The haunted culture—Shamanic heroes
in the cultural content industry of South Korea

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Abstract. Korea, with insufficient natural resources and a limited consumer market, began to take notice of the cultural content industry in the 21st century. This means that the cultivation of this industry has not taken place for a long time compared to Japan, the USA or Hong Kong. Yet Korea has obtained an astonishing outcome in a short time. The popular culture of South Korea, with the appellation of *hallyu*, boasted of an enormous strength initially in the Asian market and subsequently stretched to markets in other countries, too. Seeing that Korean cultural archetypes do not play a successful role in the cultural content business of Korea in general, the position of shamanism is truly trivial among the others. I would like to analyse and discuss the meaning, function and potential of Korean shamanism in the field of the Korean cultural content industry.

Introduction

Tourism used to be called an industry without a chimney. So it is with the cultural industry. The demands of people for recreation and entertainment have increased, while the industrial structure has moved from the agriculture-dependent first to the service-based third industry in many countries. Thus people are striving to develop software suitable for a variety of hardware to keep pace with rapidly advancing scientific techniques.

Television, one of the most representative pieces of analogue hardware in modern times, is called an idiot box. Broadcasts were chosen by many notorious dictators like Kim Ilsung of North Korea and Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania to manipulate the mentality of the masses. The fate of dictators who have failed in the effective manipulation of the media have ended in tragedy, as witnessed in history.

For some time, the content of broadcasts and media were believed to be the possession of a handful of people belonging to a special higher social stratum. However, access to information expanded to include the entire society as people's right-to-know increased and internet technology grew. Recently, we observed what enormous influence can be had in the turnover of political power and the collapse of dictatorships in countries in the Middle East by masses rallied from internet

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In this paper, the revised Romanisation rule for writing Korean names, released in 2000, will be followed, and the original name will be added in Hangeul in parentheses, except for globalised surnames like Kim.

social networks like YouTube and Twitter, proving the tremendous authority of mass media. This factor illustrates the power of the ripple effect of software conveyed to the public through the mass media. A brand new fashion or even philosophy exposed in the media is transferred to others with great speed on the internet. The number of applications with such a huge ripple effect is really huge and is increasing day by day.

In the 1940s, Horkheimer and Adorno from the Frankfurt School might have predicted the future, for they had a negative perspective on the cultural industry, that is that media will have control over the mentality of its audience.

> The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly; as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their directors' incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed. (Horkheimer, Adorno 1987, 121)

> The whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry. The old experience of the moviegoer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent upon reproducing the world of everyday perceptions), is now the producer's guideline. The more intensively and flawlessly his techniques duplicate empirical objects, the easier it is today for the illusion to prevail that the outside world is the straightforward continuation of that presented on the screen. The purpose has been furthered by mechanical reproduction since the lightening takeover by the sound film. (Ibid., 126)

Apparently many negative opinions are perceived in their conceptualisation about the cultural industry, which, although it is now well known to everybody, was a brand new concept at the time of the Frankfurt School. We can partly agree with their argument, but the cultural industry is now conceptualised in a totally different direction than their prediction. To put it briefly, in the 21st century, culture became an industry generating immense benefits.

The more science develops, the greater it becomes with the quantity of information and hardware to manipulate the data people have to deal with in everyday life. Even though many negative influences are truly being exposed, as Horkheimer and Adorno predicted, mass media has become an inseparable part of human life in the cultural, political and economic perspective. The developed countries are therefore producing ideas on how to exploit information in the most effective way and to provide the audience with entertainment based on original thought, which is becoming a lucrative business that is very suitable for the lifestyle of the new millennium, constantly generating value without the necessity for additional procedures or physical labour.

With this backdrop, cultural content, software transferred through hardware called the cultural industry, has already become a treasure box that many people have started exploring like a vein of gold or an oil field. However, it is different from the earlier

oil or gold from the perspective that the value is added by way of creative works and imagination operated intellectually, not by manual labour.

According to the Frankfurt School, content is the unity of the technical processes embodying the sensuous elements—the alliance of word, image and music, which all approvingly reflect the surface of social reality. This process integrates all elements of the production, from the novel (shaped with an eye to the film) to the last sound effect. It is the triumph of invested capital, whose title as absolute master is etched deep into the hearts of the dispossessed in the employment line; it is the meaningful content of every film, whatever plot the production team may have selected (Horkheimer, Adorno 1987, 124).

Nowadays, the interest in cultural content is growing rapidly, since some fields of the cultural industry, such as games, movies and dramas, have been discerned as lucrative industries or businesses inducing economic profits. In the 21st century, the phrase *cultural content* is understood as a product embodied in 'a cultural element' produced by creative work and imagination and generating an economic value. Cultural elements, which are the basic origin of cultural content, contain various artefacts such as way of life, traditional culture, arts, fairy tales, popular culture, mythology, personal experience, and historical documentation (Kim, Hyeon 2008, 48).

Korea, with insufficient natural resources and a limited consumer market, began to take notice of the cultural content industry in the 21st century. This means that the cultivation of this industry has not taken place for long compared to places such as Japan, the USA or Hong Kong. Yet Korea has obtained an astonishing outcome in a short time. The popular culture of South Korea, with the appellation of *hallyu*, boasted of an enormous strength initially in the Asian market and subsequently stretched to markets in Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East, and it encouraged foreigners who were not aware of anything about Korea to indulge in studying the Korean language and culture only because of their interest in contemporary Korean culture.

Kim Hyeon, the director of the Academy of Korean Studies, confirms that 'cultural content means a cultural product containing cultural ingredients in the frame of system or media' (Kim, Hyeon 2008). Here we see many diversified concepts as cultural product and content. 'The basic regulations for the promotion of the cultural industry (enforced in 2010, registry number 10369)' defines the related concept in Article 2 as follows:

> *Cultural product* refers to the unity of the tangible and intangible properties embodied from an art, creativeness, entertainment, recreation and popularity to generate an added value (embracing cultural contents, digital cultural contents, as well as multimedia cultural contents) and the service related with them. *Content* means the data or information, including symbols, letters, voices and visual images, and *cultural content* is the contents to which the cultural elements are added.

In South Korea, cultural content has begun to be discerned as a branch of industry comparable with shipbuilding, manufacturing semiconductors, and exporting IT products. The Korean people are making inroads into the world market with cultural content containing the mentality and emotion of the Korean nation, in addition to the electronic devices and automobiles engraved with 'Made in Korea'. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine this trend having a positive conclusion when the significant cultural ripple effect of content is considered. Content is employed to gain knowledge and indirect experience about a country; content plays a weighty role in generating an image representing a country. Therefore, it is erroneous to consider it only as a simple branch of business.

