

Toward an Authentic Korean Biblical Reading:
Shamanism and the Bible in Dialogue

by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the binary opposition between Yahwistic prophecy and shamanistic practices and the coexistence of various religious professionals in the Bible - prophets, magicians and diviners - who continually challenge theological distinctions set by the central religious hierarchy. My research explores Korean shamanism: from its basic worldview to the characteristics of shamanic practitioners and rituals, and to its syncretism with other religions, in which compatibility with the Korean authentic spirituality is the key to the successful settlement of missionary religions. Various shamanic models are proposed to find resources for the parallel study between the biblical faiths and practices and Korean shamanism, such as: the spiritual calling of prophetic figures in the Bible and of Korean shamanic neophytes; the paradox of prophetic condemnation against magic and divination employed by 'others', when similar techniques are used by the Old Testament prophets as a sign of divine connection; and the rite of passage of prophetic and shamanic practitioners, as a bridge between the secular and the sacred. Through a close reading of the prophetic narratives, this thesis resists what appears to be the dominant voice in the interpretative tradition of the Bible in the Korean church - a polarity between a central or Christian religion and a popular or shamanic spirituality - and points out that the Bible itself is a rich depository of competing

religious systems and models, with which Bible readers from various religious and cultural backgrounds can identify or compare in their own environments.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DCH	D. J. A. Clines (ed.), <i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
HALOT	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JB	Jerusalem Bible
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Supplement to <i>JSOT</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>KJV</i>	<i>King James Version</i>

<i>LUT</i>	<i>Luther Bible</i>
<i>NAB</i>	<i>New American Bible</i>
<i>NCBC</i>	<i>New Cambridge Bible Commentary</i>
<i>NEB</i>	<i>New English Bible</i>
<i>NIC</i>	<i>New International Commentary</i>
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version</i>
<i>OTL</i>	<i>Old Testament Library</i>
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>RSV</i>	Revised Standard Version
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>SBLASP</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts and Seminar Papers
<i>SBLDS</i>	SBL Dissertation Series
<i>SBLSBS</i>	SBL Sources for Biblical Studies
<i>SBLSP</i>	SBL Seminar Papers
<i>SBLSS</i>	SBL Semeia Studies
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WBC</i>	World Biblical Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

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Chapter 1. Introduction

I believe that in every religious culture there is a dynamic between official and popular religions. If official religions offer a more formalised system and organisation toward a religious culture or ethnic group, it is popular religion (or a folk belief; in Korea, shamanism) which sustains the basic worldview of people and the connection to the supernatural world by providing them familiarity, continuity and various means of coping with an ever changing 'real' world. The acts of 'legitimate' religious practitioners in the Bible (prophets and priests) have been accepted because they inhabit a particular ideological tradition in the text, whereas so-called 'popular' or 'shamanistic' religious groups are generally condemned as falsehood or pagan ritualism. However, when it comes to the religious phenomenon itself, it is almost impossible to distinguish the action of institutional figures in the Bible from those of the 'others', because the pattern of their actions criss-crosses too many times to support this ideological distinction. In order to discover multiple layers of religious culture in the Bible, we have to set aside momentarily what appear to be the dominant voices, or the dominant ideology, and examine the co-existence of other, competing or even complementary, voices

in the biblical text.

The reason I start my research with the magical and divinatory activities in the Bible is because the conflict between the ‘legitimate’ prophecy and other ‘popular’ or shamanistic activities in the Bible is the major obstacle for modern Korean biblical readers in their multi-religious culture. As the most recognised symbol of Christianity, the Bible has been used as an ideological tool for fundamentalists to separate religious phenomena from Christian principles, as evidence why certain religious activities and beliefs should remain marginal or be condemned. The problem is that, whereas Korean Christians have successfully adapted a new religious system on top of their traditional (shamanic) belief and practice, to the extent that one observes that Korean churches are ‘shamanised’,¹ Korean biblical reading still remains within the boundaries of the monolithic teaching of church, widening the gap between the religion they *read* and the religion they *perform*. Even if the reader notices that the Bible witnesses various acts of so called ‘popular’ or ‘shamanistic’ spiritualists, when it

¹ A. Kim, ‘Korean Religious Culture and Its Affinity to Christianity: The Rise of Protestant Christianity in South Korea,’ *Sociology of Religion* 61:2 (2000), 117-133 (119). The influence of Korean shamanism on Christian churches will be discussed in the next chapter, and, for the study of this subject, see, J. H. Kim, ‘Christianity and Korean Culture: The Reasons for Success of Christianity in Korea,’ *Exchange* 33:2 (2004), 132-152; E. K. Kim, ‘The Similarity between Korean Religious Culture and Protestantism,’ *Korea’s Christianity* 26 (2001), 91-109; J. Y. Chung, *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study* (Tokyo; New York; San Francisco: Kodansha International, in cooperation with The Institute of Oriental Religions, Sophia University, Tokyo, 1977); J. H. Grayson, *Korea – A Religious History* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002); *idem*, ‘Elements of Protestant Accommodation to Korean Religious Culture: A Personal Ethnographic Perspective,’ *Missiology: An International Review* 23:1 (1995), 43-59; *idem*, *Early Buddhism and Christianity in Korea: A Study in the Emplantation of Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985).

comes to the fundamental issues, such as monotheism, the divine government of the chosen people, and a special few (priests and prophets) who are entitled to receive and interpret the message of God, they are soon shadowed by the prophetic accusation. The ideological distinction between 'us/ legitimate/ biblical/ official' and 'others/ illegitimate/ idolatry/ popular' is the main reason why there has not been a distinctive, Korean-own interpretation of the Bible. What lies in the traditional (theological) approach of the Korean church to 'other' religious activities is the *assumption* that the Bible recognises only one legitimate form of religious behaviour. This monolithic ideology of Christian church fundamentally and exclusively suppresses, ignores, and denies various other, supposedly 'non-biblical' channels to the supernatural world even though they are certainly a part of Korean religious life.

There is a fine line between the biblical models and theological stereotypes, and especially in the early missionary era when Christian theology had profound implications for the reading and teaching of the Bible. The theological models - characterised by ethical monotheism, priestly hierarchy and church fundamentalism - were accepted as biblical models despite the fact the theological reading is one of many approaches to the Bible. Today, Korean Christians are not outsiders to Korean religious culture, but part of its tradition. Whereas the missionaries' task was mainly to cast off Korean traditional religions in order to lay the ground for Christianity, Korean Christians and biblical readers cannot just abandon

their religious roots. Their task is rather to interpret and build biblical faith on top of their indigenous spiritualities.

From the situation of modern Korean Christian churches, questions arise: how can different religious ideologies, shamanism and Christian monotheism, co-exist in the church? Are modern Korean Christians aware of their assimilation with Korean shamanism in terms of ritual behaviour? In the event of miraculous cure and exorcism, who can distinguish a Christian experience of the supernatural from that of shamanism? How does the church authority respond to the magical and divinatory acts of people, and what are the criteria for the authentication of supernatural experience? It is generally assumed that the Bible condemns magic and divination and other shamanistic-like features, but defining ‘magic’ proves surprisingly difficult. Moreover, the Bible bears witness that not only ‘pagan’ religious practitioners but also prophets employ the techniques of magic and divination in their offices, but without condemnation. Is the miracle of a prophet the act of God whereas that of a popular religious practitioner is falsehood? When Moses makes a snake from a staff, it is the miraculous act of God, but why and how should the Egyptian magicians’ exact same performance be condemned as an act of sorcery? Who sets the line between legitimate and illegitimate religious activities? How, for example, do people recognise the authenticity of a prophet, through the message of God or his or her spontaneous spiritual ability?

By holding the mirror up to the biblical text itself and bringing up marginalised characters and legendary biblical figures together into close investigation, my research aspires to discover multiple layers of biblical faith and practices and to build new ground for an active communication between the Bible and Korean spirituality, yielding various religious models in the Bible with which readers from different cultural settings can identify or compare in their religious lives and roles. The detailed discussion on the phenomenon of Korean ‘shamanised’ church, biblical models that are paralleled to Korean shamanic beliefs and customs, and how I use these models to produce a Korean authentic biblical reading will be developed in the following chapters. At this point, I will briefly mention ‘shamanistic models’ found in both Korean context and the biblical text and argue why the Bible cannot maintain a distinction between (true) ‘religion’ and (false) ‘magic’ because, in Bakhtinian terms, it is not a monologic text: it contains many voices, many views, many ideologies.

1.1. Note on Shamanic Models: Why Shamanism?

When one says ‘shamanistic models’, the term usually brings into mind the anthropological reports of primitive and aboriginal spiritualists and their ritual behaviour as opposed to modern religions and science. Western scholarship on shamanism has mainly focused on theoretical reconstruction of religious ‘abnormalities’, and failed to grasp a constant flow and

adaptation of shamanic faiths and practices in modern times and societies.² In Korea, shamanism is still widely practised in modern society and adopted in various forms of art, literature, and music as a vital part of Korean cultural map. Just as the Bible is the cultural and literary archetype of the West, shamanism has been and continues to be the religious and cultural prototype in Korean by transforming itself according to the change of time and space.

The different conception of shamanism also has an effect on understanding the nature of shamanistic (religious) phenomenon. Whereas in Western culture shamanistic phenomena are associated with hallucinatory experiences of shamans or medicine men and women, namely divination, necromancy, voodoo cults, magic, sorcery, shamanistic healing and so on, in the multi-religious context of Korea, the term is not limited to ecstatic ritual behaviours of shamans although it also refers to the syncretic affiliation between shamanism and other religious institutions. For example, ancestral worship is one of most important religious traditions in Korea, and its origin is a shamanic ritual for the spirit of the dead where the practitioner conjures up the soul from the netherworld at the request of the family. All major missionary religions in Korea, namely Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, modified it and offer their own version of ancestral worship in order to strengthen their

² Ripinsky-Naxon argues that shamanism is not a set of beliefs, nor is the result of dedicated study. Shamanism is 'a model of reality which is diametrically opposite in every way to the model presently favoured by Western science [which] holds our material world to be much more complicated than it seems to be'. M. Ripinsky-Naxon, *The Nature of Shamanism: Substance and Function of a Religious metaphor* (New York: Statue University of New York Press, 1993), 210-211. In a similar vein, 'shamanism is a fluid religious phenomenon which cannot be used with excessive terminological rigidity'. I. M. Lewis, 'What is Shamanism?', *Folk* 23 (1981), 33.

connection to common people.³ David Chung introduces the scene of the Korean funeral rite

as an example of how each different religion plays a different note, but in a strange harmony:

It is Confucianism that dresses the mourners in sackcloth, while the Buddhist bonzes chant their sutras for the departed to the Buddhist heavenly kingdom. It is a shaman who exorcizes the evil spirits that may annoy or harm the departed on his or her journey, while Taoist geomancers engage themselves in supervising the digging of the grave on the site that they believe to be the most 'profitable' location.⁴

Also, Korean shamans' divinatory technique based on theory of topography (*Poongsu-jiri*)

has influenced the architecture of sacred places and temples, and is still widely used in

selecting an auspicious site for housing and graves as a matter of social convention rather

than a religious practice. The Korean 'shamanised' church is one of most striking examples

how shamanistic beliefs and practices are integrated into a missionary religion so that Korean

people can express their native ritual energy and satisfy aspirations for harmonious

coexistence between the spirits and the humans.

³ In the Confucian ceremony, *Chesa*, the ancestral spirits are invited for an annual feast which is later shared among the family members. This Confucian style ancestral worship is 'a self-conscious reform imposed upon indigenous custom, of which the organisational focus is the right and obligation to hold the ancestor worship as the rationale for family inheritance and succession in kin groups'. K. G. Lee, 'Ancestor Worship and Kingship Structure in Korea', in L. Kendall (ed.), *Religion and Ritual in Korean Society* (California: University of California Press, 1987), 56-69 (56). In Buddhist mortuary rituals, *Sagu-jae*, the monk is called to chant sutras to aid the safe journey of the newly dead to Western Paradise (*Seoyūk* or *Kūngnak*, the Buddhist heavenly kingdom). In particular, its basic structure - purification, invitation and entertainment (of the soul of the dead and Buddhist deities), and send-off of the spirits - and its underlying purpose - with a view to accruing merit for the bereaved family - show a striking resemblance to the Korean original shamanic mortuary ritual. H. K. Kim Hogarth, *Syncretism of Buddhism and Shamanism in Korea* (Korean Studies Series 21; Seoul, Jimoondang International Edison, 2002), 327-336. Protestant Christianity and Catholicism also found their way to combine Korean ancestral worship and Christian practice into the book of liturgy, called *Chudo-yebae* (the memorial service or the service of recollection), where family members hold a small, private service to pray for the peaceful residence of their dead ancestors in heaven and for the welfare of their descendants in this world.

⁴ D. Chung, *Syncretism: The Religious Context of Christian Beginnings in Korea* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 92.

In the Korean multi-religious context, shamanism is the most archaic and authentic spiritualism and its tradition is what makes certain religions or their practices distinctively ‘Korean’, regardless of their origins. Therefore, in this thesis, ‘shamanic models’ is not confined to limited terminologies of ‘abnormal’ behaviours of medicine men and women, but will be used as an umbrella term referring to the basic shamanic worldview in which the sacred and the secular are intimately interrelated and mutually influencing, and the function of the shaman as a bridge between the two realms, using various magical and divinatory techniques to enhance communication with the spiritual world. There may be different cultural emphases, but the role of a shamanic or prophetic practitioner as a negotiator, a priest, a counsellor and a master of supernatural power, can be found in many agricultural or socio-politically stratified societies like that of the Bible and Korean society. As long as used cautiously and not violating the text’s own voice, shamanic models can inspire readers from various religious backgrounds to discover the fact that the Bible is itself a rich repository of dynamic relationships between the people and the spirits and to interpret biblical faith on top of their indigenous spiritualism.

1.2. Constructing the Cross-cultural Shamanistic Model

In biblical interpretation, prophecy is primarily identified with the message it delivers, in which is ingrained a particular theological agenda or literary (particularly Deuteronomistic) tradition. There have been attempts to dispel theological assumption and illuminate a broader spectrum of prophetic personae, and to some extent they succeed in drawing intriguing inferences about both the socio-political and cultural dynamic of the time and its cultic heritage. Magic, miracles and divination have been brought under scholarly scrutiny,⁵ anthropological study of ancient Israel and its near Eastern nations have shed important light on the religious life of antiquity,⁶ and, as literary characters, the life and career of biblical prophets, who function as diviners, priests and mediums, share certain compatibilities with

⁵ Debates concerning the definition and the function of magic, miracles and divination can be found in: Y. Gitay (ed.), *Prophecy and Prophets: The Diversity of Contemporary Issues in Scholarship* (Atlanta, GA.: Scholars Press, 1997); A. Jeffers, 'Interpreting Magic and Divination in the Ancient Near East', *Religion Compass* 1 (2007), 684-694; *idem*, 'Magic from before the Dawn of Time: Understanding Magic in the Old Testament: A Shift in Paradigm (Deuteronomy 18.9-14 and Beyond)', in M. L. Labahn and B. J. L. Peerbolte (eds.), *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 123-132; K. B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch, Magic, Ideology, and Stereotypes in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), esp. chapter 1; J. Day (ed.), *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), esp. chapter 1-3; A. C. Lehmann and J. Myers (eds.), *Magic, Witchcraft and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural* (Palo Alto: Mayfield, 1985), esp., 81-93.

⁶ For general studies of the relationship of prophecy to the cult in ancient Israel, see: J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963); T. W. Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity* (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress Press, 1989); *idem*, 'Prophecy in History: The Social Reality of Intermediation', *JSOT* 48 (1990), 3-29; R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, PA.: Fortress Press, 1980); R. Murray, 'Prophecy and the Cult', in R. Coggins, A. Philips and M. Knibb (eds.), *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 201-216; R.P. Carroll, 'Prophecy and Society', in R. E. Clements (ed.), *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 203-22; B. Uffenheimer, *Early Prophecy in Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999), 480-503.

shamanic practitioners.⁷ The fact that certain prophetic activities display an unmistakably shamanistic strain, such as magic, miracles, spirit possession and ecstasy, cannot be denied, and, if prophetic narrative has been taken for granted as having a firm association with a theological message in traditional scholarship, from a Korean point of view the same text can be read as a repository of various shamanistic operations characterised by not only supernatural performances but also by the dynamic between the sacred and the secular, individuals and spirits, a shaman and the community.

Prophetic figures in the Bible undergo shamanistic initiation (celestial visions, divine call to prophecy, spirit possession and spiritual journeys), exhibit their supernatural power (divination, magic and miracles such as curing disease, manipulating nature, reviving the dead, multiplying food, and so on), and are considered to surpass the ordinary cycle of life and death in this world (Moses, Elijah and Elisha). Anthropological studies into the societies of ancient Israel and its neighbours have produced a mass of useful data to permit navigation through the various cultic functionaries of the time. However, as socio-historical or anthropological analysts are acutely aware, this list, after all, is only a list of possible

⁷ Carroll acknowledges the shamanistic origins of prophetic figures in the Old Testament: 'the prophet in Israel was a composite personality made up of shaman, cultic figure, politician, royal counsellor, healer, intercessor, poet, and supremely, Yahwist'. R.P. Carroll. 'The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel', *VT* 19 (1969), 400-415 (407). Also Grabbe proposes several model types of prophets and related figures - the diviner, the shaman, the spirit medium, and the scribe - in accordance with shamanistic practitioners found in anthropological reports of aboriginal tribes. Grabbe, 'Shaman, Preacher, or Spirit Medium?', in Day, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, 131.

shamanistic activities of prophetic figures in the Bible. In my interpretation, prophets are foremost *characters* in the biblical literature, so the question is not one of whether these supernatural activities can be historically affirmed or institutionally legitimated. From a literary point of view, magic and miracles are devices that prophets deploy for either professional or personal reasons, and it is important to appreciate the accumulated list of such activities in a broader spectrum of prophecy. In my research, magic and miracles are neither secondary to the message of God nor do they possess their own validity free from ideological debate or scrutiny of their efficacy. Unlike divination or oracle, a prophet's personal involvement is imperative in magic and miracles; this makes such activities critically personal, and as such can be said to represent the personality of the practitioner. Shamanistic performance warrants the practitioner a great deal of proprietorship over the situation, and feedback from the audience is instant. Such performances are not finalised, as are oracles, and there is always room for negotiation or enhancement as to what measures the practitioner may use and to what particular kind of divine intercession the recipient merits. Therefore, the story of magic and miracles is more than a conventional compilation of divine grace towards those faithful, but is the complex mechanism involving magic and its consequences, the manipulation of a supernatural power, and the dynamic between the deity, the practitioner and the recipient of miracles. Comparison of cultural expressions from contexts remote in

time and place has its limitations, but is nevertheless both valued and fruitful when it is based on properly defined elements common to a structure, such as that of Korean shamanic stereotypes and biblical prophecy.

1.3. The Model Structure of Korean Shamanism and Prophecy in the Bible

Because my thesis uses Korean shamanism as a comparative tool to interpret various prophetic or cultic personae and their activities in the Bible, it may be useful to underline some of the fundamental parts of Korean shamanic structure and their compatibility with biblical prophecy.

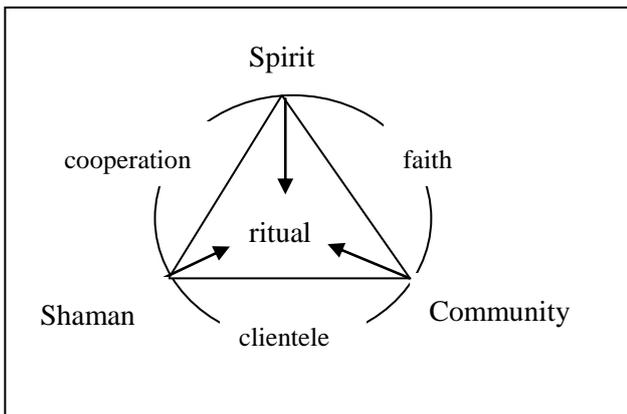


Figure 1. Structure of Korean shamanism

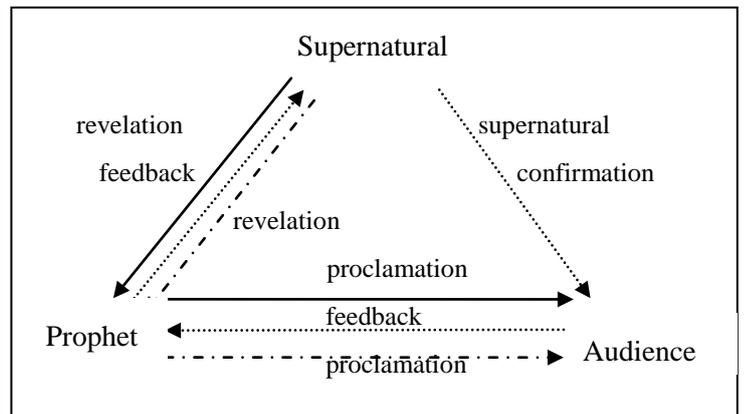


Figure 2. Model of prophetic process

The diagram (Figure 1) represents a model of the Korean shamanic structure.⁸ The service of a shaman is directed to two different entities: one is toward the deity, and is based on devotion and regular oblation that reinforces the divine patronage of the practitioner (cooperation), and the other is to the community to whom the shamanic service is offered (clientele). Foremost, a shaman uses his or her spiritual power to deal with various issues of life and death, aspiring to maintain or enhance the wellbeing of the community by winning the favour of the divine. The shaman is in charge of delivering and interpreting the message from the supernatural, petitioning the deity on behalf of the clients and negotiating between the divine will and the interests of the community. Shamans are figures symbolic of both the faith of the people and divine patronage, and it is through ritual that religious solidarity is manifested and reinforced.⁹

A crucial element of shamanic services is to secure divine providence for the daily existence of the people. This includes, for example, annunciation of births, curing illness,

⁸ H. Y. Cho, *Mu: Han'guk mu ui yoksa wa hyonsang* [Shamanism: History and Phenomenon of Korean Shamanism] (my translation; Seoul: Jungeumsa, 1997), 80.

⁹ Hogarth argues that Korean shamanism is basically a humanist-oriented cult and its ritual serves to maintain the harmony and unity of the three components in the above structure, by temporarily abolishing existing social codes and structures in the make-believe world of the shamanistic ceremony. H. K. Kim Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism* (Korean Studies Series 14; Seoul: Jimoondang Publishing Co., 1999), 118-119. Kim interprets the process as 'the return to cosmos': Korean shamanistic ceremony is based on the circulatory movement from chaos to cosmos and vice versa, and, in order to restore the harmony and order of universe (cosmos), it is first required to recreate 'chaos... the world of spaceless and timeless eternal beings, and a world without life, death, sequence or end... the origin of all creatures in union with the Eternal Being'. T. G. Kim, *Korean Shamanism-Muism* (trans. S. K. Chang; Korean Studies Series 9; Seoul: Jimoondang Publishing Co., 1998), 127-128; cf. T. G. Kim, 'What is Korean Shamanism?', in K. Howard (ed.), *Korean Shamanism: Revivals, Survivals, and Change* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1992), 21-22.

manoeuvring the course of nature, observing seasonal libations and offering prayers during times of drought, finding a missing person or object, and administering in the matters of death, such as the funeral ritual for securing a safe journey of a newly dead soul, delivering a divine judgement or curse, reviving the spirit of the dead and so on. All the above exercises of supernatural power are meticulously performed, as appropriate to the situation at hand, and the authenticity of the shaman is put to the test by the quality and efficiency of the performance. The ritual is the epitome of the dynamic between all three compartments of Korean shamanism - shaman, deity and community - and opens the paradisiacal stage where all social and ethnic oppositions are abolished and universal harmony is restored. The ritual not only draws the attention of the deity to the needs and expectations of people and but also is an occasion for public appraisal of religious solidarity within the community.

Figure 2 is a model of the prophetic process as proposed by Overholt.¹⁰ The three actors, a supernatural entity, a prophet and the audience, form interrelationships based on the pattern of revelation, proclamation, feedback and supernatural confirmation. Through revelation a deity makes direct contact with a prophet by such means as spirit possession and ecstasy, and revelation leads to a proclamation of the divine will by both verbal and nonverbal behaviours (oracles, magic and miracles). The authenticity of prophetic activities is

¹⁰ Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy*, 22-25.

revealed by supernatural confirmation. Feedback from the audience is crucial in the prophetic cycle: individuals may accept, reject or be indifferent to the proclamation made by prophets and this allows the message to be reassessed, which may result in a new revelation either confirming or altering the original message. Feedback, as an act of communication, is an underestimated element in biblical prophecy, possibly due to the belief that the prophetic oracle is complete in itself and also to the hierarchical relationship between God and people, who are usually considered passive recipients of either prophetic judgement or salvation. However, the audience or community is a vital part of both shamanic and prophetic ministries, because it is their involvement in or response to the divine plan that sets the dynamic interrelationship between the secular and the sacred in motion.

As seen in Figures 1 and 2, Korean shamanism and biblical prophecy show a certain degree of compatibility in their basic structures. Feedback or a similar act of communication is an important process to maintain the equilibrium between the spirit, the practitioner and the community, and a utilisation of magic and divination, as means of demonstrating the divine presence and legitimatising the authenticity of a practitioner. Episodes of magic and miracles in the Bible are often featured in a tightly confined framework, but even taken as minimal elements of the prophetic process, each case of supernatural performance is in itself a ritual

that weaves together prophetic efficacy, divine signs and feedback from recipients, all sufficiently grounded in their cultural and religious tradition.

A final word about my approach to biblical prophecy: even though my thesis focuses on reading biblical literature in parallel with Korean shamanism, my discussion is not confined only to analogies between spontaneous mantic activities of the biblical prophets and those of Korean shamans. The purpose of my study is to examine and illuminate the personalities and specialities of biblical prophets as performers of supernatural power and their roles as a bridge between the secular and the sacred, rather than to make a comparative survey of the biblical prophecy and shamanism as such. When any comparison is made, it is to sharpen the concepts and to make useful distinctions rather than assimilating Korean shamanism to biblical prophecy. Certain themes that can be found in both Korean shamanic and biblical material will be thrown into relief when the models are alike to provide help in clarifying and illuminating the passages on prophets.

1.4. The Use of Korean Shamanistic Models in Comparison with Prophetic Figures in the Bible

In this section, I will discuss prophetic texts and characters that show certain compatibilities with Korean shamanism, and a polarity between ‘central’ and ‘peripheral’ faiths and practices in the Bible. My reading of the tension between Yahwist prophets and other pagan spiritualists does not focus on the authenticity of magic and miracles in the Bible; it is impossible to infer whose prophecy is legitimate from this ancient and, more importantly, polemical writing. My thesis maintains the view that the tension between the two opposite religious groups is drawn from the fact that magic and divination - performed by either Yahwist prophets or unorthodox spiritualists – are accepted by the audience because they are proven effective, not necessarily due to the particular theological lesson such performances represent. Thus, the prophetic condemnation against magic and divination is, in my thesis, an attempt to secure religious authority by preventing further influence of rival professionals over people.

The major function of prophets in the Old Testament is to deliver the message of God, but there is more to the activities of prophets than just being a mouthpiece for the words of God. Jeremiah asserts that the proof of being a genuine prophet is the experience of a celestial vision (Jer 23.16-18, 21-22), which differentiates a true prophet from false prophets who only speak ‘visions of their own minds’ (Jer 23.16). Unless it is through a priestly divination such as Urim and Thummim, usually the deity reveals itself in a private setting

(Exod 3; 33.7-10; Num 12.4-11; 1 Sam 3; 1 Kgs 19.4-18; Isa 6), but it appears to be that the experience of a celestial vision does happen in public, where the phenomenon is instantly recognised and verified by people as a sign of divine connection.

When prophets were traditionally called ‘seer(s)’ (1 Sam 9), we encounter a band of independent prophets who wandered around the city prophesying under spirit possession (1 Sam 10.5). After anointed by Samuel, Saul is also possessed by the spirit of God and prophesies among the wandering prophets, and this arouses people’s questions about his new status: ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’ (1 Sam 10.9-13; 19.20-24). It appears that ecstatic spirit possession, albeit tentatively, justifies the title of prophet, or at least, is considered to be characteristic of prophets, even if there is no divine message confirming the authenticity of the person in question. In Korean shamanism, the experience of spirit possession or ecstasy is the foremost evidence of divine connection, which induced by dance, chanting, drumming and playing musical instruments.¹¹ Similarly, the prophecy of these independent prophets is accompanied by various musical instruments, such as harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre (1 Sam 10.5). Music is also used in exorcisms of evil spirits, such as when Saul is possessed by the evil spirit of God and David plays the lyre to cast it off (1 Sam 16.14-23). Also note that

¹¹ Parker recognises the shamanic ecstasy in a trance state, or altered state of consciousness from the behaviour of Saul, who prophesies in a state of unconsciousness (‘he stripped off his clothes, lay naked all day and all night’, 1 Sam 19.24). S. B. Parker, ‘Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel’, *VT* 25 (1974), 272.

Elisha asks for a minstrel before prophesying, ‘...and when the minstrel played, the power of the Lord came upon him’ (2 Kgs 3.15). At least in certain biblical passages, group prophecy or the ‘techniques of ecstasy’ inspired by conventional methods seem to be accepted a distinctive part of prophecy, providing people the tangible sign of divine presence.

Not only the initial possession experience, but also magic and miracles seem to provide certain credentials that authenticate the practitioner. In Exodus, the deity understands that without magic and signs people would have not believed his newly chosen leader, Moses. As to the people’s scepticism about Moses’ ability, God gave them three signs (Exod 4.1-9), namely, the transformation of ordinary objects into something supernatural (a staff into a snake, water becoming blood) and an incursion and a miraculous cure of leprosy, as marks of divine election. It is not a word from God that initially establishes Moses as a leader of the community; Aaron is anointed to deliver the word of God. It needed ten plagues (Exod 7-12) to convince Pharaoh that God was with the Israelites, and Moses was challenged at times of hardship but recovered his authority with miraculous acts (dividing the Reed Sea with a rod in Exod 14.15-31; healing the bitter water in 15.22-25; bringing water out of rocks with the

rod in 17.2-7; winning the battle again with the rod in Exod. 17.9-11; and performing miraculous cures using a brass snake in Num 21.7-8).¹²

In Korean shamanism, once the spiritual call is accepted, shamans have bestowed upon them the spiritual gift which enables them to interpret events and guide behaviour, to reveal the sacred knowledge and engage in divination, to heal the sick and revive the dead, to control the movement of nature and animals, to make a sacrifice to the divine, to make a shamanic curse, to find missing items, persons, or the spirit of the dead, to initiate new shamans, to fight against other supernatural powers, and so on. The Elijah and Elisha saga appears to be a favoured subject in regard to the issues of magic and religion in biblical prophecy. They multiply food (Elijah, 1 Kgs 17.8-16; Elisha, 2 Kgs 4.1-7, cf. 4.42-44; 10-16), revive a dead child (Elijah, 1 Kgs 17.17-24; Elisha, 2 Kgs 4.32-35), manoeuvre the movement of nature (Elijah, rainmaking in 1 Kgs 18.38; parting the water of the Jordan with a mantle 2 Kgs 2:8, 14; calling down the fire from heaven 1 Kgs 18.36-38; 2 Kgs 1.9-16; Elisha, controlling the movement of an animal 2 Kgs 2.23-24), travel by the Spirit (Elijah, 1

¹² This magical rod, the 'rod of God', reappears numerous times to accompany Moses' miraculous acts (Exod 4.3; 7.10; 14.16; 17.6, 9-11; Num 20.10), similar to ritual costumes and paraphernalia of Korean shamans, which are given in the initial stage of shamanhood and believed to transmit the supernatural power of shamans until the end of their services. Zakovitch recognises the magical element in the instruments used by miracle workers, and also points out the tension between divine command and employment of additional instruments in the performance of miracle. In the miracle of making the water out of the rock (Exod 17.4-7), Moses sins by using the rod to perform the miracle even though he is not ordered to use it, and his dependence on such a method is criticised in the parallel story in Num 20.10-13 which 'fights against the rod, against the belief in the power of any object, and attempts to create the impression that the rod is not essential for the doing of the miracle'. Y. Zakovitch, *The Concept of the Miracle in the Bible* (Tel-Aviv: MOD Books, 1991), 80.

Kgs 18.12, 46; 2 Kgs 2.16; ascending to the heavens in a whirlwind with a chariot of fire and horses of fire in 2 Kgs 2.11), find a missing object (Elisha, 2 Kgs 6.1-7); transform the nature of objects (Elisha, making the poisonous pottage edible 2 Kgs 4.38-41; cf. Moses' sweetening of the waters of Marah in Exod 15.22-26), cure disease (Elisha, 2 Kgs 20.5). All these features are more than enough to qualify prophets as shamanistic figures in the biblical literature.

Of course miraculous acts of prophets serve to ensure divine provision, aiming for people's acknowledgment and submission to the power of God (1 Kgs 17.24; 18.40). However, miraculous acts of prophets are often performed without the customary mentioning of God's name (2 Kgs 4.1-7; 5.10-14; 6.1-7). For example, in the parallel stories of reviving the dead child, in Elijah's case the miracle revolves around the divine directives and the authenticity of the prophet is acknowledged with the confirmation of the truthfulness of the word of God (1 Kgs 17.19-24). In Elisha's case (2 Kgs 4,25-37), it is the prophet who stands at the centre of events and becomes the one who is solely responsible for the outcome of his miracle. In the revival of the dead child, there is the subtle difference in the role of the prophet: Elijah expresses his helplessness by crying to God, which results in the divine solution and Elisha revives the spirit of the dead child with a shaman-like ritual with minimal mentioning of prayer. The woman in Zarepath attributes the miracle to God ('a man of God,

and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth', v.24); the woman in Shunem shows her reverence for the prophet ('she came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground, then she took up her son and went out', v.37). The portrait of these prophets as independent miracle workers, whose services are not confined to the traditional reception and deliverance of the word of God, certainly extends the horizon of the definition of prophet and biblical prophecy.

In pointing out similarity between biblical prophets and shamans, I am not arguing for a direct connection between biblical religion and Korean shamanism nor am I insisting upon another terminology to describe biblical prophecy and its practices from an anthropological point of view. The focus is on the fact that there is no fundamental objection against magic and other shamanistic activities in the Bible itself. It is in these 'common grounds' where Korean biblical readers can find various religious personae and practices in the Bible that are not necessarily against the Korean traditional belief in the work of the spirits that is both wondrous and practical, belief that is based on people's desire to witness divine revelation and its intercession for the problems in this world. In reading shamanistic features of prophets, there are two things that need to be remembered. As I briefly mentioned above, even though prophetic services contain magical elements, this does not mean one can regard prophets' symbolic actions as shamanic practice. The comparative study between Korean shamanism and biblical prophecy works best as parallel models, not only because of

the cultural, historical and environmental differences between the two entities, but also due to the different formats in which they are perceived by audience, biblical prophecy as literature and Korean shamanism as religious phenomena or a belief system. Secondly, although biblical prophecy incorporates magic, miracle and other supernatural activities, there is always an underlying inclination on the part of biblical writers to overcome magic and establish those acts as a part of divine revelation, the institution of Israelite prophecy.¹³

However, it should also be remembered that biblical prophecy as we traditionally think of it is an ideological construction that struggles to deal with magical acts of legendary figures and independent prophets and to keep the community loyal to the Israelite God while competing with various forms and influences of other religions. Thus, it is possible that people recognised and accepted the authenticity of the prophets from their compatibility with the autochthonous belief and practices of religious professionals, not necessarily from their theological supremacy. And this challenges the biblical reader to reassess what they have been thinking of as biblical faith, normative Israelite religion and prophecy, which cannot be fitted neatly into one theological model.

¹³ Fohrer asserts that the prophetic symbolic actions and their magical parallels are neither identical nor externally the same, the parallels between them being in 'details', not in the 'core'. According to him, the characteristics of this prophetic 'alternation' of the magical foundation are: the prophetic actions are undertaken at the command of Yahweh, they are usually accompanied by an interpretation, and there is a promise by Yahweh that the symbolized occurrence will take place. G. Fohrer, *Die Symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten* (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag; 1968), 94-95, as discussed by Overholt, 'Seeing is Believing: the Social Setting of Prophetic Acts of Power', *JSOT* 23 (1982), 6. However, even if prophetic miracles and their magical parallels only share the 'elements' of actions, this does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that fundamentally all established prophetic actions are induced by, accompanied by, or resulted from the order of God.

Also in this thesis I want to examine acts of magic and divination of ‘other’ religious practitioners. It is possible that the shamanistic activities I mentioned above were also commonly practised among popular religious practitioners, even though their very same acts have been marginalised and opposed by the legislation of Israelite prophecy and the priestly hierarchy. Deuteronomy 18.10 has been the classic example of the biblical accusation about the practitioners of magic and divination and from its list we see that these religious practitioners were engaged in divination, soothsaying, augury, sorcery, mediumship, wizardry and necromancy. However, before passing on to the prophetic judgement of the custom of ‘other’ religious practitioners, there is a need to examine whether these activities are actually addressed in other biblical texts. The acts of divination, soothsaying, seeking an omen and so on are criticized mainly because it is perceived as a foreign custom (2 Kgs 21.6; 2 Chr 33.6; 1 Sam 28), but the word *נִחַן* in seeking for an omen is also associated with Joseph’s divination cup and appears as a good omen (Gen 44.15). Sorcery (*כַּשְׁפִּי*) is a word used to describe the act of Pharaoh’s magicians who transformed a staff into serpents (Exod 7.12), but this action was originated by Moses, whose miracle was three times imitated by the magicians (Exod 7.11, 12, 22; 8.7). Inquiring of the deity (*לִשְׂאֵל*) or divination (*חֲזִקָה*) are also in the lists of pagan practices, but the act of inquiry or divination is far more prevalent among

‘legitimate’ prophets than among spiritualists and mediums (1 Sam 9.9; 10.22; Num 27.21; Judg 18.5; Jer 38.14). Exorcism is another act of magic designed to expel malevolent spirits from the place or body they possess, and the closest example of such ceremony is David’s lyre-playing to cast off the evil spirit of King Achish (1 Sam 16.23; cf. Elijah performs a shaman-like healing ritual to revive a child who has fallen unconscious for a mysterious reason, 2 Kgs 4.19, 32-35). Association with the dead spirit, or necromancy (אִוִּי), is found only in 1 Samuel 28, where the spirit of Samuel is conjured up by the female medium. But there is hardly a negative assertion against her, because she acts not only as a religious professional but also as a benefactor of King Saul, attending to his spiritual as well as mundane needs. One cannot simply put her on the side of ‘false’ prophecy or idolatry just because she employs the technique of necromancy. Rather, she exemplifies a classic shamanistic figure in the Bible, as the one who is connected to the supernatural world but remains to fulfill her responsibility as a giver of comfort and aid to the people in times of trouble.

As seen above, the acts of marginalized and condemned prophets and pagan spiritualists actually overlap with ‘legitimate’ prophets or other legendary figures in the Bible. The ideological ground for criticizing ‘false’ prophets is not because the practice is essentially wrong, but because it is of ‘others’. Prophets, magicians and diviners all show signs of divine connection by the means of spirit possession, ecstasy, magic and miracles, and

people would consult them at crucial times of life such as childbirth, illness, war and death. No matter how deeply the authority of ‘officially’ sanctioned religious ideology is embedded in the biblical faith and prophecy and how severe the condemnation is against the practice of magic and divination, at crucial moments of life people turn to familiar beliefs and ritual behaviour, expecting the religious leaders to fulfil the role of intercessor between the sacred and secular and the master of supernatural power to overcome current crises. This is the reason why shamanistic and supernatural belief and practice keep reappearing in the text is because they give continuity, familiarity, reliability and effectiveness to the people in times of trouble. Thus popular or shamanistic belief and practice are presented sparsely, yet continually, in the Bible, filling the emotional and spiritual needs of the people that the hierarchical religious office could not have provided.

1.5. The Outline of the Thesis

I begin my research with a dilemma of Korean Christians, whose identity is split into two: between the (shamanic) religious expression of Korean people and theological models in the interpreting tradition of Christian churches, which does not allow any additional channels to God. However, once freed from the Korean church’s monolithic ideology, Korean Bible readers can find compatibilities between Korean shamanic beliefs and practices and magic

and miracles in biblical prophecy, such as: people's desire for connection to the spirit world and relevant ways of enhancing the communication with the deity; signs, miracles and other supernatural activities as integral parts of ministries of both shamanic and prophetic practitioners as proofs for their supernatural capacities and their authenticity; the interaction between humans (prophets, shamans and audience) and spirits, based on the pattern of deliverance, feedback, negotiation and reinforcement; and the co-existence of 'popular' religious practitioners and official religious institutions in the Bible and the Korean church context and their rivalry to gain dominance over the people.

In chapter 2, I will continue to explore Korean shamanism and its influence on Korean religious culture, as well as characteristics of its system and practitioners, in order to establish shamanic models that Korean Christians can identify and compare in their reading of prophetic narratives. By drawing inspiration from the mutual influence between indigenous Korean spiritualism and Christian churches in Korea, in the following chapters I will propose three key factors to enable us to find resources for the parallel study between shamanism and the Bible: first, examples of magic and miracles performed by prophetic figures in the Bible and how they employ such techniques to prove their authenticity as messengers of God; second, the tension between the shamanistic acts of prophets and the condemnation of these acts elsewhere in the Bible; third, the fact that we find in the Bible

marginalised shamanistic practices that nevertheless provide people with ‘signs and wonders’ to get through the hardship of life.

Chapter 3 deals with the spiritual calling of prophetic figures in the Bible, how the call narratives in the Bible share a cross-cultural pattern of spiritual initiation in Korean shamanism, and how the neophytes’ interaction with the deity and community shape the prophetic ministries of Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Chapter 4 introduces the ‘marginalised’ religious practitioners in the Bible, the female prophets in Ezekiel 13 and the medium in 1 Samuel 28, discusses their contributions in the texts and exposes the paradox of prophetic condemnation against magic and divination of ‘others’, which echoes Korean churches’ binary opposition between monolithic church ideology and Korean shamanic beliefs and practices, when the latter are actually the backbone of Korean people’s religious life, including that of Korean church people. If the previous chapters concentrate on the compatibility between Korean shamanism and biblical prophecy, and exposing the paradox of prophetic condemnation of magic and divination, in chapter 5, I, as a Korean Christian myself, will apply shamanic models in my interpretation of the Elijah and Elisha saga, to propose an authentic Korean biblical reading and in an attempt to introduce the Bible as one of the religious scriptures in Korean cultural environment, free from the restriction of the ‘one and only’ approach of Christian monopolism. It is hoped the discoveries of shamanic

models in the Bible invite not only Korean biblical readers but also others from multi-religious backgrounds to join in sharing their cultural and religious prototypes and engaging in a dialogue with the Bible, which still is a rich repository of dynamic interrelationship between the spirits and humans.

Chapter 2. Korean Shamanism

This chapter investigates Korean native spirituality, shamanism, its basic worldview, components and impact on Korean religious culture. Korean shamanism embodies the theoretical model of classic shamanism to some extent, but in opposition to Western ethnography which considers shamanism as a primitive religious phenomenon based on a set of divinatory skills of a shaman, in Korea shamanistic beliefs and customs have survived syncretism with missionary religions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, and still are widely practiced in modern society. As the primary aim of this thesis is to achieve an authentically Korean biblical reading that is in dialogue with Korean native spirituality, it is vital, especially for Korean Bible readers, to recognise shamanism as the cultural backbone that shapes the basic outlook of Korean people toward the spiritual world and human fate,

and to evaluate the shamanistic model as an interpretative tool that can be applied to wider religious cultures and scriptures. The cross-cultural model of Korean shamanism as the basis of the parallel study between the shamanic and prophetic figures in the text will guide a Korean audience to identify and compare the magical and divinatory elements of biblical stories with their own, and realise that a biblical reading does not necessarily need to be set in opposition to their own spiritualism.

2.1. What is Shamanism? An Overview

Strictly speaking, shamanism cannot be identified as an ‘-ism’ or a specific theological denomination because it lacks the general features of a religion, such as a creed, sacred texts, priestly hierarchy or institutional body for educational and evangelical purposes. Traditionally, ‘shaman’ is a collective term used to describe various sacrificial priests or priest-doctors in the Siberian region and subsequently ‘shamanism’ is the medical, divinatory, and mystical phenomena related to them. The word derives from the Tungus word *šaman*, and since Russian anthropologists used this term to describe all magico-religious practitioners among the tribes of Siberia, Mongol and Turks, *šaman* has been widely adopted in modern studies of similar types of religious phenomena in other cultures.¹⁴ In the Tungus language the word *šaman* is both a noun and a verb. As a noun it refers to ‘one who is excited, moved,

¹⁴ M. Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1951), 4.

or raised' and as a verb it means 'to know', which captures the nature of a shamanistic ceremony and its desired consequences.¹⁵ A shamanistic religious system is based on a belief in the existence of supernatural beings or powers, whose ways are known through the ritual techniques of the shaman. To some extent shamanism coexists with other forms of magic and religion, but shamanism exhibits a particular magical sociality (the 'technique of ecstasy' or 'magical flight') which relies heavily on the charisma of the practitioner. According to Hultkrantz:

The central idea of shamanism is to establish contact with the supernatural world by the ecstatic experience of a professional and inspired intermediary, the shaman. There are four important constituents of shamanism: the ideological premise, or the supernatural world and the contacts with it; the shaman as the actor on behalf of a human group; the inspiration granted him [*sic*] by his helping spirits; and the extraordinary, ecstatic experiences of the shaman.¹⁶

Trance, ecstasy and other fervent ritualistic forms of behaviour, those which induce, maintain, or follow the spirit possession, are the most characteristic features of shamanism. In Siikala's words, 'trance (or ecstasy) is a form of behaviour deviating from what is normal in a wakened state and possessing a specific cultural significance, typical features being modification of the grasp of reality and the self-concept, with the intensity of change varying from slight

¹⁵ Å. Hultkrantz, 'A Definition of Shamanism', *Temenos* 9 (1973), 26.

¹⁶ Hultkrantz, 'Ecological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism,' in A. Znamenski (ed.), *Shamanism: Critical Concepts in Sociology* (the original article is in L. Bäckman and Å. Hultkrantz, *Studies in Lapp Shamanism* [Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1978], 9-35; London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 146-171 (148).

alterations to complete loss of consciousness'.¹⁷ This altered state of consciousness might be induced by hallucinogenic drugs, a deviation of sensory inputs, or the rhythmic music and dancing which are typical of many South and East Asian cultures. Whether labeled spirit possession, trance or ecstasy, the magico-religious experience of a shaman is often misunderstood as the symptoms of schizophrenic or any similar mentally dissociated state where the human body and mind fall helplessly under the control of an alien supernatural power. However, what distinguishes shamans from such a misconception is that the shaman is the master of ecstasy, enters and exits it at his or her own will, and is usually in control in the relationship with spiritual beings and their influences.¹⁸ Shamans possess at least one spirit-helper, usually in the form of an animal, as an assistant to the shamanistic flight of the soul, guiding the practitioner to communicate with the supernatural world and offering protection against all hazards and threats from other spiritual beings during the ecstatic flight. Also in shamanism, there is no definite concept of good or evil in relation to the spiritual beings. There are beneficent deities that bring productivity and happiness to the human community, but even these good spirits can cause harm when people neglect their ritual

¹⁷ A. L. Siikala, *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman* (Folklore Fellows Communication No. 220; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeskaremia Academia, 1978), 39.

¹⁸ Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques*, 4; R. Hutton, *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination* (London: Hambledon and London, 2001), 4.

duties, and evil spirits can be corrected or chased away by the shaman, which emphasizes the shaman's ability to gain control over spirits and their influence.

In Western anthropology, shamanism is an umbrella term for the complex of tribal beliefs associated with animism, natural economy and paranormal ritual behaviour exercised among aboriginal tribes. Although the subject-matter is largely Siberian and Asian,¹⁹ most profiles and data about shamanism have been compiled and revitalized in Western scholarship to the extent that it is in essence intended as a contribution to the history of European and American culture.²⁰ Ethnographical surveys of shamans tend to focus on exotic ritualism and the categorization of shamanic activities for analytic purposes, which takes place within a set of antithetical relationships: between the developed world and aboriginal tribes; between established and pagan religions; between sectarian institutions and the independent charisma of the shaman; and between science and magic. In the process of translating shamanistic phenomena into Western languages, it was unavoidable that certain preoccupations were attached to the supernatural quality of shamanism, for example, idol worship, paganism, mediums, witch-doctors, magicians and so on, which has to some extent

¹⁹ 'Shamanism is the term loosely given to certain religiomagical [*sic*] beliefs and practices found generally in primitive communities in which the officiating priest or functionary is a shaman...but more specifically the term shamanism is at present applied to those semireligious and semimagical procedures of the ecstatic wizards among the native tribes of Siberia'. I. M. Casanowcz, 'Shamanism of the Natives of Siberia', in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington: Government Printing Office: 1925), 415, cited in D. Owen, *Korean Shamanism: Its Components, Context, and Functions* (PhD thesis; Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1995), 125.

