examination for various official functions. The content of this education was predominantly Confucian. With the increase in number of scholars educated in competing literate traditions and particularly in Confucianism, the potential for a clash with shamanism grew over the years, but overall this period was characterized by pluralism. No single faith managed to achieve absolute dominance in state ritual. One tally of different forms of rain prayers mentioned in the *Koryŏsa* (History of Koryŏ), for instance, shows 258 recorded rituals, of which 87 were conducted in Confucian style, 53 were Buddhist, 14 Daoist, and 20 shamanic, with 57 rituals in "traditional style" at numinous mountains and rivers or shrines that did not clearly belong to a single denomination, and 27 rituals that were impossible to classify (Kim Ilgwŏn 2002). This is sufficient to conclude that the Koryŏ court was religiously pluralistic, although one would need more information than we have, for instance about the persons who conducted the "traditional" rituals, to gain a more exact understanding of the relative weight of the diverse religious currents. A striking demonstration of this pluralism is found in the *Samguk yusa*, which presents a Buddhist view of history, but in the preface quotes from the *Analects* of Confucius.[17]

A record from the early Chosŏn period (1411) makes clear that even then in many of the rituals at numinous mountains and rivers mudang were still involved, although not exclusively.[18] We also know that in Koryŏ large numbers of shamans were frequently mobilized to put an end to droughts by exposing them to the scorching heat of the sun while they were praying for rain, a practice that was sanctioned by the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), although in China it was discontinued during the Song (Ch'oe Chongsŏng 2002b: 162). The reasoning behind this was that Heaven might take pity on the shamans, who served as a conduit for messages from Heaven; as such it was not entirely based on the assumption that shamans possessed particular powers enabling them to end a drought.

[17] *Samguk yusa* kw. 1, "Kii 1."

[18] *T'aejong shillok* 22:10b.

In spite of the continued presence of shamans in court rituals, there is evidence that by the twelfth century some among the educated elite of Koryŏ tended to look down on shamans or even tried to put an end to their activities. The activities of the shamans on behalf of the common people in particular became a target of their criticism. Behind this was the Chinese, Confucian, concept of "illicit rituals" (in Korean pronunciation *ŭmsa* 淫祀), defined in the Quli section of the *Liji*, which implied that proper worship should depend on one's social status.[19] Whenever someone worshiped spirits that were not his to worship the ritual was illicit.[20] To this category belonged, in the eyes of the ruling elite, the majority of popular rituals. Another reason to consider rituals as illicit was the fact that the deities addressed were unrecognized by the ritual manuals or supposed to be inefficacious.

There also was opposition to the activities of shamans from persons one might regard as their professional competitors. Thus in 1131, a court astrologer (*ilgwan* 日官) successfully proposed that shamans, who he said were increasingly popular (a stereotypical complaint that should not necessarily be taken literally), should be banished. This is an example of the literate objecting to the competition of those who had not received the same formal training. In this case, however, the shamans collected funds to bribe persons in power, with equal success. The argument to revoke the ban was that spirits (*kwishin*) were without form and that therefore it was difficult to decide whether they were real or not.[21]

Several entries in the *Koryŏsa* (History of Koryŏ) show the ambivalent attitude of Confucian officials toward shamans. A mudang who claimed to speak the words of the "Great King of Kŭmsŏng" (a mountain god and local guardian deity) said she had to transmit a message to the court. This sufficiently impressed an official to provide her with a horse for the journey. Along the road, other local officials respectfully waited for her to arrive and were eager to expedite her traveling. When she came to Kongju, however, the local magistrate Shim Yang refused to do so. The mudang then threatened him with dire consequences. When Shim discovered that at night she slept with a male companion, he had them both arrested.[22] In another biography from the *Koryŏsa*, a local official in 1277 takes the words of a shaman seriously when she transmits a complaint from the same Kŭmsŏng mountain deity that he had received no compensation for his spiritual support of the campaign against the Sambyŏlch'o rebels, who after the surrender of Koryŏ had continued to fight the combined forces of the court and the Mongols. The court then granted the deity a title of nobility and a stipend.[23] This was a common way to honor deities in this age and in itself shows a certain ambiguity toward the gods: they were honored, but at

[19] 非其所祭而祭之, 名曰淫祀. The *Book of Rites* cautioned that such rituals would not bring blessings: 淫祀无福.

[20] For this reason, the translation "licentious rituals" or "wanton rituals", although justifiable because of the basic meaning of the character *ŭm*, seems less apt.

[21] *Koryŏsa* kw.16 "Sega 16; Injong 9, 8th month, *pyŏngja*."

[22] *Koryŏsa* kw. 106, "Yŏlchŏn 19: Shim Yang".

[23] *Koryŏsa* kw. 105, "Yŏlchŏn 18: Chŏng Kashin"; English translation in Peter H. Lee 1993: 446.

the same time placed within a spiritual hierarchy that was controlled by the government. In other words, the supernatural was subordinated to the secular.

