



Reviving Mysticism: A Comparative Analysis of African Witchcraft and Korean Shamanism in their Evolution to Contemporary Society

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Abstract— In today's secular societies, spiritual practices like witchcraft and shamanism are making a notable comeback, often as a response to the disconnection felt in a rational and materialistic world. These ancient traditions are resurfacing not only in personal beliefs but also in pop culture and media. From the growth of online neo-pagan and witchcraft communities to the portrayal of shamanistic rituals in TV shows, movies, and music, these practices offer the mysticism and connection many find lacking in modern life. This revival reflects a desire for deeper meaning and alternative perspectives on the human experience, challenging the dominance of secular and scientific views. Their presence in popular culture also gives these practices new relevance, influencing everything from fashion and art to politics, resonating with those seeking spiritual fulfillment in a complex world.

As the resurgence of spiritual practices like witchcraft and shamanism gains traction in contemporary society, it becomes essential to examine these traditions across different cultures to better understand their enduring influence and significance. The study of spiritual practices across different cultures, specifically African witchcraft and Korean Shamanism, can offer valuable insights into the social, political, and economic development of societies. Both traditions have evolved over centuries, shaped by historical, cultural, and environmental factors, yet continue to exert significant influence on their respective communities to this day. This paper aims to explore the connections between African witchcraft and Korean shamanism, focusing on their origins, specific forms of practice, and the evolutionary processes that have led to their current trends. By examining the parallels between the two spiritual systems, this study seeks to illuminate their roles in shaping the political, economic, and psychological welfare and hardships of their societies, and to provide a deeper understanding of the ongoing relevance and impact of these practices in the modern world.

Keywords— Africa, Korea, shamanism, witchcraft.

I. ORIGIN OF WITCHCRAFT

Before the advent of European colonialism, the roots of witchcraft in Africa stretched back to ancient times and sprang from various cultural wellsprings. Entwined with animistic beliefs, reverence for ancestors, and a deep respect for the forces of nature, the expressions of witchcraft were as diverse as Africa's ethnic mosaic. The evolution of witchcraft in Africa is not thoroughly documented, but it has been present since at least the Early Iron Age, with the Bantu attributing evil to witches or sorcerers. (Elfasi, 1981:640) Definitions of witchcraft were culturally relative, varying significantly between societies. While often utilized for benevolent ends such as healing, bolstering productivity, and safeguarding individuals, it was equally employed for sinister means. (Mesaki, 1995:166)



Witchcraft in African societies was imperative, where spiritual practices including magic were a regular part of communal and religious life. Witchcraft held a dual-natured power, both able to bestow benefits such as healing, fertility, and protection, and inflict curses and harm.

II. ORIGIN OF WITCHCRAFT IN GAMBIA

The Gambia is home to four major ethnic groups: the Jola, Fula, Wolof, and Mandinka, each with its own distinct language and cultural practices. These groups not only differ in their linguistic and cultural expressions but also in their spiritual beliefs, with each community venerating a unique set of deities and “Gods” specific to their traditions. (“The Gambia experience”) For instance, the Mandinka people traditionally adhered to a belief system that recognized both benevolent and malevolent spirits, each governing different aspects of life and the natural world.

In the early history of The Gambia, religious practices were predominantly rooted in Animism, with little to no syncretism with other religions. The concept of nature and natural objects was central to these practices, as they were integral to the rituals associated with witchcraft. This emphasis on the natural world reflected the deeply held belief in the spiritual significance of the environment and its elements. (“Access Gambia”)

Witchcraft practitioners in The Gambia held considerable influence in the past, with elders and spiritual leaders occupying key roles in guiding their communities. These practitioners were involved in nearly every aspect of life, from healing and fortune-telling to resolving conflicts and providing spiritual leadership. Their authority extended beyond the spiritual realm, as they were also regarded as leaders in their communities, capable of offering guidance and support in both spiritual and mundane matters. (Yaya, 2024)

Traditional healers, shamans, and diviners were essential figures in Gambian society, believed to possess the ability to communicate with the spirit world. These practitioners played a critical role in diagnosing spiritual causes of misfortune or illness and performing rituals to appease spirits or ancestors. They utilized a variety of methods, including herbal medicine, divination, and ritual performances, to address a wide range of issues, from health concerns to social conflicts, ensuring the well-being of their communities.

