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## ANCESTRAL WORSHIP AS PRACTICED IN KOREA.

THE religious beliefs of Korea show a blending of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The Confucian learning as we know forms the basis of the education of the country. Every magistracy throughout the land has somewhere in its town a temple dedicated to Confucius where twice a year, in the spring and in the fall the magistrate with his numerous writers worship the spirit of the sage. The social fabric of the country is largely Confucian. Ancestral worship is Confucian. Again the temples and priests of Buddha are scattered throughout the country—a faith with much of its lustre gone, but said to be favored with palace patronage. Taoism has its representatives in the *hpansu*\* or blind sorcerer, the *mutang*† or sorceress, and the *chigwan*‡ or geomancer.

Each religion furnishes its share to the mythology of the country. At the head of their system of belief is Sangchei§ or Hananim||, whom the king alone worships once a year or less. Many would introduce as next inferior to him Buddha (indeed some go to the temples upon the death of a relative to pray the Buddha to send his spirit to the good abode). Then come the Ten Judges of Hades, the Siptaiwang ||, whose pictures may be seen in Buddhist temples. Through their servants they are said to be well versed in the affairs of mortals. Upon the death of a man, one of his souls is seized by official servants of these judges and hurried to hades. The judges knowing whether his deeds have been good or evil, give sentence, and in accordance with the judg-

\* 盲人 判 兪    † 地 官 디 관    || 天 主 하 느 님  
 † 巫 무 당    § 上 帝 상 데    || 十 大 王 십 대 왕

ment the spirit is sent either to the Buddhist heaven or to the Buddhist hell to spend the rest of his existence. In the latter place are manifold kinds of punishment. Next below the ten judges come the *sansin*<sup>\*</sup> or mountain spirits. Each mountain of the checker-board of Korea is supposed to have its presiding genius in the person of a mountain spirit, of whom more anon. Below the *sansin* are many other kinds of spirits. We come now to the *kuisin*† or devils, with the *tchon-tok-gabi*‡ at their head, answering in our system to Satan. Nearly all the women and three fourths of the men of Korea stand in mortal terror of these malevolent beings. They are believed to be universally powerful, able to give happiness or misery alike as suits their fiendish fancy. From the top to the bottom of the social scale of Korea, men offer through the blind sorcerers or the *mutang* sacrifices to these demons. Is anyone sick, or in trouble, going on a journey or moving his lodgings, the demons are propitiated by sorcery. The houses are said to have their guardian demons. I am almost ready to say that *kuisin* worship is the religion of Korea.

With this brief look at the religions of the country, let us center our attention upon the ancestral worship as practised in Korea. Ancestral worship is Confucian in its origin. Confucius was intensely practical in his philosophy. His mind took no pleasure in dwelling upon the supernatural. He said: "Spirits are to be respected, but to be kept at a distance." On another occasion he said: "While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits." He found ancestral worship existing among the ancients he so much venerated, and he passed on the custom almost without comment. And yet, while he set before men a beautiful array of virtues to be practiced, because he gave to the virtue of filial piety an excessive import-

\* 山神산신    † 鬼神귀신    ‡ 天閻羅殿독감어

ance and made it the foundation stone of his structure, he may be said to have furnished the principle for ancestral worship.

The customs regulating ancestral worship in Korea differ so from those of China, that it may be profitable to consider the procedure after death somewhat in detail. Koreans believe that every man has three souls, and upon death one goes to hades, one to the grave, and one takes his abode in the ancestral tablet.

In the last moments before death, silence reigns through the house. Sad ministrations follow, and the remains are placed in new clothes for burial. Outside the door is at once placed a little table with three bowls of rice, and a red *hobak* or squash; and alongside of it are ranged three pairs of sandal shoes.

Three *sajas*\* or official servants have come to take the soul to the Ten Judges in Hades. These are presents to them. Smelling the flavor of the cooked rice they are refreshed. The shoes being burnt they are shod for the journey. The *hobak* is a present to the prison official who lived 2000 years ago and was fond of *hobaks*. Then the rice is thrown away, and the *hobak* broken. This is done during the first half hour after death. Then the inner garments of the deceased are taken out by a servant, who waves them in the air and calls loudly to the deceased by name. At the same time the friends and relatives of the dead man loudly lament. After a time the clothes are thrown upon the roof of the house and left there.

