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Of Gods and Men : Performance, Possession, and Flirtation in Korean Shaman Ritual

Résumé
Devant l'ambivalence de la danse, qui est un élément important du rituel chamanique coréen (kut), l'auteur plaide pour une appréciation objective. Cette danse correspond à l'enthousiasme”, à l’impersonnification de dieux qui ne sont pas toujours édifiants, et ouvre la voie à un certain affranchissement par rapport à la réserve imposée aux femmes par les censeurs confucéens. L'auteur passe en revue divers aspects de cette ambivalence : l'aspect populaire et festif du kut, son caractère railleur vis-à-vis des autorités, la mobilité sociale des exécutantes, passant facilement du statut de mansin H# ou de mudang Mit à celui de kisaeng ££4^ et réciproquement. La consécration de cette danse en "bien culturel intangible" ne risque-t-elle pas d'avoir des effets aussi destructeurs que sa suppression voulue jadis par les lettrés confucéens ?

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Devant l'ambivalence de la danse, qui est un élément important du rituel chamanique coréen (kut), l'auteur plaide pour une appréciation objective. Cette danse correspond à l’“enthousiasme”, à l’impersonnification de dieux qui ne sont pas toujours édifiants, et ouvre la voie à un certain affranchissement par rapport à la réserve imposée aux femmes par les censeurs confucéens. L’auteur passe en revue divers aspects de cette ambivalence : l’aspect populaire et festif du kut, son caractère railleur vis-à-vis des autorités, la mobilité sociale des exécutantes, passant facilement du statut de mansin 萬神 ou de mudang 巫堂 à celui de kisaeng 娘生 et réciproquement. La consécration de cette danse en “bien culturel intangible” ne risque-t-elle pas d'avoir des effets aussi destructeurs que sa suppression voulue jadis par les lettrés confucéens ?

1. A pinch and two voices

Let me begin with two voices and an observation. The first voice is that of a village grandfather of nearly seventy years :

“I don’t get the same thrill out of going to kut 萬神 (shaman rituals) anymore. When I was younger, well, there would be a nice big pile of rice cake and some pretty mansin 萬神 to try to hug. You know the old Brass Mirror Mansin ? Oh, she was beautiful when she was young. [He chuckles.] That was a mansin to hug, tee-hee.”

1) Most of the field data contained in this essay was gathered during my first field trip to Korea in 1977-1978, and during a shorter visit in the fall of 1985. Field research in 1977-1978 was supported by the International Institute for Education (Fulbright), the Social Science Research Council, and the National Science Foundation. Research in 1985 was supported by the Eppley Foundation for Research. I would like to thank Alexandre Guillemoz and Keith Howard for their very careful reading of this manuscript and Yim Dawnhee for some random but insightful remarks that were useful in its preparation. I alone am responsible for its shortcomings.

2) Mansin 萬神 literally means “ten thousand spirits”; it is the polite term for shamans in central and north Korea. Mudang 巫堂, although more common, is derogatory. The inspirational shamans of north and central Korea, and the hereditary priestesses of the south are both called mudang. This essay follows the usage of informants from the central region who speak of mudang and mansin as one and the same. When I am referring to the hereditary mudang of the south, this is indicated.

The second voice is that of a practicing shaman, quoted in my book, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits*:

"It doesn't happen so much anymore, but when I first started going to *kut*, men would bother me. We were doing a *kut* at a house way out in the country, and I was going around selling the Taegam's 大監 wine. Some son-of-a-bitch grabbed my breast. I put out my hand so the drummer would go faster, then brought my arms up quick to start dancing. I knocked that guy against the wall. [She chuckles.] Afterwards, he asked me, 'What did you mean by that?' I said, 'Oh, that wasn't me, it was the honorable Taegam 大監 [the possessing spirit] who did that'" (Kendall 1985: 61).

The observation is that of an outsider, a female American anthropologist, watching a semi-detached participant, a male intellectual from the capital city at a provincial shaman ritual. The outsider (me) stood on the sidelines of a Tano 端午 *kut*, in Kangnùng 江陵, on the east coast, an event that draws scholars and tourists from a great distance. The shaman's voice was fresh in my mind when, bearing a muted rage that was most unanthropological, I watched as a young professor from Seoul slipped a thousand-won bill into a dancing shaman's waistband and gave her breast a quick but obvious squeeze. Perhaps, after more than a year in the company of shamans, I had so come to identify with my female informants that I experienced that pinch vicariously as a personal violation. In a pinch, the young professor seemed to make a statement, albeit playful and grinning, about the status of the dancing woman — the sort of woman whose breast an audacious man might tweak in public. But was it not also a gesture of contempt for the ritual she performed, a denigration of ritual space to wine house space, of things held sacred to things bawdy and profane? Was this not a tiny dramatization of the old dichotomies, of the scholar's condescension toward the folk, of men toward women and their activities? Perhaps, but not necessarily.

