

# *Chaesu Kut: A Korean Shamanistic Performance*

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## INTRODUCTION

Shamanistic performances in Korea are still actively performed by female shamanesses (mudang, 巫女) and by male shamans (paksu mudang, 巫師). These ritual performances called kut, can be identified as shamanistic because the professional practitioner, or shaman, invokes a spirit-power and manifests the radical change in personality and behavior associated with possession. During this altered state of consciousness the shaman is said to have had his or her personality displaced by the evoked spirit. The spirits residing in the body of the shaman are capable of transmitting efficacious power or of withholding their harmful presence in response to a ceremonial request by a patient or client. Financial transactions are a significant element in the arrangement of a kut-performance but these exchanges of money are traditionally understood as a payment to the spirits through the shaman who is a channel for power. According to a Korean shamaness, if spirit-power is to be efficacious, it must be correctly solicited and purchased.

The ritual performances, or kut, are generally attended by groups of women often related to the client or personally committed to the shaman.<sup>1</sup> Actually, since the majority of shamanic practitioners in contemporary Korea are women, the term "shamaness" is more appropriate.

A shamaness who divines the response of the spirit-powers during her thaumaturgy is commonly referred to as a mudang.<sup>2</sup> The disrespect and low status associated with this term, however, has caused many of the shamanesses in the Seoul area to prefer the title mansin AM, or "ten thousand spirits."<sup>3</sup> A more individualized name is usually acquired by placing the shamaness' family name before mansin, for *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 43, 1984, 235-259.

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example, Woo-mansin, or a term designating place of birth, such as P'yongyang-mansin from the northern province of that name. A term descriptive of the shamaness such as "grandmother," Halmoni, may also be used, as may a term referring to the neighborhood of her practice, for example Namsan-mansin (Harvey 1979: 20; 40; 86).

Korean shamanistic ceremonies are identified according to purpose such as guiding the dead (chinogi or ogu \$\$\$ kut) and healing the sick (pyong 6 kut). In a similar manner the ceremony may be named according to the principle spirit honored, such as the dragon (yongsin @@ kut) or after the initiation of a new shaman (naerim kut).<sup>4</sup> The kut and their Identifying titles vary in different areas of Korea, but in general the northern provinces are traditionally distinguished from the southern provinces. Within these two regions similar spirit-personalities and ritual practices are evident but the names and manner of celebration of kut differ according to local customs. Another difference between north and south is in "call." The shamanic practitioners in the north are spontaneously called to their vocation and their rituals are considered more ecstatic, whereas the more priestly figures in the south are chosen

through lineage inheritance and their rituals are more structured.<sup>5</sup> On 7 May 1982 I attended a Chaesu *jut* kut with an interpreter in the Sang Do Dang section of Seoul. The purpose of this kut was to drive away misfortune and to increase prosperity and good fortune. It was organized and performed by the shamaness, Woo Oek Ju (Woomansin), and her assistants. The ritual performance had been solicited by two entrepreneurs in the import-export business. Their rationale for sponsoring the kut-ceremony was to improve their faltering business by divining and propitiating the underlying causes of their recent lack of business success. Some days earlier I had been interviewing Woomansin when the two businessmen made their initial inquiries. The shamaness invited me to this kut with the permission of the two patrons so that I might write a description of the setting and performance of the Chaesu kut as well as photograph its varied parts.

#### THE SETTING

The Chaesu kut was held at the home of Woo-mansin. Specifically, it was performed in her altar room (god hall, *sindang*, *fig*) located on the ground floor parallel but separate from the hot-floor family room (*anbang*). The shamaness' altar was located on the north side of a room approximately four and one half meters long and two and one half meters wide. There was a smaller altar table set up in the doorway in the west which was connected to a sitting room with western furniture. There was an outside exit on the east side of the room. The audience

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was seated in this sitting room and had a good view into the performance area looking over the smaller altar table. The audience varied in number from three to ten persons and was composed of the apprentices or spirit sons and daughters (*sinttal*) of the shamaness, friends of the clients, visiting musicians, the interpreter and myself. Woo-mansin's permanent altar, dedicated to her personal spirits, was on the north side of the room for she indicated that this directional location was necessary for the descent of her guardian spirits (see appendix). The altar was set up on top of a large wooden cabinet approximately one and one half meters in height. In the cabinet's glass cases were ritual instruments, costumes and bolts of material for the more than twenty types of kut-ceremonies that this shamaness performed. Among the many items on top of the altar were flowers in vases, candles and large incense containers. Several of these incense containers were filled with ashes from various shamanistic temples in Korea. On the eastern side of the altar was a glass box, approximately ten centimeters square, containing a baby doll dressed in Buddhist monk's robes (Fig. 2). This doll was said to represent the "lost spirits" of babies who died young. Their resentment (*han*, *II*. arising-from their untimely death and their subsequent attacks on living humans are believed to be a source of human illness. A shamaness can transform this resentment into a healing force if she is able to placate the spirits.<sup>6</sup> Near the eastern end of the altar was a statue of the mountain spirit, San sillyon nim **CLIMS**, as he is typically depicted with a white beard, dressed in red and blue and seated on a tiger. This archetypal wise old man with the tiger is found in most shamanistic altars and represents a connection to ancient folk religious themes.

