

Korean Shamanism: The Training Process of Charismatic 'Mudang'

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In Korea, the knowledge of shamanic ritual is passed on according to traditional methods. *Mudang* (shamans) use established methods as models in accordance with the common understanding of the concept of tradition as an activity or way of thinking that one generation hands down to another to continue the culture. It is a common belief among Korean *mudang* that they have used the same method of educating shamans for a thousand years. In this paper, I will discuss the concept of shamanism in Korea and how the experienced *mudang* teaches and trains new *mudang*. Most of my information comes from personal experience and interviews with three experienced charismatic *mudang*, originally from Hwanghae Province in North Korea, who now reside in Seoul.

Little written documentation of the process of shamanistic training in Korea exists. Although it is difficult to know exactly why, Youngsook Kim Harvey gives one reason in *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* (1979). She writes that shamanism, among the four professional opportunities for women that also included courtesan, physician, and palace woman, "was . . . the only female professional role for which there was apparently no formally institutionalized pattern of recruitment, training, or practice." Kendall also mentions this lack of formalized training when new *mudang* are initiated, but a discussion of the full training of a new *mudang* was not possible within the scope of her study (1985:65). We can infer that these traditions were handed down in settings that did not lend themselves to documentation.

To date, the study of Korean shamanism has focused on different aspects of the everyday life of Korean women and the role shamanism plays in women's lives (Kendall 1985; Harvey 1979). As defined by

Eliade (1974), shamanism is a technique of ecstasy, but his study does not emphasize Korean shamanism in particular (1974:462). It is difficult to dissect the role of shamanic power within the learning process and within the ritual. Since Korean shamanism is a professional elaboration, the shamans must show their skill to their clients to win their confidence and to continue successfully as professionals (Kendall:166).

The Korean Concept of the Shaman (Mudang)

In Korea, the general concept of a *mudang* is someone who communicates with the spirits who control the world (Kim 1983). These spirits are not like Western gods but rather they govern different parts of the earth (like the mountain, for example) and other aspects of our lives and world. Many Koreans believe that they must be very careful of these gods or spirits and not insult them or anger them in any way.¹ When bad things happen, usually of a personal nature, these believers often think that they have displeased the gods in some way. They then think they must communicate with the gods or spirits to find out how to please them. The Korean *mudang* communicates with these spirits and then guides and instructs the believers on how to placate the spirits.

Many modern researchers of Korean shaman tradition classify *mudang* into two types: hereditary and charismatic (Kim 1981; Choi 1981). Hereditary *mudang* are not connected with and do not have relationships with godly spirits but only lead rituals. The trance state is not an important part of their repertoire. This type of *mudang* is common in the Cholla Provinces, the Kyungsang Provinces, on Cheju Island, and in some areas of Kyunggi Province. The *mudang* are called by different names according to the region. On Cheju Island they are called *shimbang*; in the Cholla Provinces *tangol*; in the Kyungsang Provinces *mudang*; and in Kyunggi Provinces they are called *chaein* (See Appendix *Glossary of Terms*). All these names are specific for a hereditary *mudang* (Yim 1986). This type of *mudang* "inherits" his or her profession from one of his or her parents. In that way, we might say that these persons are *mudang* at birth, since they are expected to carry on the family *mudang* profession regardless of sex or personal interests.

On the other hand, a person who is going to become a charismatic *mudang* begins to have some psychological problems in early adulthood or adolescence.² (This will be described in more detail later.) The person, or others around that person, interpret these problems to be that the spirits have taken over that person's mind. For this reason

the person is called "possessed." Although nowadays some cases of charismatic *mudang* occur in the southern provinces, most cases are found in the Seoul area and in areas north of the Han River. This type of *mudang* is also known by various names depending on the region: *baksu* (for male shamans only), *mansin*, *mudang*, *munyeo*, *keaja*, and *keenyeo*, among others (Kim 1969). However, the term *mudang* can be used generically to refer to any type of shaman.

Traditional Korean society was a divided society. It was comprised of many classes, including an aristocratic class, a peasant class, a merchant class, and a very low class that included butchers, courtesans, and *mudang*.³ Although class differences have changed in recent times, *mudang* and their families are still ostracized.⁴ Nevertheless, charismatic *mudang* come from every level of society, since becoming one is not a consequence of that person's level in society but is instead connected with the person's mental state and the illness that is called *shinbyung* or *mubyung* (Choi 1978:15-16).

Since hereditary *mudang* get their profession from their parents, these *mudang* also learn their craft directly from them in the home from an early age. They are able to learn for decades the important things a *mudang* does: singing, dancing, playing instruments, preparing food, and setting up the ritual table. From this kind of *mudang* we can easily find more advanced artistic skills and techniques (Choi 1978:53-61).

