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Female Mountain Spirits in Korea: A Neglected Tradition

Abstract

The literature on mountain-spirit worship in Korea tends to emphasize the importance of the male Mountain God, San-sin. There is, however, a group of more minor deities, the *yŏ-sansin*, that are associated with individual mountains and are regarded as female in gender. The spirits are believed to guard, guide, and bless travelers passing through their territory, and to answer specific petitions for blessings (particularly requests for the birth of a child). Studies by Korean folklore researchers indicate that these female mountain spirits have been propitiated in every dynastic period of Korean history.

Key words: San-sin — *yŏ-sansin* — Lady Unje — place-names

THE worship of mountain spirits in Korea is one of the most ubiquitous aspects of the nation's folk religion. While the mountain-spirit cult is often described in the literature as focused on a grandfather-like primary spirit called San-sin 山神,¹ there are other cultic practices that propitiate the minor, localized spirits of individual mountains. These spirits, known as *yŏ-sansin* 如山神, are conceived to be female. Korean folklore researchers have shown that the gender of many mountain place-names and the gender of certain mountain spirits mentioned in legends provide rich evidence for the belief in and propitiation of female mountain spirits in every dynastic period of Korean history. The present paper will examine the characteristics of these generally benevolent local tutelary spirits and review some of the historical evidence for the practice of their cults. We begin with a brief description of the principal mountain deity, San-sin.

SAN-SIN: THE KOREAN MOUNTAIN GOD

The worship of San-sin is usually conducted either at a *sansin-gak* 山神閣, a Mountain God shrine² most often located within the grounds of a Buddhist temple, or at a *sŏnghwang-dang* 城隍堂, a pile of stones set up at the top of a mountain pass.³ Portraits of the Mountain God in the *sansin-gak* generally portray him as an elderly man with a long white beard who is seated beneath a pine tree. San-sin sits either on or beside a tiger, who is believed to be the god's messenger. In addition to these basic compositional elements, the picture may contain one or more of the following components: a second tiger, a boy offering a peach to the god,⁴ a boy making tea for the god, a female spirit (understood to be the god's *manŭva* [wife]), or the great crater lake at the summit of Mt. Paektu 白頭山 on the border between Korea and Manchuria.⁵

The latter pictorial element provides an important clue to the identity of San-sin. In the myth of Tan'gun 檀君神話, the seminal foundation myth of Korea, Tan'gun — the founder of the first Korean kingdom —

is born atop Mt. Paektu and, following an extraordinarily long reign, is transformed into the Mountain God. San-sin pictures that contain views of Mt. Paektu give explicit visual confirmation of this link. As Tan'gun is also described in this myth as the grandson of the Ruler of Heaven, the Mountain God is perceived to be an extraordinarily powerful spirit.⁶

Thus San-sin is not simply the deity of a mountain, but a guise of the founder of the Korean nation. He is the god of all the mountains of Korea, and therefore serves in the role of a national guardian spirit. He thus differs from the mountain spirits in adjacent areas of Asia. In Chinese folk religion mountain spirits are localized divinities that serve either as protectors of ancestral grave sites or as guardians of the peace and order of a particular region (DAY 1974, 31, 67). In Japan certain mountain spirits are associated with local mountains and fields and are believed responsible for the agricultural productivity of a particular area (Japanese mountain spirits of this type are said to come down from their mountain abode in the spring and return to the mountain after harvest [HORI 1968, 150–51]).⁷ The Korean Mountain God is, uniquely, the ruler of an aspect of Nature: the mountains. This function makes San-sin comparable to the “master spirits” of Siberia, who also rule over a portion of Nature.⁸

The contemporary worship of San-sin usually focuses on obtaining blessings of two types: birth of a male heir, and protection during travel. It is still common to see a childless woman (or a woman without a son) go to a strangely shaped rock deep in the forest to pray to San-sin to bless her with a child. Such blessings as health, wealth, or a child's success in examinations may also be sought. Legends stress that anyone who hunts, gathers food (including wild ginseng), or mines on a mountain should make offerings to the Mountain God, who is perceived as the owner of the mountain and everything on or under it (CLARK 1961, 200). Laurel KENDALL, in a discussion of shamanistic rituals, mentions the *ponhyang sansin* 本郷山神, the guardian spirit of the clan grave site in the village that forms the clan seat.⁹ Invoked for the protection of clan members, the *ponhyang sansin* is worshipped as an element of Korean shamanistic ritual even after a family has left the area of the clan seat (1985, 130–31). San-sin also provides protection for the traveler as he crosses mountain passes or journeys deep in the forest. It is quite common even today to see piles of rocks and stones placed as offerings to the Mountain God at the high point of a pass. Also common are strips of colored cloth tied to the *sŏnghwang-dang* itself or to the branches of trees near the pass (JONES 1902, 45–48).