Behind the main altar and above it were hand-painted pictures of Woo-mansin's personal pantheon. The paintings varied in size but

they were generally fifty centimeters square. They pictured national figures such as generals, noblemen and scholars, as well as folk deities such as the leader of the deceased ancestors and the esteemed spirit of the seven stars of the Big Dipper constellation. Several figures had a singularly personal meaning for the shamaness, for example, a painting of the male shaman who performed her initiating *naerim hut*, a general associated with Magpie mountain in her home province of Hwanghae, and also a painting of the shamaness herself. The total panorama of symbolic figures dominated the altar room. Undoubtedly it assisted the practitioners, clients and audience to imaginatively enter into the ritual action of the kut. This action consists of the invocation, communication and playful entertainment (*nolda*) of spirit-presences through the possessed body of Woo-mansin.

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There were also four statues located on the main altar. Two statues depicted Yaksa, the bodhisattva of healing; one statue was of the historical buddha, Siddhartha Gotama or Shakyamuni; and one statue represented Kwan'um (Avalokiteivara), the bodhisattva of compassion. Woo-mansin indicated that the Buddhist figures were inferior to her spirits, who were much older, she maintained, and more efficacious in healing rituals. Thus, the Buddhist statues on her altar were "mostly for my clients." The spirit paintings and the statue of San sillyon nim, however, represented that congregation of Korean spirits who are considered instrumental in both the cause and cure of misfortune.

Arranged in platters before the paintings and beside the statues were rice cakes, pastry mixed with oil and honey, and various sweets and fruits. Complementing these offerings on the permanent altar was an elaborate arrangement of offerings for the ancestors on the side altar approximately fifty centimeters in height. It held several platters of grains, cooked and uncooked rice, white and powdered rice cakes, vegetables, water, kelp, nuts, candles, tea, rice wine, a cooked pig's head, two dried fish in an aluminum kettle, wands with paper cuttings and iron knives with colored ribbons attached to their handles. Along with these offerings were several ritual instruments which were used during different stages of the kut. They included knives, swords, tridents and halberds.

Woo-mansin had indicated in an earlier interview that the arrangement of the offerings, which she herself had determined, communicated the needs of the clients to her guardian spirits as well as to the client's ancestral spirits. Furthermore, she implied that the offerings were esoterically connected to the twenty eight parts of her complete kutperformance.

7 Because her kut's ritual structure had already been symbolically incorporated into the arrangement of the altar, the shamaness said that she could freely alter the length of performance. Thus, the abbreviated Chaesu kut performed for the two businessmen had only seven ritual steps, or *kdri (ELii)*, and took approximately eight hours to perform. In all ritual matters, therefore, the shamaness had absolute authority, for she represented the transformative spirit-powers.

#### THE SHAMANESS

Born on November 17, 1920 in Hwanghae Province, Woo Oek Ju remembers her early childhood as happy. At some time between her sixth and ninth year she was taken away by a Japanese policeman who admired her beauty. She was brought to Japan and raised by this

family until she was sixteen. At this time she began to experience dizzy spells and loss of consciousness. She also felt compelled to return to her homeland. Her health immediately improved when she was reunited with her relatives in the north of Hwanghae. At the age of eighteen, however, she fell into a coma which was interpreted by her family as "shamanic sickness" or *sinbyong*. She eventually awoke from this comatose state, she said, while digging in the ground to recover the ritual implements buried in the grave of a deceased shaman. Gradually recovering her psychic balance, Woo Oek Ju began to learn the traditional shamanistic dances, songs and costumes, guided by an older male shaman, Kim Kibaek, and a shamaness, Lee Choi. She was initiated by the shaman and his portrait is among the spirits pictured in her altar room. Woo-mansin also still uses the cluster of bells on leather straps that she dug from the former shaman's grave (Fig. 5). Woo Oek Ju has continued her shamanistic practice for over forty years and, she feels, it has brought her both pain and reward. She believes, for example, that the financial impoverishment of her formerly wealthy family and their early deaths were due to her vocation as a shamaness. Moreover, her first marriage at thirty lasted only a year, until her husband discovered that she was a shamaness. After this divorce she continued to perform kut even during her arduous escape from North Korea during the Korean Conflict. In 1960 she married Park Dong Shin, a Living National Treasure and head of the Kangryong Mask Dance Group. She now has more than sixty apprentices and has actively promoted knowledge of Korean shamanistic performances among folklore groups and at various universities and colleges.<sup>8</sup>

#### THE PERFORMANCE

The Chaesu kut began at 1:30 p.m., after the clients had been served something to eat. Woo-mansin moved gracefully through the viewing room making sure that all her guests and clients were properly attended. She then went into the altar room where her apprentices were preparing the ritual costumes and instruments. Woo-mansin was said to have trained more than one hundred and sixty apprentices, a number which she confirmed as exceptionally high. She has guided her apprentices, who also are required to have had their own spirit "call," and has taught them the shamanistic arts of Hwanghae Province.