²⁰ R. Hutton, *Shamans: Siberian*, 9.

resulted in the trivialising of shamanism as occult and psychotherapeutic fashion.²¹

Shamanistic literature based on the principle of general theorising and model building always carries the danger of dissociating itself from the actual (and probably non-Western) cultural, historical and social contexts in which the original practices are found, and of bringing about a very narrow or all-inclusive definition of shamanism.²²

However, shamanism is not a peculiar religious phenomenon detached from ordinary life nor does it exist only among the primitive tribes of bygone eras. In many socio-politically stratified societies, shamanism still presents itself as a collective cultural and religious identity by offering a means of coping with an ever-changing world through solutions that have been tested and proven to be effective over the course of time. As Gustav Ränk observes:

Equally important in research is the functionalistic view-point which when we investigate details helps us not to lose sight of the structural unity. All our efforts would be in vain if we were not able to place shamanism in a functional relationship with human existence in its widest sense, that is, with its social-economic system and religious ideas. Without such a holistic view of the matter, the question of origin and development is left floating in a theoretical vacuum, lacking any contact with reality.²³

²¹ Hultkrantz, 'Shamanism: A Religious Phenomenon', in Gary Doore (ed.), *Shaman's Path: Healing, Personal Growth, and Empowering* (Boston: London; Shambhala, 1988), 33.

²² Such widespread scepticism of general theories of shamanism prompts Taussig to argue that shamanism is 'a made-up, modern, Western category, an artful falsification of disparate practices, snatches of folklore and overarching folklorizations, residues of long-established myths intermingled with the politics of academic departments, curricula, conferences, journal juries and articles, [and] funding agencies'. M. Taussig, 'The Nervous System: Homesickness and Dada', *Stanford Humanities Review* 1 (1989), cited in J. Atkinson, 'Shamanisms Today', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992), 41-48 (44).

²³ G. Ränk, 'Shamanism as a Research Subject', in C. M. Edsman, (ed.), *Studies in Shamanism* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 21.

As cultural and ethnical boundaries are constantly shifting and interwoven, today the study of shamanism should extend the existing limit of scholarly hypotheses and re-evaluate it as one of most original yet still extant religions in modern culture. Shamanism is based on mutual influence between the worlds of the living and the spirits, where shamanistic techniques are tools to solidify such a liaison rather than simply a barometer of the authenticity of the practitioner. The supernatural beings, whose ways are known through rituals, songs and myths, represent the dynamic and powerful forces in the universe with which humans must come to terms. In order to transform these powers into something useful for the human community, society has developed various ritual systems and techniques which extend the characteristics of shamans from being a master of ecstasy to serve as a priest, a counsellor, a medium, a medical practitioner, and a minister. However, this does not mean that shamanism in a socio-politically stratified society shows any deterioration of the more traditional shamanism, nor that it is in the process of becoming a finalised religious institution. Shamanism remains an inspiration to the people who believe in the coexistence of the sacred and secular worlds, and, by providing a ritual and other intermediary services on behalf of the community, manages to offer both the charismatic ritualism of traditional shamanism and solutions to the practical issues that individuals face in their daily lives.

2.2. Korean Shamanism: Syncretism and Survival

Eliade states that it is difficult to determine the origin of Korean shamanism because of the diversity of its expression throughout the Korean peninsula.²⁴ One of the early Christian missionaries, Hulbert, also points out the syncretic nature of the Korean religious mind:

In no department of Korean life is the antiquity of their civilization so clearly demonstrated as in the mosaic of religious beliefs that are held, not only by different individuals but by single individuals ... the reader must ever bear in mind that in every Korean mind there is a jumble of the whole; that there is not antagonism between the different cults, however they may logically refute each other, but that they have all been shaken down together through centuries until they form a sort of religious composite, from which each man [*sic*] selects his favourite ingredients without ever ignoring the rest.²⁵

Hulbert further argues that the Korean religious dynamic is built around the three spiritualisms, namely Buddhism, Confucianism and shamanism: 'as a general thing, we may say that the all-around Korean will be a Confucianist when in society, a Buddhist when he [*sic*] philosophizes and a spirit-worshipper when he is in trouble'.²⁶ With the exception of Buddhism, which has long been the religion of commoners and has held a strong affiliation with shamanism through essentially egalitarian ethical tenets, shamanism was often the subject of socio-political victimisation by Confucianism and the ruling ideology for its

²⁴ Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques*, 462.

²⁵ H. B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (First published in 1906; Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), 403.

²⁶ Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 403-404; in a similar vein, an American missionary, Samuel Moffet, observes how Protestant Christianity has successfully settled in Korea based on its affiliation with other Korean traditional religions: 'Korean Protestantism taught social justice, respected science and learning as high values like Confucianism, sought for purity, and promised a next life like Buddhism. It taught prayer will be answered and miracles will happen like Shamanistic religion'. S. M. Moffet, *The Christians of Korea* (New York: Friendship Press, 1962), 52.

association with the peasantry and use of female practitioners. However, as opposed to other missionary religions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, shamanism is a native spiritualism of Korea, where the animistic veneration of the sacred mountains and the sun is believed to be one of the earliest expressions of the Korean religious mind.²⁷ Thus the polemic against shamanism pertains to the popularity and influence it has among the Korean people rather than because it is genuinely considered an extreme case of religious impurity and vulgar ritualism, featuring 'abominable deeds to embroil heretic sacrifices' or 'evil-causing heresies'.²⁸

The three major compartments of Korean shamanism, namely the spirits, the shaman and the shamanistic ritual, may be deprived of an institutional body or a denominational teaching, but they constitute the basic worldview of Korean people and provide them a collective cultural identity that is distinctively Korean and beyond sectarian differences. In this regard, in what follows I will address the above three elements of Korean shamanism and discuss how the shamanistic beliefs are manifested in a Korean context, their compatibilities with the classic shamanistic model and other official religions, and how Korean people created 'the mosaic of religious beliefs' using shamanism as a basis in a dialogue with other religious cultures.

²⁷ P. Y. U. Park, 'A Study on the Relation of Shamanism to Other Religions in Korea', *Korea Religions* 2:1 (1970), 14-15.

²⁸ Chung, *Syncretism: The Religious Context*, 92.

2.3. The Concept of Shamanistic Deities and Divine Government

At first, the pantheon of Korean shamanism appears to be inconsistent and amorphous. The other name for a shaman, *mansin*, a polite term used by the clientele, literally means ‘ten thousand spirits’, implying the countless deities worshipped in the shamanist shrine and the practitioner’s ability to form a relationship with a variety of spiritual beings. There are generally three categories in the Korean shamanistic pantheon: namely gods, ancestors and hobgoblins. Goblins are mischievous spiritual beings, much like an imp or the leprechaun in Irish folklore, which possess supernatural attributes but have no power to influence people’s lives. Goblins are never worshipped, but nor should they be neglected, especially in the shamanistic ritual, as such negligence incites them to be troublesome and may cause embarrassment or the loss of a small fortune.²⁹

2.3.1. Ancestors

Ancestral spirits are closely related to the patriarchal order of Korean society. In Korea, the family tie is valued more highly than any other relation in society, and death does not

²⁹ The Korean term for this mischievous spirit is *Tok-kae-bi*. It is portrayed as a typical trickster, who plays pranks by spilling things, hiding household items and tripping people up.

necessarily indicate the severance of the family bond. Aspirations of this world, such as a sense of membership and the desire to be acknowledged and maintain a respectful relationship with other members of family and community, are also applied to life after death. Korea has long been an ethnically homogenous nation, rarely exposed to the influx of foreign races, hence historically verifiable personae such as great military leaders are categorised as ancestral spirits and worshipped in the shamanistic shrines.³⁰ As a general rule, ancestral spirits are limited in their power, highly individualistic in their character, and can only affect the direct household. If descendants neglect their ceremonial duties, their ancestors become hungry, wandering ghosts, yielding an obnoxious influence on people's lives.

As briefly mentioned above, the fact that, besides shamanism, the three official religions in Korea - Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity - offer their own versions of ancestral worship shows how important it is for Korean people to carry on their filial duties and secure immortality by observing the tradition of ancestral worship.³¹ In the shamanistic ritual, the ceremony focuses on the purgation of *han*, a complex feeling of frustration, resentment and sorrow.³² Death brings both the deceased and the bereaved family the most

³⁰ War heroes who saved Korea from foreign invasion or revolutionaries who fought against the exploitative regimes on behalf of the common people are collectively referred to as the General Spirits, whose speciality is to drive evil spirits away and protect people from diseases and misfortune. For a list of human-oriented deities in Korea, see, Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism*, 129-130.

³¹ See this thesis, p.7, n.3.

³² This particular emotional state constitutes a preoccupation of Korean culture in general and shamanism in particular. Park translates *han* as the 'wounded heart' of Korean ordinary people. S. A. Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*

powerful feeling of *han*, as represented by the name of Korean shamanistic rituals for the dead: *Chionogi kut* (The Rite of Satisfying the Dead Soul) in the central part of Korea and *Sitkim kut* (The Rite of Purification) in the southern provinces. Especially in the shamanistic worldview, which places emphasis on wellbeing and fulfilment in this life rather than after death, the newly dead are believed to have a most potent and dangerous temper, one which derives from having to leave life and family behind. In addition, in the Korean religious imagination, the dead are relocated to the Courts of Hell for forty-nine days after death, which further aggravates the restless situation that the spirits of the dead have to endure.³³

Therefore the ritual for the dead is one of the most important ceremonies in Korean shamanism, as only shamans possess the ability to cross between the realms of the living and the dead and rescue souls from hell to the Lotus Paradise.³⁴ I will briefly introduce the procedure of the shamanistic ritual for the dead. On the day of the ceremony, the women in the house set a fresh offering of a tray of rice, fruit and candy outside the gate for *Saja* (The

(Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 1993), 20. Suh views *han* as ‘a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, a sense of helplessness because of overwhelming odds against, a feeling of acute pain or sorrow’, representing the psychology of common folk in Korea whose history has been bestrewn with foreign invasions, a civil war, dictatorship and political and economic disparities. D. K. Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ* (Hong Kong: Commission on Theological Concerns, Christian Conference of Asia, 1991), 195.

³³ Hence title for the Buddhist mortuary ceremony, *Sagu-je* (The Rite of Forty-nine Days).

³⁴ The Korean shamanist ritual for the dead incorporates basic terminologies and concepts of Buddhism. For example, the Courts of Hell, the Western Paradise, The Great King Yama (the Lord of Hades or the Ten Kings of Hell) are originally Buddhist terms, and sometimes Buddhist monks are invited to the ritual for sutra chanting alongside shamans to placate the anxiety of the spirit of the dead, please the Buddhist deities who will decide the destination of the newly dead, and guide the hazardous journey of the newly dead from hell to heaven.

Death Messenger), who had snatched away the spirit of the dead that is still wandering in this world to the Courts of Hell. The arrival of the Death Messenger recreates the event of death, and, after cleansing the altar, a shaman uses the actual clothes of the dead person to bring the soul back home. As soon as the presence of the spirit is made known to the shaman, female family members start to lament with loud voices and the shaman begins *nokjuli/nökduri*, the talk of the soul, in spirit possession.³⁵ Through the body of the shaman, the spirit expresses his or her distress in hell or a foreign place and unwillingness to part from this world. The family bribes the Death Messenger with cash to bring the soul out of hell and offers the soul of the dead food, clothing and travel money for the journey to paradise. Without the help of kin, the soul in hell might starve, suffer ceaseless torments and become a malevolent ghost. Once brought back home for food, warmth and a final farewell, the soul of the dead is now rested in the ancestral tablet and invited again for periodic feasting, called *chesa*. After *Tae-sang* (The Great Send-off), which marks the end of the mourning period – usually around the second anniversary of death – the household returns to the normal state of living and the dead becomes an ancestral spirit whose function is the assurance of divine protection and help for the living kin.³⁶

³⁵ Owen notes that there are three purposes in communication with the dead: to gain knowledge about the dead, to make arrangements for the needs of the dead, and to acquaint the dead just in case there is a need for help from the ancestor spirits. Owen, *Korean Shamanism*, 106.

³⁶ More detailed analyses of the Korean shamanistic ritual for the dead can be found in: L. Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (Honolulu:

In contrast to the shamanistic or Buddhist ritual for the dead, in the Confucian ceremony any direct engagement with the spirit is reduced to a minimum and instead Confucian ethics rule the whole process. The ruling elites of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910), during which era social decorum and the political agenda were dominated by Confucian ideals, made an exception in the case of the worship of ancestral spirits despite their aversion to the shamanistic or Buddhist beliefs of the laypeople. A possible explanation is that, once fitted into the framework of Confucian conventions, aristocrats realised that ancestral worship could be an effective tool to educate the younger generation in the basic Confucian values, such as the obligatory relationship between sovereign and subject, respect for the patriarchy, filial duties and a male dominated, if not monopolised, governance over the family and society.³⁷

University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 150-156; J. Y Lee, *Korean Shamanistic Rituals* (Religion and Society 12; The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981), 121-130; D. A. Kister, *Korean Shamanist Ritual: Symbols and Dramas of Transformation* (Bibliotheca Shamanistica 5; Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1997), 81-92.

³⁷ The Confucian style ancestral worship, *chesa*, adopted hierarchical principles in Confucian codes of ethics and applied them not only to the dead but also to living kin. Female household members prepare an elaborate food offering for ancestors and as soon as the men finish the *chesa*, the women take the offerings to the kitchen to prepare a feast for the men. The manner of dining follows the patriarchal rule of the family, from ancestors by generational seniority to men by age, and then the women and children. The women and children eat last, either in a separate room or from trays the men have left. Not only are women excluded from accompanying the main ceremony, but neither will they become ancestors in their natal home but be placed in the ancestral tablets alongside their husbands. Therefore Clark argues that *chesa* is no literal invocation of the ancestral spirit, but merely a metaphoric display acknowledging one's eternal obligation to parents and ancestors. C. A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea* (New York; London: Garland, 1981), 114-116.

Periodic ancestral worship is still widely practiced in modern Korean society as the occasion serves to renew the bond between the living and the dead and between senior and younger generations of the family. There is a clear distinction between the shamanistic ritual for the spirits of the dead and especially the Confucian style *chesa*, which illustrates contrasting worldviews and the focuses for shamanism and the state religion. In the shamanic and Buddhist rituals, the anxiety and distress caused by death are pacified by the intervention of a shaman, and the living assure the newly dead with a promise of periodic feasts in return for the spiritual protection of the household. The fact is that whichever the version is, the origins and aspirations of ancestral worship, which is the communication and securing of immortality with the help of kin, are distinctively shamanic, which indicates a widespread diffusion of shamanistic belief and practice in Korean ritualism.

2.3.2. Gods

Korean shamanistic gods and the rituals dedicated to them are relatively free from the patriarchal rule of Korean society.³⁸ In terms of animistic belief in traditional shamanism and

³⁸ Besides all other supernatural beings, there is a mystical figure that is most loved and revered at Korean shamanist shrines, *Bari-gongju* (Princess Bari). The princess was abandoned at birth when she was born as the seventh daughter to a sonless king and queen. The princess was rescued by a Dragon King and grew up in heaven but came down to earth when she learned that her parents were critically ill. The princess went on a perilous journey to the underworld to obtain the sacred water to save her parents and came back nine years later after slaving for the god *Majong* in exchange for the medicine.

the anthropomorphization of the Korean shamanistic pantheon, it is not easy to produce a clear classification of Korean shamanistic gods. Kim introduces twenty-two categories of Korean shamanistic gods, 273 in total, but this classification may be too broad, as they are basically divided them into two groups, nature gods and human gods.³⁹ Hogarth views Korean shamanistic deities as reflecting the tripartite structure of the universe: heavenly gods responsible for life and general good fortune; earthy gods governing the underworld and various elements of nature, such as fire, rain, water, earth, sea, and wind; and human gods with historically verifiable records.⁴⁰ Here I will introduce examples of shamanistic deities that have had particularly lasting value and a direct influence on people's lives:

- *Samshin* or *Samshin Halmŏni* (The Three Gods or the Grandmother of Three Gods), most revered by Korean housewives as they are in charge of birth and fertility, which are vital issues in Korean patriarchal society.⁴¹

The royal parents revived and Princess Bari became *Mansin Sinju* (The Mistress of Ten Thousand Spirits), the progenitor of the Korean shaman. The story of Princess Bari contains all the basic attributes of a successful shaman, such as: rejection and separation from the community, personal ordeals to acquire sacred items, an ability to travel across the supernatural worlds, shamanistic healing and a beneficial contribution to the wellbeing of the community. For the full citation of the ballad of Princess Bari, see, Hogarth, *Syncretism of Buddhism*, 161-162.

³⁹ T. G. Kim, 'Components of Korean Shamanism,' *Korea Journal* 12 (1972), 22; *idem*, *Korean Shamanism-Muism* (trans. S-K Chang; Korean Studies Series 9; Seoul: Jimoondang Publishing Company, 1998), 90-91. The varieties of Korean shamanic deities and their essential qualities are listed in, B Walraven, *Songs of the Shaman: The Ritual Chants of the Korean Mudang* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994), 7-14.

⁴⁰ Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism*, 128-130.

⁴¹ The folk tale of *Samshin* or *Samshin Halmŏni* can be described as controversial in relation to the strict ethical rules of early Korean society. The story begins with a young girl, seduced by a Buddhist monk, who becomes pregnant. On discovering her unchaste conduct, the girl's nine brothers punish her by putting her in a stone box to die but the girl survives and gives birth to triplets, who later became *Samshin* (The Three Gods). The motif of death and resurrection in this story echoes the Princess Bari saga and subsequently the shamanistic initiation process, which consists of isolation, near-death experience and rebirth. Hogarth points out the double meaning of the word, *sam*; originally it meant three, linked to the tripartite structure of Korean shamanism, but it can also refer to the

- *Ch'ilsŏng* (The Seven Stars) is worshipped as one deity despite the name and is responsible for childcare and long life.
- *Sanshin* (The Mountain Spirit), often identified with *Tan'gun*, the mythological progenitor of the Korean nation, contributes to the procurement of descendants, national security and rain.
- *Taegam* (The Old Master or Your Excellency) is associated with money and other material blessings.
- *Chesŏk* (Buddha Emperor), an equivalent of the Buddha Sakyamuni, but transformed in Korean shamanism as the deity of the household, is in charge of all aspects of human life such as longevity, harvest, conception and birth.
- *Obang Shinjang* (The Five Direction General) administers the prevention of misfortune and the beneficial changes in a person's life.⁴²

Each shamanistic deity has designated costumes and paintings, songs and folklores dedicated to them, which are important parts of Korean cultural heritage in their own right. The domains and specialities of these gods sometimes overlap, but as a basic rule, the central concern of Korean shamanistic worship ties in with human beings and their aspirations in this world, for example, a long life blessed with wealth, health, children and happiness. In Korean shamanistic culture, these deities are not confined within the conventions of the abstract, but worshipped because their stories and essential qualities have analogies with the lives of ordinary people. Either derived from nature or human-oriented, Korean shamanist deities closely follow the rites of passage of the living and function as reliable resources for both spiritual and pragmatic aspects of human life.

amion and the placenta, which intensifies the speciality of this particular deity. Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism*, 133.

⁴² Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism*, 123.

2.3.3. *Hananim*

Korean shamanistic deities coexist with human beings based on a dynamic cycle of life and death, rather than within a strict hierarchy of the heavenly court. From the view of an outsider, the Korean shamanistic pantheon may appear a chaotic compound of native and foreign gods without a definite classification, hence an early Christian missionary described Korean people as 'a people without a religion'.⁴³ However, despite its association with numerous supernatural beings, Korean shamanism has long held a unique belief in one supreme deity, *Hananim* (The Great One). *Hananim* is perceived as the omnipresent and indefinite Being, an ultimate cause of everything in the universe and distinguished from all other spiritual beings that have a direct connection to people's lives. Even though *Hananim* is believed to be the supreme ruler, originating and supervising every human being's fate in this world, the deity is not a Zeus-like figure at the top of a hierarchy of celestial beings, and a ritual dedicated to *Hananim* only is extremely rare.⁴⁴ Direct worship is dedicated to those spirits to whom *Hananim* has delegated the authority, which could be the reason why there are hardly any conventional references - paintings, songs or myths - or a ritual routine to this particular

⁴³ H. G. Underwood, *The Call of Korea* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), 77.

⁴⁴ As Clark states, 'they say that he (*Hananim*) sends the harvest, yet in the Fall they offer their sacrifices not to him, but to the gods of the hills, or to the house gods, or to the ancestral tablets. He seems to be everything to them, and then again he seems to be nothing, judging from the way in which they disregard him when all goes well'. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea*, 196.

deity.⁴⁵ The concept of *Hananim*, its unanimous authority, its alienation from mundane life and its lack of physical representation allowed great advances to be made by early Christian missionaries in overcoming the disparity between Korean folk religion and Western monotheistic belief.

Strange to say, the purest religious notion which the Korean to-day possesses is the belief in Hananim, a being entirely unconnected with either of the imported cults and as far removed from the crude nature-worship. This word Hananim is compounded of the words 'heaven' (sky) and 'master', and is the pure Korean counterpart of the Chinese word 'Lord of Heaven'. The Korean [*sic*] all consider this being to be the Supreme Ruler of the universe. He [*sic*] is entirely separated from and outside the circle of the various spirits and demons that infest all nature. Considered from this standpoint, the Korean are strictly monotheist, and the attributes and powers ascribed to this being are in such consonance with those of Jehovah and the foreign missionaries (Protestant) have almost universally accepted the term for use in teaching Christianity.⁴⁶

Korean people, whose traditional spiritual worship had never been fully accepted in the official religions (Buddhism and Confucianism) and treated only with contempt by the literati, readily accepted the chance to worship this Heavenly God, strangely encouraged by Western belief. The irony is that, despite the claim that Protestant Christianity sought to abolish superstitious beliefs and offer Korean people a better alternative of religious structure and

⁴⁵ Park argues that the earliest form of Korean shamanism is Shinkyo [New Religion], of which one of the characteristics is the monotheistic belief in the 'high god' or 'heavenly god', the highest of all supernaturals. However, since this supreme deity does not figure as the guardian deity of a person nor is directly involved in the daily lives of the people, society began to incorporate less-important deities in the shamanistic rituals to deal with the practical issues of human life and fate. P. U. Park, 'A Study on the Relation of Shamanism to Other Religions', *Korean Religions* 2:1 (1970), 15.

⁴⁶ Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 404. In a similar vein, Scott argues, 'The term Hananim in Korean shamanism covers the idea of the one supreme mind, one God. This God of the Koreans is similar to the God of the Jewish Old Testament and played the role of a hermeneutic bridge in shifting the understanding of the traditional religious, cultural concept of God into the Christian one ... and on this deep-seated monotheism the Christian missionary has built the amazing success.' R Scott, 'Warning Mentalities in the Far East', *Asia* 20 (1920), 699.

philosophy, it was this bond between Korean people and shamanism that made it possible for them to recognise some familiarities in this new religion and incorporate it into their ritual system.⁴⁷

Moreover, a smooth transition from the native concept of *Hananim* to that of a Christian counterpart does not necessarily mean a change in the original qualities of *Hananim*. On the contrary, the Christian God had to be 'shamanised' in order to respond to the Korean people's expectations of their ideal relationship with spiritual beings.⁴⁸ Korean shamanism could retain the image of a transcendent and omnipotent *Hananim* because it exists beyond the universal cycle of life and death, delegating other spirits to attend to all practical issues of human life. However, in Korean Christianity, there is no other but the 'one and only' God, who is believed to be the master of supernatural power that brings fortune or misery to people according to their conduct.

Hananim, like Yahweh of old, is believed to have created human beings and the world, giving life to the Korean people and founding their civilization. Hananim is also believed to have an all-embracing sympathy, to answer people's prayers, and to liberate people from suffering. In times of weakness, Koreans prayed to Hananim for his [*sic*] mercy and charity as well as for his power to overcome adversities beyond the reach of human will. Koreans also believed that Hananim punished unfailingly those who committed crimes

⁴⁷ For example, Korean housewives' custom to bring the very first water from the well at dawn and offer it to the household god was transformed into the unique dawn prayer in Korean Protestant churches, which is still widely practised. Also, the daily kitchen routine of taking a handful of grains of rice before making a meal as a deposit to the provision for ancestral worship became a Christian donation, *Sung-mi*, 'the Holy Rice'.

⁴⁸ According to Chung, Korean Christians' attendance at church, and their enthusiasm for dawn prayers and generosity in offering to the church are all intimately linked to their desire for this-worldly wish-fulfilment. Chung, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 42.

and sins against the public interest: wicked persons or misdeeds were believed to be 'visited' by divine punishments or 'Heaven's vengeance'.⁴⁹

The tendency of the modern Korean church to portray Christian *Hananim* as an exclusive deity whose responsibility is closely related to the wish for personal well-being and other material blessings shows a strong association with spiritual worship in Korean shamanism, where the ritualism always aims at practical ends. Today the best example of the belief in sacred provision and the tendency to associate human fate with divine will can be found in Korean Christians' ardent worship of *Hananim*, which is a hybrid of the most original deity in Korean shamanism.

2.4. Korean Shamans

2.4.1. Magicians, Sorcerers, Diviners, or Spirit Masters? An Overview

The spirit manifests itself through visions, signs, and dreams, and by possessing the body of the shaman. According to the definition of Eliade, the major difference between a shaman and a medium is in the experience of the flight of the soul.⁵⁰ In the shamanic ritual, the soul

⁴⁹ A. E. Kim, 'Korean Religious Culture and its Affinity to Christianity', *Sociology of Religion*, 61:2 (2000), 123.

⁵⁰ Eliade refers to shamanism as simply a 'technique of ecstasy' and to a shaman as the one who has special relations with the spirit (spirit-helper) and the ability to achieve 'mastery over fire' and 'magical flight'. The flight or ecstatic voyage of a shaman is a recurring theme in the study of shamanism, and during a trance the soul of the shaman is believed to leave his or her body and to ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld. According to Eliade, a distinctive element of the shaman is that he or she is never an instrument of the spirits but is a master over them. With the assistance of the spirit-helper the shaman can communicate with supernatural beings without

is detached from the body and enters the spiritual world (ecstasy or soul-loss), whereas in the case of a medium the spirit enters the body and possesses that person. Therefore the medium in deep trance has no control over his or her behaviour during the possession, whereas shamans are generally able to enter and exit the trance state at will.⁵¹ In a similar vein, after the divination a Korean shaman often reaffirms the message of the spirit to the client in her or his own words, whereas the medium does not remember the procedures nor have the capacity to interpret the message of the spirit.

The idea of the flight of the soul seems to draw a clear distinction between the shaman and magicians or mediums, but, in the context of the Korean shamanistic ritual, spirit possession, ecstasy and mediumship are performed interchangeably rather than exclusively. In Korean shamanism, there are certain shamans who do not necessarily use the technique of the flight of soul or spirit possession in their rituals, but they are still called shamans in their own right. Thus in order to finalise the concept of shamanistic practitioners in Korea, what is needed is not an exclusive model of a shaman conceived in a theoretical vacuum, but the

becoming a subject to their domination. Eliade, *Forgotten Religions* (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1950), 4; *idem*, *Shamanism*, 5-6.

⁵¹ A classic example is Catharina Fagerberg, a Scandinavian shaman who 'was able to send out her "life-spirit(s)" to discover what was happening in other places, and yet on the other hand both evil and good spirits were able to speak through her'. C. M. Edsman, 'A Swedish Female Folk Healer: From the Beginning of the 18th Century', in Edsman (ed.), *Studies in Shamanism Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Shamanism Held at Åbo on the 6th-8th of September* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 164.

recognition of the different social and religious contexts of shamanistic practitioners in Korea and their interaction with other parts of society.⁵²

The primary aim of the ritual activity of magicians or mediums is to increase or personalise the supernatural power. However, in shamanistic rituals, spirit possession or ecstasy is a technique the practitioners employ in order to acquire practical solutions for those people who turn to shamans in times of trouble and uncertainty. Shamanistic healing and interpretations of the divine message are the integral parts of the ritual, probably the process that truly matters for the client, and in this regard the 'flight of the soul' itself has little validity as a barometer of the authenticity of a shamanistic service, unless accompanied by a beneficial contribution to the problem at hand. It is true that the Korean shamanic ritual is heavily reliant on the independent charisma of the shaman, which cannot be replaced by the institutionalised praxes of state religions; but, as much as the magical aspects of the shamanistic ceremony, the shaman's realistic view of the lives of ordinary people and ability to provide a practical solution are equally important.

⁵² Also, there is a cultural, psychological and historical difference in the emphases on the flight of the soul (ecstasy) between the classic shamanistic model and the Korean context. Whereas in hunter-gatherer societies the experience of the journey or the flight of the souls is widely experienced, in horticultural societies the experience (the journey of the soul) is limited to the shamans, and in the shaman's ritual a visit of the divine is more popular than the flight of the soul. This could be the reason why in Korea, even though the concept of the shaman as the master of the soul still exists, the host of the spirit is more common than the journey of the spirit. Cf. M. K. Lee, *A Man of High Degree: An Exploration of Jesus as Shaman in the Synoptic Gospels* (PhD thesis; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1999), 60-61.

2.4.2. *Mudang*: Korean Shamanistic Practitioner

2.4.2.1. Definitions and Characteristics of the Korean Shaman

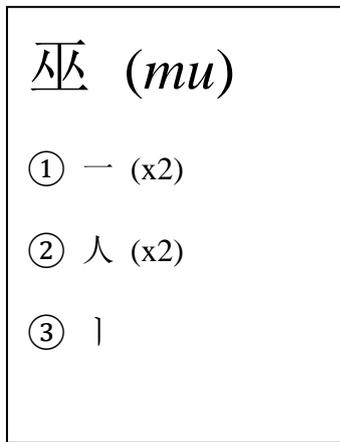
Korean shamanic practitioners are generally called *mu-dang* (female shamans) and *pak-su* or *pak-su mudang* (male shamans).⁵³ Since most shamanistic practitioners in Korea are women, the term *mudang* has become a common designation for a Korean shaman. An additional explanation of the formation of this word is necessary, because *mudang* not only refers to a person engaged in shamanistic practices but also conveys the basic worldview of Korean shamanism.

Most Asian words are like jigsaws. Each character has its own significance, but when all the letters are combined there appears more exclusive meaning and structure. In *mudang*, *dang* means an altar or a shrine, and *mu* refers to both the shamanistic ritual and the practitioner: therefore, the term may be translated as, ‘the one who performs miracles’, ‘the performance of miracles’,⁵⁴ or ‘the one who worships the abstract and dances in possession

⁵³ Besides *mudang*, Korean shamans are called *mu*, *mansin*, *munyŏ*, *miji*, *tan’gol* or *simbang*, according to region and the field in which the practitioner is specialised. For a complete list of Korean shamanic professionals, see T. Y. Yi (ed.), *Han’guk minsok-hak kaesŏl* [An Introduction to Korean Folklore] (Seoul: Iljogak, 1991), 139-163.

⁵⁴ J. Y. Lee, ‘Concerning the Origin and Formation of Korean Shamanism’, *Numen* 20 (1973), 136.

of the spirits'.⁵⁵ The explanation below of the structure of the word *mu* will help the reader to visualise the Korean shamanistic worldview.



The two parallel bars (—), at the top and the bottom, refer to heaven and earth respectively. The vertical bar (|) in the middle implies the Cosmic Tree, the sacred passage that connects the sky and earth, and there are people (人) surrounding this axis mundi, supposedly shamans.⁵⁶ Earth is the foundation of human

beings, while the sky observes their conduct. Shamans have obligations to maintain the channel between the two realms so that the messages from spirits can be delivered to people, and vice versa. *Dang*, the second element of the Korean designation of shaman (*mu-dang*), which originally means a shrine or altar, supplements the ideological construction of Korean shamanism with a symbolic body, the place of spirit worship and revelation. In a metaphorical sense, a shaman herself could be an altar when possessed by a spirit during the ritual (*mu*).

In the dyadic universe of Korean shamanism, shamans are a reliable source of communication between spirits and people, sky and earth, the living and the dead and Yin

⁵⁵ H. Y. Cho, *Mu: Han'guk mu ui yoksa wa hyonsang* [The History and Phenomenon of Korean Shamanism] (Seoul: Minjok-sa Ltd., 1997), 14.

⁵⁶ Eliade, *Shamanism*, 70-71.

and Yang. The equality of these different yet interactive entities continually oscillates between excess and deficiency in one part and another. Korean shamanism understands that it is an excess or deficiency of these eventualities that causes friction and disturbance in cosmic harmony, which results in mysterious misfortunes and calamities in the secular world. At least at a time when the natural laws had not yet been discovered and controlled by science, medicine or other human technology, Korean people believed that it was essential to secure wisdom and aid from the divine to live in this turbulent and hazardous world.⁵⁷ But it was beyond the understanding of ordinary people to grasp or interpret the mechanism of the dynamic between the sacred and the secular, and therefore they needed the shamans who could control the spirits, administer to their needs and retrieve the natural harmony on behalf of the human community. In between these two worlds, the shaman's responsibility was not confined to the worship of the spirits or the management of a shrine, but extended to an active engagement in negotiating between both the will of spirits and that of human beings to their mutual satisfaction.

However, in the history of Korean religions, shamanism or shamanistic practitioners have not been free from political victimisation by the aristocracy or the official religions,

⁵⁷ As Miyoji argues, 'The ancients must have thought that their happiness or welfare depended solely upon a supernatural power emanating from the spirit and, in an effort to control the spirit, they needed magic and taboos. As these means became complicated, there emerged a shaman whose role it was as a professional to act as an intermediary between his [*sic*] helpless compatriots and the supernatural being, as a conjurer expelling devils, as a physician curing disease, as a fortune-teller, or as a foreseer'. Y. Miyoji, 'Native Beliefs in Ancient Korea', *Korea Journal* 3:5 (1963), 7.

especially Confucianism and Protestant Christianity, for its association with or influence over common people in Korea.⁵⁸ It is only recently that the Korean government realised the importance of the cultural heritage of Korean shamanism and instituted a law to preserve shamanic arts and those practitioners who are specialised in the oral traditions of the shamanistic saga and elaborate ritual forms. However, even though the cultural value of Korean folk religion has not been dismissed, the policy focuses only on the aesthetic aspects of shamanism rather than its contribution to the construction of the Korean religious and cultural identity. Shamanistic practices are still in demand in order to overcome personal crises and to secure the blessing of the spirits, but with the traditional worldview of shamanism being overruled by the more powerful doctrines of official religions and modernisation, the function of a shaman in modern Korean society appears to some extent diminished, seen now as a psychotherapeutic service for Korean women. Then why would individuals still choose to be shamans and what does their service entail?

2.4.2.1.1 The Two Types of Korean Shamans

⁵⁸ K. H. Chu, *Kut ūi sahoesa* [The Social History of the Korean Shamanistic Ritual] (Seoul: Woongjin Publishing Company, 1995), 23-26.

The practitioners of Korean shamanism are divided into three categories: 1) the 'self-made' type, in which a direct summons from the deity is absent and a practitioner's spiritual experience is limited, 2) the hereditary type, who succeeds to the profession after parents and ancestors, and 3) the 'god-appointed' type, the classic example of shamanistic vocation through selection by the spirits. For convenience, I will distinguish the above types of shamans based on a direct link to spiritual beings, or absence thereof, hence the 'god-appointed' type as opposed to the 'self-made' or the hereditary types.

2.4.2.1.1.1 The 'Self-made' Shaman

Traditionally shamans were considered as outcasts, mainly by the Confucian convention that dominated Korean ethical tenets until the advance of Western modernisation and democracy. If not through the case of a direct spirit calling, one of major reasons for becoming a shaman was to gain economic security and to improve social status.⁵⁹ It was an acceptable choice for those who had disabilities or no educational advantages, because it at least provided them a certain sense of membership and means of earning a living.⁶⁰ Especially for women, it offered substantial economic benefits and independence, which were unattainable in Korean

⁵⁹ Kim, 'Shamanism', in I. D. Kim (ed.), *Korea: Its People and Culture* (Seoul: Hakwon-sa Ltd., 1970), 267.

⁶⁰ 'Most of the Shamans who have chosen "black magic" as a means to earn a living here have either been reared in extreme economic poverty or are considered especially adapted to the work of the Shaman, because their sensitive ears render them readily able to perceive communications from the gods, and also blindness is believed to allow the effective mental concentration required for the work'. Kim, 'Shamanism', 297.

traditional patriarchal society.⁶¹ This is one of the reasons why the general sentiments toward shamanistic practitioners were far from affirmative: because these 'self-made' shamans had been placed on a lower rung of the class system even before they became shamans, and despite the slight improvement in their economic situation, the profession itself held other restrictions, for the career often requires a life-long commitment at the expense of social conventions such as marriage and family life.

Even today, since 'self-made' shamans enter into the profession not by the choice of the spirit but their own, and then acquaint themselves with the sacred books and mechanical methods of divination, this type is considered to have a less spiritual power than a 'god-appointed' type. 'Self-made' shamans usually specialise in fortune-telling and divination, and when they are invited to a shamanistic ritual it is to assist other shamans by singing and playing musical instruments to set the appropriate tone for the ceremony.⁶² Today 'self-

⁶¹ A similar case is also found in Japan among the blind female mediums known as *itako* or *ichiko*: '...by becoming a medium she will become a viable member of her community rather than a burden. It is to save her from the stigma of uselessness that her parents apprentice her to an older *itako*, in whose house she may receive the necessary training'. Blacker, *Catapla Bow*, 141. A Korean counterpart of the Japanese *itako* is *pansoo* or *chambong*, a male shaman specialising in fortune-telling. To say that some Asian societies developed a system of utilising less-desirable or less-fortunate human resources for shamanistic practices may appear unethical by today's standards, but during that time the concept of social mobility was unheard of and the society is based on a strict hierarchical order, a career as a shaman was one of few possible ways for outcasts to achieve membership and respect in the community.

⁶² Besides the typical designation for Korean shamans, *mudang*, there are several terms which refer to this particular type of shaman, such as: *jömjaengi* (diviner), *gwansangjaengi* (face reader), *sajujaengi* (horoscope reader), *susangjaengi* (palm reader), *golsangjaengi* (bone reader) *pungsu/ jigwan* (geomancer), *gyeongjaengi / gyeongmu/ beopsa* (sutra chanter), and so on. For a detailed classification and practices of Korean shamanistic professionals, see B. E. Young, *Spirits and Other Signs: The Practice of Divination in Seoul, Republic of Korea* (PhD Thesis; Pullman, WA.: University of

made' shamans do not suffer from social discrimination as strongly as before. This is because the traditional Confucian style gender and hierarchical disparity is no longer accepted as a general rule of society, and the curriculum that the self-made practitioners undergo to become legitimate shamans, such as learning the ritual techniques and memorising the sacred scriptures and oral traditions of shamanistic deities, are considered an important part of the Korean shamanistic system, as a means of not only educating novice-shamans but also of preserving Korean traditional religious culture.⁶³

The hereditary type (*sesŭpmu*) refers to those who enter into shamanhood due to the family vocation being passed down for generations. Succession of profession is not exclusive to shamanism, because in traditional Korean society the filial duty to continue the lineage and family vocation was one of the decisive factors in determining the life and career of a member of the younger generation. However, with the exception of the hereditary type, once

Washington, 1980), 45-65. Certain divinatory skills are widely shared by different types of shaman in Korea. For example, *jŏmsungsul* (horoscopy) and the technique of skilfully arranged questions (*deodŭmi*) are commonly used methods to discover the circumstance and trouble of the client. Cho, *Mu*, 133. Also, the service of the geomancers (*jigwan*) is distinctively different from that of other traditional shamans in that the practitioner (usually male) relies on the Chinese-derived system of *pungsoo*, literally meaning 'the science of wind and water,' and the text book *Chunkeuitayo* that explains the science of geomancy and topography in order to select auspicious sites for residences or graves. Owen, *Korean Shamanism*, 161-164.

⁶³ Especially the songs of the shaman, *muga*, are based on the oral tradition of the myths of shamanistic deities, and the recital of *muga*, purely dependent on the shaman's memory, is considered an art form. One of the famous examples is Kim Kŭm-Hwa, a Korean female shaman who has been instated as a Korean human cultural treasure. Her ritual routines are so renowned that there are regular recitals of her performances both in and outside of Korea. Since there are few written documents to teach neophyte shamans the ritual procedure and performances, it is mandatory that they learn these oral traditions and memorise shamanist songs from older and experienced shamans before leading the ritual as independent practitioners. Such training rejects the preconceptions about shamanistic singing and chanting, that they are intermittent or incomprehensible rambling in a moment of ritual frenzy.

the choice to become a shaman had been made, the nominee would be expelled from his or her family, and all ties with family members and previous life-style completely severed. Hence Korean shamans used to form a guild-like community of their own and tended to marry others in a similar profession (shamans, musicians and ritual assistants), because of the social taboo attached to the profession and a mutual understanding of the nature of their work. As a result, a child born into a family of shamans was believed to have a certain predisposition towards becoming a shaman, even though a direct calling from the spirit had not been manifested. However, in modern Korean society, where people are no longer or not as strongly tied to the patriarchal order of the family as before, the term *sesŭpmu/sesŭmmu* (a hereditary type) has lost its original meaning and instead is used as an umbrella term to describe those who become shamans by personal choice rather than by spiritual calling. Today there are only a few cases of hereditary shamans, and on most occasions a person becomes a shaman because of divine selection.

2.4.2.1.1.3. The 'God-appointed' Shaman

The 'god-appointed' type (*kangshinmu*) follows the more classic model for a shaman. The spirit reveals its choice to the candidate in a dream or a vision, which is followed by a

mysterious illness called *mu-byung* (shaman-sickness) or *shin-byung* (spirit-sickness).⁶⁴ The experience of shamanistic dreams and visions is intensified in this stage, and the nominee is introduced to the master spirit that will help a novice shaman to acquire divinatory tools and the knowledge of the sacred world and guide the future career of the nominee. Repeated hallucinations and physical afflictions force the novice to detach him-herself from ordinary life and seek solitude undisturbed by other human beings to complete the initial stage of spiritual calling. Even though the initiatory experience of the shamanic vocation often implies a serious psychological crisis bordering on madness and schizophrenia, it cannot be identified simply with psychopathological personalities, as Nadel observes: 'No shaman is, in everyday life, an "abnormal" individual, a neurotic or a paranoiac ... nor finally can shamanism be correlated with incipient or latent abnormality; I recorded no case of a shaman whose professional hysteria deteriorated into serious mental disorders'.⁶⁵ Unlike an involuntary pathological disorder, the spirit-sickness of a shaman can be controlled once the candidate

⁶⁴ In Eliade's observation: 'The future shaman's vocation involves the traditional schema of an initiation ceremony: suffering, death, resurrection ... any "sickness-vocation" fills the role of an initiation; for the suffering that it brings on corresponds to initiatory tortures, the psychic isolation of "the elected" is the counterpart to the isolation and ritual solitude of initiation ceremonies, and the imminence of death felt by the sick man [*sic*] recalls the symbolic death'. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 33

⁶⁵ S. F. Nadel, 'A Study of Shamanism in the Nuba Mountains', in W. A. Lessa and E. Z. Vogt (eds.), *Reader in Comparative Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 478. In a similar vein Shirokogoroff states that 'the shaman may begin a career with a psychosis but cannot carry on shamanist functions if he [*sic*] cannot master himself'. S. M. Shirokogoroff, *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1935), 366.

accepts the choice of the spirits, which will be publically announced by other established shamans in the initiation ritual (*naerim-kut*).⁶⁶

While isolated from the mundane world, the candidate goes through a change in dietary habits, such as ‘a loss of appetite, and in particular unwillingness to eat meat and fish, and a craving for cold water’, as well as some mental afflictions, when ‘the mind of the person becomes weak, insecure and very susceptible to lucid dreams in which the future shaman encounters spirits and contacts deities’.⁶⁷ Such ordeals prepare the candidate to remove his or her old identity and confront and master the supernatural power so that the future shaman can help others who suffer similar afflictions caused by the spirits.⁶⁸

The initiation rite is the first public announcement of the divine selection, where the novice is put to the tests in terms of the authenticity of the spiritual calling, which completes the divination in the altered state of mind (*kongsu*).⁶⁹ The novice shaman joins the guild of

⁶⁶ The term literally means ‘coming-down ritual’, implying the process of gods descending to the novice shaman to become protectors and guardian spirits. The divinatory powers of the shaman are at their highest at this particular time, before the novice fully understands and employs the technique of ‘inspired utterings’, a shamanistic formula of divination which is based on communication skills rather than on inspiration. B. C. A. Walraven, ‘Korean Shamanism’, *Numen* 30:2 (1983), 245.

⁶⁷ T. G. Kim, ‘The Reality of Korean Shamanism’, in M. Hoppál and O. Sadovszky (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present* (Budapest: Ethnographic Institute, Hungarian Academy of Science, 1989), 276; Cho, *Mu*, 122-4; Eliade, *Shamanism*, 31-32, 51.

⁶⁸ Mysterious visions and dreams are not exclusive to shamanistic practitioners. However, those of laypeople are not regarded as being as intense or prolonged as the spirit sickness of the shaman. In order to determine whether the sickness is just an intrusion of an evil spirit or a divine election, people consult established shamans for interpretations of dreams and spiritual guidance. If it is diagnosed as spirit sickness, the shamans will conduct the inauguration ritual (*naerim-kut*) to help the nominee to complete the initial part of the spirit journey.

⁶⁹ Together with *kongsu*, a commonly found routine is where the novice shaman dances on a large straw cutter or climbs up a ladder of which the steps are made of blades. If the nominee is truly in the

the community of shamans and continues to learn further necessary ritual techniques under the instructions of the master shaman, who will adopt the novice as a spirit-child. The neophyte learns to familiar herself with various ritual costumes, which is an essential part of a shamanistic ceremony, as each deity has its own designated costumes completed with various adornments such as charms, features, bells, mirrors, sacred flags and miniature animal figurines.⁷⁰ In addition, most Korean shamanistic paintings incorporate images of a branch of a sacred tree, a rope, a ladder, wings (birds) and other mystical animal and celestial figures, which together symbolise the transcendent quality of shamanistic practitioners and their rituals. The paraphernalia that are directly related to the deity can only be handled by the master shaman, and when the shaman retires or dies, most of her ritual items are either burned or buried. On occasions these items are passed on to the designate-successor, but as a general rule a shaman needs to acquire the ritual items of her own, either with a help of a guiding spirit or through donations by clients. Once the novice settles in a new environment, the distinction between the god-appointed type and the hereditary type shamans grows less important. Still the possessed shaman is revered for his or her independent charisma but both

protection of the guiding spirit and not faking spirit possession, the blades do not cut the bare feet of the shaman, which signifies the shaman's supernatural immunity from physical harm.

⁷⁰ Shamanistic ritual costumes and other accessories signify the particular power that the deity possesses; for example, a bundle of medicine-plants or sacred branches indicates the healing spirit, and old-fashioned armour such as swords, tridents, bows and arrows belong to the Spirit General and is used in exorcisms and the ritual for the dead to chase away malignant spirits. For a more comprehensive illustration of shamanic costumes and ritual paraphernalia, see Huhm, *Kut*, 15-16, 32-33, 55-64; Hogarth, *Syncretism of Buddhism*, 191-196, 241-246; Cho, *Mu*, 158-171; Lee, *Korean Shamanistic Rituals*, 81-91.

types seem to cooperate in most shamanistic ceremonies, as the ritual is a combination of spiritual inspiration and fixed formulae that are accumulated and passed down in the shamans' guild.

2.4.3. The Role of Korean Shamans

Once the union between the spirit and the shaman is established, the shaman begins his or her career as a medium between the sacred and secular worlds. As a result of the divine connection, the shaman functions as a priest, a healer and a diviner, and even a judge.⁷¹ As a priest, a shaman organises and conducts shamanic rites, worships a deity, and ministers to his or her group of devotees (*dangol*). Healing and divination are the classic examples of the shamanistic service, and the fact that, in the early 15th century *Cho-sun* dynasty, shamans were registered in *Hwal-in-won* (today's equivalent of a public health centre), especially when an epidemic was raging, supports the function of the shaman as a health professional.⁷²

The shaman as a healer deals with not only psychological and emotional crises but also physical illnesses through a knowledge of special herbs and folk-medicines. Shamanic knowledge of plants and animals is believed to be obtained through a visit of the spirit in a

⁷¹ Cho, *Mu*, 21.

⁷² C. H. Kim, 'Hangŭk nongchonŭi bogeon euryochegeyeseo bigongsik bumun' [The Informal Sector of the Local Health Care System in Rural Korea: An Anthropological Approach to Medical Pluralism], *Korean Journal of Public Health* 2:1 (1988), 167-283 (200).

dream or vision, and sometimes the shaman uses animals or human figurines made of straw (*chaewoong*) in the fashion of sympathetic magic. Because people in the pre-modern era believed that contagious diseases, famines and other natural disasters were the result of divine wrath, they placed shamans in charge of discovering the reasons behind such misfortunes and finding relevant ways of solving such problems.⁷³ As a diviner, the shaman reveals the secret of life and death, interprets events, predicts the future, finds missing items or persons, brings back the souls of the dead, delivers the messages of the spirit, and makes petitions on behalf of the human community. Some of these functions overlap, but the key elements that penetrate all shamanistic services are the reciprocal relationship between the spirit and the shaman and a sense of commitment to the wellbeing of the community.