During the 11th century, the introduction of Islam into The Gambia marked a significant shift in religious practices. As Islam gained acceptance among the various tribes, there was a growing tension between the new religion and traditional witchcraft practices. To survive, many of these traditional practices began to hybridize with Islamic beliefs, resulting in a partial integration of the two systems.

This process of syncretism allowed some aspects of the original spiritual traditions to persist alongside the new religion that slowly gained dominance in The Gambia. (Lembani, 2021, Alpha, 2024)



III. MARABOUTS

In Gambia, the term "Marabout" is commonly used to refer to witchcraft practitioners. Officially recognized as religious leaders or teachers, Marabouts in The Gambia fulfill two distinct roles. The first type of Marabout is primarily a teacher of the Quran, revered for their deep understanding of Islamic teachings. Many of these individuals are believed to possess knowledge that extends beyond the Quran, offering spiritual insights and guidance to their followers. The second type of Marabout is directly involved in witchcraft practices. These practitioners engage in various forms of healing, including psychological and spiritual healing, and are known for their use of "Juju," which are charms created to bring either good or bad luck. These Juju are crafted through specific methods unique to each Marabout, often incorporating Quranic verses or invoking the deities or spirits associated with the Marabout's particular tradition. (Yaya, 2024)

Additionally, some Marabouts in The Gambia bridge both worlds, serving as Quranic teachers while also participating in witchcraft practices. These individuals are highly respected for their ability to combine Islamic teachings with traditional spiritual practices, creating a unique blend of religious and cultural beliefs that continues to influence Gambian society today. (Paka, 2024)

IV. ORIGIN OF SHAMANISM

While practices of witchcraft permeated through Africa, a comparable spiritual tradition was also unfolding in other parts of the world. Shamanism is believed to be one of the oldest spiritual practices, with origins dating back to the very beginning of humankind. Evidence suggests that Shamanistic rituals may have begun as early as the Old Stone Age or Paleolithic Era, as indicated by ancient cave paintings and artifacts. These cave depictions often portray figures wearing animal skins, appearing to be in trance-like states, surrounded by animals. These images are interpreted as early representations of individuals entering the spiritual world through rituals, dances, and mind-altering methods, likely in attempts to communicate with the spiritual realm. (Kolankaya-Bostanci, 2014:186)

The documented origins of Shamanism can be traced back to Siberia and Central Asia thousands of years ago. In these regions, Shamanism was practiced through a variety of rituals, including dancing, drumming, chanting, and the use of plants to facilitate communication with ancestors or nature spirits. These practices served multiple purposes, such as healing the sick, ensuring successful hunts, predicting the future, and invoking favorable weather conditions. As Shamanistic traditions evolved, they spread through trade routes and interactions among Asian cultures, allowing these ancient spiritual practices to influence and integrate into various societies across the continent. (Kim, 2024)

V. ORIGIN OF KOREAN SHAMANISM

The purpose of this research paper is to delve deeply into Korean shamanism, a prominent branch of shamanistic practices, to understand its unique contributions and relevance among various shamanic traditions. The origins of Korean Shamanism remain largely undocumented, with no fully or properly recorded history to trace its



beginnings. Efforts to unify Korean Shamanism, particularly during the Yi dynasty (1392-1910), were unsuccessful, leaving the true source of its origin shrouded in mystery. As a result, the exploration of Korean Shamanism's roots relies heavily on myths and legends, rather than concrete historical evidence. These stories suggest that the ancestors of Korean shamans, also known as Mudangs, were not self-ordained priests but served as intermediaries or mediums of the highest form, connecting the spiritual and earthly realms. (CHAČATRJAN, 2015:61)