During this kut these shaman-apprentices were actively engaged in learning by performing. One "spiritual daughter," an older woman, played the *changgu*-drum. Another played the cymbals in addition to chanting and helping with costumes. Several apprentices chanted in accompaniment with Woo-mansin or responded as a chorus after her leading lines. A sixteen-year old female shamaness-apprentice, having already undergone her *naerim* kut initiation, danced three parts of this

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Chaesu kut. Another young male shaman-apprentice danced an especially vigorous part of the kut called *taegam kdri*, which is discussed below.

The opening performance of the Chaesu kut was *pujdnng kdri*.

This rite purified the house by expelling evil spirits and invoking the roof beam spirit (*songju*) and the foundation spirit (*chisin*). The guardian spirits of the shamaness and the ancestral spirits of the clients were also invoked.<sup>9</sup> A special platter was placed just outside the

altar room with food offerings for the spirits. These offerings included kimpche, water with ash and red peppers, an empty cup and an iron knife with colored ribbons attached to the handle. Meanwhile Woomansin went into the altar area and sat before the apprentice who was playing the changgu-drum. She wore a light turquoise dress (chima) with a blouse of a lighter shade of turquoise, both appropriate for an older woman. Her hair was gathered in a bun and held in place by a black headband with a loop at the back. Sitting along the south wall under the ritual costumes were, from west to east, the two clients, three apprentices and the p'iri-flute player.

The shamaness invoked the spirits while the apprentices chanted responses. Another apprentice poured rice wine into the empty cups on the permanent altar, the side altar and in the offerings' tray outside the altar room. After fifteen minutes Woo-mansin stood up and took two iron blades similar to that on the offering tray and beat them in rhythm with the drum as she read the pujong chant from a sheet of paper placed on the drum. The opening lines, which were similar to those presented below, addressed the pujong or "unclean" spirits and the kamang or spirits of illness:

Let us worship both the clean and unclean Kamang.

Let the clean one in and the unclean out.

The Pujong is outside and inside the deceased one's home.

The Pujong of the great horse catches the horse.

The Pujong of the great cow catches the cow.

The Pujong of fire is in heaven.

The Pujong of water is in earth.

The Pujong of the dead and the living is in the flying birds and crawling insects.

The Pujong of the white butterfly is on a strand of hair.

Let the Pujong pass slowly through the rear and front (door).

On the inside and the outside of all the mountains.

The gift of the unclean spirits is revealed (Lee 1977: 4).

The shamaness' pujong chant summoned a lengthy list of clean and **CHAESU KUT: A KOREAN SHAMANISTIC PERFORMANCE 241**

unclean spirits to take part in the offerings. She then urged them to give their "gift" of abandoning all evil machinations against the clients.

She then set down the blades and picked up the two dried fish and the kettle in which they had rested on the side altar (Fig. 3). Waving the fish in her right hand she occasionally used them to drum the kettle in her left hand. She continued chanting invocations as she gracefully whirled and rocked on the reed mats of the altar room. Her facial features gradually softened into the detached smile she manifested throughout the kut, indicating her spirit possession.

Suddenly she moved from the altar room to the open front door of the house. Here she flipped the dried fish into the air and allowed them to fall onto the threshold of the house. Thus, she divined the entry and initial approval of the spirits. The two heads of the fish both pointed out-of-doors, indicating a positive response from the spirits. This divination ended the opening ritual section.

A complete meal was now served in which the shamaness, her family and the guests participated in welcoming the invited spirits.

After the meal, the shamaness, apprentices and clients returned to the altar room where Woo-mansin, speaking with the voice of the spirits,

engaged the two businessmen in conversation. The shamaness elicited personal information and discussed their needs in the presence of these spirit-powers (Fig. 4). The interpreter indicated that the clients appeared " very impressed " when Woo-mansin informed them that a deceased, blind uncle was responsible for their flagging business fortune. Standing up, Woo-mansin began to prepare for the second stage of the kut, sun ch'on **kori (CIIXEE)**. During this part the spirits of mountains and of the heavens were invoked. The mountain spirits are especially important for they guard the entrance and exit to the regions in which the deceased ancestors stay. The shamaness put a dark blue skirt and blue jacket, symbolic of warrior spirits, over her turquoise outfit. She also donned a full length scarlet coat with long drapping white sleeves, symbolic of the most regal spirits (Fig. 5). This garment, open in the front, was brought together and held by a wide waist sash beautifully embroidered with cranes, flowers and bamboo. The shamaness also wore a black hat typical of Confucian officials of the Korean Yi dynasty (1392-1910). The hat had a broad brim and a flat conical headpiece with two feather pieces in which the invoked spirits were said to perch during the shamaness' dances. The clients were instructed to light incense on the main altar. An apprentice suddenly struck the brass cymbals together and the second **k6ri** began. Taking up the bells, a length of yellow material and a large fan picturing the mountain and heavenly spirits, Woo-mansin gently rocked

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on the balls of her feet as she invoked these spirit-powers. Occasionally she turned a tight circle, pacing with her feet in rhythm with the drum and p'iri player. As the shamaness became enraptured by the presence of the invoked spirits she whirled about the dance area with various ritual instruments after setting aside the fan, yellow cloth and bells. First she danced holding the two wands with white paper cuttings (ndk-chong, **aq**) , then two swords, followed by a trident and a broad blade and, finally, two tridents. She enumerated the names and ranks of the spirits who were possessing her and who were ordering her to dance with the various ritual instruments. The spirits began to speak through the shamaness, initially scolding the clients and then extolling their devotion. While chanting the spirit's approval, the shamaness performed rice kernel divination. She set the bells which she had dug from the shaman's grave in the uncooked rice platter on the side altar. Then, taking the bells to one of the clients, she shook rice kernels onto his lap. An even number would indicate approval of the kut's goal, an odd number disapproval. Later, one of the apprentices said that the spirits had approved because the number of rice kernels corresponded to the age of one of the clients.

