

**THE ROLE OF SHAMANISM
IN KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH**

by

Sin Hong Kim

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Supervisor: Dr. Daryl M. Balia

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ABSTRACT

Since the reformation, from the seventeenth century onwards, the christian church has evangelised through missionary activity. Church growth has been rapid in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in third world countries. This phenomenon has given rise to the development of Missiology and the Study of Church growth as independent fields of theology. In this dissertation, the historically unprecedented growth of the Korean Church has been analyzed as singularly important model for Church Growth Theology.

This study is concerned with the relationship between Church Growth and Shamanism as the traditional Korean Religion. It focuses on special elements of Korean Church Growth, including the translation of the Bible prior to the entry of missionaries, the astounding numerical growth of Church membership, and the prominence of Christians in social and political structures. The contribution of specific social conditions, pastoral zeal, and 'early prayer' and Bible study movements to Church growth are examined.

More important, however, is the influence of elements of Shamanism in establishing Christianity as a popular religion. The affinities between Christian Doctrine and Shamanistic practices, in particular, the decisive role of Shaman, are explored, and both the positive and negative aspects of the melding of the two religions identified. While the increasing power and wealth of the Korean Church and the remarkable capacity for self-prorogation have been manifested in its extensive missionary programmes, the principle task confronting the church is how to dispel the compromising or damaging features of Shamanism from Korean Christianity.

Since similar problems occur in other world Churches which encounter indigenous religions in the process of evangelism, it is hope that this hesitation will eliminate possible accommodations between Christianity and traditional beliefs, and provide a basis for subsequent studies of Church Growth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

When I first came to South Africa during 1991, I found that I had to adapt myself to the prevailing circumstances, different lifestyles, customs, culture and language. I endeavoured to direct my energies to acquaint myself with many different people of this country and to learn from them.

In time, I met Prof. Heuer who was also a presbyterian Pastor. He advised me to study at the University of Durban-Westville. My interest was the relationship between Church Growth and Traditional Religions.

I was introduced and welcomed by the current Dean Prof. Krige and the staff of the Faculty of Theology. I studied in the Department of Church History and Missiology.

Before I wrote my thesis Prof. Krige, Prof. Goba and Dr Balia guided my course work. I selected my home church as a study model for my thesis.

Dr Balia as my supervisor is invaluable as he encouraged, helped and coached me in my thesis. I thank Dr Balia for all his help and effort in directing me.

I thank my wife, Hye Young, for her encouragement and help in arranging my manuscript and Miss Nisha for proof reading.

I dedicate this thesis to my mother who is happy that I studied in a foreign country.

INTRODUCTION

Christianity has produced many missionaries since the seventeenth century, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Churches grew in numbers and active studies of this have been undertaken. Missiology has become an independent branch of theology and more recently church growth theology has been introduced.

The Korean church has shown enormous growth in the hundred years since the introduction of the Christian Gospel in Korea.

Christians of other countries envy this and expect the Korean church to lead the way in world mission. Of the 50 largest church congregations in the world, 23 are in Korea.¹

The Korean church growth has attracted international attention as a special model of church growth. Scholars of church growth, such as Donald McGavran,² as well as Koreans themselves, are monitoring church growth in Korea. My interest is in the analysis of the type of growth of the Korean church, with particular reference to the role of Shamanism thereto.

¹ Lee Jeong Ik, *How to Conquer Secession from Church* (The Pastoral Monthly Vol. 201, Seoul, 1993) p.40

² Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (William B. Eerdmans, USA, 1970) p. 132

A. REASON FOR STUDY

All the people of the world are in a sense religious. St Paul said that the recognition of God existed in the native cultures of each race.³ In this context I am anxious to see how Korean people understood and accepted Christianity, given the traditional Korean religious background of Shamanism, and how the church has grown against this background. As we know from the customs of the Sawui race, Melchizedek of Canaan, and the Unknown God in Athens (Acts), God prepared all people to receive the Gospel.⁴ Shamanism, the traditional Korean religion, obviously exercised some influence on Korean church growth, and I wish to study this relationship.

If Shamanism plays a role in the Korean church growth, what sort of influence has it exercised? After Korean independence in 1945, domestic scholars studied Shamanism, and came to regard it as a traditional cultural phenomenon of the ordinary people. However, I will carefully analyse Shamanism and show how it was connected with Christian church growth from a comparative religious standpoint. Now, as we approach the twenty-first century, the Korean church has the responsibility to act as a mission model or growth model for world mission.

³ Romans 1:19 "What may be known about God is plain to them...."

⁴ Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts* (Word of Life Press, Seoul, 1992) p. 39

In summary, the study of Shamanism and its role in Korean church growth is essential to the Christian mission.

It is necessary that we correctly understand religious aboriginalisation and that we study the new methodology of deviation of non-western missions from the western mission trend, as in the historical development of the Korean Protestant aboriginalisation.

In this thesis, I have attempted to put the above points in perspective.

B. METHODOLOGY

1. Methods of Processing

I will seek to discover the growth types in the course of Korean church history and will study the religious and cultural basis and characters of the Korean people. I will clearly show that Shamanism is embedded in the Korean mind and has contributed to the Korean church growth.

Firstly, I will enumerate the state and elements of church growth, and discuss the fact that the mentality of the Korean people stems from the roots of Shamanism. I will analyse Shamanism and its characteristics.

Later, I will discuss the mutual relationship between Shamanism and Christianity, and other factors connecting Shamanism to church growth.

Finally, I will put into perspective the role of Shamanism in Korean church growth.

2. Scope of Study

My discourse will only include the Korean Protestant churches, and exclude the Catholic church.

Scholars have studied many traditional religions in Euroasia, and grouped them all together under the common title of Shamanism, although they have their minor differences. My research will concentrate on Korean Shamanism only.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. Church growth: I use this term to imply both numerical and internal growth.
2. Shamanism: Mudang, known as the Korean shaman, and all related religious ritual and thought, as well as a similar common faith is encompassed by this term.
3. Spirit: There are many Koreanistic religious, traditional and philosophical words, making it difficult to translate into English,

especially the concept of God and the spirit, which differ slightly from the Western concept. Therefore, I use the following words within a specific context:

soul - the spirit of a living person,

spirit - the spirit of a dead person.

4. God: Christian God;

god: (i) common concept of god;

(ii) sometimes used interchangeably with spirits.

5. Korean church: This term refers to the Korean Protestant churches within Korea, including all Protestant denominations.

CHAPTER 1

THE GROWTH OF THE KOREAN CHURCH

This chapter will examine the special characteristics of Korean church growth, as well as the reasons for, and elements of, church growth. The implications of these causes and elements and their significance for Korean society will be considered.

A. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH

The Korean Church has always been regarded as unique, and has displayed amazing growth among the world's Christian churches, particularly during this century. Dr Allen, who entered Korea in 1884, and the missionaries Underwood and Apenseller, who entered in 1885, were responsible for the formation of the Korean Protestant Church¹. In 1985 the Korean Church reached its centennial and it is miraculous that in such a short period 25% of the Korean population had accepted the Christian Gospel.² This has earned the respect of Christian churches all over the world. There are many

¹ Kim Yang Seon, *The Study of Korean Church History* (Ki Dok Kyo Moon Sa, Seoul, 1993) p.63

² Han, Cheol Ha. *Korean Church and World Mission*, in 'What do you think about Korean Church?' (Shin Mang Ae Press, Seoul, 1989) p.258

Christian churches and ministers in Korea at present, and many large congregations have appeared. The number of theological students is also increasing explosively. The Presbyterian Theological Seminary alone has approximately 2500 students.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH?

1. The Meaning of Church Growth

A church grows in several ways. Firstly, there is numerical or quantitative growth. There are normally three approaches to determining church membership: 'registered members,' 'baptised members,' and 'attending members' (those who attend Sunday services). These days, we tend to use the number of 'attending members' regardless of the number of 'registered members' submitted in a church's formal report. Nonetheless the Korean church shows a distinctive increase in all three areas.

The second form of church growth is qualitative, in the 'internal maturity' of the church; that is, the increasing activity of the congregation and the nature of its operations.

Thirdly, there is 'biblical growth' - that is the 'Christian life' or the degree to which biblical patterns and practice are found in daily life. Here I

divide the person called a 'Christian' into three classes: attending member; registered member; and disciple-member. An attending member would be one who attends church with an 'interest' in Christianity. A registered member would be one who is merely baptised and registered with the church. A disciple-member may be regarded as a true Christian, fully active in the life and work of the church.

2. Numerical Growth

The spread of world Christianity reveals that 66% of Christians are of coloured races, while 34% are white³. Among the 'non-western' churches, the Korean church has been regarded as the most capable⁴.

There are currently about twelve million Korean Christians, twenty-five per cent of the South Korean population. Such explosive growth is amazing, particularly considering the briefness of the mission's history. The main characteristic of Korean Church growth has been its suddenness. Korea has the largest of Full Gospel Central Church, Presbyterian and Methodist congregations in the world.

³ Seo, Jeong Woon, World Mission and Korean Presbyterian Church (Pul Bit ministry Vol. 106, 1991) p.58

⁴ Ibid.

3. External Growth

The Korean church has also grown externally. With the economic development that took place in Korea in the sixties and seventies, the Korean Church not only increased its church membership, but also church finances. Members make special voluntary donations as well as 'one-tenth contributions' or 'tithes.' Each church has its own building in proportion to its membership, and is conscious of showing its growth externally. Newer and larger buildings are constructed, given the funds, to accommodate an increase in membership. Investment is also made in establishments and external assets. Each church is eager to purchase church vehicles and to build a Sunday-school hall, a mountain prayer house, a minister's house, and a church cemetery. Furthermore, each church does its best to support small, poorer congregations, various social-work organisations and overseas mission work.

4. Self-Generated Growth

Another characteristic of Korean Church growth is self-generated growth from the early mission period. Before the first Protestant missionary entered Korea the 'Sorae congregation' had already been founded in Hwang-Hae province⁵. Pastor Underwood, the first missionary in Korea,

⁵ Kim Young Han, *Korean Christianity and Faith* (Collection of Treatises of Korean christianity vol.5 Pung Man, Seoul, 1988) p.22

entered Korea with Mark's gospel, which had been translated in Japan by Soo Jung Lee.⁶ The missionaries did not visit the villages to convert people, but rather to teach and baptise those who had already accepted Christ⁷. When Father Moon-Mo Joo came to Korea from China, he was very surprised to find that four thousand believers already existed in Korea.⁸

Mr Lee Eung-Chan and friends acted as language teachers for Pastors Ross and McIntyre. They were baptised and helped to translate the Bible into Korean⁹.

Mr Sang-Ryun Seo, who lived in the city of Eui-Ju, went to China in search of a pastor¹⁰. He was baptised, and after returning to Korea, founded the first Protestant Church in the town of So-Rae, in the Hwang-Hae Do province¹¹.

⁶ Kim Yang Seon, op cit., pp.55-63, and Kwon Young Sam, "Local Trip to Jeong Dong" (Ministry and Theology, Vol. 48, Tyramus Books, Seoul, 1993) p.141

⁷ Roy E. Shearer. trans Lee Seung Ik. Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) p.48

⁸ Donald E. Hoke. The Church in Asia (Moody Press, Chicago, 1975) p.376

⁹ Choi Jung Hyon, Korean Church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang Press, Seoul, 1993) p.119

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Lee Young Hyeon. Korean Christian History (Concoldia, Seoul, 1983) p.64

After having established a complete organisation, the Korean Church itself attempted to spread the gospel. Upon founding the first Presbytery, the Church appointed missionaries to be dispatched at the same time that the first graduation ceremony of the theological seminary took place¹². In 1912, when the first general assembly was held,¹³ a decision was taken to send missionaries to China. Three pastors and their families were accordingly posted to China the following year.

5. Growth of the Presbyterian and Full Gospel Churches

The fourth characteristic of growth in the Korean Church was the specific growth of the Presbyterian Church. In the seventies, the Full Gospel¹⁴ Church grew remarkably alongside the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Churches still hold sixty per cent of Korean Protestants¹⁵.

The reasons for the rapid Presbyterian and Full Gospel Church growth are related to certain Shamanistic elements. (Further details will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). These Shamanistic elements are discussed in this

¹² Seo Jeong Woon, op cit., p.57

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ There are two main Pentecostal churches in Korea: The Full Gospel Church and the Holiness Assembly of God. For convenience sake, reference will be made in this thesis to the Full Gospel church, which should be understood to include the Holiness Assembly of God.

¹⁵ Patrick Johnstone, Operation World (WEC Press, Bucks England, 1990) p.269

thesis. From early in its history the Presbyterian Church has been more conservative than the Methodist.¹⁶ This distinctive leaning towards conservatism may be linked to the conservatism evident in Shamanism. The Korean Full Gospel Church also contained Shamanistic elements, which have been present since its origins.

The world-wide Pentecostal movement with its emphasis on an intense spiritual experience, strong faith and religious zeal accorded well with the intrinsic qualities of Shamanism. The centrality of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal worship powerfully connected with Shamanistic beliefs concerning faith, healing and miracles. Shamans still enlist spirits to aid in healing and the performing of miracles today, just as the Pentecostal Church invokes the power of the Holy Spirit to these ends.

6. Activities of Women's Associations

Within the church women perform mainly auxiliary duties (receptions, entertainment, cleaning, etc.) However, they also play a major role in evangelical work and provide a large portion of the Church's financial support.

They also are the driving force behind the Church's 'prayer movement.'

Korean Christian women often fast for as many as forty days. This period

¹⁶ Kim Young Han. op cit., Korean Christianity and Faith, pp.46-47

is filled with prayer. Quiet obedience is considered an important virtue among Korean women. However, they have displayed their strength and ability in the midst of difficult circumstances. The history books are filled with stories of such women.

A large building, known as the Women's Association Building¹⁷, is a visible expression of the important role of women in the church. This is the largest of the Christian buildings in Korea. At this stage the Men's Association does not have its own building.

7. Growth as a Popular Religion

Christianity has become a formidable influence within Korean society. Throughout the sixties and seventies it was common for many businesses, mainly shops, to remain open on Sundays. 'Incomplete' Christians also continued to open their shops on Sundays. The Korean Church was not then as powerful as it is today. The situation changed in the nineteen eighties, however, when the number of Korean Christians increased significantly. Christians began to close their businesses on Sundays. Non-Christians began to do the same when it became clear that many people were no longer shopping on Sundays. By the eighties, it had become economically feasible for people not to work on Sundays. The practice, therefore, became popular even among non-Christians. It is generally

¹⁷ The eighteen-storey building was erected in 1987.

accepted that Christian students pray before meals taken at school. The Korean population tends to accept Christians as both ethical and good. In the nineteen seventies and eighties many middle-class Koreans became Christian, both in Seoul and throughout the country. The Christian faith had become widely accepted, therefore, in more ways than one.

8. Periods of Growth

While growth in the Korean church has been continuous, there have, nonetheless, been specific periods of rapid growth. For example, the Korean Church grew very rapidly during the nineteen thirties, sixties and seventies¹⁸. These revival periods coincided with periods of political oppression within the country which was also when a connection between Christianity and Shamanism was established.

B. ELEMENTS OF GROWTH

1. Internal Elements of Growth

a. Early morning prayer meetings and mountain prayer

One reason for the strength and energy of the Korean Church is

¹⁸ Lee Hun Ku, Korean Traditional Religion and Korean Church (Yeon Hab, Seoul, 1992)

the stress laid upon a positive prayer movement, in particular early morning prayer meetings and mountain prayer (or prayer retreats). Both are widely known within the Korean Church. A great many 'mountains of prayer' may be found in Korea. These can also be termed 'prayer houses' or 'retreats.' These retreats are open to all, regardless of denomination. All congregations hold early morning prayer meetings at either 4:00 a.m. or 5:00 a.m., every day without exception. Although this is tiring, particularly for ministers, it is nevertheless seen as an important source of spiritual power, uniting the congregation and increasing its abilities.

For example, Myong-Seong Presbyterian Church, which has thirty-thousand members in Seoul, is extremely successful with regard to its early morning prayer meetings.¹⁹ Approximately fifteen thousand of its members attend early morning prayer meetings every day. The monks of the European Middle Ages held early morning prayers and today many Christians have a 'quiet time' in the morning. However, the early morning prayer meetings of Korea are part of a system unique to the Korean Church. Korean Christians, particularly those who live in the countryside, will often walk as many as eight kilometres to attend the early morning prayer meetings of their church. This enthusiasm is vital for the growth of the Korean Church. Korean ministers, even when on annual leave, are considered by their congregations to be always on duty. Korean Christians recall that, in

¹⁹ Shin Seong Jong, *The Growth Churches of Korea* (The Pastoral Monthly, Vol. 197, Seoul) p.182

important or difficult times, Jesus would conduct early morning prayers and mountain retreats.

b. Home visitations

Just as early morning prayer meetings and mountain retreats are elements in a church's spiritual growth, so too are home-visits by ministers, particularly for the purpose of counselling. People regard the visiting of homes as a reflection of a minister's interest in church members homes and families. Ministers are encouraged to visit often. Through home-visits, members are kept interested in church affairs. Furthermore, many believe that a visiting minister brings blessings upon a home, and that the Lord himself accompanies the minister to the home. Through home-visits a minister may counsel members and minister on their behalf, and in so doing comes to know his congregation well. Furthermore, by visiting the homes of those who are not necessarily committed Christians a minister may bring about an increased interest by virtue of his devotion and concern.

c. Intense evangelical activity of ministers and laymen

Prior to the emergence of the current large congregations, fewer ministers were sufficient to the task. Each minister was assisted by a secretary and a 'steward'. Ministers worked devotedly, leading services, administering and counselling, preaching, visiting events and organising meetings. Through

their tireless efforts such ministers contributed to the rapid growth of the church.

Traditionally Korean pastors were 'on duty' twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Currently, ministers receive one or two weeks annual vacation in order to attend to family matters. Besides the intense activity of ministers, the evangelical work of the laity has been a big factor in the growth of the Korean Church. The missionary Fenwilk²⁰ was impressed by the powerful capacity of Korean evangelists, rather than missionaries, to spread the gospel. Early Korean Christianity produced many colporteurs and evangelical literature was sold by the roadside and in homes. These vendors were called "Yesu Jaeng Yi"²¹, (specialists for Jesus). Their efforts to spread the Gospel were frenetic, and their contribution towards the growth of the Korean Christian church cannot be overestimated. According to the 'thirtieth anniversary memorial book of Chosun Southern Methodist Church' by Ju Sam Ryang,²² fifteen of the thirty-nine pastors ordained up until 1924 had previously been colporteurs. According to the official minutes of Ham Kyong Presbytery²³, the members decided to stipulate as an additional condition for recommendation

²⁰ CHoi Jeong Man, *Mission and Aboriginalization of Theology Education* (Pu Bit Ministry vol 106, Seoul, 1991) p.54

²¹ Ibid., pp.50-51

²² Ibid., p.52

²³ Ibid.

of prospective candidates to their theological seminary that applicants should have been active as colporteurs. Lay persons also attempted to spread the Gospel. For example, the records of Ju-An Presbyterian Church, in the city of In-Cheon, show that over a year, one member brought over one thousand and twenty six people to the church²⁴.

d. Spiritual revival and (bible class)

Another element of church growth is that of Bible-class and spiritual revival meetings. The Korean Church has held special Bible-class meetings many times over the course of its history. By holding spiritual revival meetings several times a year, the Korean Church 'revives' or awakens the faith of its members. The special 'Bible-classes' of the great revival period of the 1910's were particularly effective. Rev. W.N. Blair asserted that, "above all things Bible-study meeting was a cause of fast growth and revival in the early Korean Church."²⁵ The words 'amazing growth' were used to describe the phenomenal expansion of the Korean Christian church (K.C.C.)²⁶ at the 1910 Edinburgh Mission Congress.²⁷ The Presbyterian

²⁴ Na Kyeom Il, The Collection for Jesus festival (Ju Ahn Presbyterian church, Seoul, 1990) p.49

²⁵ Roy E. Shearer, Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) p.60

²⁶ The abbreviation K.C.C. will be used henceforward to refer to the Korean Christian church.

²⁷ Choi Jung Hyon, Korean church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang, Seoul, 1993) p.121

Church revival was fuelled during this period by the practice of conducting prolonged bible class workshops, continuing for anything from a week to a month, for entire congregations. These meetings, which centred strictly on the Bible, were an important forum for the consolidation of knowledge and affirmation of faith. At the end of the Lee Dynasty, there was no longer a unifying force within the Korean consciousness.²⁸ This left a vacuum which Christianity could fill and the Bible was given to people with a fundamental respect for books. The study of the scriptures in the assemblies already described was a vital factor in determining the specific character of Korean Christianity.

Nevius'²⁹ mission policy at that time also stressed the importance of Bible study.³⁰ The emergence of Korean Church leaders occurred during this phase, and many of the best Biblical scholars and theologians from third world mission fields were Korean³¹. These leaders sustained the effort of earlier missionaries and added impetus to the spread of the gospel, which is why Biblical orthodoxy is the frame and substance of Korean Christianity. The flourishing of Bible class assemblies represents a significant contribution to the growth of the K.C.C. Like the spiritual revival meetings from 1904-1907, they centralised worship around the word of God, and the

²⁸ Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.126

²⁹ John Nevius was a missionary who worked in China in the 1880s.

³⁰ McGavran, Donald A., op cit., p.337

³¹ Choi Jeong Man, op. cit., p.50

broad movement of spiritual revival was rooted in those assemblies which advanced from study of the Bible to spiritual experience. After the Korean War spiritual revival meetings became the main element of church growth, connecting with the Pentecostal Holy Spirit Movement in the 1960's to dramatically increase the popularity of Christianity among the Korean people, who were previously Shamanistic. A council of revivalist pastors has been organised with the task of ensuring the continued growth of the revival movement.

e. The nevius mission policy

Most missionaries agree that the nevius mission policy, one of several mission policies in Korea³², has featured strongly in the growth of the Korean Church. Professor Jong Man Choi³³ asserts that the aspects of the Nevius policy regarding the 'self-government' or independence of the missionaries was highly constructive in church growth. M.C. Fennick³⁴ claimed that a major factor in the rapid growth of the Korean Protestant church was the aboriginalization of theological education and the fact that from the beginning the respective ministries were instructed in the principles of self-government and self-propagation.

³² Seo Jeong Woon, *The growth of Early Korean Christian Church and Faith of Missionaries* (Pul Bit Vol. 39, Seoul, 1984) p.76

³³ Choi Jeong Man, *op. cit.*, *Mission and aboriginalization of Theology Education*, p.50

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.53

2. External Elements of Growth

a. The introduction of a new ethos by the church

The modern western civilizations of the nineteenth century were recognised as being progressive, and were highly respected by the Korean people. In China also, the Jesuit missionaries of the Catholic church used their scientific knowledge to approach Chinese scholars and gain credibility for their beliefs³⁵. Koreans saw the church as the best way of achieving the 'new civilization' that they desired. Some converted to Christianity purely for this reason. Not only was the Church the introducer and agent of social change; it also founded schools for the teaching of the 'new sciences,' namely I-Hwa, Bae-Jae, Kyong-Shin, Sung-Sil, O-San and Yeon-Se.³⁶ Many students who graduated from these Christian schools became Christians.

Dr Allen³⁷, a medical doctor, played an especially important role in creating a favourable impression of early Christian mission work on the Korean government. Dr Allen treated the wounds of Min Young IK, a

³⁵ Kang Chun O., *Death, Religious Tradition and the World after Death* (Pul Bit vol. 104, Seoul, 1991) p.119

³⁶ Kim Jeong Hak, Lee Hyon Hue, *The History of Korea* (Dong Hwa Press, Seoul, 1974) pp.267-268

³⁷ Son Byong Ho, *The History of Presbyterian Church* (Department of Education of Presbyterian Church of Korea, Seoul, 1980) p.396

Korean minister of state who was injured in a political coup d'etat, and the Korean government subsequently appointed Dr Allen court physician in 1884.³⁸ Most of the Korean nobility at that time disliked and mistrusted Christianity, so the gospel was accepted in the North-West province of Korea which was inhabited largely by middle-class people, without a large constituency of conservative nobility. This province became the primary centre from which Christianity was spread.³⁹

b. The role of leadership in Korean glasnost

During the 'glasnost' period Korean Christianity led Korean society from the forefront. People saw Christianity as being both advanced and patriotic. Christianity had made a good impression. In the '3-1 Independent Movement,' sixteen of the thirty-three national representative leaders were Christians.