Yŏ-SANSIN: FEMALE MOUNTAIN SPIRITS

Researchers of Korean folk religious practices and folk art have tended to emphasize the ritual importance of San-sin, and as a result have often overlooked the presence of another class of mountain spirits, the *yŏ-sansin*, who are female in gender and more localized in their area of authority. Despite the presence of a rich cult of these spirits, none of the early commentators on Korean folk religion, with the exception of Isabella Bird Bishop and W. E. Griffis, make any mention of the practice of propitiating female mountain spirits. The documentary evidence for the antiquity of *yŏ-sansin* worship has been described in a recent book by Sarah NELSON, *The Archaeology of Korea* (1993, 245),¹⁰ where she discusses the cult of the female spirit of Mt. Unje, a mountain near the Silla capital, Kyŏngju. This evidence allows us to deduce three common characteristics of female mountain spirits in Korea:

- 1) they were localized guardian spirits who protected a specific mountain or hill,
- 2) they did not possess the awesome authority of San-sin,
- 3) they have been worshipped since the Period of the Three Kingdoms (fourth–seventh century AD).

Documentary references to the practice of propitiating female mountain spirits can be found throughout the three principal dynastic periods of Korea: Silla (57 BC–935), Koryŏ (918–1392), and Chosŏn (1392–1910). The following examples from literary sources illustrate some of the features of the *yŏ-sansin*.

The Silla Period

References to female mountain spirits in this period are found principally in the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 [Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms], composed by the thirteenth-century Buddhist monk Iryŏn 一然 (1206–1289). The female mountain spirits referred to in this work are generally those who play a role in longer legendary narratives.¹¹ The following six examples are of particular interest.

- 1) Section 1, part 19. Iryŏn, discussing the reign of King Namhae 南解 (r. 4–23, traditional dates), the second king of Ancient Silla (57 BC–670, traditional dates), mentions that Namhae's consort, Lady Unje 雲帝夫人, became the *sŏngmo* 聖母 (holy mother) of Mt. Unje 雲梯山 to the east of Kyŏngju. During dry spells, prayers offered to her were said to bring rain. Although this statement refers to a thirteenth-century practice, Iryŏn implies that the cultic activity at the site dates back to the Silla period (IRYŎN 1975, 36).

- 2) Section 1, part 25. Iryŏn describes the death by torture in Japan

of a Silla official, Kim Che-sang 金提上, who attempted to bring home a Silla prince. Hearing of his death, his wife was so overcome by grief that she went to the Ch'isul-lyōng 鷄述嶺 pass overlooking the Sea of Japan and died. The *Samguk yusa* records that upon her death she became the guardian spirit of the pass. A shrine erected to her spirit some time afterwards still existed in Iryōn's time. In the text of the *Samguk yusa* her spirit is referred to as the *sinmo* 神母 (spirit mother) of the pass (IRYŎN 1975, 42).

3) Section 1, part 34. Iryōn writes of the famous Silla general Kim Yu-sin 金庾信 (595–673), who was warned of impending danger by the three female mountain-spirit guardians of Mt. Naerim 奈林山, Mt. Hyōllye 穴禮山, and Mt. Korhwa 骨火山 (IRYŎN 1975, 46–47). These mountains are near the cities of Kyōngju, Ch'ōngdo 淸道, and Yōngch'ōn 永川, respectively. The last two mountains would have been important for the military defense of ancient Silla, as they guarded the entrance into the central area of the kingdom. Naerim-san is the site of the tumulus of Queen Chindōk 眞德女王 (r. 647–54), one of the three queens of Silla, but the guardian deity cannot have been her spirit, as the events described in the folktale antedate her ascension to the throne.

4) Section 4, part 22. This tells the story of a monk who, losing his way in the mountains, is given directions to his destination by a mysterious old woman. Afterwards the monk realizes that the woman was an incarnation of the bodhisattva Kuan-yin (IRYŎN 1975, 126). Although this tale is composed entirely of Buddhist narrative elements, it is my opinion that the mysterious woman is a female mountain spirit whom the story transformed into a Buddhist personage.

