

Investigative research towards the designation of  
shamanic village rituals as 'intangible cultural  
properties' of the Seoul Metropolitan Government

Yang Jongsung

# Investigative research towards the designation of shamanic village rituals as ‘intangible cultural properties’ of the Seoul Metropolitan Government

● **Yang Jongsung**

Senior Curator, the National Folk Museum of Korea

## ABSTRACT

Shamanic rituals taking place in Aegissidang, Mount Bonghwa Dodang, and Bamseom Bugundang, were thoroughly investigated by three experts appointed by the Board of Cultural Properties of Seoul Metropolitan Government. This religious belief and its related practices is still carried on by many shamans, religious specialists and their followers with the doctrines being handed down orally rather than in the form of written scriptures. Nonetheless, it is still a struggle to convince many Koreans of the cultural worth of shamanism. Owing to a deeply ingrained and stereotypical definition of what constitute religious doctrines and practices, its value as cultural heritage is often rejected. The Seoul Metropolitan Government and its Board have taken the initiative in designating these rites as ‘intangible cultural properties’ and hope this will lead to a more positive understanding of shamanism as a significant and valuable part of Korean traditional culture.

## Introduction

In this rapidly changing world, all countries wishing to maintain their own national culture must be seriously concerned about the preservation of their intangible heritage. The methods of preserving and protecting intangible heritage are therefore now considered to be of critical importance, with many cultural policy makers and academic researchers increasingly cognisant of the situation and dedicated to preventing the destruction of cultural properties.<sup>1</sup>

In South Korea, Seoul Metropolitan Government’s designation system for intangible cultural property has been operated in accordance with the municipal rules for the protection of cultural property. Individuals, or groups with exclusive talents or skills in specific heritage fields, submit an application form to the Cultural Property Committee of Seoul Metropolitan Government. There, a member of the committee, which is composed of ten members, reviews each application form and decides which proposed subjects are likely to be worth

preserving. After the initial selection process, an expert group of at least three members (including one from the committee) with expertise in the specific field under review, conduct an in-depth investigation into each proposal. This usually involves a month of research in the field. When the municipal government appoints the committee, they consider thoroughly what expertise each member has in the different areas of intangible heritage. The research can therefore be done in a very professional manner in terms of both the content and the time limit. Finally, the appointed members for a specific field will hand in a report to the officer in charge. The report will examine the individual candidate's field from a variety of perspectives - historical and geographical background, oral testimony and an evaluation by the researcher as well as a general introduction to the property, describing how it is carried out and giving profiles of the heritage holders. He or she then brings all the paperwork to the Cultural Property Committee for evaluation. These papers are crucial to the final decision since committee members usually give a significant amount of weight to them. The assessment categories are 'not eligible for designation', 'eligible but some weak points need to be remedied', 'eligible for designation,' and so on. The final decision on every application must be unanimous.

The idea of 'cultural property' was developed by academics and intellectuals at the beginning of the 20th century to protect Korean traditions from the rapid influx of foreign cultures, especially from Europe and America. It is clear that the maintenance of cultural identity is not merely an academic activity but a living process passed down continuously as part of daily life. Thus the phrase 'cultural property' refers not only to historical artefacts but also to future developments.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, cultural policy in Korea has defined 'intangible heritage'

as those cultural assets represented by such things as oral tradition, artistic presentations and ritual customs. Specifically, plays, music, dance, games, rites, martial arts, food and craft techniques with considerable artistic or academic value are all examples of the intangible heritage protected by the Korean government. The process of transmitting this intangible heritage is also very important because the assets are usually passed down from generation to generation, through language or particular types of training. In order to ensure that future generations have a full knowledge of their culture, it is necessary to understand exactly what constitutes cultural heritage.<sup>3</sup> It also means that the next generation must both create and preserve cultural properties.

In Korea, 'important intangible heritage' comes under the rubric of state-designated heritage, which is designated by an appointed official of the Cultural Heritage Administration, and 'intangible heritage' is heritage that is designated locally by the mayor of a city or the governor of a province. These two different terms are used to differentiate between state-designated heritage and city/province-designated heritage. This research paper is about shamanic rituals (*gut*), a type of intangible heritage designated by the Seoul Municipal Government, one of Korea's provincial ministries. Three village rituals have been chosen for discussion: the Bonhwasan *Dodang-Gut*, generated from a mountain culture, the Bamseom *Dodang-Gut*, generated from the cultural region of the Han River, the main natural resource for the citizens of Seoul, and the Aegissi *Dang-Gut* generated from the urban environment of Seoul, which differs widely from agricultural, mountain, or riverside culture. At the outset of the research project, these three rituals were specially selected by designated government officials as representative of the rituals of the Seoul metropolitan area.

The three case studies used in this paper were initially forwarded to the author – a specialist in Korean shamanism - via the officer in charge of designating Seoul’s municipal intangible cultural property. The author carried out a month-long investigation of these rituals with two other investigators, from August 1st - 31st, 2004. As a result of this research, the three investigators submitted a report to the Cultural Property Committee of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. The research methods were literary research, research into relevant material, interviewing and fieldwork. The author had himself previously conducted extensive academic research and fieldwork, over a long period, into the practice of shamanism in the Seoul area. In particular, representative examples of Seoul’s communal rituals (*Aegissidang-gut* in Haegdang-dong, *Dodong-gut* on Mount Bonghwa, and *Bugundang-gut* in Bamseom) had been closely examined. Moreover, the author made a series of in-depth investigations and a close study of the *Dangju* shaman leading the *Dang-gut*, the *Jaebidangju* musician, the *Jegwan* (ritual officials) and the *Haju* (male village elder who promotes the rituals); other people who participated in the ritual, local residents and heritage bearers were also studied.