Christians were in the forefront of the sciences, the arts and politics and Christianity attracted increasing numbers. Christianity played a leading role in advancing Korean society not only politically, but also in the realms of medicine, education, art and literature. It was instrumental in changing old traditions and social customs e.g. clothing, weddings, funerals and generally contributed to progress and enlightenment.

³⁸ Shearer, Roy E., op cit., p.43

³⁹ Ibid., pp.178-188

c. Escape from social discomfort

With the Japanese annexation of Korea, Korean people began to seek refuge in Christianity⁴⁰. After the war between Russia and Japan, Korean people began to associate Christianity with liberation from a hopeless situation. Through the Church they sought to realise their national hopes and aspirations. In a confused society dis-established people sought something they could depend upon. In the social confusion of the demise of the Lee Dynasty and the evolution of a new Korea, the church seemed to be an organisation which offered hope to an uneasy people, since it upheld clear beliefs and principles and seemed capable of achieving transformation through educational and cultural programmes. The people saw Christianity as promising the new light of hope. Therefore, Christianity became a mainstay of human rights, national rights, individual rights and democracy providing relief from Japanese oppression. The frustration in the aftermath of the Korean War (1950-1953) led people in the direction of the Christian church⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Yoo Dong Sik, Korean Religions and Christianity (Dae Han Christianity books, Seoul, 1979) p.145

⁴¹ Roy E. Shearer, op. cit., Church Growth in Korea, p.267

d. Nationalist unification against foreign powers

With the end of the Chosun Kingdom (1880-1910), no force remained to resist foreign powers (namely Japan, China and Russia) in the regions of the Korean Peninsula. Western missionary groups and churches were suitable places for the nationalists secret activity. Many missionaries were aware of the fact that the increases in church membership did not necessarily arise from purely spiritual motives⁴². Several 'non-political' missionaries were assailed by nationalists for their neutrality. Nonetheless, many had sincere motives in seeking conversion.

3. Religious Foundations

a. The church as an outlet for spiritual yearning

In the later periods of the nineteenth century the Korean government was powerless as were the non-Christian religious groups, who had lost their positions of power and leadership within the population.

The Dong Hak (currently known as Chondo-Kyo) religion appeared at this stage, but when their armed uprising failed, the hopes of common people vanished. Christianity was seen as a new hope and received fresh attention. People began to open their spiritual eyes.

⁴² Son Byong Ho, op. cit., The History of the Presbyterian Church, p.403

b. Harmony with the 'popular mind'

Christianity has many points in common with Korean folk mythology.

These will be discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six. Since their origins the Korean people have possessed a strong religious mentality. On this basis, they have understood and accepted Christianity as a beneficial religion. The religious mixture of Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism has been harmonised with Christianity. 'Ki-Bok,' the faith in a transcendent world and 'Mi Run' or Buddhism and the ethics, value system and integritism of Confucianism were harmonized with Christianity. Shamanism, the traditional religion of the Korean people, contains the concepts of hylozoism idea, and yet paradoxically was one of the key factors in the popular acceptance of Christianity.

People were very glad when they found the God of love in Christianity rather than the God of fear. Roy E. Shearer⁴³ agreed that when Christianity was imported to Korea, there was no religious resistance to Christianity, and Shamanism had been provided a foundation for the acceptance of Christianity.

⁴³ Roy E. Shearer, op. cit., p.30

c. Powerlessness of other religions

The reason for Christianity's rapid spread among the popular classes in early mission history, was the true powerlessness of other religions.

Because Buddhism had been suppressed by the Chosun Kingdom and driven to the mountain areas, and given that Confucianism was held to be the religion of the nobility, neither religion was actively followed by the greater population.⁴⁴ The loss of power by the other religions led to an increased interest in new religions. Christianity was quickly accepted and spread in the north-western provinces, where many of the middle classes lived. The following example⁴⁵ demonstrates the powerlessness of other religions and comparative strength of Christianity. A Shaman was approached by a group of women to chase demons away from one of their number who was pregnant, and wanted to guarantee the safety of the foetus. Finding his powers unequal to the task, the Shaman advised her to approach the Methodist minister from a neighbouring village, assuring the woman that the Christian pastor would be able to invoke protection for her baby. A Christian woman evangelist had the power to defeat the strength of the Shamans, which held many people captive in bondage and terror.

⁴⁴ Min Kyong Bae, *Church History of Korean Christianity* (Korean Christianity Press, Seoul, 1982), p.229

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.76 ff.

d. Disruption of denominations

Normally, the disruption of denominations has a negative function within the missionary field. In Korea, however, disruption performed a positive function, in that it increased membership and intensified the activities of the missions. Biblical faith issued in dogmatic fundamentalism and conservative faith. On the other hand, after independence and the Korean war, liberalist theology was introduced to Korea. Also Shintoism became a problem with which Christianity was compelled to contend, and the tension between these three disparate religious trends resulted in the disruption of denominations. However, each church tried to extend its own sphere of influence in order to maintain its own orthodoxy, and various ministers joined forces fervently with larger sympathetic groups under the bitter experience of denominational disruption. For example, after the disruption of the Hab Thong Presbyterian Church into three denominations, the greater Presbyterian church planted 1340 congregations during the 1980's while the main Hab Thong Presbyterian Church planted about 400 new congregations in the same period⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Kim Bong Ik, *The Sources of Ministry* 1993, (Korean Presbyterian Church Press, Seoul, 1993) pp.24-25

e. The church gains the confidence of the people

A significant number of western missionaries in the world did not succeed in obtaining the trust, hope and confidence of the indigenous population. However, missionaries in Korea were well-received and encountered a high level of responsiveness from local people. The Korean church has grown through the poverty, sickness, frailty, misery and bitterness experienced by civilians under oppression. Koreans found security in the loving God who does not rule by terror, and were gladdened by Christianity's promise of release from the horror of their circumstances. Western people and western Christianity were perceived by Koreans as helpers and supporters, rather than as oppressors. The maintenance of friendly relations between Korea and America also facilitated church growth.

C. EFFECTS OF CHURCH GROWTH

Statistics already quoted reveal the extent of church growth. This is further evident from the fact that the K.C.C. held the biggest mass gospel meeting, attended by over 2 000 000 people⁴⁷, in history and three democratically

⁴⁷ The mass meeting was named the Mass Revival Meeting for World Evangelisation and was held in Yeo Eui Do in Seoul.

elected state presidents⁴⁸ out of six since independence have been practising Christians.

The Korean church approximately doubled in size every decade. In 1912, when the first Presbyterian General Assembly was organized, there were some sixty-nine Korean pastors, and seventy-seven foreign Missionaries, with 2 054 congregations in existence. In all, there were 127 728 church members. The growth of the Church is evident from the following statistical table:

| | |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 1912 | 127 728 (approx.) |
| 1945 | 300 000 (approx.) |
| 1955 | 600 000 (approx.) |
| 1965 | 1200 000 (approx.) |
| 1975 | 2400 000 (approx.) |
| 1985 | 9500 000 (approx. increase x 4) |
| 1992 | 12 500 000 (approx.) |

⁴⁸ They are the following: Lee Seung Man, Yun Bo Seon and Kim Young Sam.

Revd Jae Beom Lee⁴⁹ estimated that there are 45 000 congregations in Korea. At present (i.e. end of 1992), the Korean Church has 2 412 missionaries serving in various parts of the world.⁵⁰

The Korean church grew amazingly in the short one hundred years of missionary activity. During this period, 25% of the Korean population (ten million) were converted to Christianity. This is a unique phenomenon in mission history. It is also remarkable that the Korean people themselves established a church, and that a Korean translation of the Bible was already in existence before the arrival of missionaries. At the end of the nineteenth century, the religious, social and political conditions in Korea were favourable for the introduction of the Christian Gospel. Thereafter, faith was strengthened by Japanese oppression and communist persecution. This led to the development of intense religious fervour, which manifested itself in the power of the church. The Presbyterian Church was particularly alive in promoting church growth. Despite the internal pangs which caused denominational divisions, Korea progressed from being a country which received the Gospel to being one which disseminates the Gospel. In this, the Korean church can be regarded as a salutary example of church growth.

⁴⁹ Kim Tae Bok, Pastoral Campaign (The Pastoral Monthly vol. 199, Seoul, 1993) p.47

⁵⁰ Han Jeong Kuk, Mission through Evangelism (Mission world, vol. 17, Seoul, 1993) p.20

CHAPTER 2

SHAMANISM

AS THE TRADITIONAL RELIGION

PERVADING THE KOREAN POPULATION

This chapter is devoted to considering the significance of Shamanism in Korean culture, society and religion, before analysing the relationship between Shamanism and Christianity. The origins and development of Shamanism and its relationship with other imported religions, as well as the social position of the shaman, will be discussed.

A. THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SHAMANISM

Primitive religious impulses are present in the human sub-conscious prior to being articulated, codified or structured in a rational, philosophical system. These impulses are expressed in the ancient folk-lore of every people, and are a powerful life phenomenon which pre-exists critical analysis or artificial construction. Indeed, the primary religious experience is not an element of life or a mode of knowledge. It is itself equated with life. The traditional folk-lore religion of Korea may be regarded as Shamanism. In any study of the origin of God's religion in Korean ancient periods, the faithful conception of the Korean people and the changes in Korean society, particular attention to Shamanism is required.

Shamanism was the only religion present in Korean society prior to the arrival of Buddhism in the fourth century.¹ The earliest references to Shamanism are to be found in the records² of King Nam-Hae of the first century Silla Dynasty. In a broad sense Shamanism may be termed a 'folk-custom,' given that it is the cultural remains of traditions transmitted from generation to generation. However, it can also be termed a religion because it is effectively a religious practice.

Accordingly, Shamans or middlemen, appeared to mediate between the people and the spirit world, and faith in Shamanism itself arose. The area of Shamanism in the classic sense is Northern Asia, roughly north of the Himalayas, and parts of North America, and from Lapland in the west to the Chukchee Peninsula in the East.³ The roots of Korean Shamanism can be found in the Bronze Age⁴, with the Shamans of North America and the 'Puriat' religion of Siberia. When natural calamities occur, people are frightened by nature and seek to align themselves or identify with that power. As Shamanism is a sort of spiritualism and polydemonism, it is fostered by circumstances of natural disaster. The role of the Shaman is to

¹ You Dong Sik, *Korean Religions and Christianity* (Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1979) p.15

² Kim Tae Gon, *The Study of Korean Shamanism* (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1981) p.20

³ A.T. Hatto, *Shamanism and Epic Poetry in Northern Asia* (Lu Zac and Co., Ltd., London, 1970), p.1

⁴ Kim Tae Gon, *op cit.*, p.20

mediate between humanity and the powers of nature, to establish a bridge between human frailty and potent nature, and thus the beliefs of Shamanism are fostered.

The Shaman is a dancer or worshipper who links heaven and earth. The fact that the Shaman mediates between the realms, and partakes of both, is the essence and end of Shamanistic religious activity. Through spiritual dancing and worship, a Shaman is seen as bringing together heaven and earth. It can be said that a Shaman is something of a religious agent, overseeing religious rites in the service of an ancient God. Lee Nung-Hwa regarded Shamanism as a religion⁵.

Korea was not the only region in which Shamanism, as a religion was practiced. Shamanism was a common primitive religion among all the Ural-Agaic races (those of Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, Japan) originating in central Siberia⁶.

We can assert that Shamanism in Korea was formed and prospered with the establishing of nationhood because the mythological story of 'Tan Gun,' the founding father of the Korean nation, itself includes strong Shamanistic elements.

⁵ Lee Nung Hwa, *The searching of Cho Seon Shamanism* (Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) p.12

⁶ Yoo Dong Sik, *op. cit.*, *Korean Religions and Christianity*, p.15 ff.

Many scholars agree with Nam Seon Choi, who perceived 'Tan-Gun' as a Shaman⁷. The term 'Tan-Gun' has a similar pronunciation to 'Tan-Gul' which, to this day, is taken to mean 'Shaman,' and which bears a similarity to the Mongolian word 'Tengri,'⁸ meaning 'man of heaven' or 'man who worships.' This Shamanism was steadily and continually transmitted from generation to generation as the traditional religion of Korea.

B. THE CAPACITY OF KOREAN SHAMANISM TO ASSIMILATE OTHER RELIGIONS

When a minister of the gospel attempts to convert Koreans to Christianity, he often encounters a positive response, with the prospective convert expressing the belief that acceptance of Christianity may bring him/her peace of mind, or make him/her 'a better person.' Reassurance and moral improvement are thus seen as desirable goals, because these are inbuilt elements of Shamanism. Since faith in an afterlife is central to Shamanism, imported religions are able to tap into a reservoir of existing beliefs, hopes and aspirations in order to render their doctrines congenial to the convert.⁹ The temperament of the Korean people is conducive to the mixing of religions. All religions are held to be similar in that they share as a

⁷ Ibid., p.20

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., The Study of Korean Shamanism, p.329

common goal the making of a better world. This attitude arises from a Shamanistic background in which the blending of religions is accommodated. Shamanism can be easily blended with other religions by virtue of the fact that it has no advanced religious doctrine of its own. While Shamanism contains the concept of a heavenly God, its faith is in polydemonism. Consequently, it is able to accommodate any other religion. Shamanistic faith involves a desire for blessing in the secular world. Shamanism adds materialistic elements to its spiritual functions and secularizes those aspects of imported religion which are susceptible to incorporation in the realistic mentality of people regarding civil life. The imported religion did not overcome these factors, and did not reject Shamanistic influence. A typical example is that of Kyong Kyo, an early branch of Christianity imported to Korea in the fourth century. There is an organic body, based on 'civil religion' and 'pungryudo'¹⁰ in the Silla Dynasty (second to seventh century). This organic body was called 'Hwarang Do' and became the fulcrum of the army of Silla.

The 'Hwarang Do' was a youth organisation stemming from the national elite. Their title, 'Hwarang,' has Shamanistic origins as does their manner of dress. Their code for daily life and their education system arose from Buddhism, while their sacrificial functions were derived from portions of Taoism. These Shamanistic Korean religious systems integrate the

¹⁰ Pungryudo is a mind which has enough strength in reserve at difficulties and is an idea which has artistic creativity.

structures of imported religions, consciously or unconsciously modifying or transforming them into the processes of Shamanistic thought.¹¹

Taoism was the first imported religion to permeate Korea¹², but because it lacked its own specific forms and organisation it lost all autonomy and was rapidly absorbed by Shamanism¹³. Since Taoism, like Shamanism, was partly secularly orientated with an emphasis on the aversion of misfortune and the desire for material blessing. It was fundamentally compatible with existing Shamanistic thought.

During the Lee Dynasty, there was an official government Department of Taoism, the So Gyok Seo,¹⁴ and Shamans officiated as priests in Taoist religious rites. According to bibliographic evidence, Buddhism was imported during the 4th, to Koguryo Dynasty in 372 A.D.; to Baek Je in 384 A.D.; to Silla in 450 A.D.¹⁵ In the early phases of the diffusion of Buddhism, the religion was ostracised by people as it conflicted with original, traditional beliefs. Buddhism was officially recognised by the Silla

¹¹ Choi Jung Hyon, *Korean Church and Shamanism* (Seong Kwang, Seoul, 1993) p.58

¹² Yoo Dong Sik, *op cit.*, p.27

¹³ Choi Jung Hyon, *op cit.*, *Korean Church and Shamanism*, p.52

¹⁴ Lee, Hong Sik, *Encyclopedia of Korean History* (Korea Press, Seoul, 1982) p.754

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.630-631

dynasty during the reign of King Beob Heung 14th in 524 A.D.¹⁶ after the religious martyrdom of Lee Cha Don. Thereafter, Buddhism mingled with Shamanistic faith and gradually took root.

Original Buddhism was an ethical religion, but when transmitted to China, under Chinese influence it was modified into Dae Seung Buddhism.¹⁷

This form of Buddhism elevated the Buddha to an object of worship and taught spiritual transcendence as the aim of worship. Hence, the philosophical framework of the religion was eroded as it inclined more towards the pursuit of happiness and blessing, which was the foundation of traditional religion, facilitating a comfortable melding of the two.¹⁸

Religion was ostracized by people as it conflicted with original, traditional beliefs. Buddhism was officially recognised by the Silla dynasty during the reign of King Beob Heung 14th in 527 A.D. after the religious martyrdom of Lee Cha Don. Thereafter, Buddhism mingled with Shamanistic faith and gradually took root.

Although the Buddhism which was initially a philosophical and ethical system did not disappear entirely from Korea, and to some extent preserved its own character, it deteriorated into ceremonial Buddhism. This is evident

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The World Dictionary of Philosophy (Education Press, Seoul, 1980), p.203

¹⁸ Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., pp.42-43

in the occurrence of Chil Seong Kak (shrine to the God of the stars) and San Sin Kak (shrine to the mountain God), which are of Shamanist origin, in Buddhist temples. Some 50% of Buddhist temples house such shrines.¹⁹

Confucianism, which was essentially an ideology for national government developed at Confucius (Kung Zhe), had an ethical and rationalist bias which was antipathetic to the emotional, irrational character of Shamanism. The intelligentsia studied the Seong Ri Hak philosophy, a discipline of Confucianism, and political leaders applied the principles of Confucian ideology in government during the Lee Dynasty. However, the general population was more concerned with the religious rites of Confucianism and developed its principles into forms of worship rather than studying it as a political ideology or philosophy.²⁰

There is common ground between Shamanism and Confucianism in the conception of God, spirits and rites. Confucianism incorporates philosophical principles concerning Chung (civil allegiance) and Hyo (filial loyalty). These two concepts were expressed in hero-worship, ancestor worship, the worship of the earth god, and the worship of God. These practices became formalised as the motives of the population in worship inclined towards the quest for blessing and the preservation of ancestral

¹⁹ Yoo Dong Sik, *History and Structure of Korean Shamanism* (University of Yeon Se, Seoul, 1975)

²⁰ Choi Jung Hyon, *op cit.*, pp.46-47

spirits, and mingled with 'house god' Shamanism. The reason why Shamanism and Confucianism co-existed is that they were complementary in many respects. The two systems co-existed because Confucianism functioned as the religion of the intelligentsia, of political readers and of men, while Shamanism was embraced as a populist religion by the proletariat and by women.

Because imported religions grew in the soil of a national consciousness deeply informed by Shamanistic thought, the spread of imported religion is dependent on its affinities with Shamanism, which is always orientated towards repelling misfortune and seeking blessing. Concealed within the body of any imported religion which has flourished in Korea is the substance of Shamanism. Successful imported religions are hybrid, revealing aspects of orthodoxy alongside aspects of Shamanism. The Shamanistic capacity was also applied to Christianity. The harmony between Shamanism and Christianity will be discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

C. THE FUNCTION OF THE SHAMAN WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

All aspects of civilian life were governed by Shamanistic beliefs. Annual life in the village did not begin without the appropriate Shamanistic rites.

Shamanism has been of major significance in all areas of Korean life throughout history, permeating culture, medicine, tradition, religion and thought. Tan Gun was the founder of the Korean nation.²¹ The meaning of Tan Gun is 'King who made an altar.' It is thus evident that the Korean people emerged as a branch of the Shamanistic family: their Shamanism is as ancient as their earliest forebears. According to Korean mythology²², Hwan In (God) sent his son, Hwan Ung, to earth. Hwan Ung married Ung Nyeo, which resulted in the birth of Tan Gun. The myth symbolises a union between heaven and earth, and is reminiscent of a similar tale in Genesis 6:1-4. This mythological account of their origins imparted to the Koreans a sense of being a chosen people (like the Israelites) and also affirmed the possibility of communication between humanity and god. In Egypt, a similar mythology surrounded the origins of the Pharaohs.²³ Since the religious impulses of the Korean people are so primeval and profound, and were manifested so powerfully in the ancient practices of Shamanism, the importance of the Shaman in community life is self-evident. From early times, Shamans performed specific rites. For this purpose, holy ground was established during the Shilla dynasty. Here, sinners in search of forgiveness would submit to purification rites of an sacred nature. The Hwa Rang Do of the Shilla Dynasty also possessed a

²¹ Harvie Conn, Case Study 2: Korea, in A Lion Hand Book, The World's Religions (Lion Publishing, Herts, England, 1982) p.138

²² Ibid.

²³ Min Yeong Jin, An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol.4 (Bible Study Material Publisher, Seoul, 1980) pp.445-446

Shamanistic group character. The name Hwa Rang was derived from the title of the Shaman, and even in modern times, in certain provinces the Shaman is addressed as Hwa Rang.

When female Shamans danced, they were accompanied by male Shamans on musical instruments. The male Shaman was called Hwa Raeng Yi²⁴ (which means "a man of Hwa Rang") and female Shamans were frequently prostitutes. Nowadays, adulterous women are called 'Hwa Nyang Nyeon,' an appellation which is very similar to 'Hwa Rang Nyeon,' the title originally given to female Shamans. It can be supposed that the latter term has been historically modified, and that its associations are embedded in the modern term for adultresses.

Shamanism also penetrates the lives of the population. In every home, gods are enshrined in specific significant areas. For example, Sung Ju Sin, (household god), is enshrined beneath the main beam of the house; Sam Sin (birth god) resides beneath the floor of the main bedroom; Cho Sang Sin (ancestral spirits) are enshrined at the opposite end of the bedroom. Eub Wang Sin (kitchen god) resides on the sink draining board; Eub Sin presides over the storeroom, and Ji Sin (earth god) inhabits the garden. Su Mun Sin is enshrined at the gate; Jeong Sin guards the fountain; Chik Sin is enshrined in the toilet.

²⁴ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., The Study of Korean Shamanism, p.71

It is clearly evident that people believed that the gods governed and took care of all aspects of their lives. The presence in every village of Seo Nang Dang (Shaman's shrine) and Jang Shung (carved, decorated wooden totem poles), testifies to the potency of Shamanistic religion and its influence on daily existence. On the mountains to the rear of villages there are Seung Sin Dan, or shrines to the mountain/village God who oversees the lives of the people. Shamans managed all aspects of civil life - births, funerals, the healing of the sick, farming, the construction of buildings and ships, weddings and of course village worship.

The Shaman performed the functions of priest, doctor, prophet and oracle²⁵. Shamans discharged the priestly duties of prayer to the divine, the averting of misfortune, and the dispensing of knowledge to the community. Therefore the Shaman, within the ancient period would be seen as a 'holy man' acting as a leader of civil affairs.

Shamans also had a leading role within the national community.

Shamanism was the main ideology among the young of the national elite of the Silla Dynasty, and within the army of certain periods of the Chosun Dynasty.²⁶

²⁵ Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., Korean Church and Shamanism, p.34

²⁶ Lee Hung Hwa, op cit., The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism, p.102

National ceremonies were held, with the participation of many Shamans, with the intention of bringing rain and protecting the country from misfortune. Shamans played a leading role in the Palkwanhue,²⁷ a national thanksgiving ceremony of the Koryo Dynasty. Shamans received gifts of rice and other agricultural produce in return for the services they performed.

