

# Comparative research on Korean jangseungs and Lithuanian religious monuments

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**Abstract.** The research deals with Korean jangseungs and Lithuanian religious monuments, which include various kinds of Christian crosses, chapels, chapel pillars, and roofed pillars. The latter two are sometimes referred to as chapel pillars and roofed pillars (or collectively, decorative crosses) in English. This research focuses on chapel-pillars and roofed pillarsdecorative crosses only. Such monuments are seen quite often all over both countries, and they attract the eyes of tourists visiting the countries. The shape of the monuments is quite different: Korean jangseungs are pillars with a human-shaped body and the Lithuanian monuments are pillars having many Christian symbols. After deeper analysis, it can be concluded that both monuments are closely related by their functions. They are erected at the boundaries of villages, in the most important places in villages, near roads and dangerous places, etc. These monuments from both countries are supposed to protect the sphere of human life and ensure prosperity, health, a good harvest, etc. They also have strong ties with the veneration of ancestors, still very vivid in these two countries. And since both monuments are pillars, they have deep relations with the world pillar (axis mundi): a belief widely known throughout the world.

## Introduction

In terms of geography, language, anthropology, and history, Lithuania and Korea are very distant countries, so it might seem impossible to compare the cultures of the two countries. In reality, after a more detailed examination of both cultures, one finds that the countries share a variety of cultural and linguistic similarities. One parallel is found between the Korean jangseung, the guarding deity, and the religious pillars of Lithuania. For example, the main attractions enticing foreigners visiting Korea include the jangseungs. They are all over the country and it seems as if they live together with Koreans. That is why there are a lot of written studies about jangseungs, produced not only by Korean scholars, but also by a growing number of foreigners.

The plethora of religious monuments found all over Lithuania are similar in scope to the number of jangseungs observed in Korea. In Lithuania, the situation changed slightly after the prohibition placed upon religious expression during the Soviet era, but the foreigners who visited the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century referred to Lithuania as ‘Land of Crosses’ due to the vast numbers of crosses seen throughout the country. The term *cross* as used here means not only the Christian cross well known throughout

the world, but also the various ornamental crosses found only in Lithuania. For this research, I will overview only chapel pillars and roofed pillars. They are usually thought to be a kind of cross and are widely distributed with other kinds of religious monuments. Moreover, these pillars are adorned in various ways, clearly showing not only the influence of Christianity, but also relicts of the old religions of Lithuania, which could be considered similar to Korean jangseungs. On one hand, since these works of art have either the shape of a cross or have depictions of various Catholic saints, they can be analysed as a pure product of Catholicism. But since these works are unique to Lithuania, their roots should be found in Lithuanian culture. In fact, these works of art were inscribed on the UNESCO Non-material and Verbal Heritage Masterpiece List in 2001 with the name of 'Lithuanian crosses'.

Upon first sight, it might seem that Lithuanian crosses and Korean jangseungs have nothing in common. They look totally different and the only unifying feature of the monuments from the two countries is that they are both constructed from the same material—wood. From this point of view, a comparison of these cultural symbols might seem very doubtful. However, links between them might be found after deeper research into their roots and the functions they serve within their separate cultures. A comparison of these works of art will be organised as listed below. The second part introduces the Lithuanian monuments and Korean jangseungs. That will be followed by a detailed comparison. Additionally, I will look at the roots and functions of the jangseungs and Lithuanian monuments. Bearing in mind that the countries are situated far away from each other geographically, it would be natural to expect to find similar symbols not only in these countries, but also all over the world. I will try to look for similar symbols in other cultures. Finally, I will try to take a look at the differences between these symbols.

Since Korean jangseungs and Lithuanian monuments have attracted the attention of many scholars for a great number of years, they have been well documented from as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, given the great distance between Korea and Lithuania, there have not been comprehensive studies addressing the relationships between jangseungs and Lithuanian monuments. The methods I have employed in comparing these pieces of art have been to collect and interpret the materials about pillars and jangseungs found in research.