## The investigative reports carried out on three different shamanic rituals for designating them ‘intangible cultural property’

### A) *Aegissidang* and the *Aegissidang-gut*

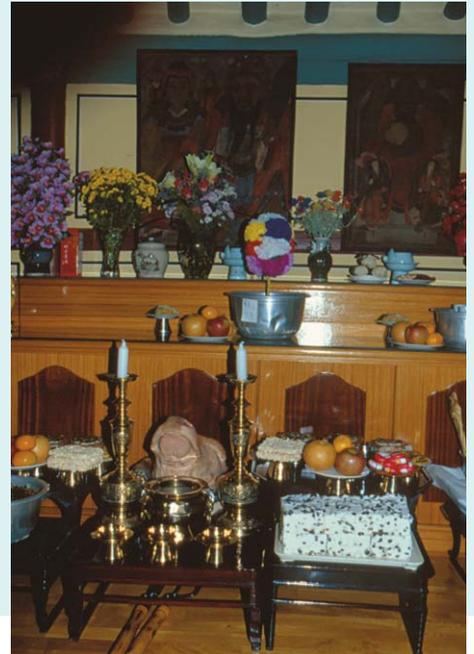
#### (a) About *Aegissidang*

*Aegissidang* is a shrine located in the Haengdang-dong area of Seongdong-gu, an eastern district of Seoul. Initially, the *Aegissidang* shrine was built in the Wangsimni area of eastern Seoul, but it was moved to the back of the Seongdong Post Office when a railway station was constructed on its original site. The shrine was finally moved to its current location in 1943 when a Japanese residence took over its second site. *Aegissidang* has also been known as *Salgundang* (the Apricot shrine) since a big apricot tree stood next to it as its main guardian tree. It also used to be called *Jinpeori salgundang*, as it is surrounded by a broad, bare field, called *Jinpeori*.

It is not easy to ascertain the historical origin of the *Aegissidang* shrine since there are few literary resources relating to the site. This problem also applies to other shrines around Korea. In order to investigate a shrine’s historic features, it is necessary to conduct comprehensive research not only into



**Figure 1**  
*Aegissidang-gut*, *dangju* shaman Kim-oknyeom



**Figure 2**  
Aegissidang-gut, shamanic shrine

founding records, such as records of construction and repair work, and inscriptions, but also to draw on verbal information from people who were connected to the shrine in the past.

In the case of research into the Aegissidang shrine, most of our information comes from a *Dangju* shaman, a member of the third generation of a *Dangju* shaman family that has managed Aegissidang and the records of its foundation. However, a comprehensive, nation-wide report on folkloric research, conducted by the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 1979, states that records of the construction of the shrine (the so-called *Bonggeongi*) at Aegissidang used to exist.<sup>4</sup> Although they no longer survive, according to the research report ... *in 4280 of the Tangun era* (that is, in 1947) *local leaders re-built the shrine which had a 200 year history.*<sup>5</sup> In other words, this record proved that Aegissidang dates back approximately 260 years.

The third villager appointed chief *Dangju* shaman, Kim Oknyeom of the Aegissidang shrine, told the investigators how shamanic rituals in Aegissidang started. According to Kim,

*A long time ago, after a war broke out in the north, five princesses fled to this village as people in the*

*court had been separated and scattered all around the nation. Amid blossoming wild roses and briars they were blocked in by mountains to the back and rivers to the front. Forced to stay here in the briars and brambles, they could scarcely get any food other than the roots of plants. Finally they died, with briars in their mouths. Later a village was founded on the site. One day a village leader had a dream in which the five princesses asked for an opportunity to show their resentment of the way they had been treated; at that point the village started to have regular gut rituals*

Kim said that one of the five sisters settled in Salgundang and another in Assidang in Yangji-dong, while the other three stayed in Supuldang.<sup>6</sup> All in all, we can assume that the rituals here were originally held to ameliorate the resentment of the five princesses who fled the court a long time ago.

All three shrines in the Haengdang-dong, Yangji-dong, and Wangsimni areas have been set in their relevant context. In doing so, they have been revered as local guardian deities who protect three neighbouring villages and bring tranquil and peaceful lives to the local residents. Yangji-dong, however, disappeared when the area was developed by an urban planning project, and Aegissidang in the Wangsimni

area still has virtually no functional value as a shamanic shrine for the local people, except for a birthday ritual for *Aegissi* (unmarried ladies) conducted annually by the *Dangju* shaman. Kim said that all three shrines were originally built in the Wangsimni area: the first was the one at Haengdang-dong, the second at Yangji-dang, and the third at Supuldang.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the shamanic paintings in Haengdang-dong *Aegissidang* have a century-old history and reflect recognisable features of other shamanic paintings kept in communal shrines in Seoul. They depict seven deities, along with *Aegissi*, the main spirit of the shrine, the *Sambuljeseok* (three shamanistic gods), *Sansin* (a mountain god), *Bugunnim* (an old man and wife who act as village protectors), *Jowangnim* (a kitchen spirit) and *Jwajechang* (the left commander) and *Ujechang* (the right commander) rest harmoniously inside the shrine.

#### (b) About the *Aegissidang-gut*

At the *Aegissidang* shrine, a large-scale, communal *Aegissidang-gut* shamanic ritual is normally held annually on the most auspicious day between the first and the fourth of the tenth lunar month. Also, on every fifteenth day of the fourth lunar month there is a regular ritual to celebrate *Aegissi*'s birthday. It is particularly remarkable that we can so easily find authentic aspects of Korea's traditional communal rituals - which have been fairly well transmitted over the years - by observing a *Dang-gut* (shamanic ritual for a village community) in such a highly urbanised city as Seoul. This is because the *Dang-gut* in early October is usually a large-scale celebration in which local residents participate. It brings people together in a harmonious and cooperative spirit and creates a kind of festive mood. Since 2005, when the *Aegissidang-gut* was designated as an 'intangible cultural property' by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, it has been revitalised as a local cultural activity.

