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ASIAN MODERNIZATION AND MEDIATIZATION OF RELIGION

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Abstract: Religion has become a new focus of study in the investigation of current crises and social conflicts in the post-modern world. This study seeks to examine the role of religion in social change and to discover possible alternatives to social problems. East Asian countries have followed a different path of development from Western societies, which is illustrated by the close affinity between religion and modernization, in contrast to the assumptions of secularization theories. The strong role of religion in modernization promotes not only rapid economic development, but also social integration and a strong sense of cultural identity. Although East Asian development is often defined the model of Confucianism-led development, Christianity have been strongly involved in modernizing societies and restructuring social class in East Asia. In the complex nexus of social dynamics, social role of religion changes into another phase in the 21st century. South Korea is the particular focus of this study because Korea illustrates the dynamic influence of religion in social development, and the drastic changes in the role of religion in the public domain among East Asian countries. This new religious phase reflects a power shift from religious institutions to the media. Spiritual life becomes mediatized when institutionalized religion declines. The mediatization of religion in South Korea demonstrates the double-edged sword of this process, by modifying spirituality into the media logic and, at the same time, by reviving native beliefs and cultural integrity alternative to Western capitalist development.

Key Words: Religion and Culture, Cultural Studies, Asian Development, Korean studies, Sociology of religion.

Introduction

Facing social and environmental crisis in the contemporary world, Asia is frequently viewed as a new model or as a mediator for achieving modern development while maintaining cultural integrity. In particular, East Asia has achieved rapid economic growth based on a new model of development by preserving cultural traditions and spiritual life. Religion has played an important role in extending modern development in this region and creating balance between material prosperity and Asian identity. This study examines religion and social change in Asian modernization and discusses its theoretical implications in the larger context of global power.

The role of religion in East Asian social change raises important theoretical issues by demonstrating an alternative role of religion in modernization to Western model in history as well as power shift of religious role from institutions to media in recent development. First of all, the affinity between religion and modernization in East Asia challenges conventional theories of modernization; religion has played a different role in East Asian development compared to the modernization of Western Europe. The role of not only Confucianism, but also of Christianity in East Asian modernization contradicts generally accepted secularization theories, including those by Weber and Durkheim¹. East Asian modernization began on a different path from secularization with the influence of Christianity. Christian missionaries spread modern education and medical science as well as a new way of life in the early modern history in East Asia. Secularization and emancipation from religion as the basis of modernization was only applied to native religions in East Asia, although new religions were amalgamated in many respects. Christianity was another name for modern life among East Asian people in early modern history. Religion still plays an important role in constructing the cultural images of East Asia. The antinomy of religion and modernization that created theories of secularization in mainstream sociology applies to Western societies; East Asia, conversely, was modernized using religion.

The second theoretical issue with regard to religion and modernization in East Asia is the role of Confucianism. Confucianism is commonly regarded as the driving force of economic development and modernization in East Asia, especially from a Western perspective². This defines Confucianism driven development model because East Asia has achieved fast development and Confucianism can be found only in Asia. Yet, it is ostensive to design a model based on geographic concurrence. Although a more complicated argument with regard to the role of Confucianism is further explained in this paper, one point is that Confucianism has not played a religious role for the public, historically but rather had the role of governance for the aristocracy. Confucianism

seldom reached the lower classes; instead, ordinary people were inclined toward native religions including shamanism, geomancy, and fortune-telling.

Third, Asian societies face a societal shift as the role of religions declines in public life these days. When institutionalized religion declines, the spiritual life becomes mediatized. The media plays a leading role in the ritualization of spirituality as major religions lose their legitimacy among the public for political and cultural reasons. The role of media in spirituality following the decline of formal religion needs to be examined in the larger context of theoretical and social issues. The mediatization of religion is an important aspect of the revival of native beliefs and spirituality in the public domain. This study seeks to examine the philosophical basis of media-led spirituality and its social context in relation to the mediatization of religion.

The focus of this study will be religion in South Korea because Korea is the most illustrative of the powerful and dynamic influence of religion in social development. In other East Asian countries, the role of religion has declined in the public domain, for example, due to communism in China and nationalist Shintoism in Japan. In contrast, contemporary South Korea still has the fastest-growing Christian population (currently 32.5% of the country) and is second only to the US in the number of international missionaries it sends out³. Korean Christians are regular churchgoers, with 70% participating in Sunday services every week⁴. Korea has the largest church in the world, *Yoido Full Gospel Church*, with a congregation of a half million members, and seven out of the ten largest churches in the world are Korean. Korea illustrates the success of Christianity from the perspective of people in Europe and North America, where the Christian population has declined significantly.

However, Korean Christianity has also been involved in complex social issues and change occurring in the country on a large scale due to social conflicts. South Korea is presently experiencing a new and shifting phase of religious power in the public domain. This new phase was initiated by public criticism against Christianity because of the historical role of religion in the course of modernization in general and against political authority in particular. There have been many accusations of church and missionary misconduct, which reveal the social position of Christianity in Korea. Pastor John Jo, the founder of *Yoido Full Gospel Church*, was arrested for adultery and fraud along with his son, who was the owner of a major daily newspaper. Ministers from the 10 largest churches have been accused of various crimes. The Christian population began to decline due to patriarchal and commercialized faith in churches. Simultaneously, there were diverse scandals Buddhist temples and monks involved in gangster violence, geisha parties and financial crimes which result in decline of Buddhism, the second largest faith in South Korea⁵.

