

Cultural Interaction with Cheju Island in Early and Mid-Chosŏn

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Abstract

The phenomenon of the “Korean-wave” runs much deeper in history than the present overseas fascination with Korean music, dramas, and movies of the twenty-first century. The propagation of the culture of the Korean peninsula outwards extends back in history for at least a millennium, and perhaps longer. However, dissimilar to the present day, this cultural interaction was not always welcomed by the peoples beyond the Korean peninsula proper. The present paper will focus on the cultural interactions of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) with the people on Cheju Island in the first half of the dynasty.

Numerous studies concerning Cheju Island and its unique culture vis-à-vis that of the Korean peninsula have demonstrated that the worldviews and cultural practices on the Island were greatly divergent from that of the peninsula. The import of social systems from the mainland to Cheju was therefore a type of cultural intrusion, and moreover, one that was resisted by the indigenous population in various forms. This study will examine the type of interactions between the mainland culture (i.e., that of the hegemonic governing powers on the peninsula) and that of the peoples on Cheju Island.

While the thrust of culture from the peninsula proved to be a nearly unstoppable force, the peoples of Cheju sought to validate their own beliefs and culture through oral narratives, thus providing both a degree of empowerment for their own worldviews and also creating an important space for personal agency in subverting the intruding culture from the peninsula. The present study will use accounts recorded in historical documents, literary collections, and orally transmitted narratives to demonstrate the cultural conflicts between the island people with Chosŏn and the cultural wave of this period.

Introduction

It is easy to fall into the trap of looking at premodern Korea through understandings of the present day. This conference is primarily concerned with the outward spread of “Korean” culture through the popularization of television dramas, movies, music, and other cultures. We can see this as, perhaps, a positive means of Korea sharing its culture with other regions around the globe and a way for Korea to become better known in a cultural sense. Moreover, the so-called Korean wave is seen in a positive light. In past times, however, such a cultural invasion was not always positive or a welcomed event by those peoples

receiving the cultural transfer.

This paper is focused on the reaction of the peoples of Cheju Island to the introduction of cultures from the Korean mainland during the late Koryŏ and early-to-mid Chosŏn periods. My argument stems from an understanding of the uniqueness of the culture of Cheju Island vis-à-vis that of the Korean peninsula and that the cultural practices of the Island people were of considerably different and based in dissimilar roots than those of the peninsula.¹ The recognition of the differences of Cheju was something that was not just understood by the people of Cheju, but also by the ruling elites of the Korean peninsula. As such, the infusion of culture from the Korean mainland in the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn periods resulted in a clashing of cultural values. This was all the more severe in Chosŏn when Confucian-type cultural systems were more or less enforced at the expense of indigenous cultural practices. It is in this aspect that we can find indigenous reactions of rejecting the invading culture and reifying the cultural practices of the Island people.

Historical Considerations

As far back as written records reach, we can easily see that Cheju Island was regarded as being separate and distinct from the Korean peninsula. These differences were not simply a matter of Cheju being an island culture, but seemed to have reached much deeper into the ways that the people lived. Chinese accounts of Cheju date to the *Sanguo zhi* [三國志 History of the Three Kingdoms] when the island was known as Chuho (州胡). This record states that both the appearance of the Island people and their language differed from that of the people on the Korean peninsula.² While one must approach these early historical accounts with a degree of caution and skepticism, other aspects of life on Cheju seem to verify that the peoples of Cheju Island did indeed have quite distinct

¹ This is not to state, however, that the cultural practices of the peninsula were homogeneous. While acknowledging cultural heterogeneity among the peoples of the Korean peninsula, we should also be cognizant that polities such as Silla and Koryŏ had long been engaged in establishing uniform ruling structures that carried a degree of standardization.

² *Sanguo zhi* [三國志 History of the Three Kingdoms], 30:18b.

origins and cultural practices when compared to the Korean mainland.

By examining the mythology of the T'amna Kingdom of Cheju we can note that there are in fact great differences in the origins of the people of these islands. As I have argued elsewhere, it is clear that the roots of the people of Cheju seem to lie to the south of the peninsula as the elements of Cheju foundation myths are very similar to other cultures along the Japan Current that reaches from Southeast Asia to Japan.³ Even today we can see quite distinctive differences in the shamanic narratives of Cheju when compared with those of the Korean peninsula, which suggests different origins for the people of this island.

