

# Maya and Korean Pig Head Rituals: A Divergence from Eliade

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## ABSTRACT

The terms shaman, shamanism, shamanic, shamanist, and shamanistic are often assumed to be universal human concepts, based on the theory of an archaic worldwide religion. Mircea Eliade is credited with originating most of the assumptions regarding shamans. Eliade's fixation on shamans was a product of his notions on what he deemed to be universally sacred space, sacred time, sacred symbols, sacred myths, and sacredness, whereupon, according to him, all human actions concentrate on seeking the religious. Here I focus on two cross-culturally distinct practices dealing with pig head rituals. Within this cross-cultural analysis, I demonstrate why Korean offerings of pig heads are shamanistic and why the Maya example is not.

**Key words:** Eliade, shaman, Maya, Korea, pig sacrifice

*Some scholars clutch their volumes of Eliade and leap into archaic time  
when [supposed] 'true' shamans flew between two worlds  
(Kendall 1985, 36).*

## INTRODUCTION

This article is a restricted comparison of ritual dynamics in two different regions of the world, the Maya and Korea, purported to have shamans per Mircea Eliade's (1964 [1951]) archetype. Eliade's (ibid) classic shamanism framework is focused on herein while analyzing the social context and

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function of rituals pertaining to pig offerings for both the Maya and Koreans in order to determine if shamanism is present in these areas. While both the Maya and Koreans are said to have shamanic ritual practitioners, these peoples have divergent understandings of how they interact with what Westerners term the supernatural. Korean and Maya ritual specialists follow different trajectories in their manner of interacting with cosmological power. In one particular ritual, however, Maya and Korean ritualists utilize a superficially similar manner in using a pig's head as a vehicle for communicating with non-human entities and this will become the target of the following cross-cultural comparison. The functions exhibited in the pig offerings seem superficially alike, however, utilizing the method of in-depth ethnographic analysis dissolves much similarity. Accordingly, the ethnographic case materials are used herein to reassess Eliade's (1964 [1951]) universal shaman stance in light of other shamanism studies which support or reject his views. Key in this argument is that intensive ethnographic study of a particular people assumed to have shamans in their midst is crucial to understanding if shamanism is present in the area in question.

Ritualist practices of great historical depth are well known in the traditions of Native North America and Asia: the peoples of both regions are noteworthy for their enduring socio-religious structures that provide an integrating force within-and-between societies of large scale and complexity. An analysis of ritual specialist practice, in terms of what is usually called shamanism, offers unique opportunities for observing similarities and/or differences on which to gauge whether their structures can be fruitfully lumped as stemming from an archaic religion, per Eliade's (*ibid*) famous claim, or whether an ethnographic focus on specific understandings and processes by which the Yucatec-Maya and the Korean people attempt to resolve a variety of dilemmas pertaining to the human condition dissolves efforts at world-wide generalization and archetype formation. Since many Korean shamans are women and most Yucatec-Maya ritualists are men, this article will in detail engage female ritual specialists in Korea in order to highlight the difference between the two areas and the reason why the gender differential may be so prevalent in the Korean case. Three main interrelated points will be made in this article: one, that when debating shamanism in general, it is impossible not to discuss Eliade (*ibid*) in-depth and his incalculable impact on this field of study; two, that intensive ethnographic documentation is required in order to assess the presence of shamanism in particular societies; and three, that in Korea there do exist shamans, mostly women, while for the Maya, where there are no

shamans, it is mostly males who are ritual specialists, however, both Korean and Maya ritual specialists, whether male or female, focus on the pig as a premier ritual offering and its analysis is essential in this particular cross-cultural comparison.

## **THE PROBLEM OF THE ARCHAIC SHAMAN: REASSESSING ELIADE**

When discussing shamanism in general, debating Eliade's (1964 [1951]) classic work pertaining to this field of study is crucial. In large degree, what follows is a response to Eliade (1957; 1964 [1951]), as his homogenizing approach to religion generally, and to shamanism in particular, has been highly influential for both studies of the Maya and Koreans. Problematic issues with Eliade's (ibid) work primarily stems from four overarching themes: first, there is Eliade's (1956; 1957; 1958; 1964 [1951], xii; 1974) notion of the sacred and the profane where a major assumption is that these radically separated polar binary opposites are inherently present in all worldviews throughout the world; second, Eliade (1954 [1949], 4-5, 59, 95, 105, 109; 1957, *passim*, 1958, 1; 1963, 6; 1964 [1951], xii, xvi-xix, 32, 107; 1969, ii, 133; 1971, 144, 152, 165, 173-174; 1991 [1985]b, 22) viewed people as always searching for "hierophanies", supernatural sacred portals, as a primary human mental disposition; third, Eliade (1964 [1951]) amassed highly selective disparate data, from a great many sources across time-and-space, in arguing that an archetypal shamanism was evident from the dawn of humans to the present where, according to him, shamanic practices were remnant in societies he deemed "primitive". Finally, Eliade (1991 [1985]a; 1991 [1985]b) recognized that his search for the universal sacred and the archaic shaman was a highly emotional and personally driven endeavor rather than a scholarly one. Worldviews are not simple to box-in (Kearney 1984), even through a culturally decontextualized methodology as that of Eliade (see Geertz 1990, 311; Geertz 1994, 21; Kehoe 2000, 1-6, 37-40, 45, 48; Leach 1966; Saliba 197, 110-118; Sidky 2008, 4-7, 12-16, 114, 137, 205-206; Strenski 1987, 102; Wallis 2003, 35-38). Many scholars, per the previous, take issue with Eliade's contentions and their critiques are pertinent when analyzing the differences between Maya and Korean ritual specialist practices.