As religious populations decline in the course of social changes in Korea, conventional role of religion switch over to the media. Spirituality has been revived in the media through renewed discourse, namely on “healing.” Shamans and fortune-tellers, once despised as superstitious and backward, are becoming popular guests on TV entertainment programs and religious rituals have become an integral part of public broadcasting. Public broadcasting frequently adopts Christian, Buddhist and other religious rituals in popular shows such as “healing” programs. This may represent the general trend of post-modern diversity in the media, as demonstrated by the New Age movements in Western societies, but was sudden and timely in Korea when the predominant religious institutions became the target of public criticism. This Korean case study encompasses the theoretical issues involved in religion and social change by illustrating the historical role of religion in modernization and how this has been affected by mediatization.

This research examines current trend of mediatization of religion in South Korea from a sociological perspective. Specifically, discourse analysis of “healing” that is currently pervasive in Korean society is conducted here. Foucaudian framework of discourse analysis widens the discussion of social communication by chasing historical and social impetus of public discourse at a time and place from his genealogical approach.⁶ Adopting Foucault’s theory, this research attempts a discourse analysis of healing programs in Korean media which was initiated by *Healing Camp* on SBS (Seoul Broadcasting System) and reproduced by other network and cable channels. This media analysis opens up the discussion of how discourse of healing has been formed in the wider context of social development and current changes in public discourse and ideology.

Modernization and Secularization

A well-received axiom in social theories is that modernization goes hand-in-hand with secularization. Most well-known secularization theories were derived from Durkheim and Max Weber in the 1960s, although this concept was commonly shared since enlightenment philosophy from the 18th century. In traditional social theories, secularization is another name for modernization and an assumption is made that the two are positively correlated.⁷ Although these traditional sociologies have large influence and implication in the development of contemporary social science, their prediction of the declining role of religion in modern society was not entirely realistic.

Religion has not diminished, but has been involved factors in serious political conflicts as found in the cases of Middle East and Balkan areas. Sociologists and religious studies have attempted to explain the persistent role of religion in contemporary society by debating diverse views in the name of counter-secularization and neo-secularization theories. Neo-

secularization theorists reviewed secularization theory and determined that traditional theories did not unilaterally claim secularization of religion as the condition of modernization⁸. Max Weber presented a complicated vision by arguing the affinity between Christianity and capitalism. Weber did not disregard the role of religion in modern society, but predicted that religion would eventually be limited to personal life. New or counter-secularization theories attempt to explain complexity of how religions still affect people's lives in modern society. Although secularization theories appear to explain adequately the decline of Christian congregations in Europe and North America, many people retain their religious faith without attending church services. Davie performed a survey study in Western Europe and found that 70% of the European population maintained their Christian faith although church attendance was as low as 2.6%.⁹ Despite the decline of traditional religious forms, in the post-modern era, religious rituals have diversified. Diverse cultural activities are conducted as a form of faith and spiritual life.

Additionally, religion has become rationalized and hence maintained as modernization proceeded according to neo-secularization theory. An extreme argument in neo-secularization is the application of rational choice theory to religion. This argument explains the role of religion in modern society as an extension of market principle. People gratify their interests by having religion similar to their economic activities in the market. Rational choice theory of religion does not divide secular and sacred to explain rationalization of religion in modern society¹⁰.

Counter-secularization theory, on the other hand, challenged the basic assumption of secularization theories and argued for diversification of religion in postmodern society. As a society becomes diversified and globalized, religion and spirituality intervene in public life as illustrated by the major social conflicts such as riots and wars throughout the world. However, Asian countries demonstrate different scenarios from counter-secularization because modernization was initiated by religion, mostly Christianity. It is not the juxtaposition of diversified and revised religions as counter-secularization theory suggests, but the predominant and religion, Christianity, unilaterally plays a role in Asian development. In East Asian countries, Christian missionaries played an important role in modernizing countries by building Western schools and hospitals as well promoting the adoption of modern lifestyles. The importance of religion remained following the 20th century developmental period. Particularly, in South Korea, Christianity has continued to affect modern development by consolidating social status and class for the last two generations, whereas Christianity declined due to political conflicts in Japan or the socialist revolution in China.

South Korea achieved the fastest economic growth in the world in only over a generation becoming the tenth largest economy from one of the poorest and internally-conflicted countries experiencing a civil war.

Interestingly, this economic development overlaps with the growth of Christian churches. Christianity accompanied modernization in Korea from early history. In the early modernization period under Japanese colonization, many intellectuals and activists were Christians who initiated social movements. For example, the first daily newspaper in Korea, the Independent Daily, was created by a Christian intellectual and spread Christian spirit, freedom and resistance throughout the country. The majority of *résistance* members mobilizing “the First of March” for independence from Japanese colonization were Christian¹¹. Many Korean leaders or *résistance* members during Japanese colonization were Christians and inherited political power after independence. After independence in 1945, the first government was established by a Christian resistance leader, Seungman Lee. The correlation between modernization and Christianity in Korean history shows a classic example against secularization theory claiming that modernization undermines religion.

Christianity was integrated into Korean modernization not only in early history, but also during the rapid development period. Even in the period of military regimes that inaugurated the fastest development, Christian churches grew in size and became stronger. The fact that Korean churches started to grow when economic growth was instigated under military dictatorship in 1960s and mega-scale churches reached their peak at the height of the Korean economy in 1990s may not be coincidental.¹² How Christianity cohabited with a repressive political regime and has grown since is puzzling.

