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**The Musical Faces of South Korea's East Coast Shaman Tradition:  
An Exploration into Personal Style Formation and Expression**

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**Abstract**

The hereditary shamans of South Korea's East Coast region foster a style of ritual that is well noted for its complex, often highly virtuosic, percussion music. Looking beyond the shared norms that hold this tradition together, this study valorises the varied contributions of individual ritualists. It pinpoints the defining characteristics of their performance 'faces' – the constellation of resemblances and deviations that mark them out as distinctive – and sheds light on the various learning experiences, socio-musical loyalties and rivalries, and personalities that are registered in those faces. Focusing on three generations of ritualists from a single troupe, music analysis and the ritualists' own testimonies, this study reveals some markedly contrasting takes on tradition. While insights drawn from niche theory help to clarify how competition has spurred on diversification, this enquiry's most significant contribution is to probe deeper and demonstrate how the musicians' innermost ways of thinking are registered in their musical choices. Extrapolating from case-study findings, a broadly-applicable model of personal style formation and expression is also outlined.

**Keywords**

South Korea; shamanism; music; tradition; style; music analysis

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## Introduction

While charismatic shamans (*kangshinmu*) are widely active throughout South Korea, the various traditions fostered by hereditary shamans (*sesŭmmu*), which neglect supernatural feats in favour of complex procedures and artistry, have long been diminishing. However, the East Coast tradition is still alive: in Kangwŏn, North Kyŏngsang and South Kyŏngsang provinces, hereditary ritualists still perform shaman rituals (*kut*) for client communities of believers, working in large troupes where all members are related through blood, marriage or adoption. While the troupe's women officiate, the men provide accompaniment – a drummer leading the ensemble on an unusually-constructed version of the double-headed *changgo*, a player of the large gong (*ching*) demarcating the music's main metric subdivisions, and multiple players of the hand-gong (*kkwaengwari*) joining in for episodes without sung text. This is highly distinctive and remarkable music: no other Korean tradition features so many different metric frameworks (*changdan*), such an extensive repertoire of patterns (*karak*), and levels of virtuosity in execution. The tradition is also notable for the high degree of creative freedom exploited during performance: improvisation enables the ritualists to respond sensitively to people's needs on a moment-by-moment basis, while generating a vibrant atmosphere in which the next moment is hard to predict (see Mills 2011).

There are now quite a few studies that try to make sense of this tradition's complex metric structures and identify constituent rhythmic patterns (see Yi Pohyŏng 1972 and 1982; Wŏn Il 1996; Kim Tongwŏn 1998; Chang Hwiju 2008; Pang Sŭnghwan 2010; and Mills 2007, 2010, 2011). However, none of these investigate the ritualists' individual voices within the tradition. Accordingly, the overriding picture is one of stylistic uniformity – a depiction that this article will show to be rather misleading. Over the course of a ritual, the ritualists regularly switch between roles, taking turns at the drum, microphone, hand-gongs and large gong, and the observer quickly realises that the troupe actually accommodates markedly contrasting skill sets, specialisms, priorities and patterns of behaviour. Each individual cultivates and expresses his or her own individual take on tradition. During an early interview with Simon Mills, the senior ritualist Kim Junghee clarified this emphasis on individualism through the following analogy:

For anyone looking, my face represents me. This nose, these eyes, this mouth: these represent me. For anyone listening to the music I play: those patterns also represent me.<sup>1</sup>

For everyone involved, the identification and evaluation of each performer's distinctiveness is a major preoccupation. Points of difference are endlessly picked over, interpreted and evaluated. Who is managing to move the participants and how are they doing it? Who is failing to evince the desired responses? Who will receive more money, wrapped around the drum strings or tucked into a waistband? As they sit there in the ritual space, the ritualists' eyes are glued to the action. Outside of ritual too, talk invariably turns to: Who sounds like who? Who is doing well and who isn't – and in what ways? After all, the continued success of the troupe depends on asking, answering and addressing these questions effectively.

This article seeks to expose the tradition's heterogeneous nature: it examines the ritualists as individuals, shedding light on their individualised performance 'faces'<sup>2</sup> – the constellation of resemblances and deviations that mark them out as distinctive – and considering the person-specific learning experiences, socio-musical affiliations and conflicts, and characters that have shaped those faces. As such, this article adds to the growing body of literature that eschews 'cultural average account[s]' (Nettl 1983: 9 cit. Stock 2001:7) and, instead, heeds the moral call to reflect interpersonal dynamics in a nuanced fashion by 'valoriz[ing] individuality' (Ruskin and Rice 2012: 308). The many studies discussed by Ruskin and Rice (2012) and Stock (2001), and subsequent publications like Hellier's collection of biography-based studies (2013), all recognise that traditions tend not to be 'happily homogeneous' but rather are 'fragmented', with 'the differences between and among individual actors and agents... [being] seen as crucial to the reproduction and transformation of... musical culture' (Ruskin and Rice 2012: 308, 307).

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Here, the authors are drawing from Kim Junghee's aforementioned analogy; there are no face-related terms in common circulation amongst ritualists nor academics to denote musical individualism within this tradition.

Here, the scope of enquiry is restricted to the male musicians of a single hereditary shaman troupe – that currently led by the Intangible Cultural Property (ICP) holder (*poyuja*) Kim Yongt'aek (b. 1946). This approach is warranted by the troupe's insular approach to fostering the ritual arts; with the senior males leading all training, the troupe has consistently taken strenuous efforts to keep talent within the troupe – an effective strategy for surpassing rivals (Ch'oe Kilsöng 1981: 104-121). Drawing from interviews,<sup>3</sup> observation, previous research, and musical analysis,<sup>4</sup> the study examines 11 ritualists spanning three generations, exploring how they relate to one another, differ from one another, and complement one another to form a rich tapestry of performance through the ages. While diverse formative factors are taken into account, special theoretical focus is placed upon investigating the ways in which personality, character and, especially, ways of thought (cognitive style) influence musical style. Although this is a seldom explored line of enquiry within ethnomusicology, in this article, we put forward the argument that it is necessary to delve into such areas when interrogating style formation and expression, asking: How does each particular individual interpret and respond to the world around them?

Before embarking on this investigation, however, it is necessary to define what is understood by 'personal style' and identify the factors that inform style formation. While the focus remains on the East coast shaman tradition, we suggest that the model of personal style formation and expression delineated here is actually widely applicable across diverse cultures and contexts.

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the interviews were conducted by the authors between 20<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 in South Korea, specifically with: Kim Yongt'aek, Kim Junghee [Kim Chönghui], Kim Tongön, Kim Tongyöl, Kim Jinhwan [Kim Chinhwan], Park Bumt'ae [Pak Pömt'ae], Cho Jonghun [Cho Chonghun], Son Chöngjin, Pang Chiwön and Chöng Yöllak.

<sup>4</sup> Musical analysis has mainly involved scrutinising video and audio recordings collected by the authors between 1999 and 2015 to identify extracts that typify individuals' approaches. These extracts have then been transcribed using conventional notation, with various markings added to highlight distinctive features of patterning, technique and articulation. To facilitate comparison, analysis has focused on two particular rhythmic cycles, *p'unöri* and *ch'öngbo*.

## Situating ‘Style’ and ‘Personal Style’

Like other kinds of music, East Coast shaman music is rendered distinctive and internally unified through a set of style-defining features, which also serve to establish contradistinction from related genres – a commonly pinpointed example being the rapidly executed rolling rhythmic patterns sprinkled liberally throughout the drum and hand-gong lines (Kim Tongwŏn 1998: 34; Chang Changshik 2004: 311). Such features are salient indexes pointing towards specific places (East Coast communities), contexts and times (shaman rituals), and social groups (the hereditary shaman network and its client communities), articulating shared identity and situating that identity in place, time and broader society (Cohen 2006; Turino 1999).

