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Notes on some Altaic Shamanistic Terms

Musok or *shamanism* occupies an important position in Korean Studies. Before Buddhism was introduced to the Korean peninsula in 372 A.D. through the Ancient Korean state of *Koguryo*, shamanism was the one and only religion and was in great vogue throughout the Korean peninsula. The ancient people of Korea worshipped nature and heavenly bodies, such as the sun and the moon. They believed that their royal ancestors were born in mysterious ways, being born of natural objects such as gourds, eggs, and even animals.

Tangun, the king of sandalwood who was the founder of *Kochoson*, the first Ancient Korean state, was believed to have been born from the union of *Hwanung*, the high ascending son of the heavenly god, and a woman who had been transformed out of a bear. Most scholars accept *Tangun* as a ruler as well as a shaman like many ancient rulers of the proto- or Ancient Korean states. According to a legend, *Tangun* was said to have become a god of the mountain after death. Besides *Tangun*, we can also easily find evidence of shamanism in most of the founders of the Ancient Korean states.

Ancient Korean people also believed in the immortality of the soul, and they buried the dead in large coffins and tombs, with rich personal ornaments to accompany the immortal spirits in their long journey to the other world of the dead. For this reason they believed the *Mudang* or *Shaman* uttered spiritual words. This shamanistic tradition has survived from proto- or Ancient Korea to the present day, despite the dominance of several major religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism, which opposed shamanism in Korea for over 1500 years.

In modern times, many studies of *Musok* or shamanism, have been carried out since the publication of *H. B. Hulbert's* article titled "The Korean *Mudang* and *Pansu*" in the *Korean Review* (1903). In the 1920s, Korean scholars such as *Nam-Sun Choi*, *Nyung-Hwa Lee* and *Cha-Ho Sin* started to study *Musok*. In the same period, Japanese scholars also began to be interested in the Ancient Korean religion.

Most Korean scholars have tended to relate Musok to the shamanism of northern tribes (i.e., Central Asian and Siberian tribes). *C. A. Clark*, the author of the book *Shamanism: Religion of Old Korea* (1932), was the first foreign scholar to consider Musok in connection with Siberian shamanism.

Nevertheless, there have been few studies in Korea which closely examined the relationship of Korea and the Altaic area (i.e., Central Asia and Siberia) in terms of shamanism. In this respect, *Si-In Park's* comparative studies of Ancient Korean and Altaic legendary literatures or myths concerning the founders of proto or ancient Altaic states is highly respected.

There is a variety of evidence to show that Korean Musok was originated from Altaic shamanism and that these two are originally one and the same. In this paper, I would like to present some linguistic evidence for the close relationship of the two. These are Altaic shamanistic terms which are found in Modern Korean.

(1) *Abači* 'bogy': Maḥmūd al-Kāšgarī explained in his dictionary that to frighten a child one said *abači keldi*! 'the bogy has come!'. This word is found in Yakut in the forms *abasy* and *abassy* meaning 'an evil spirit, spirit of the dead'.

In Korean there is the word *ebi* meaning 'bogy or the like'. This word is said to frighten a child or to give a warning to a naughty child. Comparable words exist in Mongolian: Mo. *abla-* 'to allure, to hurt through magic incantations', *abtai* 'possessing the gift of witchcraft', *abagaldai* 'a shamanistic idol, mask representing a shamanistic god'. From these Mongolian forms, we can assume **ab* is the root of the word. The Korean form *ebi* probably comes from **abi* which consists of the root **ab* and the denominal noun suffix {+I}.

(2) *Bakši* 'a male shaman': In Turkic this word appears in Uygur for the first time meaning '(Buddhist) religious teacher'. In Chagatay this word means 'scribe; surgeon'. Among modern Turkic languages, while Uygur and Yakut call a male shaman *oyun*, Kazakh and Kyrgyz people call *baqşı*. In the epic *Manas*, the phrase *qara baqşı* appears. In Turkmen, this word means 'saz singer'. This word occurs in Korean too in the form *baksu* meaning 'a male shaman'. In Mongolian the word means 'teacher'. It is interesting that Korean and southeastern languages of the Turkic language group, i.e. Kazakh and Kyrgyz have the same meaning for the word.

For the etymology of the word, *Yule* (1866:474) proposed that the word was the Turkish and Persian corruption of *Bhikshu*, the proper Sanskrit term for a Buddhist monk. *Radloff* (IV. 1446) said in his dictionary that the word

was derived from the Turkic verb *baq-* meaning 'to look at'. However, Radloff's theory is nothing but a folk etymology, for there is no deverbal noun suffix such as {-šI} in Turkic. Laufer (1916:485-7) argued that the word was borrowed from the Chinese word *bakši*. Ramstedt (1951:73) related this word to Sino-Korean *baksa* meaning 'a learned man, a doctor'.

