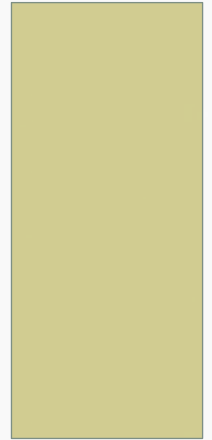


# HOUSEHOLD AND LINEAGE ANCESTOR WORSHIP

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# REVIEW OF FUNERALS

- The traditional funeral is a rite of passage in which the dead person is transformed into an ancestor (over two years)
  - Pollution of death is moved outside the house as body is removed and buried
  - Soul of the deceased transformed into an ancestor and properly placed in the grave so that the ancestor can “visit” for ancestor worship ceremonies
  - Dead soul is placated and comforted so that the living can assure the dead that they are taking care of them
- Sentiments that are created and reinforced?
  - Expiation of guilt for death of parents?
  - Feeling of gratefulness for social and material status gifted by parents?
  - Establishment of mutual reciprocity and dependence between generations goes on infinitely
  - Sentiment of belonging to a corporate descent line that defines one's social being
- Appropriate for corporate family in which reciprocity between generations and continuation of the family line is essential

# ANCESTOR WORSHIP (CHESA)

- Household death day ancestor worship (kije)
  - Most Korean houses did not have permanent ancestral altars
    - Unlike China in which every house no matter how humble traditionally had a large, permanent altar in a place of honor in the main room of the house with ancestral tablets and images of gods
    - Unlike Japan where most houses had a lacquer cabinet called a *butsudān* with tablets inside (but ancestors were worshiped collectively rather than individually)
    - In Korea people generally kept ancestor worship paraphernalia stored in a box, and then set up a temporary altar on the verandah or in the Inner Room
  - Celebrated at midnight on the night before the death day of four generations of male and female ancestors on their individual death days
    - Ancestors worshipped as couples so on the husband's death day the husband and wife are worshipped and on the wife's death day the husband and wife are also worshipped
  - Only the eldest son (or the descendant in the senior male line) do ancestor worship in their home—others have to travel to the main house to participate in ancestor worship
  - Only males participate
    - They must wash their hands and faces before participating in the ceremony
    - (women prepare the food, of course)

# ANCESTOR WORSHIP SEQUENCE

- 1. the gods descend 降神
  - Light incense to inform the spirits
- 2. first offering 初獻
  - Everybody bows twice, and then eldest son offers a cup of liquor purified by passing it over the incense
  - Remove the lid from the bowls of rice
- 3. read prayer 讀祝
  - Formulaic prayer in Classical Chinese is chanted
- 4. second offering 亞獻
  - Eldest son or other male descendent offers liquor/two kowtows
- 5. last offering 終獻
  - Eldest son or some honored kinsman offers liquor/two kowtows
  - Insert the spoon in the bowl of rice
- 6. close the door 闔門
  - File out of room (or stand in silence) so ancestors can eat
- 7. open the door 開門
  - File back in (or stand in silence)
- 8. offer tea 獻茶
  - Attendants jiggle chopsticks in soup to signal finishing ("tea" understood as soup in the village)
- 9. remove the table 撤床
  - Altar is dismantled, and the paper tablets burned

# REQUIREMENTS

- Need a table set for two (two bowls, two cups, two sets of chopsticks) and plates of food
  - People often have wooden stands upon which to place dishes for ancestor worship
- Need an incense burner (use juniper wood), a kettle from which to pour liquor, and a receptacle for spent liquor
- Takes at least two (better three) persons
  - One to make the offerings, one to pour the liquor, and one on each side of the table to jiggle the chopsticks and serve the rice for the two ancestors
  - Usually there are many more taking part in the kowtows

# DRINKING FORTUNE 飲福♪

- Offerings to the ancestors must end after midnight
- Afterwards all male and female family members participate in a banquet of the food called “drinking fortune”
  - Frequently neighbors may be fed that night as well
  - More distant kin who did not tend the ceremony will come by the next day to feast on the special banquet food
- Thus while the ceremony itself is private, that it is held is public knowledge, and the scale of the banqueting is a sign of social status
  - i.e. the higher the status the more people invited to the banquet

# CONSPICUOUS USE OF CHINESE

- The ancestral tablets (these days) are paper tablets written in Chinese for the occasion and burned at the end of the ceremony
  - In the past high status families had wooden tablets that could be permanently displayed, but these have been rare since the Korean War
- Prayer chanted in Chinese (No. 3) requires knowledge of Chinese characters
  - High status men would be educated in Chinese characters (not spoken Chinese) at private village schools
    - Memorize *Thousand Character Classic*, read *Myǒngsim Pogam*, and may the *Great Learning*.
- Manuals for proper performance of ritual (kwan-hon-sang-je) all written in Chinese, and high status families consulted them carefully

