



PERFORMANCE

OF

# the perform- ance of healing

EDITED

BY

CAROL LADERMAN

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MARINA ROSEMAN

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# THE PERFORMANCE OF HEALING

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Edited by  
Carol Laderman & Marina Roseman

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# INTRODUCTION

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**Carol Laderman and Marina Roseman**

**T**wenty or so years ago, when we were undergraduates, medical anthropology existed as a small and often narrow enterprise. Reflecting the split in American society between “hard science” and “humanism,” and the greater respect accorded “hard science,” many medical anthropologists adopted medical models even as others resisted compromising their anthropological vision. In fact, editors of mainstream anthropology journals, with the notable exception of *Ethnology*, often rejected articles on medical subjects, advising their authors to publish their work in specialized medical journals. Over the course of the last two decades, however, medical anthropology has resoundingly joined the anthropological mainstream. Medical anthropologists are increasingly rejecting the role of being an adjunct to the healing arts in favor of using questions of health, illness, and treatment as points of entry into the understanding of human thought and behavior.

All medical encounters, no matter how mundane, are dramatic episodes. The protagonists, often without conscious thought, play out their respective roles of patient and healer according to their society’s expectations. In some cultures, the dramatic aspect of healing is overt. Performers’ costumes can add to the specialness of a healing encounter, ranging from obviously theatrical dress to a medical white coat, or a stethoscope around the healer’s neck. Foods may be forbidden or necessary; odors of perfumes and flowers or the medicinal fumes of herbs or antiseptics may be used; sounds may be hushed, seductive, triumphant, mechanical. The treatment of the patient may be judged as a scientific procedure, appropriate or lacking, or as an art form whose elements are all working toward a specific end.



In this book we discuss the music, movement, players, audience, props, plots, comedy, poetry and dialogue that constitute the performance of healing. We speak about views of the self and its components, the use of healing sounds, and the messages, both spoken and silent, conveyed in these performances. The approaches to the performance of healing represented in this volume emerge from the convergence of several theoretical orientations which have reinvigorated research in medical anthropology. These include performance and practice, experience and embodiment. Each of the articles traces a slightly different theoretical lineage, but all share a concern for the notion of healing as performance: as purposive, contextually-situated interaction; as multimedia communication and metacommunicative or “framed” enactment; as historically contingent evocation fusing past traditions and memories with present circumstances and problems; as emotionally, sensuously and imaginatively engaging; as reflective and transformative.

The essays which make up this book are generally concerned with rituals and other performative genres of locally recognized significance that Singer collectively termed “cultural performances” (1955, 1968), while focusing in particular on those which concern culturally-constructed expressions of illness and health (Kleinman 1980; Good 1977). Our authors partake of what Schieffelin (this volume) characterizes as a theoretical “shift from viewing such enactments primarily in terms of structures of representation to seeing them also as processes of practice and performance.”

Victor Turner and other symbolic and interpretive anthropologists writing in the 1960s sensitized the field of anthropology to the representative power of key symbols in ceremonies. Indeed, Turner’s recognition of properties such as the multivocality and polyvalence of symbols prompted such later developments as the re-evaluation of aspects of ambiguity in the imagery of healing performances (Turner 1967; Laderman 1987, this volume; Desjarlais, this volume). The attention of symbolic anthropologists to the meanings of symbols in context, and their analyses of the social repositioning enabled by the ceremonial enactment of symbols, set the stage for what Csordas (this volume) identifies as one of the four streams of research which have converged “to define the contours of the theory of performance adequate to the questions raised by healing.” This first stream, the “cultural-performance approach of interpretive anthropology,” formulates performance as an active event, rather than merely an arena for reflective representation. The other three are the performance-centered approach from sociolinguistics, the performance-utterance approach which spans the first two, and the rhetorical-persuasive approach developed in the study of therapeutic processes. The first formulates performance as event, the second as genre, the third as act, and the fourth as rhetoric. The power of the performance is a heightened intensity of communication, an enhancement of experience.

The performance-centered approach in sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, and folklore drew attention from text to context, from language as a cognitive system to language use in social interaction, from author to speech community. The insights of Jakobson (1960, 1968) into the multimedia nature of communication and the multifunctionality of signs encouraged a new theoretical orientation toward the subtle interrelationships between aesthetic form, function, meaning, and context. A sign might figure in several communicative functions, keeping a channel open while clarifying comprehension. Jakobson's analyses of the foregrounding of form inspired attention to the manipulation of formal or stylistic patterns in verbal arts (Bauman 1984 [1977]; Tedlock 1972, 1983). Bateson (1936, 1972 [1955]) and Goffman (1974) also contributed to the awareness of the metacommunicative acts whereby performance in ritual and everyday life is "framed" or "keyed."

These developments converged in the "ethnography of communication." Recognizing that communicative competence assumes different forms in different settings, the concept of "genre" was invoked to comprehend relations between formal features, thematic domains, and potential social usages in the analysis of situated events (Hymes 1981 [1975]; Ben-Amos 1976 [1969]; Briggs 1988). This perspective problematized the relationship between text and context: texts were not merely inserted into (or easily extractable from) contexts; rather text and context were mutually constitutive of the domain of performance defined as a communicative mode (Bauman 1984 [1977]; Bauman and Briggs 1990). These insights were variably applied, refined, and reconstituted in the discourse-centered approach to language and culture (Sherzer 1983; Urban 1991), ethnopoetics (Tedlock 1983), studies of narrative structure and experience (R. Rosaldo 1980), explorations of the politics of language use (Brenneis and Myers 1984; Duranti 1994), and by others in ways too numerous to mention here.

That text and context are mutually constitutive in performance highlights the active, emergent quality of these events. Indeed, the performative aspect of performance, the extent to which it does not merely refer to or talk about but *does something* in the world, is fundamental to our comprehension of transformative movements from illness to health, from initiate to ritual practitioners, from past to present. Malinowski's investigation into the magical power of words (1965), Austin's examination of the illocutionary or performative aspects of language use (1962), theater studies of the construction of "reality" from "illusion" (Schechner 1985), and Tambiah's exploration of the performative and transformative power of verbal and non-performative effectiveness (1970, 1985 [1977]) were all central to the absorption of the trope of "performance" into medical anthropology. It is in this context that the essays in this volume were brought together.

Reading through these essays, we cannot escape the idea that if healing is to be effective or successful, the senses must be engaged. Think of the belief, common to many mystical philosophies, that the way to the soul is through the senses. Is the way to health also through the senses? Are people simultaneously moved artistically, psychologically and physiologically? Are there specific connections between particular kinds of aesthetic activity in the shaman's performance and the patient's experience of it? Are practitioners who are themselves strongly moved by music, singing, dancing, and language better able to perform as healers? If a patient is unmoved, will the illness be more difficult to treat? Are successful healers psychologically different from other people within their culture? Is what was known in Western culture (before widespread antibiotic therapy) as "the bedside manner" a comment on the satisfactory performance of a healer, whose style of interaction with a patient was understood as contributing to a cure?