During military dictatorship, Korean Christianity was divided into two camps, conservative and progressive. The progressive camp adopted liberation theology popular during the 1970s and supported labor movements and human rights issues reaching the lower classes in urban areas.¹³ Conservative churches, conversely, grew in size by appealing to the upper middle class in large Korean cities. Although conservative churches did not address political issues while emphasizing fundamentalist evangelicalism apart from the secular society, their apolitical positions were indeed political. These churches were silent about human right abuse during military regimes in 1970s and 1980s different from progressive churches that constantly criticized against dictatorship and Roman Catholic churches that frequently provided shelters for political demonstrators. Conservative churches only stayed with sacred faith and blessing that can meet interests of conservatism of military governments stressing economic development with no political participation.¹⁴ Conservative churches eventually grew to mega-churches with strong economic capabilities whereas progressive churches weakened as Korea achieved its development.

In summary, affinity between Christianity and Korean modernization in the 20th century challenges the basic assumption of secularization theories¹⁵ and is different from neo-secularization and counter-secula-

rization theories that challenge conventional secularization theory. Unlike neo-secularization that accepts the declining role of religion in public domain although religion is retained in private life in modern society, in one aspect, Korean Christianity has maintained its authority in public life and played social roles in modernization from early modern history through the rapid developmental period in the late 20th century. However, in another aspect, Korean development was achieved by the direct influence of Christianity sustaining Western influence which is different from counter-secularization claims. The renaissance of public religious power in the era of colonial and post-colonial periods and diversification of religion as a counter power against cultural imperialism that counter-secularization theories illustrate in the case of the Middle East and Africa does not explain Christian authority in the Korean society¹⁶. In South Korea, a direct correlation exists between modernization and Christianity in a classic form.

Moreover, the role of Christianity in Korean development cannot be substituted by Confucianism or any other religion. Although many Western scholars consider Confucianism as the secret behind the economic success in East Asia, Asian scholars have developed complex views on Confucianism. Peter Berger scrutinized the East Asian development model derived from Confucian values sustaining “lifestyle of discipline, self-cultivation, respect for authority, frugality and overriding concern for stable family life”¹⁷. However, those values are not unique to Confucianism. The logic of the Confucianism-driven developmental model in East Asia is that Confucianism is found only in East Asia and not anywhere else. However, Asian scholars are attempting to elaborate a more complex explanation rather than a simple geographical coincidence with regard to importance of Confucianism in their countries. In the same book edited by Berger, Kim argued that Confucianism is not the main force behind development in Korea.¹⁸ Another argument is possible that Confucianism is not the main cultural axis and has not been the religion for the lower class. Confucianism was dominated by aristocracy offering principles of governance during the Yi dynasty from the 14th to 19th century. Governors and intellectuals shared knowledge regarding Confucianism but ordinary people had no opportunity to learn about it when it was the principal governance during the dynasty¹⁹. This is also true in the modern period; Confucianism is not normally taught in schools or homes. Although Berger claims “post-Confucian ethics” as a motto of Asian development echoed by some Chinese scholars, it is not the base of East Asian tradition, at least in the religious sense.²⁰

Ordinary people relied on native religions such as shamanism, geomancy and fortune-telling more than Confucianism for spiritual life. Some Confucian rituals were integrated into native practices, particularly traditional shamanism. For example, people conduct annual ceremonies for their ancestors following a Confucian ritual, but what they believe in is

not Confucian ethic, but native ghosts, three goddesses with the power of blessing and fertility. The same is true for formal religions in East Asia including Buddhist temples and Christian churches that partially accept and use these rituals. Buddhist temples offer blessing ceremonies based on shamanistic rituals in East Asia unlike philosophical Buddhism in the West.²¹ Buddhist monks frequently play the role of fortune-tellers and spiritual messengers. Christian churches also accept certain rituals of native beliefs as cultural tradition. For example, Korean Catholic churches have accepted annual ceremonies for ancestors and bow to the idols from the early missionary period whereas Protestant churches have denied them.

However, some argue that the passion and success of Korean Protestantism is derived from native beliefs or shamanism.²² Elliott considers John Jo, the minister of the largest church in the world *Yoido Full Gospel Church*, a shaman.²³ Every Sunday service, John Jo declares how many people are cured instantly when he prays. This church emphasizes material blessing and mystical experience, and everyone is supposed to speak in tongue as part of the service. The majority of Korean churches share similar characteristics. Ordinary believers in conservative churches often believe they receive a direct message and order from God as well as priests who preach how they are ordered directly by God even in the most conservative Presbyterian churches in Korea.²⁴

The uniqueness of Korean Christianity contradicts the basic assumption of secularization and neo-secularization theories. Korean Christianity became a motto of modernization without rationalization but mystification. This de-secularization and sacredness may be the passion and creed for the fast development of modern Korea as well as the fastest growing Christianity in the world.

Mediatization of Spirituality

The role of Christianity in the history of modernization has declined in the East Asia as the existing social forces regained their power, except in Korea. China has suppressed Christianity since the communist revolution and Japan recreated a national religion, Shintoism, amalgamating native religion with world religious beliefs. However, in South Korea, Christianity continues to grow until recently when it became the target of public criticism. Christianity created a leading class that included intellectuals and resistance members since independence. Although Christian churches have not been directly involved in political issues except for progressive liberal theologians in the 70s, they grew with the expanding economy having a privileged position.

