

Applicability of Religious Economy Model (REM) to the Growth of Fortunetelling in Contemporary Korea

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Abstract

The thesis attempts to test basic assumptions of religious economy model (REM) in the Korean context where a recent expansion of fortunetelling occurs. The thesis pays attention to both the supply-side and the demand-side factors of fortunetelling and then explain why the demand-side factors are more important for a better understanding of the popularity of fortunetelling in contemporary Korea. The supply-side factors such as religious regulation, competition, and religious freedom have not worked in Korea in the same way that REM observed in the Western context. Today the Korean religious market faces two unexpected phenomena: one is the popularity of fortunetelling culture, and the other is a slightly decreasing membership of Protestantism, which REM regards as the most competitive religion in religious market. Since the 1980s, traditional values of fortunetelling provided by *mudangs* or *yeoksulgas* has been reevaluated and reconstructed in various aspects. Based on the results of field research on participants in Korean fortunetelling, the thesis shows how and why the participants consume traditional fortunetelling service rather than prophetic functions of official religions. Conclusively, the thesis suggests that REM should take into consideration the demand-side factors more importantly when it tries to explain a Korean religious society.

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I. Introduction

The basic concern of the thesis is to examine how valid it is to understand the recently rapid expansion of Korean fortunetelling in terms of the Religious Economy Model (REM), trying to analyze a structural dynamism of Korean religious society and to specify Korean features which the model overlooks. As Korean fortunetelling is not the subject that the model expects to explain from the beginning, the thesis attempts to test not a possibility of its generalization, but its theoretical plausibility. Its central hypothesis is that demand-side factors of religious market are more influential on the recent growth of Korean fortunetelling than the supply-side ones. In order to verify the hypothesis, thesis research focuses on the findings of interviewing both fortunetellers and their clients, observing and participating in the process of fortunetelling. Historical and statistical literatures issued by the Korean government are also presented to prove the validity of the hypothesis. In chapter II, the matter of methodology will deal with such research methods and processes more concretely.

As will be discussed in chapter III, the Religious Economy Model refers to a type of sociological approach that is grounded on two basic assumptions: The first is that religious beliefs and practices are chosen in accordance with the economic rationality of actors. The ‘economic rationality’ here is not accomplished by the ‘maximizing’ ratio of cost and benefit,

but by the ‘satisficing’ rate of cost and benefit because religious actors actually have to choose within a limited scope of information and options available (Stark and Finke 2002, 37). It is assumed that every choice is generally, not always, based on economic rationality. The second is that the whole society can reach a status of Pareto optimal when the religious field is controlled by the law of market. Free competition and choice can guarantee the satisfaction of all participants in the market. Any regulation of market is necessarily only interpreted to reduce the level of satisfaction by means of preventing the invisible force of the competitive market from working efficiently. In this sense, when a religious field is understood as a kind of market, we can call it a religious market. Religious suppliers are firms that sell various services such as worship service, religious membership, and religious education, while religious customers are those who purchase the religious services provided by religious firms. In short, the two assumptions introduce such microeconomic terms as the rationality of actors and the law of supply and demand into religious studies, and hence the matter of religious regulation is closely related to religious policies on the macro level. Terms such as rationality, competition, and regulation are the most important conceptual tools for analyzing the dynamism of the religious market in terms of the REM. The model, which is based on the ‘religious market,’ does not have to depend on any symbolic relationship between religion and economy because religious actors are considered to evaluate and choose their religion as rationally as in their economic lives.

Religious and economic fields are actually united through the economic rationality inherent in universal humanity beyond symbolic interactions. According to this model, we need not endow the religious beliefs and practices of actors with a special behavioural position caused by a dichotomy between religion and magic, between the sacred and the profane, and even between the mental and the material. Based on the formal homogeneity between the religious and non-religious actions, the thesis should examine if the concept of religious market can explain the dynamism of religious growth or decline in a more coherent way, not limiting religiousness to an emotional or psychological field. Generally speaking, to identify *homo religiosus* with *homo economicus* without compartmentalizing humanity is in danger of oversimplifying human religiosity. Nonetheless, in contemporary circumstances where there is no clear distinction between religious enterprises and enterprising religions, the concept of religious market may be useful for understanding new aspects of social reality that look very ambiguous against the criteria of the old dichotomy. Fortunetelling today in Korea works across such ambiguous borders, and thereby the rapid expansion of Korean fortunetelling represents a challenging object on which to test the validity of REM as a theory.

There have been various reports on the rapid growth of Korean fortunetelling since the 1980s (Sang 1983; Choi 1994; Kim, Taegon et.al.1995; Kim, Hongcheol 1995; Cho and Hyun 2001; Jang 2005; Kim, Andrew Eungi 2005). While Buddhism and Protestantism have

undergone stagnation in membership growth since the 1985 national demographic census, shamans and other diviners have had an increasing influence on various matters in everyday life of the Korean populace (Kim, Hongcheol 1995, 201; Cho and Hyun 2001, 97; Kim, Andrew Eungi 2005, 286-294). As will be shown later, the scope of their influence has not been limited to the private sphere, ranging from the Presidential election and the launching ceremony of Boeing jumbo-jet plane to Kim Il-sung's death and the unification of the two Koreas. The last twenty years of surveys conducted by Gallup Korea commonly reveal this trend of Korean religiosity, showing that more than 40% of all respondents believe in *jakmyung* (an influence of name on fate) and more than 32% believe in *koonghap* (marital harmony) based on *sajupalja* (determined destiny) (1997; 1999; 2004). Considering that only 50% of the population formally identifies with a religion (Statistics Korea 1985; 1995; 2005), the numbers of Gallup surveys are not insignificant. In particular, a few studies attribute the cause of its explosive expansion to the economic crisis of the late 1990s (Stoffel 1997; Cho and Hyun 2001, 130; Kim, Seongnae 2002, 63-66), even if many religious scholars admit that fortunetelling continuously played an important role in constructing a Korean religiosity throughout Korean history (Buswell 2007; Grayson 2003; 1992; Choi 1997; Choi 1994; Yu 1975).

The Association of Korean Fortunetellers (AKF) established and held the first International Conference of *I Ching* in 1984 in Seoul. It will hold its 23rd conference in Taiwan

in 2011, which is expected to attract about 500 participants from Asian countries familiar with old Chinese script. The AKF also successfully hosted the Korea *Saju* Fair in 2007 and the World Conference of Fortunetellers in 2008. It argues that the total number of Korean fortunetellers amounts to more than 300,000 (*Hankuk Gyeongjeo* Dec 8, 2007; *Kangwon Dominilbo* May 23, 2008). The Korean Kyungsin Association, which represents shamans or *mudangs*, has 141,790 registered members across the nation (<http://www.mudang.org/kyungsin/>). The economic scale of the fortunetelling market is reportedly about 4 billion Canadian dollars, which is similar to the total value of the Korean film industry (*Kukminilbo* Jan 10, 2007; *Jungangilbo* Feb 20, 2010). The New York Times notes the interesting revival of shamanism in techno-savvy Seoul, estimating about 300 shamanistic temples within an hour of Seoul (July 7, 2007).

As explained in detail in chapter IV, fortunetelling, called *chom* in Korean, has spread over both the private and public spheres of Korean people. In contemporary Korea, its conceptual scope comprehends any kinds of divinations, while it is only categorized into a kind of popular religion in terms of the sociology of religion (McGuire 2008; Orsi 2008; 2003; Parker 1998). The concept of *chom* in Korea evolved and is evolving through a free mixture of religious, cultural, philosophical, geographical, biological, and even technological ideas. Thus, the term ‘*chom*’ in Korean is translated into the word ‘fortunetelling’ rather than the word ‘divination’ because the latter is closer to a religious meaning.

The thesis attempts to test REM more directly, focusing on the following several issues in main chapters. .

The starting point of discussion in chapter V is that Protestantism, Buddhism, and Catholicism continue to lose their influence in fortunetelling. Although the major religions implicitly or explicitly involve fortunetelling as an aspect of their prophetic function, even their members prefer more non-institutional fortunetelling conducted by traditional diviners. Based on its numerical criterion that distinguishes winners and losers in a competitive market, the theorists of REM can claim that they provide conceptual tools appropriate for analyzing this change in the fortunetelling market statistically and positively. The recent decrease in Korean Protestant membership challenges Weberian sociology of religion that regards Protestantism as the most important religious ethos to stimulate modernization, rationalization, and industrialization (Weber 1958; 1993). Moreover, it is difficult for the current euro-centric field of sociology of religion to approach the growth or decline of shamanism, folk religions, or fortunetelling, which are not based on church membership or doctrinal commitment. In spite of the fact that REM itself is based on the situation of Euro-American institutional religions, its conceptual tools can be helpful with analyzing comprehensively both the growth of traditional fortunetelling and the decline of the prophetic function provided by the major religions. The thesis will examine

whether basic assumptions of REM are still valid in the East-Asian religious market, where non-membership religions are as strong as membership religions.

The main point in chapter V is on the relationship between religious regulation and growth under pluralistic circumstances. Taking it for granted that institutional oppression of traditional fortunetelling had been legalized from the Confucian *Chosun* dynasty through the Japanese colonial rule and to military regimes, Korean intellectual leaders of public opinion like politicians, executives, bureaucrats, and scholars have thought that fortunetelling is one of the biggest barriers against Korean modernization. President Park's regime in the 1970s entirely prohibited shamans from practicing *kut* in public areas. It was not until after the mood of religious tolerance appeared around the 1988 Olympic Games that traditional fortunetellers came out in the open marketplace of religion. Korean fortunetellers succeeded in organizing the International Conference of *I Ching* Studies in 1984 for the first time in the world. This annual conference currently has about four to five hundred participants mainly from Asian countries. The 2008 World Conference of Fortunetellers was another international event held by Korean fortunetellers. Through these events, Korean fortunetellers tried to showcase the depth of their intellectual tradition and academically support their tradition against the past prejudice of fortunetelling as superstition. In particular, the 2007 Korean *Saju* (divination) Fair in Seoul clearly showed their widespread popularity, bringing together shamans, other diviners, and

clients across the country. Above all, the REM seems useful in evaluating to what extent religious regulation affected the expansion of fortunetelling in contemporary Korea, whereas the existing reports on Korean fortunetelling have ignored the relationship between religious regulation and growth.

Chapter VI handles more extensively what aspects of traditional fortunetellers are more efficient than other competitors in Korean religious market where there is an increasing overlap between the religious and the economic. Their monistic worldview adapts themselves to secular marketing strategies very easily (Cho and Hyun 2001, 101; Kim, Andrew Eungi 2005, 297). Compared with established religions, they are creative and leading actors in constructing a new relationship between religious service and communication technology such as mobile, online websites, mass media. The flexibility of fortunetellers toward free-riding is also more appealing to those who want to make a religious portfolio in order to lower a spiritual risk. Without asking their clients to build an exclusive exchange relationship with gods, fortunetellers provide clients with their own explanations of the past, the present, and the future. Besides, how their ascetic and family-oriented work ethic works is explained with the results of interviews.

The point in chapter VII is that the demand for fortunetelling in Korea has differed from time period to time period. As the REM assumes religious demand to be constant, it cannot accept the definition of secularization as a decline of universal religiosity. So, it is important to

find out whether the growth of fortunetelling is a result of qualitative or quantitative changes in religiosity. About 50% of the entire Korean population has continuously expressed their religious identity in national demographic censuses over the last twenty years (Statistics Korea 1985; 1995; 2005). The fact seems to support the basic assumption of the REM on the constancy of religious demand. As will be discussed later, however, religious demand in a market niche such as fortunetelling is changeable under certain social conditions, even if it is accepted that religious demand in the whole market is constant. However, the existing field of sociology of religion did not clearly distinguish between the different kinds of religious markets and paid little attention to the relationship between different markets. Thus, the thesis attempts to specify the demand for Korean fortunetelling on the basis of the classified markets provided by the REM.

The last issue in chapter VIII is how Korean fortunetelling culture is different from neighboring fortunetelling cultures. Korean, Japanese, and Chinese people show a relative lack of belief in God, hell, or heaven (Halman and Inglehart et.al. 2008, 219-228), but each one of them has developed its own fortunetelling culture. In a sense, REM allows for easier cross-cultural comparison because it can simplify the differences and similarities among cultures in the macro-social context, even if it very often limits the theoretical plausibility of REM on the other hand. During the last twenty years, Buddhism and Christianity have together occupied 95.4% in 1985, 97.4% in 1995, and 98% in 2005 (Statistics Korea 1985; 1995; 2005) of the entire

religious membership market in Korea. Korean society did not experience religious revival such as a rapid growth of new religious movements in Japan, much less the expansion of polytheistic temples popular in China, and the prosperity of spiritual movement groups in North America. During the same period, only 2% of the Korean population with religious identification continued to belong to other religions than Buddhism, Christianity, and Confucianism. Non-exclusive fortunetelling coexists more cooperatively with Korean Buddhism and Catholicism, which is less antagonistic to traditional culture than Protestantism. Major new religious movements such as *Won Buddhism* and *Jungsankyo* involved various elements of traditional fortunetelling doctrinally and ritually from the beginning. Korean fortunetelling has provided both prophecy and therapy for clients very efficiently in the religious market. In this Korean context, it may be that traditional fortunetelling functionally restricts the growth of new religious movements or spiritual groups that would be in high tension with the established order. The thesis tries to show why new religious movements or spiritual groups failed in changing this structure of the Korean religious market and how this stability is related to a Korean syncretism of traditional fortunetelling and organizational religions and the new status of fortunetelling as a religious faith.

REM is the only sociological model to explain the growth or decline of religions through emphasizing the supply-side factors of religious market. It may be a good model to explain how

the growth of Korean fortunetelling since the 1980s has been influenced by creative fortunetellers, religious tolerance, and free competition, which were not seriously dealt with by previous researches. In the meantime, the thesis also confirms the fact that fortunetelling has a very long tradition in Korean history, having formed an essential source of Korean religiosity. After all, it needs to examine both whether the supply-side factors result in the growth of fortunetelling and whether the increasing demand causes the growth of fortunetellers.

Conclusively, the thesis tries to explain why the demand-side factors are more important for understanding the growth of Korean fortunetelling. Thus, it suggests that some assumptions of REM should be corrected partly or entirely, calculating different social conditions of each religious market.

II. Methodology

1. Previous Research

Major concerns of REM are focused on official and institutional religions, especially in North America and Europe. This market model in the sociology of religion was introduced by Peter Berger (1963), which tried to explain the growth of ecumenism by looking at means of competition among denominations in a religiously pluralistic society. As his research was pioneering without the help of economic theory, its systematic development did not occur. A more substantial advance of the market model was accomplished with the introduction of rational choice theories by sociologists interested in the collective decision-making process of small groups. In particular, the relationship between free-riding and the size of group in creating the public goods (Olson 1965), and a consideration of social behavior as an exchange based on the rationality of actors (Homans 1961) began to be discussed by Rodney Stark, who first argued the validity of exchange theory in *A Theory of Religion* (Stark and Bainbridge 1987) . *The Churching of America - 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* published by Stark and Finke in 1992 explains creatively the importance of free competition among religious suppliers by means of comparing successful conservative denominations or sects with declining liberalized denominations over the last 200 years in America. Unlike the religious monopoly in

Europe, America has never been dominated by state religion, and hence religious competition allegedly increases the religious participation of all Americans. However, although the book contributed greatly to a theoretical understanding of the very high level of religious participation in America in terms of religious market, their prescription of the religious monopoly in Europe has been subject to serious criticism for choosing materials arbitrarily and neglecting cultural and social experiences in a given society (Bruce 1993; 1995; 1999; Carroll 1996). Even in the Canadian religious market, regarded as similar to the American one, the main conclusions of the book were questioned by claims that cultural-historical factors such as immigration patterns were a stronger determinant of group membership (Swatos 1991) or that the decline of Canadian institutionalized religion since World War II could be due to shifts in demand structure (Beyer 1997, 273). In Italy, where there is a Catholic religious monopoly, it is reported that such indicators of vitality as clerical recruitment or mass attendance have remained relatively high and largely stable in recent decades (Diotallevi 2002). Furthermore, Stark and Finke's concept of rationality is criticized for ignoring the difference between the instrumental-rational and the value-rational types of action, a distinction made by Weber (Sharot 2002, 430).

Based on such assumptions by Stark and Finke, experimental research examining the validity of the market model in a non-American context also began to surface. Alan S. Miller concluded that such a model might perform better in Japan than in the West because of the very

practical attitude many Japanese have toward religion, picking and choosing from various religions their rituals and beliefs (1995). Miller's suggestion to apply the market model to eastern religious behaviors, which are more lax in religious membership, is an important one. However, as it focuses on age, gender, education, and occupation, it leaves the matter of competition, rationality, or regulation untouched. A more expansive and essential applicability of the market model was tested in the Latin American context. Anthony Gill's *Rendering unto Caesar* (1998) is the first application of the market model in a Latin American context; it attempts to demonstrate that "religious competition from surging Protestantism led Catholic bishops in such countries as Brazil or Chile to adopt a preferential option for the poor and to oppose military dictatorship" (Chesnut 2003, 8). However, Gill interprets arbitrarily the nature of religious phenomena in Latin America by assuming that the causal relationship between religious growth and competition is already a given. Chesnut's *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy* (2003) examines why and how the Catholic Charismatic Renewal had twice as many members as the Catholic Base Christian Communities and Pentecostal churches grew rapidly since the 1950s. In the free-market religious economy, the popular classes of Latin America are now free to choose the religious goods that best satisfy them and hence do not have to belong even normally to the Catholics, who used to be the centre of a religious monopoly during the past five hundred years. While Chesnut's research is methodologically consistent in

explaining the growth of Pentecostal or Charismatic churches on the basis of the supply-side religious economy model, it does not pay attention to the importance of the indigenous religiosity sympathetic to faith healing and spirit possession, which existed “prior to the advent of the new religious economy” (2003, 150). The reason why “impoverished urban women in Latin America,” as he puts it (2003, 151), consume faith healing and spirit possession outside the Catholic church may be not because the service was not supplied by the monopolist church, but because they demand a traditional or new type of service different from the Catholic one.

One undeniable fact regarding the previous studies that test the REM in a local context is that all of them were testing a limited area of a religious market, considering only organized or institutionalized religions. According to the propositions of the REM, popular religions such as fortunetelling or shamanism are not based on an extended or exclusive exchange relationship because they are not in pursuit of otherworldly reward (Stark and Finke 2002, 99-100). The methodological basis of the REM puts the monotheistic extended or exclusive exchange relationship with the Divine in the forefront of selfish process based on reason and choice. The abovementioned studies fall into a kind of religious evolutionism promoted by the REM because they take it for granted that monotheism in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam among other religions is more rational than polytheism in popular religions or shamanism. However, this methodological bias of the REM, especially evident in the work of Rodney Stark who is one of

its leading proponents, needs to be reconsidered in the East Asian context where there is a remarkable growth of shamanistic practices in Korea, of Taoist temples in mainland China, and fortunetelling in Japan. In this context, the application of the REM to the recently rapid growth of Korean fortunetelling, including shamanic diviners, is a significant trial that can test the theoretical validity of the REM in a non-monotheistic milieu, and may reveal interesting aspects of the Korean religious market.

Previous major research on fortunetelling in the Korean context will now be discussed. Japanese ethnographer Murayama Jijun (村山智順)'s *Divination and Prophecy in Chosun* (2005[1933]) is a pioneering work which compiled a large amount of folklore in old Korean literature and described various kinds of divination through empirical field research across the country. Although his research was conducted as a part of colonial rule, it was the first systematic arrangement and classification of Korean fortunetelling practices. Claiming that a social tradition is a hidden, but great, actor that directs the present and future of the members of a society, he postulated that the people of *Chosun* had made fortunetelling a strong social tradition (2005, 7). Further, he suggested that the prevailing tradition of fortunetelling inherent in the spirit of the *Chosun* people resulted from an underdevelopment of their scientific knowledge. Although Murayama's research paid much attention to Korean fortunetelling in order to

understand Korean religiosity, his study did not analyze its specificity in various social contexts, emphasizing its function simply as a source of Korean religiosity.

Another emphasis on fortunetelling as social tradition is remarkably demonstrated in literature concerned with Korean shamanism. As shamans took charge of fortunetelling in traditional Korean society, fortunetelling naturally became one of their important social functions. For instance, Hung-youn Cho argued that divination and prophecy are “fatalistic” functions of Korean shamans (1998, 234); Dong-shik Yu explained that shamans predict the future of human beings because they are already in communication with gods when they participate in possession rituals (1975, 153). Among others, Gilsung Choi also regarded the prophetic function of Korean shamans as diviners as their most basic function (1994, 74). These studies show that Korean fortunetelling had continuously been influenced by a religious belief in shamanism and that the recent growth of fortunetelling is related to the popularity of shamanic divination in Korea. As demonstrated by such studies, the recent increase in the divination function of shamanic rituals must also consider its specificity in a cultural comparative perspective: while prevailing types of fortunetelling relies on written manuals in Japan and Taoist gods in China, trance divination that relies on long training is dominant in Korea. However, despite what such studies contribute to our understanding of Korean fortunetelling, they are limited by the terms of their analyses, looking at fortunetelling within the field of shamanism.

The recent growth of fortunetelling in Korea is led both by shamans relying on communication with gods and by diviners relying on special scriptures. Andrew E. Kim's article (2005) analyzed the various types of divination in contemporary Korea from a sociological perspective, based on surveys conducted by an institute of commercial marketing (Daehonggihoek 1999; 2002). Kim suggests the shamanistic tradition is one of the factors that contribute to the growth of fortunetelling. He claims that "habits of the heart," a concept espoused by Robert Bellah (1985), together with cultural nationalism, and spiritual security are the major factors contributing to growth. With the support of such concepts, he examines "wide ranging forms of divination based on birth date, on marital harmony, on auspicious days, belief in auspicious names, physiognomy, and geomancy" (2005, 286). Obviously, his sociological attention to the rapid growth of fortunetelling is very timely, but his article focuses on a horizontal description of the religious phenomenon, rather than on theoretical and empirical analysis. His conclusion represents a critique of secularization thesis, as put forth in his previous article (2002). However, there is no explanation of why desecularization becomes more remarkable in contemporary Korean religious market.

On the basis of individual interviews with 30 fortunetellers across the country and of personal profiles of 170 fortunetellers described in books on divination, Hongcheol Kim's research (1995) attempts to understand the matter of Korean fortunetelling. His research is of

interest to this thesis in that it is the first to discuss the remarkable expansion of Korean fortunetelling with an empirical and non-reductive method. He summarizes the features of Korean fortunetelling, and he explains that its prevalence can be understood as a way of pursuing mysticism—increasingly found in Korea since the 1970's. He then concludes that the growth of fortunetelling is motivated by a pathological aspect of society, and claims that divination is a matter of cultural tradition the social malfunction of which should be controlled by public policy. He also admits, however, that both demanders and suppliers of Korean fortunetelling are recruited from all walks of life, regardless of age, social position, education level, and the like. Fortunetelling in Korea used to be understood as a deviational subculture limited to lower classes or women. But, contemporary fortunetelling is no longer a marginal phenomenon.

2. Methodological Reflections

Theorizing on the popularity of Korean fortunetelling are found mostly in the anthropological or psychological fields, or in functional theories of religion, while it is rarely dealt with by sociologists of religion.

First, published ethnographical or cultural studies have contributed to our understanding of the origin and specifications of religiosity inherent in shamanistic practices in a cross-cultural perspective (Murayama 2005[1933]; Yu 1975; Choi 1994; Kim et.al. 1995; Cho 1998), they do

not deal with the nature of religious dynamism that is caused by the conjunction between a variety of fortunetelling services offered by different religions and the rapidly changing social circumstances. The existing anthropological and historical perspectives, as exemplified in studies of Korean shamanism and colonialist ethnography, focus on the essence of Korean fortunetelling, and does not seem to provide any meaningful conclusions on why and how fortunetellers have become so popular recently and unprecedentedly. The goal of the thesis, however, is not in understanding the essential nature of fortunetelling in Korea, even if it is a very important matter in terms of cross-cultural comparative analysis; It is oriented toward the recent growth of Korean fortunetelling, and its relationship with Korean society and its religiosity.