Shamans, therefore, provided the leadership necessary to every community. Shamans frequently performed Shamanistic rites at the Royal Palace. When Shamanism prospered because the Shaman's gut were too noisy and wasteful, the government prohibited the practice. However, after the Koryo Dynasty, Shamans were identified with lower socio-economic groups and became destitute. They resorted to performing their rites in villages in exchange for rice and grain during spring and autumn. Although Shamans are socially isolated and suffer a sense of social inferiority, this alienation is neutralised by their belief in their vocation as messengers and servants of God.²⁸

D. SHAMANISM AS ART AND CUSTOM

During the period when it was the traditional Korean religion, Shamanism influenced, to a large degree, Korean customs and art. Annual public celebrations continue to include Shamanistic rites. Traditional customs

²⁷ Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., Korean Religions and Christianity, p.31

²⁸ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.60

derived from Shamanistic rites, starting from the New Year rite through to the year-end rite, according to the moon calendar. In the New year, people salute their elders and worship their ancestors at home and in private mausolea. They also worship the house god. On January 3, there is a gut to prevent misfortune, and people consult clairvoyants to chart horoscopes for the ensuing year. Some groups of people travel around villages playing music in various homes to exorcise evil spirits by means of noise. On January 14, the exteriors of houses are cleaned and the resulting waste burned. Villagers engage in stone-throwing combat with inhabitants of neighbouring villages; the winning village is regarded as liable to have good fortune for the following year. Community Gut led by Shamans are held around this period, and masked dancing forms part of the festivities. Annual traditional ceremonies which commence in similar fashion are Dan O in May, Chu seek in August, Dong Ji in November, and the year closes ceremoniously with Se su in December, when a light is displayed enshrined. All these activities are conflated with Shamanistic practice. Nowadays also, according to Shamanistic thought, spirits exist in all objects. Shamanism was the centre and mainstream of cultural life and is manifested in a variety of art forms. In literature such as the folk narratives and folk songs of oral literature, tales of reincarnation and human and animal metamorphoses and happy endings are common. These reflect the Shamanistic themes of eternal spiritual life and ultimate happiness.²⁹

²⁹ Shin Tae Ung, *The Perception of Spirits, in Korean Traditional Faith* (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.60, Seoul, 1986) pp.65-121

Pictorial art, especially portraits, were also influenced by Shamanistic representations of gods, spirits and humans. Shamanistic music was a dominant component of ancient music, and Shamanistic dance is the basis of all later Korean traditional dance. The dialogue of Shamanistic gut subsequently evolved into the fuller enactment of drama. All aspects of fine art have been influenced by Shamanism, including traditional music, art, dance and Korean classical opera. The modern Korean government supports the preservation of traditional culture, recognising the significance of Shamanistic elements. Many Shamans have in fact been classified as 'cultural assets' in themselves.³⁰ There are many amongst Korean traditional musicians whose musical skills and knowledge were acquired through training in Shamanistic uses of music. Therefore, when a new car is built, a new building constructed, or production in a new factory commences, spiritual rites are conducted to ensure the success of the enterprise. Even university students hold specific rites when elected to student organisations, despite the ultra-modernity of their social context and their social status as members of an intelligentsia. Moreover, government offices commence work in the new year after holding specific spiritual rites. It is thus clear that Shamanism is deeply inscribed in Korean consciousness at the most profound spiritual and emotional levels. Therefore, Shamanism cannot be ignored in any discussion of Korean art and customs.

³⁰ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., *The Study of Korean Shamanism*, p.274

E. THE INFLUENCE OF SHAMANISM IN THE FORMATION OF KOREAN CHARACTER

Shamanism continually shaped Korean thought, life and religious rituals. The reason why Korean people are regarded as deeply religious is that Koreans are fundamentally Shamanistic people. Dance, song and amusement are important aspects of Shamanistic activity and these feature prominently in the contemporary Korean character.³¹ The name 'Han' (as the Korean people call themselves) can be interpreted as meaning "big, high and right," an interpretation which, in the Korean mind, is in keeping with the Shamanistic pursuit of eternal being. Korean people believe that human life is conceived and terminated by God's power. This idea emanates from the concept of the highest god in Shamanism, who is regarded as omnipotent. For example, when somebody dies, people perceive him/her as returning to the supernatural world and being reunited with the highest god.³² The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year in Korea. As the days lengthen from 22 December, Koreans traditionally eat red bean soup to repel evil spirits, a custom which persists even in modern times. Driving away evil spirits is the task of the Shaman, and Koreans include this function of the Shaman in their customs. The red colour of the red beans is believed to be an object of fear to evil spirits. When the evil spirits flee, fortune and sunlight shine upon the believers, hence the commemoration

³¹ You dong Sik, op cit., p.36

³² Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.465

of the winter solstice in the manner described, with the additional precaution of painting the door frame and lintel with red bean soup. This belief in the power of the colour red to repel or dispel evil is apparent also in the use of red pillars, etc., in Buddhist temples. (The painting of door-frames with red in Korea is, interestingly, strongly reminiscent of the Israelites painting their doorways with the red blood of lambs, described in Exodus, in order to avoid slaughter and gain redemption.)

Korean people were designated 'the white-clad folk,' as they commonly wore white clothing, even to funerals. The custom of wearing white funeral apparel derives from the cult of the 'white Shaman.' It is noteworthy that western countries to which 'black Shamans' migrated customarily use black as the appropriate colour for mourning.³³

Christian pastors are required to solve the difficulties of church members throughout the year. This habit of relying upon ministers to be involved and intervene in all areas of believers' lives arises from the Shamanistic traditions in which the Shaman as priest and mediator was a constant and integral presence in the community e.g. should a sow have difficulty in giving birth to her young, the owner would summon a Shaman to pray for an easy labour for his animal.³⁴

³³ Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., p.17

³⁴ Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.60

Many remnants of age-old Shamanistic customs and traditions are still prevalent in modern Korean society.

Shamanism has been a force in Korean life since the foundation of the nation, and is deeply entrenched in the culture and traditions of Korean people. The Shamanism which formed the inner character of Koreans played a major role, through the presence of the Shaman, in the community, and periodically influenced or assimilated foreign imported religions.

Shamanism also deeply affected art, literature and other cultural forms, and its role in Korean traditional culture is specifically acknowledged in modern times by the government. Shamanism is the main religion, and the essence of life itself, for Korean people.

CHAPTER 3

THE SUBSTANCE OF SHAMANISM

Further details of Korean Shamanism will be explored in this chapter, and the gut (the inception of Shamanism) and history of Korean Shamanism will be explained. Existing studies of Shamanism will be enumerated, and several of the internal facets of Shamanism will be considered.

A. DIFFERING FORMS OF SHAMANISM

In this section I will discuss several characteristics connected with Korean Shamanism and discuss certain characteristics of Shamanism in other countries. Eliade¹ has asserted that all peoples, with the exception of Black African and Arian whites, are connected with Shamanism. Eliade has claimed that Shamanism could be understood as an archaic technique of achieving ecstasy;² nonetheless 'ecstasy' per se should not be misconstrued as being the main object of Shamanistic belief. Forms of Shamanism differ from country to country. The Chinese regard Shaman Muham of the Eun Dynasty as the founder of Shamanism³. They recognise that Shamanism

¹ Han Wan Sang, What problems are in Korean church? (Dae Han Christian Press, 1982) p.14

² Micea Eliade, Shamanism: Technique of Ecstasy (Bollingen Foundation, New York, 1963) pp.4-6

³ Lee Nung Hwa, The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism, op cit., p.300

has the function of worship. The Mongolian term for 'Shaman' is Tengri⁴ (meaning 'worshipper of God'). Tengri in turn is similar to 'Thangun,' a reference to the figure held to be the founding father and first Shaman of Korea.

A.T. Hatto has asserted that Shamans received their call from the spirits.⁵ In ancient times, the spiritual experience of 'receiving God' was believed to be the cause of so-called 'Shamanistic sickness.' This condition is mentioned in the folklore of all Shamanistic cultures regardless of geographical locale.

The 'Yakut' and 'Samoyed' people of Siberia enter a state of trance in which they claim that their souls are separated from their bodies.⁶ The 'Tungus' of Central Asia are reported to have similar experiences when in a state of trance.⁷ South American Shamans are said to undergo an experience in which they die and are resurrected⁸.

⁴ You Dong Sik, *Korean Religions and Christianity* (Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1979) p.20

⁵ A.T. Hatto, *Shamanism and Epic Poetry in Northern Asia* (Luzac and Co., Ltd., London, 1970) p.1

⁶ Mircea Eliade, *op cit.*, pp.36-38

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.43

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.54

The Sudanese and Amazulu of Africa experience mystic dreams and 'sickness' in the earlier stages of their spiritual growth.⁹ These mystical experiences seem to be well established steps along the Shaman's path to a transformed and spiritual state of being and bear similarity to the Christian experience of being 'born again.'

The Japanese expression for 'Shaman' (Yichi Ko) stems from the practice of celebration and evangelism in the public market of ancient times¹⁰. The Korean tradition of burying the dead with their possessions bears similarity to a tradition among the 'Dubo,' 'Beltiren' or 'Golden People' of Siberia and symbolises a belief in the continuation of life in another world¹¹.

B. HISTORY OF KOREAN SHAMANISM

Spiritual worship, as such, only began among primitive peoples once they had become familiar with the concept of 'spirit.' The concept that 'spirit' could be found in non-human forms led to the emergence of Shamanism and eventually to the idea of a 'Godhead.' The earliest recorded Shaman

⁹ Ibid., pp.56-57

¹⁰ Lee Nung Hwa, *op cit.*, p.323

¹¹ Georg Nioradze, *Primal Religions of Siberia Races* (trans. Lee Hong Sik, Seoul Newspapers Press, 1949) p.35 ff.

of Korea was 'NamHae,' second King of the Silla Dynasty.¹² This considerably predates Buddhism which entered Korea in the fourth century.

We are able to determine that Korean Shamanism originated in the Bronze Age.¹³ There are many legends in Korea about the origins of the Shaman. Choi Nam Seon asserts that Dan Gun is Shaman.¹⁴ The name 'Dan Gun' means 'Adult' or King who makes an altar and Dan Gun constructed a nation under the Shamanistic tree called Sin Dan Su. We can compare this legend with the account of Abraham constructing an altar under the Baobab tree (Genesis 12: 6-10). Dan Gun was born Hwan Ung, the son of Hwan In, and married Ung Nyeo, (bear of the earth) (God). So, Dan Gun means "intermediary between God and Humanity." Thus, in this role of mediator Dan Gun is the Shaman. The earliest Shamans were identified in various accounts, e.g. Beob U Hwa Sang, who was introduced as a Buddhist "priestess or Seon Nyeo (anger) princess Gong Sim, known as the daughter of the King; Ah Wang who was also known as a laywoman or daughter of a king" and princess Bari in Cheju Island. All these persons were reputed to be the original Shamans.¹⁵

¹² Kim Tae Gon, *The Study of Korean Shamanism* (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1981) p.20

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ You Dong Sik, *op cit.*, p.20

¹⁵ O Byong Se, *Dictionary of Theology* (The Korea Society for Reformed Faith and Action, Kimpo Korea, 1984) p.257

The oldest official Korean record of a Shaman appears in the book Sam Kuk Yusa (the history of the three kingdoms period). In the relevant extract we find reference to the title of Shaman, and discover that the Shaman worshipped evil spirits and was connected with ritual. (There are a number of records of Shamanist activity at this time. One reports that in the third year (264 A.D.) of King Michu of the Silla Dynasty, perhaps the woman Ung Nyeo belonged to a family whose totem was the bear. The exact meaning of the name is 'bear woman.'

A Shaman treated the illness of the princess. A second refers to an event in the 19th year of King Yu Ri of the Koku Zyeo Dynasty when a Shaman assisted in the healing of the King. In the periods of King Cha Dae and King San Sang Shamans prophesied justice, fortune and misfortune. Also, during the reign of King Euija of the Back Je dynasty, the King summoned a Shaman for information about symptoms of illness.¹⁶

The above stories all indicate that professional Shamans were active during the three kingdoms period. Shamanism played a role in the national rites of the three kingdoms period. During the Silla dynasty it formed the basis of the dominant philosophy, the 'Hwarang Do.' During the Silla Dynasty, Kings were termed 'Kosogan,' 'Chauchaung' or 'Chachung.' The eighth

¹⁶ Choi Jung Hyon, Korean Church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang Press, Seoul, 1993) pp.21-22

century Silla scholar, Kim Dae Moon, drew attention to the fact that in the Korean language 'Chuachung' could be interpreted as 'Shaman.'¹⁷

During the Koryeo Dynasty, Shamans participated in the programmes of Ki Woo Je (a nation-wide ceremony to bring rain); Sa Eun Je; Seong Hwang Je (Shrine worship) and Yeok Je (healing ritual). The Koryeo Dynasty actively encouraged the growth and spread of Buddhism but still retained certain significant national ceremonies that were entirely Shamanistic in nature. Of the two major national ceremonies one was Buddhist (Yeon Deung hule, a dedication to Buddha) and the other, Shamanist ('Palgwanhwe,' in honour of the celestial King and five significant mountains and rivers). The ritual of 'Palgwanhue' required the participation of many Shamans.

In the Lee Dynasty, the number of Shamans increased greatly¹⁸ and they functioned as priests, prophets and healers at important personal, domestic, social, royal and national occasions. During the period of the Chosun Dynasty, Shamanism was forced out to a degree by the philosophical ethic and political ideology of Confucianism and barely continued to exist as a religious belief among the greater populace. On the other hand, Confucianism was perceived to be the religion of the nobility, while Shamanism could adhere more closely to the realities of life as experienced

¹⁷ Ibid., p.21

¹⁸ Ibid., p.22

by the subject masses. The 'Dangolpan' system, in which each Shaman operated within a clear monopolistic district, can be seen as proof of this.¹⁹ Nowadays, Shamans still perform Ki Woo (rain ceremony), Sa Eun (thanksgiving ceremony), Ki Ja (ceremony to conceive a son), Ahn Taek (ceremony for peace in the home) and Dae Gam Nori (ceremony to appease ancestors). They also offer prayers for healing and the aversion of misfortune, and perform a variety of other rituals.²⁰

The contemporary scientific community has treated Shamanism as a superstition and Shamans can be seen to be declining in number. Nonetheless, Shamanism still underlies the many historical layers of Korean religious culture.²¹

¹⁹ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., The Study of Korean Shamanism, pp.261-269

²⁰ Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.22

²¹ Ibid.

C. THE ESSENCE OF SHAMANISM AND THE 'GUT' AS CEREMONIAL WORSHIP

While 'Shamanism' per se can be interpreted broadly as an aspect of popular culture, the term 'Shamanism' is used here to refer to the specific Shamanistic religion as it has been practised in Korea. The religion of 'Shamanism' has as its objective the escaping of the bonds of earthly existence, the securing of blessings and the salvation of the soul. The actual religious activity of Shamanism was expressed through the rite known as 'gut,' 'puri' or 'hae.' 'Gut' means the entire ritual which the Shaman leads with song, dance and oracle. The aim of the gut is to purge, to expel evil spirits, to invoke blessing, to heal, to bring peace to the home, and to solicit rain.

'Gut' is a pure Korean word which is similar to words in other related languages: 'Gutug' in Mongolian, 'Gutug' in Turkish, 'Kutu' in Tungus²². All these variations signify the concept 'happiness' or 'fortune.' The meaning of the word indicates that the Gut is essentially a ritual to bring happiness or good fortune.

Other Korean terms for gut are 'puri' or 'hae.' These synonyms mean "to unite or interpret difficult questions or problems." Hence, gut also signifies the interpretation or resolution of difficulty or misfortune. In addition, gut

²² Ibid., p.27

denotes bad, therefore the gut is received as an exorcism of that which is undesirable. Finally, ritual expulsion of evil and the pursuit of blessing is the real meaning of the Gut. The Chinese glyph for 'mu'²³ (meaning 'Shaman') be interpreted as meaning "woman who worships the intangible" or "woman who dances to invite the spirits." From this glyph, therefore, Shamanism can be described as a religious ritual which expels evil and sin, and seeks blessing through the ceremony (gut) which entails dancing and the invocation of spirits.

D. THE STUDY OF SHAMANISM

Three distinct groups in particular have displayed a scholastic interest in Korean Shamanism.

1. The Study of Shamanism

From the end of the Koryo Dynasty to the Choson Dynasty, Confucianists studied Korean Shamanism with an eye to Skepticism. They maintained that Shamanism remained a dedication to superstition. Criticism of this kind can be found in the letters of Kim Ja-Soo,²⁴ author of Koryo-Sa (a history of the Koryo Dynasty) and an epic poem called "On the Old

²³ Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism, p.12

²⁴ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., The Study of Korean Shamanism, p.23

Shaman" which appears in Yi Kyu-Bo's²⁵ "Dongkuk Yi Sang Kukjib." The book "Dialectic for the Shaman of Yi Kyu-Kyong" of Yi Kyu Kyong.²⁶

2. Studies by Japanese Scholars and Christian Missionaries

Secondly there were the studies of Japanese scholars and of the western Christian missionaries. The missionaries studied Korean religions as part of their missionary policy and in so doing, performed the first modern-scientific study of Korean Shamanism. They produced several articles, entitled "The Korean Mudang and Pansu",²⁷ which appeared in H.B. Hubert's Korea Review, and 'Shamanism in Korea' which comprises Lecture III in "The Religions of Eastern Asia" by Horace Grant Underwood²⁸. Underwood interpreted the term 'Mudang' as meaning 'sorceress,' and 'pansu' as meaning 'diviner,' both of which can further be interpreted as meaning 'Shaman.' Underwood approached the study of Shamanism from a theological point of view. He evaluated Shamanism from a theological perspective and attempted to argue that the Shamanistic worship among the Korean people of the spirits of trees, water and the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p.24

²⁷ Homer B. Hulbert, The Korean Mudang and Pansu (The Korean Review, Vol.3, Nos. 4-9, Methodist Publishing House, Seoul, 1903)

²⁸ Horace Grant Underwood, The Religions of Eastern Asia (Macmillan, NY, 1910), pp.93-142

guardian spirits of the community evolved from a more ancient form of God worship.²⁹

In 1932 C.A. Clark published Shamanism: Religion of Old Korea, in which he confirmed the view that Korean Shamanism was of the same branch as Siberian Shamanism³⁰. In his book Clark described and explained the different varieties of Shamanistic forms and styles, perceptions of God, and ethical concepts. He proceeded, however, from a primarily theological perspective and, as a result, did not investigate at any length, the sociological aspects of Korean Shamanism.

From 1910 to 1945 Korea was a Japanese colony. Between 1930 and 1945, the Japanese colonial authorities in Korea commissioned several studies of Korean Shamanism in order to more effectively govern the Korean population. The Japanese scholar Murayama Tomoyori produced Shamans of Chosun (1932), a catalogue showing the distribution of the various distinctive Shamanistic belief systems throughout Korea³¹. The scholars Akamatsu Tomoki and Akiba Takashi produced volumes one and two of A Field of Study of Korean Shamanism³² (1937). Volume One dealt

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Charles Allen Clark, *Religions of Old Korea*, 1929 (reprinted by The Christian Literature Society of Korea, Seoul, 1961) pp.173-219

³¹ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.28

³² Ibid.

specifically with the Shamans' songs of Seoul, Osan, and Cheju Island.

Volume Two provided a comprehensive overview of all aspects of Korean Shamanism. Akiba Takashi maintained that Korean Shamanism and Siberian Shamanism stemmed from the same branch and was of the opinion that all Shamanism was the product of social traditions.³³

3. Earliest Study of Korean Scholars

Thirdly, from as early as 1920, the domestic study of Korean Shamanism as it pertains to traditional culture was undertaken.

Korean scholars seeking new knowledge began to investigate Shamanism after the initial studies by western missionaries. In this period, scholars were interested in Shamanism and its role in folklore as a purely historical phenomenon. In 1927 Lee Neung Hwa produced the book Cho Son Mu Sok Go³⁴ which anthologised extracts on the subject of Shamanism drawn from earlier literature. Choi Nam Seon produced the article "Sal Man Kyo Dab Ki"³⁵ in which he demonstrates that the term 'Sal Man' (King) is derived from 'Shaman.' More significant is the contribution of Son Jin

³³ Akiba Takashi, *The Field Study of Cho Seon Shamanism* (You Bi Sha, Ten Ri, Japan, 1951) p.3 ff.

³⁴ Lee Nung Hwa, *The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism* (Kye Myong, Vol.19, Kye Myong Club, Seoul, 1929) (reprinted by Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991)

³⁵ Kim Tae Gon, *op cit.*, p.27

Tae³⁶ who collated information concerning Shamanism and examples of Shamanist art gathered directly through field research into folklore. His work Cho Son Sin Ka Yu Pyon (1930) is the first Shamanist song-book of Korea.

4. Studies After Independence

Since independence, local scholars have been studying Shamanism from the perspective that Shamanism is an undervalued traditional cultural phenomenon. Shamanism is now approached from a variety of theological positions, and different aspects of its significance are emphasised.

Viewing Shamanism as folklore are the books by Professor Jang Su Geun,³⁷; Jin Seong Rin,³⁸ Hyon Yong Jun,³⁹ Choi Gil Seong,⁴⁰ and Park Gye Hong.⁴¹

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Jan Su Geun, *Shaman Song in Che Ju Island* (Institute of Korean Language and Literature, Seoul, 1958), and *Shaman Song in Kwan Seo and Kwan Buk Province* (Department of Cultural Properties Management, Seoul, 1965)

³⁸ Jin Seong Rin, *Collection of Shaman Songs in Che Ju Island* (1960)

³⁹ Hyon Yong Jun, *Shamans of Che Ju Island* (Che Ju University News, Vol.7, Che Ju, Korea, 1965)

⁴⁰ Choi Gil Seong, *The Study of Korean Shamanism* (Collection of Learned Papers of the Military Academy, Vol.5, The Military Academy, Seoul, 1967)

⁴¹ Park Gye Hong, *The Study of Korean Folk Custom* (Hyeong Seol Press, Tae Gu, 1973)

The literary significance of Shamanism is examined Kim Taek Kyu,⁴² Heo Young Sun,⁴³ and Kim Yeol Kyu.⁴⁴

The musical aspects of Shamanism are explored by Lee Hye Gu⁴⁵ and Lee Bo Hyong.⁴⁶

Kim Kwang Il⁴⁷ considered the psychological dimensions of Shamanism.

Shamanism as religion is analysed by Jang Byong Gil,⁴⁸ Moon Sang Huei,⁴⁹ and Yoo Dong Sik.⁵⁰

Through the history of the study of Shamanism, two patterns emerge. One kind of study engages directly with data gathered from field research but

⁴² Kim Taek Gyu, *The Study of Shamanist Literature* (M.A. Thesis of University of Kyong Buk, Tae Gu, 1958)

⁴³ Heo Young Sun, *The Study of Shaman Song and Shaman Thought in Ancient Society* (M.A. Thesis of University of Busan, Busan, 1962)

⁴⁴ Kim Yeol Kyu, *Korean Myths and the Study of Shamanism* (Il Cho Kak, Seoul, 1977)

⁴⁵ Lee Hye Ku, *The Study of Shamanism* (The World of Thought, July, Sa Song Kye Sa, Seoul, 1955)

⁴⁶ Lee Bo Hyong, *Shamanist Music of Si Na Wui Kweon* (The Institute of Korean Cultural Anthropology, Seoul, 1971)

⁴⁷ Kim Kwang Il, Kang Sin Mong *Analysis of the Shaman* (The Neuropsychiatry Institute of Korea, Seoul, 1970)

⁴⁸ Jang Byong Gil, *The Study of Native Korean Faith* (Dong Seo Culture Institute of Seoul University, Seoul, 1970)

⁴⁹ Moon Sang Huei, *Shamanism and the Korean Church* (in *New Life*, July, New Life Press, Seoul, 1969)

⁵⁰ Yoo Dong Sik, *History and Structure of Korean Shamanism* (University of Yeon Se, Seoul, 1975)

fails to offer any rigorous analysis of the material. These studies are folkloristic in character. The other kind of study applies western methods of empirical and scientific analysis and hence offers a critique, rather than an account, of Shamanism.

E. CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAMANISM

From a careful study of the works of scholars listed above, it is clear that Korean Shamanism has three characteristics, namely:

1. Avoidance of misfortune and obtaining blessing;
2. The 'Gut' religious rite: the attainment of spiritual experience through rhythmic activities such as song and dance; and
3. A conception of God which is simplistic and superficial in comparison with Japanese Shinto.

Korean Shamanism, unlike many other forms of Shamanism, is based on the notion of the immanence, or descent, of God rather than on a belief in the ecstatic escape of the human spirit into the transcendent supernatural realm. There is a parallel here with the Christian New Testament, e.g. in Acts 16:16, where St. Paul encountered a woman possessed by spirits, and in 1 Samuel 29:9, where there was a woman who is a medium in Endor. Shamans are perceived as quasi-divine, possessing a peculiar power from God; therefore people believe that the anger of God can be appeased by the Shaman, and there is a sense of the necessity to seek the favour of God

through worship. Shamans believe in the eternal life of the soul, therefore mystical religious experience is a vital element of Shamanism which is a highly spiritual religion. Shamanistic Korean Christians thus regard the experience of faith as extremely important. Shamans themselves oppose Christianity, believing that the Shamanistic God is angered by defecting of believers to christianity and at spiritual war with the Christian God.⁵¹ For them, the encounter between Shamanism and Christianity is a site of spiritual conflict, eg. in one instance, a Korean Shaman had prepared a 'Gut Sang' (feast table) as part of a religious rite. On opening the lid of the cauldron in which one of the delicacies had been prepared, he/she discovered that the 'DDEOK' (delicatessen for the rite) had become discoloured. This was attributed to the fact that a christian member of the household had previously lifted the lid, thereby dishonouring the food, so that it was no longer Holy. The Shaman proceeded to recommence the ritual, preparing fresh DDEOK⁵² to replace that which had been defiled.