Many style-defining features have long been exclusive to the tradition – for example, the sequence of rhythmic cycles known as *ch’ŏngbo*. Such features point towards a partly-enduring social segregation, deriving from the ritualists’ historical endogamy and hereditary transmission, the stigma attached to the profession, and the persistence of cultural enclaves in out-of-the-way places (see Mills 2007: 1–19). Other features, however, can also be found beyond the tradition. For example, the rhythmic cycles *kutkŏri* and *hwimori* are widely encountered in *p’ungmul* (folk percussion bands), *minyo* (folksong) and charismatic shaman ritual. Still other elements constitute more obvious borrowings, including: passages of Buddhist chant and charismatic shaman-like episodes suggesting special powers;<sup>5</sup> the Shimch’ŏng narrative and selected songs from the *p’ansori* narrative song genre; and folksongs and pop songs dating from the distant past to the present-day.<sup>6</sup> All of these elements are indicative of open-minded attitudes towards the adoption and adaptation of elements from beyond the tradition. Thus, this musical style – like any other – asserts both points of distinctiveness, which distinguish it from other styles and their practitioners, and kindred qualities, linking it to other styles and their practitioners.

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<sup>5</sup> Charismatic rituals have provided little musical influence. They mainly comprise loud repeated pulses played on drums and gongs to encourage spirit possession and only sometimes employ a few extra rhythmic cycles (typically, *kutkŏri*, *chajinmori* and *hwimori*), executed using just a few simple variations. By their own admission, the charismatic shamans’ rituals are artistically basic; this is why some call upon assistance from the highly trained hereditary ritualists.

<sup>6</sup> Rituals always include interludes of joyful singing and dancing focusing on popular favourites – with villagers also encouraged to have a turn at the microphone.

The ritualists' shared knowledge and skills coalesce around core items in the repertoire – rhythmic cycles (*changdan*), songs, dances, texts and ritual actions. During ritual, the sequence of performance items is pre-fixed, with every episode conforming to conventions, and the instrumentalists' roles in the musical texture are thoroughly prescribed. At every moment, there are widely agreed-upon expectations regarding what types of patterning are typical, which are novel but still within the boundaries of acceptability, and which are inappropriate – compositely defining the aesthetic. As elsewhere, the extensive array of norms is necessary to establish a salient degree of commonality between contributions, defining the markers and boundaries of the style and setting templates against which listeners can assess the current moment. As Lucy Green explains, in all forms of music such working templates are, in fact, essential if listeners are to 'experience [music's] inherent meanings' (1988: 33–4). However, at the same time, a certain degree of space is afforded to the individual, in which to devise and express his or her individual voice.

In some forms of music, a wide range of sub-categories are hierarchically nested within the broader category of 'style' (see Middleton 1990: 174). In others, however, there are fewer sub-categories. Within East Coast shaman ritual music, although it is possible to conceptually group individuals together on account of socio-musical proximity, those groups are not taken to constitute bounded categories of sub-style or lineage – as, for example, is sometimes done in reference to *p'ansori*<sup>7</sup>. Rather, the ritualists identify only a proliferation of personal styles, or musical idiolects. Moore's observations about popular music idiolects are equally applicable here: each ritualist's personal style is essentially a composite of identifiable personalised norms, comprising both widely shared elements and more characteristic 'stylistic fingerprints' shared with fewer others or perhaps none (Moore 2012: 166).

Until recently, the ritualists have employed the dialect word '*tcho*' to denote personal style – be it in singing, dancing, playing instruments, or constructing ritual paraphernalia. Nowadays, however, it is far more common to hear expressions like '*chagi sūt'ail*' (own style), '*kaein sūt'ail*' (personal style) or '*pōjōn*' (version) – English-derived expressions widely used in everyday Korean parlance today. To provide further clarification, various adjectives may be added, ranging from commonplace words like 'light/ heavy' (*kabyōpda/ mugōpda*) and

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<sup>7</sup> Within *p'ansori*, there are regional divisions into various '*che*' and also stylistic lineages, wherein a performer may follow, for example, X's *che* (or *padi*) for the singing of the Shimch'ōng story (Kwōn Osōng, personal communication, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2016).

‘forced/ relaxed’ (*him naen/ him ppaen*) to more unusual and less easily definable words like ‘straight-hitting’ (*chikt’a*), ‘pliable’ (*nǔngch’ōng nǔngch’ōng*) and ‘delicately chewy’ (*agǔnjagǔn*).

### **Towards a Model of Personal Style Formation and Expression**

One could argue that personal style is ubiquitous, and conspicuous from the outset of every musician’s development. Even the beginner cannot help but subject musical material to their own interpretation in accordance with their temperament, aesthetic sensibilities, likes and dislikes, and physical constitution – demonstrating a clear sense of ‘I’ in everything they do. Thereafter, personal style is developed through experience and experimentation. Every musician appraises the world around himself/ herself and selectively draws patterns, structuring principles, ideas and information from it – including from experiences in non-musical modalities (see Berliner 1994: 485–504). Experimentation then reveals which new material can be effectively adopted and adapted, working aesthetically and practically to fit with and enhance existing practice while also communicating desirable associations, connotations and affiliations.

Of course, certain people exert lasting influence over the developing musician’s thoughts and behaviour – serving as models and sources for repertoire, lore, aesthetic values, techniques and codes of conduct. In some cases, authority figures insist upon particular practices, enforcing imitation of their own version of tradition and imprinting their own identity on future expression – as in the Indian *guru-shishya* relationship, for example (see Kippen 1988). Other aspects of personal style, however, may be derived from selective processes, wherein the individual has taken the initiative; one thinks here of Tim Rice’s subject Kostadin drawing from diverse sources, each providing different benefits (1994: 48–53). Subsequently, following processes of imitation, assimilation and experimentation, the internalised material and techniques become welded together in fresh new configurations, forging a distinctive idiolect.<sup>8</sup>

Within the East Coast shaman tradition, style formation is strongly guided by authority figures. During performance, the elders offer instruction through gestural indication and terse

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<sup>8</sup> These processes are effectively interrogated by Berliner, writing in regards to jazz (1994: 63–288).

admonishment. During breaks, they single out particularly effective and ineffective elements, advising the use of more adventurous material or admonishing others for being overly ambitious or diverging too far from norms. Strong social bonds exist between junior and senior ritualists, with the vast majority of ritualists having been born into the profession or adopted (unofficially). Each junior ritualist has been guided in his or her development by a mother or father ritualist (or both), engendering distinct stylistic similarities. At the same time, however, all ritualists are exposed to a wide pool of influence. Rituals usually go on for several days, affording diverse encounters with others' personal styles. Indeed, 'watching and listening during ritual' is often cited as the primary learning strategy. If someone plays an exciting pattern during ritual, anyone is at liberty to appropriate it, perhaps enquiring 'What was that great pattern?' during a lull in proceedings.

Within many traditional music spheres, the emergence of a truly distinctive personal style is only encouraged and accepted by the musical community later in the musician's life. First, one must demonstrate sufficient mastery over the repertoire, showing a working knowledge of stylistic norms. Then, as one's authority and seniority grow, so does one's autonomy, and one becomes freer to challenge the norms, albeit always within limits imposed by oneself, culture members, and sometimes other authorities.<sup>9</sup> In the East Coast ritual tradition, this rule is strictly enforced. The senior ritualist Kim Junghee explained as follows, alluding to his cousin Kim Yongt'aek who is recognised for his extraordinarily powerful style:

Kim Yongt'aek didn't play that powerfully to begin with. It happened later. On reaching a certain point, he devised his own way... Of course, I'm the same. My own style began to grow when I was around the late 30s. In the teens and 20s, I was just keeping the tradition as it was. Every kind of music is like that: it doesn't happen right from the beginning... I've taught that to my own followers as well: 'you too must make your own patterns but first you must get the foundation, study the elder's patterns, and then you can upgrade'... It's like with a baby. First, you crawl and then you toddle and then you walk. Babies don't begin by working out their own way of walking!