Second, psychological studies have offered a popular and theoretical foundation in regard to an analysis of fortunetelling as one of the most remarkable social phenomena with its rapid expansion since the latter 1980s. Postulating that divination emerges in times of great trouble or uncertainty and is a means to obtain answers to questions that are insoluble by rational reasoning (Michiko 1987, 194), this perspective used to explain a psychological motive attributed to fortunetellers and clients. In the context of a Freudian-like perspective that basically regards religion as a kind of psychopathology, an expansion of fortunetelling can be interpreted as a reflection of the increasing fear and uncertainty in rapidly changing Korean society. At the time of the sudden financial crisis in the late 1990s, Korean people felt a serious existential threat,

witnessing the dissolution of family, enterprise, and society. It is reasonable to assume that such psychological factors caused the Korean people to ask fortunetellers about both the unknown future and the difficult present. In the context of a Jungian perspective, C.G.Jung's notion of 'synchronicity' offers more persuasive terms for analyzing how clients rationalize the practical results of fortunetelling in their mind. He explains that "synchronicity takes the coincidence of events in space and time as something meaningful more than mere chance, namely, a peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers" (1967, xxiv). In fact, the ultimate goal of fortunetelling is to interpret a matter of chance that cannot be expected, known, and experienced in advance. Every client participates in a session with fortunetellers to avoid a psychological dilemma between chance and determined fate. As modern humans themselves feel consciously or unconsciously that scientific determinism is inadequate to explain and deal with their situation, they are apt to be preoccupied with a self-rationalization of a new causality provided by fortunetellers. In this sense, it is not surprising that a philosophical type of fortunetelling is more popular among the individualistic and practical Japanese people.

Obviously, psychological factors bring us closer to answering the question of why and how individuals consume fortunetelling even in post-modern society. In fact, almost all articles on fortunetelling in Korean newspapers since the 1890s have been partly or entirely based on such

psychological perspectives. Considering that there is little academic research on Korean fortunetelling, as a broader concept in comprehending shamanism, the numerous articles in the mass media are the only attempts to understand Korean fortunetelling in any theoretical context. However, these attempts not only reveal a biased theoretical flaw, but also produce a political contradiction. From a theoretical point of view, they reduce a social phenomenon to a psychological factor inherent in the human mind. As shown by Emil Durkheim in his famous study of *Suicides* (2006[1897]), social phenomenon must be examined from a social perspective. By means of dismissing historical, economic, and cultural aspects of Korean fortunetelling, their understanding of the meaning of fortunetelling formed and developed under Korean circumstances is too narrow. Thus, they are forced to keep silent about many of the contemporary issues concerned with fortunetelling: why and how traditional divinations have become more popular than Christian or Buddhist divinations; why shamanic divination is still popular only in Korea; how clients adapt fortunetelling to their scientific rationality, and so on.

Another risk inherent to psychological perspectives is a negative value-judgment of the human religious mind. As the demand for fortunetelling or divination basically represents a matter of ego inherent in the human subconscious, it is pathological from a Freudian perspective and, from a Jungian one, is more closely connected with the unconscious than with the rational attitude of consciousness. In this sense, belief in fortunetelling is simply an aspect of the

irrational human mind, whatever rational goals it moves toward. Thus, the numerous mass media articles propped up by psychological perspectives do not hesitate to make a prognosis of the popularity of fortunetelling. In particular, when shamans were intensively persecuted or prohibited during the period of modernization, such psychological theories have always been invoked as a scientific source by established religions and governmental bureaucrats.

Third, the functional perspectives, as an important strand inherited from classical sociology of religion, focuses on the social implications of fortunetelling. Fortunetelling, including divination, is a process of socialization for the individual in pursuit of a moral coherence and a stable social status in Durkheimian term. Either it leads people to conform to a ruling ideology by letting them dismiss class consciousness in the Marxian sense, or it is simply a type of traditional thought that will disappear in a fully rationalized society from a Weberian and evolutionary perspective. In social-functional terms, the fast growth of fortunetelling in contemporary Korea can be understood not as a feature of individual religiosity, but as a change on the collective level. For example, Koreans flocking to fortunetellers can be described as a flight from modernity in the terms offered by the theory of relative deprivation or deviance (Wilson 1967; Hunter 1987; Bruce 1992).

It is well known that shamanic divination in Korea was historically conducted mainly by women, who held a lower social position than men. Although they were often asked to divine in

the residences of higher bureaucrats and royal families, shamans were placed in the lowest class in the social hierarchy. Even non-shamanic fortunetellers belonged to the lower social class, even if some of them were hired as public servants. It is reasonable to assume that the lower and discriminated classes are more likely to expect fortunetellers to provide them with good fortune in the near future than the higher classes. Both shamanic and non-shamanic divinations have contributed to a social communication between the lower and higher classes through participation in rituals. In addition, even in urbanized and pluralized circumstances, the animosity factor of fortunetelling fits into the various deviational circumstances of individuals such as divorce, suicide, or unemployment. Those trapped in such problems are apt to have a tendency to reject the scientifically rationalized ideology of the dominant society, and of pursuing a trans-social worldview beyond science. Most fortunetellers interviewed in the thesis believe that their communication with clients can contribute to the prevention of suicide, divorce, or solitude. In short, the role of fortunetelling in contemporary Korea is not limited by gender, economic status, educational level, and the superstitious minority.

The basic position of the thesis does not deny that the growth of fortunetelling may be influenced by deviant tendencies. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the most serious weakness of the functional theories is to overlook the social ubiquity of fortunetelling in East Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, and China. In this area, as there is no strict distinction between

the religious and the non-religious, religious membership and non-membership, or official religions and non-official religions, it is impractical to categorize participants in the fortunetelling market according to a criterion of social classification. For example, considering that the number of *yeoksulgas* and *mudangs* exceeds the total of all other religious specialists in contemporary Korea, the growth of Korean fortunetelling urges researchers to find a more integral method of approach different from one adequate for the study of a cult or a new religious movement. This is not a study concerning a religious minority in Korea.

Fourth, the existing studies of fortunetelling are not free of categories that have been constructed and standardized by official religions, such as ‘magic’, ‘superstition’, ‘congregation’, ‘doctrine’, ‘commitment’, and ‘membership’. These conceptual categories, in which the concept of ‘religion’ in general is embedded, have been conventionally used as tools for understanding fortunetelling, even though it is a phenomenon without religious organizations, consistent cosmology, common norms, and systematic doctrines to sustain it. Durkheim supported typical usages in the dichotomy between religion and magic: “the magician has a clientele and not a church” (Durkheim 1965[1915], 42); “A rationalization of metaphysical views and a specifically religious ethics are usually missing in the case of a cult without priests, as in the case of a magician without cult” (Weber 1993[1922], 30); “religion involves personal relations with supernatural, while magic deals with mechanic manipulation of the impersonal” (Benedict 1938,

637). The thesis will discuss later why the features of fortunetelling in Korea cannot be approached appropriately using such concepts as irrationality, immorality, or mechanic manipulation. In the Korean fortunetelling, the pious, ascetic, and altruistic characteristics of fortunetellers are regarded as very important aspects by their clients and by themselves, which contribute to maintain the sacred authority of fortunetelling. Korean participants in fortunetelling maintain a religious attitude during the process, whatever the motivation may be. In this sense, we need to focus on the religious aspects of fortunetelling.

Finally, REM emphasizes an economics of supply, on which Durkheimians, Weberians and Marxists have not attached much importance in their approach to the sociology of religion, and eventually tries to reveal a rational aspect of religious choice rather than the rituals or psychological attitude of religious actors. Thus, by claiming that the dynamic changes of religious groups cannot be understood simply by means of religious preference or type of religiosity because the growth and decline of religious groups can be better explained by various comparative analyses on the social level rather than the individual level, REM has more in common with sociologists, who are accustomed to marginalizing or standardizing the various beliefs and practices of individuals in terms of official religions. From a theoretical perspective, although REM would not prefer fortunetelling as an object of religious analysis, the economic law that the competition system of the market produces more efficient suppliers presupposes a

universal hypothesis which all participants in the market are rational within the limit of information available. But, most of the previous research using REM conforms to the concept of religion or religiosity postulated by Christianity or other monotheistic religions. REM studies did not seriously consider religion in the East Asian context from its beginning (McGuire 2008, 23-24; Sharot 2002, 437-439). The influence of organizational religions in East Asia is not as accessible as in America or Europe. Theology, liturgy, and religious membership are not institutionalized parts of the religious beliefs and practices of East Asians, with their historical ties to Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and folk religions. Even in Korea, where Christianity has undergone widespread expansion since World War II, 50% of the population does not yet have any affiliation with established or new religions (Statistics Korea 1985; 1995; 2005). Still it would be very hasty to claim that Korean, Japanese, and Chinese society are not as religious as Americans or Europeans. It would be nothing but an oversimplification to conclude that another 50% of Koreans without religious identification are not religious, as REM will claim. While Christianity or Christianized religions ask their members to maintain their distinctive religious identity, non-Christian religions would not concern themselves with the religious identity of their visitors, clients, or members. Concerning the half of the population who are 'religious without belonging', Yun's survey (1985) is interesting because it reports that 91.7% of the population still behaves in a Confucian way in everyday life, contrasting with the report that only 1.1% of

the population identified themselves as Confucian in the 1985 national demographic survey. In short, when REM accounts for the numerical increase or decrease in religious membership, it is subject to the methodological constraint that cannot take into consideration religious people who are “invisible” in official surveys, which is a very common phenomenon in East Asia.

For this reason, it is important to examine the religiosity of participants in the process of fortunetelling to overcome the methodological limitations of REM deriving from numerical statistics based on membership. However, there has been no empirical research to comprehend such a network in united theoretical context, though both *yeoksulga* (non-shamanic diviner) and *mudang* (Korean shamans) flourish through constructing new networks of *dangol* (client). Thus, there is a need to analyze the issue of Korean religiosity through the actual and continuous relationship constructed by fortunetellers and clients. This is why the thesis is partly based on field research was conducted through two-hour in-depth interviews with *yeoksulgas*, *mudangs*, and *dangols* in Seoul and Pusan, the two biggest cities in Korea. With the approval of the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa in February 2010, I received a few contact numbers from my family and friends who have a considerable degree of experience and knowledge of fortunetelling. Since it seemed to me more difficult to interview fortunetellers than clients, I started to interview a female *mudang* at her shrine in Pusan on the 11th February 2010. My brother has been her old *dangol* for the last ten years. She turned out cooperative enough to

introduce her male *dangol* living in the suburbs of Seoul after the first two-hour interview and a chat for one hour. On the 15th February 2010, my friend interested in fortunetelling volunteered to be the first client interviewee in Seoul. She not only interviewed as a *dangol*, but also introduced her favourite *yeoksulga* operating in downtown Seoul, who participated in the interview a week later. In this way, the researcher asked each interviewee to introduce their familiar clients and fortunetellers. This personal network of fortunetellers and clients was used as an effective tool for snowballing samples. In fact, all of *dangols* and most of fortunetellers participated in the interview were recruited through this personal network. Besides, ten fortunetellers were called by contact numbers advertised on a nation-wide online community (<http://cafe.daum.net/taek007>), even if only three of them finally participated in the interview. In total, the researcher limited the number of contact to sixteen *yeoksulgas*, sixteen *mudangs*, and twenty-five clients, adjusting it to thirty in Seoul and twenty-seven in Pusan for a geographical balance.

But, final participants who actually conducted interviews consist of ten *yeoksulgas*, nine *mudangs*, and twenty *dangols* who have experienced fortunetelling at least once a year. Every participant was scheduled to have a two-hour interview, which is digitally recorded and transcribed on laptop computer. Sometimes the researcher rescheduled for the second or third

interview when the participant accepted it. It took about a year from the 11th February 2010 to the 31th January 2011 to complete all interviews in this way.

<Table 1> Overview of Interview Sample

	Gender & Age				Income			Region		Married
	Male		Female		Low	Middle	High	Seoul	Pusan	
	-40	+40	-40	+40						
<i>Yeoksulga</i> (10)	1	6		3	6	3	1	7	3	6
<i>Mudang</i> (9)		1	1	7	7	2		4	5	7
<i>Dangol</i> (20)	2	4	3	11	4	11	5	12	8	17

An overview of the interview sample in <Table 1> shows, the size of the interview sample is relatively too small to take serious in terms of quantitative statistics. In this thesis, however, to find a relationship between fortunetellers and clients is more important than to enlarge the number of sample. Given that believers in fortunetelling are hidden statistically and overlapped across religions, the method to examine such relationship should be different from the

quantitative method of REM. In order to complement the methodological limitation of small-sized sampling, the thesis utilizes researcher' insights gleaned from the researcher observing and participating in the process of fortunetelling, previously published mass media or books records of interview of fortunetellers and clients (Park et. al. 1995; Kim et.al. 1995), together with bibliographies of fortunetellers (Kim, Geumhwa 2007; Shim, Jinsong 1995), and Gallup surveys (1997; 1999; 2004).

Yeoksulgas and *mudangs* are the most dominant types of fortunetellers in Korea; how they identify themselves and communicate with clients are important clues on Korean religiosity inherent in fortunetelling culture. REM assumes the constant and universal demand for religions by emphasizing the desire to overcome death as a major basis of religion (Stark and Finke 2000, 88); it is thus essentially trapped in methodological inconsistency across psychology and sociology (Sharot 2002: 436). Korean religiosity surrounding fortunetelling is not really related to the constant desire to overcome death because Koreans are more likely to adopt a simple fatalism for accepting and understanding death in everyday life.

Furthermore, in order to better comprehend the religiosity of participants in fortunetelling, the thesis approaches fortunetelling in terms of popular religion. Based on the five dimensions of religiosity suggested by Glock (1965), most participants in my interviews were found to be religious along an experiential or consequential dimension. As McGuire suggests, no single

quality can be used to describe the individual as “religious” or as relatively “more religious” than another individual (2002, 109). In this sense, in order to effectively examine the phenomenon of fortunetelling, the thesis needs to be free of the conceptual hegemony of official religions by overcoming sociologists’ preoccupation with institutional questions (McGuire 2008), disentangling us from our normative agendas, and defamiliarizing us in relation to our own culture (Orsi 2003, 174). The thesis tries to focus on the active and creative power of the religious populace who construct a new social reality (Parker 1996; Levine 1990), overcoming any conceptual dichotomy concerning fortunetelling. The notion of popular religion then becomes a useful concept for analyzing such phenomena as religious non-membership as found in fortunetelling, shamanism, or other folk religions, which may be as dominant as institutionalized and organized religions in the Korean religious market. In fact, REM defines the concept of religion too narrowly to comprehend fortunetelling in terms of the model itself. That is mainly because there is no ‘supernatural being’ or cosmology based on ‘existential explanations’ in the field of fortunetelling as defined in Western culture. It is in this context that this thesis will attempt to test whether the REM approach fits in Korean fortunetelling.

III. Basic Assumptions of Religious Economy Model

1. Definitions and Propositions

There are a few important assumptions to be introduced in terms of the application of REM to Korean fortunetelling. Based on ninety-nine propositions and thirty-six definitions that Rodney Stark and Roger Finke explain in their book, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (2000), the thesis will summarize the micro and macro meaning of major assumptions that could concern directly the understanding of Korean fortunetelling

The first assumption is that *within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options, guided by their preferences and tastes, humans attempt to make rational choices* (2000, 85). This is a soft version of the economic principle that humans attempt to maximize benefits and to minimize costs. The point here is not that humans always gain a rational result from their choice, but that humans always pursue a rationality of action. It is not difficult to find irrational results caused by actions in pursuit of rationality. However, it happens because actors cannot always have adequate information and exact calculations on matters in everyday life. “Since rationality and ignorance are independent, cargo cultists are just as rational in their ignorance as the observing anthropologists are in their greater knowledge (2000, 85)”. In other words, the intention of action, not the results of actions, is determinant in judging whether

actors are rational. Thus, as the rationality of a choice can be assessed only in terms of subjective rationality, “the imputation of rationality always assumes the presence of subjective efforts to weigh the anticipated rewards against the anticipated costs, although these efforts usually are inexact and somewhat causal” (Stark 2000, 248).

This rationality proposition of REM tends to understand rational action within the scope of instrumental-rationality, *zweck*-rationality as termed by Max Weber, which means that one would choose the most appropriate means to achieve concrete goals. Eventually, rationality has nothing to do with goals which people pursue, but only with the means they use to achieve them (Stark and Finke 2000, 38-39; Stark 2000, 248-249). In terms of relative costs and benefits, any goals are not considered absolute. Even great role models such as Mother Teresa or a parent rushing into a burning building to save his or her child is understood as those who pursue their self-interest because they would regard the survival of a child or others as more rewarding than their own survival. In short, value-rationality, considered as another type of rational action by Weber, is thoroughly neglected by Stark and Finke. The value-rationality that Weber termed *wertrational* action is involved in actions whose goals are believed to be more important than any personal benefit or advantage (Hamilton 2009, 125). For example, as the value of salvation in Christianity, enlightenment in Buddhism, and virtue in Confucianism cannot be given up or substituted for, human actions pursuing such priceless values can be termed “rational” (Sharot

2002, 431). However, the notion of rationality explained by Stark and Finke simply attributes *wertrational* actions to instrumental-rationality in disguise.

The first proposition also admits both the constancy of and the variation in preferences. The variation in preferences is why humans do not always act alike, although all of them attempt to make rational choices. However, the different preferences facilitate exchange, even if humans do not know how they came to have their own preferences and tastes. When humans engage in exchanges, they can maximize rewards and minimize costs derived from the exchange relationship. In this sense, to make a religious choice is to trade with gods or the supernatural for the purpose of mutual interests. The constancy of preferences is a diachronic stock of religious demand existing in a religious market. Although preferences are various, the whole stock of religious preferences is a given in a religious market. Hence, REM strongly denies the secularization thesis as the source of decline of religiosity, namely the quantitative changes of religious preference, when it explains the growth or decline of religions (Stark and Finke 2000, 77-78). For example, when people change churches or turn to foreign religions, theorists of REM argue that it is not because their preferences have changed, but because the new churches or religions more effectively appeals to preferences they have always had (Stark and Finke 2000, 86; Sherkat 1997; Sherkat and Wilson 1995). This assumption of stable preference is one of the most controversial issues surrounding REM as a theory of the supply-side.

There are a few explanations of how religious preferences are stable. Laurence R. Iannaccone refers to a stock of accumulated religious skills and experiences as 'religious human capital', which affects the capacity to produce religious satisfaction (1990, 299). Religious participation is also the most important means of augmenting one's stock of religious human capital because people enhance their satisfaction through a familiarity with a religion's doctrines, rituals, traditions, and members. Thus, religious switching or conversion is achieved at the expense of giving up a certain stock of religious human capital accumulated previously. The costs of religious switching or conversion will increase as one accumulates more capital specific to a particular context (1990, 301; 1997, 32). While Iannaccone explains the stability of preference on the individual level, Sherkat focuses on the reciprocal relationship between individual preferences and social options. According to him, the religious market exhibits a duality of structure such that individuals are influenced by religious institutions (1997, 67). Like all markets, in his opinion, religious markets are social creations, and transactions which take place in these markets are governed by social forces. Social relations determine the choices individuals can make (1997, 67). As preferences do not equate with choices under various social constraints, social capital as well as human capital are considered to contribute to the stability of religious preferences in terms of individuals' religious choice. "Constructing a model of the structures and processes of religious economies in which the supply side provides the dynamic

and the demand side is the basis of stability”, Stark and Finke suggest that a starting point of questions should be replaced from why people’s religious preferences changed into why religious organizations are more or less appealing (2000, 193-4).

The second is on the relationship between religion, rewards, and magic (2000, 91): 1. *religion consists of very general explanations of existence, including the terms of exchange with a god or gods.* According to this definition of religion, religious explanations provide people with the fundamental meaning of life based on the supernatural, whether the supernatural is beings or essence (Stark 2001, 111). In particular, as *Gods are supernatural beings having consciousness and desire* (2000, 91), gods and humans will be partners of exchange depending on their needs, whereas unconscious essences such as the Tao (道) or Kant’s First Cause is not a god. Godless religions or divine essences are incapable of exchanges, pose no tactical questions, and thus prompt no effort to discover terms of exchange (Stark 2001, 111). Then, *in exchanging with gods, humans will pay higher prices to the extent that the gods are believed to be more dependable, more responsive, and of greater scope* (2000, 99). In this sense, the omniscient and omnipotent god presented by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam makes a much more attractive partner than the gods in polytheistic pantheons of the Greeks and Romans. Unlike many gods in pantheons who do not offer immortality, the one omniscient god requires the long-term and exclusive exchange relations with humans. Polytheistic gods are worldly-oriented, but the

monotheistic god is otherworldly-oriented. Hence, otherworldly rewards can generate extended commitment to the one god. In short, *in pursuit of otherworldly rewards, humans will accept an exclusive exchange relationship* (2000, 100).

If the fundamental purpose of religion is to provide explanations of existence, *magic refers to all efforts to manipulate supernatural forces to gain rewards without reference to a god or gods or to general explanations of existence* (2000, 105). According to Ruth Benedict as quoted by Stark and Finke, there are two techniques for handling the supernatural—at the one extreme is compulsion and at the other rapport (1938, 647). Compulsion of spiritual entities remains the realm of magic, but exchange (which implies rapport) shifts the activity into the realm of religion (2000, 106). Thus, *magic cannot generate extended or exclusive patterns of exchange* because it promises worldly rewards to be realized in the short-term (2000, 106). This difference between religion and magic is not to admit that the former evolved from magic. Rather, both developed in tandem and were always recognized as different (Stark 2001, 107). Although religion as well as magic still offers worldly rewards, otherworldly rewards presented by godly religions enable religions to require rules and morals for sustaining relationships with the gods. For this reason, godly religions alone are enabled to define and sanctify the moral order, whereas the impersonality of the supernatural component of godless religions and magic makes human motives and morals irrelevant (Stark 2001, 113). Conclusively, REM suggests that people prefer

religions to magic because otherworldly rewards is more valuable than worldly rewards and godly religions to godless religions, because the latter is unable to gather a mass following, always being limited in its appeal to small, intellectual elites.

The third is on the macro structure of religious economy as a relatively distinct subsystem of society. *A religious economy consists of all of the religious activity going on in any society: a market of current and potential adherents, a set of one or more organizations seeking to attract or maintain adherents, and the religious culture offered by the organizations* (2000, 193). If each member of the market is rational, free competition among suppliers maximizes the efficiency of the market when artificial regulations do not distort the voluntary mechanism of the market. Similarly, as religious regulations are removed, the overall level of religious participation will rise “because a single faith can seldom shape its appeal precisely to suit the needs of one segment of the population without sacrificing its appeal to another” (Finke 1997, 121). Based on research results on the 102 Roman Catholic dioceses of the United States, for example, Stark and McCann argue that ordination rates, the ratio of priests to nominal Catholics, and Catholic school enrolment are proportionately highest where Catholics are few (1993). Stark and Iannaccone claim a similar pattern in Canada by showing that Catholics in Quebec now are less likely to attend mass weekly than are Catholics elsewhere in Canada (1996). They try to argue that the overall level of religious participation is higher where Catholics are the minority—in a more

pluralistic market. Stark and Finke interprets Ted G. Jelen and Clyde Wilcox's 1998 research on European Catholicism in the same way (2000, 246):

1. Catholic church attendance is higher in European nations with a smaller proportion of Catholics, and, within nations, Catholic attendance is higher than that of Protestants, again to the degree that Catholics are in the minority.

2. Compared to their non-Catholic countrymen, European Catholics are more apt to agree with church social teachings such as opposition to abortion and liberal female sex roles to the extent that they are in a minority situation.

Concluding that minority settings are more conducive to effective religious socialization on the part of the Catholic Church, Stark and Finke try to present these findings as evidence of the negative relationship between religious monopoly and the level of religious participation. Thus, *societies with low levels of religious participation will be lacking in effective religious socialization, and where large numbers of people receive ineffective religious socialization, subjective religiousness will tend to be idiosyncratic and heterodox but far more widespread than organized religious participation* (2000, 202). As a good historical example of these propositions, they argue that there was widespread belief among medieval peasants in many non-

Christian supernatural beings, many medieval priests were ignorant of Latin, and a Christopaganism prospered constantly (2000, 64; 202; Stark 2006, 183-208).