Characteristics of a Charismatic *Mudang*

Eliade talks about the shaman as someone who has to learn religious and mythological traditions when he or she is newly initiated by old shamans (1974:110), but Eliade does not detail how this learning can be or has been documented. Some *mudang* claim that learning is not handed down but is accomplished divinely (Harvey 1979:159-60, 193). However, normally, after a person has recognized his *shinbyung* and decided to practice as a *mudang*, he or she undergoes an initiation ceremony led by an experienced *mudang* and then spends many years learning how to perform the rituals and training to be a "great" *mudang*. (In some cases, the person begins training and practicing without an initiation ritual, usually for financial reasons.⁵ This paper, however, examines only cases where the usual pattern is followed.) After the initiation ritual, if the new *mudang* does not have training in the content of shamanic ritual or the behavior of a professional *mudang*, that person cannot lead or fully participate in performances of rituals, despite his or her possession. Many do not continue their training,⁶ although they sometimes perform or practice

in limited ways. They become *jeomjaengi* (fortune tellers), *anj'un* or *seon mudang*, which means they are possessed but cannot perform the rituals.⁷

All of the *mudang* interviewed by Harvey said they experienced increasingly severe incidents of *shinbyung* over several years and that these illnesses came on suddenly each time. As they explain, they were sick many times because they could not immediately identify the sickness or because they did not want to accept the facts of their illness. Even though some did not want to be a practicing *mudang*, they all said they believed their becoming *mudang* was fate and that they could not escape that fate.⁸ The signs of illness or the phenomena that occur are as follows:

1. There is a mysterious sickness.
2. The person cannot eat.
3. The body becomes weak.
4. The mental state becomes weak.
5. The person visualizes the spirits in dreams.
6. The person has hallucinations.
7. The person makes predictions that become true.
8. The sickness recurs until the person accepts becoming a *mudang*.⁹

When these things happen, and when the person accepts the belief that he or she is possessed by some spirit and should become a *mudang*, then the person or the person's family goes to see an experienced *mudang* who divines that the spirits (or some specific spirit, such as the spirit of a dead relative)¹⁰ are trying to enter the person's body and mind (Joe 1981; Harvey 1979; Kim 1983). The *mudang* then advises an initiation rite and the person becomes a *mudang*. The type of phenomena required to become a *mudang* can vary. One important variation is when the person suddenly knows where a dead *mudang's* performing accessories—such as bells or a drum—are buried. The burial place is usually far away, but when the person goes there, he or she knows the place and can dig up the dead *mudang's* relics. After this experience, the person goes to a *mudang* and is advised to have the initiation rite.

Little research has been done on the education of a charismatic *mudang*, the methods of rituals, or the formalities after a *mudang* begins practicing. Since every charismatic *mudang* is believed to be spiritually connected with the gods, formal instruction is not considered necessary by the *mudang*. This way of thinking also means that every *kongsu* (message from the spirits through the *mudang's* lips to the clients), every time of performance, every *mudang's* methods,

every customer's reaction, every location, and every content of the ritual is unique. It is difficult to judge the quality of the performance of the ritual or compare one *mudang's* performance with another since they are always different. It is for this reason that research into the handing down of knowledge from an experienced to an inexperienced *mudang* is so difficult. It is also difficult to standardize or classify these *mudang*, since there is no obvious connection between becoming a *mudang* and the person's sex, age, occupation, or education level.

Difficulties in Training Charismatic *Mudang*

The process of learning how to become a professional *mudang* is not easy, especially if the initiate is an older person, since the person must learn the necessary chants or songs or to perform the strenuous rituals over a long period of time. Another reason the process is not easy is that these people all have different backgrounds. A third reason is the connection to the spirits. Because each person is guided by the spirits, the person is likely not to listen to the teacher but instead to trust the "spirit's voice." Another difficulty faced in the education of new *mudang* is that they all have their own family responsibilities in addition to their training obligations. These dual obligations often create conflicts of interest.¹¹ The hereditary *mudang* do not have this problem since they learn from their parents from an early age and their whole family relationship is connected with their profession. It is like a family business. But the charismatic *mudang* may have separate family obligations which keep them from staying in the teacher's home for extended periods as required for their training. The teaching method itself and the lack of any formal written instructions make it necessary to observe the teacher and participate in as many rituals as possible. Only the experienced *mudang* can perform the *kut* (rituals performed for a specific purpose) and *kosa* (ritual offerings to the household gods and other gods or ancestors). At these times, the students go to the teacher's home or to a *kutdang* (shrine). Sometimes it is necessary for the new *mudang* to stay there even if no rituals are being performed. Since some rituals can last three or four days or more, family life can become very difficult for these people, especially the women.