The village grandfather recalls a youthful brashness akin to that of the young professor but is not so easily reconciled to tidy structural oppositions. While he enjoyed teasing the mansin, undoubtedly to their ire, he was not disdainful of the

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3) Taegam 大監 is an archaic term of address for a high official, thus the possible translation, "Excellency," favored in some works on Korean shamanism. In a teasing manner, a spoiled child might be referred to as "Taegam." In my own writing, I favor "the Official" since the conceptualization and portrayal of the Taegam is akin to portrayals of corrupt officialdom in folk literature and modern historical dramas. Some informants drew an explicit parallel, the Taegam of *kut* were like "what you see on television," the king sits on his elevated throne and "the Taegam are all down below scheming." These spirits require periodic tribute to nurture their benevolence and prevent mischief (Kendall 1985: 119). When a shaman commissioned to perform a large and expensive *kut* for public broadcasting gave the district security officer a small sum for "troubling himself" during the event, she circumvented the possibility of his interfering and the necessity of paying him a larger bribe. When I commented that this was "just like the Taegam" my remark won a mirthful assent.

4) Tano 端午, the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, initiates the intensive summer agricultural season. Tano was most enthusiastically celebrated in north and central Korea.
ritual that gave him the opportunity to steal a hug. With only a little coaxing, the old man dances at *kut* for his own good luck, and I have had the good fortune to watch his performance on several occasions. Having declined an invitation to a *kut* I was sponsoring ("I don't get the same thrill ..." etc.), he joined us late in the afternoon, favored us with a dance, and stayed throughout most of the evening. Whenever I visit him, he cross-examines me about my own activities in the shaman's shrine, applauding the manner in which I honor decade-long obligations to the shrine god. The activities of the foreign academic vindicate the old man's faith against the expressed skepticism of his son.

The shaman, for her part, waxed wrathful over men's improprieties, but she did not see them as a violation of ritual intention. During *kut*, in the persona of the Taegam (supernatural Official), she will play to the men on the far sidelines, those who might be contemplating the prospect of a stolen pinch or hug but who might also provide generous tips for a drink of the Taegam's wine.

The oppositions of "sacred" and "profane" were my own baggage, often cumbersome in the heady atmosphere of a *kut*. A more suitably ambiguous image comes from the masked dance dramas of Korea, a veritable rogue's gallery of traditional stereotypes. Two stock characters, the *sadang* 寺幈, a dancing girl and itinerant prostitute, and the *somu* 小巫, a seductive young shaman, share the same mask, a fair-faced young woman in bride's makeup (Lee Duhyun 1969: 220, 285). The dancing girl who is sold for cash in the Masked Play of Yangju (Yangju Pyol Sael Nori 楊州別山臺), or who drives a widower to libidinous impropriety in the Masked Play of Pongsan (Pongsan Talch'um 凤山傩禮) and the shaman who seduces a pious old monk and then takes up with a wastrel in both plays bear the same woman's face. The roles — both theatrical and social — are distinct, but the identities of the dancing women are blurred.

Expectations of lewdness and promiscuity are part of the burden that shamans bear in assuming a profession that is, simultaneously, disreputable and a service to the gods. As a woman who sings and dances in public, the Korean shaman shares in the ill-repute of the *kisaeng* 姬生 (the female entertainer) and the *sadang* 寺幈 (the dancing girl), of other women who sing and dance in public for pay (Kendall 1985: 61-63). If the link between shamans and other dancing women is the dance itself, what then does dancing signify when shamans claim it as an element of their rituals? In what sense are the *kut* that Korean shamans perform both "lewd" (to some eyes) and "sacred" (as an efficacious healing ritual)? Are these attributes in any sense complementary?

5) This refers to the *mugam*巫感, the interlude in a *kut* when the sponsors, followed by neighbors and kin, dance in the shaman's clothing to entertain and refresh their own personal spirits. The *mugam* is discussed below.
2. Beyond dichotomies

Most treatments of Korean shaman ritual, my own work included, view this tradition in counterpoint to other aspects of the Korean experience, subsume it under the broad dichotomies of Confucian propriety versus a flamboyant folk tradition, of yangban 兩班 versus commoner, of skeptical men versus enthusiastically pious women (Akamatsu and Akiba 1938; Akiba 1957; Brandt 1971; Dix 1987; Janelli and Janelli 1982; Kendall 1985; Murayama 1932). Such dichotomies are useful in that they situate the rituals of women and shamans in their social and historical milieu and begin to explain how a body of practice, for so long denounced as lewdness, charlatanry, and avarice, might yet persist. They beg consideration of the larger issues of social structure, ethos, and gender. Gross dichotomies are limited when they encourage us to externalize, to separate by cleaving apart, the bundle of different motivations, emotions, and responses routinely evoked in the performance of single kut.

That shaman rituals were the rituals of dancing women probably contributed to the Confucian denigration of these activities as ëmsa 淫祀 “lewd” or “obscene” rites (Yi Nunghwa 1976 [1927]). The dancing shaman offended both the Confucian notions of women’s proper conduct — constrained and sequestered — and the proper conduct of rituals according to the rules of propriety, ye 礼 (Deuchler 1977). The notion that shaman rituals are, in some sense, innately “lewd” persists into the present. I have told how an officer from the district police station threatened to arrest the mansin 萬神 who were conducting a kut on the charge that they were “dancing to drum music and students were watching” (Kendall 1985: 62).

Characterizations of the shaman as a woman of casual virtue extend from the masked dance dramas of old Korea to the modern novels of Kim Tongni 金東里, both the early and critical Munyôdo 巫女圖 (Portrait of a Shaman), and the recent, far more sympathetic Ulhwa 乙火. The stereotype is a function both of what shamans do, their public performance, and who they are (by virtue of what they do), women who earn a livelihood outside the constraints of respectable family life.