Competition has generally been inferred from the degree of state regulation of the religious market or the degree of pluralism (often estimated by the Herfindahl Index), even if it is one of those concepts that is very difficult to measure, except indirectly. Pluralism does not always result in competition. For example, in multicultural caste systems where each caste has its own religion, there is much pluralism but no competition. The degree of state regulation can be distorted by the substantial lag that occurs between decreases in regulation and the rise of religious competition (2000, 218). Competition and pluralism are the inevitable result of religious freedoms (Finke 1997, 121). Other things being equal, *to the extent that pluralism or regulation are adequate inferential measures of competition, the overall level of religiousness will be higher where pluralism is greater or where regulation is lower* (2000, 219). In spite of the immeasurability of competition, it is the key supply-side factor that determines the growth and decline of religions because efficient religious firms alone can survive the competitive religious market. The economic principle that competition results in efficiency is applied literally to the dynamism of religious society. Every religious firm must utilize its personal and material resources efficiently enough to make its product more valuable. When one tries to gain a religiously valuable product, he is willing to make a certain level of commitment to the religious

firm. As a result, religious commitment required by religious suppliers is generated and strengthened by example and by exclusion. To the extent that people around them display a high level of commitment and confidence, people will conform and respond to it. The higher the level of commitment expected by the group, the higher the average level of confidence and of commitment. In particular, to remove free-riders, who benefit more and pay less, is crucial in making the average level of group commitment higher. Since religious service has a feature of collective or public goods, a religious firm is vulnerable to free-riders, who enjoy its service but with a lower level of commitment. Laurence R. Iannaccone argues that free-riding could be prevented in religious groups by requiring high costs of everyone, so that potential members are forced to choose whether to participate fully or not at all (1992; 1994, 1188). Conclusively, *there is a reciprocal relationship between commitment and (religious) growth* (2000, 154).

2. Usefulness of the REM

Now let me consider what aspects of REM can serve to provide a better understanding of contemporary Korean fortunetelling.

First, it makes it possible to analyze the popularity of fortunetelling in the context of the continuity with other social subcultures. Since its assumption of religious choice based on economic rationality presupposes a fundamental homogeneity between religious and non-

religious behavior, this methodological stance seems more useful for comprehending Korean fortunetelling consisting of shamanic and non-shamanic divinations. Common attributes of the two can be explained consistently without compartmentalizing or isolating each other intentionally. When the concept of rationality in the REM refers not to a strict principle of maximization, but to a limited and relative satisfaction (Stark and Finke 2000, 33), the assumption of rational homogeneity gives researchers the opportunity to consider prophetic functions of religions more comprehensively. In Korea, it is actually impossible to distinguish shamanistic fortunetelling from non-shamanistic fortunetelling, or even from prophetic activities of official religions in aspects of its content. In traditional sociology of religion, prophetic functions of official religions were treated as more religiously-motivated, but those of non-official religions were treated as more economically-motivated. As will be shown later, fortunetelling culture in Korea involves as many religious elements as the prophetic services of major religions. REM is useful for explaining comprehensively fortunetelling expressed in different ways in everyday life.

Second, it enables us to approach the worldly-oriented religiosity of Koreans more theoretically. When this religious worldliness increases and subsequently overwhelms the environment of a religious market, REM prevents researchers from being trapped in the demand-side factors, by means of emphasizing social conditions concerned with the growth of

fortunetelling in the relativized and pluralized context. Namely, it allows us avoid another tautological explanation that demand produces demand. As contemporary Korean fortunetellers are very flexible, creative, and adaptable under the influence of technological and individualistic circumstances, they play a crucial role in conceptually deconstructing and reconstructing religiosity, religious identity, and even religion. Under certain conditions, supply can create demand in the market. After all, a consideration of this interaction of supply and demand in terms of the market can allow us to evaluate more correctly a position of worldly religiosity in Korean fortunetelling in a balanced perspective.

Third, it can explain more consistently the issue of choice and decision made in the process of fortunetelling. Its assumption of a rational choice by religious actors can be useful for analyzing their way of consuming fortunetelling more individually than before. However, the subject of fortunetelling has never been treated as an important field by REM; it was only discussed briefly and superficially in terms of spirituality or folk religions (Stark, Hamberg, and Miller 2005; Stark and Finke 2000, 75-76). Fortunetelling really reflects a substantial part of Korean religiosity whose essence is very difficult to reveal through the western and Christian measures of religious identification. It was traditionally very human-oriented because its basic standpoint of belief is not that human beings exist for gods or religions, but that gods or religions should benefit human beings. Historically, fortunetelling culture in Korea has been nourished by

human-oriented religiosity, which is still matched up with the individualistic trend of religious choice. Furthermore, as the REM has continuously focused on the growth and decline of institutional religions in American and European society, a discussion of the increasing popularity of fortunetelling in East Asian societies will provide another opportunity for theoretical verification on how the market model can be applied to various non-Western cultures. Although the REM was admired as ‘a new paradigm’ by Stephen Warner (1993), it needs to expand the scope of its theoretical application into more diverse religious cultures that it had not considered at first.

IV. Importance of Fortunetelling in Korean Religious Market

Although fortunetelling is one of the oldest and most popular religious phenomena in Korea as well as in other East Asian countries, there has been little attention paid to it by sociologists of religion. That is partly due to the influence of Western scholarship, which deals with fortunetelling as a marginal activity of society, and partly due to a lack of methodology appropriate to comprehend the fortunetelling tradition in terms of the sociology of religion. Fortunetelling culture in Korea involves a pattern of religious behaviors different from a kind of hobby, amusement, superstition, or social deviation. That has always developed in accordance with the religious and practical needs of individuals in their daily lives. Through the process of fortunetelling, Koreans had a chance to categorize and define the self, to privatize their religious experience, and to adapt themselves to social norms and historical traditions, though such a process can make it difficult to distinguish between the religious and the non-religious as a primary task for the social scientific study of religion. In this sense, the thesis needs to show why fortunetelling is more religious for Koreans and why it is important socially.

1. Meaning of Fortunetelling in Korea

The Korean term ‘*chom* (점)’ refers to all practices concerned with explaining or predicting the past, present, or future. The term ‘*chomsulga*’ means a person who specializes in any *choms*, which involve shamanic divination, geomancy, physiognomy, the Book of Changes, *Tojungbigyul* (土亭秘訣), and so on. Admitted that many shamanic elements are found in a *Dangun-shinhwa*, the birth myth of Korea, it is obvious that the oldest type of *chom* in Korea is a shamanic divination, sometimes entailing a shamanic ritual, called *kut*. Another major type of *chom* is based on the theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, which dates back to 3B.C.E. in China. This type of *chom* relies on many scriptures and empirical wisdom, but is not accompanied by special rituals. The *chomsulga* engaged in this type of *chom* is called *yeoksulga* (易術家) in Korea, while shaman is called *mudang*. Thus, *chomsulga*, translated as fortuneteller in this thesis, refers to both *mudang* and *yeoksulga*.

The thesis uses both the English term of fortunetelling and divination to refer to *chom* in Korea. The latter tends to focus on a more ritualistic religiosity such as shamanism, popular religions, or cults. Unlike shamanic divinations, however, *yeoksulgas* do not regard ritual as an important factor or even necessary in their practices. So the term ‘fortunetelling’ can be applied with a larger acceptance. ‘Divinations’ based on geomancy, physiognomy, or the Book of Changes, *Tojungbigyul* (土亭秘訣), have nothing to do with god(s) or the supernatural being. Rather they are based on an almost profane orientation and goals. The term ‘fortunetelling’ in

this thesis is applied independently of such conventional connotations imposed on the term ‘divination’. The former is used to refer to much more comprehensive forms of divination than divination standardized by existing religious studies.

From *Samkukyusa*, the oldest historical text existing in Korea, it is not difficult to find myths or fables filled with stories of fortunetelling in the ancient kingdoms of Korea founded since 3 CE. According to Murayama’s research (2005[1933]), fortunetellers often played a crucial role in deciding major policies of the ancient kingdoms, like succession to the throne, war, rebellion, weather change, and the like. Each kingdom had a public branch and officials that specialized in fortunetelling. This tradition was passed down to the *Chosun* Dynasty through *Corea* Dynasty, even if shamans were officially placed in the lowest class of each society. As Murayama emphasizes, it seems evident that fortunetelling was and is a popular custom and culture across all levels of society throughout Korean history.

On the 7 January 1897, *Doklibshinmun* reported that 0.5% of two hundred thousand residents in Seoul were shamans. Considering that the ratio of all religious professionals to the whole population was 0.4% in 2005, the number of shamans in 1897 seems to well reflect the popularity of fortunetelling at that time. Most of the early Protestant missionaries to Korea such as George Herber Jones, H.B. Hulbert, Horace G. Underwood, and Charles Allen Clark regarded shamanism or folk religions as their most serious enemy (Kim, Geumhwa 2007, 23-41). Since

the introduction of Christianity, both Japanese colonialists and Korean military regimes reinforced laws against *kuts* or shamanic rituals, which exposed Korean shamanism and folk religions to a systemic threat of annihilation. However, it must be noted that they could not regulate non-shamanic fortunetelling because this type of divination is not based on ritual. For this reason, non-shamanic fortunetelling was the only way for both shamans and other diviners to survive economically and religiously during the period of official prosecution. In contrast to their antipathy toward ritualistic divination, Korean economic and political elites made use of famous fortunetellers as a resource to increase their power. Shim Jin-song became the first bestseller shaman by selling 300,000 copies of *Woman chosen by God* (1995) across the country after she divined exactly both Kim Dae-jung's win in the 1997 presidential election and the death of Kim il-sung, the North Korean dictator, in 1994. In fact, in the weeks leading up to local, general, or presidential elections in Korea, fortunetellers become much busier with frequent visits by the political candidates, their families, or their supporters (*Hankuk Kyungje* Dec 8, 2007).

Another trend of contemporary fortunetelling is the assembly of fortunetellers in commercial and crowded areas of big cities. Unlike its past image associated with poverty, ignorance, and deviance, recent fortunetellers form a specific complex congregated in specific areas, waiting for clients in very intellectually-decorated, modern-stylish, and convenient commercial buildings. In Seoul alone, there are four zones that are filled with hundreds of

fortunetelling offices. All of them are located on the most crowded and prosperous streets in Seoul. Apart from these zones, many fortunetellers operate close to subway stations that are efficient in terms of access and advertisement, in attracting clients. This form of grouping triggers more competition and more marketing through communication technologies such as websites, phones, and other mass media.

2. Historical Features

In order to discern a cultural basis for such popularity, we first need to explain briefly how people understood fortunetelling in Korean history. The thesis tries to summarize a few historical features of Korean fortunetelling as follows.

First, both *mudangs* and *yeoksulgas* were engaged in fortunetelling without any conflict. Since the era of the three ancient kingdoms established in about 3CE, they have functioned as a supporter or resource of political elites and as a channel of political feedback. Although both were eventually controlled by political elites, shamans were treated differently from *yeoksulgas* in the public domain. *Yeoksulgas*, called *bokseosa* (卜筮士), *yin-yangsa* (陰陽師), or *sunsa* (禪師), were eventually incorporated into a bureaucratic system and became members of a public branch that oversaw various kinds of fortunetelling. In *Chosun* Dynasty, *Kwansanggam* (觀象監) had 20 officials who were specialized in astrology, *feng-shui*, calendar, time, and

divination (Murayama 2005[1933], 57). On the other hand, shamans were hardly ever assigned official positions and titles, even if they were frequently asked to divine for the royal family, higher bureaucrats, or public events. Rather, they were engaged in the daily life of the lower classes, meeting a larger part of the religious demand of the lower classes.

This difference in social status was due to the oral tradition of shamanic divinations, in contrast with the fact that *yeokhak* (易學) relies on a more philosophical Chinese theory of yin-yang. The literati of *Corea* and *Chosun* Dynasty academically studied *yeokhak* and even foretold the future based on their studies. *Tojungbigyul* (土亭秘訣) is their representative work, which *Lee jiam* (李之函) called *tojung*, created as a scripture of Korean fortunetelling based on forty-eight trigrams, instead of the sixty-four trigrams found in the Book of Changes. Thus, divinations based on *yeokhak* tended to be regarded as part of Chinese academic tradition rather than a religious belief. Thus, it is natural that Confucian bureaucrats preferred a more intellectual method of fortunetelling different from the oral divination of indigenous shamanism, given that Confucianism had functioned as the only political ideology in Korea from the ancient kingdoms on. Nonetheless, both shamanic and scriptural divinations have practically been conducted across all social classes, though the former was more ritualistic and the latter was more intellectual. The two types of divination would and still remains the most prevalent forms even in contemporary

Korea, having grown complementarily in accordance with the specific preference of the social classes.

The second feature to be noted is that the fortunetelling culture in Korea has never been marginalized except for during the ruling period of Japanese colonialists followed by the Korean military regimes, as will be discussed later. Fortunetelling is one of the most important traditions in Korea in terms of its influence on the development of Korean religiosity. Many researches on Korean religions have already collected and showed a large degree of evidence on that point (Baker 2008; Buswell 2007; Murayama 2005[1933]; Grayson 2003; Chang 1982; Janelli 1982; Lee 1981). Fortunetelling is part of primitive religiosity that human beings have developed over a long period of time as it was and is still found in any cultural context, ranging from Old Egyptian and Vedic times to post-modern societies. *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics* describes divination as a very ancient and widespread conviction, inherited from lower levels of culture (H.J. Rose 1973, 775). Unlike this typical description, however, fortunetelling in Korea was and is consumed more ubiquitously by the ruled and the ruling classes, the uneducated and intellectuals, and the members and non-members of organized religions. Perhaps for Rose or Murayama, the widespread popularity of fortunetelling in modernized Korea, Japan, and China may be strange, but it is extremely common in East Asian countries, including Korea. Although Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity officially persecuted a type of fortunetelling culture

that originated from shamanism or folk religions, fortunetelling has played a crucial role in constructing a Korean religious identity through interacting with such dominant religions in many ways (Kim, Seong-Nae 2004; Cho, Hung-youn 1999; Grayson 1992).

Thirdly, fortunetelling is closely connected to various kinds of commercialized ideas and technologies derived from the capitalistic mechanism. From an historical perspective, it seems natural for Korean fortunetellers to be accustomed to the competition for survival because non-official religious specialists could not receive much economic support from the state during the periodical transfer of religious hegemony from Buddhism through Confucianism to Christianity. *Yongjaichonghwa* (1525 A.D.), written by a famous Korean Confucian scholar, records (Murayama 2005[1933], 60):

The blind (fortunetellers) shaved their heads and were so called *sunsa* (禪師). An old blind fortuneteller, called *Kim Yelboo*, divined as a full-time job near the *Kwangtong* bridge. People were quick to meet him, but most of them knew his divination was wrong. So women joked like this, “Things become better if he foretells a bad thing.”

An interesting thing in this story is how clients are related to fortunetellers. Clients do not necessarily believe divination entirely, and fortunetellers also do not pretend to be omnipotent. The latter seem to be very accustomed to buying and selling fortunetelling as a commodity. When they participate in the process of shamanic or scriptural divinations, both buyer and seller

agree implicitly or explicitly that they pursue a relative, situational, and limited truth of the past, present, and future. Throughout Korean history, fortunetelling culture has never lost this religious flexibility and inclusiveness, which became a major source of their adaptability. Thus, the transfer of religious hegemony between imported religions has been accomplished peacefully in Korea and without serious conflict.

3. Detailed Issues

The basic concern of the thesis is to examine to what extent the recent growth of Korean fortunetelling can be explained in terms of REM. As a result, the issues of regulation, competition, and religiousness, as introduced in Chapter III, are the core issues of debate. In order to discern what allowed Korean fortunetelling to grow quickly and recently, we have to examine both the supply-side and the demand-side. As discussed in Chapter II, previous research on Korean fortunetelling was biased toward the demand-side factors, especially the change and nature of Korean religiousness, whereas REM enables us to analyze the growth of fortunetelling according to the supply-side factors, such as the effect of deregulation and the efficiency of fortunetellers. However, the thesis tries to assess the popularity of traditional fortunetelling in contemporary Korea in terms of a more balanced approach. Let me introduce briefly a few main issues to be discussed in the following chapters.

The first issue is on the effect of regulation in the Korean fortunetelling market. The reason the matter of regulation is important in the REM is because it determines the extent of competition among religious suppliers. It relies on the economic law that a higher level of regulation reduces competition among religious firms, restricts the scope of religious choice, and hence increases the inefficiency of the market. Thus, religious regulation influences the growth or decline of the religious market through controlling competition and diversity. As basic propositions of REM suggest in Chapter III, deregulation is an ideal condition of religious growth because free competition makes inefficient suppliers fail and, at the same time, allows efficient suppliers to succeed. As religious consumers are basically rational, they will naturally choose a religious firm that meets their religious demands best or better. In this sense, it is important to understand how the growth of Korean fortunetelling was and is influenced by governmental regulations. Chapter V deals with how Korean governmental regulations of fortunetelling have been conducted historically. Religious regulations are part of social norms justifying what happens in the religious market. Although all norms are nominally fair, they cannot be fair practically because the criterion of fairness itself is a reflection of cultural values and a result of socialization. In other words, a policy of deregulation is essentially not aimed toward a legal equality among religions, but toward an order of the religious market.

The Korean legal structure was discriminatory against non-official religions like folk religions, while it was favourable to official religions, especially Christianity. The principle of religious freedom and equality proclaimed in the Korean constitution referred only to a nominal equality, but did not remove the existing structural differentiation between official and non-official religions, or even between major religions. Unlike the English-American legal system, Korean religious regulations, based on the French-German legal system, was overwhelmingly controlled by administrative bureaucrats because the government has had the right to introduce any bills, independent of the National Assembly. Under the president-centralized authoritarian ruling system, the personal tendencies of political leaders also had much influence on the making of religious enactments. In this sense, we need to examine in detail how religious regulation or deregulation is influenced by the structural power beyond competition.

The second consideration should be on other supply-side factors, except for religious regulations. If it is admitted that the effect of deregulation is not the only factor that explains the growth of Korean fortunetelling, it seems more important to pay attention to the internal attributes of Korean fortunetellers. First of all, the flexible adaptability of Korean fortunetellers enables them to utilize communication technologies more conveniently and rapidly than institutional religious suppliers. Traditionally, both *mudangs* and *yeoksulgas* have been accustomed to breaking down the border of sub-cultures like religion and economy or religion

and politics. Rather, a fast change of social circumstance tends to improve their flexible adaptability more creatively. Fortunetellers are pioneers who first launched various ways of religious marketing and services based on the internet, mobile phones, and other mass media, as explained later.

In addition to many creative combinations between fortunetelling and new communication technologies, there are two important market-oriented properties inherent in fortunetelling. One is the low cost of market entrance, and the other is the absence of free-riding. As fortunetelling services do not require any organization, building, or community, fortunetellers, including shamans, are free to open, move, and close their office. As well, its one-to-one service can rule out free-riders almost entirely. The material resources of fortunetelling are eventually individuals, not organizations or groups.

With regard to religious free-riding, Korean Protestantism has had the most efficient system for filtering ‘non-religious’ members through mutual monitoring among members. Its personal management based on cell groups focuses on drawing out various indicators of religious commitment from potential or current members. The pyramid structure of Korean churches beginning with the cell unit up to the assembly of church leaders has been propped up by personal network of members controlling, monitoring, and encouraging each other. As REM will argue, the exclusion of free-riding was one of many reasons why conservative denominations

such as Presbyterians or Methodists greatly succeeded in Korea for a short time. During the period of growth-oriented modernization, the Yeoido Full Gospel Church, which first introduced cell groups as part of church organization, has become the role model of how religious leaders should utilize cell groups for the growth of the church. Korean Protestantism did try its best to distance itself from traditional religious practices: shamanic rituals and divinations, ancestor worship, and folk religions concerning rain, mountain, water, sun, and moon. Though religious blending of Protestantism and traditional religiousness created various unique features of Korean Protestantism such as early-morning prayer, mountain prayer, loud prayer, and memorial service (a Korean Protestant version of ancestor worship), Korean Protestant churches officially demonized all traditional religious practices.

However, as such growth-oriented modernization began to be questioned after the collapse of military authoritarian regimes followed by the occurrence of the national financial crisis in 1997, people came to doubt the ever-praised Korean model of development and turned to more individualized religious suppliers like shamanism (Stoffel 2001, 341). When the political and economic justification of Protestantism was threatened internally and externally, the growth in its membership likewise stopped after the 1985 demographic census. In particular, the concept of traditional culture or even religion, which was defined mainly by Protestant elites, did not meet the desire of those who sought tradition, culture, and religion in a broader context of meaning in

the 1990s. While Protestantism subsequently took an even stricter approach to free-riders or Korean patterns of the religious portfolio, Catholicism and Buddhism were relatively tolerant to traditional religious practices, including fortunetelling. In particular, in the case of Buddhism, which was the most tolerant to free-riders, the rate of its growth has been higher than that of Protestantism in the last twenty years. In this sense, the thesis needs to examine how traditional religious practices such as shamanism or fortunetelling is connected to the growth of major religions.

Meanwhile, the entrance barrier for the Korean religious market was constructed not by the religious monopoly, but religious oligopoly. On the level of official religion, three major religions (Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism) have occupied about 96% of the entire religious population since the 1995 demographic census, while the proportion of new religious groups grows lower over time. The centralized hierarchy of Roman Catholicism has established a high entrance barrier by means of monopolizing the authority of interpreting doctrine and appointing the clergy. Considering that Korean Catholicism is not related to any charismatic renewal movements and that there are only eleven small-size Korean orthodox churches, the recent growth in the Roman Catholic membership is a problematic issue. In short, compared with the attributes of major religions, recent Korean fortunetellers were more successful in both removing the entrance barrier and preventing free-riding. Furthermore, in this concrete process

where they achieve such success, fortunetellers exhibit a form of work ethics to ensure public confidence and social justification. This will be explained later.

Thirdly, the demand-side factors, which were regarded as an 'old' and stereotyped paradigm by the REM, should be explained. That entails an analysis of Korean religiosity. The need exhibited by contemporary Koreans for fortunetelling may be related to the urgent necessity of reconstructing a new Korean self-identity in the global circumstance. As Koreans have been incorporated into a world trend of political, economic and cultural globalization since the 1990s, they have had to face a relativized and objectified identity and reconstruct a continuity with traditional values. A forty-four year old woman says in an interview:

I go to church, but fortunetelling is not necessarily bad. My church friends also visit diviners. As we feel that God cannot solve our problems entirely in everyday life, we need fortunetellers. The world today is very complex and changes fast. So, we have to accurately diagnose our own problems. Fortunetelling makes us understand the problems in various dimensions. In a sense, it is a kind of psychological counselling. Its usefulness depends on individuals' own judgment.

In communicating with fortunetellers, this woman has a chance to look back on, discover, and redefine her own problems. Through a new understanding of such existential problems, she tries to reconstruct herself and to find a balance between tradition and modernity in her own way. Fortunetelling in Korea today is therefore a primary part of the globalized self as well as the

traditional self. Those situations suggest another hypothesis; namely that fortunetelling provides various ways to reconstruct the self for individuals independently of authority.

The social and economic crisis at the end of the 1990s forced Koreans to pay attention to individual values more seriously because collective or nationalistic values propped up by official religions did not provide individuals with proper protection. In the face of the rapid disappearance of the middle class, a high rate of divorce, and an unexpected unemployment rate after the national crisis, the organized and bureaucratized religions had difficulty in convincing Korean people to turn to the otherworldly religious rewards because individuals' psychological instability reduced the present values of otherworldly rewards. A rational individual is supposed to choose religions, depending not on the future value of rewards offered by the religions, but on the present value. The gap between the two values is formularized as the concept of discount rate, which means that a rational calculation of cost and benefit is determined by psychological factors.

Fortunetelling in Korea is a religious choice to adapt oneself to worldly religiosity in everyday life. Gallop surveys show that the worldly attitude is widespread and general in Korea, and that Koreans prefer worldly rewards promised by fortunetelling to otherworldly rewards promised by God. Popular forms of Korean fortunetelling such as *sajupalja*, *koonghap*, *jakmyung*, *takil*, and *feng shui* pursue a harmonious way between humans and the cosmos in all aspects of individual life. Shamanic divinations are not based on mechanical procedure – the

compulsion of the supernatural, as Ruth Benedict put it (1938, 647). Contemporary Korean fortunetelling is consumed in a more complicated context, ranging from psychological therapy to cultural self-satisfaction and personal or family troubles. Through fortunetelling, individuals try to satisfy various desires originating from their worldly religiosity. Thus, the fatalism inherent in fortunetelling is consumed for more concrete, inclusive, and practical purposes than the idea of the one God. The pattern of religious consumption in terms of portfolio also turns out to be popular in interviews for the thesis. Unlike syncretism, indigenization, or hybridization, this represents a kind of religious portfolio because Koreans do not seek a new type of religious blending different from established religions. After all, fortunetelling functions as an inevitable element for shaping the multi-religious membership in contemporary Korea.

Finally, how the growth of Korean fortunetelling is different from or similar to fortunetelling in neighbouring countries should be noted briefly. Although fortunetelling culture is commonly popular in all East Asian countries, Korean fortunetelling is more shaman-oriented, the Japanese form is manual-oriented, and the Chinese form is more temple-oriented (Lang & Ragvald 1993; Lang, Chan & Ragvald 2005; Satoru 1990; Suzuki 1995). In a comparative perspective, it remains to be explained how differently Koreans understand fortunetelling compared with the Chinese or Japanese practitioners and clients.

