

The Interpretation of Yin-Yang and Korean Women's Status

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Abstract

This essay examines the ways of teaching of major religions in Korea and their influences on women's rights. Because Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity have all consecutively dominated the country at one point or another, Korea is a good place to assess various religious influences on its people. Surprisingly under the current major religions, the religion that offered the most consistent cosmic frame to Korean people is shamanism, which is the oldest indigenous religion in Korea. Moreover, it is laypeople who stood closely to it, rather than prominent leaders who learned foreign religions more, that worked for the equality of women. The first major religion in Korea was Buddhism. Buddhism introduced women's inferiority to men to the Korean society. Confucianism, the second major religion, that firmly held the ukeum-jonyang theory, provided theoretical ground of the oppression of women. Christianity, the third major religion, had well developed teachings about equality. Unfortunately for Korean women, it exercised dual-standard over women with the yin-yang dichotomy. Silhak and Donghak are good examples of the theologization of indigenous egalitarian views of Korean people in terms of yin and yang. The term, yin-yang is a touchstone of equality in Korea. Its interpretation reflects the status of women.

Key words

major Korean religions, women's rights, yin and yang, equality

Glossary

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| Daejong-kyo | An indigenous religion in Korea. Based on nationalism, it claims Dahngoon, the first king and <i>moo</i> (shaman) in Korea, as the founder. |
| Donghak | Its literal meaning is "Eastern School." A religious movement that caused the Donghak Farmers Revolution |

<i>dokyang</i>	of the late nineteenth century in Korea. 東學. sole yang, which means a yang that does not support yin or is not supported by yin. 獨陽.
<i>dokeum</i>	sole yin, which means a yin that does not support yang or is not supported by yang. 獨陰.
<i>gwiil</i>	to return to Oneness. 歸一.
<i>baewon</i>	to appease unresolved feelings of bitterness. 解怨 or 解冤.
<i>han_M</i>	Accumulated feeling of bitterness or resentment. 恨.
<i>han_O</i>	Oneness
Jeungsan-kyo	An indigenous religion in Korea founded by Jeungsan in the late nineteenth century.
<i>jonyang</i>	Supremacy of yang. 尊陽.
Silhak	A movement based on pragmatism that started in the nineteenth century. It was led by middle class Koreans who became Catholics through studying Catholicism by themselves, rather than being converted by missionaries.
<i>soonyang</i>	pure yang (純陽). The pure yang means a man who has never had a sexual intercourse with a woman, or the yang that is not in relation with yin.
<i>soonyin</i>	pure yin (純陰). The opposite meaning of soonyang.
<i>taegeuk</i>	A symbol of the union of yin and yang, referred to as <i>taewon</i> (太元) or <i>tae-il</i> (太一). 太極.
<i>ukeum</i>	Oppression of yin. <i>Eum</i> (陰) is the Korean pronunciation of yin. 抑陰.
<i>yang</i>	One of two universal forces representing male, light, hard, activity, etc. 陽.
<i>yin</i>	or <i>eum</i> in Korean. In contrast to yang, yin represents female, darkness, soft, inactivity, etc. 陰.

Introduction

The concept of equality that the early Korean Christians held was instrumental in the construction of modern Korea when the last feudal society, namely the Yi Dynasty, was destroyed (1905). It re-illuminated human political rights and rearranged people's social positions. Korean women were relieved from their historical oppression. But, the idea of

equality was vague and temporal. Like the seed that fell among thorns, it was choked by those who had vested interests (Luke 8:7). The principle of gender equality was not widely applied, but was mostly experienced in the field of education. Min (1988, p. 149) states, "Missionaries in those days were evangelical, having poor theological backgrounds, insisting upon spiritual salvation with no insightful observation of society, having irrational and dualistic views on the Kingdom of God and secular kingdoms." Naturally, their views on equality were inconsistent. For example, women's education was encouraged because they were equal beings to men, but women's ordination was not allowed because they were not equal beings by nature.