The speech of the shamaness was so rapid and jovial that the interpreter was unable to understand many of the more personal comments. At the time, however, the interpreter indicated that the shamaness used archaic terms in describing the place of origin and the life history of the attending spirits. The narrations of the possessed shamaness continued for approximately thirty minutes. At one point Woo-mansin came to the clients as the deceased uncle whose resentment had caused him to trouble his nephew's business. Acting as a go-between, the shamaness and her guardian spirits mediated a settlement for the disappointed uncle so that he would receive more ritual attention in the

future in return for his promise of noninterference in the nephew's business. When this matter was settled, the shamaness began a boisterous chant to which the drummer and p'iri player responded.

Joined by the chorus of apprentices with the musicians, Woomansin sang exuberantly until she ceased singing to execute a series of dance steps with whirling movements, sudden knee bends and full body extensions by rising on the balls of her feet. Performed for the delight (nolda, "play") of the spirits, this elaborate dance and its accompanying music are singularly identified with Hwanghae Province in North Korea. This sequence of structured and spontaneous dance steps is a final culmination in the sequence of invocation, possession, entertainment (nolda), narration, prognostication, recreation (nolda) and divination.

Having performed the final t'aryong (songs and dances) of sun **CHAESU KUT: A KOREAN SHAMANISTIC PERFORMANCE 243** ch'on kdri, the shamaness now divined the will of the spirits through flag divination. Woo-mansin took up five flags about half a meter square, colored respectively red, white, blue, yellow and green. Rolling them together so that the colors were indistinguishable she held out the wooden staffs as she paraded around the altar room. Meanwhile the drum, p'iri and cymbal heightened the dramatic intensity by playing progressively louder as the shamaness asked an audience member to choose a flag standard. He chose a yellow flag, whereupon the shamaness eyed him suspiciously, rerolled the flags and, reciting a chant to nullify the adverse effects of the ill-chosen yellow flag, she repeated the dance pattern in the altar room. Approaching the interpreter she gestured for him to choose. He also picked out a yellow flag. Turning to me, the interpreter said that yellow was not an auspicious color and that the shamaness was countering the inauspicious choices by means of her "magical" chants. The shamaness then returned to the interpreter for another selection of a flag whereupon he pulled out a white flag, which augured well for the continuation of the kut. With this choice the sun ch'on kdri was concluded. Thus the second part of the Chaesu kut ended without any clear demarcation, as would most of the other ritual stages.

The third part of this kut was called kamang & Ikd ri or "responding to the spirits." It was performed by the female apprentice, Kim Sun Duc, who was initiated at the age of seven by Woo-mansin. She was now sixteen years old, attractive and the foremost wage-earner in her family. Her talented performance of the t'aryong pattern of songs and dances was done with such youthful vigor that it changed the tempo of the kut.

The young shamaness set aside the blue dress and jacket and put on the rose colored skirt of the kamang-disease spirits. She then put over this skirt a pleated blue skirt of the military spirits and, finally, the scarlet coat of the regal spirits. Also her basic ceremonial dress was a light pink rather than light turquoise. Two features distinguished her t'aryong sequence which, otherwise, was remarkably similar to that of her teacher, namely her splendid whirling dance and her chanting with the voice of the deceased uncle. While Kim Sun Duc's whirling was a typical procedure during the kdri, her youthful grace gave the dance a special character (Fig. 6). Moreover, it appeared that her whirling might be a special mode of divining the approval of the spirits. This apprentice-shaman did not do rice kernel divination, and at those points

in the kdri where rice divination would normally be conducted she entered into her whirling dance. When the deceased uncle was said to have appropriated her-body to speak to his nephew her chanting in 244 **JOHN A. GRIM**

the altered state of possession was vigorous and jovial. Her lively, humorous demeanor was in contrast to the intensity of the uncle's resentment over his blindness in life and his family's neglect of his spirit in afterlife, which had driven him to spiteful attack. At times her joking with the clients caused loud and prolonged laughter.

As this third ritual step concluded with flag divination an interlude occurred in which the clients were encouraged to put on the costume of the shamaness and dance before the altar. This hiatus in the kut is called mugan **ᄃᄂ** ssuda. Woo-mansin encouraged both clients and the members of the audience to dance but only one client actually did so. He used the white coat of the ch'ilsong -kg spirit (Fig. 7). This client imitated the basic dance step rocking up on the balls of his feet. The drum and p'iri players encouraged his entry into an altered state by playing at an increasing crescendo. One interpretation of mugan ssuda is that one's own body spirit rises up in this dance to join the assembled spirits. Thus, the possibly troublesome inner spirit is assuaged by this ritual dancing (Kendall 1977b: **3844**). The client who danced said that he felt very good after having danced in the shamaness' clothes.