Despite his renown in the study of religion, Eliade (1964 [1951], xvi; 1991 [1985]b, 19-20, 22-23) had little regard for religious theory or history and admitted not being interested in critical analysis of human religious

process but that rather, it was his “literary creations,” *his novels* (approximately 45 of them, for example: 1978 [1954]; 1986 [1940]; 1992 [1935]; 1993 [1933]), which bestowed him “a more profound understanding of religious structures”. Eliade’s (1964 [1951]) assumptions are highly problematic, yet his work on shamanism often influences Native American studies (Kehoe 2000, 1-6, 37-45, 100-102). Mesoamerican religion studies are often based on the uncritical acceptance that past-to-present Mesoamerican ritual practices are centered on archaic shamanic religion (see Furst 1965, 1976, 1994; Freidel and Schele 1988; Freidel et al. 1993; Madsen 1955; Pasztory 1982; Reilly 1989). Eliade’s (especially 1957 and 1964 [1951]) popularity continues despite increasing detractors (Allen 1988, 545; 1998) and his models of shamanism and religion hold sway despite his conspicuously unreliable methods (Sidky 2010, 231). Despite fieldwork confirming that relying on ideal types has serious drawbacks, in that they downplay on-the-ground ethnographic differences (Geertz 1990, 13), the term shaman is widely applied as a Weber-like (1949, 90, 95-96; 1978, xxxvi, xxxix, 7, 18, 55) transcultural ideal type interpretive construct for native ritualists (see Pharo 2011, 13, 15-17).

Shamanism is primarily found in Asia (Hutton 2001; Sidky 2008). The word shaman appears derived from the Tungus word *saman* and apparently stems from *samana* (*sramana*), the ancient Sanskrit-Pali word for Buddhist monk, and is related to the Chinese term of *sha-men* that also refers to a Buddhist monk (Gibson 1997, 50-52; Hutton 2001, 114-115; Maskarinec 1995, 97; Mironov and Shirokogoroff 1924). Considering the previous, the uncritical application of a shamanic template to the indigenous Americas, including the Maya, has not come without vocal opposition (see Kehoe 1996, 2000; Klein et al. 2002, 2005; Klein and Stanfield-Mazzi 2004). Shamanic practice, claims Eliade (1958, 375; 1964 [1951], 3-6, 169, 194, 224, 259), emphasizes the concept of a cosmic pivot-like portal/axis through which the earth plane is linked to upper-and-lower worlds by which the shaman communicates with supernatural beings with the aid of his trance-inducing drum and spirits he mounts and controls. In an altered state of ecstasy, a shaman masters and controls supernatural spirits through the cosmic pivot/portal coined by Eliade (1976, 145) as an “axis mundi”. Eliade’s (1964 [1951]) delineation of the role and function of the shaman is problematic in terms of finding actual shamanism in the indigenous Americas (Astor-Aguilera 2010, 8-9, 231-232) and hence why he requires attention at great length herein. For the Maya, for example, there are no supernatural portals corresponding to Eliade’s (1976, 145) axial “doors of the gods’ [as] places of passage between heaven and earth”.



Quadripartitioning, actions focused on addressing the four world directions, in Mesoamerica links ritualization to social space, agriculture, identity, and community well-being in terms of health and wealth (Astor-Aguilera 2010) and in this it shares similarities with Korean practices (see Kendall 1983, 101, 105, 107-108; 1985, 87, 90, 100-101, 107-109). The previous is especially so when pertaining to pig head offerings. Robert Carmack (1988, 49), describing the Guatemalan Kiché-Maya, says the most adept Roman-Catholic colonial friars realized these people made no distinction between meeting in chapels, classrooms, or town halls and that cosmology permeated their social organization. Aspects of Maya holistic worldviews are seen in other Mesoamerican groups in making little dichotomous distinction in terms of function of locality (Astor-Aguilera 2010). The colonial Maya ritually quadripartitioned many variable locations and the Spanish friars thus presumed the Maya to be very religious. Eliade (1976, 21) thought he could interpret assumed highly present indigenous religious activities despite never learning the language of or meeting the peoples whose demeanor he purportedly understood, that is, for Eliade it was completely unnecessary to conduct ethnographic fieldwork to test his assumptions. What Eliade (1957, 15) admired were not individuals or their respective societies but, per his student Robert Ellwood (1999, 104, 108, 112), his own force-fit presence of *homo religiosus*, “religious man”, as encapsulated within his preconceived universal concepts of shamanism and sacrality. Claiming that the Maya or Koreans engage in shamanic practice cannot be tested one way or another without analyzing their documented rituals as pertaining to their function. Assuming *a priori* that shamans exist worldwide across time-and-place because Eliade (1964 [1951]) claimed that they do *does not* provide evidence that in fact they do.

## **SHAMAN, SHAMANISM, SHAMANIC, SHAMANIST, AND SHAMANISTIC**

Universal shamanism is an academic construct, with no agreed upon definition, used to describe many variable worldwide religious activities (Hutton 2001, vii). Pharo (2011, 10-11) differentiates, as an ideal type, between shaman and shamanism in that the latter specifically “presupposes that the ‘soul’ [...] can leave the body in order to travel to supernatural regions” during unconsciousness. His (*ibid*, 11) differentiation, however, recapitulates an essentialist universal shaman and shamanism despite his