V. Social Conditions of Korean Fortunetelling

Religion is always influenced by social conditions, including economic circumstances. The social conditions vary from society to society and hence make a structure of religious market more diverse because each society will eventually develop its own market structure. In particular, the local legal system is one of the most important factors that determines the structure of the religious market in the sense that it officially categorizes the scope of the religious and constructs certain formal relations between religion and state or religion and society. As REM states, the legal system can encourage or restrict competition among religious suppliers by means of controlling the extent of religious regulation. In this context, we first need to consider the relationship between the legal system and the growth of fortunetelling in Korea.

1. Basic Arguments about Korean Religious Market

Buddhism and Confucianism, both imported from China, formed their own unique tradition in Korea for more than one thousand years, interacting continuously with indigenous popular religions. Even when Confucian bureaucrats of *Chosun* Dynasty expelled Buddhist monks or shamans into the countryside areas or mountains, each religious tradition was very cooperative functionally. Confucianism offered social integration as the dominant political philosophy,

Buddhism a common otherworldly view, and shamanism an indigenous repository to solve actual troubles in daily life. However, this old balance of the Korean religious market deteriorated after the import of Christianity and the collapse of *Chosun* Dynasty at the end of the 19th century. Since then, both the conversion-oriented missions of Christianity and the colonialist cultural policy to annihilate Korean tradition led people to move into a new balance point of the religious market. Based on the transitional confusion, Korean society became a greenhouse for cultivating a large number of pro-western, pro-Japanese, or nationalistic Christian, Buddhist, Confucian, and new religious movements by the end of the Second World War (Min 2008; Noh 2005).

On the other hand, the war's end did bring religious change to South Korea. The country was liberated from Japanese rule and Japanese religious restrictions, and like its defeated neighbor experienced an immediate flowering of new religions and a sharp increase in the level of active religious membership (Iannaccone, Finke, and Stark 1997, 358).

...(such Japanese) disestablishment produced both winners and losers...the major denominations that originally enjoyed state support suffered severe losses relative to upstart sects...similar effects have been noted in Korea (Iannaccone 1998, 1488).

These are what points that REM explains in relation to the whole religious situation in Korea after the 1945 Liberation. Although there is little empirical evidence given on the situation, REM

simply analogizes the Korean religious situation from the Japanese religious situation. For this reason, it is noteworthy that we look back on several historical facts of Korean religious society to make clear the relationship between fortunetelling and the legal system.

First, there is no sign of religious decline both before and after Japanese rule. The Korean Confucian legal system officially lost its social function in 1910 when *Chosun* Dynasty collapsed by way of Japanese colonialism. However, the effect of disestablishment remarkably already appeared from the end of the 19th century when Confucian ideology did not offer any ways of understanding foreign political and cultural powers. When Japanese and Chinese soldiers occupied parts of the Korean peninsula respectively, Korean society began to experience more frequently an emergence of new indigenous religions such as *Donghak* (東學), *Jeungsankyo* (甌山教), *Cheondokyo* (天道教), and *Daejongkyo* (大倥教). Furthermore, the nationalistic new religious movements were established, split, or revived most drastically during the period of Japanese rule (Noh 2005, 129-159; 2003, 28). They continued to grow as socially important organizations, though the colonialist government legally classified them as para-religions and seriously oppressed them in the name of public security (Noh 2003, 32).

Second, there was no religious monopoly in Korea since the collapse of Confucianism. With the annexation of Korea and Japan, all organizations and facilities of Korean Confucianism were also incorporated into Shinto. However, Shinto did not obtain a status of religious

monopoly even during the period of the colonialist ruling. It is because the Japanese colonialist government defined Shinto as a kind of national ceremony, not a religious ritual, in order to avoid an all-out conflict with the Western powers. They claimed that Shinto is compatible with any other religions, even with Christianity, which continuously refused to accept ancestor worship (Kim 2003). Japanese religious policy focused not on diminishing a whole membership of Korean major religions, but on making them support its imperialist policy. In this sense, Koreans could bow before Japanese ancestors worshipped in the Shinto temple without giving up their own religious identity. In addition, Shinto itself is based on an inclusive religiosity (Simazono 1997), which is incompatible with the exclusive attributes of state religion in the West. In a decree in 1915, Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity were postulated as 'religion' (ICPD 1998, 9-10). This situation is different from what REM explained about the situation of the Korean religious market after the Second World War. In Korea, there was no religious monopoly before and after the Liberation.

Third, religious regulations of the colonialist regime were often a cause of religious growth rather than religious decline. A practical focus of Japanese religious restrictions was not on a restriction of competition among religions, but on an oppression of political activities based on Korean religious organizations. Thus, they focused on controlling religious organizations and their nationalistic identity, and hence did not influence directly the religious identity of the

Korean people. It was not until a proclamation of the *Decree of Dissolution of Para-religions* in 1936 and of *Religious Organization Act* in 1939 that Japanese religious restrictions began to make a heavy impact upon the supply-side in the Korean religious market. The 1936 *Decree* made all nationalistic new religious movements illegal, and the 1939 *Act* directly limited the number of Protestant churches. Since then, most of the new religious movements went underground and the number of Korean Protestants, which had reached 700 thousand, decreased by half until 1945 (Kim, Insoo 2003, 295). However, these effects were temporarily sustained from the middle of the 1930s to 1945, compared with an increasing trend of the Korean religious market since the end of the 19th century.

Fourth, there is no evidence that state support decreased religious membership. Buddhism and Catholicism, which enjoyed state support by the colonialist regime, grew increasingly even after the end of the Japanese rule. Also, Protestantism, supported commonly by the post-liberation Korean regimes, experienced an explosive growth. According to *The Yearbook of Korean Religions* (1993), in addition to the fact that Korean Protestantism was already over 700 thousand in its membership in 1962, Buddhism showed the highest rate of growth of its membership until 1970. Like Protestantism, Buddhism has been in a process of rapid growth after the 1945 Liberation, while Catholicism has experienced a steady growth. Regardless of

state support, the major religions experienced a substantial growth in their religious membership even after the 1945 Liberation.

In short, the above mentioned description of REM does not match up with important historical facts concerning the trend of religious growth in Korea. The most important religious change in Korea started already when Confucianism collapsed and a great number of new religions arose voluntarily in response to the social crisis. The cause and effect of Japanese religious restrictions are quite different from that of the religious monopoly as in the West.

2. Structure of Regulation

Since 1910, when shamans wanted to practice ritual, called *kut*, they had to show a registration card issued by the Japanese government (Cho 1998, 324). Various religious restrictions during the period of Japanese rule mainly focused on institutional religions that had organizational networks across the country. Non-institutional and non-organizational religions such as shamanism or folk religions were defined as superstition, as pseudo-religion, or frequently punished as fraud. It is easy to find such examples from the earliest Christian-funded newspapers such as *Doklibshinmun* (Jan. 7, 1897; Sep. 14, 1897) and *Daehanmaeilshinbo* (Oct. 1, 1908).

Despite this Japanese restriction, fortunetelling culture was generally found across the nation. Murayama's 1933 survey sponsored by the *Chosun* Governor-general shows the

widespread popularity of fortunetelling at that time. However, things changed after the 1945 Liberation. A legal structure of the religious market turned out even more favourable for major official religions such as Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

The first constitution of the Republic of Korea announced in Article 12 that, “1. All people have the freedom of faith and conscience 2. An establishment of religion is denied, and religion is separate from state”. This article has remained even through the ninth amendment since 1948 without any serious correction, but the idea of equality between religions is controlled by a legal hierarchy that consists of constitution, laws, regulations, judicial decisions, customs, and so on. As the Korean government had the independent right to enact laws and regulations under the centralized presidential system, it was and is still the most influential actor of religious enactments. In Korean religious history, there are two important Presidents who had a remarkable impact on both the pattern of religious laws and furthermore the structure of the Korean religious market.

Syng-man Rhee, who took power from 1948 to 1961, publicized very clearly a religious policy based on Christian political ideals. He, as an elder of a Korean Protestant church, pursued a relationship between religion and state to serve his Christian ideals. After the Korean War, his regime was heavily dependent on Protestantism because many American assistance groups such as Team Mission, World Vision, and Compassion Inc. were actively engaged in various activities

for reconstructing the post-war Korean society, as well as supporting Korean Protestant churches (Kim Insoo 2003, 338). In 1952, President *Rhee* allowed Protestant chaplains to be assigned to all military bases, which was stipulated in 1961. This became the basis of an evangelical movement to convert all military men into Protestants in the 1970s (Kim Insoo 2003, 379). Given that all male citizens have an obligatory military duty in Korea, such stipulations on the level of law or regulations made empty the ideal of religious freedom on the level of constitution.

Chung-hee Park, who ruled from 1962 to 1979, was known as Buddhist, but he separated his religious conviction from the political reality because he considered major institutional religions as political resources. Like *Rhee*'s times, *Park* still followed an evolutionary concept of religion under which world religions such as Buddhism and Christianity are 'developed religions', while Confucianism and folk religions are remains of pre-modern and anachronistic traditions. Religion had to become a cultural resource of economic development to be modernized as soon as possible. In this point of view, state intervened actively in the religious as well as economic market. *The Law of Hyangkyo* (Confucian shrine) *Properties* and *the Law of Management of Buddhist Properties* in 1962 legalized the direct control of Confucian and Buddhist properties by the military regime. *Hyangkyos* and Buddhist temples were restricted severely in terms of the management and possession of their properties because of complex administrative procedures and approval of their economic activities. Protestantism and

Catholicism had no limitations in taking advantage of their own economic resources, whereas the special laws seriously limited Buddhism and Confucianism in accessing various economic resources. The special laws remain even today.

In the Korean religious market, the role of government has taken effect through many enactments that produced a religious inequality and prevented a fair competition among religions. As a rule, both the rapid growth of Protestantism and the decline of Confucianism were not unexpected in terms of the attitude of religious enactment during the period of Korean modernization. Such attitudes have been supported by a dualistic simplification derived from Protestantism which became the religion of the social elites since the Korean War: the only god vs. idol, religion vs. superstition, the good vs. the evil, rationality vs. irrationality, modernity vs. feudality, and so on. In this sense, a governmental attitude toward fortunetellers, including shamans, was not significantly different from the viewpoint of Protestantism. Under both *Rhee's* and *Park's* regime, as folk religions were simply considered a reflection of pre-modern religiosity that was to be removed, it was very hard for the Korean folk to express and keep their own religious identity in public. The police frequently physically oppressed shamanistic rituals (Kim, Geumhwa 2007, 289). As bureaucrats did not put such belief systems into the category of 'religion', the Korean folk were forced to opt for 'Buddhism', 'others', or 'no religion' in official surveys. They were not comprehended even as 'para-religions' or 'pseudo-religions' in actual

execution of religious laws. In addition, those who belonged to non-official religions were never allowed to establish a religious corporation or foundation that could enjoy various lawful protections on the basis of its non-profit activities. Following a very narrow concept of religion inspired by conservative Protestantism, the regimes recognized folk religions simply as ‘superstition’ that would disappear in the end. This bureaucratic differentiation still underlies all enactments regulating the Korean religious market.

The most controversial issue in the enacting of the laws of religious corporations was the governmental approval of selling and buying a primary property of religious corporations (IKCPD 1998). Every religious corporation established by Article 32 of civil law is required to follow the same restrictions of possession, operation, and corporate articles with other non-profit corporations.

Article 32 (Establishment and Sanction of the non-profit Corporate)

Corporation or foundation, which is in pursuit of a non-profit end such as scholarship, religion, arts, or friendship, can be of a corporate capability under the sanction of the authority concerned.

The Korean civil law endows the government with full discretion to review and sanction basic requirements of registration for all groups that want to become a legal corporate. The point is that there is no way to obtain a corporate capability without relying on Article 32 of civil law. It

functions as a high entrance barrier for new religious groups because most of them are not practically affordable enough to meet the procedural requirements of civil law (Kim, Jongsuh 1992). A non-profit corporation can be provided with many economic and social benefits in a competitive market at the expense of procedural restrictions by the authority. In addition to various kinds of tax exemptions, any activities serving an original end of the corporate are protected thoroughly, and hence an existential value of the corporate is legitimated publicly. Thus, it is a sign of public confidence on the corporate. At a conference, *Jyungwoo Lee*, a scholar of Korean new religious movements, reported that only 33 of about 350 new religious movements in Korea were registered at that time (IKRS 1991, 115). Actually, shamans (*mudang*) and fortunetellers (*yeoksulga*) were sanctioned to register only one corporate in 1997 and in 1992, respectively.

<Table 2> Number of Religious Corporates in 2002 and 2008

Buddhism		Protestantism		Catholicism		Confucianism		Others		Total	
2002	2008	2002	2008	2002	2008	2002	2008	2002	2008	2002	2008
44*	69*	111	127	66	79	17	17	14	16	252	308
58**	115**	92	164	9	12	4	6	11	13	174	312
102	184	203	294	75	91	21	23	25	29	426	621

* Foundation; **Corporation

(Source: MCST 2002 and 2008)

<Table 2> shows the situation of religious corporations registered to the authority concerned. The four major religions occupy 95% of the total, while all other religious groups are represented by less than 5%. The fact that about 48% of the total belongs to Protestantism shows that it has enjoyed a corporate capability more than other religions, even if it simply explains 34% of the total religious population in Korea. Depending on how the government applies laws and regulations to the religious reality, the Korean religious market can be structuralized in various ways. As even folk religions, including fortunetelling, are forced to be under the control and management of the structuralized power of society, the abstractive principal of religious freedom is not helpful in analyzing the growth of fortunetelling in social structural dimension.

3. Effects of Regulation

Such market intervention by government produces two important results. First, it causes a separation of the religious market. When a concept of religion in religious regulations is defined very narrowly, a structural differentiation prevents non-official religions from entering an open religious market. As Robert E. Buswell concludes in his book, *Religions of Korea in Practice*, the primal religions like shamanism or folk religions “became the substratum of all Korean religious experience and has shaped the development of all religions and philosophies which have been transmitted to Korea” (2007, 230). However, the modern legal system developed by

Korean regimes accommodated a cultural hegemony of official religions in the open religious market at the expense of ridding ‘the substratum’ of the religious status. Let me explain this separated type of religious areas in economic terms.

Based on a purely economic rationality, black market occurs when the price is legally controlled below the balance point of demand and supply. The price in the black market naturally turns out even higher than the normal price because of a surplus of demand. If we assume a stability of religious demand and regard the niche market of fortunetelling as a kind of black market, the effects of religious restrictions, as REM argues, are imposed on the supply-side of fortunetelling. By means of a separation of the whole market, government restrictions decrease the cost of fortunetelling services purchased from official religions in the open market, while it increases the cost of fortunetelling services purchased from shamans and *yeoksulgas* in the black market.

As long as it is concerned with the Korean context, religious restriction produced both a growth and decline of fortunetelling in separate markets. The assumption of deregulation is not real in that there is no society without religious regulation, given that religion is a social institution. A legal system is forced to reflect many specific values constructed socially and historically. Religious regulation or deregulation in Korean society is not an independent variable that explains a growth or decline of fortunetelling consistently. A more important aspect

is that there is a structural distortion caused by religious restriction. If major religions, new religious movements, and non-official religions cannot be put in a structurally equal status, such structural differentiation would make the cost of religious participation different and distorted. In short, when the demand for fortunetelling is constant, the regulatory system in Korea has simply favoured receiving one's fortunetelling supply through official religions, at the same time discouraging people from receiving them from independent suppliers like fortunetellers. For example, Yonggi Cho, founder of the *Yoido* Full Gospel Church, indoctrinated his church members with a Pentecostal message of wealth and health to come true in near future, demonizing extremely both shamanistic and non-shamanistic divinations. This way, Korean Protestantism tried to monopolize a religious message of wealth and health, growth and development, happiness and safety, making its members feel guilty on meeting traditional fortunetellers such as shamans and *yeoksulgas*. In Korean Buddhism, fortunetelling service has been provided by monks for a long time in the same way that shamans or *yeoksulgas* divine. Healing and exorcism within Korean Buddhism has continuously remained since its introduction to the Korean peninsular (Uhlman 2007, 112). It is natural that the legal restriction on traditional fortunetellers would press believers in fortunetelling to resort to such prophetic functions of Protestantism and Buddhism.

<Table 3> Ratio of Each Membership to Total Religious People (%)

	2005	1995	1985	1975*	1971*
Total Religious Membership	53.1	50.7	42.5	72.8	58.1
Buddhism	42.9	45.6	46.8	47.3	39.5
Protestantism	34.5	38.7	37.7	15.9	17.9
Catholicism	20.6	13.0	10.8	4.0	4.33
Confucianism	0.4	0.92	2.8	18.6	24.6
Cheondokyo	0.18	0.12	0.16	3.2	3.54
Jungsankyo	0.14	--	--	--	--
Daesunjinlihoe	--	0.27	--	--	--
Wonbuddhism	0.51	0.38	0.53	2.92	3.44
Daejongkyo	0.01	0.03	0.06	0.50	0.62
Others	0.65	0.75	1.0	7.37	5.91

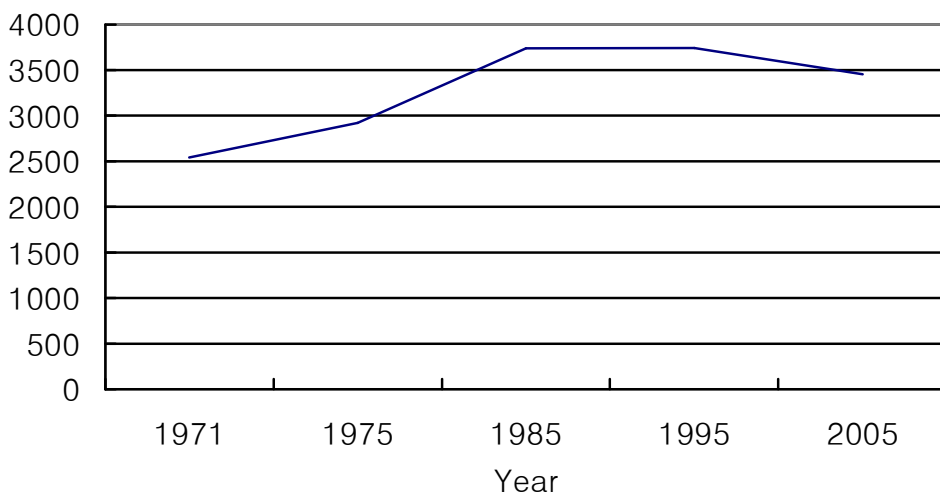
* Numbers of 1971 and 1975 are based on self-reported statistics from each religious organization. (Source: Population and Housing Census of Statistics Korea 2005; 1995; 1985)

The second effect of regulations is to create an oligopolic structure of market. <Table 3> shows how the structure of the Korean religious market has changed during the past 30 years. The self-reported numbers in 1971 and 1975 do not exclude the possibility of exaggerating membership. They are only meaningful to show a whole structure of Korean religious market in the 1970s because the 1985 demographic census of Statistics Korea involved a question of religious identification for the first time. The numbers in the 1970s should not be compared directly with those of 1985, 1995, 2005. In terms of a whole market share, Protestantism and

Catholicism experienced the highest rate of growth, and Buddhism continuously occupied the biggest share in the religious market since the 1970s. The decline of Confucianism and new religious groups are relatively remarkable. Another important fact here is that Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism have been dominating the Korean religious market by occupying 95% in 1985 and 98% in both 1995 and 2005.

<Figure 1> shows the flow of the Hirshman-Herfindahl index, which estimates the extent of monopoly. Although this is a very simplified chart based on the numbers of <Table 3>, it suggests that the Korean religious market, consisting of all people reporting their religious membership, has not moved toward a high extent of religious pluralism.

<Figure 1> Hirshman-Herfindahl Index from 1971 to 2005



Strictly speaking, it is an oligopoly market consisting of Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism, which are relative beneficiaries of religious restrictions. The oligopoly of the religious market contributed to the maintenance of a hierarchical structure of religious suppliers: World religions, new religions, para-religions, and superstitions. It costs too much to take the 'lower' religions as a source of religious identity because fortunetelling was considered as a stage of superstition, the lowest position of the hierarchy, throughout the period of modernization. Thus, it is evident that the oligopolic market structure of Korea not only restricted the extent of religious diversity, but also conveniently forced believers in fortunetelling to select another religious identity or to give up identifying themselves religiously. For many fortunetellers and their clients, Buddhism is the most convenient method for expressing their religiosity because both Buddhism and fortunetelling are not based on the concept of religious membership.

Conclusively, Buddhism and Christianity in Korea have owed their quantitative growth to governmental enactments directly or indirectly. This is because the separation and oligopoly of the religious market engendered a relative growth of the dominative religions by means of distorting the cost of religious choice structurally. In this sense, Christopher G. Ellison's remark seems very appropriate: "social norms and sanctions may influence greatly on religious membership and/or participation level under religious monopolies and oligopolies (1995: 93)". However, the Korean governmental regulation of the religious market had a two-sided effect that

can explain both religious growth and decline, as far as it is a part of social norms. The ambivalent effect was at its height when an economic ideology of growth and development functioned as the only paradigm of society.

4. Deregulation

It was not until the 1980s that folk religions were considered as part of various efforts to recover a 'Korean' identity distinct from the western (Park 1997, 194; Cho 1998, 328). The government established the Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation in 1980 and then granted the title of Important Invisible Cultural Heritage to several shamanistic rituals. The 1988 Olympic Games became another opportunity to display nationally and internationally what is 'Korean'. Folk religions were always at the centre of the 'Korean' identity. As the era of local self-government started in 1991, local governments began to invite competitively shamans and fortunetellers for their regional festivals. Furthermore, the trend of globalization since the 1990s internally prompted Korean society to redefine and reform a category of 'tradition', 'the Korean', or 'the folk'. However, this social mood did not let non-official religions enjoy "American standards of religious freedom" (Stark and Finke 2000, 232). Although shamans and fortunetellers felt free to sell fortunetelling in an open market, their fortunetelling was admitted only as a business, not as a religious practice by government. Thus, they still do not receive social benefits such as tax

redemptions or legal protections which official religions enjoy as a non-profit corporate under Korean civil law.

According to Andrew E. Kim's research (2005, 285), "Koreans perceive non-official religions as a part of their worldview, custom, and culture" in that the most popular forms are divination based on birth date (*saju*), fortunetelling on marital harmony (*koonghap*), fortunetelling of auspicious days (*taekil*), belief in auspicious names (*jakmyung*), physiognomy (*gwansang*), and geomancy (*fengshui*). The prevalence of fortunetelling in Korea is related to ultimate matters of real life: birth and death, marriage and divorce, health and disease, economic success and failure, the relationship between human and environment, the past and the future, and so on. Thus, it is not reduced easily to a process of psychological therapy, a reflection of relative deprivation, an expression of magical belief, or a variation of eastern culture. In short, that entails a more expansive consideration of religiosity prevailing in the past and present Korea.

The prevalence of fortunetelling in contemporary Korea can be understood in terms of religious toleration, not religious freedom, in the sense that there was no revision of any religious regulations. As government still has the right to control the religious market by means of various religious enactments, it is bound to be influenced by a governmental preference for official religions. During the period of modernization, both the oligopoly structure dominated by major religions and religious regulations enacted by authoritarian regimes have made the Korean

religious market conducive to the quantitative growth of Korean Buddhism and Christianity, but restrictive to the expansion of fortunetelling. Even in the era of religious toleration since the 1990s, Buddhism and Catholicism experienced a steady increase in their membership in parallel with the revival of fortunetelling culture. According to REM, the overall level of religiousness will be higher where pluralism is greater or where regulation is lower (Stark and Finke 2000, 219). However, the structure of the Korean religious market is another variable that determines the relationship between religious regulation and the level of religiousness. The recent expansion of fortunetelling in Korea is not a product of religious deregulation, but a response to the religious relativization since the era of globalization. Although contemporary religious regulations never abandon the tendency to rule against non-official religions, they leave room for admitting cultural values of fortunetelling to make up for a declining hegemony of Korean Protestantism.

VI. Supply-side of Korean Fortunetelling

The supply-side factors to be discussed in the thesis are explained in terms of comparative religious studies because our focus is on why non-institutional fortunetelling culture is overwhelmingly popular, contrasting with the declining prophetic functions of institutional religions. Even under the criterion of economic rationality claimed by REM, traditional fortunetellers provide religious consumers with a more efficient service than institutional religions in a niche market of fortunetelling. Based on experiential evidence such as participant observation and in-depth interviews of fortunetellers, four factors that make traditional fortunetellers more efficient than other priests are analyzed in this chapter: marketing strategies, an exclusion of free-riders, low cost of market entrance, and work ethics.

