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SOME ALTAIC SHAMANISTIC EVIDENCE IN KOREAN KORECEDEKİ BAZI ALTAYCA ŞAMANİST KANITLAR

Abstract

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. 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

Key Words

Musok, Shamanism, Korean Shamanism, Altaic shamanistic terminology

Abstract

Kore çalışmalarında *Musok* (巫俗) veya Şamanizmin önemli bir yeri vardır. Kore Yarımadası Şamanizm ile Budizmden daha önce, MS 372'de eski Kore devleti Koguryo aracılığıyla tanışmıştı. Kore Yarımadasının yegane dini olan Şamanizmin bu dönemde büyük bir itibarı vardı. Kore *Musok* geleneğinin Altay Şamanizminden geliştiğine ve iki inancın bir ve aynı olduğuna ilişkin çeşitli kanıtlar bulunmaktadır.

Bu çalışmada, her iki inanç arasındaki yakın ilişkileri gösteren bazı dilbilimsel kanıtlar sunmak istiyorum Bu kanıtlar Modern Korecede Şamanistik terimler olarak bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Musok, Şamanizm, Kore Şamanizmi, Altayca Şamanizm terimleri

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 shamanistic 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. This shamanistic tradition has survived from the proto or ancient Korea to the present day Korea, despite the dominance of several major religions 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 shamanism, 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': Kashgari 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 naughty 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 deverbal noun suffix {-ge}. 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 of nightmare': In Modern Korean *kawi* is a shamanistic word designating an evil spirit which obsesses man by way of nightmares. This word is attested in Middle Korean in the form of *κλω*. 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 {-uč} or {-uz}.

However, Dankoff's theory is not convincing from the facts that not only the suffix {-uč} 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 *kawi* or *κλω* 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 {-č}, and second is that it used the noun **kow* and the verb *uč-* 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, *kawi* was probably developed later. The form *kawi* was made this way; at first the denominal noun suffix {-i} came to the noun *κλω* and then *κλω* became *kawi* by regressive assimilation rendering the vowel /ɰ/ 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 *kutuy* meaning 'sanctity, happiness, benediction'. (Lessing 992). The Mongolian form consists of *kut* and a denominal suffix {-uy}. 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 Ülgen*, a supreme god of the heaven. Although *Bay Ülgen* 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 Ülgen* 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-kari* performed for the purpose of healing a victim from a disease. In the exorcism of *pudak-kari*, 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 *kari* in the compounded word *pudak-kari* means a scene of the exorcism performed by *mudang* or a Korean female shaman.

(7) Tarkan 'smith, craftsman; 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, craftman, 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: 172 ff). 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 Maqsın* can deal with 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; 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 demoninal 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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