

# Analysis on Women Leadership in Women House Churches in Comparison to Leadership in Male-centered Mainstream Presbyterian Churches

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## Introduction

This paper analyzes the tension on woman leadership between woman house churches and mainstream Presbyterian churches in Korea. What is the woman house church? There are Protestant Christians in Korea who meet regularly in private houses for a worship service. Most of them are lower-middle class women coming from different denominations mainly Presbyterians and Methodists, and they are active members in their churches. Thus, participants keep double membership at their mainstream churches and woman house churches. All leaders who take charge in the meetings are women despite a few male participants. They call the house meeting *Gajung Jedan* in Korean (literally house altar, in this article, woman house church).<sup>1)</sup>

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Historically speaking, woman house church movement originated from the prayer mountain movement which has been a part of Korean Protestantism. The appearance and development of woman house church movement paralleled the rapid growth of Korean Protestantism. The woman house church movement shares the history of Korean Protestantism in the period of remarkable growth especially in 1970s and 1980s. The two streams of Korean Protestantism have remained parallel with each other while keeping their distinct features.<sup>2)</sup>

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1) Woman house church is a gathering of women that takes place in a private home where people, mostly women, coming from different Protestant churches are held once a week or more. Depending on its location, members of the organized woman house church refer to their meeting place as "house altar." For example, if a woman house church locates in *Daebang Dong*, they call the woman house church *Daebang Altar (Daebang Jedan)* literally in Korean pronunciation). Woman house church differs from either the class meeting of Methodists or district meeting of Presbyterians, which meet weekly. Both share the common element of meeting at a private house; they differ because of participants. Participants of woman house church come from different Protestant churches mainly Presbyterians and Methodists, whereas people at those meetings of mainstream churches are from the same church.

There are two kinds of woman house churches: organized and independent one. The organized woman house church has the center, *Daehan* Christian Prayer Hill (*Daehan Sudowon* in Korean, DCPH in this article), where the church originated, so we can capture the number and size whereas we cannot know about the independent woman house church, which has no organization. The number of organized woman house church has been increased continuously since 1965, the year of establishing the first of it. Through several visits to the *Daehan* Christian Prayer Hill, I was able to get information as follows.

Period of Foundation	Number of new woman house church	Total
1961-1970	6	6
1971-1980	22	28
1981-1990	89	117
1991-2000	225	342

2) In the history of Korean Protestantism, the prayer center movement began in the 1940s when Japanese colonial government suppressed freedom of Protestant churches. At that time, some Christians sought for places of seclusion individually in order to escape from Japanese control as well as to pray for the

The woman house churches usually worship once per week during weekdays while some house churches provide worship services more than two times per week. The number of participants in these services ranges from 3 or 4 persons to more than 30. Services usually consist of two parts. Worship, which is longer than Sunday worship in mainstream churches, is the first part, followed by charismatic practices such as praying loudly together and healing practice follow the worship.<sup>3)</sup> Unlike mainstream churches, woman has an authority at the house churches, so woman particularly lay woman preaches at the worship. The woman house church constitutes itself an important part of Korean Protestantism but insufficient attention is being given to it.

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independence of Korea. However, it was after the liberation of Korea, 1945, that Protestant prayer centers appeared officially. Founders constructed buildings in the mountain for worship and pray. For the first time in the history of Korean Protestantism, sanctuaries for worship and prayer appeared in the mountain.

**Growth of the Prayer Centers in Korea**

Period	Total Numbers
Before 1945	2
1945-1955	4
1956-1965	49
1966-1975	207
1975-1989	362

Source: International Research Institution of International and Korean Religions (Seoul, Korea, 1989)

- 3) For this research, I interviewed with fifteen women in order to investigate why they join to the woman house church. All of interviewees had been active church members before they joined the woman house church. They decided to join for various reasons such as financial crisis, family problems, spiritual matters, and physical diseases. One common factor found in most of the responses is that their churches provided no help in hard situations. When they were in difficult situations, churches were not able to respond to their needs. To a new woman visitor, the woman house church becomes a shelter in which she is welcomed, where she tells her painful story to the members, and has the opportunity to listen to their stories. Through continuous participation and fellowship at the house church, the suffering woman gradually enters the stage of self-awakening through which she can figure out the meaning of her difficulties. In addition, she experiences holistic healing through which she can be cured physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Unlike the woman house church, in most mainstream Korean Protestant churches, women continue to be excluded from ecclesiastical office and from any decision-making process. Women in Korean Protestantism represent 70 percent of their numbers today, but they perform only supplementary roles. However, in woman house church, it is women particularly lay women who play dominant roles despite the existence of some male participants. The acknowledgement of woman leadership cannot but produce a tension with mainstream churches.