5) Section 7, part 1. Iryōn tells the story of the mountain spirit of Sōndo-san 仙桃山 (the ancient name for Sō-ak 西岳, the mountain to the west of the Silla capital). This female mountain spirit's shrine, located in Anhūng-sa 安興寺 temple in the capital, was the center of a cult instituted as the result of a dream by a resident nun in which the spirit revealed herself as the *sinmo* of the mountain. In the vision the female mountain spirit praised the nun for her desire to repair the temple, and commanded her to insure that there were pictures not only of Buddhist figures but of the spirits of the five key mountains of Silla as well (IRYŎN 1975, 156–57).¹² This legend from the *Samguk yusa* is rich in imagery, bringing together narrative elements derived from indigenous Korean sources, Buddhism, and Taoism (in particular the cult of Hsi wang mu 西王母, the Queen Mother of the West).

6) Section 8, part 1. Iryōn describes the monk Chit'ong's 智通 first encounter with his spiritual teacher, Nangji 朗智, the lone monk of

Yŏngch'wi-san 靈鷲山. A crow guides the novice as he searches for a master and simultaneously reveals to Nangji that he should expect the arrival of a novice. When they finally meet, Master Nangji, choked with emotion, exclaims that the encounter is due to the grace of the mountain spirit, here referred to as *sallyŏng* 山靈. Iryŏn comments that the *sanju* 山主 (master of the mountain) is to be identified with Pyŏnjae ch'ŏnyŏ 辯才天女, the Hindu-Buddhist goddess Sarasvatī, the goddess of eloquence and learning (IRYŌN 1975, 165–66).¹³

The Chosŏn period

The early modern scholar Yi Nŭng-hwa 李能和 (1869–1945) mentions two important instances of the cult of female mountain spirits. The first is a legend from an old text called the *Ch'ŏnye-rok* 天倪錄. The legend relates how the Chosŏn-period scholar Kwŏn P'il 權輶 (1569–1612) destroys a shrine on Paegak-san 白岳山 dedicated to the spirit of the mountain, Chŏngnyŏ puin 貞女夫人 (Lady Chŏngnyŏ). The spirit appears to him in a dream, announces who she is, and declares that she will seek revenge for his wanton act. She pursues and eventually kills him (YI Nŭng-hwa 1976, 175–76).¹⁴ Lady Chŏngnyŏ is said to have been the daughter of an emperor of China who, after her death, made her spiritual home on this Korean mountain.

The second instance is from the traditional Korean gazetteer, the *Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* 東國輿地勝覽, in which there is a reference dated to 1411 about the Songaksan-sa 松岳山祠 (Shrine to Songak Mountain) at the top of Mt. Songak near the former capital, Kaesŏng. The five spirits worshipped there are listed as Sŏnghwang, Taewang 大王, Kuksa 國師, Koyŏ 姑女, and Puyŏ 府女. Sŏnghwang is, of course, the guardian of the mountain pass. It is impossible to say anything specific about the character of Taewang and Kuksa, but the names of the spirits Koyŏ and Puyŏ provide a few clues as to their general nature. The Chinese character 姑 in Koyŏ refers to a female relative of a woman's husband; possibly the worship of this spirit was connected with the protection of either a particular local clan or a single-clan village in the area. The character 府 in Puyŏ clearly indicates that the spirit is the guardian or tutelary spirit of a local village (YI Nŭng-hwa 1976, 210).¹⁵

In his seminal article “Kodae Chosŏn sansin-ŭi sŏng-e chwihayŏ” [About the gender of the mountain spirits of ancient Korea], the folklorist Son Chin-t'ae 孫晉泰 (1900–?) presents four strands of evidence for the worship of *yŏ-sansin* based on his analysis of the names recorded in the *Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* (SON 1981, vol. 2, 302–13).

First, he discovered that in mid-Chosŏn times there were already a

number of well-established mountain names that were feminine and maternal in character, suggesting that the deities worshipped at the rude altars atop them were female as well. Among the names he mentions are Mo-ak 母岳 (Mother Mountain), Taemo-san 大母山 (Great Mother Mountain), Pu-san 婦人 (Wife Mountain), Moak-san 母岳山 (Mother Mountain), Mo-san 母山 (Mother Mountain), Mohu-san 母后山 (Mother Goddess Mountain), and Chamo-san 慈母山 (Benevolent Mother Mountain) (SON 1981, vol. 2, 306–307).

