

**Academic Hypothesis and Social Reliability:
on the dual structure of the Korean spiritual world**

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This panel revisits quite broad topics, but I would like to submit two concrete questions from the view point of a Koreanist in Japan. One is “can each of the world anthropologies be developed by the local anthropologists?” And the other is “can the interpretation of cultures really be as reflexive between the society and the academy as the sociologists generally argues?”

Japanese Anthropology and Korean Studies

Talking about anthropology of Korean culture, no one would deny it was Japanese researchers that started anthropological studies on the Korean Peninsula.

Indeed, as Robert Oppenheim recently pointed out, some pioneer research on Korean culture was seen in the United States even before 1945, but American anthropologists were “too busy” to open up such uncharted territory like Korea even later in 20th century (Oppenheim 2016), as were the European anthropologists. They lost intellectual interest towards Korea within Oriental studies and would revitalize their taste for colonial governance, as it became more and more obvious that the Korean Peninsula would come under Japanese rule (Kajimura 1998: 279).

On the contrary, Japanese writers began to represent Korean culture with a specific stereotype in the mid-1890s, such as Koreans were inconsistent, lazy and always smoking tobacco (Kamigaito 1994: 42; Nakane 2004: 130-132). It soon became a popular conversation pieces for Japanese intellectuals to analyze and criticize Korean culture. We can verify this phenomenon as recorded in Japanese magazines and newspapers in the 1890s through the 1900s (Ota 2006). However, once Japan has annexed the peninsula in 1910, Japanese intellectuals didn't view Korean culture as foreign and open for critique, but rather as one of the vanishing rural traditions in Japan, and started

trying to record and salvage it (Ota 2009). The most typical figure would be the famous Muneyoshi Yanagi (柳宗悦, 1889-1961), but I would rather introduce the lesser known Tomo Imamura (今村 鞆, 1870-1943). He settled in Korea as a police official, and later became a popular lecturer of Korean culture, then a core supervisor to establish the Ch'öng'gu Hak'oe (靑丘學會) in 1930, an academic association for Korean & Manchurian studies (Iijima 1940).

On the other hand, we usually regard Takashi Akiba (秋葉隆, 1888-1952) as the founder of anthropological studies of Korea. Interestingly, he confessed that he got much of his influence from Imamura. Akiba majored in sociology in the University of Tokyo, and his graduation thesis was titled “A Study on Shamanism”. He became affiliated with Keijo Imperial University in Seoul as a lecturer in 1924, but before starting, he was sent to Europe to study social anthropology and ethnology under Durheim, Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski. It was on a boat going to Korea in 1926 that he read Imamura's book, and became motivated to study Korean shamanism (Akiba 1940: 133). He applied fieldwork to his research on Korean shamanism, and often took Chijo Akamatsu (赤松智城, 1886-1960), a professor of religious studies in the same university, and some Korean students, too, as we can confirm with photographs which now belong to Seoul National University. One of the hypotheses that Akiba proposed based on these fieldworks was “the dual structure model of Korean spiritual world (朝鮮の精神世界の二重構造論)” a term still in use among Japanese anthropologists today.

Thus, Japanese discourse about Korean culture advanced from the application and verification of stereotypes to some academic knowledge, then to a hypothesis based on academic research. Indeed, anthropology and ethnology developed in Western European & American countries, and Akiba studied in Europe, too, but anthropological Korean studies in Japan had been quite independent from the mainstream of anthropology. Therefore, we can say anthropology of Korea in Japan is one of the typical examples of the world anthropologies.

The Dual Structure Model of the Korean Spiritual World

In short, Akiba's "dual structure model" describes Korean social structure as the combination of Confucianism and shamanism. Confucian rituals were held mostly by men, while the participants of shaman rituals were women. Confucianism is based on patriarchal lineage, while shamanism can be for village neighbors or generally more flexible than the frame of paternal lines. Additionally, shaman rituals often soothe the dead souls that the Confucian tradition prohibits to worship. These two sets of social norms make up for the shortcomings of the other, and preserve the social order in Korea, an idea of Akiba (Akiba 1938).

He, however, used a different term himself, "dual organisation (二重組織)". Unfortunately, after his death not only the name, but also the very core of his hypothesis got a tendency to be misunderstood or to be stretched. I would like to focus on the most obvious misunderstanding of his idea; it often misleads people to believe that Akiba had proved the Korean gender divisions and/or the distinction of ownerships of two types of traditions. I would not censure any example of scholars who made this mistake, but even some leading scholars do this, it even has also become a discussion topic in several annual conferences of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology from the 90s onward.

What Akiba argued was not this kind of gender division and/or ownership distinction. To be sure, the stakeholders and the participants of each ritual might be divided into men and women, but Akiba's hypothesis was to identify the *relationship* between two traditions to analyze Korean culture itself *holistically*. And there is no rational reason to focus on the difference between men and women here because his it was not the only dualism that Akiba used. You can find the dualisms of lineage and neighbor relationships, and sacred dead people and the other dead people, too, can't you.