In this article, we analyze the tension that exists in regard to woman leadership between the two Korean Protestant, mainstream churches and woman house church. Through the analysis, we will argue that the tension between male-centered mainstream churches and female-based woman house church is related to the tension between male-centered Confucianism and female-based Shamanism in Korean society.

### **Tension within Korean Society: Male-centered Confucianism vs. Female-based Shamanism**

It was Japanese scholar Akiba Takashi who first explored Korean society as dualistic cultures in terms of gender-based religion: male-centered Confucian culture and female-based Shamanistic culture.<sup>4)</sup> His dualistic view has influenced many scholars who studied the relation of religion and society in Korea. Following the dualistic view, Laurel Kendall approaches the structure of the Korean household divided into two religious areas based on gender. She analyzes the *kut*, a ritual of Shamanism.

Early ethnologists described the “dual organization” of Korean household religion. Men worship the ancestors in solemn, dignified rites. Women honor the household gods and expel ghosts. Some women’s rituals require an ecstatic shaman, a pounding drum, and a *kut*’s raucous gaiety. Men’s rituals are usually described as Confucian. Women’s rituals have been called spirit worship, shamanism, folk belief, and superstition.<sup>5)</sup>

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4) Kil-Song Choi, “Male and Female in Korean Folk Belief” *Asian Folklore Studies* vol. 43 (1984): 230.

In a Korean household, Kendall observes the division of male-centered Confucian ritual and female-based Shamanistic ritual. Youngsook Harvey Kim, who studies Korean shamans, also insists that the architecture of Korean household is separated into two spheres: male and female.<sup>6)</sup> In terms of division, some scholars indicate, it can be assumed that Korean society as well as its households are separated into two spheres: male-centered Confucian culture and female-based Shamanistic culture.

Since the establishment of the Yi-Dynasty (1392-1910) and before the official arrival of American Protestant missionaries in 1885, two competitive cultures, Confucianism and Shamanism had existed in Korea. Under the Yi-Dynasty, which chose Confucianism as the principle for ruling the kingdom, these two religion-based cultures generated a tension between official religion and popular religion.<sup>7)</sup> Based on this dualistic view, we can explore Korean society before the encounter with Protestantism in order to approach the tension between male-centered mainstream churches and female-based woman house church in light of Korean cultural history.

### **Tension between Official Religion Confucianism and Popular Religion Shamanism before the Arrival of Protestantism**

Before we delve into the tension of the two religions in Korean society, it is important to state the meaning of official religion and popular religion. It is Towler who attempts to classify religion into two types, official religion and common religion, based on their respective function in society.

If by official religion we mean beliefs and practices which are prescribed, regulated and socialized by specialized religious institutions, then common religion may be described as those beliefs and practices of

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5) Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 26-27.

6) Youngsook Kim Harvey, *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* (St.Paul: West Publishing Co., 1979), 255.

7) In 1392, the newly established Yi-Dynasty adopted Confucianism as its official religion in order to suppress Buddhism, the official religion of Koryo-Dynasty (918-1392 C.E.), the former kingdom. In 1945, with independence from Japanese colonialism (1910-1945), the new country chose Korea as the nation's name remembering Koryo.

an overtly religious nature which are not under the domination of a prevailing religious institutions.<sup>8)</sup>

According to Towler, common religion tends to provide alternative ways in the society where official religion plays a dominant role.<sup>9)</sup> Based on Towler's concept, changing the "common" into "popular" in order to avoid misleading of the "common" with "ordinary," scholars suggest classification of official religion and popular religion for general use for religious study. In a conference, Vrijhoff suggests a definition.

Popular religion does not need, therefore, any formalization or organization. Official religion, on the other hand, cannot function without such expedients. Official religion is defined by institutional specialization and must be regulated and maintained... official religion, finally, needs well-educated and trained religious specialists who are capable to accomplish these tasks.<sup>10)</sup>

The distinction between official religion and popular religion is similar to that of institutional church and voluntary church in the circle of Christianity. Generally speaking, we can summarize distinctive characteristics of official religion vs. popular religion as religion of state vs. religion of individual, dominant vs. marginal, politically powerful vs. those without power, the educated or upper class vs. the uneducated or lower class, systematized and organized vs. not institutionalized.<sup>11)</sup>

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8) Robert Towler, *Homo Religious: Sociological Problems in the Study of Religion* (London: Constable, 1974), 148.

9) *Ibid.*, 150.