Despite such differences, the complete independence of T'amna does not seem to have lasted, as in 476 the kingdom submitted to the Paekche Kingdom.⁴ Such a tributary relationship continued with both Silla and Koryŏ, but despite this connection with the kingdoms of the peninsula, there was not a great deal of cultural interaction between T'amna, which lies 141 km from the peninsula at the closest point, the mainland. It is notable that Cheju is actually closer to the Japanese island of Tsushima (255 km) than the main port of southeastern Korean Pusan (286 km).

As I have examined at length elsewhere, despite the fact that T'amna sent tribute to Koryŏ, it was considered by the Koryŏ court as an independent state and given the same status as Japan, the Malgal, and other areas beyond the borders of the country.⁵ While the status of the rulers of T'amna was clearly subordinate to the Koryŏ court, they were permitted free reign in governing their domain. Kim Iru has described the situation of the rulers of T'amna as both "independent and dependent."⁶

³ See, Michael J. Pettid, "Reshaping History: the Creation of the Myth of the Three Surnames, the Foundation Myth of T'amna," *The Review of Korean Studies* 3 (July 2000): 157-177.

⁴ Kim Pusik, *Samguk sagi* [三國史記 History of the Three Kingdoms], trans. Yi Pyŏngdo (Seoul: Ŭryu munhwasa, 1997), 69-70.

⁵ This is based on records in the *Koryŏsa* [高麗史 History of Koryŏ] such as that of the ninth month of 1019 (4: 31a) among others. For a complete recounting see, Michael J. Pettid, "Vengeful Gods and Shrewd Men: Responses to the Loss of Sovereignty on Cheju Island," *East Asian History* 22 (2001): 171-186.

⁶ Kim Iru, *Koryŏ sidae T'amna-sa yŏn'gu* [A study of T'amna history during the Koryŏ period] (Seoul: Sinsŏwŏn, 2000), 29-37.

Koryŏ did move towards bringing T'amna into the kingdom proper. In 1105 it was placed under direct rule of the central government of Koryŏ and ruled from this point forward by officials dispatched from the capital.⁷ Yet, the ruling elites of Koryŏ had far more pressing issues with the northern borders and internal unrest than a rather distant and peaceful island to the south.⁸ Notwithstanding the heavy demands for tribute placed on T'amna, the manifold internal and external crises confronting Koryŏ did not allow a concerted effort to settle or exploit the island.

Such inattention to T'amna was momentarily heightened by the invasion of the Korean peninsula by the Mongols beginning in 1231. The ruling elites of Koryŏ were clearly occupied with their own survival, and after capitulation to the Mongols, regaining power within the new structure dominated by the Yuan court. Cheju Island was, however, the place where the Sambyŏlch'ŏ (三別抄 The three elite patrols) made their last stand against a combined Mongol-Koryŏ army in late 1271.⁹ This was to have a negative consequence for the people of Cheju as the Mongols, after the defeat of the Sambyŏlch'ŏ in 1273, established a commandery on the island to oversee their livestock operations. Additionally, the islanders were heavily taxed and subjected to corvée labor under the Mongols. Yet, despite this obvious hardship, it is important to remember that the Mongols had little interest in changing the lifestyles or customs of the people. They simply wanted

⁷ Kim Pongok, *Cheju t'ongsa* [A complete history of Cheju] (Cheju City: Cheju munhwa, 1990), 41.

⁸ The early twelfth century was a period of numerous uprisings and problems in Koryŏ. The Jurchen people, heretofore a tribute state to Koryŏ, had been unified by Ukkonae and were seen as a rising threat to the north. An invasion against the Jurchen was carried out in 1107 under the command of Yun Kwan to this end. However, by 1115 the Jurchen declared the Jin dynasty and were to eventually sack the capital of Sung China in 1127. Koryŏ was able to avoid an invasion by entering into a suzerain-subject relationship under the influence of Yi Chagyŏm who had seized power in Koryŏ. See Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, trans. Edward W. Wagner with Edward J. Shultz (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 127-128. On the heels of this near disaster were the rebellions led by Yi Chagyŏm (1122-1127) and Myoch'ŏng (1135) which "seriously taxed the dynasty and forced the civilian officials to rely on military support to secure their control over dynastic institutions." See Edward J. Shultz *Generals and Scholars: Military Rule in Medieval Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 10. Such unrest and instability led to the military coup in 1170 in which focus was on securing power of the dynastic institutions in the capital first, and then the provinces on the peninsula.