1. Marketing

Shamans and fortunetellers in Korea are the first religious professionals who actively utilized various kinds of new communication technology to develop propaganda for their services. The major methods of their marketing go side by side with the development of communication technology, ranging from newspaper advertisements to online chatting service. According to an examination of a Korean newspaper (*Kukminilbo* 2002), there are about 1,000 Korean

fortunetelling companies based on websites and about 200 based on phone service. It is reported that the website *Sansudoin* has more than one million in its membership (*Mailkyungjae* 2003). Yahoo, Daum, and Naver, which are the most popular portal sites in Korea, provide a one-to-one fortunetelling service for their numberless users.

This produced a new relationship between fortunetelling and mass media. While marketing by personal contact makes it difficult to overcome the limitations of time and space, time-space compression by mass media can give access to widespread potential demanders all the time. Mass media provided fortunetellers with a cheap and effective means to communicate with their clients and hence they became more sensitive to the development of communication technologies. Although the content of fortunetelling is filled with religious motivation and prophecy, it is only treated as a kind of economic service in terms of marketing. This familiarity of fortunetelling with mass media differs greatly from church service or Buddhist mass. Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism never produce advertisements for their services in a direct way, as fortunetellers do, even if they have their own broadcasting stations, newspapers, magazines, and websites. The reason why churches or temples are not engaged in all-out commercialized marketing is because they still stick to a conceptual dichotomy between religious and economic service.

In contrast, for non-shamanic and shamanic fortunetellers, there is no clear distinction between the sacred and the secular, or between the religious and the economic. Rather, their

worldview relies on harmony and unification of the two fields. Communication technologies play a crucial part for fortunetellers in identifying themselves as a member of economic society, as well as in expressing a religious belief and confidence. In a sense, this ambiguous demarcation between social fields is a process or product of post-modern transition. Korean fortunetellers and shamans were active in collapsing a conventional demarcation, whereas organized religions still regarded it as a basis of self-identity.

However, advertisements in newspapers engendered serious opposition from Protestant groups that have been exclusive to shamans and fortunetellers. They systemically complained to the Board of Newspaper Ethics of the flood of fortunetelling ads and often led the Board to order a prohibition of the accused ads. For example, the Board warned *Dongahilbo*, which put out the following ads:

I opened my restaurant depending on the advice of a fortuneteller...now it is so successful as time passes...!! (March 16, 2004)

Two months ago, I opened my business, following a fortuneteller's instructions, and now so happy to have too many clients...why do political and financial celebrities come here? (April 2, 2004)

The Ethics Code of Newspaper Advertisement that the Board invokes postulates as follows:

“newspaper advertisements should not do harm to public security and beautiful tradition or

degrade the dignity of a newspaper.” The Board regarded the above-mentioned advertisements as “doing harm to beautiful tradition” because the ads promote unscientific superstitions. This is exactly what Protestant groups such as the Association of Korean Church Journalists argued. They have continuously pressed newspapers to refuse such fortunetelling ads and partly succeeded. Now, most daily newspapers except for sports and entertainment newspapers do not assign their space to fortunetellers and shamans.

In spite of the serious checks by institutional religions, creative marketing techniques of fortunetellers and shamans have made their service more competitive and more efficient. Marketing based on phone service and the website turned out to be very appealing to both young people and those who prefer anonymity in that they are unwilling to belong to organized religions. In the Korean religious market, those who are ‘religious without belonging’ should be given more attention. According to national censuses, the number of those who marked ‘no religions’ was 57.5% in 1985, 49.3% in 1995, and 47% in 2005. Compared with a higher level of religiousness in USA and Canada as reported by the REM (Iannaccone 1995; 1998; Stark and Finke 2000; Iannaccone, Finke, and Stark 1997), the result seems to reveal a very low level of religiousness in Korea.

However, it should be noted that the way Koreans identify themselves religiously is more complicated than the simplified question involved in such demographic statistics. As Iannaccone

puts briefly (1995), the matter of religious identity is very western, Jewish-Christian, familiar to collective religions. Interestingly, marketing strategies of Korean fortunetelling tend to appeal to Korean religiosity, which is not accustomed to specifying a religious membership or a religious identity. While Christianity obviously distinguishes members from non-members institutionally and doctrinally, a matter of membership is not an important issue in the relationship between fortunetellers and clients. Fortunetellers never ask their clients to profess a belief system or believe in gods. They attempt to communicate with clients by means of refraining from any value-judgment on their real troubles in everyday life. This type of communication is a fundamental basis of their marketing.

Marketing involves the psychological art of drawing potential purchasers. All fortunetellers who participated in the interviews describe themselves as a kind of counselor, to be exact, “life counselor”. A 55-year old female fortuneteller says:

Most of the clients come to me due to psychological conflict or insecurity. All of them are in a situation where they have to overcome various difficulties such as unemployment, adultery of spouses, failure in business, divorce, even mental depression, and so on...As they steadily communicate with me, they feel comfortable and peaceful in mind. I try to tell them to look at the more positive side of the difficulties, depending on my divination. I have to tell them in the mildest way, even if I find the worst divination on their fate (Interviewed on Jan 30, 2010).

She tends to regard fortunetelling as a method of psychological therapy. That is not only because she worked as a nurse for more than twenty years, but because she knows that the image of psychological therapy is more appealing to religious consumers. Fortunetellers advertise themselves not as mechanical and heartless religious producers, but as humane and generous seekers of truth. They do not try to sell a fate itself or a belief of the fate because a given fate is not something to be changed by the belief in the transcendental being, but only something to conform to. Instead, they let clients in on what the fate of their client is and how he follows his fate. Thus, it is often reported that there is a human empathy between fortunetellers and clients.

Take an example of a famous female shaman in Busan:

Rubbing the floor in the morning, I suddenly felt my legs paralyzed and then lost feeling in them. As I managed to finish cleaning, a patient came in with his legs dragging...One day I had a nosebleed all of a sudden. While doing fortunetelling, I couldn't stop it and had to wait for a client to come to me. After a few minutes, a bloody patient really came in (Interviewed on Feb 25, 2010).

This type of empathy is likely to give potential clients the psychological expectation that fortunetellers will understand the personal troubles of clients better than anyone else. In the case of fortunetelling, clients are not connected directly to a kind of god or an absolute truth because its focus is on the communication between fortunetellers and clients. Actually, most fortunetelling ads include the phrase 'trouble resolution'. This psychological marketing seems

very efficient in diluting the religious aspect of fortunetelling and in portraying fortunetellers as an objective counselor.

Historically, Korean fortunetellers were familiar with the competitive mechanism more than any other religious professional because their economic survival absolutely depended on an evaluation of their predictive ability in the market. In particular, the issue of internal competition is more important in the fortunetelling market. At least internally, providers of fortunetelling have faced a free competition in that there can be no limitations in terms of market entrance and escape. It is noteworthy to listen to what an old-man fortuneteller in Busan complained about:

As a fortuneteller, I have worked here for twenty years. If my prediction is wrong, people will come to me no longer and I'll have no clients. Now there are about one hundred fortunetellers working in the area I'm living. So my predictions should be more accurate. Otherwise, I will not survive (Interviewed on March 20, 2010).

A drastic internal competition forces participants to agonize over marketing strategies endlessly. Creative marketing of fortunetellers obviously serves to enhance their competitive power in a religious market, whereas organized religions often fail in responding efficiently to the religious demand of individualistic and practical fortunetelling because of their formalization, bureaucracy, collectivism, and so on. This failure of organized religions can be explained more clearly and

comprehensively in the discussion on the topic of free-riding, which REM considers very important in terms of religious growth.

2. Free-riding

When Stark and Finke explained that the low-commitment congregation is the victim of free-riding (2000, 148), it means that religion involves some important features of collective goods (Douglas 1986; Stark and Finke 2000). The concept of religion as collective goods, especially club goods, focuses on a matter of free-riding within organized religions because they have to increase the utility of collective goods by means of excluding free-riders. In this sense, Laurence R. Iannaccone concluded that free-riding could be prevented in religious groups by requiring high costs for everyone, so that “potential members are forced to choose whether to participate fully or not at all” (1992; 1994, 1188). How is the matter of free-riding related to the numerical growth of Korean fortunetellers? The theorists of REM fail in looking at the problem of free-riding in a broader context that comprehends both official and non-official religions. Hence, the thesis attempts to discern the role of Korean free-riders in terms of fortunetelling.

First, how free-riding influences religious growth is not uniform. While Korean Catholicism became more flexible to other religions and traditional cultures after having undergone serious persecutions in *Chosun* Dynasty (Kim, Sung-Ho 2002, 31), Korean

conservative denominations such as the Korean Presbyterian church, Korean Methodist church, and the *Yoido* Full Gospel Church has continuously required members to show a high level of commitment and piousness. Demonizing fortunetelling as the die-hard enemy rooted in Korean cultural tradition, they have always been engaged in depriving its members of the old religiosity tinted with fortunetelling or shamanism. Especially after the Liberation, Korean Protestantism was apt to demonize traditional religions because Korean pro-American regimes desperately needed to project an advanced and developmental image of Protestantism for the purpose of the moral legitimacy of their political power (Noh 2005, 233-261), as discussed in Chapter V. The exclusive consumption of club goods by club members can contribute to the growth of club membership (Olson 1965). Similarly, when conservative Protestantism has sublimated membership and its requirements over other religious conditions, its concept of religious membership strictly differentiates members from non-members in consuming goods or services. Belonging to its membership implies the selection of the one best or a better alternative in the religious market and hence to give up all other alternatives in terms of the cost-benefit analysis.

During the period of modernization, the Korean conservative Presbyterian church has overwhelmed the Korean Methodist church in membership growth by mobilizing their personal and material resources more intensively for their external growth (Noh 1986, 85-98). The very conservative Korean Presbyterian *Hapdong* denomination increased its total membership from

530,600 in 1970 to 1,090, 309 in 1979, whereas the liberal Korean Christian Presbyterian denomination increased its membership from 194,794 in 1970 to 212,044 in 1979 (CISJD 1982, 147-9).

However, as traditional religious cultures are interpreted anew and the religious demand for them has increased since the 1980s, major religions needed to redefine a relationship between themselves and traditional religious cultures full of fortunetelling or shamanistic elements. Under the end of a growth-oriented paradigm, Protestantism became a religious option which imposed a relatively higher expense on both existing and potential members in that it blocked the possibility of free-riding between Protestantism and fortunetelling, shamanism, or other types of folk religions. Believing in fortunetelling is not a matter of conversion because fortunetelling does not require a sign of belonging or membership. While Protestants should not believe in fortunetelling or shamans, believers in fortunetelling can have any religious membership simultaneously. As people can believe in fortunetelling without any risk of conversion or excommunication, they tend to be Buddhist or Catholic rather than Protestant. It cost too much to keep or choose to belong to the strict membership of Protestantism in post-modern times when even religious boundaries are blurred through the influence of the increasing pluralistic and multi-cultural interaction.

According to a Gallup survey (1999, 57), only 15.6% of Protestant respondents said that one should not marry if divination for the marriage is very negative, while 26.9% of Catholic respondents and 53.7% of Buddhist respondents gave the same answer. In addition, 15.8% of Protestant respondents showed a belief in geomancy (*feng-shui*), whereas 46.2% of Catholic respondents and 72.3% of Buddhist respondents believed in geomancy. This shows that Korean Protestantism is more successful at restricting free-riding than Korean Catholicism and Buddhism, and that it is more difficult for Korean Protestants to be free-riders than any other religious people. The 1985, 1995, and 2005 national demographic censuses suggest a remarkable trend of change in religious membership, showing a continuous decline of Protestants and a steady growth of Buddhists and Catholics. This result is in parallel with the expansion of fortunetelling since the 1980s as mentioned in the introduction. This is because Korean Buddhism and Catholicism appeals to those who are religiously flexible and accustomed to traditional religions, whereas Protestantism requires strong commitment and the abandonment of traditional religious practices. In short, the relationship between free-riding and religious growth is subject to the changing cultural and social circumstance. For example, the cost of Protestant membership is much higher in Korea than in America because Korean Protestants are required to sever themselves from the polytheistic and syncretic tradition of Korean religious culture. Thus, Protestantism cannot grow continuously unless the net-benefit of its membership exceeds the

net-benefit of religious blending of different religious practices. The decrease in Protestant membership since the 1980s is because the recent appreciation of traditional values like fortunetelling or shamanism makes the cost of such severance increasingly higher. In the Korean religious market, the relationship between free-riding and the religious dynamic is much more complex than Iannaccone concludes above.

Second, Korean Protestantism has exaggerated the role of religious organization in terms of religious growth. As the *Yoido* Full Gospel Church (YFGC) exemplified in the process of its growth, its indigenization based on an organization-oriented growth increased the urgency of removing free-riders from the organization. This is because free-riders avoid or delay offering various forms of personal and material resources necessary for a rapid growth of organization. Free-riders are those who would spend as little of their time and money as possible, enjoying the social support provided by the organization as much as possible. In terms of organizational management, they represent a cancer-like enemy because of the possible ‘infection’ of their attitudes, and hence the removal of free-riding is the most important matter for the survival of the organization. Above all, this urgency was felt by Korean Protestant churches because they had to compete with each other for their survival on the level of the individual church (Kim 1995, 65; Noh 1986). This individualistic growth originates in the Nevius policy of Korean Presbyterians in the early twentieth century, which highly focuses on the financial self-support of each church

(Kim, Byungsuh 1995, 125-126). In fact, the primary income source of each church is the various religious offerings such as tithes, weekly devotion, special devotion, seasonal devotion, or gratitude devotion. According to the Gallup survey, 46.2% of Korean Protestant respondents give tithes, while only 15.3% of Catholic respondents do so (2004, 81). The extent of free-riding determines the average rate of offering within a church. The higher the rate of free-riders who do not spend their time and money, the financially weaker is the church. For this reason, Protestant churches and priests have always attempted to prevent free-riders from degrading the overall level of religious commitment.

For example, the YFGC is well-known for inventing an efficient organizational system that prevents free-riding, although its emphasis on worldly blessings is similar to a realistic viewpoint of fortunetellers. In particular, its personal network based on cell groups, which generally consist of five families, make free-riding very difficult because cell leaders and members continuously have to monitor and control each other. Joel Comiskey, who studied the system of the YFGC, provided the following acute insight:

A strict management of this system matches up very well with a Korean hierarchy culture. Each member has his own position within the organization. For example, Rev. Cho says, “district directors are continuously managed on a situation of their district by great-district directors. They are subject to a punishment if they do not serve hard.” It is not easy to seek this type of control at an American structure. But, Korean class culture is familiar with a downward leadership. The leadership

structure of the YFGC is like a pyramid. Rev. Cho is on its top and other ministers on its lower position (2008, 395).

Personal networks based on small-sized cell groups are a controlling method institutionalized by Korean Protestant churches. They drive their registered members into a kind of network marketing like Amway. As their members are subject to the systemic pressure to recruit people, raise them as devotees, and sell them church services, they had difficulty in continuously remaining free-riders within such personal networks. As various growth strategies of the YFGC show (Comiskey 2008; Gibbs 2008), the stricter the monitoring system of a church becomes, the more difficult it is for members to seek a religious portfolio. For those who are controlled under such personal networks, there is one choice: giving up free-riding or the church. Considering that Protestant churches provide a high amount of social support and economic benefits for their members, to give up free-riding is much cheaper than to leave the church. Thanks to this cultural specification, Korean Protestant churches have been filled with sincere devotees, affluent material resources, and able ministers, especially during the period of the growth-oriented modernization.

However, this does not mean that such control of free-riding by Protestant churches could reduce the demand for fortunetelling. As already mentioned, a post-modern Korean society has faced an increasing demand for fortunetelling. The unprecedented expansion of fortunetellers

across the country broadened and complicated the scope of the religious market, whereas Korean Protestantism has kept the scope of its activity very narrow through a strong rejection of fortunetelling. The membership crisis of contemporary Korean Protestantism is due to the limitation of its organization-oriented growth that cannot respond efficiently to the complex religious demand of individuals (Kim, Sung-Ho 2002, 32-35).

Furthermore, most Buddhist temples did not have to think over the issue of competition, organizational growth, or efficiency as much as Protestantism. Indeed, Buddhism cannot distinguish free-riders from members in terms of their doctrine. As even free-riders are as an important religious asset as serious Buddhists, it does not make sense to discuss the concept of membership in Buddhism. When the number of Buddhist temples increased greatly from 7,448 in 1978 to 21,935 in 2008 (MCSTRK 1978; 2008), it should be noted that this occurred in parallel with the increasing demand of free-riding, especially the desire of religious blending of the established religions with fortunetelling or shamanism.

The Korean Catholic churches was more flexible about the issue of their individual survival or growth because it is not directly related to the survival of church priests, as REM continuously asserts. Korean Catholicism, which has limited the number of its churches, focusing on social responsibility and coexistence (Kim Sung-Ho 2002, 34), experienced a membership growth rate of 58% in the 1995 census and of 74% in the 2005 census. The number

of Korean priests has also increased by 2.9% every year during the last ten years (KCC 2010).

An old woman, who has been Catholic for more than 30 years, comment briefly on this situation:

I have had too many problems to just pray all my life. But, I do not feel that all I can do is only to pray. Praying in church is not enough for me. That is why I go to meet fortunetellers. Fortunately, I heard that it is not a serious sin, when I confessed this to the priest.

It seems that her attitude toward fortunetelling is tolerated by Catholic priests and community members. The extent of this religious toleration is even higher in Korean Buddhism, which has historically developed under the heavy influence of folk religions. Actually, there is no concern about free-riding itself in Buddhism because the concept of ‘religious membership’ or ‘religious identity’ seriously prevents people from reaching a status of enlightenment. This difference of attitude toward free-riding is confirmed again in the interview: eleven of nineteen fortunetellers identified as Buddhist, the rest of them gave no comment. This means that free-riding is only a problem if religious vitality is measured in terms of exclusive membership and identification with a religious organization.

Third, contemporary fortunetellers are more attractive to those who try to keep certain sacred elements in their life without belonging to organizational religions. The oligopoly structure of the Korean religious market explained in chapter V also renders the membership of

new religious movements as well as established religions very expensive due to the social prejudice against them, their limited resources, and administrative or legal differentiation between the established religions and them. For those who want to be religious without religious affiliation, an indirect or direct control of their daily life owing to religious membership is another serious expense. Under this structure of expense, it is easily understandable that new religious movements have not shown a significant growth of their membership in major official statistics such as Gallup surveys or National demographic censuses. Given that about 50% of the Korean population reports no religious affiliation (Statistics Korea 1985; 1995; 2005), fortunetelling, for potential free-riders, may be the best option to connect their secular life with a sacred cosmology or such belief. When they can feel sacredness in their everyday life without belonging to any religious membership, they are not willing to pay the cost of religious membership.

In post-modern Korean society, the increasing importance of traditional values encourages fortunetellers to produce religious free-riders much more strongly than before. As the desire for free-riding between modernity and tradition becomes stronger in the Korean pluralistic religious market, it occurs mainly between Buddhism or Catholicism that manifests as loose membership and folk religions without membership.

3. Entrance Cost

There is no entrance barrier in the fortunetelling market. As mentioned in chapter V, those who want to be a fortuneteller have to do nothing but report their occupation to the relevant authority as a kind of business. With regard to the entrance barrier, both potential and current fortunetellers enjoy a more advantageous position than any other religious suppliers in the sense that they pay a very low price for market entrance and retreat. Thus, this market structure leads to a high level of internal competition among fortunetellers, as Luca Diotallevi exemplified in a Catholic monopoly (2002). Let us explain this process in detail.

From a historical perspective, it was not convenient for shamans to enter the market of fortunetelling services during the period of economic modernization. They had serious difficulties in expressing their own religiosity because of a legal and social prejudice toward them. However, as various traditional cultures have been revalued socially since the 1980s, shamans' access to the fortunetelling market began to become more profitable in terms of cost-benefit calculation. The high cost of market entrance caused by social prejudice and institutions declined and, at the same time, the social status of shamans as preservers of traditional culture was enhanced greatly.

As soon as entrance barriers collapse, new styles of shamans enter the fortunetelling market very rapidly and in large numbers. They are significantly different from traditional shamans in a

few aspects. First, new shamans come from various social backgrounds, ranging from fruit retailers or the jobless to medical doctors or high-ranking officials of government. Second, while traditional shamans focused on ancestor worship, family, or ritual (*gut*), the scope of services offered by new shamans is much more comprehensive and broader, including psychological therapy, financial management consulting, and private trouble shooting. Third, male shamans have increased remarkably, and their roles are markedly differentiated from their female counterparts. Unlike the past where the overwhelming number of shamans were female, male shamans are transforming their fortunetelling into a more intellectual and systematic activity in that they generally have a higher educational level than female shamans.

On the other hand, other non-shaman fortunetellers, called *yeoksulga*, are playing a more important role in the expansion of the fortunetelling market than before. Traditionally, shamans were the dominant suppliers of the fortunetelling market, but a recent report shows that the total number of *yeoksulga* are more than two times as many as that of shamans (Kukminilbo 2002). This numerical change is closely related to the fact that *yeoksulga*'s market entrance cost is much lower than that for shamans. *Yeoksulgas* have been regarded as academic and intellectual fortunetellers, who are relatively free of an established religiosity. They explain that their fortunetelling is based on eastern philosophy and the empirical statistics of personality. While shamans (*mudangs*) are known as a medium with various spiritual abilities, *yeoksulgas* are

generally considered as specialists who seek an academic or characteristic perfection. Thus, most *yeoksulgas* are called ‘*dosa*’ (master), ‘*kusa*’ (guru), or ‘*sunsaeng*’ (teacher). These titles show indirectly that *yeoksulgas* enjoy a higher social position than shamans (*mudang*).

In addition to this difference of social prestige, *yeoksulgas* do not have to perform any religious rituals, whereas shamans take a long time to learn their ritual, called *kut*. As *yeoksulgas*’ fortunetelling relies on classical books such as the Book of Changes (周易) or *Tojungbigyeol* (土亭秘訣), it is only important that they understand and interpret the books. The basic process of becoming *mudang* requires even longer and more complex training: *naelimkut*, mountain prayers, ritual performances, and so on. However, many potential *yeoksulgas* simply complete a short-term education program provided by private institutions in order to become a professional fortuneteller. Some can upgrade their knowledge as quickly as possible by means of one-to-one private lessons. As there is no formal requirement on market entrance, *yeoksulgas* cannot help but move toward a perfect competition.

With regard to this market situation surrounding *yeoksulgas*, let me quote a fortuneteller in Seoul who has been giving one-to-one lessons on *Myunglihak* (命理學) based on the Book of Changes for 26 years:

Korean society is like a supermarket of religions. The only way I can survive in the market is to prove my competence. There is no other alternative. Some people who were taught by me only for a few months sometimes turn out to be very successful in the market, but mostly it is temporary. Such fortunetellers move continuously for economic success only.

This interviewed fortuneteller points precisely to a free competition system that has never developed any forms of entrance barriers. *Yeoksulgas* enjoy a much more advantageous position than *mudangs* in going into and out of the fortunetelling market. As long as other conditions are not changed, one can expect that the numerical prevalence of *yeoksulgas* will endure. In addition, *yeoksulgkas*, as interviewed above, tend to regard their activity as an economic service.

Question: *Why did you decide to be a fortuneteller?*

Answer: It is because I am physically handicapped. So, this is the job most suitable for me. For twenty years, I did it here very well. My clients are proof of that. Through this job, I educated my daughter and supported my family. Isn't it a good job for me?

This male *yeoksulga* in Busan described very clearly fortunetelling as a secular job, based on a long-term exchange relationship between him and clients. Fortunetelling as a means of livelihood is not unusual, even for *mudangs*. A female shaman I met in a local *kutdang* (a complex that only hosts *kut*) was proud of her situation:

I am very busy completing about fifteen *kuts* every month. I cannot rest for even a day. Of course, it makes much money. My husband is also *mudang* and makes money by means of divinations only. I specialize in practicing *kut*, and he is good at divining. We as a couple are affluent economically, unlike most *mudangs*.

For other colleagues in the *kutdang*, this couple was recognized as an ideal type in terms of how *mudangs* should live economically in secular society. Both *mudangs* and *yeoksulgas* make use of their economic advantages in terms of market entrance and correspond to the demand of the market properly and in a very timely manner. They do not hide the commercial aspect of their services and attempt to build a long-term exchange relationship with clients, not based on doctrines or holy authority, but based on personal trust between seller and buyer. After all, Korean fortunetellers have constructed themselves even more along economic (spiritual consumerism) lines than have Protestant leaders, who have instead adapted the *Chaebol* corporate model that has worked so well in modern Korea.