One of the most famous researchers of Lithuanian religious monuments is Paulius Galaunė, who worked during the interwar period in independent Lithuania. Other sources include those of Klemensas Čerbulėnas, who worked during the Soviet era. As for research from the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, I chose pieces by Alfredas Širmulis and Jolanta Zabulytė. For historical references concerning Korean jangseungs, I will be citing research by Jongcheol I, Duha Gim, Taesun Bak, etc.

## Presentation of artefacts from two countries

### *Korean jangseungs*

Jangseungs can be found all over Korea. They are known not only in modern times; records that date jangseungs can be found from as far back as the Silla dynasty (57 B.C.–A.D. 935) (Bang 2001, 112). Jangseungs erected at the entrance of a village are believed to be guarding the deities of the village, and jangseungs erected at the entrance of temples are believed to protect Buddhism. Jangseungs found in the southern regions are mainly made of stone, but jangseungs from the central and northern provinces are mainly wooden. The shape of a wooden jangseung is a wooden pillar 2–3 metres in height with a human head placed on the top of it. There are various faces of jangseungs differing from place to place, in their function and region, but usually they stand in pairs: male and female jangseungs, wearing hats. Stone jangseungs usually are smaller than wooden ones and they usually have not only head and a hat, but hands, legs and an entire body. A similar totem which is called *soddae*, consists of a pole with a bird sitting on it.

The names of jangseungs are contingent on a number of factors, including the region in which they are located or originate, the period that the totem was created in, and the social or cultural function, to name but a few. The term *jangseung* (long strip) is usually used in the Seoul region and is standard Korean. They will be referred as jangseungs in this research, too. They are also known as *beoksi*, *dangsan harabeoji* (grandfather of the holy mountain), and *dangsan halmeoni* (grandmother of the holy mountain) in the southern regions. In Southern and Northern Chungcheong Provinces they are called *susari* (stopping water), *susaldae* (bamboo stopping water), *susalmok* (tree stopping water), and *susalmak* (screen stopping water). They are known as *jangseung* or *jangsing* (dialectal form of jangseung) in Gyeonggi province. The names *dyangseung* (dialectal form of jangseung), and *tolmireuk* (stone Maitreya) are used in the provinces of northern Korea. The jangseungs that are most often observed on Jeju Island are called *dolharubang* (stone grandfather) (Bang 2001, 113). There are many more regional names for jangseungs besides the few mentioned (Jeongcheol I 2002a, 121–2).

### *The religious monuments in Lithuania*

As already mentioned, Catholic symbols, such as crosses and carvings are as prolific in Lithuania as Jangseungs are in Korea. As a result, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lithuania has been widely known as the ‘Land of Crosses’. A significant number of these carvings are made mainly of wood. These features are typical to all of Northern Europe. The northern regions of Europe are full of monuments and other pieces of

art constructed solely from wood (Širmulis s.d.). There were always a prominent number of wooden idols in Lithuania as well. Only beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did artists start to utilize iron to make crosses and the upper parts of mostly wooden monuments. It is also important to note that such monuments are found only in the regions inhabited by ethnic Lithuanians (Čerbulėnas s.d.).

All documents I have encountered refer to these works as Lithuanian crosses, even though some are not in the shape of a Catholic cross. Even the ones having the shape of a Latin cross are always decorated with carvings of the sun, moon, snakes, etc. Additionally, several crosses can be connected, making double or triple crosses. Roofed pillars (Lith. *stogastulpis*) have a roof on a pillar 2–4 metres in height. Chapel pillars (Lith. *koplytstulpis*) are similar to roofed pillars, but they have a space in which an image of a Catholic saint is seen under the roof. Such pillars are usually decorated with carvings of flowers and other plants at the bottom. A third type of monument is expressed as a little chapel fastened to trees or placed on the ground, on rocks, or other such places. Images of saints can usually be found in the chapels. Since all these monuments hold the same symbolic meaning for Lithuanians, they will be analysed and compared with Korean jangseungs in this research.