⁹ The designation of "Cheju" first appears in records concerning the island in 1229. See, *Koryŏsa*, 22: 36a.

the subservience of the people as elsewhere in their vast empire.¹⁰

Given such a backdrop, it is not surprising that culture on Cheju was not an issue in the Koryŏ dynasty. There was, nonetheless, acknowledgement of the cultural uniqueness by Koryŏ elites as there certainly are accounts that allow us to understand that the island was seen as, at the very least, different than areas on the peninsula. Yet, given the other problems that Koryŏ had to contend with, reforming the social customs of Cheju was of little concern. Moreover, we should remain cognizant that the worldview of Koryŏ was quite an eclectic mixture of Buddhist, shamanic, Daoist, Confucian, and other worldviews, none of which was fully able to subdue other belief systems.

Such a situation was to change with the advent of the Chosŏn dynasty. Unlike previous suzerains, the elites of Chosŏn sought to reach into Cheju and institute changes in the lives of the people. Confucianism was adopted as the guiding state ideology as a means of ordering the country. A part of this ordering was the suppression of competing worldviews, particularly those of Buddhism and shamanism. One means to implement Confucian policies was through education. Among the first Chosŏn period records concerning Cheju Island is an account that states that because there were no schools on the island, the people could not only not enter government service, but were also ignorant of laws and even reading and writing.¹¹ By 1420 there were two *hyanggyo* established on Cheju, each of which had fifty students.¹² It is at this point that the lengthy and arduous processes of changing the customs of the people of Cheju had begun in earnest.

Undoubtedly those receiving education at the government operated *hyanggyo* were willing students who sought advancement in a society that rewarded successful students of the appropriate social status group. However, others who were absolutely outside of the status groups that could advance through education were also significantly affected by the cultural intrusions on

¹⁰ For more on the consequences of the Mongol rule on Cheju and the subsequent cultural changes, see Pettid, *Vengeful Gods and Shrewd Men*, 173-174.

¹¹ *T'aejo sillok* [太祖實錄 Veritable records of King T'aejo], 5: 33b (1394-3-26).

¹² *Sejong sillok* [世宗實錄 Veritable records of King Sejong], 10: 16b (1420-11-15).

Cheju. Particularly, the shamanic-based worldview of the island was an area that would suffer greatly under the repressive measures enacted by government officials under the banner of Confucianism. A particularly infamous incident in island lore is that surrounding a newly appointed magistrate, one Yi Hyöngsang (李衡祥, 1653-1733), in the sixth lunar month of 1702. Yi is said to have burnt down some 129 shrines to shamanic deities and banished over 400 shamans to the countryside where they were forced to labor on farms.¹³

Beyond the economic exploitation of Cheju and its people, the persecution of religious beliefs demonstrates the intent of some ruling elites of Chosŏn to fundamentally alter the ways of life on the island. This is an aspect of a colonial intrusion, one that sought to transform an island people seen as given to rebellion into subjects that followed the will of an outside governing power. Primarily it was under the guise of promoting Confucianism that the oftentimes violent subordination of Cheju was legitimized.

It is important to note that shamanic practices were also persecuted on the Korean peninsula. Yet, the persecution on Cheju was different in that this island had long been outside of the cultural influences of the peninsula. Shamanism was the main worldview of Cheju, whereas the peoples on the peninsula had a more eclectic belief system influenced by not only shamanism, but also Buddhism and, to a lesser degree, Confucianism. Additionally, at the outset of the Chosŏn dynasty Cheju still retained a hereditary ruling class that also highlights the distinctive culture milieu of Cheju vis-à-vis the peninsula.¹⁴ Cheju was absolutely seen as being different from the peninsula by the rulers of Chosŏn, and although there are no period records to verify this aspect, we can certainly imagine that the people of the island saw themselves as being different than the rulers who came from outside the island.