A further example of the tension between the two religions is the belief that the presence of a Christian at a Gut ceremony prevents the descent of the spirit of God, rendering the ritual futile.

Thus it is clear that Shamanism as a religion is an extremely powerful spiritual force.

⁵¹ Kim Ki Suk, *The Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air* (in the *Kidok Kong Bo Newspaper in Korea*, Vol. 1956, Seoul, 1993 October 2), and Kim Tae Gon, *op cit.*, p.57

⁵² DDEOK is Korean traditional rice cake.

Shamanism denies the reality of the temporal, material world, and creates a new world and new humans. This belief in the creation or realisation of an alternative realm of existence has an affinity with the doctrines of Christianity. However, Christianity differs somewhat in two respects. It stresses the concept of eternal life without denying the reality of the secular, and it excludes from eternal union with God those sinful beings who reject salvation. Because of the emphasis of Shamanism on the unreality of the material world, many Christian theologians who are sympathetic to this perspective interest themselves in the aboriginalization of Christianity and readily incorporate elements of Shamanistic belief into traditional western orthodoxy. Shamanism maintains that Shamans are able to expel evil through ceremonial song and dance. Similarly, Christians believe that their praise and worship placate God, thereby saving them from misfortune and punishment.

Shamanism is a very accommodating religion, which easily embraces elements of foreign or alien beliefs. The use of song and dance to establish contact with the spiritual world can be a means of opening the self, of releasing the individual from inhibitions. Shamanism is extremely potent and resilient, and therefore no imported religions have succeeded in superseding it. Shamanism has been superficially influenced by other religions, but the essence of Shamanism remains undiluted and unchanged.

As the religion practised by Korean people for some thousands of years, Shamanism has been internalised to such an extent that its power to shape religious perceptions and the processes of the national consciousness is immense. Shamanism has four major features. Its character is differential, pervasive, continuous and it is motivated by the quest for eternity. These features of Shamanism derive from an early interweaving of Shamanism and Confucianism which together moulded the consciousness of the original Korean people.

Shamanism is ubiquitous in Eurasia, especially as a religion in northeast Asia and Siberia. In Korea, Shamanism has been connected with people's lives since the time of the founder Dun Gun, and has endured as the popular religion from dynasty to dynasty. The practices of Shamanism arise out of the Gut, or worship ritual, which is central to the religion. The study of Shamanism began during the Koryo Dynasty, and continued in the early studies by national scholars during the 'glasnost' period, in studies by Western missionaries, and in the work of Japanese scholars during the colonial period. After Korean independence, Shamanism was studied in terms of genre, using modern academic methods. In a word, Shamanism is a religion which seeks blessing from God and attempts to eliminate misfortune.

CHAPTER 4

A COMPARISON OF SHAMANISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The precepts of Shamanism and those of Christianity bear certain similarities. In this chapter, I will undertake a comparison of Christianity and Shamanism, thereby illustrating such similarities and, consequently, the reasons for the ready acceptance of Christianity by the Korean population.

A. PERCEPTIONS

1. Perceptions of God

Because Shamanism is not monotheistic it is able to accept and absorb the principles of many other religions. Although it is polytheistic, Shamanism nonetheless retains the concept of an Almighty Godhead. In Korean Shamanism 'Haneunim,' 'Hanulnim,' 'Hananim' and 'Ok Hwang Sang Je' were names used to refer to this 'Highest God,' the Creator of the World. The word 'Hanulnim' means wide (Han) and fence (Ul). Hanulnim is a God who rules over the wide cosmos, so the shaman believed in the real existence of God.¹ Shamanism maintained that while this Godhead was

¹ Christianity Encyclopedia (Ki dok Kyo Moon Sa, Seoul, 1983) p. 966

invisible, he had nonetheless taken on human form on occasion² -- a concept which is central to the Christian faith. Within the pantheon of Shamanism, gods were believed to be either good or evil.³ All of human life was believed to depend upon the benevolence of the Almighty Godhead.⁴ Korean Protestant Christianity adopted the name 'Hananim,' the Most High God of the Shamanistic pantheon, when referring to the God of Christianity. For Koreans, the name already carried the desired connotations.⁵

Benevolent spirits belonging to the lower strata of the pantheon were equated with the angels of Christianity. In the same way, evil spirits or 'gods' were equated with demons. The 'Punishing God' of Shamanism could be understood as the Christian 'God of Justice.' The Shamanistic belief that all things were controlled by the Will of God can be likened to the Christian belief in the Absolute Supremacy of God.

² Kim Tae Gon, *The Study of Korean Shamanism* (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1981) p.139

³ *The World Dictionary of Philosophy* (Education Press, Seoul, 1980) p.534

⁴ Kim Tae Gon, *op cit.*, p.287

⁵ Palmer, S.J., *Korea and Christianity: The Problems of Identification with Tradition* (Holly Corporation, Seoul, 1967) p.8

2. The Perception of a Messiah

Ancient Korean folklore holds mention of an incident in which a spiritual entity has sexual intercourse with a woman and who, through the consequent pregnancy and birth, manifests itself in human form.⁶ Koreans, being familiar with this idea, are thereby more easily able to accept the concept of the 'Virgin Birth' of Jesus Christ. According to the lore of Korean Shamanism, Sibwang (the Supervisor of sin) waits in the afterlife to judge the sins of humanity. Koreans perceive Sibwang as being equatable with "Jesus, the Lord of Judgement." In this regard, Shamanism and Christianity share a belief in the importance of the confession of sin. Furthermore, within Shamanist lore, 'Mireuk,' a saviour-figure, bears a striking resemblance to the Christian Messiah.

3. The Perception of Spirits

According to Shamanistic ideology, humanity is eternal, with the human soul returning to its original position after death. This concept of reversion to the origins of existence is the basic Shamanist viewpoint.⁷ Shamanists believe that the soul is fundamental to the life of the body.⁸ Though certain

⁶ Shin Tae Ung, *The Perception of Spirits in Korean Traditional Faith* (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol. 60, Seoul, 1986) p.86

⁷ Kim Tae Gon, *op cit.*, *The Study of Korean Shamanism*, p.305

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 300

differentiations do exist, this concept is nonetheless similar to that of Christianity.

According to the Bible, "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

The scholar, Lee Ik⁹ of the Lee Dynasty, recognised that there are spirits in all things. Further to this, the scholar, Kim Shi Seub,¹⁰ asserted that while a spirit occupied the form of its living body (whether plant or animal), that spirit could be referred to in terms of that form and by that form's name; once the outward form died, however, the spirit could no longer be associated with that form in name or otherwise and would be referred to simply as 'spirit.' Furthermore, all things brought into being in the universe, upon their death, reverted to existing as malevolent spirits.

Shamanism maintains that the Almighty Godhead Himself dwells in a realm well removed from that occupied by humanity and that he does not actively intervene in human affairs. Rather, management of the realm of humans is delegated to the gods of the lower spiritual strata.¹¹ These, in turn, are assisted in their responsibilities by hosts of lesser spirits.

⁹ Shin Tae Ung. op cit., *The Perception of Spirits in Korean Traditional Faith*, p.71

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 75

¹¹ Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., *Korean Religions and Christianity*, p.18

A common Korean belief was that the souls of the dead became ghosts or spirits, which either went to heaven or remained in the human world. The spirits of deceased parents were said to be malevolent. This belief can be regarded as the origin of the practice of ancestor worship.

The Bible, on the other hand, does not seem to subscribe to the principles of ancestor worship, and maintains furthermore that the spirits of the living cannot communicate with those of the dead (Luke 16:19-31).

Early Korean Catholics were martyred for holding to their belief that the worshipping of ancestors was evil (e.g. the martyrdom of Yun Ji Chung and Kwon Sang Ryon during the religious persecutions of 1791).¹²

When attempting to cure a patient, a shaman will seek to drive away those evil spirits believed to be the cause of ailment. From this practice we are able to see the strength of the Shamanistic belief in the spirits of the dead. This belief is at variance with Christian doctrine.

As a result of their concepts of a Shamanistic pantheon, Koreans are easily able to understand the Christian perception of a 'devil,' whom they equate with 'Doggebi' (One of Ghosts). 'Doggebi' are believed to be active at night given their purported fear of light. To the Korean Christian

¹² Kang Chun O., Korean Church and Ancestor Worship (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol. 39, Seoul, 1984) p.19

understanding, Jesus, being associated with light, is seen as the great repulser of evil.

4. The Perception of Gifts

According to popular belief, Korean shamans are actually possessed by spirits, and have the 'gifts' associated with evil spirits in particular. These gifts include the ability to heal, to drive away evil spirits, to speak as oracle, and the gifts of prophecy and spiritually inspired composition, all when in a state of Shamanistic ecstasy.¹³

Those shamans who are inspired in the writing of spiritual epistles are referred to as 'Myong Du' as are the epistles themselves.

As with all the previously mentioned 'gifts' the writing of epistles has been correlated by Korean Christians with the 'gifts' of the Christian Holy Spirit. The concept of the 'Myong Du' was later developed into the idea of 'Bu-Jeok' in which the epistle itself became a charm preventing bad luck.¹⁴

¹³ The World Dictionary of Philosophy, op cit., p.535, and Lee Nung Hwa, The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism (Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) pp.137-139 and 143-147

¹⁴ Religion and Society Institute of Korea, Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1991) p.p243-325

5. The Perception of a Supernatural World and Salvation

The idea of faith as a requirement for salvation and entry into the afterlife was not part of Shamanistic lore. The supernatural world was seen as an extension of the present world and all were believed to pass into it as a matter of course. A young man, or woman, who died before marrying would be betrothed by his parents to a deceased member of the opposite sex, thereby ensuring the married status of both in the afterlife.

Korean Shamanism did not have a developed concept of 'sin' or 'morality' but tended rather to be 'material' belief.¹⁵ In this sense it differs strongly from Christianity which traditionally has at its centre the idea of salvation.

Shamanists believe that only the souls of the innocent are able to abide in the afterlife; others are reborn in the form of different species. While Christianity shares this concept of the afterlife, it does not generally accept the idea of transmigrationism. Nonetheless, it is a popular belief that human life is begun and ended by the power of God.¹⁶ A person who dies is said to have returned home, or to have moved to another world.

¹⁵ Clark, Allen C., *Religions of Old Korea* (The Christian Literature Society of Korea, Seoul, 1961) p.217

¹⁶ Kim Tae Gon, *op cit.*, p.287

The Shamanistic perception of Paradise is similar to the Biblical one with its image of heavenly garden and eternal life, into which the souls of the dead are received by 'cha sa' (messengers) or angels.

6. The Perception of Human Nature

Within the Puriat province of Siberia, traditional belief holds that the human being contains three essential components, namely: the Body ('oyeye'); the lower grade Soul ('Amin'); and the Spirit ('sunyesun'). The 'Amin' is seen as being related to death and the 'Sunyesun' as being related to sleep. During sleep the 'Sunyesun' is believed to depart from the body.¹⁷

Shamanism does not have a clear concept of creation. In Shamanistic pictures, God was depicted in the form of a human, but Shamanism does not have the idea that the human being is the (perfect) image of God. It should be noted, however, that gods, when appearing in dreams, adopt the appearance of the human form.¹⁸ The 'Chang Se Ka' (Creation Song) of the Shamanist explained in detail the origins of humanity.¹⁹ Within the song, the origins of humanity are explained in terms of 'Evolution' as opposed to 'Creation.'

¹⁷ Choi Jung Hyon, *Korean Church and Shamanism* (Seong Kwang Publishing, Seoul, 1993) p.33

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Son Jin Tae, *The Study of Cho Seon Folk Tales* (Eul You Publishing Seoul, 1947) pp.166-171

Shamanism maintains that following death the material body decays and releases the soul, which in turn is transformed and united with 'Guishin' (spirits) in eternity.

According to the Christian Bible, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). A biblical example of trichotomy is found in 1 Thessalonians 1:23, "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, parents, even though they may have died, continue to exist as spirits. This belief can be regarded as the origin of the practice of 'ancestor worship.' Christian Scriptures, on the other hand, advocate the respect of living parents ("Honour your father and mother," Exodus 20:12) but does not advocate the "worship of deceased parents." The Christian trichotomy could be understood by Koreans by virtue of the trichotomies similarly present in Shamanism.²⁰ Furthermore, the idea of man himself being unable to achieve anything without spiritual assistance -- being present in Shamanistic ideology -- assisted greatly in promoting acceptance of the Christian doctrine of faith.

²⁰ Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.33

7. The Perception of Blessing

The Shamanistic perception of 'blessings' differs significantly from that of Christianity in that it stresses the material as opposed to the spiritual aspects of the world. In other words, in seeking a blessing, a Shamanist seeks material sufficiency and the furthering of his community's and his own self-interests, as opposed to the 'Will of God,' stressed in Christian ideology.²¹

If we analyse the Korean word for 'blessing' we see that it is composed of four separate glyphs combined into one phrase. 福. Respectively, the four glyphs represent 衣 clothing; 一 roof/house; 口 mouth/food; and 田 farm. We can hereby deduce the mainly physical connotations of the word 'blessings' in the Shamanistic interpretation and can understand the role of the shaman as primarily a preventer of physical misfortune when Korean people pray to receive blessings. It does not mean to accomplish God's will, (το θελημα τοῦ θεοῦ), but to get personal interests.

Notwithstanding Christian references to material blessings, the primary 'blessing' of the Christian faith remains, nonetheless, the realisation of the Kingdom of God. Throughout the Old Testament examples of this interpretation can be found; for example Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless

²¹ Park Jong Ku, "Korean Church and Shamanism" in What Do you Think About Korean Church (Pastoral New Books, Vol.19, Seoul, 1989) p.133

you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace." In the Gospels of the New Testament, the 'blessings' of this world are portrayed as leading to the Glory of God; for example, Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

Despite these apparent differences, the Korean Christian church has managed to accept, to a degree, the Shamanistic view of 'blessings' and, in assimilating this view, has attracted more adherents. The various kinds of 'special collections' common in Korean church life possibly stem from concepts that have their roots in a Shamanistic interpretation of 'blessings.'²²

8. Perception of Healing

Ancient oriental scholars held the belief that disease arose from disproportions within the body. In keeping with this belief acupuncture and finger pressure therapy were developed as means of treatment, along with various Chinese medicines aimed at restoring the patient's energy.²³

²² Ibid., p.131

²³ Kim Hyon Je, *The Drug Nature and Effect of Chinese Medicine* (Ministry and Theology, Vol.44, Tyrannus Book Co., Seoul, 1993) pp.254-256

Very little was known of the bacilli or viruses which are now seen to be the cause of much disease. Consequently, when a patient could not be successfully treated through the aforementioned procedures, evil spirits were suspected of being the cause of the ailment. In such cases, a shaman would be contracted to perform a 'gut' rite, in the hope that through prayer and the appropriate ritual such evil spirits might be driven away. Shamans were recognised as possessing the ability to heal that which could not be healed by science and during the Chosun Dynasty were attached to medical centres, known as 'Hwal In Seo.'²⁴

There are biblical records of Jesus driving off devils. Jesus, however, did not maintain that the diseases of the body arose from the presence of evil spirits. He cured disease through his abilities. The Bible advocates the use of prayer in healing but stresses that such prayer should be used in conjunction with medicine (see James 5:14 and Mark 5:13).

Among modern day Korean Christians there are those who believe that the laying on of hands, loud scolding, and even assault are means by which disease can be driven out. Pastor Kim, Ki-Dong,²⁵ in particular, maintains the belief that all disease has the presence of evil as its cause. Accordingly,

²⁴ Lee Nung Hwa, *The sSarching of Cho Seon Shamanism* (Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) p.85

²⁵ Pastor Kim Ki Dong belongs to Korean Christian Baptist Church. However, most Korean churches feel that he is a heretical pastor.

his methods of treatment are centred around the idea of driving this evil out of the patient.

These beliefs are essentially Shamanistic in nature, as are actual means of treatment.

9. The Perception of Leadership

Within the community a shaman had three distinct functions: priest, doctor, and prophet.²⁶ He supervised the performing of all ceremonies necessary to the healing of village life. Given that he was believed to be the recipient of a divine message, the shaman was treated with much trepidation within the community. The shaman was seen as controlling the fortunes of the community, good and bad, and people lived and died according to his teaching. Shamans believed to have a greater spiritual power than other shamans were treated preferentially. This resulted in a form of spiritual competitiveness among shamans in the field.

Towards the end of the Chosun Dynasty, shamans could be found serving in the army²⁷ as advisors or chaplains of sorts. Given the importance of agriculture to Korea, nationwide ceremonies were held, with the

²⁶ Dictionary of Theology (The Korea Society for Reformed Faith and Action, Kimpo, Korea, 1978) p.257

²⁷ Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., p. 28

participation of many shamans, with the intention of bringing rain.

Furthermore, on occasion the king would request that his shamans hold prayer meetings to protect the country from invading enemies.²⁸ Public officials and members of the royal family are known to have commissioned 'gut' ceremonies aimed at hampering political opponents.²⁹

Given their importance within the community, shamans would occasionally find themselves in jeopardy. The last king of the Baek Je Dynasty, Euja, is believed to have sent for a shaman in order to gain an interpretation of what he thought was a lucky dream. When the shaman interpreted the dream as signifying the fall of the nation, Euja had him executed.³⁰ Later generations came to regard this shaman as particularly prophetic.³¹

Within the modern community the role of pastor is similar to that of the shaman. Christ himself being priest, healer and prophet is interpreted by Koreans as having Shamanistic attributes and is more easily accepted as a consequence.

Nonetheless, Korean Christians do not always recognise certain important differences between Christianity and Shamanism and require the guidance

²⁸ Ibid., p.111

²⁹ Ibid., pp.150-159

³⁰ Ibid., p.28

³¹ Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., pp.21-22

of a pastor in many matters. Pastors perform a leadership function similar to that of the shaman and, like shamans, are given preference according to their spiritual abilities (healing, prophecy, etc). Pastors who are perceived to be particularly powerful attract increasingly large congregations. In an attempt to secure spiritual and material blessings many church members seek to establish a connection with their pastor. Pastors are invited to meals and presented with gifts or money by members of their congregations, and to a large extent are treated as though they were shamans.³²

Nonetheless, Christian doctrine generally stipulates that a minister or pastor is not, himself, the origin of blessings but rather a shepherd guiding his children to the way of faith in God.

³² Bae Sang Gil, "Talk to Pastoral Visitation" in What do you Think about Korean Church (Pastoral New Books, Vol.19, Seoul, 1989) p.315

10. Perceptions of the Cosmos

The Shamanistic cosmos has three levels: the heavens, the world, and the underworld.³³ The Underworld is believed to be underground; this explains the Korean custom of placing the deceased's possessions in the coffin for later use in the 'underground life.' The burial ground to be used is carefully selected to be beneficial to the deceased. While the Apostle Paul is known to have mentioned a 'third door' of heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2), the Christian Scriptures are nonetheless free of any mention of an 'underground' world.

11. Perception of Worship

Shamanism, which has spiritual faith, has many objects of worship: the God of Heaven, Mountain god, Wood god, Farm god, Sea god, House god, and even a Toilet god. But Christianity maintains that Christians have to worship only one God, as is written in the first two of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-6), and also in Acts 17:22-31. To worship any object other than God is to dishonour God. In Shamanism, which has many gods, many kinds of gut are performed. Similarly, the Korean Christian church has many rites which are variously named.

³³ You Dong Sik, *Korean Religions and Christianity* (Dae Han Christianity Books, 1979) p.22

Amongst these rites are the following: salutation service for the publication of a book; birthday party ceremony; graduation thanksgiving ceremony; anniversary of death memorial service; congratulatory service on acceptance into university; service to bless the opening of a business; house-moving thanksgiving service; service to bless the commencement of construction; ceremony for travelling mercies. These practices suggest an acceptance of Shamanist concepts. Church members attribute Shamanistic powers to ministers. These rites are not orientated towards the worship of God -- rather they represent a quest for success and good fortune.

The Shaman prays and bows on preparing 'Jade Water' in the room set aside for the shelter of God, and presents the pure water on a special table.³⁴ This ritual is performed for the preservation of a spiritual relationship with God. Traditionally, ordinary Korean people prayed with clean water on a small table in the early morning when they confessed their needs. Now this ritual has been adapted by Korean Christians who hold early morning prayer meetings. This may be viewed as a positive result of the assimilation of Shamanistic practices into Korean Christianity.

According to Korean custom, an annual ceremony, Se Su, which celebrates the year end according to the moon calendar, is held. On that night, fires are lit. This signifies the burning and destruction of everything from the

³⁴ Religions and Society Institute of Korea, Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture, op cit., pp.562-563

previous year, especially misfortune.³⁵ This tradition entered the church in the form of a service named Song Ku Yeoung Sin, meaning a farewell to the past and welcome to the future. Korean Christians recall and confess their past sins, and renew their commitment to faith for the New Year.

The place where women shamans conduct their rites to God or spirits was called Dang. The Korean Christian church has appropriated the Shamanist terminology, calling their churches 'Yebe (Worship) Dang,' 'Kyohwoe (Service) Dang,' or 'Seong (Holy) Dang.' Buddhists called their temples 'Jeon' or 'Jeol Kan.' Taoists called their temples 'Kak.' It is most significant that Korean Christians elected to utilise the names accorded to places of worship by Shamanism.

During the progression of a gut, the shaman moves into a state of ecstasy, but those attending are merely spectators. In accordance with the assumptions underlying the dynamics of these ceremonies, Korean Christians still talk of watching a church service, rather than of participating in an act of worship. Actually, congregations function as an audience which views and assesses the performance of the pastor.

³⁵ Kim Tae Gon, *op cit.*, p.467

B. A COMPARISON OF FORMS OF WORSHIP

Shamanism and Korean Christianity have many similar points of form. The many forms of Shamanism have facilitated the proliferation of the various forms of Korean Christianity.

1. Aspects of Worship

Shamanistic ritual took the form of either 'home-rites' or village rites. The term 'gut' refers in general to all such rites but may be used to refer, in particular, to the larger forms of ritual. Smaller-scale rites can be referred to, specifically, as 'bison' or 'binyom.' These tend to be less formal.³⁶

In the case of a 'bison,' a single shaman is usually sufficient for the ceremony, while a true 'gut' invariably requires the participation of many shamans. Musicians ('Jebi') are also involved in the larger 'gut,' orchestrating the singing and dancing required by the ritual.³⁷

Similarly, the larger 'gut' can be referred to as 'Seon Gut' (meaning 'Standing Gut') and the lesser gut, or 'bison,' referred to as 'Anjeun Gut' (meaning 'sitting gut').³⁸

³⁶ Religions and Society Institute of Korea, op cit., p.109

³⁷ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., pp.46-51

³⁸ Ibid., p.347

The Korean Christian church has divided its services into two categories, based upon the influences of the corresponding division in Shamanistic ritual. The 'major service' of Sunday morning may be likened to the large Shamanistic 'gut,' while the Sunday evening and Wednesday services correspond with the 'bison' or 'binyom.'

The 'great service' of Sunday morning involves the participation of many pastors and elders, musicians, a choir and entails much standing prayer and singing of hymns.

The lesser services, or 'praise services,' involve a smaller congregation, a smaller choir and the full ensemble of priests and elders is not present. The congregation remains seated throughout most of the service. A strong trend among the various congregations is for one-fifth of the membership to attend the Sunday evening service and one tenth to attend the Wednesday service.³⁹

Traditionally, most Christian formal services take place in the church itself -
- Sunday services, wedding ceremonies, funerals and Holy Communion.

According to Shamanist traditions, however, only those ceremonies pertaining to the community as a whole were enacted in the shrine or public meeting place. Lesser ceremonies took place in the home of the family or

³⁹ See the Attending Graph charts of three churches accompanying.

person to whom they applied. The Korean Christian church has adopted this tradition to a degree, and many small-scale ceremonies are conducted at homes or in the workplace. Shamanistic rites can be further divided according to their purpose. I will draw comparisons in order to show how the Korean church has assimilated almost all the various forms of 'gut.'

Because Western Christianity does not consider home visitation and prayer meeting part of its formal service, it can be deduced that its significance in Korean Christianity arises from the importance of earlier Shamanistic ritual. Korean Christians do not differentiate between home visitation, special prayer meetings, etc., and the major Sunday services -- all the various aspects of Christian worship are referred to simply as 'service.'⁴⁰

See Figure 1 for a comparison of services in Shamanism⁴¹ and Christianity.