direct claim to be doing otherwise. Pharo (2011, 9) emphasizes, while attempting to resolve, the shaman quagmire, per his, “a wide variety of scholarly disciplines employ the concepts of ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ in diverse, indistinct, and often contradictory ways”; however, this he finds lamentable only because, despite both terms’ worldwide application problems, he still wants to retain them, per Hultkrantz (1989; 1992), as somehow universally applicable. As admitted by Hultkrantz (1989, 44), despite his frequent misapplication of the term shaman, there exists “a chaos in the understanding of what shamanism is: most authors dealing with the subject never give any definitions [...] Those who define the subject differ widely”. My position follows Humphrey (1994, 192) in that “the term *shaman* is used for the specialists called by equivalent words in [Asian] native languages, and *shamanism* refers to their practice”. The previous follows a basic methodology for the term shamanism, as derived from shaman, in terms of the productive rules within English grammar per the following: *-ism* is a suffix that forms nouns referring to a distinctive practice, movement, or philosophy (*Webster’s* 1989, 755). The previous applies to the terms shamanic and shamanistic, as derived from shaman, per the following: *-ic* is a suffix that forms adjectives (*ibid*, 705) and/or denotes a particular form or instance of a noun; *-ist* or *-istic* is a suffix forming personal nouns and related adjectives that denote an adherent/practitioner of a system of beliefs and/or principles (*ibid*, 757). What the suffixes of *-ism*, *-ic*, *-ist*, and *-istic* do, then, when applied to the term shaman, is produce a particular grammatical usage rather than change the definition.

The most effective procedure for understanding the function of shamans, if present in a particular area, is to ethnographically focus on one population within their dominant region (see Geertz 1990, 312; Geertz 1994, 20; Hutton 2001, ix; Sidky 2010, 223). Eliade’s (1964 [1951], 500) influence surprises considering he did not conduct ethnography, unless one calls his (1958 [1933]) three years of studying yoga in India or winter trip to Guatemala and the Yucatán as fieldwork (Carrasco 1991 [1985], 141; Ricketts 1981, v). Eliade (1954 [1949]; 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1961; 1963; 1964 [1951]; 1969; 1971; 1974; 1976) relied heavily on secondary sources without applying standard methodical assessments on which to gauge the precision of the sources he was mining (Park 1965, 306; Saliba 1976, 116-118). Eliade (1964 [1951], xix, 500) was not only *not* attentive to the accuracy of the data he selected but was also *not* concerned with the methodological problems arising from his heavy reliance on secondary materials (Sidky 2010, 221). Sergei Shirokogoroff (1923; 1924; 1935, 269,

271-274) mentions in his ethnographies that shamanic practice is characterized by ritual specialists that initiate and terminate their interaction, through master and control, of spirits at will. The shaman achieves control through his/her use of special paraphernalia and their body as a vessel for the mounting and expulsion of spirits. Shamans are masters over spirits and *possess them* rather than the spirits possessing the shaman. Shamans enter altered states of consciousness at will *without* the aid of mind-altering substances or physically induced stress. Furthermore, the beings the shaman mounts and masters *are not* his or her spirit or animal counterparts. Shamans, in addition, place themselves as eligible for the role of ritual intercessor and *need* to be accepted as such by their communities (ibid).

Critically analyzing shamanism requires two factors: first, discontinuing the reliance on Eliade's (1964 [1951]) decontextualized research configured to construe a "preconceived vision" of an archaic shaman (Sidky 2010, 229); second, to consider a historical and ethnographic context for shamanism while evaluating the source and quality of the information (see Lett 1991, 1997). Homayun Sidky (2008, 209), using Shirokogoroff's (1923; 1924; 1935) extensive diagnostic data set, arrives at a critical definition of shamanism in order to differentiate this practice,

The Shaman is a socially recognized part-time ritual intercessor, a healer, problem solver, and interpreter of the world, whose calling is involuntary and involves a transformative initiatory crisis. His[/her] repertoire consists of dramatic public performances involving drumming, singing, and dancing in which he[/she] is the musician. He[/she] has the ability to access ASC [altered states of consciousness] at will (without drugs) and enters into a distinctive mode of interaction with paranormal beings of various classes. The embodiment (adhesion) of spirits does not result in the replacement of the shaman's consciousness. He[/she] has master over spirit helpers and uses that power for the benefit of his[/her] clients. The shaman has distinctive specialized paraphernalia: the drum, costume, headdress, metal bells, and beads. Finally, he[/she] commands a body of specialized knowledge transmitted orally from teacher to pupil according to tradition.

Sidky's above definition fits Korean shamanism but it does not fit Maya ritualists. Similarities between Maya worldviews and shamanistic practice, per Sidky's historical/ethnographic shamanic complex delineated above, are their foci on individual and community healing through communication with invisible beings; however, it is only within these parameters that some ritualists throughout the world appear similar to shamans (Kehoe 2000, 4 and 2006, 356; Sidky 2010, 231; see Kehoe 2002, 112-113 note 2 and 2006, 426 for native North American exceptions).



Figure 1. Courtesy of Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich, Analysis 19

## SITUATING THE KOREAN AND MAYA PEOPLES

### The Koreans

The people of Korea live on the large peninsula extending southward from the eastern Asian mainland, between Japan and China, flanked by the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan (Clark 2000, 5; Lee et al. 1970, 2). The Republic of Korea was divided into the nations of North Korea and South Korea between 1945 and 1953 (Clark 2000, 18-21; Hwang 2010, 206-210). This article concentrates on South Korea (figure 1). At the turn of the second millennium, South Korea had an estimated 45 million people (Clark 2000, 18-21) speaking the Korean language (Kim 1970, 27; Kim and Yoon 1970, 28). Koreans, and the Chinese, are partly descended from the *Ural-Altaic-Tungus* adjacent to Siberia (Cho et al. 1970, 43; Clark 2000, 4; Kim 1970, 18, 20-21; Kim and Yoon 1970, 30-32). Siberian-Tungus descentance appears important when considering Korean shamanism (Clark 2000, 43). Shamanism in Korea is present throughout its countryside (Hong and Lee 1970, 136; Kim 1970, 27) and creates outbreaks in the social atmosphere of “supercharged emotions” that extend rural Korea “perpetual nights of gongs and clamors” (Cho et al. 1970, 171). South Korean shamanism refers to the ritualists called *mudangs*, or *mansins*, who perform rituals called *kuts* (Clark 2000, 45). The shaman dresses in “special clothing”, wears a “special hat”, carries a trident/sword,