The colonization of Cheju was not unlike the colonization of other peoples throughout the world. The new rulers sought to transform these territories into economically productive and easily governed areas, most often under the pretext

¹³ Kim Pongok, *Cheju t'ongsa*, 116.

¹⁴ The special status of this class was lost in 1445 when they were reduced to freeborn commoners. See *Sejong sillok*, 108: 17b-18a (1445-6-10); 108: 20a (1445-6-19).

of introducing “higher” civilization. The local and the indigenous was debased and the cultures from outside were elevated—we can note the very same situation in the early twentieth century when Chosŏn was colonized by Japan. Yet, just like in the twentieth century colonial period, such tactics caused the people of Cheju to reexamine their culture and seek refuge in their indigenous beliefs and customs.¹⁵ One area in which the people found comfort was in the shamanic narratives dedicated to various tutelary deities. This was, and remains, an important element of the shamanic myths of Cheju: to provide a psychological outlet for the discrimination that the people suffered at the hands of the ruling elites.¹⁶

Not to belabor the point, but the only real option available to the people of Cheju to resist the colonial intrusions from the peninsula were in their shamanic worldview. They could not take to arms with any hope of success and they could not hope to enter into the ruling class of Chosŏn either. It is through the histories of the deities of the island—narratives that often stress overcoming difficult situations—that the people found a cathartic release for the marginalized positions that they were relegated to by the new rulers. Such a stance has been convincingly argued by Seong-nae Kim who sees the symbolic meaning of Cheju shamanic narratives as being based in an articulation of colonial history and the opposition between indigenous and intruder, ruled and rulers, and poor and rich.¹⁷ From marginalized positions outside the ruling class, the collective composers of Cheju shamanic narratives created gods and other characters that either rejected Chosŏn society or compensated for its deficiencies.

Mainland Perceptions of Difference

¹⁵ Such a phenomenon has been noted in former European colonies too. See Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bikhu Parekh, “Shifting Imaginaries: Decolonization, Internal Decolonization, Postcoloniality,” in *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power*, eds. Pieterse and Parekh (London: Zed Books, 2000), 1-20, at 2.

¹⁶ Cho Tongil, *Tongasea kubi sŏsa ūi yangsang kwa pyŏnch’ŏn* [Change and aspects of the oral narratives of East Asia] (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 1997), 91-92.

¹⁷ Seong-nae Kim, “Dances of *toch’aebi* and Songs of Exorcism in Cheju Shamanism,” *Diogenes* 158 (Summer 1992): 57-68, at 66.

Before delving into the shamanic narratives of Cheju, it will be beneficial to demonstrate that the people, at least the ruling powers, on the Korean peninsula saw Cheju as being different and beyond the reaches of the culture that they saw as, or wished to become, standard or normal. There is really no shortage of accounts in the official and unofficial records that clearly demonstrate that Cheju was seen as being an “Other” to the normalcy of the peninsula. Such a situation, too, is a feature of a colonizing power. That is, to see the culture that is being colonized as inferior to one’s own culture. And one does not colonize a part of his/ her own country. In this aspect also, the colonizers of Cheju were no different than the colonial powers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The main trend of the accounts concerning Cheju indicates the inferiority of the island people and their ways of life. Visitors to the island often noted the barbaric sexual mores of the island such as petition to the throne by Ŏ Pyŏn’gap who described the people of Cheju as “thinking only of carrying out adultery like enraged beasts” and that they “deem both god and man as vexatious.”¹⁸ This echoes the complaint of Ch’oe Ch’ŏkkyŏng (1120-1186), an official posted to T’amna in the Koryŏ period who criticized the island as having “customs that are evil and thus is difficult to govern.”¹⁹ We can see in commentary such as the above that Cheju was understood as being a different culture and one in need of change in both late Koryŏ and Chosŏn. It was in Chosŏn, however, that attempts to change the island customs were undertaken.

The dynastic records of Chosŏn are an excellent source for understanding the ruling elites’ views on Cheju Island. In the first half of the dynasty, there are numerous accounts of the perceived uncivilized nature of the island people. For example, a record in the *Sejong sillok* in 1427 cites the loose sexual morals of commoner class women on the island, stating that the daughters of commoner households are known by the euphemism of *yunyŏ* (遊女), in short women who

¹⁸ Ŏ Pyŏn’gap, “Chŏng Taemado kyosŏ” [征對麻島教書 Order of attacking Tsushima Island], in *Tongmunsŏn* [東文選 Anthology of Eastern {i.e., Korean} literature], 24: 8a. This account describes events taking place during the early fifteenth century.