Famous author and statesman Yi Kyubo (1168–1241) has left us a poem entitled "Nomup'yŏn" (老巫篇 The Old Mudang), in which he heaps scorn on a mudang living near his house (Yi Nŭnghwa 2008: 111–15, 527–29). In the introduction to the poem he noted that the shamans led the people astray with improper songs and strange tales and that therefore the government had denied them access to the capital, reason for him to celebrate the decision by composing the poem. He also pointed out that to lead the masses astray as the shamans purportedly did was not compatible with the (Confucian) duty of a subject to serve the monarch with loyalty (*ch'ung* 忠). In the poem Yi ridicules the claim that supreme deities (*chishin* 至神) would descend in the body of lowly shamans. This appeared an unacceptable provocation to someone in power like Yi Kyubo, who served as a prime minister, and seemed even more absurd when the shaman in her little hovel was an old crone who uttered that she was the deity Chesŏk 帝釋 (Indra) presiding over heaven.

In his poem Yi Kyubo expressed appreciation for an official called Ham Yuil (1106–1185) who had taken measures against mudang, but noted that after his death the mudang had emerged again. The ambivalence of the Koryŏ elite with regard to the shamans is well illustrated in the biography of Ham Yuil in the *Koryŏsa*.[24] Ham is represented as a perfect example of the good Confucian official who always first thinks of the public interest. He was very suspicious of popular cults and shamans whose influence he judged to be detrimental to the people. Therefore, he put an end to *ŭmsa* in private homes and made all the shamans leave the capital. He also aimed to destroy the shrines (usually tended by shamans) of mountain deities whose aid was not efficacious. When to test the deity of Kuryongsan he shot an arrow at the image of the god from outside the shrine, however, a gust of wind closed the doors, protecting the image. Thus, in this case the *Koryŏsa* confirms the powers of the deity. Similarly, when Ham Yuil burned the shrine of a god who in his opinion had failed to prove his efficacy, the deity appeared in a dream to the king to appeal for help, and so the shrine was rebuilt. These stories fit a familiar type of tales intended to demonstrate the numinosity of certain shrines and may have reflected local traditions of believers who aimed to show the vanity of elite objections against their cults.[25]

In the late Koryŏ period, the introduction of Neo-Confucianism reinforced the existing tendency among the literate elite to distance themselves from popular religion and other forms of religion, including Buddhism, that were thought to be contrary to orthodoxy. An Hyang (1243–1306), the man who is reputed to have introduced Neo-Confucianism to Korea, had shamans flogged because in his view they deluded the people.[26] He was not the first to resort to violence against mudang,

[24] *Koryŏsa* kw. 99, "Yŏlchŏn 12: Ham Yuil".

[25] This may be the reason that the stories about Ham Yuil are also found in a later Chosŏn source that recorded local traditions, the *Shinjŭng Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* (Revised and Augmented Gazetteer of Korea), kw. 42:24b and kw. 5:1a.

[26] *Koryŏsa* kw. 105, "Yŏlchŏn 18: An Hyang"; English translation in Peter Lee 1993: 445.

as Ham Yuil and a another magistrate called Kim Yŏnsu (1237–1306) had done the same.[27] The gradual establishment of Neo-Confucianism as the state ideology in the following Chosŏn period continued developments that could already be observed in Koryŏ, but would have even graver consequences for the position of shamanism in society.

5 Confucian Attitudes Toward Shamanism in Chosŏn

When there was a change of dynasty in 1392, the "Confucian transformation" of Korea began in earnest, but it was a gradual process that took centuries. Below we will discuss the question to which extent the process was ultimately successful (Deuchler 1992 and Deuchler 2007). What is certain, however, is that from the outset the intention was to redress the "[ritual] mistakes the state inherited from the previous dynasty" on the basis of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy.[28] As part of this, Confucian zealots did not hesitate to destroy the sanctuaries of deities they disapproved of. There is also no doubt that Confucianism quickly became the dominant discourse, in the sense that other faiths, such as Buddhism, felt the need for apologetics that argued that they did not contravene Confucian values (Buswell 1999; Muller 2015).[29] This is not to say, however, that Confucianism established an absolute hegemony, although a one-sided focus on official and elite pronouncements might create this impression. Buddhism and shamanism succeeded in finding tactics to survive and managed to maintain considerable support in spite of discriminatory government policies, and not just among the lower echelons of society that were less directly affected by Confucianization, which initially was particularly directed at the *yangban* elite. Ch'oe Chongsŏng has aptly characterized the relation between Confucianism and shamans we witness in the Chosŏn period as "co-existence within conflict" (Ch'oe 2002a: 52).

The way the conflict between Confucianism and shamanism was handled in many cases involved the creation of actual or symbolic distance between the two. This was most pronounced in the case of the capital, the "King's City,"[30] which was conceived as the center of the country's moral universe, from which the civilizing influence of the monarch's virtue radiated out to the most far-away corners of the realm (Walraven 2012b). Care was taken to turn the capital in what may be called a Confucian sacred city, by purging the space within the city walls completely of non-Confucian sacred places, leaving within this enclosure only the Sajik 社稷 altars (for the Gods of Land and Grain, from early in Chinese history symbols of the

[27] *Shinjŭng Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam*, 14:19b.