Given this background, many negative voices are heard regarding the cultural content produced in South Korea. Criticism that Korean cultural content is a copy or reproductive application of Japanese and American artefacts has been raised since the very beginning of *hallyu*.

New adaptation on the basis of inventive interpretation is undoubtedly an important factor in the cultural content industry. Yet the creation of original content is more crucial. Therefore, the significance of the cultural archetypes of the Korean nation is huge because it can supply very original ideas for content. According to a report about 'the development of content based on Korean traditional cultural archetypes' by the Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, released in 2007, the representative archetypes available for commercial utilisation can be sorted into five general categories (Bak 2007, 108):

1) Traditional ethics and values such as love and filial piety based on Korean ancestral philosophy.
2) Specific characters in Korean history, such as General Yi Sunsin, King Jeongjo, Inspector Bak Munsu and the *kisaeng* Hwangjini.
3) Historical events and incidents like wars and coup d'états.
4) Fairy tales, legends and literature.
5) Special inanimate objects such as dolmens, ceramics, food and swords.

According to the presidential commission's report, among Korean archetypes belonging to these categories, approximately 120 specific objects have been sorted out, but it is emphasised that these objects are not actually utilised in the cultural content industry.

The issue of this paper is the elements of shamanism, which is all the fashion in the global cultural content business. Korean shamanism could belong to the commission's fourth category. This in itself illustrates apathy towards shamanism, since a special category was not made for related objects displaying the traditional religion of the Korean nation, such as *muga*,[2] and myths about the foundations of kingdoms. Seeing

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2   The songs chanted by shamans about the history of the gods.

that Korean cultural archetypes do not play a successful role in the cultural content business of Korea in general, the position of shamanism is truly trivial among the others. I would like to analyse and discuss the meaning, function and potential of Korean shamanism in the Korean cultural content industry.

The significance of the cultural content industry in South Korea

South Korea, which was one of the poorest countries in the world after the Korean War, accomplished rapid economic growth almost unparalleled in history to establish a country out of ashes that became 'the miracle of the Han River'. Thanks to the successful organisation of the 1988 Olympic Games and the 2002 Korea–Japan World Cup Championship, the name of Korea spread widely around the globe. The country also succeeded in occupying a dominant position in the field of electronics and IT.

Korea's results are small in the cultural perspective, however. Comparing Korea with Japan and China, the general image of Korea is dominated by political or economic aspects, like the confrontation between South and North Korea, the human rights abuses during industrialisation, the state of war, and the exporter of electronic devices and automobiles, to name a few. The alteration of Korea's image through the dissemination of Korean culture like *samulnori*, *hanbok* and Korean food has been attempted only in the 21st century.

The government of Korea has been seeking a way to promote the cultural content industry since comprehending its value. The cultural content industry was chosen by humanitarian scholars as a way to cope with the crisis of humanitarian studies in Korea. The idea that arose among humanitarian scholars was that humanitarian research should be employed to explore 'humanity and culture' to create and develop objects for the cultural content industry. Afterwards, new institutions were established by professors and researchers who agreed about the idea with the purpose 'to establish a space for cooperation between humanitarian studies and digital content' (Kim, Hyeon 2008, 43).

First of all, a new, major focus on the creation of content has emerged at universities. According to KOCCA (the Korea Creative Contents Agency) data, the number of departments related to cultural content increased very quickly in two years in secondary schools, colleges and universities: from 932 in 2006 to 1325 in 2008 (only 849 in universities), which are dominated by the study of broadcasting (607) and animation (240). The number of departments specialising in music, games, movie and popular characters is gradually growing, too. Unlike Japan, the drawing of *manga* is occupied by a small number of students that is constantly decreasing.[3]

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3   The situation of education institutes related with cultural content, <http://www.culturist.or.kr/front/edu/edu.asp?subject=subject&grade=summary>.

An obvious problem is that many humanitarian studies representing Korea, such as the Department of Korean Literature, were annexed to the sphere of cultural content or changed their names or started focusing on more curricula employing the peculiarity of cultural content rather than on pure Korean study. The Department of Cultural Content at Hanyang University was established in 2007 by Bak Sangcheon (박상천) and Bak Gisu (박기수), scholars of Korean literature. The department is totally different from former Korean literature studies, for curricula are made up of practical activities like script writing for comics, the creation of games, and consultation for cultural events. Much concern is being voiced that the study of Korean literature is losing its position only for economic advantage, but this truly manifests how Koreans are fascinated by the cultural content industry.

Korea has already found cultural technology to be a growth engine of a new generation for the country and, over the past decade, it has executed a variety of policies on the promotion of the cultural content industry as a business strategy of the government. When Lee Myungbak was inaugurated president, the government launched many new policies on the promotion of cultural content, such as the national fund for the promotion of the content business (150 billion KRW), the enactment of a fundamental law for the content industry, and the plan to establish a committee for the promotion of the cultural content industry (Kim, Hyeon 2008, 45–6). Since then, the cultural content industry has been run by the government in Korea, not by the private sector. Nowadays, this is operated mainly by KOCCA, which was established initially in 2001 and reorganised into a national agency in 2009 to work on the creation of content and copyrights. Media such as broadcasting channels and newspapers that used to maintain typical literary content have drastically changed and introduced creative content contests to discover writers who can be employed for further utilisation in content sectors. The number of such contests for content discovery is still growing.

Many factors are propelling Korea into the cultural content industry. First, the cultural content industry is a valuable driving force for cultivating an economy for a small country like Korea that is not endowed with natural resources. Content is always possible to produce and manufacture without consuming natural resources, assuming that equipment and professional staff are assured. There is a misconception that an enormous amount of money is required for an investment at the beginning and that the risk of failure is quite high. Nonetheless, the potential to acquire high added value still has the power to hold the attention of opinion leaders. Additionally, Korea has gained a reputation as an important manufacturing base for IT products. It is confined more within the development of hardware, such as equipment and apparatus, than with software that generates more added value, positioning Korea in

an inferior place among other nations. Korea designs beautiful frames for computers and IT products, which are stuffed with software developed and processed abroad, just translated into Korean. It was possible to print books of good quality with high technology and materials that ended up being filled with content from foreign countries. The development of cultural content is essential to cope with the imbalance in the creation of content experienced by Korea nowadays. Fortunately, many encouraging phenomena have been observed recently that indicate the video game industry is developing briskly, and the film industry, including animation, is gaining more success in the foreign market than it was a decade ago.

