

The Divine *Mengdu* and Their Creators: A Study of the Divinity of the *Mengdu* and Their Relationship with Smiths in Jeju Indigenous Shamanic Religion*

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This paper argues that shamanic instruments known as *mengdu* are revered as sacred on Jeju-do and that the smiths who make the *mengdu*, as creators of divine *mengdu* and as transmitters of these instruments to the *simbang* (Jeju shamans), are regarded as sacred beings. The relationship between shamans and smiths could be seen in many places in Korea, including Jeju-do, until quite recently, though it has become difficult to identify in the course of time. On Jeju, where the sacred power and role of smiths were in evidence until twenty years ago, smiths were considered sacred because they make the material god *mengdu*. This job is extremely challenging because the *mengdu* are themselves a kind of *sillyeong*, which can be offended during the process of being made into metal instruments. Although *sillyeong* are defined as “spirits or natural objects that are served as gods,” this definition should be expanded, for the *mengdu* are metal “artifacts” also served as gods. The smith making the *mengdu* also performs the *mengdu gosa*, in which he unites the new *mengdu* with its soul and divines the future of the *simbang*. It is not the shaman but the smith who is the first user of the new set of *mengdu* for divination. Since full-time smiths making the *mengdu* do not exist any longer on Jeju, a renowned young *simbang* is currently doing the work of creating gods out of metal, showing again that “smiths and shamans are from the same nest.”

Keywords: Jeju shamanic religion, *daejang* (*daejangjaengi*, smith), *simbang* (Jeju shaman), *mengdu* (a Jeju shaman’s ritual instrument and tutelary god)

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