As they address these questions, the essays in this volume contribute to, and benefit from, a growing engagement in the field of anthropology with issues of embodiment, experience, sensation, and imagination. Victor Turner's investigation of what he called the condensation of the "ideological" and the "physiological" poles to symbols could be seen as an early formulation of the concern for embodiment (1968). It was here, in the ability of the symbol to bring lofty ideological concepts into resonance with bodily or "gut" processes, that Turner located the transformative power of symbols. By arguing that "techniques of the body" are cultural categories literally taken on or embodied in social interaction, Mauss's concept of the *habitus*, as adopted by Bourdieu in his theory of practice, undermines both the primordial nature of Turner's "sensory" pole, and the clearcut distinction between the sensory and the ideological (Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Mauss 1979; Kratz 1994).

Medical anthropology itself, in concert with psychological anthropology, has been instrumental in furthering the paradigm of embodiment. Investigations into the cultural construction of illness and health necessitated a re-examination of theoretical constructs distinguishing mind, body, and spirit; person, self, and society; cognition and emotion (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987; Csordas 1990; M. Rosaldo 1980; Lutz 1988). Feminist theory, becoming successively bolder in its investigatory categories, also prompted a progression in focus from "kinship" to "gender" to "the body." Reminding us that the *political* is bodily inscribed and experienced in the *personal*, feminist theory legitimated the turn from disembodied, decontextualized words ("phallogocentric") to embodied utterances and gestures of emotion as they accomplish social jockeying. Butler's concept of "gender performativity" (1993) brings performance and feminist theory together, as she examines the constitution of the gendered subject through performative acts embedded in chains of social and historical conventions.

Aesthetic anthropology, through its focus on music, dance, fragrance, and shape, recognizes the symbolic importance of sensuous forms like sounds, movement, odor, and color in performativity. Ethnomusicologists and dance ethnologists were forced to improvise theoretical and methodological approaches to these dimensions of expression and experience, given the relative lack of attention paid to them by mainstream anthropologists. Paying particular attention to nonverbal aspects of cultural action, musical and dance ethnographies have tilted cultural studies in interesting directions and helped refocus the anthropological antennae on the body, sentiment and sensation (Feld 1990 [1982]; Roseman 1991; Ness 1992; Qureshi 1986; Spencer 1985; Royce 1977). These researchers, along with their cohorts in the “anthropology of the senses” (Howes 1992; Stoller 1989), have contributed theoretical and methodological sophistication to the study of healing performances (McAllester 1954; Bahr and Haefer 1978; Roseman 1990; Laderman 1991; Robertson i. p.) Investigating avenues such as how the concept of “performative” shifts when refracted through non-verbal forms, anthropologists of the arts and the senses have generated new insights into the transformative powers of dramatic pacing, fusions and interactions, the poetics of form, and the forging of meaning (Feld and Fox 1994; Kratz 1994).

These issues and orientations percolate through the chapters in this volume; the authors simultaneously push on the performance frame and the boundaries of medical anthropology as they investigate particular healing performances. Questions of efficacy are resituated in relation to issues of embodiment, sensation, imagination, and experience.

Laurel Kendall, in her poignant essay, “Initiating Performance: The Story of Chini, A Korean Shaman,” traces the attempts of a young Korean woman to become a shaman. Kendall warns that a simplistic application of performance theory would only “lead us to an appreciation of how drum beats, costumes, dance, and the recognizable theatrical business of particular spirits—the fan over Princess Hogu’s face, the pouring of wine for a drunkard father—are implicated in the construction of a successful *kut*, a *kut* that becomes compelling for its universe of participants.” The initiatory spirit seance or *kut* during which Chini’s “gates of speech” momentarily opened was effective not merely by virtue of manipulation of these multiple media, but through the action of these forms as dramatic resources linking her with her family and ancestral past. Chini’s pain and affliction are understood and resolved by engaging family history.

Most of the essays in this volume take for granted that the healer has achieved proficiency in performance of the art, and do not discuss how healers are initiated or how they must behave in order to keep their patients and reputations. Kendall, however, helps us begin to understand the challenge of shamanistic ini-

tiation and the reasons why many of those who would like to attain this role will instead continue their lives in poverty and misery.

Korean shamans are usually women who have had signs that the spirits are calling them to the profession, such as sickness, bad luck, poverty, bad marriages, men harming and neglecting them. But learning to be a shaman is very difficult. Chini does not succeed because she fails to act like a shaman: she cannot clear her mind and open herself to feelings, losing herself in performance. For Chini to be successful, her words must go beyond the formulaic. She fails because she is self-conscious and inhibited: She lacks the ability to perform.

What kinds of skills are necessary for a performer-healer to command in order to be accepted in that role? Kendall's story of the failed Korean student shows us how demanding the shaman's role can be, while Edward Schieffelin's account of two competing Kaluli healers, "On Failure and Performance," reminds us that the "bedside manner" must forever be renewed if a healer is to keep his clientele. Schieffelin, like Kendall, uses the conceit of a failed performance to highlight, through its imperfections, how the event "works." Schieffelin asks: "What is involved in the performative creation of presence, verisimilitude, and social effectiveness—and how is this involved in the social construction of reality?" He approaches his answer through the analysis of an ethnographic example, asking specifically: "How is spirit presence created and convincingly sustained and how are curative or predictive powers effected?"

Aiba and Walia, the two Kaluli shamans in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea who appear in Schieffelin's essay, are both accepted healers, but the respect they are accorded by patients and audience depends strongly upon the evaluation of their current performances. Aiba's audience suspected him of "performing" (or pretending), when he should have been opening a path for true spirit voices to sing. His repeated attempts to regain credibility were more and more firmly rebuffed by his audience, who encouraged Walia to take on the evening's major shamanistic role and essentially excluded Aiba from the seance.

The loosely structured and dialogic Kaluli spirit seance directs our attention to "strategic and interactional aspects of performativity," sometimes overshadowed when ceremonial enactments are determined by (or analytic precedence is given to) their form. Aiba failed to successfully employ Kaluli dramatic conventions that might have created mutual participation and group synchrony; in his insensitivity to the rhythms of the other participants, he failed to establish the audience engagement that would lend *him* credibility and the *performance* reality. Although he is accused of being a performer, his audience is really accusing him of being a bad performer, an inexperienced showman who mimics the spirits' voices and doesn't really attain a state of trance. Calling a seance a "performance," meaning pretense, judges the reality of ritual situations. Is the spirit the performer, or is the shaman?

A favorite question often asked of medical anthropologists is “How effective are these treatments?” The question of medical efficacy is more complex than it may seem, since beyond any discussion of pharmacology or the placebo effect, further questions must be asked, such as “Who are the recipients of the treatment?” This may seem like a peculiar inquiry to Americans who find an instant connection between the patient and the treatment, but becomes a perfectly reasonable question to an anthropologist attempting to understand why some seemingly minor problems demand a ritual performance while others do not.

