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## **Healing through Syncretic Shamanism: The Linguistics of the Opening to the Rebirth Cycle in the Korean “Abandoned Princess” Myth**

By Thomas N. Grove and Shin Freedman

The syntax and morphology in an eight-line passage from the Princess Bari myth sung by the shaman Pae Kyongjae generate a semantic field that blends a Taoist view of this world with a Buddhist belief in an afterlife. Through her juxtaposition of a main narrative birth cycle with a seemingly digressive rebirth cycle, she comforts mourners at a funeral. When the first baby princess in the myth leads people out of the land of the dead, the shaman breaks down a Taoist dualism of yin and yang forces, allowing the princess’s followers to reach a Buddhist paradise beyond such division. Syncretic shamanism embeds Taoism in the deepest linguistic level of individual morphemes, before combining it with Mahayanan Buddhism in the syntactic and semantic levels.

In their paper, “The Language of Resurrection Ritual,” presented to the Society of Korean Oral Literature at its spring 2009 meeting, Thomas N. Grove and Choi Kyungshin noted two main cycles of recurring passages in Pae Kyongjae’s rendition of “The Abandoned Princess”—one about the birth of each princess, the other about the rebirth of dead souls after each royal birth. Although the birth cycle initially carries the main plotline of the narrative, the rebirth cycle eventually takes over as the seventh princess, Bari, rejects her father’s offer of part of his kingdom and becomes the first shaman, leading everyone to paradise at the end. The beginning of this rebirth cycle at first seems just a momentary eight-line digression from a main plot line about repeated attempts of a royal couple to produce a male heir:

1. 우여슬푸다. 선후망의 아모망재
2. 초공쥬탄생하시는 뒤를좃차
3. 상산의 살문벗고, 명도에 조상하고
4. 조비조상의 원근벗고, 불사의 텃룡지계벗고
5. 남망재는 복건벗고, 녀망재는 요모벗고
6. 왕생천도 극락세계후세발원,
7. 남자되여, 서방정토극락세계로
8. 가시는날이로성이다.

Through her interplay of the two cycles, however, the shaman manages to syncretize a Taoist interpretation of this world with a Buddhist one of an afterlife. The fusion characterizes Korean shamanism's acceptance of several philosophies, one or more of which may especially apply to an immediate problem—in this case, sudden death of a person who was loved. When the seventh princess-shaman finally leads everyone to paradise, Pae Kyongjae is demonstrating how shamanism can break down the perceived Taoist division of this world into yin and yang forces to access a stable Buddhist existence beyond such division. This process begins with the first rebirth cycle, without formal introduction of the shaman herself as leader, but the oldest of her sisters.

Pae Kyongjae presents the birth cycle, based in the present world of living beings, as essentially a Taoist construct of juxtaposed forces. The eight lines which formally begin the rebirth cycle signal a fundamental Taoist pairing of the land of the living against the land of the dead. Other complementary juxtapositions emerge in the digression, such as before and after, the dark world and heaven, male and female. The shaman's syncretic inclusion of Buddhism, however, allows the juxtaposition of death and life to be dispelled by a supernatural causal link between the two—"supernatural" because, unlike causal events in the land of the living that require one event to occur before another, this link materializes instantaneously as a dead soul is released from its dark world at the same moment a princess is born. Such coincident activation in both realms can be understood through a Buddhist interpretation.

The form of Buddhism expressed by the shaman in her version of the Princess Bari story, with its emphasis on chanting to the Buddha Amitahbul, is the Pure Land School of Mahayana tradition. Although her audience does not hear the name Amitahbul as the rebirth cycle opens, several aspects of Pure Land Buddhism do resonate. Buddhism in general offers possible escape from this world of suffering, but Mahayanism offers the quickest way to Buddhahood and Pure Land followers believe they can reach an actual Land of Happiness, *sukkavati* or *kungnok*(극락). The souls reborn from the land of the dead who follow the first princess are clearly heading there.