One of the most famous myths related to the origin of Korean Shamanism is the story of Dangun, which originates from the Three Kingdoms of Korea. According to this creation myth, Dangun was the result of a divine union between a heavenly god and an earthly goddess. The goddess, who was originally a she-bear, underwent a transformation into a human and married the celestial god. Their union produced a son, Dangun, symbolizing the creation of a new nation and the unification of heaven and earth. The myth of Dangun is frequently viewed as a foundational narrative that signifies the inception of Korean civilization and the creation of a new world. This story is rich with symbolism that reflects and reinforces key social principles, including the delineation of gender roles, the value of tolerance and perseverance, and the use of specific herbal remedies like garlic and spring onions. (Lee, 1973:151-152) Through its depiction of Dangun's legendary establishment of the Korean nation, the myth encapsulates the cultural and ethical values that shaped early Korean society, highlighting the integration of practical knowledge with spiritual and societal ideals. Other examples of ancient Korean ideas conveyed through symbolic stories can be found in the tales of Hyōkkōse and Chumong. These narratives, like the story of Dangun, use symbolic elements to convey the ancient beliefs and origins of Korean Shamanism. Although the exact origins of Korean Shamanism remain elusive, these myths and legends provide valuable insights into the spiritual and cultural foundations of this ancient practice. (CHAČATRJAN, 2015:57)

Shamanism in Korea has a rich history and a distinct set of traditions that have evolved over centuries. Korean shamans (Mudangs) are categorized into two main types: Gangsinmu, who become possessed by spirits, and Seseupmu, hereditary shamans born into priestly families. The tradition of shamanism in Korea is deeply rooted in the country's history, with references to shamans dating back to ancient times. (Soholm, 2023) For instance, historical chronicles refer to King Namhae, the second ruler of the Silla kingdom (c. 4–24 BCE), as a "chachaung" or shaman. (Yang, 2024) Long before the introduction of foreign ideologies such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, shamans played a central role in religious ceremonies across Korea.

The term "Mudang" itself carries significant meaning. The character "Mu" (巫) is composed of symbols representing the heavens, the earth, and a divine tree connecting the two, symbolizing the shaman's role as a mediator between the spiritual and earthly realms. "Dang" (堂) refers to a space that harnesses supernatural energy to support humankind. The primary religious expression of a Mudang is the "gut," a trance ritual where shamans demonstrate various skills and feats to entertain and connect with the community. Each city, village, or community in Korea may have its own unique form of gut, with different methods and objectives. (Yang, 2024)



Among the main types of gut in Korean Shamanism are the Naerim-gut (내림굿), Dodang-gut (도당굿), and Ssit Gim-gut (씻김굿). The Naerim-gut is a ritual marking the initiation of a Mudang, during which a god enters the shaman's body. The Dodang-gut is performed several times a year to wish for the well-being and prosperity of a village. The Ssitgim-gut is a purification ritual aimed at cleansing the impurities of deceased spirits, particularly ancestors. Korean Shamanism is also characterized by a pantheon of god-like figures, drawn from Buddhism, Daoism, and the natural and celestial worlds. These include the Mountain God, God of the Earth, General God, Tree Deity, and Dragon God. ("Encyclopedia of Korean culture", 2020)

Korean shamans express their spiritual practices not only through words but also through various forms of art, including songs, dances, theatrical dramas, and banter. This integration of artistic expression with spiritual practice reflects the deeply interconnected nature of Korean Shamanism with the cultural and social fabric of the communities it serves.