4. Work Ethic

The most remarkable feature of contemporary fortunetellers lies in their work ethic. All fortunetellers who participated in the interview process were proud of their current work, regardless of their age, sex, and income level. They are confident about their social contributions and the justification for fortunetelling services, as well as the mental and physical well-being of clients. It is now very difficult to find evidence of their image in Korea as hermit or mystic, which was typical in the past.

Although this thesis does not attempt to justify the famous Max Weber's thesis that a religious spirit, as shown in the Protestant work ethic and doctrine of predestination, can be a factor of social revolution (1958; 1993[1922]), Weber's thesis still reminds us of the following question: how is fortunetellers' work ethic related to the growth of fortunetelling? In order to answer this question, we should examine a few characteristics exemplified by interview respondents in terms of work ethic.

First, all respondents replied that making money is never their important goal. Although they make money by means of providing fortunetelling services, they seem to believe that their services should not be similar to secular work. Shaman respondents share in common with non-shaman fortunetellers their thoughts on how they should earn money. Take the following example:

Question: *Can you as a fortuneteller tell me some of your important job ethics?*

We should not attempt to sell amulets or our service by means of scaring clients psychologically. I do not think of this work as a business, even if I make money through it. We should not have an economic desire. That is because one cannot be rich, depending on that desire. But, I can be rich because I accumulate a fortune of money someday.

--- a 55-years old female *yeoksulga* ---

We should be honest and modest. Every shaman boasts that he is the closest to the gods. That is because there is not any doctrine of shamanism... Shamans should not have a desire for money. However, some shamans give *naelimkut* to their immature students because they can receive about \$15,000 to \$20,000 for it. Such immature *mudangs* are likely to close their shrine before long.

--- a 47-years old male shaman ---

For contemporary fortunetellers, the value of money is not very high, at least ethically. In particular, they often tend to explain economic success in a rather negative light. All respondents warn unanimously that the moment they obsess over money, their predictive ability will begin to wane. All of them seem very religious in the sense that they still keep in their minds a morally contradictory relationship between God and Mammon, which all major religions include as one of the most important doctrines. This attitude of fortunetellers can instill among their clients a stronger confidence in their fortunetelling.

Second, the ascetic life style of fortunetellers is quite exceptional. Moral virtues such as thrift, simplicity, and purity are crucial in maintaining fortunetelling as a job. Fortunetellers believe absolutely that their talent is influenced by good habits in daily life. Sometimes fortunetellers do not eat, sleep, or engage in sexual activity a few days before they conduct an important fortunetelling session. A clean body along with good personal habits should be ready to receive a clear spirit. A representative shaman of Korea, *Geumhwa Kim*, says in her autobiography that she makes it a rule to pray at 4:30, to run at 5:20, and to have breakfast at 7:40 every morning, which she has been doing all her life (2007, 285). It also is common for shamans to stay in mountain prayer caves periodically. They believe that without such pains and effort, they can never see the past, present, and future of clients who need their help desperately.

Their shrines or offices also reveal very clearly an ascetic aspect of their life style. Rooms of residential buildings, partitions of commercial buildings, or portable tents are used for shrines and offices in urban areas. Compared with churches or temples, fortunetelling facilities are very modest. In fact, most of the fortunetelling valleys in Korea are located in poor districts of big cities. These ascetic features of fortunetellers underlie their work ethic and let clients see fortunetellers from a more pious viewpoint. In this sense, fortunetelling is being consumed not temporarily as a hobby or amusement, but continuously as a process of religious communication between fortunetellers and clients.

Third, for all fortunetellers, the dignity of human beings lies in the kernel of their work ethic. As official religions systematize their own doctrines of salvation, compassion, or mercy based on a universal humanity, so fortunetellers attribute the cause of fortunetelling to a confidence of universal humanity. Let us analyze *mudang* and *yeoksulga* separately as each divines in a different sense.

In the case of *mudangs*, from the beginning their main duty was to heal people, to protect people from evil gods, and to console dead people. Divination itself is not a crucial element of *mudangs'* work, and occurs only on the very first occasion on which the client and *mudang* meet in a religious setting (Bruno 2002, 30). Even today *mudangs* still regard *kut* as more important and essential than divination (Choi 1994; Cho, Hung-youn 1998; Kim, Tae-kon 1998; Bruno 2002, 36). For them, divination is only a preparatory stage for *kut*. When they feel that divination alone is not effective in helping clients overcome their various troubles, *kut* is performed as the best and last method. This is because, although both divination and *kut* are commonly what the people seek, the former focuses simply on describing and prescribing clients' problems, but not directly resolving them. *Kut* is obviously a more reliable and more effective way to deal with clients' fate in terms of shamans. Nonetheless, they are still fatalists who have to conform to gods' will from the moment they receive *shinnaelim* or possession. Ironically, however, they

are faced with a human dilemma to save clients from their bad fates. A confession of a female *mudang* reveals this ambivalent situation clearly:

I was Christian. All things I tried turned out unsuccessful. And, I was very often sick...Nobody can escape the way of life determined by god. Those who come to me are mostly tired in their life. We *mudangs* should save such persons rather than seeking economic profit. Indeed, most of us do so. I am forced to give clients a divination, based on a human conscience as well as on their fate.

An interesting fact, in terms of the thesis, is that such ambivalence serves to expand the scope of services offered by shamans. Originally, divinations by shamans never dealt with clients' problems in the light of *yeokhak*, the Book of Changes. While the term 'divination' is used in a religious and ritual context and 'fortunetelling' in everyday practice for personal purposes, the Korean term '*chom*(占)' comprehends both 'divination' and 'fortunetelling'. Today's *mudangs*, Korean shamans, do not adhere to the separation of the two fields, and hence play the most important role in both fields, namely in the *chom* market.

Next, *yeoksulgas* are fundamentally interested not in other-worldly matters, but the law of this world that consists of sky (天), earth (地), and man (人). While man becomes the other party of gods in shamanism, he is an indispensable element of the cosmos in *yeokhak* (易學). *Yeoksulgas* attempt to interpret the fate (天命) of each man given by the sky; a numerical

combination of birth year, month, day, and time (Lee 2005, 25). The goal of their interpretation is to pursue the good and to avoid the evil. That is, they foretell the way of man (人道) which should be in harmony with the order in the universe (天道), so as to make man happier and more peaceful in mind. Actually, the priority of *yeoksulgas* who participated in the interviews was to encourage clients to look at the positive side of their fates rather than to solve directly individual problems such as unemployment, divorce, depression, or suicide. Even when *yeoksulgas* are faced with a very bad divination result for their clients, most of them tend to explain it in a roundabout way. As *sajupalja* (a determined fate) is ultimately a matter of interpretation, every *yeoksulga* leaves room to interpret clients' fate so as to avoid or alleviate the negative elements of fate. Thus, they are no less fatalistic and humane than shamans because a perfect fatalism is the most inhuman one.

In short, these characteristics of work ethic promote social trust in a rationality of fortunetelling and its sacredness. Human-oriented, ascetic, and anti-materialistic fortunetellers are likely to appeal more effectively to those who are tired of a strict bureaucracy of organized religions. Furthermore, many ministers of Korean Protestant churches have the reputation of being greedy as they strictly pursue generational succession of church ministry, have been implicated in financial scandals, are known to lead luxurious lifestyles, conduct church elections based on plutocracy, and so on. A recent poll by the Association of Korean Protestant Ministers

shows that 41.1% of respondents regard Catholic churches as the most confidential religious organization, 33.5% for Buddhist temples, and 20% for Protestant churches (*Hankyoreh* June 29, 2011). Such a negative reputation of Protestant leaders has caused Koreans to turn to religious suppliers who seem very ascetic, even in everyday life. The appealing power of fortunetellers motivate ‘the religious without belonging’ to construct a religious identity appropriate to the postmodern times more creatively and flexibly. Given that about 50% of the whole population reveals no religious affiliation in national censuses, the potential influence of fortunetellers on the religious without belonging are never small.

On the supply-side of fortunetelling, this chapter focused on four factors that contributed to the remarkable growth of fortunetelling. Of course, the factors do represent the the entire set causes of the fact that traditional fortunetellers overwhelm the fortunetelling market of postmodern times over religious professionals of established religions. Furthermore, the matter of work ethic is not related significantly to the results of market competition, which the REM relies on, even if marketing, free-riding, and market entrance become much more important in a competitive system. However, all factors of the supply-side are not separated from those of the demand-side and so a relative importance of each factor can differ from market to market, from time period to time period, and from actor to actor. In this sense, we will examine factors of the demand-side in terms of the growth of fortunetelling in the next chapter.

VII. Demand-side of Korean Fortunetelling

The demand-side factors that influenced the growth of fortunetelling should be discussed in detail in this chapter. For this consideration, the thesis tries to find a causal relationship between Korean religiosity and the growth of fortunetelling. In terms of the REM, as the entire stock of religiosity is considered to be constant, there can be only its qualitative change (Stark and Finke 2000, 77-78). Admitting that religiosity (or religiousness) can change, depending on tradition, culture, individualism, urbanization, ethnicity, and so on, the recent growth of fortunetelling must be related to the matter of “when and why various aspects of religiousness rise and fall”. Let us examine such demand-side factors in the process of Korean fortunetelling.

1. Continuity with Tradition

While organized religions are trapped in a modern ideology of growth, contemporary religious consumers need to readjust their religiosity in a way appropriate to postmodern social trends. They do not want to communicate with religions in an authoritarian, collective, and standardized way. By the time the high rate of divorce and suicide rapidly broke down families and individuals as the most basic unit of society, individual satisfaction and values began to become no less important than collective and organizational goals. Thus, the former needs no longer to

be the same with or subject to the latter. Reconstructing a religious identity is one of the various attempts to find and improve such individual values.

Today the growth of fortunetelling in Korea is closely connected to the matter of reconstructing a religious identity in the way that religious demanders can involve both individual and collective values, traditional and modern values, and local and global values. While fortunetelling in the past was regarded as a symbol of evil customs that would fade in the process of modernization and industrialization, it recently has come to function as a bridge that connects modernized individuals with traditional wisdom and culture. Those who would like to recover the continuity with tradition draw diverse meanings from fortunetelling. What meanings do they want to draw?

First, clients tend to rejuvenate Korean ethics through traditional divinations. As *sajupalja* (determined fate), *koonghap* (the harmony of marriage), *taekil* (decision of the date), *jakmyung* (naming), and *feng shui* (geomancy) by *yeoksulgaks* are based on the Book of Changes as part of Confucian philosophy, it is bound to involve a variety of Confucian values. For example, *Feng shui* continues to be conducted as one important means of ancestor worship across the nation, regardless of religious affiliations. It is believed that descendants can avoid calamity and gain prosperity when ancestors are buried under the ground guided by *Feng shui*. Korean people commonly prefer that tombs of their ancestors be put on the shiny and warm breast of a

mountain, looking down a river. The descendants gather in front of the tombs regularly and confirm a familial solidarity across generations.

<Table 4> Korean Religiosity and Traditional Divination (%)

Total (N=1500)	Buddhism (N=366)	Protestantism (N=321)	Catholicism (N=101)	Non* (N=698)
Q) Do you think about how much one's name influences fate? (<i>jakmyung</i>)				
1. very much	28.8	11.4	12.6	12.4
2. a little	40.1	33.7	39.5	38.9
3. no relation	31.2	54.9	48.0	48.5
4. do not know				0.1
Q) Do you think when divination of the harmony of marriage suggests a negative result, the marriage should not happen? (<i>koonghap</i>)				
1. It should never happen.	56.5	18.4	31.4	30.4
2. do not care	43.5	81.6	68.6	69.6
3. do not know				
Q) Do you think a tomb placed on a good spot makes its descendants prosperous? (<i>feng shui</i>)				
1. yes	73.9	32.9	55.2	56.8
2. no	26.1	66.8	44.8	43.2
3. do not know		0.3		

Non* means those who mark no religion.

(Source: Gallop Korea, *Religion in Korea*, 2004)

Based on Gallup surveys concerning this kind of traditional divinations, <Table 4> approximately suggests an influence of divinations on Korean religiosity. As a whole, three kinds of divination are activated in the depths of Korean religiosity, regardless of religious identity. Especially, 45.1% of Protestant respondents and 52% of Catholic respondents recognize

the importance of *jakmyung*. 31.4% of Catholic respondents have a belief in *koonghap* as seriously as non-religious respondents. 32.9% of Protestant respondents still regard *feng shui* as important. The reason that both religious and non-religious people cling to *feng shui* more than *jakmyung* or *koonghap* is because the former is concerned with the fate of the whole family, but the latter is concerned simply with that of individuals. The low rate of ‘do not know’ group in divination can be interpreted as the increase of popular knowledge on traditional worldviews by means of increasing publications, active specialists, and many reports on mass media since the 1980s.

Sajupalja, *taikil*, *jakmyung*, *koonghap*, and *feng shui* all fall in an unbroken line of a traditional, especially Confucian, inner-worldly ethics. Whether each divination focuses on individual or familial fate, what they try to interpret is where ‘I’ or ‘the family’ should be in harmony with an order of this world, not other world. As Confucianism has no concept of other world, such divinations do not offer clients any ethics based on a concept of other world. Nonetheless, they are not amoral, unlike various cults in the West. As all of them foretell an individual or familial fate in terms of Confucian societal hierarchy, participants in the divinations do not have to create any tension with the established order. In fact, *koonghap* is generally conducted as a preliminary step of marriage in order to prevent a divorce for the new couple in

the future. A question of a woman member posted on aonline community of fortunetelling is very usual in Korea (<http://cafe.daum.net/taek007>):

I have a fiancé who have promised a marriage for three years. But, my parents object to the marriage very seriously only because of the fact that fortunetellers describe our *koonghap* as too bad. A few fortunetellers tell that my marriage will make my brother and sister very unhappy. How should I conform to the advice of my parents?

Asking fortunetellers about the *koonghap* of the couple is not separated from *sajupalja* of each partner, because the former is ultimately determined by the latter. As all in this world are born with different *sajupalja*, no couple can have the same one. *Koonghap* is revealed only when one *sajupalja* is combined with the other one, and so are very relative and dependent. This is how *sajupalja*, the fate of each individual, is related to *koonghap*, the fate of the family. Both get entangled inevitably.

I have asked a fortuneteller the *koonghap* of our couple. He answered that my *sajupalja* is similar to the *sajupalja* of my husband. When each different *sajupalja* becomes mutually complimentary, the *koonghap* of a couple is best for the marriage. According to his explanation, it seems difficult for my couple to enjoy a happy marriage life.

--- a 39-years old woman in Seoul ---

Furthermore, *taikil*, *jakmyung*, and *feng shui* are becoming a necessary event for small communities, civil organizations, commercial companies, and even public institutions. For them, the belief itself that good dates and names protect an individual, group, and society from the unexpected risk is not the point. The key is that today, they need a cultural identity that allows them to adapt themselves to traditional values of divinations, which were dismissed only as one aspect of individual religiosity. Let me quote the story of a CEO who participated in an interview:

The original name of my company was *Geosung*, the great star. Back then, this company was not as big as it is now. One day when I met a *yeoksulga* near the company, he suddenly told me to change the name of company. The reason he said this was that its name is too great in comparison with the ideal scale of the company. I agreed with him, and then changed it into *Shinwoo*, new friend, whose scale seems much smaller. After that, the financial situation of the company really got even better.

This example of *jakmyung* reflects a hierarchy of the Confucian worldview in that even commercial organizations should pursue a goal proper to its current status. When individual or collective values are controlled by the vertical order of society, they are legitimate and right.

On the other hand, *Shinjeom*, divination heard from gods, of *mudangs* especially, attributes most of human troubles to neglecting ancestor worship. The difference between shamanistic and Confucian ancestor worship is mainly in its motivation. While Confucians conduct *jesa* as a sign

of loyalty and filial piety, *mudangs* perform *kut* in order to avoid resentment and revenge from the dead. Both *jesa* and *kut* are two basic forms of ritual for ancestor worship, which have been handed down historically. However, *kut* is involved in a more complicated social context than *jesa*. While *jesa* is motivated by a purely moral duty by living people, *kut* is based on moral, emotional, and experiential motivations. Thus, *jesa* is a regular ritual, but *kut* is mostly conducted irregularly, depending on the birth, age, illness, and death of human beings. *Shingeom* basically assumes *kut*. When clients realize through *shingeom* that they caused gods of ancestors to be angry, they ask shamans to perform *kut*. *Shingeom* is a starting point for clients to repent their sins and recover a moral and emotional relationship with their ancestors. The process of such repentance and recovery comes to the climax through *kut*. This is the difference between a *mudang*'s and *yeoksulga*'s fortunetelling.

I prefer *Shingeom* to *yeoksulga*'s divination because I feel that the latter predicts the future on the basis of feeling and impression. So, I have a greater belief in *Shingeom* than *yeoksul*.

--- a 43-years old woman near Seoul ---

I prefer *yeoksul* to *Shingeom* because the former is a kind of statistics. *Yeoksulgas*' divinations on my life were mostly similar, whereas *Shingeom* differed from *mudang* to *mudang*. *Shingeom* always gives me a psychological pressure of *kut*.

When *mudang* told me to host a *kut* ritual, it was so difficult to reject the suggestion because I have a certain degree of belief in *Shingeom*.

--- a 43-years old in Seoul ---

In short, while *yeoksulgas* focus on what the fate is, *mudangs* focus on how it should be handled. The former is more descriptive, but the latter is more prescriptive. Therefore, clients of *mudang* participate dependently and limitedly in reconstructing the moral relations through fortunetelling, whereas those of *yeoksulga* participate independently and comprehensively. All clients of fortunetelling are in the middle of descriptive and prescriptive ends. They would regain these traditional values to the extent that their religiosity needs.

Second, they seek to redefine the self by means of fortunetelling, which attempts to explain who they really are in actual life. Who I was, am, and will be is the first question to be asked. When clients enter *yeoksulgas'* office or *mudangs'* shrine, they expect fortunetellers to analyze and explain their troubles in light of traditional wisdom which the established religions intended to annihilate. In fact, most of them do not have any belief in gods or a supernatural truth, which *mudangs* and *yeoksulgas* rely on. Obviously, they do not go to fortunetellers to believe what fortunetellers believe in; they only listen. So, they are never followers of fortunetelling and fortunetellers. Why clients are rational is remarkably shown in the way they apply fortunetelling

to their life. Most of the clients who participated in the interviews said that they listen to a few fortunetellers concerning their troubles:

Fortunetellers should be honest and sincere. I have visited many famous fortunetellers in order to test their ability. Among them, seven to eight fortunetellers were efficacious. Now I trust them.

---a 40-year old woman---

I have visited fortunetellers for seven years. Depending on the nature of my troubles, I try to find a fortuneteller specializing in business, marriage life, or child education. I prefer those who can predict the long-term cycle of my fate when I want to know my fortune for the new year, but I prefer short-term fortunetelling when I simply want psychological comfort.

--- a 42-year old woman ---

After comparing explanations of different fortunetellers, they choose partially or entirely the explanation that they regard as proper to their circumstance. They are willing to accept the plausibility inherent in fortunetelling. For clients, fortunetelling is not a matter of belief or disbelief. Even *shingom*, divination by gods, is not thought as an aspect of pursuing any faith. Clients simply attempt to hear temporarily the opinion of gods through *mudang*. This aspect of fortunetelling is one reason why clients can access fortunetelling freely regardless of their religious affiliation.

Obviously, what people try to find in fortunetelling is not an abstract reward, but a better understanding of their life. In a system of absolute belief like Buddhism or Christianity, a fallacy of the Truth or God is never assumed. However, fortunetelling is based on free interpretation of basic principles of cosmos or a direct communication with gods. As it is simply an interpretation of man, life, and world, its clients are also free to evaluate various interpretations provided by fortunetellers. Ironically, there is not an absolute truth in terms of clients involved in fortunetelling. As to determine a meaning of divination is not done by fortunetellers, but by clients; a rational client is forced to doubt partially the plausibility of fortunetelling. As to devote oneself to an absolute truth is risky, so to keep the plausibility of fortunetelling closed is dangerous. Free interpretations of their life often produce a new possibility that clients themselves never knew. When the self manipulated by the established order is challenged and doubted in the process of fortunetelling, clients have an opportunity to look back on who they were and are.

Third, fortunetelling is the most efficient way that clients can consume a traditional religious culture in daily life. Recently, Buddhism, which has a more than 1500-year-old tradition in Korea, also makes serious effort to take their own tradition and penetrate it into the field of everyday life. Korean Buddhism is engaged in promoting temple-stay programs, publishing Buddhist scriptures in Korean, singing Buddhist hymns, leading Buddhist

environmental movements, cultivating Buddhist cell groups, and the like. These efforts reflect its strong will to escape from an isolated position in the past, and obviously contribute to a popularization of Buddhism. This popularized orientation of Korean Buddhism is simply an aspect of the supply-side change motivated by a drastic competition with Christianity, and hence accelerates a Christianization of Buddhism, which will make it difficult to keep its cultural identity as a religious tradition.

My religion has always been Buddhism since my childhood. All members of my family enjoyed going together to temples across the city where we lived. My parents used to ask famous monks my future and destiny. The kind of divination was conducted in most Korean temples. But, things changes, and today's monks are not interested in such divination. So, that is why I come to fortunetellers more frequently.

--- a 51-years old man in Pusan ---

My wife's family has a Buddhist background and are familiar with divinations. I had no idea of religions or divinations before marriage. The monks, who are close to my wife's family, chose a marriage date for my couple and made my children good names. Nowadays, it is very difficult to find such great monks in temples, as you know.

--- a 42-years old man near Seoul ---

Paradoxically, the secularity inherent in the popularized and Christianized Buddhism is less likely to satisfy religious consumers preferring a purely traditional religiosity. For such

religious consumers, there are only a few alternatives. Confucian fortunetelling and shamanism are naturally among the priorities. This is one of the reasons why 72% of respondents in a survey were reported to take seriously fortunetelling on the many problems of their real lives (Gallup Korea 1994). It is a relatively recent phenomenon that Koreans have been consuming fortunetelling at an unexpected pace, even though fortunetelling has been widespread throughout Korean history. Today's religious consumers can enjoy the relatively purest form of traditional religiosity in their daily life through fortunetelling. They now try to consume a religiously pure tradition combined with, not separated, from their reality. If so, where does such demand come from?

This question is closely related to a variability of religious demand. For a more detailed discussion, we need to distinguish two types of religious demand. One is a constant demand, and the other is a variable demand. If there is only a constant demand in the religious market, as the REM assumes, the success of one religion presupposes the failure of other religions. This regards the concept of religious market as the zero-sum game. However, if the concept of religious market is understood to involve non-official religions like fortunetelling, a competition in the market is no longer the zero-sum game. The Korean religious market exemplifies this non-zero sum feature exceptionally.

During the period of the government-led modernization, social demand for non-official religions was not so remarkable, compared with an explosive demand for official religions. According to national censuses since 1985, however, the increasing rate of religious people is continuously higher than the growth rate of population. The recent growth of non-official religions has not produced a decline of official religions. Interestingly, this fact is different from the situation of European countries in which Rodney Stark argues that a decline of state religions accompanies a popularity of spirituality (Stark, Hamberg and Miller 2005). After all, any perspective based on the constancy of religious demand cannot explain a recently rapid expansion of Korean fortunetelling properly.

2. Social Preference

Even today, the number of women participating in fortunetelling is greater than that of men, though male clients and fortunetellers have flown into the market of fortunetelling increasingly. <Table 5> summarizes the findings of a few Gallop surveys. In all areas surveyed, female clients are more likely to believe fortunetelling than male clients. This is not a new finding in that women are generally more religious than men.

Question: *What is the ratio of regularly visiting clients?*

About 80% of them are women. Men come to me only when they are in trouble very seriously.

--- a 55-years old female fortuneteller ---

About 90% of all my clients are women, if not always.

---a 55-years old male fortuneteller ---

About 90% of them are women. They look mentally-tired and more dependent on shamanism. Women are even weaker psychologically.

-- a 47-years old female shaman ---

With the ratio of gender, the one thing to be discussed is that the gap between genders is much more outstanding in individual issues than in the whole divination as a whole. In spite of the fact that many Korean men have a general confidence in divination as a whole, they still hesitate to regard fortunetelling as a clear criterion of their decision-making. This ambivalence of Korean men seems to be very similar to the way that Confucian elites dealt with fortunetelling in terms of classical hierarchy. As fortunetelling was considered as a religious practice of the lower class, they could not conform to the instructions of fortunetellers publicly, though they utilized it abundantly in reality. In addition, the overwhelming majority of fortunetellers were female shamans who were subject to the lowest class in the Confucian hierarchy.