The choice of the site of the grave is considered a matter of great importance to Koreans. The semiglobular mounds are invariably placed upon hill-sides. While they may be placed upon slopes facing any direction, a south exposure is preferred, probably for reasons such as carry weight in China, the belief being there that inasmuch as warmth and life pro-

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\* 使者人子

ceed from the south, and cold and frost come down from the north, that grave is most fortunately located which is at the same time sheltered from the north and open to the good influences supposed to emanate from the south. But if that were all, the choice of a grave site were a simple matter. There are many intricate points connected with the subject, which only the initiated are versed in. The relatives are obliged to consult a *chigwan* or geomancer. He is a learned man who by long study of books upon the subject in his possession, knows all the superstitions relating to the good and bad influences supposed to be in the ground. He must choose the burial site. It is believed that a well chosen site brings rank and money and numerous sons to the children of the one buried there.

The day of the funeral arrives. The remains have been placed in a coffin more or less expensive according to the means of the family. At dusk they start with a long train of lanterns, the brilliantly colored hearse, the loudly weeping mourners, of whom the male members are dressed in the bushel basket hat and the yellow mourners' clothes. The grave at last has been reached, the interment has taken place, and the mound has been rounded up. Now occurs the first sacrifice, called the *piogto cheysa*\*. Small tables are placed in front of the grave. Upon them are set offerings of wine and dried fish. The relatives facing the offerings and the grave, bow to the ground in five prostrations. A formula is repeated wishing peace to the spirit who is to dwell in the grave. Afterward, at a little distance behind the grave, like offerings and similar prostrations are made to the mountain spirit. This is called the *Sansin cheysa*†. The mountain spirit is supposed to preside over the place. Prayer is offered to him invoking his protection as host to the spirit of the grave they are committing to his care. It

\* 平土祭祀 평토제스 † 山神祭祀 산신제스

is deemed necessary in order to secure hospitable treatment for the spirit at the grave. After these ceremonies the wine is thrown away, and the fish is divided among the servants.

We now come to the third soul of the man. He returns from the grave with the mourners to take up his abode in the ancestral tablet. In the room the tablet is to occupy (a vacant room if possible) another offering is made, called the *pan hon chycsa* †. The offerings consist of native bread, wine, meat, cooked rice, and vermicelli soup. These articles of food are placed before the tablet that the spirit may regale himself with the flavor. The relatives and friends bow five times. Then the food is taken into another room and eaten by the assembled company.

At this point it may be well to make a few explanations. The ancestral tablet consists of a strip of white wood upon which is placed the family name and other writing. It is set in a socket. After three years of mourning it is put with the other ancestral tablets in the little cabinets in the ancestral temple\* adjoining the house. During the intervening time, if the man is wealthy he places the tablet in a vacant room, usually in his wife's apartment. But if the man is poor and has no ancestral temple, the tablet is placed in a box on one side of a room, and on the occasions when he worships his other ancestors, strips of paper with writing on them are pasted on the wall in lieu of the proper tablets. The common people worship not only for their father, but also for their grandfather and great-grandfather. Some go back two generations or more. High officials worship for four while the king worships for five ancestors. Some curious customs regulate the period of mourning, strictly so called.

If the father dies, the family goes into mourning for three

\* 祠堂 사당

† 返魂祭祀 반혼제사

years. If the father and mother die the same day, the same period of mourning is observed; and likewise, should the mother die sometime after the father's death. But if while the father is alive the mother dies, the family wear mourning garments for one year.

Again suppose three generations of a family to be living. The father dies and the family goes into mourning for three years. The grandfather dies next, and the son takes his dead father's place in wearing mourning clothes for another three years. Where a man received rank, posthumous rank is sometimes given to his departed father from the feeling that the father must always be considered higher than the son. An official cannot hold office during the three years of mourning. And we remember how in the recent year of mourning for the Dowager Queen custom required that the public offices be closed for a long period of time. Custom also prescribes that no matter how young a king may be at the time of his decease, his successor must be younger than he, so that he can perform the sacrifices.

