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N.B. This is a draft chapter for a book describing the religious practices that I encountered when doing fieldwork in an out-of-the-way Korean mountain village in Kangwŏn Province in 1977 and 1983. Most of the book will be about the village mountain god cult, ancestor worship (chesa), shaman's ceremonies (kut), and worship of house gods (kosa). Some ten percent of the villagers during this time period were recently converted Christians, however, and this chapter will be placed somewhere in the middle of the book to reflect this aspect of village religion. This chapter deals with what informants told me about religion and their reasons for becoming Christian. (I did not do participant observation of Christian worship because that would have, in my estimation, made it impossible to study the folk religion of shamans, spirits, and ancestor worship.) I also discuss how Christianity does and does not fit in with the folk religion, and the traditional gendered religious division of labor.

Village Christians

The Christian presence in the village had been apparent from the beginning of my stay because of the Presbyterian church near the center of Big Hamlet not far from my house. Its bell would ring clamorously to announce services, including a prayer service each morning for which the bell began to ring around 5:20AM resounding throughout the valley and into my half-asleep ears. I hadn't yet met any Christians, but on my first Sunday in the village I was surprised by a delegation that visited my room. It turned out that they had come from the church to invite me to attend services. I knew immediately they had assumed that since the United States is a Christian country I must be a Christian. I'm not a churchgoer, but more importantly I knew that my plan to find out about folk religion on the side would become impossible if I were publicly associated with the village Christians. I thought frantically about how I could graciously decline this invitation, but even if I had come up with a good excuse my Korean language at this early stage was not capable of subtlety. I blurted out, "I am not a believer," (*Sinja animnida*).

The head of the delegation looked shocked, and they then withdrew. It was an early, but I guess unavoidable, gaffe. I felt bad about it because the delegation seemed so chastened by my refusal. I later got to know A-7, the head of the delegation, as a 62-year old man, small-of-stature, humble, and sincere in belief. Months later I happened to drop by his house on a Sunday when the church pastor was visiting. After asking one of the visitors to say a prayer he asked A-7 to do a Bible reading. A-7's halting recitation of the Bible passage was heart-rending, and

made me guess that he had only learned to read as an adult in the mass literacy campaigns in South Korea after 1945 liberation from Japanese rule. Born in 1915, he would have been school age during the early colonial period when formal schooling was unavailable for most rural people.

Six weeks later, after I had become more confident about meeting people, I went out one Sunday morning when church-goers were milling about after worship and managed to strike up a conversation with a woman in her fifties who herself seemed drawn to me by curiosity. She turned out to be from the hamlet of Little Stream about twenty-minutes-walk down the valley.

[B-49 1977.2.27] She told me that her whole family goes to church, and that they had started last year. Because of this they have stopped doing *chesa* [ancestor worship]. When I asked about how such a decision is made, she answered that it follows from the house head: if he goes to church, they don't do *chesa*. She was there with her 15-year-old third son with whom, she continued, she attends dawn worship every day. Not only that, but they attend services on Sunday during the day, and come in [to Big Hamlet where the church is located] three evenings a week (Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday).

This was my first interview about Christianity. I subsequently met her husband, a man in his sixties who habitually wore Hanbok and who had not been in sight while I had talked with his wife. I found that he was a heavy drinker, and he confirmed during a subsequent interview that he does not attend church. His lack of ancestor worship may not have been related to his wife's Christianity either. Genealogical research revealed that his nephew D-1 is the Big House and thus responsible for the ancestor worship for the nephew's grandfather, who was also B 49's father (B-49 was the nephew's junior uncle). It was B 49's wife who had married into the village from the city and her younger children who were the churchgoers. A wife, and/or children, attending church without the father would turn out to be a common pattern fitting the villager's traditional religious division of labor by gender as discussed below in which men manage high status formal ceremonial, while women deal with relations with gods and spirits.

After this I gradually got to know some of the other village Christians as individuals. For most villagers Christianity turned to be about two things: modernity and healing. Only one villager seemed taken with Christianity as a moral vision. To villagers I talked with Christianity seem to be about modernity because Christians opposed the 'superstition' (misin) and spirits (kwisin) of folk religion, and because Christian (that is Protestant) countries were understood as the world's most developed.¹ When I talked with Christian villagers, in fact, I sometimes had the eerie

¹ There are also strong discourses in Korean Christianity about God's Providence and His plan for the uplift of Korean Civilization, although I did not hear any of these

feeling they had been reading Max Weber on Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism.² For older and especially female villagers, however, Christianity seemed to be more about religious efficacy than modernity: they had success curing ailments by praying to the Christian god after failing to obtain a cure by praying to folk deities. For them Christianity seemed to function as a more powerful folk religion providing spiritual protection to family members rather than a vision of a new, modern morality. These two strains of thought often coexisted within the same person.

Early on I was struck by one Midvale householder, D-13, who seemed one of the pillars of the village Christian community. When I first interviewed him in March 1977 the subject of religion didn't come up though I knew him to be a Christian, but the next day coming back through Midvale after visiting a hamlet up the valley in Village No. 2 some young men I knew proposed killing a chicken for a banquet to which I was invited. I felt a bit awkward since the young men pitched in 500 wŏn each and hadn't asked me to contribute, but the food and company were both good. When this forty-one-year-old pillar of village Christianity from a few doors down joined the banquet, I took the occasion to ask about his religion.

[D-13 1977.3.30] He's a Christian, but he's still involved with the traditional system and *chesa*, but I don't know exactly how, since he dodged the question of the compatibility of Christianity and *chesa*. He said they are incompatible, but earlier had told me that he himself does *chesa*. I didn't understand his reply when I pointed out the discrepancy.