¹⁹ *Koryŏsa*, 99: 25a-26a.

have sexual relations with numerous men.²⁰ A subsequent record during the same reign notes the predilection of the island people for thievery of horses and cattle and gives the reason for this as being that the “people do not know propriety.”²¹ We can understand from these early fifteenth century records that those who governed the dynasty saw the lifestyles of the people on Cheju as being out of line with accepted behavior and in need of correction.

Such commentary continued in subsequent reigns. A petition to the throne in 1510 by a junior military officer Kim Ŭijung (金義中) complains of the lack of a citizen response to attacks by pirates,

As there is no temperament of decorum and humility in the homes, when there is an invasion, there are no men of merit [to rise up and lead the people], and the people simply lament—such a happening is not unusual at all.²²

One could understand such a lack of “response” as being indicative of the island people’s lack of any real commitment to the missions of the Chosŏn government.

Other records show that this distaste for the lifestyles and customs of the people of Cheju was widespread. A 1517 account notes that the people of the island are “no more than barbarians” in trying to explain the lack of success in agrarian development on the island.²³ Subsequently, Song Insu (宋仁粹), the magistrate of Cheju, complained,

The people of this area are all devoted to martial arts and as they do not know learning, the customs of every house are rough and wild. Since [the situation] is as such, how about selecting Confucian students for the *hyanggyo* who are bright in disposition and worthy of cultivating Confucian studies, send them to the Hajae-dormitory of the Sŏnggun’gwan and teach them to become men of ability, and have them revive the corrupted customs [of Cheju]?²⁴

After this petition, the Board of Rites approved the idea of Song and issued an order to train such men.

²⁰ *Sejong sillok*, 36: 22a-23b (1427-06-10).

²¹ *Sejong sillok*, 72: 36a (1436-06-20).

²² *Chungjong sillok* [中宗實錄 Veritable records of King Chungjong], 11: 63a (1510-07-10).

²³ *Chungjong sillok*, 30: 38b (1517-11-05).

²⁴ *Chungjong sillok*, 68: 49a (1530-06-21).

In the early Chosŏn, then, a strong sense that Cheju and its customs and people were barbaric was fashioned. Such a mentality allowed the ruling classes to treat the people and their ways of life with disdain and to carry out brutal suppressions of the customs on the island. Such attacks were executed in a variety of ways, with the actions of the Yi Hyŏngsang in 1702 as perhaps the most visible manifestation of this cultural suppression.

Island Understandings and Responses to Cultural Suppression

For the people of Cheju, the attempts by their new rulers to change their way of life was clearly evident. The establishment of schools, new regulations, and even restrictions on their movements demonstrated the coercive nature of the new rulers. Such attacks on their culture gave rise to a sentiment of helplessness on one hand, and a desire to retaliate on the other. Given that the changes enforced by the ruling powers were aimed at eradicating cultural practices seen as barbaric or unfit, the response of the people was formulated in this very culture.

The religious worldview of Cheju Island in the early Chosŏn was one that centered on local deities that were charged with the various matters that affected the lives of the people. Such concerns could be agrarian or related to harvesting fish and other marine life from the sea. These deities were honored through songs that retold of their pasts and how they came to be settled in a particular spot on the island. Known as *ponp'uri*, these orally transmitted songs were passed from generation to generation by the shamans who served as the religious heads of given communities. Like any oral literature, however, these songs were dynamic and changed with external conditions and stimuli, thus reflecting the current concerns of the people in a given area.

A common theme of these songs is that of rebellion or of overcoming hardships. This reflects the concerns of the songs' composer group (i.e., shamans) and the audience (the island people). Such qualities are typical of the literature of any colonized people, as literature provides a forum where the hegemonic ruling powers can be challenged and local culture can be upheld as

significant. Such a validation process allows a colonized people to demonstrate the value of their cultural practices that have been dismissed as illegitimate or unimportant by the colonial powers.