A final problem in the teaching relationship is that the experienced *mudang* sometimes is not an experienced teacher. However, the new initiate must learn from an established, charismatic *mudang*, regardless of the *mudang's* teaching experience. No formal system for teaching has been established;¹² and established *mudang* are not subject to any specific qualifying process in order to take on new

mudang as students. However, a teacher is usually an older person with extensive experience. He or she usually is a good performer and is called a "great" *mudang* by his or her clients and other *mudang*. I have met many *mudang* who have students and these *mudang* are all usually over fifty years old.

The Informants

The three charismatic *mudang* whom I observed for eleven years are originally from Hwanghae Province in North Korea and now reside in Seoul. I studied their performances on a regular basis between 1977 and 1988, usually five or six times each month. Their names are Song Soonboek, Kim Kumhwa, and Woo Oekjoo, and they all have been performing rituals since they were very young. They came to South Korea during the Korean War, and they have many students (or have had them, as in the case of Song Soonboek). Their skills and techniques for performing *kut* seem to utilize only traditional methods. A brief description of each of the informants follows.

(1) Woo Oekjoo is called "Woo Mansin," or "Woo Yeosa," which means "Woo dowager".¹³ She was born in 1925 on November 17, according to the lunar calendar, in Ongjin in Hwanghae Province. When she was twenty years old, she had an initiation ritual (*naerim kut*) which was performed by Kim Keebaek, a male *mansin*, and Choi Illee. She now lives in Tong Jak Ku, Sangdo Dong, in Seoul and has about fifty students. Her specialty is the *Taetak Kut*, which is the largest *kut* in Hwanghae Province. The *Taetak Kut* consists of twenty-four *kori*, which are performed over a period of seven days. Because of the length and complexity of this rite, no shaman has performed the complete ritual more than three times. In recent years, she has taught college students some of the fundamentals of the rituals, although they are not initiates but rather students of Korean traditional performing arts or folklore. She is sometimes known as the "razor-like *mansin*" because of her sharp personality. Her house is always very clean (she requires this) and she does not like to go outside. She smokes two packs of cigarettes every day, but she does not drink. Her special scenes are the *Sangsangmaji Kori* at the beginning of the *kut* in which the spirits give their blessings, the *Chilseong Kori* (the spirit of the Big Dipper), and the *Malmyung Kori* (the spirits of dead *mansin*).

(2) Kim Kumhwa was born in Yeonbaek in Hwanghae Province in 1931 on August 18 according to the lunar calendar. She is called the "*Neomsaewee Mansin*" because she is very tall and when she watches *kut* she stands at the back of the crowd and stares like a bird.

She became a *mudang* when she was sixteen, and she learned *kut* from her maternal grandmother. She now lives in Sungboon Ku, Sukkwon Dong, in Seoul. She does not smoke or drink. She speaks very slowly. She now has several students. Her specialties are the *Chilseong Kori* and the *Chaktoo Kori* in which she dances barefoot on two fodder choppers. She was designated a Living National Treasure as the performer of the Important Intangible Cultural Property Number 82, the *Poongeo Jae* on February 1, 1985. This ritual is performed for the fishermen to get a big catch.

(3) Song Soonboek was born in 1905 on March 9, according to the lunar calendar, in Yeonbaek in Hwanghae Province. She is called the "*Toryong Mansin*" because *Toryong* is her patron spirit. She has been involved in shamanic activities since she was seven years old and was initiated as a *mudang* when she was about thirty years of age. She said she has initiated fifty to sixty students. A small woman, she smokes and drinks a little and has a good memory despite her age. She is known for her honesty and naturalness. Her costumes, decorations and equipment are abundant even though she has lost many or given them to her students. At the present she does not have any students, but she is sometimes called by her old students to perform with them. She does not perform the rituals by herself anymore. She seems to have been a great *mudang* at one time and says that she was the teacher of Kim Kumhwa and Woo Oekjoo. Her special scenes are the *Malmyung Kori* and *Chaktoo Kori*. She also is an excellent performer on the hourglass drum.

The People and Rituals Involved in Training

New *mudang* must master many different subjects. They must learn at least the following:

1. *cheongbae*: chanting to supplicate the spirits
2. dancing
3. *chaedam*: engaging in witty exchanges with the musicians during the performance
4. *kongsu*: delivering the spirit's message to the client
5. the making of costumes
6. the making of paper flowers for the decorations for the rituals
7. *kutdang cha'rim*: preparing and maintaining the location of the rituals or the shrine.
8. preparing food for the rituals
9. *kutcheolja*: the sequence of performance of rituals

10. *mudang yaedo*: the desired behavior of a *mudang*, including the style of performance

11. playing instruments

The *mudang* then combines these different and separate skills to perform his or her three main functions of *jeom* (divination or fortune telling), *kosa*, and *kut*. The performance of these primary activities of a *mudang* depends on how well the skills listed above have been learned.