[28] *T'aejong shillok* 22:10b (國家承前朝之謬); Han Ugŭn 1976.

[29] Evidence from recent periods suggests that shamans, too, made similar efforts to justify their rituals in Confucian terms.

[30] The "King's City" was the term the Dutch shipwrecked sailor Hendrik Hamel used to refer to Seoul in his *Journal* and, like many descriptions in his report, hit the nail right on the head.

nation rather than objects of popular veneration), the Chongmyo 宗廟 (the royal ancestral temple) and the Munmyo 文廟 (the temple for Confucius and other Sages) as official places of worship (Walraven 2000). The symbolic and at the same time pragmatic nature of this arrangement becomes clear when one realizes that throughout the Chosŏn period the city outside the walls was surrounded by a host of Buddhist temples and several communities of shamans. As the complete eradication of non-orthodox worship was impossible for reasons that will be further discussed below, this at least maintained formal propriety. Similarly, outside the capital officials made sure that in their public behavior they maintained a certain distance from popular worship, even if it was conducted right in front of their noses by the clerks of their own offices. What these officials and yangban in general did *privately* was another matter. Hence Buddhist monks and shamans could continue to serve many members of the elite, both inside and outside the capital, as long as certain rules that maintained decorum were respected.

As a ruling class that claimed to strive for the common good rather than being intent on the fulfillment of private desires, the Chosŏn elite, increasingly influenced by Neo-Confucianism, tended to dissociate itself from what we may call popular religion as represented by shamanic rituals and Buddhism, which both were regarded as heterodox (*idan* 異端). They were inclined to think in terms of an opposition between what was *kong* 公 "public," that is in the general interest, and what was *sa* 私 "private" (Walraven 1994: 544). Confucianism was in the public interest, while other faiths and rituals catered to more personal, more partial needs, and in that sense were inferior and to be rejected (Yi Uk 2009: 49–54). Rituals for private needs were not completely suppressed, but members of the elite who were supposed to serve the public interest of the state should show restraint in seeking recourse to them. In the case of illness, for instance, the proper recommended attitude was to leave everything to the will of Heaven, which was said to be impartial (*kongp'yŏng* 公平), and not to resort to prayer or to call mudang to perform a healing ritual in the vain hope that the fate Heaven had ordained could be averted. The fact that when the Crown-prince was ill the court sent people to pray at numinous rivers and mountains[31] may seem to contradict this, but of course the recovery of a public figure like a Crown-Prince was in the national interest and therefore prayers for his convalescence could be considered to be *kong*, not *sa.* At the same time private concerns for the wellbeing of children and other relatives frequently persuaded even yangban, not to heed Confucian injunctions to reject the rituals of shamans or Buddhist monks. Actually, in such cases, Confucians, might legitimate their actions by appealing to the Confucian principle that in one's carrying out of social duties one should demonstrate "utmost sincerity" (*chisŏng* 至誠), which meant that one should not leave anything untried.[32] This, for instance, might imply that in order to fulfil the filial duty of producing a male heir one might resort to Buddhist or shamanic ritual, although one would tend to be discreet about it.

[31] *E.g.*, *Injo shillok* 39:19b.

[32] On the basis of this "no deity could not be worshiped" 靡神不擧 (Ch'oe Chongsŏng 2002a: 250–52).

Confucian education did not entirely exclude women, who were assigned an important role for the prospering of the household, which was the center from which the proper ordering of society was to proceed. Yet, in practice a strongly gendered pattern emerged according to which men, particularly elite men, became the strongest proponents of Confucianism, while women tended to favor Buddhism and shamanism. It is telling that upper-class women who against the propensities of their sex rejected recourse to the services of shamans were singled out by their male relatives for special praise. Apparently, it was not the normal behavior expected from women. The reasons for women's reliance on the shamans are not difficult to detect. Even though the *Daxue* 大學 (Great Learning) made clear that the family was essential to the state,[33] and Confucians liked to stress that women were essential to the fortunes of a family and that therefore efforts should be made to teach them Confucian values,[34] the Confucian system offered much more scope to elite men, who would study for the state examinations from a young age and for many years in order to pursue a public career, thereby strengthening their identification with the official ideology. Conversely, Confucianism had little to offer for the trials and tribulations of women's daily lives, such as anxiety because of childlessness, or the naughtiness and sickness of children. Mudang would offer special prayers and rituals for such problems.