VI. POWER/USING OCCULT FORCES TO CARRY OUT PRACTICES

Both African witchcraft and Korean shamanism involve calling upon occult forces to perform various rituals, such as healing, predicting the future, and creating protective charms. In Africa, witches use different methods to summon their "Gods" or spiritual entities to assist them in these practices. For instance, they may utilize a book called the *Shams Al'Marif* to invoke these powers or interact with nature, such as visiting a river at a specific time, to establish a connection with the spiritual world. A significant aspect of African witchcraft is the creation of Juju, objects believed to possess supernatural powers. Juju can take the form of physical charms or be part of spiritual practices like rituals. They are used for both protective purposes and to bring harm to others. For a Juju to work effectively, it must be created by a Marabout following a precise method, often involving Quranic verses or other sacred texts. There are different types of Juju tailored to specific concerns, such as love or wealth. (Alpha, 2024)

Similarly, Korean Mudangs, also call upon "Gods" to carry out physical and mental healing, make predictions, and create protective charms called Bujeok (부적). In Korean shamanism, rituals such as dancing or singing are performed to excite the "Gods" and harness their powers. This parallel in practices highlights a shared belief in the ability to interact with spiritual forces for the benefit of individuals and communities. (Yang, 2024)

While both African witchcraft and Korean shamanism share similarities in calling upon spiritual forces, their methods of inheriting and using these powers differ significantly. In African witchcraft, the ability to harness these occult powers is typically inherited through lineage. Only individuals who have ancestors who were witches can possess these abilities, even if several generations have passed. This practice follows a strict inheritance method, meaning that one cannot simply choose to become a witch; the power must be passed down through familial lines. (Paka 2024, Yaya 2024)



In contrast, Korean shamanism allows for both hereditary and non-hereditary transmission of spiritual power. The hereditary shamans, known as Seseupmu, inherit their powers through their ancestors, much like in African witchcraft. However, Korean shamanism also includes the Gangsinmu, who become shamans by being possessed by spirits or "Gods." In this case, a spirit can choose to possess a random person, granting them shamanic powers. (Yang, 2024)

The way these powers are used also differs between the two traditions. African witches do not become possessed by the occult forces; instead, they borrow these powers and learn to harness them as needed for various situations. In contrast, Korean Mudangs are fully possessed by the "Gods" they work with. The shaman and the "God" become one entity during rituals, allowing the shaman to channel the deity's powers directly. While Mudangs are not always possessed, they know how to invoke possession when performing rituals such as healing or prediction, making the connection with the spiritual world more direct and embodied. (Kim, 2024)

VII. SYNCRETISM

Both African witchcraft and Korean shamanism have undergone significant syncretism as a result of the introduction of other religions into their respective societies. Originally, these practices were the dominant traditional religions in their regions—African Witchcraft in West Africa and shamanism in Korea. However, as new religions were introduced, many people began to distance themselves from these indigenous traditions. To survive and maintain relevance within society, these folk religions began to integrate elements from the new religions, leading to a syncretic blend that still carries the essence of the original practices while adapting to the changing religious landscape.

African witchcraft, particularly in Western Africa, has been heavily influenced by Christianity and Islam, primarily as a result of European colonialism. The introduction of these religions during colonial times led to a significant suppression of traditional practices by European colonizers. Over time, African witchcraft began to merge with Islam to the point where they became nearly inseparable in many regions. (Ike, 2021:16) In countries like The Gambia, the syncretism between witchcraft and Islam is so profound that many Muslim citizens also practice witchcraft and believe in its power. Traditional healers and religious leaders in these regions often integrate Islamic elements, such as Quranic verses, into their rituals, allowing them to appeal to a broader audience that may adhere to both Islam and traditional beliefs. (Paka, 2024) In Gambia, this blending reflects the complex cultural identity of its people, showing how traditional African spirituality remains a significant part of life despite the dominance of world religions.