Pae Kyongjae's digression also indicates a Pure Land form of Buddhism through the rapid and unquestioned acceptance of all the dead as ready to head for *kungnok* (극락). All they have to do is entrust themselves to a baby princess for guidance. Before she ends her song about Princess Bari, Pae Kyongjae will ask followers to chant a prayer, but for now, access to everlasting bliss seems

automatically triggered by the princess's birth. Any encumbrance collapses before the journey to sukkavati.

Other forms of Buddhism do not offer instant deliverance. In a fundamental scripture of the Pure Land School, the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra*, Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, describes what the bodhisattva who would become Amitahbul said when he first met Buddha Lokeshvararaja: "I beseech you to explain the Dharma . . . please teach me how to attain Enlightenment quickly . . ." (*Wu-liang-shou ching*. trans. by Samghavarman (K'ang Seng-k'ai). *Taisho shinshu daizokyo*. ed. J. Takakusu and K. Watanabe, vol. 12, 267a, Tokyo, 1924-29) His subsequent achievement of speedy emancipation from samsara realms of endless birth and death cycles became the wish of his followers.

Why the first child of Princess Bari's parents would be capable and willing to lead the dead to a pure land may receive some explanation from one of the forty-eight vows Amitahbul made before becoming a Buddha: "If . . . bodhisattvas . . . who hear my Name should not after death be reborn into noble families, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment." (269c) This forty-third vow follows from his twenty-second one, which singles out those bodhisattvas who wish to "deliver all beings from birth-and-death . . . and establish them in the highest, perfect Enlightenment." (268b) As a possible bodhisattva the first princess's impulse for such work seems strong: she accepts followers the instant she is born. And all those coming with her to paradise become male. Listen to Amitahbul's thirty-fifth vow: "If . . . women . . . awaken aspiration for Enlightenment and wish to renounce womanhood, should after death be reborn again as women, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment." (268c)

For yet another sign of the Pure Land School of Mahayanism, in line seven of the digression Pae Kyongjae calls the place the dead are reaching, "jahng toh (정토)," which translates easily into "pure land."

Pae Kyongjae's sudden introduction of the rebirth cycle immediately jars her listeners from the affairs of a living royal family into activities of dead souls. The contrast between the two worlds is clear but not insurmountable. The shaman can assure the mourners hearing her story that they, as well as the one they have just lost, can gain a life beyond these two worlds. The process unfolds as a Taoist interpretation of present conditions in the two worlds is replaced with a Buddhist view of the past, present and future. The Taoist present comprises pairs of opposites, beginning with light and shadow, then extending to life and death, male and female, as well as myriad more. The Buddhist view presented by Pae Kyongjae emphasizes an escape from these oppositions into a paradise third world beyond the opposed ones of living and dead.

Before she finishes her eight-line first version of the rebirth cycle, Pae Kyongjae will meld her interpretations of Taoism and Buddhism by placing the noun phrase, “정토jahngtoh,” a Taoist combination of yin and yang, right before “극락kungnok,” the Buddhist Sukkavati. She subtly refers in line three to the former system when she sings “명도myung doh,” since “도doh” can mean “the Way.” Its appearance here reflects the underlying yin-yang mechanism of this whole eight-line departure from the main story: the contrast between the yin dark world and yang paradise.

After jolting her audience out of what seems her main story about a family of more and more princesses and never a prince, the shaman very soon is singing about how dead souls can follow a new born princess out of the darkness they have endured for three frosts to a western land of joy. She builds her message of consolation through constructing pairs of opposites that she, the shaman, can deconstruct.