Second, Son found mountain place-names that could be read phonetically to reveal a hidden Korean female name, in particular Ami-san, written with the Chinese characters 阿未山 or 峨嵋山. Although the latter name may refer to a famous mountain in Shandong Province, China, Son insists that it could, and indeed should, be read phonetically.¹⁶ The phonetic reading *ami* sounds like the native Korean word *ōmi*, the child's word for "mother."

Third, Son could not locate any mountain names that were capable of a masculine interpretation (SON 1981, vol. 2, 307).

Fourth, Son discovered that the mountain spirits propitiated in local tutelary shrines were often referred to by the term *sōngmo* (holy mother), suggesting, again, that they were female. This is consistent with several of the narratives from the *Samguk yusa*. The three principal cases cited by Son concern the tutelary shrines in the major cities of Kyōngju, Chinju, and Hamyang (SON 1981, vol. 2, 308–309).

Documentary records thus show that there were female mountain spirits who were the local guardian spirits of particular mountains in Korea. Petitions could be offered to these spirits for rain and for village prosperity. They were also known to warn, guide, or protect anyone entering their territory, and there is some indication that they played a role as national protectors in antiquity. This generally benevolent image is confirmed by the fact that many place-names for mountains incorporate terms like "holy" or "spirit" with "mother," implying that the female mountain spirits were thought to have caring, maternal characteristics. This benevolent aspect of the *yō-sansin* may be an implied contrast to the stern grandfatherly character of San-sin. Nevertheless, there is legendary evidence that when their cult centers were damaged or their ire otherwise aroused, the female mountain spirits would wreak vengeance on humans.

Unlike certain female mountain spirits in Japan, the *yō-sansin* do not seem to have been connected with rituals related to the agricultural cycle. Neither do they appear to have posed puzzles to travelers journeying through their realm, as did certain of their Japanese counterparts.

The Contemporary Cult of Unje-san

The worship of female mountain spirits is not an extinct, historic ritual practice. There are a number of contemporary cult sites at which these female spirits are propitiated, as well as sites mentioned in documentary sources that show a continuity of practice down to the modern day. One such historic cultic site is the above-mentioned Mt. Unje, northeast of Kyōngju. The full text on historic cultic activity at the mountain in section 1 part 19 of the *Samguk yusa* reads:

The wife [of King Namhae] was Lady Unje 雲帝. Sometimes called Unje 雲梯, she is now the Holy Mother of Mount Unje in the western region of Yōngil County 迎日懸. Prayers offered to her for rain are effective. (IRYŌN 1975, 36)

The second and third sentences in this quotation, which are comments inserted by the redactor Iryōn to augment the historical narrative, imply that cultic worship of Lady Unje had been conducted on the top of Mount Unje from antiquity. Iryōn also makes it clear in this brief passage that the cult continued in his own time, the mid-thirteenth century in the Koryō period. This implies that supplication to this powerful local spirit had already been going on for seven to eight hundred years at the time of the writing of the *Samguk yusa*. The reference to Lady Unje as the “Holy Mother” of Mt. Unje is consistent with references to the spirits of other mountains.

In July 1993 I made a site inspection of Mount Unje to obtain evidence for the continuity of religious practice on the mountain. Unje-san is located to the northeast of the modern city of Kyōngju in the southwestern corner of Yōngil County 迎日君, North Kyōngsang Province 慶尚北道. The mountain, which rises to a height of 481.4 meters, overlooks a range of mountains that ripples away in all directions. It is located a short distance (sixteen kilometers) due north of the Sōkkur-am 石窟庵 grotto, a major Buddhist — and quite probably syncretized folk-Buddhist — cult center overlooking the Sea of Japan.¹⁷ The principal approach to the summit of Mt. Unje is from the O’ō-sa 吾漁寺 temple, which is located approximately one-and-a-half kilometers east of the mountain.