⁴⁰ Jeong Il Ung, *The Study of Worship Forms of Korean Church* (Ministry and Theology, Vol.44, Tyrannus Books Co., Seoul, 1993) p.46

⁴¹ *Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture*, op cit., pp.108-110

Figure 1. COMPARISON OF SERVICES IN SHAMANISM AND KOREAN CHRISTIANITY

| SHAMANISM | KOREAN CHRISTIANITY |
|---|--|
| A. Mustin Je (shaman's rite) 1. Nae rim Gut (Kang shin Je) 2. Kkot maji Gut (Chuk shin Je) 3. Ha jik Gut | A. Pastor's Ordination 1. Ordination service 2. Pastoral training for getting spiritual power 3. Retirement ceremony |
| B. Gaje (rites for home) - lifetime - 1. Sam shin Gut (Chil seong Je) 2. Gyong Gut (Pu dak go ri) 3. Yeo tam 4. Seong ju Gut 5. Jae su Gut 6. Kwang in Gut 7. Young jang ji ghi 8. Non bu Gut (Aek me ghi) 9. An tek Gut - after death - 10. Det mo ri 11. Jib ga sim 12. Mo ghi Gut (Jin o ghi) | B. Home-visiting service (ministry) - lifetime - 1. Service for congratulating 2. Healing service 3. Engagement ceremony, wedding ceremony 4. House-moving ceremony, construction ceremony 5. Regular home-visiting ministry 6. Service for driving away evil 7. Consolatory prayer visit for patients 8. New Year ceremony 9. Regular annual home visiting - after death - 10. Funeral service 11. Ceremony for cleaning the mourner's house 12. Ceremony for sending the spirit of the dead man to heaven (Catholic ceremony) |
| C. Dong Je (rites for community) 1. Go sa 2. Pung eo Je 3. Dang Gut | C. Rites for community 1. Thanksgiving service 2. Thanksgiving for fishing 3. Prayer meeting for village protection |
| D. The others 1. Yong shin Gut 2. Yo Wang ma ji 3. Dwuit ma ji Gut | D. The others 1. Sailing ceremony 2. Prayer meeting for ship or worship for sea god 3. Closing ceremony |

2. Order of Worship

The various Shamanist ceremonies differ from one another in content, form, and the order of rituals. Most of them, however, have three phases in common. These are: the 'calling' of God; the 'welcoming' of God; and

the 'hearing' of the will of God.⁴² The traditional Christian service bears similarities, although in this case the 'calling' and 'welcoming' stages are collectively referred to as the 'approach of service,' and are followed by an additional phase, called the 'response,' not present in the Shamanistic ceremony.

For example, here follows the order of 'gut' used by Mrs Mun Deok Sun, indicative of the ritual procedures of the Mudang (shaman) in Seoul, Korea. Her 'gut' follows twelve stages.⁴³

⁴² Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.51

⁴³ Choi Gil Seong, op cit., pp.72,152

| ACT 1: GOD IS INVITED | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Bu Jeong Gori ⁴⁴ | Purification of the place of ritual and the way of God's approach |
| 2. Ga Mang Gori | The invitation of God |
| ACT 2: ENTERTAINMENT AND ORACLE | |
| 3. Mal Myong Gori | In separate seances, each god is individually called upon in turn. The gods are entertained with song and dance. The message or words of each god are heard. |
| 4. San Sang Gori | |
| 5. Byol Sang Gori | |
| 6. Sae Gam Gori | |
| 7. Je Seok Gori | |
| 8. Seong Ju Gori | |
| 9. Seong Ju Gori | |
| 10. Gun Ung Gori | |
| 11. Chang Bu Gori | |
| ACT 3: CLOSING CEREMONY | |
| 12. Dwuit Jeon Gori | The gods return to their respective realms. |

⁴⁴ Gori means 'stage.'

Korean Christians who were familiar with the order of these Shamanistic rites could easily understand the order of the Christian church worship.⁴⁵ Christian doctrine advocates the preparation and cleansing of the mind through repentance prior to church service. Christian service involves the singing of hymns, the hearing of the preaching of God's work, the taking up of a collection, and, at the close of the service, the pronouncement of the benediction. In all these respects, the Christian Order of Worship bears a strong resemblance to that of Shamanist ritual. The main difference between the two lies in the fact that the Shamanist ceremony involves the worship of more than one God.

3. Garments for Worship

The priests of the Old Testament, the present-day Catholics, Greek Orthodox and the African church, among others, all have their distinctive ritual garments. The same is true of Korean shamans. The attire of the Korean shaman consists of the following: the traditional shaman's hat made of white paper, called 'gokkal.' Female shamans wear 'kueja' (the traditional woman's jacket and skirt) and 'hwal ot' (the traditional woman's coat).

⁴⁵ Kim So Yeong, *Worship and Life* (Hyon Doe Shin Seo 62, Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1974) pp.62-63

Garments are white, black, and yellow cloth with stripes of many colours and each shaman will have in his possession a bell-stick (with seven bells), a fan, a sword, a spear, a myong du (circular brass dish), and a fodder-chop. Often, Korean shamans will dress themselves in the traditional attire of a Korean knight when seeking to drive away malevolent spirits. This practice is somewhat reminiscent of the Christian idea of the "full armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11). Similar to the shaman's use of a ceremonial bell is the use of bells by Catholic priests and Korean church pastors to announce the beginning of the service.

4. The Use of Musical Instruments in Ritual

The performing of a traditional 'gut' involves the accompaniment of many musical instruments,⁴⁶ including the 'jing' (gong), 'jang go' (double-headed drum), and the 'jegeum.' The 'jebi,' or "shaman's assistant in charge of music," coordinates the use of the 'buk' (drum), 'piri' (recorder), 'haegeum' (Korean fiddle) and 'hojeok' (clarinet). The use of musical instruments in the 'gut' is believed to be important to the success of the ceremony. The Christian Scriptures make frequent mention of the similar use of musical instruments (cf. Psalms, Chapter 150) in religious ceremonies and many instruments are used in the services of present-day Full Gospel Churches, in particular.

⁴⁶ Choi Gil Seong, op cit., p.80

5. The Object and Content of Worship

The object of Shamanistic ritual is the avoidance of misfortune and the invoking of blessings in order to ensure the permanent continuation of human life through the various stages of being.⁴⁷ Almost all the religions of the world have this objective in common.⁴⁸

Shamanism is the ritualistic conduit through which the petitions of the community are presented before God. Prichard⁴⁹ emphasises the importance of concentrating on actual religious practice and beliefs rather than on theoretical and abstract origins.

Shamanistic ideology holds that human misfortune arises from disobedience to God's will, and advocates obedience as an assurance of good fortune.⁵⁰

The Bible preaches salvation as a consequence of the acceptance of the Gospel, and unity with Christ (John 1:12, Ephesians 1:10).

Shamanism maintains the belief that sin arises from the desire to possess,⁵¹ and in this respect is similar to Christian doctrine. According to the Bible, human unhappiness arose from the 'original sin' of Eve's desire for the "knowledge of good and evil." "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives

⁴⁷ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.163

⁴⁸ Johannes G. Vos, trans. Han Seong Su, A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World (Korea Logos Research Institute, Seoul, 1988) p.9

⁴⁹ E.E. Evans Pritchard, Theory of Primitive Religion (Charendon Press, Oxford, 1965) p.22 ff.

⁵⁰ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.193

⁵¹ Ibid., p.171

birth to sin, and sin when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15)

In Shamanistic ceremonies, the expiation of sin frequently requires the sacrificing of an animal, and the 'spilling' of its blood.⁵² This practice has facilitated the understanding by Koreans of the sacrificial rites of the Old Testament. 1 Chronicles 16:29: "Bring an offering and come before Him; worship the Lord in the splendour of His holiness."

The shaman is responsible for the provision of a portion of the food required by the 'gut,' and for the purified water used in 'bison' (or lesser 'gut'). Water is a basic requirement of Shamanistic ritual, signifying purification and life,⁵³ and this has facilitated an understanding of the concept of baptism and the idea of the 'living water' of Jesus Christ.

The Korean people, who sought from their shaman's blessings health and the expulsion of evil, sought the same rewards from Christianity.

Within the Korean Christian mind set, the hearing of the sermon would seem to have the same importance within the "Order of Service" as the "hearing of the oracle" carried within the 'gut.'

Most shamanist ceremonies take place at night, largely due to the popular belief that God is better able to listen to prayer at night.⁵⁴ This belief has

⁵² Ibid., pp.416-417

⁵³ Ibid., pp.414-415

⁵⁴ Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., *The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism*, p.17

been carried through into the prayer meetings of the Korean church, most of which take place at night.⁵⁵

The Shamanistic concept of 'ancestor worship' should not be thought of as synonymous with the Christian tenet of respect for parents. The main objective of 'ancestor worship' in a Shamanistic sense is the obtaining of blessings and the averting of misfortune, not respect for respect's sake.⁵⁶

6. Objects of Worship

Shamanism is a polytheistic series of beliefs. The various spirits and gods of the Shamanistic pantheon are believed to inhabit many different bodies and many different places. All of these divine entities are worshipped -- the 'Most-High God,' the Water-god, the Earth-god, the Hero, the Ancestors and the Gods of 'house,' 'tree' and 'stone,' etc.

Christianity, on the other hand, forbids the worship of anything but the one Almighty God, believing that the worship of created things is idolatrous (Jeremiah 10:8).

⁵⁵ Most Korean churches have all-night prayer meetings.

⁵⁶ Kim Myong Hyok, *Historical Understanding of Ancestor Worship* (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.30, Seoul, 1984) p.39

C. ORGANISATION

1. Interpretations of the Shaman's Title

The characteristics of the shaman may be deduced from literal interpretations of the name.

An interpretation of the Manchu word for shaman gives the meaning: 'excited man,' 'stirring man,' or 'shaking man.'⁵⁷ A literal Chinese translation renders shaman as 'jumping god.'⁵⁸

In fact, the Chinese glyph (巫) for the word can be interpreted as "one who dances between heaven and earth."

The pronunciation of the Manchurian word for shaman -- 'salman' -- is similar to our pronunciation of shaman.⁵⁹

'Samu' was the term used within the Kokuryu Dynasty for shaman.⁶⁰

The history books, Koryosa and Chosun Wang Jo Sillok, render shaman as 'Mukyok.'⁶¹

⁵⁷ You Dong Sik, op cit., Korean Religions and Christianity, p.16

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism, p.248

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.11

The expression 'Mu' is used to refer to a female shaman, while 'Kyok' refers to a male shaman.⁶²

Woman shamans were also specifically referred to as 'mansin' (meaning 'many gods') and male shamans as 'baksu.' According to Kim Tae Gon⁶³ the work 'baksu' is a misrepresentation of the name 'boksa' meaning 'fortune teller.' Within the same province another expression for the male shaman was 'kwang dae,' meaning 'clown' -- a reference to the shaman's musicians present during the 'gut.'

Contemporary terms for Korean shamans are 'mudang,' 'dan gol,' 'sim bang' and 'myong du,' but the most popular of these is 'mudang.' These are honorary titles.⁶⁴

The term pastor, translated into the Korean language, is rendered as 'moksa' meaning shepherd and master. The word 'sa' meaning 'master' is also found in expressions meaning shaman.

Of further interest is the word 'simbang.' Among the people of Jeju Island, Korea, home-visitation by the shaman of the area is a frequent and important occurrence. Among these people, the expression used when

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., p.14

⁶⁴ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.365

referring to a shaman is 'simbang.' Within the Korean Christian church the term used to describe the concept of 'home-visitation' by pastors is also 'sim bang.' The word is pronounced identically in both contexts and carries the same root meaning, namely 'to visit.'

2. Self-Organisation

In order to maintain their lineage and ensure the linear transfer of their special abilities shamans only married one another.⁶⁵ Shamanistic abilities were transferred from generation to generation by way of the 'nae rim gut' (or "rite for receiving God").⁶⁶

During the ancient period there were no religious training schools in Korea. New shamans arose through lineage, were formally ordained as shamans and were then instructed in Shamanist techniques by their predecessors.

Female shamans referred to their disciples as 'shin ddal,' meaning 'daughter of God.'

Over the course of their studies, disciples were required to pass through five levels, or grades, of instruction. These were 'shin nae,' 'seong bang,' 'ha

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.70

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.62

shin chung,' 'jung shin chung,' and 'sang shin chung.' The highest shamans of the 'sang shin chung' category were the 'do hwang su.'⁶⁷

This system bears a similarity to the Christian hierarchy of evangelist, assistant pastor, pastor, bishop, and archbishop. Shamans, particularly those in Honam Province, maintained clearly defined 'holy precincts' within which to perform their respective ministries.⁶⁸ The concept of 'holy precincts' bears a similarity to the system of ministry districts adhered to by the Korean church, instituted at an early stage by the first Korean Christian missionaries. Shamans managed their own organisation through marriage, lineage, hierarchy and "dan gol pan je do" (the system of distinct shaman districts).

3. Management of Followers

'Mudang' (shamans) manage their followers in various ways. Each shaman has a group of adherents (su yang ja) whom he or she will visit in order to perform the religious rites of the household.⁶⁹ This cultivation of loyalty and discipline amongst followers is similarly conducted in the Christian Church. The extensiveness of the practice amongst shamans, of establishing 'clientele,' was particularly evident in Ho Nam Province, where the 'dan

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.131

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.148

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.70

gol pan' system emerged. In this system each shaman had his or her specific customer region and determined his or her specific role within that territory.

Shamans did not encroach on each other's territory, nor were followers of one shaman permitted to consult another shaman from a different district.⁷⁰

Shamans performed all the Shamanist rites of their communities and imparted their teachings to specific groups of devotees.

Residents of a given region would provide the local shaman with rice and barley in spring and autumn, and would reward the shaman for the performance of rites with food and money. The annual fee paid to the shaman was called 'do bu.'⁷¹

When shamans went to collect 'do bu' from their followers they would customarily give, in exchange, Korean cookies (ddeok) and sweets (yeot) as a gesture of gratitude for the support received.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.112 ff.

⁷¹ Ibid.

This practice whereby the shaman is provided for by his or her followers is reminiscent of the Jewish and Christian tithing systems, and continues to influence the traditions of the Korean Christian church.⁷²

There is a specific period of extensive home-visiting by Christian ministers during spring and autumn. Pastors are frequently given generous gifts during these visits, and seldom go to the members of their congregations empty-handed.

Similar customs prevail in Eastern Africa, where the 'dan gol' shaman is the recipient of gifts and support, and were also evident in the Christian church during the first century.⁷³

'Dan gol pan' could be sold or lent, in the same way that in the modern Korean Christian church buildings and congregations are sometimes traded amongst ministers.

Nowadays, the 'dan gol pan' system of 'transmitted' Shamanism is occasionally ignored by those seeking a more spiritual form of Shamanism. In today's Korean church, Christians flock towards charismatic pastors and

⁷² Han Wang Sang, *What Problems are in Korean Church?* (Dae Han Christian Press, Seoul, 1982) p.198

⁷³ J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (Macmillan, London, 1957) pp.199-200

ministers who will seek to retain their congregation by portraying themselves as such.

4. Sin Byong Che Heom

Shamans are generally divided into two categories: "kang sin mu dang" and "se seub mu dang," the first meaning "shaman who has received God," and the second meaning "shaman who was educated." "kang sin mu dang" who performed their functions by way of spiritual power, or divine inspiration, spread throughout middle and northern Korea. "Se seub mu dang," those who perform their function by way of inherited priestly authority, spread throughout southern Korea and Jeju Island.⁷⁴

In the process of becoming a shaman "kang sin mu dang" experience a series of spiritually transmitted afflictions, including mental disorders, assorted bodily pains and any of a number of other ailments that may confine the shaman to the sick-bed.⁷⁵ These afflictions are termed "sin byong che heom" and are believed to be incurable by any means other than the complete acceptance of God by the subject. It is believed to be an entirely religious phenomenon, defying scientific explanation, and is considered the shaman's rite of passage into the world of God. Certain

⁷⁴ Choi Gil Seong, *op cit.*, pp.154-155

⁷⁵ Kim Tae Gon, *op cit.*, p.77

South American shamans are said to experience a phenomenon in which they die and are revived.⁷⁶

In Christianity, when one accepts the Gospel, one is said to experience the operation of the Holy Spirit, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit one is said to be 'born again' (John 3:3-8). This is the process by which the believer is relieved of his old nature and is created anew. Occasionally in the midst of the 'born again' experience the initiate will display extraordinary gifts -- speaking in strange dialects, etc.⁷⁷

In many respects, therefore, the "sin byong che heom" of the shaman and the 'born again' experience of the Christian are quite similar. The phenomenon, in both cases, is seen as an indication of true acceptance and belief.

The "sin byong che heom" of Korean Shamanism can be regarded as a universal phenomenon reflective of man's interaction with God regardless of racial differences.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.231

⁷⁷ See 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

5. Seong Mu Gwa Jeong

The term "seong mu gwa jeong" refers to the course through which the student shaman becomes an independent shaman. This process differs between kang shim mu dang and se seub mu dang. "Se seub mu dang" learn Shamanistic dance, song and incantation through continual parental instruction. The novice will accompany the parents in the rituals performed by the latter and will diligently practise the various aspects of those rituals under close parental supervision.⁷⁸

"Kang shin mu dang" is not voluntary or by designation but rather is put into motion when the subject, displaying signs of 'shin byong' ('shaman's disease') is interpreted by a consulting shaman as being a potential shaman.⁷⁹ From this moment the novice will commence the "seong mu kwa jeong." This process involves the performing of the 'ne rim gut' by a prominent shaman, in which the novice is presented before God and receives the spiritual power associated with a shaman. By this ceremony, the novice becomes accepted as a shaman.⁸⁰

For the ceremony the student will wear the 'kwe ja' or shaman's garb, and will carry a bell in the left hand and a fan in the right. Music and dance

⁷⁸ Kim Tae Gon, op cit., pp.273-278

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.77

⁸⁰ Ibid.

accompany the ceremony. During the performance of the 'gut' the striking of the bell sends a vibration through the body of the subject, summoning the spirit to enter.⁸¹

The student will call out the names of the approaching spirits and speak 'in oracle.' At this stage, witnesses of the ritual will present the subject with money and request the telling of their fortunes. This the subject does and is hereby recognised by the witnesses as being legitimate.

Nonetheless, 'new' shamans do not yet perform 'gut' as the techniques of these rituals have first to be learned from an established shaman. The novice will accompany his or her instructor in the "gut sang cha rim" (the preparation of food for the ritual taste) and will be taught the various songs and dances associated with Shamanistic ritual.⁸² As instruction progresses the student will assume more and more responsibility for the performance of the various ceremonies. The "seog mu kwa jeong" of Shamanism can be compared to the taking of Holy Orders.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

| SHAMAN | PASTOR |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Sin Byong Che Heom (receiving god) | Calling (receiving Holy Spirit) |
| Gong Su (oracle) | Tongue of Dialect |
| Ecstasy | Divineness |
| Seeing through fortune | Prophecy |

The course of study of the shaman is undertaken individually while that of the Christian pastor takes place in a school, alongside many students. Nonetheless, there are Biblical examples of the personal guidance of spiritual leaders. Joshua received instruction under Moses, and Samuel studied privately under Eli before receiving the Spirit of God in the sanctuary. Following the death of Eli, Samuel assumed the religious leadership of the Israelites. The cases of Joshua and Samuel bear similarity to the process of seong mu kwua jeong of Shamanism.

Within the Shamanistic phenomenon the subject is seen to have no personal choice in becoming a shaman. Similarly, Judeo-Christian prophets are believed to have been unable to refuse their spiritual callings.

Shamanism influenced the ready acceptance of Christianity on the part of the Korean people. The perceptions of God, spirit, salvation, the metaphysical world, blessing, sin, ministers, the cosmos, society and worship held by Shamanism are closely related to those of Christianity, and

thus provided a preparation for the reception of the Gospel. In its forms of worship, the Korean Church adopted a style derived from existing communal patterns and habits, and incorporated the seasons and festivals of the traditional calendar into its religious cycles. The gut in which God is welcomed, enjoyed and heard is similar to the content and order of service in Christian worship. The management of followers through the cell system (dan gol pan of the shaman) is comparable with the organic church growth achieved through the structures implemented within the Korean Church. The special power of the shaman (shaman's disease) evolved into a church dominated by the desire for spiritual fulfilment. Undoubtedly, Korean Christianity demonstrates in innumerable respects the pervasive influence of Shamanism.

CHAPTER 5

SHAMANISM IN THE KOREAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In this chapter, I shall examine the practise of Shamanism in the Korean church: how it is expressed, applied and adapted.

The colours of Shamanism are ubiquitous in the Korean Christian church. God provided Korean people, through Shamanism, with a religious basis which facilitated a ready acceptance of Christianity. The perception of the cosmos, God, humanity, spirits and priests in Shamanism is very similar to the Christian view, as I have shown, and therefore Christianity, rather than being viewed as a foreign imposition, seemed to Koreans to be a natural extension of an existing faith. No radical reversal of beliefs was necessary.

When St Paul visited Athens, he saw a monument with the inscription "to the Unknown God" before the court of Areopagus (Acts 17:16-31). There he proclaimed the Unknown God to be God Almighty, Jehovah.

Similarly, in Korea, Shamanism was known as God's religion. Lee Nung Hwa saw that Shamanism was in some measure a religion of God.¹ God's

¹ Lee Nung Hwa, *The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism* (Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) p.12

religion, namely the Christianity which believes in Jehovah as the Almighty God, was introduced to Koreans who worshipped God, but whose understanding of God was vague and imprecise. Christianity offered them a clearer definition and a deeper understanding of the being whom they worshipped.²

Since ancient times, Korean people have been predisposed to embrace imported new religions, but their commitment is selective, rather than complete, since, despite appropriating features of other religions, they still retain their Shamanistic character. Thus, although nominally accepting Christianity, Koreans remain Shamanistic in their habits, lives and thought. In the blending of the two religions, the Shamanistic elements remain virtually undistilled.

Korean people like to eat bibim bab, a dish in which white rice, shredded meat, chilli sauce, bean sauce, varied greens, herbs, vinegar, sesame oil and seasonings are mixed with fried egg and eaten. This disposition of Koreans towards mixing diverse elements which is well expressed in the nation's food culture, is also evident in Korean religious practice.³ Emergent religions in Korea invariably incorporate aspects of the major

² S.J. Palmer, *Korea and Christianity: The Problems of Identification with Tradition* (Holly Corporation, Seoul, 1967) p.8

³ Choi Jung Hyon, *Korean Church and Shamanism* (Seong Kwang Press, Seoul, 1993) p.77

religions, producing new syntheses, for example, Ton il kyo; Weon kyo (zero religion); Won bul kyo; Dong ban kyo; Yong hwa kyo; etc.⁴

In this chapter, the influence of Shamanism in the Korean church is to be discussed in greater detail.

A. EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS KOREANS

Koreans are an emotional people, a people of Han.⁵ Koreans applied this appellation to themselves.⁶ The Korean name for the country is Dae Han Min Guk, which means "The Republic of Great Korea." Since earliest times, Korean people have been called 'Han.'

Ko Cho Seon, the first state of Korea, was called Han in the book *Si Kyong*,⁷ an anthology of poetry from ancient China. At the end of the nineteenth century, the King Ko Jong of the Lee Dynasty changed the name

⁴ Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, trans. Rhee Ho Youl, *Understanding the Cults* (The Christian Wisdom Publishers, Seoul, 1987) pp.21-22; Kim Dong Wan, *Exodus from Circle* (Young Dong Press, Seoul, 1989) pp.291-296; Tak Myong Hwan, *Tong Il Kyo is not Christianity* (Kuk Jong Press, Seoul, 1983) p.4; Religion and Society Institute of Korea, *Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture* (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1991) pp.219, 491-492, 494

⁵ Yoo Dong Sik, *Korean Religions and Christianity* (Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1979) p.218

⁶ The appellation 'Han' was called from the Three Kingdoms period (Fourth Century A.D.. Lee Hong Sik, *Encyclopedia of Korean History* (Korea Press, Seoul, 1982) p.1641

⁷ Yoo Dong Sik, *op cit.*, *Korean Religions and Christianity*, p.215

of the state from Cho Seon to Dae Han. The word 'Han' has very emotional connotations. It is the same as Ghan, which was the title of King during the Shilla Dynasty, e.g. Geoseo Ghan, and Marib Ghan, and also is the same as Khan, which is the title of the king in Mongolia, e.g. Genghis Khan. The word han means big, wide and high, e.g. han chang (peak time); han bada (wide sea). Han also means heaven, e.g. han ui (high heaven), and right (correct) or centre, e.g. han ka wui (full moon or the "centre" of the month according to the lunar calendar); han ka un de (the exact centre). Lastly, han means both one and the whole, e.g. han sa ram (a man and many men); han jong kyo (one religion and all religions). In the last examples, we can observe the paradox in the word: it simultaneously signifies one entity, and a larger whole. This is the cornerstone of the Korean character -- its acceptance and inclusiveness.⁸

Han Ul Nim, the name of the God of the Korean people, means the Highest God, One God and God of the Whole. This God became the God of Shamanism, i.e. the God of Shamanism can be the One God who encompasses all gods. Therefore, Shamanists worship simultaneously one God and many gods. For this reason, Shamanism could incorporate and subsume Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Christianity.