As a sincere Christian he didn't smoke or drink, something that limited his social interaction with other village men, but he was a quite successful farmer whose landholdings put him in the top quintile of villagers. On several occasions I heard him talk quite critically of Korean tradition. He was one of the modernizers.

The following month during one of my regular peregrinations around the village I came across him teaching a young neighbor to plow with an ox. The neighbor wasn't a very apt pupil (the ox wouldn't obey him). While we watched the young man struggle D-13 kept trying to convert me to Christianity. His reasoning began with the assertion that Christianity doesn't allow for the distinction between *yangban* and *sangnom* (aristocrat and commoner). "Look around," he continued, "All the

discourses in the village. Perhaps the most famous example is Ham Sŏkhŏn's *Ttŭt ŭro pon Han'guk yŏksa* [Korean History as Seen through Purpose] serialized 1934-5 in the periodical *Sŏngsŏ Chosŏn* [Bible Korea]. For more recent examples see of this discourse see Nicholas Harkness, *Songs of Seoul: An Ethnography of Voice and Voicing in Christian South Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), especially chapter 2, "Voicing an Advanced Korea."

² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. (New York, Scribner's and Son, 1958).

advanced countries are Christian, aren't they?" (D-13 1977.4.23). Some months later when the summer dog soup season arrived some of the village men butchered a dog to roast for a picnic along the riverbank of boiled dog soup. A-13 was critical of that, as well. I overheard him berate one of the younger men for participating in such a picnic. "I don't see why you have to eat a puppy (kangaji)," he complained, to which the indignant young man replied, "It wasn't a puppy. It was a full grown dog!"

The daughter of this pillar of the Christian community was married to the caretaker of the elementary school in Midvale whom one of the teachers told me is Christian. When I interviewed him he said he doesn't go to church, but he volunteered that his wife attends often. (D-22 1977.6.16).

The Church Picnic

I continued to have limited contacts with the village Christians, but one Sunday in May as I was writing to my wife a delegation of Christians once again came to my room. This time they were inviting me to a church picnic. As I wrote to my wife,

[Letter 1977.5.8] Normally I steer clear of the Christians, but I had been trying to figure out a way to find out about them without [becoming] identified with them. Anyway, I went. Apart from the conversion attempts it was okay. At least I can identify most of the Christian men now. The Christians are about ten percent of the population, so I can hardly ignore them.

The May weather was warm and pleasant, and the cuckoos announced their presence with a constant refrain of *ppökkuk, ppökkuk* (I constantly heard them, but never actually spotted one). I had remarked in the above letter that as dawn was coming earlier and earlier, the daily dawn prayer service with the church bell calling everyone to prayer was also coming earlier. It used to be at 5:00AM, but now the bell started ringing at 4:00AM.

The picnic by the riverside started off with worship service led by the pastor: silent prayer followed by two hymns, verbal prayer, a hymn and a choral reading. The girl from the Midvale shopkeeper's family did a solo prayer (eyes shut at the top of her voice), followed by a solo hymn sung by of the men from Little Stream whose mother I had interviewed above. The pastor gave a short sermon that was followed by another hymn and a solo prayer (eyes shut at the top of his voice).

[RFN 1977.5.8] Women sat on the left, and men on the right. This happened naturally. There was some comment about this, but nothing was done [about it]. The kids were running to and fro as usual, being breast-fed when needed, and otherwise playing in the river.

In praying people bowed their heads and closed their eyes. Sometimes they prayed silently, but often one person prayed aloud for all the rest. When praying aloud people used lots of old-fashioned verb endings [hamnida, inaida]. Prayers were fast and fervent. People often expressed thanks. Many people crouched rocking back and forth as they prayed. The sermon was vehement, but didn't promise fire and brimstone.

The picnic that followed was pleasant and convivial. About a dozen adult men and twice that number of adult women were in attendance. When some of the people got ready to leave the pastor insisted on some final Bible readings. First was a passage from *Isaiah*. Second was *Revelation 21:1-5* about God establishing a new heaven and earth for the New Jerusalem after the destruction of the sinners. No watered down Christianity for them! Once the Bible reading was completed the picnic developed into a party with singing and games.

A Hard Luck Tale and Conversion Narrative

As May rolled along families continued miscellaneous farming tasks: fixing the dikes, plowing rainfall fields for soybeans or peanuts, weeding tobacco or barley, spreading *kaekt'o* (extra soil), and preparing their rice fields for transplantation. I continued timing these tasks and recording the composition of the work groups. As I walked through the fields that day I found a snake that had just caught a frog by the head and was vigorously squeezing it. The madly hopping frog suffocated in a minute or so, after which the snake relaxed and devoured it head first as I watched with a shudder.

On the way home late in the day I came across A-18 resting near his house with his two sons, the same two I had seen at the church picnic the day before, along with with garrulous A-24's ugly brother. As we got to talking A-18 admitted with chagrin that his family owns no land at all, and even their house is rented. Then he began his story.

[RFN 1977.5.9] He was born near Fishplay Shore in 1924. When he had been quite young his father, being poor, had been told to go to Japan,³ but he didn't want to go. His family apparently wandered about the area so his father could avoid conscription. The family was eventually sent to Manchuria (East Manchuria) where they lived until liberation in 1945. After liberation they came down [into the southern US occupation zone] to live in Kaesŏng. When the Korean War started he was twenty-seven and was not drafted. His family fled down to Taegu. His little brother apparently became a red [*ppalgaengi*].

³ This was likely between 1937 and 1945 when the Japanese began recruiting Korean labor for factories in Japan that were running short of labor due to mass mobilization of Japanese men into the army. He wouldn't go

He died, and A-18 was arrested for redness. He says he wasn't a red, but his brother had died, and was he supposed to not cry for his brother? He got out of that pickle, and they fled to Taegu (apparently the Americans were more lax about who they let through than the ROK).