Second, Korea is short on national images representing the country in comparison with neighbouring China and Japan as well as other Asian counterparts like India and Tibet. The national image is one of the most important barometers determining the development of tourism and amiableness of a country. Korea's lack of national images discourages foreigners from choosing Korea as a tourist destination. In addition, the few humble images of Korea have until recent times been dominated by negative connotations related to war, confrontation with the North, and oppression of human rights in the 1970s and 1980s. The prejudice of considering Korean culture as a branch of Chinese or Japanese culture also constitutes a big obstacle, keeping foreigners from understanding the core of Korean culture. As discussed above, the significance of the cultural content industry is being highlighted to overcome the distortion or prejudice of images regarding Korea.

Cultural content and shamanism

The boundaries of shamanism to be dealt with in this paper will first be discussed. A variety of cultural content grounded in Korean tradition, such as *Daejanggeum, The Princess Diary* and *Damo*, has recently been gaining a reputation in the world market under the name of *hallyu*. Although still very incomplete, the development of cultural content using traditional Korean archetypes is gradually growing. Now the difference between shamanism and other general traditional archetypes will be investigated.

KOCCA manages a site (www.culturecontent.com) where various ancestral and original archetypes of Korea are categorised thematically and furnished for the convenience of users. The categories are:
  - the basic life of humans (shelter, clothing and food),
  - architecture,
  - religion,
  - transportation/communication,
  - military affairs/diplomacy,

- history/nation,
- art,
- science,
- literature/documents.

There are various sub-categories where one can scrutinise materials available for practical applications. Shamanism can belong to the category of religion, which has twenty-nine sub-categories, among which twelve are connected with

- Jeju, the island of mythology,
- Korean mythology,
- the gods of five directions,
- the lyrical epic of Princess Bari,
- *Dokkaebi* (goblin) of Korea,
- archetypes of traditional amulets,
- the foundation myths of dynasties,
- *gut* (a shamanistic ritual),
- the village ceremony on the seashore,
- the world after death,
- house deities,
- Korean ghosts.

The shamanic hero of this paper does not coincide with the concept of animism, totemism, supernatural forces, or content manifesting the mystique of the Orient like Buddhism, Daoism and Hinduism. Here the shamanic hero refers to the activities of persons representing a function of shamanism that establishes contact between the human world and the divine world. The exact meaning of shaman can be traced from the Chinese character 巫, and the word meaning shaman in Korean symbolises two people dancing between the sky and the earth. The sky does not exactly coincide with the concept of sky as a location or the afterlife but denotes another world differentiated from the reality inhabited by humans and unreachable in the normal way—the supernatural realm, the special world, the other world, so to speak. Therefore, shaman means a person connecting these two realms, as is frequently found in texts of lyrical epics. The relationship between these heroes and shamans is often investigated by many scholars. The classic shamanism of Northern Asia is characterised by an ecstatic technique based on the use of drums and rhythmic singing by which the shaman enters an altered state of consciousness in order to make contact with his spirit helpers. During his trance, he is considered capable of direct communication with representatives of the 'other world'. He may summon his spirit helpers to the place where the shamanic session is being held or take their form in order to journey to the supernatural world (Siikala 2002, 43).

Shamans are usually understood as individuals who have the special power of being able to contact gods or spirits by way of trance, ecstasy or possession. Here are some more examples how the shaman and the function are defined by other scholars.

Merete D. Jakobsen has asserted:

> The shaman is, as I have argued, first and foremost a master of spirits in traditional society. His role is to contact and to possess spirits so that communication on behalf of an individual or society as a whole can be established. The way of communicating with the spirits is mostly through ecstasy but there are also other dramatic ways of establishing contact. The shaman is in charge of this communication. (Jakobsen 1999, 9)

According to Thomas DuBois, the shaman is 'an expert guide or authority in cosmic journeys' (DuBois 2009, 41).

Characters coinciding with this concept can be found in heroic epics of Northern Europe: for example, Väinämöinen in *Kalevala* by Elias Lönnrot in Finland, Kalevipoeg in *Kalevipoeg* by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutwald in Estonia, and Lāčplēsis in *Lāčplēsis* by Andrejs Pumpurs in Latvia; each function as a bridge between two realms.

Väinämöinen has several characteristics at the same time. He was originally conceived of as a divinity associated with water. He later acquired the features of a divine creator and a cultural hero. In addition to creating the world, he takes credit for the origin of fire, the first boat, the kantele, and music. In many folk poems, Väinemöinen does not play the role of a god or a cultural hero, however. He is described as concentrating on human deeds; he is a *tietäjä* and an adventurer (Siikala 2002, 171).

Here a *tietäjä* has a function very similar to a shaman. The activities of a *tietäjä* were founded on secret knowledge dealing with supranormal powers and influences and their mastery through ritual. Training to become a *tietäjä* involved not only the guidance of an older *tietäjä*, but also secret rites, and meant being initiated into the mythical universe revealed through incantations. The aspiring *tietäjä* did not merely learn diagnosis of illness, incantatory formulas, and magical procedures by heart; he internalised and organised knowledge concerning the other world, its denizens, and topography as an organic part of his worldview. By relying on both this knowledge and his own personal force, or *väki*, the *tietäjä* could be in direct contact with the representatives of the other world (Siikala 2002, 84).

Siikala asserts that over wide parts of Europe, Asia and Oceania it is believed that the universe has been constructed of several layers, with man occupying the central layer. Other layers divided into several different strata are located both above and below him. In the Scandinavian concept, the lowest, ninth level of the underworld is Niflhel, a dark, misty realm inhabited by the dead (Siikala 2002, 159).

The song by Lemminkäinen's mother, who was killed on the way to *Pohjola* (North Land), contains concepts about the many layers of the world imagined in Finnish folklore.

She, Lemminkäinen's mother
Anointed with those ointments
With the nine ointments
The eight remedies;
Still she got no help—
No, found none from it,
She said with this word
She spoke with this speech;
'Bee, bird of the air
Fly there a third time
High up into heaven
Above nine heavens!
There is mead in plenty there,
Honey to the heart's content
With which once the Creator
Sang charms and the pure God talked
The Lord anointed his brood
Injured by an evil power'. (Lönnrot 1999, 181)

Similar views on layers of the world can be discerned in the Korean *muga*, too. The spirits of dead people were traditionally believed to move to another realm called *Jeoseung*, which shows a very different concept from the heaven and hell of Western belief. *Jeoseung* is a concept contrary to the realm of humans, denoting a realm after death. Conceptually, it can be ranked higher than hell. A spirit must pass ten trials by ten judges, after which his or her fate is finally decided—to hell, to the eternal misery of starvation, to reincarnation in the form of an animal or human, to heaven, or elsewhere.