### **Comparison of Korean jangseungs and Lithuanian religious monuments**

#### *Comparison of functions*

Although the shapes of the monuments in each country have almost nothing in common, it is possible to compare their functions. As previously mentioned, Lithuanian monuments are widespread. While travelling in Lithuania one can see many such wooden monuments erected in front of houses and at the entrances of villages, in central squares, in front of churches, at the boundaries of villages, and so on. These monuments can be found not only in places where humans actually dwell, but also outside of villages. They are seen in cemeteries, the place of the ancestors, who have profound relations with the humans still living in the village. The monuments can be found along roads, especially at crossroads, which have a special meaning in Lithuanian folklore. The monuments erected at crossroads may also be used as road signs. The other special places these monuments can be found are forests, rivers and tumuli (Zabulytė s.d.[a]). The monuments erected in forests, seen next to springs and rivers, etc., always mark a holy spring, holy stone, or some other special place.

The functions of these widespread monuments can be divided into two groups. The first function is to protect the peace and life of a human and the village he or

she is living in. The monuments having such functions are erected in the centre of the village and on the boundaries of it. These monuments are certainly used to guard the village. The monuments protecting private life are usually erected in front of a house or on the boundaries of personal territories. Such monuments serve to define boundaries, but their primary function is believed to be the protection of the family living in that house. Other monuments having similar functions are erected on roads, in order to ensure safety while travelling. The most frequent locales for such monuments are crossroads, which are believed to be very dangerous places not only in Lithuania but also throughout many other cultures. These monuments are believed to guarantee peaceful journeys and protect travellers. Monuments having special functions are usually adorned with the image of the saint who is believed to protect such sphere. For example, pillars with St. Florijonas (St. Florian) are believed to shield one from fires and are erected at the high places of a village, and St. John of Nepomuk is believed to protect people from drowning and is often seen near rivers, marking the dangerous places.

Lithuanian monuments are also used as memorials. These commemorative monuments are often manifested as large crosses placed in cemeteries. It is also possible to find such monuments in many other places. Such monuments found in cemeteries are built in honour of ancestors, but there are a lot of memorial monuments marking special events in the history of a village, family or individual. The number of such monuments increased in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, a lot of monuments to mark the abstinence movement and in memory of the victims of the Rebellion of 1863–64 were erected (Širmulis s.d.; Zabulytė s.d.[a]). The monuments having these two functions do not greatly differ in shape, however. It is also worth mentioning that they symbolise the same ideas for Lithuanians. Besides that, the monuments erected in memory of ancestors can be viewed as having a guarding function as well. Since it is widely believed that the ancestors are much stronger than the living, a monument built for an ancestor usually means that he or she still has a connection to the locality in which the sculpture is found and is thus helping his or her descendants. The monuments erected to memorialise events important to the village or a person are not thought to protect life directly; their function is much more to protect history. From this point of view, the monuments built in Lithuania are meant to protect the space and time in which humans live. One who does not wish to have disturbances will build monuments to protect the space and time he or she is occupying.

Koreans jangseungs can be found in different places, just as Lithuanian monuments are widely dispersed. Typically jangseungs stand at the entrances of villages. They are believed to be the guarding deities of the village. Such jangseungs protect peace and provide safety for the village, scaring spirits who are believed to bear ominous

tiding such as famine and disease for the coming year. They also serve to protect agricultural harvests. Such monuments are quite common in Lithuania as well. But the jangseungs that protect villages are erected not only at the entrances, but in other places as well. They are built to mark the boundaries of a village and areas of farmland. Such jangseungs are used to mark the space between where the human and the rest of society are living, to make sure that nothing bad will happen there.