Gradually the idea of equality retreated as the church began to settle, and was replaced by male-centered dogmas. Women's position in the church did not progress, but in many cases underwent a regression. With the development of the Presbyterian Church, women lost ground on many of their rights. They were not allowed to become elders, and were excluded from the decision-making process.

The first petition for a female elder in the Korean Presbyterian Church was submitted by Young Hae Choi in 1933, and rejected. In 1946, Malbong Kim's petition was also rejected without discussion. In 1963, the general assembly formed a study committee, but women's eldership was also rejected the next year. In 1970, it was again on the agenda, and rejected. By 1994, every petition was rejected (Choi, 1992).

Many Protestant leaders have supposed that the inequality was endorsed from the beginning by God, the Absolute Authority. The inferiority of woman was an unchangeable fact that God willed from the beginning. Theologians justified, and church leaders reaffirmed.

We can build a hypothesis that there would be several causes of the decline of the concept of equality in Korea. First, although missionaries introduced equality, they did not have a theological basis for it. While Korean Christians were building their theology, they were dependent on so-called Orthodoxy, which was founded on male superiority in the West. Second, there was dogmatic dualism. Although Christian society overcame systematic classism of *babnsang* (班常), it supported the conceptual classism between the saved, or the pure-yang and the damned, or the dirty-yin. Christians divided people into two groups: the holders of truth, and the rest. For them, a "Christian" meant more than a religious person

who believed in Jesus as Christ. It meant moral superiority over others. In the same manner, antonyms such as "pagan," "heathens," and "non-Christians" did not merely signify that they were non-believers. They were symbolic terms depicting inferiority.

When Protestantism entered into Korea in the nineteenth century, some domestic religions such as Donghak (Eastern Scholasticism, 東學), Jeungsan-kyo and Daejong-kyo, sprang up as a reaction to Christianity. But the actual reason for their popularity was the resurgence of the indigenous non-dualistic worldviews. They commonly refused the Confucian dualism of the T'ien (天) and Chi (地), and the Christian dualism of the Light and the Darkness. By restoring their Korean worldviews based on the traditional yin-yang relationship of balance, the new religions could claim their authenticity. They had three common emphases: the union of god and humanity, the need of *haewon* (the resolution of *han_M*) and the yin-yang balance. More descriptively, their notions were the harmonious work of yin-humanity and yang-god (*Sinin-Jowba*, 神人調和), the power of union of yin and yang (*Eumyanghap*, 陰陽合), and the goodness of dispelling *han_M* (*haewon*, 解冤).¹ Because they believed that *han_M* is derived from social disorders between yin and yang, they tried to solve it with fairness. These common emphases are also shown in shaman maxim: the equality between yin and yang the greatness of union of yin and yang (大同) the restoration of equality of yin-yang. These three emphases would be Korean indigenous understandings of yin and yang.

Other major religions also claim that they have supported women's rights. However, it is hard to find proper evidences of systematic supports. It is rather folk religions in Korea that extended women's rights; laypeople instead of prominent religious leaders. What is more, major religions provided pervasive system of oppression.

In this essay, yin-yang will be tested for the equality of women. It is because Korean people have explained the cosmos in terms of yin and yang. It is interesting that the connotations of yin-yang were changed by

¹ There are many hans in Korea. Han in Minjung theology usually concerns the han meaning the accumulated feelings of various oppressions. Here, han means oneness. From this han, the Korean name of God "Hananim" was driven. The other han indicates human limitations. To distinguish them, an abbreviational subscript with each han respectively will be noted. For example, *han_M* means the han in Minjung theology, and *han_O* means the han as Oneness.

time; and the change occurred simultaneously with the change of the role of women in society.