10) Pieter Hendrick Vrijhoff, "Twentieth Century Western Christianity" in Pieter Hendrick Vrijhof & Jacqjes Waardenburg eds, *Official and Popular Religion*(The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 226.

In 1974, scholars held a conference on the concept of the official religion and popular religion at the University of Utrecht, Netherland. Nine scholars dealt with the classification of the concept within Christianity, and another nine explored the concept in other religions such as Judaism, Muslim, and Confucianism. They published their efforts in the conference, *Official and Popular Religion*.

11) Robert A. Segal, Book Review of *Official and Popular Religion*(The Hague:

Throughout the history of religion and society, we could observe a certain tension between the official religion and popular religion.<sup>12)</sup> The history of Korea is not an exception. Under the Yi-Dynasty (1392-1910), before the arrival of Protestantism in 1885, Korean society manifested a tension between official religion Confucianism and popular religion Shamanism.

As we have observed above, the newly established Yi-Dynasty accepted Confucianism as the official religion, and suppressed Shamanism, a popular religion which was attractive to the lower-class people, particularly women. The elite of Confucianism were unable to eradicate Shamanism because of its popularity, particularly among lower-class people, although Shamanism lacked system or organization.<sup>13)</sup> Shamanism responded to the practical needs of people who were in disastrous situations, whereas official religion Confucianism could not. Under the Yi-Dynasty, the upper class and the educated adhered to Confucianism, but common people and women in particular relied on Shamanism.<sup>14)</sup> When the country was in an unstable situation, whether caused by epidemic or economic crisis, even the upper class secretly turned to Shamanist practices.<sup>15)</sup> Thus, Yi-Dynasty made Shamanism take a subsidiary role due to its popularity to the Korean masses. As Youngsook Kim Harvey states:

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Mouton Publishers, 1979) in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* vol. 21, no.3 (1982): 284.

12) Vrihjoft, 222.

13) Jong-Sung Choi, "Chosunsidae Yugyowa Musokeui Gwangye Yeongu," [A Study on the Relation of Confucianism and Shamanism in Yi-Dynasty] *Minjokkwa Moonhwa* [Nation and Culture] vol. 10 (2001): 222.

14) Young-Taek Ji, "Shamanismi Hankook Gyohoe Kichinyounghyang," [Influence of Shamanism to Korean Protestant Church] *Nonmunjip*[Collection of Works] vol.18 (1990): 207.

15) Chang-Sam Yang, "Shamanismkwa Hankook Gyohoe" [Shamanism and Korean Church] *Hyunsangkwa Insik* [Pheonomena and Understanding] vol. 10, no. 3 (1986): 58.

In the early period of Yi-Dynasty, when Confucianism did not present itself as an official religion, Confucian officials requested the help of Shamanism like *kut* in that kind of crisis. However, after they established the Confucian social system, in the middle of Yi-Dynasty, they, as representatives of the official religion, tried to suppress Shamanism. Jong-Sung Choi, 241.

The Yi Dynasty made the eradication of shamanism an official policy and launched a systematic campaign of persecution. . . . Indeed, it appears that the Yi Dynasty government coped with its failure to eradicate shamanism by giving it begrudging recognition as a belief system suitable only for women and some men of ignorance. It made the role of shaman one of the four professional roles officially permitted to women, the other three being those of *kungnyo* (palace woman), *uinyo* (female physician), and *kisaeng* (courtesan).<sup>16)</sup>

Under Yi-Dynasty, male- centered Confucianism, the official religion that had many religious experts, developed its dogma, established its ceremony, and organized itself, while female-based Shamanism, the popular religion, kept its tradition based on people's requests through shamans, who were mostly women.<sup>17)</sup> Before Protestantism arrived in Korea, Korean society already had developed a tension between male- centered Confucian culture and female-based Shamanism with different roles for women as an important aspect in the tension.

This discussion will now explore the views of woman within the two different cultures in Korean society.

### *Confucianism and the Korean Woman*

Under Confucian system, loyalty to the king and filial piety to the parents plays an important role in sustaining social system. In order to strengthen the Confucian social system, it arranges the family system such that the father possesses supreme authority. Under the patriarchal Confucian family system, the father holds absolute power over family matters including the life and death of members of his own household.<sup>18)</sup>

Confucianism holds the theoretical principle that woman is inferior to man. The inferiority of woman functions as a basic principle for sustaining the Confucian family system in society such as Yi-Dynasty.

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16) Youngsook Kim Harvey, *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* (St.Paul: West Publishing Co., 1979), 3.

17) Jong-Sung Choi, 222.