Besides those realms separated by death, there are also other realms inhabited by totally different beings, a divine realm separated from the human realm by another standard other than life and death in traditional Korean belief. Jo Heungyun (조흥윤) classifies the world into six realms according to Korean mythology: layers of heavenly gods, of nature gods, of deceased kings, of deceased generals, of house gods, and of sundry spirits (Jo 2004, 24).

These realms exist separately and may be somewhere nearby the human realm to which access is blocked. Shamans can summon beings from other realms through rites or ascetic practice. The heroes in the aforementioned epics of Northern Europe travel to a different realm through many difficult routines similar to ascetic practices and finally deliver mandates from representatives of the realm to humans. Their stories about their journeys to other realms have always aroused mystique in audiences and have formed a basic plot of mythological narratives.

The journey of heroes depicted in visual cultural content look quite different from the typical character of shamans in Siberia or Central Asia. They do not deliver

mandates from gods in a state of ecstasy or sacrifice the blood of animals any more. In full reflection of the atmosphere of the new century, they manipulate neat outfits and apparatus to undertake their missions. They can be a young sorcerer with glasses, a girl who gets lost and enters a divine realm accidentally, or a traveller who makes a journey to another world after accidentally obtaining an evil ring.

Here attention should be paid to the concept of monomyth asserted by Joseph Campbell. He pointed out in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* typical patterns of the journey of protagonists presented in the texts of lyrical epics. According to him, the standard path of the mythological adventure of heroes is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passages: separation, initiation and return, which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth. A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder. Fabulous forces are encountered there, and a decisive victory is won. The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell 1999, 44). His assertion reminds us of shamans who have finished a hard journey to the other realm or the shamanic protagonist described in the *muga* of Korea.

With this backdrop, stories of shamanic heroes are breath-taking enough to attract the attention of the public. A number of stories featuring shamanic heroes and spectacular ideas have enjoyed great success in many fields of cultural content in Hollywood, motivating the creation of content that makes use of motifs of shamanic heroes in many countries. This is verified by the fact that the most successful Hollywood movies in the latest decade concern the adventure of shamanic heroes making contact with two different realms or of people with a similar peculiarity.

The table below shows 14 movies employing protagonists with shamanic characteristics out of the 30 movies that have made the largest profits since the beginning of this century.[4]

RANK	TITLE	WORLDWIDE BOX OFFICE
1.	Avatar (2009)*	$2,781,505,847
3.	The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003)	$1,129,219,252
4.	Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest (2006)	$1,065,896,541
6.	Alice in Wonderland (2010)*	$1,023,285,206
8.	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (2001)	$968,657,891
9.	Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End (2007)	$958,404,152
10.	Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 (2010)	$945,662,162

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[4]   All-Time Worldwide Box Office at the Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/boxoffice/alltimegross?region=world-wide>.

RANK	TITLE	WORLDWIDE BOX OFFICE
11.	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2007)	$937,000,866
12.	Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (2009)	$933,956,980
14.	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002)	$921,600,000
16.	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2005)	$892,194,397
20.	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002)	$866,300,000
22.	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)	$860,700,000
29.	Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004)	$795,458,727

The movies above marked with an asterisk refer to movies whose protagonists have characters similar to the mythological heroes in monomyth, though the divine world is not outwardly described. On this reflection, shamanic heroes are utilised as a good subject of cultural content in many countries.

This phenomenon is not limited to Hollywood. There are many animated films created out of content resources of national belief. The Japanese movie *Spirited Away* (千と千尋の神隠し, *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*; picture 1), released in 2001,

Picture 1. The poster from the animated film *Spirited Away* (2001), directed by Hayao Miyazaki.

portrays a girl who undertakes mysterious tasks in a strange realm to save her parents, who were transformed into pigs. The journey of the girl, who enters a strange realm by way of a deserted amusement park and goes through a variety of difficult tasks, resembles the story of Princess Bari who departs on a journey to *Jeoseung*. In fact, *Spirited Away* director Miyazaki has produced a series of animated films based on Japanese myths. The representation of *kami* is one of the important tasks in the movies of Miyazaki. *Kami* is usually interpreted as a god or deity, but they are not omniscient and actually distant in the Christian or Muslim sense. They were thought of in a way similar to the Greek gods, capable of human emotion and accessible to mortal communication (Wright 2005, 3).

The most important incident in *Spirited Away* is the disappearance—*kamikakushi,*

or hidden by deities—which frequently appears in Japanese mythological narratives. In the past, when children or women suddenly disappeared and could not be found for a long time, it was presumed they had met *kamikakushi.* Sudden disappearances were often attributed to the spirit realm, as many believed that spirits took people away to the spirit world (Reider 2005, 9).

Chihiro, the girl in *Spirited Away*, is not endowed with an ability to communicate with a divine realm like Väinemöinen was by nature. She found a secret path to an unknown space in a deserted amusement park while on a journey with her parents. In the world of Japanese folklore, bridges, tunnels, and crossroads are often considered a demarcation point between this world and another (Reider 2005, 10). Afterwards, Chihiro comes across various characters in a divine world unreachable by normal people. The many trials she must go through in the realm to save her parents transformed into pigs (strictly speaking, they had lost their vitality as humans) coincide with the stages of the adventures of heroes as indicated by Campbell. Haku, another important protagonist guiding Chihiro to the resolution, can be interpreted as the supernatural aid of Campbell's monomyth theory.

Miyazaki's works are famous for attempts to combine numerous new characters with elements taken from Shinto and Japanese mythology, and they have accomplished great results because of progress in technology. Protagonists in other animated films like *My Neighbor Totoro*, *The Princess Mononoke* and *Kiki's Delivery Service* also portray mediators between two realms existing adjacent to but unreachable from the other in a normal way, where they undertake their missions or deliver something to others.