While the elite generally was inimical to popular religion, they did not necessarily reject all the premises of popular beliefs. It is important to be aware of this when the relationship between Confucianism and the "heterodox" religions is considered, because it helps explain why some members of the elite looked for assistance from shamanic deities or Buddhism when faced with urgent personal problems or in situations of social crisis. Confucianism emphasized the importance of social relations in the here and now, but it did not deny the existence of invisible numinous forces. Accordingly, the official ritual handbooks contained numerous prescriptions for sacrifices to such forces, including the deities of Land and Grain, the deities of Wind, Clouds, Thunder and Rain, star deities, and deities of mountains and rivers.[35] The elite tended to view these sacrifices in their own way as symbols of government power or an expression of care for the people, but the existence of such invisible forces was not denied. There was also a strong belief in cosmic correspondences, which for instance implied on the one hand that human resentments could cause natural disasters such as drought and on the other hand that Heaven might signify its displeasure with the failings of the ruler through unseasonable weather or lightning striking palace buildings (Park 1998). Most literati would also believe in the

[33] The classic formulation of this, which makes some matters that we might consider to be private a matter of public concern, is found in the introduction of the *Daxue*: "The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts." (*Daxue* 1892: 357)

[34] Examples of books compiled to this end are *Naehun* 內訓 (Instructions for Women) of 1475, and *Yŏsasŏ ŏnhae* 女四書諺解 (The Four Books for Women, explained in the vernacular) of 1736.

[35] These deities were to be venerated by every local magistrate, together with the spirit of Confucius.

possibility of prognostication, although they would tend to see it as based on a profound understanding of the principles of the universe rather than as due to information proffered by spirits.

Rather than flatly denying the existence of an unseen world, Confucian philosophers in both China and Korea also strove to clarify what was the exact nature of spirits or ghosts, explaining their existence as rationally as their basic assumptions allowed, as manifestations of *yin* (as opposed to *yang*) (Murayama 1929: 99–133). Typical of the way of thinking of the elite was however that the invisible world was seen as strictly hierarchical, paralleling the human world as it should be according to Confucian standards, and that the beings in the invisible world were not necessarily superior to humans and might not always deserve to be respected. Already for the Koryŏ period it is recorded that King Ch'ungsuk (r. 1313–1330 and 1332–1339) burned down the shrine of a local guardian deity whom he held responsible for the death of his falcons and horses.[36] Generally the reason that certain gods were thought unfit to be worshiped was not so much that they did not exist, but that they were inferior and unreliable, lacking the proper qualifications to warrant veneration. One might also interpret this as disdain for the social status of the (predominantly female) shamans and their rituals, rather than as a rejection of the "theological" premises of the rituals.

Early childhood experiences may also have contributed to men's (guarded) acceptance of shamanic ritual. The fact that most women, even those of high status, would invite shamans to perform rituals at their homes may have predisposed yangban men to believe, deep down, in the efficacy of shamanic ritual, as they would have frequently assisted at such rituals at a sensitive age.

The public rejection of shamanic ritual and other illicit rituals became something that was obligatory for members of the elite to maintain proper yangban status, irrespective of what they actually believed. In the privacy of the home, however, yangban might condone the performance of shamanic rituals, even though they would tend to keep somewhat aloof from them. The resulting ambiguities are clearly shown in the diary kept by the scholar-official Yi Mun'gŏn (1494–1567) (Yi Pokkyu 1999). Although he shows some skepticism with regard to the shamans who frequently visit his household, the illness of a grandson prompts him to seek the assistance of a mudang to find out what was the matter with him. Even if men themselves completely rejected shamanic rituals, they might have a good reason to allow their performance in their homes because this would please their mothers and wives. The French missionaries who in the nineteenth century illegally entered the country furnished information that allowed Dallet to conclude that "the husbands tolerate [mudang rituals] for the sake of domestic peace, even if they refuse to take part in them, so that from the palace down to the meanest hovel they are widely practiced." (Dallet 1874: cxlviii-cxlviv)

[36] *Shinjŭng Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* kw. 13:4a.

6 Actual Practice: Accommodation and Appropriation

Although the policies of the Chosŏn government with regard to non-orthodox faiths such as Buddhism and shamanism from the outset tended to reflect a negative attitude that already could be observed to some degree in late Koryŏ and efforts were made to "civilize" ritual, the reality on the ground was such that a total ban on shamanism was not feasible. Accordingly, there was both change and accommodation. While violence by Confucian zealots against popular shrines was not uncommon, the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* law code, promulgated in 1485, stated that shamans from both the capital and the provinces should be charged with tending to the ill, an effort to bring them under control as well as a recognition of sorts of their role as healers (*Yŏkchu Kyŏngguk taejŏn* 1985: 259).[37] This shows on the one hand that not all shamans had been evicted from the capital (although attempts had been made) while on the other hand the inclusion of this regulation in the section "Charity" (*hyehyul* 惠恤) of the code for the Department of Rites reflects a typically Confucian paternalistic concern for the wellbeing of the people. Although different kinds of medical practitioners had been around for centuries, many still relied on the services of the shamans for healing.