The shaman’s economic independence, sanctioned by divine authority, renders her nearly anomalous among Korean women. As a consequence, she conducts her family life according to somewhat different premises than those governing ordinary women.6 Ch’oe Kilsông notes the relatively high status of women among hereditary

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6) In writing about Korean religion for Western audiences, the missionaries, who were themselves no fans of dancing women, followed indigenous characterizations of the shamans as creatures of low repute: “The mudang is always a woman, and her office is considered the very lowest in the social grade. She is always an abandoned character, though generally married” (Anonymous 1903: 145). “Common rumor credits these women with being of questionable moral character. They usually marry men as base as themselves” (Clark 1961 [1932]: 185).
mudang 巫堂 (shaman) families, a condition which he attributes to the work they do: “In shamanism (musok 巫俗), the female mudang holds the most important position. This is because the male mudang merely assists while it is the female mudang who performs the kut in front of the guests” (Ch’oe Kilsŏng 1981b: 125). As a consequence, daughters are valued and failure to produce a son is not a common reason for divorce. Divorce, itself, does not carry a great onus among hereditary mudang families and, given women’s own resourcefulness, divorce is often initiated by an abused wife rather than a dissatisfied husband (Ch’oe Kilsŏng 1981b: 125). But the relatively advantageous position of mudang women seems to apply only within the endogamous mudang 巫堂 occupation. Among non-mudang, the mudang designation carries an onus, and mudang women do not become the primary wives of non-mudang men. Like kisaeng, they enter these unions as concubines or as second wives (Ch’oe Kilsŏng 1981b: 119-120). Such arrangements imply unions premised upon sexual gratification rather than propriety and consequently contribute to the blurred imagery of mudang and kisaeng.

Among inspirational mudang, often called mansin 萬神, initiates invariably describe their initial possession as an unsought and painfully resisted compulsion. On the basis of this compulsion, the shaman is forced to perform kut, dancing in public to the sound of a drum, and on the basis of this compulsion, shamans claim their income through the demands of greedy gods and hungry ancestors. An autobiographical tale of suffering and resistance underscores the legitimacy of a shaman’s calling, sets her apart from kisaeng and other women who dance in public for pay and from charlatans who mimic the gods and ancestors for their own mercurial ends (Kendall 1988). Nevertheless, by the gods’ authority, the new shaman improves her economic standing and assumes unprecedented authority within her family (Kim Harvey 1979). Hong-mansin, Wilson’s informant, is most explicit when she states, “My husband is a womanlike man. He’s quiet and mild and never behaves like a man, but I act like a man, so I would like to be like a great general. I want to lead and tell people what to do’ (Wilson 1985: 51). By Wilson’s interpretation, this is exactly what Hong-mansin is able to do when she assumes the role of a divine general during a kut.

Some mansin claim that jealous gods prevent them from having marital relations with their husbands, but other mansin scoff at this (Kim Harvey 1979: 200). Oksun, Choi Chungmoo’s informant, denigrated another mansin’s claim to a “divine marriage”

7) Hereditary mudang 巫堂 are called sesup mu 热霊巫 in the writings of Korean folklorists. Strictly speaking, hereditary mudang do not claim to experience possession and are less comfortably described as “shamans” than are inspirational mudang.

8) Among Korean women, the Confucian premises of normative family life also rest lightly upon the resourceful diving women of Cheju Island (Cho Haejoang 1983) and successful market women among the urban poor (Chung Chawhan 1977).

9) Inspirational mudang 巫堂 are called kangsin mu 隆神巫 in the writings of Korean folklorists. In north and central Korea, they often refer to themselves as mansin 萬神.
with her guardian spirit: "She interprets such a 'marriage' as an excuse for a young shaman to gain freedom from her husband" (Choi Chungmoo 1987: 31). Among the mansin I knew, Songjuk Mansin was troubled because her prodigal husband had returned home, after twenty years, at the invitation of her son. The old man was sent to sleep with Songjuk Mansin in her shrine. She claimed that whenever she went to lie down, the "grandfathers" in her shrine would command that she rise up and flee the room. The jealous gods eventually departed in indignation. In the judgment of her colleagues, Songjuk Mansin would not regain her full powers until she threw out her unwelcome spouse and welcomed back her gods with an appropriate ritual.

Songjuk Mansin's colleagues did not consider the jealous gods to be a self-serving rationalization, a reason for avoiding a now undesirable husband. Her situation was explained to me as further testimony to the troubled marital histories of destined mansin, as part of the burden they bear by virtue of their ill-fated calling. The pretty Ms. Yang, an unmarried mansin now in her early thirties, found no man willing to take on a shaman bride. When she attempted to rectify her situation by pursuing the more respectable profession of a horoscope diviner (saju chŏnjaengi 四柱占術이), her gods would not grant her professional success. She was forced, once again, to perform kut. Yongsu's Mother, although she considers her solitary state unnatural, has not been able to remarry since her early widowhood. She attributes both her husband's death and her own enduring solitude to her shaman destiny and jealous gods. In her eyes, the gods are no substitute for a warm-blooded husband (Kendall 1988: 121-122).