shakes an assortment of bells while an adjacent drummer carries a rhythmical beat, proceeds to call on a spirit (Shirokogoroff 1935, 287), and begins a dialogue with it, enters a “semi-hysterical state” while dancing, twirling, jumping, singing, chanting, and shouting, and sometimes within this state places flesh against sword by walking on it (Clark 2000, 45). The shaman may offer a pig, placing it balanced on the sword without other support (*ibid*), and it is the common use of pigs in Korean rituals that give it a likeness to the Maya that make it such an important factor in this cross-cultural analysis.



Figure 2. From Astor-Aguilera, 2010

## The Maya

The Maya people are monolithic neither in culture or language (Coe 1993). The Maya are composed of various populations that most, until approximately the 1980's, did not self-identify as Maya with many still not doing so (Astor-Aguilera 2010, 4-6). Per Castañeda (1996, 13), the “categories of Maya, Maya culture, and Maya civilization are not empty of meaning or reality” but are primary debated signifiers. Matthew Restall (2004, 64, 77) mentions that the people who researchers categorize as “The Maya” did not self-referent as such although “the term ‘Maya’ was in use in Yucatán in colonial times and most likely in the post-classic period” circa 900 A.D. to Spanish contact. The various Mesoamerican populations lumped as the Maya is due to their shared linguistic roots and an archaeological distribution of similar material remains (Justeson

et al. 1985). Maya civilization lies within a cultural boundary that includes diverse ethnic peoples, social and political structures, and geography that temporally and spatially share cultural traits. The Yucatán-Maya, however, are the only Mesoamerican population to consistently apply the term Maya to themselves, their culture, and their language (Roys 1965, 659).

The Maya homeland, encompassing the various populations noted above, is part of a larger region composed of similar but varied cultures, coined by Paul Kirchhoff (1943) as Mesoamerica, extending from northwest Mexico to northern Central America (figure 2). The Maya people mainly discussed herein live in the Yucatán: the large southern Mexican peninsula divided into the three states of Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Yucatán. The Yucatán-Maya population was determined in 2010 to number around one million (INEGI 2010), making them one of the largest Native American populations. Most of the Yucatán-Maya speak Mayan, three quarters of them as their primary language (Bastarrachea et al. 1994, 1), and share basic cultural patterns (Bonfil Batalla 1996, 23, 25). While Spanish is the official Mexican language, many of my ritual specialist mentors are monolingual Mayan speakers with little Spanish speaking skills. My Maya mentors are referred to in Mayan as *j'meen*, “he who knows,” or *aj'k'in*, “he of the sun”, and do not self-referent as *chamanes*, “shamans”, and below I delineate their pig offering activities.



Figure 3. Photograph by the author



Figure 4. Photograph by the author

## CASE STUDY ONE: MAYA PIG HEAD DANCES

Pigs are the contemporary ritual offering without peer for my Maya consultants. The Maya ritual involving the killing of pigs, described herein, involves a pilgrimage to a pre-Columbian monolith (see Astor-Aguilera and Jarvenpa 2008, 488-491). My mentors venerate this stone (figure

3) in a manner superficially similar to Japanese Shinto practices in that certain rocks may be thought of as having volition (see Stuart 2011, 68). Conservative Mesoamerican ontologies tend to exhibit the natural world, with no distinction to a supernatural one, as inhabited by person-like beings often referred to a priori by outsiders as deities and/or gods (Astor-Aguilera 2009). For my Maya consultants' there is an overlapping of power and category of being, entity-like in personal disposition, that defies Western categorization (Astor-Aguilera 2010). The villages surrounding this stone pay it annual homage, as constituted by a five-day festival, where it is offered food, drink, tobacco, and entertainment. Ritual killing of animals are said by Gann (1918, 4) to have been offered by the Maya to material objects during the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century. My Maya consultants offer pigs by dramatically throwing them on their backs onto a large raised round platform as the sun's rays begin to lighten the sky (figure 4) (see similar in Konrad 1991, 133). My main *ak'iin-j'meen* Maya mentor states that his grandfather used to kill pigs directly in front of the monolith and smear their blood on it. Blood, for my consultants, has a high presence of a person-like essence and this is due that animals, including humans, have blood circulating throughout bodies that die without it. Ritually killing pigs, substituting for humans, as offerings in the Maya area has been mentioned for the colonial period when these animals were introduced throughout the Americas (see Clendinnen 1982, 343; Scholes and Adams 1938, 101). All three hogs are butchered on the round platform where they were killed with their meat being offered, in a variety of dishes, to the stone. The ingestible offerings are not sacrificed to the monolith but are provided later, once the stone has *tsok u janal*, "consumed", their essence, to those attending the celebration. One key body part of each hog, however, is set aside for each day's ending of rituals and this is the pig heads (figure 5) that are also ubiquitous in Korean shamanic offerings (figure 6). Nowhere, however, have I seen Maya performances like those reported for Korean shamans.