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the Korean cultural preservation system stipulates that appointees must not subject their art to change. See the Cultural Heritage Charter: [http://english.cha.go.kr/english/about\\_new/charter.jsp?mc=EN\\_02\\_04](http://english.cha.go.kr/english/about_new/charter.jsp?mc=EN_02_04), accessed date 10/8/2016

Unsurprisingly, this same principle is also evidenced in other Korean genres where personal style is similarly highly prized. In *p'ansori*, for example, only those who have achieved mastery of technique and repertoire can experience the eureka realisation of '*tŭgŭm*' ('realised sound'), when a truly distinctive and fully convincing voice comes into being. Only acknowledged masters go on to have their particular styles recognised as '*padi*' or '*che*', to be followed by future generations (Kwŏn Osŏng, personal communication, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2016).

Personal style formation is informed by diverse inter-connected considerations, typically including:

1. Aesthetic considerations: Is this beautiful/ satisfying to me? Is this beautiful/ satisfying to the target audience?
2. Considerations concerning identity expression: Does this accurately articulate my existing and/ or desired social affiliations?
3. Benefit considerations: Will this enhance my status, reputation and economic situation?

However, all music makers are in competition with others. Accordingly, they also direct these considerations towards others' creativity, engaging in a distinctly comparative evaluation. Of course, focus will be concentrated more upon rivals whose artistry, audience, work opportunities and status are perceived to overlap substantially with their own. In the East Coast shaman tradition, competitiveness is upfront and highly conspicuous, manifested through frequent comparative evaluations: 'Person A is good at x but not so good at y; Person B is not quite so good at x but better at y...' Only the most revered, reviled and inept are depicted in wholly positive or negative light.

Competition not only fuels personal development; it also exerts powerful influence on the direction of that development, with the evaluation of others' artistry, identities, affiliations, and audience responses stimulating avoidance of certain areas and engagement with others. This process also reveals scantily addressed yet potentially fulfilling niche areas. By 'filling the holes', the individual can not only enhance their distinctiveness and meet unfulfilled

needs but also, crucially, contribute towards establishing a condition of relative mutual complementarity amongst the broader pool of musicians, thereby offsetting the fierceness of competition.<sup>10</sup>

An ecological niche perspective is certainly helpful for shedding light on social interaction and creative expression within the individual East Coast shaman troupe. The troupe's rituals are vast in their scope, involving large portions of the community, going on for several days, and seeking to address human needs in a comprehensive manner. This is achieved through diverse ritual actions, stories, songs, dances, prayers, karaoke-style episodes, spoken dialogue, humorous skits, and more.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, success is dependent upon having troupe members with varied yet complementary skill sets, personalities, ages, levels of authority and appearances – a miscellany of jokers, philosophers, beautiful youngsters, charismatic elders, skilled paper-flower makers, people who encourage playful disorder, people who organise, powerful drummers, light drummers, and so on. This provides the richest possible experience. Consequently, from the moment of entering the profession, one's development is directed towards establishing a constellation of specialisms and skills that complements others' constellations, enhancing them through contrast, while simultaneously manifesting ample distinctiveness, filling in areas of performance weakness and offsetting competition. As the ritualist Park Bumt'ae told us: 'Everybody has their special things. They have to, don't they? Otherwise it won't work'.

While each musician's socio-musical affinities are registered in their personal style, so too are aspects of their psychological makeup. Sometimes, it can seem that a musician's essentialised personality, as extrapolated from others' encounters, is reflected within their musical output – as with Beethoven and other semi-mythologised characters for example

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<sup>10</sup> The present authors are surprised that so few ethnomusicologists have thought to apply a niche theory perspective to the exploration of musical style formation – drawing from the pioneering works of cultural ecology (Steward [1955]1990; Barth 1956; Rappaport 1968) and from later developments (for example, Love 1977; Alley 1982; Kendal 2012). We particularly advocate the application of niche construction theory (NCT), which addresses the previous unfortunate tendency to underplay individual agency in evolution-related conceptualisation (see Rahaim 2006: 35, 36); now organisms are seen to not only respond to but also modify their niches through processes of negotiation (Odling-Smee, Laland and Feldman, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Nowadays, troupes mainly perform good fortune rituals (*Pyölshin kut*), to re-establish a state of harmony between gods and community members, and post-death rituals (*Ogwi kut*), to soothe the souls of the deceased and bereaved (Mills 2007: 19–28; 2012).

(Nettl 1995: 24–27).<sup>12</sup> In jazz spheres too, where establishing a unique musical personality is often stressed (see O’Donnell 2013), the most celebrated masters’ musical personalities are commonly interpreted to be extensions of their own inner personalities, as reflected in their other behaviour.<sup>13</sup> Humphrey Lyttelton, for example, demonstrates this outlook in his interpretation of Lester Young’s playing:

The subtle twists and turns which I have described... owed much to the character and personality of the man himself... Many musicians and promoters who had dealings with Lester... will testify that this accurately describes the personality of the man who devised a strange, monosyllabic vernacular of his own, discouraged interviewers with oblique and devious answers and, in one phase, feigned homosexual mannerisms in order to keep the world at arm’s length... One rewarding outcome of Lester’s reluctance to look the world in the eye was his predilection for those notes in the scale... which introduce a degree of harmonic ambiguity. (2008: 386)

However, it is not always possible to unambiguously relate aspects of personal style to an identifiable static set of personality traits as a kind of reflection in sound.<sup>14</sup> At any point in time, a person’s musical preferences are informed by a momentary ‘interaction between qualities of the person and qualities of the physical and social environment’ (Deary and Matthews 1993: 299–300), with a myriad of situational experiences, social affiliations, needs and constraints playing a part alongside changeable inner conditions of mood and thought pattern (Rentfrow, Goldberg and Levitin 2011: 1141). Furthermore, the extent to which a person possesses a single static constellation of personality traits is very much open to question, with some even arguing that ‘the whole notion of traits is illusory’ (Kemp 1996: 14). In addition, people sometimes favour musical characteristics that appear not to match their

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<sup>12</sup> Personality-centred explanations of musical works abound in educational documentaries such as the *Genius of...* mini-series presented by Charles Hazlewood (2004/2005, BBC2).

<sup>13</sup> Ivan Hewett writes: ‘If I was rash enough to attempt a definition of jazz’s essence, I’d say it was the unpremeditated revelation of human personality through a musical instrument, mediated by jazz’s inherited idiom’ (*Telegraph* 7<sup>th</sup> February 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, within the field of music psychology, empirical studies have been conducted to elucidate correlations between personalities and favoured musical qualities – building upon the earliest studies (Cattell and Saunders 1954) to apply more rigorous forms of psychological assessment and acknowledge the breadth of contemporary tastes (Rentfrow and Gosling 2003, 2011; North and Hargreaves 2008).

prevailing personality traits, instead favouring characteristics that transport them temporarily into another identity – using music to explore a hypothetical ‘what if...’.<sup>15</sup>

It is because of these complexities, no doubt, that ethnomusicological enquiries into personal style tend to sidestep the hidden dimension of personality to focus on the observable external factors that are registered within creativity. One rare researcher who does tentatively consider personality/ style connections is Leslie Tilley; in her study of drumming styles in Bali, she suggests that musical conservatism and innovation may well derive not only from ‘a constellation of external considerations’ but also from ‘internal, personalized ones’, specifically from the personality trait of being open to novelty or not (2014: 492). Although Tilley does not explore prevailing theories about personality traits, her suggestion is borne out by the widely endorsed ‘big five’ theory, wherein the Openness continuum is one of the principal domains of personality alongside Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. From the initial formulation of the ‘big five’ by Costa and McCrae (1985), the individual’s level of openness, encompassing the component facets of imagination, artistic interests, emotionality, adventurousness, intellect and liberalism, has been identified as having a particularly strong influence upon how that person interacts with the external world (Rentfrow and Gosling 2003, 2011).