Among my own mansin informants, only Okkyŏng's Mother enjoyed a stable marriage, in that she was neither widowed nor abandoned. Still, colleagues gossiped that her husband harbored a profound, if unfounded, jealousy. The other mansin, while they defended Okkyŏng's Mother's virtue, thought that his feelings were inevitable. Here was a wife who fixed herself up to go here and there, performing kut, a wife who earned her own money; had she wanted an affair, it would certainly have been possible. Similarly the husband of Tongil's Mother, one of Brian Wilson's informants, "drinks and is abusive and does not approve of her shamanistic activities. He suspects her of 'fooling around' with other men" (Wilson 1985: 63). This was one more testimony to the assumption that shamans do not enjoy good marriages. I was told that "From long ago, they have always said that the mudang's husband is a good-for-nothing who lives off of his wife's earnings," and indeed, the stereotype does seem to have persisted for a long time. Writing at the turn of the century, Isabella Bird Bishop reports that "A man sometimes marries a mu-tang [mudang] but he is invariably 'a fellow of the baser sort,' who desires to live in idleness on the earnings of his wife" (Bishop 1897: 425). Hesung Chun Koh notes, some decades later, "The term 'a fellow like the husband of a mudang' was used when referring to a playboy who was totally dependent upon someone else" (Koh 1959: 156).

Given the wondrous and painful destiny that shamans claim and the social and
economic consequences of their calling, it is possible, indeed tempting, to impute the genesis of stereotypical sexy shamans to Confucian moralizers, or to men who would keep unconventional women in their place. While useful in situating the distorted lenses through which shamans' lives are often apprehended, such an externalized explanation does not explain why the village grandfather who liked to hug pretty shamans in his youth also placed great stock in the rituals these women perform or why the shaman who disdained such embraces teased the men as part of her performance. For these questions, the shared image of a shaman and a dancing girl, blended in the single mask they share, serves as a point of departure. Why is it appropriate for these two characters to bear the same face? Our emphasis shifts to the roles shaman and dancing woman perform, to the work they do. This becomes a different enterprise from that of accepting or rejecting judgments on the moral character of shamans.

3. Shamans, men and supernatural Officials at kut

As spectators, men are structurally peripheral to events enacted by shamans and housewives — not irrelevant, but relatively more expendable. There is logic, or at least convenience, in the Korean shaman's gender since women represent their households in the shaman's shrine when they suspect that angry gods or restless ancestors are the root cause of serious or prolonged misfortune. Their visits to the shrine are an extension of other sacred duties. Within the home, women make kosa, offerings to the household gods, and although men conduct chesa, the formal rites of ancestor worship, women deal with the restless and potentially dangerous dead. The mansin provides a direct link between her clients and their household gods and ancestors. Through divinations and the visions she finds in trance, she determines the source of present troubles. Persistent illness or a bundle of different but nearly simultaneous misfortunes implies that individual affliction is merely symptomatic of a deeper malaise within the house. In the mansin's words, "The ancestors are hungry and the gods want to play." The family should sponsor a kut to feast and entertain them. As the night of the kut progresses, the gods and ancestors appear throughout the house and possess the costumed shamans. They vent their grievances, provide divinations, receive tribute (if they are gods) or sustenance (if they are ancestors), and shower blessings on each member of the family.

Ideally, the male sponsor, the taeju, should greet the gods with the female sponsor, the kiju, but many kut are held with an absent taeju. Men's participation varies from house to house. There are households where, on the night of a kut, the men flee and find lodgings elsewhere, leaving the premises to their wives, female kin, and neighbors. On these occasions, I would scratch into my notebook, "This was very much a women's kut." On other occasions, and to varying degrees, male kinsmen and neighbors might be present among the guests. Sometimes the men
might hold their own party, emerging periodically to observe the kut on the veranda. Some kut were memorable for a particularly enthusiastic male sponsor or kinsman who danced onto the center of the porch, vain of his skill at dancing and increasingly loud with drink.

Male participation is particularly encouraged during the Taegam nori (Official's play). Many consider the Official's play the high point of a Kyonggi Province kut. The mansin who complained to me of harrassment is particularly noted for her spirited performance of the Official's sequence. "The Official plays well with me," she states with pride, and is often asked to perform this sequence when she assists at kut called by other mansin. The Official is greedy, irrepressibly demanding. He peeks into pockets and under skirts, looking for extra cash. He finds that the offerings do not match his appetite and declares the music unsatisfactory. He is rude and crude and filled with wild, cackling laughter, and eventually, he is satisfied.10

In a better mood, he sells his "lucky wine" to the spectators while singing his own praises to a lively drum beat. There is some good-natured coaxing here, since the lucky wine provides one opportunity for mansin to extract small fees from the assembled crowd for ritual services. Their prearranged fee is enhanced by the number of "special fees" (pyolbi 別費) they may extract from the crowd for divinations, distributions of food from the tray prepared for Samsin Chesok, the Birth Grandmother, and the lucky wine. The mansin who performs the official's play is thus encouraged to dance her way to the far sidelines and coax the men into accepting an empty wine cup which she fills to the brim.

Her gesture is suggestive. To fill a man's cup outside the intimacy of kinship suggests the behavior of a woman paid to serve men's pleasure, the hospitality offered in a wine house. With this image in mind, a female professor of my acquaintance once noted that male and female colleagues are now reasonably comfortable with the etiquette of reciprocal pouring and drinking; she added that in her youth, her brother would not allow her to pour his friends' drinks. In the kut, of course, the gesture is ambiguous, since within the logic of the ritual, it is the Taegam (Official), not the mansin, who pours and sells the wine. Mansin draw legitimacy from a tradition that distinguishes women who dance the descent of the gods from women who merely dance, and by the gods' authority, sometimes claimed facetiously, a shaman might even knock an obnoxious spectator against the wall.