A shaman needs the intervention of the spirit in order to defeat those crises which are beyond human knowledge and reasoning, but at the same time the practitioner employs a spirit-helper and manoeuvres the supernatural power in favour of his or her clients. And also, unlike the institutional system of official religions, the primary task of Korean shamans does not lie in propagating certain ethical tenets, competing against other religions, or insisting on the

⁷³ Hence the *1975 Seoul Statistical Yearbook* (Seoul: Seoul Metropolitan Government, 1976, 186-87) refers to Korean shamanistic specialists as ‘practitioners in the field of misfortune’.

hierarchical relationship between humans and spirits, spirits and spirits, and humans and the religious institution. As Hogarth argues:

True *mudang* are altruistic people, despite their well-known greed for money. The sympathies and consolation they give to their clients during *kut* [the Korean shamanist ritual] are touching to observe, and help one to understand why *kut* have not disappeared despite centuries of persecution by 'rationalized' men and government authorities. The shamanic vocation is received only with great reluctance and a sense of self-sacrifice, because of the notion that the realm of the spirits is fraught with danger.⁷⁴

This further underlines the fact that Korean shamanism is a religion of the common people, from among whom the practitioners are selected, and whose daily struggles in ordinary life are the main concern of the shamanistic service.

2.5. Korean Shamanistic Rituals

Shamanistic culture so deeply penetrates the daily lives of Korean people that some of its routines are carried out without the presence of a shaman or the acute realisation of its ritual liability. As Owen observes:

Members of households seek to resolve certain difficulties through supernatural means at times of crisis and on a regular basis. The male head of a household may offer rice or wine to tutelary spirits, kill a chicken as an offering to the spirits of the soil, provide a rice-straw doll (*chaeoong*) as a scapegoat for the family, and burn incense before the ancestral tablets. Women may pile stones in a heap before the altar of the Mountain Pass spirits, or tie strips of cloth to sacred trees in order to guarantee childbirth. Children may tie amulets about their wrists in order to ward off evil spirits or diseases.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Hogarth, *Syncretism of Buddhism*, 165. The sense of self-sacrifice, commitment to help disconsolate and desperate people and tolerance of official religions' coercions are commonly found expressions in interviews with Korean shamans. For full transcripts of fourteen interviews with novice shamans, see, O. S. Cha, *Han'guk in'ni Jongkyo kyunghum, Mukyo* [Korean People's Religious Experience, Shamanism] (Seoul; Seokwangsa, 1997), 33-101.

⁷⁵ Owen, *Korean Shamanism*, 251.

Based on the Korean shamanistic worldview, people believed that spirits reside in every corner of the physical macrocosm, so extra care is needed in order not to intrude upon the domains of the spirits and to maintain peaceful coexistence with the spirit world. However, since it is almost impossible to lead a normal life while observing this 'abstract cosmological principle which acts in concert with complicated notions of horoscope, fate, and the individual's relationship to an eternally shifting cosmos', people need shamans who can intervene between the secular and the supernatural and undo the damage caused by the infestation of malevolent spirits into the private domains of people.⁷⁶ Korean people consult shamans for auspicious days and specific guidance in regard to prearranged events, such as moving, a wedding, farming and the harvest, but such occasions do not necessarily call for shamanistic rituals. It is when a mysterious illness or sudden calamity occurs that shamans are invited to perform an exorcism or placate angry spirits with offerings. Hence there are two types of shamanistic rituals in Korea: the first is crisis or non-periodic rituals, normally related to unexpected situations over which individuals have little or no control, and the second is cyclical or fixed rituals, recurrent ceremonies connected with the seasons and concomitant events such as planting, fishing and harvesting.

⁷⁶ Building a house, repairing it, moving, cutting trees or even bringing in new (especially wooden) furniture could lead to ill-fated consequences if done on an inauspicious day or in violation of directional principles. Kendall observes that it is based on this abstract cosmological principle that Korean shamans prognose their clients' own schema of affliction. Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives*, 94.

The cyclical ritual used to function as a state ceremony, where its style was based on the environmental and economic properties of the region. However, these days it is hard to find periodic rituals with their regional character intact. One of the reasons is the decline of traditional agricultural communities, due to urbanisation, the specialisation of farm labour and the import of crops from abroad, all of which have pressured the people into leaving the farming industry for more work opportunities in the city. The remaining examples of cyclical or fixed rituals are ancestral worship, harvest rituals (thanksgiving) and the annual village *kut* (shamanic ceremony) held at the beginning of fishing or farming season. Today, most shamanistic rituals in Korea are either to ensure divine blessings (*Chaesu kut*, 'the good fortune rite') or to overcome family crises such as death, illness or various kinds of misfortunes (*Pyöng kut*, the healing ritual, and *Chinogi kut*, the ceremony for the dead).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Shamanistic community ceremonies are usually categorised as 'the good-luck rite' which vary in style and scale. Cheju island and some of the east coast provinces in Korea retain the tradition of a regional communal rite; for example, *P'ung-öje* (Rite for Abundance in Fishing) is still conducted in spring and autumn, for the safety of fishermen and their success in fishing. The ritual is dedicated to *Yongwang* (The Dragon Spirit of the Sea), the king of the world beneath the sea who is believed to be in control of storms at sea and rain. Other examples are: *Kiu-je/Kiu-che* for rain during a drought; *Pyölshin/Byölshin kut* for abundance in crops or fishing in the community; *Söng/kalmaegi* (or *kolmaegi*) *kut*, dedicated to *Söng-hwang/Söngang* (or *Todang*), the Tutelary Spirit of a Village; *Yöngdüng kut*, the annual ritual for *Yöngdüng* God, who is responsible for the safety and prosperity of fishermen and female divers on Cheju island; *Kangnüng Tanoje*, held each year on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar (*tano/dano*) and primarily for the people in *Kangnüng* area, but now gathering spectators and shamanistic practitioners all around the country as one of the biggest shamanistic folk festivals in Korea. For a detailed description of the regional characters and procedures of communal rituals in Korea, see, Hogarth, *Shamanism and Cultural*, 202-209; Kister, *Korean Shamanist Ritual*, 10-11; Cha, *Mukyo*, 139-186; H. Y. Cho, *Han'guk üi mu* [Korean Shamanism], (Seoul: Jungeüm-sa, 1982), 123-127; H.P. Huhm, *Kut: Korean Shamanist Rituals* (Seoul: Hollym International Corp., 1980), 11-15.

The Korean shamanistic ritual is called *kut*, where the term is possibly derived from the word *kutta*, meaning 'nasty', 'foul' or 'unfortunate'. Hence the primary aim of the ceremony is to overcome various kinds of misfortunes that befall human beings with the help of the spirits. Korean people also use the word *han-p'uri*, in place of *kut*: *p'uri* means 'solving' or 'dispelling', and *han* is, as mentioned earlier, a Korean distinctive sentiment of grief and frustration.⁷⁸ Therefore the Korean shamanist ritual is a socio-religious occasion of dispelling the 'unfulfilled desires' or 'deep-rooted grievances' of ordinary people.⁷⁹ Another function of the shamanistic ritual is to ensure divine blessings for the family and community, such as health, happiness and prosperity for as long as one lives in this world. Hogarth points out that the term *kut* may be traced back to the Tungusic *kutu*, the Mongolian *qutug* and the Turkish *qut*, which all mean 'happiness' or 'good fortune'.⁸⁰ In a similar vein, Kim argues that Korean shamanic services were exercised to fulfil 'secular wishes such as real desire, escaping misfortune, longevity, health, giving birth to a boy, wealth and reputation. It depended on the spirits for the prosperity of secular life'. According to Kim, Christianity, which was introduced as an instrument of modernisation just before the Japanese military invasion, adapted this shamanistic belief and provided Korean people with the faith to

⁷⁸ See this thesis, p.38 n.32; p.78 n.91 and n.92.

⁷⁹ It is not just the distraught feeling of human beings that falls under the category of *han*. Especially in the ritual for the dead, the shaman prioritises the emotional state of the soul of the dead person ahead of those of the living in order to prevent any malicious influence from the spirit induced by prolonged restlessness. Y. G Kim, *Han'guk shinhwawa musok yŏn'gu* [A Study of Korean Mythology and Shamanism] (Seoul: Iljogak, 1977), 244.

⁸⁰ Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism*, 177.

overcome secular calamity and adversity, which later became aspirations for individual success and national prosperity.⁸¹

In addition to the basic concept of the monotheistic deity, *Hananim*, and the emphasis on the wish-fulfilment aspect of religious life, the shamanistic rituals, such as disease-curing, the exorcising of evil spirits, and prophesying the future, became a popular fixture of Christian church services, which all contributed to the phenomenon of Korean ‘shamanised’ churches. In order to secure the blessing of the spirits and avoid misfortunes, Korean shamans developed various ritual routines provisions, and their role as a negotiator between the secular and the sacred and a master of the supernatural power is inherited by Korean church ministers, as Kim points out:

They (Korean church pastors) used hypnotism, chanted incomprehensible words (comparable to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues in Christianity), and spoke to the evil supposedly residing in the afflicted person. All of these, of course, parallel the characteristics of Korean shamanic rites in healing and exorcising. By performing the healing rites during Sunday Services and revival meetings, Korean pastors turned the two occasions into, in essence, shamanic ritual that typically featured disease-curing exorcism.⁸²

Moreover, many Korean churches operate their own prayer centres, *kidowŏn*, where the speciality is faith-healing and exorcism, situated in the quiet countryside hills or mountains. People visit these places for exorcism, meditation and spiritual and physical healing, often accompanied by fasting, chanting, and spiritual possession. All this recalls the spirit journey

⁸¹ Kim, ‘Christianity and Korean Culture’, 2-4 (2).

⁸² Kim, ‘Korean Religious Culture and Its Affinity’, 126.

or an inaugural quest of the shaman. Also, the Korean distinctive out-loud congregational praying session, *tongsŏng-kido*, which, it is believed, could lead to a spiritual condition in which the deity manifests itself and spiritual blessings will come true, resembles the ritual frenzy of Korean shamanism. However, there is a fundamental difference. Whereas for the Korean shamanistic practitioners the accustomed spiritual power is utilised in the service of the community for any individuals in trouble, in the case of *kidowŏn*, its service is exclusively for the members of Christian churches. This can be seen as a drawback of syncretism between shamanism and Christianity in Korea in that, as in the case of *Hananim*, the original meaning and function of shamanistic custom are somehow subsumed by the fundamentalism of Christian doctrines, serving only to benefit the believing community.

2.6. Excursus: *Minjung* Theology

Korean shamanistic rituals are mostly called for in times of disaster or uncertainty, but in the daily lives of Korean people shamanism still functions as a reliable source of spiritual guidance and protection. Korean shamanism has a strong connection with common people, with its ethical tenets being undoubtedly egalitarian. Korean traditional shamanic rituals are the joint activities of families, shamans, different social groups and supernatural beings. Besides its religious function – spirit possession and ecstasy, divination, healing and

restoration of the harmony between the sacred and the secular – Korean shamanism has theatrical and psychotherapeutic aspects. Cho observes that the essence of the Korean shamanic ritual is ecstasy and exhilaration, and the momentary overturning of social decorum paradoxically serves to nourish greater family harmony, self-identity and reconciliation between the spirits and the humans.⁸³ Except for the ritual for the dead, there is always a festive air about Korean shamanistic ritual scenes, which is not generally characteristic of ceremonies of official religions. The Korean shamanistic ritual skilfully juxtaposes human psychological, spiritual, emotional and practical issues, which is one of the reasons why shamanistic rituals are still in demand in modern Korean society. The fact that Korean national peasant drama, *madang-kŭk* (The Court Play), which is famous for its bluntness in mocking haughty aristocrats and features a combination of drama with music and dance, originates in the shamanic ritual underlines both the merit of the Korean shamanist ceremony as a form of cultural heritage and its enduring appeal to the Korean public.

The deep-rooted bond between shamanism and the Korean people has been a subject of scholarly attention through *Minjung* theology, dating from the 1970s, one of the rare cases where Korean folk religion inspires the interpretation and reintroduction of Protestant

⁸³ Cho, *Mu*, 35. In a similar vein, Ch'oe argues that during Korean shamanic rituals people fall into an 'anti-structural' state, where the frantic ritual atmosphere momentarily creates a state of anarchic sociality in which new social relations between gods and humans can be established. K. S. Ch'oe, 'The Symbolic Meaning of Shamanic Ritual in Korean Folk Life', *Journal of Ritual Studies* 3:2 (1989), 217-33.

Christianity and biblical reading into Korean contexts. *Minjung* means the 'oppressed' or the people, especially those who have been politically, socially and economically marginalised within Korean modernisation. This theology represents the feeling of oppression and vulnerability that Korean people had to endure from the period of Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) to the Korean War (1950-1953) and the totalitarian government in the late twentieth century. *Minjung* theology is often compared to Latin American liberation theology for its aspiration to liberate people from colonialism and social injustice. However, interestingly, the major characteristic of *Minjung* theology is the absence of a particular ideological agenda that is common in resistance theologies. Unlike Latin American liberation theology, which relies heavily on the language of Marxism in the development and articulation of its ideology, such political language is hardly seen in Korean *Minjung* theology.⁸⁴ Instead, *Minjung* theologians turned to the Korean unorganised folk tradition, shamanism. Korean Christian theologians discovered the collective action and stories of the *minjung* in the Bible. For example, they read Exodus as the story of the colonised Korean struggling to be liberated, and Daniel as a patriotic hero fighting against Japanese colonialism, and the cross of Jesus became a political cross that Korean *minjung* ought to bear.⁸⁵ The fact

⁸⁴ D. K. Suh, 'Minjung Theology: The Politics and Spirituality of Korean Christianity', in M. R. Mullins and R. F. Young (eds.), *Perspectives on Christianity in Korea and Japan: The Gospel and Culture in East Asia* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 148-149.

⁸⁵ In particular, redemptive actions of God and a heroic portrait of Moses (Exod.3.7-10; cf. 6.6-8; 12.51) are favoured subjects of Korean *minjung* theologians, who view Moses as an inspirational leader who shares the pain of the oppressed and will eventually deliver them from their suffering and

that the shamanistic expression, *han*, is the term that most frequently appears in *Minjung* theology underlines how these theologians found an analogous sentiment in Korean shamanism and saw it as sharing a history of political oppression and social disparity. However, *Minjung* theologians were either persecuted or forced to seek asylum in other countries because of the authoritarian rule of the time.⁸⁶ As a result, *Minjung* theology was ironically discovered by Western scholarship and reintroduced to Korea decades later as being representative of Korean authentic theology.

Today, Christian theology and biblical reading in Korea are dominated by the Western scholarly and fundamentalist church interpretative tradition, which *Minjung* theologians were trying to object to and warn about. With the major concerns about these mammoth churches being the maintaining of their socio-economic privileges and the 'colonising' of other religious minorities, the disparity between Christian churches and the general Korean public seems greater than ever. It is time to re-evaluate the legacy of the *Minjung* theologians and their appreciation of Korean traditional religious culture, and produce another Korean authentic theology that connects Korean native spirituality with the

political oppression. Suh, *Korean Minjung in Christ*, 195.

⁸⁶ Besides of the totalitarian censorship of the time, it was particularly challenging for theologians to send their messages to the general Korean public, because certain socialist ideals in *Minjung* theology were misinterpreted as synonymous with Communism. In the seventies, when Korean people were yet to overcome the trauma of the Korean War, and the ideological conflict between Communism in North Korea and capitalism in South was still going on, *Minjung* theology was one of most controversial ideologies that Korean churches and theological academics had witnessed.

liberating messages in the Bible; this way, Korean Bible reading will be free from the monolithic interpretative tradition of the Christian churches and able to offer wisdom, consolation and guidance for modern Korean *minjung*, as the shamanic service has done for centuries.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed Korean shamanism and the components of its tripartite structure - the spirits, practitioners, and the community – and Korean shamanic rituals in which all the three entities are intermingled. Western anthropological research on the classic models of shamans has made a contribution by recognising the difference between independent magico-religious phenomena and the community-based ritual contexts of shamanism. However, most of its current discussions are based on secondary ethnographical compilations that have been overused and lack a connection with modern society, especially the ones where shamanism still functions as a vital part of the religious system and cultural identity. In Korea and its neighbouring countries, shamanism is more than a theoretical concept about pathological abnormalities or a primary stage of religion. Shamanism in Korea is perceived as part of the Korean religious and cultural heritage accumulated over the centuries and it has survived syncretism with other missionary religions such as Buddhism,

Confucianism and Christianity. Shamanistic beliefs and customs are still widely practised as they have proved compatible with the ideologies and structures of official religions, due to their distinctive approach to the human psyche and the spiritual world.

Since the primary aim of my research does not lie in collecting episodes of Korean shamanistic rituals or listing the various functionaries in Korean shamanism, I have not incorporated vast amounts of interviews and records of shamans and their services in this chapter. The aim has been to introduce the authentic yet versatile worldview and models of Korean shamanism, which are easily recognisable for a modern Korean audience, so that they can form a base for a comparative study of Korean native spiritualism and the Bible. The basic worldview of Korean shamanism; the mutual relationship between the spirit and human beings; the role of the shaman as a bridge, a negotiator and a messenger between the two realms; and the shamanistic ritual that incorporates magical elements with human spiritual, psychological and pragmatic issues - all these aspects contribute to the formation of a collective cultural and religious identity of Korean people. As a model, the above features of Korean shamanism have certain parallels with prophetic narratives in the Bible, especially in the prophet as an independent, charismatic and spiritual figure who functions as an intermediary between the secular and the sacred and whose divinatory services have particular shamanistic qualities. In the next chapters, the Korean shamanistic models will be

further articulated in comparison with prophetic characters and operations in the Bible,
beginning with the initiation calling of the prophet.

Chapter 3. Prophetic Initiation: Spiritual Calling

The commissioning of a chosen one and supernatural experiences accompanying a divine message are found in various religious cultures and their literature. From the classic studies on the Siberian shamanic initiation (characterised by ecstasy, spirit possession and trance) and the classic schema of rites of passage to the cross-cultural anthropological research about the inaugural experiences of shamans and neo-shamans, the events surrounding a divine selection and its procedures vary according to social and historical context or the ideologies that process, interpret and frame such activities in writing.⁸⁷ Because the two foci of my research are Korean shamanism and biblical literature, this chapter will compare the patterns of the Korean shamanistic initiation and explore the inaugural experiences of the biblical prophets, and consider how the model of the Korean shamanic initiation can provide a useful tool for analysing the interaction between the message and the magical elements in the

⁸⁷ Eliade, *Shamanism*, 79-80; Shirokogoroff, *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (London: Kegan Paul, 1935), 255, 271-273; A. van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (Chicago: Aldine, 1960), 96; A. L. Siikala, 'The Interpretation of Siberian and Inner Asian Shamanism', in Siikala and M. Hoppál (eds.), *Studies on Shamanism* (Budapest and Helsinki: Finnish Anthropological Society and Akademiain Kiado, 1992), 5-6. More anthropological reports on the subject of the Korean shamanic initiation are available in: C. Akamatsu and T. Akiba, *Hanguk musogŭi yŏn'gu* [A Study of Korean Shamanism] (trans. U. Shim; originally published in 1938; Seoul: Tongmunsŏn, 1991), 52-74; T. Akiba, *Chosŏn musoŭi hyŏnji yŏn'gu* [A Field Research on Korean Shamanism] (trans. K. S. Choi; originally published in 1950; Taegu: Kyemyŏng University Press, 1987), 63-82; Y. S. Kim Harvey, *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* (St. Paul, MN.: West Publishing Company, 1979), 235-240; Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives*, 57-65; and T.G. Kim, *Han'gukŭi musok* [A Study of Korean Shamanism] (Seoul: Jipmoondang, 1981), 12-13.

prophetic calling, one free from the theological antithesis between (prophetic) words and (shamanistic) actions.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that Korean shamanism and the Bible have fundamental differences, not necessarily ideological distinctions but in more terms of the formats perceived by the audience. Korean shamanism is typically identified with the magical and divinatory phenomena of the shamans, who not only inherit but also continually reinvent the ritual system and techniques as society is stratified, whereas the Bible is a fixed, written text of different times and places, with a complex history of complication, about which there is no scholarly consensus. Therefore, in order to bridge the gap between Korean shamanism and the Bible, the prophetic figures in the biblical narratives will be taken as literary prototypes in comparison with the shamanistic model, which is based on Korean authentic spirituality but not necessarily exclusive to its socio-cultural contexts. In reality, Korean shamans and their ministries function as an answer to specific, personal or communal issues felt by Korean people, but over time there has been an accumulation of sufficient prototypes to build a cross-cultural model that can be applied to other religious environments. For example, below is the pattern of the Korean shamanic initiation, a pattern which incorporates the classic schema of the rites of separation and rehabilitation, bearing similarity to prophetic commissioning in the Bible:

1. Divine selection: supernatural signs and dreams
2. Test of the nominee's fitness: *mubyung* /*shinbyung* (the shamanic-sickness/the spirit-sickness)
3. Trial and conflict: initial doubt and rejection on the part of the nominee
4. Divine assurance: reception of the spirit (spirit possession, ecstasy, visions and miracles)
5. Induction of the spirit: recovery of health, education in the knowledge of the sacred world, divinatory and ritual techniques
6. Return to the community: the initiation rite, the first public exercise of the supernatural power of the novice shaman

I will begin with Korean shamans' spiritual calling, and a detailed comparison between the Korean shamanic initiation and the prophetic inauguration will follow.

3.1. The Spiritual Calling in Korean Shamanism

The spiritual calling of Korean shamans expresses itself in dramatic dreams and visions, and as a result the nominee suffers shamanic-sickness, manifested by various psychological and physical inflictions which cause the person to exhibit outrageous forms of behaviour that invert traditional social and ethical decorum and eventually sever the nominee from society.

Through this shamanic-sickness the candidate learns to channel psychic power, which enables the shaman to enter a state of self-loss or an altered state of consciousness, the basis of shamanic divination and healing. It is in this condition that the spirit reveals itself, in that the practitioner experiences a flight of the soul and delivers the message of the spirits or brings a miraculous cure. The symptoms of the shamanic-sickness vary according to the

nominee's spiritual and physical background, but in most cases the illness appears without any apparent precipitating factor. Sometimes a sudden onset of a psychotic episode triggers the shamanistic calling: the person cannot eat, loses weight and his or her psychological and physical states become weak, all of which symptoms lead the candidate to be susceptible to the influence of the spirits.⁸⁸ The spirit-sickness could last for years, first tormenting the nominee with illnesses and isolation from ordinary life, and then, if the advance warning is not heeded, deaths and various misfortunes in the immediate family and other relatives (called *indari*, meaning 'bridges of human') occur until the person accepts his or her fate and receives the spirit.

From a psychiatric point of view, the spirit-sickness is termed 'culture-bound depersonalization syndrome' and the controlled trances and possession experienced during the initiation rite are symptoms of the 'transient regression of the ego'.⁸⁹ Harvey associates the spirit-sickness with the Korean authentic psyche, *han*, 'a deep and abiding sense of having been morally injured as human beings', and argues that a sudden exposure to the supernatural realm generates *han* that has been hidden in the deepest layers of the mind.⁹⁰ The initiation rite provides an emotional exit, where the novice vents all his or her *han*

⁸⁸ T. G. Kim, *Mu*, 48.

⁸⁹ K. I. Kim 'Sin-byung: A Culture-Bound Depersonalization Syndrome in Korea,' *Neuropsychiatry* 11 (1972), 233.

⁹⁰ Harvey, *Six Korean Women*, 237.

through (controlled) trances, spirit possession and other ecstatic ritual forms. In order to recover from this disoriented state of mind, it is a priority to resolve the nominee's *han* that has been accumulated in this world, because if directed negatively it could become 'the fearful *han* which can kill, cause revenge, destroy and hate endlessly'.⁹¹ As *han* is 'an accumulation of suppressed and condensed experiences of oppression, inherited and transmitted, boiling in the blood of the people', a novice shaman needs to unburden his or her negative *han* power before administering to the collective feeling of *han* within the people.⁹²

The following account of the Korean shaman Jung-Ja Jung follows the pattern of the Korean shamanic initiation, and encapsulates various symptoms of the shaman-sickness and how her *han*-riddled life was transformed by the selection of the spirit.

The first shamanic vision came to Ja when she fell down from a swing (aged 11) and lay in bed unconscious for more than a day. During that period, Ja saw a white-bearded *harabōji* [a grandfather, but a common designation for an elderly gentleman; in Korean shamanism, *harabōji* often features as a guidance spirit] in her dream. She was on the way to the great mountain with blue clear water [typical scenery of the heavenly paradise], when the Grandfather asked why and how she was here when there were tasks left for her in the world of living. After that dream Ja regained her consciousness. Ja got married and her marriage was strewn with economic crises, her husband's illicit affairs, physical abuse, miscarriage, the death of her son and numerous shamanic visions that intruded on her life. One day, Ja saw a vision of a huge rock spouting water in every direction and Ja, her mother-in-law, a famous shaman dancing on it with other shamans. After that Ja had repeated visions of flying to heaven, and one occasion she saw that her kitchen is flooded by red muddy water full of the dead fish. Ja scooped, drank the water and swallowed the dead fish and when she threw up, suddenly all the dead fish came back to life and the red muddy water became clear. Ja had the first spirit possession in her mother-in-law's shrine, and the spirits began building *indari* [bridges of humans] around her. Ja was hospitalised five times from poisoning, her eldest son and her brother suddenly died, and worst of all, she could predict such tragedies and said so with her own

⁹¹ N. D, Suh, 'Toward a Theology of Han', in *idem*, *Minjung Theology, People as the Subjects of History* (CTC of the Christian Conference of Asia; Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis Books, 1983), 64-65.

⁹² Hence Eun koh, a famous *minjung* poet, said, 'We Koreans were born from the womb of *han* and brought up in the womb of *han*'. Suh, 'Towards a Theology of Han', 54.

lips. One evening, on the way to the host club – in a vain attempt to ‘pollute’ herself - Ja was suddenly possessed by a mysterious power, dragged herself out and headed to the Mt. Inwang, a mountain with numerous shamanic pantheons. Ja took her shoes off, climbed the iced mountain barefoot, and prayed to shamanistic gods sitting on top of a Buddha Rock till the morning. Her next vision came in the day after, she saw the Grandfather again from her first shamanistic dream, and he led her to the well behind the house. He put a straw in her mouth and ordered her to bow three times in four directions to cleanse her soul. Ja’s mother-in-law conducted Ja’s initiation rite and handed over her ritual paraphernalia and a divination table, making her a successor-designate. Later during the shamanic ritual, in spirit possession Ja found out that not only her mother-in-law but her aunts in the paternal line were shamans, and after the revelation she could no longer deny her fate as a shaman. Since becoming a shaman, Ja does not suffer from psychoses and other illnesses and is now a fully-fledged shaman with the Grandfather as her master spirit.⁹³

This rather lengthy report shows how the classic schema of the rite of initiation unfolded in the real life of a Korean shaman. In the following section I will briefly point out the important features of Ja’s spiritual calling in relation to the procedures of the Korean shamanic initiation.

3.1.1. Divine Selection: Supernatural Signs and Visions

First, the spirit reveals its choice through a messenger formula, such as dreams, visions and other supernatural signs that accompany angelic beings and the heavenly counsel. The guidance spirit, mountains as places of divine revelation, and visions of ascending to the sky or travelling to the underworld are the fixtures of the introductory dreams of a Korean novice shaman. Ja still vividly remembers the details of her first vocational dream: her visit to the shamanistic paradise, conversations with the Grandfather spirit and the guard of the heavenly

⁹³ Summarised and translated from Cha, *Mukyo*, 81-90.

paradise, and the (ritual) cleansing of her body and internal organs in the sacred water, although she had not realised the significance of such actions.

3.1.2. Test of the Nominee's Fitness: the Shamanic-illness

Dreams and visions become more intense as the shamanic-illness develops. The nominee gradually experiences ailments, and then, the more frequent the shamanic dreams, the less conscious the nominee grows, to the extent that he or she experiences perpetual spirit possession and becomes unable to distinguish the dreams and visions from reality. Even in his or her waking hours the nominee's senses are filled with hallucinatory sights and sounds. The nominee shows symptoms of indigestion and inclines to an unbalanced diet, avoiding fish and meat and drinking only water. He or she becomes lean and weak, feeling tingling pains in the limbs and heavy in the chest or on the shoulders, having seizures or falling ill with bloody excrement.⁹⁴ Such physical and psychological ordeals lead the nominee to exhibit abnormal forms of behaviour which will eventually cut the person from ordinary life and the community.

⁹⁴ Choi, *Mu*, 48.

Spirit possession and similar ecstatic experiences are not necessarily the consequences of the shamanic-illness, but rather the spirit-illness and spirit possession often happen simultaneously. If malevolent spirits seize the person, he or she exhibits ecstatic behaviour similar to spirit possession, but this can be cured by shamanic exorcism. However, if an ordinary person has repeated spirit possessions, as did Ja, they can trigger the shaman-illness to develop because it is believed that the person has a particular personal attribute - be it natural or hereditary – that draws spiritual beings to the world of the living. If other established shamans failed to channel the divine message or guide the person through the proper procedures of the shamanic initiation, the victim will be severely damaged or even die from psychoses and other health complications.⁹⁵ When Ja refused to be a shaman, her physical and mental health rapidly deteriorated and her family members perished around her. Ja's visions of ascending to the sky and fish in the polluted water and their resurrection signify the shamanic ability to travel across the supernatural realm and bring a miraculous cure, although at that time she did not comprehend the implications of such dreams.

⁹⁵ The wife of a Siberian shaman, Kyzlan, tells how her husband became a shaman: 'That was how he became a shaman, after the sickness, after the torture. He had been ill for seven years. While he was ailing, he had dreams: He was beaten up several times, sometimes he was taken to strange places. He who is seized by the shaman sickness and does not begin to exercise shamanism, must suffer badly. He might lose his mind, he may even have to give up his life. Therefore he is advised, "You must take up shamanism so as not to suffer!" Some even say, "I became a shaman only to escape illness."' V. Diószegi, *Tracing Shamans in Siberia*, (Oosterhout: Anthropological Publications, 1968), 58.

3.1.3. Trial and Conflict, and Divine Assurance: Reception of the Spirit

The most common reaction to the spiritual calling is denial and resistance. Symptoms of the shamanic-illness are recognised by the family or other members of the community, and the established shamans in the community are brought in to determine whether the illness is a result of spiritual calling or a momentary intrusion by evil spirits. As Ja did, the nominee may seek relief through various religious practices such as reading the Buddhist scriptures or going to church, and most commonly taking part in a shamanistic purifying ritual in the belief that a simple exorcism can chase off the malevolent spirits. However, since the qualities of the spirit-sickness are different from any pathological abnormalities in terms of their intensity, in that, for example, the schizophrenic episodes and bodily impairments last eight years on average and up to thirty years in record,⁹⁶ it is believed that the spirit-illness can be cured only by accepting the choice of the spirit and announcing this to be so through the initiation rite. In most cases, the novice in Korean shamanism accepts his or her fate as a shaman because not doing so will only aggravate the spirit-sickness to the point of death.

The primary aim of the shaman-sickness is to allow the divine selection to be known to the person and the community, but also to produce ‘a heightened sensitivity that ultimately

⁹⁶ T. G. Kim, *Korean Folklore* (Seoul: The Sisayoungosa Publishers, 1983), 20.

enables the shaman to diagnose and heal the illnesses of others'.⁹⁷ Alienation from the community due to the shamanic-sickness provides the nominee with the opportunity to explore the spiritual realm and establish the means of contact with the spirits so that the shaman can develop into a professional and inspired intermediary. The novice shaman explores the geography of other dimensions and acquires the knowledge that permits prediction, overcoming or prevention of the perilous proceedings of the darker side of the spiritual world and beings. As the initiation progresses, the pattern of the visions and dreams becomes crystalised and the nominee is repeatedly visited by a certain deity or a celestial figure which will become a guidance spirit. The spirit-helper helps the neophyte to understand the mechanism of the supernatural power and reassures the practitioner with a promise of divine protection during a hazardous journey into the spiritual realms.

3.1.4. Induction of the Spirit and Returning to the Community

The Grandfather spirit reappeared after Ja's visit to Mt. Inwang. In order to remove her secular defilements, she bathed in cold water and bowed to all the directional spirits three times. Her ritual cleansing echoes her first shamanic dream, in which she drank and bathed in

⁹⁷ H. Kalwelt, *Dreamtime and Inner Space: The World of the Shaman* (trans. W. Wünsche; Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1988), 90.

the water of the heavenly paradise before returning to the world of the living. This figurative action finally reaches its desired result: Ja cleansed her soul and body with the substance of the sacred world, and she became a ready vessel for the divine power and message which will be channelled through her to the human community. The initiation process is only completed with the return of the neophyte into wider society as a bridge between the secular and the sacred; in interviews with Korean shamans, they all share the sentiments of a strong commitment to the wellbeing of the human community and pacification between the will of the living and the spirits.⁹⁸ The song of a famous Korean shaman, Keum-hwa Kim, shows this particular aspiration:

Let us go outside, outside to be called/white or black they are the people of this land/let us help them with a righteous mind/let us forgive our enemies, and love and help each other/be firm and brave/overcome all the obstacles/look ahead and strengthen yourself/do not forget your vow/look up to the sky and look deep into your mind/get up whenever you fall, no matter how many times (you fall)/keep going and there will be a place for you/keep coming, come nearer/receive (the spirit), receive it well.⁹⁹

In Korean religious culture, a shaman is expected to be a healer, a negotiator and a counsellor, in addition to the traditional divinatory and priestly functions. During the initiation ritual, the neophyte has to choose one pot out of seven, and the contents inside are used to determine the character of the future ministry of the novice shaman. The pots contain clear water (the basis of all creatures in the universe, symbolising purity), rice (the essential nourishment for the

⁹⁸ Cha, *Mukyo*, 39, 44, 63, 67, 73, 81, 89.

⁹⁹ K. H. Kim, *Kimkeumhwa mugajip* [Songs of Kim Keum-hwa] (my translation; Seoul: Mooneumsa, 1995), 335.

Korean people, meaning healing), lye (cleansing impurity and the wish for fame), washing water from rice (cleansing the pollution of human minds), money, white beans and forage (for prosperity, as it is consumed by farm animals, especially cows, which are the most prized possession in agricultural Korea).¹⁰⁰ If the novice shaman picks up the jar of money, even if unintentionally, other established shamans would frown upon this, as the shaman should pay more attention to helping the oppressed and needy and releasing their accumulated *han* than to vain desires for such as money and fame.

In the interpretation of the biblical calling, the above procedures of the Korean shamanic initiation can be used as a navigating tool: the divine manifestation symbolised by visions and dreams; the spirit-sickness; trials and conflicts between the will of the spirit and that of the nominee; divine assurance and acceptance of the spirit; induction under the tutelary spirit; and returning to the community with a renewed identity and the divine message. The cultural emphases on the initiation system may differ, but nevertheless the fact that Korean shamanism and biblical prophecy are built on a similar tripartite structure - the deity, the community and the shaman/prophet as an intermediary figure – and that they acknowledge the existence and significance of magic and miracles as a fact of a religious life,

¹⁰⁰ Cha, *Mukyo*, 31-32.

suggests that it is not impossible to produce an authentically Korean reading of prophetic initiation in the Bible based on this cross-cultural model of Korean shamanism.

3.2. Spiritual Calling in the Prophetic Narratives

The pattern found in prophetic commissioning in the Bible is surprisingly similar to the Korean shamanistic initiation. Habel introduces the six stages in the call narrative: 1) divine initiation, 2) introductory words, 3) human resistance, 4) rebuke and reassurance, 5) the physical act of commissioning and 6) the substance of commission.¹⁰¹ As parallel studies of the Korean shamanistic initiation and the spiritual calling of the prophets, I have selected three call narratives in the Bible: Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The narrative of Moses (Exod 3-4) appears to set the prototype for the call narratives in other biblical passages. It consists of: 1) the initiation by God accompanied by supernatural signs, visions and the divine manifestation itself; 2) trial and conflict demonstrated by the nominee's resistance to the

¹⁰¹ N. Habel, 'The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives', *ZAW* 77 (1965), 297-323. This pattern of the call narratives appears to be a general rule of initiating experiences of biblical prophets, for example: W. Schmidt: 1) commission, 2) objection, 3) reassurance and 4) sign. W. Schmidt, 'Prophetic Delegation: A Form-Critical Inquiry,' *Bib* 63 (1982), 206; and T. Fretheim: 1) theophany, or divine appearance, 2) introductory word, 3) divine commission, 4) objection, 5) reassurance and 6) sign. T. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 51. Zimmerli proposes two types of prophetic commission: one is the Jeremiah-Moses type consisting of 1) divine manifestation, 2) reluctance of the person, 3) an answer to the reluctance in promises and 4) signs; and the other is the Micaiah-Isaiah type based on a vision of God enthroned and an anointing of the (prophetic) word to the heavenly counsel. W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (trans. R. Clements; Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA.: Fortress Press, 1979), 97-100.

calling; 3) divine reassurance supplemented with symbolic and physical contact with the supernatural power and 4) the instructions from God about the specific prophetic mission and the return to the human community.¹⁰² In relation to the recurring themes and patterns in the commissioning of Moses and other early prophets (such as Jeremiah and Samuel), it is possible that the narrator inserts the call narrative ‘at the beginning to map out an additional rhetorical goal, as a product of theological reflection’.¹⁰³ The parallel experiences of the nominee in receiving the words of God make an overt or covert claim about the legitimacy of the title of the prophet, which becomes an important source of continuity and authority at times of social upheaval.¹⁰⁴ In a similar vein, Brueggeman suggests,

The sequence of the call narrative has the merit of lodging the authority of the prophet more decisively in the institutional life and social fabric of the community. The prophet does not receive authority as primitive “raw data,” but authority is mediated through a community that acknowledges the authority claimed for the prophet.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Jeremiah’s ministry especially has been treated as a bridge between the world of old-prophetism (before Isaiah) and that of the new (post-exilic era), and his commissioning depicts such a transition to some extent, as the emphasis of the initiation process moves from the divine action to the divine word. Holladay argues that Jeremiah’s response to the prophetic call is subsequent to the finding of the scroll of Moses, based on the parallels between the phrase, ‘I have put my words in your mouth’ in Jer 1.9 (15.16, cf. Deut 18.18) with the Song of Moses (Deut. 32). W. L. Holladay, ‘Jeremiah and Moses: Further Observation,’ *JBL* 85 (1966), 25-26.

¹⁰³ R. P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (London: SCM, 1981), 31-58. Also, P. Craigie, P. H. Kelly and J. F. Drinkard (eds.), *Jeremiah 1-25* (WBC 26; Waco, TX.: Word Books, 1991), 8-9.

¹⁰⁴ The continuity found in the parallel call narratives does not necessarily call for a form-critical hypothesis about the circulation of the prophetic prototype. In this thesis, I treat call narratives in the Bible as independent units that share comprehensive yet flexible models of prophetic tradition. In a similar vein, Habel views the commonality of themes in the narratives as reflecting more the commonality of experience than the existence of a distinctive literary type. Habel, ‘The Form and Significance’, 297-323.

¹⁰⁵ W. Brueggeman, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 24.

I recognise the interdependency of these call narratives, but this thesis will not delve into their chronological relationship as formed by the historical development of prophecy in the Bible and its environment. Instead, if there is a recurring theme or continuity found in the call narratives of Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, such similarities will be discussed as reflections of a commonality of experience, one which is a vital process in becoming a prophet, rather than the existence or circulation of a distinctive literary type.¹⁰⁶ The spiritual callings of Moses and Jeremiah follow the above pattern with the classic prophetic themes (divine deliverance and judgement), and the narrative of Ezekiel shows a unique combination of mystifying religious imageries with biblical theophany and his abnormal behaviour during the initiation period in many aspects echoing the spirit-sickness in Korean shamanism. This allows the conclusion that the spiritual initiation of biblical characters is a fundamental part of prophetic dialogue, to some extent refining the characteristics of the individual prophet's future ministry. I outline the patterns of the call narratives in below, and they will provide for discussion of the interpreting points for the inauguration procedure of Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

¹⁰⁶ Zimmerli connects the accounts of Moses' (Gideon's, Saul's) and Jeremiah's callings in the sense that there is: 1) a very personal encounter between Yahweh and the nominee; 2) room for reluctance and even objection by the one who is called, which; 3) Yahweh overcomes with personal promises and the granting of signs ('I am with you; I have set my words in your mouth; this will be a sign for you', Jer 1.9). Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 97-98.

Divine initiation (spiritual calling/visions and dreams)	Horeb, the mountain of God, burning bush that is not consumed: ‘Put off your shoes, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground’ (Exod. 3.5).
Introductory words	‘I have seen the affliction of my people, have heard their cry...you will bring forth my people out of Egypt’ (vv.7-12).
Human resistance	‘If the people of Israel ask, “What is his name?” what shall I say to them?’ (v.13). ‘But they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, “The Lord did not appear to you”’ (4.1). ‘Oh, my Lord, I am slow of speech and of tongue’ (v.10). ‘Oh, my Lord, send, please, some other person’ (v.13).
Rebuke and reassurance: substance of commission	‘I am who I am’ (3.14). ‘So I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all the wonders which I will do in it’ (3.20). ‘Who has made a person’s mouth? Who makes him numb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak’ (4.12).
Physical act of commissioning (signs and visions)	Miraculous signs: A rod transformed into a snake and returned to its original form Moses’ hand became leprous and cured Water of the Nile turn into blood (4.2-9).
Substance of commission	‘You shall take in your hand this rod, with which you shall do the signs’ (4.17).
Returning to the community	‘Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people...and they bowed their heads and worshipped’ (4.27-31).

Figure 3. Moses’ commissioning (Exod 3-4)

Divine initiation	‘The word of God came to me saying...’ (Jer 1.2, 4)
Introductory words	‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations’ (v.5).
Human resistance	‘Ah, Lord God! I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth’ (v.6).
Rebuke and reassurance: substance of commission	‘Do not say, “I am only a youth”, for to all whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you’ (vv.7-8). ‘I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant’ (v.10)
Physical act of commissioning (signs and visions)	‘Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and said, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth”’ (v.9). The vision of a rod of almond and a boiling pot (vv. 11-13)
Returning to the community	‘So you, gird up your loins. Arise and say to them everything that I command you’ (v.17).

Figure 4. Jeremiah’s commissioning (Jer 1)

Divine initiation	‘The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God...’ The divine revelation consists of wind, cloud, fire, lightning and celestial beings (ch.1).
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Introductory words	‘Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak to you’ (2:1). ‘Arise, go forth into the valley, and there I will speak with you’ (3.22) ‘I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me...and you shall say to them, “Thus says the Lord God”’ (v.4).
Human Resistance	‘Ah Lord God! Behold, I have never defiled myself from my youth up till now’ (4.14).
Spirit-illness (spirit-possession, visions, and bizarre behaviour of the nominee as a result of a spiritual calling)	‘When he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set upon my feet’ (2.2; 3.22-24). ‘Then the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away. I went in bitterness, in the fury of my spirit, the hand of the Lord being strong upon me’ (3.12-14). Other abnormal behaviour: remaining dumb and speechless, deprivation of the control of mind and body, practice of asceticism, seclusion from the community (3.24-5.4) and not mourning the death of a wife (24.16-18).
Rebuke and reassurance: substance of commission	‘Whether they hear or refuse to hear, they will know that there has been a prophet among them’ (2.5) ‘You shall speak my words to them’ (2.7) ‘I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me’ (3.17)
Physical act of commissioning	‘So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. And he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey’ (3.3).
Returning to the community	‘I came to the exiles and sat overwhelmed among them for seven days’ (3.15).

Figure 5. Ezekiel’s commissioning (Ezek 1-5)

The initiation process usually begins with the formula of ‘the God called...’ or ‘the word of God came...’ (Exod 3.4; Jer 1.4; cf. 1 Sam 3.1; Judg 6.12; Isa 6.8), and similar to the Korean shamanistic initiation, the message is followed by supernatural signs, visions and dreams. However, although most prophetic callings begin with visions and mysterious dreams (‘If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream’ Num 12.6), unlike the Korean spiritual calling, such divine revelations do not necessarily trigger spirit possession or other forms of ecstatic behaviour. In the absence of the spirit-sickness, the initial struggle between the spirit and the novice is expressed in the form of verbal argumentation, which is usually dispelled by further divine

assurances of protection and the legitimacy of the prophetic mission. Although the resistance of the neophyte prophets is not as severe as the Korean counterpart (shaman-sickness), it is not impossible to find cases of spirit-sickness in biblical prophecy. The Mari prophets exhibit strange behaviours in between the vocational calling signalled by spirit possession and the realisation of the selection of the divine,¹⁰⁷ and Ezekiel is repeatedly under the influence of the spirit and displays abnormal behaviour throughout the initiation process. Supernatural visions and signs initially accompany the divine message to signal the presence of God, but they are also effective tools to overcome the initial fear and doubt of both the nominee and the audience. Substance of commission is particularly heavy with symbolism that prefigures the future ministry of the neophyte (Jer 1.10-16, 18; Ezek 4.1-8), and the message and signs operate concurrently till the nominee finally accepts the choice of the spirit.

3.2.1. Divine Initiation: Supernatural Signs and Visions

The initial purpose of the Korean shamanic-sickness is to isolate the nominee from the secular world and its defilements, so that the neophyte can communicate with the spirits undisturbed by external influences. In a similar vein, Moses and Ezekiel are called to the wilderness to witness a theophany and receive the divine message. Moses steps onto the

¹⁰⁷ Grabbe, 'Ancient Near Eastern', 21-22.

mountain of God, Horeb, and sees a burning bush that was not consumed by fire (Exod 3.2). However, Moses appears to be oblivious to the significance of the place where he is standing, and decides to examine the supernatural phenomenon (v.3) but is instantly warned against doing so by God: 'Do not come near, put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground' (vv.4-5). Moses removes his shoes, and from a Korean shamanic point of view, it is considered a general rule that the sacred place may be trodden only by naked feet, feet in their natural condition. As with Ja on the shamanic mountain, in spirit possession the nominee often sets out to the wilderness barefoot or treads on hot coals to remove any 'secular dirt' remaining on the practitioner's feet.¹⁰⁸ A similar idea can be found in the initiation of Isaiah, in a purifying rite which uses a burning coal to remove the impurities of the secular world before divine message is placed in the prophet's mouth: 'Behold, this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away, and your sin is forgiven...Go, and say to this people' (Isa 6.6-9).

Having realised that he is in the company of God, Moses hides his face because he is afraid to look at God (v.6, a mere mortal cannot look God and live: Judg 13.22; 6.22-23; Gen 1.13) A vision-like dream is considered the most common form of divine epiphany (Gen

¹⁰⁸ There is another perspective on the 'barefoot' appearance of Korean novice shamans. While treading on hot coals, climbing a ladder made of sharp blades, or wandering aimlessly in the wilderness, the shamans appear to be immune to physical harm or otherwise their feet would be covered with burns and cuts. The implication is that from the moment of the divine selection, the nominee will be protected by the supernatural power until the person completes the initiation process and while serving as a shaman.

15.12; 28.11-22), but, especially in the initial stage of spiritual calling for biblical prophets, the contact happens not only in auditory but also both visual and physical forms which heightens the sensitivity of the nominee to the supernatural surroundings. The narrative of Ezekiel is unique in its abundant usage of auditory, visual and physical sensations pertaining to the divine revelation. Ezekiel sees the heavens open and visions of stormy wind, huge cloud and flashing fire, which are common metaphors for the divine potency that controls the violent and unpredictable power of nature.¹⁰⁹ The expression in v.3, ‘the hand of Yahweh came upon me’, is also a typical biblical description of a personal experience of being under the influence of the spirit (Ezek 8.1; 11.5; Judg 3.10; 11.29), and, especially in the narrative of Ezekiel, the hand of God is regularly associated with spirit possession (3.22; 8.1; 33.2; 37.1; 40.1).¹¹⁰ As the supernatural realm is opened up in front of his eyes, Ezekiel sees the heavenly beings surrounding the divine celestial court. A similar image of the celestial court

¹⁰⁹ For example, Isa 63.19 (64.1), in the tearing of the heavens, and 2 Sam 22.10; Ps 18.10 (9), 144.5, in the spreading open of the heavens like the curtains of a tent. The statement about the opening of heaven is found only here in the OT, while the opening of the windows of heaven as a punishment (Gen 7.11; Isa 24.28) and blessing (Mal 3.10; cf. 2 Kgs 7.2) is mentioned more than once.

¹¹⁰ The hand of God demonstrates the power of divine promises in history (1 Kgs 8.15, 24; 2 Chr 6.4, 15), the works of creation (Isa 45.12; 48.13), the force with which it comes upon human beings (1 Sam 5.6; 6.3,5), protection (Isa 49.2; 51.16), and the means of empowering the prophet (1 Kgs 18.46) and of giving an oracle (2 Kgs 3.15; Is 8.11; cf. Jer 15.16). In parallel to Ezekiel’s trance-like vision, in 2 Kgs 3.15 God’s hand triggers the altered-state of consciousness in which an oracle is communicated, and, in 1 Kgs 8.46, it offers a physical empowerment to run with exceptional speed. Wilson argues that being under the influence of the hand of God does not necessarily refer to external behaviour, such as ecstasy or trance, but to divine possession as is primary means of divine-human communication. R. Wilson, ‘Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Re-examination,’ *JBL* 98 (1979), 325. However, it is not so clear how to separate the (biblical) phenomenon of spirit possession from trance or ecstasy, let alone to distinguish physical and psychological aspects of possessions from divinatory activities while under the influence of the spirit.

opening up in front of a human is also found in Isa. 6 (cf. Jer 23.16-18, 21-22), but unlike Isaiah who was brought up to the celestial court for the cleansing ritual, Ezekiel appears to remain on the earth while his usual surroundings are transformed into something lofty and transcendental.