<Table 5> Ratio of those who believe various kinds of fortunetelling in 2004 (%)

	<i>Jakmyung</i> (N=1500)	<i>Koonghap</i> (N=1500)	<i>Feng shui</i> (N=1500)	God (N=1500)
Total	54.3	34.2	55.7	42.6
Gender				
Male	49.5	28.1	50.7	35.4
Female	59.1	40.1	60.5	49.6
Education*				
Elementary	51.2	38.4	50.5	42.7
High school	55.2	32.5	57.2	38.6
College	55.1	25.1	50.6	47.9
Career				
Farmer et al.**	50.2	54.1	63.9	33.6
Self-owner	52.6	29.4	55.1	41.0
White colour	58.0	32.5	52.0	44.1
Housewife	58.9	40.8	64.1	50.4
Region				
Big city	54.9	32.3	52.9	41.7
Small town	43.3	43.7	61.4	39.3
Income				
High	51.3	26.7	52.0	43.1
Medium	56.8	32.2	58.3	40.4
Low	51.8	52.8	61.7	45.5

* It means those who completed only elementary or high school, and higher than college

**This group also includes those who work in fishery and forestry.

(Source: Surveys of Gallop Korea in 1994, 1996, and 2004)

Under the influence of this Confucian tradition, most Korean husbands actually ask their wives to go to a fortuneteller on their behalf. This ambivalent attitude of Korean men is revealed more remarkably in *koonghap* of <Table 5>. In patriarchal Korean society, it is very usual for

women to ask about *koonghap* to a few different fortunetellers because they know that their social status gets more fragile and volatile by married life. <Table 5> shows that full-time housewives trust *koonghap* even more highly than the average level of respondents. They tend to approach marriage more conservatively in response to the loose social security of women and the high rate of divorce. This difference in social demand on *koonghap* makes bigger the gap between gender ratios. With regard to other variables, the relationship between social class and *koonghap* also shows a very consistent pattern. It is trusted more seriously by the lower educated, rural, low-income classes. According to <Table 5>, 34.2% of the entire respondents are reported to believe in *koonghap*, but 54.1% of farmers, fishermen, and loggers and 52.8% of low-income participants believe in it. *Koonghap* deals with a more actual and concrete problem than *jakmyung* and *feng shui*. Given that the lower classes are more heavily threatened by increasing family dissolution, it is natural that the educationally, regionally, economically, and occupationally lower class of people attach to a status mobility by means of marriage.

Koreans' worldly religiosity is also confirmed in that people believe *jakmyung* and *feng-shui* more than *koonghap*. Unlike other types of divinations, *koonghap* is more closely related to *sajupalja*, which means a different fate for each human determined by combinations of time, day, month, and year of his birth. Through *koonghap*, fortunetellers attempt to explain whether or not potential or one's current marriage matches up with the *sajupalja* of each spouse. Thus, there can

be good or bad *koonghap*, but no correctable *koonghap* because each *sajupalja* is already determined at the moment of birth. Even fortunetellers cannot change *koonghap* itself. In contrast, both *jakmyung* and *feng-shui* are divined to obtain good fortune by means of fortunetellers' help. To create a good name or to find a good location entirely depends on the ability of fortunetellers. Even in case of bad names, they can be changed into good names appropriate to clients' *sajupalja*. In reality, although names can be changed simply by a court hearing and decision, the number of its applications has increased five times during the last ten years from 2000 to 2009 (<http://www.scourt.go.kr/justicesta/JusticestaViewAction.work>). *Feng-shui* in Korea has also been developed and utilized very practically in the everyday lives of the Korean people, influencing the location, arrangement, and even interior structure of buildings. For instance, as Koreans believe that houses with a southern overview of a lake, river, or the water are a better place to live, apartment units with a southern view are even more expensive than any other unit of the same apartment.

Another interesting detail in <Table 5> comes from the comparison of fortunetelling with the absolute God. While the belief in *koonghap* is lower than the belief in the absolute God, the belief in *jakmyung* and *feng shui* is even higher than a belief in the absolute God. Although 321 and 101 of the total respondents are Protestant and Catholic respectively, the ratio of those who believe in the absolute God still remains very low, in contrast with its level in North America. In

short, belief in the absolute God is not as popular as belief in fortunetelling. What is the relationship between fortunetelling and demand for the absolute God? In terms of the REM, existential explanations of *yeoksulgas* are not within the scope of religion, while gods of *mudangs* can be regarded as a subject of exchange relation (Stark and Finke 2000, 91). The limitation of secular explanations by fortunetellers is in their incapacity “to postpone the delivery of rewards to an otherworldly context” (Stark and Finke 2000, 88). Thus, it is concluded that the rationality of humans ultimately leads religious people to choose the only or absolute God who provides the otherworldly rewards most certainly through “an extended and exclusive exchange relationship” (Stark and Finke 2000, 98-100). This evolutionary perspective of the REM may be very useful for explaining a human rationality inherent in the developmental change from a polytheistic primitive society into a monotheistic industrial society.

However, contemporary Korean fortunetelling still functions very efficiently as substitutes of the absolute God, even though its explanations and shamanistic gods emphasize this-worldly rewards rather than otherworldly rewards, in parallel with other East Asian religious markets like Japan, China, and Taiwan, where the concept of the only God is accepted much more narrowly. Based on <Table 5>, we cannot find a consistent pattern in the relationship between social class and an extent of belief in divinations or the only God. As a result, there are a few factors to be considered about otherworldly rewards as “the truly potent religious resource”.

The first point is on discount rate, which determines the present value of any rewards to be obtained in the future. If one is rational, he prefers \$100 in the present to \$100 in the future and hence interest rate should always be higher than zero. When one expects to get \$100 in ten years, the real value of \$100 to be obtained in ten years is the volume discounted by interest rate, and then it is called discount rate (*i*). For example, if the one-year interest rate is 3%, the real value of \$100 in ten years is discounted by 3% every year. The below formula is the mathematical equation between the present value (**PV**) and the future value (**FV**) of a reward expectable after a certain period of time (**n**). Precisely speaking, 'n' is the unit of time that it takes to gain a future value.

$$\frac{\mathbf{FV}}{(1 + i)^n} = \mathbf{PV}$$

In this equation, an important point is that *i* and **n** are the variables to influence **PV** independently because **FV** is a constant number. Thus,

$$\mathbf{PV} = f(i, n)$$

Although otherworldly rewards such as eternal life, revival, or the kingdom of God can generate extended commitments (Stark and Finke 2000, 100), all believers are bound to evaluate the rewards in terms of the present. It is not until the rewards to be obtained in the future are discounted by the ' i ' that they are in position of giving their extended commitment. If human beings know the meaning of ' i ', they will not confuse the face value of otherworldly rewards with the real value. **FV** of otherworldly rewards itself does not become a determinant in religious choice. Even polytheistic Korean shamanism offers as many otherworldly rewards as Christianity. Through comparing the **PV** of otherworldly rewards obtainable from different religions, religious actors conduct their cost-benefit analysis. Then, as **PV** is the function of i , religious actors cognize the real value of otherworldly rewards discounted by i . Interest rate or discount rate is the index that reflects the time preference of human beings. The proverb that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush is still valid in religious choice as well as in economic choice. The point is that time preference is a product of social, psychological, and historical experience beyond the scope of individual choice. Discount rate on the level of individuals is also heavily influenced by human capital accumulated by educational circumstance, family tradition, friendship, and geographical environment, even if it is more or less diversified. Why otherworldly rewards of monotheism cannot be the most profitable and efficient religious

resource for every person is because discount rate is not what individuals or religions can choose.

It is a socially built capital.

In order to explain the variable '**n**' in the above formula, now let us suppose the following propositions:

P1: FV of divinations is lower than that of the only God.

P2: All social members are subject to *i*

Admitted that rewards promised by the only God are more ultimate and comprehensive than rewards expected from divinations, **P1** is not an irrational proposition. If '*i*' is socially built and hence functions as an index of time preference of social members, as assumed in **P2**, the present values (**PV**) of worldly and otherworldly rewards are influenced by '*n*', a unit of the time. This is the second factor to be noted concerning the price of otherworldly rewards. The length of '**n**' in divinations is even shorter than that of '*n*' in the absolute God because worldly rewards are accomplished in an even shorter period than otherworldly rewards. After all, if the difference of '**n**' between divinations and the absolute God is great enough to exceed the difference in **P1**, the present value of worldly rewards will be higher than that of otherworldly rewards.

Admitting that all religious demanders need both worldly and otherworldly rewards, the truly important aspect for rational demanders is a portfolio of rewards, namely a religious portfolio, which determines an optimal rate of the two rewards in their religious life. Christian interviewees explain in this way:

I go to a Catholic church every Sunday, but do not think that seeing fortunetellers is always bad. When I sometimes feel that God is not helpful, I tell fortunetellers my troubles and wishes. Many of my church members also do so. Through fortunetelling, they seem to find an answer to problems in real life. We ourselves make a religious decision on it.

--- a 54-years old woman in Seoul ---

I have been a Presbyterian for about twenty years, as I told. Although I would not give up my religious membership, I am still looking for a well-known fortuneteller who can advise me how to educate my son and what his future should be like. Christianity never provides any concrete solutions for important problems in daily life.

--- a 44-years old woman in Seoul ---

I attended the Korean Holiness Church during the past thirty years, even though I belong to a Presbyterian church now..... The moment I was really satisfied with fortunetelling was when a fortuneteller suggested when and where to move in the same way I had wanted. At that time, it was very important for my family to decide the place to live in. The ministers do not try to give an answer on such problems.

--- a 50-years old woman in Seoul ---

In Korean society where about 50% of the population confess a religious affiliation, social variables like gender, education, income, and, career classified in <Table 5> do not reveal a wholly consistent causality to comprehend the widespread popularity of fortunetelling. Why half of the population has no religious membership is as important as why 18% is Protestant and 23% is Buddhist. In this sense, the matter of fortunetelling should be understood in terms of a fundamental religiosity of Korean people. In fact, the above quoted interviewee does not exhibit any special characteristics in terms of Korean religiosity. Rather, what she confessed represents a typical aspect of Korean religiosity. This is related to the preference for a religious portfolio as a method of risk management, which has voluntarily been formed under the historical and social constraints of Korea, as put in chapter V.

Unlike Western society where Christianity has held a religious hegemony for about one thousand years, Korean society has experienced a relatively frequent replacement of the religious hegemony from Buddhism through Confucianism to Christianity. These foreign religions transplanted artificially by necessity by the ruling class have continuously remained ambivalent in dealing with native religiosity nourished by various kinds of folk religions, including shamanism. With regard to this relation between foreign and native religions, much research has proved a very Korean religiosity based on the interaction between the two in terms of syncretism,

hybridization, or indigenization (Yu 1975; 1984; Harvey 1987; Grayson 1992; 2003; Choi 1994; Cho, Hung-youn 1999; Chung 2001; Buswell 2007). However, the terms are more useful for explaining the nature of the interaction. Why it exists is a more important question in terms of religious portfolio. One of the advantages that the religious portfolio perspective has is that it does not have to suppose a new type of religiosity severed from a cultural continuity, to the extent that the previous terms relied on.

In a historical stance, the phenomenon of religious portfolio is not new, special, or recent.

Let me introduce the story of *Ichadon*'s martyrdom from *Samkukyusa*:

Early in his reign, *Beopheung*, the 23rd king of Silla, had desired to promulgate Buddhism as the state religion. However, lots of officials in his court opposed it because of their shamanistic belief. In the fourteenth year of his reign, an young Buddhist servant, called *Ichadon*, devised a strategy to overcome the opposition. He secretly asked the king to allow a construction of a Buddhist temple (according to other version of the story, he constructed a Buddhist temple at his will). During the period of construction, lots of servants complained about the construction and claimed an execution of *Ichadon*. After all, the king accepted the punishment of execution. *Ichadon* prophesied to the king that at his execution a wonderful miracle would convince the opposing court faction of Buddhism's power. When *Ichadon* was executed on the 15th day of the 9th month in 527 CE, his prophecy was fulfilled; the earth shook, the sun was darkened, beautiful flowers rained from the sky, his severed head flew to the sacred *Geumgang* mountains, and milk instead of blood sprayed 100 feet in the air from his beheaded corpse. The omen was accepted by the opposing court officials as a manifestation of heaven's approval, and Buddhism was made the state religion in 528 CE. *Ichadon*'s body was then taken to the *Geumgang*

mountains and buried there with respect. His martyrdom led to the construction of *Heungryunsa*, Silla's first state-sponsored temple.

Given that *samkukyusa*, one of the oldest history books on Korea, was written by the famous Buddhist monk, *ilyeon* (1206~1289 CE), it seems strange that *Ichadon*'s death is tinted thickly with shamanistic elements. A miraculous event after his death made the opposing party believe in Buddhism because it was like an entire shamanistic ritual to behead the offering, to sprinkle its blood, and to call to gods of the earth, the sky, and rain. This symbolizes that Buddhism imported by the ruling elites was understood and explained in the light of traditional folk religions. Even today's shamans believe that they are Buddhists, and actually many shamans became Buddhist monks, especially a monk belonging to Taego Order. For the general populace alienated by an essential intellectualism of Buddhism, Korean Buddhism also actively utilized and tolerated many folk religious practices, as far as they became an ad hoc means for the nescient people. There is still no big difference between Buddhist and folk religious belief in terms of demanders.

In establishing the relationship with folk religions, Confucianism and Christianity were implicitly ambivalent, while Buddhism was explicitly ambivalent. Confucianism regulated systemically Koreans in everyday life, but it could not deal with their demand of otherworldly reward because it did not admit the concept of other world or god at least publicly. Even

Confucian elites, including royal families, frequently conducted *kut*, and most of them were serious Buddhists privately. Under the hegemony of Confucianism, Koreans had to find more religious rewards in folk religions and Buddhism, although *yeoksulgas*, shamans and monks belonged to the lowest class in the Confucian status order. Most Korean people conduct at home *jesa*, Confucian ancestor worship ritual, pray or bow at Buddhist temples across the country, and ask fortunetellers their fortune on the early days of the New Year. This type of religious attitude is still general, not special in Korea. Here the point is that Koreans never seek a blending of the three religious beliefs. Each belief contributes to them respectively in terms of meaning and symbol, description and explanation, worldliness and otherworldliness, and so on. Each is separately expressed and practiced depending on times, places, and goals. In fact, a religious blending as a new type of religiosity different from original religions is not easy to find in the Korean religious circumstance, admitting that the terms like syncretism, hybridization, and indigenization exaggerate its extent accommodatingly.

The domination of Christianity, claiming an exclusive source of supply for the religious rewards, tried to break down the operation of religious portfolio in the past. It is well known that the earlier missionaries regarded the religious portfolio as the most dangerous enemy that had to be defeated. In terms of Korean demand, Christianity is a very special system of belief in that the only and absolute God cannot coexist with the attitude of religious portfolio and further, it

intends to control both religious and non-religious people in all aspects of life. During the period of modernization, the traditional pattern of religious portfolio has been managed and controlled in a moral, political, and especially economic dimension by the Christian ruling class, as exemplified in chapter V, even if Korean Protestantism itself borrowed many marketing strategies from folk religions: an importance of mountain prayer and prayer at dawn, healing prayer by minister, loud prayer, emphasis of worldly well-being, and so on. Korean Christianity had in common with Confucianism the official position that folk religions are a superstition based on irrational mentality, but it, especially Protestantism, was different from Confucianism in that it absorbed many elements of folk religions into its belief system. In a sense, it is Korean Protestantism that became the stereotype of such religious blending only to be named variously. Above all, a relative merit of Protestantism is that it provides religious consumers with one-stop service, in which “one is enough”. Korean Protestantism has functioned as an inexhaustible source of both abstract and concrete rewards, ranging from anti-communism and economism to eternal life and family troubles. This feature is one of the main reasons why it enjoyed an increasing growth of membership until the 1980s.

As <Table 3> suggests, major victims of the comprehensive service of Protestantism was Confucianism and New Religious Movements (NRMs). Confucianism essentially has few worldly rewards that religious consumers can take unless it is a means for the upward mobility of

social status. Compared to Protestantism which already holds a religious hegemony and is ready to offer various kinds of rewards, the limitation of Confucianism becomes more and more evident in terms of reward through the modernization period, and hence its opportunity cost becomes increasingly higher. In case of *Cheondokyo*, *Daejongkyo*, and other religions in <Table 3>, a cause of its decline should be understood differently because Korean NRMs attempted to give a kind of comprehensive service based on religious blending, ranging from Confucianism, Christianity, and Buddhism to folk religions and Taoism. Although most of them grew greatly in response to the social crisis at the end of *Chosun* Dynasty and during the Japanese rule (Noh 2003; 2005), they failed in recruiting social elites, in providing an ideology of modernization, and in making their organization economically efficient. Unlike Protestantism, their propaganda of rewards was very grand, unpractical, and unsystematic, except for *Wonbuddhism* which focused on expanding social works and practicing Buddhist doctrines in everyday life. As will be discussed later, this whole decline of Korean NRMs in the post-war times is the most salient difference between the Korean and Japanese religious market.

However, every one-stop package service has difficulty in satisfying a specialized and diversified demand because it becomes a more effective supply strategy to the extent that consumers' preference is standardized. Protestantism was undoubtedly chosen the most profitable option in the era when an ideology of growth and development overwhelmed and

integrated all sectors of Korean society, but religious consumers in the post-growth era began to realize that the one-stop package service costs them an overconsumption of religious service beyond their perceived rewards, and that its opportunity cost is also very high because they have to give up the possibility of finding other diversified services, namely a religious portfolio. In other words, the cost of Protestant commitment was justified so long as Korea was in its rapid growth phase, but once that phase was over in the 1990s, the present value of the Protestant religious package became too low. A pattern of religious consumption is not fixed. Turning back to the pattern of religious portfolio is the most important reason that Korean Protestantism stopped its growth since the 1990s, as shown in <Table 3>.

3. Individualism

The recent growth of Korean Catholicism and Buddhism is closely related to the return to religious portfolio, which was restricted during the modernization period. In the Korean context, a religious portfolio mainly happened not between foreign religions, but between foreign religions and traditional religions such as shamanism or folk religions. As mentioned above, the political oppression of traditional religious practices was driven by Korean Protestant social elites since the 1950s, who were seriously influenced by American conservative Protestant

missionaries (Park 2003). As Korean society enters the post-growth era and experienced a financial crisis of national bankruptcy in the 1990s, its members paid more attention to a fallacy of the classic paradigm by which modernization is the same as Protestantization. Witnessing various kinds of increasing social troubles like unemployment, divorce, suicide, and bankruptcy, they seek a closer and more tangible reward rather than a distant and intangible one. Economically speaking, the present value of otherworldly rewards becomes lower because discount rate (i) is higher to the extent that individuals' fear of an existential crisis is strong. However high the future value of the rewards may be, rational consumers with a high discount rate will never be deceived by the future value of the rewards. The rational choice of humans is always conditioned by their expectation of the future. As psychological factors are incorporated into economic rationality through the discount rate, rational consumers choose a religion or religions depending on the present value of the religious service. The interviewees express as follows:

Question: *Do you think that competition between fortunetellers contributes to a whole growth of fortunetelling?*

Sure. The number of fortunetellers increases because people have a difficult time financially. They gather around fortuneteller's office in order to get a message of hope even in this economic situation of depression.

--- a 25-year old woman in Seoul ---

Competition is always not good. I have ever met many fortunetellers for the last twenty years. During the period of financial depression, it seems that people need fortunetellers more than before. That causes commercialized and unqualified fortunetellers to flourish.

--- a 51-year old woman in Pusan ---

Competition between fortunetellers enables people to access to fortunetelling more conveniently than before. The popularity of fortunetelling is necessarily based on a weak mind of human beings who suffer from complicated problems in life.

--- a 42-year old woman in Seoul ---

Protestantism with a religious hegemony failed in lowering the social discount rate. Rather, it served to increase the feeling of psychological crisis and social insecurity through many millennium movements prevalent in the end of the 1990s. To again put in Stark's words (2000, 88), to lower the discount rate means "the capacity to postpone the delivery of the rewards to an otherworldly context". Thus, the end of all religious prophecy is to equal the present value with the future value of the rewards by letting discount rate be zero. If the level of psychological fear increases for some reason, however, the present value of Protestant prophecy overwhelmed by otherworldly rewards becomes lower and lower. When believers feel the necessity of coexistence in pluralistic circumstances, a religious portfolio is more balanced and less risky than a religious one-stop service. In this sense, the religious hegemony of Korean Protestantism is being

threatened. In short, individuals who experienced an inability of Korean Protestantism to deal with social crises of the post-modern era are likely to avoid its strong commitment and to look for a more flexible religion.

Individual religious desires, which were dismissed within the collective ideology of modernization admired by Protestantism, now become a cultural nourishment for the rapidly increasing fortunetelling. Although Protestantism has most drastically criticized Koreans who participate in the fortunetelling culture, a crack in its religious hegemony allows Koreans more freedom to make use of fortunetelling individually. The Gallop Korea survey (1999) asked those who had experience in religious switching, and <Table 6> shows the results.

<Table 6> Experience of Religious Switching (%)

Previous religion	Protestant (N=117)	Buddhist (N=58)	Catholic (N=17)	No religion (N=208)
Protestantism	--	84.5	52.9	63.0
Catholicism	18.8	15.5	--	16.8
Buddhism	76.9	--	47.1	20.2
Other Religions	3.4	--	--	--
No answer	0.9	--	--	--
Total	100	100	100	100

(Source: Gallop Korea 1999, 41)

On <Table 6>, it is obvious that the religious loyalty of Protestants is relatively lower than Buddhist or Catholics, even if the gap is not remarkable in terms of inter-religions switching. 84.5% of Buddhists and 52.9% of Catholics were Protestant, whereas 76.9% of Protestants and 47.1% of Catholics were Buddhist. On the column of no religion, however, the rate of giving up Protestantism is much higher. 63% of those who have no religious affiliation were Protestants, while only 16.8% and 20.2% were Catholic and Buddhist respectively. When we are reminded that about 50% of the population does not report any religious affiliation, this result is significant. Put in short, remaining Protestant is now an expensive religious option because the high level of religious commitment required by conservative Korean Protestantism makes it more difficult for members to practice a religious portfolio.

In terms of religious portfolio, Catholicism and Buddhism are more profitable than Protestantism in that they require a lower level of commitment and hence are allowed to keep an individual religious portfolio free. In contrast with Protestantism or New Religious Movements, Catholicism and Buddhism have experienced a steady or rapid increase of their membership even recently, as shown in <Table 3>. Taking a flexible attitude toward folk religions, Korean Catholicism has been more careful not to break down a tradition of religious portfolio, which consists of Buddhism, Confucianism, shamanism, Taoism, and other folk religions. While

Protestantism refuses to be part of the religious portfolio, Catholicism is willing to be an important element, at least practically.

Given that fortunetelling is always based on one-to-one relations because fortunetellers are bound to provide their service individually, not collectively, it is not at all surprising that fortunetelling is prioritized for the religious portfolio of individuals. In an individualized society, the individual fatalism of fortunetelling becomes more persuasive and practical than macro doctrines of religions, which are engaged in a fate of church, nation, and humankind. The point in the thesis is on the role of fortunetelling in a religious portfolio of individuals. Everyone always faces matters of decision-making, whatever it concerns. The more individualized a society is, the greater becomes the importance of individual decision-making. All clients interviewed did not believe fortunetelling entirely or absolutely, though it is not simply a kind of hobby or amusement. All of them replied that fortunetelling is only a reference for their own decision-making:

In the process of decision-making, it is useful. But, I myself decide all matters on the basis of my personality and preferences. When a fortuneteller warns me to be careful about something in the near future, I am willing to be more careful because it is not bad to me.

--- A 42-year old female realtor ---

I thank them for warning me about the possibility of my bad fortune, encouraging me to live more seriously, and above all thinking over my troubles together. They are not gods. How I take their fortunetelling is up to me absolutely.

--- A 38-year old hairdresser ---

No fortuneteller was perfectly wrong concerning my fortune. But, even a very famous fortuneteller was accurate approximately 60%. They have not given me concrete and practical help. When I want to know their thoughts about my business plan, I go to them. That's all.

