

Some Altaic Samanistic Evidence in Korean

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Abstract: There are various evidences showing that Korean Musok was originated from the Altaic shamanism. This paper presents some linguistic evidences for the close relationship of Korean and the Altaic peoples such as Turkic, Mongolian and Manchu-Tungus from comparison of shamanistic terminologies between Korean and the other Alatic languages.

Key words: Korean, Altaic, Turkic, Mongolan, Shamanism

In Korean studies Musok(巫俗) or Shamanism takes an important place. Before Buddhism was introduced into Korean peninsular 372 A.D. through Koguryo which was an ancient Korean state, shamanism was the one and only religion and was in great vogue in the Korean peninsular. The ancient people of Korea worshipped heavenly bodies, and nature 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 gourd, egg, and even animals.

Tangun, the king of sandalwood who was the founder of Kochoson, the first ancient Korean state, was believed to be born through marriage of Hwanung who was the high ascending son of the

heavenly god and a woman who became a human through transformation from a bear. Most scholars accept Tangun as a ruler as well as a shaman like many ancient rulers of proto or ancient Korean states. According to a legend, Tangun was said to become a god of mountain after death. Besides Tangun, we can also find easily samainistic evidences 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 never-perishing spirits in the long travel to the other world of the dead. For this reason they believed Mudang or Shaman uttered words of the spirits. These shamainistic tradition has survived from the proto or ancient Korea to the present day Korea, despite the dominance of several major religion such as Buddhism and Confucianism which opposed shamanism, for over 1500 years in Korean history.

In modern times, regarding the ancient religion of Korea, Musok(巫俗) or shamainism, many studies have been made since the publication of H.B. Hulbert's article titled "The Korean Mudang and Pansu" in the Korean Review in 1903. In 1920s, Korean native scholars such as Nam-Sun Choi, Nyung-Hwa Lee and Cha-Ho Sin started to study Musok or Korean Shamanism. At the same period, Japanese scholars also begun to be interested in the ancient Korean religion.

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

Nevertheless, there were few scientific works in Korea which studied closely the relationship of Korea and 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 evaluated.

There are various evidences showing 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 evidences for the close relationship of the two. These are Altaic shamanistic terminologies which are found in Modern Korean.

(1) Abači 'bogy': Kashgarli Mahmud 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 of 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 nauty child. In relation to this word, there are some words in Mongolian; Mo. abla- 'to allure, to hurt through magic incarnations', abtai 'possessing the gift of witchcraft', abagaldai 'a shamanistic idol, mask representing a shamanistic god'. From these Mongolian forms, we can assume *ab as 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 appear 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 *bakşı*. In *Manas* epic, the phrase *kara bakşı* appears. In Turkmen, this word means 'saz singer'. This word occurs in Korean too in the form of *baksu* meaning 'a male shaman'. Mongolian gives 'teacher' for the meaning of the word. It is interesting that Korean and south-eastern languages of the Turkic language group, i.e. Kazakh and Kyrgyz has the same meaning of the word.

For the etymology of the word, for the first time Yule(1866: 474) proposed that the word was the Turkish and Persian corruption of *Bhikshu*, the proper Sanscrit term for a Buddhist monk. Radloff(IV. 1446) said in his dictionary that the word was derived from the Turkic verb *bak-* meaning 'to look at'. However, Radloff's theory is nothing but a folk etymology, for there is no deverbal noun suffix such as {-şı} in Turkic. Laufer(1916: 485-7) argued that the word was borrowed from the Chinese word *bakši* 博士. Ramstedt(1951: 73) related this word to Sino-Korean *baksa* 博士 meaning 'a learned man, a doctor'.

(3) Kam 'a shaman; a ruler': Among titles of Silla which was an ancient states of Korea, we can find *kam* 監(ACh. *kam*', Sino-Ko. *kam*) in the titles of high ranking officials such as 大監, 少監, 弟監, etc. While, in these examples, 大, 少, and 弟 are being used as adjectives which mean big, small, and a younger brother respectively, 監(*kam*) is a Chinese transliteration of the word *kam*. In my opinion, *kam* is one and the same with ancient Turkic *Kam* designating 'shaman': Uyg. *qam* 'sorcer', 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 {la-} meaning 'to practice medicine, to heal' which was probably developed from 'to act as a *kam*, to make magic'.

Interestingly, Middle Turkic Kuman gives 'a female shaman' for the meaning of the word. From the Turkic meaning, we can deduce that one of the major role of kam was to act as a healer. This role of kam or shaman is seen often in both Korean shaman mudang and Turkic shaman kam. In this respect, Ramstedt(1949: 90, 1951: 71)'s theory that this Turkic word was borrowed from the Chinese word 監 (ACh kam') meaning 'to inspect' is incorrect.

On the other hand, as is seen, in the early shamanism of Altaic Area, shamans or kams acted not only as healers or spiritual doctors but also were engaged actively in politics as politicians or rulers. Many times shamans ruled over their communities as sages or wise counsellors who had the greatest political power. It is well known that Tangun(檀君), 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. In connection with this fact, it is not surprising that the last ruler of Kochoson, who ruled in the second century B.C., had ugə 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 deverbial noun suffix {-ge}. This word was also used as a ruler's title in ancient Turkic: Uyg. Baga Tarkan Ö ge, El Ö gesi. (Eliade 181, 422; Inan 72 ff, 75, 84, 88; Kim 70).