But have not the mansin also appropriated the imagery of the female entertainer to their own benefit? The possibility occurred to me when, in the company of two disdainful shamans, I watched a performance by professional kisaeng 娘生 at a country party.

10) For examples of the Taegam's Official's play, see Kendall (1977a: 15-16, 19-20; 1985: 8-10).
4. The country hwan'gap

The occasion was a hwan'gap 還甲, a celebration of the completion of a full sixty-year cycle of life. The shamans, Yongsu's Mother and the Songjuk Mansin, were invited guests of the celebrant, a client of long standing. As is the custom at country hwan'gap in the countryside near Seoul, kisaeng 妓生 had been hired to chant sijo 時調 poetry while the honored grandmother received ceremonial bows and libations from her children and grandchildren. On this occasion, the kisaeng arrived late, detained by another hwan'gap party. In their absence, the ritual bows were performed to recorded music, and followed by some impromptu dancing before lunch. Members of the family urged the two shamans to strap on drums and encourage people to dance. Women of the family expressed disappointment that the two shamans were wearing street clothes and not the Korean dresses they donned to perform kut. I found myself wondering if their choice of informal wear was a conscious attempt to distinguish themselves from the kisaeng who, apart from the members of the immediate family, were the only women at the hwan'gap in Korean dress.

When the three kisaeng finally did arrive, they poured the honored grandmother a libation and sang while she drank. Next, they called on the eldest son and encouraged him to drink, saying “It's your mother's wine.” He set several thousand won on the tray, accepted a cup of wine, and the kisaeng nudged him into a dance opposite one of their number. His brother and then other men were summoned to set down their money, drink, and dance. I was reminded of the Taegam's play at a kut, particularly where the mansin who distributes the Taegam's wine encourages a spectator of either sex to dance a few bars with her in the enthusiasm of the moment. I was also reminded of the spectators who dance mugam at a kut (see below) in costumes borrowed from the shamans, of the sequence of coaxing, setting down money, and sometimes drinking a cup of wine before dancing. Bashful performers may be coached by a shaman who dances alongside the performer. The logic of the kisaeng entertainment that made a cup of wine a show of filial piety, since it was “mother's wine,” recalled the logic of a shaman encouraging a country yangban to dance the mugam in honor of the founding ancestor of his local lineage, behavior usually considered antithetical to the yangban ethos and likely to make the ancestor roll over in his grave.

But there were also profound differences in the dynamics of the kisaeng performance and the mansin's kut. If women are central to the kut, they were irrelevant to the hwan'gap once the birthday grandmother had received her due. And the kisaeng were far more aggressive than any shamans at forcing a spectator to drink or dance. At the country hwan'gap, the kisaeng began to rush the men, hugging them and dragging them into the dance. I was reminded not of kut, but of the importunate streetwalkers who used to haunt the back alleys of downtown Seoul after dark.

My mansin companions announced that there was nothing more of interest to see,
“just men buying *kisaeng* wine.” We left, with Yongsu’s Mother cackling about the “old *kisaeng*, the shopworn *kisaeng*” that we had seen. She commented disparagingly that the men might set down as much as 5,000 won for a cup of *kisaeng*’s wine.\footnote{11} I remarked that the Official’s wine was less expensive. Yongsu’s Mother smiled, but seemed uncomfortable with the comparison. I asked if the men bought the wine “for luck,” having heard that *kisaeng* sometimes make this claim at country *hwangap*. Yongsu’s Mother denied it: “It’s just *kisaeng* wine.”

5. Of shamans and other dancing women

Shaman and *kisaeng* would probably both stoutly resist comparison; Yongsu’s Mother and the Songjuk Mansin were blunt in their contempt for the “shopworn *kisaeng*.” Nevertheless, there does seem to be a convergence of motif in the performances enjoyed by rural audiences. The shamans, perhaps unconsciously, borrow upon *kisaeng* imagery in pouring the Taegam’s wine. Is it merely coincidence that the youngest and prettiest shaman in the team often plays the Taegam 大監 (Official) and, as a consequence, dances out among the spectators, now men as well as women, to sell wine amid music and dance? If my information is correct (and I did not observe this), the *kisaeng* also enhance the luster of wine and dance by appropriating the shaman’s notion that the purchase brings luck.

Whatever their expressed disdain, biographical connections often link shamans to other dancing women. Kim Harvey cites a folk belief that beautiful women are “believed by many to have been predestined for misfortune; they are thought more likely to become *kisaeng* or *mudang* than ... average or homely looking women” (Kim Harvey 1979: 278). The association is compounded in hereditary *mudang* families where performers mingle and blend with the personnel of the *kisaeng* world (Ch’oe Kilsông 1981a: 109). It is said that the promising and beautiful daughters of *mudang* families, raised amid music, dance, and song, were sent to Seoul to be trained as *kisaeng*. Such women might slip back into the *mudang* profession in later years. Ch’oe Kilsông describes the mother of one of his hereditary *mudang* informants as “a *mudang* who had been a famous *kisaeng* in Kyŏngju” (1981b: 132). Wilson describes a *mudang* who “had been a *kisaeng* when she was in her early twenties” (Wilson 1985: 69). Loken-Kim describes a woman who grew up in a hereditary *mudang* household and, being a pretty child, was trained in the *kisaeng* arts, a profession she followed until recent years where she “finds herself performing more and more as a shaman [*mudang*]” (Loken-Kim: 2).

