

Abstract

A Comparison Study on Shamans of Korea and Taiwan

Hung-Ping, Lu
Graduate School of Korean
Language and Literature
Chinese Culture University

Shamanism is probably the oldest form of religious practice, referring to belief in a world inhabited by spirits which dates back to prehistoric times. Shamans's roles and images are generally categorized as sick or abnormal, that is very negative and undesirable in social or cultural terms. This thesis intends to investigate and analyze the conceptions of shamanism, comparing Korean shamans with Taiwanese ones. Korean shamans, known as 'mu-dang(巫堂)', are similar in many ways to those found in Siberia, Mongolia, and Manchuria. As in the same Asian culture, Taiwanese shamans, known as 'dang-gi(童占)', show rather similar folk religious practices in the communities with Korean shamans, including the worship of Buddhist gods, the concerns which are addressed to shamans, the ways in which shamans establish credibility, the significance of gods and ancestors in accounts of misfortune, etc. However, this thesis directs attention to very profound local differences which can exist in the midst of apparent similarity. One of the major differences is the central feature of a Korean shaman's initiation, which is her affliction with an illness known as a 'spirit sickness(神病)'. A ritual called a 'naerim-gut(降神祭儀)' cures this illness, which also serves to induct the new shaman. Another difference can be found in a shamanistic rite where the shaman offers a sacrifice to the spirits to intercede in the fortunes of the humans in question. The central form of Korean shamanistic rite, known as 'gut(巫祭儀)', consists of singing and dancing as a shaman's way to offer entertaining sacrifice in order to beg the gods to intercede in dealing with the problems of people. However, Taiwanese shamanistic rite relies heavily on offering bloody sacrifices by means of such methods as mutilating oneself and so on.

Centering around the local differences and similarity of Korean mu-dang and Taiwanese dang-gi, this thesis attempt to explain several aspects of shamanism in both countries such as the social implication, the type of shaman's initiation, ritual clothes and instrument, central process of rituals, offerings and expenses and so so. This thesis lacks of materials gathered from fieldwork owing to the author's unavoidable circumstances, and thus the research inevitably relies heavily on references from previous studies. It is hoped that this study will provide additional insight into shamans'

world in Korea and Taiwan, and further research needs to be done with more historical documents and field work materials.

Key word : spirit sickness , naerim-gut