Charismatic *mudang* use certain instruments in the performance of rituals. These instruments include the hourglass drum, a medium-size gong, cymbals, a stringed instrument, flutes, another wind instrument, and a small gong. All of the instruments are used only for a large ritual. Normally, only the percussion instruments are used. These instruments are important tools of the performance of the rituals (Eliade 1974:168). The performer of the hourglass drum is called the *kun halmoni* and the performer of the medium-size gong is called the *jakun halmoni*: the big and small grandmothers (or old women).

In terms of skills, Woo Oekjoo is known for her ability at *cheongbae*, dancing, *chaedam*, *kongsu*, and *kutdang cha'rim*. She is especially well-known for the costumes she makes and for *yaedo*. Kim Kumhwa and Song Soonboek are both known for their *cheongbae*; dancing, *chaedam*, *kongsu*, and *yaedo*. Kim Kumhwa is additionally known for her *kutdang cha'rim*, and Song Soonboek is known for her talented playing of musical instruments.

The student participates in rituals as part of his or her learning, and the *kun halmoni* plays an important role. The *kun halmoni* almost lives in the *mudang's* home and is familiar with all aspects of a ritual's performance. The person is almost always a woman and normally is responsible for preparing and maintaining the shrine and preparing food for the rituals, as well as controlling the musicians. She also assists the *mudang* in making costumes and flowers. Often she is the teacher of how to maintain the shrine. She is vital to the performance of the ritual since she must respond to the witty remarks of the *mudang* and, therefore, must know all of the stories of the *mudang* and all of the scenes of the ritual. The *kun halmoni* also helps to instruct and direct the new *mudang*. She is powerful in the home of the *mudang*, and the initiate must maintain a good relationship with her or him.

The established *mudang* is called the *shin eomeoni* (spiritual mother) by the new *mudang* and the clients. The new students are often called the *shin aegi* ("spirit child") by the *shin eomeoni* and the

musicians. They are also called *shin ddal* or *shin addul*, which means "spirit daughter" or "spirit son."

The Training Relationship

After the ritual of initiation, it is usual for the new *mudang* to stay in the *shin eomeoni*'s home every day from morning until late at night, whether a ritual is to be performed or not. The two must spend much time together in order to pass on the teacher's knowledge. When a performance or a ritual occurs, the new *mudang* sleeps at the teacher's house until the ritual is finished. When the new *mudang* has clients who need to have rituals performed, they are brought to the experienced *mudang*'s house and the two *mudang* perform the rituals together. The *shin eomeoni* also goes to the *shin aegi*'s house occasionally to help and guide the performance of the *kosa* or *kut*. When there are no rituals to perform, the student cooks and cleans the *shin eomeoni*'s house and does other work. The student must do anything the *shin eomeoni* requests and must work to keep the *shin eomeoni* in good spirits. During this time the student becomes very close to the teacher. First, the initiate gets to know the experienced *mudang*'s personality, deep feelings, personal problems, future plans, her past, her likes and her dislikes. The initiate must submit to the teacher completely. She is the role model.

As part of the training, the initiate sometimes performs a *kut* or *kosa* under the direction of the *mudang*. The student prepares the food, prepares the shrine, arranges the costumes, and does everything else that is necessary for performance of the rituals. Nevertheless, the initiate cannot perform a whole scene—not to mention a whole *kut*—by himself or herself for a long time. Mostly, the trainee performs between the scenes while the "great" *mudang* is resting. This period is called *mukwan* and is a time when the clients, new *mudang*, and others dress up in costume and dance and imitate the *mudang* for fun. It is also a time when the new *mudang* can practice and develop their skills freely. Additionally, when the *shin eomeoni* performs the *cheongbae*, the new *mudang* holds the bells that are used during chanting, stands behind the *shin eomeoni*, and joins in the refrains. By becoming aware of feelings, by feeling the spirit themselves following the singing, and by becoming aware about all the parts of a ritual, the new *mudang* gradually learns. This is the primary method of teaching and learning. The new *mudang* spends time thinking about and slowly understanding these things. Nowadays, some modern techniques are also being used. On one of my visits, I saw one of Woo Oekjoo's *shin ddal* use a tape recorder to record the singing,

chants, and witty exchanges at a *kut* so that she could study at her home. This would mean that she could spend less time at the *shin eomeoni's* home.

Jeom (Divination or Fortune-telling)

As stated, *jeom* is one of the important functions of a *mudang*. It is different from *kosa* or *kut* because no music is performed; it is more like a personal conference for advising. Usually the *kosa* or *kut* is the result of the advising that happens during *jeom*. When the clients have a problem, they go to see the *mudang* for divination (*jeom*). They pay the *mudang* a small fee (*boekjae*). Although this meeting is often private when the client has a secret or really personal problem, at other times people can sit around and listen. When it is private, only the client and the *mudang* are in the room together. Because of this, the new *mudang* cannot watch and see how the *shin eomeoni* conducts *jeom*.

