Korean Shamanism: The Training Process of Charismatic ‘Mudang’

Jongsung Yang
Indiana University

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, Young-sook 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. 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 Kyungsan 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. (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, keeja, 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. Although class differences have changed in recent times, mudang and their families are still ostracized. 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. 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, 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.  

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. 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.  

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) 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. 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; 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." 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 Taerak 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 Sangsangnaji 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 Malmu 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 Sungbo Ku, Sukkwan 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 Inchon 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 (kudgang 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 yoedo) 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 comeoni 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.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

an'g'um 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
cheonghae—chanting to supplicate the spirits
Chiseong Kori—scene of the Spirit of the Big Dipper which is performed before food is eaten
hwanjaengi—professional flower maker
jukun halmoni—performer of the medium-size gong, "small grandmother" or "old woman"
jeom—divination or fortune telling
jeomjaengi—fortune tellers
jing—medium-sized gong
keija—another name for mudang; female shaman
keneo—another name for mudang; female shaman
keosang ch'um—a difficult dance that begins slowly and builds to an extremely rapid pace
kongsa—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
kutcheoja—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
mubung—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
Naeryim—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 eomeoni—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
KOREAN SHAMANISM: THE TRAINING PROCESS

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 shinbyung. 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).


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.
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.

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

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 "Toyong 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 Kumbha being called the "Neomsawee Mansin" because of her birdlike features.

Works Cited

Cho, Hung-yoon

Choi, In-hak

Choi, Chungmoo

Choi, Kil-sung

Covell, Alan Carter

Dix, Griffin M.

Eliade, Mircea
Ha, Tae-hung

Handbook of Korea

Harvey, Youngsook Kim

Huhm, Halla Pai

Janelli, Dawnhee Yim

Janelli, Roger L.

Janelli, Roger L. and Dawnhee Yim Janelli

Janelli, Roger L., Dawnhee Yim Janelli, and Suk Jay Yim

Joe, Wanne J.

Kendall, Laurel

Kendall, Laurel and Griffin Dix (ed.).

Kendall, Laurel and Mark Peterson (ed.)

Kim, In-hwaee and Choi, Jeong-min

Kim, Tae-gon


*Music of Shaman Rituals*

Park, Jung-suk

Seo, Cheong Beom

Shils, Edward

Yim, Suk Jay