In shamanism, yin and yang are not antagonistic. They are relational as in the case of "this" and "that". This and that are by nature inter-relational. One does not strive to annihilate the other, but they exist together without struggle. In this type of relationship, antagonism is not involved. The yin-yang theory parallels the "this-that" dichotomy. Therefore, yin and yang are not moral elements, and are changeable. They are not the subject of any ethical value judgment of good and evil. What matters is only the femininity of yin and the masculinity of yang and their relationship to each other. Their relation lacks the concept of domination and that of subordination instead it expresses that of light and shade, warmth and coldness, and femininity and masculinity. The concern is not the expansion of one but their well-balanced coexistence helping each other without hurting the other. This balanced situation is called harmony, or *chobwa* (調和), that is the maxim of old shamanism.

Buddhism and Women

In the fourth century, Buddhism was introduced to Korea, thus becoming the first major religion. It also was the first religious tradition that shared the Korean culture with shamanism. Probably the most successful amalgamation occurred between Buddhism and shamanism in Korea.

Shamanism shares the same cosmology with Buddhism and grew together with it. Shamans worship Buddha as one of the gods, and Buddhists are allowed to participate in shamanic rituals in their temple. In many rural Buddhist temples, shrines for mountain gods (山神) and the deity of the Seven Stars (七星神) that were originally shamanic can be easily found.

Buddhism in India had no theistic worldview. On the contrary, the shamanic world was filled with thousands of gods. Common sense indicates that Buddhism and shamanism should not go hand-in-hand. However, the union was made in Korea. Buddha became one of the greatest gods, and other Boddhisattvas became small gods saving all "foolish" people. Meanwhile, shamans taught about the Buddhist hell where all evil people go. Shamans began to call themselves Boddhisattvas,

and regard the Buddhist temple as their sacred place to pray and sacrifice.

Their views on woman were also different. Theoretically, Buddhism stands so aloof from the world that it has no relation to sexism and classism, as is widely accepted that male-ness and female-ness are ultimately illusory and meaningless, devoid of substance. However, its practical attitudes towards women do not quite correspond to this theory. Within the regulations on *Shangga* (communal life, *sangha* in Sanskrit) and the theory of attainment of Buddhahood, many clauses toxic to women were hidden.

According to the *Boolsulchoilmyungsammae*-sutra (佛說超日明三昧經), there are five impossibilities for woman (Chon, 1993, p. 72): Woman cannot become *Sakra devanam Indra*, *Brahma the Creator*, four kings in the corner of Directions, the King of Right-Law, or Buddha. Because women are wicked and coquettish, they cannot be *Brahma*. Because women are lecherous and immodest, they cannot be *Sakra*. Because women are flippant and disobedient, they cannot be the Direction Kings. Because women have deep attachment to things and are two-faced, they cannot become the Buddha (p. 73). In order to adopt such existences, women should have men's bodies (p. 65).

When Sakyamuni Buddha allowed the women's *Shangga*, he gave the Eight Conditions (*sila* in both Sanskrit, Pali). One of them was that even though a *bbikkuni* (a Buddhist priestess) may be one hundred years old, she should stand up in front of the newcomer *bbikku* (a Buddhist priest) and honor him as superior by joining her palms together. Another *sila* was: As long as a *bbikkuni* breathes, she should ask teachings of a *bbikku* every other week. As long as a person is in a woman's body, she is not allowed to become a Buddha. In order to become a Buddha, the person must have a man's body. This is called, in Buddhism, *byunsongsongbul*-theory (變性成佛論), a theory of changing sex to become a Buddha.