After the Korean War he lived in Seoul for twenty years. I don't know why he left [Seoul], but he came back [to the village about four years ago] because this is his *kohyang* [native place]. He has a relative that lives in a big house, but he commented about visiting that relative by saying, "ilgajiman poram i ōpsōtta" [He's a clan mate but it didn't do me any good]. He has eight-inch cousins in the neighboring township.

A-18 lived close to where I lived. I used to see him fetching water from the stream for his wife, since they were too poor to have a well of their own. His "rich relative" was the richest man in the hamlet A-10 whom I had met several times. This is one interview I wish I could do over, however. In subsequent fieldwork elsewhere a decade later when I had made an effort to learn the details and timing of the Korean War I would have caught the vagueness of some of his Korean War story and have pinned him down more carefully.⁴

In any case, I knew the man to be a Christian. Later that month after I had already seen the village *tang kut* and observed a village funeral I again saw him resting in his courtyard as I came home late in the afternoon. Dropping in to converse I mentioned to him the village funeral I had seen earlier that month. A-18 immediately warmed to this topic teaching me the terms *sangmang* which he defined as *ch'oharu* (new moon, first day of the lunar month) and *porŭm* (full moon, fifteenth day of the lunar month), the two days when descendants are supposed to make offerings to the recent dead. He also taught me *sosang* the tombstone worship done at the end of the first year, managing in the process to teach me the native Korean term for two years, *it'ae*, a unique term that has no counterpart for one or three years.⁵

⁴ Between 1945 and 1950 Kaesŏng, which is just south of the 38th parallel and now part of North Korea, was administered by the US occupation authorities, and then the Republic of Korea starting in 1948. It was overrun by North Korea in the first hours of June 25th, 1950 and occupied by North Korea until UN forces moved north after taking Seoul in September, 1950. It would have fallen again to the Chinese PLA in late December 1950. It is likely A-18 stayed in Kaesŏng during the summer of 1950 since he would not have had time to flee the initial North Korean assault. His younger brother likely joined the North Korean volunteers at that time. A-18 was likely arrested by the South Korean pacification corps (*ch'iandae*) when UN forces retook Kaesŏng, and later fled to Taegu in front of the Chinese PLA forces coming down in December 1950.

⁵ The word probably came up when he tried to teach me *taesang*, the ceremony that ends the three year mourning period (on the second anniversary of death), but my

I took the opportunity of talking about the funeral to ask about souls [*hon*] and spirits [*kwisin*]. It's not clear from my field notes how I asked this question. I was probably probing to see whether David Jordan and Arthur Wolf's hypothesis about a three-way distinction between gods [*shen*], ghosts [*kuai*], and ancestors [*zu*] in Taiwanese folk religion holds for Korea.⁶ The ubiquitous use in Korean of the term *kwisin* (a combination of the Chinese terms for ghost and god, i.e. *kuai-shen*) didn't seem to conform to this conceptual scheme. In any case, A-18 replied that souls [*hon*] and spirits [*kwisin*] are interchangeable. He then volunteered, "Christians say there are no souls." [RFN 1977.5.20] I didn't know how to interpret this at the time, though a subsequent interview (related below) of another Christian clarified this issue. A-18 continued, "Catholicism is superstition. Look how Protestant countries are more developed than Catholic," sounding very much like D-13 in Midvale above.⁷

I asked him how he had become a Christian.

[RFN 1977.5.20] His wife had gotten sick. [They tried everything, but nothing worked.] Finally she prayed [to the Christian God], and she got better. She and his sons began attending church. His sons went to church for three years before he finally decided to join in. He only goes to church in San'gongni, however, not elsewhere.

He continued his hard luck narrative about the times just before liberation when he was twenty-six. Of his three sons, one died, and one lives in Hongch'ŏn. I asked about remittances, but he apparently doesn't get any. His rich kinsman who lives up the hill, he told me, owns 40 majigi of land [2.6 ha].

Later on my way home I engaged in conversation with the twenty-two-year old son of B-40, husband of the Little Stream mother I had interviewed in the churchyard in February. He attends church with his mother. I had my notebook out, and looking over my shoulder he spotted the words *hon* and *kwisin* that I had written in Korean in my notebook from the interview above. He was horrified.

[Indecks 5/20/1977] "There is no such thing as spirits [*kwisin*], you know. The souls (*hon*), where do they go?" he asked. "They don't stay in the grave

notes do not contain this term which I only was able to retain after learning from a later informant.

⁶ David K. Jordan, *Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: The Folk Religion of a Taiwanese Village*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1972; Arthur P. Wolf, *Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974.

⁷ As in the US South, the term Christian [*Kidokkyo*] was used in the village as a synonym for Protestantism, although there is also a distinct word in Korean for Protestantism, *Kaesin'gyo*. Catholicism was referred to by a distinctive term [*Ch'ŏnjugyo*].

like those who are superstitious (*misin minnŭn saram*) say, but they go up into the sky (*hanŭl*). Therefore, there cannot be spirits because the souls are up in the sky.”

I was noncommittal on this point, of course, but his comments shed light on why my previous informant had told me Christians don't believe in souls. In the folk religion the word *hon* (soul) primarily references souls of the recent dead that can be called *kwisin* in certain contexts. The souls who, after proper burial, return in annual ancestor worship ceremonies I had heard sometimes referred to as *kwisin*. In the *kut* I had seen *kwisin* had also been present, and some of them might well have been spirits of the dead who didn't quite make it to the “other side” (*chŏsŭng*).

In 1983, moreover, a non-Christian informant once again confirmed that Christians don't believe in *hon*.