The position of a shaman called the *kungmu* 國巫, the national or royal mudang, deserves special mention in this context.[38] The *Sejong shillok* (Veritable Records of the Reign of King Sejong) states that in 1443 this figure, together with more than twenty "mudang soothsayers" (*chŏm munyŏ* 占巫女) was still present within the city walls and requested that these shamans would be sent outside the city and put under the control of the Hwarwŏn 活院 (or Hwarinsŏ 活人署), the agency in charge of the sick, with the exception of the kungmu.[39] The kungmu was given an official position in the Sŏngsuch'ŏng 星宿廳 a bureau with a name that has a Daoist ring ("Bureau of Astral Mansions"), but practically was in charge of state-sponsored shamanic rituals, including sacrifices to numinous mountains. Quite likely the use of sŏngsu as an appellation for personal guardian spirits by modern-day mudang performing rituals in Hwanghae Province style is a last trace of the name of this bureau. The Sŏngsuch'ŏng itself, however, disappeared from the records in the early sixteenth century, together with the kungmu as the celebrant of official state sacrifices. This did not mean that shamans no longer frequented the royal palaces. There is ample evidence in records of incidents that took place there to show that mudang continued to offer their services, but it was no longer in an official capacity. When Chang Hŭibin, the concubine of King Sukchong who was briefly made queen and then again demoted, was charged with the use of sorcery against her rival, Queen Inhyŏn, a mudang who served her was accused as an accomplice (Walraven 1987).

[37] A similar measure had already been taken during the reign of King Sejong in 1423 (*Sejong shillok* 19:21a).

[38] The *kungmu* (originally probably called *nara mudang*) and the government bureau they belonged to, and the debate they caused, are discussed in detail in Ch'oe Chongsŏng 2002a: 117–30.

[39] *Sejong shillok* 102:8b.

We also know that when in another palace tragedy Crown-Prince Sado (1735–1762) was killed, quite a few persons around him were executed, including some mudang (Hyegyŏng 1976: 274–75; Haboush 1996, 325). As reliance on mudang often was considered typical of women, it should be noted that in this case the shamans were part of the entourage of a man. At the end of the nineteenth century, Queen Min, the consort of King Kojong, was famous for her patronage of shamans (Walraven 1998: 58), and even in the first decade of the twentieth century a mudang with connections in high places confidently challenged policemen who wanted to refuse her entrance to the palace (Walraven 1995: 116–22).

The government also took measures to rectify the customs of the governing elite. In the early Chosŏn period, it was common for elite families to entrust the mortuary tablets of their ancestors, which were the focus of the ancestral rituals that were the foundation of Confucian orthopraxis, to Buddhist temples or shamans. Henceforth yangban were expected to establish separate family shrines (*kamyo* 家廟) for the worship of these tablets. In 1437 a royal edict was issued to reform funerary practices:[40] "From now on the playing of music, the gathering of guests, and the performance of wanton ceremonies for the spirits as well as visits of mourners to shaman houses to feast the spirits of the dead, or the invitation of guests to pray for the soul's repose, and the serving of wine on funeral days must be clearly and sternly prohibited by the censorial offices in the capital and by the local authorities in the province."

Pressure from above prompted a steadily increasing number of yangban lineages to create their own shrines to worship their ancestors and keep the ancestral tablets, but it did not put an end to shamanic rituals for the recently deceased performed on behalf of the elite, in spite of the fierce opposition of Confucian officials. This led to occasional clashes. When King Hyojong died in 1659, his wife had mudang perform an elaborate ritual outside the East Gate where, as was the custom, the deceased spoke through the mouth of a shaman.[41] The ritual was attended by many spectators. This quasi-public flouting of decorum aroused the ire of an official of the Censorate, who had the head shaman arrested and killed. He himself then had to face the anger of the queen. In this case there was open conflict because of the very high status of the persons involved, but those at (somewhat) lower echelons of society would be able to have such rituals performed without problem.

Generally, an equilibrium was reached in the relationship between the elite ideology of Confucianism and the shamans in the sixteenth century. Private shamanic rituals were usually condoned, as long as they did not attract too much attention. On the one hand, the resistance against shamanism was successful in that shamans were excluded from virtually all official state functions, at least at the central level, although the state formally recognized their existence as payers of a special shamans' tax (Rim Haksŏng 1993: 90–126). The latter was characteristic of the

[40] *Sejong shillok* 76:15b–16a. Translation by Martina Deuchler, in Peter Lee 1993: vol. 1, 558.

[41] Ku Suhun 1983: 431. It is typical that we know about this case from an individual's private record. There is no trace of it in the *Shillok* although the official who angered the queen was himself threatened by her with death.

pragmatism in official attitudes toward shamans, which compromised fundamental objections to heterodoxy. Chosŏn intellectuals ware aware of the inconsistency implied in this and occasionally objected to it (Yi Ik 1967 vol. 1: 114).