In the first line of the rebirth cycle (Pae Kyung Jae, “Bari Gungju,” page 121, line 5),

우여슬푸다. 선후망의 아모망재

a Taoist contrast quickly arises in “선후,” “before-after.” This syntactic juxtaposition could not be more dynamically compact and simple: two syllables right next to each other. The compound reference to dead people suggests—as do many of the song’s pairs—a completeness or inclusiveness, which “아모” (anyone) achieves before the first line ends. All-embracing “아모” reverberates from Amitahbul’s twenty-second vow about emancipating all beings from the endless karmic circle of birth to death to birth. In an actual performance at a funeral, the mourners could take comfort that this word includes in its wide-open reference the one lying before them, who has just died. A central dynamic of the entire story unfolds rapidly in the first line as the contrasting terms, “선sun” and “후hoo,” dissolve into one term, “아모” after one word is sung between them: “망재” (deceased). In the afterlife of the dark world, “sun” and “hoo” become unimportant, at least temporally. This breaking down of distinctions, blurring of boundaries, will happen again and again as the shaman paves the way for a Buddhist escape from the Taoist world of juxtaposed pairs.

Here the resolution of the contrastive pair, “sun” and “hoo,” in “ah moh” receives reinforcement from the repeated disyllabic semantic units dominating the opening line of the first description of the land of the dead. In fact, only one semantic unit does not carry two syllables—“슬푸다” (it is sad)—which

seems inserted primarily to explain the first disyllabic outburst, “우여,” and register the shaman Pae Kyongjae’s momentary sympathy with the king, who wants a son, not a girl. This gender opposition will resolve itself as other contrasts have: all the reactivated dead become male as they head for paradise in the seventh line of this passage.

Again, resolution of the Taoist contrast between “sun” and “hoo” becomes the main interest of the line as the same morpheme follows “sun hoo” and its resolution “ah moh”—namely, “mang” (dead), emphasizing the change and how to achieve it (by dying). Phonologically, the resolution already has been absorbed in the second half of “ah moh” which begins with the same bilabial onset as “mang.” This particular voiced bilabial appears nowhere else in the first line.

The resolution of “sun hoo” achieved by the inclusive, boundary-free “ah moh” of Pure Land Buddhism resonates throughout the eight-line passage as Pae Kyongjae presents past, present and future groups of people. The “sun” materializes before the end of the first half of her digression in “조비조상의,” dead grandmother’s ancestors, who form part of the group following the first princess out of the dark region of dead souls. And the shaman opens her second half as those who are leaving life shed their funeral covering, “복건” and “요모,” to advance toward a paradise that—in her sixth line—“후세,” the later generations, wish for.

Pae Kyongjae has indeed created an immediate strong contrast between the first line of her rebirth cycle and the preceding ones, which announced the birth of the first child of the king and queen. Besides opening this new cycle with a traditional funeral cry, “우여,” the shaman repeats “망” (dead) in the last six syllables of the thirteen-syllable line. Her abrupt shifting between the land of the living and the land of the dead will become a major Taoist dynamic throughout her story until she becomes the royal heroine herself, leading everyone into a land apart from the living or the dead as her older sisters did.

Pae Kyongjae opens the second line of her eight-line digression from the main story of the royal family with yet another contrast.

초공쥬탄생하시는 뒤를좃차

“초공쥬,” the first princess, is not just “아모,” anyone. She is royal—an attribute highlighted by the honorific “하시는.” She has also just been born, “tang sang,” unlike the dead ones just described and

she is singular while they are plural. Before the second line ends, another resolution or solution to the accumulating Taoist juxtapositions is at work as the dead follow the newborn. She will show them the way out of the land of the dead to the Mahayanan Land of Happiness.

The geographical resolution to the basic contrast of the living princess and the dead people who follow her begins materializing in line three and four.

상산의 살문벗고, 명도에 조상하고  
조비조상의 원근벗고, 불사의 텃룽지게벗고

The shaman sings of “명도,” the dark region of the dead. Just as the first two lines work together to contrast the living and dead, so lines three and four form a contrast. The third line introduces “살문,” killgate; the fourth ends with “텃룽,” heaven hole. “살문sahl mun” is the way out of a present existence; “텃룽” the way in to a future one. The repeated verb throughout these lines, “벗고,” punctuates the two locations, being sung right after each location is given. The first location has stood as a boundary for three frosts to those in the darkness of death’s land; the second stands as a threshold for their entry into heaven.