[RFN 1983.7.20] Christians oppose belief in spirits (*kwisin*). They say that when people die they go to Heaven (*ch'ŏndang*), and there are no *hon* (souls). This is going too far. Of course there are *hon*.

It was only in 1983 that I had learned the Korean word for Heaven. My 1977 informants had said souls go up into the sky rather than the Heaven. But if Christians don't believe in *hon*, what would they say for the Christian soul? Perhaps they use the term (*yŏnghon*).

Vietnam Comes Up in the Fields of Midvale

In March 1977 I had an uncomfortable encounter with a young Midvale man D-12 over the Vietnam War. Anxious to re-interview this Vietnam veteran I kept visiting Midvale to see if I could find him again. In June as I was making one of these visits I came across a group of young men that included D-12's younger brother working in the fields transplanting rice. As they were resting taking a meal I stopped to chat. D-15, a contemporary of D-12, unbidden, brought up again the issue of Vietnam again. It turns out that he, also, was a Vietnam veteran.

[D-15 1977.6.2] “Seven San'gok men went to Vietnam [to fight]. Five thousand soldiers died, though none from this village.” When I commented that I didn't think the Vietnamese wanted to fight (unlike the Koreans in the Korean War) he replied, “Yes, there is a lot of Buddhist superstition there.”

I knew that D-15 was married to the daughter of Mr. Hard Luck, A-10 mentioned above, and was also a Christian, but this explanation seemed like a non sequitur. My field assistants, however, recorded a fuller story from him in 1983 when he was still resident in the village that was more revealing. It turned out he had been a Christian for about a year when I first met him in 1977, and that there was a connection with his attitudes toward “superstition” and Vietnam.

[Blue/Brown No. 10 1983.7.24] I've believed in Christianity for seven years. My motivation was that when my mother was suffering from illness I went to a prayer hall [kidowŏn] to pray, and after it proved effective (hyohŏm ūl pon ihu) I became a Christian. Compare this with my mother going up San'gok Mountain to pray and hold a *kut* for me when I was in Vietnam! At first people criticized me for believing in Christianity, but my beliefs are mine, so why should villagers criticize me? I don't like superstition.

In 1977 I had noted about D-15 that both he and his father-in-law in Big Hamlet were, like D-13 the pillar of the Midvale Christians, not well connected by kinship to the rest of the community, even though all were distantly connected to well-established village lineages. Since D-15 mentioned in 1983 village criticism of his Christianity my assistants asked about relations among Christians at that time.

[Blue/Brown No. 10 1983.7.24] Among we who believe in Christianity there are ties (yudae). It's not definite, but we do tend to stick together (mungch'inŭn p'yŏn). Somehow it's better than with non-believers. Amid this pressure (p'ippak) I live my belief that way.

Later that June in 1977 I made another attempt to find the Vietnam veteran who was the married eldest son of the house, but again failed. I was told that he was socializing in a hamlet several miles up the valley and wouldn't be home that day. A third interview attempt in July also failed to find him at home, so I finally broke down and interviewed his younger brother. This second brother was cooperative about family organization and economic matters, but he balked at questions about Christianity. In my household interviews of 1977 I didn't normally ask specifically about religion, but since I had noticed that this man attended church I thought he would be happy to tell me about his belief. He parried my question, however, saying something I didn't fully understand about marriage and how that affects church attendance (his 28-year-old brother was married, but he at 25 was not yet married). The mother of this house, I also observed, habitually wandered about the village saying strange things, and tended to be mildly taunted when she appeared in Big Hamlet though she did seem to socialize well with the other women in Midvale.

In 1983 we re-interviewed this same house that had been taken over by the third son. He explained that the other family members (his two older brothers, mother, and sister-in-law) had moved to Ch'unch'ŏn six years ago. This must have been about the time I finished my 1977 fieldwork.

[Blue No. 12 D-21 1983.7.24] Older brother's family said, "It's better to live in Ch'unch'ŏn even if I have to do manual labor (mak nodong)." And then there was the problem of the children's education.

Whatever religious tensions there had been in 1977 they seemed to be resolved by the partitioning of the family leaving only one brother on the land. This third brother proved to be an early and loyal convert.

[Blue No. 12 D-21 1983.7.24] We've been attending church for thirteen years ever since the church came into the village. Before that we believed in the god of San'gok Mountain (san sillyŏng). When the church was built almost all the villagers (tongne saram) pitched in to build it, but after it was all built the villagers opposed the church.

As his neighbor D-15 reported above, this young married man of 28 reported that the church forms the center of social like for this cluster of young Christian families in Midvale.

[Blue No. 12, D-21 1983.7.24] The younger people [chŏlmŭn saram]⁸ gather at the church. We socialize, or do service activities. We have divided ourselves up into about three groups. There is also a group of those in their thirties and forties.

The Presbyterian Minister

By mid-June the busy planting season had wound down. During a break in a rainy Saturday in June I emerged from my room looking for activity. Nothing much was going on, but I spied the village pastor at seeming loose ends in the center of Big Hamlet. Since I had met him several times before I grabbed my notebook and asked for an interview. He proved amenable.

He had been born in 1939 in P'yŏngch'ang County high in the T'aebaek Mountain Range, the third of seven children all raised in the same area. I didn't get a striking conversion narrative from the pastor, but he did tell me he was the first in his family to convert to Christianity. He subsequently converted his mother and his younger brother. He attended divinity school in Seoul's Kwangiang-dong, but seems to be the only one in his family to be college educated. He reported that his older brother and mother live where he was born, as do his unmarried younger brothers, and all are engaged in agriculture. He seemed to have started off his career in his native county, but headed a small church near San'gongni before coming to the village four years ago. The church itself had only been founded in 1968, less than ten years previously, he noted. Currently he is living in the village with his wife (from North Ch'ungch'ŏng Province) and five children. His oldest son attends his second year of middle school in the market town. He has two children in the local elementary school, and two preschool children. He is without a doubt the most educated person in the village.