During this mugan ssuda Woo-mansin received three regular patrons (tan'gol ᄃᄂ) for a brief divination session (chom, &) wholly unrelated to the Chaesu kut in progress. Although the interpreter and I did not join this divining session the shamaness called to tell me that I might photograph the patrons and herself (Fig. 8). Holding the spirit-divining fan open before her, Woo-mansin acted in the same distinctive manner as she had during the kut, that is, alternately humorous and serious. It appeared obvious that these patrons had purposely come at this time because they knew that she would be possessed by the spirits. The interpreter also concurred that the strange archaic terms that she used in this brief exchange indicated that she had maintained her state of possession between the stages of the kut-performance. The break between the third and fourth stages of the kut was further extended by a light meal so that two hours passed before the ceremony began again.

Woo-mansin returned to the altar room and put on a scarlet dress, symbolic of the regal spirits, over her turquoise outfit. On top of that she wore a white coat with long draping sleeves and a monk-like hood. Over this white coat she crossed long strands of Buddhist prayer beads as well as red and green sashes held in front by a lovely embroidered waist band with flowers, fruit and two cranes centered around a peony. This costume was said to represent the ch'ilsong spirit. But the iconography also accomodates the seven stars-spirit in the Big Dipper, the **CHAESU KUT: A KOREAN SHAMANISTIC PERFORMANCE 245** Buddhist monks associated with that constellation and the personal " Birth Grandmother " (Samsinhalm6ni) spirit of the shamaness. The levels of symbolic meaning evoked by this costume gave increased meaning to the prior interlude of mugan ssuda, for the client was allowed to call up his own body's troubled spirit for " play -(nolda). Thus, while he was dressed in the clothes of the spirit presences to



whom the shamaness felt a special relationship, the client's body spirit was associated with these auspicious cosmic spirits. Having moved the clients from the east side of the altar room and the drum, p'iri and cymbal players to the west side, Woo-mansin invoked the spirits for the next ritual stage, ch'il song kori (-t;E.li.%). Seated on the floor she initially chanted verses to which the apprentices responded in a chorus. At times she gathered the ends of the sleeves in her hands and raised her arms as if in flight (Fig. 9). She then stood and gently danced about the altar room invoking the ch'il song spirits with this waving motion of her arms as well as with paper cuttings on a wand. The shamaness took up a Buddhist monk's staff as her ritual instrument while being possessed by the ch'il song spirit and narrating the spirit's mythic story. She moved in a circular pattern, stopping several times and thumping the staff which had brass rings and a small brass figure of the Buddha at the top. Standing before the two clients she chanted the spirits' greetings and appreciation for the gifts of the kut-celebration. The ch'il song spirit then forecast business success as an outcome of this correct ritual practice. After the dances with the Buddhist monk's staff, the shamaness and her apprentices handed out rice cakes and fruit to all the guests. Woo-mansin then sprinkled water from a brass bowl on these foods. Then she took a platter fifty centimeters in diameter, heaped with a mound of powdered rice cakes, and proceeded to balance it on a drumstick perpendicular to the edge of the changgu-drum. Meanwhile the drummer continued playing the drum in accompaniment to the shamaness' chant. After several unsuccessful attempts and after the clients had placed won currency notes on the platter to placate the unruly spirits, the shamaness finally managed to balance the platter (Fig. 10). She then took the iron drumstick and rapped the drum sharply as if to dismiss any doubts of her spirits' abilities. Walking away she muttered that someone must have touched the rice cakes earlier to cause the spirits' lack of initial cooperation. A young male apprentice who had earlier joined the audience now asked the shamaness if he could perform the next kdri, saying that he felt "half-spirited." He put on a rose colored skirt and a bright green jacket symbolic of the kamang-disease spirits. Over these clothes he

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put on a blue coat with white drapping sleeves and a black hat with a white plume dangling from the top. This outer costume was symbolic of the troublesome *taegam* spirits. He took up the shamaness' bells and opened one of her ritual fans to invoke the spirits of the *taegam kdri APES*. He read from a printed list which was on top of the drum and called the *taegam* spirits from their resting places in the boulders, trees, rivers and other natural phenomena of Korea. The *taegam* spirits are believed to be the troublesome presences of former petty bureaucratic officials of the Yi dynasty. Invoking these petulant spirits into himself was no simple task for the young apprentice. He stopped chanting and began to dance vigorously with wands topped with paper cuttings. Gradually his pace quickened and the musicians had to move back to the west side to avoid his increasingly chaotic movements. A grimace spread over his otherwise handsome countenance and the blood seemed to drain from his face as the *taegam* spirits possessed him. The shaman began a series of whirling, undirected dance movements.