--- A 51-years old female CEO ---

This attitude of fortunetelling is generally found in the Korean people, whether they are clients of fortunetelling or not. Fortunetelling is often considered a human resource for individuals to think over their private and public matters in more various aspects, and most Koreans are envious of those who can freely access fortunetellers with a divine power. That signifies a very realistic, confidential, empirical, and structural power. Obviously, fortunetelling still functions as a political or economic resource as major religions did. However, that becomes a resource for both the ruling class and the ruled. Whatever clients pursue depending on their social status, fortunetelling seems to be a passage ritual to be conducted in the process of the pursuit. Its 'doctrine' is more conservative than many Protestant cults, more balanced than nationalistic NRMs, and more human-oriented than churches or temples. Above all, it presupposes a divine power that practically and concretely breathes life into each individual. Individual desires of the

practical, not abstract or distant, power fits well into the following basic features of fortunetelling in a modernized circumstance.

First, the recent expansion of fortunetelling is an urban phenomenon. Fortunetelling based in the urban environment has grown in accordance with the diverse life styles of industrialized individuals. Unlike the traditional *shnidang* (shaman's shrine) located in a calm and secluded area in the mountains or countryside, today's *shindangs* and *cheolhakkwans* (fortuneteller's offices) are located in overcrowded areas, especially near subway stations. For example, among more than 400 advertisements of *shindangs* for purchase or sale listed from September 13, 2006 to February 18, 2011 on the website of an online community of Korean shamans consisting of 5,221 members (http://cafe.daum.net/allo2886?t__nil_cafemy=item), about ten are located in the countryside. In fact, even most of the ten are for prayer or *kut*, not for fortunetelling. Here are a few typical ads among them:

Ad 1

2 million won for deposit and 150 thousand won for monthly rent,
I sell a detached *shindang* with a front yard near Onyang Spa station and surrounded
by commercial outlets. (Jan 17, 2011)

Ad 2

3 million won for deposit and 200 thousand won for monthly rent,

I sell this single *shindang* with 2 bedrooms, kitchen, one bathroom, an oil-fired boiler. Immediately occupy! Only five minutes to Seoul National University station, on the main street. (Dec 1, 2010)

Ad 3

50 million won for deposit, 700 thousand won for monthly rent, and 5 million for premium, On the third floor of commercial building, 148 m² of total inner space, 4 bedrooms, recently renovated by professional carpenter, Songpa-gu, Seoul. (June 5, 2008)

From these ads, two common features stand out. One is that buyers and sellers of *shindangs* necessarily prefer a crowded commercial area centred around public transportation. Another is that all of them want a residence to divine and, at the same time, live in at low cost. This means that most Korean fortunetellers still belong to a very low income class and only make ends meet. They frequently move their *shindang*, which is a small complex comprised of an office, residence, and shrine, depending on their own economic situation. Their *shindangs* located behind colorful urban streets are normally chaotic, narrow, unclean, and even odorous. Ironically, urban individuals seem to believe that such poor but honest fortunetellers can tell more about the real self than pretentious ministers or deceptive monks. Given that the extent of religious pluralism is higher in the urban environment, individuals will try to find the real self, which was dismissed by the absolute doctrines of established religions, through a relative worldview of fortunetelling.

Second, in response to a fast and complicated change in social circumstance, individuals demand a power reified in the process of fortunetelling. Experiencing an unexpected social crisis like the collapse of *chaebols*, mass unemployment, and national bankruptcy, Korean individuals realized that the total of individual rationality does not always result in the maximum of social efficiency through an invisible power. All humans facing an existential crisis wish that Adam Smith's naive power be replaced by a visible power. The visible power will be pursued more seriously by individuals to the extent that the meaning of their existence is trivialized by macro-social risks. In this sense, the concept of fate, which fortunetelling relies on, is a power to be felt, verified, and guessed. For individuals whose existential value is endlessly threatened in daily life, anything invisible is difficult to believe. The fatalism inherent in fortunetelling is at least clear because it is already designed by a power, whatever it is called. Why incredulous individuals cling to the power of fate is because they can experiment and verify this power in the context of their individualized life. Ironically, the inability of fortunetelling to postpone rewards to a distant future is a real cause of its numerical growth in Korea. All clients who participated in the interviews said that they were not angry when they later realized the imperfection of fortunetelling:

They are not gods. So, it is only natural that they cannot know all I will do in the future.

--- A 24-year old female student ---

I do not believe in randomness and take a flexible approach. Fortunetelling implies a high possibility, but not something to be trusted absolutely.

--- A 41-year old female worker ---

I have never been angry because of wrong fortunetelling, although I waited for a long time to realize the degree of accuracy of fortunetelling. *Cheom* is simply a reference for looking at my problem in a broader context, and is not my decision itself.

--- A 41-year old female self-employer ---

What they want to rely on is not an omnipotent power, but an imperfect power of fate. That is already determined at the moment we are born. Individuals get closer to a self-realization of what their fate is in the process of fortunetelling. They are free to analyze, compare, and combine many interpretations of their fate provided by fortunetellers. All of them react to such interpretations very flexibly, depending on their personal situations. There is no flawless fate in fortunetelling. Thus, the imperfectness of humans is not sinful. As each human is born with its own imperfectness, the most important thing in human society is a harmony between imperfect beings. The imperfectness of humans is not something to be overcome by a perfect and omnipotent being. Nor is it a natural result of shamanic polytheism as claimed by Don Baker (2008, 99). The harmony in fortunetelling does not assume a special god or arbitrator because the

imperfectness is mutually complimentary. Only to know what one's fate lacks through fortunetelling becomes a better way to live in harmony with the world.

An isolated and helpless individual is pressed to be skeptical of their existential meaning in a rapidly modernized society. When the individuals feel that their real life is harmonious with the law of cosmos or this world, their existence is considered justifiable and meaningful. Fortunetelling is needed to correct a broken balance between the self and the cosmos caused by rapid modernization. This is why the loneliness and helplessness of modern individuals is healed in the process of fortunetelling. However, this function of healing should not be overly exaggerated as being the result of the supply-side factor because it is part of demanders' self-control. Clients of fortunetelling are engaged in a process of positive self-healing independent of the supply-side. It is they themselves that evaluate and choose one or a combination of various interpretations provided by fortunetellers. Interpretation itself does not have any power. It is not until clients empower the interpretation in their life that it is powerless. The ultimate decision-maker of empowerment in terms of fortunetelling is the client, not fortuneteller. This is the most remarkable distinction between fortunetelling and other religions. Unlike the supply orientation of other religious markets, Korean fortunetelling is a very demand-oriented market. Furthermore, the expansion of fortunetelling as a kind of amusement sometimes tends to reduce the demand of empowerment because fortunetelling without empowerment is not a religious phenomenon, but a

mere play. With regard to the interview question, “What factors do you think determine success or failure of fortunetelling as a job?” all thirty-nine participants replied unanimously that seeking money is a shortcut to failure. If fortunetelling functions simply as a tool of seeking a commercial profit, its demand will be very limited, as exemplified in the interviews. Therefore, it is more reasonable to explain the growth of fortunetelling on the basis of religious demand.

Third, Korean individuals tends to access fortunetelling as a resource for defending the self in competitive relations. If fortunetelling is only an aspect of a pre-scientific stage of thought or a psychological fear, it might not survive in an age of ultramodern science. It is one of the oldest and most prevalent religious forms in Korea, and hence is built on a historic religiosity. One historically interesting feature concerning its defensive function is that it has mainly been demanded in conflicts of horizontal dimension. Even today, most of the problems ailing clients are related to issues deriving from competitive relations in society. There is much evidence that supports this (Gallop Korea 1984; 1989; 1997; 2004). While established religions play an important role in dealing with vertical conflicts like class ideology, social poverty, national policy, or political preferences, fortunetelling has focused not only on private issues, but also on horizontal troubles. For example, clients do not ask the fortuneteller if he votes for a party, since it is a very private question, while established religions have a great influence on the questions. However, one political candidate may go to ask fortunetellers if or how he can defeat another

candidate. In Korea, the demand for fortunetelling is different from that of private religions. Its most advantageous feature in individualized society is its adaptability to diverse competitive relations. *Koonghap*, *Jakmyung*, *Saju*, *Feng shui*, and *takil* help individuals compete with others under more advantageous conditions. It is a well-known fact that many Korean chaebols such as Samsung, Hyundai, or LG Group have famous fortunetellers report on the physiognomy of potential new recruits in the final interview stage. The late *Byungcheol Lee*, the founder of Samsung Group, is still the most well-known businessman in Korea to have applied fortunetelling culture successfully to the management of big companies. An interviewee, who is the CEO of a medium-size company, talked about his experiences:

One day the teacher (mudang) read the faces of all my employees. When the teacher told a female employee that she would eventually not work here because of her *sajupalja* to wander around, she replied that she would continue to go on working here. Before long, she actually moved on to be part of the sales staff of another company. In my experience, some fortunetellers were very exact, and their prophecy was useful in the management of my company. If my company gets bigger in the near future, I will hire a fortuneteller to specialize in my company. Actually, this is what most CEOs wish to do.

Members of Parliament, Premiers, Mayors, CEOs, high officials, and many political candidates are ardent clients of fortunetellers who are famous for their divine insight (New York Times on

July 7, 2007; Weekly Chosun on January 7, 2008; on January 4, 2010). Let me introduce a part of the profile of *Woonsan Back*, who is known as one of the top *yeoksulgas* in Korea:

- . Lecturer, Graduate School of International Studies at *Korea* University
 - . Lecturer, Graduate School of Confucianism at *Sungkyunkwan* University
 - . Lecturer, Investigation and Security Institute of the National Police Agency
 - . Lecturer, Training Institute of Provincial Administration
 - . Lecturer, Training Institute of National Intelligence Service
 - . Lecturer, Korea Electric Power Corp., Samsung Electronics Co., LG Group, and JungAng Daily
 - . Lecturer, Chamber of Commerce & Industry in the City of *Sungnam*
 - . Honorary Chief of *Kangnam* Fire Station
 - . Member of the Presidential Advisory Council on Democratic and Peaceful Unification
 - . Chairman of Korean *Yeoksulga* Association
- (Source: <http://www.backwonsan.net/>)

As soon as clients enter his office, located in the richest area of Korea, they are inundated with grandiose pictures taken of him with political or economic celebrities, including previous Korean Presidents. His lectures are attended by major leading groups of society, from important branches of government to the largest journal. For clients, his insight is not superstition or wordplay, but a very practical resource for individuals driven into an extreme competition.

4. Ethnicity: Comparative Analysis

Most East Asian countries have a very long tradition of fortunetelling. Through their history, divination was and still is a central, not marginal, tradition in that it has continuously developed and spread regardless of age, sex, and status in eastern society. Based on this common popularity in Korea, Japan, and China, it is important to explain how the recent explosive growth in Korea should be understood in the comparative context with the two neighboring countries.

The most remarkable distinguishing feature of Korean fortunetelling is the position of shamanic divination. As discussed in preceding chapters, shamans are still a dominant supplier of the Korean fortunetelling market, while their status is marginalized and museum-ized in China and Japan. Today, Chinese and Japanese shamans only participate in the fortunetelling market very limitedly in time and place. Given that Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have historically absorbed various kinds of divination, composing the comprehensive religiosity of Chinese people, it is not unusual for contemporary shamans to provide divination simply among minority ethnic groups or in mountainous aboriginal regions. Today, although the shamanic tradition is reported to be an important element in Manchu ethnic identity, even ethnic shamans seem to be more ritual-oriented, dismissing divination as a trivialized part of their religious practices (Shi 1996, 224). The marginalization of shamanic divination went much further in Japan. Since the Meiji period, *Mikos*, Japanese shamans, had already lost its social position as a main supplier of divination, being absorbed as a member of Shintoism and Buddhism. Although

yuda and *noro* in Okinawa are similar to Korean *mudang* in terms of the terms, deities, and paraphernalia (Fairchild 1962, 105; Choi 1994, 31-32), they are now only a traditional treasure of Japan. Like Chinese shamans, Japanese shamans do not have any serious influence on the supply-side of its fortunetelling market. As a simple assistant of regional festivals, they are invited and asked to divine. Their divination represents a comedic event or temporary amusement in an effort to attract more people to festivals, which are not based on a religious belief.

As noted above, however, shamanic divination in Korea is never local, limited, temporary, or sectional. Korean shamans were and still are one of the most dominative suppliers in the fortunetelling market while many daily conflicts in even modern society are questioned and answered in a continuous communication between fortunetellers and clients. What produces this difference among the shamanic divinations of the three countries? I would like to suggest the answers from the viewpoints of both supply and demand.

In terms of the supply-side, Korean shamans succeed in finding various ways of surviving in a process of industrialization and urbanization, keeping pace with informational and communicational technologies. They also are more active in learning and conducting new methods of divination, ranging from tarot cards to the Book of Changes. They now tend to retain a religious identity as shamans rather than to belong to more complicated and systematic

religions like Buddhism, Taoism, or Shintoism. For the same reasons Tibet Buddhism persecuted Chinese shamans and the Meiji government prohibited shamanic rituals, Korean regimes used to ascribe shamanic divination to a type of superstitious magic that would eventually fade and die. Even when contemporary Korean shamans may perform rituals seen as “magic” by the public, their service appeals to a more balanced rationality, comprehending spiritual and material motivations of clients. Obviously, such elements improve the competitive ability of Korean shamans.

On the other hand, the problem of why a different method of divination is preferred should be answered, even if the demand for divination is stable in all three countries, as the REM assumes. While Chinese people consume divinations in various temples, Japanese people prefer a face-to-face communication with *yeoksulgas*. According to Lang and Ragvald (1993), for example, more than 150 fortunetelling stalls were said to flourish in the 1990s near the gates of the Wong Tai Sin temple in Hong Kong. In a recent research, the same authors report that the Wong Tai Sin temples in Guangdong and Zhejiang still register a strong growth in terms of the religious competition among temples (Lang, Chan, and Ragvald 2005). However, in comparative perspective, this simply demonstrates an aspect of Chinese religiosity according to which the demand for divination is met through the temples, whether the temples are Taoist, Buddhist, or Confucian. In contrast, Japanese consumers prefer a personal relationship with fortunetellers

whose numbers grow in urban environments. While street fortunetellers tend to gather around divination halls or divination corners managed by commercial enterprises, home fortunetellers rely on a non-face-to-face communication by phone or internet (Suzuki 1995, 251). How Japanese fortunetellers communicate with clients is much closer to a kind of psychological consulting which may seem to offer an escape from social insecurity. Unlike China, it is very rare in Japan and in Korea to find people who visit Buddhist or Shinto temples in search of divination. According to Suzuki's research (1995), Japanese people believe in divinations more seriously than Korean people, and further utilize it in a more commercial and urban environment. They divine even for themselves on the basis of various manuals provided by mass media, which reflects their tendency to prefer a written divination.

The methods of divination that are prevailing in Japan such as tarot cards, palmistry, or physiognomy are secondary and supplementary in Korea. Korean people still expect *yeoksulgas* to be more faithful to the theory of Yin-Yang and Five Elements because they are more interested in themselves within this cosmos than themselves in isolation. Even in the case of shamanic divination, Korean clients would ask shamans to explain their current troubles from the viewpoint of existentialism by which the present trouble is caused by a past one and will cause a future one. In fact, Korean fortunetellers make an effort to not predict a fortune in the near future, but to explain clients' troubles through the framework of existential causality. While the

Chinese prefer temple-oriented divinations and the Japanese prefer text-oriented divinations, the Koreans tend to stick to a more existential and explicatory divination.

This means that each of these countries consumes fortunetelling in different modes, with different expectations, and from a different belief system. The attitude of the clients also varies. While Chinese temple worshippers are likely to be cynical about a fortuneteller's interpretation of the fortune-poem picked by them (Lang and Ragvald 1993, 116), 90% of Japanese respondents interviewed by Suzuki say that they know of someone close to them who believes in divination. Unlike the Japanese respondents, the Chinese clients seem to trust in the gods of the temples rather than in fortunetelling. In the meantime, Korean clients take a fortuneteller's interpretation seriously; they rarely believe in self-divination or commercial divinations. Both Korean clients and fortunetellers who participated in the interviews for the thesis agreed unanimously that commercialism is the largest threat against the real power of divination. Unlike China and Japan, the widespread popularity of shamanic divination in Korea also includes a dose of antipathy toward commercialized divinations. As mentioned above, members of the Korean fortunetelling community normally expect fortunetellers to have the same level of morality, conscience, and purity as Christian priests or Buddhist monks. *Mudangs* and *yeosulgas* are believed to divine not only on the basis of their knowledge and wisdom, but also on the basis of a sacred power.

In short, the varieties of fortunetelling in East Asian countries are more closely related to a pattern of religious demand than that of supply. Without a proper consideration of religious preference, we cannot explain many aspects of religious diversities such as the decline and growth of shamanic or non-shamanic divinations, godly or godless divinations, and more or less commercial divinations among the countries.

VIII. Conclusion

The preceding chapters of the thesis attempted to show how main assumptions of REM can be applied to explain the recent expansion of Korean fortunetelling, depending on socio-historical conditions, various features of the supply-side, and the demand-side factors.

First, the influence of religious regulation on fortunetelling should be understood in a more complex social context than REM postulated. There is no empirical proof that the article of religious freedom postulated in the first Korean constitution in 1947 caused the sudden expansion of fortunetelling through religious competition. Rather, fortunetelling culture was widespread and popular even long before the first constitution was established. A strict control of Korean regimes against traditional fortunetelling led Korean institutional religions to involve belief in fortunetelling into their prophetic functions in various ways. Since the trend of globalization the late 1980s, however, it began to be considered an independent and important resource in recovering a cultural self-identity, even if there were no specific enactments or legal revisions concerned with fortunetelling. In short, it is very difficult to find a relationship between religious regulation and the growth of fortunetelling in Korea. It seems more important and meaningful for a better understanding of fortunetelling to examine a socio-structural attribute inherent in religious enactments rather than to claim the effect of deregulation imagined abstractly, given that no human society is without religious regulation. As evidenced in Korean

Protestantism, the recent growth of Korean fortunetelling based on subjective religiousness has not been influenced by religious regulation to the same extent as REM claims (Stark and Finke 2000, 202).

Second, the thesis explains that market competition is not an essential factor to cause a recent popularity of Korean traditional fortunetellers. Many creative marketing strategies that their competitors do not possess derive from their monistic worldviews in which there is no need to distinguish the sacred from the secular. As the harmony and unification of the religious and the economic is much more essential in their cosmology, they are free to incorporate various communication technologies into their means of service. Another factor is that there is no entrance barrier in the fortunetelling market, let alone organizational or doctrinal commitment, encouraging the establishment of a free relationship between fortunetellers and clients. This flexibility of fortunetelling market leads suppliers to engage in a higher degree of competition and a more efficient way of production. In contrast with the claim of REM that there is a positive relationship between religious commitment and religious participation, Korean fortunetelling as a kind of private religion grows through a loose and flexible network of fortunetellers and clients. All fortunetellers and clients who participated in the interviews actually revealed a substantial apathy toward a fear-making or giving-oriented way of fortunetelling. Furthermore, the ascetic attitude of fortunetellers plays an important role in evaluating the sacred authority of

fortunetellers and their divination. Their ascetic work ethic promotes a public confidence in the fortunetelling service itself, which means that fortunetelling can be a ritualistic alternative in every field of Korean society.

Third, the rapid expansion of Korean fortunetelling can be explained better in terms of the demand-side factors, which REM regards as dependent variables. As mentioned in Chapter III, the basic demand-side assumption of REM is the constancy of religious preference. With the increasing trend of globalization, however, contemporary Koreans are driven to redefine their relativized identity and to recover the continuity with traditional values. Fortunetelling in globalized Korea is utilized as one of the most popular ways to reconstruct a modernized life in light of traditional wisdom or worldview. Traditional divinations such as *sajupalja*, *koonghap*, *jakmyung*, *fengshui*, and *taikil* do not need the concept of the only and omnipotent God because all of them pursue a harmony between imperfect beings. According to empirical surveys presented in the thesis, the increasing demand of such divinations is not limited to the lower economic class, the uneducated people, regional minorities, or women. This recent trend is related to the fact that it is customized for an individualized life style in an urban environment, such as the two biggest cities in Korea, Seoul and Busan, where the interviews took place. Clients with private problems need an anonymity and customization of fortunetelling service that they cannot find in institutional religions.

After all, the thesis suggests that the demand of fortunetelling differs from the growth-oriented period to the post-growth period. Major factors to cause the change of demand are social variables that religious individuals cannot control for themselves. Self-expansion in globalized society is based on the selfishness in an individualized life style, whereas the modern meaning of social growth and development is constructed by the emphasis on collective interest over individual selfishness. The social demand of both self-expansion and selfishness is reflected in the increasing consumption of fortunetelling, which cannot be explained by the constancy of religious preference, which REM assumes as most important. Furthermore, their feeling of economic insecurity strengthened by the 1998 financial crisis cannot but influence the present value of religious rewards through discounting their future value. In this way, a rational choice of religious alternatives would reflect many psychological factors in the cost-benefit analysis of religious actors, which is overlooked by REM. In short, the widespread popularity of fortunetelling in Korea is related to a more variable religious demand, which seems to determine the vitality of subjective religiousness such as fortunetelling. From an historical perspective, the changing demand of Korean fortunetelling depended on the social needs of the times and hence, forced fortunetellers to become more strategic, flexible, and creative. In this sense, the decline of conservative Korean mainstream Protestantism sharply contrasts with the rapid growth of fortunetelling.

Finally, a comparative analysis of fortunetelling culture in East Asian countries can offer a more expansive evaluation of REM as well as a specific character of Korean fortunetelling. While Chinese fortunetelling grows around Buddhist or Taoist temples, Japanese fortunetelling is overwhelmed with *yeoksulgas*, not shamans. Fortunetelling is gods-oriented in China, but it is manual-oriented in Japan. The most distinguishing feature of Korean fortunetelling is that it is a shaman-oriented market. Shamans in Korea divine not as gods, but as speakers of gods. Like shamans, Korean *yeoksulgas* would pray in mountains, keep their body and mind pure, and focus on human-oriented divinations. As a rule, Koreans maintain a serious belief in fortunetelling, experience the feeling of sacredness through it, and at the same time find a practical usefulness in it. These religious features of fortunetelling absorb the substantial religious demand of new religious movements in Korea, while new religious movements flourish in Japan, regardless of the popularity of fortunetelling. In this sense, this kind of comparative studies in East Asian context leaves much room to be pioneered in the future projects of REM.

Like other sociological theories of religion, the REM allows us to move closer to understanding certain aspects of Korean fortunetelling at the expense of overlooking its other aspects. However, what it overlooked in the context of Korean fortunetelling is a traditional vitality of the religious demand-side, and hence makes us wonder about the major propositions

of REM, which attempts to be a comprehensive theory of religion. In this sense, this thesis tried to show both what the model can and cannot see.

Appendix:

Interview Script for Fortuneteller

I. Personal Information

Full Name or Office Sign:

Age:

Place:

Sex:

Income:

number of children:

marriage status:

II. Questions

- What or whom does your fortunetelling rely on?
- Why do you think clients come to see you?
- In which aspect is your fortunetelling useful for your clients' life?
- How do you recruit and manage your clients?
- How long have you been engaged in fortunetelling?
- What was your previous job?
- Why did you decide to be a fortuneteller?
- Which kind of clients makes your fortunetelling difficult?
- How exact do you think your fortunetelling is?
 - In the event that your fortunetelling turns out correctly, how do you react or explain it?
 - Can you as a fortuneteller tell me some of your important job ethics?
- What factors do you think determine success or failure of fortunetelling as a job?
- When are you happiest as a fortuneteller?
- Do you think that competition between fortunetellers contributes to an overall growth of fortunetelling?
- Do you find any common religious attitudes among your clients? If yes, what is it?
- What is the ratio of regularly visiting clients?

Interview Script for Client

I. Personal Information

Full Name:

Age:

Place:

Sex:

Income:

number of children:

marriage status:

II. Questions

- What kind of fortunetelling do you prefer? Why?
- Why do you come to see a fortuneteller?
- In which aspect is fortunetelling useful in your life?
- How do you find your fortuneteller?
- How long have you used fortunetelling?
- What is your current job?
- Do you agree that fortunetelling is just a kind of commercial good? If yes or no, why?
- Which kind of fortuneteller makes you disappointed?
- How exact do you think fortunetellers are?
- How do you react to wrong fortunetelling?
- Do you think that fortunetellers should have a certain job ethics? If yes, what is that?
- What factors do you think determine success or failure of fortunetelling as a job?
- When are you happiest as a client of fortunetelling?
- Do you think that competition between fortunetellers contributes to an overall growth of fortunetelling?
- Do you find any common religious attitudes among your fortunetellers? If yes, what is it?

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