The action of “벗고” expresses, makes possible, eventual destruction of the difference as the distance between the two is covered. If they follow the princess while making condolences to the dark region, removing the distance between ancestors of deceased grandmothers, and practicing Buddhist rituals, they can get to heaven. The verb “벗고,” another disyllabic, punctuates the interior of the paired lines three and four as it closes formal description of the dark region of the dead in the middle of line four, immediately after another microcosm of contrast, “원근” (far-near), that mirrors the Taoist opposition of “선후.” A geographical dimension now enhances what was temporal.

The end of line four, occupying the center of Pae Kyongjae’s eight-line departure from the world of the living, suitably registers two words, again disyllabic, that pinpoint the underlying force upon the frequent contrastive pairs: “지게벗고,” boundary removing. The distance between the living and the dead realms can be shortened and finally—through the power of the soon-to-be first shaman Princess Pari—physically traversed.

The impetus of “벗고” continues into the following line as the singer clearly expresses its subjects, which have not been mentioned since the first line: “남망재” and “녀망재.”

남망재는 복건벗고, 녀망재는 요모벗고

Here they momentarily express an opposition within the amalgamation reached by the end of line one with “아모망재.” In a reversal of line one’s sequence, “아모” is divided again, but not back into the rather indeterminate groups specified by “선” and “후.” The gender distinction of “남” and “녀” brings the audience back into their present reality after a fantastic glimpse at a journey from one unseen formidable place to another, “살문” to “턴룡.” The comparison to line one is well-timed: the newly defined cadre will now be concentrating on where they are going rather than where they have been.

This fifth line, in fact, stands alone in Pae Kyongjae’s eight-line digression because of its tangible references to the world of the living in the midst of her description of less comprehensible activities in the world of the dead such as “살문벗고.” Suitably, these references depend on materials used to cover heads of people who just died, “복건” and “요모,” as well as on the familiar gender division. The head covers themselves follow the division: “복건” is for men, “요모” for women. The singer carefully and clearly articulates the division, reserving exactly half of the line for the male and half for the female. The genders balance perfectly, each receiving eight syllables that include the phrase, “망재는.” So the temporary contrast, energized by the last two uses of “벗고,” reflects the general dynamic of Taoist opposed pairings throughout the rebirth cycle digression.

The equalizing mirror treatment of the sexes in line five anticipates another kind of amalgamation or resolution than that achieved by “아모” in the first line. In this latter instance, the Buddhist solution will come as one group absorbs the other. Before heading for paradise, the women will become men.

The shaman’s singing in line five about understandable, familiar remnants of the living realm from the birth cycle contrasts markedly with what comes immediately before and after: tyunyung and 극락, mysterious, hard-to-define places in the rebirth cycle. A Taoist pairing of small material head coverings with presumably vast, immaterial heavenly places emphasizes not only the difference between locations of living and dead beings but also the speed at which the princess can get the dead to an everlasting life. Soon-to-be Amitahbul’s words recorded in the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra* when he first met Buddha Lokeshvararaja, “Please teach me how to attain Enlightenment quickly,” come to mind.

왕생천도 극락세계 후세발원,

With line six Pae Kyongjae returns to the fantastic journey and especially where it will end for followers of the princess: “극락,” the Mahayanan sukkavati. She opens the line with “wang sang.” The rhyming nucleus and coda in the two syllables of the word subtly produce semantics like “sun hoo” and “wan gun” but on a decidedly different level. Instead of two morphemes directly contrasting with each other, the two morphemes—bound tightly by rhyming nucleus and coda—combine to contrast with one of them. Within “왕생” or death lies “생,” life. This has been the central dichotomy of the digression. The semantics of this word reveal, in fact, why Pae Kyongjae leaves her main story of a king and queen for eight lines. There can be desirable life after death, free of the relentless return to suffering in what Pure Land Buddhists call “samsara,” for those the princess leads through sahlmun.