The *jeom*, then, is particularly important because the *mudang* may advise the performance of a *kosa* or *kut* as a solution to or prevention of the problem divined during *jeom*. The client, however, can choose whether or not to take the advice, so a *kosa* or *kut* may not always happen after *jeom*, but *jeom* always happens before a *kosa* or *kut*. For this reason, how often the *mudang* performs these rituals (which help her make her living), depends on how well the *mudang* performs during *jeom*. If the client chooses against the advice of the *mudang*, this usually means the client does not trust his or her advice (Yim Janelli 1977).

Despite the importance of *jeom* in the professional life of the *mudang*, a *shin eomeoni* usually does not give direct instructions to the *shin aegi*. Instead, this is taught secretly or indirectly under the cover of teaching *kosa* or *kut*. One reason for this is that if *jeom* were something a *mudang* could teach, then she could not claim that it is from guidance of the spirits. She would lose her credibility. However, times are changing. Lee Oekja, a *mudang* from Incheon who has been the *shin ddal* of Kim Kumhwa for more than 15 years, told me that she openly teaches divination and is fully capable of doing so.

Kosa (Ritual Offerings to Household and Other Gods or Ancestors)

After the client is advised of his problem and the solution, often a *kosa* is performed. For a *kosa*, the food is prepared simply since it is a small affair. While performing, the *mudang* holds the *jing* (medium-size gong) and chants. She does not dance. The order of rituals or scenes is usually the same as that of the *kut*, but particularly

kongsu (delivery of the spirit's message) occurs at the end of the *cheongbae* (chanting). At this time, the spirits that are being placated speak through the *mudang* while she is in an ecstatic state. Since the method of teaching is indirect, this is not easy for a new *mudang* to do. However, by following the teacher, and participating in many instances of *kosa*, the new *mudang* learns many of the lyrics and words of the chants which he or she will use later when allowed to perform *kut*. The student normally learns *kosa* first, and then graduates to *kut*.

Kut (Shamanic Ritual)

Learning how to properly perform a *kosa* and learning the words of the *cheongbae* can take a long time. New *mudang* learn by imitation and practice. They are able to practice because the *shin eomeoni* often orders them to perform *kosa* regardless of how well they can do it. This imitation, practice, and repetition approach has an interesting result. Although a great number of people have learned from the very same *mudang* and imitated her in order to learn, they all through their constant practice and repetition end up with their own versions and interpretations of how the ritual is performed. They are able to bring their own personality and understanding into the performance.

A *kut*, which is a series of large rituals performed for a specific purpose, is made up of several parts (or scenes). Some of these scenes also resemble the parts of a *kosa*, but on a larger scale. The first and most important aspect of a *kut* is the *cheongbae*, the chanting to specific rhythms supplicating the spirits or gods to come into their bodies. Usually, the *mudang* stands near the drum and the *shin aegi* stands beside or behind while the drummer (usually the *kun halmoni*) echoes the chant's refrain along with the *shin aegi*. If many students are present, then the oldest and best student holds and shakes the bells (*bangool*) and stands next to the *shin eomeoni*. Through doing this, the students can gradually learn the rhythms used during the performance of the rituals, and can begin memorizing the words of the chants and the lyrics of the songs. Woo Oekjoo explains that learning the lyrics takes a long time—usually ten years. The words are rarely written down and can vary. Sometimes even a well-educated person cannot understand the meaning of the words and chants since they often refer to gods or spirits and use very old terminology.

Dancing is one of the skills the new *mudang* must learn, even if they have never danced before. This type of dancing is called "god dancing" (*shin ch'um*) and helps to encourage and show the necessary ecstatic state for receiving the spirits. Not many different steps are

involved, but every dance is done according to definite slow, medium, or fast rhythms. Because it is a "god dance," the beginning *mudang* is willing to jump or otherwise perform energetically even though he or she cannot follow the rhythms. The ability to follow the rhythms will come gradually. From the start, beginners must try to follow the music, even when they are not performing the appropriate movements for the rituals. Once again, they are supposed to learn by watching and imitating the experienced *mudang* who is their teacher. In particular, the rituals from the Hwanghae Province (in present day North Korea) include much excited dancing where the *mudang* rotates in time to the music on one foot, and *keosang ch'um*, a type of dancing that begins very slowly and then picks up tempo until the *mudang* is dancing very fast. This is particularly difficult to learn.

After the new *mudang* have gradually learned to dance adequately, they are asked by their teacher to perform the *mukwan* between rituals. Combined with their participation in *cheongbae*, these are the two important activities of the new *mudang* during a *kut*. According to my observations, the audience usually judges the quality of the *mudang* by their ability at *cheongbae* and dancing rather than by the other activities such as *kongsu*. As Kendall and Kim describe Korean shamanism, it is a social ritual for women in society.

