

The Female Principle in the Magoist Cosmogony

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ABSTRACT

Mago is a yet-to-be-known Great Goddess of East Asia. In documenting and interpreting a wealth of primary sources from Korea, China, and Japan, I have discovered the tangible but "forgotten" tradition of Mago and named it Magoism. By Magoism, I mean the anciently originated gynocentric tradition of East Asia that venerates Mago as supreme authority. This article delineates the Magoist cosmogony written in the Budoji (Epic of the Emblem City), the primary text of Magoism whose original manuscript was allegedly first written in the early 5th century and whose modern version has been made available since the mid 1980s. I have interpreted the female principle of the Budoji's Magoist cosmogony in light of a larger corpus of Mago sources from Korea, China, and Japan.

I suggest that the Budoji's origin narrative engenders a gynocentric consciousness in which femaleness is defined as divine. The self-birthing of the Magoist triad, Mago and her two daughters, symbolizes the great cosmic beginning. The Magoist cosmogony is distinguished by its female-principle, embodied in such notions as female-toned cosmic music called PalYoe (Eight Female Musical Pitches), the triune pantheon of Mago and her two daughters, their parthenogenetic procreation, the milk-spring, and the genealogy of Mago. The original female principle becomes gender-harmonized when maleness made its entry to the world as grandchildren of Mago.

Keywords: creation myth, East Asia, folklore, goddess, Korea, PalYeo, Triune Deity, YulYeo

INTRODUCTION

While such deities as Xiwanmu (the Supreme Goddess of Daoism), Amaterasu (the Sun Goddess of the Japanese imperial family), Matzu (the Goddess of the Sea from Taiwan), and Guanin (the God/Goddess of Compassion in Buddhism) represent the female pantheon of East Asia, Mago 𐄀𐄀 remains barely known to the world. Mago is the "forgotten" Great Goddess of East Asia.¹ This article explores the female principle of the Magoist cosmogony as written in the *Budoji (Epic of the Emblem City)*.² In the *Budoji's* origin myth, the great beginning is symbolized as the self-birthing of Mago and her two daughters, the primordial triad. It is my view that the *Budoji's* origin myth rekindles an ancient consciousness that venerates Female as the Divine Principle/Way. Femaleness is not merely a sex/gender quality. It is rather seen as the primal principle/way of existence, the deep reality that humanity must seek and not forget.

The Magoist cosmogony provides an original account for the triune divinity of Mago Samsin (Triune Deity). It illumines the cosmic beginning through the self-birthing of Mago and her two daughters. Its versatile language is filled with yet-to-be-heard sublime female symbols and concepts such as female cosmic music, self-birthing, and earth-milk. *PalYoe*, the female cosmic music, is described as ultimate

1. Pronounce Ma as in Mama. Mago is conventionally known as Halmi or Halmeony. For modern Koreans, Halmi means grandmother or crone. In the context of Magoism, however, Halmi means both Grandmother and Goddess. This Magoist meaning was likely effective until pre-modern times in Korea. As the status of women underwent a process of demotion and degradation on the foreground, the word Halmi no longer included the meaning Goddess. I am aware that the term Goddess, let alone Great Goddess, is controversial. Nonetheless, I find it necessary to name Mago the Great Goddess, a henotheistic supreme divine. The Great Goddess is my interpretation of the word "Mago." Mago is the name that indicates the Great Goddess of East Asia and at the same time a generic term that refers to the Great Goddess.

2. Bak, JaeSang *Budoji [The Epic of the Emblem City]*, trans. EunSu Kim (1986; repr., Seoul: Hanmuhwa Press, 2002). My transcription of Korean names is as follows: when it is pre-modern names, I follow Korean conventions, that is, last name is followed by first name (e.g. Bak JaeSang). For modern Korean names, I follow Western conventions; first name is followed by last name (e.g. Geum Bak).

creativity from which primordial beings—including stars, Mago, and the Citadel of Mago (earth)—were born. Mago, the anthropomorphic embodiment of ultimate creativity, gives birth to two daughters by parthenogenesis (self-birthing). The text proclaims the Female as the original sex. She is called Woman/Grandmother/Goddess because she is the sex that procreates and administrates. Her two daughters bore daughters and sons by self-birthing. At this point, the male sex/gender makes an entry to the world as grandchildren of Mago.

MY ENCOUNTER WITH MAGOISM

To explain how I came to encounter a reality that illumines my ontological and existential questions is a complex task.³ It is not merely an intellectual matter. It is also a spiritual, psychological, social, and political act. When this reality remains yet-to-be-known, my task appears overwhelming. This is the case with my story of encountering Magoism. I have not only encountered but also reconstructed Magoism.

I am a native woman of Korea and citizen of the world. And I am indebted to many whose lives have crossed and mingled with mine. I had begun the journey of my spiritual and intellectual quest as a university student activist and, at the same time, a born-again Catholic, in Korea. With a dream to become a cross-cultural missionary, I left Korea and joined a liberal, U.S.-based, Catholic women's overseas missionary congregation. During the training period, I became a Christian feminist. Also I became aware of my own ethnic identity. In the end, my missionary experience with the marginalized people, particularly women, of the Philippines brought me an excruciating but priceless realization that I no longer wanted to lead a life of a religious missionary.

