

musicologists, anthropologists, students of comparative literature and drama, and those interested in broadening their horizons to include art forms perhaps unfamiliar to them but nevertheless deserving of study and appreciation.

Marshall Pihl died on 12 August 1995. This book will stand as a testament and a memorial to his scholarship in the fields of Korean literature, art, and culture, and to his love of the Korean people.

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WALRAVEN, BOUDEWIJN. *Songs of the Shaman: The Ritual Chants of the Korean mudang*. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1994. x + 307 pages. Appendices of formulae, formulaic systems and themes, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$76.50; ISBN 0-7103-0403-X.

What are Korean shaman songs? The infinitely variable utterances of divinely inspired women? An ancient corpus, long frozen into text like *The Nine Songs* (CH'U 1973) or the Manchu *Tale of the Nisan Shamaness* (NOWAK and DURANT 1977)? The truth, Boudewijn Walraven tells us, lies somewhere in between. These long, complicated, and sometimes humorous songs are learned from a shaman teacher (or sometimes several teachers), and mastery constitutes one of the more daunting tasks of shamanic apprenticeship in Korea.

Printed song texts, without musical notation, seem to have circulated from teacher to apprentice for a very long time. Like Walraven, I have seen dilapidated copies of a standard anthology in the hands of shaman and antiquarian bookseller alike. In recent decades young shamans have practiced their songs with the aid of tape recorders. But once the songs are mastered the shamans who perform them will sometimes delete and elaborate, borrowing from each other and adding imagery from their own contemporary landscape. Mythic figures appear shod in rubber-soled athletic shoes, and (in one of Walraven's examples) events are situated at the time of the New Village Movement (1970s) when shaman rituals and other "superstitious practices" fell afoul of the nation's modernizing agenda. Minor improvisations within a fixed song address the concerns of particular clients. At a series of *kut* held in the summer of 1995, I heard shamans in Seoul sing reassurances to a florist that "bunches of flowers are going in [to fill a large order], whether sitting or standing you will hear the sound of the door [opening constantly for clients]." For an electrician, "Though my client goes east, west, south, and north... I will help so that there will be no power failure." For a family that runs a travel agency, the Spirit Official of the vehicle (Cha Taegam) will "seize the front tire and seize the back tire and move the vehicle to an auspicious place."

In recognizing the songs as a simultaneously conservative and innovative form, Walraven opens the door to larger issues. Prior studies have hewn to the commonsense assumption that the shamanic tradition is primeval, valued as a repository of the ancient roots of Korean culture. By this logic, shaman songs are the progenitors of Korean literature in a procrustean evolutionary scheme. Walraven's painstaking research shows us that, to the contrary, the shamans have shamelessly borrowed from *sijo* and *ŕasa* poetry and the Korean vernacular tales that have appeared as both published novels and performed ballad operas (*p'ansori*). Walraven's command of this corpus is impressive! His exacting annotation and analysis of several shaman songs not only reveal the bits of stories, imagery, and turns of phrase that can be traced to literary sources but also show how the shamans have borrowed from the rhetorical

devices and other stylistic embellishments of several genres.

While *p'ansori* was performed in both noble homes and the marketplace, other literary forms that nourished the shaman songs were the pursuits of highly literate nobles (*yangban*). Walraven cautiously reimagines the Korean literary world of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The performers (*kwangdae*) who entertained the office-holding elite and seem also to have been associated with hereditary shaman teams became a critical conduit whereby Korean high culture entered into popular religious performances. If Walraven's research makes shaman songs a dubious source for the origins of Korean literature, it gives them new value as a means by which that literature became more broadly "Korean."

Beyond his stated goals, Walraven provides us with an important lesson for the study of shamans in Korea and other places as well. Local historiography values the shamans as "ancient" and disdains contemporary innovations as a blemish upon the face of the past. Walraven's findings relate also to the "commonsense" histories of Korean religion that describe "shamanism" as something primal, a subject for the first chapter only. Contemporary Korean shamanic rituals are replete with the terminology and accoutrements of Buddhist practice and saturated with essentially "Confucian" moral notions. We would do far better to abandon the search for an ancient "shamanism" and regard the shaman as an inspired synthesizer of history and contemporary experience.

I have one minor quibble with the author, an inevitable consequence of our different approaches. He correctly notes that the songs are not magical formulae, that the words themselves do not compel the spirits to comply with the client's wishes. He remarks, offhandedly, that certain elements of the songs invite the spirits to "descend" into the ritual space, and that the performance is more generally intended to please them (48). One misses a sense of the power of performance in Korean shaman ritual, of the absolute necessity of pleasing the spirits, as shown by the careful manner in which shamans groom themselves for a *kut*, by the meticulous arrangement of offering food, and by the music, song, and dance that they perform. (I have had my own ear pulled by a spirit who was irate that I had not hired musicians for a *kut* that I was sponsoring.) The spiritual climate of a ritual may, the shamans explain, affect the tenor of performance. When restless ghosts and ominous forces hover, neither the drum beats nor the human voice can burst forth with a clear and powerful sound.

Walraven provides us with a clear and detailed sense of what Korean shaman songs are as texts displaced from their ritual context. His argument rests on the assumption that innovation occurs within a living tradition over time, but one must look elsewhere for a sense of how these works of cultural production are realized in performance. Even so, this is a fine work of exacting scholarship that opens a new dimension of the Korean shaman world.

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