He seized various ritual instruments, danced with them all in his hands and arms and then threw them down and seized others. All this frenetic movement was performed for the delight of the *taegam* and, seemingly, at their instigation. He then danced alternately with the wands with paper-cuttings, pairs of swords, tridents, broadblades and finally knives. As he whirled with the knives the apprentice slashed the air. Suddenly he stood still, faced the audience and charged toward them. Raising one knife high in the air he stabbed violently into the pig's head. Moving backwards he stared glassy eyed and charged again at the pig's head. He then stabbed his other knife into it and pulled the pig's head off of the smaller altar. The apprentice-shaman now danced with the pig's head occasionally tearing at it with his teeth (Fig. 11). Meanwhile an apprentice beating her cymbal continued a near-deafening din, keeping a safe distance from the whirling shaman. After several minutes of frenetic dancing the male apprentice seemed to calm down. He stuck the pig's head onto a one meter forked trident. He then took a rice cake and put it in a bowl. He proceeded to divine the approval of the *taegam* spirits by attempting to balance the trident mounted with the pig's head on the rice cake. The clients came forward and placed paper currency in the pig's mouth to encourage the spirits to cooperate. When the point of balance seemed near, Woo-mansin joined her apprentice (Fig. 12). They both chanted as the trident balanced. Then they stood up and stepped back with their open arms crossing one another.

The apprentice returned to the ritual instruments and took up the bells. After moving through several graceful circular movements with **CHAESU KUT: A KOREAN SHAMANISTIC PERFORMANCE 247** sudden knee bends, he placed the bells in the platter of uncooked rice. Taking the bells to one of the clients he shook them, allowing rice kernels to fall into the client's lap.

At the conclusion of the apprentice's *k b i* Woo-mansin sat with the two clients at the west side of the altar room. Here she continued to talk with them and consider their future prospects. Meanwhile the musicians had moved back to their original position and were preparing the female apprentice, Kim Sun Duc, for *youngjdn kdri* **B&ELE**. The young shamaness dressed herself in a blue dress and blue coat with a red embroidered waist band and red hat of an official's travel garb. This *youngjdn kdri* was the "farewell to the spirits." The apprentice performed an abbreviated ritual sequence which was subdued and confined to the area immediately before the drum. Woo-mansin and her clients, meanwhile, were less than two meters away and engaged in earnest conversation.

In the same costume and with a continued restraint the apprenticeshamaness performed *sdngju kdri* **@SELJi**. The final stage of this Chaesu kut was directed toward the spirits of the house under whose initial auspices the entire kut had transpired. With the conclusion of this abbreviated sequence of invocation, narration and dance the Chaesu kut ended. Woo-mansin said goodnight to her clients and guests and retired, visibly exhausted, to the inner family room. The apprentices prepared a table with food and bottles of rice wine insisting that we all stay and continue the celebration while they cleaned the altar room.

#### CONCLUSION

The symbolic richness of the Chaesu kut is quite apparent even from

this descriptive overview. Such symbolic elements as the wall-hangings, offerings on the altars, costumes, chants, dances and other ritual items derive from a complex thought tradition which suggests a variety of influences. For example, the folk religious practices of East Asia are evident in the Korean shamanistic concept of illness and misfortune as caused by ancestral spirits. Influences of Siberian shamanistic cosmologies may be present in the multilayered worldview of the Korean shamaness. Moreover, Buddhist soteriological figures, such as the compassionate bodhisattvas, have been accommodated into the Korean shamanistic pantheon. So also Confucian influences can be seen in the appearance of bureaucratic figures in the kut-performances as well as in the ritual propitiation of lineage ancestors. Finally, Taoist practices are evident in the delineation of the spirit pantheon as well as in the use of magic charms and incantations to alleviate calamities. Although a discussion of these complex influences cannot be attempted here, it is

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helpful to note their presence as a means of interpreting the historical influences on the development of Korean shamanism.

While an understanding of historical influences is important for an adequate appreciation of this religious phenomenon such an understanding alone cannot elucidate the contemporary meaning of Korean shamanism. In the Chaesu kut just described, for example, the particular motivations and values of the clients are determined by more personal, social and economic factors. Both these factors and the historical influences already mentioned can best be seen in a wider context of shamanistic phenomena in a variety of cultures. A comparative treatment would not necessarily describe or fully explain such a particular expression as the Chaesu kut performed by Woo-mansin, but it would help to explain the endurance of shamanic expressions into the contemporary period. Thus, a comparative approach may be helpful in providing an explanation of the religious meaning of these ritual activities.

The material presented in this article, then, can be discussed in terms of three comparative patterns of shamanic experience, namely, the formation of the shamaness, her techniques of ritual performance, and the goals that motivate both the practitioner and the participants to engage in these activities.

The literature on Korean shamanism indicates that the formation of the shaman among northern practitioners often arises from an experience of *sinbydng* or "shamanic sickness." Comparative research shows that similar formative experiences occurred among Siberian shamans (Michael 1963), but not as frequently among the shamans of the Central Asian Mongols (Heissig 1980). Among North American Native Peoples "shamanic sickness" as an expected formative experience is not widely documented. However, an illness prior to a shamanic vocation or extensive periods of isolation and other forms of sensory deprivation are not uncommon in North America (Grim 1983). What appears in comparative studies of shamanism is a simultaneous occurrence of a call from the spirits and a liminal status in the society. The shamanic personality is initiated into his or her vocation by a personal experience of the traditional world of spirits which is articulated in oral narratives or cosmologies. An intimate experience of spirits makes of the shaman a liminal or marginal person believed to be capable of communication with the sphere of cosmic power. The personal psychic disturbances

that result from the call and the social reaction to the signs of such a call also prompt the liminal stage of formation which entails both unique privileges and responsibilities.

A person who matures in this marginal state may escape some social norms and restrictions but will also enter into vocational responsibilities.

