



# Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF: South Korean Popular Religion in Motion

*Laurel Kendall*

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## **Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF: South Korean Popular Religion in Motion** Laurel Kendall

Thirty years ago, anthropologist Laurel Kendall did intensive fieldwork among South Korea's (mostly female) shamans and their clients as a reflection of village women's lives. In the intervening decades, South Korea experienced an unprecedented economic, social, political, and material transformation and Korean villages all but disappeared. And the shamans? Kendall attests that they not only persist but are very much a part of South Korean modernity. This enlightening and entertaining study of contemporary Korean shamanism makes the case for the dynamism of popular religious practice, the creativity of those we call shamans, and the necessity of writing about them in the present tense. Shamans can be found thriving in the high-rise cities of South Korea, working with clients who are largely middle class and technologically sophisticated. Emphasizing the shaman's work as open and mutable, Kendall describes how gods and ancestors articulate the changing concerns of clients and how the ritual fame of these transactions has itself been transformed by urban sprawl, private cars, and zealous Christian proselytizing.

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