It is problematic to insist that our own categories and standards constitute an unquestioned universal given. Even so, it has become increasingly evident that some healing rituals whose aims are improvement in the health or happiness of particular patients can be judged by standards of Western psychotherapies as producing significant observable results. These rituals do more than merely label sicknesses, manipulate these labels, and apply new labels such as “cured” or “well” to the patient’s condition. Hypotheses regarding the mechanisms responsible for results of ritual curing have clustered around two levels of human functioning: the psychological and the neurobiological.

Although scientific studies of medical treatments cannot be accepted as valid unless they demonstrate greater efficacy than that achieved by placebos, the placebo effect, which can trigger the body’s ability to heal itself, is nevertheless one of the most powerful tools in any healer’s armamentarium. Placebos are used by contemporary Western physicians for such purposes as controlling postoperative pain, relieving anxiety, curing warts and ameliorating peptic ulcers (and, we must not forget, placebos may also cause unexpected and negative reactions). The placebo effect is not necessarily limited to the administration of substances, but may also include words and actions, such as occur in a shamanistic seance or a Western physician’s diagnosis. The healer, in engaging the mind and affecting the emotions of his patient, might also initiate physiological repair.

For healing to take place in this manner, aesthetic distance must be achieved—the balance point must be established between feeling painful emotions that have been repressed in the past and reliving these feelings from a point of safety in the present. The healing effects of performance are, on one level, caused by the catharsis that can occur when a patient’s unresolved emotional distress is reawakened and confronted in a dramatic context. Techniques of aesthetic distancing often rely upon a willing suspension of disbelief, and combine experiences of pleasure and pain, as evidenced by the interweaving of awesome scenes with comic episodes that not only relieve tension but also provide critical comments about status, class, religion, politics, and relations between the sexes.

A growing number of scientists—from biochemists and pharmacologists to psychiatrists and anthropologists—have speculated that another key to the heal-

er's success may be found in the biochemistry of endorphins, endogenous morphine-like substances that act on the nervous system and are generated in the human brain in response to pain, stress, or certain kinds of peak experience. Given the proper cues, the brain may also generate other endogenous chemicals, as effective as Librium or Valium in their tranquillizing effects. Interestingly, it is usually the patients (and the shaman) who attain trance, while the audience, hearing the same music and chanting, and feeling the vibrations of the shaman's hands beating on the floor where they are also seated, enjoy the experience in full command of their conscious minds, not subject to the biochemical changes taking place in the principal actors.

Thomas Csordas tackles the issue of how healing performances work by conducting an in-depth examination of patients' engagement with the Catholic Charismatic healing process. He situates the approach taken in his article, "Imaginal Performance and Memory in Ritual Healing," within a review of prior variants of performance theory, outlining both their contributions and shortcomings. Csordas demonstrates how performance-oriented approaches can be enriched by theories of experience and embodiment, imagination and memory, self and other. Using a combination of ethnographic techniques, including patients' introspective reports, Csordas investigates how participants in religious healing become existentially engaged in the healing process. Grasping the "experiential specificity of participants," he argues, subverts the researcher's need to leap from action to interpretation. Rather, "performance thus invites us—though we do not yet always accept the invitation—to go beyond the sequence of action and the organization of text to the phenomenology of healing and being healed."

Csordas locates performative transformation in "imaginal performance"; sequences of imagery are not merely elements in a healing performance, but performances in their own right. They do not represent phenomena, they *are* phenomena. Working with a charismatic healer, a patient uses her imagination to place people who have hurt her in the past into a Eucharistic cup, then offers them to the deity. The desired effect is "growing up" and "coming to know who I am in Christ," enacted in the merging of adult and childhood selves in the divine embrace. The result is not just a metaphor but a feeling, as in the case of a patient who commented, "I felt their heart in mine."

Bringing personal experience into relation with symbolism, and memories of past traumas into the imaginal experience of divine embrace effects autobiographical transformations. These contingent and emergent aspects of imaginal performance—like the cries of the Songhay violin fusing past and present, an archetypal personality animating a patient in a Malay spirit seance, or a Kaluli spirit singing through a medium—are grounded in embodiment. "For

Charismatics, efficacious healing is predicated not only on a cultural legitimacy that says healing is possible, but on an existential immediacy that constitutes healing as real.”

Grounding images in the body enacts a geography of healing. Metaphor ceases to be merely a referential trope, but becomes performative in the sense of motion suggested by Fernandez (1986). The polysemous overlay of terrestrial and body parts in Malay seances, the images of places uttered by Yolmo shamans, the places mentioned in Kaluli songs and those of a group discussed below, the Temiar, recalling relations between people and remembered occurrences, create a participatory poetics engaging bodies and selves, capable of effecting therapeutic transformation.

Carol Laderman elaborates on the performative dimensions that constitute healing as *real* in her essay “The Poetics of Healing in Malay Shamanistic Performances.” She traces the links between Malay theories of illness etiology and treatment, and indigenous concepts of self and personality. She demonstrates how Malay spirit seances evoke these understandings of person and personality as dramatic resources in performance. Most illness is believed by Malays to be caused by humoral imbalance and cured by dietary changes, medicines, massages, and the body’s own strength and curative powers. Occasionally, however, the human body becomes imbalanced due to an increase of heat and air brought by spirit attacks, through the loss of *semangat* (universal spirit), or because of the build-up of unexpressed *angin* (Inner Winds which all people carry from birth and which, much like the archetypes discussed by Jung, are responsible for talents and personalities). Some of these problems may be treated by prayers or spells, others may demand a seance. These seances, where through words and rhythms the ritual healer aids the patient in achieving a trance, provide an arena within which the patient can express, through dramatic enactments of archetypal personalities, sentiments and dispositions that are at other times inappropriate. In spirit seances, Malays can periodically heal the need to be “other” than their daily selves.

In his essay “Presence,” on the elaborate healing rites of the Yolmo Sherpa, a Tibetan Buddhist people, Robert Desjarlais argues that shamans change the way a body feels by altering *what* it feels, activating the patient’s senses, altering his sensory grounds, and waking him up. To the Yolmo Buddhists, presence equals health. If the spirit leaves its body, the body feels heavy, the person has bad dreams, suffers from insomnia, and withdraws from social relationships. The patient needs to be reengaged in life, and his shaman must engage in a struggle with malevolent forces. The shaman’s body shakes as he hooks a spirit that appears on the surface of his drum. He drops a “flower” into food that the patient eats and is healed.



Yolmo criteria of efficacy do not rest upon a shaman's statement that life and health have returned, but upon the presence of visceral evidence within the patient that his body *feels* better. Healing takes place not merely within some cognitive domain but also within the reaches of the body. When the spirit returns it feels like a jolt of electricity in the body. The patient's senses and imagination have been activated and his body is rejuvenated.