But to return to the family in mourning. Allusion has been made to the mourning clothes ordinarily worn. On the minor sacrificial occasions a robe called the *to pho*<sup>\*</sup> is worn. It consists of a flowing-sleeved garment, split up the back to the waist, over which portion a fold falls to the bottom of the garment. During the three years, upon the two national mourning days, and upon the anniversary of the father's death, an especial attire called the *chey pok* † is worn by the male relatives during the period of mourning. Among other features the official hoop belt is worn; and the hat is peculiar, in which a white loop goes up over a baggy skull-cap from front to rear.

During the three years a dish of fruit is constantly kept before the ancestral tablet.

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\* 道袍도포      † 祭服제복

Let us consider the sacrifices further demanded by the laws of ancestral worship. During the three years certain sacrificing is rendered only before the deceased father's tablet, and not in the ancestral temple. On the first and fifteenth of each Korean month the *saik mang cheysa*\* is observed, and rice or vermicelli soup amid lamentations is placed before the tablet. The time for the sacrifice is one or two hours after midnight. The anniversary of the father's death is a very important occasion during the mourning years. The first anniversary has a name, the *sosang*†; the second is called the *taiasang*‡. In after years when the tablet has been placed beside the other tablets, this anniversary goes by the name of *kuil cheysa*§. While in mourning, on the night before this anniversary, sacrifice is made before the tablet. The next morning friends visit the family in mourning and sympathize with them, upon which occasion food in many varieties is set before them. Some time during the day the mourners repair to the grave and repeat the sacrifices of the previous year to the soul in the grave and to the mountain spirit.

These constitute the sacrifices peculiar to the first three years. Afterwards the offerings upon the first and fifteenth days cease, while sacrifice on the father's anniversary day goes on perpetually, but in the ancestral temple where the other tablets are. Mention should be made here of the anniversaries of the grandfather's and great-grandfather's death, when sacrifice is made in the *satang* or ancestral temple, and at their graves.

We come now to the eight Korean holidays upon which sacrifice to the dead must be performed. Only in these cases the name is changed and the relatives are said to *chey rey hao*||.

The occasions are New Year's day, (about the 1st. of

\* 朔望祭祀 삭망제스 § 忌日祭祀 기일제스

† 小祥 소상

|| 爲祭禮 제례 호오

‡ 大祥 대상

Feb.), the 15th. day of the first month which closes the New Year's holiday season, the two national mourning days, and four other festivals. Upon these days sacrifice is offered at day-break. One peculiarity marks the celebration of these eight festivals during the mourning years. A double sacrifice is performed at the house, one in the *satang* before the remoter ancestors' tablets, the other later before the father's tablet in the other building. The two general mourning days come in the spring and in the fall, one in the third month corresponding to April, the other in the eighth month, our September. Upon these two days the practice is various. Some visit their father's grave, and some do not. Others again visit in addition the graves of their grandfather and remoter ancestors, upon which occasions they bow and offer their food at the graves and before the presiding mountain spirit.

Now as to the significance of all this ancestral worship. The literature upon the ancestral worship of China, especially the pamphlet by Dr. Yates, seems to indicate that the Chinese believe that the happiness of the dead and of the living is directly connected with ancestral worship. Whether their fathers are rich or beggars in the other world depends upon the fidelity of their children in keeping up the prescribed sacrifices, and that their fathers reward or punish the living children according to their faithfulness in ancestral worship.

The Koreans on the other hand seem to believe that the condition of the dead is permanently fixed by the sentence of the ten judges upon their arrival in the other world.

As nearly as I can learn after considerable inquiry, two views are held among Koreans as to the significance of their ancestral worship. One class would hold that whether a man worships his father or not, does not affect the happiness of either the father or the son. It affects the *reputation* of the son among his acquaintances, as being a man who shows disrespect to the spirit of his father living in the ancestral tablet in his house.

Still other Koreans would say, that if they worship their ancestors well, Hananim, the head of the Korean mythology will reward such a man with money, honors and other promoters of happiness and on the other hand will punish with trouble the man who neglects to sacrifice. Such are some of the features of the ancestral worship of Korea.

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