Public criticism against Christianity in recent years reveals the power and privilege of Christians in Korean society. The pivotal example was criticism against Christianity calling *gaedokyo* (*gae* =dog in Korean and

Gidokyo = Christianity) during the Lee government from 2008 to 2013. The criticism was directed against the social class of political leadership called *Kang Buja* and *Ko Soyoung*²⁵ and Christians were part of that privileged class. Public criticism was not directed only against a certain religion but also against the power and class position that Korean Christians established during modern history.

Criticism against Christianity was so pervasive that it has become the number one public discourse last few years. The majority of social and political issues is related to *gaedokyo* in Korea, and is debated by the public, particularly internet users who constantly make critical comments on news reports. Although most criticisms target the Lee government and their allies, *Kang Buja* and *Ko Soyoung*, religious institutions are also the target of criticism. Problems with churches such as heredity and taxation for religious institutions were raised in addition to many accusations of criminal activity by church ministers as illustrated by the case of *Yoido Full Gospel Church*. Additionally, Buddhism was involved in criminal cases and scandals during this period. Although such criminal acts might be limited to a small number of Buddhist monks and Christian churches, people started to denounce religious institutions.

These events occurred at the same time as the Korean financial crisis and social conflicts. World financial crisis originating from the USA and Europe in 2009 affected the Korean economy. Moreover, Korea had difficulty adjusting to new changes at the turn of this century after achieving fast economic development during the last generation. Economic growth stagnated and modern development created negative effects such as environmental problems and labor dispute. Additionally, social conflicts affected the younger and older generations altogether; Korea has the poorest elderly population among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries because there is no appropriate pension system for an aging population that invested all their money to the children without saving for themselves. People in their 40s and 50s experienced high unemployment in their jobs during the restructuring of the Korean economy. Young people also have experienced difficulties starting their career since the unemployment rate of the youth is three times higher than the normal rate. Teenagers spent 15 hours on average studying to pass university entrance exams, but eventually found that university degrees do not guarantee their future. These unexpected events experienced by all generations can underlie social conflicts, propel people to reassess what Korea achieved in the last generation, and cause them to search for possible alternatives.

Subsequently, Korean people desire new consolations different from any existing authority including religion that has not provided an alternative to predominant power. Collective depression and despair targeted at religious institutions since they disclosed negative byproducts of social development instead of offering a new vision and values. At this

moment, media start to play an important role in contributing to spirituality by creating the “healing” discourse. Healing became the commonly used public theme in the last couple of years in Korea. Publications, commerce, politics and most aspects of everyday life incorporate the theme of healing. The media inspired the creation of a TV program called *Healing Camp* which encompasses all the social areas.

Healing Camp adopted a new format of entertainment programming by ritualizing spirituality on TV and is a genre of talk show that invites celebrities. The uniqueness of the program, however, is the resemblance of religious services in its format. The program focus on confession of the celebrities interviewed by introducing a sin or a mistake by a guest followed by repentance in tears and a healing ceremony as a symbol of redemption. This program invites the most famous celebrities and covers their troubles and stories of overcoming obstacles in an outdoor natural setting²⁶. The show lasts one and quarter hours to hear life story of only one guest. Each guest discloses his/her personal matters and intense emotional distress in a confession. Celebrities discuss their family troubles, drug addictions, mental health, and poverty experiences. After an hour of emotional confession, the program ends with healing ceremonies such as feet washing, meditation, spiritual practices, healing foods and herbal medicines. At the end of the program, guests confirm that they are healed and regain their happiness.

For example, Byung Hun Lee who is a celebrity playing leading roles in Hollywood films such as *GI Joe*, *Red*, and the upcoming *Terminator* series, confessed his emotional and mental distress on *Healing Camp*.

MC1: I heard you experienced hard times because of the debt that your father inherited.

Lee: The real trouble started after I redeemed the debt; I was suffering continuously. That's depression...I also had a panic disorder first experienced on a plane.

MC1: Have you been treated?

Lee: I continued to take pills, still now sometimes.... (At the end of the program) When I am down, I remind hardship in the past and realize I am happy now.

Another world celebrity, *Psy* who was ranked second on the Billboard chart in 2013 and has the world record for the most viewed music video, confessed his wrongdoing with drug abuse and conviction.

MC1: Your parents were called by the police.

Psy: I was just 25-years-old and really scared at the police station. My father came and said “quit smoking” and left without doing anything for me.... (At the end of the program) Since I was away from

my role (as a singer) for a long time (due to conviction), I find happiness just doing my own work now.

Sport star Sung Young Ki who is a soccer player at Sunderland AFC in UK confessed to his mistake of insulting viewers and being banned from the national team for a period of time.

MC2: You are hot tempered.

Ki: That was at the age of 18 when I cursed negative fans on the net. I was wrong and did not deserve to be a member of national team.... (At the end of the program) Because I had long slump and got through hardship, I can be more relaxed and happy to leave the soccer field when time comes.

As the examples above illustrate, *Healing Camp* is unique in that it ritualizes spirituality on network TV. Although guests are national heroes and world celebrities, they disclose their emotions and confess intimate and private problems for the nation-wide audience. They humble themselves through confession similar to Christian praying and Buddhist bows in religious rituals while revealing their emotional dread. The show ends with healing ceremonies and guests confirm their happiness.