Desjarlais' sensory interpretation of the effect of the shaman's words or "wild images" in the patient's body adds new dimensions to linguistic meaning. The sensory impact of dramatic media, and their activation in relation to indigenous concepts regarding the constitution of the self, are recurring themes in these essays.

In "Sounds and Things: Pulsations of Power in Songhay," Paul Stoller tunes into the sensuousness of sound, and its power to bring the culturally configured past into a performatively reconfigured present. He reminds us that in Western cultures sound has been spatialized into writing, a visually-based textual analysis which can remove us from the sensory world of taste, smell, hearing, and touch. If such textual analyses are left to stand alone for the event, they limit our understanding of cultural sentiment. Stoller's essay thus enters into debates on textual form, content, and meaning that permeate this volume.

Many Songhay villages have possession troupes, loosely organized groups of men and women headed by a possession priest who produces ceremonies like an impresario of a theatrical company. Most healing in possession ceremonies is social healing, featuring offerings to the spirits for a good rainy season or harvest, but some infirmities, such as infertility and paralysis, must be treated by spirits. Stoller's analysis of Songhay incantations focuses upon the sound of words and instruments: the cries of music are the voices of ancestors filled with power of the past. The sounds of violins, drums, and praise-names are not directly implicated in healing acts, but by activating the ancestral past within the present, they effect the fusing of the worlds necessary for a Songhay medium to speak the words of spirits to the human community.

These sounds, acoustically shaped and weighted with cultural significance, bring collective memories into confluence with present circumstances. They point us toward a strategic aspect of performativity that each of the essays in this volume explores: the contingency or historicity of performance. Contingency is one of eight determinative issues in performance theory that Schieffelin (this volume) delineates: performance is of the moment, articulating cultural symbols and ritual genres at that particular time and submitting them to particular circumstances. Performance "works" when it encompasses the particular occasion.

Can features of healing ceremonies that lack semantic content afford insight into ritual processes? Charles Briggs in "The Meaning of Nonsense, the Poetics of Embodiment, and the Production of Power in Warao Healing" considers both

meaningful and “non-sense” elements, movement and touch, vital in effecting a cure. Shamanistic discourse provides an auditory tracking of the production, embodiment, and externalization of complex forms of subjectivity by shamans. The rattles used by the Warao shaman contribute to the ceremony through their variations in tempo and loudness, relationship to singing, and distance from patient’s body. Rattles also embody the shaman’s dual existence in earth and in the spirit world. Quartz crystals within the rattles ignite tiny wood shavings, providing visual evidence that spirit power is being unleashed.

Warao conceive of illness in pneumatic terms, as pathogenic odor, wind, or air, with physical as well as intangible, invisible attributes. The dominant model for healing is displacement of fetid odorous air by healthy sweet air. The shaman can discern the size and hardness of spirits and feel the movement and heat of a spirit’s breath. Vocables uttered by the shaman “provide a running indicator of the complex interaction of spiritual entities” taking place in his body. Sounds, not meaningful as human words, are meaningful as signs of what is occurring in the rite, providing ways of understanding overlapping subjectivities and interpenetrating selves, as helping spirits and illness agents move through the shaman. Briggs’ close examination of the details of a Warao healing performance, rather than obscuring its purpose, demonstrates how power and agency, social leveling and social differentiation are accomplished. Through his analysis, Briggs shows us the true sense of “nonsense.”

Briggs’ ethnographic example reminds us that “curing is not just ‘about’ making people well—it also forms a crucial means of (re)producing relations of power.” Marina Roseman’s article, “‘Pure Products Go Crazy’: Rainforest Healing in a Nation-state,” investigates relations of power between Temiar “forest people” and “out-foresters” as they are mediated in healing ceremonies. Temiars employ healing ceremonies, traditionally a site for situating themselves in relation to the forest and to one another, to situate themselves as members of the now independent Malaysian nation. Roseman demonstrates how a healing performance directed toward a particular infant also enacts preventive and therapeutic social healing for a social group traumatized by their encounters with deforestation, Islamic religious evangelism, and the transformation of their economy from generalized reciprocity to mercantile and capitalist systems of exchange. Increasingly disempowered by loss of land and resources, Temiars appropriate the power of foreign peoples and commodities for their own purposes in spirit ceremonies.

In the culturally demarcated zone of the healing performance, a Temiar medium embodies the emergent concept of the “State of Kelantan,” combining sounds, shapes, and performance formats traditionally employed by these people of the forest with those associated with the culturally diverse populations of

Kelantan, including Chinese Buddhists, Malay Muslims, and Tamil Hindus. Competing social voices are ceremonially interwoven in a multiplicity of sensory modalities. The Temiar medium draws upon the multidimensional "Spirit of the State of Kelantan" to counteract the effects of living in a multicultural world in which "pure products have gone crazy."

What are the goals of the healer's performance? We have seen that the primary goal is not always the cure of a patient. Can a treatment be considered successful if the patient nevertheless dies? Janet Hoskins, in her essay "From Diagnosis to Performance: Medical Practice and the Politics of Exchange in Kodi, West Sumba," deals with these questions through her study of diagnostic decisions that lead toward or away from performance and the moral consequences of these decisions.

The seriousness of illness or injury, judged in Western biomedical terms, is not as important to Sumbanese people as is its location of occurrence and cause. Hoskins analyzes three cases: the first, gonorrhea in a young man, was considered the result of pollution whose treatment did not require a public ritual; the second, a young woman's fall, resulting in a very minor injury which, however, was interpreted as a sign of social troubles below the surface, caused by an angry ancestral spirit; and the third, a ritual healing ceremony for an old man with a terminal case of mouth cancer. His rite was not held to release him from his coming death; rather, it released his children from their otherwise inevitable early deaths and repaired relations between in-laws. Kodi healing performances may "heal the group" at the expense of the individual; they force us to expand the definition of "cure" from its narrower sense of restoring a victim to health, to the larger goal of repairing social relations.

Like Kendall, Hoskins warns against an analysis of performance that might examine dramatic details but miss the overall purpose of the event. The trappings of elaborate performance, she cautions, may confuse certain issues of substance. "Singers, dancers, and orators are summoned to repeat and reiterate points in a complicated visual and auditory experience intended to dissolve difference into consensus. Moral unity becomes the unity of audience, the shared sensory stimulus, and the evocative dramatic presentation. It is through this aesthetic impact of performance that the group is recreated and reconstituted, often over the body of the patient and without much hope of alleviating his suffering."

Hoskins shows us that for Sumbanese, a treatment that ends with a patient's death may still be thought of as successful and satisfying. Would this judgment seem truly bizarre to contemporary Americans, or are there circumstances under which the performance of healing in America becomes a necessary performance of death?

How do Americans (specifically Texans) judge doctors who, by assisting patients in the performance of death, take the role of Charon, ferryman of the

ancient Greek dead? In Megan Biese's and Robbie Davis-Floyd's essay, "Dying as Medical Performance: The Oncologist as Charon," they discuss how an oncologist's words, dramatically ritualizing and repeating pronouncements of his patient's terminal status, convince the patient that death is imminent, and encourage her to prepare herself rather than attempt healing.