*Aegissidang-gut* preparations start twenty days before the actual ritual, when organisers brew the sacred liquor called *Jora*. In order to make *Jora*, the maker should first cleanse his or her body, hoping that his soul will also become clean and that he will behave well. Local people believe that if the maker is not pure and sincere, he or she will not make good-

quality *Jora*. Secondly, they clean the shrine and arrange its interior neatly. Moreover, only food of good quality can be selected for ritual offerings. Then the *Dangju* shaman arranges in advance for assistant shamans to perform the ritual, while the *Jaebidangju* musician finds assistant musicians to play shamanic music. Three days before *Dang-gut*, the organisers ward off all possible bad luck from the site by stretching a rope called a *Geumjul* across the shrine gate, putting yellow soil at the shrine, and forbidding 'impure' people (those who have recently been to a funeral or been in the home of a deceased person or of a newborn infant) or animals from entering the place.

#### (c) The sequence of activities in the *Dang-gut*

(i) Brewing the *Jora* liquor. The brewing has to start twenty days before the ceremony.

(ii) Stretching the *Geumjul* across the gate of the shrine and arranging the vessels of yellow soil. This happens three days before the ceremony.

(iii) Holding a preliminary ritual called *Judangmullim* to purify the shrine where the shrine *gut* will take place.

(iv) Sitting singing shamanic songs and shamanic prayers and playing an hourglass-shaped drum to expel evil spirits. Then shamanic songs called *Bonhyangnora* are sung to propitiate the god, *Gamang*.

(v) Performing a *Jinjeok*. A *Jinjeok* is a kind of Confucian ritual: male officials in costume read a written prayer, offer fruit and nectar and bow respectfully, after which the female shamans and other participants repeat the same actions.

(vi) Performing a *gut* called *Bonhyanggeori*. This welcomes the god *Bonhyang* (the spirit of the local mountain god).

(vii) Performing a *gut* called *Aegissi geosang* to welcome the god *Aegissi* who is housed in the shrine. A female shaman wearing a red scarf in the guise of *Aegissi* wanders around delivering messages from *Aegissi* to local residents.

(viii) Performing a *gut* called *Malmyeonggeori*. At this point, the *Mansinmalmyeong* gods (deceased people who were once *Dangju* shamans or their close aides) enter in the following order: *Dangju* shaman *Ko Songja*, *Dangju* shaman *Kim Myobun*, *Ayangnang* (*Ko Songja*'s spiritual grandmother), *Daesa* (*Ko Songja*'s

spiritual mother), Pyeongsan (Ko Songja's spiritual daughter), Seoksun (*Dangju* of Yangji-dong shrine), Taesangsin (the nurse who previously took care of Ko Songja) and Sim (who arranged all the sacrificial food offerings during Kim Myobun's reign).

(ix) Performing a *gut* called *Jeseokgeori* to welcome the gods Chilseong, Jeseoks, and Balsa, who make divinations using chestnuts and dates.

(x) Performing a *gut* called *Jesokgeori* which invites the *Bugunmama* couple who have safeguarded the Haengdang-dong area to join the participants and visiting deities in enjoying the *gut*.

(xi) Performing a *gut* called *Mugamseogi* in which local residents in ritual costumes join in the *Simpuri* (origin ritual).

(xii) Performing a *gut* called *Byeolsanggeori* to welcome the god Byeolsang.

(xiii) Performing a *gut* called *Sinjang Daegamgeori*, a rite intended to welcome the gods Sinjang and Daegam and allow them to enjoy the ritual and predict fortunes for the year ahead by choosing one of five different coloured flags.

(xiv) Performing a *gut* called *Seongjugeori* to welcome the domestic deity, Seongju, using a wooden pole called a *Seongjudae*.

(xv) Performing a *gut* called *Changbuggeori*, a rite intended to drive out misfortune in the coming year by letting the god Changbu enjoy the *gut*.

(xvi) Performing a *gut* called *Gyemyeongeori*, at which pieces of *Gyemyeon* rice cake are sold to local residents

(xvii) Burning sacrificial papers called *Soji* in front of a flower-strewn meal table (a table with bank notes on the top of rice, lit by candles) arranged by local residents.

(xviii) Finishing the *Dangjgut* by holding a *Dwitjeon* to end the ritual by letting the miscellaneous gods and spirits leave after they have eaten plants.

#### (d) Heritage bearers - *Dangju* shaman and *Jaebidangju* musician

(i) *Dangju* shaman Kim Oknyeom.

Kim Oknyeom, a *Dangju* shaman, was born on 25th December, 1936, and is the third *Dangju* shaman of the Aegissidang shrine. She is supposed to live in the shrine to manage and organise the *Dang-gut*. Kim learned how to conduct all the ritual ceremonies from her mother, Kim Myobun, as Kim Myobun did from her mother, Ko Songja. The three generations of shamans know all about the *Aegissidang gut* and its traditions, shamanic songs, shamanic dances, the delivering of messages from the dead or from the gods, the sequence of activities in the *gut* ritual and how the food offerings should be arranged. Kim has been passing her knowledge and experience in rituals down to her disciple, Sin Hyeonju, (another female shaman, aged forty seven), her biological daughter, Oh Soyeon, (a forty four year old female shaman) and other 'spiritual daughters'.

(ii) *Jaebidangju* musician, Choi Hyeonggeum.

The chief musician, called a *Jaebidangju*, Choi Hyeonggeum was born on 18th June, 1954, learned



**Figure 3**  
*Aegissidang-gut*, To receive the domestic deity called *Seongju*

shamanic music in the Seoul area from his aunt and subsequently became a well-known musician. He is already a top-level musical performer and is a man of immense erudition on the *Dang-gut* and issues related to it. Mr. Choi has been the chief musician at *Aegissidang-gut* since 1981. *Aegissidang-gut* music consists of three different parts; Choi mainly plays a bamboo flute called a *Piri* but occasionally plays a large transverse bamboo instrument called a *Daegeum* and one of the traditional stringed instruments, a Korean fiddle called a *Haengeum*. Many generations of *Jaebidangju* musicians at *Aegissidang-gut* have been leading musicians in their day. *Jaebidangju* Lee Sungil, in the reign of the late Dangju, Ko Songja, played as a *Jaebidangju* with Park Kidong and Jeon Duyeon. In the period when Kim Myobun was *Dangju*, Kim Gamyong led musical performances with such other great musicians of the day as Ji Gwanghi, Park Innam, Yang Gwangseon, and Choi Seokgil. Currently, Mr Choi performs with Han Sanggi, Park Munyeong, Han Yeongseo, Kim Chanseop, Park Munsu, Im Gitaek, Kim Seongyeon and others.