I disassociated myself from patriarchal upbringing, ideologies, and religious values and embraced my female and Korean identities. During this time, I grieved to my depths as I distanced myself from many familiar beliefs. Yet, I was strong and at peace. I was Be-Coming Myself. Mary Daly's feminist thought, which I soon encountered, was a beacon in my trans-patriarchal voyage. I quenched my ontological thirst by reading and translating her books.⁴ My on-going intellectual and spiritual

3. This section was added at the request of members of the Editorial Council of *OCHRE Journal of Women's Spirituality*. I owe heartfelt thanks to their constructive and scrutinizing comments and suggestions for this article.

4. I translated and published in Korean Mary Daly's first two books, *Beyond God the Father* (Seoul: Ewha Women's University Press, 1996) and *Church and the Second Sex* (Seoul: Women's Newspaper Press, 1997). Since then, she and I have been steadily

quest, which had been suppressed in my earlier years, brought me to California to pursue graduate degrees.

I began my graduate studies as a feminist spiritual/ideological expatriate. I resisted an identity that was given by patriarchy. Although I took pleasure in feminist studies, I did not take part in any particular feminist activist group. Instead, I continued my own intellectual and spiritual search—this time as a secular hermit who was immersed in the mundane life of finishing my higher degrees while making ends meet. With the hope of holding a clear and lucid vision of myself and the world, I continued my voyage onward.

It was the summer of 2000 when SangYil Kim, a Koreanist, handed over the *Budoji* to me. He may have intuitively understood that I would make use of its feminist implications. This was around the time when I completed the coursework for my doctoral degree. However casual or haphazard that single incident appeared to be, it brought an irreversible consequence. The book was like an old, mysterious mirror that beckoned me to come and see. Upon my reading of the *Budoji*, Mago was no longer an unfamiliar name to me. My soul leaped in realization that She was the ultimate divine after whom I was seeking. Then I found her everywhere. I had no hesitation to choose Mago for my dissertation subject. My advisors did not question my interest in Mago. I pondered about two years, while documenting primary sources, and spent two years of intense writing.

Another level of consciousness cracked open inside me. In Magoism, I found a whole new world that had sunken into the subconscious under patriarchy: the origin myth, the pre-Chinese history, the pro-Magoist Korean identity, and the erased gynocentric civilization of East Asia. Through my research, I discovered and conversed in my imagination with Magoist priestesses and priests, sovereigns, shamans, immortals, grandmothers, witnesses, and supporters, and visited natural and human-made architectural structures across time and space. My consciousness entered a new reality that I had longed for but had never traveled before. My life journey began to make sense in Magoism. I was coming Home.

In fact, the remnants of Magoism appear countless throughout East Asia. Rocks (boulders, dolmens, and menhirs), mountains, hills, roads, villages, lakes, ponds, and seas are told to have myths, rituals, place-names, episodes, and histories of Mago. Magoism has resurged, although fragmentarily, through cultural events in Korea in recent years. To name a few: the children's storybook, *Mago Halmi* (*Grandmother*); the title of a movie; the name of a female rock band; and the name of

a meeting place.⁵ National interest in documenting and preserving Korean traditional cultures, equipped with a nationwide online accessibility, have made folktales and place-names concerning Mago visible to an unprecedented extent in recent years. Websites run by cities, citizens, amateur scholars, businesses, and cultural centers list extensive data. Writers including myself have written about a variety of Mago literature in journals, newspapers, websites, and blogs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A major part of this article is drawn from my dissertation research on Magoism. In a spirit marked by continuous surprises and exhilaration, I was able to document a wealth of the "forgotten" corpus of Mago from Korea, China, and Japan. I soon encountered an organic structure that permeated the fabric of East Asian civilizations and named it Magoism. Magoism refers to the anciently originated cultural matrix of East Asia, which venerates Mago as originator, progenitor, and sovereign.⁶ Mago as originator completes and maintains the self-equilibrating power of the universe. According to the cosmogonic narratives of the *Budoji* and folktales from Korea, Mago moves and relocates the primordial water and land including mountains, megaliths, rivers, ponds, and villages.

While the term Magoism is my neologism, the notion of Magoism proves to be archaic in origin. Magoism is explicitly and implicitly referred to as "the State of Mago," "the Principle of Mago," and "the Affair of Mago," in various pieces of literature from Korea. The *Budoji* records that most people forgot "the Affair of Mago" and that "the Principle of Mago" became vain, when the Sovereignty of Dangun—more commonly known as Old Choson (c. 2333-232 BCE), the ancient state of Korea, which I call the third Magoist confederacy—underwent the process of disintegration caused by the invasion of neighboring Chinese regimes.⁷ Also the

5. Geun Jeong, *Mago Halmi* (Seoul: Borim, 1996, rep. 2006); the film, *Mago* (Seoul: RMJC, 2002); Band Mago led by Hea Kyoung Ahn (Seoul: 1996), and Salon Mago run by Jiha Kim (Seoul 2007).

6. I avoid the term "creator" and instead employ "originator," for the former is conventionally understood as the divine who creates from nothing.

7. *Budoji*, Chapter 25, 90-91. I do not include the alleged author's name before the title. A possibility of co-authorship of the *Budoji* is discussed in my dissertation, Helen Hye-Sook Hwang, *Seeking Mago, the Great Goddess: A Mytho-Historic-Theological Reconstruction of Magoism, an Archaically Originated Gynocentric Tradition of East Asia* (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate University, 2005), Chapter 3. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, publ.