While personality’s influence upon personal style remains elusive, cognitive style is arguably a more salient factor, as persuasively demonstrated by Greenberg et al. (2015). Denoting ways of thinking, perceiving and remembering information, cognitive style is thought to be relatively stable throughout one’s life, being applied in all one’s attempts to make sense of and interact with the external world. As Messick explains, cognitive styles ‘appear to serve as high level heuristics that organize lower-level strategies, operations, and propensities – often including abilities – in such complex sequential processes as problem solving and learning’ (1976: 9, cit. Kozhevnikov 2007: 468). Inevitably, therefore, cognitive style deeply informs the

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<sup>15</sup> For example, many mild-mannered conservative white children favour the hardcore sounds of gangsta rap and, as Paul Auslander points out (2009: 305), many musicians adopt performance personas deviating markedly from their off-stage personalities (see also Moore 2012: 179–181).

individual's musical thought and behaviour, their learning strategies, ways of interpreting, and consequently also their preferences.

While many different ways of thinking have been identified, these are commonly situated within two essential overarching styles – the analytic and holistic. However, contention persists regarding whether these exist as the end points of a continuum, are fundamentally opposed, or coexist as complementary processes operating in balanced equilibrium or with one dominating (Kozhevnikov 2007). Thinking in the analytic style is:

- Convergent – following logical steps to ascertain correct conclusions and leaving little room for ambiguity
- Differentiated – dividing up phenomena into discreet chunks on the basis of perceived points of difference
- Sequential – dividing tasks into discreet steps
- Reflective – cognitively stepping back to review analytically
- Deductive – applying general rules in a top-down fashion to separate truths from falsities
- Adaptive – applying standard procedures to meet current needs

Contrarily, thinking in the holistic style is:

- Divergent – generating a profusion of possible conclusions and accepting ambiguity
- Global – examining the whole as a complex constellation without isolating elements for separate evaluation
- Impulsive – limiting consideration before action
- Intuitive – relying on feelings to reach conclusions
- Inductive – deriving conclusions from specific observations
- Innovative – drawing from outside the immediate sphere of influence to develop new ways to meet current needs (summarised from Kozhevnikov 2007: 466–470 and Greenberg et al. 2015).

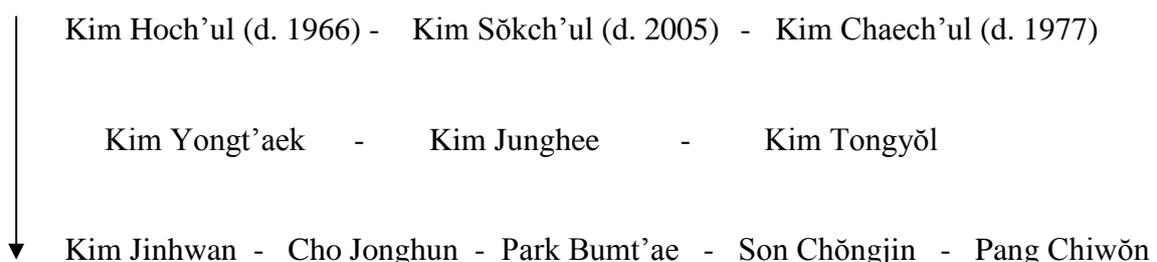
In the East Coast shaman tradition, one often encounters statements and behaviour that poignantly indicate one or other of these cognitive styles, running through individuals' changeable personalities, their non-musical lives and also their musical creativity.

Significantly, the ritualists themselves concur, readily acknowledging the existence of markedly different – even opposing – ways of thinking amongst their family members.

In summary, then, personal musical style is developed through experience and experimentation. The individual emulates the authority figures' oft-insisted-upon models while drawing selectively from other encounters. Through experimentation, the individual manipulates the assimilated patterns and behaviours to form original yet fluid constellations, which aim to meet various criteria – conforming to aesthetic ideals, connotatively and associatively stimulating favourable ideas, emotions and responses, communicating particular social affiliations, demonstrating remarkable skill and knowledge, and promoting personal gain (of status, influence or wealth). Meanwhile, comparative evaluation of others' creativity fuels skill development and influences developmental direction, informing decisions regarding what to explore and what to put aside; niche areas are revealed, wherein the individual can flourish while dissipating competitive pressure. While all of these processes are perceivable in the external world, all of the underlying decisions, of course, take place in the mind, unfolding correspondingly with the individual's personality and cognitive style – their subjective ways of making sense and responding.

### **A Deeper Exploration: The Kim Family Troupe**

Having outlined a model of personal style formation and expression, discussion will now turn to explore the hereditary East Coast shaman tradition in depth, considering three generations of male ritualists from the Kim family troupe:



Over the course of these three generations, the tradition has undergone radical transformation – as has the whole of Korea. When the three brothers Kim Hoch’ul, Sökch’ul and Chaech’ul were born into the ritual life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Mills, 2007: 6–8), there were many such shaman families active in the Eastern provinces. Although the shamans themselves maintained centres to monitor and regulate ritual activity (*shinch’öng*), there was no top-down regulation to promote broader standardisation and, consequently, it is thought that there were a number of distinguishable regional sub-styles and, within those, a proliferation of personal styles.<sup>16</sup> Thereafter, diverse factors have conspired to radically reduce the troupes’ clientele: police-enforced restrictions on public gatherings during the Japanese occupation (1910–1945); the spread of Christianity from 1945 onwards; the Korean War (1950–1953); industrialisation and mass migration to cities from the early 1960s onwards; the New Village Movement (Saemaül Undong) and the accompanying drive to Destroy Superstition (Mishin T’apa) from 1970 until the early 1980s; and increased access to other forms of entertainment, including television and radio (See Mills 2007 for more details). While charismatic shamans have been able to continue working because belief in their powers to know what is usually hidden persists,<sup>17</sup> these transformations have meant near extinction for the hereditary shamans, whose specialism has always been larger-scale community rituals. In fact, in the present day, only two troupes still persist – the above-mentioned Kim family troupe and one other, currently led by Kim Changgil. Crucially, both troupes have been appointed by prestigious preservation bodies in recognition of their rare skills – most significantly, the Kim family troupe by the South Korean national cultural preservation system in 1985 (as ICP 82–1) and the other troupe by UNESCO in 2005 for its vital role in the Gangneung Danoje Festival.

The above-mentioned transformations have engendered big changes in ritual performance, most obviously promoting a scaling down to focus on the most entertaining passages. They have also profoundly affected the ritualists’ approaches to learning and earning a livelihood.

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<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, little is known about the contents of East Coast rituals before the 1970s, when the first ethnographic studies were carried out (Ch’oe Kilsöng 1972). It only becomes possible to begin exploring musical details subsequent to the late 1970s, when the first comprehensive field recordings were produced (Yun Tonghwan et al. 2012/13).

<sup>17</sup> In cities like P’ohang, Pusan, Ulsan and Kangnŭng, there are neighbourhoods where charismatic shamans are especially concentrated and many smaller communities have one or two resident shamans.

Formerly, youngsters were born into the ritual life from shaman parentage,<sup>18</sup> received limited schooling, started learning the arts from young ages (usually before the age of 10), and remained busily committed to performing ritual. In contrast, today's younger ritualists have all graduated from university, received music education in diverse genres, and entered the tradition at a later point in life.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the dwindling demand for the troupe's rituals has prompted surviving ritualists to diversify their activities, establishing additional professional niches for themselves. These include teaching the ritual arts to charismatic shamans and/ or collaborating with them in their smaller scale oracle-focused rituals;<sup>20</sup> teaching the shaman arts to non-shamans and working alongside non-shaman musicians in creative projects beyond the ritual space.