The metamorphosis of the ordinary or natural into the holy or supernatural continues as Ezekiel sees the figures of four messengers of God, creatures combining human forms with those of wild animals:

Four living creatures had the form of human, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands, and the four had their faces and their wings ... As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a person in front; the four had the face of a lion on the right side, and four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle at the back. And their wings were spread out above; each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies (1.5-14).¹¹¹

Ezekiel's eyes are opened to the omnipotence of God by all the great creations in the earth, beasts and human being; the forces around them such as wind, cloud (water), and fire, and the

¹¹¹ I will not explore a detailed comparison of the images in Ezekiel narrative and those of Israel and ancient Near Eastern environments, since the focus of this research is not the anthropological discoveries of biblical or pagan religious imageries and their validation, but instead read those images as a part of divine revelation, legitimating the authenticity of the inaugural experience, and examining how the divine message is manifested and reinforced in the supernatural signs and visions. The subject of biblical and ancient Near Eastern religious iconography have been discussed in many scholarly work, such as: L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, PA.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 95-98; R. Wilson, *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Sourcebook for Biblical Researchers* (SBL/SBS; Atlanta, GA.: Scholars Press, 1986), 117-30; M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (AB; Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1983), 54-58; L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-20* (WBC; Dallas, TX.: Word Books, 1994), 26-31; and R. Klein, *Ezekiel: The Prophet and His Message* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 16-24.

divine order that brings life into each entity (cf. Ps 103.20-22; 104.3-4; 148).¹¹² The number four, symbol of totality, also adds significance to the divine government of every macrocosm: Ezekiel witnesses the breath of God coming from the four points of the compass and restoring the dead to life (37.9); the four world eras of Dan 2 and 7 represent the whole of human history which is still to run (from Nebuchadnezzar to its end); Isaiah declares the universal power of God to assemble people from the four cardinal directions (Isa 11.12); the four chariots which are identical to the heavenly messengers in Ezekiel 'go to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of the whole earth' (Zech 6.2-5); and Ja's bowing down to the four directions make known her presence to the spirits that reside in each corner of the universe. The spirit of God is the force that directs these heavenly beings, organising their movement through its will (Ezek 1.20; cf. 2 Sam 22.11; Ps 194.3, the 'wind' as a means of divine mobility). As in Moses' vision of the burning bush, or Jeremiah's boiling pot, a mysterious heat (fire) features in the narrative of Ezekiel as a symbol of the presence of God ('in the midst of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro, and the fire was bright and out of the

¹¹² Ezekiel's vision, which started with images of a stormy wind, a great cloud with a brightness around it, and a flashing fire with gleaming bronze in the middle of it (1.4) neatly rounds off with his actual confrontation with the divine itself, described as, 'gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about...and there was brightness round about him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness about' (Ezek 1.27-28).

fire went forth lightning', v.14).¹¹³ Overwhelmed by this experience, as was Moses, Ezekiel falls on his face and prepares to hear the message of God: 'Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and heard, "Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you"' (1.28-2.1).

3.2.2. The Divine Message: Introductory Words

In Korean shamanism, there are two major ways in which the spirits are believed to communicate directly with humans: the first is the shamanistic flight of the soul, in which the spirit or soul of the human leaves its body and travels to the supernatural realm; and the second is spirit possession, perhaps the most commonly found means of divine-human communication in the Bible.¹¹⁴ The divine calls to Ezekiel with 'son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you' (2.1), and, in the subsequent commissioning, a combination of the divine message and the signs and visions dominate Ezekiel's body and mind, which

¹¹³ Other biblical descriptions of the divine fire: Ex 9.16 as lightning, Ex 19.18 as fire, and Ps 18.9, 2 Sam 22. 9 as burning coals.

¹¹⁴ Examples of biblical expressions of spirit possession are:

- (1) the hand of the Lord fell upon me (Ezek 8.1; cf. 1.3; 3.14,22; 33.22; 37.1; 40.1; Isa 8.11; 1 Kgs 18.46; 2 Kgs 3.15; Jer 15.17)
- (2) the spirit lifted me up (Ezek 8.3; cf. 11.1, 24; 43.5)
- (3) the spirit entered into me (Ezek 2.2; 3.24)
- (4) the spirit rested on them (Num 11.25-26)
- (5) the spirit of the Lord is upon me (Isa 61.1)
- (6) the spirit (of the Lord) clothes itself with Gideon/Amasai/Zechariah (Judg 6.34; 1 Chr 12.19; 2 Chr 24.20)

See, Wilson, 'Prophecy and Ecstasy', 325.

makes it easier to get the message through to a vulnerable but highly perceptible state of mind.¹¹⁵ Spirit possession is regularly recognised as stereotypical prophetic behaviour (Num 11.24-27; 1 Sam 10.5, 6, 10, 11, 13; Ezek 37.9-10), yet it has been assumed that during possession the prophet is capable only of unintelligible utterances and therefore the oracles have to be translated and delivered at a later time. Such a hypothesis is partially based on a polemic against those who exhibit similar ecstatic behaviour, hence prophecy as the most legitimate form of divine correspondence, but also due to the gap between the intelligible prophetic speech and abnormal behaviour of the practitioner in a trance.¹¹⁶ However, fundamentally, both activities (spirit possession and writing an oracle) are under the control of the spirit (Jer 4.19; 23.9), and there are cases where prophets, during the trance, are reported to have conducted ordinary human activities, despite the assumption that spirit possession is incapacitating (1 Sam 10.5-6; 28.12-14). In Korean shamanism, spirit possession, ecstasy and divination often occur interchangeably, recognised not necessarily by their external and physiological appearance but by their desired result, which is an opening of the channel between the secular and the sacred so that the message of the spirits can be manifested in socially and culturally detectable forms. Here, in the calling of Ezekiel, the

¹¹⁵ Unlike other prophets (Moses in Exod 3.4; Samuel in 1 Sam 3.4; Amos in Amos 7.8; 8.2; and Jeremiah in Jer 1.11; 24.3), who are addressed by the divine by their proper names, Ezekiel is addressed via stereotyped formulae 'son of man' or 'human one'. One may compare it to the commissioning of Jeremiah, where the prophet is addressed in the uniqueness of his particular personal being, as an individual within the created order of God.

¹¹⁶ Wilson, *Prophecy and Ecstasy*, 328.

spirit enters the nominee and simultaneously makes him stand on his feet. Ezekiel hears God speaking to him (v.2) and falls into a trance-like state, which is in many ways similar to the shamanic experiences of spirits, ‘marked by reduced sensitivity to stimuli, loss or alteration of knowledge of what is happening, and substitution of automatic for voluntary activity’.¹¹⁷

The message of God to Ezekiel follows a typical prophetic formula: ‘I send you...and you shall say to them, “Thus says the Lord God”...and they will know that there has been a prophet among them’ (2.3-5). Whereas the target is repeatedly commented on, (‘the people of Israel, a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me...and also are impudent and stubborn’, vv.3-4), the specific content of the mission is hidden from the reader.¹¹⁸ However, the unconditional and authentic quality of Ezekiel’s commission itself is a sign that Ezekiel is a true prophet (2.5; 33.33), as opposed to the people themselves and their controvertible nature (‘whether they hear, or refuse to hear’, 2.5, 7; 3.11, 27). Similarly, the three main verb phrases in the initial message of God to Jeremiah - ‘I knew you’, ‘I designated you’ and ‘I made you’ - signify both intimacy and a covenantal bond between the divine and its servant (Gen 18.19; 2 Sam 7.20).¹¹⁹ The idea that the prophets are the ‘sign’

¹¹⁷ E. Bourguignon, ‘The Self, the Behavioural Environment, and the Theory of Spirit Possession’, in M. E. Spiro (ed.), *Context and Meaning in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 41.

¹¹⁸It appears to be, at least in the prophecy of Ezekiel, that his ‘task is to deliver the prophetic word, which is cited in terms not of its content but of its divine authority...the context warrants a focus on Ezekiel as his genuine spokesperson’. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 133; *idem*, *I Am Yahweh* (trans. D. W. Stott; Atlanta, GA.: John Knox Press, 1982), 49-50.

¹¹⁹ Carroll emphasises that the term בֶּטֶן (belly) connotes an intimate relationship between God and the one who is called, as it is a place of emotions. By inserting this term, the author intends to stir the

from God is strengthened by a symbolic gesture of the deity in stretching out its hand with a scroll and offering it to the prophets (Ezek 2.9-3.3; Jer 1.9-10). In this way, the prophets become one with the divine message that they are about to deliver.

3.2.3. Resistance on the Part of the Nominee

Upon hearing the selection of the spirit, the instinctive responses from Moses and Jeremiah are bewilderment and refusal. Even in the moment of closest contact with God, the nominees express their doubts and concerns, which indicates that ‘they are not merely passive recipients, but active, even opposing respondents. There is true address and response, genuine give and take. The human partner has a say in shaping the direction and outcome of events’.¹²⁰ In a similar vein, Craigie argues that ‘in fact, despite the deterministic tone of the opening statement, the undertones throughout the narrative are those of human freedom and the capacity to respond to the divine call’.¹²¹

In the narrative of Moses, trial and conflict in particular play an important role in developing a renewed sense of identity and responsibility as a newly consecrated prophet.

Moses repeatedly expresses doubts and objections to the vocation (Exod 3.11, 13; 4.1, 10, 13)

audience’s sympathy and confidence in the chosen one (cf. Jer 15.10; 20.7-10). R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1986), 97-98.

¹²⁰ M. Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus* (New York: Berhman House, 1969), 94.

¹²¹ Craigie, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 10.

that range from insecurities about himself - ‘Who am I?’ and ‘I am not eloquent, I am slow of speech and of tongue’ – to those about his connection with the people of Israel and the success of the mission: ‘Who am I that I should go and bring the people of Israel out of Egypt?’, ‘If I say, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you” and they ask me, “What is his name?” what shall I say to them?’, and ‘they will not believe me or listen to my voice’.¹²²

Despite the fact that God reveals Moses’ true identity and his connection to the people of Israel by referring to the Israelite patriarchy (3.6) and giving repeated divine assurances (3.12, 14-22; 4.5, 8-10, 12, 15-17), Moses’ doubts are not easily dispelled: ‘Oh, my Lord, send, please, some other person’ (3.13).

Similarly, Jeremiah replies to the message of God with reluctance: ‘Ah, Lord God! I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth’ (Jer 1.6). Jeremiah’s response to the prophetic calling conveys a similar feeling of despair and panic,¹²³ but the difference is that

¹²² Moses’ personal history perhaps explains his sense of insecurity: Moses may be a prince, but his true identity, a Hebrew boy who survived the nation-wide massacre of the male Hebrew children (Exod 1.15-22), and his name ([being] drawn out of water’, v.10) betrays any privilege the prince might inherit naturally. The name of his first child (Gershom: ‘I have been a sojourner in a foreign land’, v.22) also transmits the restless and rootless situation of Moses after his murder of the violent Egyptian (Exod 2.11-15).

¹²³ The phrase ‘Ah, Lord God!’ appears ten times in the OT (besides the present passage: 4.10; 14.13; 32.17; Josh 7.2; Judg 6.22 and Ezek 4.14; 9.8; 11.13; 21.5) to express dismay or alarm, and the sentiment is analogous to Gideon’s objection (Judg 6.22) and that of Moses (Exod 4:10, 13). W. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA.: Fortress Press, 1986), 34. Also, the word אֲהִי which opens Jeremiah’s response connotes the stressful condition that motivates Jeremiah’s desperate appeal to God (cf. Josh 7.7; Judg 6.22; 11.35 and Jer 4.10; 14.31; 32.17). Y. Gitay, ‘The Projection of the Prophet: A Rhetorical Presentation of the Prophet Jeremiah (According to Jer 1:1-19)’, in Gitay (ed.), *Prophecy and Prophets The Diversity of Contemporary Issues in Scholarship* (SBLSS; Atlanta, GA.: Scholars Press, 1997), 46-47.

whereas Moses resists strongly even the possibility of the commissioning, Jeremiah's concerns are more about his inaptitude for the mission that determines the future of the whole nation and kingdom. If Moses is reluctant to carry out the mission because the nominee believes that he has no connection with the community to which he is sent, Jeremiah is hesitant because he is already a part of the community which will be severely judged by God. In this regard, when it comes to the deliverance of the message of doom, prophets seem to find it necessary to emphasise the fact that they are compelled to do it, not because they wish to but because 'The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?' (Amos 3.8).

The nominee is chosen by the spirit before realising his or her own potential, and the initial doubts and conflicts function as a necessary check mechanism before the neophyte embraces the new identity. The primary aim of the Korean shamanic-sickness is a transformation of the previous ego into a new one infused with supernatural power and a connection to the spirits, and in the narratives of Moses and Jeremiah, God eventually employs magic and signs to prove the authenticity of the event and to dispel any lingering doubts.¹²⁴ However, before moving onto signs and visions as means of divine assurance, we need to be aware of the danger of a direct comparison between the prophetic neophytes and

¹²⁴ Craigie shares a similar view: 'Such a visionary experience would be significant at the very beginning of the prophet's ministry, in response to the reluctant prophet's hesitation about proclaiming a word concerning the substance of which he had no guarantee of fulfilment'. Craigie, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 16.

Korean novice shamans as in trying to fit biblical characters into a sociological model of the Korean religious system. Unlike Korean novice shamans and their spirit-sickness, which is accompanied by depression, a journey into the netherworld, and various physical and psychological illnesses, the biblical prophets show no sign of schizophrenia and appear to be able to conduct a rational debate with the deity. The question 'Who am I?' asked by Moses and Jeremiah, is not commensurate with the same degree of identity crisis felt by Korean novice shamans, and may demonstrate the undercurrent of perturbation in confronting the call of the spirit, but it does not reach the point of physical or symbolic death, when the pain is so great that the nominee has no choice but to accept the divine selection in order to survive. However, there is possibly one exception in the call narratives that shows similar symptoms to the spirit-sickness of Korean shamans, that of Ezekiel.

3.2.4. The Shaman-sickness and Ezekiel's Abnormal Behaviour

The shaman-sickness forces the nominee to detach him-herself from the world of humanity and material existence and to enter the closed realm of primordial energy, powers and spirits.

Through a near-death experience induced by spirit-sickness, shamans become:

A master of death, a messenger from the Beyond...as one of the most capable explorers of an inner world which, in turn, is but the outer appearance of another realm...the transpersonal psychology of the shaman arrives at diagnosis and form of healing that overcome the shortsightedness inherent in forms of analysis confined to the human

environment. The new psychology will show the conflicts in our lives to be related both to the here and now and to the Beyond. Based on this super insight it will strive for therapeutic solutions that might be somewhat unusual and incomprehensible in the eyes of ordinary people.¹²⁵

In Korean shamanism, only the god-appointed type undergoes the shamanic-illness, the experience grants the nominee a supernatural power to heal, to diagnose, and to communicate with the spirits. The shamanic-illness serves two purposes: first, it is a means of awakening the nominee to the divine selection and isolating the person from his or her previous life through various physical and mental afflictions; second, it is a way of training the nominee to become fit for the mission, as the shamanic-sickness prefigures the hazardous journey that the novice has to undertake for the future ministry. Through alienation and a spiritual rebirth, the nominee's physical and psychological capacities are challenged and replaced by gifts of the spirits.

After Ezekiel's visions of the celestial court, the hand of God falls upon Ezekiel for the second time and commands, 'Arise, go forth into the plain, and there I will speak with you' (3.22). There is a formula in Ezekiel (1.28-2:2; 3.22-24) which implies the transitional state of mind of the nominee under the influence of the spirit: a spiritual calling, the divine vision in the wilderness, the spirit entering into Ezekiel and making him stand, and the

¹²⁵ Kalweit, *Dreamtime*, 14-15.

communication with the divine.¹²⁶ The ground he is standing on is transformed from ordinary to supernatural (cf. Exod 3.5), and Ezekiel sees and hears the deity itself, a sight and sound that is usually hidden from the naked human eye.¹²⁷ The divine instruction to Ezekiel is of total seclusion from the mundane world: once Ezekiel shuts himself within his house, cords bind him so that he cannot go out among the people, and his tongue sticks to the roof of his mouth so that he is dumb and unable to reprove people (3.25-26). Ezekiel's imprisonment and dumbness are similar to the process where Korean novice shamans detach themselves from the mundane life and its defilements, a process which consequently alters the inner structure of the nominee so that he or she can reach a higher level of the senses, tuned into the spiritual realm. What is interesting is that the shamanic-sickness is an 'illness' or 'madness' from an outsider's point of view, but, fundamentally, it is a spiritual way of reconstructing and revitalising the physical and mental fitness of the nominee, where the emphasis is always on cure and recovery rather than the infliction itself. The spirit claims all the rights and senses of Ezekiel's body and mind, and the nominee will regain his ability to speak and

¹²⁶ The phenomenon of the prophet empowered by the spirit to stand and assume the position of a servant standing in front of the divine master can be also found in 1 Kgs 17.1; 18.15; 2 Kgs 3.14; 5.16; Jer 15.1.

¹²⁷ The concept of the sacred site or holy ground is still widely observed in shamanistic and other pagan religious cultures. As opposed to the archaeological understanding of the sacred site as a time window to the past, shamans and neo-shamans believe that such places are still 'alive' today, infused with spiritual energy so that practitioners can feel, engage with, or contact ancestors, gods, and nature spirits. For further discussion of the sacred site in contemporary spiritualism, see R. Wallis, *Shamans/Neo-Shamans: Ecstasy, Alternative Archaeologies and Contemporary Pagan* (London: Routledge, 2003), 142-167.

communicate with other people when the spirit channels through him again: ‘But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, “Thus says the Lord God”’ (3.27).

The difference between Ezekiel’s calling and that of other prophets (Moses and Jeremiah) is that there is no strong resistance on the part of the nominee to the divine will, but instead Ezekiel immediately faces an extreme alteration of his former self. Moreover, unlike Moses and Jeremiah who received the call of the spirit due to the uniqueness of their particular personal being (as in their being predestined to be chosen by the spirit), and unlike other prophets who are addressed by the divine by their proper names (Samuel in 1 Sam 3.4; Amos in Amos 7.8; Moses in Exod 3.4 and Jeremiah in Jer 1.11; 24.3), Ezekiel is repeatedly addressed through stereotyped formulae - ‘son of man’ or ‘mortal’ - although there is something almost inhuman and stark about his response (or lack of it) toward his calling.

Ezekiel is to exercise strict restraint in his human habits, both sleeping (4.4-7) and dietary (4.9-12). Ezekiel is ordered to lie on each side for a number of days respectively (three hundred and ninety days, equal to the number of years of the punishment of the people of Israel, and forty days for the punishment of Judah, a day for each year) as a sign of bearing the punishment of the people. The cords will be upon Ezekiel so that he cannot turn from one side to the other until he completes the term of his ordeal (v.8). The cords appear here for a

second time, meaning a total submission to the divine instruction, yet the implication is changed. If the first usage of cords (3.25) is to prevent the prophet's interaction with the people, the second usage (4.8) is to ensure that the prophet fulfils his responsibility as a bearer of the guilt-punishment of the people. The symbolic bondage of the guilt and punishment represents the prophetic act of public identification, as he bears it as a burden in his own life (Ezek 3.26; 24.7; 33.22; cf. Isa 53.7). However, this bearing is not substitutionary, as if the prophet were atoning for their guilt, but representative (cf. Exod 28.38), more likely a sign-action (or theatrical teaching).¹²⁸

An analogous example of a sign-act can be found in the Korean shaman's ritual for the dead. The shaman begins the ceremony by dressing in rough hemp cloth with coarse rope, which signifies the appearance of the death messenger, and she (since the majority of Korean shamans, especially the god-appointed type, are women) hisses at people, snatches the food from the table and gulps it down with her hands in a fidgety fashion, indicating the rough condition of the netherworld where the newly dead is now placed. The long journey of the

¹²⁸ For the rhetorical aspect of Ezekiel's sign-acts as nonverbal communication, see, K. G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts* (JSOTSup 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 192-213. Another study is that of Lang, who argues that these symbolic acts function as 'street theater', dramatically visualising the oral messages of the prophet. B. Lang, 'Street Theater, Raising the Dead, and the Zoroastrian Connection in Ezekiel's Prophecy', in J. Lust, *Ezekiel and His Book* (BETL 74; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 302-305. Other examples of symbolic actions of prophets in relation to the future of the community are: Isaiah, who walks barefoot and scantily clad for three years as a sign against Egypt (Isa 20.3-4); Jeremiah, who carries a wooden yoke around Jerusalem, as a gesture that the residents should surrender to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27.2, 12; 28.10); and Elisha, who determines the outcome of the war against Syria by using a bow and arrows (2 Kgs 3.14-19).

soul from the netherworld to paradise is symbolised in long strips of white cloth woven with different materials, with which the shaman makes a pavement by tearing it in two. She thrusts her body, writhing in pain and grief until she reaches the end of the strip, which is now made of silk: the heavenly paradise. Although Korean shamans do not bear either the guilt or the punishment of the people, because today the Korean shamanic service operates at a personal level, a shaman/clientele basis rather than a communal one, the Korean shamanic ceremony has a similar mechanism to 'street theatre', where the sign acts of the prophets (shamans) provide excellent educational material for the audience.

In the case of Ezekiel, during the ordeal, the prophet is to live on a minimal amount of food (the historical realities of the burden are illustrated in Jer 37.21; 38.6) prepared in such an unbearable manner that for the first time the prophet raises his voice to defend his priestly purity (4.14). Ezekiel's objection to the way his food is prepared (baked on human dung) is the only expression of his personal opinion about his commission in the entire book. Ezekiel's protest contains a confession about his previous manner of life, led by a very definite ideal of purity. However, the rationed portions of food and drink and the manner of preparing food indicate the inevitable suffering of the people during the siege, which the prophet has already demonstrated in his symbolic action of bearing the guilt and punishment

of the community. Ezekiel's desire to maintain his own purity has lost its ideological ground

because he is now a priest without a temple. As Allen observes:

The tone of the composition changes from the transcendent to the immanent, from the universal to the particular. The change is necessitated by the increased involvement of Ezekiel, the Judean exile, as he ceases to be an external observer and becomes a participant in the divine purpose.¹²⁹

There is no more sacrificial system, purification offerings or priestly purity to be gained by keeping himself alienated from impure objects or people. If the purity that separates the priest from the people was a way of serving the community (in a paradoxical sense),¹³⁰ now Ezekiel finds himself among the exiles in an unclean land, the experience of which 'would harness his purity to the greater good of the community [as] Ezekiel has become a vestigial member of the body politic'.¹³¹ God issues another instruction, for Ezekiel to shave his head and beard (5.1) as if to nullify further any previous traces of his human life. According to Num 6.5, those who had taken a vow to separate themselves to God were forbidden to cut their hair during the period of the vow (the vow of a Nazirite, Judg 13.15; 16.17; 1 Sam 1.11), and it would be shameful for Ezekiel the priest (1.3) to be stripped off a symbol of his identity. The divine orders appear to serve two purposes: for the prophet himself it is to

¹²⁹ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 38.

¹³⁰ According to Milgrom, in the sacrificial system of the Temple, priestly purity serves to absolve corporate guilt, where the action is only accomplished through the priests' eating the purification offerings, for 'when the priest consumes *תאטף*, he is making a profound theological statement: holiness has swallowed impurity; life can defeat death'. J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 637.

¹³¹ M.S. Odell, 'You Are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll', *JBL* 117 (1998), 240.

detach himself from his previous way of life, and for the community it is a sign-act that demonstrates their future.

There is no figure like Moses, Jeremiah or Ezekiel in Korean shamanism, no one who is given great authority as a political and religious leader besides the traditional divinatory role. Nonetheless, the altruistic ethics of Korean shamans, who identify themselves with the oppressed and marginalised, are basically what these prophets learn to embrace from their long process of trial and conflicts, so that they can recognise the bond between the sacred and the secular, between themselves and the people of God. The deity orders Ezekiel not just to cut his body hair but to burn it, to strike it with a sword, to scatter it to the wind, and to cast it into the fire (5.2-5), where such actions symbolise destruction and the grim reality of the future of the people, whose fate is now tied with the prophet himself ('and you shall take from these a small number, and bind them in the skirts of your robe', v.3). In Korean shamanism, the intrusion of the spirits, illnesses, death, isolation and social stigma all prepare the novice shaman for the future ministry, because such experiences make the practitioner aware of the suffering of other people, and enables them to sympathise with them, and to seek to secure the means of alleviating their pain. Now Ezekiel has to leave all previous ritual confinements behind and face a community that has lost its connection to God.

He cannot atone for the guilt of the people as he did when he was a priest, but must simply live through the exile, siege, famine and destruction that are in store for them.

3.2.5. The Divine Reassurance

I will now return to the narratives of Moses and Jeremiah, where the protests of the nominees against their callings are nullified by mysterious signs and miracles. First, Moses witnesses two miraculous signs and is promised a miracle in case those previous miracles should fail to convince the people of Israel of the authenticity of the newly chosen prophet. A rod Moses picks up from the ground is transformed into a snake and returned to its original form, Moses' hand becomes leprous and then recovers, and the water from the Nile will turn into blood as Moses pours it on dry ground (Exod 4.2-9). Leprosy is a deadly disease, mostly referred to in association with a divine curse ('Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?', 2 Kgs 5.7; cf. Num 12.10; 2 Sam 3.29, 15.5; 2 Chr 26.19-23). Sickness, death and resurrection are the key elements of the shamanistic initiation curriculum, and although not as intense as in the shamanistic experience, Moses is introduced to the supernatural power when it breathes life into an inanimate object, triggers a mysterious illness and cures it. All three signs - the disease, the snake/staff and the water/blood - reappear in the later episodes of Moses' prophetic journey

as examples of miraculous illness and cure, which are in essence two sides of the same coin, as divine provision and retribution. In addition to the mysterious transformation of the water of the Nile into blood (Exod 7.19-24, realisation of the prophecy), the water of the Reed Sea is parted by Moses' staff/hands, saving the lives of the people of Israel but killing the army of Egyptians which was pursuing them (Exod 14.15-29).

Moses' question 'Who am I?' (3.11), is replaced by 'your servant' (Exod 4.10) and 'God of *your* fathers' (3.13) becomes 'my lord' (4.10). Moses is no longer sceptical of the divine revelation but is uncertain as to how he can accomplish the prophetic task because he lacks eloquence and is slow of speech and tongue (4.10). Similar to the Korean shamanistic calling, where the test of the 'initial fitness' of the nominee (by means of the shaman-sickness) acts paradoxically to prove the physical and psychological fragilities of human beings, in the commissioning of the prophet we witness only the vulnerability and timid responses of the nominees, offset by the powerful messages and signs of God. Jeremiah is recognised, consecrated and appointed a prophet by God even before he is formed in the womb (Jer 1.5), not necessarily because of his exceptional personal attributes but despite them. Similarly, Moses is reminded of the divine order of creation, 'Who has made a person's mouth? Who makes the person dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?' (Exod 4.11) which negates his concerns about his inability to deliver the message of God. Thus, human 'fitness'

hardly matters when it comes to the divine selection. The prophetic calling does not focus on the natural ability of the nominee but the process of challenging, reconstructing and reassuring the new identity and responsibility of the person as a prophet, where their shortcomings will be compensated by gifts of the spirit and companionship (Exod 4.12, 14-17; Jer 1.7-8, 19).

Jeremiah is also offered two visions that reinforce the message of God: a rod of almond and a boiling pot. Jeremiah's natural observation of a rod of almond (שקד) is converted into a revelation of divine promise ('I am watching [שקד] over my word to perform it', 1.12),¹³² and the second vision (a boiling pot, vv.13-15) specifies the impending doom of the nation as the foe (the wind) from the north blows upon all the cities of Judah (an overflowing pot) to the very gate of Jerusalem. The judgment is inevitable, for the people have forsaken their God by worshipping other gods and idols (v.16). The former image of Jeremiah as an inexperienced youth is transformed to that of a spiritual antagonist, reinforced by expressions such as 'gird up your loins' and 'arise' to compel him hurry back to the community to announce the message of God (v.17, cf. 1 Kgs 18.46; Isa 5.27).

¹³² Gitay, 'A Rhetorical Presentation', 50. Zimmerli states that the word has its own 'bodily existence', in the sense that it is not simply an eloquent symbol, but through a shift from visual to aural recognition, it proclaims itself in the vision. W. Zimmerli, 'Visionary Experience in Jeremiah', in R. Coggins *et al.* (eds.), *Israel's Prophetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 106-107. For exegetical analyses of the vision of an almond rod and its word-play, see: Craigie, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 16; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 37-8; A. Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination among the Hebrews and Other Semites* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 149-150.

3.2.6. The Physical Act of Commissioning

In addition to the signs and visions that accompany the divine message, the words of God are implanted in the mouths of the prophets. For Moses, consumption of the divine message takes place at an auditory level ('I will be with your mouth and teach you what to speak' 4.12), whereas in Jeremiah's calling there is a visionary and physical quality to the event: 'God stretched out his hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth, saying, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth"' (Jer 1.9). Jeremiah describes his experience, even though he was in the midst of his bitter complaint, as 'a joy and the delight of my heart' (15.16). However, such ecstatic bliss is immediately followed by the message of destruction, verbalising the essence of Jeremiah's ministry in four negative and two positive instructions: 'to pluck out and to pull down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant' (1.10). Jeremiah's binary prophetic mission reflects the themes of (miraculous) illness and cure, destruction and rebirth, which may appear contrasting but are ultimately designed to supply a greater equilibrium, as 'God can work newness, create historical possibilities *ex nihilo*, precisely in situations that seem hopeless and closed'.¹³³

¹³³ Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 25.

Ezekiel consumes the scroll (Ezek 3.1-3) so that the divine word becomes a part of his very being.¹³⁴ Greenberg asserts that the reality of the scroll event signifies the complete subjection of the prophet to the divine will. The command to eat the scroll (not ‘these words’ or ‘laments’) is something of an ordeal intended to test the prophet’s obedience, overriding his hesitation about his ability to perform the monstrous task offered by God.¹³⁵ Ezekiel’s act of submitting to the prophetic mission shows different psychological phases: the scroll is written in words of lamentation, mourning and woe, which are the consequences of the divine message to the people of Israel;¹³⁶ but when Ezekiel swallows the sacred text, he is filled with ecstatic bliss as sweet as honey (3.3), similar to Jeremiah’s response.¹³⁷ The last emotion is ‘bitterness in the heat of the spirit’ (3:14), as Ezekiel returns from his ecstatic journey. The earlier divine message to the people of Israel expresses a great deal of accusation and indignation (2.3-7; 3.7-9), and, while still under the influence of the spirit

¹³⁴ Another example of the ‘physical’ intake of divine words is in Num 5.23-28, where the priest tests a woman accused of adultery with the water of bitterness: ‘Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and wash them off into the water of bitterness. And he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain’ (v.23-24). This trial is a mixture of the law of divine judgement and shamanistic sympathetic magic: ‘washing off’ the curses in the book in the water is a figurative action, but the magical element in the performance enables the message (bitterness) to actually affect the subject (a bitter pain).

¹³⁵ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 78. Odell also points out the significance of this action: ‘It is significant that when Ezekiel eats the scroll, he takes it into his belly (3.3). By contrast, when he internalizes the divine message, he takes it into his heart and ears (3.10). Internalizing words through the ears corresponds most clearly to the prophetic task, while internalizing through the belly may well have more in common with the priestly ingestion of sacrifices’. M. S. Odell, ‘You Are What You Eat’, 243.

¹³⁶ Examples of Ezekiel’s prophecy containing laments include Ezek 19.1, 14; 26.17; 27.2, 32; 28.12; 32.12-16.

¹³⁷ Allen remarks: ‘What in terms of content would have been unpalatable as the bread of adversity, in terms of his willingness to receive it as God’s word was sweet, like the “heart’s delight” of Jeremiah. He has committed himself to a prophetic ministry that will invoke hostility and rejection, but the privilege far outweighs such hardship.’ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 41.

(‘the hand of God being strong upon me’, 3.14), Ezekiel perhaps shares the bitterness of the deity against the rebellious nation, which triggered the initiation of the prophet (cf. Jer 14; Ezek 29; 2 Kgs 22.13; Deut 9.19). But it is also possible that once the ecstatic journey is over (‘I heard behind me the sound of a great earthquake...the spirit lifted me up and took me away’, vv.12-14),¹³⁸ the prophet confronts the grim reality of the exiles, to whom he is sent to deliver the oracle that will make their lives even more miserable. Having returned to the realm of mortals, Ezekiel sits by the river Chebar for seven days, still in awe of the theophany (v.15). His inert state of mind and body in the mundane world is the opposite of the various physical and emotional excitement of in his previous ecstatic journey. This contrast leaves a sense of incompleteness and suspense, as Ezekiel remains speechless and withdrawn even though the spirit personally carried him to the very target of his prophetic mission.

3.2.7 Return to the Community

¹³⁸ The sounds made by heavenly creatures and chariots as God arises (vv.12-13) give the impression of the dismissal of a heavenly council where each member (God and human) is to return to their respective place. ‘Lifted up’ (אָנִיחַ) also means ‘to raise, carry off’ (cf. 8.3; 11.1, 24; 43.5). Similarly, Obadiah fears that Elijah could be physically removed by the spirit of God: ‘As soon as I have gone from you the spirit of Yahweh will carry you whither I know not’ (1 Kings 18.12), and Elijah is actually taken up by a heavenly chariot in a whirlwind to heaven (2 Kgs 2.11, a similar phenomenon to being carried away by the stormy wind: Isa 40.24; 41.16).

Moses cannot anymore deny the fact that he has faced God (3.13-14; 4.1-9), that the people of Israel and he himself have a connection inherited from the Israelite patriarchy (3.6, 15), and that he does not need to worry about his shortcomings as they will be compensated by both human and spiritual companionship (4.12, 14-17).¹³⁹ Despite his incessant worries, once Moses returns to the land of the people of Israel, his authority is instantly recognised: ‘Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped’ (vv.30-31).

There is no need to resort to the third magical performance to prove his legitimacy as a prophet, but in the presence of Pharaoh Moses does turn the water in the Nile into blood with his staff/snake (Exod 7.19-24), and the same tool also brings the plagues of frogs and insects to the land of Egypt (8.5-6, 16-17). The magic of the water/blood and death (‘the Nile turned to blood, and the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul’, 7.20-21) brings to mind the initiation vision of the Korean shaman, Ja. The image of the flood of red muddy

¹³⁹ God gives Moses a staff as a prophetic tool - ‘you shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs’ (4.17) - and it becomes a fixture of Moses and Aaron’s magic and miracles (Exod. 7.9-20; 8.5, 16-17; 9.23; 10.13; 14.16; 17.9). Similarly, when the novice shaman finally accepts the choice of the spirit, the shaman is not only provided with spiritual guidance but also ritual paraphernalia that symbolise the particular power and nature of the master deity. Such tools are used in evoking spirits, divination, exorcisms and healing as they are believed to transmit the supernatural power from the spirits and the practitioner.

water and dead fish and her use of her own body as a filter of death and impurities underline the basic principle of the shaman: a channel of the supernatural power that can provoke mysterious death but also restore the life of every creature under its rule. The magicians in Egypt reproduce the same magic as that of Moses and Aaron (the magic of the snake/staff, vv.11-12, the plagues of blood, v.22, and insects, 8.7) by resorting to their secret arts, but, interestingly, neither the prophets nor the Egyptian magicians can reverse the divine curse once it has appeared on the land. This is perhaps the fundamental difference between Korean shamans and biblical prophets. The biblical text acknowledges the existence and influence of the magical/shamanistic activities of the prophets and non-Israelite religious professionals, but unlike Korean shamans who are the master of the supernatural power and beings, the biblical religious practitioners are not given full access to the mechanism of magic and miracles, and ultimately cure and recovery appear to be strictly in the hands of God.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Grabbe recognises a similar distinction between the shaman and a spirit medium: ‘the main characteristic of the shaman is that he or she is a master of spirits. The shaman differs from a spirit medium in that the shaman actively employs the spirits rather than serving as a passive vehicle for the spirit’. L. Grabbe, ‘Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy from an Anthropological Perspective’, in M. Nissinen (ed.), *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (SBL Symposium Series 13; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 18. This particular episode of Moses and Egyptian magicians discloses the tension in biblical texts, between recognising special powers and the biblical writer’s desire to bring miracles under the control of God. The prophetic condemnation against magic and miracles insists the authenticity of biblical prophets as opposed to magicians and diviners; but, if both the prophets and non-Israelite spiritualists possess an ability to perform magical acts but are denied of full access to the supernatural power, who can argue that biblical prophets are fundamentally different from magicians and diviners?

Through the shamanic-sickness, the novice experiences the cycle of life and death, and the knowledge gained from such experiences will help the shaman to solve the problems of others which are beyond human wisdom and capacity. However, in the prophetic commissioning, first, it is not mandatory that the nominees should undergo the symbolic or physical dismemberment of mind and body (the ultimate stage before the shamanic rebirth), and second, the biblical partnership between the practitioner and the deity appears to be a vertical and exclusive relationship based on orders from above, unlike the Korean shamanistic counterpart, which is reciprocal and open to the influence from and influx of other spiritual beings, as long as they are proven to be effective and beneficial. Therefore, in the Korean shamanic ritual, the practitioner is in charge of interpreting, arguing and negotiating between the will of the spirits and the people, whereas in biblical prophecy, in most cases, once the message of God is delivered, it is considered a complete process in itself.

In this regard, Ezekiel's initiation is a unique case in the call narrative. The mystical elements of Ezekiel's spiritual calling seem perplexing at first, but every single detail of the divine instruction embodies the necessary steps for the transition of Ezekiel from an institutional priestly figure to a visionary prophet. Ezekiel is repeatedly possessed by the spirit (1.3; 2.2; 3.12, 22, 24), which enables him to communicate with the divine, and through a series of intense ordeals Ezekiel develops a renewed responsibility as a prophet.

Overwhelming visions and dreams reveal the authentic power of God that surpasses the human limitations of Ezekiel, and under divine instruction Ezekiel embodies the message of God in his every limb and movement, to be both physically and emotionally connected to the future of the community. If the initial part of Ezekiel's commissioning is dominated by an overwhelming experience of the spirit and divine visions, the next part calls for participation from the nominee, imposing a complete, both physical and mental, transformation. Maybe this is the reason why the initiation of Ezekiel as a prophet begins with such a compelling display of divine portent and signs. The priest Ezekiel has to be exposed to the supernatural power itself, in order to hand over ownership of his body and mind which had been sheltered by priestly purity, and to be reminded of the internal meaning of his service to the community. When he loses the ability to speak, his body tells the message of God, and, if actions speak louder than words, Ezekiel himself is an instrument for the divine message, louder and clearer than any other prophetic words.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to read prophetic commissioning in the Bible in a dialogue with Korean shamanic initiation. Against the traditional view of biblical prophecy - a hierarchical relationship between God and the nominee, the supremacy of the divine message over

magical events, and the role of a prophet as a passive recipient - I have argued that how the message and the supernatural signs complement each other, and the deity and the nominee respond to each other is vital in shaping the specific identity of a newly chosen prophet.

Korean shamanism follows the classic schema of the initiation ritual: divine selection, a test of the fitness of the nominee, trial and doubt of the nominee, divine reassurance, induction of spirits, and return to the community. The above pattern is encapsulated in the Korean shamanic-illness, *mu-byung*. From mysterious visions and dreams to spirit possession and ecstasy, from separation and extreme ordeals of the nominee to the return to the community with spiritual gifts, the shamanic-illness symbolises spiritual torment and bliss and the cycle of life and death in the secular and sacred worlds. The education of the spirit starts from the very beginning of the shamanic-sickness, as the nominee is directly exposed to the divine potency which challenges and overcomes human limitations, and continues until the nominee finally submits to the divine will and accepts the inevitable selection by the spirit.

Moses' spiritual calling is in many aspects analogous to the shamanistic initiation in Korea: it is set in a holy place of God, the divine message reveals Moses' true identity which sets out a new relationship with the deity as well as the community he is going to serve; and various visions and magic (the burning bush that is not consumed, the miraculous cure

for leprosy, the transformation of ordinary objects into something supernatural) act as tools to overcome Moses' resistance and prove the authenticity of the calling. As the main focus of Moses' spiritual calling is a personal struggle against the reality of the calling, the initiation process closely relates how the deity methodically removes Moses' doubts - by a means of three signs, miraculous illness and cure and the metamorphoses of a snake/staff and the water of the Nile -and clothes him in a better belief in both himself and the mission. The prophetic initiation provides Moses with a new identity and responsibility that bridge the realm of the sacred and the secular, and he will be the one who restores the broken link between the patriarchs and the current generation, through the help of the human companions (Aaron and Miriam) and spiritual gifts.

The rhythmical exchange between God and Jeremiah underlines the fact that the prophet is not just a passive recipient of the divine word but an active participant in preparing the realisation of the divine message in this world. God's powerful announcement of Jeremiah as a chosen one is immediately disputed by Jeremiah's own exclamation of his human limitations; and the promise of divine protection and the blissful experience of spiritual contact are overshadowed by a burden of the prophet who has to deliver the message of doom. However, rather than negating each other, the complex processes underline both the excitement and fear of the nominee, facing human limitations and the omnipresence of the

divine, the sweetness of accepting the divine message and the violence the message possesses.¹⁴¹ As in the case of Moses, God removes the nominee's fear with visions and magic, physical contact with the divine itself, which Jeremiah recalls as joy and delight. Although the situation has changed; Jeremiah's prophetic message is about the divine judgement against the rebellious people of Israel, as opposed to Moses' divine redemption for the oppressed people of Israel, God does not entirely deprive the nominee and the community of hope. Jeremiah's ministry consists of various forms of work, not only 'to pluck up and to pull down', 'to destroy and to overthrow', but also 'to build and plant' (Jer 1.10). And the promise of renewal will only come to pass when Jeremiah succeeds in fulfilling his duty, despite the anger and hostility of the people and his enemies, by being as strong as 'a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall' (Jer 1. 18).

Ezekiel's commissioning shows the strongest resemblance to the Korean shamanistic initiation: overwhelming divine visions, spirit possession and personal afflictions consisting of isolation from the community, practice of asceticism, deprivation of sensory inputs, and

¹⁴¹ Thus, even though the fundamental part of Jeremiah's prophecy is a deliverance of the divine message, I do not agree with the view that 'the main emphasis in course of Jeremiah's prophecy has entirely shifted in the direction of the preaching of Deutero-Isaiah, in which no visionary elements are to be found'. Bruggermann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 31. Jeremiah condemns the prophets who boast of the mysterious character of their prophetic experience (23.16), but this does not necessarily mean that Jeremiah entirely rejects the concept or experience of visionary or magical elements in the prophetic mission. Indeed, a number of clashes take place between Jeremiah and his opponents on the question of prophetic authenticity (especially repeatedly in his confrontation with Hananiah, who was called a prophet, 28. 1, 5, 10-12, 15, 17). However, the fact that Jeremiah opens his oracle with nothing other than the magical experience of the divine in order to prove the legitimacy of his commissioning confirms that the (divine) word and acts cannot be separated.

sign-acts that prefigure the future of the community. Unlike Moses and Jeremiah, there is no strong refusal or doubt on the part of the nominee, and when Ezekiel voices his discomfort about the ordeal, it is not to be comforted or acknowledged, but to remind the reader that his former self as a priest should be completely disposed of at the time of exile, siege, famine, and destruction. Ezekiel encounters and experiences divine beings and visions more than does any other prophet in the Bible, and these physical and psychological sensations fill the void left for the prophet after he abandons his priestly identity. Ezekiel's experiences and actions themselves become the message of God, and even though there is no means for Ezekiel to alleviate the suffering that the community will have to endure, Ezekiel faces it with all his mind and body, becoming not apart from but of the community itself. At least in the above cases of prophetic commissioning, there is no dichotomy between the words and the signs/acts of the spirit. Whether the prophet learned (Exod 4.12), touched (Jer 1.9), or swallowed (Ezek3.3) the divine message, it is not simply the deliverance of the message or its content that determines the authenticity of the prophet, but the fact that he is called to be a prophet, as a living sign of the divine to the community.

Chapter 4. The Spirit Masters in Ezekiel 13:17-23, 1 Samuel 28 and in Korean Shamanism

There are five passages written on female prophets: Miriam (Exod 15.20) and Deborah (Judg 4.4-5) lead the Israelite women in the singing of a victory hymn; Huldah delivers an oracle against the unfaithful community (2 Kgs 22.14-20); Noadiah appears to act in a similar vein in Nehemiah's prophetic duty (Neh 6.14); and an anonymous woman who bears Isaiah a son is also given this title (Isa 8.3).¹⁴² These female prophets are mentioned only rarely in the

¹⁴² For studies about Miriam, see: R. J. Burns, *Has the Lord Indeed Spoken Only through Moses? A Study of the Biblical Portrait of Miriam* (SBLDS, 84; Atlanta, GA.: Scholars Press, 1987), 11-40; W. C. Garney, *Daughters of Miriam: Women Prophets in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress

Bible, and, although biblical writers recognise existence of female public figures, it appears to be that written prophecy is exclusively a male preserve and the subject of women's religion was treated either with silence or hostility. In this chapter, I will examine female prophets (Ezek 13) and a medium (1 Samuel 28); they may not be free from Deuteronomistic condemnation of magic and divination practices, but somehow these female practitioners earned their own places in the text either by posing a threat to the prophet's ministry (Ezek 13.17-23) or helping a distressed individual (1 Sam 28.3-25). From the Korean shamanic point of view, they are independent spirit masters who actually achieve in a considerable result based on their own connection to the spirit world, whether or not their service are judged corrupted and primitive. In the Ezekiel text, it is impossible to reconstruct the actual nature or the process of the prophets' practices, and one can only attempt to characterise their ministries from the description of sign-acts and magical devices that accompany their spells. However, this does not mean that the discussion of the prophets and their services is a fruitless one. Instead of accepting an ideological distinction between 'legitimate' prophecy and that of 'popular' religion, in my interpretation of the female prophets in Ezekiel 13, I will pay more attention to the polemic of Ezekiel's prophecy against these rival practitioners and how it paradoxically affirms the influence they have over people. In 1 Samuel 28 we have an

Press, 2008); J. G. Janzen, 'Song of Moses, Song of Miriam: Who is Seconding Whom?', *CBQ* 54 (1992), 211-20. About Deborah, see: A. van der Kooji, 'On Male and Female Views in Judges 4 and 5', in B. Becking and M. Dijkstra (eds.), *On Reading Prophetic Tests: Gender-Specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkeliën van Dijk-Hemmers* (BIS 18; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 135-152 (esp., 143-44); K. Spronk, 'Deborah, a Prophetess: The Meaning and Background of Judges 4:4-5), in J. C. de Moor (ed.), *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist* (OTS, 45; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 232-42. About Noadiah and Huldah, see: R. P. Carroll, 'Coopting the Prophets: Nehemiah and Noadiah', in E. Ulrich *et al.* (eds.), *Priest, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp* (JSOTSup 149; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 87-99; D. L. Christensen, 'Huldah and Men of Anathoth: Women in Leadership in the Deuteronomic History', *Seminal Papers SBL 1984* (Chico, CA.: Scholars Press, 1984), 399-404. And for the mother of Isaiah's son, see: J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 238.

actual shamanic ritual performed at the request of a client (Saul), and despite the fact that the association with the spirit of the dead is strongly condemned in the Bible (Deut 18. 10-14), the event is recounted in a surprisingly neutral tone, free from prophetic judgement against magic and sorcery. Thus, rather than making an unnecessary attempt to defend the medium against the priestly ban on magic and divination that is typical in prophetic narratives, I will examine how the narrative combines her professional capacity as a medium and the compassionate side of her human nature which brings to mind a familiar name, *mudang*, a bridge between the living and spirits.

4.1. The Female Prophets in Ezekiel

4.1.1. Ezekiel 13.17-23: Magicians, Sorcerers, or Prophets?

Of all other female characters named prophets in the Bible, none of them fits the description given Ezekiel, although these women deserve that title since they prophesy with the power to influence the life and death of people (v.22).¹⁴³ When Ezekiel accuses the female prophets of prophesying ‘out of their own imagination’ (v.17), their religious faculty seems to be reduced to black magic, deceiving people with invalid oracles and misguiding in a way that is

¹⁴³ Interestingly, the text does not call them ‘prophet’ but uses the *hipo’el*, ‘who behave like prophets’, perhaps as a way of denying them authority; see: Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA.: Fortress, 1979), 296; Bowen, ‘The Daughters of Your People’, 423-428; M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (AB 22: Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1983), 239; R. Wilson, ‘Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Re-examination,’ *JBL* 98 (1979), 329-336.

unfavourable in the eyes of God.¹⁴⁴ In regard to this classic antagonism, how different the characteristic magical features of ‘prophecy’ are from a more ‘orthodox’ form of religion championed by establishment prophetic and priestly classes is beyond the scope of my current research. I have discussed in the previous chapters the fact that magic, miracles and divination are featured an integral part of biblical prophecy, and that whether the symbolic actions of the biblical prophets are considerably different from the ‘primitive’ magical action of other spiritualists is not easy to determine. According to Cryer:

We must understand the Deuteronomistic and priestly structure: not as a blanket prohibition of the practice of divination, but as a means of restricting the practice to those who were ‘entitled’ to employ it, that is, to the central cult figures who enjoyed the warrants of power, prestige and, not least, education.¹⁴⁵

In a similar vein, Kapelrud points out:

The sharp words of the prophet and his indication that the attitude of the people towards the sorcerers was typical, reveals the strong grasp that the shamanistic rites still had, in spirit of prohibitions and encroachments by kings and other authorities.¹⁴⁶

Moreover, especially in the book of Ezekiel, even if there is a tension between ‘false’ and ‘true’ prophecy, the distinction between magic, supernatural signs, and prophecy becomes

¹⁴⁴ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 296; W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* (OTL; Philadelphia, PA.; Westminster, 1970), 169; M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (AB 22; Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1983), 240.