Goryoesa [Chronicle of the Goryoe Dynasty] records that people sang, "Ah, ah, if the State of Mago leaves us now, when will it return?" during the twilight period of Goryoe Korea (918-1392 CE)⁸

People's longing for the return of the State of Mago appears in many folk literature pieces as well as written records of Korea, China, and Japan. To name a few among Korean sources: a folk lyric, the *Ujo* or Men's Song, sings about a vagabond who asks people including animals if they know Mago's dwelling place; a poem engraved on Nakhwaam (Rock of Falling Flowers) expresses a nostalgic wish of the poet/government official to meet Mago again; Saga, the *Sukhyangjeon (Tale of Sukhyang)*, portrays a male protagonist who asks Mago about the dwelling place of Mago without recognizing that he is speaking to her. In these pieces, Magoism is often addressed simply as Mago. To cite some examples from the Chinese context, Ts'ao T'ang (Tang poet) of the mid 8th century sang, "Once Miss Hemp [Magu] has gone away, none knows when she will come again."⁹ An earlier record, the *Maguzhuan (Biology of Magu)* by Ge Hong (284-364 CE) and an epitaph, the *Magushan Xiantanji (Record of the Altar of an Immortal in Mt. Magu)* by Yan Zhenqing (709-785 CE) also address Magu (Chinese transliteration) in relation to her immemorial origin and her legacy on Mt. Magu.¹⁰ In a Japanese source, *The Tale of the Heike*, Mt. Mako (Japanese transliteration) is referred to as a place where the deceased emperors return.¹¹

According to my assessment, the history of Magoism dates back to several thousand years BCE within East Asian societies, to the mythic period of origin. I divide the history of Magoism into six distinctive periods; mythic, archaic, Budo, post-Budo, dark age, and modern revival. My historical reconstruction of Magoism

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8. *Goryoesa [Chronicle of the Goryoe Dynasty]*, vol. 36, Saega, King Chunghye, quoted in JungPyoeng Noh, *GoChoson-ui Jonggyo Hyoekmyoeng [The Religious Revolution of Old Choson]* (Seoul: Daehan, 2003), 130.

9. Edward. H. Schafer, *Mirages on the Sea of Time: The Taoist Poetry of Ts'ao T'ang* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 98. Ts'ao T'ang's nostalgia for the lost history of Magoism remains unrecognized among the Chinese and the Daoists even today.

10. For detail discussions, see Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapters 10-11.

11. See Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapter 2, 73 note 182. There are two interpretation of Mt. Mako according to a Japanese source. The second interpretation mentions that Mt. Mako is noted in the *Chuan Tzu*, one of the earliest Daoist texts. Interestingly, both interpretations are crucial in establishing organic connections between early Chinese sources and Korean and Japanese sources. See Hwang, *Ibid*, Chapter 10.

not only suggests pre-Chinese histories of East Asian Magoist peoples but also reconfigures territorial demarcations among East Asian peoples particularly of Korea, China, and Japan. Since ancient Koreans are identified as pro-Magoists, the history of Magoism necessarily exposes the lost history of ancient Koreans.¹²

The mid 1980s marked a watershed in the modern history of Magoism with the reemergence of the *Budoji* [*Epic of the Emblem City*],¹³ and the *Handan Gogi* [*Archaic Chronicles of Han and Dan*],¹⁴ which I see as two major texts of Magoism. Of the two, the *Budoji* occupies a unique place, as it presents the epic of Magoism beginning with a universal origin story that is succeeded by the history of the archaic Magoist states. My first acquaintance with the *Budoji* opened my eyes to a yet-to-be-named tradition of Mago. The overt gynocentric principle that runs through this epic text was a strong attraction for me. Intrigued by the *Budoji*, I began to seek a larger corpus related to Mago by asking various friends in Korea if they had heard of Mago.¹⁵ The result was beyond my expectations. I soon learned that Magoist literature such as folklore, paintings, poems, sagas, shaman lyrics, as well as written texts exist not only in Korea but also China and Japan in abundance. For example, I documented over 300 folktales on Mago including place-names from Korea alone.¹⁶ In Korea, a good number of folktales documented in the *Legends from Jeju* (1976) and the *Hanguk Gubi Munhak Daegyedae* [*A Survey of Korean Oral Literature*] (1980) predate the reemergence of the *Budoji*. Nonetheless, these modern documentations of Mago folktales should not be deemed as an indicator that Mago folktales began to

12. For the detailed discussion see my dissertation, Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapter 2, 76.

13. Also refer to Thomas Yoon's English translation and commentary on the *Budoji: The BuDoZhi: The Genesis of MaGo (Mother Earth) and The History of the City of Heavenly Ordinance* (Notre Dame, IN: Cross Cultural Publications, 2003).

14. There are at least three renditions of the *Handan Gogi* [*Archaic Chronicles of Han and Dan*], which were published almost simultaneously in 1986. The most popular version among Koreans is that of Seung-Guk Im, trans. and annotator, *Handan Gogi* (Seoul: Jungshin Segyesa, 1986). An extensive number of commentaries have been written and published in Korea since then. It should be noted that the modern Japanese translation and annotation of the *Handan Gogi* was published prior to these Korean translations. Refer to Noboru Kashima, trans. and annotator. *Kandan Koki* (Pusan: Minjok Munhwasa, 1986). Originally published (Tokyo: Rekishi to Gendaisha, 1982).

15. For more detailed information about the contemporary revival of Magoism in Korea, see Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapters 2 and 9.