China has accomplished drastic economic growth since the recent acceptance of the policy of reform and opening up. It proclaimed a new national task to establish a society for a middle class with sufficient incomes, and at the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China held in 2002, it designated the development of high technology through scientific education as the destination of the future. China also started showing its intention to support the development of a cultural industry to build a new engine for proliferation, asserting its significance to represent the country. China anticipates that the progress of the economy will be steered by cultural industry, not manufacturing, in the 21st century, largely based on the manipulation of knowledge (Bak 2006, 302). This trend has settled in a slightly different direction. The ultimate aim of the cultural industry is to unearth and develop the effectiveness of the cultural industry of socialism, to establish the original socialistic culture of China for the purpose of improving the lifestyle of the Chinese people, and finally, to enhance national power. For that reason, the original culture of China, based on socialistic realism, is a fundamental precondition required of their cultural industry. Therefore, the majority of the newest cultural content is supposed to represent the

superiority of Chinese tradition and emphasise the public interest of society (Bak 2006, 303). Due to these circumstances, the Chinese cultural content industry looks different than the situation in Korea and Japan.

The Walt Disney animation featuring the subject of Mulan, a legendary heroine of China, obtained global success, encouraging the conglomerate to study the lyrical epic of the Orient. China is abundant in narrative resources available for cultural content. Some famous Chinese directors, such as Zhang Yimou, achieved success with a variety of movies manifesting true Chineseness and standing up to the tendencies of the West to produce mock Chinese films mixed with marginal Oriental images to satisfy Western viewers' fanaticism with Oriental mystique (Bak 2006, 307).

The tendency to make use of shamanic heroes does not look very promising at the present. However, shamanic heroes as mediators between two realms appeared quite frequently in the film industry of Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s, which represented Chinese cinematography with stories about the transformation of humans into other beings, demolishing physical limitations and involving love and sexual intercourse between humans and non-humans.
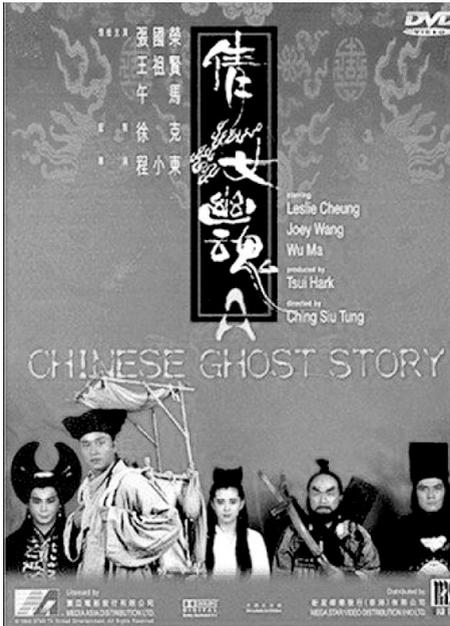
Picture 2. The poster from the film *Chinese Ghost Story* (1987), directed by Ching Siu-tung.

Representative cases are the *Chinese Ghost Story* (倩女幽魂, Picture 2) series[5] and similar copies produced in the 1980s that caused a great sensation in Northeast Asia. The series, based on the original novel of Pu Songling from the Song Dynasty, portrays a love story between protagonists from a ghost realm and a human realm. Contrary to the traditional ghost movie, which is in the genre of horror film, *Chinese Ghost Story* demonstrates a harmony and unity between two realms through peaceful communication. It gained tremendous popularity among Asians and touched off a boom to produce analogical films such as *The Green Snake* (青蛇) and *Picture of a Nymph* (畫中仙), to name two. In *Ghost Story*, ghosts converted into friends from a different realm, forsaking the cliché to

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5   See < http://www.acdrifter.com/Asian-Movie-Review/18/A-Chinese-Ghost-Story.html>.

threaten people, become mediators by way of communicating with a protagonist from the human realm who accidentally found a secret path.

The Chinese movie industry has recently been dominated by traditional heroes and notable historical people, so the former series based on the story of shamanic heroes is no longer appearing on the market. Nevertheless, a new series of movies and even games based on old novels loaded with Taoist and Buddhist images, such as *Fengshen Yanyi* (封神演義) and *The Journey to the West* (西遊記), now in preparation, display the possibility of the success of Chinese cultural content concerning shamanic heroes.

The situation in Korea

The state of the utilisation of Korean cultural archetypes is indicated as poor in the report of the Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, and it is the same with the subject of shamanism. Some outstanding outcomes have however been observed since scholars from the various fields of humanitarian studies and art (Korean language, literature, folklore, design, musicology and painting) united to produce many joint projects for the proliferation of Korean humanitarian studies. Still, this effort has not borne much fruit for the development of the cultural content industry. According to the commission's report, humanitarian experts who took part in projects were not granted sufficient financial profits, and they did not attribute the results of the project to 'their own achievement' (Bak 2006, 110). Experts assert there is another original peculiarity of cultural content frustrating the active application of traditional Korean archetypes. Contrary to other industries in which products with the same quality would satisfy the needs of consumers at the same rate all the time, cultural content, in spite of the same genre, similar story, and same protagonist, can be perceived totally differently by each viewer and unfortunately is not guaranteed equal consequences (Kim, Yeongjae 2008, 47). This illustrates a high risk in the research and development of cultural content.

Shamanic content that lies directly under the developmental policy for traditional Korean archetypes is not free from such criticism either. Korea, believed to have the biggest number of shamans in the world in proportion to its population, is endowed with abundant mythological resources. Beside the written narratives about the foundation of dynasties and legends documented in the annals of *Samgukyusa* and *Samguksagi, muga* and chants concerning the divine realm are still being transmitted orally. The number of mythological resources available for commercialisation is therefore really enormous. Yet the amount of modern cultural content about shamanic heroes is scant.

Many causes can be found for this. First of all, the inveterate stereotype related to shamanism left a negative impact on the cognition of the Korean people. Shamanism

was regarded as a superstition that deluded the public and deceived people, and it became an object of persecution during the Joseon Dynasty, the period of colonisation by Japan, and the industrialisation after the Korean War. Moreover, under the influence of Christianity, mostly Protestantism, shamanism was downgraded to satanic witchcraft or sorcery. Its confrontation with Christianity is described in the novel *A Shaman's Portrait* (1939) by Kim Dongni (김동리), which depicts the declining position of shamanism due to the drastic influence of Western religion.