⁸ The category "chŏlmŭn saram" refers in this case to people in about their twenties.

He related that the church has two services each Sunday, one during the day, and one in the evening. They also have Tuesday evening and Friday evening services, as well as the daily dawn prayer meetings whose bell ringing has woken me up each morning. He was well aware that this number of services is well beyond what is normal in the United States (especially the dawn prayer services), and he expressed pride at the fervor of his congregation. It serves families of both Sangok 1 and Sangok 2 high up in the mountain, and there are a few churchgoers from Duldai several miles up the river. He didn't give me an estimate of what proportion of the villagers are Christian, but I would guess it was about 10% in 1977.

Since I was aware that the Presbyterian Church in Korea had split into a number of factions, I tried to elicit information as to which group his church belonged to, but at the time my knowledge of the various strains of Presbyterianism in Korea was too elementary to allow me to make much progress there. Instead, the pastor taught me the general Korean names for the different Protestant denominations: Presbyterianism (Changnohoe), Methodism (Kamnigyo), Holiness Church (Sönggyö) that he said was founded by the Americans Cowman and Kilbourne,⁹ and Baptist (Ch'imnyegyo) that he associated with Billy Graham. His theological seminary gave away his faction, however, since the one in Seoul's Kwangjang-dong would be Seoul Changsin Taehakkyo, a school of The Presbyterian Church of Korea, Taehan Yesugyo Changnohoe (T'onghap), a mainline group whose theology is considered middle-of-the-road in the Korean context.

Other Big Hamlet Christians

As I continued family interviews in Big Hamlet I came across a number of other Christian families that I hadn't known well since they circulated in different social circles in the village than I did. One was a dignified widow who had married her husband after her husband's first wife had died, and had no children of her own. Her husband's daughter was married and living in Inch'ön. A son had been adopted to her husband's line, but she said he lives in Seoul and only comes for ancestor worship. I felt that her motivation for going to church was probably for fellowship.

Several days later a second Christian family proved most interesting. A-8 was a forty-six year old man and his daughter living close to my host family. I had met the man's son in February when he had graduated from the English Department of

⁹ These names are transcribed from Korean, so I am not certain whom the pastor meant but it is likely he was referring to Charles Cowman and Edwin Kilbourne who were in 1904 appointed General Superintendent and Vice Superintendent respectively for Korea, Japan, and China of the International Apostolic Holiness Union and Churches. They were active mostly in Japan, but a Holiness Bible Institute was also set up in Korea around 1910.

Kangwŏn University in Ch'unch'ŏn and was waiting at home in the village for a job as an English teacher to come through. (He spoke English to me.) The son was now, I was informed, teaching English in a High School in P'yŏngch'ang. The father I knew as a fervent Christian.

I had a great deal of trouble reconstructing the family history because, as it turns out, the grandfather had remarried a woman from P'yŏngyang and moved to Fish Pleasure Shore to dabble in geomancy and fortune telling, splitting from his eldest son, the current resident of the house. I wouldn't have found this out but for his daughter who kept chiming in with information about grandpa's doings. What was most on this householder's mind, however, was the opportunity to convert me to Christianity. He had suggested conversion to me right away during our interview. I had put him off, but as we relaxed and talked informally it came up again.

A-8 1977.6.29 Then he got back to trying to convert me [to Christianity] so I could turn into a missionary. [It seemed such a perfect set up. I'm American, and I already speak Korean!] His idea was that there is democracy (minjujuŭi) on one side where people speak ill of others, and communism (kongsanjuŭi) on the other where people also speak ill of others. Christianity represents a third way. If everybody would believe, then there could be established peace on earth, and no war between nations.

My field assistants interviewed him again in 1983, and he was still a fervent Christian. This time he revealed himself to be one of the original village converts.

A-8 1983.7.26 "We've been Prebyterian since about fifteen years ago. Our whole family started going as soon as the church showed up. When I studied Hanmun as a child¹⁰ I came to feel for morality (todŏk)—humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom (仁, 义, 礼, 智). I found these same values in Christianity, so when they had a revival (puhŭnghoe), I took part. I did have doubts about the Bible (about resurrection, hell, heaven, and so forth), and there was pressure from those around me, but I came to believe that Jesus came according to the prophesy of Isaiah, and this strengthened my belief.

A-8 1983 was by far the most intellectually engaged of the Christians, and he illustrated a third strain in Christian conversion narratives: the search for modern

¹⁰ This was most likely in the village *sŏdang*, a school of Chinese letters run informally by some of the better educated elders that operated until the modern middle school opened in Broadmart some ten years previously. I met in the village many male, middle-aged alumnae of this "school" that often met in the shade of a tree when the weather was fine.

and sound ethical foundation. A standard criticism of folk religion in Korea is that it lacks an ethical foundation—being all about curing disease, and enhancing household fortune—yet for most village non-Christians the ethics of Confucianism were alive enough to provide a moral basis for social action. Thus, to most villagers, modernity was a more compelling reason for rejecting folk religion than ethics. This made A-8's narrative all the more interesting.¹¹

Hard Luck Continues

Mr. Hard Luck whose conversion narrative I related above was one of my favorite informants whom I had talked to many times, but I did not do a formal family interview with him until the end of June. At that time he gave me one of my most extensive family stories.

(A-18 1977.6.30) I interviewed him at his home on a rainy day, but I'm still not sure about everything, that is, he says he was married three times, but I only got the story of two marriages.