(3) *Kam* 'a shaman; a ruler': Among titles of *Silla* which was an Ancient Korean state, we can find *kam* (ACh. *kam*', Sino-Ko. *kam*) in the titles of high-ranking officials. In my opinion, *kam* is one and the same with the Ancient Turkic *Kam* designating 'shaman': Uyg. *qam* 'sorcerer', MK *qam* id., Chag. *qam* 'physician, healer, sage, wise man' (Clauson 1972:625).

In Middle Turkic, this word was used as a verb with the denominal verb suffix {+IA-} meaning 'to practice medicine, to heal' which was probably developed from 'to act as a *kam*, to make magic'. Interestingly, in Middle Turkic Coman the word means 'a female shaman'. From the Turkic meaning, we can deduce that one of the major roles of a *kam* was to act as a healer. This role of a *kam* or shaman is seen often in both the Korean shaman *mudang* and the Turkic shaman *kam*. In this respect, Ramstedt's theory (1949:90, 1951:71) that this Turkic word was borrowed from the Chinese word (ACh *kam*') meaning 'to inspect' is incorrect.

Furthermore, as is seen in the early shamanism of the Altaic region, shamans or kams acted not only as healers or spiritual doctors but also were engaged actively in politics as politicians or rulers. Shamans often ruled over their communities as sages or wise counsellors who had the greatest political power. It is well known that Tangun, the founder of Kochoson, was a ruler as well as a shaman. This was to reflect the primitive theocratic system which was very common in ancient primitive societies. It is not surprising then that the last ruler of Kochoson, who ruled in the second century B.C., had *uga* meaning 'sage, wise man' as his official title. This word was borrowed from Turkic *öge* having the same meaning. The Turkic word *öge* was derived from the verb *ö-* 'to think of' with the deverbal noun suffix {-gA}. This word was also used as a ruler's title in Ancient Turkic: Uyg. *Baga Tarkan Öge*, *El Ögesi*. (Eliade 181, 422; Inan 72 ff, 75, 84, 88; Kim 70).

(4) *Kow* 'an evil spirit in nightmares': In Modern Korean *kawi* is a shamanistic word designating an evil spirit which possesses man by way of nightmares. This word is attested in Middle Korean in the form of *κλω*. From this form, we see that Modern Korean *kawi* consists of two morphemes, *kaw* and {+i}, a denominal noun suffix very common in Korean.

This shamanistic term is found in the Oghuz dialect of Middle Turkic in the form of *kowuč* or *kowuz*. Maḥmūd al-Kāšġarī offers 'the symptoms of demonic possession' for the meaning of the word in his dictionary. He gives some explanation for the use of the word; the victim is treated, cold water is thrown in his face, and at the same time the words *kowuč kowuč* are recited in order to expel the evil spirit, then he is fumigated with rue and aloes-wood (Clauson 1972:581). Dankoff (1985:144) argues that this word was derived from the Turkic verb *kow-* meaning 'drive out, expel' with the deverbal noun suffix {-uĉ} or {-uz}.

However, Dankoff's theory not compelling since not only is the suffix {-uĉ} or {-uz}, which is rare in Turkic, used with an intransitive verb without exception but also that the semantic connection between 'the symptoms of demonic possession or the like' and 'drive out' is very thin. From the point of view that the Korean word *kawi* or *kʌo* is not a verb but a noun, we can suppose two different possibilities for the word: the first possibility is that it consists of the noun **kowu* and the diminutive suffix {+ĉ}, and the second is that it combines the noun **kow* and the verb *uĉ-*. While, in the former, the word means 'an evil spirit exercising the demonic power of possession', the latter case means 'go away! evil spirit'. In my opinion, the latter one is more likely than the former.

Moreover, among the Korean forms, *kawi* was probably developed later. The form *kawi* was made this way; at first the denominal noun suffix {+i} came to the noun *kʌo* and then *kʌo* became *kawi* by regressive assimilation rendering the vowel /ʌ/ in the first syllable into the unrounded vowel /a/ under the influence of /i/.

(5) *Kut* 'an exorcism by a shaman or Mudang, a shaman ritual': This term is very common in Altaic languages. In Turkic this means 'the favour of heaven' originally in a rather mystical sense, thence, less specifically 'good fortune' and the like, and thence, more generally, 'happiness' (Clauson 594). In Mongolian, the word appears in the form *kutuγ* meaning 'sanctity, happiness, benediction' (Lessing 992). The Mongolian form consists of *kut* and a denominal suffix {-uγ}. While *xuturi* exists with the same meaning, the similar form with *kut* is *xutu* meaning 'demon, evil spirit' in Manchu.