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For example, Woo-mansin as a woman may have given expression to intellectual and creative talents not ordinarily open to Korean women. This significant aspect of Korean shamanism must not be overlooked, but it is also important to emphasize the personal, social and ritual responsibilities which arise from her formative experiences and subsequent training for the career of a shamaness. She nurtures a selfimage which is liminal to that of Korean society; consequently her vocation may adversely effect both her own social status and that of her family. She seeks to maintain a steady clientele whose ritual focus is the mansin herself. Finally, as long as the shamaness functions as a spiritual guide and healer she is in relationship with psychic-spiritual entities whose caprice and capabilities are constantly being manifested in ceremonial kut. The entertainment (verb, nolda; verbal, nolki) of the taegam-spirits, for example, is a demanding ritual stage whose trance privileges also exact arduous duties of propitiation.

Comparative studies in shamanism consistently describe the trance states and ritual arts as techniques of the shaman for evoking and channelling spirit power. The type of altered states associated with shamanic trances are quite varied. While possession states are evident in the Chaesu kut discussed here, the trance states of Siberian shamans are likened to soul-journeys to the place of power (Michael 1963). Among Native Americans the mediumistic trance meditations are more predominant (Grim 1983). Japanese blind shamans, or itako, also used mediumistic states to communicate with the dead (Hori 1975). An amazing differentiation of such shamanic trance states results from even a cursory comparative study but the technique consistently functions to establish contact with the believed sources of efficacious power needed to deal with a specific malady. Moreover, the trance states are at the core of the shaman's therapeutic activity and they often authenticate the shamanic performance among the participants much more than the hoped-for cure.

The ritual arts so widely linked with shamanism are often part of the shaman's technique for inducing the trance as well as evoking the co-operation of the spirit. Rhythmic drumming, ritual instrumental patterns, and repetitive chants all aided Woo-mansin in her skillful performance of the taryong song and dance sequences. In ceremonies among Northwest coast shamans and Navajo initiations in North America (Gill 1982), looking through the holes of the mask was tantamount to imagistic participation in the spirit presence just as "wearing the shaman's clothes" (mugan ssuda) in the Chaesu kut enabled the client to participate in the spirit presence of his own body. A great variety of shamanic arts are evident in the Korean context that are primarily

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directed towards evocation of spirit presences and entry into sensory and imagistic experience of the spirits and their machinations.

The goals of the shamanic practitioners and participants are everywhere distinguished by the specific requests which are conveyed to the spirits by the shaman. Just as the clients in the Chaesu kut solicited

Woo-mansin's services to benefit their flagging business, so also the participants at an Okinawan yuta's ritual performance solicit that shamaness' ritual art for their specific needs (Lebra 1966). Comparative research in shamanism emphasizes the role of spirits in its investigation~ of the purpose of shamanic performances. No other concept of primal traditions is so widespread and variously articulated as the spirits who may be sacred or demonic in their activities while numinous and personal in their manifestations. The shamanistic ethos finds its basic religious style in participation with spirits and evocation of their efficacious power. No description of spirits can be considered adequate for any one shamanistic tradition but some comparative explanation can be attempted that helps to interpret the concept of spirits as a method of expressing the interaction of various elements in the cosmos.

The Korean shamaness personally integrates the spirit presences which are pictured on her wall-hangings and she ritually evokes their power for healing and divination. For example, in Woo-mansin's pantheon the presence of cosmic deities such as the seven-stars spirit should be seen in relation to the historical, military generals. Most of these generals died young with unfulfilled ambitions, a fact which drives them and their spirit armies to inflict either benefit or harm on humans. Alongside these figures in Woo-mansin's wall hangings are mountain deities and taegam spirits believed to reside in the Korean landscape. All of these spirits are evoked at appropriate stages of the kut and are believed to bring a participant and his or her specific problems into the presence of cosmic powers.

Such relations between the shamaness and her society's worldview provide insight into the last comparative pattern of shamanic experience, namely, restored balance. In the Chaesu kut the failing business was interpreted as due to the spirit machinations of a deceased uncle who was envious of his nephews and antagonized by sacrificial neglect. Success could be restored by ritual participation at the kut and by promised ritual care in the future. Resentment and imbalance, then, cause problems to humans and restoration of proper relationships and psychic harmonies effect healing. Even in areas with different worldviews the shamanic personality often contacts the spirit world to restore lost harmonies. Thus, the Ojibway tcisaki or shaking-tent shaman of North America contacts a host of manitou-spirits and channels their power in a specific ritual manner to remedy situations that have become detrimental to the individual and society goal of long life and happiness (Grim 1983). This pattern of shamanic experience, provides insight into the means whereby the shaman restores the participants to a right relationship with themselves and their environment. In summary, then, the comparative patterns of formation, techniques and goals demonstrate the particular characteristics of Korean shamanism as well as the cross-cultural similarities of these religious practices.

**Appendix:** Diagram of Woo-mansin's altar

Im Kyiing'ip Changgun ;tjl;Bg#\$B an historic Korean general who died a tragic death while at a young age.

Pybngma Changgun %B#\$ai\$ m ythic general of sickness.

P'alman Sinjang ABfiW warrior spirit who leads the 80,000 spirit-army.