Jangseungs are also quite plentiful at the entrances to temples and in them. Since ancient times, religion has had a profound influence on human life, and the jangseungs protecting this important part of Korean culture are considered necessary. The jangseungs built in the temples were meant to protect Buddhist law and Buddhism. They were also erected to protect humans from epidemic diseases. Yet another type of jangseungs are those erected as road signs. These jangseungs have two functions: to mark the road and directions and to protect travellers. A good example of such jangseungs could be the *duchang* (smallpox) jangseungs. They were supposed to protect humans from smallpox epidemics. On the other hand, some of them were built every 10 li (around 3.93 km) on the roads, so being used as road markers (Duha Gim 2001, 54; Na 2004, 198–201) as well.

The functions of Lithuanians religious monuments and Korean jangseungs can be summarized as two cultures independently developing similar sculpted structures to serve similar purposes. The main functions of both types of monuments are to mark and protect the spaces in which humans live. It is quite easy to understand such an idea. According to Mircea Eliade, ‘if you want to live in a world, first you have to create it’ (Zabulytė s.d.[a]).<sup>1</sup> Behaviours based on this idea can be found all over the world. In the cases of Korea and Lithuania, humans are marking the spaces they call home with a monument that is spiritually meaningful and culturally important to that person. But these monuments are not simply markers; they are guardians, protecting the spaces they inhabit. They provide peace and safety, agricultural jobs, etc. There are some monuments that define both space and time. An example of such a monument would be a Lithuanian monument commemorating an important event. Clearly Korean and Lithuanian monuments differ in the forms they take, but they have similar functions. Thus it would be natural to assume they have more in common.

### *Relation with ancestors and death*

There have been a lot of different ideas about the origins of Lithuanian monuments. As previously mentioned, a substantial number of these monuments are in the shape of a cross or bear images of Catholic saints. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there have been

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Mircea Eliade, *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*, trans. from the French by Willard R. Trask, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.

two main opinions about the origins of these crosses. Many researchers believed the genesis for the use of crosses were influenced by Catholicism, citing the use of the cross symbol itself and images of Catholic saints. Other researchers believed the monuments originated indigenously as part of the old religion of Lithuania, an argument that most now believe to be the most likely. Moreover, religious monuments in Lithuania have strong relationships with the cult of ancestor that has always been very strong in Lithuania (Širmulis s.d.).

Looking into the historical data about Lithuania from the Middle Ages, one can find records of an idol that was built after a person's death in the shape of that person. Additionally, there is a persistent legend about a tree growing near the idol, and it is customary to worship that tree. There are two famous legends about such customs. One of the most fabulous of the legends is as follows. After the death of a famous person, the descendants erect a wooden idol in the shape of that person next to a lake or river and worship it. After the idol has rotted, a tree or forest grows in that place and people keep worshipping that tree or forest. They are called sacred forests. From these records it can be understood that the custom of making an idol of the deceased and worshipping it and asking for the help of this person, has existed in Lithuania for centuries. Such customs are well known not only in Lithuania, but also in neighbouring countries and those that are farther away as well. It is also worth mentioning an artefact in Šventoji discovered by Rimutė Rimantienė. That monument was a stylized pillar with a human head, and it is believed to be a monument of a god or deity that acts as a protector. The custom of erecting a monument in the shape of a dead person is well known in Slavic cultures. Such customs are natural for cultures that believe the dead person to be a god. For instance, the Ostyaks of Siberia have a custom of making an idol in the shape of a human. It is believed that the human soul lives on in that idol (Gang 2004, 125). After comparing Lithuanian materials with information from other countries, Lithuanian scholars made the following conclusion: even though Lithuanian monuments have a lot of Christian symbols, their origins are in the old religion of Lithuania. To be more specific, it was a custom to erect a monument in the shape of a dead person and to believe that his or her soul would continue living in that idol. Similar customs are widely known in other countries as well. The custom of worshipping a tree or forest that has grown up in the place of a decaying idol especially seems to show deep connections with the Mongolian custom of worshipping the wood mother and the rock mother (Širmulis s.d.; Jangsik Jang 2005). It is still not clear whether all monuments from pre-Catholic Lithuania have a direct relationship to pillar-type monuments, but it is possible to hypothesize that the existence of such pillar-type monuments could have influenced the origin of modern pillar-type monuments.