**(e) Researcher's report**

The *Aegissidang-gut* in Haengdang-dong is a traditional communal ritual which takes place in the Seoul area and is at least 260 years old. It is a form of shamanic ritual which is typical of agricultural or

fishing cultures, but is remarkable in that it happens in a city. It is widely accepted in the Korean scholarly community that the current and third *Dangju* shaman, Ms. Kim, who has been maintaining the place as a working shrine, is clearly the next in line to inherit this intangible cultural property. In particular, Ms. Kim is proficient in interpreting ritual documents and fulfills her mission as *Dangju* shaman by maintaining a close relationship with the local community. *Jaebidangju* musician, Mr. Choi, has a celebrated talent in musical performance and is extremely well versed in the ritual music of the Seoul area. It is widely accepted by scholars that he is a professional musician who has directly inherited the shamanic musical tradition, and he is also good at inviting guest musicians to accompany him at rituals.

The fact that local residents are keen to participate in the ceremony reinforces the belief that *Dang-gut* enhances communal unity and prosperity. Moreover, with the full cooperation and support of the Seongdong District Office and District Council Office, the ritual creates a harmonious link between the ceremonial officials and the local community. Seven shamanic paintings housed in the shrine have significant value as cultural properties. Given that *Aegissidang-gut* in Haengdang-dong has a long history, and *Dangju* shaman Kim and *Jaebidangju* musician Choi perform their roles in accordance with the traditions that have been handed down to them,



**Figure 4**  
Dodan-gut on Mt. Bonghwa, Shaman chanting



**Figure 5**  
*Dodan-gut* on Mt. Bonghwa,  
 Shaman collects money from villagers

*Aegissidang-gut* is sufficiently important to be designated as municipal 'intangible heritage' by the Seoul Metropolitan Government.

#### **B) The *Dodang* and *Dodang-gut* on Mount Bonghwa**

##### **(a) About the *Dodang***

Since there are no literary records about the origin of *Dodang* on Mount Bonghwa, it is difficult to assess the actual value of the place and its practices.

Nevertheless, from hearsay evidence we learn that the site has a long history going back about four centuries. According to Choi Seokgil, husband of the previous *Dangju* shaman, Ms. Bang, and himself a famous shamanic musician in the Seoul area, the genealogy of *Dangju* in Bonghwa *Dodang* consists of thirteen generations covering about four hundred years. Choi's testimony is strongly supported by local people who were born in the area and who are particularly interested in *Dodang*. Currently, official documents published by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the City Office of Jungrang and the City Council of Jungrang, all assume that *Dodang* on Mount Bonghwa has this four hundred year history, but they offer no historical evidence to support this claim.

Fortunately, we can find a very short description of *Dodang* on Mount Bonghwa in a story about *Bonguje* published by the Institute of Local History of the

Junghwa-dong area in Jungrang-gu district, which refers to a historic record written by Byeongin in March, in the 29th year of King Sejong's reign (1397-1450). It is described as:-

*... a house with water and a heating supply system, was built on the upper part of the stage so that people could store necessary tools and utensils ... initially it was a thatched cottage with a single room but it was remodelled into a tile-roofed and colourfully painted house with four rooms at the front and two rooms at the side in the second year of Gwangmu's reign (1900AD) .... a fire of unknown origin burnt the building down on 27th July 1992. From 22nd September through 30th November 1992, the place was reconstructed as the current red brick/cement building.*

However, it is incomprehensible that a storage building, run by a government body, was originally constructed as a very humble thatched cottage. It should have been a house with a tiled roof since it was a place to keep national assets and ceremonial items. All this presumably indicates that the thatched, single-roomed shrine existed before Bongsudae was rebuilt on it. In the meantime, it seems that the place was remodelled as a shrine with a tiled roof and four rooms at the front.<sup>8</sup> What is important is that the existence of the thatched structure in the record

supports the belief that a shrine has existed for a long time on the top of Mount Bonghwa. Considering the scale and form of the thatched building, it seems to have been a functional place for holding a simple communal ritual organised by people in the neighbourhood. Accordingly, the local peoples' belief that Dodang on Mount Bonghwa is more than four hundred years old seems reasonable.

It is easy to see that Mount Bonghwa might well have been a beacon. Mount Bonghwa is 138 meters above the sea, and what is known as *Bonghwajae* by the public and *Bonghwattuk* in shamanic communities, is located on the top of the mountain at a junction between the villages of Sinnae 2-dong, Sangbong 1-dong, and Muk 1-dong. The structure on the top of Mount Bonghwa has been remodelled as a house with a tiled roof, consisting of a *Ujingak* roof and brick walls, and it has two and half rooms at the front and a single one at the side. Under the stairs to the main building there is an annex where the shrine guard lived, and an adjacent small storage house for keeping ritual utensils and preparing food offerings. In the main *Dangjip* building, there is an altar about eighty centimetres high on which are deity figures, candle stands, a censer and a vessel of holy water. The deity figure is the 'mountain lady' who takes care

of villagers living around Mount Bonghwa. The current keeper, Ms. Kim Soweon, calls the figure 'Bulsahalmeoni' (immortal lady), while local people call her *Sansinhalmi* or just *Halmi*. The figure is seated and wears a white robe with red wavy drapery and a white trimmed hat. She has a round face and a smile on her lips which give her a merciful look. There is a baby monk figure just to the right of Bulsahalmeoni. According to an unwritten legend, after an old lady who served the mountain god died, local villagers started to revere her as a divine being called the 'mountain lady'.