The TV program *Healing Camp* has a strong influence on Korean society. First, the show received a positive reaction from the audience. After the program the first ranked keyword on portal sites included the name of the celebrity. The audience appears to feel closer to celebrities by watching intimate conversations and deep repentance. Some politicians have used the opportunity to attract voters by sharing their personal lives including current president Park²⁷.

Secondly, the program *Healing Camp* initiated a new genre on TV. Other stations produced this type of 'healing program'; *Human Condition* on KBS, *Dad Where Are You Going* on MBC and *Thank you* on SBS. Although these programs have different formats, all attempt to show the healing process of recovering psychological distress and difficult relationships. These entertainment TV programs represent a return to a more natural state and show repentance of celebrity's misconduct due to their career and modern lifestyle. The guests experience a new way of life on the programs²⁸. It is not only media but also the society in general that apply the discourse of healing to commerce, politics and culture in Korea.

Thirdly, the dialogue of healing opens a new dimension in the media that has been undermined in modern history. The media show superstitions more than ever before since the "healing" started. There was only one TV program on shamanism before 2011, but superstitions became a popular subject on TV particularly between 2012 and 2013.²⁹ Since September 2011, 13 new programs regarding shamanism and superstitions were introduced. Eight were talk shows with celebrities and professional

shamans as guests. Typically, these programs are hosted by two or three MCs talking with four to seven celebrities and three or four professional fortune-tellers and shamans. The shamans and fortune-tellers interpret destiny and dreams of guests, perform face readings and read previous lives of celebrities in these entertainment programs. Three of the 13 healing programs are documentaries that portray mystery cases and exorcism. Another two have a journalistic format attempting to report shamanism and superstitions logically³⁰.

Media integration of shamanism and superstitions into entertainment and reporting programs is not coincidental. Spirituality became a popular subject for the media as the discourse of healing gained attention in Korean society. The media discuss new ways of life, such as adopting oriental traditions and superstitions in diet, health and belief as healing techniques. The media present instant versions of meditation, breathing exercises, and modified religious rituals as healing ceremonies in the program. Healing instructors on TV became so famous that people call them healing mentors and follow them on SNS. Several monks and writers on the TV healing programs became stars on SNS and have the most followers on Twitter and Facebook³¹.

The discourse of healing led by media influences changes in religion in Korean society. This is a phenomenal case led by mediatization of religion. Mediatization is a research trend different from conventional media studies which place attention on the window of the world depending on a stimulus-reaction formula. Media, by definition, are mediators of the world instead of having independent power. Therefore, media studies have been oriented toward social science approach by examining the use and effect of media in a pragmatic and short-sighted view. Mediatization is an alternative vision to this conventional approach by focusing on the strong influence of media integrated into social structure and long-term social changes. Schulz defines mediatization theory as “beyond causal logic dividing the world into dependent and independent variables.” Hjarvard concurred with this view by defining mediatization as different from “mediation which describes the concrete act of communication by means of a medium in a specific social context”.³² Mediatization represents the long-term social changes as a consequence of media influence.

Currently, media play a significant role in social, political and cultural lives more than ever before. More voters choose political candidates based on their media image; this is similar to consumers desiring products according to their advertised image. Religion is also affected by media in the way of how Hollywood movies and celebrities portray religions and religious symbols. Presently, role of media is not limited to mediating but extends to mediatizing diverse social practices. Mediatization of politics, of religion and of various areas of research becomes emerging agenda in social studies.³³

Mediatization of religion was introduced because media play a stronger role in religion in post-modern and high-tech society than before. Hjarvard argued for mediatization of religion in a highly industrial Western society even if not universal in the rest of the world.³⁴ He found that people engage in spiritual issues using media more than institutionalized religion. According to his 2009 survey in Denmark, 50% of people used media to engage in spiritual issues whereas 6.7% attended church services and 3.9% read the Bible. Hjarvard concluded mediatization of religion spreads the banality and secularization of religion in highly modernized societies.

Similar to Northern Europe, Korea also shows a mediatization of religion typical of modernized and high-tech societies. However, Korea utilizes the media further by substituting institutionalized religions instead of banalizing and secularizing religions as Hjarvard argued. Mediatization of religion challenges the predominant power of Christianity and other formal religions in the Korean society. The discourse of healing is an example of how media substitute formal religions by presenting an alternative way of life. Spirituality was introduced into mass media which included the New Age type of spirituality borrowed from the West as well as traditional superstitions that had been publicly suppressed. Although the discourse of healing in Korea shares characteristics with Western societies, the difference is that Korea promulgates it in mainstream venues as shown in network TV and best seller books, whereas healing in the West applies to a minority of the population as observed in New Age movements and meditation institutes. Moreover, mediatization of religion in Korea contends with secularization differently from what Hjarvard and other theorists of mediatization argued.³⁵ Unlike mediatization of religion in the West, Korean media promote sacredness in the media format by ritualizing spirituality in the TV programs which is how media began to replace institutionalized religions in Korea when public criticism against institutions was widely expressed.

Mediatization of religion in Korea encourages de-secularization in the 21st century. Media introduced mystical and spiritual issues in entertainment by creating a healing discourse which is an extension of the contradicting secularization theory of early modern history in East Asia. The role of Christianity in Korean modernization accompanied de-secularization while maintaining the mystic nature of religion and public authority. This is different not only from secularization but also from neo-secularization and counter-secularization theories as previously explained. In the new phase, mediatization of religion adopts de-secularization by substituting the power of formal religions. Media amalgamate superstitions of native religions, Western New Age types of healing techniques, and rituals of conventional religions while encompassing the spirituality of the general audience.