Figure 5. Photograph by the author



Figure 6. Courtesy of Joanna Ebenstein

The Maya village *u ook'ot nojoch pool k'éek'en*, “great pig’s head dance”, often occurs just before sunset. Mary Pohl (1981, 513) links this contemporary Yucatec-Maya festival to its pre-Columbian analogue in that it embodies fertility, and thus agricultural abundance, and this is what the pig offerings represent and what my consultants seek to accomplish through their actions. In the pig head dance, in contrast to the Korean shamanic pig head offerings that follow, only males dance while the women look on. The pig head dance draws observers who revel to the *Jarana*, “commotional racket”, Spanish-style music enacted with the Western instruments of violin, trumpet, and snare drum that, due to the snare-like wire stretched across the bottom drumhead, produces a very distinctive rattling type of sound. The ritual involves thirteen counter-clockwise circular dances followed by a clockwise repetition of the thirteen turns. My main mentor says the clockwise movement is done following the counterclockwise turns, representing the sun’s movement, in order to *punk*, “undo”, the power just given the monolith. My mentor states that the pig head dance’s energy *tsa ik’ u jana’al*, “feeds”, the monolith and, if not undone, makes the stone more powerful. The stone is benevolent but also acts harshly and for this reason its power is kept in check.



Figure 7. Photograph by the author



Figure 8. Photograph by the author.



Investigators interested in indigenous ontologies, and be able to detect whether ritual practices are shamanic or not, should ethnographically immerse themselves (Astor-Aguilera 2010, 131-132). Pig rituals are telling how my Maya friends perceive themselves and the world that surrounds them and whether their worldview is shamanic. The ritually killed pigs, though dead, are considered transformed volitional beings by my mentors and this is expressed in the attention the pig heads receive (figure 7): a string of life, indicating breath, is tied as if emanating from their snouts (figure 8). My Maya mentors treat the monolith in the same manner they handle other non-human entities. My mentors say they have power over the sun, as well as other non-humans, and vice-versa. Alfonso Lacadena (2008, 1, 4-5) states that the Postclassic Maya conceptualized celestial bodies as volitional person-like beings. To my mentors, the sun-person wants reciprocation but also wishes coaxing for it to continue on its daily path. My mentors' sense of community and being are interlocked with a sense-of-place that at its core is linked to this monolith and by extension the sun.

In the pig head dance, my mentors' sense-of-place is incorporated within a dialectical conception of an interrelated balance between the sun and its associations with sky, earth, and water as all are linked to Maya geography. Apparently different worlds, and thus requiring shamanic activity to connect them supernaturally, the three realms of underground, earthly plane, and sky are not discretely separate: these realms are connected and flow into one another. These three regions are not impermeable worlds that require shamanic portals, per Eliade (1976, 145), to be opened in order to access one another. The Maya *do not* require shamans to access and open supernatural portals into divine realms. These three permeable areas are places the Maya, in unconscious to semi-lucid states, and non-humans travel to-and-from and in this they share *only a superficial similarity* with Korean practice. Unlike the Korean shamanic placation through pig head offerings given almost reluctantly to very powerful supernatural beings, to be delineated below, the Maya reciprocate with non-human entities in a much different manner. No shaman-like performance, per Sidky's (2008, 209) prior mentioned definition, is present in the pig head dance or in any of the other Maya rituals I have documented.

## CASE STUDY TWO: KOREAN PIG HEAD OFFERINGS

In contrast to the musical instruments mentioned for the contemporary Maya, Korean shamans employ clanging cymbals and/or jingling bells accompanied by a large hourglass drum that emanates steady thump-like percussive notes (Kendall 1985, ix). Per Kendall (1985, x), the deep hourglass drumbeat drives shamanic performances and draws children and women to entryways of Korean houses since they recognize “the flood of sound” in “that the shamans are doing [an ‘elaborate shaman ritual’], and a *keut* is high entertainment [...] a boggling event in color, sound, and costume”. Some Korean researchers, such as Tŭk-kwang Kim (1963: 15-104), regard modern Korean shamans as the inheritors of ancient traditions made weak due to sixth-to-seventh century Buddhist influence. Elemire Zolla (1985, 101) also regards Korea as a shamanic conservatory. Korean shamanism, however, has not remained static (Ministry of Culture 1996, 7, 128) since its apparent introduction from the Tungus, if this is how it occurred (see Hutton 2001). Regardless, Korean shamanism inspires Korean researchers, such as T’ae-gon Kim (1972, 76), to hail its practice as particular to Korean religion and as the spiritual energy, *chŏng-sin enŏgi*, of its people. Chai-shin Yu and Richard Guisso (1988, 10), however, pose the question, “is there even enough consistency of doctrine and practice to say that such an entity as ‘Korean shamanism’ exists?” Jung-young Lee (1981, v, vii) readily thinks so as he was heavily influenced by Eliade (1964 [1951]). Despite Lee (1981, viii) being Korean, with a father having shaman acquaintances, he deeply mystifies shamanism as an archaic universal religion. Lee (1981, 1) states that he studied Korean shamanism because Eliade (1964 [1951], 462) confessed, not per his usual homogenizing form, not being able to ascertain Korean Shamanism. Eliade (1964 [1951], 456-457) admitted likewise for China, however, this time falling back on his *modus operandi* that “our final impression is always that a shamanic schema can be experienced on *different though homologizable* planes” [my emphasis].

Eliade (1964 [1951]) was so unrelenting on final impression to find shamanism universally present, and homologizable, that make applying his shaman archetype very difficult even where shamans are present. As will be demonstrated, per Kendall’s (1985, 37) comment that “religious historians suggest that women became shamans only after men had discarded archaic religion”, the fact that most shamans in Korea are women, while most Maya ritualists glossed as shamans are male, requires being dealt with. While shamans have been addressed through historiography, what

has largely been “lacking is a systematic ethnographic appreciation of the who, why, what, where, and when” (Kendall 1985, 38) in order to better understand their presence and function (Hutton 2001, ix; Sidky 2010, 223). For Korea, studying shamans requires, for the most part, studying women’s rituals (Kendall 1983; 1985; 1988; 2010; Lee 1981, 25) and this factor and its importance for this cross-cultural contrast with the Maya is here emphasized in terms of Eliade’s (1964 [1951]) questionable homogenizing method leading to his argument favoring a universal shamanism. However, Lee (1981, 1) is regarding Eliade (1964 [1951]), in construing shamanism to be an archaic religion now distorted in Korea, he admits that the difficulty in studying the origins of Korean shamanism is due to its complexity in practice throughout Korea which make it hard to locate a central body and therefore “almost impossible to trace the origin of shamanism”. Lee (1981, 4), however, still stresses archaic shamans in that “the *Mudang* or the female shaman and *P’ansu* or the male shaman [...] are not identical with Korean shamans as they had been understood in early days”.