#### (b) About the *Dang-gut*

In the past, the *Dodang-gut* on Mount Bonghwa was a communal festival held jointly and amicably by villagers from six villages: Seochonmal (now in the Sangbong-dong area) the majority of whose villagers were members of Heo clan, Hwangchomal (also now in the Sangbong-dong area) whose villagers were mostly from the Hwang clan, Choichonmal (now in the Junghwa-dong area) where many Choi clan families lived, Piul (now in the Sinnae-dong area) where the Papyeong Yun families lived together, Meokgul (now in the Muk-dong area) and Hyeon's village (now in the Myeonmok-dong area). Of these, the Meokgul area



**Figure 6**  
*Dodang-gut* on Mt Bonghwa – shooting arrows to drive evil spirits away

started to hold its own separate *Dang-gut* rituals a long time ago. Since the late 1960s, villagers from the Junghwa-dong area (Choichonmal) and the Sangbong-dong area (Seochonmal) have formed a community and organised an alternative annual *Dang-gut* with the Sinnaedong area (Piul) villagers. In other words, two communities, one consisting of the Junghwa-dong and Sangbong-dong areas, and the other solely from Sinnae-dong area, started holding annual rituals in turn. Recently, an inter-communal committee for preserving the *Dodang* ritual tradition, started to organise rituals hosted by the City Council of Jungrang and supported by the District Office of Jungrang. In the past, rituals were mostly paid for by voluntary contributions from the villagers but now they are financed from official funds from the City Council and the City Office of Jungrang. *Dang-gut* takes place on every third day of March (according to the lunar calendar). A Confucian memorial service forms part of the *Dodang-gut* ritual.

**(c) The sequence of events at *Dang-gut***

- (i) A *gut* called *Georibujeong* is performed at the entrance leading to the mountain peak.
- (ii) *Jaebi* and *Mansin* (a female shaman) enter the *Dodang* building to a *Gilnori* with *Gilgunak* musical accompaniment.
- (iii) A *gut* called *Judangmullim* is performed at the *Somang* (wishing) stone in the court yard of the guard's house.
- (iv) A *gut* called *Bulsacheongbae* takes place, at which the female shaman sits and beats an hourglass-shaped drum to receive Bulsahalmioni, she then performs *Bujeongcheongbae* and *Gamangcheongbae*, and sings *Gamang* songs.
- (v) A *gut* called *Bulsageori* is performed in the main building, and then messages from the gods are delivered at the courtyard using *Yonggung danji*.
- (vi) A *gut* called *Jinjeok* is performed which involves arranging a ritual table in the courtyard to hold a Confucian memorial service. Representatives from the City Council and Committee read written prayers.
- (vii) A *gut* called *Dodang bujeongcheongbae* is performed to expel evil spirits and ward off bad luck by the shaman sitting beating an hourglass-shaped drum.
- (viii) A *gut* called *Dodanggamangcheongbae* is performed in the hope that the god Gamang will come

down from the heaven, people start singing *Bonhyang* songs, again accompanied by the hourglass-shaped drum.

- (ix) A *gut* called *Jinjeok* offers nectar and pays homage to the gods.
- (x) A *gut* called *Sangeori* welcomes the Mountain God, and then invites Sansinmalmyeong, Sansingamang, Daesinhalmioni, Sanjejang, Gulmakjejangharabeoji, Dangjigiharabeoji, Dangjigihalmioni, and Daejaebiharabeoji to enjoy the performance.
- (xi) A *gut* called *Sangsangeori* invites the gods Byeolsang, Sinjang Daegam and the gods in general to enjoy the ceremony.
- (xii) A *gut* called *Sanjeseokgeori* invites the god Sanjeseok to sell *Bokbara* and *Myeongbara* and *Gyemyeon* rice cake to local residents.
- (xiii) A *gut* called *Changbugeori* is performed to ward off bad luck in the year ahead by inviting the god Changbu to enjoy the ritual.
- (xiv) A *gut* called *Sangununggeori* is performed, which consists of taking a cow's head which has been cooked, piercing it with a long sword, parading it round the courtyard and then standing the sword and the head on the ground.
- (xv) A *gut* called *Yoggungbulsageori* involves going to Yonggungdang on the top of Mount Bonghwa to invite the god Yonggungbalsa to come to the ceremony.
- (xvi) In a ritual called *Daenaerim*, *Daejaebi*, a man with a pole, prays for good luck by sticking the pole into a bowl filled with rice so that spirits and gods will come down it.
- (xvii) Next comes *Yugadolgi*. *Dangju* and the *Jaebidori*, led by *Daejaebi*, play *Gilnori*, shooting bows towards the villages in this sequence - first Piul, then Meokgul, Choichonmal, Hwangchonmal, Seochonmal, Ankkol, and finally, Bakseondal, to keep evil spirits away from the area.
- (xviii) This is followed by a ritual called *Cheonggyeo Byeokkigi*, again intended to keep the evil spirits away. The local villagers gather together and throw roosters, symbolically 'throwing them away'.
- (xix) Next to last is the ceremony of *Dodang Dwitjeon* which ends all the ritual activities where *Dodang-gut* took place.
- (xx) Finally, they perform *Dwitjeon* to end all the ritual activities at the *Somang* stone in front of the guard's house.

(d) Heritage bearers - *Dangju* shaman and *Jaebidangju* musician

(i) *Dangju* shaman, Sin Wihaeng.

*Dangju* shaman, Ms Sin Wihaeng was born on June 26th, 1939, in Yeongdeok, in north Gyeongsang province. She settled in the Sangbong-dong area of Seoul at the age of twenty nine. She is known as *Sangbongdong Jjokjipge Mansin* (an exceptionally perceptive female shaman) or *Jjokjipge bosal*. At the age of thirty three she received a spirit god, and stayed alone until she became Bang Sunnyeo's apprentice and her last spiritual daughter. At that time Bang - who was the wife of Choi Seokgil, a famous shamanic musician - was living in the Myeonmok-dong area. Bang had Sin participate in *Dodang-gut* on Mount Bonghwa. After Bang passed away, another of her spiritual daughters, Gang Gisun, succeeded her as *Dangju* shaman. Gang, born on Jeju Island in 1929, was known as *Jejudojip* or *Gatbawi*. Sin continued to join in the *Dodang-gut* rituals on Mount Bonghwa and succeeded to the position of *Dangju* when Gang emigrated to the USA in 2000. Sin is the present *Dangju* shaman.