Before the singer has completed six syllables in the line, the mourners listening to her have heard the Buddhist resolution of the Taoist dichotomy: “극락.” The resolution receives emphasis as the clear, firm onset of the first syllable is sung, “극.” The strong voiceless stop, heard for the first time in this description of the dark world’s inhabitants, explodes from the velar region of the throat, further back than any sound in the previous five lines. It suggests the spiritual distance once-dead souls must travel to reach paradise. And the morpheme conveys the significance of the destination: “zenith,” “height.” The same resolution-signaling “k” marks the end of the word, “극락,” clearly defining this explicit reference to a place free of Taoist contrast. The word following it, “세계,” further accentuates “극락,” stressing its expanse into even another world or universe devoid of the suffering found both for dead souls of “명도,” the dark region, and for people listening to Pae Kyongjae.

The singer impresses upon her audience the geographical expanse as she lengthens her next line, the seventh in this first version of her rebirth cycle, with an uninterrupted chain of references to the Buddhist paradise: “서방정토극락세계로.” The three-word sequence builds to repeat the words she first used for paradise in this section, “극락sehgeh.” It begins with “sol,” indicating when accompanied by its suffix, “pang,” where the place lies. West is not only where the sun sets but where India, the origin and home of Buddha, lies in relation to Korea. In reference to 극락 in his *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, Professor Hisao Inagaki adds that “all things, like the sun and the planets, turn for rest” in the west. (Inagaki, 1994. 27)

Pae Kyongjae carefully orchestrates the multiple paradise references with increasingly heavy syntax through modifier modulation. “서방” carries the least weight in the paradise chain, since “방” acts as a

suffix for the noun “sol” with no new meaning of its own. The shaman makes the second reference, “정토,” heavier by using an adjective, “정,” instead of a meaningless suffix. And the base term, “토,” describes the place itself rather than where it lies. The third reference consists of two potentially independent nouns, the first modifying the second: “극락세계,” paradise realm—both descriptions of the place.

The second link in the paradise chain, “정토,” carries multiple attributes of sukkavati, Mahayanan paradise. As the seventh syllable in this thirteen-syllable line, the morpheme “정” represents the pivot and carries appropriately heavy semantic weight. It specifies the direction from Korea to India more exactly—south by southwest, as well as conveying several desirable modifiers for “정,” one of the five basic elements of the world: “right,” “clear,” “love,” “clean,” and—especially for many Buddhists—“pure.”

Transcendence of a Taoist world of paired contrasting forces through arrival in a Buddhist paradise is realized through “정토jahng toh,” a felicitous coupling of morphemes: in traditional Chinese thought toh refers to the Fifth Process and jahng to the Fourth of Ten Heavenly Stems. Jahng, or in Chinese “Ding,” correlates with one of the eight seminal trigrams of the *I Ching*—Dui or lake, while “toh” as the center Process, Earth, correlates with Gen or mountain. In his 1796 commentary on the *I Ching*, Taoist adept Liu I-ming associates the lake trigram with joy felt from travel along a path, “just passing through once.” (Cleary, 1986. 207-213) The mountain trigram represents stopping, stillness. The sequence of these trigrams, solidified into the disyllabic “정토,” delineates the progress of the princess’s followers, who have managed to travel for the first and last time from the world of dead souls to a paradise where they may stop and live forever.

Liu I-ming analyzes the hexagram “Sensitivity,” whose upper trigram is lake and lower is mountain, drawing attention to its unusual “harmonization of yin and yang” in which “stillness is the substance of joyfulness, joyfulness is the function of stillness.” The opposed pairs of Pae Kyongjae’s digression have come to a unity. The direction for reaching coherence in this next-to-last line of the passage first appeared as the fifth syllable, “sol,” which anticipates “jahng”’s reference to trigram Dui occupying the west position in the Latter Heaven scheme. (Cleary, 1986. 72-3)

She begins the seventh line with “namjah” heading west toward paradise and, before the next line’s “kashsheenin,” he has entered it. The three solid horizontal bars that represent a pure yang or masculine

Taoist trigram (namjah) have come to rest within the three broken bars of the trigram for earth, forming the Sensitivity hexagram “경토” produces. The communion of yin and yang manifested here comes from the spontaneous formation of a pure yang trigram inside the hexagram as the lake lies upon the mountain. Liu I-ming remarks, “Firmness rests within; flexibility rests without . . . a boy and girl are together.” (Cleary, 1986. 129-130) The meaning of “jahng” as a noun for “love,” “affection” surfaces.