Some among inspirational shamans seem to have viewed a life in the performing arts as a way of avoiding, or at least postponing, their calling. Choi Chungmoo describes two women who escaped their fate by running away to work as wine house entertainers and eventually found themselves serving as shamans’ musicians

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\footnote{11} This was approximately $6.25 U.S. in 1985.
in later life. (Choi Chungmoo 1987: 129-130). Another of Loken-Kim's informants felt an irresistible attraction to music and dance from an early age despite the harsh punishments her parents imposed to dissuade her. Her parents, mortified by her behavior but still hopeful of circumventing a shaman's destiny, eventually took the advice of a diviner and enrolled her to be trained as a *kisaeng* (Loken-Kim: 2). In a similar vein, Kim Harvey's most intriguing informant, Suwôn Mansin, sought a mid-career shift into the glamorous but still not quite proper life of a cabaret hostess (Kim Harvey 1979: 171-203).

Perhaps more pervasive is the notion, tacitly acknowledged in shaman biographies, that repeated exposure to music and dance rendered these women potentially vulnerable to the descent of the gods and the life of a shaman (Choi Chungmoo 1987: 129). The parents who reluctantly enrolled their daughter to be trained as a *kisaeng* assumed that her compulsive attraction to music and dance would ultimately call down the spirits. Similar fears may have prompted Chatterbox Mansin's sister-in-law to slap her children when she found them dancing in time to the drum rhythm during a *kut* (Kendall 1985: 63). Michong, one of Choi Chungmoo's informants, explained her self-interested motivation for swiftly sponsoring her own mother's initiation *kut*, "Don't people say that if the mother is unable to release the energy of the spirits (sin'gî), one of her children may be chosen?" ... Michong felt that she was the most apt candidate because it is believed that the spirits prefer the person who is prone to music and dance. ... Michong felt that she already had paid the price of misfortune by being a dancer" (Choi Chungmoo 1987: 129-130). Kûmch'o, another informant, had experienced a harsh life as a tavern owner, minor singer, and drummer, "The mixture of her occupation is not far from that of an entertainer at the taverns. Now Kûmch'o is 'planning' to become a shaman. ... She blames [the spirits' influence] ... for her harsh life and ill-fated occupation" (Choi Chungmoo 1987: 130).

Thus also do we find that Suwôn Mansin initially pursued a performing arts degree at Sôrabôl College of the Arts (Kim Harvey 1979: 184), and that Yongsu's Mother was, in her youth, an enthusiast of rhumba and jitterbug (Kendall 1988: 80-81). Park Hi-Ah (Ch'æ Hûia [Hioi]), a Korean shaman active in the United States, is perhaps the best-known example of a woman who became a shaman through the contagion of dance. She received her calling while researching a dissertation in dance ethnography at U.C.L.A. (Kim Inhoe and Ch'oe Chongmin 1983: 84). 12

The careers of Suwôn Mansin, the performing arts major, and Park Hi-Ah, the Ph.D. candidate, confound a process of legitimization that has brought dance instruction into the universities and made it an agreeably feminine pursuit for female students. Christine Loken-Kim has described the emergent role of the educated middle class university dance instructor in contrast to the artistically accomplished

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12) I was reminded of perceived dangers of contagion when a Korean colleague recently asked me if, as a consequence of my association with the shaman world, I had felt any intimations of a calling.
but ill-regarded kisaeng. Female professors of dance “consider themselves primarily dancers, dance teachers, choreographers, and dance researchers rather than entertainers (Loken-Kim: 11-12).” Sensitive to the tradition's antecedents, one young dancer characterizes herself as an “artist” while disparaging her predecessors as mere “chaengiǎ,4,” as low-status artisans (ibid.: 11-12). Similarly, mask-dance dramas and farmers' music, vibrant but non-elite performance traditions with ritual and ecstatic overtones, gained their contemporary popularity as quintessentially Korean arts through the respectability of university-sponsored clubs.

6. The Dance and Dancing Spirits

The biographies cited above suggest contradictory responses to dance. Some of the women seemed to consider a life-long dedication to music and dance a conscious tactic that would forestall the descent of the gods. For others, music and dance carried their own danger, the danger of luring in persistent gods who might claim a new shaman. The seeming contradiction may be resolved when one appreciates the relationship between gods and dance, understands why it is that Korean gods are attracted to music and dance. While possession by gods and ancestors distinguishes the shaman's dance from any ordinary woman's performance, the spirits come to the dance charged with less than admirable emotions, emotions that find expression in the dance itself. As we shall see, this association of spirit, emotion, and movement accounts for some of the ambiguity that abides in the image of the dancing woman, both sacred and profane.