Lee (ibid, 25), in the above and the following, portrays *Mudang* in Eliadean (1964 [1951], 182, 208) manner by explaining historically documented diversity as a corrupt lower class form, rather than “pure shamanism”, in that the

deteriorated form of traditional faith or *Sinkyo* [‘the religion of spirits’] is known in our time as the cult of *Mudang*, which has been sustained by the inferior class of people, particularly the women of the lower class [...]. This kind of distinction between the traditional and deteriorated forms of national faith is almost essential to understanding the historical phenomena of Korean shamanism [...] *Mudang*, which is in practice in our time, is a deteriorated form.

Lee (1981, 182), however, strays from Eliade (1964 [1951]), “I have reached a similar conclusion that Spiro [(1967, 219)] made in his study of Burmese shamanism [...] [and this is that] prohibited sexual needs due to sexual repression are, to me, primary causes for the shamanistic development in Korea”. Lee (1981, 183) elaborates, “shamanism is more than the archaic transformation of ecstasy. It is, rather, an archaic process of transformation using the process of repression, liberation and reintegration”. To which Lee (1981, 184) concludes, shamanism “is a process of overcoming repression, especially the repression of female sex”. Since according to Lee (1981, 2) “Korean shamanism in our times is almost exclusively identified with terms like *Mudang* and *P’ansu*”, what

confounds him is why “*Pansu*, the male shaman, occupies an insignificant place in Korean shamanism, while *Mudang*, the female shaman or shamaness, occupies a central position”. As noted for the Maya, it is the males that dominate in ritual and their function in mediating with non-human entities is not due to sexual repression. Chang (1988, 31, 35) offers a variable perspective as to why women dominate as shamans within Korean society,

[In Korean] ancient times, both sexes served as shaman, today, females invariably fill this role [...] Due largely to the rising influence of Confucianism, [...] [shamanism became] a sort of ‘underground’ religion revered only by women and members of the lower classes.

If Chang is correct in the above, what of Fairchild’s (1962) data that Japanese shamans are women and, as noted, what of Spiro (1967) stating that most Burmese shamans are also women? Additionally, Bogoras (1908, 414) noted that northeastern Siberian *Chukchee*, shamans were mostly women. Kendall (1985, 24) thinks, agreeing with Ioan Lewis (1969, 89), that “women use possession as a strategy; in trance, they speak the unspeakable [...] Possession cults are front organizations for a ‘feminist subculture’ wherein women pitch oblique barbs of protest at a man’s world”. Is this why Kendall (1985, xi, 27), who prefers the term “*mansin* (pronounced man-shin)” rather than the common usage of *mudang* for a female shaman, notes that “the rare male shaman in Korea (*paksu mudang*) performs *kut* wearing women’s clothing, down to the pantaloons that hide beneath his billowing skirt and slip”? The Korean shaman, Kendall (ibid, 1) states, is a gifted storyteller woman telling polished stories to other women through an entertaining battery of linked and occasionally opposed complaints spoken in the voice of an often melodramatic ancestor. Social interactions for Korean shamans are mostly female-to-female, since those hiring the shaman are almost always women who happen to be the most enthusiastic and numerous at shamanic rituals (Kendall 1983, 98) and this is in sharp contrast to Maya ritualists since their function is not to mediate spirits in performative acts of protests against those who oppress them.

Kendall (1985, 28) calls *mansins* shamans as they enter trance at will. Per Kendall (ibid, 29), the *mansins* “summon down gods and ancestors, they bear the gods and ancestors in their own persons, and they issue commands. They lure gods into dwellings, exorcise malevolent beings, and cajole and bargain with a variety of spirits”. Within Kendall’s (ibid, 28-29) discussion stating why *mansins* are shamans, she alludes to problems with Eliade’s (1964 [1951]) universal scheme in stating that Korean scholars

Suk-jay Yim (1970, 215-217) and Kil-söng Ch'oe (1978, 12-13) discuss the limits of his method and the inherent problems in “the blanket use of the term shamanism”. Zolla (1985, 112 note 15, 113), for example, refers uncritically to the universal shaman in describing the foci that pigs represent in Korean ritual,

The Korean shamaness participates in *the same archetype* that generates deeds and creeds *all over the world*. She seeks the gift of soothsaying, and it appears, according to *a universal belief*, that only the warm blood, either of humans or of pigs, confers it [...] The Boar *is responsible* for the perpetuation of shamanism [...] [It is] *the blood of pigs* [that] strengthens and possesses the shaman [...] The shaman *needs* [the] unflinching resolve of the Boar [my emphases]. Zolla (ibid, 112), due to her focus on Korean pig ritual, requires further quotation, The shamaness carries out an act of sacred butchery; the chosen victim is a pig. She begins with an elaborate dance, in which she caresses the bound victim [...] When the blood-thirsty spirit seizes her, she sways her head frantically, wielding two knives, which she waves to and fro like two scythes. Her frenzy climaxes, she straddles the victim and mows it down. Its foaming blood she licks off the blade as she swirls and whirls around the corpse. She bends over backward with three swords sticking into her throat [...] She [then] chants, rings her bells, and recounts to the hog's head on the altar.