Having briefly outlined the tradition's recent history, discussion will now turn to examine the ritualists as individuals via a series of brief style portraits. As mentioned, a particular concern here is to shed light on the links between cognitive style, personality and musical style. While two broad strains of approach are identified – analytic and holistic, the authors recognise that in reality these approaches probably do not exist as binary opposites; rather, in line with a conceptual continuum, they are indicative of differing degrees of cognitive processual emphasis.

### *Analytic personal styles*

Family lore includes many figures remembered as 'scary' (*musöpdä*). For example, the three brothers Kim Hoch'ul, Kim Sökch'ul and Kim Chaech'ul all learnt from their maternal aunt Yi Yönp'a, described as follows by her grandson Kim Junghee:

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<sup>18</sup> Kim Pömsu (born in 2016), the son of Kim Jinhwan and his shaman wife Kim Hana, is the first child to have been born into the tradition of shaman parentage for several decades. Given his family's deep immersion in ritual life, it seems highly likely that he will follow. At the age of just 100 days, he was introduced to ritual performance, handed around amongst family members and placed beside his father as he played the drum (12<sup>th</sup> October 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Although younger ritualists have used record playback technology to assist skill acquisition and older ritualists have abandoned aggressive teaching practices, learning modes remain much the same: watching and listening during ritual, memorising and practising in private, and receiving directed tuition from elders.

<sup>20</sup> According to Kim Sökch'ul, 'helping' charismatic shamans has been lucrative for many years (personal communication, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2000). Nowadays, however, it has become more prevalent, with collaborative rituals also taking place outside of the East Coast region.

She had a tough manly character. If she said ‘this is right’ then it was right... If you disagreed with her that was big business. You could see her character in her music and in her ritual. Her drumming was also strong, influenced by her character.

Kim Junghee recalls that his uncle and father (Kim Hoch’ul and Kim Chaech’ul) wielded similar characters: ‘It was always like dancing on a knife edge – no, sharper than a knife’s edge.’ While being praised as a brilliant all-round ritualist, Kim Hoch’ul (d. 1966) is remembered to have dominated younger ritualists with harsh discipline (Chang Changshik 2004: 140–141). Park Bumt’ae told us:

Apparently, Kim Sökch’ul was so afraid, he’d be frantically memorising texts while going to the toilet. People passing by would say: ‘Ah, that must be Sökch’ul!’

More details are forthcoming about Kim Chaech’ul (d. 1977), with some precious recordings also remaining, secreted away in private collections. His drumming was apparently relatively simple as his niece Kim Tongŏn remembers:

When people play drum, they usually want to put all of their skill into it but not Uncle Chaech’ul: he played regular patterns, faster than others but simply, making himself low and so raising up the officiating shaman. His playing made us very comfortable.

Pointing out how much she and her sisters loved to play around with him, she drew direct parallels between his drumming style and his personality:

He was unbelievably strict and impatient, just like Uncle Hoch’ul – categorical, with the kind of mind that says ‘These are red beans (*p’at*), those are just beans (*k’ong*)’. But he was also generous with it.

Kim Chaech’ul’s elder brother, Kim Sökch’ul, added that his drumming had a concomitant ‘*tchakdaegi ch’ae*’ quality – a dialect term denoting a robotic quality.

Meanwhile, Kim Chaech'ul's hand-gong skills were allegedly unparalleled. His brother once claimed that Yi Kwangsu, a celebrated current master of the instrument, 'was never even as good as his little toe!' (cit. Chang Changshik 2004: 35) His nephew, Kim Yong'taek, recalls that spectators would say 'His hand-gong is on fire!' His son Kim Junghee provides deeper insights, recalling that his father provided him with very little verbal rationalisation of patterns or techniques but would sometimes make analogies to the rapid pumping of pistons on motorbikes. Kim Chaech'ul was apparently very much interested in mechanics, vehicle maintenance, and, significantly, travelling at great speed; Kim Sökch'ul recalls that he was often fixing motorbikes or out-speeding police cars on the motorway (ibid.: 36). Another feature of Kim Chaech'ul's artistry was his humorous personality. His niece, Kim Tongön, remembers him as 'a real gag man', with a remarkable ability to provoke laughter during ritual 'just by standing there' and a gift for promoting the desired cathartic unleashing of tension (*han p'uri*). She recalls how her husband was very nervous when he first joined the troupe, sitting before the large gong, red in the face and not knowing where to look; 'my uncle diffused the tension completely with jokes.'

Significantly, these and other recollections draw clear links between Kim Chaech'ul the man and Kim Chaech'ul the performer; the same personality traits, styles of behaviour and ways of thinking that shaped his extra-ritual interactions with his young nieces and his motorbike hobby also informed his artistry. Specifically, the accounts seem to suggest a rather analytic approach, marked by categorical thinking and a compulsion towards precision and accuracy.

Of course, it becomes much easier to examine the relationship between inner- and outer- style in regards to present-day ritualists, and Kim Yongt'aek's artistry clearly epitomises the analytic approach today. Kim has been the troupe's lead drummer since the early 1980s and the tradition's ICP holder since 2005, when Kim Sökch'ul passed away, and the ritualist Chöng Yöllak put it to us that his drumming is 'the text-book version of our music.' It is balanced and precise, with strokes articulated very close to metronomic rhythmic subdivisions.<sup>21</sup> As Cho Jonghun explains, it is also 'based on power – straight-hitting (*chikt'a*)... Playing hand-gong seated next to him, it sometimes hurts my ears!' Kim has cultivated a particular set of playing techniques to enable his strong, crisp patterning – for

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<sup>21</sup> Here, we write 'very close' rather than 'on' to acknowledge that Kim is a master of subtle micro-rhythmic placement, as confirmed by micro-rhythmic analysis (see Mills 2011).

example, using one swing of the wrist to execute rapid pairs of strokes on the lower-pitched head, exploiting the natural bounciness of the skin.

Like other researchers (Chang Hwiju 2008, Pang Sünghwan 2010), we have found that Kim’s style lends itself to transcription and analysis: all his patterns can be represented without any distortion using crotchets, quavers, semiquavers, and acciaccatura. As Cho Jonghun explains: ‘He always makes the patterns so that they fit perfectly – like the toothed wheels in clockwork.’ The transcription below (Figure 1) shows Kim’s playing at the start of the second section of *ch’öngbo* (a 30-beat cycle).<sup>22</sup> It demonstrates several characteristics of his personal style, specifically unpredictable switching between on-beat and off-beat accentuation and long strings of quavers in the left hand. In this transcription, and also subsequent transcriptions, the top line represents strokes played on the higher-pitched drumhead (*ch’aep’yön*) while the bottom line represents strokes played on the lower-pitched drumhead (*kungp’yön*); the ‘X’s denote strokes on the large gong, and the starting points of each cycle.

The transcription consists of six systems of musical notation, each with a top staff for the higher-pitched drumhead and a bottom staff for the lower-pitched drumhead. The time signature is 3/4. The first system starts with a 'set signal pattern' marked with an 'X' and includes sections labeled 'A' and 'A1 (denser)'. The second system features 'off beat' patterns, 'B', 'B extended', and 'B1'. The third system shows 'off beat pair', 'C + off beat pair', and 'C + on beat pair', with 'C + repeated pulses' indicated below. The fourth system includes 'on beat', 'off beat', and 'closing pattern' sections. The fifth system shows 'overlapping patterns' and 'closing pattern'. The sixth system, titled 'With song:', shows a sequence of rhythmic groups: '4 (crotchets)', '3', '2', and '6 (2+2+2)'. 'X' marks indicate the start of each 30-beat cycle.