O’ō-sa is located at the end of a long road from the city of P’ohang 浦港; since there is no regular bus service from the city, the journey must be accomplished by private car or taxi. The temple’s location deep in the mountains southwest of P’ohang makes it difficult to approach from Kyōngju or any other major point. From O’ō-sa the path to the mountain

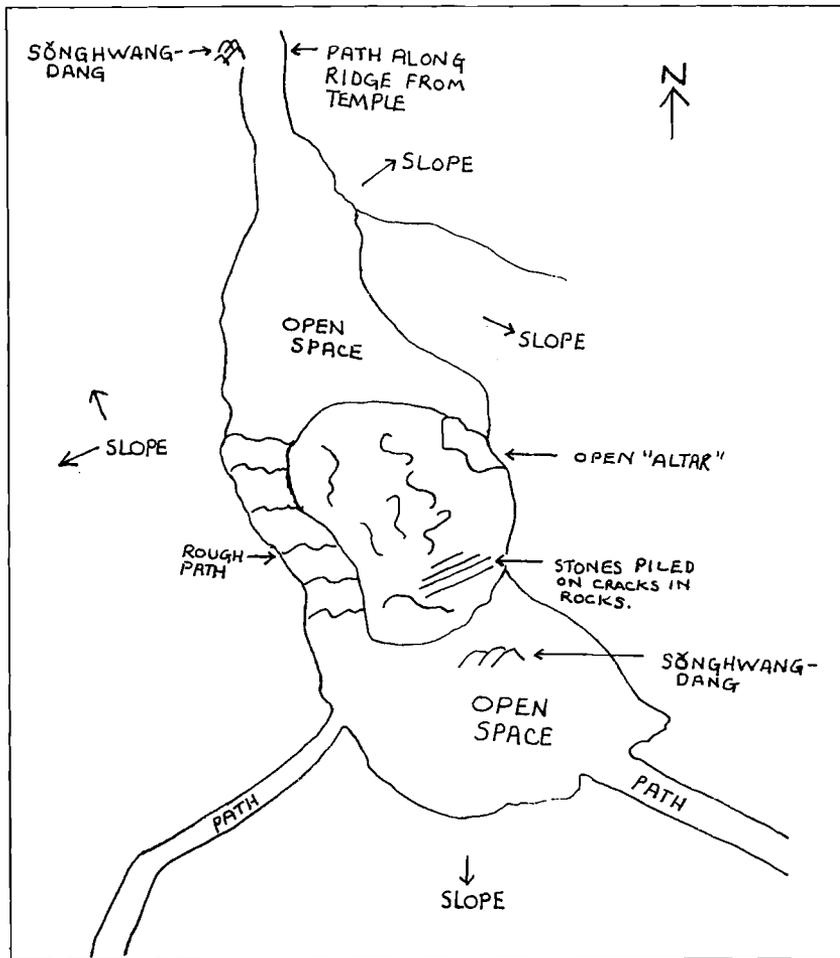
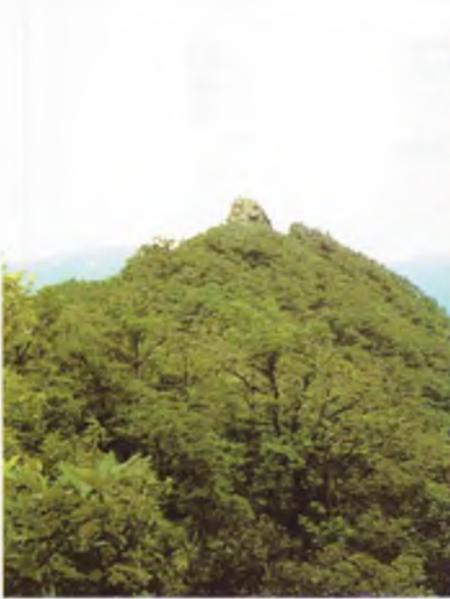


DIAGRAM 1. Summit of Unje-san

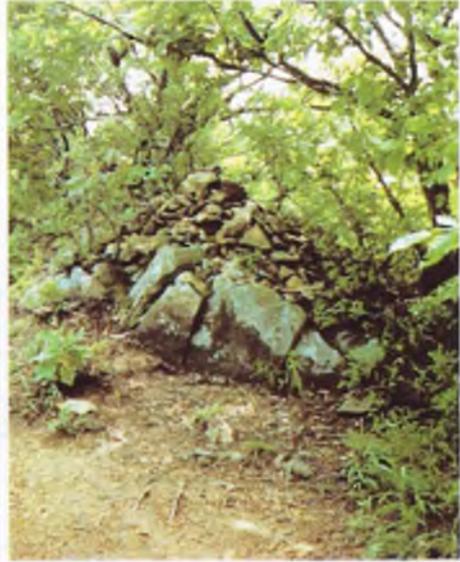
first winds north from the temple, then swings south to approach the summit from its northern side (Diagram 1). The ascent to the peak requires approximately one hour and a half of hard walking from the temple.