(ii) *Jaebidangju* musician, Mr Kim Gwangsu.

Kim Gwangsu was born on November 23rd, 1945, and took on the mantle of *Jaebidangju* musician from his

father, Kim Sunseon, who died at the age of eighty four. He has become a very well known musician in *Dodang-gut* shamanic music. As with other *Dodang-gut* rituals in different regions, Bonghwa *Dodang-gut* music is composed of three different parts played on the *Piri*, *Daegeum*, and *Haegeum*. Kim plays the *Piri*. His brother, Kim Heungso, Kim Chanseop, Lee Hanbok, Bang Ingeun, Heo Yongeop and He Seungpil play the music with Kim. He was trained in shamanic music by his father and is very experienced and talented in *Dodang-gut* music. In particular, he specialises in the *Gilgunak* part of the Mount Bonghwa *Dodang-gut* performance.

(e) Researcher's report

*Dodang-gut* on Mount Bonghwa is one of Seoul's most famous communal *guts* and has at least a 400-year-long history. In particular, this is a large-scale *gut* combining six neighbouring villages. The present *Dangju* shaman, Sin Wihaeng, keeps *Dodang*, the shamanic shrine and its shamanic rituals as *Dangju* shaman and has a thorough knowledge of *Dodang-gut*. *Jaebidangju* musician, Kim Gwangsu, also has an orthodox pedigree and shows brilliant musical talent. He leads a group of other inspirational musicians. He is also very knowledgeable about the performance of

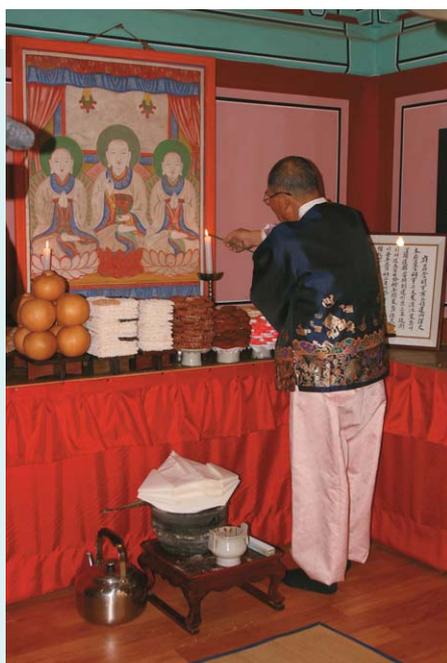


Figure 7  
*Bugundang-gut* in Bamseom, A villager burns incense at the shrine

**Figure 8**  
Sasil – sticking a three-pronged spear  
in a pig's head as an offering to the gods.



*Gilgunak* in Mount Bonghwa's *Dodang-gut* ritual.

*Dodang-gut* is a traditional festival and, for many years, has involved a group of local districts in a friendly, communal activity. What is more significant is that the local authorities (the City Council and the City Office in Jungrang) support the rituals financially as a form of cultural activity. *Dodang-gut* needs to be revitalised as a significant cultural expression by designating it as one of Seoul's 'intangible cultural properties'.

### C) Bugundang and *Bugundang-gut* in Bamseom

#### (a) About Bugundang

Like the two previous cases, the historic origin of Bugundang, a village shamanic shrine in Bamseom, was rarely recorded. Only oral evidence and a few documents provide some clues about it. According to oral testimonies from local people in Bamseom, Bugundang is about six hundred years old. '*Jeungbomunheonbigō*' tells us that people hung paper notes – *Bugun* – in the woods around Bamseom. '*Ojuyeonmunjangjeonsangō*', written by Lee Gyugyeong, describes a wooden lingam that was hung on the interior wall of Bugundang. These records indicate that the *Bugun* religion has existed

for a long time. In this context, Seoul's Bamseom Bugundang may well be equally ancient. The 3rd edition of '*Bugundang History*' tells us that:-

*Bugundang was founded on Yuldo Island when the capital was transferred to Seoul. Residents of Yuldo Island had conducted rituals on every January 2nd for about 570 years. Since 1968 (4301 in the Tangun calendar), it has been under the national management system - Gukchaek - until it finally settled where it is now in 1995, when the previous location was developed into a giant apartment complex.<sup>9</sup>*

According to this, people in Bamseom believe that Bugundang's history is as long as Seoul's history as a capital city. Bugundang settled in its present location in 1995, but when the residents were all moved out of the area in 1968 because of an urban development project, the building was located a bit further to the north.

Bamseom residents believe that the god Bugun still takes care of them. The status of the god Bugun was notably high since people believe that the mountain god of Mount Gwanak bowed to Bugun. People in Bamseom are not willing to talk freely about

Bugun as they both respect and fear him. Whenever they face a difficult situation, they visit him to pray for a solution to their problems.

In the past, people believed that if anyone urinated around the building or entered without permission, he or she would be punished; if children picked fruit and ate around the shrine, they would get boils; people with glasses were supposed to take them off; even pointing a finger at the building was prohibited. Women heading to a washing place could not carry used nappies or clothes spotted with menstrual blood when they were passing through the building. There is also a story that a mounted Japanese policeman trying to pass by the building during the Imperial Japanese era found that he could not move a single step. Accordingly, Bugundang is believed to be a place full of miraculous energy.

#### (b) About the *Bugundang-gut*

Bamseom *Bugundang-gut* takes place every year on January 2nd (by the lunar calendar). Every year on December 10th there is a preparatory meeting to appoint *Soim* and *Doga*, and *Dangju* and *Jaebidangju* decide which female shamans and musicians they are going to invite. They also discuss what went wrong at the previous *gut* ceremony and suggest ways of avoiding the same problems at the forthcoming one. People then clean the building, and individual residents as well as *Soim* and *Doga* try to avoid visiting mourners' houses or houses with newborn babies. All the expenses for the *gut* come from

voluntary donations from residents. A list of donors is posted on the *Dodang* wall.