The problem is, however, that mediatization of religion creates a risk by modifying spirituality into the media logic which pursues entertainment and instant results. Media incorporate spiritual issues into an adaptable media format by presenting instant counseling, three-minute meditations and entertaining fortune-telling. The mediatization of religion eliminates the due course of instructing spirituality in formal religions and instantly transitions into the state of redemption or *nirvana*. Jeong claimed that the present healing discourse in Korea substitutes religious training by pursuing *sorter* (a savior) without dedication,³⁶ which is similar to New Age exercises to achieve immediate ecstasy using drugs, meditation and hallucination. Mediatization of religion in the present Korean society conveys instant remedies for comfort and happiness by introducing diverse healing techniques.

The healing phenomenon has similarly spread to social network media by offering instant remedies. For example, Haemin, the most well-known healing mentor in Korea, offers instant counseling for life-long problems.

Follower 1: I hate my two-faced father and am scared of him. One moment he is nice and the next moment he is angry.

Haemin: Does your grandfather behave the same? Your father may be stressed. Send an E-mail to your father and express yourself.

Follower 2: My mom and dad often fight with each other. I am tired of it and frustrated. Can they be nice to each other?

Haemin: Write to you dad and mom that you are frustrated. Nice people can quarrel with each other.

Follower 3: I draw, but feel inferior because I learn by myself and wonder if I have talent.

Haemin: Can you draw your own style? If you continue despite economic difficulty and no attention from others for a while, then go ahead.

Follower 4: I am uncomfortable at home with my parents and brother. Father drink every day.

Haemin: Ask to pay for private study room... if you are a student.

Follower 5: I am suffering from diet, compulsion, anorexia. I want to be relieved. I am not hungry, but my heart is hungry. I would like to have someone understand and comfort me.

Haemin: Try volunteer work. Counseling can be helpful.

Above is an illustration of a one-day Twitter conversation between Haemin and five followers on the 30th of March, 2013. Followers discussed their lifelong troubles in two lines and Haemin provided a remedy in one line for each follower on SNS. Haemin appeared to be a thoughtful adviser according to the above Twitter messages and may instruct the best answer as an individual. However, mediatization of religion encourages functionalistic and utilitarian approaches to spirituality based on media logic. Family problems, lifelong careers and mental disorders that the above followers discussed are long-term and complicated issues that cannot be solved in an instant without knowing their life stories at a deeper level. Yet, the media attempt to offer instant remedies and affect serious spiritual problems using its own procedures. Additionally, new technology accelerates the process in interactive media. Users attempt to find emotional comfort and spiritual recovery within a line of instant advice that Haemin and SNS healing mentors provide. Whether users hear this type of advice only from healing mentors in the media is questionable. Similar advice may be offered by individuals in other institutions including churches, schools and family but may have been rejected and criticized by the users in everyday life; however, they accept the advice on SNS and feel relieved because it is refined in the media format. Media justify healing rituals based upon mediatization of religion and spirituality.

The present mediatization of religion may also mislead spirituality. Culturist theologian Paul Tillich argued that spirituality is not a mystical and solely metaphysical world that one needs to control or to benefit from. Spirituality represents fundamental values that an individual can master only by dedicating oneself. Religion can be a method to discover the ultimate self. Media and other cultural venues can be helpful in this endeavor. In this sense, Tillich argued that religion is the essence of culture and culture is the form of religion.³⁷ Since institutionalized religion created flaws in history, media, presently the most pervasive means of popular culture, emerges as an imminent vehicle for spiritual life as an alternative. The problem is that media follow modernist logic to the extreme and transform all into entertainment, and exchange values for visible effects, while failing to encompass the fundamental being or ontology of human spirituality.

The mediatization of religion undermines the fundamental being or spirituality while ironically de-secularizing media contents. De-secularized messages in healing programs on TV and interactions on SNS pursue immediate remedies following the modernistic logic of effectiveness and functionalism. However, modernization is not necessarily opposite to spirituality. Even in the West, philosophers chase the process of consolidating the present type of modernization and secularization that suppressed spirituality. Foucault examined the source of Western modernization by reviewing the genealogy of knowledge in Western philosophy. Enlightenment philosophy and scientism did not

emerge at once but from knowledge accumulated over thousands of years from Aristotle and medieval scholar philosophies. Foucault called the “instance of Descartes” pivotal to modern thought as inherited from this tradition of Western philosophy.³⁸ This is a gnostic tradition and a specific part of Aristotle’s logic which included only a minority in early Christianity and Greek philosophy. Cartesian humanity and Newtonian natural science inherited this tradition which became mainstream modern belief and unilaterally influenced Western modernization. Foucault concluded that the problem with modernism is the elimination of spirituality in knowledge and directed his attention to Socratic dialogue to regain the human ability for holistic knowledge balancing between *epimeleia* and *gnothi*, in other words, spirituality and cognition. According to Foucault, reason and emotion are not contradictory, and spirituality and modern knowledge are not necessarily separate.