Korean shamanism, on the other hand, has been influenced by Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, each leaving a distinct mark on the practice. The original form of shamanism in Korea has largely disappeared, with its elements being absorbed into these other religious traditions. For example, during the golden age of Koryŏ culture under Kings Munjong and Yejong, Buddhism became the state religion, and there was a significant mix between Buddhism and shamanism. Rituals like the Ssit Gim-gut, a purification ritual for the deceased, began to incorporate



Buddhist prayers and concepts of the afterlife, ensuring a peaceful transition for the spirit. This syncretism reflects a mutual respect between the two religions, often with shamanistic practices taking place near Buddhist temples. (Grayson, 1984:190-191)

Confucianism, which became the state ideology during the early Joseon Dynasty, also influenced Korean shamanism. The government actively suppressed shamanistic practices, viewing them as superstitious and incompatible with Confucian values. However, shamanism adapted by incorporating Confucian elements, particularly in the area of ancestral worship. *Jesa* rites, central to Confucian ancestral worship, became a significant part of shamanistic practices, blending offerings and prayers to ancestors with shamanistic rituals. Additionally, Confucian moral teachings on filial piety, loyalty, and righteousness were integrated into shamanistic practices. (Baker, 2006: 268)

Lastly, Daoism contributed to Korean shamanism by introducing cosmological concepts such as the theory of the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, water), which shamans use to understand and influence the natural world. Daoist techniques, including talisman writing, geomancy, and qigong, have also been adopted by shamans to enhance their rituals and healing practices. Ritual instruments like bells, gongs, and swords, commonly used in Daoist ceremonies, are now integral to shamanistic rituals, helping to summon spirits and ward off evil forces. These examples demonstrate the diverse ways in which Korean shamanism has adapted and integrated elements from other religions to survive and remain relevant in a changing religious landscape. (Jung, 2000)

VIII. CURRENT TRENDS

Over the years, both African witchcraft and Korean shamanism have seen notable reductions in their prominence, largely driven by external influences and evolving societal conditions. In Africa, there has been a significant shift in educational emphasis, leading many to distance themselves from traditional practices such as witchcraft. This transition has been accompanied by a reduction in the number of practitioners and a growing detachment from these traditional rituals. Similarly, in Korea, the rise in Christianity has paralleled a decrease in Shamanism. As Christian populations have expanded, Shamanistic practices have notably declined, reflecting a broader trend where modernization and religious conversion impact traditional beliefs. Both regions are experiencing a movement where urbanization and westernization push traditional practices to the peripheries. In urban areas, witchcraft and Shamanism are increasingly marginalized, with practitioners predominantly found in rural areas or outskirts of cities. This shift highlights a common pattern where the expansion of cities and modernization contribute to the decline of traditional practices, as urban centers tend to reject these practices. (Kim, 2024)

Media and public perception further influence the decline of both African witchcraft and Korean Shamanism. In Korea, Shamanism is often stigmatized and regarded as a negative aspect of society. The portrayal in the media reinforces this negative perception, leading many to view Shamanism as outdated or superstitious.



Similarly, in Africa, governmental and societal critiques focus on the harm caused by faulty witchcraft practitioners, amplifying negative views through media and public discourse. Furthermore, the increasing focus on secular and scientific perspectives has led to a decline in the belief in witchcraft, particularly among those who have studied abroad. Exposure to alternative religious practices, such as Christianity and Islam, often results in a rejection of traditional witchcraft, as these individuals encounter different religious ideologies outside Africa. (Hussein, 2024) In contrast, Korean Shamanism has persisted despite the introduction of Christianity and modern education, which often dismiss the practice as superstition. However, Shamanism remains accepted by many, with some seeking out Shamans for traditional purposes or entertainment. Notably, modern technology has adapted these practices, with apps offering fortune-telling services based on methods like Saju Palja (사주팔자), which uses birth details to predict one's future. This blend of tradition and modernity illustrates a unique dynamic where Shamanism persists in different forms alongside contemporary influences. (Kim, 2024)