18) Youngsook Kim Harvey, 255.

Yi Dynasty was an absolute male-centered society. According to the idea of yin and yang as stipulated by the *I Ching* (Book of Change), the Yi Dynasty's Confucian social ethics considered women inferior to man by nature and subjected woman to man. "That *yang* is strong and *yin* lenient is the heaven's truth, the principle which is in accordance with the man's way of putting man higher than women."<sup>19)</sup>

Confucianism built a system in which woman was segregated, and the segregation by gender became a pivotal tool of controlling woman.

Women were perceived as inferior beings, beings who had no capability for an academic understanding of Confucianism... While the wife was confined to the inner house or inner rooms of the house, her husband lived in the outer house and handled all social contacts with outsiders... *anae* (wife)...means inside person... women gradually lost all opportunity for social involvement and became virtual slaves and prisoners of the Confucian system.<sup>20)</sup>

As a result, silence was regarded as the most important virtue of woman. In addition, in order to control woman, Confucianism invented several devices such as "seven eligible grounds for divorce" and "woman's three virtues of obedience."<sup>21)</sup> According to the rule on woman's three

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19) Hee-Soo Kim, "Roots of Han and Its Healing: A Study of Han from the Perspective of Christian Ethics" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1994), 104.

20) Kwang-Soon Lee, "Korean Women's Understanding of Mission-The Role of Women in the Korean Presbyterian Church" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1985), 56-65.

21) Beginning under the Ching dynasty (1644-1912) in China, there have been seven grounds under which a man could arbitrarily divorce his wife:

- 1) If she behaves disobediently to her parents-in-law
- 2) If she fails to give birth to a son
- 3) If she is talkative
- 4) If she commits adultery
- 5) If she is jealous of her husband'
- 6) If she carries a malignant disease
- 7) If she commits theft

virtues of obedience, a woman, through her whole life, must acquiesce to her father when she is young, to her husband when she is married, and to her son when she is old.<sup>22)</sup> In other words, woman should stay within a household under a man (father, husband or son) as his supporter or helper, nurturing the children of the man.<sup>23)</sup> Woman under the Confucianism of Yi-Dynasty was an “unregistered servant.”<sup>24)</sup> As we will explore in the next section, under the oppressive social and family system of Confucianism, Korean women experienced an increase of *han*, an accumulation of inner sufferings. Today, Confucianism continues to play an oppressive role in the lives of Korean women. In contrast to Confucianism, woman played active roles in Korean Shamanism.

## Shamanism and Korean Woman

Most scholars agree that Shamanism constitutes itself as basic layer of Korean culture and religion. It had existed before the fourth century C.E. when the major foreign religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism were introduced to Korea.<sup>25)</sup> Shamanism has absorbed other religions, and transformed them as “Koreanized religions” as Youngsook Kim points out.

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Since a divorced woman was rejected by her own family and her husband's family, as well as by society, most women were willing to accept everything to keep their marriage, including accepting concubines.

Andrew S.Park, *The Wounded Heart of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 55.

22) *Ibid.*, 55.

Originally the three virtues of obediences are in the teaching of the Classics of Rites, which is one of the Five Confucian Classics. Five Confucian Classics are Classics of Poetry, History, Changes, Rites and Spring and Autumn Annals.

23) Heung-Seok Nam, “Yugyoelui Yeosunggwankwa Hyundai Yeosungleader-shipeui Moonje” [Confucianism's View of Woman and Woman Leadership Today] *Dongbanghak* [Study of East Asia] vol. 14 (2008): 291-292.

24) Hye-Sook Oh, “Gaehwagi Gidokkyo Yeosung Undong” [Women's Movement of Korea in the Period of Modernization] (Master's thesis, Berea Theological Seminary, 2004), 21.

25) Chang-Sam Yang, 56-8

In fact, the claim that shamanism is the only indigenous religion of Korea...Palmer... acknowledges shamanism as the most powerful religious force among the Korean and observes that new religions, whether imported or generated from within, have historically failed to survive among the Korean unless shamanistic traits were incorporated on a large scales... Buddhism was much Koreanized... Confucianism also became Koreanized... Christianity proved no exception.<sup>26)</sup>

In Shamanism, it is the shaman who plays an essential role with the threefold function: priest, doctor, and fortune teller. The shaman presides various religious rites including *kut*, heals patients by expelling evil spirits, and prophesies future things with the help of the shaman's own god. In addition, *kut*, a ritual unique to Shamanism, is accompanied by music and dance, through which the shaman can communicate with spirits in order to solve problems of clients. The shaman fills people with delight through their participation in and enjoyment of music and dance.<sup>27)</sup>