His grandfather and father were both landless. He was born in Ten Thousand Village about 10 miles from here, and hardships started when he was quite young. His father and family were deported to Manchuria [by the Japanese] and lived there until Liberation. He talked much about the Soviets (*Ssoryŏn nom*). He thought the Soviet soldiers were greedy, and he didn't like them. He fled to Kaesŏng where he says he was well received by the American soldiers who said, "kosaeng manhi tanghaetta" (you've suffered a lot), and gave him bread to eat. Somewhere along the way his first wife divorced him. I don't know why. She might have been a local girl.

Anyway, when he got to Kaesŏng the authorities put him in busses (trains, trucks, or something), and sent the refugees down to Seoul (where I think he lived for a while). He got to Kap'yŏng (which he called "Kaep'yŏng") in Kyŏnggi Province where he did fire field farming [hwajŏn, a kind of slash and burn agriculture that used to be done in the mountains of Korea] for twenty years. There he met his present wife and her husband and son, who were also refugees, and moved into his house.

Here my original raw field notes of the interview provide additional information. His younger brother had died in the Korean War (see above). His wife was originally from Yanggu and Hwach'ŏn Counties that, although they are now under South

¹¹ Note here that Max Weber regards "peasant religion" to mostly lack ethical rationalization. See "The Religious Propensities of Peasantry, Nobility and Bourgeoisie," In *Economy and Society*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968). Vol. I pp 468-80.

Korean administration, are north of the 38th parallel and had been administered by North Korea from 1945 to 1953. And they were the scenes of ferocious fighting in the last months of the Korean War. The language he used about his wife (*haebang hui wöllam hae nawatchi*) implies that she fled south after liberation.

(A-18 1977.6.30) “I lived as a widower (*horabi saenghwal*) for a while with my friend and his wife. The husband died in our *sarangbang*, so I subsequently married the new widow, and also raised her son. [They were still in Kap’yöng at the time]. His wife had also been in Manchuria and she and her former husband had fled south.

“After the war ended President Syngman Rhee told people to go into the mountains and do fire field farming (*hwajön*) so as to live off the land. I did that in Kap’yöng for twenty years. Several years ago *hwajön* agriculture was prohibited by President Park Chung Hee, however. The government was supposed to give the slash and burn farmers money, and tell them to go, but they just told us to go without giving us any money. The lands that I used for fire field agriculture were government lands so I didn’t have to pay any rent.

“After that I became a tenant farmer in Kap’yöng for three years, and then came to San’gongni. I came here because my father’s sister’s grandson was wealthy here, and kept saying to come. This “outside cousin” *oejong sach’on* (father’s sister’s son) did trading, had a lot of land, and so became rich. When I arrived in San’gok, however, this outside cousin who had enough land to harvest 100 bags of rice sold all his land and moved to Hongch’ön. I got into a fight with this outside cousin over this. After telling me to come all these years how could the cousin just sell out and leave? But he did.

“I’ve lived in San’gok in four houses (it’s been about six years). My present house is for the seasonal ancestor worship (*sihyangje*) of A-33 (See “Farming Since the Age of Ten” in *Agricultural Crunch Time* pp 27-8). I sharecrop land owned by each of the three largest landowners in Big Hamlet. Even my rainfall field is sharecropped,” he complained. “Now that you can’t do fire field agriculture,” he said, “What else is there?”

His family consisted of himself, his third wife, his eldest stepson, and his own son and daughter by his present wife. His oldest daughter is married to the Midvale Christian mentioned above. He treats his stepson like one of his own, though legally the stepson is considered the head of a separate family of one. All are Christian.

A Christian Still Doing Ancestor Worship

I continued to do family interviews across the river in Overbridge, the final hamlet of the village, but this affluent hamlet dominated by the largest village lineage was

far from the Church, and participated much less in village activities than other hamlets. I didn't find any more Christians there in 1977.

I did make a re-acquaintance with the Big Hamlet man who had originally invited me to attend church that first Sunday in the village. By now it was October, and seasonal ancestor worship would soon begin in the mountains around the village. I recalled that even Midvale's D-13 had equivocated about ancestor worship even though he could be critical of Korean custom, so I wondered how A-7, who belonged to a prominent lineage that would have local tombs that would require worship would react to questions about Christians and ancestor worship.

"Christians [by which he meant Protestants] don't do ancestor worship," he replied. "In fact, if a Christian were to continue to do ancestor worship, there are others in the congregation who would go after them."

"But," I objected, "Some people think that if you don't do *chesa* the spirits (*kwisin*) will get you."

I deliberately asked the question this way to see if he would take the bait.

"There are some people who think that way, but really that idea isn't very plausible," he replied. He continued explaining in ways I didn't completely understand, but his talk didn't revolve about the souls going to heaven and not remaining spirits. Rather it revolved around the word *chongson* (head of the lineage) and the position of the eldest son (*sŏng* in local dialect = *hyŏng* in Standard Korean). He apparently feels that he continues to have lineage responsibilities that prevent him, as eldest son, from fully shedding his ancestor worship responsibilities. In fact, he ended by inviting me to accompany him to the seasonal rites (*sisa*) coming up in mid-November (lunar 10th month)!

I knew him to be a sincere Christian. Yet his responsibility as a traditional eldest son, and his responsibility as a sincere Christian were in conflict in a way that he couldn't fully resolve. I had noted that some of the village Protestant men would take an occasional drink on social occasions. Now I knew that some of them didn't fully give up ancestor worship either. And for a Christian man to admit outright that at least some people believe in the power of *kwisin* to harm people was very unusual.

A Fervent Christian Prayer Meeting

As noted above several typical conversion narratives that I collected in 1977 revolved around the efficacy of prayer to Hanŭnim (God) in healing sickness. But on October 20th I serendipitously came across even more striking evidence of the importance of prayer and healing to village Christians.