The site for the worship of Lady Unje is not primarily a local cult center but one that draws supplicants mainly from more distant areas. The power of this site to attract supplicants from far away, together with the antiquity of the cult, indicate that Lady Unje is believed to be a spirit of great efficacy.

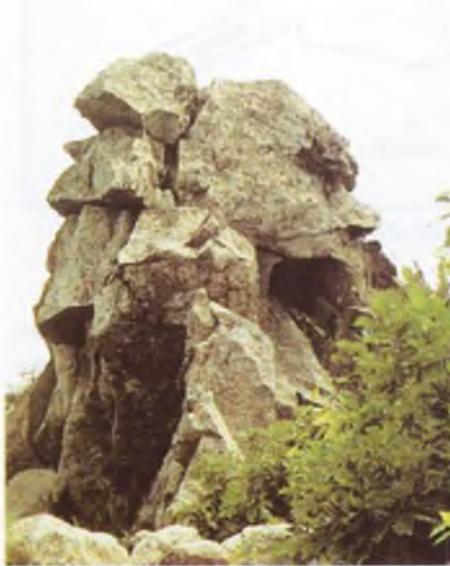
As one approaches the summit there is a narrow ridge running from



1. Mount Unje seen from the north side looking south over the ridge towards the rock at the summit.



2. *Sŏnghwang-dang* on the ridge path just before entering the area surrounding the rock at the summit.



3. Pinnacle rock looking at the northeast side and showing ritual area at left-hand side of the base of the rock.



4. Ritual area on the northeast side of the pinnacle rock.

the north, south to the peak itself. Just before the final ascent to the highest point of the mountain there is a *sŏnghwang-dang* on the right-hand side of the path. This pile of stones marks the passage of the pilgrim from the profane world into the realm of the sacred.¹⁸

Beyond the *sŏnghwang-dang*, the summit of the mountain is capped by a strangely shaped rock that is vaguely reminiscent of the *Sŏn pawŭ* rock near the Muak-tong shamanistic center in western Seoul. This strange rock, approximately six meters in height, stands out prominently from the deeply wooded mountain slopes that lead up to it, and is visible from a considerable distance, including from O'ŏ-sa.

Examination of the rock capping the summit revealed two small ritual sites on its eastern face. The first of these, at the bottom of the northeast section of the rock, comprises a crude altar made of a small stone slab inserted into a crevice at the bottom of the rock. On this slab were the remains of recently burnt candles; the altar itself was covered with a thick coating of melted wax. A smaller stone was placed in the center of the slab. The supplicant would have faced northwest at the time of the ceremony.

The second ritual site is on the southeast side of the rock, which has a relatively smooth face, unlike the pockmarked appearance of its other sides. This smooth surface is broken by several crevices or ledges onto which have been placed rows of small stones. Owing to the evenness of the surface a certain acrobatic skill would have been required to climb up and arrange the stone offerings. Beneath the rock face there is another *sŏnghwang-dang*.

These small ritual centers indicate that the cult of Lady Unje continues in the present day. The focus of cultic practice is on prayer to the spirit of the mountain. Further examination of the area around the pinnacle rock gave no evidence of any foundations for a formal shrine structure. This indicates that the cult of Lady Unje has never been characterized by formal ritual practices, but has involved simple petitions to the spirit using simple materials.

Interviews with residents living in the area of the mountain revealed that there are two legends told about the female spirit who lives at the summit. The first legend concurs with the record in the *Samguk yusa*, with the raconteur saying that the spirit was Lady Unje, queen consort of King Namhae, who upon her death became the *sŏngmo* of the mountain, and that prayers offered to her during a drought would bring rain. The raconteur of the second legend said that the spirit of the mountain was the mother of King Yuri (r. 24–56, traditional date), the third king of Silla. The king's mother was born on the mountain, it was believed, and

thus her spirit continues to reside there. It is important to note that the queen consort of King Namhae and the mother of King Yuri are the same person, Lady Unje.