Might the origin of Korean jangseungs be similar? At first, let us look at the names of Koreans jangseungs. Jangseungs have many names, in part meaning *grandfather* or *grandmother*, which correlates with Lithuanian data (I, Hwang 1993, 125). Jangseungs are built to worship many gods, including Josang (God Forefather) and Sijo (God Progenitor). In the analysis of legends about jangseungs, death and its attending spirits are always mentioned. In other legends, people meet jangseungs in their dreams (Jeong 2004, 148). The legends and myths in which people meet and talk to death or gods are widely known all over the world. Moreover, it can be understood from the ancient dates of Korean history that the custom of erecting such monuments existed in the ancient Silla Dynasty. The jangseungs are much more than mere guarding deities (Bang 2001, 112–3); they have deep relationships with ancestors and the death cult.

A comparison of data from the two countries demonstrates that both monuments not only have similar functions, but they may also have similar origins. Korean jangseungs are pillars with a human head providing protection. Such monuments are believed to have existed in pre-modern Lithuania, one of them found by Rimutė Rimantienė in Šventoji. It is still not clear whether the Lithuanian monuments were directly influenced by the traditions of the old monuments, but let us assume that there are relations between both eras (Zabulytė s.d.[b]). The monuments show deep relationships with the veneration of ancestors, which continues to maintain firm positions in both countries. To compare the functions of these monuments in both countries, it has been said that the main function is to protect and guard the person and village he or she is living in. But after an analysis of the origins of these monuments, it could be concluded that they have such functions because the origins of these monuments are related to dead ancestors.

That is why it is necessary to think once more about the idea of *creating the world*. The people from both countries who were creating the world marked it with monuments and asked the dead ancestors to remain there. There are beliefs that the dead leave this world and go to another, but the belief that people after death simply get another appearance and keep living next to us is widely known as well.

The belief that ancestors continue living next to their descendants after death can be proven by the customs of both countries. There is a custom in Korea to summon dead ancestors, bow to them, and make a sacrifice to them on the Lunar New Year. Lithuanians have the custom of dining with dead ancestors on Christmas Eve, which is similar to the Lunar New Year. The Chuseok (Harvest Moon Festival) and All Saints Day customs also show the respect for ancestors in both countries.

After a comparison of the customs of the two countries, it is not surprising that the monuments have similar features. They have deep relationships with the veneration



of ancestors, which occupies strong positions in both countries. It might be expected to find these monuments in other beliefs.

*Relation between human  
and tree seen in folk beliefs*

As was mentioned earlier, Korean jangseungs and Lithuanian religious monuments are related to the veneration of dead ancestors. Korean jangseungs are carved in the shape of a human, and numerous Lithuanian monuments have a roof or are in the shape of a house. Such forms represent the space in which humans live. Almost all Lithuanian monuments are made of wood, and there a lot of wooden jangseungs in Korea as well. The material of the monuments is important as well.

The deep bonds between humans and trees can be seen in a host of Lithuanian legends and myths. A good example of this relationship can be found in the Lithuanian legend 'Eglė, queen of the grass snakes'. The story follows a woman who changes herself and her children into trees. Similar stories can also be seen in folk songs. There are stories about plants growing on the grave of a person, and it is believed the soul of that person lives in that plant. Lithuanian funeral songs always refer to a dead person by the name of a tree: a young male is referred to as a birch, a mother a fir, etc. (Zabulytė s.d.[c]). It is also worth mentioning the strong belief in dreams and their attending symbols. If one dreams about an oak or a birch it means that a male is going to die, while a dream about a fir is a sign of a woman's death. Signs such as these are plentiful in Lithuanian mythology and folklore. Stories abound in which humans become roses, lilies, pine trees, apple trees, etc. Such beliefs are known not only in Lithuania, but also in other countries. There are a lot of myths from ancient Greece in which plants start to grow after the death of humans. A familiar example of such a myth is the myth of Adonis and Narcissus. It is said that these people were changed into flowers and that they continue to live in this world. Myths about human souls living in trees are well known in other European cultures as well. Usually this soul functions as a mediator between the human and divine worlds and serves as fortune teller. The vision of a tree in dreams is seen as an omen of death in many cultures (Zabulytė s.d.[c]).