Clark's (2000, 45) previously mentioned Korean pig ritual, somewhat hearkens Zolla. Kendall (1985, 141) hints of Zolla, in that pig meat is demanded where a *mansin* “hits her cymbals and begins to chant [...] [and then] the *mansin's* body jerks. The gods descend and speak through her lips” with the supernatural demanding wine while another supernatural with intense hunger, that another *mansin* has summoned, “denounces the simple offering [...] ‘Where are the spareribs? Where's the pig's head?’” (ibid). Kendall (ibid, 119, 122) says the supernaturals that *mansins* mediate during a *kosa*, “ritual offering to household ‘gods’”, are gluttons that demand much steamed rice cake, a cow's legs, a pig's head, and/or a cow's head. A “pig's head is very special *anju* [‘snack food to accompany wine’]” and is highly sought by the *mansin's* summoned spirits (Kendall 1985, 123). During the *kosa*, a housewife places food offerings throughout her home and may dedicate a whole pig's head on which a shaman sticks “thousand-won bills into every orifice” (ibid, 111-112, 115).

*Mansins*, unlike Maya ritualists, are often adept skilled acrobats rebounding “barefoot on sharp blades or dancing on the rim of a jar”, jugglers that stand “huge objects upright on a minimal prop”, indefatigable and accomplished dancers, singers, highly rhythmic drummers, and poets expert

in “cryptical, refined, lyrical impromptus” that make shamans “the primal tragic actress, clown, costumier, set-dresser, stage director, dramatist, and liturgist all in one” (Zolla 1985, 105-106). According to Mikhailovskii (1895, 63), “shamanism is not a religion” but Siberian performative ritual actions and despite Lee (1981, 124-125) seeing Korean shamanism as a corrupt practice, his following description counters his assumption,

The shamaness takes off the ritualistic gowns and dances around the altar raising her arms over her head. She takes up the clothes of the dead from the altar and starts to swing them [...] The shamaness wraps herself with the clothes of the dead and begins to talk with the family of the dead [...] Through the shamaness the dead soul speaks [...] to the family [...] The shamaness takes a white paper in her right hand and a bell in her left hand and dances [...] She takes up a piece of white fabric and tears it in two smaller pieces and ties them to her forehead to signify the coming of the spirit. As soon as the shamaness changes to the form of the [spirit] she becomes wild [...] The shamaness changes her clothes [again]. She covers her head with a large mask and ties her waist with a red cloth. She holds a drum in her right hand and a bell in her left hand and dances. She tells a story [...] [and then] she chants [...] The shamaness rings a brass bell [...] She wraps her body with cloth and swings her sacred sword.

Shamans are elaborate community performers who can mediate the dead and, unlike the Maya area, this has been extensively noted for not only *mansins* (Kendall 1985, 90) but also for Central Siberians (Dioszegi 1968, 65-76); *Samoyed* Shamans (Hajdú 1968, 147-173); *Sakban* shamans north of Japan (Sieroszewski 1896, 639-642); the *Evenki-Tungus* (Anisimov 1958; Shirokogoroff 1935, 273, 289, 383-385; Vasilevich 1968); the Siberian *Khants* and *Nenets* (Hoppál 1992); *Daur* Mongols (Humphrey and Onon 1996), *Buryat* Mongols (Buyandelger 2013), Turkish speakers in southwest Siberia (Alekseev 1990, 105-106), and Nepalese *Jhākeris* (Sidky 2008). Maya ritualists neither fit the above details or Eliade’s (1964 [1951]) primitivist archaic shaman notions leading to his archetypal framework that this article heavily counters.

## ROMANCING THE PRIMITIVE UNIVERSAL SHAMAN

Despite the ever-accumulating criticism of Eliade (1964 [1951]), his compositions continue to inspire (Geertz 1996, 400; Sidky 2010, 221)

studies assuming *a priori* the presence of shamanism, as in the Maya area, where it has not been systematically given evidence to exist. Eliade (1976, 146) on rare occasion admitted how complex studying religion is; for example, “as soon as you start to fix limits to the notion of the sacred you come upon difficulties – difficulties both theoretical and practical [...] almost everywhere the religious phenomena we see are complex”. Implicit in Eliade’s extremely rare reality check is that radically binary polar opposites consisting of reality and transcendence, religious and secular, and sacred and profane do not unequivocally globally exist as he (1954 [1949]; 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1961; 1963; 1964 [1951]; 1969; 1971; 1974; 1976) so profusely presupposed. Strenski (1987, 108) criticized Eliade for his lack of falsifiability and his self-indulgent essentializing. Ellwood (1999, 107), trained by Eliade, states that “like James Frazer (1922 [1911-1915]), Carl Jung (1938; 1964; 1969), and Joseph Campbell (1949)–Eliade (1954 [1949]; 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1961; 1963; 1964 [1951]; 1969; 1971; 1974; 1976) drew “an overwhelming wealth of examples from a range of sources and cultural contexts, treating them all uncritically as equal”. What Frazer, Jung, Campbell and Eliade engaged in, per the previous, was a reification of a supposed primitive archetypal religion inherently present in the human mind.