IX. COMMUNITY, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCE

As popularity of both African witchcraft and Korean shamanism rises and falls within their respective backdrops, both exhibit striking similarities in how they are manipulated by individuals and affected by political environments, particularly through the exploitation of fraudulent practitioners. In both African and Korean contexts, there are individuals who claim supernatural abilities to manipulate outcomes or heal physical ailments, but their true intention is often to deceive and financially exploit people. For instance, in Africa, practitioners may promise to multiply money or cure illnesses in exchange for substantial payments, only to abscond with the funds. Similarly, in Korea, there have been cases where individuals falsely presenting themselves as Shamans have defrauded clients. A prominent example is a 66-year-old shaman in Seoul who was sentenced to four years in prison for deceiving a client out of more than \$200,000 by pretending to communicate with the client's deceased mother. (Yim, 2024) These incidents highlight a common issue where the guise of supernatural power is used for financial gain.

Political influence also demonstrates a significant similarity between the two practices. In Africa, it is not uncommon for politicians to seek guidance from witchcraft practitioners, which can lead to problematic situations where decision-making power is unduly influenced by these practitioners rather than by elected officials. A specific example of witchcraft influencing political governance in Africa is the case of President Paul Biya of Cameroon. In 2016, it was reported that Biya's administration was involved in witchcraft practices to influence political outcomes and secure power. Allegations emerged that some government officials engaged in occult practices, which they believed would ensure political stability and personal protection. The media coverage of these claims was intense and often sensationalized, amplifying fears and criticisms about the impact of witchcraft on governance. Reports highlighted the perceived dangers of such practices, suggesting they undermined democratic processes and contributed to corruption. This portrayal in the media led to increased public skepticism and criticism of both witchcraft and its perceived influence on political governance, reinforcing the broader view that such practices are detrimental to societal integrity and political stability. As such, political waves of negative



affiliations with spirituality affect public attitudes, leading to a broader consensus that both Shamanism and witchcraft are detrimental to society. (Locka, 2017)

A similar trend is observed in Korea, where some politicians have been known to consult Shamans for advice on various matters. This reliance on supernatural guidance by political figures can blur the lines between political leadership and traditional practices, impacting the political process and decision-making. Most recently, South Korea witnessed a dramatic political upheaval with the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye, a scandal that underscored the intersection of politics and personal belief systems. The controversy erupted when it was revealed that President Park had delegated significant governmental responsibilities to Choi Soon-sil, a civilian woman with known connections to shamanistic practices. Choi, who was not an elected official, reportedly influenced policy decisions and had undue access to sensitive state affairs, raising concerns about corruption and misuse of power. The scandal, which became known as the "Choi Soon-sil scandal," led to widespread public outrage and demands for accountability. Park Geun-hye was subsequently impeached and removed from office in 2017, marking a pivotal moment in South Korea's democratic history and highlighting the profound impact that personal relationships and unorthodox shamanistic influences can have on political governance. The current regime is not immune to similar claims and continues to remain subject to criticisms and suspicion regarding the potential influence of shamanistic beliefs on political decisions. (Jung, 2023)

Despite these similarities, there are distinct differences in the community influence of witchcraft and Shamanism. In Africa, the influence of witchcraft practitioners can be profound within communities. Often, these practitioners are seen as leaders who wield significant power and control over their communities by leveraging their perceived supernatural abilities. They use this influence to assert dominance and extract resources from the community, often exploiting their position for financial gain. In contrast, Korean Shamanism in modern times has less communitywide impact. Shamans are generally not perceived as community leaders with substantial authority. Instead, their influence is more personal and individual, with a focus on providing guidance or fortune-telling services to individuals rather than asserting dominance over a broader community. This difference reflects varying roles and perceptions of traditional practices within their respective societies.