¹⁴⁵ F. H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation* (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 327. See also, A. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Studies in the History and Culture of Ancient Near East 8; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 83; N. R. Bowen, ‘The Daughters of Your People: Female Prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23’, *JBL* 118 (1999), 420.

¹⁴⁶ A. S. Kapelrud, ‘Shamanistic Features in the Old Testament’, in C. M. Edsman (ed.), *Studies in Shamanism* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967), 90-96 (96).

less explicit since Ezekiel's ministry itself is a unique combination of symbolic visions, divine instructions and abnormal ritual behaviour.¹⁴⁷ It is also important to recognise Ezekiel's oracle against false prophets have two different targets. One is toward male prophets who 'see delusive visions and give lying divinations' (13.1-16), and the other is directed at female prophets, a special class of prophets whose crime is more than just deceptive prophecy (vv.17-23). Male prophets are accused of giving false hope to the people of Israel and obscuring the fact of impending doom on the land, as if 'daubing the flimsy wall with plaster which shall collapse in driving wind and rain' (13.10, 13, 15). The first half of the narrative follows a conventional formula of a woe oracle, deliverance of divine outrage against false promises of peace and security (c.f. Isa 28.7-10; Jer 14, 23; Hos 4.5; Mic 3.5-8). On the contrary, in the latter part concerning female prophets, although the prophet condemns them for their lying and deception, the focus is, rather, on their magical performances that can yield power to influence the fate of human beings, determining the life and death of the people of Israel (13.19). If their divine or paranormal knowledge is responsible for reversing

¹⁴⁷ Ezekiel repeatedly falls into the ecstatic spirit journey and employs various sign-acts in his deliverance of the divine message. For example, in his prophetic call, the Spirit entered into Ezekiel and as a result he had a visionary experience and spiritual journey (which could be understood as a journey in the flesh as well) transported from place to place by the Spirit (3:14-15, 22, 24; 8.1, 3; 11.1, 5, 24; 33.22; 37.1; 40.1-2). Also as mentioned in the previous chapter (chapter 3, 'The Shaman-sickness and Ezekiel's Abnormal Behaviour', 125), Ezekiel's ordeal (such as: being dumb for several days (3.24-27; 24.27; 33.22); lying on his left and right side for three hundred and ninety days, forty days respectively; change of dietary habits; and alienation from mundane affairs) is similar to the shamanic novice's spirit sickness and suffering, and also doubles as a sign-act that signifies the desolate condition of the future exiles. But his behaviour only results in people's bafflement: 'Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting like this?' (24.19) and 'Ah Lord God! They are saying of me, "Is he not a maker of allegories?"' (20.49).

the designated path of the righteous or the wicked (v.22), then their crime is not just their recourse to pagan witchcraft or uttering false prophecy, but their serious influence on people's minds and lives.

At this point, it is necessary to reemphasise that it is not only impossible, but it is also not an aim of my research, to reconstruct what kind of service these female prophets offered and how they acquired divine knowledge through mechanical aids. The text itself is notoriously difficult and it is impossible to say with any certainty exactly what practices these women were engaged in.¹⁴⁸ Even if there are certain similarities between the ritual behaviours of the prophets and those of Korean shamans, as anthropological examples of religious antiquities, what I am trying to achieve is not a comparative study of mantic actions by pagan spiritualists, but rather an insight into a perpetual appeal this kind of ritualism has for ordinary people and how it generates conflicts with establishment religions. If Ezekiel rhetorically builds his oracle using generic language derived from various selections of conjurations, the crucial interpreting point is not a survey of particular types of incantation

¹⁴⁸ Beside the difficulty of historical reconstruction, the opaque nature of Ezekiel's oracle poses numerous translation and interpretive issues, such as whether souls/persons (vv.18,20) means living persons or disembodied souls, whether cords and veils and the process of binding and loosening have any specific purpose or are used figuratively, and whether grain (v.19) is for divining or payment. For more exegetical analyses, see: Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 296-298; L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-20* (WBC; Dallas, TX.: Word Books, 1994), 190-193; Bowen, 'The Daughters of Your People', 423-428; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 239-241.

and their socio-historical verification, but something of the polemical situation in society that compelled Ezekiel to condemn these prophets exclusively.

4.1.2. Exegetical Issues in Ezekiel 13.17-23

There are a few exegetical issues in regard to the prophets' activities. Certain ritual objects and symbolic actions appear in the Old Testament only in these passages, possibly related to these prophets 'hunt for the souls'. For example, 1) The magic bands and veils are found in the Old Testament only in these passages (vv.18, 20), and they seem to be related to the prophets' 'hunt for the soul'. Are these objects parts of the prophets' costume or do they refer to a certain technique of their ritual? Also, handfuls of barley and crumbs of bread (v.19) could be either a part of their incantations or their divination fee. Are they related to the bands and veils, and the prophets? 2) What does 'hunt for souls' (vv.18, 20) mean, and why are those souls referred to as 'birds'? And who makes the soul 'go free like birds' or 'fly away' (v.20)? Is it the prophets, Ezekiel or God? 3) In the process of seeking answers to the above questions, how can one envision the relationship between the female prophets and Ezekiel or prophets and God? Is this oracle a mere condemnation or does it reflect a genuine rivalry between two types of prophecy over the soul (of the people)?

4.1.3. Interpretation of the Text

4.1.3.1. Bands, veils, and souls flying away like birds (Ezek 13.18)

It is not easy to determine the meaning or function of the band (כַּסָּת) and the veil, or head-covering (מַסְפָּהָה). These words, found only in v. 18 and v. 20, seem to be associated with magical power, ‘magical binds’,¹⁴⁹ and to the actual act of binding the bands on the wrists of victims as a means of ‘sympathetic magic’.¹⁵⁰ It is also possible that the prophets have the image or statue of the victim tied up, as in black magic or ‘modern’ voodoo,¹⁵¹ but it could be simply a part of their ritual costumes. Drawing inspiration from similar language and imagery found in the text from ancient Mesopotamia, such as binding/tying and unbinding/untying the knots (13.18, 20, 21), Bowen associates these women with the magical practices of pregnancy and childbirth.¹⁵² Since in Mesopotamia pregnancy and childbirth

¹⁴⁹ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel. Chapters 1-24* (NIC; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1997), 413; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 169.

¹⁵⁰ H. W. Saggs, “‘External Souls’ in the Old Testament”, *JSS* 19 (1974), 5.

¹⁵¹ Jeffers notes the parallels between the practices of Babylonian witches and these prophets: ‘Their main techniques involved making images of the victims and binding their knees and arms...it was the images of the victims which were bound and veiled...The grain or barley may have been used to block the mouth of an image already made’. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 94.

¹⁵² In Mesopotamian incantations, tying a band made from cloth on a woman’s hand or other body parts serves to stop profuse vaginal bleeding during pregnancy, and also the removal of knots implies that one or more of the gods are being asked to loosen the (sorcerer’s) knot from a woman’s womb so that she may give birth safely. Bowen, ‘The Daughters of Your People’, 423-424. Grain also plays a part in incantations associated with childbirth, to create a magic circle, a place safe from demons, and bread to ward off hungry demons who seek infants. J. A. Scurloc, ‘Baby-snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth: Medico-Magical Means of Dealing with Some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia’, *Incognita* 2 (1991), 140-182. Interestingly, there is a parallel in Korean shamanism, too. When childbirth is due, family members place a line of straw strewn with charcoals (*kumjŭl*) over the gate to prevent malevolent spirits and other impurities from entering the house.

were considered to be an 'illness' that required professional medical treatment, Bowen, taking into account biblical texts concerning childbirth and midwives (Gen 25.22, 38; 35.17; Exod 1.15; 1 Sam 4.20), argues that it is possible the women in Ezekiel could be 'medical professionals' specialising in particular issues of pregnancy and delivery.¹⁵³ Especially in the context of the early exile when it was critical to ensure fertility and safe delivery, so as to benefit the whole community, there would be a belief that the magico-medical practices of these women could increase the probability of a successful pregnancy and delivery. These medical professionals were also able to prognose and determine, through divination, if the patient would live or die, and Ezekiel accuses them of medical malpractice in giving false prognoses, as they 'put to death those persons who should not die, and preserve alive those persons who should not live' (v.19). However, as Bowen suggests, if ritual objects of the prophets are mostly used in incantations related to childbirth and pregnancy, then certainly Ezekiel would view these women as powerful, but not as necessarily threatening to his prophecy. It is hard to imagine that Ezekiel's ministry clashes with the prophets' counselling women on the issue of pregnancy or childbirth. Besides, the text states that the prophets' ritual concerns proprietorship over the general public ('make veils for the heads of people of

¹⁵³ Bowen, 'The Daughters of Your People', 426-427. See also: W. Brownlee, 'Exorcising the Souls from Ezekiel 13:17-23', *JBL* 69 (1950), 367-373; M. C. A. Korpel, 'Avian Spirits in Ugarit and in Ezekiel 13', in N. Wyatt *et al.* (eds.), *Ugarit, Religion, and Culture* (UBL 12; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 157.

every stature', 13.18) rather than being subjected to particular issues shared only by female members of the family.

The excessive number of appearances of the word 'souls'¹⁵⁴ and the depiction of souls that 'fly away (like birds)' (v.20f) are also noteworthy.¹⁵⁵ Since the notion of the soul as something separate from the body is unusual in a Hebraic sense, it is possible that נַפְשֵׁי here is simply a designation for 'persons'¹⁵⁶ or 'human lives',¹⁵⁷ yet it is not comprehensively applied in this passage, since there is an explicit reference to the people (עַם) as an object of the prophets' profanity and deception (v.19), and if the soul is a substitute for actual individuals, it does not explain the reference to the birds and the use of particular verbs (for example, 'to fly away' and 'to hunt', especially when the actions of the 'people' are separately explained as 'to (be) deceived', 'to listen', 'to turn from [the evil way]').

It is extremely rare in the Bible that the soul is associated with birds or flying action,¹⁵⁸ but the image of the soul as a bird is commonly found in various shamanic cultures. If one looks beyond an obvious answer of the soul (persons) as a victim of the prophets'

¹⁵⁴ Soul (נַפְשֵׁי) appears eight times in vv.18-20, three times in v.18, twice in v.19, and three times in v.20.

¹⁵⁵ For the textual and historical reconstruction of the concept of avian spirits, see: Brownlee, 'Exorcising the Souls', 367-373; Korpel, 'Avian Spirits in Ugarit', 99-101.

¹⁵⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 415; Brownlee, 'Exorcising the Souls', 370; Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 240.

¹⁵⁷ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 297.

¹⁵⁸ The word, פָּרַח, appears nine verses in the Old Testament, as sprout of tree (Job 14.9), or rod (Num 17.20), metaphor of Israel (Isa 27.6), bud of vine (Gen 40.10), bloom (Isa 35.2), to break out (Lev 13.20), to break open (Exod 9.9), to bring to bud, bloom (Isa 17.11; Ezek 17.24), but none of them match the depiction given in Eze 13.20.

witchcraft, is it also possible to suspect that two different types of spirits or souls are involved in the prophets' activities, not only as victims but also as avian spirits of the prophets, which they 'brought back to life' (v.20)?¹⁵⁹ For example, in the shamanic séance, the shaman could call up the souls of the dead, and the spirits comes in the form of birds or animals. Eliade notes that in the flight of the soul, shamans transformed into birds in order to bring the lost soul back.¹⁶⁰ Also in Siberian, East Asian and aboriginal American Indian culture, it is traditionally believed that birds symbolise a 'man's [*sic*] soul or spirit as it is released from the body in ecstasy or in death; a symbol of absolute freedom and transcendence of the soul from the body, of the spiritual from the earthly'.¹⁶¹ Thus, shamans imitate birds by wearing feathers, either as headgear or outer garments, and performing dance rituals typifying bird characteristics to stimulate an ecstatic journey.¹⁶² And also, since the concept of birds as the immortal souls of the dead is not unknown to the ancient Near East,¹⁶³ it is not altogether implausible to imagine that the prophets are 'waiting for' (צִיָּד, v.18) avian spirits to be

¹⁵⁹ In this passage, הִיָּה is chosen for the meaning 'to bring (back) to life' (Ps 30.4) rather than 'to preserve'.

¹⁶⁰ Eliade, *Shamanism*, 89.

¹⁶¹ Eliade, 'Birds', in Eliade *et al.* (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (vol 2; New York; London: Macmillan, 1987), 224. In the Korean ancestral rite, toward the end of the ceremony, family members invite dead ancestors to the elaborate dinner table and leave the room. If there is a footprint of the bird left on the surface of a bowl of rice, it is considered a sign that ancestral spirits savoured their service.

¹⁶² Lee, *A Man of High Degree*, 225-230 (226).

¹⁶³ Dijk-Hemmes suggests that since people imagined the souls of the dead as 'fluttering (birds)', perhaps the speech of the spirits of the dead, or of spirit raisers, in two passages in Isaiah (8.19 and 29.4) is characterized as 'chirping' and 'cooing', or 'murmuring'. A. Brenner and F. van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (Biblical Interpretation Series 1: Leiden: New York: Köln; E. J. Brill, 1996), 67.

conjured up from the netherworld so that they can pass on the knowledge of the spirit world to mortals. Or, taking into consideration that these souls could be the victims of the prophets' witchcraft, one may draw inferences that the ceremony is designed to 'hunt down souls and keep souls alive', using secret cords and veils as a net (v.18)¹⁶⁴ to capture the souls of the dead, hoping to increase their influence over spiritual beings.¹⁶⁵ We do not know whether the prophets are using spirit-helpers (avian spirits) as a part of divination, as shamans do, or if they are exercising black magic to hunt down the spirits of dead people so as to possess them. As expected, Ezekiel condemns the prophets as the latter case ('Will you hunt down souls belonging to my people, and keep other souls alive *for your profit?*', v.18), but this does not mean that readers necessarily follow Ezekiel's verdict on the prophets' service, since there are more clues left in the text for us to make our own assessment.

4.1.3.2 Handfuls of Barley, Morsels of Bread, and the Consequences of Hunting Souls

(Ezek 13.19)

¹⁶⁴ Micah 7.2: 'The godly person has perished from the earth, and there is none upright among them. They all lie in wait for blood, and each of them hunts the other with a net'.

¹⁶⁵ In Korean shamanism, although practitioners maintain a loyal relationship with designated spirit-helpers - which are regarded as semi-gods - till the end of their career, it is not uncommon to find reports of shamans using infernal magic to take control of the spirits of the dead to the practitioner's advantage. The difference between spirit-helpers and other ordinary spirits of the dead is in their relationships with the shaman. In case of the former, it is a reciprocal relationship based on (the shaman's) liturgical devotion and (the spirit's) guidance, but for the latter type of spirits, especially if they have no families or relatives to take care of ancestral rites, could fall into the game of shamanic hunting and become dispensable properties of the shaman, although such is not authorised in Korean shamanic guilds.

What, then, are the functions of handfuls of barley and pieces of bread? Are they used for divination, as in offerings that accompany the prayers and invocations of the prophets,¹⁶⁶ or are they payment for their services?¹⁶⁷ If the latter, this does not provide sufficient grounds for Ezekiel's vilification of the women's practice, because the Yahwist prophet (seers) is also reported to receive similar payment for their inquiry of God (1 Sam 9.7-9). And if a morsel of food is used as a sacrificial offering, it gives substance to the theory that these women are accustomed to exercising hieratic responsibilities, despite Ezekiel's attempt to reduce the prophets' role to that of deceiving soothsayers (v.23).

In the Korean shamanic ritual, food plays an important role: it is primarily offered to the shamanic deities, and, once the ceremony is over, the food is distributed to other wandering ghosts and the audience.¹⁶⁸ It is generally believed that the sounds of dynamic music, the smell of food offerings, and especially the invocation of the shaman are the reasons the spirits and ghosts are drawn into the shaman's ceremony and make themselves known. And, even if the shaman only needs a specific deity or the spirit that is responsible for any current misfortune, other minor spirits should not be overlooked, because such negligence would generate other personal afflictions. In Korean shamanism, all spiritual

¹⁶⁶ Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 244.

¹⁶⁷ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 299.

¹⁶⁸ If there is a sick or old person in the house, people who participated in the ritual are allowed to take leftover offerings home, based on the belief that the sacrificial meal is blessed with the shaman's healing power.

beings are believed to retain human emotions and desires even after death; thus shamans offer them a morsel of food to satisfy their needs, bidding them to leave this world and return to their respective places. In regard to these ‘hungry’ spirits and their treatment, Hulbert explains:

The first form of *Mudang* [shaman] service, or *kut* [shamanic ceremony], and the one most in demand, is the healing of the sick. If a man [*sic*] is taken suddenly ill or if his symptoms seem in any way strange the inference is that it is caused by an evil spirit...But why should spirits torment people in this way? Well, there are the ‘hungry’ spirits. They come around the door when you are eating, and if you do not throw them a morsel of food they have a grievance against you, and so have power to lay you on a bed of sickness...If the trouble is caused by the spirit of a dead relative, great care must be taken; but if by a common spirit, then a little ordinary food will generally suffice to cause its departure.¹⁶⁹

It is interesting to note that even though it is possible that these ‘hungry spirits’ may wander around this world all the time, their presence or influence is acknowledged only through the work of the shaman. The point is the shaman’s mediating skill, which can conjure up the soul of the dead by using an ordinary item (a morsel of food), and then transform such a commodity into something extraordinary using his or her spiritual power. It is hard to determine whether the female prophets raise up the avian spirits or hunt down souls of human victims *for* (as payment for their black magic) or *with* (as a ‘bait’ or offering for the spirits of the dead) a morsel of food; it could have binary purposes for both humans and spirits, as in the case of bands and veils (as a symbolic ‘net’ for spirits or the part of mediums’ costume).

¹⁶⁹ H. B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (first published in 1906; Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), 403-431.

As repeatedly emphasised, the focus of my interpretation of magic and divination in the Bible is not a historical verification of an ancient mantic ritual or its theoretical reconstruction, but, rather, unveiling the polemic behind the prophetic judgement on such practices. Therefore, I will not move into a detailed discussion as to whether or not a morsel of food is used in conjunction with bands and veils or simply referred to as payment of the ceremony. The point is that, the more Ezekiel discloses the specifics of the prophets' practice, the more it becomes clear that their service concerns the grave matters of ordinary people, such as life, illnesses and death, to the extent that they can determine the fate of people (v.19).

In the old days, when every illness or misfortune could be explained in the category of absence and intrusion of the spirit,¹⁷⁰ shamans were regarded as reliable sources for general health care, based on their knowledge of nature and formulae for antidotes passed down through generations of shamans. Since proper sessions of *kut* (shamanic ceremony) were still a costly event for an ordinary household, Korean housewives customarily observed a mixture of a folk medicine and shamanic practices in their daily lives to ensure the wellbeing of family members. Therefore, in addition to annual ancestral rites or seasonal village *kut*, a shaman was summoned in emergency cases, such as 'a sudden, high, or

¹⁷⁰ Percival Lowell reported, 'the evil spirits are a sort of impersonation of ill-luck. They are forever wandering about, and seeking a baneful intimacy with frail mortality...One of their most common noxious pursuits is as the bearer of disease. In fact, one is tempted to style the worship of bacteria-bacteria of the mind, body, and estate'. P. Lowell, *The Land of the Morning Calm* (Boston: Tickman and Co, 1886), cited in L. Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives*, 86.

lingering fever, a fit, a cold and congested chest, or body malaise has lingered through long weeks or months of treatment'.¹⁷¹ However, shamans were not always able to cure the illness; if the family opted for a shamanic healing ritual as the last resort, it could be that the person became sicker or even died while the shaman was proceeding with the *kut* sessions. In such cases, shamans would 'attribute the patient's demise to an interlacing of supernatural causation, medical and ritual neglect, and the vicissitudes of fate and old age ... weaving several strands together into a more-or-less cohesive fabric'.¹⁷² This is not to say that Korean shamans are used to make excuses for a failure in their magic; but shamans have long constructed a unique worldview combining the words of the sacred and the secular, and their knowledge of the cycle of life and death helped Korean people to cope with the strain of daily existence. Even upon the death, the bereaved family would find comfort in knowing that the shaman would now guide the newly dead on the journey to the heavenly kingdom so that the living and the dead could live peacefully in their respective places.

In this regard, Korean shamans have a distinctive place in the Korean religious domain; they might have been persecuted by establishment or missionary religions, but Korean shamans have worked closely with the passages of community life, being entrusted

¹⁷¹ Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives*, 89.

¹⁷² Kendall witnessed the client of the shaman die despite the exorcism, and the *mudang* provided ample reasons, like 'The dead person's horoscope was bad, the house had a full battery of restless ancestors and ghosts, the wood imps and earth imps entered the house when the family brought in wooden furniture on an inauspicious day...and so on.' Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives*, 91-92.

with authority and reliability as spirit masters, philosophers and priests by ordinary Korean people. Therefore early Christian missionaries, whose goal was to abolish such superstitions held by Korean people, reported:

The name of *mudang* is most appropriately translated as ‘deceiving crowd’, for *mu* (巫) means ‘to deceive’ and *dang* (黨) means ‘company’. Sometimes this individual is called a *mu-nyu* (巫女), a ‘deceiving woman’...She pretends to be a sort of spiritual medium, and by her friendship with the shades to be able to influence them as she may wish.¹⁷³

Similar to shamanistic ceremonies in Korea, represented by ritual paraphernalia such as bands, veils, birds and feathers, and other symbolic actions such as binding and hunting, the female prophets in Ezekiel 13 appear to exercise considerable leverage on people’s lives with their specialised ritualism being closely related to the critical issues of ordinary life, such as diagnosing illness, divination, soul searching, pregnancy and childbirth. The power of these prophets poses a direct threat to the ministry of Ezekiel, who has also prepared his own version of divine providence and sacred knowledge of the cycle of life and death. In this regard, Ezekiel’s accusation, ‘killing the souls that should not die and keeping alive the souls that should be killed’, could be understood polemically. To Ezekiel, the women violate not only the rule of nature (as in bringing back the soul alive) but also the authority of God, for they interpret and determine the fate of a human being based on their own assessment of the situation: ‘[the female prophets’ oracles] cause damage for they are uttered as, and believed

¹⁷³ Authors unknown, ‘The Korean Mudang and P’ansu,’ *Korean Review* (1903), 145-149.

to be, authoritative and divinely inspired messages ... they attempt to reveal what he [Ezekiel] wishes to hide or to disclose at an appropriate later date'.¹⁷⁴

There are two different points of view about Ezekiel's accusation. The conventional interpretation is that the women are giving people false divination, drawn from delusive visions (v.23), thus 'genuine [Ezekiel's] prophecy finds itself caricatured and ousted by demonic soothsaying, which seems to work within a very limited sphere, and yet poisons the whole atmosphere'.¹⁷⁵ However, as in the case of the above Christian missionary, who interpreted the word *mu* (shaman, shamanic) as 'deceiving' mainly due to a specific political perspective, it should be taken into consideration that Ezekiel's description of the prophets is not necessarily an accurate one, but is, instead, polemical. It is possible that the prophets' service was beneficial to people in need, and, Ezekiel obliquely confirms their influence by saying: 'you have profaned me among my people, by your lies to my people, who listen to lies' (v.19).

4.1.3.3. You Hunt, I Will Snatch Them (Ezek 13.20-22)

Ezekiel proclaims a divine act of retribution: 'Your bands with which you hunt the souls, I

¹⁷⁴ Brenner, 'The Israelite Woman', 74.

¹⁷⁵ Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 172.

will tear them from your arms. And I will let go/send away (וקרעתה) the soul which you hunt'

(v.20). The typical reading is as follows:

A	Divine action	I (Yahweh) will tear them (the bands) from your arms
B	Divine aim	I will set free the persons
C	Purpose/result	That they may fly away
A'	Divine action	I will tear off your amulets
B'	Divine aim	I will rescue my people from your hands
C'	Purpose/result	That they may cease to be prey in your hands

In this reading, only the deity comes into view as the cause and effect of events, and such an interpretation deliberately washes out the binding power of the female prophets.¹⁷⁶ Unlike the English translation, in the Hebrew version there is an equal measure of the prophets' action that triggers God to act more forcefully towards the people of Israel.

The prophets' action		God's counteraction
You hunt the souls with your magic bands (20a) and veils (20d)	I will tear them from your arms (20b)
You hunt the souls like birds (20c)	I will set the souls free (20c)
You seize my people in your hand and as prey (21c)	I will deliver my people out of your hand (21b)

God finally acts by tearing the prophets' magical bands and veils and setting the souls free, but this does not mean that the female prophets are completely banished from the scene. The impression readers have is of a competitive action over the ownership of the souls, not the

¹⁷⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 417: Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 204; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 298.

divine complete consummation of the prophets' ritual. In this fierce act of prey and quarry (hunt צודות, tear קרעתי, snatch נצלתי, fly away לפרחות, send/let go שלחתי, hunting-net מצודה), the competition between the prophecy of the women and Ezekiel comes clearly into view, It is not a matter of divine justice for the individual who turns away from evil ways (c.f. 18.5-29; 33.7-20), nor is it the case of condemning a mere ineffective deception. This warning against female prophets paradoxically demonstrates the power they had, namely bringing back, hunting down, and keeping alive the souls of the people regardless of God's will as Ezekiel interprets it. This would be a serious challenge to the prophecy of Ezekiel, whose responsibility is the defence of his God, who proclaims, 'Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine' (18.4).

4.1.3. Conclusion

In biblical interpretation, the female prophets in Ezekiel 13.17-23 have been regarded as magical practitioners, witches, or sorcerers. With expressions such as 'lying divination' and 'vanity' (vv. 17, 23), it is easy for the reader of Ezekiel to label their practices as falsehoods or illegitimate prophecy. However, this particular oracle on female prophets is striking in the uniqueness of its content and expressions. Certain ritual objects (bands, veils, and hunting

nets) and symbols (souls as birds or preys) are only found in these passages, and I have raised the possibility of how these prophets would utilise such items to help people as a bridge between the spirits and humans. Ezekiel's strong and detailed accusation suggests that these prophets possess the power to control the souls of people, and that their influence is becoming too great for Ezekiel to ignore. By focusing on the polemic against rival spiritualists, found both in Ezekiel and Korean shamanism, I have tried to shift the interpretative keynote from a conventional condemnation against magic and sorcery to the possibility of finding a new, potent religious model of women in the Bible. Even though the prophecy of the women is severely criticised by Ezekiel himself, their very own existence has an effect on Ezekiel's identity as a prophet, not just as a divine visionary, but as a figure who acts more conscientiously, as a shepherd (3.17) and a watchman (33.7) for the people of Israel. Perhaps it is the case that Ezekiel has one view of God and the women another, and Ezekiel is 'right' only to the extent that he has the final word in this text. But it is clear that he cannot suppress the 'reality' of their alternative claim.

In the discussion above, I read the symbolic actions of the female prophets in Ezekiel 13 in comparison with Korean spirit conjuration, using a parallel with Korean shamanic paraphernalia (bands, veils, nets and food) and their usage to conjure the spirits of the dead. There is another biblical story that deals with bringing back the soul of the dead, 1

Samuel 28. However, unlike the oracle of Ezekiel, in 1 Samuel 28 there is no mention of any magical techniques of the medium or a prophetic accusation against such practices. The text recognises the conflict between Yahwistic religion and ‘popular’ magic and divination, by means of Saul’s short-lived campaign against pagan spiritualists (1 Sam 28.3), but also it acknowledges the beneficial act of the medium and her confidence in dealing with both the spirits and humans. If this interpretation of the female prophets in Ezekiel 13 focuses on their ritual behaviours, goals, and the polemic against their influence, in the following section I will focus on personal interaction between the characters and how the medium embodies the characteristics of Korean shamans, not necessarily because she is a necromancer, but because of her role as a competent spiritualist as well as a generous host.

4.2. The Female Medium at Endor (1 Sam 28)

4.2.1. Introduction: The Story of Saul

The story of Saul has a distinctive position in the Bible. In the narrative of the rise and fall of the king, it gives the reader a glimpse of the dark side of God and the human struggle against fate as Saul reaches an inevitable and catastrophic end. The story of Israel’s first kingship is inextricably bound up in the tension between flaw and fate, and the development of human-divine relationships. God’s attitude toward the king is often ambiguous if not savage, and the

conflict in the interpretation of God's command results in the collapse of Saul's kingship.¹⁷⁷

For example, God repents of making Saul king (15.10), and Samuel relates God's words to Saul at length, but in almost the reverse of what he is told ('God has rejected you ... God will not lie or repent; he is not a person, that he should not repent', 15.26, 29, as opposed to God's own assertion, 'I repent that I have made Saul king', 15.10, 35). It is later that God tells Samuel that Saul is rejected from being king of Israel (16.1), but, even after the final divine rejection - by claiming David as a ruler of the nation 'after God's own heart' (16.7) - the deity permits Saul to continue to be king, and this decision inevitably leads to the rupture of Saul's claim as a king of Israel.¹⁷⁸ The tragedy of Saul, who has lost not only God's favour but also

¹⁷⁷ Samuel tells Saul what to do, and Saul acts ('Saul waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel,' 13.8), but Samuel interprets the king's actions as contrary to the divine commandment and delivers God's rejection of Saul's kingship (13.13-15). While Saul's errors have a cumulative effect (cf. 15:1-31), the decisive factor in determining Saul's fate is that he is not informed that divine instructions are not open to interpretation. Saul may have acted in good faith (15.13, 20-21), but his intentions are irrelevant to God and Samuel: 'The privilege of interpretation belongs to God, and God, allowing no explanation on Saul's part, chooses to interpret as he does.' Gunn, *Fate*, 56; 'The interpretation of the command is evidently Yhwh's prerogative, and in choosing to find Saul's interpretation unacceptable, Yhwh condemns him'. Nicholson, *Three Faces of Saul: An Intertextual Approach to Biblical Tragedy* (JSOTSup 339; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 43. This power-laden dynamic is built on the 'tension between human guilt and accountability on the one hand, and divine order and control on the other', and the dilemma between 'fate' and 'flaw' or 'divine hostility' and 'human guilt' is what drives Israel's first kingship into tragic catastrophe. W. Lee Humphreys, 'From Tragic Hero to Villain: A Study of the Figure of Saul and the Development of 1 Samuel,' *JSOT* 22 (1982), 95-117 (100). See also: W. Lee Humphrey, 'The Rise and Fall of King Saul: A Study of an Ancient Narrative Stratum in 1 Samuel,' *JSOT* 18 (1980) 74-90; J. C. Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative: Arrows of the Almighty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. chapter 2; D. M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul: A Interpretation of a Biblical Story* (JSOTSup 14; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980); S. Nicholson, *Three Faces of Saul*, esp. chapters 2 and 4; B. Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen?: A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel* (JSOTSup 365; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), esp. chapters 5 and 8.

¹⁷⁸ According to Eslinger, God gave Saul a new heart 'to ensure that Saul has the divinely approved psychological profile,' which means that God has been complicit in Saul's fate from the beginning of his kingship. L. Eslinger, 'A Change of Heart: 1 Samuel 16,' in L. Eslinger and F. Taylor (eds.), *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie* (JSOTSup 67; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 345. Also, why God chooses David over Saul – despite the fact that the

his dignity, is seen in his two identical yet conflicting experiences of spirit possession. The first prophecy of Saul under the spirit possession (1 Sam. 10.9-13) brings people's to an awareness of Saul's altered status, and the second spirit possession leads to a public acceptance of Saul as the new leader ('And the spirit of God came mightily upon when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled ... then the dread of God fell upon the people, and they came out as one person', 11.5-7). On the contrary, after God's rejection of Saul, a similar prophetic seizure renders Saul into a frenzy, totally vulnerable and out of control of his mind and body ('The spirit of God came upon him, and as Saul went he prophesied ... he too stripped off his clothes, prophesied before Samuel, and lay naked all that day and all that night', 19.23-24). Exactly the same words used by the audience ('Is Saul also among the prophets?', 19.24; cf. 10.12) paradoxically demonstrates how far Saul has been removed from his earlier glory.¹⁷⁹

kings are chosen by similar attributes, such as heart and good looks - while not completely removing Saul from the throne confronts the ambivalence of God's choice with its disunity.

¹⁷⁹ Another parallel is the different types of violence Saul shows as a result of spirit possession. If the previous episode involving the flight of Jabesh-gilead demonstrates Saul's holy anger, approved by the people of Israel, the prophet and God, in the wake of David's military success (1 Sam 13-15, 17; cf. 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands,' 18.7), Saul becomes an irrational and paranoid character, being perpetually tormented by an evil spirit sent from God. In combination of his own jealousy and an invasion of evil spirits, Saul twice casts a spear at David to kill him (18.10-11; 19.9-10). The text confirms that Saul was under the influence of the spirit from God in both incidents (18.10; 19.9), and this suggests that it is the manipulation of the evil spirit (and perhaps David's lyre-playing as an additional torment) that causes the schizophrenic state of mind of Saul, because Saul appears to be able to deal rationally with the presence of David in his kingdom in his normal state (18.17-29; 19.6-7).

In addition to this personal drama, the narrative of Saul brings many surprising aspects to the dynamic of ancient prophecy: God is not stereotyped as either a forgiving or vengeful deity, but is often ambivalent and sometimes evil; ecstatic shaman-like behaviour leads to prophesying under spirit possession (1 Sam 10.10-11; 19.23-24); Saul is driven into madness by an evil spirit from God, which can be expelled or induced by lyre-playing (16.14-23; 18.10; 19.9); and the text introduces a real shaman who summons up the spirit of a dead prophet from the underworld. The pinnacle of Saul's conflict in his role as king, but as a rejected one, is his visit to a medium at Endor.¹⁸⁰ After the death of Samuel, Saul has driven the mediums and magicians out of the land (28.3), but the validity of this action is immediately questioned by his inquiry of an 'illegal' channel to the spirit world. The text confirms that every channel between the deity and the king is closed ('God did not answer Saul, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets', 28.6), and, in desperation ('when Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly', 28.5), Saul decides to resort to magic and sorcery, even if it means the denial of his policy and inner values. Later the Chronicler views this event in 1 Samuel 28 as positive proof that Saul deserved the judgement that fell on him at Gilboa ('So Saul died for his unfaithfulness... he consulted a medium, seeking guidance and did not seek guidance from God,' 1 Ch. 10.13),

¹⁸⁰ Exum observes: 'Saul encounters various setbacks, from anxiety over his loss of prestige in the eyes of the people (18.7) to his inability to apprehend David, and his fortune, not to mention his sanity, deteriorates until the narrative reaches its lowest point with the vision of Samuel conjured up by the medium at En-dor.' Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narratives*, 22.

and, in the same vein, one may concede that the author makes reference to the ban on magical and divinatory practices in Deuteronomy 18.10-11 (necromancy in particular, v.11). Traditional interpretations focusing on Saul's disobedience and the collapse of his kingship conclude that his secret journey to the medium only reveals the king's desperation and a preview of his own impending fate.¹⁸¹ In this way, they reluctantly acknowledge that Samuel was called up by the medium, but once he appears it is Samuel himself who seizes control of events. The medium's spiritual ability is limited to offering a chance to this old prophet to give his final blow to Saul.

However, the text describes the medium, though she is guilty of a capital crime (Lev 20.27), and her assistance in Saul's inquiry of the spirit of the dead in a neutral tone. The medium is not without doubts about the purpose of Saul's visit in the night, but risks her life to help a distressed king, consequently becoming a host who restores the king's strength, and also, to an extent, his spirit.¹⁸² Her 'generosity'¹⁸³ and her 'insight of an angel'¹⁸⁴ have a calming effect on Saul and momentarily relieve the tension as the story approaches Saul's last

¹⁸¹ R. P. Gordon, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 192; R. W. Klein, *I Samuel* (WBC 10; Waco, TX.: Words Books, 1983), 271; W.A.M. Beuken, '1 Samuel 28: the Prophet as "Hammer of Witches"', *JSOT* 3 (1978), 3-17.

¹⁸² J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (vol 2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986), 620.

¹⁸³ J. Ades, 'Samuel, Whar 'Ast Tha Been Sin' I Saw Thee?' in V. Tollers and J. Maier (eds.), *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text* (Lewisburg, PA.: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 263.

¹⁸⁴ U. Simon, 'A Balanced Story: The Stern Prophet and the Kind Witch', *Prooftexts* 8 (1988), 165.

attempt to wrestle against his destiny.¹⁸⁵ The medium effectively balances out Samuel's severity and the silence and isolation that terrify Saul, by being a 'paragon of womanly solicitude...[who] relieves the torpor into which Saul has sunk, and fortifies his determination to face courageously certain death in battle'.¹⁸⁶

4.2.2. The Bridge between the Living and the Dead

The portrait of a medium at Endor as a compassionate host and a necromancer brings many questions: Is she a pagan 'witch' who is powerlessly 'hammered' by the prophet?¹⁸⁷ Or, as by showing 'a trait of humanity', is she approved only by caring for the mundane incidentals when other spiritual authority rebukes and defiles Saul?¹⁸⁸ Interpretations that focus on the tragic battle in the game of God – the axis of the divine (God, the prophet) and the human (Saul) – typically have little to say about the medium and her conjuration, since her contribution is mainly acknowledged in regard to her domestic care for the king. To some

¹⁸⁵ For the detailed interpretations of Saul 'the pragmatist', resisting against the fate which has been manipulated by forces outside his control, see: Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 109; Humphreys, 'The Rise and Fall', 79-80. Exum discerns that, though Saul's downfall is of his own making, the main root of Saul's distress is the terror of divine enmity, manifested by God's persecuting presence in the form of an evil spirit. Therefore, 'Saul is caught between his own turbulent personality and the antagonism of God toward human kingship. He displays heroic greatness in his refusal to acquiesce in the fate prophesied by Samuel, taking extraordinary steps to hold on to his kingdom'. Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative*, 40-41 (41).

¹⁸⁶ P. T. Reis, 'Eating the Blood: Saul and the Witch of Endor', *JSOT* 73 (1997), 4.

¹⁸⁷ W.A.M. Beuken, "1 Samuel 28: the Prophet as "Hammer of Witches"" *JSOT* 3 (1978), 13.

¹⁸⁸ Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 109; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry*, 619.

extent, it is true that it is her warm hospitality rather than her magic that brings out a more positive response from the king ('and he [Saul] hearkened to their words, so he arose, sat on the bed, ate, and went away,' 28.23, 25). However, on the other hand, from the beginning, Samuel had declared that this séance would have no effect on Saul's predestined future ('Why then do you ask me, since God has turned from you and become your enemy?', v.16), and the request Saul made for the medium was to bring up the dead prophet ('Bring up for me whomever I shall name to you', 'Bring up Samuel for me', vv. 8,11), rather than to inquire of the outcome of the battle tomorrow. Thus, the silence on the part of the medium during the séance does not necessarily mean that the apparition of the dead prophet dwarfs the presence of the medium,¹⁸⁹ but it could simply be due to the fact that she is not – nor is asked to be – a part of the case that is already closed between God, the prophet, and the king. The fact that the medium is a powerful spiritualist is confirmed in the text by her recognition of the king in disguise (28.12) and her success in conjuring up the spirit of the dead prophet from the netherworld (v.13). The episode in Endor is no exception to the binary dispositions that penetrate the saga of Saul, such as divine selection versus divine rejection and fate versus

¹⁸⁹ R. P. Gordon, *I and II Samuel: A Commentary* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 195. In a similar vein, Beuken insists that the prophet announces himself even before the medium begins spirit conjuration: 'He [Samuel] does not let himself be manipulated by a medium...Samuel beats the woman to it. He does not allow himself to be conjured up: he appears. The conjuration does not succeed.' Beuken, '1 Samuel 28', 8-9. However, if the prophet really 'beats' the medium to it, there would be no reason for Samuel to wait patiently until the medium passes the details of 'a divine being coming up from the earth' (v.13) over to the king so that Saul would recognise Samuel from her description. For a brief moment, the medium, Saul and Samuel all present at the scene (vv.12-14), and therefore there are no grounds for asking whether her conjuration failed or the prophet chased the medium away.

flaw; her warm personality contrasts dramatically with the fact that she is a necromancer, a profession severely condemned elsewhere in the Bible. Fokkeman rightly addresses this dilemma: 'The mainstream of Western culture is incidentally very unqualified to judge spirits and conjuring up of the dead, because it takes a purely negative view of states such as death and pain, as being in conflict with life and something that must be combated, diverted, put off and so on...This attitude of avoidance is primitive'.¹⁹⁰ The text grazes on this issue by keeping the medium silent during the séance, in comparison to lengthy details about her food preparation and her persuasion (vv.21-25), but it is worthy of investigation how one can read the 'human' and 'supernatural' sides of the medium harmoniously without giving precedence to one side or the other.

However she is referred to in English - medium, necromancer, or diviner - in Korean nothing seems to be more suitable than calling her a *mudang*. Korean shamans, *mudang*, are distinguished from other institutional religious practitioners for their organic relationship with the spirits: they can summon the guardian spirits at will, bring back lost souls, and fight with and win over evil spirits which cause illnesses or misfortune,¹⁹¹ and thus procure the cure.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Fokkeman, *Narrative Art and Poetry*, 617 (esp., n.16).

¹⁹¹ The acknowledged dead, known ancestors who were married, had children, and died at a ripe old age, are far more fortunate than ghosts in that they are entitled to receive libations and invited to annual family ritual for the blessings. In contrast, anonymous ghosts are believed to be as a source of affliction to the living since they died unsatisfied as in a case of 'ghosts of the drowned, ghosts who were shot, ghost who died unmarried, often violently or suddenly when far away from home and many more...wander angry and frustrated, venting their anguish on the living'. This type of spirits

Since there are no foundations, neither written texts nor religious practices, and the ritual totally depends on her skill and performance, she is the single most important figure in Korean shamanism.¹⁹³ Yet her (since most Korean shamans are women) responsibility and devotion are not given only to the deities. Korean shamans are respected for their supernatural intuition, but their service is essentially for the people: to relieve their stress, resolve grudges, and give them hope through mediating between humans and spirits. In 1 Samuel 28, the story begins with the medium conjuring up the dead and ends with her giving a warm care to the traumatized king. The juxtaposition of spiritual, emotional and physical needs and their fulfilment brings to mind a familiar name, *mudang*, and, like *mudang*, the medium skilfully crosses between the realms of the sacred and the secular.

4.2.2.1. Interpretation of the Text (1 Sam 28.8-25)

The story is set entirely in the medium's house, and consists of three parts that are sharply distinguished by a change of protagonists. The first scene (28.8-14) introduces the medium and Saul, the second (vv.15-20) involves Saul and Samuel, and the last (vv.21-25) brings back the medium and Saul. It is interesting to see how, in contact with Samuel, Saul is

would wander around the world of living in envy and grief, causing troubles unless their demands are acknowledged and resolved by shamans. Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives*, 99.

¹⁹² Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 11.

¹⁹³ Suh, *Korean Minjung in Christ*, 90-91.

notably shrunk in posture - is in great distress (v.15), falls at once full length on the ground (v.20a), has no strength (v.20b), and is terrified (v.21) - whereas with the medium, he rises, sits (v.23), eats, and walks (v.25). Samuel has died and Saul appears to have completely lost all connections to the deity (v.6). Saul could not get any answers either in dreams or through conventional rituals (the priestly divination with Urim and Thummim). Earlier Saul had rid the land of idol worship, mediums and magicians (v.3), and if this was his redemptive action to retrieve divine favour, it may have been too late, for only a grim silence surrounds him on all sides. Perhaps God has already answered Saul by keeping him in the dark, and now Saul's heart is 'trembling greatly' (v.4), in contrast to his better days when he was a valiant young lad with a heart changed by God (1 Sam 11. 5-7).

Saul unwittingly corroborates the change in his status; before he goes to the house of the medium, the king must disguise himself, where his furtive action is 'unintentionally giving in to the divine plan...by taking off his royal attire and other insignia of dignity'.¹⁹⁴ However, although Saul's donning different clothes is linked with denying his own policy and identity, if the king had been completely resigned to the end of his kingship, he would

¹⁹⁴ In reference to 1 Sam 18.4, where Jonathan removes his robe and gives it to David, thereby renouncing his right to the throne in favour of David, Fokkelman argues that 'by "stripping" his robe, Saul symbolically marks the end of his kingship, arriving at the point of abdication'. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 600.

have not cared to seek out an alternative channel to the divine (28.7).¹⁹⁵ From past experience (14.36-46), Saul has learned, though there is still a doubt as to whether Saul has really ‘learned’ a lesson from his error, that when heaven is silent, it is an expression of divine displeasure. Upon the visit to the medium, it is possible that Saul considers the silence of God as a broken connection which can be mended by magic, rather than a sign of total rejection. Thus the king endeavours to infiltrate the realm of darkness and uncertainty.

Saul asks her to conjure up the spirit, but is immediately caught up in contradictions:

‘The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land?”’ (v.9). Consulting the medium is a capital crime as expressed in the medium’s harsh words (‘cutting off’, ‘snare’ and ‘death’, v.9), and Saul has sealed this by persecuting her fellow spirit specialists, yet he is so desperate that he violates his own policy against magic. It is an irony that Saul swears by the name of the God of Israel as a guarantee for the safety of the medium when God’s silence has already determined that any connection between the king and God is broken, making his oath unreliable. Also, Saul conveniently ignores the fact that he is using God’s name to attain something that is clearly detested and banned by the deity. Whether or not the medium believes in Saul’s words or sees through his desperation, she complies with the request of the king.

¹⁹⁵ When Saul finally accepts his fate, he loses all the strength and will to live (28.20), no more believing in an illusion that his fate can be changed.

The medium proves herself to be a competent medium as she successfully conjures up the dead prophet. As the séance begins the medium realises who her client is and cries, ‘Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!’ (v.12). Jobling argues that the medium had already seen through the disguise of the king and cunningly ‘deceives’ him to secure her life,¹⁹⁶ but the fact that her realisation of the true identity of her guest coincides with the contact with the spirits suggests that her spiritual transition opened her eyes to unveil something hidden.¹⁹⁷ From the perspective of Korean shamanism, the latter - that the séance has opened the medium’s eyes – makes more sense, because when the shaman is successfully connected to the spirit world the practitioner can unveil the truth that has been kept in dark. This process is called ‘opening the gate of words’ (*malmu’ni yeoli’da*), and the dialogue during or after the séance is different from an ordinary conversation, for shaman speaks with an authority and accuracy given by the spirit. For a general consultation, a shaman does not always have to be possessed by the spirits to give divination, as reading the future or diagnosing the cause of afflictions suffered by the client can be deduced by an elaborate

¹⁹⁶ According to Jobling: ‘Her first words are therefore of lightly mocking reproach: “Surely you know what Saul has done.”...The woman is ready to accept Saul’s oath that she will come to no harm, for she knows it is made by the one person who is able to guarantee it! Still, she needs a safe and plausible way to reveal to Saul her recognition of him...though she herself recognizes Samuel perfectly well she contrives matters so that Saul thinks it is he who does the recognizing (v.14)’. D. Jobling, *1 Samuel*, (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 187-188.

¹⁹⁷ Fokkelman also supports this view: ‘I imagine that this woman could at least boast an excellent intuition or, even more probably, has perceived, through pure clairvoyance, that the energy field between the ghost and the client changed drastically with Samuel’s appearance...the narrator gives woman her spark of clairvoyance or intuition before Saul has entered the game and has been able to relate verbally to the woman and her impressions’. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 606-607.

system of questions and answers that is unique in Korean shamanism (*dadumi*). But, when the situation calls for *kut* (Korean shamanic ceremony), spirit possession and ecstasy are an essential part of the ritual because they intensify the ritual atmosphere so that the communication between the living and the dead can be easily achieved and verified by the audience.

The dead prophet is brought up and the text shows different ways of recognition of Samuel: for the medium it is visual perception ('She saw', 'I see gods coming up' and 'What do you see? [Saul]'), whereas for Saul the contact is achieved in an auditory fashion (listening and speaking):

Three things are told about how a conjurer raises a ghost. He who conjures him up does not hear his voice. He who needs him does hear his voice but does not see him. He who does not need him does not hear him nor see him. Thus the woman did see Samuel rise up but did not hear his voice. It was Saul who needed him; therefore he heard his voice but did not see him.¹⁹⁸

In the Korean shamanic ritual, the spirit of the dead is manifested by means of spirit possession and the dead person would 'borrow the mouth of the living [shaman]' (*sanja ui ip'ul billida*) to communicate with other members of the family. Once the spirit is conjured up and momentarily resides in the body of a shaman, the practitioner appears to be transformed into another being, taking up the distinctive accent, voice or gesture of the

¹⁹⁸ *Midrash Samuel* 24.5, cited in Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 617.

deceased person. This is one of the most emotional scenes during the ritual for the dead, as family members instantly recognise such features and hold on to the shaman as if the dead had come to life. In contrast to the common perception that spirit possession or ecstasy renders a person into a state of confusion, in Korean shamanism, to be able to communicate with what people understand to be entities in the spirit world, ‘the behaviour of the person possessed by the spirit must be intelligible or able to be interpreted; this implies that it must follow some fairly regular, predictable pattern, usually of speech’.¹⁹⁹ This is particular in the Korean shamanic ritual: even if the spirit possesses the body of the shaman, the practitioner still has control over the event to some extent, and the shaman does not only receive the message of the spirit, but is also entrusted with the ability to persuade, reprove, or translate the message of the dead if necessary.