Kongsu, however, is an important activity in the *kut* and *kosa*, and every new *mudang* must learn to perform it well. Like *jeom*, it is very difficult to teach since it is supposed to be the spirits talking through the *mudang* and not something that can be learned or memorized. Every scene or part of a *kut* includes *kongsu*. Although it is not possible to teach the words of *kongsu*, the new *mudang* must learn the melody and rhythm of speech. At this time, unlike *cheongbae*, there is no musical accompaniment.

According to all three of my informants, the *shin eomeoni* begins the rituals of the *kut* and performs *kongsu*. At this time, the students and the *mudang* who are performing other scenes of the *kut* (there are usually several *mudang* assisting at a *kut*) have to listen carefully so they will not contradict the *shin eomeoni* during their own performances. If a contradiction occurs (for example, the "great" *mudang* predicts that the client will be rich, but the student later says the client will be poor), then this not only makes the "great" *mudang* angry, but it also makes the clients lose confidence in her powers. Even if the *kongsu* is wrong, the students and other *mudang* must support it. Therefore, they must pay close attention even to items they cannot memorize.

Music, too, is another aspect that has to be learned. The musicians who regularly perform at these rituals are never *mudang* themselves, although the *mudang* and students often play instruments too (percussion). As mentioned earlier, Song Soonboek is famous for her ability to play the hourglass drum. However, being a musician is not an essential part of becoming a professional *mudang*, so this depends on the individual wishes of the student and is not specifically taught. Harvey states that above-average musical talent is one of the qualities of the six *mudang* she interviewed, but it is not necessarily true of all *mudang*.

Costume-making is another aspect of preparing for the performances of rituals. Although some *mudang* (such as Woo Oekjoo) make their own costumes, not all *mudang* have this skill. But a *mudang's* own traditions can be expressed and continued through the making of costumes (Park 1982). Park's thesis concerned Woo Oekjoo and her skill as a costume maker. On the other hand, Kim Kumhwa's mother makes her costumes, and Song Soonboek buys her costumes or uses ones that have been handed down. This skill obviously then is not an essential part of becoming a professional *mudang*, although Woo Oekjoo's students and *kun halmoni* often are trained in it.

Decorations are often important to the ritual setting. Both hereditary and possessed *mudang* use paper flowers which are made by a professional flower maker (*hwanjaengi*). This flower maker is usually male and specializes in flowers for these rituals. Nevertheless, the *mudang*, students, musicians, and family members often make the flowers too. New flowers are always necessary for a large ritual. Although the new *mudang* normally learn how to make these flowers, this skill is not an essential part of becoming a professional *mudang*.

The first thing a new *mudang* learns is how to prepare the performance place or shrine for the ritual (*kutdang cha'rim*). It includes preparing food, fruit, rice cakes, the paintings of the spirit's images, rice, flowers, and everything that is necessary for the *mudang* to use or for decorating the performance place. This task is not considered difficult to learn despite its importance, and the *kun* and *jakun halmoni* teach this as well as the *shin eomeoni*.

As part of the preparation for performance, the new *mudang* must help make the special food that is used during performance. This includes cooked rice, cooked beef and chicken, fish, side dishes, fresh fruit, boiled pork (often including a pig's head), and rice cakes. Although the preparation of most of these dishes is not any different than that of a private home, a *mudang* has to take care with the rice cakes. There is a rice cake for each separate spirit, and if a *mudang*

has twenty different gods, for example, then twenty different dishes of rice cakes must be prepared. The new *mudang*, then, has to learn the gods' names and which rice cakes are appropriate. None of the food can be eaten until after the performance of the *Chilseong Kori* (Scene of the Spirit of the Big Dipper). Food preparation is essential to being a professional *mudang*.

Another aspect of *kut* which the new *mudang* must learn is the order of performance of the different scenes (*kori*) for the particular *kut* that is being performed. Depending on the purpose, the beginning scene and the ending scene, as well as the order, vary. It is important to decide which of the 12 to 24 different scenes to perform and then to organize accordingly. In addition to the costumes, the *mudang* also uses a variety of knives and other accessories such as masks and flags. The new *mudang* must learn how and when to use these accessories skillfully and effectively.

Rules of behavior or codes of conduct (*mudang yaedo*) are a vital element of learning from the *mudang*. The new *mudang* must behave precisely according to the *shin eomeoni's* wishes and instructions. Since initiates must learn with a "great" *mudang* for ten years or more, this can lead to problems. Many new *mudang* quit their training because of conflicts with the teacher. They have trouble following the teacher's rules. These rules reflect the personality of the teacher. Normally, the teacher explains openly at the beginning and during the course of the training what the rules of behavior are, what the new *mudang* have to be careful about, and what the taboos are. The *mudang's* competence and credibility depend on their following these rules of behavior.