# VARIATIONS

- Notice in Guillemoz
  - No ancestral tablets, but wicker baskets with personal items of the ancestors
    - Literacy not required
  - Prayers in vernacular Korean rather than Chinese
  - Otherwise similar
- Notice in Chun Kyungsoo
  - (no mention of language)
  - Eldest son does father, younger son does mother
  - Kidun chesa for non-ancestors



# MODERN MODIFICATIONS

- Household ancestor worship
  - Held earlier than midnight (because of past curfews)
  - Fancy store bought offerings added (bananas, Johnny Walker Black Label)
  - Number of offerings and identity of offers more flexible
  - Females might participate in the offerings and bows

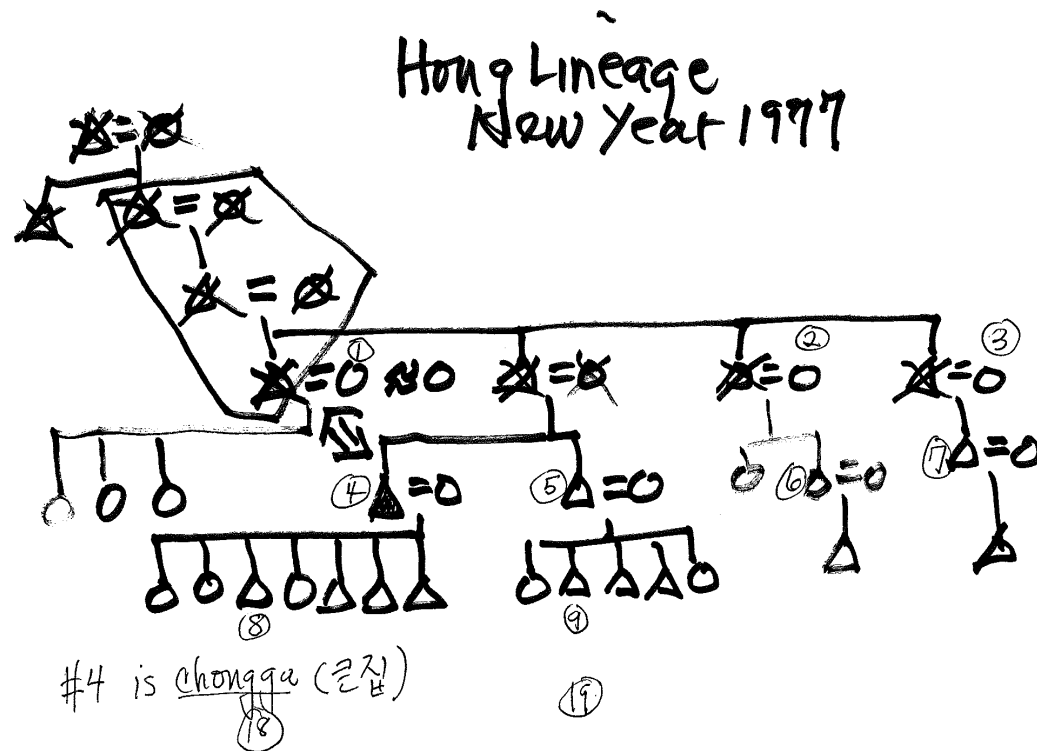
# INTERPRETATION

- Not a rite of passage (no change in status), but for care and feeding of known (near) ancestors
  - About reciprocity between generations and mutual relationship of ancestors and family
  - About recognizing one's identity as an descent line
  - About reinscribing the seniority of the senior male line, and of males over females
- Elements of conspicuous consumption
  - Chinese literacy, ritual punctilio from Chinese language manuals
  - Banqueting not only within family, but for social equals as well
  - Thus is an assertion of status and respectability
    - Families who did this kind of worship well were proud of it and happy to let people know about it.

# HOLIDAY ANCESTOR WORSHIP

- Done at home on Lunar New Year and Harvest Eve (Ch'usök 8.15)
- Entire lineage does ancestor worship at the big house for four generations (if the big house is responsible for that many generations), then each house with more junior ancestors does ancestor worship
- This is followed by lineage New Years Bows (sebae)
  - Most senior person sits and is bowed to by next most senior person, after which the two are bowed to by the third most senior person, etc.