The audience of such songs is also important. Shamanic practices are oftentimes dismissed as simply a “women’s religion,” but such a view is too narrow. Shamanic practices reached all social and economic groups in Cheju (and elsewhere in Chosŏn too). As Kim Yŏngdon has argued, one common link between audience members of a Cheju shamanic narrative would have been a shared consciousness of Cheju’s history and a sense of separateness from the Korean peninsula.²⁵ And such a link would have easily overridden any differences based on social or economic disparities among audience members. What was challenged by the new ruling powers was the very legitimacy of their cultural practices. It was the “shared oppression” of the island people that brought them together in the shamanic worldview.²⁶

The first set of shamanic narrative examined here are those of deities that openly attack those who infringe upon the island people.²⁷ Consider, for example, the following narrative that tells of an arrogant government official, one Hŏ Chwasu (許座首), who rides his horse through a funeral ritual, thus disrespecting both the gods and the spirit of the dead. Three shamanic shrine gods hunt down Hŏ,

“Are you Hŏ Chwasu? Don’t you know me? I am the god of Kimnyŏng Village!”

“And I am the god of Kwangjŏng Shrine!”

“And I am the god of Yech’ŏn. What kind of dishonor did you do to us?”

“Jail and punish him!”

After the order was given and the punishment meted out, Hŏ lost his senses.

Later the villagers came by and marveled at Hŏ’s blood spread all about, exclaiming “What is all this?”; there was no more military camp and no more governor. Hŏ’s descendants all died off and his fortune was lost.²⁸

²⁵ Kim Yŏngdon, *Chejudo Cheju saram* [Cheju Island and the Cheju people] (Seoul: Minsog’wŏn, 1999), 316-317.

²⁶ Terry Eagleton argues that, “What any oppressed group has most vitally in common is just the fact of their shared oppression.” See, “Nationalism” irony and commitment,” in Eagleton, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 37.

²⁷ I have discussed the cultural significance of narratives such as these in terms of healing in, Michael J. Pettid, “May the Gods Strike you Dead! Healing through Subversion in Shamanic Narratives.” *Asian Folklore Studies* 62 (2003), 113-132.

²⁸ Recorded in Hyŏn Yongjun, *Chejudo musok charyo sajŏn* [Encyclopedia of the shamanic

We see in the above a desire of the people to protect their customs and to continue the religious practices that they deem as being valid. In reality, no such retaliation against a government official would have been possible, but in fiction the people realize justice.

Other songs reveal similar sentiments such as that telling of the punishment of Kim T'ongjǒng (金通精, ?- 1273), the leader of the Sambyōlch'o forces that made their last stand on Cheju Island and brought the wrath of the Mongol army to the Island. In this narrative, entitled *Kwangjǒng-dang* [Kwangjǒng shrine], Kim is seized by three shrine gods for attempting to extract a heavy tax burden on the people.²⁹ He is ultimately killed by the shrine gods after being locked in an iron box and cast into the sea.

A final song in this category is that of *Kodaejang ponp'uri* [The origin myth of Headman Ko]. This narrative directly tells of the religious persecution that the people of Cheju suffered at the hands of the Choson officials sent to their island to govern and bring Cheju in line with Confucian social practices. The basic narrative line of this story tells of a newly appointed magistrate, the aforementioned Yi Hyōngsang, who in this narrative burns down some 500 temples and shrines upon his appointment, and then banishes the shamans to the countryside where they are forced to labor. Yi is ultimately punished by a group of shamans led by a shaman surnamed Ko. This group gathers and conjure forth legions of *chapkwi* (雜鬼 minor demons) who rid the island of this outside,

The branches of a thousand year-old Chinese nettle tree let forth violent screams and were accompanied by a fierce gale.

Suddenly, legions of *chapkwi* began to swirl about in a huge cloud filling the space between heaven and earth. At that time, Magistrate Yi, clapped his hands together in appeal:

“Although it was by my hand that all the shrines outside of the city walls were burnt, the power of the gods remains inside the walls!”

The magistrate could not order the shrines burnt inside the city walls and fled the island.³⁰

materials of Cheju island] (Seoul: Sin'gu munhwas, 1980), 731-733.

²⁹ Recorded in Hyōn Yongjun, *Chejudo musok charyo sajōn*, 774-775.