Figure 1. Kim Yongt’aek’s powerful patterns, as demonstrated in the second section of *ch’öngbo*

<sup>22</sup> Recorded by Mills at a ritual in Mop’o village, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2000.

From the outset, Kim Yongt'aek claims to have modelled his style closely on that of his father, Kim Ho'chul. While others 'ran away', he endured the typically harsh training, spurred on by a 'strong competitive spirit' and particularly by long-term rivalry with Kim Changgil, his direct equivalent in another troupe. But, interestingly, he denies any subsequent stylistic personalisation, claiming: 'I'm still doing exactly the same, playing exactly what I learnt from the elders... and that's what others should do too'. As the tradition's ICP holder, it is perhaps not surprising that he should tow the preservation system's anti-change line. However, other ritualists stress that Kim is actually conservative by nature. Alongside his father's musical patterns, he also inherited his father's distinctly analytic ways of thinking and responding – drawing clear delineations between correct and incorrect, favouring logical precision and disliking ambiguity, and preferring the application of well-established procedures and methods to create order. Kim recognises that his insistence on these qualities establishes him as the troupe's tough guy:

In the old days, the elders were scary and we practised hard because we were afraid of beatings. Today, it's only me who is a bit scary and insists on things being right, isn't it?

Kim Tongyöl is another senior ritualist whose playing suggests an analytic cognitive style, albeit a remarkably different musical style from that of Kim Yongt'aek. Kim Tongyöl plays in a subdued fashion, with minimal extraneous bodily movement and all strokes executed at a quiet volume. Again, this seems to reflect deep-rooted personality traits: both inside and outside the ritual space, Kim Tongyöl is rarely seen to speak to anybody and his face is often flatly inexpressive, which his wife, the shaman Kim Tongön, laments is often negatively interpreted. Kim Tongyöl's musical style is sometimes described as 'meticulous' (*kkomkkom han*) and 'like the ticking of clockwork', and it is significant that he himself claims to have mastered the structures by 'working them out' (*t'ödük hada*). His playing is invariably characterised by the continuous quasi-mechanical articulation of metronomically accurate pulses, becoming subtly louder and softer in waves, with hands operating in unison, as in Figure 2 (below).<sup>23</sup> While this approach is never taken as representative of the genre, the officiating shamans often consider it preferable to over-virtuosic playing that competes with the shaman's song rather than accompanies.

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<sup>23</sup> Recorded by Park at a ritual in Nasa village, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

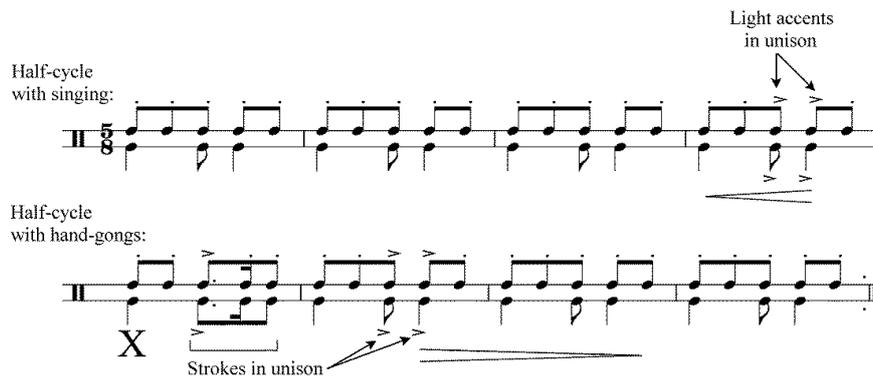


Figure 2. Kim Tongyöl's metronomical style in the fourth section (*chang*) of *ch'öngbo*

The troupe's senior ritualists evidently strongly control the younger musicians' developments, insisting upon emulation and not yet allowing marked distinctiveness. This is the case for the two young virtuosi who have been learning from Kim Yongt'aek – his adopted son Son Chöngjin (for over 10 years) and younger disciple Pang Chiwön (for about 4 years). Even their freest improvisatory flights appear to be executed using their master's building-block patterns, playing techniques, and favoured techniques of variation and development. However, Cho Jonghun suggested that a divergence of style was just beginning:

Before Pang Chiwön appeared, Son Chöngjin was playing the same as Kim Yongtaek. But then Pang Chiwön appeared, playing even more exactly the same... So now Son Chöngjin is slowly changing to be a little different.

Meanwhile, Park Bumt'ae has experienced greater liberty. When he joined the tradition in 2000 he did so through adoption by a widowed [is this correct?? As in Kim Yonghui is a woman?] senior shaman, Kim Yönghui (Kim Sökch'ul's eldest daughter), which left him without a dedicated ritualist father. Accordingly, he has been freer to apply a more selective approach, deliberately working towards a hybrid style fusing Kim Yongt'aek's power, Kim Junghee's ceaseless inventiveness (discussed below), and Kim Sökch'ul's 'rustic old-time flavour' (also discussed below). Park explains:

The structure is all from Kim Yongt'aek but inside the patterns are from grandfather. My way of learning involves guessing: 'What would he have thought about this?'

Meanwhile, Park's approach is well recognised to be distinctly analytical. Kim Sökch'ul himself stated, 'Bumt'ae could become a lecturer: he asks questions systematically, one and then another' (Chang Changshik 2004: 198), and Chöng Yöllak, another ritualist, told us:

Bumt'ae is good at analysis and I think that, amongst us, he understands the music the best.... He's looking at it from a different level – from above. I think that's because of his character. When we learn patterns, we only think about the pattern. But he thinks, 'Why is this pattern like it is? Where does it come from? What is happening inside it?'

Park's analytic approach is also apparent within his teaching methods, which stress the use of metronome for rhythmic precision and piano for pitch accuracy, and from his observations about others' performance. Tellingly, when the authors asked him for his analysis of Kim Junghee's remarkably irregular *kutkõri* patterns – discussed later with accompanying transcriptions (Figure 5) –, Park replied that Kim's patterns were 'wrong' because they did not conform to the established conventions. Meanwhile, illustrating a more holistic approach, Park's colleague Cho Jonghun exclaimed: 'But they work!'

### *Holistic personal styles*

Thankfully, Kim Sökch'ul's life story, knowledge, opinions and creativity are well documented in biographical accounts and a large body of music recordings.<sup>24</sup> He was the tradition's first ICP holder when the category was set up in 1985 (asset 82–1), remaining its representative until his passing in 2005.

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<sup>24</sup> Kim himself was impressed by Kim Myönggon's biography (1987) (personal communication, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2000). Yi Duhyun's published fieldwork recordings, from the early 1980s, provide a vivid picture of his ritual artistry (Yun Tonghwan et al. 2012/13).

Compared to his two brothers (discussed in the previous section), Kim Sökch'ul evidently cultivated a markedly different personal style, reflecting a very different kind of mind. His daughter, Kim Tongön highlights the acute contrasts with her Uncle Chaech'ul:

My father was very feminine, sensitive, and a perfectionist. So his musical style was slow with very complicated patterns, compared to Uncle Chaech'ul's faster pace and manly style. My father didn't like playing fast. So with *p'unöri* [an oft-played ritual musical structure], when I played hand-gong, sitting next to him, I found it very difficult to follow because he played it so very slowly.

His nephew, Kim Junghee, also draws clear links between the man and his music:

His character was like mine. He didn't get angry easily. Everything should be easygoing: he tried to understand other things, not fight them. The pliancy within his character was there in the pliancy of his patterns.