# HONG LINEAGE CHESA AND SEBAE



# INTERPRETATION

- Ancestor worship is the same as for death day, but since five persons done all at once it's not really about individuals, but the founders of the lineage
- Notice that seniors do not make offerings at junior collateral lines
- Notice that the *sebae* within the lineage reinforces the genealogical hierarchy so that the young can understand it
- Notice that the grandmothers, as incipient ancestors, get bows, but wives and mothers do not
- Thus the ancestor worship and *sebae* inscribe and reinscribe the genealogical hierarchy

# WIDENING CIRCLES OF SEBAE

- After finishing sebae within the lineage, the men of the village went out and did sebae to all the prominent elders (male and female) of the village
  - In this context elders would bow back, say some nice words, and offer hospitality of liquor and leftovers from the chesa to those who bowed
  - In Seoul it is common for children who do sebae to be offered a little money (Guillemoz noted that this didn't happen in Mipo)
- First day—family and village as single face-to-face community
- Second day—more distant kin and contacts
- Third day—more distant kin and contacts
  - Professors on second or third day receive students at their home

# OTHER HOLIDAY RITES

- Holiday rites are lineage rites, but they are for near ancestors (up to 4 generations)—the same ones for whom one does death day worship
- In addition to lunar new year on Ch'usök in the Big House
- Graveside simple ancestor worship on Hansik (105 days after the winter solstice), and Kuil (lunar 9.9)
  - These ceremonies are less common than they used to be though Guillemoz describes Ch'usök graveside ancestor worship
- Graveside rites (whether funeral, holiday, or seasonal) must be preceded by a *sansinje* (mountain god ceremony)

# SEASONAL LINEAGE RITES

- Unlike other rites, these are not universal, and they are for ancestors more distant than great-great grandparents
- In order to have seasonal lineage rites (*sije*) you have to have land set aside to finance the rites (*wit'o*)
  - This land is rented out to tenants who till it in exchange for providing the food and labor for the *sije*
  - The tenants are called *myojigi* or *sanjigi* (tomb keepers, or mountain keepers) and before the Korean War would have belonged to a distinct lower status group that provided services to elite lineages
- Thus, holding *sije* is a nominal sign that one is of yangban lineage
  - People who held *sije* would say they did not intermarry with families who didn't hold *sije*



# SEASONAL RITES

- Are celebrated at the tombs of ancestors
- Rites begin with the apical ancestor (founder) of the entire lineage of the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month
  - Each day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month a couple of the subsequent generations are worshipped
  - Which generations on which day is decided by the lineage as a whole, and each generation has a “generation character” in their name decided by the lineage (hangnyöltcha, tollimcha)
- Example:
  - Namyang Hong in P'albongni were 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> generations from the founder in Tang China who came to Silla in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century
  - Senior line from Ch'unch'ŏn came to celebrate ceremonies for the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> generations on 10.8
  - The local lineage celebrated the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> generations on 10.9

# TOMBS IN THE MOUNTAINS

- Tombs are generally located in the mountains (so that one name for “tomb” is *sanso* 山所 (mountain place))
- In case of the Namyang Hong the 27<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup> generations were a 40 minute hike into the mountains from the village
  - Often have stone altars and pillars
  - The myojigi and friends recruited through labor exchange carried the sacrificial offerings and paraphernalia up the mountain on chige (pack frames), set up the altar and the offerings, followed by the ũmbok banquet
  - About 10 minutes away they did a simple “tea ceremony” for an elder brother who is no longer worshipped
- 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> generations on 10.9
  - 29<sup>th</sup> in different part of mountain (without myojigi)—wife brought offerings
  - 30<sup>th</sup> about 15 minute hike from 29<sup>th</sup>, but this time with myojigi, but ũmbok banquet held in myojigi’s house

# INTERPRETATION

- Seasonal ancestor worship is not really about the care and feeding of souls (though formally it takes that form)
- It is a public display of social status
  - That one's ancestors were prominent enough to have ritual estates dedicated to their worship
  - That one has the social and cultural capital to do these very public, Sinified, outdoor rituals
  - The contrast between the (past servile) myojigi and the worshipping yangan is inscribed and reinscribed constantly
- Notice that properly doing these rituals requires cooperation with the lineage on a national scale
  - Namyang Hong lineage has about 500,000 members throughout Korea
  - Have to coordinate the days of the ritual, the publishing and updating of genealogical books, the tollimcha of names
- Men acquire literacy in Chinese and wide-ranging contacts in order to continue this tradition
  - This is one of the social forces that elevated men above women in premodern times