Classrooms and the Hypothesis

Then, why does it matter to modern society? Well, it matters because Akiba's hypothesis is still studied and applied to this day. The most obvious example would be the group of anthropologists in Japan. A young Japanese researcher, Yoshinobu Shinzato, claimed that "the dual structure model" is "dogma" even in the 2010s (Shinzato 2011: 57). This "dogma", however, is alive not only among Japanese anthropologists, but even among Korean intellectuals. Now if I say Korean intellectuals, you might think it would be a rather small group and barely seem like a reasonable measure of a society. But do you know how many percent of Korean people get into college these days? In Japan, the rate of student studying in university was 56.8% last year. Then, how about South Korea? Any idea? The percentage was highest in 2008. More than 50%? More than 60%? More than 70%? Would you be surprised to learn it was 83.8% in 2008? Of course, I cannot say all of college-going people learn the same content at the same academic rigor, but I think you would understand the connection more with this study.

In 2003, I conducted a questionnaire research in two universities, one a prestigious women's university in Seoul, to which admission is fairly difficult; it is indicated here as A. The other is a co-ed university in a suburb of Seoul, which to locals has a reputation that almost anyone can get admission; it is B on the screen. The first Question is if they have heard of "the dual structure model" hypothesis. The result was no one besides three senior students of University A heard of it. But take a look at the responses If I ask if they have heard that Confucianism is for men while shamanism is for women, almost all students answered yes. Now, where or when did they hear this? Surprisingly, more than 40% of students answered that they have *learned* it as a part of some course. The students in both universities come from diverse backgrounds; sophomores to seniors, and especially in the case of University B, some students were in Department of Taekwondo! One of the students in University A wrote, "such knowledge is common sense, if I want to graduate from college." A student in University B wrote, "this topic came up on the mid-semester exam of Korean Culture class.

Korean men are more Confucian, and Korean women are more _____. ”

As I explained before, some Korean students did accompany Akiba when he went out for on his fieldwork. Needless to say, these very same students became the leaders of the humanities and social sciences after Korea gained its independence from Japan. Moreover, it is quite a famous anecdote that South Korean researchers were catching up with the trends of Japanese academia, even before South Korea and Japan restored diplomatic relations in 1965, and even while Japanese books were still stigmatized in South Korea. Therefore, it is not hard to imagine that Akiba’s hypothesis and the misunderstandings of it have been seeping into the South Korean people’s subconscious, and becoming accepted fact.

Additionally, it is not only public education, but there are also various kinds of lectures and courses that are teaching this misleading version of “dual structure model.” Public lectures on TV programs, which are broadcasted by non-cable network television in the afternoons of weekdays sometimes refer to it. And what is more interesting is shaman schools. In South Korea, they established several shaman schools which train shamans in classrooms in the 1990s, and these schools are becoming more and more popular among those who are willing to become shaman. According to a shaman, he studied the hypothesis at one of them. He says, “our main market is women since shamanism is women’s tradition. Instructors taught me. Religious studies of Korean religion proved.” Now he has a small shrine to serve women’s job offers, and at the same time, he is telling fortune to female students and young women in a café restaurant in Seoul, getting some money. “I do know this hypothesis is *not really correct*. But it’s a *must-know*,” he asserts, “and it’s very *useful* to set the business target for us.”

Conclusion

I introduced a small part of my data here, but the misleading version of “dual structure model”

is spread all over the country. Again, it is regarded as a *common sense* among college students, and even as a *must-know* among new-age shamans. But, it does not seem they believe it totally. Rather than that, they need to know it because it is *useful* for their intellectual conversations and sometimes for their business.

On the other hand, western anthropologists' studies are free from this "dogma." For example, Laurel Kendall who has conducted anthropological research on Korean shamanism for more than thirty years, analyzes the gender issues hiding behind Korean shamanism from more various and diversified angles, which is totally different from Akiba's point of view; her work focuses on shaman's and women's lifetimes as well as the structure of Korean culture, and shamanism in her books looks more alive (Kendall 1985; 1988; 2009).

Japanese anthropologist, Mutsuhiko Shima also warns the idea of "dual structure" might not have existed any more in South Korea even when Japanese anthropologists restarted Korean studies in the 1970s. He also insists that we should pay attention to the dynamic sphere of Korean religions (Shima 2000), which shares the basic schema as Kendall's one.

As most of the modern Korean anthropologists read English articles and books, they are no longer bound by Akiba's hypothesis, either. They know more about Kendall than Akiba. Still, they have to teach Akiba's hypothesis, being careful not to mislead their students, but often unintentionally misleading. That being said, we also should not ignore the indirect influence that Korean anthropologists are getting from Akiba as many previous research in Korean language are deeply steeped in Akiba's influence.

As the conclusion, I would say two things. One is the vague subjects which develop the local anthropologies. And the other is the vague relationships between academic knowledge and social common senses. Some people might say they are too old topics to discuss, however they are still surrounding anthropologists' daily praxis.