



The Thunder Spirit. Late Yi dynasty. Mineral color on silk. Collection of the Emille Museum; Seoul.

various gods certainly contributed to the Buddhist form of a heavenly being. Most of the popular gods of Hinduism, such as Siva and Vishnu, failed to play much of a role in mingling with Korean Shamanism; but Indra, the king of the Thirty-three Heavens, did play a significant role in the evolution of *Hananim*. Coincidentally the sound of Indra-Vanin was similar to Korean God *Han-In*, so both Vanin and *Han-In* were written in Han characters. Thus Hindu Indra-Vanin merged with the Korean Shamanic *Han-In*, causing a great deal of confusion in Korea.

In the *Samguk yusa*, the oldest historical record of Korea, the Korean Shamanic mythology is found in which *Han-In*, *Han-Ung* and *Han-Kom* appear as a trinity. The author of the book "El-Yon" writes in a footnote that *Han-In* is the same as Vanin and he calls him *Che-Sok*. He used the Hindu-related term *Che-Sok* instead of the Confucian term or the Taoist term *okhwang sancje* to express the Korean concept of *Hananim*.

Chesok certainly plays a major role in Korean Buddhism, particularly in the popular side of the religion. There, he is treated as the supreme ruler of heaven; he is often regarded as the agricultural god and he is also worshipped as the greatest guardian of all. In *mudang* ritual there is a style called *Che-Sok-Kori*. Its ritual song explains the origin of *chesok*, but the descriptions are inconsistent, adding confusion to the issue. However, one important fact is that *chesok* is always called *Sambul-chesok*, meaning tri-Buddha of *chesok*, which hints at a certain link with the Shamanic concept of tri-god. There are still abundant materials for *Sambul-Che-Sok* paintings available in Korea, including the *Mudang* fan painting and scrolls in *mudang* houses. In either case the icon painting of *Sambul chesok* cannot be mistaken, for the icons are unique, wearing a Korean paper diamond cap and a white garment. Thus, the lost tri-god of Korean Shamanic *Hananim*, through the long complicated historical process, was expressed in the form of three Buddhas. This iconographical discovery will, hopefully, help in the understanding of the general historical evolution of Korean ethnic Shamanism.

The Sun Spirit and Moon Spirit

Like any other civilization, the Korean race believed and worshipped the spirits of the sun and (1-2, p. 16) moon. According to the story described in *Kyuwon sahwa*, in the beginning God created heaven and earth, and then he separated day and night. After that he brought the sun to control all affairs in the daylight and the moon to take care of the night. There are of course a number of folk tales related to the origin of the sun and the moon that say a boy and a girl ascended to heaven and became the moon and the sun. It is also interesting to trace certain animistic expressions in the sun and moon. The Korean words *shae* (Sun) *nim* (Honorific), and *tai* (Moon) *nim* really mean something like the Honorable Sun and the Honorable Moon.



Left, the ox is one of the 12 zodiac signs dividing the year and the day and influencing the life of Shamanic people and their souls.



The Taoist Tri-God, above, is of the late Yi dynasty period. Painted on mulberry paper by an unknown artist, this piece is in a collection of the Emille Museum; Seou.

The icons of the sun and the moon in Korean Shamanism are expressed again in the form of a graceful old man and woman, usually dressed in the old Korean costume. Indeed a distinguishing characteristic of Korean Shamanic painting is that most of their deities are dressed in their own ethnic uniform. However, as with Hananim, the sun and the moon also evolved along with the advent of other religions. So, we often find the Sun Spirit and the Moon Spirit appearing in the form of Buddha. In either case the icons of the sun and the moon are comparatively easy to detect because of the red disc (sun) and the white disc (moon) attached to each deity.

The Seven Star Spirit

Although, theoretically, Shamanism worships the Sun Spirit and Moon Spirit, we find no physical evidence of a shrine for either the sun or the moon. Instead, Korea has many *ch'ilsongdang* or shrines of the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper. The Seven Stars Shrine is usually found behind a golden hall of a Buddhist monastery, or it may be found on a hill top, standing alone. The belief in the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper is directly linked (1-2, p. 17) with the belief in the North Pole Star Spirit, who controls all heavenly movements. The reason that Shamanists believe in the Seven Stars is because these sacred star spirits are supposed to grant life. Just as the Big Dipper is formed with seven sparkling stars, the human face, too, has seven stars (holes); eyes, nose, ears, and a mouth. Hence, the Shamanic people believe that the fate of one's life is dictated by the seven stars of the north.

Fascinating yet confusing, Taoists and Buddhists believe in the Seven Stars as much as the Shamanic people do. Naturally the origin of the Seven Stars cult has become an important issue; but so far it does not seem likely any conclusion will be reached in the near future. This problem is more explicitly depicted in icon paintings of *Ch'isong* in which three different types of Seven Stars are put together. Here we find another case where Shamanism, Taoism and Buddhism are unified under a secular belief in star spirits. Consequently, we usually find three different styles of the Seven Stars icon painting.