In contrast to Confucianism, women play a dominant role in Shamanism in terms of ministers and participants. Most shamans as well as clients are women. As Kim states: "Today, while there continue to be male shamans, the vast majority of shamans and their clients are female."<sup>28)</sup> It was women who experienced suppression under the male-centered Confucian society. Under the patriarchal Korean society, most women faced a bitterly difficult life which caused them to increase their *han*. They were victims of the patriarchal Confucianism culture. Through the performance of the *kut*, women or marginalized people could resolve their *han*.<sup>29)</sup> Therefore, there have been more female believers than male in Shamanism. One Korean scholar defines Shamanism impressively: "Korean Shamanism especially its ritual, *kut*, exists for women, of women, and by women because its producer (client), actor (shaman), and audience (participants) are dominantly women."<sup>30)</sup> Unlike Confucianism, in Shamanism, women take

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26) Youngsook Kim Harvey, 8-9.

27) Ho-Jin Kim, "Hankook Gyohoe Chukbokshinangeui Mugyojeok Geukbokkwa Gidokkyo Gyoyookjeok Geukbokbangahn" [Shamanism's Influence to Blessing Theology of Korean Church and a Suggestion of Overcoming the Influence] (Master's thesis, Yon-Sei University. 2007), 14-20.

28) Youngsook Kim Harvey, 3.

29) Young-Taek Ji, 212.

charge of important roles, perform rituals and they constitute the majority of believers. Shamanism cannot exist without women shamans and believers.

Tension within the two streams of Korean Protestantism, male-centered mainstream churches and female-based woman house church, is built upon the existing tension of the two different cultures within Korean society long before the arrival of Protestantism - Confucianism and Shamanism.

Now we will explore the relationship between two streams of Korean Protestantism and the tensions within the two cultures in regard to woman leadership.

### **Korean Protestantism, Confucianism, and Shamanism**

Since the introduction of Protestantism to Korea, these two cultures, male-centered Confucianism and female-based Shamanism, have influenced the lives of Korean people, and Korean Protestants are not exceptions. Just as the male-centered Confucianism contributed to the formation of patriarchal mainstream churches, so female-based Shamanism connected itself to the rise of woman house church and mountain prayer centers, particularly since the 1970s and 1980s, the remarkable numerical growth period in Korean Protestantism.<sup>31)</sup> As we will examine further, the influence of Confucianism was tremendous in most areas of Korean society including mainstream Protestant churches. Thus, it is not difficult to observe the relationship of Confucianism with mainstream churches in their shared values, such as the patriarchal system. Likewise, female-based Shamanism has a relationship to

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30) Yong-Sik Lee, "Seongeui Sangjingsung, Mubokeul Tonghaebon Hankook Musokeui Kwonryuk," [Sign of Gender: Observation of Korean Shamanism's Power through Shaman's Clothing] Shamanism Yeongu [Shamanism Study] vol. 3 (2000): 137.

31) Confucianism has continued to be a dominant social system in Korea even after the arrival of Protestantism. Naturally mainstream Protestant churches exhibited patriarchal aspects due to the influence of Confucianism. Since the 1970s and 1980s, the numerical growth period, the Shamanistic culture emerged with the appearance and expansion of prayer centers in mountain and woman house church. Thus, we could observe the tension of the two Protestant groups, which reflected the tension of Confucianism and Shamanism. Further research will be necessary on the influence of Shamanistic culture on Protestantism before the 1970s.

the appearance of woman house church. Yee-Heum Yoon, professor of religious studies at Seoul National University, points out the close relation: "It is indeed surprising that Shamanistic practices seem to revive also in a certain trend of Protestant movement, namely *Kajong-jedan* literally meaning "family altars."<sup>32)</sup> As Yoon points out, woman house church has been a part of the Protestant movement, a stream that is distinct from mainstream churches. In relation to the two different cultures, woman house church connected itself to female-based Shamanistic culture, whereas mainline churches had deep influences from Confucian culture. Both mainstream churches and woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) belong to Korean Protestantism but emerge from different cultural roots.

In the process of Christianization, especially the explosive numerical growth period in the 1970s and 1980s, the existing two cultures, patriarchal Confucianism and feministic Shamanism, infused the two types of Protestant churches, mainstream Protestant churches and woman house church and mountain prayer centers.<sup>33)</sup> In order to understand the connection between these existing two cultures and these two types of Korean Protestantism, in terms of women, we will explore woman leadership of mainstream churches and woman house church.