Considering the Sensitivity hexagram, Liu also states “it follows on the previous hexagram [*mastering pitfalls*],” another timeless one. He explains “in pitfalls, yin traps yang—yang is not strong and yin is not docile; yin and yang do not combine. So this . . . harmonization [in the Sensitivity hexagram] is indispensable.” Pae Kyongjae has certainly recorded a dangerous trip up to this point in her digression, with obstacles. Through the yang or odd-numbered sequence of hexagrams of the *I Ching*, the experiences of the princess’s group in moving toward paradise unfold. Like the traditional Chinese life cycle, the hexagram sequence has twelve stages. Liu’s labels for the hexagrams have been capitalized: Sameness with People (hexagram thirteen) describes all the dead people in the first line of the rebirth cycle, followed by the Humility (fifteen) gained through three frosts in darkness that they need in Following (seventeen) the baby princess Overseeing (nineteen) their journey of Biting Through (twenty-one) obstacles and Stripping Away (twenty-three) their head covers as they exhibit Fidelity (twenty-five) to their leader, receiving Nourishment (twenty-seven) and Mastering Pitfalls (twenty-nine) to reach Sensitivity (thirty-one) through Withdrawal (thirty-three) from the worlds of the living and of the dead, which allows them to Advance (thirty-five) into paradise.

In further explanation of 경토 jahng toh’s trigram correlations, The *Qinding Xieji bianfang shu* commissioned by the Chinese Emperor Qianlong in 1740 cites Wang Kui’s *Lihai ji* from the Ming Dynasty: “trigram Gen and trigram Dui are the ends of coming to life and transforming.” (Aylward, 2007. 174) Elsewhere the same treatise states that Dui communicates vital breath, qi, with Gen, again indicating the closeness of the morphemes in “경토” and their importance in the stages of life. The previous souls of the dark world have indeed transformed through their journey.

If the headword of the noun phrase, “경토,” receives first emphasis as earth, one of the Five Processes, its modifier, “jahng,” can resonate on the same level. As Fourth Heavenly Stem, jahng manifests yin fire. So in the dynamics of the mutual production sequence, it immediately precedes yang earth by burning wood into ashes that become earth. (41) This is a self-perpetuating pair, well-suited for the eternal Land of Happiness glorified in Mahayanan scripture.

And when fire and earth produce the word, “jahng toh,” two of the four timeless hexagrams of the *Ching* meet, engendering commentary upon the extraordinary journey Pae Kyongjae is finishing her description of. The timeless hexagrams operate in every situation and at every moment. Thus the seventh line of the shaman singer’s digression crystallizes her syncretism of Taoism and Buddhism as kungnok or sukkavati follows right after Taoist jahng toh: two nouns referring to the same object.

Ambiguity, an easy semantic boundary breaker, arises with especial effect from “deh yoh” in line seven.

남자되어, 서방정토극락세계로

As the word is sung, the audience can immediately understand it as “becoming.” Pae Kyongjae places it right after “남자,” which can complement it, describing the gender reduction noted earlier. She also, however, places it right before the chain of references to a Buddhist paradise, “서 . . . 세계로,” which allows its more basic meaning of “reach” to emphasize the kungnok sought in her previous line and throughout her digression. This interpretation will last until the shaman finishes singing the long line and begins the next. 남자 and the 극락 chain—the seeker and his goal—are drawn close together, indicating successfully completed action of the verb between them. 남자(Namjah) is actually becoming part of 극락(kungnok) because “this land is above all forms and concepts. It is the sphere of pure spiritual activity” (Inagaki, 1994. 405-6) The verbal ambiguity reflects the spiritual nature of the activities, “becoming” and “reaching”: they are synonymous once the followers have escaped samsara. Any perceived barriers or boundaries between sukkavati and the souls following the princess out of the dark region in the first part of Pae Kyongjae’s digression have been dispelled.