X. PSYCHOLOGICAL/PHYSICAL HEALING

Both African witchcraft and Korean Shamanism share similarities in their approach to physical healing, utilizing spiritual and ritualistic practices to address ailments. In both traditions, healing is often sought through invoking spiritual power, which may involve deities, ancestors, or other supernatural entities. Practitioners in both cultures use a combination of rituals, dances, and sacrifices as integral parts of their healing ceremonies. Additionally, herbal medicine plays a significant role in the healing processes of both African witchcraft and Korean Shamanism, with practitioners employing various plant-based remedies to treat physical and spiritual maladies.

Despite these similarities, there are notable differences in how each tradition approaches healing and community roles. In African witchcraft, individuals frequently turn to practitioners for healing instead of seeking conventional



medical treatment. These practitioners often use verses from the Quran or other sacred texts as part of their healing rituals, reflecting a syncretism between traditional practices and Islamic influences. In some communities, such as in Gambia, witchcraft practitioners may also serve as community leaders, combining their roles as healers with positions of social authority. Rituals in this context may involve protective charms, herbal remedies, and offerings to spirits, blending spiritual and practical elements. ("My Gambia", 2023)

In contrast, Korean Shamanism involves rituals known as "gut," which are characterized by offerings to gods and ancestors, spirit possession, and the performance of sacred dances and songs. Unlike in some African contexts, Korean shamans typically do not act as community leaders but rather focus on individual healing and fortune-telling. It is not uncommon to hear recounts of positive experiences with gut rituals, recognizing and highlighting the perceived healing power of these traditional practices. The rituals in Korean Shamanism are performed to appease spirits and seek guidance, emphasizing the role of possession and spiritual performance rather than the use of religious texts. This distinction underscores the different ways in which each tradition integrates spiritual and ritualistic practices into their healing processes. (Yang, 2024)

XI. CONCLUSION

The exploration of witchcraft and shamanism across different cultural contexts reveals both profound similarities and distinctive differences shaped by historical, social, and spiritual dynamics. African witchcraft and Korean shamanism both demonstrate the use of occult forces to perform rituals aimed at healing, predicting the future, and creating protective charms. These practices often involve invoking deities or spirits, engaging in elaborate rituals, and utilizing herbal remedies. However, the methods and cultural significance of these practices diverge significantly based on their unique historical and societal contexts.

In Africa, witchcraft has deep roots in animistic traditions and varies widely across ethnic groups, often serving as both a healing mechanism and a means of exerting social control. The influence of external religions, such as Islam and Christianity, has led to a significant syncretism, where traditional practices have integrated elements of these new religions to maintain relevance and address contemporary needs. In contrast, Korean Shamanism, with its origins in ancient shamanistic practices, has evolved through the influence of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. This integration reflects a blending of spiritual and religious practices, demonstrating how traditional shamanistic elements have adapted to coexist with other major religious and philosophical systems.

Both traditions have also faced challenges from modernization and urbanization. In Africa, the shift towards Christianity and Islam, coupled with the impacts of colonialism, has led to a reduction in traditional witchcraft practices. Similarly, in Korea, the rise of Christianity and modern education has contributed to a decline in traditional shamanistic practices, although these practices have found new forms of expression through modern technology. Despite these challenges, both traditions continue to persist in various forms, reflecting a complex interplay between tradition and contemporary influences. Furthermore, the exploitation of these practices by individuals posing as genuine practitioners highlights a troubling aspect common to both traditions. Scammers



leveraging the guise of supernatural power for financial gain underscores the vulnerabilities inherent in these spiritual practices. Additionally, political influences on traditional practices reveal how they intersect with broader societal structures, impacting decision-making and governance in both contexts.

Overall, the study of African witchcraft and Korean Shamanism reveals a continuity of narrative in the spiritual practices that have evolved over time, influenced by external forces, and adapted to changing societal contexts. Understanding these practices provides valuable insights into how traditional spiritual systems navigate and survive in a rapidly changing world, reflecting both the resilience and the adaptability of cultural practices.

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