#### (c) The sequence of events at the *Dang-gut*

(i) A *gut* called *Judangmullim* is performed to purify the atmosphere around Gutcheong before the main *gut* ceremony.

(ii) A *gut* called *Gosaban* is performed. They go to *Dogajip* (*Soim*), perform a shamanic exorcism and pray for good luck.

(iii) A *gut* called *Yugadolgi* is performed to collect money from each and every house (*Yuga and Geollip*).

(iv) They perform a *gut* called *Bujeongcheongbae*. *Gamangcheongbae* play an hourglass-shaped drum from a seated position, and perform *Cheongbae* to invite the god Gamang and sing *Bonghyang* songs.

(v) A *gut* called *Bugungeori* is performed to call on the god Bugun to take good care of Bamseom's residents, and they perform *Sasil* by sticking a three-pronged spear into a pig's head.

(vi) A *gut* called *Seonanggeori* is performed to invite the god Seonang to the festival.

(vii) A *gut* called *Bonhyangmalmyeonggeori* is performed to invite the gods Dangju, Jaebidangju, Hwaju and Malmyeong.

(viii) A *gut* called *Majiollim* is performed to offer *Maji* to the god Sinryeong.

(xix) A *gut* called *Sangsangeori* is performed to invite the gods Janggun, Byeolsang, Sinjang and Daegam.

(x) A *gut* called *Bulsageori* is performed to invite the immortal god, Balsa, to the ceremony, and the



**Figure 9**  
*Bugundang-gut* in Bamseom, Shaman carries steamed rice cake on the her head

participants dance *Myeongbara* to the accompaniment of small cymbals.

(xi) A *gut* called *Gununggeori* is performed when the participants wander around the village and shoot arrows to drive out evil spirits.

(xii) A *gut* called *Changbugeori* is performed to ward off misfortune in the coming year by inviting the god Changbu to the festival.

(xiii) A *gut* called *Dwitjeon* is performed to close the ritual by letting the various gods and spirits eat plants.

#### (d) Heritage bearers - *Dangju* shaman and *Jaebidangju* musician

(i) *Dangju* shaman, Ms. Kim Chungang.

Kim Chungang was born on March 2nd, 1941, into a shaman family in the Naesu-dong area of Seoul. Her grandmother was a famous shaman called *Jeokseolne* and Ms Kim's mother succeeded her and bore the same nickname. Ms Kim's father died when she was only nine, and two years later, Lee Chungseon, a famous shamanic musician in the Seoul area, became her stepfather. He taught shamanic music to her brother, Kim Chanseop, the current *Jaebidangju*. Kim succeeded her mother as shaman. She has been *Dangju* shaman of Bamseom *Dodang-gut* since 1997. She has also mastered Seoul *Saenam-gut*, an important intangible cultural ritual designated by the central government, and is famous for performing *Daegam-gut*. She has the full support of local residents who participate in Bamseom *Dodang-gut*.

(ii) *Jaebidangju* musician, Kim Chanseop.

Kim Chanseop was born on March 28th, 1945, but his registered birthday is May 6th, 1948. He has a strong shamanic background on both the maternal and paternal sides of his family, and, as we have seen, he is the brother of the *Dangju* shaman, Ms. Kim Chungang. He learned *Daegeum* and *Haegeum* from his step father, Lee Chungseon, and they performed together until Lee died. Kim also learned shamanic music, specifically the *Deureongje* sound technique of the *Piri*, from his foster father, Master Choi Seokgil. Kim has become a shamanic musician of great repute and his performance is already first class. He also teaches a lot of pupils at the same time. His musical passion is Bamseom *Bugundang-gut*, which he is passing on to his son, Kim Pilhong. He is actually one of the most influential people in Bamseom

*Bugundang-gut* since he has an exceptionally good relationship with the residents of Bamseom.

#### (e) Researcher's report

One of the representative communal *guts* in Seoul, Bamseom *Bugundang-gut* goes back approximately 600 years. In the context of cultural history, Bamseom *Bugundang-gut* seems to have a direct link with a culture that formed along the Han River, as well as preserving a very significant religious tradition. *Dangju* Kim Chungang is a renowned shaman who leads the *Bugundang-gut*. Along with her brother, *Jaebidangju* Kim Chanseop, she is in charge of the rituals and follows the authentic principles of shamanic ritual as handed down in Bamseom *Bugundang-gut*. Ms Kim Chungang's literary references to shamanic rituals have been judged to be 'legitimate', and she gets on well with local residents in Bamseom. *Jaebidangju* Mr. Kim Chanseop is one of the most famous shamanic musicians in Seoul *gut*. He is a talented and brilliant performer and keeps to the musical tradition of Bamseom *Bugundang-gut* perfectly. In addition, he is actually one of the most influential people at the head of the Bamseom *Bugundang-gut* tradition, since he has complete knowledge and experience of all the activities related to it.

The local people from Bamseom actively participate in *Bugundang-gut* which makes it a harmonious festival that ensures the continuation of their indigenous culture and tradition. As our investigations have shown, Bamseom *Bugundang-gut* has a long history and the *Dangju* shaman and *Jaebidangju* musician play their roles in a very traditional way. Moreover, they perform *gut* ritual at the highest possible level. Thus it is essential that the Metropolitan Government designate this 'intangible cultural property' in order to make the local residents more aware of it, as well as promoting an indigenous culture formed near the Han River in Seoul.

## Conclusion

Shamanic rituals that take place in Aegissidang, the Mount Bonghwa *Dodang* and the Bamseom *Bugundang* were thoroughly investigated by three experts appointed by the Seoul Metropolitan Government's Board of Cultural Properties. As a result, a 'Report for

Designating Intangible Cultural Properties of the Seoul Metropolitan Government' was submitted to the Board, and the three cases were finally designated as municipal properties in January 2005.