There are exceptions, however, the *Buphwa*-sutra recounts a case of a woman's Buddhahood. There was a daughter of a sea god named *Sagara*. Although she was only eight years of age, she was well versed in the ways of the world, and became enlightened after hearing the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha. She in return offered him a pearl worth more than the universe. At that moment, she turned into a man and became

a Buddha. Ordinarily, in order for a woman to become a Buddha, she must first turn her body into man's. After then, she-actually he-has to seek after the truth for five hundred more lives to become a Buddha. Although this girl skipped this long process and became a Buddha in a relatively short time, however, the principle of becoming a man first still remained. Having a body of man was necessary in order to become a Buddha. This story is from Sutanisapa:

One day Ananda asked Buddha, "Why are women not allowed in official meetings? Why can they not have an occupation? Why can they not live off what they earn?" "Dear Ananda, women are easily angered. Dear Ananda, women are jealous beings. Dear Ananda, women are stingy. Dear Ananda, women are naïve. That is why they cannot attend official meetings. That is why they cannot have an occupation. That is why they cannot live off what they earn (Yutaka, 1993, p. 44)."

SakyamuniBuddha also warned monks against meeting women. He believed that women were obstacles in the pursuit of Buddhahood. The new religion generalized woman's inferiority to man, woman's easy temperedness, and many other negative images.

There may be a connection to the absence of female rulers after the establishment of Buddhism in the sixth century. There were three female rulers in Silla before Buddhism was prosperous but none afterwards.

Silla also had a female-knight-class named Wonhwa in contrast to Hwarahng, the male-knight-group. But Wonhwa was dissolved in 576. The revealed reason for the dissolution of Wonhwa was women's jealous rage among them. But viewing a woman through the category of jealousy might be a reflection of a Buddhist view.

In the authentic Buddhism, woman is an obstacle to Buddhahood. Though it is not common to find an exception, but there is a Korean story about two men who reached enlightenment through a woman. This kind of story is unique in Korea. Ilyun of the thirteenth century left the story of Budeuk and Bahcbach in his Samgook Yoosa, Book 3.

Budeuk and Bahcbach were friends who shaved their heads and became monks in Mt. Backwolat the age of twenty. After

three years, a beautiful girl requested Bahcbach if she could spend the night in his hut. Bahcbach refused her with the reply "This is no place for you to be. Go elsewhere." The girl then went to Budeuk. Budeuk let her in with the reply, "Although this is not a place to be together with a woman, how can I turn you out into the deep forest at this hour?" Budeuk gathered his hands and bowed to her. He let her in and continued his discipline under the candlelight. As dawn approached, the girl spoke. "It appears that I may have a child. Please prepare the place for me." Budeuk took pity on her and held out the candle for her to see. She then gave birth and asked him to bathe her. Although he was frightened and embarrassed, he took pity on her and filled the tub with water and gave her a bath. At that moment, a sweet fragrance arose and the water turned bright as gold. Budeuk became alarmed but the girl replied, "It would be wise for you to also bathe in this water." He obeyed her. Suddenly, his mind cleared and his skin shined with a golden light. He looked around and saw a lotus stand. The girl asked him to sit on the stand. "I am Guanum Bosal (Avalokitēśvara in Sanskrit). I helped you reach enlightenment." With that, she disappeared. Believing that Budeuk had failed, Bahcbach went to Budeuk's house to make fun of him. When he arrived, he saw Budeuk with a golden glow about him. Bahcbach sighed, "My mind was still veiled, and I could not see a Buddha at my door." Budeuk told Bahcbach, "Take a bath in the water still left." Bahcbach also became enlightened. All the people of the village wondered at the amazing turn of events.

Both young men were enlightened with the help of a woman. In Shamanism, the co-work of yin-yang is always required. The appearance of a woman was mostly helpful to the young male monks. This story projects shamanic worldview clearly. Thus, staying a night with a girl, and bathing a woman in a hut for the monks, did not necessarily get in the way of enlightenment.

Another strange thing in Korean Buddhism is the usage of "*bosal*." The title "*bosal*" (Bodhisattva in Sanskrit) is usually applied only to men in other countries. But in Korea, women believers are rather called *bosal*. Buddhism in Korea has had a unique custom that considers women

bodhisattvas.

It is not clear why Korean female Buddhists have a relatively higher status than those of other Asian countries. Probably, Koreans had nondiscriminatory views of yin-woman. From the shamanic point of view, yin was never inferior to yang. It might be the reason that Korea has the best-developed bhikkuni sangha in the world.