Yoksim 慾心, appetite, makes the gods and ancestors desirous of a kut, and dancing to the sound of a drum calls them forth. The gods arrive vexed (soksang hada 속상 하다), furious (kori nada 끼어 날다) at past neglect and hungry for tribute. The shaman plays upon these attributes in her portrayal: the gods huff and puff, strut and scowl, harumph over the quantity of offering food, smear grease on the faces of their human patrons, and tug at clients' ears — this last to express their dissatisfaction with the musicians. The confrontation of god and human is a dynamic process, a play of gods demanding cash and humans demurring, a bargaining banter that is formulaic but still amusing to the participants. The sponsor resists, stonewalls, and gradually relinquishes a prearranged sum of cash. “Give me a new hat,” says the god. “Make me rich, and I'll give you one next time,” says the woman, and so on into the night. The outcome is also inevitable, if hard won; the god capitulates into a cackling show of good will, a sharing of wine, a beaming, triumphant dance of celebration (Kendall 1985: 8-9, 17-18).

These tiny dramas, a string of tiny dramas performed in succession throughout the kut, performed predictably from kut to kut, portray the danger of frustrated appetites and by so doing, banish them in the satisfaction of music, dance, and bantering play. The gods enjoy dance and feasting; if you satisfy the desires of your own spirits, then they will do well by you. Thus, women with particularly
potent spirits in their household pantheons are encouraged to dedicate costumes at the shaman's shrine. Spirits of great appetite will feast and play each time the shaman dons these costumes to perform kut in other households. Each time I return to Korea, Yongsu's Mother's colleagues reassure me that she often wears my Taegam's vest and hat while performing kut.

Divine therapy is human therapy writ large. The sponsor of the kut — ideally both the female and the male sponsor — is encouraged to dance, sometimes given several opportunities and fortified with several cups of wine. This satisfaction of personal spirits is, with the mollification of long frustrated gods, considered a part of the process of healing. The sponsor should dance to exhaustion, and on the day after the kut, feel a relaxed, refreshed, and pleasant fatigue. The parallel between divine and human-scale appetites and their resolution in the dance of shamans and ordinary people is most clearly articulated in the mugam 林, the dance performed by ordinary women during the interlude of a kut.

A woman sets her money on the drum, is garbed in an appropriate costume, and begins a graceful dance which soon becomes a series of rapid leaps to quickened drum beats in imitation of the shaman's dance of possession. When the woman has danced to exhaustion, her momju 林, her own personal body-governing god is satisfied. At a kut, women are told to dance the mugam “for luck” (chaesu 財數) bestowed upon their entire families, but luck as a consequence of sated spirits is the flip side of misfortune engendered by greedy, restless spirits. According to the mansin:

People whose [body-governing Officials] have a lot of appetite scrunch up their faces as if in pain when they dance mugam. They pound their arms and legs. Their Officials aren't satisfied. They should have played like this in their own homes [i.e., been entertained with a kut], but instead they have to come to someone else's house to play, so they behave that way (Kendall 1983: 228; 1985: 135-138).

Or again, when Yongsu's Mother described Yongsu's Grandmother's spontaneous, animated performance during a kut:

That was her momju 林: (body-governing god). You didn't know that our mother has such a powerful one. When it's strong like that you have to do its

13) Alexandre Guillemoz suggests the Chinese character gloss, mugam 林, following Cho Hungyun (Cho Hung-youn [Cho Húngyun] 1980: 104. Ch'oe Kilsông, on the other hand, uses a pure Korean mugam 林 (Ch'oe Kilsông 1978: 17). The Chinese character 林 indicates feelings, emotion, or even bewitchment. Pure Korean 林, as a noun ending, refers to material, stuff, or even fabric, okkam 林. One choice emphasizes the experience of mugam 林, of being taken over by shaman-like sensations, the other mugam 林 seems to underscore the use of costumes as vehicles for the spirits. Since the shaman tradition was largely oral, with some chapbooks written in Korean alphabet, it is possible that many words have acquired multiple nuances over time.
bidding or it gets its dander up and gets nasty. My mother hasn't held a kut for has it been five years? She really should have one this spring ... Her Pulsa (Buddhist Sage) comes on strong, it's ravenous. My mother's Pulsa has a huge appetite (Kendall 1988: 68).

For the women who dance the mugam, the dance is pleasurable. They say "it refreshes the insides," or that the dancers "like to play." But questions about this public letting-go also provoke a giggling embarrassment and women often insist that they had to be coaxed into using the mugam. The mugam is best pursued by established matrons and is not quite proper for younger women. "However much she may want to sponsor a kut, the mother-in-law hates the sight of her dancing daughter-in-law's head (bobbing up and down)," states a Korean proverb. Or in the words of an informant: "Maidens aren't supposed to dance or people will think they're wild. Young brides aren't supposed to use the mugam either. When a woman has a child, or two children — that's even better — then she can use the mugam (Kendall 1983: 230)."

Initially, Yongsu's Mother shielded me from requests that I dance mugam because I was "a student." When I eventually began to dance, I became more of a participant in Yongsu's Mother's world, and a source of greater amusement for her other clients. ("Does she really dance"?)

The mugam dance is usually predictable, but strange things can happen during a performance of mugam. I have seen a dancing woman flail at her mother-in-law and a woman lambaste her sister-in-law, actions forgiven the women because they were attributed to the will of powerful momju (body-governing gods). But this opening up of the self to the will of spirits through the medium of music and dance also carries danger. My informant Yongsu's Mother, Kim Harvey's informant P'yôngyang Mansin, and possibly Wilson's informant Hong Mansin were all irrevocably claimed by the spirits while they danced mugam at kut and were subsequently compelled to become mansin (Kim Harvey 1979: 98; Kendall 1988: 98-99; Wilson 1985: 46-47).