## Woman Leadership in Mainstream Churches

In 2005, the believers of Confucianism reached only 0.2 percent of the total population in Korea. However, Confucianism has had a tremendous influence on the daily lives of Korean people. Though Confucianism lost its position as the official religion and ruling value system at the end of the *Yi*-Dynasty in 1910, Confucian culture has retained its dominant role in the lives of the Korean people.<sup>34)</sup> Korean Protestant churches were not exempt

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32) Yee-Heum Yoon, "The Diversity and Continuity of Shamanism in Korean Religious History," *Shamanism Yeongoo* [Shamanism Study] vol.3 ( 2000): 267.

*Ka-jeong jedan* in Korean literally means house (or home) altar, which is the same woman house church in this dissertation. Therefore, Yoon already acknowledges the Korean woman house church.

33) Actually, mainstream churches had kept their Confucian culture before the growth of Protestantism. Due to the growth, woman house church began to appear as a new stream, so that we could see the two streams.

from the influence of Confucianism, which limited women leadership in churches. As a result, despite the active role of Protestant women, in 1912, when the first General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church was launched, there was no woman leadership in it. Even after the law of woman ordination was passed at the General Assembly in 1995, woman in mainstream churches have continued to be excluded from important portions such as leading worship service, the decision-making process, and education especially in the Presbyterian Church.<sup>35)</sup>

The male-centered culture of Confucianism influenced the emergence of the same dualistic realms, male and female spaces, in mainstream churches, so women continue to be excluded from important things just as they were in Confucian society. Moon-Jang Lee, a professor at Singapore Trinity Theological Seminary, points out on the discrimination of women in Protestant churches based on the dualistic roles of man and woman derive from Confucian culture:

There is a cultural discrimination in Korean society. The discrimination distinguishes space of male and female. Confucianism provided the foundation of the discrimination...The same discrimination based on gender exists in the church. In the church, people regard woman's realm as inferior than man's sphere. As a result, important matters in the church belong to man's realm whereas woman is supposed to follow the decisions of man's area... What we observe in the church is not evangelical but the culture of Confucianism.<sup>36)</sup>

In most Protestant churches, women take charge in subsidiary roles which ask obedience and sacrifices just as they do at home, like working in

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34) Jae-Kwang Gye, "Yugyo Munhwaga Hankook Leadershipe Michin Yeonghyang," [Influence of Confucian Culture to the Formation of Korean Leadership] *Shinhakkwa Shilcheon* [Theology and Praxis] vol. 22 (2010): 85.

35) Jeong-Sook, Jeong, "Bokeumseoreul Tonghaebon Yeosungkwankwa Onelnal Hankook Gyohoeuk Yeosung" [Women in Gospel and Women in Korean Church Today] (Master's thesis, Hanil Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2006), 65.

36) Moon-Jang Lee, "Bokeumkwa Munhwa Georigo Yeosungeui Wichiekwanhan Ehae" [Gospel and Culture, and Understanding of Woman's Role in the Church] *Mokhoewa Shinhak* [Ministry and Theology] (May, 2004): 77-78.

the kitchen. Despite their active contribution, women are excluded from important matters of their churches. Behind the discrimination against women, the influence of Confucian culture plays an essential role to the church. In other words, patriarchal structure of Confucianism penetrated directly into mainstream churches, so women could not be leader in their churches.<sup>37)</sup> In most mainstream Protestant churches, women perform tasks that are similar to the work they do in their homes.

Statistics from 1979, the period of numerical growth of Korean Protestantism, explains well the situation of woman leadership in mainstream Korean Protestant churches.

Table 5-1. Number of Lay Person and Minister in Protestant Church (1979)<sup>38)</sup>

		Male	Female	Total
Lay Person		1,778,848 (36.5%)	3,088,809 (63.5%)	4,867,657 (100.0%)
Minister	Pastor	11,312(97.6%)	270(2.4%)	11,582(100.0%)
	Evangelist (unordained)	9,386(75.4%)	3,067(24.6%)	12,453(100.0%)

In the table above, the number of women leaders was only 2.4 percent for pastors (*Moksa* in Korean) and 24.6 percent for unordained ministers (*Jeondosa* in Korean) while women represented 63.5 percent of the total of Korean Protestants. In important decision-making meetings, consisting of elders and pastors in mainstream churches, *Jeondosa* cannot be members. Thus, we can understand that women can have no influence on important matters in their churches, although they constitute the majority: almost two-thirds of whole congregation. Leadership in mainstream churches is biased against women, and patriarchal Confucianism functions as one of the

37) Young-Jae Won, "Yugyomunhwa Yeonghyangeuroinhan Hankook Gyohoeui Sesokhwa," [The Influence of Confucian Culture to the Secularization of Korean Protestantism] *Gidokkyo Cheolhak* [Protestant Philosophy] vol. 8 (June, 2009): 66.

38) Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, *Hankook Gyohoe Baeknyun Jonghap Yeonguseo* [Analysis of Korean Protestantism Reviewing Its 100 Years] (Seoul: Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, 1982), 161.

primary causes.<sup>39)</sup>

Women ministers are also discriminated against in terms of wages and tasks. According to one survey on the situation of woman ministers in 1988, 51.9 percent of women ministers received wages below 400 U.S. dollars, the minimum wage at that time. In addition, their tasks were house visitation (77.7%), Sunday school (5.0%), and preaching (3.3%), whereas male ministers worked mainly in preaching and education.<sup>40)</sup>

Women in male-centered mainstream churches play the same roles as women in the over-all Confucian Korean society. In regard to woman leadership, we can argue that patriarchal mainstream churches reflect the system and culture of Confucianism. Unlike mainstream Protestant churches, women in Korean woman house church and mountain prayer center, another stream of Korean Protestantism, perform active roles reminiscent of women's roles in the Shamanistic culture.

Now we explore woman's role in woman house church, especially considering its common features with Shamanism.

## Woman Leadership in Korean Woman House Church

As we have seen in introduction of this paper, it is woman who plays a central role in woman house church, just as woman does in Shamanism. Several common aspects exist between woman house church and Shamanism. This section will explore woman leadership in woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) comparing the common features with Shamanism in view of woman-centered movement.

Shamanism has survived as a popular religion, because Confucianism has not been able to satisfy the practical needs of people, particularly those of the lower-middle class, despite its dominance as the official religion under the *Yi*-Dynasty.<sup>41)</sup> The rise and prosperity of woman house church and

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39) Jae-Kwang Gye, 94.

40) Jeong-Sook Lee, "Hankook Gaeshingyo Yeogyoyeokjaeui Inkwon," [Human Right of Korean Protestant Woman Ministers] in *Asia Yeosung Yeongu* [*Research on Asian Women*] vol. 4 (2003): 145-149. According to this survey, in regard to education, one of the most important elements of church, female ministers spend only 5% at these among their allotted works, whereas male ministers spend most of their time doing this kind of core work, including preaching.

mountain prayer centers is the result of a similar problem within mainstream churches that have been unable or unwilling to care for the spiritual needs of their people.<sup>42)</sup> As Tark points out: “One of the most important reason [of rising mountain prayer centers] is that established churches lost attractiveness to Christians. The churches of today are so rich that they do not listen to the cry of the sick, the poor, the powerless, and the widow. That is why prayer centers are attractive to Christians.”<sup>43)</sup> Korea today has no official religion, as it did under the Yi Dynasty when Confucianism was the official religion. However, today’s mainstream Protestant churches stand in the same relationship to woman house church as in an earlier time Confucianism stood in relation to the popular Shamanism.

Similarities can be seen between Shamanism and woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) in terms of the process of training women leaders. In Shamanism, a student shaman refers to her teacher shaman as “mother,” and the relation of the two is similar to that of master-apprentice.<sup>44)</sup> Usually, the apprenticeship of the student shaman occurs during a stage of hard times. As Kendall states: “A woman (or man) becomes a shaman through traumatic possession sickness, initiation, and apprenticeship to a more experienced shaman.”<sup>45)</sup> Similarly, in woman house church, a “spiritual mother-daughter” relationship exists between a woman leader and leaders-in-training, showing their respect for her as God’s daughter. These similar features of Shamanism and woman house church can be a ladder through which we can examine further deeply the characteristics of the woman house church in view of cultural connection of the two woman movement.

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41) Jong-Sung Choi, “Chosunsidae Yugyowa Musokeui Gwangye Yeongu” [A Study on the Relation of Confucianism and Shamanism in Yi-Dynasty], 236.

42) Historically woman house church movement was originated from the mountain prayer center movement, which launched in the middle of 1960s and flourished in the 1970s and 1980s..

43) Myung-Hwan Tark, “Hankook Gidowon Undongeu Gongkwa,” [Evaluation of Korean Prayer Center Movement] *Gidokyo Sasang* [Christian Thought] vol. 18, no. 9 (1974), 53.

44) Nam-Hyuk Chang, “Shamanism,” *Sunkyowa shinhak* [Mission and Theology] vol. 6 (2000): 159.

45) Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 27.