Ukeum-jonyang

Confucianism was the state religion of the Yi Dynasty (1336-1910). It held the highest religious and moral regard. Confucianism was the religion for the upper-class male who could read and write. Because only the higher class male could enjoy the privilege of education, women and lower classes could not legitimately study the Confucian belief.

Although Buddhism had a bias against woman, yin was not oppressible until the Confucian *ukeum-jonyang* theory was introduced. *Ukeum-jonyang* (抑陰尊陽) literally means the oppression of yin and the encouragement of yang. The new Confucian philosophy changed Korean society significantly. All *eum* (yin) aspects of life such as women, servants, folk culture, folk religion, the uneducated, informality and human instinct were restrained.

Before the period of ukeum-jonyang, yin meant the worldly life compared to the spiritual life, inside to outside. Yin was the other face of a coin. But, ukeum-jonyang dictated all yins be hidden and shaded. The hidden part should be hidden in this new paradigm. Confucians believed that if it were revealed, the order of the universe would be broken. For instance, women should not be open to public view. Therefore, women did not go to school, but were educated at home if the parents wanted. Only yang could be in public.

One of the first effects of ukeumjonyang was that it brought forth noticeable changes in how women were viewed and treated. According to Jung (1998), up until the end of Koryo society (918-1392), the husband moved into the wife's house after marriage, but after the introduction of Confucianism, man was not the being of "move," but woman was. Thus, the wife labored in the husband's house (Jung, 1998, p. 27). The way of inheritance property was another big change. The custom of equal inheritance between sons and daughters died out in

general. Only men were able to become masters of the household, and could succeed the family fortune.

We can find examples of ukeum in *Naeboon*, which was compiled in 1475 by a Confucian Queen Sohye, the mother of King Sungjong. She taught girls the four basic principles of feminine behavior (Kim & Lim, 1984, p. 151),

Moral conduct-women need not have great talents, but they must be quiet and serene, chaste and disciplined.

Proper speech-women need not have rhetorical talents, but they must avoid bad and offensive language and speak with restraint.

Proper appearance-women need not be beautiful, but they must be clean in dress and appearance.

Womanly tasks-women need not be intelligent, but they must pay attention to such duties as weaving and entertaining guests.

This is a very colorful explanation of the Confucian influence. Why is talent unimportant for women? Why is the beauty of woman not important? Why do they not have to be intelligent? It is because these things hinder the subordination of women. As shown in *Naeboon*, the disciplines of women were focused on serving, to adapt well to the given life situation, molding women into the Confucian stereotypes of obedient daughter, dutiful wife, and sacrificial mother. The performance of their role was judged by their degree of compliance and submission in relation to their significant men in the domestic sphere.

We can easily imagine the situation of women from the seven conditions of Confucian that define the cases in which a husband can rightfully desert his wife, when he finds his wife has committed one evil out of the following seven evils, the so-called *chilgojiak* (七去之惡: Seven Evils). They are (Kim & Lim, 1984, p. 141):

The wife does not obey her parents-in-law.

The wife does not or cannot deliver sons for the house of the husband.

The wife is lecherous.

The wife is jealous of her husband's concubine(s).

The wife is seriously ill for a long time.

The wife is talkative.

The wife is larcenous.

But, the wife cannot be deserted if she meets the following three not's.

Do not cast out

if she has no original family to return to;

if she did the two-year mourning with her husband after the husband's parents died

if the husband's family became rich because of her.

It has been said that these three not's, or the so-called *sambulchool* (三不出), were established for women's sake: Women were protected. This kind of interpretation is not legitimate. Rather, the three cases supported patriarchy. According to Lee (1991, p. 290), the Yi Dynasty double-restricted women's freedom with the seven evils and three not's : The seven evils theory helped to control women's behavior and the three not's helped to maintain domestic workforce. Jung (1998, p. 104) analyzed that the Yi-Dyansty did not permit divorce with the article of *sambulchool*, and added one more "not" to make harder the separation.