The word occurs in Korean in the form *kus* meaning 'an exorcism, a shaman ritual' (Ramstedt 132). This Korean form probably comes from *kut*. By the way, it is difficult to disclose the manner in which the word was borrowed among Altaic languages. However, when considering both the form

and the meaning, I reckon that the word *kut* was passed from Turkic into the other Altaic languages including Korean. From the meaning in Ancient Turkic we can suppose that in Korean the word originally means 'a shamanic performance for a benediction'. This meaning must be secondary when compared with the Turkic 'benediction, happiness'. This word was probably borrowed directly into Korean from Turkic in the very early stages.

Also, it is very interesting that this word means 'spirit of the dead' in Yakut in Siberia. (Eliade 197, Inan 84, 177).

(6) *Pudak* 'the obstacles laid on the way to *Erlik Khan*, the supreme god of the Underworld or Hades': According to Altaic shamanism, there is *Erlik Khan* in the Underworld or Hades as opposed to *Bay Ülgen*, a supreme god of heaven.¹ Through a shamanic ritual, Altaic *kams* or shamans would descend to the Underworld where *Erlik Khan* rules with absolute authority. To reach *Erlik Khan*, shamans must pass through seven obstacles laid on the seven stairs on the way to the Underworld. Altaic people call the obstacles *pudak* (Eliade 192, 254, 257). This shamanistic word also appears in Yakut in the form *buudak*, also meaning 'obstacle'.

The word *pudak* occurs in Korean shamanism. Shamans perform an exorcism called *pudak-kəri* for the purpose of curing a diseased victim. In the *pudak-kəri* exorcism, the shaman prays for the patient after offering a chicken as a sacrifice. After the prayer, he buries the sacrifice in the ground. The word *kəri* in the compounded word *pudak-kəri* means the scene of an exorcism performed by a Mudang or a Korean female shaman.

(7) *Tarkan* 'smith, craftsman; a title of an Ancient Turkic ruler': In Turkic, even though this was a high title probably carrying administrative responsibility, it was not peculiar to the Royal family as *tegin* and *šad* were. This title cannot be traced in Turkic after the 11th century.

This occurs in the form *darxan* in Mongolian where it means 'a person exempt from ordinary taxation'. This word was borrowed into Chagatay probably from Mongolian. In his dictionary, *Sanglax* denoted a person with a title exempting him from all government taxes. One who has the title can attend the royal court with special permission and can commit up to nine offences without being called to account. In *Manas*, a Kyrghyz epic, the word

¹ Although *Bay Ülgen* is one of the supreme gods in heaven, he is not the absolute god. According to Altaic shamanism, *Tengere Kayra Khan* is considered to be the absolute god among the gods the heaven. *Bay Ülgen* seems to be a god of abundance.

appears in the form *darqan*, meaning 'smith', which was probably borrowed from Mongolian.

This word or title has also been used to designate 'smith, craftsman, artisan' besides 'person free from taxes and official duties' in Mongolian. I think this meaning was original, even though the meaning was seen even later in Mongolian manuscripts. In addition to these meanings, *Lessing* provides an additional meaning for the word in his dictionary, 'area or place set aside for religious reasons and therefore inviolable'. This word has also been used as an adjective meaning 'sacred, celebrated'. This fact indicates that a *tarkan* or *darxan* was somehow connected to a primitive religion or shamanism. Here we see the reason why *darxans* were exempt from taxes and official duties. This was because they were engaged in religious affairs.

The Yakuts saying that smiths and shamans are in one and the same group is very informative. When seeing a fine young woman, Yakut people even say that she would make a good wife for either a smith or shaman. In Yakut shamanism, smiths are believed to have the power to heal and prophesy (Jochelson 1933:172ff). Yakut Dolgans believe that, because smiths always keep their souls in the flames, shamans cannot swallow the souls of smiths. But they believed that smiths can burn the souls of shamans (Popov 1933:258-60). According to a Yakut myth, smiths inherit their skills from an evil god K'daai Maqsin. K'daai Maqsin can handle shamans as well as iron. Thus he is very famous as the teacher of smiths (Popov 260).

Coming to the etymology of the word *tarkhan*, we can find some derivations in Mongolian: the nouns *darxad* and *darxaci*. While *darxad* forms a plural with the plural suffix {+d}, *darxaci*, meaning 'smith or craftsman', comes from **darxa* with the denominal noun suffix {+ci} designating occupations. In addition to these, there is the verb *darxala-* meaning 'to do the work of a smith, a craftsman or an artisan; to be exempt from taxes and official duties; to set aside as sacred'. This verb consists of the noun **darxa* and the denominal verb suffix {+lA-}.

There is also the verb *tarku-* meaning 'to heat a piece of iron in fire' in Korean. Besides this verb, there is the homonym meaning 'to deal with a person, thing, or matter' in Middle Korean. I think these are of the same origin. The latter meaning was probably developed from 'to deal with iron or metal'. The Korean word *tarku-* and the Turkic *tarkan* or Mo. *darxan* are probably all of the same origin.

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