Applying this Foucauldian perspective, current mediatization of religion does not promote spirituality. Instead, it is a reflection of modernist cognition, *gnothi* that utilizes mystic metaphysics and healing techniques only functionally. This is an extension of a particular line of thought: gnostic, Cartesian, modernist applying to Western New Age and Korean healings. De-secularized messages and healing techniques in media do not delve into the fundamental self or spiritual being. This can be considered as a tool for self-comfort and worldly fortune that appeases the masses for short-sighted purposes and maintains the *status quo* of contemporary society.

Concluding Remarks

The present expansion of healing discourse in Korea may appear to be an alternative to Western and capitalist ideology. South Korea has been one of the fastest developing countries in the world. Korean people have sacrificed most of their values for the pursuit of economic growth and international competitiveness in the course of modern development. The present era may be the appropriate time to reassess the past and regain what has been lost as Korea faces serious social conflicts and cultural disorder in addition to economic stagnation. The pervasive discourse of healing in Korean society appears to reflect people’s wishes and desire for alternative lifestyles exemplified by the modern Western style of development.

However, the discourse of healing is not an alternative to but a reflection of modernism and is an extension of affinity between modernization and religion in the East Asian developmental model. The supposed contradiction between modernization and religion is not applicable to Korea. Mainstream sociologists claim that modernization is promoted by secularization and a decline of spiritual life. Religious and mystical views of the world are diminished as modern enlightenment

spreads scientific discoveries. Yet, universal validity of secularization theory has been challenged by non-Western societies. Religion has played an important role in East Asian development. Particularly, Christianity was viewed as a symbol of modernity throughout Asia in early modern history. In Korea, particularly, Christianity has settled social class and political authority while establishing a record number of Christian churches. Modernization accompanied religious growth and its influence on the public realm instead of secularization or privatization of religion in Korea.

Moreover, Christianity in Korea integrated mysticism and de-secularization during the course of modernization. Since the early missionaries, native religions have been incorporated partly in the Christian faith. Shamanism, the patriarchy of native religions, and traditional values influenced the organization of Korean Christian churches. In particular, ministers of protestant churches had such strong authority and privileges that they were eventually involved in many scandals including sexual abuse, embezzlement and unlawful inheritance. Korean Christians rely greatly on religious figures who claim to be mediators of God to bestow blessings. Although mainstream Korean Christianity tends to maintain fundamentalist beliefs, the base of faith resembles shamanistic beliefs, while authoritarian religious leaders emphasize fear and threat.

Mediatization of religion revived native beliefs and spirituality in their raw forms as institutionalized religions became target of public criticism and the Christian population decreased significantly.³⁹ Media introduce an alternative life encompassing mysticism and oriental religious rituals including yoga, meditation and Korean shamanism. However, the techniques and methods of how media present and use spiritual dimension is functionalistic and utilitarian. Media transform religious rituals and spiritual learning into instant remedies and visible effects. This instantaneity and superficiality reflects the logic of Western modernity similar to scientism and enlightenment. Healing techniques such as instant counselling, washing feet ceremonies, short meditation and other healing rituals that the media present in the course of ritualizing spirituality on TV programs become entertainment and short-sighted techniques without including the effort to explore the self and dedicate oneself to spiritual communication.

Asia followed a different path of modernization from Western societies. Asian modernization illustrates a possibility of combining modernization with spirituality. Christian power in Korea invalidates any version of secularization theory including original, neo- and counter-secularization theories by providing a strong religious role in modern development. However, spirituality embedded in both institutionalized and mediatized religions demonstrate social and cultural problems in Korea. Leading theologians argue, ironically, the foremost problem with

Korean Christianity is the lack of spirituality despite the fast growth of Christianity. Mediatization of religion in Korea again reproduces a utilitarian, or *gnothi* approach *a la* Foucault to spiritual issues. This new phase of religious power derived by media undermines spirituality by integrating it into the logic of entertainment and of the media industry.

Notes

¹ Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic and spirits of capitalism* (New York: Scriber, 1968); Emile Durkheim, *Elementary forms of religious life* (London: George Allen, 1964).

² Peter Berger, *In Search of an East Asian Development Model* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1999); Alice Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

³ Byung Geum Jeon, *Analytic Report of Korean Christianity*. (Seoul: URD, 2013). The USA sent out 46,381 missionaries in 2011, South Korea 21,000 and Great Britain 5,666 (Lausanne evangelical association 2012).

⁴ Byung Geum Jeon, 70.

⁵ According to National Census 2012, Buddhists are 26% of total Korean population. However, unlike Christian population, Buddhists are not all regular attendants of services but mostly family faith inherited from generations.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1977); Christ Barker and Dariusz Galasinski, *Cultural studies and Discourse Analysis* (London: Sage, 2001); Paula Saukko, *Doing Research in Cultural Studies* (London: Sage, 2003).

⁷ Peter Berger, *Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor, 1967).

⁸ Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁹ Grace Davie, *Religion in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Steve Bruce, "Religion and Rational Choice", *Sociology of Religion* 54 (2) (1993): 194; Lawrence Young, *Rational Choice Theory and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹¹ There were 33 members inaugurating the declaration of independence; 16 were Christians, 15 were *chundokyo* which was a new Korean religion mixing Christianity with native religion and 2 were Buddhists.

¹² KCHA, *History of Korean Christianity*, V. 1, 2, 3 (Seoul: Kidokyo Munseo, 2012, 2013).

¹³ Myung Bae Kim, *History of Social Movement and Korean Christianity, 1960-1987* (Seoul: Book Korea, 2009); Hyung Mook Choi, *Two Paths of Korean Christianity* (Seoul: Nakta, 2013).