7. The Dance Itself

Korean folk tradition acknowledges dance as an experience transcendent of rhythm and movement. Some dancers describe the ascent of hung, of a rising sense of joy, mirth, or excitement. More colloquially, this is sinbaram, excitement roused by the heat of performance. One critic, in a much-cited passage, has characterized the dancer's experience as "Irrepressible joy ... almost reaching the point of giddiness ... a joy pouring forth from within ... from a deep sense of beauty ... a state of everlasting exhilaration" (Cho Dongwha cited in Heyman 1966: 5). A professional dancer once described for me, with a graceful gesture of the hand to map the ascent of the hung, the sense of dreamy euphoria that rises up from the
belly to the chest as the dancer experiences the dance. The trajectory of the hŭng and of rising sinbaram is equivalent to the ascent of the momju 神主, the body-governing god which “rises up” during a performance of mugam.14 Fiery, potentially destructive emotions also travel this course, rising up to the chest in choking hwappyŏng 火病, “fire sickness,” an illness associated with feelings too long held inside.

In shaman rituals, the dance becomes a gateway for the expression of strong emotion in the idiom of spirits whose desires and appetites are vented and by so doing, satisfied. This process is transacted through the direct experience of the dancing client and others who use the mugam, and through the performance of the shaman who invokes the gods and ancestors with dance and brings them forward to “play” (nolda 玩) the dramatic confrontations and resolutions that ultimately satisfy their overbearing appetites. Similarly “playful” are the spectators at a kut, the women and men who are coaxed into buying a cup of wine and dancing a few bars with the shaman. Similarly playful are the men who are coaxed into buying more expensive wine and dancing with the kisaeng at a country celebration.

As a gateway to the spirits, to excitement, to play, dance also acknowledges a dark aspect, the danger of surrender, of giving free reign to base impulses. One hears of the dangers of “chʻumbararr 串巴” 串巴, the dancing compulsion that overtakes bored matrons in pursuit of amusement and leads them on the path to adultery and shame (Chung Chawhan 1977). More common, perhaps, is the man enticed into spending far more than he ought on the charms of a dancing female entertainer.

Spontaneity, feeling, and abandon are eliminated in choreographed revivals of traditional arts, as when four women in shaman garb execute elegant movements in unison on a proscenium stage. The process of designating shaman rituals as Muhyŏng Munhwaje 無形文化財, as Intangible Cultural Properties, is similarly disenchanting. An advisory committee of the Ministry of Culture records the “correct” procedures for the kut and monitors subsequent performances to insure that the shamans are performing the preserved kut “correctly.” Such events are inscribed as “performances” in which shamans enact possession, not “rituals” that embrace the possibility of possession by angry or playful spirits.15 The act of museum-like preservation itself proclaims the death of tradition (Choi 1987 : ch. 2).

It is one of the ironies of the 1980s that students have appropriated folk performance as an expression of the spirit of the minjung 民衆, “the masses,” romanticizing the very elements that have been denied in the transformation of these same traditions as middle class performance arts.

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14) The shaman’s spirits are distinguished from those that “rise up” in ordinary women during kut insofar as the shamans’ own spirits “descend.”

15) Choi Chung-moo provides an interesting discussion of this process and of the shamans’ own ambivalence toward play-acting their kut (Choi Chung-moo 1987: 59-81).
8. Conclusion

We began with the image of a dancing woman, the convergent imagery of
dancing shamans and female entertainers, and the seeming contradiction in the
behavior of those who nag and harass shamans while affirming they accept the
validity of their rituals. We saw that shaman and 

{kisaeng} 妓生 may have borrowed
elements of each others' performance, and that biographies often linked 

{mudang} 萬 to secular performance experiences. We began to examine playful dancing, \(^{16}\) how it is experienced, what it connotes, and why it is an appropriate vehicle for
vexed and greedy spirits.

The Korean shaman tradition assumes the idiom of dance in both its positive and
negative aspects if, indeed, “positive” and “negative” could here be disassembled
from the experience of dancing and the spirits who emerge in the dance. There is
irony in the notion of a Buddhist-identified {Pulsar} 佛師 spirit with a huge appetite, an
irony that accounts for some of the disapproval cast upon dancing women. Shaman
rituals invert the Buddhist ideal of transcendence and the Confucian injunction to
controlled moderation. Shaman rituals deal with the negative consequences of
worldly craving and powerful emotion by bringing them forward in the person of
angry gods who find satiation in feasting, dance, and play. From the shaman's
dance of powerful gods to the client's dance of personal spirits, the dance heals, and
the dance, like the performances of other dancing women, provides pleasure. The
atmosphere of a {kut} gets the spirits up for shaman, client, and spectators, both
women and men. It generates luck and good feelings, but carries the danger of
excess, of capture by the spirits and the possibility of disgrace. Such are the
delights and anxieties projected upon the common mask of shaman and dancing
woman, they who, despite disapprobation, have continued to celebrate a vital
Korean tradition.

\(^{16}\) “Playful dancing” is my own crude attempt to distinguish the nearly spontaneous
recreational dancing that occurs at country parties, in wine houses, on the sidelines of {kut},
and in the slightly more stylized dances of inspirational {mansin}, from Korean dance traditions
that emphasize form and meticulous execution, the “dances” performed during periodic
rituals in Confucian shrines, the court tradition, and stage adaptations of the folk tradition.
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