Armin Geertz (1996, 397) states that primitivism can have a persuasive hold and that some of this romanticism stems from researchers within the study of religion. Geertz (*ibid*) mainly blames Eliade (1954 [1949]; 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1961; 1963; 1964 [1951]; 1969; 1971; 1974; 1976) for influencing armchair studies “at least five times removed” from the people being studied. Kehoe (1990; 1996:377) adds Hultkrantz (1989; 1992) as another primitivist reifying universal shamanism. Major problems Geertz (1996, 398) sees with Eliade’s influence is a reluctance from his followers to learn indigenous languages and continuing “*a priori* assumptions”: relying on his “dialectics of the sacred” and “terror of history”. Being human for Eliade (1954 [1949]; 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1961; 1963; 1964 [1951]; 1969; 1971; 1974; 1976) meant being religious in an archaic transcultural and transhistorical manner. Geertz (1996, 399), per John Saliba’s (1976, 140) critique, points out that Eliade (1957; 1958; 1964 [1951], xii; 1974) did “not study religion in order to study mankind, but in order to study the sacred” and this has been highly detrimental to a critical study of religious practice that, as has been argued herein, include the Maya and Korea.

## DISCUSSION: WAITING FOR THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

I relied herein on Kendall (1983; 1985; 1988; 2010) since she is the most published English writer on Korean shamans. Kendall's (ibid) ethnographic scholarship demonstrates that documenting the presence of Korean shamans does not require force-fitting universal schemes. Eliade (1964 [1951]), however, is popular with some Koreans interested in a supposed archaic worldwide religion (see Chang 1988, 30; Lee 1981, 1-21; Yu 1975, 164-169) where it becomes an easy substitute for intensive ethnographic fieldwork (Kendall 1985, 36-38). Per Kendall (1985, 27), "the term shamanism and the adjective shamanistic have been broadly, indeed sloppily, applied to a vast spectrum of Korean religious activity". The previous indicates a worldwide phenomenon that romances the "primitive". Kehoe (1990; 1996, 377, 384) mentions that Eliade (1954 [1949]; 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1961; 1963; 1964 [1951]; 1969; 1971; 1974; 1976) created "a new humanism" that became the rage in the days of the "New Age". This New Age of Aquarius leading up to the Maya worldwide phenomenon associated with the "End of the World" in 2012 (see Aveni 2009; Restall and Solari 2011; Stuart 2011; Van Stone 2010). Per Eliade (1991 [1985]a, 11-15),

Thoughts proclaiming the imminent end of our world [...] have a religious structure [...] in that all believe in the inevitability and the imminence of *our* world's end [...] Spiritually we are entering, or ready to enter, a new era [...] The discovery (or re-discovery) of the value and significance of non-Western spiritualities represents a *cultural innovation*, for it launches a dialogue and an interrelationship with *the others* [...] recalling the passionate interest of Carl Jung in [...] the 'wisdom of the East' [...] The most *creative* encounter is with archaic prehistoric-spiritual values [...] [where, through shamanism,] modern man has become contemporary with his Paleolithic and Neolithic relatives, that is to say, he understands and reiterates their mode of being [his emphases].

Eliade's new humanism, Kehoe (1996, 377) states, is sheer primitivism (see Lovejoy and Boas 1965 [1935]). Despite Eliade (1991 [1985]b) calling his work a "History of Religions", in self-reflection being what he admitted as novelistic writing, is not scholarship but "religious revelation". Eliade (ibid) never questioned sacrality but indulged in it as an "aesthete of religion" (Ellwood 1999, 110; Kehoe 1996, 383-384). Eliade (1991 [1985]a, iv) did not mind criticism for his "sacred fictions", that sought



connections when not there (Ricketts 1981, xxi), because he believed that “artistic imagination has a mythological, i.e., *religious* source”.

Universal shamanism is highly questionable (Hutton 2001). Applying the term shaman to Maya ritualists is not accurate, is simplistic, and distorts (Lewis-Williams 2004, 404; Wallis 2003, 194). William Hanks (1984, 162 note 8) glosses “*bač yá’ab yobel* (‘he knows a lot’) or *bač yàan und’at* (‘he really has understanding’)” as shamanism because the previous implies the ability to “make things happen”; therefore, according to him, “this emphasis on effectiveness is coded in the Yucatec[-Mayan] word for shaman, *bméen*, an agentive nominalization of the verb ‘to make or do’, meaning literally ‘doer, maker’”. Is Hanks’ definition for shaman then a “doer” or “maker”? Evon Vogt (1965, 39, 42, 51 note 3), admitting that the term “shaman” is mostly an anthropological concept, explains the process of glossing this word, “*b’ìlöl* means literally ‘seer’ [...] The *b’ìlölètik* I shall gloss as ‘shamans’ [...] ‘Shaman’ is a gloss for *b’ìlöl* [...] [and] it is selected for its mnemonic, not its defining, value”. Not clear in the previous is that these “doers” can “see” and interact with non-human beings in their midst as was given example within the pig head dance discussion. The non-human beings interacted with by mostly male Maya ritualists are *not* supernatural spirits contacted and mounted through performances like those so conspicuous for mostly female Korean shamans.

Maya ritual specialists arrive at their knowledge with the help of non-human beings who communicate with them in a variety of means but not like for Korean shamans. Per Sidky (2010, 226), there are worldwide ritualists that seem alike, however, classifying “them as ‘shamans’ [...] obfuscates crucial experiential differences between them and distorts”. Looking at different ritualists “highlights the importance of paying close attention to ethnographic evidence rather than employing preconceived classificatory schemes [...] Overlooked are the significant differences between these specialists in terms of the kinds of [entities] with which they interact, the nature and consequences of those interactions, and their functions in society” (Sidky 2010, 223). Maya ritualists interact with non-humans associated with living and non-living things alike per the monolith mentioned for the pig head dance. Per Vogt (1969, 371; 1976, 19), “the most important interaction going on in the [Maya] universe is not between persons and material objects, but rather between souls inside these persons and material objects”. The previous *is not* a natural-to-supernatural portal opened by a shaman. Maya reciprocal action occurs between ritualists and non-human entities inside/surrounding persons or objects whereas the shaman focus, per the Korean case, is

on theatrical performances as helped by others in the community in order to harness spirits and make them speak through the shaman.

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