When Pae Kyongjae sings the first word of the last line, she binds the chain of references to paradise closer together too.

가시는날이로성이다

With “되어가시는(deh yoh kahsheenin)” playing a final syntactic role as part of the verbal phrase, “되어,” “is reaching,” the chain acts an extended direct object to it. She underscores the certainty of attaining the desired land by uttering with “가kah,” for the fifth and last time in her digression, the clear voiceless stop from the velar region of her throat that introduced “극락.” No other words in the passage have this piercing sound that announced the Mahayanan Land of Peace and Bliss.

After “가kah” the final line of Pae Kyongjae’s interlude to her recitation of the main story of Princess Bari dissolves into a short, abstract prayer—anchored to the Taoist push-and-pull of a present existence by only a single syllable, “날” (day). A fittingly non-specific antithesis to the concrete reality the second

half of the digression brought in with **복건**” and “**요모**, while mirroring the seventh line’s expansion from more limited “**토**” or earth to the vastness of “**세계**” or universe.

Unsurprisingly, like her whole narrative of Princess Bari, movement forms the productive dynamic in Pae Kyongjae’s rebirth cycle, as contrastive Taoist pairings break down during a journey toward a Buddhist paradise. This dynamic generates a plotline meant to comfort funeral mourners, who will, before the story ends, be invited by the shaman princess to join her in a procession to Amitahbul’s Pure Land. The verbal sequence of following, getting away, overturning, becoming and reaching reflects this. The motion begins in the dark world, not a world of light. It gathers force in going from one part of a contrastive pair to its complement—especially from the dark region to the realm of “the Buddha of Incomparable Light,” one of the twelve names Sakyamuni gives Amitahbul which describe the infinity of his light. (Samghavarman, 1994. 270a) In this process, a final opposing pair forms, representing Taoism against Buddhism. The travel through various transitory contrasts ends in a permanent contemplative existence, free of any motion except lips forming a prayer in an unusually long phrase of five syllables, “**이로성이다**,” an extended formal indicative assertion by a static verb occupying over half of the final line in an eight-line passage controlled by present active transitive participles.

This travel, or motion, contrasts with paradise, or no motion, through the shaman referring only once to disyllabic “**명도**” but thrice to paradise, using twice-as-long “**극락세계**” two times and “**정토**” once. The relative frequency of static noun references to paradise differs from the greater frequency of verbs earlier in the rebirth cycle. Repeating “**potgul**” five times and using other verbs convey much motion that suddenly ends with the first “**극락세계**.” And allowing only one subject to govern every “**벗고**,” which reduces the number of nouns involved with travel from “**명도**,” sharpens contrast between verbs and nouns, motion and no motion. The shaman has superimposed a higher level Taoist dichotomy that includes a Buddhist paradise of no motion.

In what seems at first a digression, Pae Kyongjae has sung the groundwork of a rebirth cycle that eventually expands the story of a royal family into a story about how everyone can gain a Mahayanan existence beyond the turbulent opposing pairs governing the samara lands of the living and the dead. The final solution to this Taoist view is given near the end of the fourth line: “**불사**.” The explicit Buddhist rituals needed to “**턴룡지게벗고**” coalesce near the end of the shaman’s story into the six syllables of “**나무아미타불**” which can guarantee paradise.

She has placed her introduction of the cycle well. After the first princess receives her names, Pae Kyongjae sings, “우여 슬푸다,” a traditional outcry at a funeral—as if she has just remembered the occasion for which she has been employed. The absence of any reference to something, in sounds which carry no specific meaning, can startle her listeners: a blaring contrast to the story she has been telling.