⁸ You dong Sik, op cit., p.217

Korean people were called the People of Han,⁹ which denotes a complex emotion including anger, revenge, sorrow and yearning. Here, we encounter a very interesting word which marries the two different meanings: han ma neon (한마음). The word han ma neon has two meanings. The first is derived from the first set of concepts explained, ie very much or too much. The second is related to the idea of yearning, i.e. very powerful yearning. The Korean people have strong positive and negative yearnings. This emotion of yearning is born of Korean history. From early times, the Korean people encountered great difficulties, and the women in particular suffered and wept. Han (the cluster of feelings already described) is an emotion deeply embedded in the Korean temperament.

The Korean folk song, 'Ari Rang,' which is known throughout the world as representative of Korean folk music, contains and conveys the han of fruitless love. The song tells of a young girl who is deserted by her lover, and yearns for his return:

Ari rang ari rang ara rio

He passes over the Ari rang hill

The lover who leaves and abandons me

Will get a disease of the feet

Before he has travelled four kilometres.¹⁰

⁹ Kim Jeong Hak, The History of Formation of Korean Race (The Great History of Korean Culture, Vol.1, University of Korea, Seoul, 1964) p.411

¹⁰ Department of Education, The Music Schoolbook for Middle School (National Schoolbook Press, Seoul, 1979) p.22

In Korean society, entertainment with strong overtones of pathos is very popular. Sad films, mournful music and tragic drama are highly appreciated because for Koreans the essence of enjoyment lies in sympathetic identification with the characters, themes and events portrayed. The power of entertainment to move the audience is a key criterion in evaluating its success.¹¹

This han emotion is manifested in three ways. Firstly, han is (한 기 ggeun gi) suppressed or contained. The Korean people naturally repress the han. When confronted with suffering or injury, Korean people are inclined to suppress their pain rather than reacting angrily. It is interesting to note that the Korean national flower, the Mu kung Hwa (the Rose of Sharon),¹² blooms over a long period. The flower shares the character of han in that it is continuous and sustained, and provides a further metaphor for Korean life in that the bark is plagued by small insects, which can be likened to the hardships of human circumstance.

Korea does not have a history of aggression. Over a period of 5000 years, Korea has never attacked or invaded another country, but only defended itself. This han and ggeun ki are commonly sublimated in prayer. Prayer is the medium through which Korean people express han: this prayer is the objective correlative of the Korean people's emotion.

¹¹ You Dong Sok, op cit., p.217

¹² A scientific name: Hibiscus syriacus

The function of the shaman was to communicate the han of the people to God through prayer, incantation and ritual.¹³ Shamanist rites are often extremely lengthy, lasting throughout the night or extending over days. Korean people are known to engage in long periods of prayer. In all churches in Korea, there are Christians who hold long prayer vigils late into the night.

In this way, the emotional character, the han of Korean people, is expressed in the religious practice of prayer.

Secondly, the han is expressed in life and art, for example in singing, dancing and games. Religious song, dance and play are also components of the Shamanist gut. 'Chang' is a form of song which evolved to express sorrow. Korean people enjoy recreation and celebrate holidays with various kinds of lively play: loud singing, dancing and card playing are favourite festive activities. Modern young people vent their emotions in the uninhibited atmosphere of discos. Korean people vent their innermost selves in gut ritual play.

So, Korean Christians discharge their han in prayer, the singing of hymns and gospel dancing. After the release of emotionally charged Sunday

¹³ Choi Gil Seong, *Shaman of Korea* (Yeol Hwa Dang, Seoul, 1985) pp.141-151

services, Christians feel that a catharsis has been experienced and are satisfied that their worship has achieved its purpose.

The character for shaman, 샤, means 'dancing shaman.' Korean people were known from early times as 'dancing people.'¹⁴ Christian pastors are required to fill the role of the dancing shaman. Korean Christians feel that Shamanistic Christianity is more spiritual and closer to their psychic origins because of its emotional elements.

Thirdly, Korean people expressed their han through literature. Sad stories are the narrative norm in films and literature. The famous anonymous ancient novels, *Seong Chun Hyang* and *Sim Cheong Jeon*, depict tragic events, and portray the abiding Korean han.

The sadness of the Korean emotional character is expressed in prayers of contrition and repentance which are offered up with tears and in sorrow. It is clear that Korean people typically express their emotions passively, rather than through aggression or action.

¹⁴ Kim Jeong Hak, Lee Hyon Huei, *The History of Korea* (Dong Hwa Press, Seoul, 1974) pp.28-32

B. CHARACTER OF THE KOREAN CHURCH

The rapidly-grown Korean church, nurtured by internal elements of Christianity and the external influence of circumstance, displays many characteristics which are identifiable with Shamanism.

1. The Korean Church has an Extremely Individual Character.

The Korean church demonstrates great enthusiasm for the salvation of individual souls, but is less interested in social responsibility, or in justice in the community which contributes to the formation of the human personality.¹⁵

Shamanism is a religion in which the believer prays to God himself, or through the shaman, for personal blessing. He/she is unconcerned with the welfare of others, and therefore intercessory prayer is totally absent from Shamanism. This specific characteristic of Shamanism still determines the nature of belief for Korean Christians. The true meaning of the Gospel is not centred on the prosperity of the individual in this way. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) teaches that salvation is not for the single individual, but that the Christian has a responsibility towards his neighbour. It is this emphasis on love and service which distinguishes the

¹⁵ Lee Yo Han, *The Church Programme with No Purpose* (Mission World, Vol.18, Seoul, 1993) p.51

Christian Gospel from Shamanism in its self-centred approach. Of course, salvation involves an individual responsibility to God, but in Christianity, the purpose of God is accomplished and his kingdom established through the works of believers. The Church of Christ is not only a personal refuge, but exists as a body within society, and is therefore socially accountable.¹⁶

The individualistic, self-centred faith of Shamanism¹⁷ is manifested not only in the attitudes and practices of Christians, but also in the churches which tend towards separatism and idiosyncrasy rather than unity. Church members demonstrate a strong allegiance to their own congregations and exercise their Christianity within that specific context. Other congregations are perceived in terms of rivalry, rather than fraternity, and in order to expand their own congregations, ministers and members 'poach' from others, believing that their power is thereby increased. The growth of particular congregations, rather than that of the church as a whole, is treated as paramount. This mentality is shared by both members and ministers.

Individualistic growth is one of the distinctive features of the Korean church. The acquisition of material assets and facilities for individual churches always takes precedence over undertaking other, more distant

¹⁶ Alvin J. Lindgren, Trans. Park Keun Won, *Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration* (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1977), pp.45-46

¹⁷ Lee Hun Ku, *Dorean Traditional Religion and Korean Church* (Yeon Hab, Seoul, 1992) pp.135-137

ecumenical enterprises. For example, the establishment of a church building, a parking lot, a mountain prayer retreat, a church cemetery are given priority over funding rural congregations or supporting missionary activity. This occurs even when the congregation itself is depleted: while church pews are empty, plans for new constructions are being prepared.

This tendency arises in part from the mission policies of Nevius, which included the principle of congregational self-sufficiency, whereby missionaries were not responsible for the training or support of ministers. Costs, including the salaries of ministers, were to be borne by individual congregations who were self-governing and financially self-sufficient.¹⁸

However, the individualistic nature of Korean churches and their concern for self-preservation must largely be attributed to the fundamentals of Shamanism.¹⁹

2. The Passivity of the Korean Church

In Shamanism, the individual is wholly dependent on God, and is passive in his life circumstances. The Korean church lays great stress on the salvation of the individual soul and the promise of eternal bliss. It is significant that

¹⁸ Seo Jeong Woon, *The Growth of Early Korean Christian Church and Faith of Missionaries* (Pul Bit, Vol.39, Seoul, 1984) p.76

¹⁹ Lee Hun Ku, *op cit.*

the mystical dimensions of Christianity, such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual ecstasy of revival prayer meetings are important facets of Korean Christian belief and worship. Because of an inordinate preoccupation with the afterlife, there is an absence of social concern and an acceptance of the existing social parameters as natural or inevitable. This leads to an apathetic attitude towards social projects or the practice of faith as a Christian: service, charity and active commitment are lacking. For example, a housewife might visit a mountain retreat for some months in search of intense spiritual experience and a revival of faith, meanwhile neglecting the practical needs and welfare of her family.

The shamanistic emphasis on the powerlessness of humanity and omnipotence of God has had both positive and negative consequences for the Korean Christian church. On the one hand, it has encouraged passivity and social indifference; on the other, it has promoted a deep spirituality and an ideal of communion between the individual and God.

3. Formalistic Character of Korean church

The formalistic character of the Korean church may be partially derived from the formalism and legalism of Confucianism during the 500 years of the Lee Dynasty,²⁰ as well as from Shamanism.

²⁰ Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., p.242

Hereditary shamans who are trained in the arts and techniques of shamanism by their forebears may lack actual spiritual power: they acquire the skills to perform shamanist rites, but their activities are relatively meaningless, being merely an observance of form. Similarly, there are many Korean Christians who believe that their salvation is gained by adherence to the rituals and conventions of the church. Diligent attendance with appropriate participation in the order of service is mistaken for authentic religious commitment.

Korean Christians keep the Sabbath diligently, but having attended a Sunday service, typically feel that their responsibility to God has been discharged, and revert to their normal patterns.²¹ Having gone through the necessary motions, they consider themselves free of further obligations. In Shamanism, the preparation of the gut food table and the performance of gut rites are intended to please the gods. The gut is therefore enacted with devotion and complete concentration. Here, the shaman is the main participant, with little involvement on the part of followers. Hence, shamanistic Christians often maintain a facade of belief, while inwardly lacking a substantial faith. Their identity as Christians is a mask which can be donned for appropriate occasions, but they are intrinsically unchanged. Shamanists are largely ignorant of the doctrines of the belief to which they

²¹ Kang Young Ahn, *The Christian Intellectual of these Days* (Light and Salt, Vol.95, Tyrannus Books Co., Seoul, 1993) pp.52-53

subscribe. In the same way, Korean Presbyterians are largely ignorant of the Westminster Creed, Catechism and Presbyterian Constitution.²²

4. Conscientiousness of Church

Conscientiousness played a role in church growth, and was particularly evident in the fields of Bible study and evangelism. The Gospel was enthusiastically spread and received, just as people had diligently attended to the songs and utterances of shamans. New converts loudly affirmed their faith just as patients healed by Shamanism happily proclaimed their good fortune. A Biblical example of this pleasure in a new-found hope occurs in the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4). The conscientiousness of early Korean Christians led to the development of domestic and foreign missions as part of the task of the church in witnessing to God.

In the early phases of the Korean Christian church, new members were not admitted to congregations unless they were engaged in some form of evangelism.²³ Churches ordered that prospective members should have a sound knowledge of the Bible before baptism, and children were required to memorise scripture from an early age.²⁴ Shamans are required to study all

²² Son Byong Ho, *The History of Presbyterian Church* (Department of Education of Presbyterian Church of Korea, Seoul, 1980) pp.409-411

²³ Shin Nae ri, *What do you think about the Korean church?* (Shin Mang Ae Press, Seoul, 1989) p.343

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.342

the procedures of their rites and to memorise their songs, dances and incantations, etc. It was believed that if the shaman performed the gut conscientiously, the spirits would be summoned and bless the rite.²⁵ The zeal of early Korean Christians did indeed prove a powerful force, imparting a profound awareness of the Holy Spirit as an active presence in the personal lives of members and in the growth of the church as a body.²⁶

5. The Prayer-Centred Church

This point has already been discussed in Chapter 1 B. An important characteristic of the Korean church is its zeal in the area of prayer.

Believers seek contact with God through prayer. Prayer is like a telephone which permits communication with God. Zealous prayer, loud prayer, early morning prayer and the custom of mountain prayer all illustrate the prayer-centredness of the Korean church. Through prayer, people request the help of God, and feel empowered as Christians. This practice is associated with the belief that the prayer of the shaman is able to solve everything and that the shaman's power of mediation is a gift from God. The gut of Shamanism was performed with prayer from start to finish. The gut comprised twelve Go Ri (scenes). The Ta Ryeong (song) of each Go Ri is a prayer in song form. The small gut (Bi Nyom) is simply the prayer of the shaman. In early

²⁵ Kim Tae Gon, *The Study of Korean Shamanism* (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1981) pp.274-278

²⁶ Lee Yo Han, *op cit.*, p.52

times in Korea, it was customary for women to pray concerning matters of significance in their lives, e.g. for the conception of male offspring, for the success of their husbands in civil service examinations, etc. This habit of prayer provided the matrix for prayer practices in the Korean Christian church.

6. Bible-Centred Church

The Korean church received its faith from missionaries whose teaching was Bible-centred. This orientation of the early 'planting' church was adopted by the offspring church which aimed to promote Bible-centred living and the diligent study of scriptures. The role of Bible study in church revival has already been referred to in Chapter 1 B. Therefore, when confronting life crises, Korean Christians seek biblical guidance in their decisions.²⁷

Because Koreans have, for centuries, regarded the shaman as an oracle interpreting the mind of God, they are predisposed to treat the word and will of God with reverence, obedience and humility. This respect for the Bible has led to the development of a church which interprets the Bible conservatively. The contemporary Korean church is more conservative than both western churches and the Japanese Christian church.²⁸

²⁷ Shearer, Roy E., *The History of Korean Church Growth* (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) p.248

²⁸ Choi Jung Hyon, *op cit.*, p.134

7. Sacrificial Service Within the Korean Church

Korean Christians differ from other peoples in their sacrificial service. This is evident from many examples. When building or cleaning a church, members sacrifice their time and labour, freely laying bricks, carrying timber and generally performing the tasks necessary for the satisfactory completion of the work in hand. The same applies to material and financial contributions. In Africa, early missionaries provided materials and labour for the establishment of churches. In contrast, from the outset in Korea, the local population drew on their own resources, tithed and made special contributions to construct and expand their own churches. The main impetus for Korean church growth came from this capacity for sacrificial service.²⁹

Female church members take pleasure in gathering together for pastoral home visits and gladly share funding for refreshments and transport for the minister. This activity derives from shamanistic practice, in which special portions of scarce foods and delicacies were reserved for the rites of home gut, ancestor worship, etc. The saving of these foods usually involved some sacrifice, particularly where resources were not abundant, but the importance of ritual was such that these customs were routinely observed by Korean people.³⁰

²⁹ Roy E. Shearer, *op cit.*, pp.249-250

³⁰ Lee Hung Ku, *op cit.*, pp.93-94

This sacrificial mentality, generosity of spirit and desire to perform good deeds is expressed in the contemporary character of the Korean Christian church.³¹

**C. EMERGENCE OF SHAMANISTIC COLOURS IN THE
KOREAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH: DOES THE KOREAN
CHURCH DISPLAY SHAMANISTIC COLOURS?**

Behind the splendid growth of the Korean church lurk many elements of Shamanism. The first person to use the term 'Shamanism' in Korea was the missionary, Horace Grant Underwood from America.³² The reason why he was able to spread the Gospel effectively was that he studied Shamanism and was therefore able to understand the distinctions between Shamanism and Christianity. Because Shamanism has no dogma to conflict with Christianity, the style of faith adopted by the Korean church retains remnants of Shamanism.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Park Jong Ku, Korean Church and Shamanism (Pastoral New Books, Vol. 19, Seoul, 1989) p.141

1. Elements in Faith

Shamanism pervades the Korean style of faith in that it is fundamentally extemporaneous, self-centred and egoistic. We know that the Christian God does not necessarily respond immediately to prayer (Habakkuk 1:2).

Shamanists believe that when the shaman summons the spirits, their prayers are instantly answered and miracles are promptly performed. Since for Christians their God is almighty, Korean Christians steeped in the traditions of Shamanism have great expectations that their prayers will be immediately answered and their problems miraculously solved.

The Bible instructs the believer to search his heart and mind before praying to God (2 Chronicles 7:14), but the Korean Christian prays without premeditation or reserve, egoistically seeking personal benefit without concern for the needs of others. For example, a family travelling to the seaside on holiday will pray for fine weather alongside a village farmer who is earnestly petitioning for rain to irrigate his rice fields. Neither is concerned with the other's problems, or with the general welfare of the community.³³

³³ Lee Hun Ku, *op cit.*, p.108

2. The Element of Prophecy in the Korean Christian Church

In Shamanism, when the shaman performs the gut, the spirits immediately descend to judge good and evil and to prophesy concerning the future. However, the prophecy of Christianity differs from the prophecy of fortune-tellers in that it does not reveal the personal destiny of individuals. Some Christians believed to have the gift of prophecy provide forecasts to 'customers' regarding affairs of the heart, financial matters, etc. Because of this element of superstition, although no one knows when the Second Coming of Christ will occur (Matthew 24:36), many self-styled heroes of the last days have emerged during the short history of the Korean church. The mystique surrounding Jeong Do Ryong³⁴ is representative of the mythologies connected with Christ's second advent. Moon Seon Myong, the founder of Tong Il Kyo (Moonism), is a self-styled god.³⁵

3. Elements of Ethics

Korean Christians are firm believers inside the church, but their daily lives seldom demonstrate a commitment to Christian ethics. Conflict amongst Christians is common, often involving swindling, fraud, etc. For example, the president of a Christian women's association borrowed money from its

³⁴ Korean people believe that Jeong Do Ryong (which means a young man Jeong) will come to earth on the final day as Messiah.

³⁵ Tak Myong Hwan, Tong Il Kyo is not Christianity, op cit., p.13

members and disappeared to another city, later joining a new church and parading as a devout Christian. The women whom she had defrauded were thoroughly disillusioned and subsequently rejected Christianity.³⁶

In Shamanism, the concept of sin is not foregrounded. The purpose of shamanist worship is to avert misfortune and attain a comfortable life; therefore personal morality is not determined or restricted by the religion. Hence, unethical conduct is not incompatible with Christian belief for those whose values are informed by a shamanistic world view.³⁷

The replies of Korean Christians to a questionnaire³⁸ reveal a dissatisfaction with the standards upheld within the church community. Two hundred and seventy-eight out of 613 respondents (ie 45%) complained that there were no sound role models amongst "mature" Christians from whom to learn proper Christian conduct. One hundred and forty-two respondents (23%) stated that Christians participated unscrupulously in unethical projects or activities.

Because of its relatively tolerant stance towards unethical conduct and the double standards practised by many nominal Christians, the church has

³⁶ Kim Tae Bok, *Reform Starts from Sharing* (The Pastoral Monthly, Vol.203, Seoul, 1993) pp.42-43

³⁷ Lee Hun Ku, *op cit.*, pp.99-100

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161

grown prodigiously, since it is perceived as permissive and accommodating.³⁹

4. Aesthetic Elements

Shamanism is characterised by a highly developed aesthetic sensibility.

Generally, religions are concerned with purity, piety, holiness, compassion and truth. This emphasis on the pursuit of the sublime means that such religions are practised in an atmosphere of reverence and tranquillity, rather than amidst bustle, splendour and brilliance.⁴⁰

Shamanism, however, is typified by gaudiness, boisterousness and excitement. The face of the shaman is elaborately and beautifully decorated. (c.f. Chapter 2, The Hwa Rang Do of the Shilla Dynasty.) Her clothes are multi-coloured, usually brightly striped, and a different outfit is donned for each stage of the ritual. In Taoism, priests wear white or blue; Buddhist priests wear robes of grey or saffron; Confucians wear white; while Christian ministers and priests generally wear black, white or grey.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., p.149

⁴⁰ Lee, Elizabeth K., *The Koreans* (Korean Overseas Information Service, Seoul, 1989) p.69; Kim Tae Gon, op cit., pp.46-47; Choi Gil Seong, op cit., p.15

⁴¹ The Committee for the Research of Clerical Garb and Stole (The Kidok Kong Bo in Korea Newspaper, No.1956, Seoul, 1993) p.5

In contrast, the shaman is vividly and elaborately attired. In one hand she carries a stick bearing seven rings, on the other a fan. At some stages of the ritual she plays musical instruments, sings and dances. Shamanism is a religion of performance in which the priest is the bright, animated focal point.⁴²

Representations of the shamanist God in shrines are also vividly coloured, with the ornamental character of representations of Hindu deities.⁴³

Colour is also carefully and symbolically utilised in other aspects of shamanistic worship. Incantations are printed on coloured cloth and paper, the shamanist altar is decorated with colourful cloth bearing inscriptions, and foods are harmoniously arranged according to colour on the shaman's gut table, eg red foods are placed to the right, etc., according to their symbolic significance.⁴⁴

A strong aesthetic element is thus apparent in all areas of shamanist practice: music, dancing, fine art, make-up, apparel, cuisine, etc.⁴⁵

⁴² Kim Tae Gon, op cit., pp.72-73

⁴³ Ibid., p.135

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.75-76

⁴⁵ Choi Gil Seong, op cit., pp.69-80

Originally, the Protestant movement (eg Calvin) was strongly opposed to the ornamentation and decoration of church buildings.⁴⁶ It rejected the iconography of the papists and established an ideal of simplicity and austerity in church design. Nowadays, the Korean Protestant church shows considerable enthusiasm for the beautification of houses of worship and the incorporation of wider aesthetic experience into worship. Floral art, stained glass windows and choir gowns are a focus of renewed interest. Floral art has become particularly important, and this is strongly reminiscent of the decoration of shamanist shrines.

One church in Seoul spends R1800 per week on flowers for church decoration: the ornamentation of the pulpit and altar is considered more important than the practice of faith. The motivation for this kind of expenditure is surely rooted in shamanistic thought.⁴⁷

5. Elements of Music

The shaman herself plays music and sings during the gut. We are therefore justified in regarding Shamanism as a musical religion. Christianity also has musical elements, eg the Psalms of the Old Testament. However, the modern Korean church has seen the emergence of percussion instruments as

⁴⁶ Kim So Young, *Renovation of Worship in Korean Church* (The Pastoral Monthly, Vol.204, Seoul, 1993) p.39

⁴⁷ Lee Dong Huy, *Structural Renovation of Church for Mission* (The Pastoral Monthly, Vol.203, Seoul, 1993) p.96

an accompaniment to praise. Here, too, the influence of Shamanism is apparent, since the instruments most favoured by shamans were drums, etc. Christian meetings conducted to percussion music strongly resemble the shamanist gut, in using rhythm to induce ecstasy.

The Korean Full Gospel Church is particularly prone to using music and rhythm to heighten emotional and religious experience.

6. Economic Elements (Mammonism)

Shamanists believe that their prayers are more effective if they provide a generous gut table. Also, the amount of money paid to the shaman is believed to affect the results of prayer: the shaman commands a fee supposedly required by the spirits, and the believer expects blessing in proportion to the amount of his offering. Thus, shamanists measure faith and its results in terms of economic principles.⁴⁸

Korean Christians enjoy attending enormous meetings, especially revival meetings. When fund-raising drives are held, special meetings are held over a period, culminating in a financial appeal. Contributions are publicly solicited, in auction fashion. Church members regard donations as an investment which will earn them spiritual and material profit or interest.

⁴⁸ Lee Hun Ku, op cit., p.35

Actually, God becomes an investment project for Christians with this mentality.⁴⁹

7. Social Elements

The shaman was the almighty arbitrator concerning personal problems, domestic conflicts, neighbourly disputes and social customs in her area.⁵⁰

Korean Christians expect their pastors to fulfil the same function in modern society. Church ministers have to involve themselves in the business problems and legal difficulties of their congregations, in their illnesses, human relations, children's education, marital conflicts, moving of homes, etc. The minister is expected to pray over all these matters, and is valued according to the degree of his involvement in the mundane, trivial concerns of his flock as well as in their major crises.

Korean ministers are both the almighty guardians and almighty servants of their congregations.