During the time of teaching these rules, the teachers also instruct informally on the other skills necessary to performance of rituals, such as dancing. This usually lasts until the death of the *shin eomeoni* or some other permanent break in their relationship. Unlike the hereditary *mudang*, who can learn proper behavior and manners as they grow up and as part of their home life, the possessed *mudang* must often change his or her whole behavior after deciding to become initiated as a practicing *mudang*. Because there is no family bond in the relationship of the charismatic *mudang* teacher and student, they must establish strong personal relationships. One way to do this is by following the teacher *mudang's* instructions and behavior.

Summary

A big difference exists between hereditary and charismatic *mudang*. The hereditary *mudang* are related by blood, but charismatic *mudang*

are related only by their mutual possession by the spirits (Kim 1969; Choi 1978). Age, occupation, and sex are not connected with becoming a charismatic *mudang*, nor are education and position in society. The learning of rituals (*jeom*, *kosa*, and *kut*) often take a very long time. The performances of these rituals depend on the *shin eomeoni* or *shin aboji* (male teacher *mudang*) as well as on individual interpretations and abilities which allow new *mudang* to develop their own versions. For a charismatic *mudang*, the following series of events describes his or her becoming a professional *mudang*:

1. *shinbyung* (mysterious illness)
2. *naerim kut* (initiation ritual for becoming a *mudang*)
3. learning rituals and doing things with the "great" *mudang*
4. becoming an independent *mudang*

The length of time to learn depends on the individual, but the training period often lasts more than ten years. After becoming independent, the *mudang* is then judged as a "great" or "small" *mudang* depending on how well he or she has learned and can now perform *jeom*, *kosa* and *kut*. All of my informants could perform *cheongbae*, dance, and engage in witty repartee well. Because of this, they are called "great *mudang*." *Kongsu* is important at all times but cannot be learned directly because it is supposed to be a spiritual message, although the rhythms and melodies can be taught. Playing instruments and making costumes and flowers are not essential skills and abilities to becoming a professional *mudang*, but knowing how to prepare the right food and the shrine or other place of the ritual is important. The new *mudang* must show competence in these areas before he or she can be designated a "great *mudang*." *Yaedo*, or following the proper rules of behavior, is essential to the continuing relationship of the teacher and student *mudang* and to their continuation as professionals.

This usually means that the students must treat their teacher with extreme reverence and obey the teacher's every word and wish. They believe that doing this helps to ensure that the student *mudang*, the teacher, and the gods and spirits are all together in one spirit. If there is any strife or dissidence, then the relationship and teaching situation cannot be successful. Learning usually takes place at the teacher's home or in a shrine. The students usually learn during performances of *jeom*, *kosa*, and *kut* or at any other time they can observe the teacher. Although learning before they can be independent *mudang* usually lasts ten years, all of my informants said that they never stop learning and developing their skills. They will continue learning until they die, even when they no longer have a teacher.

Normally a student cannot change a *mudang* as his or her teacher because the length of time of learning is so extensive, the style so personal, the method of teaching so dependent on imitation, and the relationship between the teacher and the student so important. (There are cases where they do change, but the training then takes longer and becomes more complicated. These changes usually occur because of personality clashes.) The only truly acceptable situation for changing a teacher occurs when the *shin eomeoni* dies before the training period is finished.

Learning is not a result of direct, step-by-step instruction, but rather by watching, performing, and thinking about rituals themselves. The skills of a *mudang* by possession do not happen suddenly or magically after initiation as a *mudang*. They are learned over a long period of time in a personal and difficult process.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- anj'un mudang**—a possessed shaman who did not complete his or her training to perform rituals
- baksu**—male charismatic shaman
- boekjae**—a small fee for divination or fortune-telling
- bangool**—bells used in rituals
- chaein**—another name for mudang; hereditary shaman
- chaedam**—witty exchanges between the shaman and the musicians during the shamanistic performance
- cheongbae**—chanting to supplicate the spirits
- Chilseong Kori**—scene of the Spirit of the Big Dipper which is performed before food is eaten
- hwanjaengi**—professional flower maker
- jakun halmoni**—performer of the medium-size gong, "small grandmother" or "old woman"
- jeom**—divination or fortune telling
- jeomjaengi**—fortune tellers
- jing**—medium-sized gong
- keeja**—another name for mudang; female shaman
- keenyeo**—another name for mudang; female shaman
- keosang ch'um**—a difficult dance that begins slowly and builds to an extremely rapid pace
- kongsu**—message from the spirits through the shaman's lips to the client
- kori**—specially performed scenes
- kosa**—ritual offerings to the household gods and other gods or ancestors
- kun halmoni**—performer of the hourglass drum, "big grandmother" or "old woman"
- kut**—shamanistic ritual
- kutcheolja**—the sequence of performance of rituals
- kutdang**—shrine
- kutdang cha'rim**—preparing and maintaining the shrine or site of the rituals
- mansin**—charismatic male or female shaman, highly venerated
- mubyung**—illness that leads a person to become a charismatic shaman
- mudang**—shaman, shamans
- mukwan**—a time when the established shaman is resting and when clients, new shamans, and others dress up in costume and imitate the shaman for fun
- munyeo**—another name for mudang; female charismatic shaman
- naerim kut**—initiation ritual for shamans
- seon mudang**—a possessed shaman who did not complete his or her training and who thus cannot perform shamanistic rituals
- shimbang**—another name for mudang; hereditary shaman
- shin aboji**—male teacher-shaman ("spiritual father")
- shin addul**—male shaman novice ("spirit son")
- shin aegi**—shaman novice ("spirit child")
- shin ch'um**—"god dancing" (dancing which shows the necessary ecstatic state for receiving spirits)
- shin ddal**—female shaman novice ("spirit daughter")
- shin comeoni**—female teacher-shaman ("spiritual mother")
- shinbyung**—illness that leads a person to become a charismatic shaman
- tangol**—another name for mudang; hereditary shaman; this term also refers to the client of such a mudang
- yaedo**—the desired behavior of a mudang, including her/his style of performance