16. While I was writing my dissertation in 2004, Mago mythic tales from Korea numbered about 215. Since then, I have added about another hundred examples.

appear only at this time in Korea. It is plausible that many folktales originated earlier than the *Budoji*. Dating the oral tradition of Magoism is a particularly precarious issue because Magoism remains largely unrecognized in academic domains even to this day. While some symbolisms like rocks, mountains, bird, fox, snakes, spirals, and meanders appear Paleolithic in origin, other sources including written texts, epigraphs, sagas, paintings, poems, folk songs, and shaman lyrics from Korea, China, and Japan appear to have been produced throughout history, beginning with the earliest written text of the *Maguzhuan (Biography of Magu)* by Ge Hong, dated between the late 3rd and mid-4th century CE.

Since a major part of my focus in this article is on the *Budoji*, I will give a brief survey of the text. The modern 1986 Korean version of the *Budoji* was derived from the notes and memory of Geum Bak (1895-death unknown), a descendent of the alleged original author, Bak JaeSang. Geum Bak, as modern scribe of the *Budoji*, presents evidence proposing that this book was originally written in the early 5th century. Geum Bak adds that the *Budoji* is the first volume of the 15 books entitled the *Jingsimrok (Literature of Illuminating Mind/Heart)*, written by Bak JaeSang.¹⁷ While the original text of the *Budoji* is thought to have been lost due to the out-break of the Korean War in 1950, the 1986 version appears to be the sole surviving text thus far.

My work suggests that one way to validate Geum Bak's testimony is to read the *Budoji* within the context of a larger corpus of Mago sources, which I listed above. Moreover, I hold that the *Budoji* should be read from a feminist perspective. The female principle explicated in the *Budoji* may well appear irrelevant if not spurious to scholars with androcentric perspectives who deem ancient Korean history and culture as unquestionably patriarchal. In accessing the issue of the *Budoji*'s value or authenticity as a text, one needs to consider the controversy over the history and culture of ancient Korea among non-mainstream scholars and the general public in Korea. If one raises a question of the authenticity of the *Budoji*, he/she may have to provide counter-arguments to this controversy. Under this situation, mainstream Koreanists inside and outside Korea have kept silence about the *Budoji* along with the *Handan Gogi (Chronicles of Han and Dan)*, which I consider as a second major text of Magoism. In order to overcome this tacit resistance, I have endeavored to show how the *Budoji* and the *Handan Gogi* are mutually supportive; moreover, that these two texts are supported by various forms of literature not only from Korea but also from China and Japan.

17. See Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, chapter 3.

While the silent treatment by mainstream Koreanists appears as disinterest if not a stumbling block to my use of both texts, I hold that my historical reconstruction of Magoism based on these two texts has far-reaching implications. It grants a new scheme in which East Asian histories and cultures are viewed in a radically new light from a female gender perspective. In fact, my work coincides with the current situation in Northeast Asia which Chinese, Korean, and Japanese peoples are engaged in the battle of re-writing their nationalist historiographies. I have discussed why my work should not be lumped together with the Korean nationalist view in my dissertation.¹⁸ In my view current knowledge about ancient Korean history and culture—a product of Chinese and Japanese imperialists as well as pro-Chinese and pro-Japanese Korean subordinates—is on the verge of disintegration. From the perspective of Magoism, this is an event that has been long overdue. Ultimately, my reconstruction of Magoism contributes to East Asian Studies beyond the realm of historiography. It re-envision East Asian religions such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism as patriarchal offshoots of ancient Magoism. This is a complex discussion that would benefit from further exploration in a future article.

The *Budoji* contains commentary proposing that ancient (pre-Chinese) Koreans generated a flowering of Magoism and defended it. It accounts for a coherent historical trajectory of Magoism from the mythic time of the cosmogonic origin, through ancient Korean (pre-Chinese East Asian) states before c. 7199 BCE, until the early centuries of Silla Korea (c. 57 BCE-935 CE). Its mythic language conveys pre-patriarchal consciousness, and its multi-faceted holistic view is distinguished for its non-linear, non-hierarchical, and non-monist perspectives.

The first two chapters of the *Budoji*, which I introduce in this article, contain only a small part of the Magoist epic (a total of 33 chapters). I read these two chapters in light of the immediately successive chapters, which relate the creation acts of Mago Samsin (the triad), the procreation of her daughters and grandchildren, the stabilization of the Citadel of Mago, epicenter of the world, and the paradisiacal life of immortal ancestors. I acknowledge that my interpretation of these two chapters is influenced by other materials, including hundreds of folktales that tell of Mago as "creator" (read originator: see note 5).

In approaching the Magoist cosmogony, it is necessary to explain some cosmological assumptions. In the *Budoji*, cosmic time and space are described as three epochs: the Former Heaven (Seoncheon); the intermediary period called JimSe (One's World); and the Latter Heaven (Hucheon). Although the term heaven conveys a spatial dimension for modern readers, it is used in the Magoist context to indicate

18. See Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapter 2.

both space and time simultaneously. In other words, the concept of time does not exist in separation from space. Time is space-bound and vice versa. These three macrocosmic epochs, however, do not represent monolithic concepts of time in which past, present, and future are construed as linearly separate entities. Rather, they present the spiraling of time/space evolution. Points of the past, the present, and the future are not static but positional. In this cosmology, to speak technically, there is one direction to which time/space flows within a circle of time/space. To speak realistically, however, we humans live in multi-layered times/spaces. Magoist cosmology invites us into a reality in which we as human communities encounter past, present, and future events at once and in a continuum.