Taemin A@ a dead shaman who has become both a pantheon deity

and the spirit who inspires the shamaness. Thus, it is the shamaness herself.

Yongt'ae Puin grand madame of dragons.

Siisan Taesa **BbAgifi** historical monk who led an army against the Japanese invasion of 1592. Now immortalized as the great western mountain teacher.

Yaksa Sinjang %\*fig a healing master in the retinue of Yaksa bodhisattva. There is possibly a connection to Baisajya Guru.

Pu'gun 22% or Hanabang polite reference to father and grandfather.

Kim Kibaek &\$& mentor of Woo-mansin and possibly her special personal deity *momju*.

Pyblsang Mama a messenger god and spirit.

Siirin Changgun T\$&#\$@ another auspicious mythic general.

Kkach'isan Pyiingma Changgun general of magpie mountain in Hwanghae Province.

Howi-pyiang \$\$\$j& and Waryong Siinsaeng @ @%& the auspicious tactician, Kung-min, of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

P'al S6nny6 a fairy maiden leading 8,000 hosts.

Sambul Chaesiik f #,;fif\$ the three Buddhas and Indra or, more probably, the Birth Spirit in Buddhist form.

Ch'lsiang -kg the seven stars of the Big Dipper, which spirit

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helps raise children.

17. Sansin m\$\$ the mountain spirit.

18. Toryong and Aegissi, young boys and girls who died as virgins and have become powerful spirits.

19. Yaksa yijrae % + \*u%st atue of the healing bodhisattva.

20. Kwan'iim posal @gg@ statue of the compassionate bodhisattva.

21. Puchd 4% statue of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni.

22. Yaksa yijrae-see #19.

23. San sillyijn nim III\$ESta tue of the mountain spirit on his mount, the tiger.

#### NOTES

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1. For a discussion of the special relationship between Korean shamanism and women see Harvey 1976 and 1979, and Kendall 1979 and 1983.

2. For mudang see Lee 1973a; while some reseachers continue to use the term, *mudang*, when speaking of these practitioners, I have followed the preference of Woo Oek Ju and use *mansin*. Laurel Kendall has repeatedly made this point in her work and in her presentation to the Korean section at the American Academy of Religion (Dec. 1982).

3. This polite term is used largely in north and central Korea. See Kendall 1979: 307.

4. An overview of the variety in Korean kut can be found in Lee 197313 and 1981.

5. The Korean Conflict caused many northern shamanesses and shamans to move south, especially into the Seoul area. Thus the northern style has become more available for researchers. For the Seoul performance see Kim T'ae-gon 1978; for a description of a northern performance see Harvey 1979: 85-128.

6. In my interviews with Woo-mansin she repeatedly used the term *han* or resentment to explain the attack of malign spirit forces. In a later discussion with Professor Kim Yul-gyu at So-gang University during May of 1982 he pointed out the central characteristic of Korean shamanism as dealing with this resentment. See Kim Yul-gyu 1975. Professor Kim Yul-gyu also indicated that such "lost spirits" were the most dreaded spirits and associated only with the most powerful shamanesses.

7. Woo-mansin said that unlike most shamanesses who have only twelve *kdri* in their full kut, she has twenty-eight *kdri*. When I later spoke with Professor Kim Yul-gyu he indicated that the number of *kdri* is not set but, like so many aspects of Korean shamanistic ceremonies, determined by the shamaness herself. For arrangement of altar offerings see Halla 1980: 34.

8. This biographical information was obtained through interviews with Woomansin and personal correspondence with Susan Martin at Indiana University and with the apprentice, Yang Jongsung.

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9. The opening stage seems to have included the initial evocation of the client's ancestors which is customarily associated with *chosang kdri* + B I-fig. See Kendall 1983.

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Fig. 1. Woo-mansin discussing the feathered headpiece in which the spirits perch during the kut-performance.

**Fig. 2.** The eastern end of Woo-mansin's permanent altar, picturing numbers 9 and 18 in the diagram.

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**Fig. 3.** The dance with dried fish to entertain (*nolda*) the *pujin?* spirits.

**Fig. 4.** Through guided questioning, Woo-mansin clarifies the client's requests in the presence of the spirits who have possessed her.

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Fig. 5. Dressed in the regal red of the kingly spirits with the military blue of the warrior spirits underneath, Woo-mansin invoked the auspicious

spirits of the mountains and the heavens.

Fig. 6. The shamaness-apprentice, Kim Sun Duc, shown whirling during *kamang kciri* with the long sleeves of the red regal costume gathered in her hands.

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Fig. 7. A client dressed in the shamaness' clothes. This break in the ritual stages, called *mugan ssuda*, is intended for the delight (*nolda*) of one's own body-taegam spirit.

Fig. 8. During a break in the Chaesu kut Woo-mansin performed a divination (*chom*) for some regular clients (*ton'gol*). Note the coins on the table for this divination.

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Fig. 9. Woo-mansin entertaining the *ch'ilsdng* spirit, the seven-star spirit of the Big Dipper. The shamaness' gestures during this dance segment strongly suggested flight symbolism.

Fig. 10. Divining the approval of the *ch'ils6ng* spirits, Woo-mansin balanced a heaping platter of powdered rice cakes on the wooden drum stick.

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