³⁰ Recorded in Hyōn Yongjun, *Chejudo musok charyo sajōn*, 811-815.

There are numerous other such narratives that well demonstrate the desire of the people of Cheju for the elimination of outside interference in their lives. Such narratives demonstrate the resentment of the people towards the colonial powers that have attempted to suppress or eradicate their cultural practices and ways of life. The fact that all of these songs can be categorized as violent further illustrates the anger of the people and their hopes for supernatural intervention. It is notable that we do not find such narratives of supernatural revenge against government officials on the Korean peninsula, again demonstrating the uniqueness of Cheju and its situation in early Chosŏn.

The next group of songs I will examine are concerned with guardian deities. That is, these shamanic narratives feature deities that function to protect the island from outside forces. Given the location of Cheju, it has historically been a frequent target of pirates and thus the desire to gain protection from such outside forces is natural. Of course, these deities also represent a desire to repel the new ruling powers from the peninsula.

Of the numerous songs in this category are *Ch'ilmŏrit-dang* [Song of Ch'ilmŏrit shrine] which retells the history of a goddess who leads a million strong army to Cheju where she settles at a shrine in Cheju City.³¹ Here, the goddess protects the island people against invasion and also grants prosperity to those who worship at her shrine. Similar to this narrative is that of *Sinch'on ponhyang-dang* [Origin myth of Sin'ch'on shrine].³² In this song a god named K'unmulmŏ brings some ten thousand troops to his shrine in southern Cheju where he protects the people from invasion.

A more interesting narrative of a guardian deity is that of *Kwoenwoegit-dang ponp'uri* [Origin myth of Kwoenwoegit shrine].³³ In this structurally well-developed narrative, the life story of Kwoenwoegit is retold. Having been discarded by his parents as an infant, Kwoenwoegit gains great power and returns to seek revenge on his parents with a million-man army. While the motif

³¹ Recorded in Hyŏn Yongjun, *Chejudo musok charyo sajŏn*, 597-598.

³² Recorded in Hyŏn Yongjun, *Chejudo musok charyo sajŏn*, 370-381.

³³ Recorded in Hyŏn Yongjun, *Chejudo musok charyo sajŏn*, 636-647.

of a child being discarded by a parent is common in the shamanic narratives of the peninsula such as *Pari kongju* [The abandoned princess], the idea of a child returning with an army and seeking revenge is unique to Cheju Island. Kwoenwoegit, after disposing of his parents, takes political power of the island and establishes a time of prosperity.

Such powerful and protective deities reflect the desire of the island people for supernatural assistance in their own lives. Rather than having their ways of life and customs attacked, the people follow these narratives in the hope that such ideal conditions will be realized. These guardian deities are a manifestation of the people's hope for a hero-savior who will liberate them from the oppression and discrimination that they experienced at the hands of the rulers from the peninsula.

Conclusion

While, in the interest of space considerations, I have only briefly recounted a few of the shamanic narratives of Cheju Island, we can note general trends of rejecting outside influence and of seeking to safeguard island customs. Quite visible in these historic accounts and shamanic narratives are sentiments concerning the cultural uniqueness of Cheju Island: from the official records concerning Cheju we see disparagement of the people's way or life and customs and a strong desire to enact change; from the shamanic narratives, we note an equally strong wish to preserve a way of life passed on from the time when Cheju was an autonomous polity. Such a contrast is, in short, the opposition between a colonial overlord and the colonial subject.

Cultural interaction takes many forms. We can note trade, religion, and technology on one side, and domination, suppression, and cultural eradication on the other side. In the case of Cheju Island and the Chosŏn dynasty, it is quite clearly a case of an unwillingness by the people of Cheju to abandon their longstanding cultural practices. The history of Cheju in early Chosŏn is not that of a willing part of the country, but rather that of a conquered and subjugated people being forced to alter their customs and lifestyles. The shamanic narratives

discussed above are forms of colonial literature and represent the pleas of the island people for liberation from their colonial oppressors. Colonial literature is designed to remember and preserve what has been taken away by the colonizing powers; it is further a means to confront the oppressor and to create a bond among the oppressed. We can note all of these functions in the shamanic narratives of Cheju Island.