In the Magoist cosmology, the emergence of Mago demarcates the three cosmic epochs. The Former Heaven refers to the time before Mago's emergence, whereas JimSe, the intermediary epoch, refers to when Mago and her two daughters and then their daughters and sons (referred to as immortals) began their lives. The Latter Heaven unfolds when and where the self-creation by all beings continues to evolve.¹⁹

MUSIC AS PRIMORDIAL CREATIVITY

The Magoist cosmogony is distinguished not only for its description of cosmic music as primordial creativity but also for its perception of primordial creativity as female. According to the *Budoji*, the great beginning of the universe originates from PalYoe (Eight Female Musical Pitches):

In the epoch of the Former Heaven, the Great Citadel of Mago was located above the Citadel of SilDal (Real Land) and next to the Citadel of HeoDal (Ideal Land). In the beginning, there was nothing that could be seen but warm sunshine. Only was there to be heard the Music of PalYoe (Eight Female Musical Pitches) from heaven. The Cities of SilDal (Real Land) and HeoDal (Ideal Land) all came from this music,

19. In Korean indigenous religions, the Latter Heaven is addressed as an epoch that is to come. Such founders of Korean new religions as Suwoon and Zeungsan in the late 19th and 20th centuries mention these three epochs in their teachings. Refer to *Korean Native Religions* (Seoul: The Association of Korean Native Religions, 2006).

so did the Great Citadel of Mago and Mago. This epoch is called JimSe (One's World).²⁰

Like many non-monotheistic origin myths of the world, the Magoist origin story does not describe creation *ex nihilo* (from nothing) by a transcendental monotheistic god. The account that there was warm sunshine in the beginning of the Former Heaven presupposes the existence of the sun in the beginning. Then, amidst the primordial universe, the music of PalYoe arose from heaven. Everything—including Mago, the Citadel of Mago, and primeval materials—was born from PalYoe. PalYoe literally means the eight-pitched female music (*pal* means "eight" and *yoe* "female-toned music"). It appears that the number eight indicates the eight cardinal directions of the universe in this context. A theological discussion of PalYoe as ultimate creative force requires a complicated explication, which goes beyond the purpose of this article. In Korean folk traditions, eight female immortals and eight mudangs (shamans) are well-known.²¹ I will return to the discussion of the female specificity of PalYoe shortly.

While PalYoe is referred to as ultimate creativity during the epoch of the Former Heaven, YulYoe (Male and Female Musical Pitches), the sex/gender balanced cosmic music, is employed to describe creativity in general. YulYoe (*yul* means male-toned music and *yoe* female-toned music) symbolizes the fundamental dyad of two sexes/genders. IlBu Kim (1826-1898 CE), Korean philosopher, notes that the term should be transposed to YoeYul from YulYoe because he claims Korean traditional thought is primarily female-principled.²² The dyad of Yoe/Yul representing two primary sexes/genders needs to be examined in relation to Yin/Yang of the Chinese cosmology.²³

20. *Budoji*, Chapter 2, 26-27.

21. Such fairy tales as the Seonnyoe (Female Immortal) and Woodcutter tell of eight female immortals. Also, eight mudangs (shamans) were dispatched into eight provinces of Korea by aristocratic women during the early period of the Choson Dynasty (1392-1919 CE). See *Hangukhak Daebaekgwa Sajeon* [*Encyclopedia of Korean Studies*, vol. 1] (1972; repr; Seoul: Eulyu Munhwasa, 1991), 468-9.

22. See JiHa Kim, *YulYoe-ran Muetshinga?* [What is YulYoe?] (Seoul: Hanmunhwa, 1999), 30-67. Following IlBu Kim, JiHa Kim, Korean poet and philosopher, not only affirms the sex/gender-ridden nature of YulYoe but addresses the problem of its patriarchal implications. For more information, see Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapter 4, 131.

23. The thought of Yin/Yang deserves a new investigation as to whether it is exclusively attributed to the Chinese in its origin. Within the context of Magoism that reconfigures pre-

The *Budoji* describes the emergence/bifurcation of sexes/genders, as follows:

Prior to JimSe, when YulYoe rose repeatedly, stars emerged. When JimSe completed its cycles for a long time, Mago bore two daughters, GungHee (Vault Woman) and SoHee (Nest Woman), and had them to take care of OemChilJo (Five Pitches and Seven Tunes). . . . GungHee and SoHee bore four women and four men . . . and assigned the former to manage Yoe and the latter Yul.²⁴

In the above account that informs the sex/gender dynamic of cosmic music, the sequence is noteworthy. The music of Yul appears only with the emergence of the male for the first time in the third generation of Mago's lineage. That Mago assigns four women to Yoe and four men to Yul for management offers an etymological foundation for the notions of Yul and Yoe—Yoe represents the female identification of music and Yul, the male counterpart. In Magoist cosmogony, the notion of YulYoe reflects the sex/gender bifurcation of beings. Unlike Yoe as it is in PalYoe (eight female-toned music), however, Yul alone does not have an autonomous standing. In other words, it functions only as a form of YulYoe, the sex/gender harmonized music, and there is no separate Yul, male music that stands alone; there is no such entity as PalYul. In other words, the male principle is deemed as dependent and subsidiary in the Magoist cosmogony.