The area of public ritual where shamans participated longest were rituals to pray for rain, which addressed the greatest vulnerability of the agricultural economy of Chosŏn. Prolonged drought would not only endanger the lives of many, but also cause great anxiety among the population and concern among the ruling class that the stability of government would be threatened. The last instance of rain ritual in which shamans participated that was actually conducted at the behest of the central government dates to 1638, although a century later in 1745 rain rituals by shamans and blind exorcists[42] where still mentioned in the handbook of the Office of Rites (T'aesangshi 太常寺) to the chagrin of King Yŏngjo (Walraven 1999: 173).[43] In the provinces, affairs were less strictly regulated and shamans still might be called upon to pray for rain, although magistrates tended to maintain a certain distance from them.

Generally, the government made a concerted effort to control rituals and limit the worship of particular spirits to officials appointed by the court, excluding worship by members of the general public or shamans. The effect of this was to subordinate worship to the political order. An early example of an attempt to bring rituals that belonged to unorthodox religious practices under government control was the institution of sacrifices at the *yŏdan* 厲壇 altar in 1401 (Walraven 1993a; Yi Uk 2009: 279–85). This was located to the north of Seoul or of any place where there was a magistrate sent by the central government and was intended to placate the spirits of persons without offspring, but also and predominantly those who had died before their time, because of violence, injustice, accidents or disease. Such spirits of the unquiet dead are feared in many cultures and in Korean shamanic rituals are held responsible for all kinds of misfortune. They also figure in Buddhist rituals (as "hungry ghosts" *agwi* 餓鬼). In the early years of the Chosŏn period the government would prescribe the Buddhist "Assembly of Water and Land" (*suryukchae* 水陸齋) ritual for such spirits, for example when the accumulated resentment of soldiers fallen in battle was held responsible for a raging epidemic. In later centuries people who had died such premature violent deaths were depicted in the Sweet Dew paintings (*kamno t'aeng* 甘露幀) that from the mid-sixteenth century were presented to many Buddhist temples (often by court ladies) and were related to rituals for both the restless dead and deceased family members. *Yŏje* 厲祭, the ritual at the yŏdan, was however to put an end to the heterodox shamanic and Buddhist rituals for potentially dangerous resentful spirits. It claimed to have its basis in the canonic *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), but was actually largely a tradition invented in Ming China, because the *Book of Rites* only speaks of the spirits of those who had died

[42] The male blind exorcists (*p'ansu*) performed rituals that in some ways were similar to those of the shamans, but slightly more acceptable to the yangban elite, because of their sex and the style of their rituals, which was more decorous according to Confucian standards.

[43] For much more detailed discussions of government rain ritual, see Ch'oe Chongsŏng 2002a, b: 142–276, and Yi Uk 2009: 135–228.

without posterity to conduct sacrifices for them. The yŏje rituals were performed by government officials (locally perhaps aided by members of the gentry, but not by shamans) for more than 500 years, until 1908, but in their basic rationale were so similar to the rituals of the shamans that present-day Confucians, if they are at all aware of the existence of yŏje in the past, sometimes think that it was a shamanic ritual. It was intended, however, as a decorous, civilized substitute for shamanic or Buddhist ritual and, moreover, was given a typically Confucian justification. When epidemics raged, it was seen as the expression of the paternal care the king bestowed on his "babies" (*chŏkcha* 赤子), the common people, doing whatever was possible to console them.

Another example of efforts to control worship is the cult of the *sŏnghwang* 城隍. The name is derived from China, where it denoted the city god. In Korea, the term first crops up in the Koryŏ period and refers to local tutelary deities, not necessarily of cities (Sŏ Yŏngdae 1998: 479). It has been suggested that the cult of the sŏnghwang was first adopted by local gentry and that this is behind the fact that a number of these cults were devoted to the spirits of historical figures, ancestors of local elite groups. This did not preclude that such deities were at the same time mountain spirits, a natural combination as the role of mountain deities as local guardian deities was one of the oldest strands of the indigenous religion. In fact, according to the *Samguk yus*a, Tan'gun, too, turned into a mountain god after he had founded and ruled the state of Ko-Chosŏn. Accordingly, from the outset in Korea the sŏnghwang was not worshipped within the city, as in China, but at a nearby mountain. A famous and still extant example is the sŏnghwang of Kangnŭng, whose shrine since days immemorial has been located at the Taegwallyŏng mountain pass, about eleven kilometers from the town.

