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After Korean shamanism attracted attention from scholars who wanted to find “Koreanness” within it during the colonial period, the topic has been consistently represented as a core of Korean spirituality and culture to this day. However, it is unquestionable that there has also been a tendency to demean Korean shamanism as a superstition based upon a perspective of Western modernity. Whether it is defined as a core of Korean culture or as a superstition, I argue that these two contrasting positions take an essentialist attitude toward Korean shamanism. By contrast, for several decades and as Laurel Kendall indicates, it has been argued that there is no such thing as a fixed “Korean shamanism,” but rather a complex of religious practices which are adapted to a changing Korean society. Criticisms of an essentialist approach to Korean shamanism were initiated in the article, “Musok cheontong eui damron bunseok” [Contemporary Approaches to Korean Folk Religion], by Kim Seong-rye.

It is good news that the anthropologist who initiated a new approach to Korean shamanism has published a comprehensive work in which she

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revised her previous articles around specific themes. The strength of this volume lies most of all in the author's ethnographic methodology used to describe the Jeju shamanism. As is well known to anthropologists, an ethnography is the co-product of a researcher and informants created as the researcher participates in the informants' everyday lifeworld. Somewhat thin knowledge about Korean shamanism may be gained by short time observation of a particular ritual or an interview with a shaman but, most important, deep insights can be obtained only in conjunction with living in and with informants' in their own lifeworld, which I believe makes this book different from other Korean folklorists' works.

This book, which faithfully reflects the insights obtained by the author's fieldwork in the 1980s for her dissertation and by subsequent field research in relation to changes in Korean society, consists of five parts. In the introduction, the author clearly maintains that Korean shamanism is not a survival of ancient religion nor archaic religiosity, but rather a contemporary religious phenomenon created and recreated by practitioners "here and now." In this context, the problematics and themes of this book are summarized as follows: "How has Korean shamanism as a religious tradition produced a discourse of sanctity, and what is the religious truth that has been taught in Korean shamanism? How has the discourse of sanctity changed in response to other changes in Korea?" (p. 17)

The author's definition of Korean shamanism as a religion that functions as a "model for" as well as "model of"—terms borrowed from Clifford Geertz—is also illustrated by the title of this book. In contrast with many scholars who prefer to use the term *musok* (shamanic customs), and thus overlook the religious aspects of Korean shamanism, Kim self-consciously uses the term *mugyo*—as almost all religions in Korea use the term "-gyo" to indicate their religious identity. As a matter of fact besides these two terms, there are many other Korean words that indicate and classify Korean shamanism. All these terms connote intellectual paradigms and worldviews by which Korean shamanism is defined and are analyzed in the first part of this book. In particular, part one begins by introducing controversial issues such as the identity of Korean shamanism and its religious characteristics, and then the author moves on not only to organize chronologically multiple perspectives on Korean shamanism but also to analyze theoretical positions, such as nationalism and colonialism, inherent in those perspectives. I believe that the way Kim arranges the history of Korean shamanism studies provides an insight for understanding the

relationship between discourse and reality.

Part Two, titled “Historical Discourses and Narratives of Redemption in Korean Shamanism,” represents the author’s life-long research topic by examining Korean shamanism as social practices. In particular, such issues as how the popular memory of the 4.3 Massacre in Jeju island has been transmitted and revealed through shamanism, otherwise forgotten by official history, and how shamanism has transformed the islanders’ sufferings into a meaningful experience with its narratives of redemption, are illuminated by reference to the author’s fieldwork. I would say that, metaphorically, just as Jeju shamans have done with ritual activities for the victims of the 4.3 Massacre, the author has listened to the voices of the dead and comforted the souls by the publication of this book.

Part Three is organized around two different but closely related themes: Who is a shaman and what are the features of his/her experiences; how has Korean shamanism reflected female experiences? The first chapter of this part (Chapter 6) characterizes a shaman’s career as “an art of self-creation and self-transformation.” Considering that most existing studies of shamanic careers tend to focus on spiritual experience in an initiation ritual and obtaining shamanic techniques for ritual performance after taking part in the initiation ritual, the author’s analysis of the triangular-relationship among a shaman, guardian spirits, and clients in establishing mature shamanship deserves to be highlighted. The other three chapters in Part Three take a feminist approach to a shaman’s life story and shamanic myths. In other words, the author deals with such issues as how gender subjectivity is constructed by a shaman’s act of narrative organization with reference to shamanic myth; what sort of ethics can be found in such shamanic myths as Princess *Bari* and *Jajimyeong agissi* in which female subjectivity is revealed.

An issue of how the sanctity of Korean shamanism is created by a ritual performance in conjunction with myths is the topic of the fourth part. In addition, the author explains how such concepts as gods, spirits, and ancestors as mythic realities are construed as “really real,” and describes how the mythical schema enacted in combination with ritual participants’ own life stories in a ritual setting is reproduced as a cultural schema. Because all the theoretical concepts and insights are unfolded along with an analysis of particular cases, students of shamanism as well as of anthropology, whatever their topics, can use this book as a guide to combining theories with cases.

Part Five, titled “The Magic of Modernity and Shamanism,” is the product of the author’s continued interests in Korean shamanism “here and now.” Despite living in a highly capitalist society, as cases illustrated in chapters fourteen and fifteen show, contemporary Korean people still consume geomancy and shamanism once regarded as primitive, even if they are in a secularized form. How can we understand these secularization practices of shamanism in contemporary Korea? The author classifies this as proof of “modernity’s rationality in the guise of irrationality,” (p. 33) illustrating Kim’s challenge to the classical theory of modernization. The last chapter of this book forecasts the transformation of Korean shamanism in a postmodern age based upon case studies on shamans’ activities in cyber space.

Because each part of this book is organized by its own issue and theme, a reader might choose chapters selectively and need not necessarily start at the beginning but anywhere. However, considering the interrelationship between discourse and reality, I suggest that the first part is vital. At a glance, this book might be read as just about shamanism studies, however, the virtue of it lies in its relevance to various academic fields such as mythology, ritual studies, gender studies, and Korean culture in general. In this vein, I hope this book invites many scholarly comments as well as further research in the future.