As the appearance of the dead prophet is carefully defined - from gods coming up (v.13) to an old man in a robe (v.14) - the boundary between the dead and the living is gradually diminished to the point where Saul finally recognises Samuel from the medium’s description.²⁰⁰ When she opens the gate in the underworld, the spiritual entities are first

¹⁹⁹ R. Firth, ‘Individual Fantasy and Social Norms: Seances with Spirit Mediums’, in *Tikopia Ritual and Belief* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1967), 296, cited in Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism*, 18.

²⁰⁰ By the medium’s depiction of ‘an old man wrapped in a robe’, Saul recognises Samuel and falls on the ground as a form of obedience. The image of the robe brings Saul back to the painful events with Samuel and David. The first account of tearing a robe in ch.15 symbolises God’s rejection of Saul’s kingship and the second (cutting off the skirt of Saul’s robe in ch.24) shows Saul’s

described as plural,²⁰¹ which is not so surprising from the perspective of Korean shamanism, because even if the shaman has a designated spirit to be conjured up, usually the shaman's invocation wakes various spirits and ghosts that have been residing in every corner of the universe. The medium's silence, coinciding as it does with the appearance of the prophet, does not necessarily mean that she has left the scene: when the spirit has something to tell, there is no need for her to stand out as a medium. Although the medium is not involved in the confrontation between the spirit and her client as Korean shamans are, she has successfully completed the mission by breaking the silence of the divine, which all other conventional methods could not achieve.

As expected, the prophet begins the exchange in a reproachful tone: 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' (v.15). It is interesting that Samuel has no fundamental objections appearing through the agency of a medium; rather, his annoyance lies in the fact that Saul has disturbed the rest of a dead man, seeking answers for the matter that has long

vulnerability against his enemy, David, and leads to Saul's bitter acknowledgement of the divine favour on David rather than himself. Throwing Saul back to the humiliating accounts related to the robe and depicting the prophet in this particular image, the narrator insinuates that this last contact would not be in Saul's favour. Similarly, Polzin comments, 'In line with the conjoined character zones of Samuel and Saul throughout the story, Samuel is closed in a dead man's robe as he foretells the imminent death of Saul and his sons. The robe as shroud enfolds Saul's death as well as Samuel's'. R. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist. A Literary Study of the Deuteronomitic History* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 219. See also Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 95; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 608-609.

²⁰¹ The word is literally read as 'gods' in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, LUT and KJV, but modern translations show: 'a preternatural being' (NAB), 'a ghostly form' (NEB), 'a spirit' (NIV), 'a god' (RSV).

been decided. Saul explains the grave situation he is in as one where ‘God has turned away from me and answers me no more’ and asks what he should do (v.15). In response, Samuel uses the words of Saul himself, ‘now that God has turned from you’ (v.16), to confirm that this last contact is of little avail to Saul and that the prophet has nothing new to add to the divine judgement against Saul, his sons and his army (v.19). Having learned that there is only a catastrophic end waiting for him - defeat and death on the battlefield tomorrow – Saul falls to the ground with no hope.

After the contact, the medium comes to Saul, sees him paralysed on the floor, filled with fear (vv.21-22). At first, it could be assumed that she was absent during the séance, but in regard to the phenomenon of spirit possession and conjuring up the spirit, it is also possible that she has come around from the trance as soon as the contact between Samuel and Saul is over. In the Korean shamanic ritual for the dead, the shaman invites the spirit of a dead person, stages the last contact between the living and the dead in spirit possession and guides the soul to the netherworld to conclude the ritual. For the family members, it is the middle part, the contact with the spirit, that truly matters, but no one assumes that the shaman is being pushed aside or is oblivious to the situation. This is not to say that the medium at Endor employs a similar technique to raise the dead, or that she has the ability to cross between the realms of the living and the spirits at will, like Korean shamans. However, it is more

untenable to assume her invitation to the meal is 'a gesture of powerless incomprehension' because 'the mysterious practices shackle her to a level of mental comprehension on which she cannot follow the prophet'.²⁰² The medium sees that 'Saul is greatly terrified', and considering that his fear is not just from the rejection of the prophet (this happened long ago, 1 Sam 15-16) but also from a sudden realisation of his own impending death, it is not just a lack of physical strength she sees in the king, but that his mind is drained of all hope and will to live, as demonstrated in his lifeless posture.

Addressing Saul, the medium says, 'I have taken my life in my hand and have listened to what you have said to me. Now therefore, you also listen to your servant' (vv.21-22). In the Bible, 'putting my life in my hand' implies that the person risks his or her own life for a certain purpose, usually resulting in something negative (Job 13.14-15; Judg 12.3; Psalm 119.109-110). By bringing up the spirit of a dead person, the medium certainly intrudes upon the territory of God who 'kills and brings to life; brings down to Sheol and raises up' (1 Sam 2.6). The details of the medium's food preparation (28.24) have created a debate over her true intention: does she 'kill' (KJV and RSV), 'slaughter' (JPSV), or 'sacrifice' a calf? Reis insists that it is cultic ritual slaughter, and what the medium is offering

²⁰² Beuken '1 Samuel 28', 13. According to Beuken, the medium at Endor is a member of 'a pagan religion' who practises an 'unbelieving profession', and her lack of comprehension makes her believe that a good meal will revive Saul from his temporary collapse. His argument seriously undermines her role in the text, creating an unnecessary polarity between the 'legitimate' prophet (Samuel) and a pagan spiritualist, even though such antagonism is nowhere to be found in the text itself.

is not food but a sacrifice to the dead.²⁰³ By insisting that Saul join this bloody ritual, the medium seals 'an unholy but legally effective covenant between God's anointed and an idolatrous shaman' that will safeguard her life.²⁰⁴ In a similar vein, Hackett argues that 'there is some ambiguity about her actions. Although she may simply be preparing an ordinary meal, it is also possible to understand that Saul and his servants participated in a sacrificial meal prepared by this female medium as part of her quasi-priestly function in a peripheral, and banned, religious subsystem'.²⁰⁵

The above interpretation of her 'true' intention reveals her character not as a paragon of motherly protectiveness but as one of professionalism, resourcefulness, and determination. However, Reis's conclusion, drawn from Saul's sharing the sacrificial meal, that 'the loathsome conviviality of this prohibited sacrifice does not arouse our sympathy for Saul; rather, our contempt for him is increased', seems extreme. As discussed in my interpretation of the food in the prophets' hunting ritual in Ezekiel 13, in the Korean shamanic ritual, food is primarily offered to the spirits but also functions as a communal meal for the shaman and the audience, an event through which to share religious solidarity and a feast that is rarely seen in the old rural Korea. The meal is for both the spirit and the human, for mind and body.

²⁰³ Reis, 'Eating the Blood', 16-19.

²⁰⁴ Reis, 'Eating the Blood', 4.

²⁰⁵ Hackett, '1 and 2 Samuel', 88.

The reason the critics condemn Saul or the medium is because the bloody ritual is an infernal worship, and by consenting to the request of the medium, Saul commits another treachery, one which warrants his consequent suicide.²⁰⁶ However, this negative evaluation of the medium's invitation to the meal is drawn from other biblical passages that condemn eating (on) the blood as a sin against God (Gen 9.4; Lev 3.17; 7.26-27; 17.10, 12, 14; 19.26; Deut 12.16, 23), and, in 1 Samuel 28, there is no concrete evidence that the medium prepared the food as a sacrificial offering to the spirit of the dead (Samuel). Moreover, there is no denunciation made on the part of the author of her assistance to Saul. Samuel, instead of making a point by not appearing through an illegal channel, was brought up by the medium's conjuration, and the prophet's anger is directed at Saul's persistence in seeking an answer for his fate (28.16) rather than at his transgression. The saga of Saul is permeated with the ambiguous relationship between the human and the spirit (to the extent of Saul's madness driven by a demonic God), and one should avoid judging the medium and her service too hastily just because they are located in a peripheral religious culture. As in the case of the food offerings in the Korean shamanic ritual, it is possible that the meal the medium prepared for Saul has a double meaning: as a covenantal sacrifice for the spirit and nourishment for the human being. But it is more likely that the food is primarily served to restore a bodily strength of a distressed individual: 'The woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was

²⁰⁶ Reis, 'Eating the Blood', 7-8; Beuken, '1 Samuel 28', 12.

terrified, she said to him ... “Now you listen to your handmaid; let me set a morsel of bread before you, and eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way” (28.21, 22). Even if the meal is a part of the medium’s ritual, the fact that she was able to provide Saul what he needs most (‘there was no strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night’, v.20) and that it has brought a positive result (‘he arises from the ground, sits upon the bed, eats, arises, and walks away that night’. vv.23, 25) does not change.

4.2.3. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is not only the medium’s spiritual capacity, proven by the materialisation of the soul of the prophet, Samuel, but also her personality that merits special appreciation, as seen in her compassion toward another human being, Saul, even though he was directly responsible for the current desolate situation facing her and her fellow cultic professionals. She is a figure who lives at the threshold between the worlds of the living and the dead, yet her responsibility as a medium is appreciated most fully when she returns from the spiritual world and takes care of a human being who is being crushed by the harsh indictment of the spirit. Korean shamans are respected for their supernatural power and knowledge of the spiritual world, but their services are essentially for the living, helping those with problems which are otherwise insurmountable without divine intervention. It is true that the medium

did not have a power to change the fate of the king - but this applies to the prophet as well - or to intervene in the prophecy of Samuel, but if she had not acted according to her profession, Saul would not have had the strength to carry on and face his fate.

The *mudang* knows what to do, The *mudang* will not preach to him [*sic*]. The *mudang* understands him, his *han*-ridden life of trouble and tribulation as a powerless and oppressed person...The *mudang* was once sick with mental sickness (*shinbyung*). She was once called mad and spirit-possessed. The *mudang* has the experience of overcoming and transcending her illness, spiritual illness and the suffering of mental sickness. Therefore, she understands her patient's grievances and suffering...she will hold his hands tightly and give him sincere and heart-warming consolation.²⁰⁷

This strong yet caring medium provides a close parallel with Korean shamans whose commitment is directed both to the words of the deity and the mundane world where divine words and messages are manifested and observed. Despite the ideological antagonism and censorship, the reason why shamanistic belief and practices cannot be completely removed from community life is that they give continuity, familiarity and reliability to people in times of trouble and uncertainty.

4.3. Conclusion

²⁰⁷ Suh, *Korean Minjung in Christ*, 195.

When reading different religious cultures and professions in the Bible, it is important not to fall into the familiar dichotomy between the prophecy of 'legitimate' prophets and that of 'others', who are usually castigated as pagan spiritualists, mediums, magicians, sorcerers and so on. In this chapter, I have tried to examine the place of the female prophets in Ezek 13 in the light of polemic against equally potent religious professionals and Ezekiel's condemnation as an attempt to prevent their further influence or their 'binding' power over the people of Israel. These female prophets' ritual paraphernalia and techniques are to some extent similar to Korean shamans' 'hunting' of avian spirits or the flight of the soul, but the parallel between the biblical text and the Korean context becomes more obvious when it comes to Ezekiel's vilification, because it echoes the very stance early Christian missionaries took in regard to Korean traditional spiritualism and its practitioners. Korean shamanism always has been the religion of common people, dealing with the mundane issues of everyday life and more critical matters such as birth, illness, war, death, and so on. The penetration of shamanic beliefs and customs in Korean religious culture was a serious obstacle for Western missionaries whose goal was to replace an old belief system and install their own answers to human fate, divine guidance, and the cycle of life and death. Modern Bible readers who study Ezek 13 may realise that this antagonism has been inherited in many major Christian churches in Korea, as an ideological tool to separate themselves from 'other' parts of society

or religious culture, insisting on 'the Only and One' way to salvation and eternal life. Therefore, realisation of the unreliability of an ideological distinction between 'biblical' prophecy and 'popular' religious practices, as well as the polemical nature of biblical writing, will help Korean Bible readers to reassess the church as interpretative tradition and produce biblical models that are not necessarily opposed to their native spiritualism.

Therefore, this reading of the female medium at Endor (1 Sam 28) is an attempt to discover a biblical character who corresponds well with Korean shamanic models. Saul is already a rejected king, his every channel to the spirit world is cut off, and his only hope is a prophet who has already died. When a Yahwist prophet and non-Yahwist spiritualist appear together in the biblical text, the familiar pattern would be an antithetic relationship between the two or condemnation of the sorcerer and those who participate in the infernal worship. However, in 1 Sam 28, Saul is rebuked for his stubborn rejection of prophetic verdict and neither the prophet nor the biblical author accuses the medium in terms of her cooperation with the request of the king. Samuel appears unsympathetic and impenetrable, and the only revelation that is new is that Saul and his sons will die tomorrow (v.19). However, this does not mean Saul's visit to the medium is of no avail. Samuel's harsh indictment was necessary for Saul to finally accept this fate, and the medium, whose profession is committed to the sin of divination and necromancy (1 Sam 15.23; cf. Isa 19.3), assists in the last night of the king

in this world with her spiritual gift and motherly care. The medium's compassion and humanity accompany the strict justice delivered by the prophet, and Saul, who first appeared in disguise and in denial of his own identity and values, emerges from the house with restored energy, as his authentic self as the king of Israel.

In this chapter, I have introduced two different types of female spiritualists: one as a powerful rival to the prophet's ministry and the other an equally potent medium who contributes to the final prophecy of Samuel. These peripheral religious professionals are accused because central institutions dictate that their supernatural knowledge and practices are not inspired by God. They may or may not possess the power to influence or to change human destinies, but this is also applied to the prophets of God of Israel. The various religious practitioners in the Bible (a prophet, a medium, a priest, a diviner, and so on) to some extent convey the authority of the deity they represent, but their role in the human community is to give counsel and assurance in times of uncertainty as a bridge between the two worlds. In this regard, the female religious professionals in Ezekiel 13 and 1 Samuel 28 skilfully cross over the realm of spirits and humans, enough to suggest that we have a biblical version of the Korean shamans, *mudang*.

Chapter 5. Magic, Miracles and Prophecy of Elijah and Elisha

So far in this thesis, I have dealt with parallels between Korean shamanism and biblical characters, and, by drawing attention to the compatibility between the two, argued that certain biblical characters are not unlike shamans, so shamanism should not be condemned out of hand by a sectarian theological tradition. In this chapter, I, as a Korean Bible reader, will attempt to read the story of Elijah and Elisha in the light of Korean shamanic models, one way of suggesting what an authentic Korean Bible reading might look like.

5.1. Characteristics of the Prophecy of Elijah and Elisha: An Overview

This chapter focus on the story of Elijah and Elisha, since they appear to have provided models for the prophets who come after them, all of whom, to a greater or lesser extent, reflect the approbation, dilemmas and crises these two prophets experienced in their ministry. I will not engage, as many studies on cultic specialists have, in any discussions of possible definitions, such as whether Elijah and Elisha are prophets, diviners, seers, mediums, or magicians, nor do I intend to finalise the concept of supernatural activity.²⁰⁸ Episodes of supernatural activities in the story of Elijah and Elisha combine the elements of magic, divination, sorcery and miracle, and hereafter such events will be referred to as supernatural activities, magic or miracles. The magic and miracles of Elijah and Elisha are not necessarily a defining factor of the ministry of the prophets: they are simply too varied to be assigned such convenient terms. Nonetheless, when examined from the perspective of their efficacy, the prophets' attachment to the exercise of supernatural power, and the state of affairs that

²⁰⁸ Numerous references are available for the study of religious specialists in the Bible and other social and historical contexts. Some of the findings concerning various cultic professionals in the biblical text and ancient Israel can be found in L. L. Grabbe, *Priest, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, PA.: Trinity Press International, 1995); Grabbe and A. O. Bellis (eds.), *The Priests and the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets* (JSOTSup 408; London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 79-97; B. Uffenheimer, *Early Prophecy in Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1999), 480-503; R. Murry, 'Prophecy and the Cult', in R. Coggins, A. Philips and M. Knibb (eds.), *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 200-216; V. W. Turner, 'Shamans, Priests, and Prophets', in A. C. Lehmann and J. Myers (eds.), *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural* (Palo Alto, CA.; London: Mayfield, 1985), 81-93; M. Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta, GA.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); T. E. Klutz, *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon* (JSOTSup 245; London: T & T Clark International, 2003).

warrants a particular divine intervention and reaction from the recipient, magic and miracles are no longer just peculiar mystical phenomena but the epitome of the dynamic between the deity, the practitioner and the community. The focus is not on finding the ‘correct’ vocabulary for a supernatural phenomenon but rather how they are implemented in the various stages of prophetic career and, from a literary point of view, how similar types of magic and miracles form an antithesis according to the different ideological backgrounds and personalities of the practitioners. As can be seen from the tables below (Figs. 3 and 4), the prophets undergo certain rites of passage, and magic and miracle accompany this process, from the initial training for prophecy to displays of supernatural power and a public test of the authenticity of the prophets.

Stages	Shamanistic activities
The beginning of the career	Divination: ‘As the Lord lives, the God of Israel whom I serve, there will be no dew or rain except my word’ (1 Kgs 17.1)
	Divine provision I: Being fed by the ravens (17.5) Divine provision II: Being fed by a widow (17.9)
Displays of supernatural power	Magical supply oil and flour (17.11-16) Reviving the dead child (17.17-24) Travelling by the spirit (18.12, 46; 2 Kgs 2.11, 16) Manoeuvring the movement of nature (divine fire 18.20-40; 2 Kgs 1.9-12; rain 1 Kgs 18.41-45)
Trial and recovery	Divine Provision III: Being fed by an angel (19.5-9) Theophany on Mount Horeb (19.9-13)
Prophetic succession	Meeting Elisha (1 Kgs 19.19-21) Parting the waters of Jordan (2 Kgs 2.8)
Final exit	Being taken by heavenly chariot to the sky (2 Kgs 2 11-12)

Figure 6. Episodes of the magic and miracles performed by Elijah (1 Kgs 17-2 Kgs 2)

Stages	Shamanistic activities
Prophetic succession	Inheriting prophetic power from Elijah: receiving the mantle of Elijah (1 Kgs 19.19-20), a similar magic involving the water of Jordan and the mantle of Elijah (2 Kgs 2.12-14)
Displays of supernatural power	Manoeuvring the movement of nature: -parting the water of Jordan (1 Kgs 2.14) -restoring waters of Jericho (2.21) -controlling the movement of animals (2.23-24) Spirit possession and divination (3.15) Magical supply of oil (4.1-7) Curing a poisonous pot (4.38-41) Multiplying food (4.42-44) Curing disease of Naaman (5.1-14) Knowledge of his servant's secret act (5.26) Finding a missing object (6.5-7) Knowledge of events happening elsewhere (6.12) Foretelling the future (7.1-2; 16-20; 8.1-3, 7-15;13.14-19) His bones reviving a dead man (13.21)
Trial and Recovery	Miraculous conception of the woman of Shunem and death of the child (4.11-17) Reviving the dead child (4. 18-37)
Final exit	Reviving the dead (13.20-21)

Figure 7. Episodes of the magic and miracles performed by Elisha (2 Kgs 2-13)

Elijah and Elisha display unparalleled supernatural abilities, but not without human frailties that continually shift the equilibrium between the divine directive, people's response and the prophets' initiative. The ministries of Elijah and Elisha are deeply involved in issues of life and death on both personal and professional levels. On a professional level, the audience identifies the prophets with their miraculous power to ward off the threat of death and enhance the quality of life, the basic formula for the service of Korean shamans. The prophets themselves are also recipients of divine provisions which are shared with other people through the prophets' magic and miracles. On the other hand, at certain times in their

career, the prophets confront in person a threat of death, where the experience throws the prophets off balance and brings out their shortcomings as a human being. In Korean shamanism, a momentary death of the mind and body of the practitioner is a crucial part of the shamanic training, as the experience helps the shaman to break the mould of the mundane world and embrace a new identity as the one who is placed between death (spirits) and life (humans) till the end of her career. Although not as intense as in the case of Korean shamans, Elijah and Elisha face the danger of death, either themselves or as a result of their prophetic activities, and this experience gives them an opportunity to reassess their reliability as masters of supernatural power and to gain better connections both to the spiritual world and people.

The succession from Elijah to Elisha is important not only because it dovetails the narratives of Elijah and Elisha, but also because it displays different kinds of prophetic vocations, one in which the prophet is in direct contact with the deity and the other is selected without any supernatural intervention, such as spirit sickness, divine revelation or spirit possession. Elijah is a wandering prophet, who challenges the morals and points out at the religious offenses of the central establishment from his position at the periphery of the community. Owen's observation on Korean shamans, who are 'marked by a degree of social separation from the rest of the community, and are not always required or expected to abide

by the rules of Korean society, [so that the] demands and nature of the vocation seem to set them apart from normal patterns of living',²⁰⁹ seems to work as a plausible description of the characteristics of Elijah. Elisha, in contrast, emerges as a fully-fledged prophet in the community, whose professional interest lies with the more enduring and practical needs of people. Although Elijah does not dwell among people (his residences are usually the wilderness or the holy mountain of God), the spirituality or authority of the word of Elijah is never questioned.²¹⁰ Elijah's numerous miracles, intimate encounters with God and his controversial personality ultimately determine his image as that of an independent charismatic prophet. Elijah appoints Elisha as successor to his prophetic office, and Elisha ministers for Elijah as an apprentice until Elijah finally exits the scene in 2 Kings 2. As an assistant celebrant, Elisha closely follows Elijah, witnesses his miracles and is given the spiritual power of his master when he successfully passed the tests to prove his eligibility. At the beginning of a prophet's career, people often display doubts about this newly chosen prophet, and Elisha gradually establishes his own spiritual charisma by serving a social function through magic and miracles. The different styles of ministries of Elijah and Elisha

²⁰⁹ Owens, *Korean Shamanism*, 135.

²¹⁰ Collins observes that 'they [Elijah and Elisha] are archetypes of all the biblical prophets as rival figures to the kings, offering a different model of leadership with which the people can identify...Elijah the prophet *par excellence*: the condemner of idolatry, the defender of the law, the successor to Moses'. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, 130. However, this does not mean that Elijah offers a stable alternative leadership: the prophet remains at the periphery of the community throughout his life and the public affirmation of his legitimacy is based on his magic and miracles, rather than on the religious solidarity between the prophet and the community.

bear a striking resemblance to two different types of practitioners in Korean shamanism: *Kangshinmu*, a god-appointed type of shaman, and *Sesupmu*, a hereditary type.

5.2. *Kangshinmu* and *Sesupmu*: Two Types of Korean Shaman

Korean shamanic professions are classified into two categories: *Kangshinmu* (a god-appointed shaman) and *Sesupmu* (a hereditary shaman).²¹¹ The first is sought and summoned directly by spirits and given supernatural power through various supernatural experiences, such as shaman sickness, ecstasy and spirit possession. The latter lacks a direct connection to the spirit and is trained to be a shamanistic ritual specialist by learning the necessary devices and ritual arrangements under the tutelage of other established shamans. The hereditary type primarily refers to those who succeed automatically to the profession through family lineage, but nowadays the term is generally applied to shamans or assistant celebrants who have made the choice to enter the profession without a personal spiritual calling.

It is thought that the god-appointed type possesses more spiritual power, since this is ‘inborn’ and ‘natural’, whereas that of the hereditary type appears to be ‘acquired’ and ‘artificial’. As Kim explains,

²¹¹ See this thesis, chapter 2, 53-60.

Although *kangshinmu*'s [god-appointed type] spiritual charisma may satisfy the common people's religious desires, yet *sesummu* [hereditary type] is an expression of community functioning by conventional/institutional charisma, rather than by spiritual charisma/power. It follows that as spiritual charisma is reinforced and expanded into a social function, it becomes apparent on its successor that the spiritual charisma must have been superior as a phenomenon as compared to the institutional charisma.²¹²

However, the religious authority of a shaman is not necessarily expected to be achieved only through personal and innate revelation of the spirit. The religious mandate in Korean shamanism is something more collective: a spiritual efficacy is established and judged not only by the possession experience but also by a belief system which assigns a shamanic service for the personal and collective interests of the community.²¹³ The hereditary system makes up for its lack of innate charisma by contributing towards maintaining those unique ritual techniques and cultural assets which are important part of Korean shamanism in their own right. And Kim argues that the hereditary system helps the individual spiritual charisma of a god-appointed type to extend into the priestly authority that has been accumulated in its (hereditary) systematic institution.²¹⁴ Also, whether called into the profession by spirits or

²¹² Kim, *Korean Shamanism-Muism*, 58-63 (61). According to Choi, a hereditary type shaman is normally from an economically weak stratum of society and hopes to rise above class oppression and succeed to a priestly role of Korean shaman through learning necessary arrangements of ritual. K. S. Choi, *Han'guk musok ui yongu: tonghaen chiyogul chungshimuro han sahoe illyuhak chongnon* [The Study of Korean Shamanism: an Anthropological Research of the East Sea Province] (my translation; Seoul: Hyongsol, 1978), 18. Kim also points out that, whereas a god-appointed type has a personal network of clients, a hereditary type often works for the local patronage system. S. N. Kim, 'Problems in Defining Shaman Types and Local Variations', in Howard, *Korean Shamanism*, 33-36.

²¹³ Jurisdiction is not the practitioner's own, but rather, 'religions and faith constitute human actions suspended between the words of believers and spirits and spiritual power depends on the satisfying flow of communication between the two sides'. S. C. Im, 'Han'guk musok yon'gu sosol' [An Introduction to the Study of Korean Shamanism], in *Asea yosong yon'gu* [Journal of Asian Women] 9 (1971), 73-90 (74).

²¹⁴ Kim, *Korean Shamanism-Musim*, 29-37, 57-63.

through his or her own choice, it is mandatory for a shamanic neophyte to undergo an apprenticeship process to create rapport with the guild of shamans, to learn necessary ceremony skills and to make a smooth transition from ordinary human being to religious specialist in the community. In this regard, a hereditary type should not be considered as a lesser shaman; the assumption that anyone can be a shaman through the hereditary system and tutorials should be avoided, because even without a direct summons from the spirit the neophyte has been selected because of certain predispositions of personality which are important to the shamanistic vocation. As one female shaman explains to Kendall, ‘the portent is a gift from the spirit, but the talent should be learned’, Korean shamans’ ministry is a blend of talent, effort and spiritual inspiration.²¹⁵ Also, its transference is considered to be a process of ‘being introduced to the same power rather than being bestowed by one human to another’, thus refuting any unilateral relationship in the clerical hierarchy.²¹⁶

Korean shamanism is a complex synthesis of regional typicality, cultural heritage and a ritualistic religious system. The shamanic belief system and ritual structure are products of frequent internal innovation and syncretism in response to specific circumstances. The co-existence of two types of shaman in one region may not be without conflict but both seem to

²¹⁵ Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives*, 67.

²¹⁶ Owens, *Korean Shamanism*, 149.

achieve a collaborative ritual style that is complementary.²¹⁷ Therefore, the spiritual authority of a god-appointed shaman, as enabled by direct contact with the spirits, and the communicative skills of a hereditary shaman, in keeping with the demands of the clientele, are both vital ingredients in constituting the unique ritual environment of Korean shamanism. The reason I bring up the cultural prototypes of Korean shamans is not because I intend to assimilate Elijah and Elisha into these two types of Korean shamans: what I am suggesting is that, just as the two different types of Korean shaman balance the dynamic between supernatural power and people's religious aspirations, the different yet complementary characteristics of Elijah and Elisha invite the reader to appreciate a more diverse portrait of prophets in the Bible.

In a broader scheme of biblical prophecy, the journeys of Elijah and Elisha complement each other and complete the whole cycle of death and life, isolation and companionship, and judgement and rehabilitation. In Korean shamanism, a god-appointed type conjures up in people's minds the mystery and awe of the spiritual world, whereas a hereditary type provides various means of channelling the divine will even without the spirit possession or ecstasy that is typical of traditional shamans. Elijah's ministry begins with a message of doom as a divine judgement, and his journey after the first oracle is a constant

²¹⁷ For the variations of the hereditary type of Korean shamans and their collaborative ritual style, see Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 71-74, 116.

struggle against the threat of death (famine and drought, Jezebel's campaign against the prophets of God of Israel). Elijah remains at the margins of community life; his presence among the people often generates fear and doubts (1 Kgs 17.18; 18.8, 17). Elisha, in contrast, begins his journey as a prophet with a communal feast and maintains a close network not only with fellow prophets but also with politicians and kings. There is barely any message of divine indictment against the people of Israel, and his prophetic service is acknowledged and appreciated for its contribution to the wellbeing of the community. The story of Elijah and Elisha provides an archetype of the most basic function of a religious practitioner, a bridge in between two worlds, albeit a contrast in *modus operandi*. Elijah exudes spiritual charisma as an independent prophet, his magic and miracles are tools to overcome the initial doubts of people and establish himself as a legitimate prophet of God (1 Kgs 17.24; 18.39). On the contrary, Elisha appears to be an institutional figure, whose authority is already firmly established not only among the people of Israel but also in its political circles and neighbouring nations (2 Kgs 3.11-12; 4.1, 8, 42; 5.3); hence he does not need magic and miracles to prove his authenticity but instead uses them as part of his prophetic office, helping various people in need and enhancing the quality of lives. Keeping in mind the different styles of ministries and the overall theme of the correlation between the three entities – the deity, the practitioner and the community – that is found in both Korean

shamanic and biblical prophetic structure, in the next section I will closely analyse the stages of the prophetic careers of Elijah and Elisha: the initial stage, the highlight of their career, the failure and the recovery, and the succession.

5.3. The Story of Elijah and Elisha

5.3.1. The Prophets in Between Life and Death

5.3.1.1. Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17.1-16)

The beginning of Elijah's ministry is abrupt and abrasive without compromise. He delivers a hostile message which is likely to provoke public wrath: 'As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word' (1 Kgs 17.1).²¹⁸ '(As) Yahweh lives, the God of Israel' emphasises Elijah's conviction that his God is the true sovereign of the land (as opposed to foreign gods worshipped by the monarchy). Neither the king, Ahab, nor the people of Israel are given a chance to assess the legitimacy of the prophet or the magnitude of his words. There are no further explanations

²¹⁸ Elijah's introduction, 'Elijah the Tishbite, of the settlers of Gilead' (v.1), portrays the prophet possibly as an immigrant living in a marginal part of Israel, who may have neither welcome at, nor invitation to, Ahab's court. His self-assurance is based on the fact that he is the one 'who stands before God', and the phrase contains an implicit claim that he has an intimate relationship with the deity as far as 'serving as one of [Yahweh's] intimate counsellors and obedient ministers'. S. J. DeVries, *1 Kings* (WBC, 12; Waco, TX.: Word Books, 1985), 218. Also, the fact that his name, which 'sounds like a partisan campaign button, אֱלִיָּהוּ, "My God is Yahweh"', emphasises Elijah's status as a zealous propagandist of the ancient faith in the God of Israel. E. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA.: Westminster, 1965), 10.

about this sudden outbreak of prophetic invective, and readers can only guess at it from the list of sins committed by the house of Ahab in the previous chapter.²¹⁹

It is ironic that the description of his God as one who *lives* is immediately associated with the prospect of doom. Elijah has left an impressive yet nonetheless negative impact on the people, and, when he comes back with rain as promised (v.16), the prophet is bound to face an angry crowd whose lives have been made miserable by his oracle. He will soon face the consequences of his prophecy, and this suggests that, unlike the conventional way of the oracle, which in itself is complete once delivered through a mouth of a prophet, the responsibility of Elijah as a prophet lies in both the deliverance of the divine message and in bearing the weight of the words of God throughout his career. As shall be seen in the following passages, Elijah's encounter with other people reminds him of the harsh indictment of and suffering caused by his message and the prophet needs to regain their trust without compromising his commitment to the divine will. Elijah will be continually in and out of the community, unsettling the status quo of the society, even if it is not entirely favourable in the eyes of ordinary people and is done so as to restore the covenant between the deity and the community.

²¹⁹ 'And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all that were before him...he took for wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him...he erected an altar for Baal and Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him' (1 Kgs 16.30-33).

Once he has delivered the oracle of God, Elijah is relocated at the brook Cherith, where he is given sufficient supplies of food and water, arranged by ravens and other natural resources (17.3-4, 6). The bountiful daily rations, bread and meat twice per day, in the most inhospitable environment and the fact that the narrator uses the verb כִּוֵּל, 'to sustain', rather than אָכַל, 'to feed', allow for Elijah's belief of God that lives and supports life to those who are faithful. However, Elijah soon faces the harsh reality of the drought as the wadi finally dries up. This time God promises to provide food from a widow in Zarephath (v.9). If Elijah was merely the recipient of the miracle of life by the brook of Cherith, this time the prophet is pressured into participating in fulfilling the miracle. God may have anticipated and prepared for all eventualities, but, when it comes to the actual confrontation, it requires more than a promise given to the prophet in private in order to persuade the woman to share her valuable resources during the famine. Moreover, Elijah is sent back to human society to witness the sufferings of those whose existence has been so bitterly affected by the word he has spoken in God's name.

The prophet is reduced to begging the widow for minimal rations, 'a little water in a vessel' (v.10). The woman of Zarephath provides him with water but balks at Elijah's request for a morsel of bread, since she and her household are near starvation. Caught between the demands of hospitality and the harsh reality of famine, she replies desolately:

‘As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a cruse, and now, I am gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die’ (v.12). The minimalism of her language, a handful of meal, a little oil, two sticks and a small cake, is in sharp contrast to the description of Elijah’s previous rich meals brought by the ravens. Interestingly, her oath (‘as the Lord your God lives...’) echoes the very first words that Elijah uttered in the presence of the king (v.1), but with a hint of bitter irony. The implication is that God is living, but the situation is far from the grace of God. *Your* God may live and promise you (Elijah) a means of sustaining life, but it is also *your* God who has brought drought and famine and she, a widow in a foreign land, has not seen any proof of divine providence or grace. Moreover, the prophet’s request puts greater strain on her already appalling situation, where she can only associate the measly meal in her hand, initially a source of life, with impending death: ‘I will go, prepare it, we will eat it, then we will die’. This is another characteristic of Elijah’s ministry; the audience is not a passive recipient of the words of God or the prophet. People argue with the prophet (1 Kgs 17.12, 18; 18.9-14), challenge him (18.17; 21.20), and plead (2 Kgs 1.13-14), and sometimes Elijah changes his initial plan (1 Kgs 18.15; 2 Kgs 1.15) to accommodate the feedback from and the situation of the audience. Voices and reactions on the part of the audience or the community is often an underrated element in biblical prophecy. How the

process of the deliverance of divine message, magic or miracles, and the feedback from the recipients shape the ministries of the prophets will be discussed in the rest of the chapter. At this point, suffice it to say that, at least in the narratives of Elijah and Elisha, the tripartite structure of biblical (and Korean shamanic) prophecy - the deity, the practitioner and the audience (community) – is easily recognisable, an important ground for the dynamic interrelationship between the sacred and the secular.

The woman's protest reveals that the human agent whom Elijah is promised will feed him has no way of sustaining the life of Elijah, let alone of herself and her family. Elijah faces his first challenge, since he cannot doubt the divine promise that the second provision will be given by the hands of the widow of Zarephath. Either he has to overcome her resistance and persuade the woman to share the food with him (in case she is hiding more than she admits) or make it possible for her to become his benefactor by utilising his spiritual gifts. Elijah ventures: 'Fear not, but first make me a little cake of it and afterward make for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel, "The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth"' (vv.13-14). Now the woman faces a dilemma: should she listen to the prophet and put his need before hers and her family? The prophet has survived the drought on his own, but why is it now necessary to take her last resource to maintain its marvel? The tension between

Elijah and the woman, between the divine command and her harrowing daily existence, is eased as she finally complies with the prophet's request.²²⁰ The divine command to Elijah to go and stay with the widow, which initially seems to address Elijah's need, eventually also becomes effective for the widow, who was at the point of death by starvation. The woman is rewarded with an endless supply of meal and oil (v.15).²²¹ The encounter with the woman of Zarephath dramatically widens the horizons of Elijah's ministry. At the brook of Cherith, Elijah was a passive recipient of the miracle until the provision runs out. However, in Zarephath, when the prophet shares his confidence in God ('according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by Elijah') with the widow, they are rewarded with miracle that will never be spent nor fail.

The last miracle of life in Zarephath is the revival of the dead son of the woman. It is an ultimate victory over death, a manifestation of divine power that adds credibility to the words of Elijah that his God is the one who truly lives. The miracle of bringing back life is suitably situated just before Elijah returns to the community, who is going to terminate the

²²⁰ The almost identical composition of v.14 and v.16 confirms that the words of Elijah were genuine, satisfying any lingering doubts of the authenticity of his message:

v. 14 The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail,
(until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth)

v. 16 The jar of meal was not spent, neither did the cruse of oil fail
(according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by Elijah).

²²¹ The prophet asks the woman to bring him a morsel of bread 'in your hand', and Brichto argues that the Hebrew expression *by hand of* is also the idiom for 'by the agency of' or 'through', as appeared in v.16: 'the promise Yahweh had spoken through (*by hand of*) Elijah'. Here the woman of Zarephath appears to act as another agent of divine providence alongside the prophet. H.C. Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics: Tales of the Prophets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 125.

life-threatening drought and restore the wellbeing of the people. Paying heed to the words of Elijah has proved rewarding for the widow. She and her son no longer suffer from the aftermath of divine judgement and the mysterious source of food in her house has never been so bountiful. Having the prophet as a permanent guest will be nothing but beneficial, but the story has an unexpected turn: ‘after this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill, and his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him’ (v.17).²²² There is no logical explanation for the cause of the death and even the prophet is baffled by this sudden setback. A convenient aphorism or theological peroration that normally justifies the ‘mysterious’ way of the work of the spirit is hardly sufficient to explain the death of an innocent child. If it is a part of a yet greater test of Elijah’s prophetic capacity and the woman’s belief in him, then how far do they have to go to prove themselves worthy of divine favour? Is the fact that this foreign woman gave her last resources to the prophet and obeyed his demand not enough to show her loyalty? Is she not reminded of Elijah’s miraculous power whenever she scoops out flour and oil from the magical jars? Even if the death of the boy was only temporary, can it be morally justified that the family of the prophet’s benefactor should become scapegoats to boost the confidence of the prophet as a miracle worker? While there hangs in the air an uncomfortable realisation that perhaps the prophet is not an innocent

²²² Breath, נשמה, signifies a life force, such as spirit, soul, God, and one’s own essence (BDB 5397; cf. 1 Kgs 15.29; Gen 2.7; Job 27.3; Isa 42.5) and the absence of it is a commonly used biblical connotation of death.

bystander, the readers are invited towards a broader and more ambiguous work of the miracle in the Bible.

Korean shamanistic rituals are held in two general circumstances: the crisis ritual and the cyclical or fixed ritual. The latter follows the patterns of community life, such as annual ceremonies for abundance in crops (in agricultural communities) and for the safety of fishermen and a plentiful catch. Such ceremonies are usually funded by local governments and became public cultural events where the guilds of shamans and villagers in the district all gather together. The characteristics of the traditional shamanic ceremony can be found in the crisis rites; ritual behaviour is motivated by the desire to resolve certain critical issues or maintain specific relationships with the spiritual world. In crisis situations or times of uncertainty, where the individual has little or no control over the matters at hand, shamanistic service brings clarity to the situation, and offers spiritual recourse and possible solutions. Personal problems that are brought to shamans can be grouped under the rubric of ‘survival motifs’, including disease, financial issues such as business problems, employment or change of post, household matters such as marriage, fertility, health and success of children, death of the family member and so on.²²³ The emphasis on corporeal wishes and solutions may appear shallow, but these are critical issues for any ordinary household, issues that official

²²³ Y. H. Yoon, *Hanguk jonggyo yeongu* [A Study of Korean Religion] (vol. 1; Seoul: Jimoondang, 1986), a detailed list of ‘survival motifs’ is cited in N. H. Jang, *Shamanism in Korean Christianity* (Korean Studies Dissertation Series No. 4; Seoul: Jimoondang International, 2004), 33.

religions have failed to address. Confronted by the Confucian strict code of ethics and disturbed by the egocentrism of Christianity, Korean people visit shamans, rarely seeking to fulfil the model of the ideal type of human being or to reform society, but instead to tackle urgent needs or difficult and unexpected situations.²²⁴ Korean shamanistic routine offers them physical, mental and spiritual strength in times of uncertainty by providing ‘an explanatory mechanism through which otherwise unanswerable questions are answered’, curing problems with shamanistic specialised skills, and restoring a stable equilibrium between divine protection and community life.²²⁵

Dispensation of life and death is attributed to the ultimate deity, *Hananim*, a high god that controls the cycle of the universe and presides over all other spiritual beings, but this deity is generally removed from the humdrum nature of daily life. When someone suddenly becomes ill, where the symptoms are beyond the comprehension of modern medicine, it is assumed to be affliction caused by malevolent spirits, which first intrude with the illness, and, when the warning is not heeded, can lead to death. Thus shamans are placed in charge to diagnose the symptoms of the unusual illness and to produce a remedy based on their power

²²⁴ Ino Park, the president of the Association for the Preservation of Shamanism, says an interview: ‘Buddhism and Christianity are religions of the conscious mind. Our faith [shamanism] comes from our flesh. It is the direct experience of our body. One cannot abandon it or discard it. [unlike Buddhism or Christianity] We don’t have models, we have no goals. You are your own model. Because I am here, the spirits are here’. A. Guillemoz, ‘What do the Naerim Mudang from Seoul Learn?’, in Howard, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 73-89 (83).

²²⁵ C. Geertz, ‘Religion as a Cultural System’, in M. Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), 46.

to influence spiritual beings.²²⁶ Despite the common perception of shamans as having an animistic belief and the power to influence others at will, the profession should be distinguished from sorcerers or magicians because of its primary commitment to Good God (*Hananim*), who is believed to be the source and protector of life and wellbeing of the faithful.²²⁷ From the Korean shamanistic perspective, the god (Good God) has apportioned a life span to every person at birth; so an untimely death through either illness or accident is perceived to be a defeat by the malevolent spirits and is the reason why Korean people grieve over a death. As Choi explains, ‘In spite of the protection of the Good God, the person could not fulfil the cycle of life that is given to him or her. Death occurs due to the lack of faith in Good God or the fight against malevolent spirits, thus symbolises the victory of such spirits’.²²⁸

Although early Christian missionaries condemned Koreans as virtual atheists, without true religious beliefs, they could not unequivocally deny the existence or the influence of the spirits in Korean shamanism:

²²⁶ As Hulbert reports, ‘If a man [*sic*] is taken suddenly ill or if his symptoms seem in any way strange the inference is that it is caused by an evil spirit. Now it is proper to ask how and why spirit should torment people in this way. Well, there are several reasons...if a man has wronged one of the spirits by insulting or belittling it or by denying that there are such things as spirits, the injured one is very likely to seek revenge by causing sickness.’ H. B. Hulbert, ‘The Korean Mudang and P’ansu’, *The Korean Review* (1903), 148.

²²⁷ Thus Korean shamans’ houses (shrines) are considered as off-limits for the malevolent spirits and function as a sanctuary in times of an epidemic. T. S. Yu, *Hanguk mugyoui yoksawa kujo* [The History and Structure of Korean Shamanism] (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1975), 195.

²²⁸ K. S. Choi, *Hangukin eui han* [The Wounded Heart of Korean People] (my translation; Seoul: Yejin, 1991), 141.

There is no doubt that often there is sleight of hand and charlatanism. But that from time to time the demon really manifests himself [*sic*] and his influence in men [*sic*] and things by phenomena which are contrary to the laws of nature, that there are true sorcerers, and especially sorceresses, who by magical rituals establish contact with infernal powers, that is an absolutely incontrovertible fact. The missionaries affirm that possession in the real sense of the word occurs sometimes; equally, case of obsession, without being frequent, are not rare, even among Christians.²²⁹

God in biblical prophetic stories may have a similar power as divine protector to dispense life and death, but the author of the Elijah narrative does not give any reasons behind the death of the child. There is no mention of the intrusion of evil spirits, nor had the boy any prolonged illness; the prophet seems as bewildered as everyone else. At least, the widow's response and her accusation against the prophet suggest that she suspects that this sudden affliction is related to the presence of the prophet in her house. Rather than staying silent, as in accepting a tenuous verdict that the death of the boy is a prelude to a greater divine grace, the mother turns to the prophet with vehemence: 'What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!' (v.18). The widow and her son were struggling to live through drought as a result of the divine judgement on the land and the missing prophet, the one who is responsible for the current hardship ('there shall be neither new nor rain these years, except *by my word*', v.1) suddenly appeared on her door step. Elijah promises her gifts of life with the authority of God ('according to the

²²⁹ Dallet, *Histoire de l'Église de Corée* 1 (1874), 150, cited in B.C.A. Walraven, 'Interpretations and Reinterpretations of Popular Religion in the Last Decades of the Chosŏn Dynasty', in K. Howard (ed.), *Korean Shamanism: Revivals, Survivals, and Change* (Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society; Seoul: Seoul Pres, 1998), 68.

word of the Lord which he spoke by Elijah', v.16) and it seems that the prophet, the widow and her son manage to escape the threat of the death. However, according to her, Elijah has drawn God's attention to the house, and, so long as the prophet stays, it is possible that the widow and her households are exposed to the watchful eyes of God to the extent that 'her general sinfulness has registered on the divine consciousness'.²³⁰

There are conflicting interpretations of her remark, relating to what exactly her 'sin' is and whether or not it is so grave that it incurs the death of an innocent child. On the one hand, the widow may be referring to her first encounter with the prophet, that she purposely lied about her situation in order to avoid the unnecessary use of valuable resources during the drought.²³¹ However, her oath and the fact that she needed only a couple of sticks to prepare her last meal (17.10) contradict the assumption that the widow purposely lied about her situation because it would be very unwise to give food away to this wandering prophet in such a harsh situation as a famine. On the other hand, her grievance demonstrates the shamanistic understanding of divine disposition towards its creatures. In Korean shamanism, the life and death in this world is closely linked to the relationship each person has with the

²³⁰ R.D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (IBC; Atlanta, GA.: John Knox Press, 1987), 111.

²³¹ A.G. Auld, *I and II Kings* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1986), 110. In a similar view, Kissling points out that it is possible that the woman of Zarephath had possessed more food than she admitted to Elijah, in accordance to the description in the narrative which refers to her as 'the mistress of the house' (v.17), as a woman of some substance. However, such implication is rejected by DeVries and Fritz who identify the woman as a widow belonging to the lower social stratum, although Fritz considers the story of resurrection of the dead child has nothing to do with the previous one and it is only placed in its current context by the transitional phrase. DeVries, *I Kings*, 222; V. Fritz, *I&2 Kings: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress, 2003), 183-184.

spirits, and a shaman bears the responsibility of guiding people to the way that is favourable in the eyes of god to ensure comfortable life and longevity. And if the work of divine retribution is already done - the death of the boy in Zarephath – it is important not to fall into the temptation to hold her ‘general sinfulness’ accountable for her misfortune. As in the Korean saying, ‘no one is entirely free from some fault or other,’ she may have fallen from grace at some point in her life, but this is an all-inclusive saying that can condemn anyone.

This is where the practical aspect of Korean shamanic services comes to light. Korean shamans are not only in charge of the spiritual guidance of the people but also petition the deity for divine intervention when there is a threat to the wellbeing of the community. If an illness of the client cannot be helped by conventional methods of treatment, the shaman will resort to his or her connection to and influence over the spiritual world to cure the affliction. When a client comes with an urgent and difficult matter, the practitioner does not dwell on any debate over the law of cause and effect; he or she may enlighten the client with possible reasons for the circumstances, but will put the most effort into producing an instantaneous and satisfying practical solution. The woman of Zarephath has not succumbed to a fatalistic resignation to her fate. She reminds the prophet of his share of liability: ‘What have *you* against me...*you* have come to me...to cause the death of my son!’ as if to say, ‘It is

you who have brought the attention of God to my house. If your God did this to my son, it is your responsibility to find a solution to it.’

Now Elijah has no choice but act according to her demand. The prophet brings the dead child to his chamber and asks in desperation: ‘O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?’ (v.20). Elijah is still hesitant to take full charge of restoring the life of the child, and his expression, ‘slaying her son’, conveys even a slight sense of resentment toward God for using the family of his benefactor of all people as a part of God’s training of the prophet. But his question is misdirected. Knowledge of divine distribution of life and death is not something Elijah can grasp or learn. Therefore, the prophet now puts all his personal effort into retrieving the favour of God, and so he does: ‘Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to the Lord, “O Lord my God, let this child’s soul come into him again”’ (v.21). The combination of magico-religious treatments and the correct request to his deity brings the desired result. God has heard the prayer of Elijah and returns the soul of the child to him.