(4) Kow 'an evil spirit of nightmare': In Modern Korean kawi is a shamainstic word designating an evil spirit which obsesses man by way of nightmares. This word is attested in Middle Korean in the form of 𑖅𑖆𑖇. From this form, we can understand that Modern Korean kawi

consists of two morphemes, kaw and {-i} which is a denominal noun suffix very common in Korean.

This shamanistic terminology is found in Oghuz dialect of Middle Turkic in the form of kowuč or kowuz. Kashgarli Mahmud gives 'the symptoms of demonical possession' for the meaning of the word in his dictionary. He gives some explanation about the use of the word; the victim is given treatment, 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 is not convincing from the facts that not only the suffix {-uĉ} or {-uz}, which is rare in Turkic, is always used with an intransitive verb unexceptionally but also that semantic connection between 'the symptoms of demonical possession or the like' and 'drive out' is very slim. From the point of view that the Korean word kawī or kᄡo is not a verb but a noun, we can suppose two different possibilities for the word; First possibility is that it consists of the noun *kowu and the diminutive suffix {-ĉ}, and second is that it used the noun *kow and the verb uĉ- together. While, in case of the former, the word means 'an evil spirit exercising the demonical power of possession', the latter case means 'go away! evil spirit'. In my opinion, the latter one is more likely than the former.

On the other hand, among the Korean forms, kawī was probably developed later. The form kawī was made this way; at first the denominal noun suffix {-i} came to the noun kᄡo and then kᄡo 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 of shaman or Mudang, a shaman ritual': This terminology is very common in Altaic languages. In Turkic this means 'the favour of heaven' originally in a rather mystical sense, thence, less specially 'good fortune' and the like, and thence, more generally, 'happiness'. (Clauson 594). In Mongolian, the word appears in the form of kutuγ meaning 'sanctity, happiness, benediction'. (Lessing 992). The Mongolian form consists of kut and a denominal suffix {-uγ}. While there is xuturi in the same meaning, the similar form with kut is xutu meaning 'demon, evil spirit' in Manchu.

The word occurs in Korean in the form of 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 way of borrowing of the word 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 of Ancient Turkic we guess that in Korean the word originally means 'a shamanic performance for benediction'. This meaning must be secondary when comparing with the Turkic one 'benediction, happiness'. This word probably was borrowed directly into Korean from Turkic in the very early stages.

On the other hand, 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 Altai shamanism, there is Erlik Khan in the Underworld or Hades being

opposed to Bai Ӱlgen, a supreme god of the heaven. Although Bay Ӱlgen is one of the supreme gods in the heaven, he is not the absolute god. According to Altai shamanism, Tengere Kaira Khan is considered to be the absolute god among gods of the heaven. Bai Ӱgen seems to be a god of abundance.

. Through a shamanic ritual, Altai kams or shamans would descend to the Underworld where Erlik Khan rules over with the absolute authority. To reach Erlik Khan, shamans must pass through seven obstacles which are laid in the seven stairs on the way to the Underworld. Altai people call the obstacles pudak. (Eliade 192, 254, 257). This shamanistic word also appears in Yakut in the form of buudak in the same meaning 'obstacle'.

The word pudak occurs in Korean shamanism. There is an exorcism of shaman called pudak-kəri performed for the purpose of healing a victim from a disease. In the exorcism of pudak-kəri, shaman prays for the patient after offering a chicken as a sacrifice. After the prayer, shaman takes the sacrifice to bury it in the ground. The word kəri in the compounded word pudak-kəri means a scene of the exorcism performed by mudang or a Korean female shaman.

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

This occurs in the form of 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 stated a person of the title to be a person who is exempt from all

government taxes. According to Sanlax, one who has the title can attend the royal court with special permission and can commit up to nine offenses without being called to account. In *Manas*, an epic of Kyrgyz, the word appears in the form of *darkan*, meaning 'smith' which was probably borrowed from Mongolian.

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

In relation to this, Yakut's common saying that a smith and a shaman are one and the same group is very notable. When seeing a good girl, Yakut people even say that she would make a good wife of either 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 souls of smiths. But they believed that smiths can burn souls of shamans. (A. Popov 1933: 258-60). According to a Yakut myth, smiths inherit their skills from an evil god *K'daai Maqsın*.

K'daai Maqsin can deal with shamans as well as iron. Thus he is very famous as the teacher of smiths. (Popov 260).

Coming to the ethymology of the word tarkhan, we can find some derivations in Mongolian; There are darxad and darxaci which are nouns. 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 craftman or an artisan; to exempt from taxes and official duties; to set aside as sacred'. This verb consists of the noun *darxa and the denoninal verb suffix {la-}.

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

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Received 20 Sep 2013, Screened 7 Oct 2013, Accepted 19 Nov 2013