⁴⁹ Han Wan Sang, *What Problems are in the Korean Church?* (Dae Han Christian Press, Seoul, 1982) p.200

⁵⁰ Choi Jung Hyon, *op cit.*, p.34

8. Non-political Elements

Traditional shamanist faith does not usually entail political awareness or involvement. Shamanism has no formal organisation or moralistic social dogma.⁵¹ As a religion focused on the individual subject in relation to God, it disregards political life and activity.

Although the Korean church generally attempts to remain detached from politics, in its early days the church was often a refuge and secret meeting-place for Korean nationalists who opposed Japan and sought the support of foreign powers.⁵²

One section of the Korean Christian church which has liberal theology sympathies opposed the despotism of the military regime in the 1970s - 1980s, but this was a small minority.⁵³

The prophets of the Old Testament cried out for social justice, but this social conscience has failed to manifest itself in the Korean Christian church which remains largely non-political. Although the early missionaries taught a non-political Gospel, the dissociation of the church from politics is

⁵¹ Yoo dong Sik, op cit., p.19

⁵² Son Byong Ho, op cit., p.403

⁵³ Lee Yo Han, op cit., p.48

more probably a result of the influence of shamanism with its complete disregard for political issues.

D. PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE AND PRACTISE OF SHAMANISM IN KOREAN CHURCH LIFE

The influence which Shamanism has had on the Korean Christian church is not in the area of dogma. It is discussed in relation to the style and practice of faith and the spreading of the Gospel.

1. In Worship

In the Korean church, music, particularly the church choir, plays an important role in worship, just as music is a primary element of shamanist ritual. The names of the choir director and accompanist are printed with that of the minister on the first page of the Order of Service. The gut, with song and dance, has been adapted to create exciting church services. Cheon Boo Gyo, a heretical offshoot of Christianity, resembles Shamanism in this respect.

Some Korean churches which judged the praise method of Cheon Boo Gyo to be heretical have in fact recently adopted a similar style of worship one after another. The notion that if people sing praise in incantatory fashion the Holy Spirit will be present amongst them is shamanistic in origin.

When Christians pray long formulaic, repetitive prayers, as if memorising the script of the shaman, the meaning of their prayers is lost. People engage in prolonged prayers and value direct prayer, the meaning of which they may not know.

Early morning prayer in the Korean Christian church originated in shamanist practice, in which women prayed to spirits early in the morning with clean water.⁵⁴ If a minister dislikes leading early morning prayer meetings he is driven away from the church. As the shamans played the gut with loud voices, so Korean Christians believe that shouted prayers are more effective than spoken ones. This has led residents in the neighbourhood of churches to complain, with the result that Korean Christians resort to mountain retreats for charismatic prayer sessions.

Protestant churches value the sermon, but as a part of the worship service. However, many Korean Christians believe that the sermon alone is important: if they are busy, they will time their churchgoing in order to audit the sermon.⁵⁵ This habit also emanates from Shamanism, in which believers would ignore the playing of the shaman, and attend only to her oration. The role of the believer in worship is therefore unclear.⁵⁶ The

⁵⁴ O Byong Se, *Dictionary of Theology* (The Korea Society for Reformed Faith and Action, Kimpo, Korea, 1984) p.258

⁵⁵ Kim So Yeong, *Worship Renovation of Korean Church* (The Pastoral Monthly, Vol.204, Seoul, 1993) p.35

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.36

word for worship participation is actually Ye Bae Bon Da (spectator worship). This suggests the shamanistic style of worship, where believers are the audience to the shaman's display, rather than being actively involved in the process. In the shaman's gut, the shaman plays all roles, and the believer simply listens to the oracle. The Shamanistic Christian therefore wishes to hear the pastor's sermon, particularly if it deals with blessing. Pastor Cho Yong Ki is the most successful preacher of 'blessing sermons' in Korea.⁵⁷ Korean Christians do not enjoy sermons which encourage repentance and confession.

As spectators, Korean Christians tend to criticise the content and mood of a service. More than half the members of a church do not punctually observe the commencement time of the service. Church ministers are more concerned with the members' attendance than with the sacrificial attitude of members.

The offering is not given in a spirit of gratitude to God, but in order to avert punishment and disaster, as in Shamanism. Tithes are donated as an obligation on the part of the believer and as a guarantee of blessing. Indeed, ministers stress the importance of tithing as a guarantee, referring to Malachi 3:10.⁵⁸ Because of the prominence given to this aspect of

⁵⁷ Kim Nyong Hyok, *Biblical Reformed Thought and Korean Christian Faith* (Collection of Treatises of Korean Christianity, Vol.5, Pung Man, Seoul, 1988) p.156

⁵⁸ Choi Jung Hyon, *op cit.*, *Korean Church and Shamanism*, p.57

Christian duty in Korea, the Korean church is renowned for the generosity of its adherents. Their willingness to support the church financially has had very positive consequences in that the funds thus obtained have aided the expansion of the church and established its self-sufficiency.

2. Establishment of Faith

Korean Christians have inherited Jeok Gong thought (the construction of goodness) from Buddhism. This form of thought is an obstacle to the acceptance of the Gospel. People see belief in Jesus as an option once they have attained goodness. Indeed, even Sunday school teachers tend to teach in accordance with this philosophy.⁵⁹

The Gospel teaches that salvation is freely given (Romans 3:24). In the 1980s, some churches started formal prayer meetings for success in matric exams.⁶⁰ Many Korean Christians think that special prayers and donations can be exchanged for university admission. Some ministers who do not conduct such meetings receive complaints from their members about the lack of this service.

Korean Christians stress the value of physical healing, even though the healing offered by Jesus was complete healing of body, mind and soul.

⁵⁹ Park Jong Ku, op cit., Korean Church and Shamanism, p.143

⁶⁰ Kim So Yeong, op cit., Worship Renovation of Korean Church, p.38

Pastor Baek Byong Ryong, formerly of Dae Gu Young Rak Presbyterian Church, was admired for healing his members of disease with a coin, without prayer, and he prophesied to 80% of the young people in his church that they would become pastors. Many Korean Christians seek liberation directly through prophetic prayer without reference to the Bible, as if receiving the oracle of a shaman.

The Da Mi Mission organisation, whose belief that the Second Coming of Christ would occur on October 28, 1992, was publicised world-wide, is typical of those elements within the church which promise immediate liberation through prophecy, and the popularity of the group testifies to the susceptibility of Korean Christians in this regard.⁶¹

The susceptibility to prophecy is a tendency long nurtured in Koreans and reinforced by their habit of consulting fortune-tellers, and the practice of engaging in long prayer rituals arises from the ancient custom of praying to the shamanist mountain god (Seong Hwang Je).

⁶¹ Kim Yeong Jae, *Why does the Korean Church Stress the Eschatology?* (The Pastoral Monthly, Vol.198, Seoul, 1993) p.136; Tak Myong Hwan, *Does the End of the World come in 1992?* (Kuk Jong Press, Seoul, 1990) pp.74-95

3. In Lifestyle

Even though a Christian woman⁶² elder had a fatalistic philosophy, when her young son died in a motor accident, she wrote in a letter to her minister:

"That my young son died is a sign that God wants me to gain a deeper faith. The accident was his fate, so I pledge that I am trying to grow in faith."

It is apparent from this letter that the woman believed that if her faith had been deeper, or her Christianity stronger, her son would not have met with his accident. Motor accidents can occur at any time or place. The explicit connection between misfortune and the testing of faith is one which originates in shamanistic attitudes towards blessing, punishment and God.

There are other cases which prove this theory. When Korean Christians hold a funeral service, the family deliberates carefully over the position of the grave.⁶³ They also consider the direction in which the body will be laid.

When Koreans move house, they commonly hold a prayer meeting to ask a blessing on the dwelling. This is akin to the Seong Jeu Pu Ri Gut of

⁶² Her name is Lee Bok Young and she lives in the city of Daegu of Korea.

⁶³ Shin Tae Ung, op cit., *The Spirits' Perception of Korean Traditional Faith*, p.112

shamanism. When a newly-built house is erected, a prayer ceremony is held at the commencement of construction. This echoes the Gosa of Shamanism.

When Koreans offer a minister hospitality, it is often because they seek blessing, rather than as an expression of gratitude or friendship.

4. In Customs

Most Korean Christians can be regarded as Confucians or Shamanists who attend a Christian church. When marrying, Protestant Christians adopt the western style up to a point, having a ceremony led by the pastor. Thereafter, they don traditional dress and follow the traditional procedure.

Korean people habitually pray for the dead. The salutation is "myong bok eul bil da," which means "pray for the repose of the soul." In the funeral ceremony, Korean Christians burn incense, light candles, and leave an open Bible on a table near the body. This is a mixed ritual. The Bible does not give instructions about the treatment of the dead. The placing of the Bible and hymn book beside the corpse is based on the belief that the spirit will read these after entering the realm of evil.

Ancestor worship was traditionally practised in Korea. This is not a sign of respect for parents, but is done in order for children to obtain blessing. This ancestor worship has evolved into Chu Do Sik, in which the birthday or

death day of the deceased is commemorated by displaying pictures of him/her and inviting the minister to offer prayers and share refreshments.

In Korea, people go to Seong Myo (visiting the cemetery) on New Year's Day (15 August according to the lunar calendar). This Shamanist practice is continued by Christians.

Some scholars argue that ancestor worship has a religious character and is the worship of dead men.⁶⁴ The Korean church had decided that ancestor worship violates Biblical injunction.⁶⁵ The Asian theological conference⁶⁶ which was held in Taiwan prohibited ancestor worship. However, recently, the Korean Catholic church, Korean Full Gospel Church and some Presbyterian churches have begun to allow ancestor worship. In the Catholic church, the Pope decreed that ancestor worship be permitted.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ok Han Heum, Practical Understanding of Ancestors (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.39, Seoul, 1984) p.55

⁶⁵ Kim Myong Hyok, Historical Understanding of Ancestor Worship (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.39, Seoul, 1984), p.41

⁶⁶ Son Bong Ho, Ancestor Worship and Modern Culture (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.39, Seoul, 1984) p.50

⁶⁷ Kim Myong Hyok, op cit., Historical Understanding of Ancestor Worship, p.41

5. In Ideas

After becoming Christians, Koreans' ideas concerning civil life remain unchanged. In Shamanism, the projects or plans of the spirits or God can be influenced by human actions, such as the Shamanist gut. This belief leads Koreans to perceive God as their servant, somebody who can be persuaded to do their bidding. Therefore, their prayers directly reflect their personal desires. This is fundamentally at odds with Christian dogma, since, instead of seeking the accomplishment of God's will on earth, these supplicants desire the working of their own will in heaven.

These attitudes are also connected with the positivist beliefs of Pastor Robert Schuller of the Crystal Church⁶⁸ (U.S.A.) who teaches that work and commitment inevitably yield commensurate tangible returns. This encourages people to seek prophecies and assurances for the future, rather than applying themselves to God's work disinterestedly.

Korean Christians in foreign countries are particularly conscientious in their church attendance. Korean emigrant churches are an interesting phenomenon, in that they attract almost all members of the expatriate communities, whether Christian or non-Christian. This is because the church

⁶⁸ Kim Eun Gon, *Faith Education and Life for Success* (Seong Kwang Publishing, Seoul, 1990) p.321

offers fellowship, support and is a mine of community information, but those who attend do not necessarily gain in faith or spiritual maturity. The Sabbath is widely observed by Korean Christians, who enjoy the opportunity of fun and recreation.

Korean people have a strong belief in the prophetic power of dreams, being firmly convinced that events which occur in dreams will be realised.⁶⁹ In Shamanism, people believe that spirits provide information and guidance concerning the future in dreams, and there are many recorded examples of prophetic dreams. Christians in Korea are commonly known as Yesu Jaengi (Jesus Specialists). This term indicates that people recognise Christians as members of a specialised religious group. The word Jaengi (Specialist) means that one is a specialist in one's field, but not in any other field. In this sense, the Christian is a Jesus Specialist in church, but reverts to being a non-specialist, i.e. an ordinary person, in the general sphere of everyday life after his devotions.

6. Ministry Style

The ministry style of Korean Christian ministers is very similar to that of Shamanism. Shamanism is extremely charismatic, and the churches in which ministers exercise charismatic power over their congregations are growing. This phenomenon is evident throughout the Christian church and

⁶⁹ Shin Tae Ung, *The Perception of Spirits in Korean Traditional Faith* (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.60, Seoul, 1986) p.111

transcends denominations. Ministers who manifest extraordinary spiritual gifts are especially recognised and valued by members.

The pastor who has the gifts of the Holy Spirit gains absolute authority and readily receives the respect and cooperation of the congregation, just as the shaman who was believed to be spirit-possessed was more highly esteemed than the hereditary shaman who had merely acquired the appropriate skills.

Ministers are extremely anxious to retain the loyalty and devotion of their church members, and establish elaborate structures to prevent defection. Cellular regional networks are organised and managed by the minister in a manner which is reminiscent of the shamanist Dan Gol Pan. Like the Dan Gol shaman, who performs her gut at the homes of adherents, the minister undertakes an intensive programme of home visiting to promote the strength and cohesion of his congregation and ensure the continuing support of members. This is currently the main work of Korean church ministers, as it was of the shaman.

So, each church which does not have Dan Gol Pan is competing for church members. In this scramble for disciples, some churches have sought to establish themselves in affluent areas, just as shamans sought to perform their gut in wealthy villages. Examples of such churches are the Dok Rib Moon Church and the Chung Hyon Church.

Therefore, when evangelising, Korean ministers stress attendance and participation within their own particular sects and denominations, and tend to disregard the universal significance of the Gospel. Evangelism is more in the nature of a membership drive to advance local interests than a true Christian mission.

Since the 1970s, part of the churches' evangelical thrust has been a Sunday mass mobilisation programme which is an attempt to swell attendance at Sunday services. The particular emphasis of this outreach is strongly suggestive of the Shamanist practice of inviting and attracting as many customers as possible to enhance the status of the shaman and ensure the efficacy of the gut.

Several times a year, churches organise 'marathon' worship sessions, when the service is repeated seven - eleven times during the course of a Sunday. These are gala affairs in which celebrities are invited to participate as star attractions, and where prominent people give their testimonies. The programme for these services is varied, including popular music groups, etc. The aim of these special Sunday services is to draw new members, to revive the interest of lapsed members, and to lure members from rival congregations. All active members are assigned tasks and goals for the occasion, eg to bring ten prospective converts to the services. However, despite these zealous attempts to increase numbers, membership generally stabilises at previous levels after the 'festive' programme.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Lee Yo Han, op cit., *The Church Program with No Purpose*, p.49

One of the perpetual tasks of ministers is home-visiting for the purpose of praying and preaching for blessing. As the shaman worships Eo P Wang Sin (the Property God), so ministers conduct services at the opening of shops, praying for the success and prosperity of businesses. This is a vital branch of ministry for Korean pastors. Christian ministers go so far as to pray for the success of gambling shops and liquor stores at their opening ceremonies! Korean ministers are adept at inventing and improvising new forms of service for every imaginable occasion or event.

The shaman tells fortunes according to the wealth of his customer and according to the expectations which he shrewdly intuits. Likewise, Christian ministers shrewdly assess the requirements of their church members and preach to these needs in order to gain popularity.

7. Current Practice of Faith in the Full Gospel Church

The style of service in the Korean Full Gospel Church is very similar to the Shamanist gut.⁷¹ Their services include song and dance to the accompaniment of drums and several other musical instruments which help to induce religious ecstasy.

⁷¹ Kim Deok Hwan, *Is Pastor Yong Ki Choa Heresy?* (Han Kuk Kwang Bo Publishing, Seoul, 1981) p.111; Kim Myong Hyok, *op cit.*, *Biblical Reformed Thought and Korean Christian Faith*, pp.156-157

Like the shaman who functions as an oracle, the Korean Full Gospel minister uses services to prophesy, to expel evil spirits, to identify sickness amongst members and heal, and to forecast individual fortunes. Full Gospel congregations enjoy loud, participatory prayer in tongues, worshipping volubly en masse.

Just as the shaman who delivered the word of the oracle was regarded as authentic, the minister who is able to pray in tongues is regarded in the Full Gospel Church as genuinely manifesting the Holy Spirit. The gift of speaking in tongues is considered proof of the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Should a minister lack this facility, it is doubted whether he is capable of offering a genuine message of salvation.

Full Gospel ministers have a spiritual hierarchy in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are imparted, often secretly, from senior to junior leaders. This accords with the shamanist pattern in which mature shamans initiate novices into the skills and mysteries of their art, and the religion is perpetuated through personal transmission.

Because of the personal nature of the spiritual hierarchies within the Full Gospel Church, it is inevitable that competition and rivalry occur. This has led to the splintering of the main body into several sub-denominations. Because of the nature of their religious practices, the Full Gospel churches

claim to be spirit-filled, in contrast with other denominations⁷² which they regard as lacking the presence of the Holy Spirit. Their attitude in faith is unduly conceited. Any Christian can pray for healing with the laying-on of hands, and where faith is paramount, divergences in spiritual practice do not cause irreparable damage.

Korean people enjoy those things which edify and enlighten, but are also possessed of the 'han,' which is considered an apt signifier for their identity. Those emotions fused with traditional religion to form a character peculiar to Koreans, a character which has subsequently found expression in the Korean Protestant church. The Korean church involves many Shamanistic elements: a strong emphasis on the individual, dependence on a higher power, formalism, prophecy and the absence of an ethical foundation. Sacrificial prayer and service, and artistic and musical sensibility have given impetus to constructive development within the church.

⁷² Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.63

CHAPTER 6

THE ROLE OF SHAMANISM IN KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH

When Protestantism was imported into Korea, there was no religious opposition. Shamanism was ready to accommodate or assimilate Christianity.¹ Shamanism, which mediates between the natural and supernatural worlds, provided a stable religious foundation. In the fertile soil of Korean religious sensibility, the seeds of Christianity germinated, blossomed and bore fruit.

Yoo Dong Sik² argued that the mindset of the Korean people facilitated the rapid growth of Christianity. George Jones³ said that the Korean people have a strongly religious character, and that their particular mentality was certainly a factor in the expansion of the church.

¹ Roy E. Shearer, *The History of Korean Church Growth* (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) p.29

² Yon Dong Sik, *Korean Religions and Christianity* (Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1979) pp.22-23

³ George Jones, *Korea: The Land, People and Customs* (Cincinnati: Gannings and Graham, 1907) p.49

It was shown in previous chapters that the traditional Korean Shamanist religion has influenced the Korean Christian church enormously and is still deeply involved in contemporary church life.

How exactly did Shamanism contribute to Korean church growth?

A. REASONS FOR PENETRATION OF KOREAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH BY SHAMANISM

The capacity of Shamanism could accommodate Christianity because Shamanism always absorbed foreign religions or comfortably co-existed with them, and because each common factor between the religions made Christianity more acceptable (c.f. Chapter 4). This alone played a role in church growth.

Korean people easily understood Christianity because of their existing concept of a supernatural God (Romans 1: 19-20). Palmer agrees with this interpretation.⁴ John Ross argued that because the name Ha Na Nim (God) generally used in Korea was adopted by Christian missionaries, there was no conceptual confusion for prospective Korean converts and therefore the problems of resistance to 'Yahweh' encountered in China were avoided.⁵ The Korean Catholic church did not adopt the established Korean term 'Ha

⁴ S.J. Palmer. *Korea and Christianity: The Problems of Identification with Tradition* (Holly Corporation, Seoul, 1967) p.8

⁵ John Ross, *History of Korea* (Elliot Stock: London, 1891) p.355

Na Nim,' but chose instead to use the name 'Cheon Ju' (Lord of Heaven), which did not find ready acceptance, and as a result their church growth was impeded.⁶

Since the ancient period in Korea, conflict amongst religions has been almost unknown. No single religion has been allowed to become hegemonic, or to eradicate other religions on political or dogmatic grounds. Hence foreign, imported religions have generally been received with tolerance and open-mindedness.⁷ Unlike Europe, Korea has never experienced 'witch-hunting' or any significant degree of religious persecution.

God has created within certain individuals an awareness of His existence which enables them to give evidence of His being through their witness, and prepares people for the full acceptance of the Christian gospel of salvation. We see this in the Korean people.⁸

As was indicated in Chapter 2 B, Christianity does not repudiate Shamanist belief, but utilises it in the worship of people who traditionally pray for

⁶ Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts* (Word of Life Press, Seoul, 1992) p.88

⁷ Cho Seong Nho, Kim Ji Cheol, *Gospel and Culture* (Hyeon Dae Theology Institute, Seoul, 1992) p.198

⁸ Don Richardson, *op cit.*, pp. 137-138. See the following book for further study: Francis Mason's *The Korean Apostle* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1861) p.10

wealth and peace through the shaman. Shamanistic Christianity was felt to be more spiritual and aboriginal than imported European forms.⁹ Therefore, Shamanism, which has no dogma per se, accorded effortlessly with Christianity, and Christianity in Korea became increasingly infused with Shamanist elements. As the connections between Shamanism and Christianity were forged, the Shamanist influence became a major factor in church growth.

B. THE ROLE OF SHAMANISM IN THE HISTORY OF THE KOREAN CHURCH

In the history of the development of Korean Christianity, the influence exercised by elements of Shamanism on the growth of Christianity is very diverse in different periods.

In each phase of church growth, different elements of shamanism were incorporated into the character of the church according to the particular conditions and pressures of the time. The church itself and the Korean folk acquiesced in the permeation of Christianity by Shamanism.

⁹ Choi Jung Hyon, *Korean Church and Shamanism* (Seong Kwang Press, Seoul, 1993) p.167

1. Early Period

The religious history of Korea shows that, during the early period of Christianity in Korea, the older religions of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism were powerless in those uneasy times of social and political upheaval. Amidst this general insecurity and religious desert, people experience a desperate spiritual thirst which inclined them to pursue a new religion.¹⁰ Since they were unable to express openly their disillusionment, dissatisfaction and despair or to improve their material conditions, people sought spiritual refuge and consolation. The established habit of seeking resolution of problems and healing of spiritual disease in the Shamanist gut extended and translated itself into the forms of Christian worship, ie song, prayer, etc.¹¹

Then, too, Christianity adopted the title for God used in Shamanism, which enabled people to retain their God-centred faith while making the transition to a new belief system.¹²

Confucianism includes a belief in ancestor worship, but this is not practised in a structured, formal ritual. Buddhism has a mass called Beob Hue, but

¹⁰ Kim Young Han, *Korean Christianity and Faith* (Collection of Treatises of Korean Christianity Study, Vol.5, Pung Man, Seoul, 1988) p.24

¹¹ Ibid., p.52; Harry A. Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission: Presbyterian Church U.S.A. 1884-1934*, p.282

¹² Kim Young Han, *op cit.*, *Korean Christianity and Faith*, p.50

this mass is purely for teaching and preaching, and cannot be classified as a religious ritual. Therefore, these religions were found to be spiritually unrewarding, and the Korean people in search of a substitute for the Shamanist gut found satisfaction in the worship services of the Christian churches, which entailed familiar elements of ritual, performance and excitement.¹³

2. Major Revival of 1910

After the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, the general population was extremely despondent, and knew that the rehabilitation of the country was dependent on the empowerment of people through mass education, training and the cultivation of men of talent. So, many privileged young people attended mission schools which provided an elite, modern, western-style education.¹⁴ This preoccupation with education spilt over also into the study of religion and led to conscientious attendance of church Bible class meetings.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., p.51

¹⁴ Kim Chi Su, "Literature of the Colonial Period" in *The National Language for Students* (Han Kuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, 1979) pp.85-86

¹⁵ Roy E. Shearer, trans. Seung Ick Lee, *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea* (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) pp.247-248

Originally, Korean people used to recite the Scriptures of Confucianism and the incantations of Shamanism. After the establishment of Christianity, people sought to familiarise themselves with the Christian Scriptures through Bible study, and found that the recitation of Bible verses fulfilled certain of their spiritual needs. In Shamanism, the shaman recites perfectly his incantations to dispel evil magically. Korean people attributed similar spiritual power and benefits to the recitation of Christian Scriptures. Even nowadays, the Bible recitation competition is an important social event in any church calendar.¹⁶

3. Period of Japanese Colonisation

After the failure of independence movements in 1919, Korean people lost all hope of independence. Many people emigrated in despair, to Manchuria, China and the U.S.A.¹⁷ As a reaction to the failure of independence, those Koreans whose hopes of gaining happiness in the material world had been disappointed aspired instead to a supernatural, spiritual transcendence. This manifested itself in a spiritual revival movement and a focus on the Holy Spirit in Christian life.