Second, objective criterion to identify genuine Korean shamanic elements from foreign religions is missing. Korean shamanism is eligible to be regarded as a national religion, representing the ancestral philosophy of the Korean people like Hinduism in India, Taoism in China, and Shinto in Japan. Yet, there is no original term referring to it. It was not managed so that its content was arranged and systemised. There are no criteria to identify the genuine prototype, because many foreign elements, e.g. from Buddhism and Taoism, were accepted into its structure. Therefore, an inadequate application of shamanism can generate the impression of a mock-Korean image similar to Buddhism or Taoism, which makes it hard to create refined Korean shamanic content.

Very recently, many new films and dramas derived from the mythological narratives documented in *Samguksagi* and *Samgukyusa* have been produced. Actually, according to the original records, the protagonists of these stories are mediators between two realms as shamans. But most of the prototypes faded and were transformed into war heroes or politicians. In addition, an argument tinted with political overtones is emerging due to contention over the ownership of history among Northeast Asian countries.

Third, the visualisation of characters is not managed. Attempts to visualise or systemise shamanic characters according to peculiarity, behaviours, and exterior features has not taken place. Thus it is very risky to anticipate success in the cultural content market, where visual images are highly valued. The adequate visualisation of a character not only helps audiences to easily comprehend content, but also holds a key to supplementary success. For example, a secondary business can be launched relying on the sales of the visualised characters or the development of a game after the content is released on screen.

The characters of Buddhism and Taoism are relatively well maintained by paintings, carvings and sculpture in temples. The appearance of the main characters in Buddhism, such as Sakyamuni, Avalokitesvara, Ksitigarbha and Maitreya, is already visualised in professional or folk paintings and sculptures. Unfortunately, the specific visualisation of shamanic deities according to layers, characters and functions is not still actively managed, even though there are some characters illustrated in paintings in private sanctuaries and fortune tellers' houses that have almost identical

appearances, regardless of function, peculiarity and the layers they belong to. Hence, the responsibility upon artists not only for the creation of content, but also for its visualisation, has to increase.

Shamanic heroes often employed in cultural content in Korea

In 2008, a Seoul National University professor, Seo Daeseok, issued a book, *Everything about the Traditional Characters of Korea*, which was collected from various lyrical epics. He was joined on the project for the book by many eminent scholars and professors who were engaged in the field of Korean study and wanted to commemorate Professor Seo's retirement. Seo consecutively occupied the highest positions in the Korean Classical Literature Association and the Society of Korean Oral Literature, and he gave form to 85 characters from Korean classics and narratives. His book aimed to discover characters applicable to the visualisation and story-telling businesses for the cultural industry and uncovered a variety of shamanic heroes, such as Ungnyeo, Yuhwa, Princess Bari, Gangnim, Goenegitdo and Danggeumagi, who made journeys into unknown realms.

The use of the mystical atmosphere of shamanism in a published work has been attempted by a number of artists, even though they have not been very notable. There were attempts by many artists to create cultural content from the images of the shamanic heroes, for example, the animated film *Oneuri* by Yi Seonggang (이성강) based on the mythology of Jeju island, the novel *Bari and the Tiger* by Seo Jinseok (서진석) based on the story of house gods, and other movies and dramas relying on traditional ghost stories. These however failed to obtain remarkable success. Still, there are some typical characters of shamanic heroes frequently employed in cultural content.

Princess Bari

Princess Bari, the guardian deity of Korean shamans, is one of the most important characters transferred into oral literature. It is a lyrical epic transferred orally by shamans about Princess Bari, the seventh daughter of a king, who finds out that the parents who abandoned her fell ill and departs on a journey to locate medicines to heal them. Her journey and all of the stages she must overcome on her way are illustrated in very great detail. The epic has a very well constructed plot recalling the monomyth of Campbell. It had a huge influence on folk art and paintings concerning the world after death and therefore motivated a lot of artists of new generation to create various literary works. There was a novel by the same name by renowned novelist Hwang

Seokyeong (황석영), but the main theme of the book was imagined by the author. Thus the protagonist is far different from the original Princess Bari.

The epic was staged in 1999 as a musical entitled *Bari, The Forgotten Lullaby* and awarded the prize for best stage production at the 5th Korean Musical Awards. It cost 800 million KRW to produce the musical, with experts from many fields such as lighting, costumes, music and choreography creating the best of all possible harmony. The musical starred Korean celebrities Yi Seonhi (이선희), Yun Bokhi (윤복희), Yu Inchon (유인촌) and Yu Yeol (유열) and attracted the attention of audiences, who highly praised it as a masterpiece. It is not being staged at this moment. Additionally, a new project to produce an animated film based on the Princess Bari story was started by Jang Seunu (장선우), an outstanding film director, and Bak Jaedong (박재동), a cartoonist who gets attention from the mass media. The project seemed unsuccessful at the beginning, but in 2007 it was decided to get financial support for the project from France and China. The date of the release of the film is still unclear. HanGame, one of the main game companies in Korea, created a computer game with the motif of the epic, and it is winning popularity among players.

Gumiho

The archetype of Gumiho, the fox ghost having nine tails, is not known exactly but known generally in the narratives of East Asia. Nowadays, Gumiho is often depicted as a fox, mostly female, with the possibility to become a human after rigorous training. The hero looks quite different in old texts where Gumiho is mentioned. The story of a fox ghost, an archetype of Gumiho, appears in *Samgukyusa*, one of the most valuable chronicles in Korea. There is a story about a fox ghost encountered by the monk Wongwang during his training on Samgi Mountain described in the section 'Wongwang's Journey to the West'. Four years after the beginning of his training on the mountain, a new monk came and lived for two years in a nearby temple. One day a god appears in front of Wongwang and asks him to warn the new monk to move to another place because he is blocking the way.

> On the next day, Wongwang arrived to warn him.
> 'Yesterday, I was told by a god that you have to move to another place. Otherwise a misfortune will be upon you'.
> The other monk answered,
> 'Even a trained monk can be beguiled by an evil spirit. Why are you so concerned about the word of a fox ghost?' (Ilyeon 2003, 421–22)

Afterward, the new monk, who did not listen to the warning, perished in the collapse of the temple. Even though in this story the fox ghost is not described as the conventional Gumiho believed nowadays to have nine tails, it had already

been granted numerous abilities presented by the 'modern' Gumiho, for example to perform magic and predict the future. After punishing the monk, the fox ghost advises Wongwang to go to China to study and finally to enlighten the people of Korea. When Wongwang comes back to Shilla after 11 years of study in China, the fox ghost makes an appearance once more at the temple and reveals that it is a fox (Ilyeon 2003, 424). This apparently shows that Gumiho used to be respected as a sacred being; it is not always described as a sacred god, however.