These informants said that the summit of Mt. Unje was visited frequently by women offering prayers to the mountain spirit for the birth of a son. There were not, however, any fixed periods for cultic attendance nor fixed numbers of attendances required. The cultic activity was strictly personal and not part of any formal cult. These legends not only confirm the story in the *Samguk yusa* that Lady Unje could control meteorological events, but also augment her powers by crediting her with the ability to provide male heirs. This latter function is a principal cultic activity of Korean folk religion, particularly in the cult of San-sin.

SUMMARY

Despite the importance of San-sin in Korean mountain spirituality, there are other cultic practices focused on the localized, minor spirits of individual mountains who are often conceived to be female. Korean folklore research has demonstrated, through the study of mountain place-names and the gender of certain mountain spirits, that belief in and propitiation of female mountain spirits has occurred in every dynastic period of Korean history. The *yŏ-sansin* are generally benevolent tutelary spirits of a particular mountain who may guard, guide, and bless travelers passing through their territory, and to whom specific petitions for blessing may be addressed.

Clearly, it is incorrect to assume that the worship of the guardian spirit of a mountain is a cultic activity addressed solely to San-sin. The cult of the *yŏ-sansin* is old, as is evidenced by mentions of female mountain spirits in the *Samguk yusa*. In the case of the cult of Lady Unje, the practice of worshipping a named spirit with historical associations at a particular spot can be shown to have existed for at least a millennium. The question of the antiquity of cultic practices associated with other female mountain spirits should be investigated in order to clarify the history of the practice and the relationship of those practices with the cult of San-sin.

NOTES

1. See DALLET (1874, vol. 1, cxlviii), ROSS (1891, 356), GRIFFIS (1882, 327), BISHOP (1970, 416-17), JONES (1902, 43-48), HULBERT (1969, 408-10), and CLARK (1961, 199-202). Bishop and Jones are the first Western commentators to discuss the worship of female mountain spirits.

2. Shrines containing pictures of the Mountain God may have more than one designa-

tion on the wooden signboard that identifies the shrine, although the term *sansin-gak* is the most commonly used term. Such shrines may be known also as *ch'ilsöng-gak* 七星閣 (seven-star spirit shrine) and *samsöng-gak* 三星閣 (three-star spirit shrine). The deities of the *ch'ilsöng-gak* and the *samsöng-gak* are the same: the ruler of the polestar. This great spirit is often regarded as a guise of the Mountain God. Behind the altar, these shrines usually contain three separate pictorial representations of gods/spirits, normally the Mountain God, the Seven Star Spirit, and the Lone Star Spirit (Toksöng 獨星). In at least one case (a shrine at the great Haein-sa 梅印寺 temple), the shrine contains a portrait of the Dragon King (Yong-wang 龍王), the ruler of the sea. The *chilsöng-gak* near the Kuksa-dang 風師堂 shamanistic center in Seoul is unique in having a portrait of a tiger.

3. The *sönghwang-dang* type of stone pile is not unique to Korea. McCULLOCH states that the piling of stones as an offering to the *genius* of a mountain is a universal folk practice found amongst all peoples at all "stages of culture" (1908, 867). HORI discusses the similarity of this custom in Japan to practices in Korea, Mongolia, and Tibet (1968, 148-49). The standard Korean historical reference work *Han'guk-sa* states that because the propitiation of mountain spirits took place on the tops of mountains in ancient times, these shrines were originally called *sanwang-dang* 山王堂 (shrines of the mountain king) or *sönwang-dang* 仙王堂 (shrines of the king of the immortals). The author claims that the sounds of the words then became elided in popular speech into the pure Korean term *sönang-dang* (tutelary spirit shrine), which in turn became confused with the Chinese term *chenghuang* 城隍 (Korean, *sönghwang*). In China the term *chenghuang* refers only to the tutelary spirit of the city moat, and not to a spirit resident on a mountain or hilltop. See CHINDAN HAKHOE 1980, vol. 1, 76.

4. The peach that the boy offers to San-sin is a *xian-tao* 仙桃 (Korean *söndo*), a peach of immortality that grows on the trees in the peach-tree garden of the Daoist realm of the immortals, the *xian-jing* 仙境 (Korean *sön'gyöng*). The imagery used in the Mountain God paintings is highly complex, with iconographic elements derived from many religious sources. For a discussion see KIM 1986, 31-37.

5. Examples of *sansin-do* 山神圖 and pictures of the Mountain God may be found in KIM 1986 (31-37) and SEOUL OLYMPIC ORGANIZING COMMITTEE 1984 (28-37).