The main problem was not in either *chilgojiak* or *sambulchool*, but in the belief that a woman had no power of initiative. A woman who met any of the seven conditions but did not have the right to divorce lost her status as a wife and became a slave to the house. Then, a husband could openly bring home a second wife or a concubine. The first wife had to work for her room and board until death. There was no way to freedom, equality, or human dignity in those conditions. Only duties existed, and endurance was strongly recommended for women.

The Silhak School (實學派) that arose in the 18th century, as a minor group, tried to apply the indigenous yin-yang understandings to the social system. They developed a new understanding of academics, and called it Silhak, which means practical studies. They observed the dominance of yang (the male ruling class) and the subordination of yin in their society. This imbalance, they believed, caused disorder in Korean society.

Dasan Yakyong Chung (1762-1836) was a remarkable leader of the Silhak. He held the *gwiil* (歸一) idea (Yoon & Ko, 1990, p. 287), which is also known as his *han_o* idea. He believed this world consists of an exquisite union (*myohap*, 妙合) of yin and yang. For instance, our existence consists of the delicate union of yang-body (身) and yin-mind (心). Thus, it is improper to divide existence into the impure body and the pure mind. Although *han_o* means oneness, the oneness does not mean a sole yang (獨陽), a pure yang (純陽), a sole yin (獨陰), or a pure yin (純陰). *Han_o* is the state of the union of equal yin and equal yang, and the completion of equal works of yin and yang. He believed that either yang or yin should not be isolated from the other. Nor was there a law that one part only could follow. Dasan finally claimed a single standard that both the lower-class people and the noble people should follow.

Dasan's understanding of yin and yang was not authentic Confucian. Avoiding the idea of the superiority of yang, he made people see the wholeness. To avoid seeing a half of one, Dasan held the *gwiil* (歸一) theory: Both yang and yin came from One (*han_o*), and will return to the One; neither are yangs or yins necessarily isolated from the other. Dasan's *gwiil* idea starts from his view on society. He regretted that the government was occupied by the yang alone, that is a half, and that officers were pleased with a pure yang and sole yang condition, that is a half condition. He tried to make the government more accessible for the oppressed. The pure yang, or the ruling class, which did not want to have any relations with the lower class, did not represent true oneness, because they did not embrace yins. The pure yang is therefore not One in the yin-yang theory, but is imperfection. It is because the One is neither yin nor yang, but the unity of yin and yang as is *taegeuk* (太極). He insisted that the society strive for real oneness. This idea was called *gwiil*, which became an inspiration for the liberation of the lower class. He stuck to Catholicism because he believed it embraced the *gwiil* theory. Later, Dasan was exiled for eighteen years because of his radical idea and because of his foreign Catholicism.

Women and Protestantism

When Protestantism came into Korea in the late 19th century, missionaries sought helpers from the educated. So the early church leaders were Confucians because the educated were Confucians. Naturally, the educated who became the early Korean Christian leaders and theologians were mostly influenced by Confucianism. It is not difficult to imagine how they perpetuated their Confucian attitudes toward the church. As the Confucians had done, they abhorred Buddhists and shamans, and preferred the discriminative, dualistic ethical norms. Many Korean theologians believe that the Confucian society was a morally sound society and that Korean Christians were lucky to inherit such a society. Some theologians tried to theologize Confucian norms. Sungbum Yoon developed the Confucian idea of Sung (誠), Hatae Kim, that of Kyung (敬), and Bong Bae Park, that of In (仁).

The main features of Korean Confucianism were 'order' and 'man.' The former has a connection to hierarchy and the latter to androcentrism. The Confucian norm 'filial piety' is a good example of order and androcentrism. In that tradition, daughters have no right to join in the ancestor worship, and therefore one son is worthier than one hundred daughters. If there is no son, the ancestor worship will be stopped in that family.