Shamanic ritual had not been designated as a cultural property in Korea for a long time due to a lack of understanding of the meaning of such rituals. Unfortunately, many people dismissed shamanic ritual as outmoded and superstitious, without ever clearly defining why this might be so, or indeed why this rendered it culturally worthless. However, as the report shows, shamanism is clearly a form of religion. Shamanic ritual demonstrates a belief in providence, a belief which is enshrined in sacrifices (*guts*) to the gods.

This religious belief and its related practices are still carried on by many *mudang*, or religious specialists, and their followers, with shamanic doctrines being handed down orally rather than in the form of written scriptures. Yet it is still a struggle to convince many Koreans of the cultural worth of shamanism. There is a deeply ingrained and stereotypical definition of what constitute religious doctrines and practices and the value of shamanism as cultural heritage is often rejected.

Yet through shamanic customs in Korea we can identify valuable aspects of traditional culture that help to maintain our unique identity. Through this process of re-examining national culture we can also uncover ideas about the structure and organisation of Korean thinking. Therefore shamanism ought to be considered a cultural asset that has artistic merit, unwritten traditions, ceremonial forms, linguistic techniques, a long history and is also a form of religious belief.

Shamanism's recognition by the municipal government means that Korea can now protect heritage bearers, revitalise the tradition and facilitate the dissemination of this form of heritage nation-wide. Accordingly, training fees, maintenance costs for training groups and other expenses connected with holding ceremonies are subsidised by the Seoul Metropolitan Government. In other words, heritage bearers and their training centres, as well as the ceremonies themselves, are provided with regular financial support. This includes financial support when a heritage bearer is hospitalised, and if one dies, the government subsidises his or her funeral service.

In March 2008, thirty eight fields were designated 'intangible cultural properties'. Forty four heritage holders, masters and various bearers are devoted to

transmitting their precious heritage to future generations. By producing documentary films, music CDs, and publications, the government has been trying to ensure that if a current heritage holder dies without leaving a successor, or becomes physically unable to continue their activities for some reason, people will be able to revive their heritage by using these resources as points of reference.

Through labelling the three examples 'intangible cultural properties' via what is, in some senses, an artificial system of designation, a field of intangible heritage which used to be 'naturally' transmitted has been altered in various ways. The negative side of those changes - such as 'prettifying' dynamic cultural practices - has been discussed elsewhere. However, it is necessary to think about the positive consequences of designation as well. This system of designation revitalises intangible cultural assets, some of which were on the verge of becoming extinct as a result of widespread and rapid social change. By being managed and protected in a very systematic and academic way, public awareness can be raised and the value of the cultural property can be reassessed and enhanced.

To sum up some significant points, firstly, as the social status of heritage bearers is raised, they can be confident in what they do and concentrate on handing down their knowledge and skills in a much more stable environment. This boost to their self-esteem and pride in whatever activities they undertake, is one of the most significant changes. Secondly, as local traditional practices become recognised as art forms that are represented on the national stage, this begins to raise national awareness and increase public confidence in those intangible aspects of cultural identity. This means that there are more and more people who want to learn and pass on certain forms of intangible cultural activity. Traditions which in the past lacked new blood, or art forms that were marginalised and dying are offered the chance to be revitalised. As people come to consider intangible cultural properties as significant, their value as part of the historical heritage is also appreciated. Thirdly, heritage bearers have started to contribute to the development of the art and culture industry by participating in secondary or tertiary education institutions and in museum education programmes, thus contributing to the social education curriculum.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government and its Board have been inspired by these changes and look forward to

subsequent developments leading to a more positive understanding of 'intangible cultural properties' as a significant and invaluable part of Korean traditional culture. 

## REFERENCES

- Choe Chong-hil, 2006. 'Intangible Heritage and Museum', *Folk News*, (published by the National Folk Museum of Korea)127.
- Chun Kyungsoo, 2006. 'Appropriateness for Concept of Intangible Properties and Cultural Heritages', *Folk News*, 129.
- Ha Hyogil and Yang Jongsung, 2001. *Dodang gut on Mt. Bonghwa*.
- Jungrang City Council and the Society of Korean Shamanism, 1999. *Research on Bugundang gut, Mapo*, Mundeoksa.
- Hwang Rusi and Kim Sunam, 1989. *Korean Gut - Seoul Dang gut*, Yeolhwadang.
- Lee Munung, 1979. 'Folk Religion', chapter two of the *Comprehensive Report on Korean Folklore*, Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage.
- Park Heungju and Jeong Sumi, 2001. *Communal Gut in Seoul*, Seomundang.
- Yang Jongsung, 2003. *Cultural Protection Policy in Korea: Intangible Cultural Properties and Living National Treasures*, Seoul, Jimoondang.
- ....., 2004. 'Korean Cultural Property Protection Law with Regard to Korean Intangible Heritage', • *Museum International*.
- Yim Dawn-hee and Janelli, Roger L., 2004. 'Proclamation of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO', *Asian Comparative Folklore*, 26.

## NOTES

1. Yim Dawn-hee and Janelli, Roger L., 2004. 'Proclamation of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO' in *Asian Comparative Folklore*, 26, pp. 499-522.
2. Chun Kyungsoo, 2006. 'Appropriateness of the Concepts of Intangible Properties and Cultural Heritages', *Folk News*, (the National Folk Museum of Korea) 129, pp. 10-11.
3. Choe Chong-hil, 'Intangible Heritage and Museum', *Folk News*, (the National Folk Museum of Korea) 127, pp. 8-9.
4. Lee Munung, 1979. 'Folk Religion', chapter 2 of the *Comprehensive Report on Korean Folklore*,(Seoul) Ministry of Culture and Tourism and National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, p. 79.
5. Lee Munung, op. cit.
6. Verbal statement by Kim Oknyeom recorded in 2004.
7. Verbal statement by Kim Oknyeom recorded in 2004.
8. Ha Hyogil, 2001. 'Origin of Dodang gut on Mt. Bonghwa' in *Dodang-gut on Mt. Bonghwa*, Jungrang City Council, pp. 24-28.
9. Previous edition of the translation of *Bamseom Dodang* written by the local residents of Bamseom on 14 December 1995.