Back in June when I had been making the rounds of Big Hamlet I had made the acquaintance of A-26, a widow who had endured much recent tragedy. Since she was a widow, the formal head of her house was her second son, but that son had moved to Fishplay Shore to get more trade for his barbering business, and had taken his wife and children with him. The woman's other unmarried children, 18 and 16, had taken jobs in Seoul. Her eldest son had died, and her eldest daughter, just married the year before, had recently succumbed to yŏnt'an gas poisoning (Carbon monoxide) from the *ondol* floor of her rented house. She had been pregnant at the time. Once I recognized the woman, I remembered her from the church picnic as being among the more fervent Christians, and I subsequently would greet her if I met her in one of the village lanes.

That October after a day of looking over Residential Registration Records in the township office over Alder Pass, I was going for an evening walk around Big Hamlet just after dusk when I heard a commotion that sounded like a drunken revel down near the sulchip. As I walked over the sound turned out not to be coming from the sulchip, but rather from the nearby house inhabited by A-26, the fervent Christian widow. I thought, moreover, that I recognized the voice of her second son who normally lived in Fishplay Shore.

When I got to the house:

(RFN 10/20/1977) The singing had stopped. A number of people were speaking rapidly all at the same time.

A prayer meeting was in progress. The rapidly speaking voices became faster and faster, and more and more frantic as people prayed more and more fervently until it reached a peak, at which point the people seemed virtually in a trance—almost but not quite reaching the point of glossolalia—and then the speaking rapidly subsided, and someone sounded, "Amen."

Immediately they started in on another hymn (which is what the singing I had thought of as a drunken revel from a distance had been earlier). What was so striking about this hymn (that I heard standing just outside the *ult'ari*¹² looking at the shadows of the people [cast] on the paper door [by the candlelight]) was that it was so rhythmic (in a very folk-Korean way), and sung with such fervor that even though I knew it was a prayer meeting, the song *still* sounded like something coming from a drinking party. This stands in great contrast to the hymns I have heard from the church (and other private prayer meetings, too, such as the ones that used to be held at the houses of A-8, A-7, and A-25) all mentioned above where the songs are sung with great fervor, but they always retain the [even] *dum, dum, dum, dum*

¹² The brushwood fence that surrounded all village homesteads.

marching rhythms of the original [American] hymns they are translations of, and whose melodies I often could recognize.¹³

Two days later on Saturday I as I was walking over the pass to the bus stop in Fish Pleasure Shore I came across the very same widow in whose house the prayer meeting had been held the previous Thursday evening.

(RFN 10/22/1977) She was walking very slowly and leaning on her daughter. As I came up I asked her if she is sick to which she replied in tragic tones, "Ap'ayo. Naega ap'ayo." (Sick. I'm sick.) She said she was going to the city to get treatment. I asked her if it was serious, and she said yes.

I went on my way. We [myself and the other villagers on the way to the bus stop] waited for the mother and daughter at the ferry. I told the ferryman about my conversation with her, but he didn't treat it as news. When she came he asked, "Haven't you gotten any better?" She said no, that she had been sick for several days and had gotten worse instead of better.

It was only then that I knew for sure that the prayer meeting had not simply been unusually intense one, but had been for purposes of faith healing.

The 1983 Interviews

When I used field assistants to systematically re-interview all the village households with explicit instructions to ask about religious belief in 1983 I found the situation quite similar to 1977. I found fifteen (out of ninety-four) families in which at least one family member attended church, but there were only six households that reported the entire family attended church. A similar number of households (five) reported that the children attended church while the parents did not (the parents often saying they "believed in the mountain.") In two households only the wife attended church. One man from Overbridge reported that he doesn't go to church, but "it's enough to just sit quietly and believe in the heavenly Father," while another reported going to church at the urging of his sister who had become a church deaconess in the city.

Fourteen families reported no religion, and another nineteen failed to reply to our religious queries, making the irreligious as large a demographic as the Christian. Nevertheless we found in 1983 some degree of engagement with folk religion from just about half the households. This engagement could vary from something as simple as having made offerings to Samsin Halmõni for a crying baby, or making a simple offering in the fall of ttök "to the land", to full engagement with the folk

¹³ My field notes make no further analysis of the folkish Korean rhythm, but it is likely the 4/4 beat of the hymn had been turned into a dactylic triple beat.

religion including worship of house gods, holding ancestor worship, visiting the mountain temple, and hiring shamans in times of need. A few former Christians had even stopped going to church. The 71-year-old keeper of the sulchip, for example, when asked about church retorted:

[RFN 1983.7.15] I used to go to church, but all they wanted was money, money, money. The pastor has been here for eight years.¹⁴ He has a motorbike, television, briefcase, and so forth. I have no money. Why should I give money to him?

When I asked about spirits she replied,

“Spirits, you say? Heaven, they all go to heaven. That’s where they say they go.

When my field assistants interviewed her they got a similar story.

[Blue 18 1983.7.25] In the past I believed in Christianity, or in the Mountain God, but now I don’t believe in anything. Absolutely nothing.

There was a new pastor at the church in 1983, who had been rotated into the village in 1980 after serving in Ch’ongdo and Mun’gyōng (both in North Kyōngsang Province). He reported that two of his sons had graduated from theological seminary and both are pastors. The church now had about 1000 p’yōng of land that they rent out for income, and his assessment of the status of Christianity in the village was broadly similar to mine.

[Blue 27 1983.7.26] The number of faithful here is around twenty to thirty, mostly housewives. Most of the villagers believe more keenly in San’gok Mountain [than Christianity], but the [Christian] believers are very naïve and innocent (sunjinhada). Since making a livelihood is a more critical thing, they can’t be always going to church, yet every dawn three or four persons regularly come to participate in the service.