In Korea, this Confucian androcentrism goes hand in hand with the Protestant androcentrism. Only men could be elders and pastors of Presbyterian churches. Though Korean Methodists supported female elders from the early ages of its history, their churches did not provide specific governing jobs to the elders.

Korean churches dramatically stressed God's sovereignty and his maleness. The power of God and the image of His servants were integrated with masculine superiority. This male superiority fit well in the Confucio-Christian tradition.

Because women's ordination was thoroughly blockaded for one hundred years, it is not good to discuss the cases of Presbyterian female ordination. Methodist female pastors, though they were ordained, were banned from ministry in 1972. They were allowed to work only in an office setting (Choi, 1992, p. 37). Church leaders believed that a woman could not be a leader of a holy community, or conduct holy sacraments.

Until 1989, Methodist female pastors were banned from performing marriages if they were already ordained. It was believed that a woman could not serve two superiors—God and her husband—at the same time with the same sincerity. The married life was good only for the male pastor, because he could serve God with devotion, but care for his wife with good charity. Women cannot thoroughly serve God unless they have masculine characteristics. Therefore, most Korean church leaders are men or man-like women who wear men's custom and have men's voice.²

During the transition period from Confucian feudal society to Christian-influenced democratic society, Confucian yin-yang dualism, the metaphysical principle of Eastern Asia, fit in nicely with Christian mind-body dualism. Protestantism took the Confucian yin-yang theory and turned it into double ethical standards. That is to say, in cosmological terms, yang-heaven was viewed to preside over yin-earth, and correspondingly, yang-men had precedence over yin-women. Subsequently, male elements included the sun, height, strength, action, and the public sphere, while female elements were the moon, depth, darkness, weakness, and the inner or domestic sphere. The Protestant tradition, which equates men with rational elements, and women with emotional, bodily, and domestic elements, parallels the mind-body dichotomy nicely. The concepts of male dominance and traditional dual sex roles seen in Confucian society have not been challenged by Protestantism at all. In fact, Protestantism in Korea has supported those concepts and ideologies.

In relation to the mind-body dichotomy, a Protestant tendency to view sin in a narrow manner, as merely sensuality and arrogance, could also easily merge into the Confucian ethics of Korean society. In Western church history, under the influences of Stoic and Platonic spirituality, since the goal of salvation was viewed as the flight of the soul from the body, sin was viewed as being directly related to material, body, sensuality, and sexuality, as well as pride. Women, who were equated with the body side of the mind-body dichotomy, were also easily associated with sinful characteristics. Their bodies and sexualities were regarded as dangerous elements.

² Rosemary R. Ruether (1993, pp. 140-142) discussed well this subject in her "Mariology as Symbolic Ecclesiology," *Sexism and God Talk*.

In fact, it has been found that teachings of the Christian community, through its own patriarchal systems, have been compatible with Confucian patriarchal morals and family systems. Extreme masculine images of God, scriptural references to the wife-husband relationship based on the bride Church and the husband (lord) Christ relationship, as well as the holy covenant of marriage in Protestantism have rarely conflicted with the emphasis of strong familism, male headship in the household, preference for sons in the male lineage system, and wives' subordination to husbands in Confucianism.

But there was another early 20th century viewing of women as equal beings. It has contributed to the awareness of women's social position and played an important role in Korea's road to independence from Japan. This view was mostly inspired by Christian laypeople and the leaders of the independence movement. No one can devalue these Protestant efforts in modern Korean society.

In July 1907, Chae-ho Sin published the *Family Magazine*, a monthly publication, in Seoul. Although the publications stopped after only seven issues, due to both the oppression of the Japanese and financial difficulties, it played a great role for women. Among many writers, two Protestant writers, Chun-Gang Ahn (天江 安國善, 1879~1926) and Sang-Chon Kim (19th century) had the most radical feminist views. Although Ahn's family was in a noble class, his ancestors could not hold any official position with unknown reasons for seven generations. He probably knew what oppression or isolation meant. Later, Ahn became a fighter for national independence from Imperial Japan and served a four-year sentence in prison. Ahn (1907, p. 8) wrote, "Men's immediate problem is their attitude toward women. They do not respect women, and regard them as objects to have and to play with."