Yet Park Bunt'ae, who learnt drum from Kim Sökch'ul, recalls that his master would often rail against simplicity and regularity: '*Chö – kung – da*: That kind of pattern is a children's pattern – not a proper ritual pattern, like *tö-dŭ-rö-dö-dö*, *tö-dŭ-rö-dö-dö*, *ku-ru-gu-gung-gung*'. Accordingly, his variations were usually difficult to learn, typically featuring irregular accenting, unpredictable switching between forceful and relaxed playing, unexpected placement of patterns, accents and silence, and rumbling left-hand patterns, executed using a propulsive throwing back of the shoulder. Figure 3 (below) shows two of Kim's variations for *p'unöri* (an eight-beat cycle)<sup>25</sup> and, immediately beneath, two variations that Park Bunt'ae played for us to highlight particularly characteristic features of his master's style:<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Recorded by Mills in Ch'uksan village, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2000 – a rare instance when Kim took charge of the drum during ritual. By that stage in his life, he would mainly spectate, offer criticism, and play the *t'aep'yöngso* shawm.

<sup>26</sup> Recorded by the authors during a private interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2014.

Unexpected accenting/silence

Unexpected accenting

Forceful, with propulsive left hand

Unexpected accenting

Relaxed

Forceful

Forceful, with propulsive left hand

Park Bumt'ae's emulation:

Forceful

Relaxed

Forceful, with propulsive left hand

Unexpected

Relaxed

Unexpected

Unexpected

Figure 3. Two variations for *p'unŏri* played by Kim Sŏkch'ul and two variations played by Park Bumt'ae, emulating Kim's style

Over the course of his life, Kim was open to learning from diverse sources. While much was forced upon him by the 'scary' seniors, he sought out additional skills by travelling further afield, collaborating with allied troupes (such as those of Wŏn Hwasŏn and Pak Ch'unshil), and pooling skills with similar-aged ritualists such as his close friend Kim Chaesu (Chang Changshik 2004: 36–38). As Kim Yongt'aek attests, the in-troupe competition would surely have become less fierce as he and his brothers established their own niche areas of expertise: 'They each had their own special things, you see?' Kim Sŏkch'ul's rivalry with Song Tongsuk, however, was lifelong, the latter being of similar age, reputation and pedigree, and a leading figure in the aforementioned rival troupe (Ch'oe Kilsŏng 1981: 122–136). Within the Kim family troupe, Song's distinctive drumming style, with its near-constant rolling

patterns on the lower-pitched drumhead and sparse punctuating strokes on the other head, endures as a primary reference point of how one should not play; his successor, the aforementioned Kim Changgil, plays in a remarkably similar way.

Tellingly, Kim Sökch'ul widely explored other genres and styles too, learning *p'ansori* from the master singer Pak Tongjin, the *t'aepyöngso* shawm from Pang T'aejin, Wön Changhyön and Im Chaegün, the *p'iri* oboe and *taegŭm* flute from other musicians, and various arts from his Uncle Pömsu's *namsadang p'ae* [travelling entertainment troupe] (personal communication, 28 April 2000; Chang Changshik 2004: 38-40, 109-111). Although initially raised in the North Kyöngsang province ritual style, he also learnt the Kangwön province and Pusan area styles, thereby enabling the expansion of his troupe's client territory (Mills 2007: 91–96). And, much later in life, he collaborated in various 'fusion' projects, some with jazz musicians (Howard 2006: 153–155).

While stylistic versatility seems to have been commonplace in the old days, Kim was evidently prone towards employing his broad skills in surprising ways. For example, he introduced the *t'aepyöngso* to the East Coast ritual space – the instrument's harsh sonority and unfamiliar modal content from the Southwestern region challenging the traditional aesthetic. Park Bumt'ae recalls that he also contravened conventions in his *t'aepyöngso sanjo*, introducing novel patterns emulating the *taegŭm* flute and revising the ordering of sections:

In *sanjo*, there is a fixed sequence, isn't there? – 1 2 3 4. But he would just change things around all the time – do 1 and then 3, or just 1 or 2. Grandfather was always totally unpredictable.

And while Kim's brothers were unwilling to blur male and female roles and identities, Kim was different, as his daughter Kim Tongön recalls:

In the old days, there sometimes weren't enough of us to deal with all the rituals so my father would put on my mother's dress and head-scarf and do *Shimch'öng kut* [a narrative story derived from *p'ansori*].

For one period in his life, he even grew his hair long and wore ear-rings outside of the ritual space – atypical behaviour amongst hereditary shaman males and even more unusual amongst non-shaman males.

In many ways then, Kim's ways of interacting with the world, both musically and non-musically, appear to have contrasted markedly with his brothers', suggesting a more holistic cognitive style – allowing a profusion of widely contrasting ideas, accepting ambiguity, favouring unpredictable spur-of-the-moment decisions, and drawing from outside the immediate sphere of influence to develop new ways to meet current needs. Significantly, Kim's conversation was characterised by these same qualities.

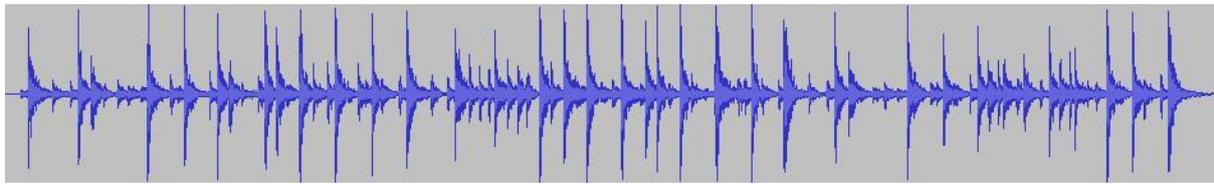
Amongst today's senior ritualists, it is Kim Junghee who most clearly demonstrates a holistic approach – his softness and pliability in music-making and beyond forming an acute contrast with (and complement to) his older cousin Kim Yongt'aek's tough rigidity (discussed earlier). Park Bumt'ae, who has learnt from both, demonstrated the stylistic differences by playing the following *p'unŏri* variations (Figure 4, overleaf),<sup>27</sup> first emulating Kim Yongt'aek's playing (above) and then emulating Kim Junghee's (below). The wavefile images visually represent their defining characteristics particularly effectively.

People who favour patterns that fit together 'like clockwork' invariably judge Kim Junghee's playing to be inferior to Kim Yongt'aek's, and the latter himself told us:

Junghee plays things that he's devised himself a lot... I always tell him that making those patterns is without any value; the old techniques would be appreciated more – and people who are trying to learn and famous scholars agree.

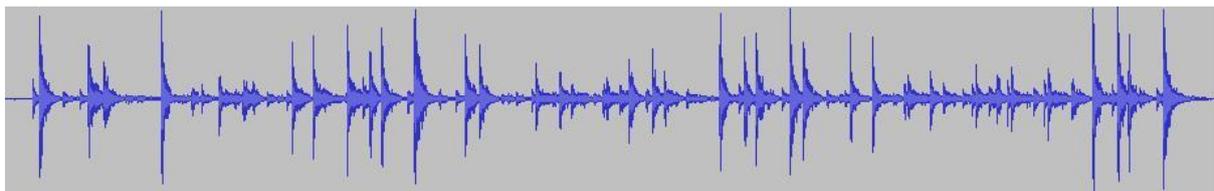
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<sup>27</sup> Recorded by the authors during a private interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2014.