In the section 'Milbon Casts an Evil Spirit Out' in *Samgukyusa*, it is said:

> Queen Seondeok, whose real name is Deokman, fell ill and did not recover for a long time. Hence a monk Beopcheok from Heungryun Temple was summoned to cure her but without success. Retainers who had found Milbon, a monk, to be very renowned for great deeds, asked the Queen to exchange him with Beopcheok. Then the Queen invited the monk to court. The monk chanted the medicine sutra in front of the Queen's chamber. As soon as he finished reading the book, his stick with six rings flew into the bedroom of the Queen, stabbed an old fox and Beopcheok, and threw them out to the yard. And then the Queen rapidly recovered. Then all the people were astonished to see beams of five colours glaring over the head of Milbon. (Ilyeon 2003, 499–500)

This excerpt displays the existence of a negative view against the fox ghost. Nevertheless, the association between the old evil fox and fox ghosts in general is not made intentionally. The fox ghost, or Gumiho, now mostly appears as a female who allures men. This is widely used in visual content because the story is loaded with various attractive elements such as horror, love and history that attract the attention of audiences. The fox ghost has provided subjects for some movies: *Gumiho,* which in 1994 became the first science fiction movie of Korea; *The Gumiho Family*, which was released in 2006 and contained some musical elements; and *Yobi, the Five-Tailed Fox*, an animated film, in 2007. This story was also introduced in many TV series, among which *My Girlfriend is Gumiho* (picture 3)[6] was a trendy drama starring the most famous celebrities that had great success in 2010.

Picture 3. The poster of the drama *My Girlfriend Is Gumiho* (2010), directed by Bu Seongcheol.

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6   See the hompage of the programme <http://tv.sbs.co.kr/mygumiho/>.

Dokkaebi

In Korean fables and legends, *Dokkaebi* is a character with two directly opposed dispositions—to be good and to be evil. In contemporary usage, it is a goblin-like creature that has a horn on its head and is fond of joking and playing tricks on people with a magic club. This description is often argued by scholars to be an imitation of Japanese goblins and not authentically Korean. Nevertheless, *dokkaebi* occupies such a significant place in Korea's cultural content industry that KOCCA maintains a special website. According to the description on the website, the term *dokkaebi* might refer to the general concept for goblins or monsters that do not have any specific special characteristics and dispositions. The site defines *dokkaebi* as 'a ghost that has the features of a human or a beast and an unusual and strange power to allure and play tricks on people'. In this definition, the term ghost has a broader concept, embracing all mystical beings, not just the spirits of dead people or souls. Therefore, *dokkaebi* can refer to all unusual beings the Korean people believe to be scary or mysterious. The representative distinctiveness is the complexity of characteristics, the ability to be horrifying as well as helpful and friendly. *Dokkaebi* used to be a good object to reflect the multifaceted cravings of the Korea people.[7]

According to KOCCA, the majority of the famous tales about the *dokkaebi* were written down after the 1980s. It is problematic to consider them all authentic, taking into account the possibility that the authentic prototype could have been distorted during the Japanese occupation. Truly some distortions are found in *dokkaebi* texts. Nevertheless, it is still possible to trace back the prototype of Korean goblins by thorough research, which is being pursued by KOCCA.

Examples of successful applications

The use of shamanic heroes in the creation of modern content has not always been successful. As mentioned earlier, it was influenced by the intolerance for shamanism in society and the limited number of experts trained in the visualisation and creation of storylines. Despite all the failures, the successive, fruitful accomplishments of cultural content in mysterious stories based on original legends and mythology in Hollywood nevertheless motivated Korean artists to search for new characters. Therefore, the challenge to employ shamanic heroes in new productions of content is growing. Here are some examples of successful cultural content in which shamanic heroes appeared.

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7   The definition of dokkaebi of Korea, <http://dokkaebi.culturecontent.com/dokibe_info/sub. asp>.

Jeonwoochi

Jeonwoochi (전우치) by Choi Donghun (최동훈) (2009) (picture 4)[8] was the first movie in South Korea to exploit a historical person appearing in an old novel with the same title. Jeonwoochi is not really related to the original version of the shamanic hero but was granted a number of shamanic characteristics in the movie as a mediator between a divine realm and the human realm. The main storyline was created on the basis of legends and

narratives telling about the mysterious activities of Jeonwoochi, who was believed to have lived during the reign of King Jungjong (1506–1544). His story is documented in various collections such as *Joyajipyo* (조야집요, estimated year of publication 1784), *Daedongyaseung* (대동야승, the exact year of publication unknown), and *Eouyadam* (어우야담, by Yu Mong, 1559–c. 1623). There are some differences among the documents, but Jeonwoochi is believed to have obtained magical ability from a fox that took a golden beam from a king to help the poor, to save people falsely accused of a crime, and to exact revenge on officials harassing people in town. When wanted by the government, he goes to the king by himself and decides to take a job at the lowest level of the court. During his work, he defeats a gang of thieves hiding in a mountain but is forced to abandon the task because of a

Picture 4. The poster from the film *Jeonwoochi* (2009), directed by Choi Donghun.

conspiracy. He continues his former heroic deeds, punishes the officer who started the conspiracy against him, and tries to kidnap a widow at the request of a friend. At last restrained by Gangnim, an envoy from *Jeoseung,* he flees to a mountain after defeating Hwadam, a master of Taoist sorcery, in a fight. He is killed finally as a result of treason but is believed to make an appearance to people even after death.

The movie *Jeonwoochi* reformed the protagonist of this legend, with the innovative imagination of writers blended in, into a new superhero parallel with Superman or Batman of Hollywood. Even though the performance of one of Korea's greatest celebrities, Gang Dongwon (강동원), contributed to the success of this movie, it is very risky to conclude that the success totally relied only on the name of the actor, considering that the movies he had starred in were not so successful at the box office.

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8   See the database at <http://movie.naver.com/movie/bi/mi/basic.nhn?code=48227>.

In the movie, the story begins in 1509 during the Joseon Dynasty and involves a trio of Taoist wizards, Jeonwoochi and his dog turned man, a corrupt king, evil goblins, and a prophetic pipe everyone is after. Eventually Jeonwoochi becomes sealed inside an ancient scroll for a crime he did not commit. Jumping ahead to the year 2009, the wizards are called out of peaceful retirement as goblins start appearing in Korea and wreaking havoc all around. The trio calls on Jeonwoochi, who is released from his ancient scroll entrapment, to save the day. The problem is that Jeonwoochi, a kind of anti-superhero, becomes more interested in sightseeing and womanising in modern-day Korea.[9] Thanks to the well-built plot and splendid computer graphics, this movie attracted more than 6 million viewers in Korea and even occupied a higher rank than *Avatar* by James Cameron right after being released.[10]

The unexpected achievement of the movie was praised as a success of Korean classics and humanitarian studies. The movie, embracing a new interpretation of the classic and a parody of Korean society, displays the high potential of the traditional Korean archetype with shamanic elements.