6. An annotated translation of the myth of Tan'gun may be found in GRAYSON 1989 (282-84). The important early modern researcher on Korean religions, Yi Nüng-hwa, was the first scholar to make explicit the identity between Tan'gun and San-sin. See Yi Nüng-hwa 1976, 11. RYU Tong-shik 柳東植, a contemporary scholar, has developed this theme further (1975, 28-35). JOHN MACINTYRE reported that he saw a Mountain God shrine in Manchuria with a depiction of the spirit accompanied by a tiger and a bear, reminiscent of the principal characters in the Tan'gun myth (1886, 43-44).

7. DAY gives three names for the grave guardian spirit: *shan-shen tu-di* 山神土地, *fen-mo tu-shen jun* 墳墓土神君, and *ben-shan zhi shen* 本山之神 (1974, 31, 67). DAY (1974, 120) and YANG (1970, 155-56) both state that the great spirit of Tai-shan 泰山 had a national function of assisting in the maintenance of justice.

8. SHIROKOGOROFF provides a general definition and some examples of master spirits amongst the Tungus of Siberia and Manchuria (1935, 126-27); CZAPLICKA provides further examples (1914, 258, 264, 271, 278, 285). SHIROKOGOROFF also says that Bainaca, the master spirit of the animals of the Manchurian taiga, is depicted in shrine portraits as an elderly man with a white flowing beard who rides on a tiger (1935, 127). This description makes Bainaca similar to the Korean San-sin in both function and depiction.

9. The term *ponhyang sansin* is reminiscent of *fen-mo tu-shen jun* and *ben-shan zhi shen* recorded by Day (see note 7, above).

10. The *Han'guk-sa* states that female guardian spirits of mountains are a typical feature of the folk religion of southern Korea (CHINDAN HAKHOE 1980, vol. 1, 76). It cites the example of the guardian spirit of Mt. Chiri 智異山 in the southwestern part of the peninsula. This spirit is called Ch'önwang-bong söngmo 天王峰聖母 (Holy Mother of the Peak of the Heavenly Ruler). HORI says that in antiquity most mountain spirits in Japan were female

(1968, 166–74). These spirits were said to guard the resources of the mountain, control hunting, and bless travelers after giving them a test. Hori says that in ancient times certain mountains were also perceived to be divine mothers connected to the agricultural cycle.

11. The *Samguk yusa* is divided into *kwŏn* 券, or “books,” and further numbered sections that contain titled but unnumbered subsections. As the sections are enumerated separately without reference to the number of the *kwŏn* I have ignored the *kwŏn* numbers in the reference notes, giving only the section number and subsection or part number, which I have added to help in the location of the particular text.

12. Sŏndo, the name of the mountain on which this spirit resides, refers to the peaches that grow in the peach-tree grove in the realm of the Taoist immortals. The implication is that the mountain is sacred and is the realm of immortals and spiritual beings. The female spirit refers to the spirits of the five key mountains of Silla as *sin'gun* 神君 (spirit princes), implying that these spirits were male, not female.

13. A brief description of this spirit and other terms for her are to be found in SOOTHILL 1934 (484).

14. Yi Hŭi-sŭng says that Kwŏn was sent into internal exile over a political matter and was given a poisoned cup to drink en route (Yi et al. 1976, 62).

15. Yi Ka-wŏn states that the character may refer either to a village or to a shrine (1987, 582). Whichever interpretation is preferred, Puyŏ must refer to a female tutelary spirit. The *Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* [Augmented survey of the geography of Korea], originally composed of 50 *kwŏn*, is a historical, cultural, and geographical encyclopedia of the Chosŏn kingdom first compiled by a committee of scholars and presented to King Sŏngjong 成宗 (r. 1469–94) in 1481. The revision of 1531 is extant.

16. Chinese characters in Korean are always read with the Sino-Korean reading and with the Chinese meaning.

17. Although this artificial grotto, constructed circa 750, is seen to represent the highest artistic and engineering attainments of the Unified Silla era (670–935), I have argued that its iconography would also indicate that it was created in part to be a gigantic mandala for the protection of the state. This ritual function was a continuation of certain pre-Buddhist rites conducted by the sacred rulers of the state. See GRAYSON 1984, 194–97.

18. This function of the *sŏnghwang-dang* to mark off the entrance into sacred space is described in GRAYSON 1992 (211–12).

19. For a description of this site, see GRAYSON 1992.

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