The oncologist termed the task of announcing terminal status a central responsibility—to help the patient to a "good death." He needed to help the patient prepare spiritually and make the best use of her remaining time. Yet simultaneously he was reinforcing the claim of the medical establishment to ritual and symbolic hegemony over the bodily processes of life and death. The patient wavered between embracing either a technocratic model of understanding the body, involving medical control over nature, or a more holistically oriented understanding of the interconnectedness between mind and body. Ultimately, she died at home, cared for by her family. Her doctor's medication, provided to hasten death, remained unused. If death is "the final stage of growth," as prescribed by the holistic model of health, there may be some reason for not hurrying the process. "A good death" was reached through the family's participation in an egalitarian conversational context.

This death in Texas is compared to rituals in Africa among the !Kung (Bushmen). For the !Kung, healing and religion are inextricably linked in altered-state performance. Life and death are in hands of God. Healers are not paid or set above others; healing energy only multiplies by being shared. Healers do not announce terminality; they always affirm life and hope. American doctors have a harder task than !Kung healers; they incur personal responsibility as part of their healing mission. Their attitudes toward dying are embedded within Cartesian rationalism and a belief in human potential to control nature and fate. Of course, both !Kung and American beliefs are cultural constructs. Dying is a cultural performance.

Medical systems need to be understood from within, as experienced by healers, patients, and others whose minds and hearts have both become involved in this important human undertaking. We live in a world increasingly aware of the need to address differences theoretically and in applied dimensions such as health-care governance and service. This volume, addressed to members of the medical, psychiatric, and psychological professions, as well as the anthropological and performance-oriented, joins other essays and voices in a call to understanding concepts and textures embodied in different ways of healing. We hope that these articles on the performance of healing in societies ranging from rainforest horticulturalists to dwellers in the American megalopolis will touch our readers' senses as well as their intellects.

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# 1

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## INITIATING PERFORMANCE

### *The Story of Chini, a Korean Shaman*

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Laurel Kendall

**Kendall:** They say a shaman's initiation is the most difficult ritual of all.

**Young Shaman:** It's hard on the disciple and hard on the teacher. The spirits keep coming in and going out again, and hiding themselves, and then restless ancestors come in and interfere with things.

**Experienced Shaman:** If it goes well, the initiate speaks the true words of the spirits. A lot of customers come and they all receive remarkable divinations, that sort of thing, proof that the initiate has really become a shaman. If she fails, then no one takes her seriously.

## PROLOGUE

The three shamans meet again in Chini's dank little rented room on the day before her *kut*, filling their student's cramped quarters with drums and cymbals, cheap vinyl suitcases bulging with the gods' costumes, and the flurry of their preparations. Chini's pitiful accommodations, like her emaciated figure, attest to the hardship of one who is destined to serve the spirits. The three shamans claim to know this well; the tribulations of the calling are their common history. Still, one must stretch the imagination to find in these robust and



forthright matrons any trace of a woman like Chini, thin and timid, pale at the prospect of performing a *kut* to claim the gods' authority as her own.

They had taken Chini, in the late spring, to the public shrine on K'amak Mountain for her initiation ritual (*naerim kut*)<sup>1</sup> but the initiate was reticent and the gods stubborn. The shamans, as they told me months later, hit the drum throughout the night while the initiate stood mute. They hit the drum until four o'clock in the morning before Chini began to shout out the names of her gods, the eleven gods whose painted images she has since installed in a narrow shrine against the far wall of her tiny room.<sup>2</sup> That she had even managed this much was the final proof: the gods have chosen Chini. They had caused her the past ten years of bitter suffering, and now offered resolution in her initiation as a shaman. But Chini's words on the mountain had not been enough. Her "gates of speech" (*malmun*) had not opened to pour out inspired oracles (*kongsu*). She lacked sufficient inspiration to prognosticate for her clients over a divination tray<sup>3</sup> or while performing at a *kut*. The gods had not yet empowered her to earn her living as a shaman. The first *kut* cleansed Chini of unclean ghosts and ominous forces. Now in the fall, this second *kut* would call in the gods and urge them to make Chini into a successful shaman.<sup>4</sup> To become a shaman, she must find it in herself to perform as one.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s and 1970s, avant-garde theater attempted to reenchant performance by dipping into ethnography. The actor's experience was described as analogous to possession rituals and shamanistic journeys which evoke imagined truths in the experienced immediacy of performance, thereby making them "real." Actors were encouraged to see themselves as shamans (Cole 1975; Kirby 1983 [1975]). Ironically, performance is precisely what Chini, a destined shaman by the classic standards of her own society, found to be so difficult. An initiation *kut*, like all other *kut*, is a healing ritual aimed at securing auspicious consequences—health, prosperity, harmony—by winning the favor of the gods and assuaging the grief and longing of the dead. These aspirations are given tangible form when a shaman, in appropriate costume, invokes the spirits in their proper sequence and manifests them through song, dance, mime, comic banter, and oracles. For an initiation *kut* to be judged successful, the initiate must also be able to do this, and at her first *kut*, Chini had failed miserably.

This is the story of Chini's second initiation *kut*, held in the fall of 1989 to open her gates of speech in the presence of three members of her family, an anthropologist (myself), and an ethnographic filmmaker (Diana Lee) with crew

(Kim Asch). Through Chini's story, it is also an exploration of the delicate balance between theatricality and inspiration as shamans work with the initiate and her family to construct compelling idioms of past misfortune and future power, and to perform them into being. Finally because Chini's second initiation was again judged insufficient, her story confounds the ethnographic near-certainty of formulaic passage rites, the near-inevitability of ritual processes which by their own internal dynamic transform mere mortals into shamans and healers.

There is irony in Western theater's having sought its reflection in ethnography before anthropology was prepared to confront the subjects of its own musings in theater. The recognition that ritual is essentially performance is not new to anthropology. Waldemar Bogoras's turn-of-the-century account of a Chukchi shaman's seance, a masterpiece of ethnographic description, is attuned to the beats of the drum, to how the shaman modifies his voice as he chants, to the spectators' shouts and then the cries and whispers of the spirits as they enter the room (Bogoras 1907). Eliade's (1970) opus is riddled with dramatic portrayals of shamanic soul quests and netherworldly journeys. Michel Leiris described the "theatrical" possession rituals of the Ethiopians of Gondar ([1958] cited in Cole 1975), and Raymond Firth (1967) the "dramatic elements" in performances by Malay spirit mediums. The Human Relations Area Files offer numerous descriptions of shaman rituals replete with such "theatrical" business as impersonation, pantomime, dialogue, sound effects, costumes, and lighting (Charles 1953). My point is not that the dramatic element of shaman rituals went unrecorded, but that it was so seldom pursued. Little more than a decade ago, John Beattie (1977) could claim that ethnographers had generally neglected the learned and performed quality of spirit possession.