Such beliefs are not only found in Europe, but in other countries, as well. According to the myths of Native Americans, the souls of the dead do not disappear, but acquire the appearance of a tree or plant, always living next to the descendants of the deceased. In a discussion of cultural myths concerning death, it is necessary to talk about the theory of reincarnation, which started in India and is widely known in all Buddhist countries. This theory seems to have the same origin. Lithuanian folk songs commonly tell of a dead mother's soul flying around the world like a bird. Moreover,

there are some stories about human souls appearing as butterflies or birds, flying all over the world while the person is sleeping. Later the person can remember all the places the butterfly or bird visited. These fantastic tales are not only encountered in Lithuanian lore, but also in the mythology of other nations.

Beliefs such as these are not common in Korea, but even so, it is still possible to find some correlations between trees and death. There are some tales that may have originated in China about a girl who was mourning at the tomb of her lover. Later a plum tree grew upon the tomb, and the girl was transformed into a bird. Since that time, these birds have always been found only in plum trees. Relations between death and plants can also be found in Korean folk songs. For example, there was once a girl who was visiting the graves of her parents-in-law, and she found that the flowers and trees growing on every grave matched the character of the person entombed (e.g., a tiger flower was growing on the grave of her mother-in-law because she was as cruel as a tiger).

In order to summarize these myths, it is necessary to mention animism. According to this ideology, humans are not the only beings endowed with a soul, but all animals, plants, and even inanimate objects have their own souls. Beliefs and stories that introduce the idea of a human soul residing in trees and other plants originated from this ideology. There are beliefs of humans becoming a tree or a flower after death, and other beliefs speak of human souls flying in the shape of a bird or a butterfly; even after death it stays in this world and in the same appearance. This may be one explanation as to why Lithuanian religious monuments are usually built in the shape of a roof or house. As has been stated, the ancient Lithuanians believed the souls of the dead lived in trees. Descendants made 'houses' so that their ancestors would be able to live next to them and help and not feel that they must leave their family's home.

*Worldwide symbol of pillar  
and the world pillar/cosmic tree*

It can be noticed that the shapes of the monuments from both countries vary in size. It is because both of them have a shape of a pillar. Since Korean jangseungs are built to resemble the shape of the human body, it can be inferred that other shapes would not suit them, but it is easy to criticise such an opinion. Stone jangseungs are shaped like the entire human body, but wooden ones only bear a head. Lithuanian religious monuments are clearly columnar. It can therefore be said that the monuments from both countries are closely related to a pillar. As already discussed, these monuments have important meanings both in these two countries and all over the world. So it would be natural to analyse the meaning of a pillar in other countries.

The symbol of a pillar is not necessarily seen in Korean jangseungs, but it is widely known in Lithuanian folk art. It also proves the relation between humans and plants. As mentioned above, both types of Lithuanian pillars are often decorated with ornaments of flowers and plants. This clearly proves the relationship between Lithuanian monuments and trees. These similarities can be found in the shape of the monuments and in the folk beliefs. But the tree is an important symbol widely known in other countries, too. Relationships between Korean jangseungs and trees may be seen in the shape of the pillars. This 'tree', widely known in all countries, is not a simple tree, but a cosmic tree. The world pillar/cosmic axis/cosmic tree, axis mundus, is well known in many other parts of the world, and it often appears in different forms of folk art. Both Lithuanian and Korean scholars see the origins of the monuments of their countries in this cosmic tree (Zabulytė s.d.[b]; I, Hwang 1993, 147). Additionally, totem poles of Native Americans have close connections with this cosmic tree; they also have some things in common with the monuments of both countries. Totem poles have animals carved on them and are widely known among Native American tribes. But these animals are never chosen at random; they are always the mythical ancestors of the tribe. From this point of view, it can be said that the monuments of Korea and Lithuania and the totem poles of Native American tribes are spaces in which ancestors can live. Incidentally, totem poles are always placed in the centre of the village and are believed to protect the village.