¹⁶ Lee Yo Han, *The Church Program with no Purpose* (Mission World, Vol.18, Seoul, 1993) p.51

¹⁷ Kim Chan Jeong, *The Korean People of the Silk Road* (Shin Dong A., Vol.383, The Dong A Il Bo SA, 1993) pp.531-533; Roy E. Shearer, *op cit.*, p.67

Korean Shamanism was naturally, originally, a spiritual religion involving the playing of Gang Sin (invocation of spirits) and Gong Su (oracle). Because of these elements, Shamanism provided a firm spiritual and mystical basis for Christianity. The healing, oracle, exorcism and ecstasy of Shamanism were found to be similar to practices of Christian faith as well: healing, prophecy, exorcism, speaking in tongues and Ib Sin (divinity). The playing of Shamanist rituals is also related to the mysticism of Christianity.

The pastor Lee Yong Do¹⁸ is a renowned leader of the popular mystical movement in the Korean Christian church. The mystical movement is especially powerful in the Full Gospel Church, the Jerusalem Church, and the Elijah Gospel Mission Church. These churches equate speaking in tongues with salvation, and provide training in the gift of speaking in tongues, believing that redemption is unattainable without this facility.

The teaching of tongues is clearly a derivation from Shamanism in which student Shamans are tutored in the art of incantation until they 'graduate' and are able to perform the gut independently.

In this way Shamanism was a model for the development and exercise of spiritual gifts in the Korean Christian church.

¹⁸ Kim Yang Seon, op cit., *The Study of Korean church History*, p.163

4. Pre- and Post-War Period (After Independence): 1945-1959

Independence was granted to the Korean people on August 15, 1945, but for political reasons Korea was divided. This was a period of strong ideological contestation between East and West, and the Koreans were caught up in an extremely complex political dynamic which caused major internal conflict. Finally, this conflict erupted into the Korean war in which approximately two million people died. In this situation, common people were terrorised by the ruling national democratic forces by day, and by Communist guerrillas at night.¹⁹ In reaction, people abandoned themselves to fatalism, committing all things to God in their paralysing powerlessness.

Shamanism originally interpreted everything as occurring by divine providence, and Koreans found in Christianity a similar providential vision. During those uncertain times, many mountain prayer houses, similar to Shamanist mountain god shrines, were established.²⁰ Na Un Mong's "Yong Moon San mountain prayer house movement" was one of the strongest mystical groups, having a great deal of influence throughout the Christian community of Korea. People flocked to the more mystical Christian factions.

¹⁹ Cho Dong Jin, *The Pastor who went to the Mountain Ji Ri* (The Pastoral Monthly, Vol.206, Seoul, 1993) pp.271-272

²⁰ Lee Hun Ku, *Korean Traditional Religion and Korean Church* (Yeon Hab, Seoul, 1992) p.167

5. In the Industrial Development Period: 1960s-1970s

After the April 19 civil liberation in 1960, Korean society became more complex and extraordinary. On May 16, 1961, a military coup d'état took place, after which the new government implemented a five-year economic development plan. Because of this plan, Korean industry burgeoned and the country experienced rapid economic advancement. The citizens of Korea benefitted materially, becoming increasingly wealthy.

During this time, church ministers began to preach a gospel of prosperity, arguing that God's blessings were both spiritual and material and teaching that the acquisition of wealth was the fruit of faith. The faith element of Shamanism provided a basis for this position, and Shamanists were drawn to the church in the hope of experiencing greater blessings, ie gaining more riches. Just as people had believed that paying large fees to shamans would earn them good fortune, so they now placed their faith in the church and made massive contributions as an investment in future prosperity. Some believers sold their homes and property, donating the proceeds to church funds as a form of insurance policy. One consequence of the enormous inflow of capital was a church building boom. Actually, many church members were extremely affluent, but there is no way of establishing whether this prosperity resulted from God's blessing or from social and economic reform.

Anyhow, people's desire for blessing drove them increasingly to the church which led to remarkable growth, especially amongst those groups which stressed the material benefits accruing from faith.

6. 1980 to the Present

During this period the church has interested itself in ensuring the permanency of places of worship. We have already considered the extravagance of the accoutrements of Shamanism. Wealthy Korean churches expend vast sums of money on accessories, extensions and auxiliary services. Expensive audio systems, illumination, pipe organs and ornamentation are acquired. Annexes to the church complexes, such as parking areas, cemeteries and education facilities are established, as well as centres for retreats, etc. The physical size and beauty of the church facilities is a generally accepted measure of its success.

Shamanism involves the lavish enjoyment of food, song, dance and culture in the gut ritual. In the modern Korean church, considerable sums are invested in bands, choirs, etc., which are an integral part of the praise-worship movement. The emergence of an 'entertainment industry' within the church arises from the elements of spectacle and entertainment in Shamanism.

C. IN GROWTH OF FAITH

Shamanism played a major role in the growth of Christian faith because of their similarities.

1. Acceptance of Faith

Shamanism originally had the capacity to receive Christianity favourably, because of their shared objectives of dispelling evil and invoking blessing. The superstitious mind was receptive to the Christian concept of God and the Mi Reuk Bul idea easily accommodated the Christian notion of the advent and the millennium.²¹ The Christian notion of the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit accorded with Shamanist belief in the protection of ancestral spirits. The mystical connotations of the number seven, signifying God, appears also in Shamanism. The priestly role of the shaman as mediator between the supernatural and natural realms is paralleled by the significance of Jesus Christ as the sacrificial offering reconciling God and humanity. The title of God is the same in both Christian and Shamanist discourse, and the term for the shaman, Sim Bang, is used also to refer to the visiting ministry of church pastors. Another title of the shaman, Man Sin (Agent of All Gods) is related to the function of the pastor. Spiritual

²¹ Kim Young Han, op cit., p.56

faith, and the perception of the hereafter or metaphysical realm, are also very similar in form in Christianity and Shamanism.²²

2. In Faith Revival

Shamanist faith, which is based on a dependence on God for everything, accords with the Christian teaching of total reliance on, and submission to, God. The emotional release, spiritual consolation and lightening of heart experienced by believers through the acts of Christian worship, which are not unlike the cathartic effects of the Shamanist gut, provide a strong incentive for church attendance and commitment to faith.

Shamanistic faith in the efficacy of the fortune-telling fee prompts modern Korean Christians to contribute generously and enthusiastically to church funds.

The influence of lengthy Shamanist incantations is evident in the practices of Korean Christians who habitually engage in prolonged periods of prayer. In Shamanism, ordinary people conducted minor prayer rituals (Bi Nyom) within their own homes, praying to spirits without the offices of the shaman. This form of private worship gave birth to the Korean practice of

²² Shin Tae Ung, *The Perceptions of Spirits in Korean Traditional Faith* (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.60, Seoul, 1986) p.67

laymen planting churches without the services of an authorised pastor or missionary.²³

The fact that a Korean church had already been founded before the arrival of missionaries was previously referred to in Chapter 1 A. The spiritual communion phenomenon of Shamanism became attached to the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit and the believers' experience of being filled with the Spirit.

Clearly, the Korean Christian Church is immersed in Shamanism.

D. IN EXTERNAL GROWTH

1. In Evangelism

Shamanism has no ethical basis or moral code.²⁴ This feature of Shamanism has affected the evangelical activities of the church. Evangelists encourage the belief that church attendance and participation will in themselves lead to redemption, without any radical conversion or moral reform on the part of the acolyte.

The Church also receives people into membership indiscriminately without any scrutiny of their lives or conduct, so that little genuine commitment to

²³ See Chapter I A.

²⁴ Clark Allen C., *Religions of Old Korea* (The Christian Literature Society of Korea, Seoul, 1961) p.217

Christian principles is required. Because of this dissociation between lifestyle and church membership, members are valued and rated in terms of the regularity of their attendance, rather than in terms of how their Christianity is actively practised. Thus, there are many church officials, such as appointed deacons, whose authority and duties have been conferred solely on the basis of their conspicuous diligence on Sundays, without any reference to their conduct in the broader social context.

The General Mobilisation Sunday programmes which are currently fashionable in Korea arise out of a serious concern with the present state of the church, as do the numerous popular mass meetings.

All the above factors contributed to the extraordinary numerical growth of the Korean Christian church.

2. In Collection

Secondly, the influence of Shamanism has affected the nature of offerings collected by the church. Korean Christians donate special thanksgiving offerings. It is common practice for people to write their names and thanksgiving messages on the envelopes. These messages are then read publicly by the pastor to the congregation. Shamanistic Christians generally donate exceptional amounts in order to achieve greater blessing, and

because the publicity given their acts of generosity enhances their status as believers.

The increase in church revenue resulting from this practice has enabled the church to work more effectively and to expand its foreign mission activities.

3. In Organisation

Organisationally, Korean churches established cells within congregations.

This arrangement is patterned on Shamanism, in which the shaman managed the followers under her jurisdiction through the Dan Gol Pan system. The cell system (Kuyok Je Do) replicates the Dan Gol system. Through the cell system, church ministers regulate and monitor their parishioners to prevent members from leaving or defecting to other congregations. Churches grew large through the effective operation of the Kuyok Je Do, e.g. Myong Seong Presbyterian Church, the Yeo Ui Do Full Gospel Central Church²⁵ and the Keum Ran Methodist Church. Generally, ordained assistant pastors are employed in large Korean churches to act as district managers. These assistant pastors are supported by Jeon Do Sa (non-ordained female pastoral workers) who are then responsible for sections of a district. They, in turn, are assisted by Kweon Chal (group inspectors) who supervise small groups of cells. There are thus four tiers to the church hierarchy, and the extensive involvement of the leadership in prayer meetings, Bible study groups, etc.,

²⁵ Yeo Ui Do Full Gospel Church has about 50 000 cells.

has promoted Korean church growth enormously. Assistant pastors are fiercely competitive as district managers, which strengthens the cell system and leads to rapid expansion of individual cells. Just as the charismatic power of the shaman attracted followers and was reinforced by the system of retaining their support, so the modern church adopts similar strategies to maintain and extend its membership, eg Kang Nam Baptist Church, An Yang Full Gospel Church, Mok Min Presbyterian Church. Cell organisation is crucial in Korean church growth.

4. In the Concept of Growth and Success

When shamans conduct the gut ritual, they provide a splendid gut table with an abundance of food and the order of the ritual is both lengthy and elaborate. The externals of Shamanism are spectacular, and the strict observance of form, with the appropriate grandeur in displays and emblems of faith in the gut, are used as measures of its worth and efficacy.²⁶

The Korean church was heavily influenced by these Shamanistic notions. Korean Christians gauge success and growth in terms of the size and beauty of church buildings, the worth of the church assets, the size of the membership, the social class and level of education of the congregation, and the general wealth of the church. Because of this emphasis on the externals of success, Korean churches vie with each other in gaining members and

²⁶ Lee Hun Ku, op cit., *Traditional Religion and Korean Church*, p.129

constructing beautiful buildings, etc. A minister who establishes a large following and houses his congregation in an impressive building acquires commensurate status and esteem. Accordingly, ministers attempt to attract members from the upper echelons of society and retain their support by allocating them prominent positions and important duties within the church.

Church members value high academic qualifications, which prompts ministers to pursue their studies in order to command respect.

In a word, the Korean church has grown through an excessive demand for blessing, and a mentality which equates material abundance with growth and success. Despite the positive aspects of the remarkable drive towards Korean church growth, there are also negative implications to be considered.

E. IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (ESPECIALLY SOCIAL SERVICE)

1. In Art and Culture

In the early mission period, the Korean church contributed greatly to the dissemination of knowledge, cultural development, and the evolution and acceptance of Han Geul (Korean letters) which were used in the translation

of the Bible.²⁷ At that time, Korean society was living through the end of the Lee Dynasty, and experiencing a transition to modernism. This was a culturally chaotic period in the country's history. The king, Se Jong Dae Wang, of the Lee Dynasty, created and distributed new Korean characters, the Han Geul, through the efforts of linguistic scholars in 1443.²⁸

However, the upper-class intelligentsia believed that the more difficult Chinese characters, Han Mun, were superior to the Han Geul, which were regarded as simplistic. The new Korean characters were contemptuously termed Eon Mun, and were disdainfully disregarded by those classes with pretensions to scholarship. Only women and common folk, who did not receive formal schooling, used the Han Geul. However, the complex and intricate Han Mun could not survive as popular characters.

During this period of contestation between the rival systems, Shamanism became the custodian of Eon Mun: Shamanist literature used the new Korean characters in recording songs and incantations.²⁹ This involvement of Shamanist religion in the protection and preservation of the 'Eon Mun' led to the Han Geul translation of the Bible and the development of the Han Geul.

²⁷ Joo Jae Yong, *The Korean People (Min Jung) and the History of Korean Protestant Church in Minjung and Korean Theology* (The Institute of Korean Theology, Seoul, 1991) p.221

²⁸ Kim Jeong Hak, Lee Hyon Huei, *op cit.*, *The History of Korea*, p.161

²⁹ Choi Gil Seong, *Shaman of Korea* (Yeol Hwa Dang, Seoul, 1985) p.158; *Religion and Society Institute of Korea, Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture* (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1991) p.251

Subsequently, the Han Geul Bible played a pivotal role in spreading knowledge and combating illiteracy amongst Koreans.³⁰ Most national language scholars, such as Ju Shi Kyong, Choi Hyeon Bae and Lee Heui Seung, agree with this assertion. Thereafter, the newly emergent intelligentsia began to produce literature in Han Geul.

Korean people were accustomed to the musical forms of Shamanist religion, which were not unlike the music and hymns of Christianity. In order to learn Western music, Koreans attended Christian worship services and mission schools. Therefore, most early twentieth century Western musicians in Korea were Christian.³¹ In particular, the Korean National Anthem, 'Ae Kuk Ga,' is from a poem by Yun Chi Young set to a melody by An Ik Tae, both of whom were Christian. The 'Ae Kuk Ga' was initially sung to the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne' in the Korean hymn book, before being set to the present tune by An Ik Tae. The influence of Christianity is apparent in the first verse of Ae Kuk Ga, in the lines, "God protect our country."

Even in modern times, the majority of musicians are Christian. Most Christian universities have music schools, whereas non-Christian universities do not. For example, Yeon Se, Yi Hwa, Jung Ang, Han Yang, Bae Jae, Seong Shin, Mok Won and Gye Myong all have music departments, while

³⁰ Kim Yang Seon, op cit., The Study of Korean Church History, p.74

³¹ Lee Yoo Seon, A Hundred Years History of Western Music in Korea (University of Joong Ang, Seoul, 1976) pp.33-66, 110-152

Dong Kuk, Geon Kuk, Dan Kuk, Kwang Un, Han Kuk Foreign Language Studies, Hong Ik, Korye and Kuk Min, which are non-Christian, have no music departments even today.

Therefore, many applicants for studies in literature, art and music attend Christian churches.

The artistic character of Shamanism flowered in the church.

2. In Social Service

As was indicated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 6, the Christian church functioned as a means of resolving and realising educational, political, economic, social, religious and cultural needs and desires. Through its social services the church grew in power and extent.

Shamanism had previously provided a focus for the religious needs of the community, a role which was then readily assumed by the Christian church. Just as Shamanism was involved in the areas of healing and education, so the Korean Christian church has been responsible for the founding of many schools and hospitals.

After the 1960s, the church acted as a complainant to the State President on matters of social injustice and human rights. According to some literature,³² the shaman performed drama in the royal palaces depicting the grievances of the common people, e.g. objections to heavy taxation. The shaman thus mediated in social concerns between the people and the authorities. In similar fashion, Korean Christian pastors have developed an image of a church which recognises social responsibility and demonstrates social concern.

3. In the Development of Koreanistic Theology

Shamanism has historically absorbed imported religions and transformed them into Koreanistic products. The assimilative power of Shamanism is demonstrated especially in the evolution of Christianity in a Koreanistic theology. So, during the 1960s, aboriginalisation theology appeared; in the 1970s, liberation theology, and Koreanistic theology; in the 1980s, Min Jung theology (folk theology). The aboriginalisation theology of Yun Seong Beom was motivated by a naïve desire to contain the Gospel within a narrowly Koreanistic world view³³ (i.e. to anchor it to the base of Shamanist thought).

³² Lee Nung Hwa, *The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism* (Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) p.19

³³ The aboriginalisation theology of Yun Seong Beom is called 'theology of Seong' (성론). Seong means 'sincerity.'

The Koreanistic Pung Ryu Do theology³⁴ of Yoo Dong Sik attempted to interpret the events of the Gospel in Shamanism and Hwa Rang Do.

The Han theology³⁵ of Seo Nam Deong was influenced by South American liberation theology. He asserted the primacy of political and economic liberation from difficult material conditions.

The Min Jung theology (the people's theology) of An Byong Moo³⁶ is an attempt to connect the contemporary Korean zeitgeist and the folk Han with the Gospel, within the framework of Shamanistic puri. His theology represents God not as transcendent, but as immanent, participating in daily events in the real world. This developed in reaction to conservative theology.

Recently, churches which allowed Shamanistic Je-Sa (ancestor worship) have appeared. These churches also make further advances and concessions towards Shamanists.

³⁴ Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., Korean Religions and Christianity, p.231

³⁵ Seo Nam Dong, "The Formalisation of Han and its Theological Thought" in Minjung and Korean Theology (The Institute of Korean Theology, Seoul, 1991) p.319 ff.

³⁶ Ahn Byong Moo, The Story of Min Jung Theology (The Institute of Korean Theology, Seoul, 1990)

F. THE NEGATIVE ROLE

As was previously explained, Shamanism has played a major role in church growth. However, the negative aspect of this role is also apparent.

Those churches which stress material blessing increased membership, but often to the detriment of the spiritual life of the church, eg prayer.

A further effect was a drifting away from the real kernel of the Gospel. Therefore, there is a tendency to view God merely as source of blessing and the church as an instrument or agent.

Currently, with economic development in Korea, the faith which desires blessing has been partially satisfied in the acquisition of material wealth, which has led to declining percentages in church attendance, and a weakening or dulling of Christian zeal. Although this decline is not significant, and is not clearly reflected in empirical data, it is a trend which can be recognised.

The Korean Christian church has adapted the arrangement of Sunday services to accommodate the entertainment element of Shamanism. Since followers expect their gatherings to provide pleasure as well as religious edification, morning services are held at 11:00 a.m., followed by lunch and fellowship at the church, after which 'evening' services are held at 2:00

p.m. Thus, recreation and worship are combined, and members are further free to enjoy their own leisure and other forms of entertainment thereafter. (No official statistics are available, but approximately 20% of churches have adopted this practice.)

Services have become increasingly Shamanistic, with a gravitation towards spectacle and emotionally charged spiritual experience. Since the mid-1980s, many dignified, intelligent Christians have begun to move to those churches in which a more devout, sober and reverent atmosphere prevails, or are leaving the church altogether.

Shamanism has also manifested itself in the blurring of the historical perspective of Christianity. Shamanistic transmigratory thought is at variance with the linearity of Christian chronology, and its infusion into Korean Christianity has obscured the notion of a final judgement or divine resolution of history.

The essential conservatism of Shamanism has also had a detrimental effect on the Korean church. The ugly divisions which have led to the proliferation of denominations stem from a basic conservatism which is intolerant of dissent within the body.³⁷

At the same time, because an egocentric, materialistic and non-ethical style of faith has been condoned by the Korean church, it does not display the unity or community which are the ideals of the Christian Apostolic Church.

³⁷ Lee Han Ku, op cit., pp.130-131

The competitiveness, materialism and avarice of the domestic Korean church are also evident in its foreign mission activities. Individual churches evangelise abroad with little cooperation or sense of common purpose, and Korean missions have been sharply criticised for their acquisitiveness.

Finally, the Korean Christian church is becoming something of a theatre, akin to the playground of the Shamanist gut, where the meaning and aim of the ritual is to invoke showers of blessing. Churches which witness the apparent success of Shamanistic churches begin to adopt similar growth-centred goals, defining success in the terms previously outlined, and believing that the true character of the church is realised and expressed in tangible, external results.

In other words, the Korean church is becoming increasingly humanist, and is in danger of being totally transformed through a process in which the essence of Shamanism entirely displaces the original tenets and principles of Christianity.

In the modern context of pluralism, the dilemma of the Korean Christian church is whether to strive towards an inclusive, catholic character, or to retain the cultural specificity of the established Korean Christian identity. The prime example of eclectic Christianity is the South American Catholic church. The attempt at aboriginalisation and eclecticism within the African

Independent Church has been a focus of scholarship, which has so far been inconclusive.

Further study of the Korean Christian church is required before new directions can be mapped.

Shamanism played a vital role in Korean Church growth, especially in the early period of the introduction of Christianity in Korea. Korean people appreciated Western civilisation after Korea became a Japanese colony. The Korean attitude towards Christianity was receptive, rather than resistant, because the West did not pose any threat of oppression. In the difficult economic and social conditions resulting from the loss of Korean sovereignty, the sensibility of the people expressed its neediness in the pursuit of blessing encouraged by Shamanism, and the convergence of these ideals with Christianity issued in church growth. The perceptions of heaven, God and blessing in Shamanism facilitated the acceptance of Christian faith, and Shamanistic forms of worship were readily adapted to the purposes of Christianity. The religious diligence and prayer of the Korean people sparked a faith revival, and the management of followers through the cell system stimulated church growth. The church began to produce leaders who were prominent in the fields of art, culture and politics. Such figures projected a favourable image of the social functions of the church. Hence, the church became increasingly powerful. The Korean church experiences considerable internal division and there are many negative factors; however,

Shamanistic elements have undoubtedly made a substantial and constructive contribution to church growth.

CONCLUSION

Since the primary task of the Christian church is to spread the Gospel, the remarkable growth of the Korean church is clearly a phenomenon which deserves scholarly attention: this thesis has aimed to analyse the elements of church growth and to define its character.

Shamanism has been isolated as a major factor in church growth. I have attempted to demonstrate that Shamanism is incorporated into the foundations of Korean character and sensibility, and that it features in all aspects of social, political, cultural and religious life.

The thesis has also explored the amalgamation of Shamanism and Christianity, showing how the religious inclusiveness of Shamanism has accommodated Christianity, and how Christianity has become alloyed with elements of Shamanism.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I illustrated the direct influence of Shamanism in Korean church growth and attempt to construe accurately the process of church growth.

The intention of this study was to identify the growth elements of the Korean church in terms of historical/environmental factors and spiritual/emotional factors, and to place the issues in clear academic

perspective, even if, ultimately, the growth of the Korean church is attributable to God.

I have shown the positive aspects of church. I argued that, although Shamanism has affected Christianity negatively in some respects, it is via the spiritual preparation of Shamanism that Koreans have been able to comprehend and accept Christianity. Subsequently, the Korean church has gained international status, and has a significant responsibility for evangelism through the world mission.

Numerical church growth involves certain problems. However, it does imply a further, concomitant dimension, and this study aims to move beyond celebrating numerical growth, to advance growth in the more intangible areas of faith and spirituality.

Shamanism contributed immensely to Korean church growth. What will be the future influence of Shamanism, and what will be the future role of the Christian church in Korean society? These are pertinent questions which are sure to provoke further study.

It is necessary to discuss what Koreanistic Christianity is, without losing sight of the original essence of Christianity. That is, it must be established what Christianity is within the Korean religious and cultural context which is composed of an admixture of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism (none of

which became popular religions) and Shamanism. Also, Korean Christianity must be viewed in relation to aboriginalisation theology, Pung Ryu Do theology and Min Jung theology.

In the pursuit of church growth, it is necessary to develop a method for the encouragement and expansion of the Christian mission. I suggest that the churches of each country need to study their own traditional religions. I propose also that the Korean church and theological seminaries should provide instruction in traditional religions, because of the present dearth of knowledge in this area.

It is necessary to study, not only Shamanism itself, but also the Shaman and the Shamanist, in greater depth. Further study of the relationship between Shamanist songs and the Bible, and between Shamanist incantations and the Christian sermon, would be rewarding.

Korean Shamanism has elements which easily connected with any religion. Those Korean Christian missionaries whose spiritual matrix was largely evolved through Shamanism found themselves able to communicate well with unreached people, most of whom are concentrated in Asia¹ and possess a Shamanistic world perception.

¹ Ralph P. Winter, "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," in *Let the earth hear His voice*, J.D. Douglas, ed. (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975) p. 229, and *The report of Colorado Congress for Evangelisation of Unreached People* (Mission World, Vol. 17, Seoul, 1993), pp. 68-69

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