The shaman as actor has been an uncomfortable notion for a relativistic social science. Our students inevitably ask us if we "believe" in the powers of the shamans we have studied, or if the spirits were "really" there. The question discomfits insofar as it implies, on the one hand, that the ethnographer follows Castaneda's (1968) leap beyond the pale of professional credulity, or on the other, that acknowledgements of simulation make charlatans of one's informants. We bear the burden of Euro-American conventions in which, as Richard Schechner reminds us, "'acting' means make-believe, illusion, lying. . . . In America we say someone is 'only acting' when we detect the seams between the performance and the nonacting surround" (Schechner 1982:63). Bogoras knew that many Chukchi recognized the ventriloquistic feats and sleights-of-hand that enhanced a shaman's performance, but he attributed this knowledge to a skepticism born of acculturation. He did not ponder how Chukchi cognizance of, in his words, "deceit," "liars," and "fraud" might yet be reconciled to his informants' perception of the performances as "wonderful" (Bogoras 1907:429).

Lévi-Strauss (1963) gave us the parable of Quesalid, the Kwakiutl shaman who was not so much a great shaman because he was able to cure, as he was able to cure because he was a great shaman, a fine performer. The story highlights our (and initially Quesalid's) equation of theatricality with falsehood, and then subverts it. Quesalid, the cynic who apprenticed himself as a shaman to expose the tricks of the trade, discovers that his sleight-of-hand cures more effectively than the tricks of a rival shaman. In that realization, conveyed from the Kwakiutl shaman to the discipline of anthropology, lies the knowledge of the power of performance, but the parable of Quesalid still separates artful illusion from the truth claims of the ritual text.

It remained for avant-garde theater to insist that elemental drama was something more than the imitation of a reality that existed elsewhere (Brecht 1964 [1957]; Brook 1968; Cole 1975), and to seek in ritual and in ritual dramas a revitalized knowledge of compelling performance (Artaud 1958; Kirby 1983 [1975]; Schechner 1982, 1985; Schechner and Schuman 1977). It remained for anthropology, infected in at least one instance by association with the avant-garde, to blur the distinction between theatrical artifice and ritual process (Turner 1982)<sup>5</sup> and to view ritual as more than the sum of its structure and symbols, as an enacted realization of personal and collective knowledge (Atkinson 1989; Crapanzano 1977; Schieffelin 1985; Tambiah 1977, 1979, and for Korea, Choi 1989; Kendall 1985:Ch. 1; Kim 1989). Enactment implies a broad range of knowledge and skill. Following the influential work of Bruce Kapferer (1983), a number of studies, including several in this volume, trace the realization of efficacious enactments through the complex and varied media of performance (Boddy 1989; Kapferer 1983; Laderman 1988, 1991; Roseman 1988, 1990, 1991). But if music, song, dance, drama, and mime are inextricable from the texts of ritual, it follows that the skilled performances of shamans, mediums, and accompanying musicians are also intrinsic to the efficacy of the event, however "efficacy" might be emically rendered (Atkinson 1989:93, 218; Briggs this volume; Boddy 1989:134; Golomb 1985:81; Laderman this volume; Lambek 1988). We begin to find, here and there, accounts of those who are poor performers and consequently failed shamans (Choi 1987:164; Laderman 1988: 299, n.d.; Shieffelin n. d.; Obeyesekere 1977:289). The road leads circuitously back to Quesalid and his Chuckchi cousins, to an acceptance of artistry as an attribute of healing power, and on to Korea, to Chini, feeling neither skilled nor yet sufficiently empowered. Her three shaman teachers would struggle to construct for her a world in which the promise and burden of her calling might at last be made manifest.

It would be tempting to call Chini's story a "case study," but this scientifically respectable trope obscures the project at hand. A case study would necessarily

focus on Chini as “patient,” “victim,” or “afflicted” and cast the authorial voice as analyst, recounting her “problem” and its resolution. As a narrative strategy, the case study reduces and simplifies the complex interactions of several family members, shamans, gods, and ancestors brought into play by a ritual as rich and complex as a Korean *kut*. Moreover, the “case” implies closure, however ambiguous, while the shaman’s initiation represents only an early chapter in the longer story of a shaman career. Chini’s story, and its realization in the performance of her *kut*, comes to us linked with other stories; stories from her family who see Chini’s calling as tied to their own troubled history, and from the shamans who find resonances with their own experience. In the text that follows, as in the ethnographic film that Diana Lee and I produced, these several voices—of Chini, the members of her family, the three shamans, the anthropologist, and the spirits—speak in, through, and about the performance of Chini’s initiation *kut*, sometimes assessing the action in a monologue, sometimes creating it in the heteroglossia of an unfolding performance (Lee and Kendall 1991).

## KOREAN SHAMANS

In Korea, shamans (*mudang*, *mansin*) are both born and made: fated from birth to suffer until they acknowledge and accept their destiny, initiated, and then trained by a senior shaman to perform *kut*, less elaborate rituals, and divinations. Korean shamans draw legitimacy from personal histories of affliction, constructed as evidence of a calling (Kendall 1988), but they become great shamans through their command of ritual knowledge and performance skills acquired during an onerous apprenticeship (Choi 1987). As elsewhere in the ethnographic world,<sup>6</sup> considerable attention has been devoted to the psychodynamics of possession in Korea as recounted in personal histories that culminate in a shaman’s initiation (Harvey 1979, 1981; Kendall 1988; K. Kim 1972; T. Kim 1970, 1972, 1981). I have suggested that Korean shamans are themselves willing participants in the construction of this record. A fortuitous convergence of interest links practitioners of the case-history method—adapted from clinical practice into psychological and medical anthropology—and shamans who create legitimizing autobiographical texts, tales of profound suffering, portentous dreams, and visions, all of which bespeak an inevitable calling (Kendall 1988:16, 63–64). Broad ethnographic treatments of Korean shamans’ practices, including my own ethnography, give bare passing mention to the initiated shaman’s subsequent apprenticeship under the tutelage of her “spirit mother” (*sin ōmōn*) (Ch’oe 1981:81, 129; Harvey 1979:126–127; Hwang 1988:21–24; Kendall 1985:65–69; Kim 1981:451–452). The outstanding exception to this lacuna is Chungmoo Choi’s (1987, 1989)

study of the shaman's competence in performance, a rigorous portrayal of the multifaceted skills of the successful shaman and their realization as both art and power in emotionally compelling performances.<sup>7</sup>