In the earliest years of the Chosŏn period, the justification for the existence of the altars for the sŏnghwang was still a subject of debate, with some regarding them as deplorable remnants of irregular worship that should be eradicated. Eventually, however, the government decided to regard the sŏnghwang as the supernatural counterpart of the local magistrate, establishing a place for his worship in every location where a magistrate was sent by the court, while at the same time making efforts to get rid of the irregular forms of worship. Only the magistrate was entitled to worship the sŏnghwang. It was not so easy, however, to suppress the older sŏnghwang cult, which continued on a large scale, although often at a different place than the official sŏnghwang altar. The name remained the same, but usually was rendered in a simplified pronunciation: *sŏnang*. Sometimes the place of worship was a shrine, but more often it was a heap of stones, or a sacred tree. If we consider the contemporary practice of shamans from the Hwanghae Province tradition (who in South Korea maintain the rituals of this area of North Korea), there is an interesting parallel between this and the official Chosŏn cult. In the Chosŏn period, officials 3 days in advance had to notify the local sŏnghwang that a ritual would be held for the restless spirits worshiped at the yŏdan, so that in the realm of the supernatural the sŏnghwang, as the "magistrate of the other world," could lead his charges to the place of worship (Walraven 1993a: 74). In the same way, in the

Hwanghae tradition it is the sŏnang who gathers the dead to come to the shamanic ritual for them (Bruno 2002: 139). Interestingly, moreover, the Hwanghae sŏnang is often depicted as a tiger. This confirms that the Korean sŏnghwang/sŏnang originally is a mountain god, because there is general agreement that Korean mountain gods originally appeared in this animal shape.[44]

As the official sŏnghwang were no longer represented as the spirits of human beings, the government also got rid of the spouses that were worshiped together with them, and of the images of the deities that were a common characteristic of the earlier sŏnghwang cult. Doing so, the government followed the example of the Ming, which had issued a similar decree in 1369 (Sŏ Yŏngdae 1998: 393). In this way, the proper Confucian style of worship distanced itself further from the veneration of tutelary deities by the mudang, who in the Koryŏ period typically had been the keepers of the sŏnghwang shrines.

It is worth noting that there also emerged a sŏnghwang cult that stood between the official, governmental cult, which practically functioned as a symbol of political domination, and the popular cult practiced by shamans to pray for benefits of their clients. This was the veneration of local tutelary deities by the clerks in government offices, who also socially stood between the yangban elite and the masses of the population (Pak Howŏn 1998: 147–91). Such deities would include sŏnghwang, but might also comprise other spirits with different names. Thus, a deity called Pugun 府君 was worshiped as a protector of many government offices. The purpose of the rituals for such deities was to promote good fortune and avert calamities, but the style of the rituals in many instances could be characterized as Confucian. The result of all this was that in the end there emerged a variety of forms of worship. At one end there was the official, aniconic Confucian-style worship of deities who had a proper place in the ritual codes, executed by servants of the monarch, and at the other end of the spectrum there were the uncodified rituals of ordinary people and shamans. In-between there were rituals that were performed by persons who in some way were associated with the government, sometimes aided by shamans and sometimes not, of deities who in one way or another had retained characteristics of the older cults. While such cults were condoned, some care was taken to distinguish them from the official cult. The Tanoje festival of Kangnŭng, which in the twentieth century achieved the status of cultural heritage, maintains traces of this. Celebrated around the fifth day of the fifth month, not a day for the official veneration of the sŏnghwang under the auspices of government clerks, the sŏnghwang of the city for the occasion is taken to the city from his shrine at the Taegwallyŏng mountain pass to be united with his spouse, the Yŏ-Sŏnghwang (female sŏnghwang), whose shrine is situated closer to the town. At the altar that is the focus of the veneration there are two kinds of worship. Early in the morning, before the numerous spectators who watch the spectacle later in the day arrive, representatives of local government and various organizations, like Kangnŭng University, attired like Chosŏn officials,

[44] Modern depictions of the mountain god commonly take the form of an old man accompanied by a tiger, but I have met an old lady who had made a sacrifice to the mountain god of Samgaksan in Seoul and claimed that the deity himself would appear in the shape of a tiger.

conduct a ritual in Confucian style, while in the daytime mudang worship the deities on behalf of the visitors of the festival. This demarcation between different types of worship, separated by the time when veneration takes place, also was characteristic of similar rituals in the past.

An interesting case in which Confucianism and ideas that may be called shamanic peacefully coexisted is the worship of "chaste women" (*yŏllyŏ* 烈女)。 These women typically had chosen to die rather than give in to rapists. This was virtuous from a Confucian point of view, sufficient reason for the government to grant them official tokens of appreciation, but at the same from a shamanic perspective might be a cause for resentment that might pose a danger to the living, causing drought for instance. There is some evidence that in some cases the decision of the government to venerate yŏllyŏ was motivated by the fear of wrathful spirits rather than admiration for superior virtue (Murayama 1929: 208–09; Walraven 1999: 191). In the case of soldiers who had demonstrated their virtue by dying in defense of the country, too, government veneration of their spirits at a special altar, the *minch'ungdan* 民忠壇, simultaneously will have assuaged fears for the consequences of their resentment because of their early death that might be shared by the shamans and their followers.