As in Shamanism, the majority of woman house church leaders are women and adherents of both are of the lower classes. Today's woman house church women are primarily lower-middle class women who have low-education careers. Unlike woman in patriarchal mainstream churches, the women in woman house church and mountain prayer centers play active roles. Most directors in mountain prayer centers are women. In addition, all of the leaders of the woman house churches are women, most of whom are lay people. In the meeting of the Daehan Christian Prayer Hill, a prayer center and birthplace of the organized woman house church, lay women led meetings including the sermon and Holy Spirit Dance, even though male pastors and elders were present.<sup>46)</sup> In local woman house churches, numerous lay women preach, preside over worship, and care for members, playing a role similar to that of male pastors in mainstream churches.

On the issue of woman leadership, the leader of organized woman house church points out the little room for woman to be ordained minister under the current situation of Korea. Though she had a dream to serve as God's daughter, it is hard for her to work as a leader in mainstream churches due to her low education career as well as her responsibility as a house keeper. The other reason derives from doing charismatic practice like healing prayer (*anchal gido* in Korean) which needs to touch body of participants, most of whom are women. The lay woman leadership can provide a good opportunity for her to serve other people with spiritual gifts through preaching, praying, and caring. However, there is some criticism on the theological problems which can be derived from the deficiency of theological training.

## Conclusion

Up to this point, we have examined different understandings of woman leadership in the two streams of Korean Protestantism, with a focus on the tension that exists between the male-centered Confucian culture and female-dominant Shamanistic culture. As in the Confucian social system, men have dominated the leadership within Protestant churches, with women excluded from the decision-making structure despite their

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46) My observation and explanation of the woman director of the DCPH, Myung-Hee Park.

numerical dominance. Under the influence of Confucian principles, Korean churches extended the segregation into its own religious environment, thus limiting the role of women in the church to the same subsidiary roles they played in their homes. Thus, until recently, women could not aspire to be pastor or elder.<sup>47)</sup>

Historically speaking, the period of development of the woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) movement paralleled with the rapid growth of mainstream Korean Protestantism, mainly during the 1970s and 1980s. Basically, the tension between the two streams of Korean Protestantism derives from the double membership of participants, because members of the woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) are active church-goers in the mainstream churches. On the woman issue, the tension between male-centered mainstream churches and female-based woman house church reflects the existing cultural tension between male-centered Confucianism and female-based Shamanism in Korean society. The tension appeared with the blooming of woman house church in the growth period of Korean Protestantism in the 1970s and 1980s. In woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*), despite male participants, women play leading roles. Only woman may take on the leadership roles in local woman house churches. As male leaders do in mainstream churches, she leads worship, preaches sermons, and sometimes visits homes for individual care. However, mainstream churches have restricted women in the church only to subordinate roles. Women have been excluded from decision-making procedures or ordination for a long time despite their numerical majority.

Because of its somewhat unorthodox characteristics, the movement produced tension within mainstream Protestant churches that, interestingly, share the same people as their members. As a voluntary church, woman house church created tension with the mainstream institutional church. Following in the tradition of female-based Shamanistic culture, the movement revealed a conflict with the male-centered Confucian mainstream church. However, woman house church leaders maintain that mainline church is to woman house church what public school is to after school institution. The purpose of woman house church is to return members to the mainline church after they are healed at the woman house

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47) Woo-Jeong Lee, *Hankook Gidokkyo Yeosung Baeknyuneuk Baljachi* [Stories of Hundred years of Korean Women] (Seoul: Minjung Press, 1985), 106.

church. In terms of the tension, one of the important things is to understand the woman house church movement. The understanding can lead us to have an expectation that the woman house church can provide challenge as well as hope for the mainstream churches particularly in terms of developing woman leadership and reforming churches.

### **Abstract**

Woman house church movement has been a part of Korean Protestantism since 1960s, when prayer centers in mountain, the birthplace of the woman house church, began to flourish in Korea. With the growth of the woman house churches, the tension with mainstream Korean Protestant churches such as Methodists and Presbyterians has increased because the participants have double membership to the two different churches: woman house church and mainstream churches. Woman leadership in the two churches occupies an important issue in the tension. Behind the subordinate role of women in mainstream Korean Protestant churches, there have been influences of patriarchal Confucianism. Likewise, female-centered Korean Shamanism contributed to shape female-based Korean woman houses church. Thus, the tension between the two streams of Korean Protestantism reflects the socio-cultural tension between Confucianism and Shamanism that existed before the arrival of Protestantism.

### ***Keyword***

Woman, House Church, Korea, Shamanism, Confucianism.

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