The two motifs, calling and training, intersect during a shaman's initiation when the initiate must perform like a shaman with appropriate chants, dancing, and above all, divine oracles to conjure and convey the inspiration sent by the gods. When her ability to do this is proven, she may begin to receive clients for divinations, build a following, and earn an income as a shaman. At her initiation *kut*, the would-be shaman is the most active agent in her own transformation. By her own performance, she wills the spirits' presence; if she lacks confidence and rudimentary ritual knowledge, if she falters, then she will fail. Not only is she humiliated, she is also burdened with the necessity of sponsoring yet another expensive initiation ritual before she can even begin to earn her living as a shaman. In the words of Chini's spirit mother, the formidable shaman Kim Pongsun, "If the initiation ritual fails, then the initiate has no professional standing as a shaman, she can't divine for clients. No food, no money, an empty belly, illness, she has to go through all that again."<sup>8</sup>

Chini was in precarious circumstances as she faced her second *kut*, since she had already fallen into debt to finance the two rituals. Kim Pongsun explained, with great compassion, "Chini's all alone in the world. She has a parent and an older sister, but there really isn't anyone who can help her make her way. So we'll make a great shaman out of her . . . this time we'll do another *kut* and she'll have more self-confidence, she'll balance on the knife blades, perform like a shaman. Anyone whom the spirits desire is bound to have hardships. When Chini had her *kut* in the spring, her elder sister gave her the money, and of course she paid for this one, too. But after this, Chini will be a great shaman, then she can make money and pay back her debt."

### CHINI'S STORY

The stakes, for Chini's success at her second *kut*, are best understood in her own words, a tale that reveals how she, and those around her, came to construct her story as that of a destined shaman, a tale she willingly told on camera. I had dreaded the task of interviewing her for the film. In my earlier attempts to solicit Chini's story, always in the company of her spirit mother, Chini's quiet voice was inevitably overtaken by that of the seasoned shaman and veteran informant who poured out her own recounting of Chini's tribulations. We arranged to interview Chini on the eve of her *kut*, choosing a quiet moment when the senior shamans were gone on an errand. Initially, Chini was uncomfortable with the

idea, insisting that she “really didn’t know anything,” displaying an apprentice’s insecurity over her partial knowledge of the tradition, compounded in this instance by the senior shamans’ teasing insistence that the anthropologist bested Chini’s knowledge of the rituals. She nearly giggled with relief at the patent obviousness of my first question, “What are you going to do tomorrow?”

Tomorrow, of course, that’s my initiation *kut*. That’s when you receive the spirits and after that you become a shaman. Ever since I was twenty-three years old, for the last ten years, everything has gone wrong. I’ve been ill and my family too, nothing’s worked out for them. If it were just for my sake, then I wouldn’t go through with it, but my whole family is affected. I have an aunt and a cousin who got to be the way I am now, and when they didn’t accept the spirits and become shamans they lost their minds, they went crazy. Because two people refused the spirits, and because I’ve been struggling with this for so long, one *kut* wouldn’t do it for me. . . . If I’d accepted the spirits when they first claimed me, then everything would have burst out of me and I would have danced like crazy, but now that it’s gone on for so long . . .

Chini’s own story, like the stories of many other shamans, begins with a portentous dream:

I dreamed I was with three friends by a mountain stream. There was a big round rock with a great cavity in the base. . . . I went to see what was hidden there, and when I drew it out it seemed to be some sort of clothing, I didn’t know what kind, a bright, dazzling garment. I put it on, and then right before my eyes, I saw a building that looked like a temple. It was a shaman’s shrine, and that’s how I interpret it now, and the clothing was what the shamans wear. Back then, I had no idea what it was or what sort of clothes those were but just as soon as I put on that splendid garment, I saw the old tile-roofed house. There aren’t many of them left now, are there? It was the sort of house they used to build in Korea during the Chosŏn Dynasty. The dream was so clear and vivid. I haven’t forgotten it, even after all the things that have happened to me since then.

When my teachers, the great shamans, asked me about my most vivid dream . . . [t]hat’s when I realized what it meant. . . . Even after so much time has passed, I remembered everything just as soon as someone asked me, ‘What have you dreamed?’ The clothes . . . that I put on, the old house, I can still picture them although most of my dreams just fade away. When I was twenty-three years old and had that dream, that’s when I should have received the spirits and become a shaman. Instead, a match-maker came by and I was married. My married life was nothing but quarrels and suffering. I couldn’t bear it. I had to leave.

The story of her married life was already well-known to Kim Pongsun, her spirit mother, who elaborated on another occasion:

She was matchmade and married off, but that man did nothing but drink, he did absolutely nothing to provide for his family, just drank. As if that weren't enough, he got himself another woman and fooled around. . . . So she ran away . . . she gave up her children, a boy and a girl, a three-year-old and a six-year-old. She left all that behind.

In Chini's own words:

I made my own way and earned some money, but I'd loan it to someone who'd make off with it, or I'd have to go to the hospital, or to a psychiatric hospital. Even though I had several examinations, they never could find anything wrong with me. Medically speaking, there wasn't anything wrong. But as far as I was concerned, I was always in pain. In the four years since I left married life, what little money I earned was wasted on bad loans and my medical expenses. . . . That's how it is; I haven't the least bit of money to show for all that time and all those hardships. Why, I even tried peddling. There isn't anything I haven't tried to sell—scrub brushes, rice cake, water—I tried them all, but I couldn't make any money at it . . . and my body is as it is. I used to weigh more than 110 pounds, I've lost twenty-two pounds. I used to have a nice full figure [*she gestures the shape of a plump, shapely body and chuckles*].

I was sitting in a tearoom with some friends when a shaman happened by, come from an exorcism or something. As soon as she saw me she said, 'The spirits want to make an apprentice of someone; aren't you the one? If you don't apprentice yourself, you'll have a hard time surmounting your troubles.' And with that she left. After this, I had a lot of different jobs, but never anything that suited me. I had jobs that didn't pay very well and sometimes they even withheld my pay. When I had work, I would sense that someone outside was calling me, I'd feel an urge to rush outside. But of course there wouldn't be anyone there. It was the spirits who were shaking me up. I didn't realize what was happening.

I'd be out looking for work, roaming around and I'd see a shaman's house; you know, they have a flag. Every now and then I'd go in. They'd tell me, [*she gives a portentous ring to her voice*] 'You must receive the spirits before the next year is out. You must. If you refuse, your health will deteriorate even more and you will have even worse luck. You must accept them.'

I went from job to job until I finally got discouraged and went to my sister's house. Just joking, I said, 'It looks like I have no recourse but to become a shaman.' My sister yelled at me, called me a 'crazy woman' [*laughs*] because I, her own little sister, had said such a thing. In Korea, If you become one, it's still considered really base. She hated the idea. 'Crazy

woman, with all your gadding about, must you go that far to make a living?' Since it couldn't be helped, I went out again and forced myself to find work, but they cheated me out of my pay. . . . I went back to my sister's house. My sister said, 'Mother and I talked it over. If the spirits have gotten such a hold on you, then you have to accept them. Could we hold that against you?'