The statement, "Prior to JimSe, when YulYoe arose repeatedly, stars emerged" requires a close examination. This means that YulYoe, the sex/gender harmonized music, is the creatrix by which stars were born during the Former Heaven, prior to JimSe, the intermediary cosmic epoch. However, this contradicts the previously quoted account that PalYoe, the female-specific music, was the primordial music of the universe during the time of Former Heaven. According to this previous account, the male had not made an entry until the time of JimSe. In other words, the mention of YulYoe in the above account is likely an anachronistic error on the part of the author or scribe. According to the preceding origin narrative of the *Budoji*, Yul does not come into existence/consciousness until the birth of sons by Mago's two daughters.

Chinese East Asian civilizations later defended by ancient Korean states, some notions as well as cultural symbolisms that are previously known as the hallmark of Chinese or Japanese are redefined as those of pan-East Asian, that is Magoist, or ancient Korean.

24. *Budoji*, Chapter 2, 26-27.

Having said that, it is useful to note the comment of Hyoen Bak, contemporary exponent of the *Budoji*. He states that YulYoe (the male-female-toned music) is mistakenly placed and that it must be corrected to PalYoe (the female-toned music).²⁵ This means that the pertinent account should be corrected to "Prior to JimSe, when PalYoe arose repeatedly, stars emerged." Bak's assertion is congruent with my interpretation of the female principle of the Magoist cosmogony. In the context of the Magoist origin myth, YulYoe is—although not meant as inferior to PalYoe—the subsequent gender-equilibrated creatrix.²⁶

In the first passage, the Female principle of PalYoe (Eight Female Musical Pitches) takes precedence over YulYoe (Male and Female Musical Pitches) in the origin account of the *Budoji*. PalYoe is the primal creatrix from which both female and male are derived. To be more precise, the Female in PalYoe precedes the demarcation of sex/gender dualism, male and female. Note that I capitalized the Female. The Female transcends and embodies at once both female and male. Nonetheless, we must not perceive PalYoe and YulYoe in conflicting terms. The text itself does not suggest the dynamic of domination or suppression. According to the continued story of the *Budoji*, PalYoe is succeeded by YulYoe without a rupture, as Mago continues to procreate and create. The *Budoji* highlights the female principle of PalYoe during the Former Heaven, while underscoring YulYoe, the sex/gender harmonized music, for the successive epochs, JimSe and the Latter Heaven.

The Magoist genesis may likely be perceived as a great musical procreation of the universe rather than a great explosion (the Big Bang). Creation spontaneously and simultaneously takes place, as the cosmic music reaches its climax. Such musical forces as PalYoe, YulYoe, and OEmChilJo (Five Notes and Seven Tunes) are engendered, as primordial entities move in equilibrium. Vibration/sound is invoked by movement/dance, and vice versa. In fact, music and movement are not two independent entities. Cosmic music and primeval creative movements refer to the two interconnected aspects of the primordial reality.

25. Such an inconsistency may have been added by a scribe considering the long historical process that the text has apparently endured to its present form.

26. Hyoen Bak stated this in his lecture of November 2002, one of the lecture series addressed to Korean Buddhists at the Jogye Temple in Seoul. His authority as an exponent of the *Budoji* is likely derived from the claim that he is a contemporary descendent of JaeSang Bak, the alleged early-fifth-century author of the *Budoji*. Keum Bak, familial predecessor of Hyoen Bak and the modern scribe of the *Budoji*, admits that there might be some minor mistakes in his work of retrieving the text from his memory of translation and childhood recitation. See Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapter 3.

JungPyoeng Noh, expert on Korean Shamanism, suggests a Magoist exegesis of Korean traditional music. His explanation of PalYoe (Eightfold Female Cosmic Music) and OEmChilJo (Five Notes and Seven Tunes), is both poetic and scientific, and it illumines the interdependence of music and movement. He writes:

The universe was created by PalYoe. The music of PalYoe is a vibration, which is generated by the movement of the gravity axis, and goes out into eight directions. . . . OEm (Five Notes) is a sound that comes inward from the center of the gravity axis. It cycles crescendos and diminuendos. ChilJo (Seven Tunes) functions to transfer the direction of sound outward, when an incoming sound reaches the zenith. GungHee and SoHee manage the task [of OemChilJo].²⁷

For Noh, PalYoe is the vibration/music that arises from the self-equilibrating movement /dance of stars. It can be equated with "the Music of the Spheres" described in ancient European cosmology, which I wrote in my dissertation.²⁸ The primordial vibration/music is induced, while the "gravity-axis" of the stars spins and rotates for balance. To put it another way, the planetary movements of the Earth [self-rotations and revolutions around the sun] are generated according to the vibrations/musicology of the cosmos. Noh's interpretation is no mere euphemism or poetic fancy. Rather, it is a Magoist effort to re-discover and reinterpret Korean traditional music.²⁹ His explanation of the theory of Korean music springs from the

27. Noh, *GoChoson-ui Jonggyo Hyoekmyoeng [The Religious Revolution of Old Choson]* (Seoul: Daehan, 2003), 41.

28. See Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapter 4, 140-143.

29. The principle of YulYoe appears pivotal in archaic Korean culture. However, much of its discourse seems to be lost except for the *Budoji* and other fragmented sources. The *Budoji* itself states that the Law of Invoking YulYoe was enacted upon the foundation of Silla. See *Budoji*, Chapter 29, 102. See, also, the *Samguk Sagi* [History of Three Kingdoms], translated and annotated by ByoengSu Lee (Seoul: Elyu Munhwasa, 1977), 503, 507. It lists the names of musical instruments: SamJuk Jeok (three bamboo flutes) and SamHyoen (three string instruments), and also states that the music of three bamboo flutes has seven tunes. While such information is too terse to draw any substantial inference, it is worth noting that the numerical symbols of three and seven recur as a central motif in the history and culture of Magoism.