Ahn's position is radical even today. He hoped for equal treatment of women as he hoped for equal treatment from the Japanese. Equality begins with respect for the other party. He pointed out the exact error of Korean males. Another author is Sang-Chun Kim, who was influential in Ahnsung, Kyung-gi Province. Kim said (1906, pp. 1-2),

Dear woman, do not bear a grudge against others. As you know, you are giving up your God-given rights through a silly thought that your life is bound to your husband. By harboring

such a thought, you are willingly welcoming men's mistreatment. You do not care for your hunger, coldness, pleasure, sufferings, death, life, and even yourself. You deserve everything.

Kim argues about the God-given rights of women. When missionaries came to Korea, they wanted to plant the 'Old English law' in the soil of Korea. Women could not be the head of household. Kim dare proclaimed that the coverture-the status of a married woman considered as under the protection and authority of her husband (English Dictionary, Random House, 1998) - was not a God-given idea. He surely held somewhat different idea from that of missionaries. He believed: There is a God-given equal right for a woman.

Claims of Donghak

The Donghak movement was stopped in 1894 by the Government and Japanese soldiers. However, the spirit of Donghak opened a new spiritual era in Korea. As soon as the Donghak movement was stopped, two folk religions, Jeungsan-Kyo and Daejong-kyo, arose; and they claimed four central teachings (宗旨): (a) Both yin and yang do good together (陰陽合德) (b) gods and humans are harmonized (神人調化) (c) Where han_M is resolved, there is mutual vitality (解冤相生) (d) Enlightenment leads to the true world (道通眞境). Indeed, Confucianism centered its idea on the governing power of the King, and the loyalty of the people. However, these new religions did not have such views.

Jeungsan, the founder of Jeungsan-Kyo, warned, "The PreSky world [current world] is the world of *ukeum-jonyang*. Therefore, the sky and earth are packed with women's han_M, which blocks the movement of heavenly will. If this continued, the doomsday of this world would come soon." If we do not resolve [women's] han_M, no sages could save this world, even though they had the spirit of god, even though they had the knowledge and the power of the world (Dojeon [the Jeungsan Bible], 2:13). In the *Truth of Jeungsan*, it is written, "In the past days, strange things happened; nevertheless people taught of the *ukeum-jonyang*, they mentioned yin first, and then yang later. From now on, all distortions in the order of yin and yang will be corrected as they are originally placed (Ahn, 1984, p. 211)."

As soon as the Confucian kingdom collapsed (1895), the Korean people immediately stopped practicing the Bahnsahng classism, which consisted of two classes of the noble ruling class and the lower working class. It was not a miracle, but a natural progression. From the early ages of the first century, Korean people have viewed that the cosmic balance should not be broken. It has been believed that *soonyang*, *dokyang*, or any other form of sole-yang or sole-yin causes cosmic disorder. That is why laypeople raised women's right in their own ways. Equality is a Korean people's cosmic projection on their understanding of balanced coexistence of yin and yang.

Conclusion

Korea is a country with five thousand years of history. In the span of her long history, she has embraced several dominant religious traditions: Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and, more recently, Christianity. Shamanism is the oldest religion and a tradition of the Korean people from the very beginning of their history. Although it lost its dominance to Buddhism over a period of time, it continued to function as a governing force in many areas of Korean culture. It has provided three views of (1) the equality between yin and yang, (2) the productive power of unity of yin and yang, and (3) the peace that can be derived when han_M is resolved. It is good for theologians to theologize these three beliefs because they are (1) religious *a priori* for Korean people, (2) and are the most radical request of current society.

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