Elijah returns to the ordinary world in triumph: ‘Elijah took the child, and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and delivered him to his mother, and said, “See, your son lives!”’ (v.23). It is an exclamation of the divine supremacy over death, hailing the power of healing of the God that lives. In Chapter 17 we witness a gradual

increase of miraculous power in the ministry of Elijah. The first miracle in the brook Cherith concerns an everyday marvel, food and shelter in an austere environment; the second miracle in Zarephath shows a supernatural way of sustaining the lives of those who believe in the power of the god that lives; and the third miracle outweighs all the previous wonders as it prevails over death itself, the threat of which can overshadow everyone in their daily existence, even the one who is most faithful. As for the prophet's involvement, especially the last two miracles would not be done without confidence of the prophet as a miracle worker and cooperation from the recipient of magic. The widow of Zarephath might have guessed that Elijah serves the God of Israel (v.12) but her true acknowledgement of the prophet as a bearer of miraculous power of God comes at the end of chapter 17: 'Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth' (v.24).

In the both prophetic and shamanistic ministry, it is crucial to provide a sufficient contribution of divine favour to the community, by means of magic, miracles and divination, in order to be recognised and accepted as a legitimate channel of supernatural power. The effects of magic and miracles are usually instant and in some cases proven to be more effective than the practitioner's theology to demonstrate divine grace that spans every realm of human life, from ordinary daily maintenance to the universal cycle of life and death. Elisha follows in the footsteps of his master; indeed he appears to be as capable of magic and

miracles as Elijah, if not better. It is perhaps not coincidental that both Elijah and Elisha feature as bearers of the gift of life and death, as will be seen in the following section. These are the issues that affect people most and the prophets' reputation will be either affirmed or challenged according to their mastery over supernatural power that can bring abundance and stability to the community.

5.3.1.2. Elisha and the Woman of Shunem (2 Kgs 4.8-37)

Elijah's successor Elisha is already a fully established figure in the community. After the series of successful miracles, people have no doubt of the spiritual capacity of the prophet. The following episode in Shunem (2 Kgs 4.8-37) is brimming with Elisha's mastery of magic and miracles, ranged from performing magic by proxy, miraculous conception of a barren woman, and retrieving the soul of a child from death. Elisha is a man of great renown and the wealthy woman in Shunem volunteers to provide the prophet with lodging and food. Many exegeses speculate that the story of Elisha in Shunem is probably based on the episode of Elijah in Zarephath (1 Kgs 17): they both feature a woman as a benefactor of the prophet as well as a beneficiary of his miracle, and they are the only cases in the Old Testament where a prophet retrieves the soul of a dead child using a similar medico-magical treatment. However, the only resemblance found in the stories of Shunam and Zarephath is that they run contrary

to the stereotypical miracle saga, 'which originally contains only one miracle, stands independently and [is] not anchored in a temporal sequence of events, of which the heroes are anonymous and their reactions are limited in astonishment and reverence'.²³² Although the arrangement seems similar, the process of magical performance - from the miracles of life (endless supply of food and oil and the conception of a child) to the mysterious death of the child - and how the prophets interact with the recipients are very different.

In Zarephath, the widow shows her own intuition to some extent, by relating the presence of the prophet in the house to the mysterious death of her son, but her doubt is annulled by Elijah's miracle which restores both the life of the child and Elijah's authority as a man of God. The widow's conception of miracle, a prophet and divine providence is developed over the course of her interaction with Elijah, as she finally admits at the end of the narrative. In contrast, in 2 Kgs 4, the woman of Shunem refers to Elisha as a 'holy' man, the only case so far (from Genesis to 2 Kings) where a prophet is described with such a term, even before meeting him. This not only confirms the authority of the prophet but also the depth of her knowledge, '*I know that this is a holy man of God*' (v.9). If the woman of Zarephath is convinced of Elijah's prophetic authority as a result of a series of miraculous performances ('*Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your*

²³² Rofé, *Prophetic Stories*, 33.

mouth is truth', 1 Kgs 17.24), the woman of Shunem does not need to see any miracles from Elisha to recognise that he is a holy man; it is her own knowledge, which will not be easily altered by conspicuous signs.

This is perhaps where a conflict of interests arises between the miracle worker and the beneficiary. Clearly the woman of Shunem was content in her life and asked nothing in return for her charitable work, but Elisha is determined to reward her.²³³ The reward is a miraculous conception of a child (vv.15-16), which she responds in bewilderment rather than gratitude: 'No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant' (v.16). The annunciation of an heir is a common theme in the Bible to demonstrate divine authority, especially if there is a petition from the barren women who suffer from the burden of social expectation of maternity (for example, Rebekah in Gen 25.19-25 and Hannah in 1 Sam 1). However, Elisha responds to woman's situation without receiving any petition, and the woman conceived and bore a son 'as Elisha had said to her' (v.17). It is daring and at the same time alarming that Elisha has stepped into this particular realm of God, and in this particular miraculous birth story the association between the origin of life (God) and the beneficiary is reduced to a minimum, making the prophet solely responsible for this

²³³ Elisha asks the woman of Shunem what could be done for her hospitality ('Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?' 4.13), and even though she politely declines the prophet's offer, Elisha asks again his servant Gehazi, 'What then is to be done for her?' (v.14).

attribution of life.²³⁴ At this point, one wonders whether Elisha's miracle actually transmits the divine grace for individuals in need or is a case of supernatural power being exploited to uphold the authority of the prophet. And if it is the latter case, one cannot help but wondering about Elisha's all-too-human way to exercise his supernatural power.

The woman of Shunem embraces the promised son (v.16), but the miracle is soon annulled by the death of the child (v.19). Similar to the widow of Zarephath, the woman of Shunem becomes a fierce defender determined to keep the miracle alive. The woman seems already to know what should be done and the rapid succession of actions highlights her meticulous way of dealing with the situation (vv.21-25).²³⁵ Not accepting the death of her child, she makes all the preparations in the absence of the man of God. She puts the child on the bed of the one who is responsible, which is exactly what Elijah did at the death of the child of the woman of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17.19), and completes the preparations by shutting

²³⁴ Gehazi is part responsible for this miracle as well, because it was his idea that the woman of Shunem may want - since she has none - a child: 'Well, she has no son, and her husband is old' (v.14). However, this complicates the situation even more: the prophet performs the miracle not based on divine instruction, neither on the request from the recipient nor on his own assessment of the situation.

²³⁵ As Zakovitch explains, 'In the stories of miraculous births, survivals of a child, there is frequently an element of the superior wisdom of the wife and mother, who is not only wiser than the male protagonist but even manages to persuade him of the rightness of her path and gets him to follow her'. Y. Zakovitch, *'Every High Official Has a Higher One Set over Him': A Literary Analysis of 2 Kings 5 [Hebrew]* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1985), 44-45, cited in Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 250. Simon adds, 'The Shunammite knew that she would enjoy the fruits of the miracle only if she were bold enough to guard its worker from error by listening to her own innate religious sensitivity and maternal intuition'. Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 258. In regard to maternal intuition, Korean housewives are said to be 'half shamans' to raise their children; it is commonly observed that Korean housewives would use a homemade concoction from a family recipe or a simple shamanic exorcism to treat minor illness of family members. Kendall, *Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits*, 110.

the door on him, a symbolic action dividing the realms of the mundane and the supernatural.²³⁶

The woman of Shunem confronts Elisha; ‘Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, do not deceive me?’ (v.28). Her earlier disbelief, ‘do not lie to your maidservant’ (v.16) becomes a vehement accusation, ‘did I not say, do not deceive me?’, and her reluctance about the prophet’s promise is recalled as his overbearing conduct: ‘Had he not worked the miracle, she would have no claim upon him. Now, however, that his miracle has been undone, she expects him to rectify the situation and restore it.’²³⁷ However, Elisha not only did not know the calamity that has befallen his benefactor (‘the Lord has hidden it from me, and has not told me’, v.28), but also fails to respond properly to the gravity of situation. Elisha attempts to resolve the situation by sending his servant Gehazi with the prophet’s staff (v.29). As a legitimate successor to Elijah, Elisha appears to be confident that his staff would transmit the miraculous power of Elisha, like the mantle of Elijah which still retained the prophet’s spirit after his departure (2 Kgs 2.14). However, the woman of Shunem refuses to be dealt with by proxy; Gehazi has been acting a go-between (vv.12, 15, 26), but the woman knows that the

²³⁶ In the Elijah and Elisha saga the closed door, especially of the room of the prophets, symbolises the realm of supernatural activities (1 Kgs 17.19; 2Kgs 4.4, 21, 32); as Glover remarks, ‘The upper room is witness to joint activity of YHWH and the prophet as they form a potent, anti-death partnership’. N. Glover, ‘Elijah versus the Narrative of Elijah: The Contest between the Prophet and the Word’, *JSOT* 30 (2006), 454.

²³⁷ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 248.

situation calls for an immediate intervention of the prophet. At this moment, the woman's perception of the mysterious appears to be better than that of the prophet, for indeed Gehazi's implementation of Elisha's instructions failed to revive the child (v.31). In the earlier episode in Shunem, Elisha's excessive use of his supernatural power was a problem and here the lack of it is causing the woman to despair.²³⁸

Elisha finally comes to the house of the woman. The prophet prays to God, and begins the ritual: 'he lay upon the child, putting his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm' (v.34). It is a combination of magical and medical treatment, as 'most miracles are performed using a small natural stratagem', and Elisha uses every limb of his body to transfer the vital force of life to the child.²³⁹ However, the child does not come alive at once, and Elisha gets up again and walks back and forth in the room as if to recharge his spiritual energy (v.35).²⁴⁰ Elisha's persistence in the miracle of resurrection is highlighted in

²³⁸ Her determination, 'As the Lord lives, and as yourself live, I will not leave you' (v.30), echoes the very words Elisha said to Elijah (2 Kgs 2.2, 4, 6) when Elisha refuses to leave until he receives Elijah's spirit as a legitimate successor. Bergen observes that Elisha is not simply acceding to the request of a distraught woman, but is following the lead of the one in charge. Bergen, *Elisha and the End of Prophetism*, 101.

²³⁹ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 252. Also, by making a parallel between the child's 'seven sneezes' (v.35) and popular associations of perfection with the magical figure seven, Jones argues that 'the prophet evidently practised a form of magic that aimed at transferring life to the organs of one party from another by bringing them into contact with each other'. G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 409.

²⁴⁰ Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 410; J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (ICC 10; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1951), 369; J. Gray, *1 and II Kings* (OTL; Philadelphia, PA.: Westminster Press, 1970), 490.

the detailed description of his assiduous exertion, and after the second attempt the child finally returns to life: ‘the boy sneezed seven times, and the boy opened his eyes’ (v.35). The miracle is now restored and so is the authority of Elisha as a man of God. The rest of chapter 4 tells of other miracles of Elisha (curing a poisonous pot and multiplying food in 2 Kgs 4.38-44) in which the problem and its solution are dealt with in a straightforward manner without unnecessary involvement of the prophet or his servant.²⁴¹

The stories of the prophets and the women of Zarephath and Shunem deal with similar characters and magical themes, but there is a subtle distinction in how these stories are integrated into the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. The story in Zarephath is set at the beginning of Elijah’s career, an episode that introduces a prophet of his capacity to perform magic and miracles, whereas in the story in Shunem the event unfolds as the high point of Elisha’s career, and, through his failure and recovery, the episode gives the reader a glimpse of the prophet’s human frailty which has previously been overshadowed by the magnitude of his miracles. One thing the two stories share is an active involvement of beneficiaries in the work of miracle; both women refuse to be a submissive recipient of the prophetic word and

²⁴¹ The prophet makes the poisoned pot wholesome (vv.38-41) and multiplies food to feed the masses (vv.42-44). These two stories round off chapter 4 by reinstating the miraculous power of Elisha that sustains the lives of faithful individuals. Especially the second miracle confirms the solidarity shared between the prophet and his followers; the event underlines both a pious person’s devotion to the prophet by providing essential nutrients, and Elisha’s miraculous power to multiply the gift of first fruits. In relation to the previous story in Shunem, the first miracle reinforces the magnitude of Elisha’s power that can terminate the threat of death and the second story reminds the reader that the initiation and confidence of the recipient in the work of miracle are as crucial as the performance itself.

action, and they challenge the prophets when the life of the child hangs in balance, leading the prophets to perform one of the greatest miracles in their career.

The interaction with the audience, in particular, plays an important role in shaping the ministry of Elijah, as this eccentric and perhaps even slightly egocentric prophet has a history of limited and often conflicting relationships with other people. The following episodes show how the original recipients of Elijah's oracle (the people of Israel, Obadiah, Ahab and Jezebel) respond to the return of the prophet and how interactions with other people have an effect on Elijah's knowledge of himself and the prophetic mission.

5.3.2. The Prophets in the Community

5.3.2.1. Elijah as a Bearer of Fire and Rain: the Prophet on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18-19)

Now the drought and consequent famine have reached disastrous proportions in the land, and its severity in Ahab's capital (Samaria) indicates that the confrontation between the king and the prophet is imminent (1 Kgs 18.2). God announces termination of the drought (v.1) and on his way to meet Ahab, Elijah comes across the king's major-domo, Obadiah. Obadiah's piousness has been confirmed in the narrative. Obadiah's name ('servant of God' in Hebrew) and the fact that he revered God greatly (v.3) suggest that his loyalty lies with the God of

Israel rather than the house of Ahab; and such is affirmed by the fact that Obadiah rescues a hundred prophets from Jezebel's eradication of the prophets of God, hides them and keeps them in a cave supplied with bread and water (vv. 3-4). Obadiah instantly recognises Elijah and does not hide his reverence toward the missing prophet: 'he fell on his face, and said, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?"' (v.7).

However, Elijah rather curtly brushes off Obadiah's earnest reception and instead orders him to report the return of the prophet to the king. By responding to Obadiah's 'my lord' with 'your lord (Ahab)', the prophet appears to be rejecting Obadiah's professed devotion and subtly accusing the major-domo of having compromised his loyalty.²⁴² Obadiah's response to Elijah's demand brings to mind the bewilderment of the widow of Zarephath. Obadiah's protest, 'What have I *sinned*, that you would give your servant into the hand of Ahab, to *kill* me?' (18.9), echoes the woman's accusation, 'you have come to me to bring my *sin* to remembrance, and to cause the *death* of my son' 17.18). Their protests are legitimate, since all they have done is to provide shelter for the prophet(s) and sustain his life (their lives) at the risk of their own. Is it worth conforming to the command of the prophet even if it is likely to result in grave harm? It is a pattern that repeats itself. The presence of

²⁴² Obadiah does refer to the king as 'my lord' in v.10: 'As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord has not sent to seek you.' However, Obadiah insists that his genuine and overriding loyalty is to Elijah ('your servant', vv.7, 9, 12, 13) and the God of Israel, whom he has revered from his youth (v.12).

Elijah seems to extract fear rather than a sense of security from others, which sits at odds with the concept of God as benevolent protector of those faithful.

In his protest, Obadiah discloses something about the reputation of the prophet: ‘As soon as I have gone from you the Spirit of the Lord will carry you whither I know not’ (v.12). The phenomenon of spiritual travelling is not unusual in Korean shamanism and biblical narratives (1 Kgs 18.46; 2 Kgs 2.16; Ezek 37.1; cf. Acts 8.39), but here such a trait reveals something particular about Elijah, his aloofness from other people and community life. The fact that a prophet (or shaman) can surpass the limits of time and space is one of many features that distinguish the religious practitioner from other ordinary humans, whose existence is strictly confined to this physical and mundane world. The supernatural power frees prophets (or shamans) from earthbound restrictions and enables them to predict the future, see beyond human limitations and travel across the realms of both the secular and the sacred. The place of prophets (shamans) is always somewhere in between, inevitably setting them apart from the ordinary routine of daily existence. Obadiah’s remark implies both reverence and perhaps a hint of resentment toward such freedom of Elijah. Elijah, Obadiah and a hundred prophets in Israel all believe in the same God, but compared to other ordinary people who had to endure the hardships of not only the drought but political oppression, Elijah seems hardly fazed by divine judgement on the land, thanks to the numerous miracles.

The conversation between Elijah and Obadiah discloses the fact that the prophet's alienation from ordinary life could be both a blessing and a burden, in that the practitioner is relatively free from humdrum daily existence, but this can also lead to the isolation of the prophet from other members of society. For Korean shamans, in relation to this dilemma, the commitment to and bond with the community are the foremost important parts of their ministries, supported by shamans' abilities to negotiate and influence spiritual beings in favour of humans. But for Elijah, he does not have power to intervene in God's plan nor does he seem eager to identify himself with the pains of ordinary people. Despite Obadiah's pleading, 'has it not been told my lord?' (v.13), the prophet does not concern himself with the new revelation of the existence of other fellow prophets. As Kissling points out, 'He [Elijah] is either so blinded to reality that he denies the very existence of other prophets, or he is so rigidly judgmental of the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of other followers of Yahweh that he assumes that only he really counts in the arithmetic of the faithful'.²⁴³ Elijah placates Obadiah's anxiety with words similar to those he used in Zarephath ('As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will show myself to Ahab', v.15; cf. 17.14), but this time, by adding his intimate connection to God ('before whom I stand'), the prophet perhaps makes a subtle distinction between himself and other prophets who claim to be faithful servants of

²⁴³ Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, 122.

God. Moreover, now the story takes an unforeseen turn when Elijah decides to prove that he is the only legitimate prophet in front of people.

The first oracle of Elijah, ‘as the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word’ (17.1), incorporates all crucial elements of divine providence: God as an ultimate sovereignty over the land, Elijah’s liability as the one who stands before God, the gruesome reality of divine judgement, and a promise of recovery. A straightforward deliverance of returning rain would complete the process of divine providence. However, suddenly the prophet proposes the contest between himself and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, on condition that the deity who answers by fire will be the genuine sovereign in the land (18.22-24). Elijah chooses fire and its destructive nature as a sign of divine revelation rather than rain, which is the sustaining element of life and in fact would be most anticipated by people in severe drought.²⁴⁴

The people and the prophets of Baal gather on Mount Carmel and Elijah gives an ultimatum: ‘How long will you go limping with two different options? If the Lord is God,

²⁴⁴ The massacre of the prophets of Baal after the contest underlines Elijah’s conviction of divine justice in the form of revenge and violence, and the original theme of drought and rain only returns at the very last part of the chapter (vv.41-46). Although the contest looks somewhat contrived, many exegeses see the episode on Mount Carmel as a highlight of Elijah’s prophetic career, a classic story of Yahwistic victory over foreign gods. See, Hauser, ‘Yahweh versus Death’, 22-47; Nelson, *1 & 2 Kings*, 116-119; Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 190-194; Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 179-190. These exegetes all share the conviction that 1 Kgs 18 incorporates poetic conventions of prophetic saga, such as: the victory of the prophet who won singlehandedly against hundreds of rendered incapable Baalists; the mysterious divine revelation juxtaposed against lifeless foreign gods; public vindication of the supremacy of the God of Israel and the legitimacy of the words of the prophet.

follow him, but if Baal, then follow him' (v.21). His radical affront is, however, only greeted with sullen silence. For the majority of the people, the choice is either to conform to the royal cult or to prepare themselves for flight from Jezebel's persecution. Ordinary people are left to their own devices while Elijah and the prophets of the royal shrines are sufficiently provided for (17.4, 9; 19.19). Political oppression and the harsh reality of the drought may have led the Israelites to 'hop between the branches', searching for a way out that would provide relief from the current state of life. People will turn to Elijah only if he can prove to them that he can provide a better alternative than his rivals. If it is a case of choice, that people have to decide whether their loyalty is to Elijah's God or to Baal, Elijah has to compete against the prophets of Baal on terms that are agreeable and recognisable.

Frivolous as it may appear to be, the people's consent to witness a direct divine intervention creates a backdrop where the prophet can resort to shamanistic performance without the complications of dogmatic legislation. At least for Elijah and his audience, magic or spiritual power is accepted as a fact of life in the social and cultural environment of the time. The task of Elijah is not to deny shamanistic beliefs or practices but to implement them to underline the basic idea of Israel's religion, that his God is a jealous God that would brook no rivals, which startlingly recalls Elijah's own view of himself. This kind of cultic polemic, embedded in the typical accusation that 'one religion is likely to depict the miracles of the

other as magic',²⁴⁵ caused problems for Western Christian missionaries in the early Korean church, missionaries who were torn between their own theological agenda and the Korean people's penchant for the exploitation of various channels to the supernatural power.

Early Christian propagandists, blinded by strong personal views of the superiority of their faith, have found that Korean people living in a multi-religious culture dwell in a 'confused, undigested mass of teaching and belief, hopelessly intermixed and chaotic'.²⁴⁶ However, in the minds of Koreans, this is a system developed and held together over years as a solution to problems and questions of human destiny. In earlier times, Koreans built their social and educational foundation around Confucian principles, accepted Buddhist philosophy to illuminate human destiny and strive for the freedom of the soul, and resorted to shamanistic service to alleviate the agitation and pain of both individuals and the masses in their daily existence. Korean people's ritual behaviours have been reconstructed, challenged and amended by those who continually 'hop between the branches'. As most acts of Korean shamanic ritual are 'extremely pragmatic, revolving around needs to be satisfied, risks to be reduced, and problems to be resolved',²⁴⁷ and by means of incorporating other religious ideas and customs, Korean shamans have developed and inherited a ritual system that addresses the

²⁴⁵ Y. Zakovitch, *The Concept of Miracle in the Bible* (Tel-Aviv: MOD Books, 1990), 77.

²⁴⁶ G.H. Jones, 'The Spirit Worship of the Korean', *Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2:2 (1901), 48.

²⁴⁷ Owens, *Korean Shamanism*, 247.

practical matters of ordinary people and provides instant answers for them. The success of Christian churches in Korea has not been achieved through ideological supremacy but through their compatibility with Korean traditional religious ideas and needs. Missionaries in general may have deplored the tenacity of traditional beliefs, but when they discerned opportunities for a smooth transition from shamanistic resources to theological beliefs of the Christian church they made use of the Korean belief in spirits to further their own case.²⁴⁸

The audience on Mount Carmel in 1 Kgs 18 needs an active divine involvement that can bring a positive effect to the problem in the here and now. The people of Israel does not respond to Elijah's challenge ('how long will you go limping with two different opinions?', v.21), it is only when Elijah proposes a test that will show a substantial evidence of divine presence (by fire, vv.23-24) that people break the silence and nod in agreement, 'it is well spoken' (v.24b). The prophet proposes a contest against the prophets of foreign idols, but tension also exists between Elijah and the people of Israel, whose purgatory has become hardened by first-hand experience of penury brought by the drought during the absence of the

²⁴⁸ Mrs Gale, the wife of one of the first Protestant missionaries in Korea, recalls how she and her fellow Christians healed the Korean woman dying from cholera with their prayer, and that she used to spend whole afternoon reading biblical accounts of Jesus' power over devils for Korean women who had come to her in the hope that Jesus could cast out devils. J. S. Gale, *Korean Sketches* (Edinburgh; London: Oliphant & Co., 1898), 248. From the missionaries' point of view, 'some types of illness could be pronounced as cases of hysteria, but they were careful not to condemn "shamanic superstitions" when they open the possibility for facilitating a smooth transition from old to new'. D. L. Gifford, *Every-day Life in Korea: A Collection of Studies and Stories* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1900), 112-115.

prophet. It proves that at the moment the people are as much in need of divine manifestation as is Elijah.

The drought and famine announced by Elijah seriously challenged the royal patronage of Baal, as the Canaanite god of rain and storms.²⁴⁹ The Baal prophets spend all morning calling their god, limping about the altar, but to no avail. The only thing that has returned is total silence: ‘there was no voice, and no one answered’ (v.26). Elijah jeers, ‘Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened’ (v.27). Ironically the series of actions Elijah associates with Baal, such as musing, going inside, being on a journey, sleeping and being awake are all symptoms of being *alive*. However, the god fails to meet any of the above requirements. In desperation, the prophets offer the vital force of life as ‘they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushes out upon them’ (v.28) as sympathetic magic. However, the frantic rituals of the Baalists fail to rouse their god: ‘But there was no voice, no one answered, no one heeded’ (v.29).²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ For the detailed discussion on the contest between Baal and Yahweh as a theological backdrop for the entire narrative of the drought, see J. Walsh, *1 Kings* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1996), esp., ‘The Whole Drought Story: Baal vs. Yahweh’, 260-263.

²⁵⁰ Hauser points out that the scene of Baalists’ shedding their own blood has ‘a sarcastic implication of the draining of life not only out of Baal, but also out of his prophets and his supporters...suggesting the death of the Baalistic movement and anticipating their own death at the hands of Elijah and the people of Israel (v.40)’. Hauser, ‘Yahweh vs. Death’, 45.

After the devastating defeat of the prophets of Baal, the people turn to Elijah (v.30). The audience and readers are invited to savour every detail of Elijah's methodical preparation: the (re)building of the altar is described twice (vv.30, 31-32), the prayer moves over the same ground twice (vv.36, 37), and all the nationalistic stops are pulled out in the invocation of the names of the patriarchs of Israel, manifested by twelve stones and twelve jars of water (vv.31-37). Elijah's fervent prayer is a bizarre mixture of his assurance in God and making a case for his own reputation: 'O Lord...let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, art God, and that you have turned their hearts back' (vv.36-37). Now the deity must answer to the prayer of Elijah. If God had not supported Elijah in the contest, the people would have concluded that his god is as powerless as Baal has been in controlling the elements of nature (fire and rain), and the point of the drought as divine judgement would be lost on them.

The contest now reaches a climax. The divine revelation as a mysterious fire was so powerful that it burnt the offering, the wood, the stones, the dust and even the water in the trench (v.38). The people of Israel respond immediately: 'when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "Yahweh, he is God, the Yahweh, he is God"' (v.39). The public confession in v.39 sounds very close to calling out Elijah's name twice in Hebrew and the

result is a declaration of both God and Elijah as winners. To wrap up the competition, Elijah slays all remaining Baal's prophets in Kishon, ('let not one of them escape', v.40), perhaps as retaliation for Jezebel's 'cutting off' the prophets of the God of Israel (18.4, 13). Elijah's intention is clear; he will remain as the only one legitimate prophet of God in this land. Together with episode on Mount Horeb, where Elijah experiences an extremely rare and intimate experience with God (1 Kgs 19.4-18, which recalls the theophany of Moses, Exod 3), 1 Kgs 18 certainly sets Elijah distinguished from all other prophetic or authoritative figures in the narrative.

The initial divine command, 'Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth' (18.1), is finally executed at the end of the chapter. On the top of the mountain the prophet resumes the most humble gesture of a servant, 'and he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees' (v.42), and waits for the sign of rain. In what may be another act of sympathetic magic, at the seventh time the servant spots a sign of rain (vv.43-44).²⁵¹ The promise of rain is now fulfilled and, undeterred by absence of food or

²⁵¹ The prophet's posture, squatting with his head between his knees, has been explained as: an indication of humiliation and mourning pending the coming of the rain (A. Jirku, 'Das Haupt auf die Knie legen,' *ZDMG* 103 [1953], 372, cited in Gray, *I & II Kings*, 403); an act of concentration and ecstatic absorption (Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 306); or an act of imitative magic, where the prophet simulates a rain-cloud from the sea (W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson [eds.], *A History of Israel* [vol 1; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948], 154). Also, the number seven in Elijah's instruction ('Go again seven times', v.43) and its fulfilment ('At the seventh times his servant said, "Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising out of the sea', v.44) make this performance more magical and manipulative.

physical restrictions of time and space, Elijah outruns the chariot of the king on his food under the influence of the spirit (v.46).

The victory of Elijah on Mount Carmel is undoubtedly the highlight of Elijah's career; he singlehandedly defeats the prophets of foreign idols and proves the supremacy of his God. However, I cannot help but wonder, though Elijah's bravado is impressive, whether Elijah's motive for the contest is not entirely selfless. It is true that Elijah begins his mission with a message of doom, but he was on the process of overcoming doubts of other people with magic and miracles (the widow and her son in Zarephath) or the promise of God (Obadiah) that bring life, abundance and security. Whereas the mysterious fire and its destructive power have brought a fervent response from the people of Israel, when the rain finally returns, there is no audience to witness this gift of life but only the prophet himself and his servant. There are two contrasting images of God, one as a violent force (fire) and the other as a renewal of life (rain), and one may wonder which image Elijah is more inclined to promote, at least in the episode on Carmel. The ideological backdrop to the contest is Elijah's own assertion: 'I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord (v.22)...let it be known this that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word' (v.38), and by inserting his case in the prayer to God, Elijah skilfully combines the authority of God with his own. At the end, Elijah confirms that he is the only one prophet left by killing all the rival prophets (v.40).

However, Elijah is not alone in making use of magical power for what appears to be a conceited reason. The following episode shows the antithetical operation of Elisha's supernatural power, one resulting in death and the other in renewal of life.

5.3.2.2. Elisha as a Bearer of Life and Death: the Prophet in Jericho and Bethel (2 Kgs 2.18-25)

The miracles in Jericho and Bethel are the first exercises by Elisha of supernatural power (2 Kgs 2.19-25).²⁵² Elisha is on the way back to the community, and, just as in the case of Elijah, this newly consecrated prophet needs to provide sufficient proof that he is in intimate contact with the spiritual world, and the outcome of these performances will lead to the first public acceptance of him as an authentic channel of the God. Elisha achieves what he desires in this series of independent magical performances, yet the two miracles are hardly complementary and, in fact, they are so contradictory that readers are left wondering what to make of Elisha's remarkable but reckless exercise of prophetic power.

²⁵² Strictly speaking, Elisha's first miracle is parting the waters of the Jordan on route back to the community, but the prophet is still very much in a shadow of his master. Not only was the miracle performed in the fashion of mimicry of his master, but also Elisha has to plead to 'the God of Elijah' (2 Kgs 3.14) after the first unsuccessful attempt, which suggests that the neophyte is yet to establish his own connection to the source of supernatural power.

The first miracle involves healing the water of Jericho (2 Kgs 2.19-22). The land is pleasant, but the water is bad, causing miscarriage and barrenness. This story recalls two earlier incidents in the Bible. The first is Moses' making the bitter waters of Marah sweet by throwing a stick into the water (Exod 15.22-25). Similarly, Elisha puts salt into the bowl of bad water, making it pure again. The second reference reveals the origin of the current fraught situation (1 Kgs 16.34; Josh 2-6). As a divine judgement on the house of Ahab, Joshua brings a curse on Jericho, here taking its effect as the land is forced to suffer the effects of a high rate of child mortality. In 2 Kings 2, Elisha terminates the divine curse on Jericho and reverses the future of the community: 'Thus says the Lord, I have made this water wholesome; henceforth neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it' (v.21). The fact that the prophet uses salt as a purifying antidote, the very element which normally renders water unsuitable for drinking or irrigation, discloses the magical power of Elisha (or his God or both) which 'can mysteriously turn life-giving waters into a death potion and the death-symbolising salt to restore the spring's life-giving wholeness'.²⁵³ In parallel with Moses' miracle, Elisha's first miraculous performance reinforces the image of Elisha as a legitimate bearer of the divine word and power, whose potency matches that of Moses or Moses' successor Joshua. Moreover, this episode successfully establishes Elisha as a positive alter ego of his master, who was furiously hostile and judgemental against the royal

²⁵³ Brichto, *Toward a Grammar*, 196.

establishment. Elisha's miracle removes the curse of Jericho, symbolically lessening the degree of divine judgement on Ahab's dynasty.

The second miracle in Bethel (vv.23-24) also involves a divine curse, but this time with the opposite effect. Elisha is heading to Bethel and is mocked by a bunch of youths whose act of bravado is punished by a prophetic curse, resulting in the gruesome deaths of forty-two of them in an attack by bears. Understandably, some commentators refrain from confronting the trauma of such a violent action and this somewhat sinister aspect of Elisha's personality.²⁵⁴ However, this sudden outbreak of hostility, the degree of violence and the fact that God turns a blind eye to this extremely personal use of supernatural power do not sit comfortably with modern readers. The only crime these small boys have committed is that they greeted the prophet with mockery rather than reverence: 'Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!'(v.23b).²⁵⁵ In their remark, 'Go up, you baldhead!', if 'baldhead' is to be taken as a naturally hairless pate, Elisha's features are immediately set against those of Elijah, who was 'a hairy man, with a garment of haircloth and a girdle of leather' (2 Kgs 1.8).

²⁵⁴ Gray insists that the story is 'in every respect a puerile tale', Gray, *I and II Kings*, 28, so does Jones: '(the story) cannot have a serious point, and it does no credit to the prophet'. Jones, *I and 2 Kings*, 389. Brichto describes the event in Bethel as 'the most embarrassing tale in the Bible' and Rofé shares the difficulty of modern readers with the brutality of the event. Brichto, *Toward a Grammar*, 196; Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories*, 15; cf. R.D. Nelson, 'God and the Heroic Prophet,' *QR* 9 (1989), 93-105.

²⁵⁵ Brichto attempts to lessen the degree of cruelty in the episode by proposing a different understanding of 'youths' as 'worthless oafs, hooligans or hoodlums', rather than naïve children, and suggests that the animals are merely breaking up the group of knaves rather than mangling them as beasts would do: 'they [youths] are scattered as chips flying off in all direction... Green in years and greener in wisdom, brave in their solidarity but cowardly at heart, they are dispersed by two "smokeys"'. Brichto, *Toward a Grammar*, 196-198.

Ahaziah, the king of Samaria, becomes ill and sends messengers to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron (1.2). However, the messengers who instantly identified ‘a hairy man’ with Elijah, returns with the prophet’s oracle that foretells the death of king, because he chose to consult a foreign idol (vv.3-4), and the king dispatches fifty military men with a captain to fetch the prophet, but the demand made of Elijah to ‘come down’ results in the violent deaths of over a hundred military men by divine fire. Now, the youths’ jeering injunction to Elisha to ‘go up’ ends with deaths by beasts. After the attack by the animals, Elisha does not even enter the city, the city of a royal shrine dedicated to God, but heads straight to Mount Carmel, the place which immediately recalls the battle of Elijah against rival prophets of Baal, and then he returns to Samaria. The parallel reveals a primitive prophetic ethos that is atrocious and vindictive. It is alarming that Elisha is not hesitant in utilising his supernatural connection for a personal reason, to retaliate against a slight insult to his self-esteem. Elisha may have felt a sense of vindication later at Mount Carmel, where his master once claimed absolute authority as a prophet and slayed four hundred and fifty Baal’s prophets in the contest, but any satisfaction he may have felt appears hollow. His extravagant punishment of the youths undermines the impressiveness of preceding miracle in Jericho.

The stories of Elisha in Jericho and Bethel exemplify the incongruous nature of magic and miracles. Elisha’s first independent exercises of supernatural power are unusual,

extraordinary and shamanistic. The fact that the episodes in 2 Kings 2.19-25 feature both positive and vindictive uses of supernatural power, occurring in proportion to the varying receptions given to the prophet ('my lord' versus 'hey, baldy!'), suggests that perhaps prophetic service is more closely related to the personal desire of the practitioner than to divine directive. Elijah and Elisha do not tolerate those who challenge the authority of the prophets (such as the Baalist prophets, the Israelite army and the youths in Bethel) and they retaliate using a supernatural power that can manipulate nature (fire from heaven and wild animals) regardless of whether or not their crimes deserve such harsh punishments.²⁵⁶

5.3.3. The Prophets in the Commissioning

5.3.3.1. Elijah's Commissioning: the Prophet in the Wilderness and on Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19)

Although Elijah won the contest against the king and the prophets of Baal singlehandedly, it was against a relatively compliant group who unwittingly become accomplices in proving the

²⁵⁶ Kissling points out that, in comparison to Elijah's action, which is a head-on retaliation against the threat of adult military men who attempted to force the prophet to submit to the king's wrath, Elisha appears as being morally inferior to Elijah, a man who acts on impulse when 'his personal dignity was mocked by "youth" or "children" whose crime was to compare him unfavorably with his master'. Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, 167.

impotence of their god, trapped in a word-to-compliance pattern.²⁵⁷ Moreover, as soon as Elijah launches the contest, Jezebel is completely withdrawn from the scene despite the fact she is the one who is essentially in charge of the royal cult and the campaign against the belief in God of Israel, the antithesis to everything Elijah and his prophecy stand for. As the chart below shows, the real competition over the religious authority and dominance is between Elijah and Jezebel, whose original forms of name represent a contest between gods, between YHWH and Baal.²⁵⁸

Elijah	Jezebel
Sustaining the lives of the faithful by divine providence	Sustaining the lives of those faithful to her religion by her own resources
The meaning of name: ‘My God is Yah[weh]’	The meaning of name: ‘Where is the prince?’
Ahab and people of Israel: (with their) lack of moral fibre, silence or easy submission to the authoritative voice	

Figure.8 Characteristics of the two antagonists in 1 Kgs 19

Upon hearing Ahab’s recount of the event on Mount Carmel, Jezebel vows to kill the prophet:

‘So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them

²⁵⁷ v.16 (Ahab) ‘Obadiah *went to meet* Ahab and told him and Ahab *went to meet* Elijah’
v.19 (Elijah) ‘Now therefore *send* and *gather* all Israel to me’
v.20 (Ahab) ‘So Ahab *sent* to all the people of Israel and *gathered* the prophets’
v.41 (Elijah) ‘*Go up, eat and drink*’
v.42 (Ahab) ‘So Ahab *went up to eat and to drink*’
v. 25 (Elijah) ‘*Choose* one bull and *prepare* it first and *call on* the name of your god’
v. 26 (Prophets) ‘And they *took* the bull, and *prepare* it, and *called on* the name of Baal’
v. 27 (Elijah) ‘*Cry aloud!*’
v. 28 (Prophets) ‘And they *cried aloud*’

²⁵⁸ From the beginning, the name of Jezebel forms the antithesis to Elijah. Rofé points out that the second element of her name, *zebel*, is one of the epithets of Baal in Ugarit and the first component probably is *eli* or *avi*, in which case the name Elijah, ‘my god is Yhwh’, and Jezebel, ‘where is the prince?’, indicate the archetypal conflict between the Tyrian queen and the prophet from Gilead. Rofé, *Prophetic Stories*, 195, 723.

by this time tomorrow' (1 Kgs 19.2). By injecting her belief into the similar form of oath of the woman of Shunem and Ahab (17.12; 18.10), Jezebel exudes a dangerous but powerful authority of her own.²⁵⁹ The queen does not seem in the least intimidated by the recount of Elijah's victory, 'all that Elijah has done...slain all the prophets' (19.1), and her message brings a desired outcome: 'then he was afraid, and he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, and left his servant there, and went a day's journey into the wilderness' (vv.3-4). A rapid succession of actions (was afraid, arose, went, came, and left) shows how quickly and efficiently her threat is able to immobilise a once triumphant prophet, even before Jezebel puts her words into action.²⁶⁰

In a series of abandonments, Elijah gradually removes himself from companionship and continues to distance himself from the human community. The desolation is emphasised by the image of the prophet sitting down under a broom tree, under its poor shade that is hardly sheltering in the desert. Elijah laments, 'It is enough! Now, O Lord, take away my life,

²⁵⁹ Each episode of the Elijah saga opens with the word from the authoritative figure, for example: chapter 17 begins its drama with Elijah's prophecy, 'As the Lord the God of Israel lives' (v.1), and chapter 18 with divine command, 'Go, show yourself to Ahab' (v.1). In chapter 19, the one who utters the first word is neither God nor Elijah, but Jezebel, 'So may the gods do to me and more also...' (v.2).

²⁶⁰ The queen gives the prophet a day's leave before she brings her word into action. The warning indicates that her intention perhaps lies in preventing any further influence of Elijah over the people, rather than in killing him and thus turning him into a martyr in the eyes of the public. Ahab's extensive search for the missing prophet and his coming to Elijah voluntarily (18.10, 16) prove that, despite Elijah's being labelled a 'troubler' of Israel (v.17), his words have an unmistakable effect on the community (after all, the rain eventually came 'by his [Elijah's] word'). Therefore one might speculate that Jezebel's message is a cautious and deliberate attempt to remove the prophet from the land so that the people are again left without the Yahwist prophet, who this time deserts the land of his own accord.

for I am no better than my fathers' (v.4). At this juncture, Elijah's flight reveals something deeper than just a fear of the formidable queen. If the prophet had been serious in his intention of throwing his life away, Elijah would have not fled from Jezebel. He had to wait only one more day until the queen puts her oath into action, but he ran for his life, traveling extra miles, to make sure of his own safety. There could be number of reasons behind Elijah's resignation of his life and mission. Firstly, Jezebel's oath is not just a threat to the personal safety of Elijah. It also shows her determination, that she would continue her campaign against Yahwhist prophets so that Elijah's life will become 'as the life of one of them' (v.2), those who are either already dead or hiding in fear. Hearing the message of Jezebel, Elijah realises that the great victory on Mount Carmel has had no effect on Jezebel and her campaign to eradicate all the prophets of God in the land. Elijah's hopes for the king and the Israelites become groundless as long as Jezebel presides as a manipulating power. The depth of his despair is in proportion to the height of his expectations of the king and people. Secondly, the ministry of Elijah is characterised by his solitude and independence. As Clements argues, 'The prophet's claim to be able to speak directly on behalf of God placed him outside the more traditional and rational forms of authority of on-going religious institutions. He felt no compulsion to submit to them, and did not need to appeal to them for his legitimacy'.²⁶¹ However, on the other hand, his independence also means that Elijah has

²⁶¹ R. E. Clements, 'Max Weber, Charisma and Biblical Prophecy', in Gitay, *Prophecy and Prophets*, 224

to fight the battle alone, and, facing Jezebel's threat, Elijah confronts the possibility that he may actually get killed for the sake of the people of Israel who have continually 'hopped between the branches'. Now alone in the wilderness, Elijah seriously doubts whether he can amend the people's ways, which have not changed with the passage of time and generations. Elijah calls again God to act, this time not for a grand prophetic mission or the people of Israel, but for the prophet himself, either taking away his life and thus releasing him from his burden, or acting more forcefully so that the prophet can find a reason and a will to continue on his prophetic mission.

At first, the third miracle of food (a cake and a jar of water prepared by an angel, 19.5) appears to be the sign of continuation of divine concern for its chosen prophet. However, there is a twist. There is an unmistakable parallel between the scene in the wilderness and that in Zarephath: the angel's injunction, 'arise and eat' echoes God's command, 'arise, go...to feed you' (17.9); 'a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water' corresponds with 'a small cake and a jug of oil' (17.13, 14). Here Elijah, who was once revered as a deliver of the divine word and a source of supernatural power, has become an ordinary recipient of miracles. The angel comes back a second time, touches him, and says, 'Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you' (v.7). Elijah departs from the

wilderness and goes to Mount Horeb, where he is witness to a theophany and undergoes (re)commissioning of his prophetic mission as did Moses (Exod 3-4).²⁶² Elijah is one of those very special few who are allowed to speak to God ‘face to face, as a man speaks to his friend’ (Exod 33.12), but the narrative on Mount Horeb does not revolve around the glory of the theophany, rather, it patiently follows Elijah’s perturbing process of self-realisation, from his earlier bravado to admission of his shortcomings, request of termination of the mission and his life, and finally the renewal of the prophetic contract. It is interesting that his experience in the wilderness and on the mountain of God shows certain parallels to the prophetic (and shamanic) initiation, characterised by isolation, denial, divine reassurance and acceptance of the spirit calling. Jezebel’s death message triggers Elijah to cut himself off from the community and his vocation, and move further into the wilderness, where the prophet is repeatedly looked after by a celestial being and directly exposed to the divine apparition. Elijah’s uncertainty is placated by assurances of support from both spiritual and corporeal forms, and the prophet returns to the community with a renewed contract and further prophetic tasks.

²⁶² Elijah manages the journey of forty days and nights with the strength of one miraculous meal (v.8), and his journey echoes the expedition of Moses in a similar circumstance (‘forty days and forty nights without bread or water’, Exod 34.28; cf. Deut 9.9, 18), which suggests that Elijah may be on a par with Moses in regard to the capacity to serve as a messenger of God, thus correcting Elijah’s earlier assertion that he is no better than his predecessors (1 Kgs 19.4). For the parallel between Moses and Elijah in the wilderness, see, Carroll, *Elijah-Elisha Saga*, 411-414; T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (Waco, TX.: Word Books, 1985), 19.

In Korean shamanism, spirit sickness is considered to be the prelude to a religious rebirth, through a process of isolation and dismemberment of mind and body, alternation of ego and a new founding relationship with the deity. The person is repeatedly sought after by a specific spirit and undergoes a temporary death, which signifies the ability of a shaman who crosses the realm of life and death at will. A vertical relationship with the deity is established through a clear vision of shamanistic service, and the involvement of the public and other established shamans is utilised to determine the authenticity of the initiation calling. Moreover, such experience is not confined to the initial stage of shamanic profession. Even if the shaman is released from the shaman-sickness by accepting the choice of the spirit, the illness could recur if the shaman neglects his or her duties (from worship of the deities to providing necessary services for the community). In some cases, shamans undergo once again similar physical and psychological ordeals, such as the practice of solitude, the absolute reduction of sensory input, a change in dietary habits, the exploration of mystical, transcendental and revelatory states of mind and so on. The practitioner withdraws himself from the external world and departs for the wilderness and mountains, where the person can hear only the call of the internal world and renew and increase their spiritual strength.

When Korean shamans feel their powers waning, they go on a mountain pilgrimage, *san'gido* (mountain prayers). Clearly the mountain is believed to act as the connector, like the pole, through which they can communicate with the spirits which dwell in the

sky. Many *mudang* [Korean shamans] have told me that their favourite place is the mountain, where they felt invigorated and renewed. Important *kut* [shamanistic rituals] are often held near the top of high mountains.²⁶³

Korean shamans have long held the concept of the mountain as link between heaven and earth and the primordial maternal figure, where the practitioners often have their first encounters with their tutelary spirits. This is not to say that Elijah voluntarily put himself through the ordeal of spirit calling, but Elijah's lifelong association with mountains and high places (1 Kgs 18; 20-46; 19.9-18; 2 Kgs 1.9-16) is perhaps not without the symbolic meaning, suggesting that now the prophet is at the sacred site, the *axis mundi*, that channels the realms of transcendent to the mundane.

The commissioning begins; God commands Elijah to fulfil the work of a prophet, as had been defined by Elijah himself (17.1; 18.15): 'Go forth, and *stand before the Lord*' (v.11). It is rare moment in biblical literature, where a metaphor for the relationship (standing before God) is transformed into an actual physical demonstration. If readers of the story of Elijah have so far been doubtful about the legitimacy of Elijah's prophetic standing, here the narrative provides a proper (re)commissioning of Elijah, of his status as claimed. This theophany has two contrasting images: an avalanche-causing wind, earthquakes and fire as overpowering and destructive forces of nature, and the sheer sound of silence that surpasses

²⁶³ Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 228-229.

all human comprehension and ability.²⁶⁴ The preceding natural phenomena are spontaneous, immediate and destructive, just as Elijah was associated with divine power on Mount Carmel (18.25). However, the narrative makes clear that those elementary and destructive forces of nature are precursors of the deity, symbolising the dynamic effect of God on the earth, and are not to be confused with the deity himself.²⁶⁵ In relation to the divine presence in a ‘still small voice’, Korean shamanism shares a similar view that the spirits can only be experienced in an intimate transcendent stage, as against a common notion of Korean shamanic ritual being marked for its extensive array of physical and outward display: ‘as the awareness of experiencing god is a religious experience, that experience appears in a form in which one essentially meets a god who is more than a man [*sic*], absolute, transcendent, with innate power to act as an sovereign being’.²⁶⁶

Called upon by God, Elijah wraps his face in his mantle and stands at the entrance of the cave (v.13). Wrapping his face can be understood as a reverence in response to the presence of God (as Moses in Exod 34.5-6),²⁶⁷ however, his gesture (only to stand at the

²⁶⁴ Literally it is ‘the voice of a thin silence’; ‘the sheer sound of silence’ is proposed by Walsh, *I Kings*, 277; Brichto says that the voice of God is only audible ‘in the nothingness of silence’, *Brichto, Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics*, 18; see also Zakovitch, ‘A Still Small Voice’, *Tarbiz* 52 (1983), 344-346, cited in Rofé, *Prophetic Stories*, 217.

²⁶⁵ ‘And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord *was not* in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord *was not* in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord *was not* in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice’ (1 Kgs.19.11-12).

²⁶⁶ Choi, *Musim*, 53.

²⁶⁷ Or, it could simply be his fear that a person cannot see God and live (Gen 16.13; Judg 13.22; Exod 33.20).

‘threshold’) and the fact that Elijah uses his mantle, the symbol of his prophetic power (1 Kgs 19.19; 2 Kgs 2.14), ironically to hide himself from God suggest that Elijah’s experience is quite different from that of Moses. God repeatedly asks, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’ (v.13). God’s original question in v.9 was more than a query about the prophet’s physical presence in the cave, but a rhetorical one, as in, ‘What are you doing *here*, instead of being in the place where your prophetic responsibility lies?’. And now the same question implies a more fundamental problem, his failing to act in accordance with his identity as ‘the one who stands before God’ (17.1; 18.15).²⁶⁸ Both times, Elijah replies with an implied threat to resign, using the very same words: ‘I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the swords; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away’ (19.10, 14).