Living Together with Gods

Living Together with Gods by Ju Homin (주호민) is a cartoon that attracted a huge amount of attention from readers on its inception. It is published serially on Naver, an internet portal of Korea. This cartoon, with a plot and structure similar to *Princess Bari*, describes the encounter between the divine and human realms on the basis of authentic Korean mythology concerning a journey to *Jeoseung* and house deities with a sense of humour. This cartoon comprises three seasons: the life in *Jeoseung*, of which 78 parts were finished by March 2011, the life of house deities, which is on-going at this moment, and the life of gods in the divine realm, which will begin after the second season. The first season—the life in *Jeoseung*—is full of wit and humour and tells about the 49-day journey of a citizen from death to the final sentence by ten judges. The second season is about the harmony between humans and house
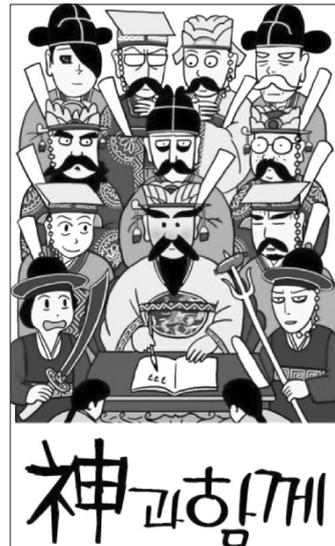
Picture 5. The main page of the series *Living Together with Gods* (January 2010–September 2012) by Ju Homin.

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9   Post about Jeonwoochi at Asian Mediawiki, <http://asianmediawiki.com/Woochi>.

10 Statistics about Jeonwoochi at The Korea Film Council, <http://www.kofic.or.kr/cms/64.do>.

deities who strive to protect a poor family living in a slum in Seoul from the demolition of their house. It is now being published twice a week. House deities, who are obliged to protect their residents, have to confront envoys of *Jeoseung* who come to take the soul of a grandfather who is taking care of a young kid alone in a poor family. The third season about the life of gods in the mythological world is expected after the second season. This cartoon holds the attention of readers with a very intriguing original subject never tried before in Korean popular culture. The witty humour of the cartoonist is discerned on the title page of the cartoon (picture 5)[11] taken from the typical wall painting in shaman shrines where the main judge who is supposed to list the deeds of sinners writes down the sign largely used in internet chat to denote laughter, and a sausage is stabbed on the spear of a guard.

The cartoonist also provides the visualisation of the characters, which was missing in the cultural content of Korea, by employing original colours, costume designs, and properties utilised in traditional folk paintings. There are some characters inspired by Buddhism, such as Ksitigarbha and the ten judge gods, but the functions and disposition of the characters that are depicted in the narratives are recreated according to the imagination of Korean people and very much agree with the atmosphere of traditional Korean shamanism (picture 6).[12] The creativeness of the cartoonist coincides with the needs of readers, who have given him an average rating of 9.9 out of 10. He was awarded the best web-cartoon prize at the 9th Best Cartoon Awards Chosen by Readers.

Picture 6. A cut from the series *Living Together with Gods*. With the permission of Ju Homin, the author of the cartoon.

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[11] See <http://comic.naver.com/webtoon/list.nhn?titleId=119877>.

[12] See <http://comic.naver.com/webtoon/detail.nhn?titleId=119877&no=10&weekday=wed>. With the permission of Ju Homin, the author of the cartoon.

Regardless of the remarkable achievement of the cartoon, it was harshly criticised by many Korean readers who associate the content with shamanism as a religion. The cartoonist had to attach a special comment in the cartoon issued on 16 September 2010 requesting that Christian readers 'avoid unnecessary religious arguments, because the cartoon is based solely on the personal imagination of the cartoonist'. He also added the announcement that he is an atheist.

Conclusion

Korea experienced a series of tragedies—the occupation of Japan followed by the Korean War—that forced the country to establish its entire economy from ashes. During the industrialisation in the 1960s and 1970s, the violation of human rights was tacitly tolerated in the name of economic growth, and numerous cultural archetypes of Korea, considered pre-modern or unsuitable for a new generation by the authoritative government, were destroyed or vanished. The significance of cultural activity was denied the Korean middle class for the sake of the economy, and projects on cultural development were postulated to focus on Europe and the USA as models of advanced culture.

Under these circumstances, while the economic position of South Korea soared for a time, its cultural position did not rival China or Japan. Compared to neighbouring countries, South Korea was consequently late in the development of cultural content based on traditional archetypes. Nevertheless, the cultural content produced in South Korea, also called *hallyu*, has gained a global reputation since the successful organisation of many national events and proved that South Korea is not a producer of just electronic and IT devices any more.

The cultural content industry in Korea has borne many remarkable fruits in a relatively short period, but it is still perilous to make a hasty conclusion about whether it has been completely successful or not. As discussed in this paper, although there have been many fruitful achievements in discovering and developing archetypes related with shamanism, there are still many mountains to climb.

The principal problem to be addressed is the argument about authenticity and ownership still fierce among Northeast Asian countries where the rivalry over cultural hegemony has been strong. The discussion concerning ancient history has turned into a political dispute among China, Japan and Korea. For instance, China insists that the history of Goguryeo, an ancient dynasty of Korea that provided the subject of *Jumong*, a drama series about the foundation and history of the dynasty, is part of their history. Koreans are therefore facing the loss of a valuable historical resource.

In the case of shamanism, the possibility of religious conflict remains all the time, and no common ground has yet been found. Furthermore, because education about

ancient history is not effectively maintained in schools, the younger generation of the Korean people is exposed to the problematic situation that they will learn the history and culture of Korea only from cultural content created by a handful of artists.

Cultural content is undeniably an industry that can generate enormous economic profit. Yet it should be considered that it requires social compromise, at least in Korea, and that it has a vast influence on the comprehension of culture and history. Therefore, it forces Koreans to deliberate about whether the current positive achievements of the cultural content industry are successful or not.

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