In spite of his estimate that most villagers were still keen believers in the mountain god, he took a long-term view of social change and the civilization and enlightenment that he thought Christianity must bring. I disagree with his characterization of the villagers as haphazard spendthrifts below, but his remarks do illustrate widespread assumptions of Korean educated Christians about the beneficial secular effects from spreading the gospel.

¹⁴ The church pastor in 1983 had been assigned to the village in 1980, so he had been there for only three years. The previous pastor, however, had served eight years from 1972 to 1980. I’m guessing, thus, that my informant left the church around 1980.

[Blue 27 1983.7.26] From the time last year when a bridge was built [over the river into the village] the life of the village residents has begun to change a little bit. Formerly they would earn income in only one season and then use it up over the winter, primarily idling away doing things like pitch penny (t'ujŏn), and there are still many people who do pitch penny. There are a lot of problems

The establishment of a church in San'gok was only about fifteen years ago, but missionaries have been spreading the gospel [in Korea] for seventy or eighty years. That's why a church has come to be even in this out-of-the-way place (oettan kot).

The Transformational Power of Christianity

The Christianization of South Korea has been one of the more remarkable stories of post World War II history, particularly in cities in which church-going culture had provided such a secure social anchor for newly arrived urbanites that more than 20% of the population of Seoul was Christian by the mid-1980s. Yet on this dimension, as on many others, San'gongni proved more resistant to social change. Of the four hundred or so residents in 1983, the pastor estimated that twenty to thirty were regular churchgoers, while almost half of the villagers participated in folk religion activity of various kinds. How transformational could Christianity be under such circumstances?

Only one villager expressed a vision of a new moral order through Christianity, but on the other hand, I did identify the cluster of 3-4 Christian households in Midvale led by D-13 who were convinced that Christianity leads to civilization and enlightenment because "the most developed countries in the world are Protestant." These men were critical of Korean tradition, and especially of the "superstition" (misiin) that they identified with the folk religion. Sober Christian sociality (no drinking or smoking) isolated them somewhat from the rest of the village, but also motivated them to stick together. Christian fellowship provided by weekly worship, dawn services, evening services, and private prayer meetings at the homes of believers created an alternative social structure from that of the village lineages, ancestor worship and banqueting, drinking, and mountain god worship that tied together the other villagers.

Here it is critically important that particularly in the Midvale cluster the adherents of the new religion were the young and male rather than the old or female. It has been hypothesized [find citation] that Christianity has succeeded in Korea precisely by capturing the young in a Kuhnian "paradigm shift." In support of this hypothesis one could notice that most of the Midvale Christians, apparently led by middle-aged D-13, were committed to moving in new directions away from tradition, and several evinced a strong distaste for "superstition."

This transformative potential for Christianity seemed real in 1977 and 1983, but in the context of a village maintaining their unusual tang kut with a degree of government support throughout the “villages without superstition” (misin ōmnūn maül) campaigns of the contemporaneous the New Village Movement, such a view might be overstated. Disdain for “superstition” was hardly confined to Christians. Those who maintained Confucian ceremonies alone often condemned other ritual activity as superstition. Informant D-4 considered himself a rationalist and also condemned superstition, but evinced belief in Buddhism. For these informants “superstition” seemed confined to intercourse with active spirits rather than all folk religious activities. Even those who initially answered that they had no religion, moreover, when we made more detailed queries about specific ritual activities such as doing ancestor worship or making offerings of first fruits in the fall, many answered that they engaged in some of these activities.

One must remember, moreover, that according to the pastor, there were in 1983 “twenty to thirty faithful, mostly housewives.” Interpreting the significance of conversion to Christianity for these housewives is more difficult than for the males for whom ritual activity is a public, status-enhancing activity whether it be Confucian or Christian. The gendered division of labor in the folk religion had entrusted women, on the other hand, with the spiritual welfare of their families. Much of their religious activity had to do with worshipping gods in order to protect their family members from supernatural harm. And indeed, the cult of the mountain gods simply took this protective function up to the village level.¹⁵

As we have seen many of the conversion narratives quoted above told of similar concerns. A-10’s wife became a Christian after an illness in which she prayed to the local gods to no avail but recovered after praying to the Christian god. A-10 joined the church with her after three years. D-15 went to a prayer hall when his mother became sick and converted after it proved effective, contrasting his experience with his mother’s prayers to the mountain god when he had been in Vietnam. Most striking perhaps, was the faith healing prayer meeting for A-26. Although the form was Christian prayer, its purpose and hubbub reminded me strongly of the atmosphere of village kut I had seen. The only thing missing was the shaman in this case.

I did not do systematic fieldwork when I revisited the village in 2012. The few old folk that I knew and were still alive still were active in the folk religion, though they were no longer able to go to the mountain to pray. The shaman had left the mountain, and the mountain shrine, while in good shape, seemed inactive (an impression that could well have been inaccurate, since such shrines are only open

¹⁵ References to Roger and Dawnhee Janelli, *Ancestor Worship and Korean Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982). Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), etc.

when somebody is using them). The modest stucco Presbyterian Church of 1977 and 1983 had been replaced by a very large, imposing brick structure, however, giving me the impression that Christianity was now the main faith present in the village. My gut feeling was that the church was partly for the local residents, but the main process of religious change had been that most of the village natives had moved out to the cities. Those who moved in from elsewhere were not familiar with the local folk traditions. Not peasants, but businessmen and women that were running pensions, ski-board rental stores, restaurants, and the local lumber yard, these were probably the stalwarts of the Christian congregation. It wasn't so much that the folk religion had lost its hold among the native villagers, but that the native villagers were becoming a smaller and smaller element in the village population, and newcomers were not interested in the local cult because they had not been raised in it.