In ancient Chinese texts, a wealth of literature which treats music as a central theme, is available. Among many, the following works are relevant: Jao Tsung-i, "Foreword: Speaking

Budoji's explanation of the Magoist cosmogony. While his view is integral to this article, a deeper exploration of his perspective is beyond its scope.

THE BEGINNING OF MAGO SAMSIN (TRIUNE DEITY)

The *Budoji's* creation account culminates in the emergence of Mago, the anthropomorphic progenitrix, and the self-birthing (parthenogenesis) by Mago of her two daughters. Particularly, the birth of Mago by PalYoe illumines not only the emergence of PalYoe by the movement/vibration of primordial stars but also the self-birthing of progeny by Mago and by her two daughters. The primordial trinity of Mago and her two daughters is a fulcrum to the great beginning of the cosmos as well as of humanity.

According to the epic, Mago is brought forth into existence by PalYoe, the female music of the universe. Then, the Way/Life of Mago opens a new epoch called JimSe. Now let us put the above two citations together and see the full account of the *Budoji's* second chapter:

In the epoch of the Former Heaven, the Great Citadel of Mago was located above the Citadel of SilDal (Real Land) and next to the Citadel of HeoDal (Ideal Land). In the beginning, there was nothing that could be seen but warm sunshine. Only was there to be heard the Music of PalYoe (Eight Female Musical Pitches) from heaven. The Cities of SilDal and HeoDal came from this music, so did the Great Citadel of Mago and Mago. This is called JimSe (One's World).

Prior to JimSe, when YulYoe [PalYoe] arose repeatedly, stars emerged. When JimSe completed its cycles for a long time, Mago

of 'Sages': The Bronze of San-hsing-tui" in *Sages and Filial Sons: Mythology and Archaeology in Ancient China*, ed. Julia Ching and R.W.L. Guisso, xv-xvi (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1991); Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1982); Walter Kaufmann, *Musical References in the Chinese Classics* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1976); and Chao-Mei-Pa, *The Yellow Bell: A Brief Sketch of the History of Chinese Music* (Baldwin, MD: Barberry Hill, 1934). These authors, albeit to different degrees, establish not only that ancient Chinese intellectuals knew a sophisticated system of musicology but also that music was understood as primordial creativity.

bore two daughters, GungHee (Vault Woman) and SoHee (Nest Woman), and had them take care of OemChilJo (Five Pitches and Seven Tunes).

The Citadel sprang forth milk [from the ground] for the first time. GungHee and SoHee bore four women and four men and raised them with earth-milk. They assigned the former to manage Yoe and the latter Yul.³⁰

Since I have already explained the incipient creation process that took place during the Former Heaven, I focus here on the successive creation during the intermediary epoch of JimSe marked by the great beginning of Mago. The above account reveals an original story of Mago's and her two daughters' procreation. Mago, the Primal Woman, gave birth to two daughters by parthenogenesis. Like Mago, her two daughters bore their progeny by parthenogenesis. Since milk sprang from a well in the Citadel of Mago, GungHee and SoHee raised their children with earth-milk. Thus, the Triune Divinity of Mago and her two daughters, GungHee and SoHee, was established.

The *Budoji's* Magoist triune mythology offers a lens to examine ancient Korean thought and religiosity, especially as recounted in the *Handan Gogi* (*Archaic Chronicles of Han and Dan*), the second major text in my reconstruction of Magoism. In the *Handan Gogi*, not only Mago is addressed as Samsin (Triad Deity) along with other names such as Cheonsin (Heavenly Deity) and Daejosin (Great Ancestor Deity), but also triune theology is discussed with great emphasis and at greater length.³¹ Also the Magoist triune mythology is reflected in traditional folk piety toward Samsin Halmeony (Triad Grandmother/Goddess). In faith-practices enacted for her by the populace, which were popular among Koreans up until the 1970s, Samsin Halmeony was venerated for her power to decide the life and death of children, including impregnation and child-birth.³² I refer to the three, Mago and her two daughters, as Mago Samsin (Triune Deity) hereafter.

Although the above account does not articulate Mago Samsin's parthenogenesis, more commonly referred to as "virgin-birth," it is contextually assumed as such. The Three Women are self-evidently the primeval anthropomorphic beings on earth. Male sex/gender appears in the third generation of Mago's lineage. In

30. *Budoji*, Chapter 2, 26-27.

31. See Hwang, *Seeking Mago*, Chapter 3.

32. On popular practices of Magoism, see *ibid.*, Chapter 9.

other words, Mago Samsin's parthenogenesis is clearly assumed in the above account. In contrast to this, the previous chapter of the *Budoji* had already made parthenogenesis explicit. It is illuminating to juxtapose Chapter 1 now with the above cited:

The Citadel of Mago was located on the highest place on earth.
 Honoring the Heavenly Emblem, it succeeded the Former Heaven.
 There were four heavenly men at the four corners of the Citadel who
 stored tubes [flutes] and composed music. The first was named
 HwangGung (Yellow Vault), the second CheongGung (Blue Vault),
 the third BaekSo (White Nest), and the last HeukSo (Black Nest).
 Mother of two Gungs was Sovereign GungHee and Mother of two Sos
 was Sovereign SoHee. GungHee and SoHee were daughters of Mago.