Chini's story follows upon numerous other shaman autobiographies as a tale of inexplicable illness, marital turmoil, and financial reverses, interlaced with a portentous dream and oracles (Ch'oe 1981; Harvey 1979; Kendall 1988; Kim 1981:196–228). The discovery of shamanistic goods hidden away in the mountains (Choi 1987:114, 121–126), the mysterious compulsion to rush out of the workplace (Kim 1981:202), and even the image of the tile-roofed shrine appear in other stories (Ch'oe 1981:66). Like other shamans in other tales, Chini presents herself as dodging and denying the bald evidence of her destiny through years of pain (Harvey 1979; Kendall 1988). Her tale builds to a relentless sense of inevitability when Chini and her family finally acquiesce to the will of the spirits.

But while Chini presents herself as avoiding the obvious, her actions, even as she describes them, suggest her nagging preoccupation with the intimations of a calling. She visits diviners and their response becomes predictable: "You must serve the spirits." "Just joking," she broaches the idea to her sister. The construction of Chini's tale is a collective enterprise with a long gestation, begun in the divination sessions when she tells her story to a shaman and is in turn told its meaning.<sup>10</sup> By the time of her *kut*, Chini's story has also become a part of her spirit mother's repertoire, a story the older shaman tells about Chini as confirmation of the necessity of initiating her, and as one more example of the kind of person who is a destined shaman. While the oral performance of Chini's story—Chini to a shaman, Chini to our camera, Kim Pongsun to her clients, to the anthropologist, and back again to Chini—is an event peripheral to the performance of Chini's initiation *kut*, by its message and its place among a universe of such tales, it is intrinsic to the ritual's realization (Bauman and Briggs 1990).

### FINDING A TEACHER

Between Chini's acceptance of her calling and her first initiation lay a crucial task: finding a shaman who would perform the initiation ritual and train her as a "spirit daughter." "You have to find a good shaman to do the initiation," the old shaman An Hosun insists. "If you meet up with a bad woman—and there certainly are a lot of bad women—if they don't do it right, then the initiate might even lose the force of her inspiration (*myönggi*).



Chini explains how her sister took her to Kwan Myöngnyö, a young shaman with whom she was acquainted, but Kwan Myöngnyö was unwilling to preside at Chini's initiation *kut*.

Kwan Myöngnyö said, 'As soon as you walked in, the General (Changgun) and the Child Gods (Tongja) came right on in after you. Whether I do a divination or not, that's the way it is (the spirits are with you.)' Then she divined and told me that I absolutely had to receive the spirits in the next year. There it was! She said exactly the same thing as the others. Kwan Myöngnyö said, 'I'm just a beginner. I'm going to introduce you to a good, experienced teacher. I'll take you to meet her right now.' And that's how I came to meet my spirit mother Kim Pongsun.

Kwan Myöngnyö is still considered an apprentice "little shaman" (*chagün mudang*) or "disciple" (*cheja*) studying with her "teachers" (*sönsaeng*), Kim Pongsun and An Hosun. An avaricious but still inexperienced shaman might have claimed Chini as her own client and officiated at her initiation, but Kwan Myöngnyö considered this immoral:

Would I go and ruin someone else's life for a few pennies? The truth is, it's pitiful enough when someone is forced to become a shaman. When someone gets in that situation, the only right and proper thing to do is see that they get a good teacher . . . I had so many difficulties starting out, the last thing I wanted was for her to go through what I'd endured.

Kwan Myöngnyö had sponsored four *kut* before she was able to burst out with inspired speech and deliver oracles from the spirits. But without further training she was unable to mount *kut* for her own clients. She explained:

I had a lot of customers for divinations, a steady stream of work, but I couldn't perform *kut*. Even though I had many opportunities for work where I could jump and call up the spirits, I gave it all away to other shamans. Kim Pongsun is the only one [who helped me]. Because I met her, things are working out for me now.

[*The old shaman, An Hosun, assumes a didactic tone.*] That's right. There are rules and procedures (*pöpto*). Now you're learning them one by one, huh? You'll get to know them all by and by because you met the right teacher. You know which spirit this is and which spirit that is, rules and procedures. When you perform it properly, then aren't you a shaman who serves the spirits? You've got to know it all, for all twelve segments of a *kut* the way it's been handed down from the old people, sequence by sequence. You have to learn it all to be a shaman, and it's very difficult to learn.

[*Kwan Myŏngnyŏ turns to the anthropologist for sympathy.*] It's really hard. You learn all that and there are still so many different sorts of things to learn, a lot of different spirits, a lot of rules and procedures . . . They say that if you don't concentrate just so, then it goes right past you. . . . since I met Kim Pongsun, I always write everything down. Me too [like the anthropologist], when I go home at night, I write down everything I've learned during the day and fix it in my mind. But of course, the language of the spirits and the way we humans talk isn't the same thing, is it?

Kwan Myŏngnyŏ and Chini were both initiated at a moment when women were embracing the shaman's profession in unprecedented numbers as a consequence of the loosening of government "anti-superstition" policies in the late 1980s, the rising popular interest in officially designated "National Treasure Shamans" whose rituals are often televised, and an intellectual movement that embraces shamans as the wellspring of the Korean spirit (Choi 1987:Ch. 2; Kim n. d.). When I asked Kwan Myŏngnyŏ about the frequency of initiations, she attributed their popularity to "*massŭ kom*," to mass communications. Hwang Rusi (Lucy Hwang) quotes a shaman who joked that one out of every two *kut* is an initiation (Hwang 1988:19), and religious studies scholar Sun Soon-Hwa cites a popular observation that "in poor districts like Kuro-dong if a woman shivers after urinating, she is initiated" (Sun n. d.:34). Hwang sees in this enthusiasm a dilution of the tradition and faults the numerous recent initiates for performing as they please without having subjected themselves to years of rigorous training at the feet of a spirit mother who has genuine knowledge of the tradition (Hwang 1988:19–21). These complaints are echoed by some of Sun's shaman informants (Sun n. d.:35). Some would-be shamans seem even to practice without the benefit of an initiation *kut*, particularly where their attractiveness or performance skills prompt seasoned shamans to include them in their *kut* (Choi 1987:132; Harvey 1979:191–195).<sup>11</sup> An Hosun's remarks and Kwan Myŏngnyŏ's experience suggest, on the other hand, the vulnerability of the neophyte when a less than maternal "spirit mother" regards her initiation as little more than a passing business transaction (see also Choi 1987:179).

An Hosun and Kwan Myŏngnyŏ, from their different perspectives, affirm that even with a proper teacher the training is grueling. Other apprentices complain that the senior shamans exploit them (Kendall 1985:59, 69–70). Kwan Myŏngnyŏ describes how, once she'd "bounced my way through a *kut*, the senior shamans would take all of the money for themselves." Jealousy among junior shamans, or the ambitions of established shamans who would snatch a promising apprentice, can also fracture the relationship between a spirit mother and spirit daughter (Kendall 1985:71, 1988:116–117; Sun n. d.:67). Some women given up in despair at the harshness of their training (Choi 1987: 130). This was An