The Taoist pairing of opposites expands in other directions from her wailing. The singer is suddenly referring to the present scene she is in, outside of her story, as she refers to the dead. This juxtaposes present and past, amplified by expected opposing emotions: a birth should bring happiness; a death, sadness. Yet the placement of her outburst suggests she could be not only empathizing with the mourners but also with the king, who is disappointed he has no male heir. Sadness links the opposite pairs of inside and outside the story, past and present, as well as living and the dead, suggesting such boundaries can, and will, disintegrate.

Similarly the contrast of any person in the dark region with the royal family, which arises from pairing the rebirth cycle’s first line with the line before it, receives force from the double naming of Princess Pink Peach and Moon Girl as opposed to the nameless dead soul of anyone. By the end of her second line in the rebirth cycle, however, Pae Kyongjae has weakened this contrast through describing the first movement toward a Buddhist resolution: the nameless dead follow the new born princess out of darkness, forming a diverse group bound for a common destination.

Pae Kyongjae has clearly marked the opposed features of a Taoist landscape but also intimated they can crumble as the supposed concrete reality of this present world of the living begins melding with less perceivable worlds of the dead and of paradise portrayed through Buddhism.

The shaman singer also marks the end of her first version of the rebirth cycle well. The day paradise is reached changes to the time the queen senses she is pregnant with her second child. Three years have passed in the birth cycle during the singing of the rebirth cycle, coinciding with the three frosts a dead soul spends in darkness before following the princess out. The link invites comparison again of the living with the dead. This fundamental Taoist pairing is drawn through, among other means, line length: the return to the royal family comes with a line longer than any in the rebirth cycle and double the length of the nine-syllable last and shortest line in the digression. Like its opening wail, the last words of the rebirth cycle leave strict narration for a prayer, one that will culminate at the end of “The Abandoned Princess” in the magic syllables “나무 아미타불.”

The linguistics of syncretism as used by shamanism in “The Abandoned Princess” appears from the small sampling so far to manifest Taoism more completely than Buddhism. This seems predictable, given the greater orientation of the latter system toward describing ineffable spiritual realms, whereas the former grounds itself in direct observation of the visible concrete world. Its yin-yang analysis springs from seeing a mountain as simultaneously open and closed to the sun—one side light, the other dark. The samsara existence of suffering, which the Buddhist at least initially wants to leave, provides endless opportunities for the Taoist to reach a better understanding of its dynamics. Taoism can concentrate on the present world; Buddhism concentrates on future worlds.

In the first eight-line expression of the rebirth cycle, Taoist features clearly emerge from the smallest morphological elements, namely morphemes such as “선후,” and expand into syntactic structures like “남망재는 . . . 녀망재는” before manifesting themselves more directly on a purely semantic level in larger passages like the preparations for Princess Pink Peach’s birth and the journey of the dead souls to paradise. In short, Taoist dualism operates openly at all levels. Even phonologically, the natural alternation of consonant-vowel-consonant-vowel allows the onset, nucleus and—if present—coda of a syllable to be perceived. This sequence can acquire unusual significance with a word like “극락:” the velar voiceless stop signals both the beginning and the end.

In contrast, Buddhist features emerge more gradually. Certainly certain words such as “불사” refer to the system, but even its morphemes “불” (“fire” or “incense”) and “사” (“temple” or conceivably “personal”) must combine for the meaning. Primarily the semantics of extended groups of words open the Buddhist world, like line seven that brings a human being into sukkavati. Simply put, Taoism provides a platform, a way for Buddhism to express itself, transcending Taoist juxtaposed pairs into a nirvana emptied of description.

The shaman Pae Kyongjae most consciously or independently works on this syncretism by directing Mahayanism to the plight of people in the dark land of the dead. By bringing a newborn baby into that land, she forces her audience out of thinking only in terms of a Taoist world of polarities. She frees them, showing them how to escape from karmic recycling in samsara.

The morphology and syntax Pae Kyongjae uses in the eight-line opening of the rebirth cycle from the Princess Bari myth sung do generate a syncretism of Taoism and Buddhism by means of shamanism.

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