Powerful throughout,  
Fast + metronomical

Consistent accenting



Lyrical, fluctuating dynamic +  
often unmetronomical (with push and pull)

Unexpected placing

Unexpected

Counter-metric subdivisions

Figure 4. Park Bumt'ae's emulation of Kim Yongt'aek's style (top) and Kim Junghee's style (bottom), playing two *p'unŏri* variations for each, with accompanying wavefile images

However, there are many who highly value Kim Junghee's artistry, with its exciting risk-taking, experimentation, complexity, widely varied articulation,<sup>28</sup> compelling narrative logic (Mills 2010), and teasing timing, often involving the subtle stretching and compressing of musical time. Cho Jonghun, his ritualist son, incisively explains:

Kim Junghee *constantly has to create new things*. He constantly challenges himself and through doing so, he creates exciting new patterns – and then he shows off to us. That's his charm. He says: 'Did you see that? It was good, wasn't it?' and we say 'Yes!' ... In the past, I thought it was a bit juvenile but now I think it's precious, because it means he's still young and our tradition is still alive. Even if it doesn't quite work sometimes, he *insists on developing*. Even if a string of patterns doesn't really fit into the rhythmic cycle, he has pride, and he will squeeze it or stretch it until it goes. With Kim Junghee, *the teeth in the cogs don't match but, strangely, the machine still works. If you calculate it, it sometimes seems wrong – but it feels right!...* And when he's teaching, he *can't ever play the same thing twice...* – which makes it very difficult for learners. Every day *he feels different and plays accordingly*. But Kim Yongt'aek will play the same yesterday, today, tomorrow. (Authors' italics)

Figure 5 (overleaf) captures a particularly Kim Junghee-esque episode during ritual performance,<sup>29</sup> replete with inventiveness and humour (apparently inherited from his father, Kim Chaech'ul). Here, Kim is leading the ensemble in the establishment of a new rhythmic cycle, *kutkōri* – a moment when convention dictates one should play several simple cycle-defining variations (as shown beneath in Figure 5). However, Kim spontaneously does the very opposite, playing a pair of supremely irregular variations that are impossible for the accompanying hand-gong players to synchronise with – thereby promoting laughter. It is unthinkable that Kim Yongt'aek would break with such a fundamental convention or introduce such rhythmic ambiguity.

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<sup>28</sup> In contrast with Kim Yongt'aek, rather than use one swing of the wrist and the skin's bounciness to execute rapid pairs of strokes on the lower-pitched head, Kim Junghee articulates every sound with an independent wrist movement. This allows precise control of every sound, but prohibits displays of extreme speed and volume.

<sup>29</sup> Recorded by Park, Nasa village, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

Kim Junghee's *kutkori* patterns:

Standard *kutkori* patterns:

Figure 5. Two very irregular variations for *kutkōri*, as played by Kim Junghee, with more typical variations below

In contrast with Kim Yongt'aek, Kim Junghee celebrates the fact that the old music, as learnt from his father Kim Chaech'ul, has subsequently undergone transformations:

My father's patterns are still there inside my own playing and I sometimes suddenly feel: 'Ah, this is from my father!' But I don't ever try to remember those patterns exactly as they were and preserve them. I've upgraded. You have to upgrade.

Kim Junghee's own development was evidently spurred on by in-troupe competition, with Kim Yongt'aek's expertise a constant target. Cho Jonghun recalls the competitive dynamics between the two in the early 2000s:

Whenever Kim Junghee played the drum, Kim Yongt'aek would be standing behind him and would exclaim 'Oh, you still can't play it properly!' if he made a mistake. And when Kim Yongt'aek played, Kim Junghee would tell me, more privately, 'I think my patterns are better'.

Meanwhile, Kim Junghee also competed with his younger brother Kim Jungguk, particular in regards to hand-gong playing. With a character 'exactly the same as' his father's, the latter has long fostered an accordingly tough straight-hitting style, with strong accents, metronomic precision, and extensive left-hand damping – markedly contrasting with Kim Junghee's own softer style, with its weaker accenting, subtle damping, and blurred washes of sound. As Cho Jonghun puts it: 'If Kim Junghee plays *kae-gu-ru-gaeng*, Kim Jungguk plays *ta-ta-dang*'. At the same time, Kim Junghee's development has been motivated by long-term rivalry, specifically with Kim Myōngdae, his direct equivalent in age and skill from the other rival troupe – son of, and accompanist for, the late great shaman Shin Sōngnam. Persisting since they were both teenagers and often fiercely bitter, the rivalry has only recently ceased to be a preoccupation, now that their paths seldom meet. Finally, various life changes have also informed Kim Junghee's stylistic development, with a dramatic 'level up' occurring in the mid-2000s, around the time of his marriage, the birth of his daughter, and his rise to second-in-command in the troupe. As he puts it, his 'heart became more relaxed... and sensitive to others' needs', and he suddenly found 'greater freedom to devise more clever patterns'. So, as his older cousin's deteriorating health compromises his ability to extemporize ingenious patterns, conversely, Kim Junghee is 'flying', as Cho Jonghun puts it.

In short then, Kim Junghee's creativity seems to be wholly permeated by holistic thinking. Challenging the clear delineation of categories, he favours ambiguity by positioning sounds between metric subdivisions, employing the full dynamic spectrum, and producing blurred sounds on the hand-gong. Meanwhile, his extemporisation involves the spontaneous outpouring of diverse ideas, with decisions made impulsively and intuitively, innovation favoured over reproduction, and less reliance on the systematic application of conventional procedures. As with Kim Sōkch'ul, these ways of thinking and playing correlate with the personality trait of openness: Kim Junghee has eagerly learnt other genres and styles and, tellingly, it was he who persuaded the other troupe members to abandon the traditional cylindrical stick formerly used to play hand-gong in favour of the *samulnori* mallet-type stick.

Amongst the younger generation of ritual musicians, Cho Jonghun has been closely emulating Kim Junghee's style ever since being adopted as the latter's ritual son in 1999, with everyone expecting that he would inherit Kim's niche as the troupe's most virtuosic hand-gong player. Although Cho has learnt some Kim Yongt'aek-style patterns, he claims to avoid them in his playing, in the interests of displaying loyalty and stylistic consistency (both aesthetically and regarding playing techniques). Tellingly, he adds, 'Those patterns don't actually match my character either: I don't like to sweat and I don't like to be seen to be exerting myself either' – an attitude that pervades Cho's life, promoting a style often considered unusually 'pretty' (*yebbūda*).

The final young generation ritualist to be considered here is Kim Jinhwan whose approach is one of 'supporting and never exceeding' (as Chŏng Yŏllak incisively puts it). In large part, this approach has developed out of intensive practising and performing with his subdued father Kim Tongyŏl and assertive mother Kim Tongŏn: like his father, he employs a modest repertoire of patterns and avoids overly complex, loud or surprising patterning that might distract attention away from the officiating shaman. However, because of his father's unassertive disposition, he has been free to limit his emulation, developing other attributes more in keeping with his own character. Significantly, Kim claims that this process has happened 'naturally, without thinking' – suggesting a less calculated approach to style formation than that of, say, Park Bumt'ae – and the resulting style is wholly devoid of his father's meticulous quasi-mechanical qualities (discussed earlier). Rather, both Kim Jinhwan and his music are celebrated for their 'easy going' (*maūm p'yŏnhan*) natures.

### **Concluding Comments**

It is clear that the East Coast shaman ritualists have always thrived on difference, diverging stylistically from those they find themselves in proximity with, through their own agency as much as external coercion – thereby managing to stake their own place within the tradition, dissipate competition, meet perceived needs, and promote intrigue and excitement for all parties. As this case study demonstrates, even within – or *especially* within – a small dwindling tradition, stylistic differences can be quite radical.

While it would be possible to explain musical individualism solely in terms of lineages, loyalties, rivalries and niche-directed competition, the present authors have joined the growing group of researchers who feel the need to consider the roles played by mindset – the individual’s highly personal ways of making sense of and responding to the external world. There is truth in the ritualists’ frequent observations that people play like they do because ‘that is what they are like.’ Accordingly, this study and the model it advances have, somewhat experimentally, incorporated insights from psychological research, identifying cognitive style as a particularly salient determinant of personal musical style – something that runs through all of our interactions with the world and is therefore also registered in our highly personal musical decisions.

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