Elijah protests, Elijah distinguishes himself, and his devotion to God, from the people of Israel and complains that the prophetic mission was a failure. Elijah’s accusation against the people is threefold: forsaking the covenant, throwing down the altars and attempting to kill the prophet himself (19.10). However, the one who tried to exterminate the

²⁶⁸ Gregory observes that Elijah’s tentative response to the command of God unveils the gap between what is being depicted ostensibly (the self-characterization of Elijah encased in an oath form) and what actually is being relayed: ‘Elijah is seen as he really is; he is a prophet plagued by his own ego and exaggerated importance’. Gregory, ‘Irony and the Unmasking of Elijah’, in Hauser and Gregory, *From Carmel to Horeb*, 102.

prophet of God was Jezebel, not the people of Israel, and the first two crimes seem to have been negated in the event on Mount Carmel when Elijah rebuilt the altar of God and the people declared the truthfulness of his God. Thus Elijah's harsh indictment betrays his own success. Even his assertion, 'I, I alone, am left' (18.22), which appeared impressive when used against the prophets of Baal, here becomes a sign of fundamental egoism when used against his own people.²⁶⁹ The prophet, who regarded the one hundred prophets of God in hiding not worthy of the title 'prophet', is now placed in their very situation, hiding from Jezebel in a cave, fearing for his own life. Ironically, the strict ascetic demand which Elijah makes of himself and his fanaticism reveal his insecurity and unwillingness to face reality.

Instead of continuing to placate this stubborn prophet (vv.5, 7, 9, 13), God assigns the prophet a new mission: 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus' (v.15). The divine message methodically addresses issues raised by Elijah; in response to Elijah's complaints that he is the 'only one left' (vv.10, 14), God designates Elisha as a companion and a successor to Elijah's prophetic office (vv.15-16). Besides Elisha, Hazael will be anointed as the king of Syria and Jehu as the king of Israel who will execute the followers of Baal until there are seven thousand people left in the land, who remain faithful to the God of

²⁶⁹ As Winer states, 'His fanatic fight for him (God), on the assumption that he is only one who has remained faithful makes him fight his own people. His love for mankind [*sic*] is repressed... His autocratic summoning of the judgement of God, his challenging prayer for confirmation and also his later breakdown in the desert show his disposition and his vain attempt to suppress his human limitations'. A. Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism: A depth-Psychological Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 21.

Israel (vv.17-18). The demand is clear: the prophetic mission will continue, during and after the lifetime of Elijah. Elijah may think the mission is futile and groundless and has given up hope for the people of Israel, but this is precisely the reason why the campaign should go on. It is a rude awakening for Elijah: Elijah's claim that he is the only one, his belief that he is the indispensable agent of God, is rebuked. Elijah demanded action from God (v.4) and the divine command is clear and firm: 'Go, Return!' (v.15).

This all adds a unique perspective to the idea of prophetic mission in the Bible, not as a condescending concept of a holy war against paganism, but as a struggle over fear of failure, fatigue, egoism and the faith of the practitioner. The tripartite structure of the prophetic (and shamanic) system requires a balanced dynamic between the deity, the audience (community) and the practitioner. Divine actions and words are not the personal possessions of the practitioner; miracles and magic are not only means of proving the authenticity of the practitioner but also of transmitting divine providence for the individuals who keep the faith even in the hostile environment. In the wilderness, Elijah finds himself in the same position as the woman of Zarephath and the fellow prophets in hiding and admits his shortcomings ('I am no better than my fathers', v.4). Elijah has been shielding himself in a mantle and his own vindication until God finally delivers the indisputable truth about the prophet himself, that he is not of irreplaceable value nor is he immune to political oppression by the royal cult. Elijah

has to accept this and continue to serve as a true representative of God until there are ‘seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him’ (v.18), a considerable number compared to Elijah’s earlier fatalistic resignation (‘I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts...and I, even I only, am left’, v.10). Now Elijah returns to the community with a renewed sense of prophetic responsibility and anoints Elisha as a successor, who later completes Elijah’s mission (Hazael and Jehu as future kings, 2 Kgs 8-9), according to the word of God. The narrative does not reveal whether or not Elijah has changed much since the (re)commissioning, but at least the following succession story shows how Elisha, as a faithful successor-designate, accompanies Elijah till the end of his career and functions as a positive alter-ego of his master, restoring the role of the prophet as a bridge between the sacred and the secular whose responsibility lies both in the words of God and the wellbeing of the community.

5.3.3.2. Elisha’s Commissioning: The Prophetic Succession from Elijah to Elisha (1 Kgs 19.19-21; 2 Kgs 2.1-18)

The story of the succession from Elijah to Elisha is unique in that it introduces a rare case of a transition of dependent protégé to legitimate prophet in the community. A similar prophetic succession can be found in the succession from Moses to Joshua. God nominates Joshua as a

successor to Moses, and Moses takes Joshua to the tent of meeting, to be commissioned in front of God, the priest and the whole congregation (Num 27.18-23; Deut 31.14-23). However, there is a subtle difference: Joshua is personally called and given a task with a promise of divine companionship, ‘you shall bring Israelites into the land which I swore to give them, I will be with you’ (Deut 31.23), which is a complete prophetic call in itself; whereas in the Elijah-Elisha succession, there is no direct interaction between the deity and the neophyte, nor does Elisha receive any oracles confirming a specific prophetic duty, as opposed to other prophetic figures in the Bible (for example, Moses in Exod. 3.1-12, Joshua in Deut 31.23; Samuel in 1 Sam 3.1-14, Jeremiah in Jer 1.4-10 and Ezekiel in Ezek 1.1-3.15, to name a few).

The fact that religious succession does not mean the termination of the previous post has not been explored fully in the Bible; often a new recruit is left to his or her own device, until the divine message arrives with specific instructions. It is generally understood that ‘the prophet is neither designated by a predecessor, nor ordained, nor installed in office, but called’.²⁷⁰ In similar vein, McNutt states that the prophetic vocation is ‘customarily not inherited or taught, as is the case for priests. Prophets tend not to be associated with

²⁷⁰ J. Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 1996), 35.

institutions'.²⁷¹ Therefore it is a rare case in biblical prophecy that, in 2 Kings 1, the time and place of the predecessor (Elijah) and the neophyte (Elisha) overlap, and that the narrative closely follows how Elisha inherits the spirit of Elijah, which is then instantly recognised by the sons of the prophets (v.15).²⁷² The succession is in accordance with the divine injunction that the prophetic mission should continue (1 Kgs 19.16-17), and provides another insight into biblical prophecy, not as a separated and sporadic practice entirely governed by the plan of God, but as a fixture of the community's religious life, functioning as 'a continuous and permanent office constantly supplying the people of Israel with a covenant mediator'²⁷³ who would continue to serve as a bridge between the spirit and the human worlds, which is the very reason why shamanism and its practitioners are still in demand in modern Korean society.

When Elijah calls Elisha to follow him rather than properly anointing Elisha to replace him in his prophetic office, the readers may wonder whether Elijah's attachment in the role of prophet resists the idea of immediate retirement. However, it is not the case that Elijah's personal interest eclipses that of the deity, nor is it that Elisha 'pushes (Elijah) back

²⁷¹ P. McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 1999), 179.

²⁷² These 'sons of the prophets' are largely found in the Elijah-Elisha saga (1 Kgs 20.35; 2 Kgs 2.3, 7, 15; 4.1, 38; 5.22; 6.1; 9.1; cf. Amos 2.11), appears to be a guild of prophets or members of the prophetic order.

²⁷³ Carroll, 'The Elijah-Elisha Sagas', 401.

into his prophetic role',²⁷⁴ reluctant to take on such a large responsibility. From the perspective of Korean shamanism, it is only natural that Elisha first follows and administers to Elijah, where the time and experience gained consolidate the identity of the practitioner and the ritual solidarity with the community. In Korean shamanism, after the initiation a candidate is taken to the extended family of shamans, with a master shaman as *sinǒmǒni*, 'the spirit mother (father)', and the designate as *sinddāl*, 'the spirit child', who starts his or her career as an assistant of his or her master shaman.²⁷⁵ A 'spirit-parent' recognises the future shaman, determining the symptoms of spirit sickness and educating the neophyte in the knowledge of the spiritual world, worship of the spirit and the procedures of shamanic ceremonies. Once the spiritual experiences of the neophyte are accepted as authentic and satisfactory, the newly chosen shaman begins his or her service by emulating other established shamans in a guild, like the sons of the prophets. The fellowship among the sons of the prophets who acknowledge Elisha as a successor-designate and Elijah as the head master (2 Kgs 2.3), who Elisha calls 'my father' (v.12), underlines the possibility of a

²⁷⁴ Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, 175. Lamb also suggests that the expression 'a prophet instead of you' implies that God intends to replace Elijah with Elisha, and that 'it was the threat of redundancy that motivates Elijah to act according to the divine directive'. D. T. Lamb, "'A Prophet Instead of You" (1 Kings 19.16): Elijah, Elisha and Prophetic Succession', in Day, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, 172-187 (183).

²⁷⁵ This close-knit community is perhaps the outcome of a long history of public persecution of certain cultic specialists who are marked as outcasts. In the old days, Korean shamans tended to be married to someone with a similar background (shamans, musicians, diviners and so on), as it caused less friction in the society which was still governed by strict social hierarchy. The unique hereditary succession of Korean shamanism partly originates from this custom, as one enters into the profession not necessarily by a direct spiritual calling but due to the family heritage. Choi, *Musim*, 56.

systematic succession from one prophet to another, incorporating the institutional authority and the spiritual charisma of the prophet.²⁷⁶

In Korean shamanism, the succession rite is the first public declaration of a newly fledged practitioner. The shamanic abilities of the neophyte are put to the test in the open, by such means as finding hidden ritual instruments, identifying correct costumes that belong to shamanic deities, giving oracles, spotting the supernatural signs and so on. Elijah throws his mantle on Elisha and Elisha immediately recognises the meaning of this symbolic action. It could be questioned whether 'throwing a garment' qualifies as a proper anointment, but in the story of Elijah, his mantle is a distinctive symbol of his identity and office (1 Kgs 19.13; 2 Kgs 1.8; 2.13-14; cf. Zech 13.4) in as much as it is 'a part of one's body and being, imbued with a portion of its owner's essence'.²⁷⁷ The symbolic meaning of costumes and ritual paraphernalia is more predominant in Korean shamanism, as certain master spirits have their own designated costumes that channel the spiritual energy, which are passed onto the next generation of shamans.²⁷⁸ The mantle of Elijah finally comes into the possession of Elisha

²⁷⁶ According to Lindblom, the prophetic guilds were carefully organised under a leader, whose title was 'father' and whose function is 'to train members of the guild in ecstatic exercises and practices and also instruct them in matters belonging to the Yahwistic religion and cult'. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 69.

²⁷⁷ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 219-220.

²⁷⁸ Shamanic costumes and various paraphernalia are reverently treated by shamans, according to a strict code of conduct, such as: white refers to the Heavenly Spirit and red to the Mountain Spirit, blue to the General or Tangun (the mystical founder of the nation), yellow to the ancestral spirits, green to the sundry ghosts and so on. Shamanistic costumes or other ritual items are in some cases inherited by the successor-designate, but it is common custom to burn or bury these items when their respective owners die. Cho, *Mu*, 57-59. Thus, one of the first lessons a neophyte needs to learn is to be familiar

after the final departure of the prophet. En route back to the community, Elisha tears his clothes, and puts on the mantle of Elijah, as if ‘divesting himself of a new identity since now the paring of Elijah-Elisha has now ended’.²⁷⁹ Considering the emblem of the prophet’s garment, this action can be interpreted as Elisha removing the last remains of his earlier self (preceded by slaughtering and offering his oxen - a means of his livelihood - to share with other people, 1 Kgs 19.21) and taking up a new identity.²⁸⁰ It may be a coincidence or a general conception of farm animals in agricultural society, but there is a parallel between Elisha’s offering his oxen as a sacrificial meal and the shamanic offering customs in Korea:

The ox is an extra pair of hands, legs and body for him [*sic*]. It is an extension of him...when he offers an ox to the spirit, he not only offers his most prized possession, but the whole of himself. The worshipper shows his/her devotion by offering the whole of him/herself to the spirits. It also symbolizes the death of his/her old polluted self, and rebirth as a purified cleansed person.²⁸¹

In addition to an ox being considered an offering of the highest value, in Korean religious culture, a ‘change of clothes symbolises a complete separation from the world to which the candidate hitherto belonged as a symbolic new birth’,²⁸² and such a concept is analogous to the personal belongings of prophetic figures (Elijah’s mantle, Moses’ staff,

with the costumes and ritual objects that belong to their respective owners (spirits), and at the initiation ritual the candidate is symbolically given a pile of garments by his or her spirit mother or father for easy transmission of the shaman’s supernatural power.

²⁷⁹ Cohn, *2 Kings*, 15.

²⁸⁰ Walsh suggests that the oxen of Elisha becomes a sacrificial meal for family and friends, a cultic thanksgiving upon Elijah’s taking the new status which serves to build a ritual solidarity with the people among whom he will pursue his prophetic service. Walsh, *1 Kings*, 280.

²⁸¹ Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 153-154.

²⁸² Owens, *Korean Shamanism*, 261.

Samuel's robe, and so on) which are believed to transmit the supernatural power of the prophet or the God.

The initiation ceremony serves two purposes. One is for the candidate to accept the reality of a divine commissioning, to acknowledge the master spirit as the source of his or her spiritual power and to take a pledge to become a messenger of god. The other is for the community, and by attending the first public demonstration of the spiritual power of the shaman, the people celebrate the continuation of divine providence that will be channelled through a new shaman.²⁸³ It is vital to have established shamans involved in the process, not only to recognise the potential of the recruit and guide him or her through the long process of initiation, but also to bridge the gap between the neophyte and the community and to confirm the novice shaman's legitimacy in a culturally and socially acceptable form. The final journey of Elijah and its chiastic structure (Figure 9) shows the systematic succession from Elijah to Elisha, supplemented with various tests, such as an assessment of his resolve in the prophetic office, his spiritual susceptibility and the first demonstration of Elisha's supernatural power.

A Elijah at Samaria (1.15b, 16)

B Elijah and Elisha leave Gilgal (2. 1-2a)

C Elijah and Elisha at Bethel (2. 2b-4a)

²⁸³ Unlike prophetic call narratives where the divine choice is revealed in private, in Korean shamanism, it is during the initiation ceremony (*Naerim-kut*, a descending ritual) that established shamans clarify which spirit has possessed the neophyte and made its choice known by spirit-sickness. The neophyte and master shamans may know in advance who the master spirit is by interpreting dreams and visions, but the official relationship between the shaman and the spirit is established only when the candidate completes the process of shamanic initiation, which is a public ceremony.

- D Elijah and Elisha at Jericho (2. 4b-6a)
- E Elijah and Elisha leave the sons of the prophets at the banks of the Jordan (2.6-7)
- F Elijah and Elisha cross the Jordan (2. 8)
- G The ascent of Elijah (2. 9-13)
- G' Elisha crosses the Jordan (2. 14)
- F' Elisha meets the sons of the prophets at the banks of the Jordan (2, 15-17)
- E' Elisha and the sons of the prophets at Jericho (2. 18-22)
- D' Elisha at Bethel (2, 23-24)
- B' Elisha at Mount Carmel (2.25a)
- A' Elisha at Samaria (2.25b)

Figure 9. The final journey of Elijah (2 Kgs 2.1-25)²⁸⁴

The first half (C-G) contains the journey of Elijah and Elisha, preparing for the final departure of Elijah (H). Elijah attempts three times to separate himself from Elisha, unsuccessfully, and the text emphasises that the journey is made by ‘the two of them’ throughout. If a seemingly unnecessary detour to Gilgal and repeated attempts to dissuade Elisha from his trail are tests of Elisha’s loyalty to the master, then Elisha has passed his first tests: (Elijah) ‘Tarry here, I pray you’ and (Elisha) ‘As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you’ (2.2, 4, 6). Elisha silences the scrutiny of the sons of the prophets (‘Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?’...‘Yes, I know it; hold your peace’, vv.3, 5) and proves his unwavering determination to accompany his master till the end. At the banks of the Jordan, while the sons of the prophets are watching

²⁸⁴ This structure is recognised by Cohn *2 Kings* 15; Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, 159; and Bergen, *Elisha and the End of Prophetism*, 68.

from a distance, Elijah effortlessly parts the waters of the Jordan with his mantle. Only when the two of them are left at the other side of the Jordan does Elijah ask Elisha what is on his mind, ‘Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you’ (v.9a). This is more than a simple gesture to recompense Elisha for his companionship and this will be the last chance for Elisha to receive any counsel from the master. Elisha does not hold back: ‘I pray you, let me inherit a double share of your spirit’ (v.9b).²⁸⁵

Bestowing the spirit of God (or of Elijah) is beyond human ability, but nonetheless Elijah encourages his successor: ‘You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if you do not see me, it shall not be so’ (v.10). It is a reminder that Elisha will be given the gift of spirit in exact proportion to his own spiritual inspiration: the final test for Elisha is to prove himself a ready vessel for the spirit, depending on whether he can witness the supernatural transition of his master.²⁸⁶ Elisha sees Elijah being taken up by a celestial chariot and a whirlwind into heaven, and that is the final exit of the prophet, Elijah.

²⁸⁵ Elisha’s request for ‘a double portion of the spirit’ can be understood metaphorically, as round number; because, strictly speaking, Elijah cannot give more (a double amount) than he actually possesses. However, in the Korean shamanic succession, it is possible that the neophyte receives ‘a double share of the spirit’ from his or her spirit-parent. In a case of a ‘god-appointed’ shaman, a novice is designated with a master spirit that chose and visited the nominee from the early stage of spirit-sickness, but it would happen that the novice continue to serve the deity, though not as a master spirit, worshipped by a spirit-parent, which is not unusual in the Korean polytheistic culture.

²⁸⁶ In the later episodes Elisha indeed proves that he inherits the spirit of God when he calms the anxiety of his servant by opening the young man’s spiritual eyes so that he can see mysterious horses and chariots of fire as their allies (2 Kgs 6.15-17).

On the way back, Elisha faces the waters of the Jordan and attempts to part them using Elijah's mantle and calling on 'the God of Elijah' (2 Kgs 2.13-14). There is an unmistakable parallel between Joshua and Elisha: Joshua is to be said 'full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses has laid his hands on him' (Deut 34.9), and the sons of the prophets acknowledge that 'the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha' (2 Kgs 2.15); Joshua stops the water of the Jordan from flowing (Josh 3-4), emulating Moses' miracle (parting the water of the Red Sea, Exod 14), and Elisha parts the water in a similar fashion to his master (2 Kgs 2.8, 13-14). The parallel motifs between Moses-Joshua and Elijah-Elisha, symbolised in the transference of the spirit and the parting of the water, support the continuity of prophecy and thus legitimate Elisha's succession albeit it misses a direct divine contact for the benefit of the prophetic guild and the audience. Elisha geographically retraces Elijah's trek and continues towards Mount Carmel, a place that instantly calls to mind Elijah's victory against the prophets of Baal. But he continues on to Samaria, the capital of Israel. Elisha does acknowledge the significance of certain places such as Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho and the Jordan, which echo various prophetic activities of Elijah, but the exchange of the final destinations (Samaria instead of Mount Carmel) indicates the shift of the paradigm of the prophetic ministry. Instead of dwelling in the wilderness or at the periphery of the city as did Elijah, Elisha chooses the heart of the community, saturated with current socio-political debates and

the humdrum nature of ordinary life, as the base for his future office. As a second generation of prophecy, Elisha will serve the community in between the two entities, between the authority of the royal institution and that of the prophet.²⁸⁷

The beginning of the prophetic career of Elisha is drawn in sharp contrast to that of Elijah. After the symbolic gesture of anointment (receiving the mantle of Elijah), Elisha asks the prophet's permission to return to the community and Elijah gives him a rather terse response: 'Go back again, for what have I done to you?' (1 Kgs 19.20). Previously Elijah's interaction with other people began with posing difficult challenges (demanding the food from the widow in Zarephath during the drought, sending Obadiah back to Ahab with the news of the return of the prophet), and magic and miracles were means of overcoming people's initial doubts so that they would follow the instruction of the prophet. However, with Elisha, Elijah demands nothing and his rhetorical question 'What have I done to you?'

²⁸⁷Wilson observes that the prophetic succession is 'a shift in role from that of peripheral prophet who communicated the aspirations of powerless individuals to the "larger society" to that of a central prophet who performed "social maintenance functions for the crown"'. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, PA.: Fortress Press, 1980), 69-71. In a similar vein, Lamb observes that many prophetic individuals in the ancient Near East were part of institutional prophecy, which took the established forms of religion such as rituals and temples. The rulers, particularly in Mari and Nineveh, 'utilized numerous prophets, whose encouraging oracles were meant to give greater stability to the ruler...Since the prophetic institution provided religious legitimacy, helping to ensure the longevity of the monarchy, it received royal support'. Lamb, 'A Prophet Instead of You', 175. Whether the institutional authority of Elisha is assimilated to the similar maintenance functions for the king is doubtful, but it is undeniable that Elisha lives in a less dangerous time than Elijah, who had to battle continuously against the threat of royal persecution. In comparison to Elijah, who 'made his isolation too much a virtue, [but] nonetheless earns the reader's respect for his courageous independence', Elisha's ministry certainly lacks such characteristic charisma of biblical prophecy. Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, 160; cf. Bergen, *Elisha and the End of Prophecy*, 70.

denies the mandatory force of his prophetic act and thus makes Elisha's decision to follow him a voluntary act.²⁸⁸

An example of how Elisha functions as central figure in the community who offers a service that influences people's lives positively is the miracle of oil in 2 Kgs 4.1-7. In addition to the miracle of reviving a dead child (1 Kgs 17.17-24; 2 Kgs 4.18-37), the episode in 2 Kings 4 instantly recalls a similar miracle performed by Elijah for the poor widow in Zarephath (1 Kgs 17.8-16). The miracles are both featured in the initial stage of the prophet's career, involving similar characters and magical techniques that transform poverty into abundance. Both the widow in Zarephath and the widow of one of the sons of the prophets are suffering serious poverty which threatens the lives of their children, in the form of starvation and enslavement, and the prophets grant them an unlimited source of life. However, this is more than a portrait of Elisha as an enabler of supernatural power on a par with his master; there is a clear distinction between Elijah and Elisha, and how they respond to the aspirations of individuals. Elijah goes to the widow in Zarephath and asks for water and food, as commanded by God by the brook Cherith. Not only the life of Elijah and that of the widow and her son, but also the reliability of the prophet would be in peril had Elijah not performed

²⁸⁸ As Simon states: 'not only is Elijah rescued from his isolation as human being and prophet, his labor of influence and persuasion is crowned with extraordinary success. As happened at the beginning of his career, in Zarephath, so now, at the first stop on his return to his vocation, his success on the interpersonal level has implications for what can be anticipated between the nation and its God'. Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 223.

the miracle of an endless supply of flour and oil. Divine provision fulfils the corporeal need just enough to sustain the life of Elijah and his host family, and the widow's initial doubts about this itinerant prophet are dispelled on the evidence of his connection to the supernatural power. In the story of Elisha, it is the widow of a member of the prophetic guild who first calls out to the prophet. Her current hardship has not originated through divine judgement but is, rather, due to the current socio-economical system, and her children are in danger of being enslaved by creditors. Strictly speaking, Elisha has no obligation to observe her request; the prophet was only passing and had no need of food or shelter, nor had there been a divine directive to specify this encounter. It is the widow who begins the drama by calling out to the prophet and bringing his attention to her desperate situation. However, surprisingly, she does not throw herself on Elisha's mercy but rather evokes Elisha's responsibility as an authoritative figure in the community. By stating that '*your* servant my husband is dead, and *you know that* your servant feared the Lord' (v.1), she puts Elisha in a position of obligation to grant her request.

Elisha asks her in return, 'What shall I do for you? Tell me; what have you in the house?' (v.2). Elisha's compassion toward the widow of a nameless prophet stands in stark contrast to his master, whose prophetic service hardly reaches beyond self-preservation or undertaking divine commands. Hearing the widow's confession about her measly possessions

(a jug of oil), Elisha starts his miracle there, without any reference to the deity or physical endeavour. The prophet's instruction places the widow and her children at the centre of the miracle: she is to go and borrow as many vessels from her neighbours as she can, specifically 'not too few', and pour the oil from her last jar into the borrowed vessels behind the closed door (vv.3-6). The transformation of an ordinary place into that of a mysterious one is repeatedly featured in the stories of Elijah and Elisha, and the order to 'shut the door' (v.4, 5 cf. 2 Kgs 4.16) implies that now her humble jar of oil and house become something extraordinary. The magic of an endless flow of oil stops as soon as she has filled the last vessel in her hand. The prophet returns to the scene only after the widow comes out to report to him (v.7). Elisha then commands the woman to go and sell the oil to pay her debts and to live off the remainder. The widow has the money now and no more magic is needed, but the validity of the initial miracle will endure long after the departure of Elisha.

Elisha, as a representative of alternative authority to the central legal system, provides moral and religious aid so that the people, those who are vulnerable to socioeconomic disparity, can carry on with the routine of everyday life. This underlines a basic principle of a religious practitioner whose obligation moves in two directions, one toward the deity and the other to the members of the community as they turn to prophetic intervention in the hope that it can bring a significant change in the way they cope with the

various tribulations of life. Elisha's miracle requires the widow to go and act (sell) in the market economy, which had been once associated with debt and enslavement but is now where she can enjoy profit from the miracle of the prophet. It is more than God's charity; for the powerless individual, his miracle became a more reliable source of an alternative authority that bestows upon the poor widow self-reliability, independence, and a chance of becoming a respectable member of the community.

5.3.3.3 Epilogue

There are more miracle stories involving Elisha which distinguish him as possibly one of the foremost miracle workers in the Bible. Elisha cures Naaman's leprosy (2 Kgs 5) and finds a missing axe-head by making it float (6.5-7). He can hear even 'the words spoken in a bedchamber' (6.12), and predict an event in future (6.32-33; 7.1-28). The prophet warns of the seven years famine (8.1-6), foretells the future of Hazael as the king of Syria, which is in effect, the final fulfilment of Elijah's commissioning on Mount Horeb (8.11-13), and even has the power to influence the future with a symbolic act (13.14-19).

However, the greatest miracle is yet to come. Elisha was dead and buried, but when a corpse is buried next to his grave and comes into contact with the prophet's bones, the dead man is revived and stands on his feet (13.20-21). The episode reflects Elisha's miraculous

power '(which is) of such a magnitude that even his dead body is still infused with power several months or perhaps even years after his death'.²⁸⁹ It is not without purpose that both prophets exit the scene in circumstances that associate them with the God of life, the ultimate source of creation and victory over death. God finally releases Elijah from the prophetic office (1 Kgs 19.11) and rewards him with an unscathed escape from death itself as a celestial chariot takes the prophet into heaven. The spirit of Elisha, which was initially inherited from Elijah, appears still to maintain the miraculous power to sustain or revive the life even though his body in this world has long expired. This epitomises a complete cycle of the prophetic succession: the anointment of new kings and prophetic succession ensure the continuation of the campaign of God; but it is not just divine judgement (1 Kgs 19.15-18) that will continue, but also the power of miracle that renews the life, as demonstrated by Elisha's final act of magic.

5.4. Conclusion

Magic and miracles are the crucial part of the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, as they instantly conjure up the presence of supernatural power and inspire the public recognition of the

²⁸⁹ Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, 197.

authenticity of the practitioner. The characteristic combination of spiritual mediumship and the prophetic tasks in the stories of Elijah and Elisha present a close parallel to the shamanistic service in Korea, in that the practice contains, in addition to ecstatic and visionary components, systematic and socio-religious elements that function as stable reinforcements of the equilibrium between the three entities: the deity, the practitioner and the community. Elijah appears to be a classic inspirational functionary, corresponding to a distinctively god-appointed type in Korean shamanism, characterised by an independent charisma. Elijah's prophecy directly challenges the cultic enterprise of the state religion and he is treated as one who is endowed with supernatural, superhuman or exceptional power that sets him apart from ordinary members of society.²⁹⁰

When his charismatic and independent authority is challenged (by the threat of Jezebel), Elijah takes flight instantly to the wilderness, where he expresses serious doubts about himself and his mission to the point that he pleads to God to take away his life. Elijah's isolation and divine confrontation resemble the process of spiritual commissioning: the

²⁹⁰ Coote describes the complexity of Elijah's personality quite effectively, 'The narrator paints Elijah larger than life: bearer of the divine word and wielder of divine power, swinging from ecstatic exaltation (18:46) to deepest despair (19:4), fanatic in his Yahwism yet focused on himself, scrupulously obedient and stubbornly resistant, heroic and heroically flawed'. Coote, *Elijah and Elisha*, 282. Also, 'The narrator depicts him [Elijah] in his full humanity ... everything we learn about the relations between the prophet and his master, between the prophet and those to whom he is sent, and between the prophet and his own emotions, constitutes an integral part of the prophetic message...his unique personality, which informs his struggles with God, with Israel, and with himself, is also an instrument for implementing his mission'. Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative*, 225-226.

prophet protests, God grants the prophet a theophany where Elijah's initial conception of God and himself is overturned, Elijah re-establishes his relationship with God and the prophetic mission, and he returns to the community with a renewed sense of identity and responsibility. The (re)commissioning on the mountain of God leads to the prophetic succession from Elijah to Elisha, a rare case of spiritual transmission and apprenticeship in biblical prophecy. Elijah's charismatic authority is passed on to Elisha, who renews it in a more long-lasting pattern of institutional authority (like a hereditary type of Korean shaman). Elisha replaces his master's remoteness and restraint with his compassion for various individuals in society, but, he is not without human frailties.

Since Elisha's commissioning is without a direct spirit call, the prophet has to prove himself as a legitimate successor to Elijah to those who do not understand the work of the spirit (2 Kgs 2.16-19) or those who blatantly challenges his status (2 Kgs 2.23-25), even if it requires an excessive use of supernatural power. And as a second generation of prophecy, Elisha's ministry confronts the typical danger of establishment and professionalization ascribed to public success. In the episode in Shunem, Elisha treads upon the territory of God to work a miracle that has not been requested, and as a result he is momentarily shunned by the world of the spirit (2 Kgs 4.27). In the parallel miracles of the revival of a dead child, the prophets are guided by the female beneficiaries of the miracle whose religious sensitivity and

intuition seem to surpass those of their male counterparts. The widow in Zarephath makes the connection between the death of her son and the presence of the prophet in the house even before Elijah realises it, and this leads the prophet to perform one of the greatest miracles in his career. The woman of Shunem guides Elisha until the prophet regains the lost connection to the supernatural power that needs his full personal involvement rather than his preferred method of working the miracle by proxy.

The story of Elijah and Elisha depicts two different paradigms for the prophet, an idealistic view of the man of God as a perfect bearer of divine provision which fully exhausts his prophetic potential, and the realistic view of the practitioner who is described as a master of supernatural power but nonetheless susceptible to human frailties, due to either the lack of confidence (Elijah) or too much of it (Elisha). The prophets' interactions with other people encapsulate a continuing interplay of prophetic hopes, ideals, failure and encouragement, of which the process inspires the harmonising effect that restores the polarities to their correct state, the ideal balance between the deity, the medium and the audience. The feedback or participation on the part of the audience (or the community) has not gained much attention in the interpretation of biblical prophecy, but the prophets' interaction with various recipients of the prophetic words and actions (the widow in Zarephath, the woman of Shunem, Obadiah, the sons of the prophets, Baal prophets, Ahab, Jezebel, the people of Israel and so on)

certainly demonstrates the fact that the strength and originality of the prophetic contribution comes from the enduring commitment to righteousness and their moral integrity, which could be effective only when their demands are modified and adapted to accommodate to moral and social issues of individual and community life.

In terms of a practical perspective on Korean shamanism, Owen observes, ‘Shamanism provides a ritual buffer for members of society against the abrasive frustrations, anxieties, and stresses which occur in daily life. Therefore, Korean shamans are not particularly concerned with worship in the abstract. Rather, most acts of ritual are extremely pragmatic, revolving around needs to be satisfied, risks to be reduced, and problems to be resolved.’²⁹¹ The fact that religion cannot stand alone, but is a part of culture, based on an intimate link with other parts of the whole, is one of the enduring factors that keeps shamanism alive in modern Korean society. The Korean shamanic ritual is more than a cult based on the practitioner’s mastery over supernatural power or testimony to divine presence. It provides the participants an opportunity to glimpse into a supernatural realm, where a conventional binary opposition, such as god versus humans, men versus women, sacred versus profane and rich versus poor, no longer holds jurisdiction over people. By temporarily abolishing binary oppositions in the existing system, shamans recreate the intimate

²⁹¹ Owens, *Korean Shamanism*, 247.

relationship between individuals and supernatural power, which ensures aid in alleviating the sufferings of those who turn to the practitioner with their problems.

In this regard, shamanistic features in the stories of Elijah and Elisha are not only found in their association with magic and miracles, but also in the ethical aspects of their service, based on the interaction between the practitioner with mediating skills and the individuals in need of a better connection with the supernatural power, a connection which would liberate them from poverty and resignation and ensure the promise of improvement. As the figure between the sacred and the secular, death and life, divine provision and moral and ethical precepts of community life, the service of prophets (and shamans) represents both the commitment to the higher order of the divine and the wellbeing and wish-fulfilment of ordinary people in this world. The prophecies of Elijah and Elisha do not promote an abstract system of divine judgement and favour, but provide an alternative power source for those individuals, by making sure their petitions are heard and registered in divine consciousness. Korean shamanism and the miracle stories of Elijah and Elisha celebrate a transformation from despair, scepticism and resignation to triumph over seemingly insurmountable problems.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

In chapter 1, I addressed the specific situation of the modern Christian church in Korea and why is it imperative to produce a distinctively Korean reading of the Bible in order to prevent a further monopolization of scripture by the authoritarian voice of the major churches and to create a direct connection between the text and Korean native spirituality. The three distinctive characteristics of the modern Korean church, namely the ‘Koreanised’ or ‘shamanised’ beliefs and practices of Korean Christians, the alienation of the Korean church from other indigenous religions in Korea due to the ideological framework initially set by

early Western missionaries and later reinforced by church fundamentalism, and the lack of a Korean independent interpretation and pedagogy of the Bible that is in dialogue with Korean multi-religious culture, were also introduced in this chapter. The dilemma facing modern Korean Christians is that whereas early Korean Christians successfully adopted a new religious system on top of their shamanistic structure and customs, the Bible and its interpretation are still within the boundaries of the monolithic teaching of the Christian doctrines, which does not tolerate any other channels to the spirit other than that which it promotes. This is where the identity of Korean Christians splits; as the religion they perform, Christianity merged remarkably well with Korean indigenous religious culture, but as the religion they read, the Bible is still the text of foreigners. Whereas the early missionaries' task was mainly to cast off all traditional spiritualism in order to set the ground for Christianity, Korean Christians cannot just abandon their religious roots. It is time the biblical literature and its interpretation were relieved of the ideological conformity of Christian dogma and instead be shared with, challenged by, and established on Korean native religious culture. For that reason, in this thesis I have used the most archaic and original spiritualism in Korea, shamanism, as a comparative tool for constructing not necessarily a theological, but nonetheless a biblical model of religious structure and its constituents.

The Bible itself contains numerous references to ‘other’ religious groups and practices. Especially in the stories of prophetic figures in the Old Testament, the symbolic actions and magical performances of such prophets invite shamanistic parallels in Korea, based on the interrelationship between human community and spirit. However, in the orthodox teaching of the Christian church, such passages have either been neglected or used as an ideological tool to separate ‘other’ religious phenomena from Christian principles, as evidence as to why certain beliefs and customs should remain marginal or be condemned. It is undeniable that the Bible contains a certain set of ideological convictions, for example monotheism, the divine government of the chosen people, and the polarization between ‘true’ and ‘false’ prophecy, between ‘legitimate’ acts of the spirit and ‘popular’ or ‘pagan’ practices related to foreign idols. However, such polemic against ‘other’ religious practitioners, as well as against their presence in the Bible, paradoxically displays the strain the biblical authors or propagandists had to endure in order to acquire a priority in terms of the faith of people. This is the reason why my thesis was focused on magical or shamanistic elements in biblical prophecy and its related figures, because not only had the theological tradition of the Korean church and its censorship done an injustice to the voices of marginalized religious practitioners in scripture, but also because the conflict, or rather the co-existence, between different religious operations in the Bible mirrors the current situation of the Korean church.

Chapter 2 introduced the basic structure of Korean shamanism and examined how this archaic spiritualism has survived and transformed itself through generations based on a mutual influence between the larger part of society and other missionary religions, namely Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity. In the multi-religious context in Korea, the fluid nature of shamanism and its appeal to the masses were the key factors behind its survival. In relation to the 'shamanised' church service in Korea, this chapter analysed the co-existence of the shamanistic worldview and practices and Christian ideology in the church ministry. It explored: *Hananim*, the supreme deity in Korean shamanism which was later transformed into the Christian God ranked at the top of the hierarchy of the supernatural world; shamanistic customs that successfully latched on to the church service as they provided various means of communication with the deity; and the role of the minister or church leader as a representative of both divine will and community life, equipped with mediating skills and spiritual charisma, which form the vital ingredients of a successful shaman in Korea.

A shamanistic religious system is essentially based on a belief in the existence of supernatural beings or powers, whose ways are known through shamanic techniques and rituals. The shamanistic techniques of ecstasy, spirit possession and magic could be misinterpreted as abnormal psychic behaviour found in a primitive stage of a religion or among aboriginal tribes of forgotten worlds. However, in many socio-politically stratified

societies, in this case Korea, shamanism is still widely accepted and practiced, perhaps for its contribution to maintaining the collective cultural and religious identity of the Korean people, as well as offering a means of coping with an ever-changing world based on its unique worldview and ritual traditions which people identify as distinctively Korean. As this society was stratified, the traditional worldview was supplemented with a new religious structure, and the role of the shaman, which had essentially been that of spirit medium, was extended to that of priest, counsellor, health specialist and even human cultural asset. To some extent shamanism coexists with other forms of magic and religion, but it exhibits a particular magical sociality, heavily reliant on the charisma of the shaman. The Korean designated term for (female) shaman, *mudang*, embodies the basic worldview of Korean shamanism and its religious mechanism. *Mu* signifies the coexistence of the sacred and secular worlds and the role of shaman as a bridge between the two realms. *Dang* originally meant the altar or sacred place where the communication between humans and spirits was achieved, but it can also signify the practitioner herself, as a symbolic body where the spirits are invited and can manifest themselves.

Chapter 2 summarised the characteristics of Korean shamanism in three categories: the belief in the co-existence of the secular and sacred worlds, the function of the shaman as an intermediary between the human community and spirits, and the specialised ritualism of

Korean shamans, which are magical, divinatory, supernatural and psychotherapeutic. Although shamanism can be best understood through its fluid nature, since shamans constitute a backbone of the basic concept of religious practitioner in Korean spirituality, this chapter further investigated the two different types of shamans in Korea, namely a ‘god-appointed’ type and a hereditary type. These particular characteristics of Korean shaman merited particular attention, because they contribute to establishing the cross-cultural shamanistic model applied in later chapters to the interpretation of prophetic figures in the Bible. A ‘god-appointed’ type is a classic example of a charismatic independent shaman who is summoned directly by the spirit, whereas a hereditary type displays the institutionalised authority of a religious leader firmly based in the socio-political environment of the community. But both types need to acquire a strong connection to the spiritual world and mastery of supernatural power, since they are the foundation of any shamanistic service. The discussion of the two types of Korean shaman resurfaced in the narrative of Elijah and Elisha, and the next chapters introduced the characteristics of the Korean shamanistic model and argued for the usefulness of its application for prophetic figures in the Bible.

For Korean shamanism and the biblical text, a cross-cultural model of Korean shamanism can be used to bridge the gap between religious phenomena and the text, between the religious environments of the time of biblical writing and that of modern readers, even

though they are historically and culturally conditioned differently. Korean shamans start their career with a spiritual initiation consisting of isolation, celestial visions, divine calls to the specific mission, a spiritual journey, and a personal inflection which can be removed once the nominee accepts divine selection. The authenticity of the practitioner is put to the test and affirmed by a manifestation of supernatural power, in a catalogue of divination, spirit possession, magic and miracles, such as curing diseases, manipulating nature and the movement of animals, reviving the dead, finding missing objects and people, foreseeing the future, exorcising evil spirits, multiplying food and so on. The initial spiritual calling is especially crucial in the Korean shamanistic model, not only because it captures the classic pattern of the rite of passage (such as isolation from the community, spirit possession, ecstasy, symbolic death of the old self and a spiritual rebirth), which can be universally applied to other religious institutions in the world, but also because the initial process sets the tone for the future ministry of the nominee, based on the mutual relationship with the deity and a divine assignment that responds to the specific milieu of the community. In this regard, chapter 3 examined the vocational calling of prophetic figures in the Bible - Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel - on the analogy of the initiation rite in Korean shamanism.

In chapter 3, I explored the transition of the nominee from ordinary human being to divine messenger, how the candidate encounters the divine calling manifested by visions or a

direct revelation of the deity, and how prophetic figures in the Bible undergo exemplary stages of shamanistic inauguration, namely divine selection, shamanistic illness, trial, personal infliction, initial doubt on the part of the nominee, divine assurance, substance of the mission and finally return to the community with a renewed sense of identity and responsibility. The narrative of Moses (Exod 3-4) appears to set the paradigm for the call narrative, sharing the classic pattern of spiritual initiation with the shamanistic model, and the inaugural process of other prophets (Jeremiah in Jer 1 and Ezekiel in Ezek1-5). It also echoes the pattern established above, with particular emphasis on the magical elements of theophany. The compatibility between the Korean shamanistic model and the biblical prophets allows the conclusion that the initiation rites in the Bible are fundamental parts of prophetic vocation as a training and building block of the future ministry of a prophet.

Spiritual inductions accompanied by dreams, visions, spirit possession and the practice of asceticism prepare the candidates to remove their old identities and surpass the restrictions of the ordinary human mind and body, and eventually to be born again as a channel for divine messages and supernatural power. Prophets return to the community with a mission and spiritual gifts that can eliminate the suffering of people, enhance the quality of living, and guide them in the way that is in accordance with the divine will. What is noteworthy is that, in the combination of magical elements of initiation rites and the specific

mission given to the prophets, there is no antagonism between the message of God and the shamanistic experience of spirit. Whether the prophet has learned (Exod 4.12), touched (Jer 1.9), or swallowed (Ezek 3.3) the word of God, the message will be transmitted not only by the prophetic oracle but also materialised in the service of the prophet, as a living sign of divine provision. The title 'prophet' thus connotes more than being a propagandist for a particular theological conviction or legislation for the divine agent. The call narratives of Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and their cross-cultural parallels with Korean shamanism illustrate the fact that the foundation of biblical prophecy is more complex than an intimate relationship between the chosen and the deity. In proportion to the magnitude of divine revelation, there are human sides to the prophets, such as, their anxiety, doubts, rejection of the divine call and a constant struggle between the respective wills of the candidate and the deity. Moreover, the prophets' commitments to both the divine rule and the demands of people, the dilemma of prophetic judgement and future of the life of the community, and the process of denial and reassurance or separation and rehabilitation suggest that the intermediary and the human community perhaps constitute an important part of the divine directive in biblical prophecy.

In chapter 4 I focused on the binary opposition between 'legitimate' prophetic figures and 'popular' or 'pagan' cultic professionals. By holding the mirror up to the biblical

text itself and bringing together marginalised religious practitioners and legendary figures under close investigation, this chapter exposed the paradox of the prophetic accusation against those who provide an alternative channel to the spiritual world and sacred knowledge of the cycle of life and death. Also, it is almost impossible to draw a fundamental distinction between the supernatural performances of the prophetic figures and those of magicians and diviners, and this led to the tentative conclusion that ideological bias against 'others' cannot sustain itself if the comparison is taken at face value; rather, the prophetic accusation ironically exposes the constant struggle against the rival cultic professionals and their influence on the people.

To realise this polemic is important for Korean biblical readers, because such recognition will invite the readers to explore layers of different religious structures and voices in the text, which will liberate their biblical reading from an ideological conformity that has set the ground for theological discrimination against 'others'. Chapter 4 examined the female prophets in Ezek 13.17-23 and the female medium in 1 Samuel 28 and how the warning against these cultic professionals paradoxically demonstrates the powers they possess, namely, hunting, bringing back the souls from the underworld and determining the fate of people with divine oracles. Especially in parallel to shamanistic ceremonies in Korea, represented by ritual paraphernalia such as bands, veils, birds and feathers, and other

symbolic actions such as binding and hunting, the female prophets in the Ezekiel text appear to exercise a considerable leverage on people's lives with their specialised ritualism being closely related to the critical issues of an ordinary life, such as diagnosing illness, divination, soul searching, and possibly pregnancy and childbirth. The power of the female prophets poses a direct threat to the ministry of Ezekiel, who has also prepared his own version of divine providence and sacred knowledge of the cycle of life and death. Furthermore, the female prophets' hunt for the soul leads to another distinctively shamanistic practice, bringing back the soul of the dead, witnessed in the Bible in the case of the medium at Endor in 1 Samuel 28.

Korean shamans are respected for their supernatural power and knowledge of the spiritual world, but their services are essentially for the living, to relieve their stress, solve the problems which are otherwise insurmountable without divine intervention, resolve grudges and give them the hope and strength. Despite ideological antagonism and censorship, the reason shamanistic belief and practices cannot be completely removed from community life is that they give continuity, familiarity and reliability to the people in times of trouble and uncertainty. This is demonstrated in the episode in 1 Samuel 28. The medium could not change the divine verdict concerning her client, but after the séance, the medium was the only one who saw through Saul's despair and gave him the strength so that he could complete his

journey in this world. The facts that the spirit of the dead prophet can be materialised through a supposedly illegal channel and that the medium's presence and her interactions with other characters are not at odds with the course of event in the saga of Saul suggest that perhaps a classic antagonism between Yahwist prophets and non-Yahwist spiritualists is not the most effective way to read a diverse spectrum of religious professions and their co-existence in the Bible.

In chapter 5, I have attempted to read the Bible from a perspective of Korean shamanism and examine how the shamanic models proposed in the previous chapters can contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics between the spirit, the practitioner, and the community, and how the prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha are shaped, supported or challenged based on the interactions in between the three entities. I concentrated on the story of Elijah and Elisha, as a narrative that sets the prototype for subsequent prophets who incorporate the elements of magic, miracles and other supernatural practices into their ministry. Magic and miracles are often favoured tools for prophetic figures in the Bible because they instantly conjure up the presence of the divine and inspire public recognition of the authenticity of the practitioner. The characteristic combination of spiritual charisma and prophetic mediumship in the story of Elijah and Elisha finds a close parallel in the shamanistic service in Korea, in that, in addition to the magical and visionary components,

Korean shamanism has supplied the systematic and socio-religious framework that functions as a stable reinforcement of the equilibrium between the deity, the shaman and the human community. As intermediaries between the sacred and the secular, death and life, divine provision and the daily struggle of ordinary life, the prophets (and shamans) represent not only the divine rule that is to be carefully followed and preserved but also the demands of the community, which need to be heard, placated or adjusted by the mediating skills of the intermediaries. The prophetic services of Elijah and Elisha do not promote an abstract concept of divine government, but provide an alternative power source for individuals, who come forward for physical, mental and spiritual guidance and solutions in their times of need. The sheer scale of the list of shamanistic performances of Elijah and Elisha is sufficient to establish them as masters of supernatural power *par excellence*, but the parallel with the Korean shamanistic model runs deeper than the external attributes of performers of magic and miracles.

Their prophetic succession, interactions with the audience (the recipients of prophetic words and actions) and the different yet complementary ministries of the prophets show a remarkable compatibility with the Korean shamanistic model, especially with the two distinctive types of Korean shaman, a 'god-appointed' type and a hereditary type. Elijah's charismatic personality and intimate relationship with the deity make him a classic

inspirational functionary. And Elisha's voluntary choice of the profession, the absence of a direct summons from the spirit and his commitment as a fully-fledged practitioner in the community and his stable relationship with the larger part of society echo the institutional authority of hereditary-type shamans. Just as the two different types of Korean shaman combine the spiritual charisma of the self-reliant shaman and the communication skills of the mediator, counsellor or negotiator, the compatible styles of prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha display ideal paradigms for biblical prophets: an idealistic view of the messenger of God as an independent bearer of a divine rule and sacred knowledge, and the pragmatic view of a prophet whose ministry is firmly based on the socio-political environment of the time, providing people with an alternative means of finding an answer to hardships of daily existence.

The goal of my reading of biblical and Korean shamanistic inspirations is to enlighten not only Korean biblical readers but also others in various multi-religious cultures of the possibility of translating the elementary and basic truth about biblical prophecy into practicality, morality and social responsibility of other religious cultures, in this case distinctively Korean, but of which the implications and ramifications are ultimately universal. This is not to insist that prophetic figures in the Bible are 'biblical shamans', but once freed from the restrictions of terminologies, dogmatic church hierarchy and the interpreting

traditions of Western missionaries that have been accepted as an ‘approved’ way of reading the Bible, it is possible to reintroduce and establish the Bible as a part of Korean religious culture. The fact that the Bible is itself a rich repository of various religious cultures, addressing issues such as a sense of vocation and prophetic (or shamanic) responsibility to and for the world, and the social, corporate, and institutional dimensions of human life, suggests that the Bible can still function as helpful guidance for the audience in modern times, just as the prophets’ words and actions had done for members of the community in biblical times.

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