Mago was born in JimSe. Mago had no emotion of pleasure and pain.
 She, rendering the Former Heaven male and the Latter Heaven female,
 bore GungHee (Vault Woman) and SoHee (Nest Woman) without
 spouse. Also GungHee and SoHee, without spouse but united by the
 Former Heaven and the Latter Heaven, each bore two heavenly men
 and two heavenly women, which added up to all four heavenly men
 and four heavenly women.³³

In this first chapter, Mago Samsin's parthenogenesis is aided by the union between the Former Heaven and the Latter Heaven. This metaphoric apparatus appears to ease the difficulty on the part of readers in understanding the self-birthing of Mago Samsin. Such a metaphoric narrative may have functioned as an expedient means on the part of the narrator/scribe.³⁴ Also what can be inferred is that the author or scribe is conscious of the readers who might have deemed a sexual union between the two genders as a corollary method of reproduction.

MAGO AS ORIGINATOR

The first chapter of the *Budoji* begins the creation story out of chronological sequence. Instead of beginning by narrating the birth of stars during the Former

33. *Budoji*, Chapter 1, 17.

34. The term, expedient means, is a Buddhist term that describes a metaphoric teaching method that conveys the pertinent dharma.

Heaven, it begins with the four heavenly men/women [read tribes] who live in the Citadel of Mago. Then, it traces the lineage of these four tribes back to Mago Samsin. As a result, the first chapter firmly establishes the genealogical descent from Mago to the two daughters GungHee and SoHee, to the eight grandchildren of the four tribes. The four tribes represent the four primal racial groups, the yellow, the blue, the white, and the black. This genealogical etiology of Mago serves an important role in the history of Magoism. According to the *Budoji's* subsequent epic of Magoism, it functions as "the family tree" by which all peoples of the world find Mago as the one progenitor. In other words, ancient Magoists testify to the common origin of all peoples.

In the creation story of Mago, one might have noticed the lack of emphasis on fertility and motherhood. This is also true of the mythic tales of Mago from Korea. Only a small number of about 300 mythic folktales about Mago address such themes as fertility, motherhood, and/or female sexuality. Some readers may have noticed that the image of "the feminine sex" and her "voluptuous body" is strangely absent. While portraying Mago as progenitor, the word Mother for Mago is intriguingly absent.³⁵ Interestingly, in folklore Mago is more preferably called Mago Halmi (Grandmother/Goddess). The term "Halmi" in Korean is not exactly equated with Mother but Grandmother, a generic term that implies the Great Goddess in origin. The lack of the patriarchal fixation on "the feminine" in the Magoist cosmogony offers a clue that its narrative may reflect an archaic gynocentric consciousness. This inference is not farfetched when we note that the *Budoji* is alleged to have been written in the early 5th century CE; therefore, the lack of so-called feminine sexual characteristics may suggest that the *Budoji's* perspective predates patriarchal perspectives; or it may intend to undermine them. In this case, it appears that the female is not defined by men but by women themselves. The *Budoji's* creation narrative of Magoism suggests women's ownership of the power of naming in the past in East Asia.

The *Budoji's* second chapter constitutes a curiously refreshing story. Imagine that stars were born as the music of the universe, so beautiful and powerful, playing

35. Emily Culpepper points out the problem of over emphasizing Goddess as Mother. On the one hand, I agree with her critique on the compatibility of "mother-based imagery" with heterosexism. On the other hand, however, I also see that the understanding of Goddess as Mother is too crucial and universal to ignore for both women and men. See Emily E. Culpepper, "Missing Goddesses, Missing Women: Reflections of a Middle-Aged Amazon," in *Woman and Goddess Traditions: In Antiquity and Today*, Karen L. King, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 426-446.

crescendos and decrescendos. Then, when the universe reached an optimal self-equilibrium, Mago was born and began her life. Mago represents the Female that is defined by the gynocentric perspective. She is the unimaginably strong, wise, and spiritual Woman. She knows the profound urgency of her task to nurture and maintain earthly beings/things in harmony with cosmic music, in order for the whole to survive and thrive.

As the cosmic choreographer, Mago designs the cosmic dance for the coming forth of humanity. As the primordial sovereign, she is the administrator of the world. Mago is the Origin from whom we come. In her, humanity finds home. Mago witnessed the sea-change of cosmic epochs. She succeeded in self-procreation and bore two daughters, GungHee (Vault Woman) and SoHee (Nest Woman). Thereupon, the primordial Triune Divinity was formed. The Three-in-Unity co-practiced the Art of Living. Thereupon, the earth brought forth a spring of milk. GungHee and SoHee bore daughters and sons and raised them with earth-milk. The two daughters were identical to Mago with one exception. Their progeny included men as well as women; they brought into existence the first beings of the male sex/gender. Mago Samsin, the Female Trinity, taught their progeny the Art of Living. Daughters and sons, the heavenly women and heavenly men, to be referred to as the primal immortals by East Asians, lived in the four corners/gates of Paradise. They all co-practiced the Way of Living.

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