

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT: TANNER JONES

### **Performing Agency and Change Through Jeju Shaman Ritual**

(research directors: Donna Kwon and Ron Pen)

Most studies of Korean shamanism tend to privilege the “preserved” form of a recognized ritual and view changes to actual practice in a negative light, especially if they either represent a loss of “authenticity” or a loss of artistic integrity. The South Korean government’s Intangible Cultural Asset System and UNESCO are two entities that recognize, “preserve,” and promote shaman rituals throughout the country. However, these activities overshadow smaller rituals and ritual life in certain communities. In contrast to these approaches, my research project will focus on documenting aspects of ritual life that lie somewhat outside of the purview of government preservation institutions, and will examine how these institutions interact with the community to elicit change in ritual practice. In this process, I will focus my research on three areas: (1) concertization and appropriation of ritual to the stage as a means of cultural tourism in Jeju, an area which hosts high volumes of tourists; (2) documentation of practicing hereditary shamans and ritual life throughout the rest of the island, including smaller scale rituals that have thus far been largely undocumented; (3) new and changing rituals that are being performed as a political movement in relation to the new Save Jeju movement.

Beyond Jeju’s preserved ritual *Chilmeoridang kut*, there is little ethnomusicological research on smaller rituals throughout the island. My research will give particular attention to other rituals throughout the island in order to provide a dynamic portrayal of ritual life of the island as a whole. Furthermore, my research will look into how ritualists view and participate with those recognized or preserved ritual, their attempts at seeking special designations for rituals that they preside over, and how these processes affect their practices. Likewise, ritualists are seeking out new venues for performances of their rituals, particularly in cultural exhibitions such as the *Tamna Cultural Festival* and other concert venues. Along with the observations of rituals in their traditional sites, I hope to view concertized performances in non-traditional settings as a means for shamans to widen their audience and continue a tradition that may otherwise be in decline.

Finally, the struggle of the people of Gangjeong Village against the construction of a new naval base began in 2007 and continues to this day, despite the base’s imminent completion. Music has played a very prominent role in these protests, from hymns, traditional Korean percussion, to even shamanic ritual. The latter was performed for a shrine deity located near the naval base, and had been reportedly resurrected after quite a long period wherein it had not been performed. My research will explore the significance of music and ritual within the protest movement.