¹⁴ Jang Kyusik. "Church and State during the Military Regime," *Korean Christianity and History* 25 (2006): 103-137; Lee Sangsung, "Church of Hope without hope", *Historical Criticism* 89 (2009): 174-207.

¹⁵ Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority", *Social Forces*, 72 - 3(1994): 5; Steve Bruce, "Secularization", *Journal of Theological Studies*, 62-1(2011): 431-432.

¹⁶ Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁷ Peter Berger, *In Search of an East Asian Development Model*, (London: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

¹⁸ Kyung Dong Kim, "The Distinctive Features of South Korea's Development", in *Search of and East Asian development model*, (London: Transaction Books, 1999).

¹⁹ Aristocrats had to know Confucianism thoroughly to pass the examination of governance which was only given to aristocrats during the Yi dynasty. Ordinary people, conversely, were largely illiterate and had no interest in Confucianism.

²⁰ Yonghan Jung, *Sensible Theories of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism* (Seoul: Kyungin culture, 2011); Seungpyo Hong, *Oriental Thoughts and Post-modern Life*, (Daegu: Kyemyung University Press, 2011).

²¹ Sungtaek Cho, *Buddhism and Buddhist Thoughts* (Paju: Dolbegae, 2012).

²² James Grayson, "Element of Protestant Accommodation to Korean Religious Culture", *Missiology: an International Review*, 23-1 (1995): 43-59.

²³ Charles Elliott, *Sword & Spirit: Christianity in a Divided World* (New York: Marshall Pickering, 1989).

²⁴ This is my own personal experience having attended regular Presbyterian churches for decades. Additionally, I often observe Sunday service of *Yoido Full Gospel Church* in person and on TV.

²⁵ *Kang Buja* and *Ko Soyoung* are names of famous celebrities in Korea, but these words represent abbreviations for *Kang* (southern Seoul), *Buja* (owners of expensive real estate), *Ko* (a Korean university where president Lee graduated) *So* (Somang Church, mega-church in the richest neighborhood of Seoul where Lee attended), *young* (YOUNGnam, southern province in Korea, rich and conservative where Lee was born). These three were considered as the class origin of Lee's leadership and vested interests.

²⁶ *Healing camp* started on July 18, 2011 and airs on SBS, a commercial network TV every Monday at 11 PM. From July 18, 2011 to June 17, 2013, the show included 39 actors, 17 singers, 10 sport stars, 8 talents and artists, 2 religious leaders and 5 politicians including 2 presidential candidates. All are mostly well-known celebrities in Korea.

²⁷ After President Park showed her pictures in bikini swimsuit in her 20's on the *Healing Camp* her name was the first ranked on the internet portal site and her popularity rose up. On the program Park talked about her life hardship as a daughter of the former president whose mother and father were assassinated.

²⁸ *Human Condition* shows addictions to technology, media and material possessions in the modern lifestyle by returning to the natural state. *Dad Where Are You Going* shows the process of regaining family life that celebrities lost due to busy schedules. *Thank you* is another talk show that celebrities appear on with mentors confessing mistakes in their lives and counseling with the mentors.

²⁹ Among the 13 TV programs, one started in 2011, 6 in 2012 and 6 in 2013.

³⁰ Talk shows include *Secret of God*, *Head Butt* and *Edu Korea* on JTBC, *Enter Bright* on Channel A, *Combat Fortune* on Living TV, *Counseling You*, *Counseling Men and Women* on Health TV, *Comic League* on TVN. Two journalistic programs include *PD Lee Solving in Logic* on Channel A, *Revealing The Secret* on MBN. The three documentaries include *Secret of Geomancy* on TV Chosun, *Touring Shamans* on Living TV and *Exorcist* on tvN.

³¹ Buddhist monk, Haemin is the most well-known healing mentor followed by Pomnyun and Jungmok. They are not affiliated with a religious domination but independent Buddhist monks. Haemin is, for example, a professor at the University of New Hampshire in the USA with a Harvard University degree.

Bomshin Park, Yoisu Lee and Nando Kim (professor) are famous healing writers who published best sellers on this subject.

³² Winfried Schulz, "Reconstructing Mediatization as an Analytical Concept", *European Journal of Communication*, 19 (2004): 87-101; Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorizing Religion, Media and Social Change", *Culture and Religion*, 12-2 (2011): 119-135.

³³ Nick Couldry, "Mediatization or Mediation", *New Media Society*, 10 (3) (2008): 373-391; Jesper Strömback, "Mediatization and Perception of Media's Political Influence", *Journalism Studies*, 12-14 (2011): 423-439.

³⁴ Hjarvard, 130.

³⁵ Hjarvard, 119; Gordon Lynch, "What Can We Learn from the Mediatization of Religion Debate?", *Culture and Religion*, 12- 2 (2011): 203-210; Knut Lundby (ed.), *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

³⁶ Jinhong Jeong, "A Thought about 'Phenomena of Healing'", *Philosophy and Reality*, 94 (2012): 74-88.

³⁷ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

³⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

³⁹ *Seoul Daily* reported the decrease of the Christian population in the article titled "Big Drop of Christians, Protestant Churches Threaten". The newspaper stated a decrease of 70,000 believers for the last two quarters in three dominations of major Korean churches with the predominant reason being 'untrustworthy priests' (19.7% of survey respondents), *Seoul Daily* September 13, 2013.

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