7 Conclusion: The Limits of Confucianization and the Fate of Shamanism in Modern Times

It is surmised that in China the *ru* (儒), who eventually turned into "Confucians," originally conducted rituals that were very similar to those of shamans, or even were shamans themselves. One may note that even now the structure of the rituals conducted by Confucians and shamans in some ways is strikingly similar. Care is taken to ensure ritual purity before the ritual, spirits are invited to the place of the rituals, they are presented with offerings of food and drink, and then sent off again, after which some of the ritual implements are burned. Over time, however, these superficial similarities became much less important than the differences in the mental world behind the rituals and the purpose of the rituals. While Confucianism turned into a philosophy, based on writings that became canonical and offered elaborate views on the social world and the cosmos, it became deeply invested in the larger social structure and the organization of the state. An emphasis on the interests of a complexly structured society, rather than individual wishes, led to a rejection of ritual that just aimed to satisfy private desires, and "praying for individual happiness." Conducting ritual became a form of spiritual cultivation rather than a means to the realization of particular wishes. A focus on the actual world of man also discouraged speculation about the spirit world and life after death. All this left room, however, for ritual specialists like the shamans, who as mediators between man and an unseen world that is supposed to deeply influence, or even to govern daily life act to solve acute practical problems and psychological impasses, which frequently are

of a quite personal nature. The human needs they catered to are eternal and explain why shamanic ritual did not disappear, in spite of sustained efforts to establish an official public discourse that vehemently rejected it.

When Confucianism was introduced in Korea, it had already distinguished itself radically from popular beliefs such as one finds in shamanism, but it took many centuries before the influence of shamanism disappeared from public life as it was institutionalized in the organization of the state. Even when Confucianism established itself as the dominant discourse of the elite in the first half of the Chosŏn period shamans initially still were occasionally called upon by the state to perform some tasks, but this happened less and less, and in the end stopped completely at the central official level.

In the second half of the Chosŏn period the differences between the official Confucian cults and popular religion were quite clearly defined conceptually. Consequently, the urge to strictly enforce the dominance of the elite ideology was less strong, except in areas that were thought to be lagging behind, such as Cheju Island, where in the early eighteenth century the magistrate Yi Hyŏngsang (1653–1733) still thought it necessary to destroy a host of shamanic shrines and two Buddhist temples to "rectify customs" (Walraven 1999).

It is tempting to describe the state of affairs that was prevalent in the late Chosŏn period as the final victory of Confucianism. It is possible, however, to interpret this in a rather different way, particularly if one takes into account what happened in the twentieth century. At first sight, in previous centuries the Confucian orthodoxy of the Zhu Xi variety had been firmly established thanks to the examination system, which required mastery of its principles as the only way to advancement in the bureaucracy. At the same time, respect for the "Confucian virtues" of filial piety and loyalty to the monarch had spread among virtually all layers of the population, and was praised by Buddhist monks and shamans alike. Nonetheless, privately many literate persons, both elite yangban and marginal scholars without hopes of advancement, would read all kinds of non-Confucian literature, including Buddhist writings. Moreover, because both Buddhism and shamanism, too, unambiguously embraced the virtues of filial piety and loyalty, as the generally accepted virtues of Chosŏn society these ceased to be specifically Confucian. Confucian ethics had turned into Korean ethics (Walraven 2012a). At the same time, even persons with a great personal stake in Confucianism showed openness to other ways of thinking. In the nineteenth century, for instance, several headmasters of the Confucian National Academy, the Sŏnggyun'gwan 成均館, contributed to the printing of a Buddhist sutra, together with prominent members of the royal family (Y Lee 2012: 98). The conclusion that may be drawn from this is that the Confucian transformation of Chosŏn, which undoubtedly had radically changed Korean society in many respects, slowed down or even ground to a halt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This interpretation is particularly persuasive when one considers that after 1894, when the examination system was abolished, Confucianism as the primary spiritual allegiance of individuals took a heavy blow, although its influence even now lingers in many diffuse ways. The beneficiaries of this were Buddhism and Christianity, and some of the new religions. The position of shamanism, however, changed but little,

because it retained low status, now as a remnant of hoary superstitious beliefs that did not agree with the civilization of modernity (Walraven 1995). Christianity, in particular, has perpetuated the disdain for shamanism that was characteristic of the attitude of many Confucians in the Chosŏn period. Whereas more organized religions, such as Christianity, Ch'ŏndogyo, or Wŏn Buddhism, managed to file a successful claim to modernity in some form, the shamans have struggled to justify themselves in these terms. The only way they have been able to legitimate themselves successfully in modern terms is as keepers of Korean cultural heritage. This is not to say that they have not "modernized" themselves in various ways. They have adapted to the times and the needs of a largely urban society, for instance by shortening their rituals to accommodate the pace of modern life. In this way they have maintained their place in Korean society, largely outside the limelight, as spiritual healers and counselors who help people deal with loss and uncertainty, as they have done throughout Korean history. Ironically, in one respect Confucianism and shamanism, opposite poles of Korean society as they have been and still are, have shared a similar fate in contemporary Korea. Both have been hugely influential in defining different modes of Korean culture, but neither plays a dominant role any longer at the forefront of contemporary life, although both make efforts to adapt to changing times.[45]

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[45] For shamanism, see Kendall 2009; for Confucianism Kim Bi-Hwan 2017, and Kaplan 2018.

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