In summary, monuments in the shape of pillars from both countries are small models of the cosmic tree, well known all over the world. The cosmic tree is believed to be the centre and the beginning of the world. According to the beliefs of ancient cultures, after death a human goes back to the place he or she occupied before being born. This space could have been a cosmic tree. This suggests that descendants who were not willing to let their ancestors go too far away from them after death made small models of the cosmic tree and placed them in the most important locations in the village for their ancestors to be able to live, after death, in harmony with their descendants.

### *Influence of foreign religions*

The meanings and historical backgrounds of these monuments in both countries are very similar, but they do differ quite dramatically in appearances. The jangseungs of Korea are clearly human shaped, while Lithuanian monuments look much more like pillars. Perhaps that explains why upon the first sight these monuments appear to lack commonalities. There are many possible hypotheses for these differences.

There are certainly a number of differences in the geographical and historical realities of these two countries. However, archaeological data has provided evidence

that pillars bearing engravings of human heads existed in ancient Lithuania. The attending legends that connect these archaeological findings refer to a cult of death, but archaeologists think these pillars may also represent images of gods.

So, although Korean and Lithuanian monuments share origins and an initial shape, they are now very different. How did this happen? These cultural monuments have deep connections with their respective religious beliefs. It is therefore necessary to look at the religions that the cultures developed and adhered to. Lithuania became a Catholic country in 1387. Catholicism was a very strong, strict religion in medieval Europe, and it was therefore common to prohibit the old customs and traditions. According to some scholars, the monuments in Lithuania changed drastically as a result of such prohibitions. Consequently, Lithuanian religious symbols were discarded, particularly those that represented 'heathen gods'. The images of dead ancestors disappeared from the monuments as well. Conversely, the number of images depicting saints increased on chapel pillars. The cross, being the most important symbol of Christianity, is also seen in all kinds of monuments. It is not only the variously decorated Latin crosses that one can see throughout the country, but also roofed pillars and chapel pillars, which usually have a small cross on the roof (Zabulytė s.d.[d]). However, the ornamental moons, suns, plants, snakes, etc. still apparent on many pillars, which have deep connections with the old religion, provide circumstantial evidence that alludes to the history of the monuments.

In Korea the old customs and traditions were not prohibited by the wave of new religions that entered the country. On the contrary, these customs were widely accepted and co-existed peacefully with the new ones. A good example is shamanism, which disappeared in Europe, but is still very strong in Korea. It may be that because of the different character of the foreign religions, the monuments in Korea were not changed as much as they were in Lithuania.

## Conclusions

The ideas presented in this paper could be summarized thus. Certain decorated wooden monuments of Korea and Lithuania, which attract a great deal of foreign interest, may initially seem to lack many similarities. Korean jangseungs represent a human shape and are believed to be guarding deities. Lithuanian religious monuments are crafted in a multitude of shapes, but because of the widely seen cross or images of Catholic saints, they seem to be of Catholic origins. After studying data from both countries, however, it can be concluded that these monuments are not only connected but also symbolic representations of the cosmic axis/cosmic pillar, an almost universal symbol of life and origin. The monuments of both countries, originating

from the myth of the cosmic axis/cosmic pillar, are also symbolic of the souls of dead ancestors living in a tree. Since dead ancestors are spiritually much stronger than living humans, the descendants make small models of the cosmic axis/cosmic pillar and strategically place them in the village. In this way, their ancestors are able to live near their descendants in perpetuity, offering protection and guidance. The influence of foreign religions altered the shape of these monuments over time, however. In the case of Lithuania, Catholicism prohibited the use of the old gods and ancestral images on public monuments, and they had to be replaced by crosses and images of Catholic saints. Since in Korea there were no restrictions, jangseungs still bear human shapes, and their names show deep connections with the cult of ancestors.

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