Notes

- 1 Many people who have shamanic rituals or divination performed do so because they want to make the spirits happy. During my research, the purpose of all the clients was this. After they make the spirits happy, they then can ask good things for themselves.
- 2 Several books discuss or comment on the symptoms or phenomena of *shirbyung*. These include *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* by Youngsook Kim Harvey (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1979); *Kut: Korean Shamanist Rituals* by Halla Pai Huhm (Hollym International Corporation, 1980); and *Research on Korean Shamanism* (Hankuk Musok'ui Yeongu) by Choi, Kil-sung (Seoul: Asia Munhwa Sa Publishers, 1978).
- 3 This information is based on discussions of social status in *A Handbook of Korea* (Korean Overseas Information Service, 1982), pp. 325-341, and *Traditional Korea: A Cultural History* by Wanne J. Joe (Seoul: Chung'ang University Press, 1981), pp. 300-309. See also *Ancestor Worship and Korean Society* by Roger L. Janelli and Dawnhee Yim Janellia (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1982).
- 4 Harvey's informants give good evidence for the discrimination *mudang* and their families in Korean society, which is also discussed in *The Korean Shaman* (Hankuk'ui Nudang) by Choi, Kil-sung (Seoul: Sulhwadang Publishers, 1981), pp. 114-140.
- 5 This conclusion is based on my own personal experiences with new *mudang*, especially the students of Woo Oekjoo. They often did not have enough money to do the ritual, which can be very expensive, but they began learning and practicing anyway.
- 6 Most of the *mudang* interviewed by Harvey did not discuss their training after initiation or stated that they had not been trained. Another woman had not yet had her initiation ritual although she had been a practicing *mudang* for many years. My personal experience has shown me, however, that these situations are not the average ones. It is hard to judge from the contents of Harvey's book since training was not the purpose of her research and she does not investigate the women's statements about their training.
- 7 This is my own interpretation based on my experience and observations of what these terms mean.
- 8 This idea of "fate" as the force behind a person becoming a *mudang* is a main feature of the attitudes of the *mudang* Harvey interviewed about themselves. It is also an attitude that my informants all have.
- 9 These symptoms are discussed by Kim, Tae-gon in "A Study of the Process of Change in the Korean Shaman System", and described in detail by the women in Harvey's book. My informants also gave details of this kind of phenomena, as well as others I have talked to.
- 10 Woo Oekjoo is a *mudang* who had this experience of dreaming of another *mudang's* burial place for her bells. See also *Music of Shaman Rituals* (Seoul: Korean Cultural Arts, Volume 3, 1980), p. 191.

11 This information is based primarily on my own interviews with informants and members of their families. Harvey also discusses this conflict of interest and presents evidence of it in the interviews in her book.

12 This information is based on my own personal experiences and on conversations with Woo Oekjoo.

13 Every *mudang* usually has some sort of nickname. For example, a name is given according to the place of birth. A *mudang* from Seoul is called the "Seoul *mudang*." Another method is according to their last name (for example, "Woo *mudang*"). Hwanghae Province *mudang* are called *mansin*, which means "possessing ten thousand gods." But Woo Oekjoo says that calling a *mudang* a *mansin* is acknowledging a higher level of *mudang*, comparable to distinguishing levels of a university professorship or calling a teacher "master."

Another way of nicknaming is according to one's patron spirit, as in the case of Song Soonboek being called the "*Toryong Mansin*" after her patron spirit. A final way of nicknaming is according to the person's physical or personality features, as in the case of Kim Kumhwa being called the "*Neomsaewee Mansin*" because of her birdlike features.

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