

= Juldarigi =

Juldarigi (Hangul : ????? , also chuldarigi) is a traditional Korean sport similar to tug of war . It has a ritual and divinatory significance to many agricultural communities in the country , and is performed at festivals and community gatherings . The sport uses two huge rice @-@ straw ropes , connected by a central peg , which are pulled by teams representing the East and West sides of the village (the competition is often rigged in favour of the Western team) . A number of religious and traditional rituals are performed before and after the actual competition .

Several areas of Korea have their own distinct variations of juldarigi , and similar tug @-@ of @-@ war games with connections to agriculture are found in rural communities across Southeast Asia .

= = Cultural significance = =

Juldarigi is an important part of several agricultural celebrations , and is a common event at the Daeboreum lunar festival .

As with many Korean rural folk traditions , the sport is regarded as a predictor of future events , specifically harvests . The outcome of a ritualised contest between the two sides of a village (East and West) was seen as an indicator of the abundance (or otherwise) of that year 's rice crop , which would be harvested in the autumn ; as a result , juldarigi and similar folk sports are predominant in the rice @-@ growing areas of the South . This is due to the common association in Southeast Asia between dragons (which the ropes of the juldarigi are thought to resemble) and rain ; as a result juldarigi or similar tug @-@ of @-@ war ceremonies have also historically been staged during periods of drought . The connection of the two ropes used (with one rope 's smaller loop being placed through the other 's larger loop) is reminiscent of sexual intercourse , which also gives rise to the sport 's association with fecundity .

= = Equipment = =

The straw ropes used in juldarigi are immense , up to 200m in length and 1m in diameter . They can weigh as much as 40 tons . They are constructed of twisted rice straw ; this choice of material is symbolic , since rice is the staple grain in the areas where juldarigi is practiced . The construction process is a communal event , reflecting the communal nature of rice cultivation . Two ropes are used , one for each team ; they are connected by a wooden beam or stump known as a binyeomok , around three metres long . The rope held by the Eastern team is termed the sutjul (Hangul : ?? " male rope ") and the Western team hold the amjul (Hangul : ?? " female rope ") . Because of the ropes ' great size , they cannot be grasped directly ; players attached smaller side @-@ ropes to the main rope to act as handles and fray its ends to provide additional hand @-@ holds .

= = Ceremony = =

The ceremony leading up to the tug of war begins at around midnight on the eve of the festival . Both teams repair to their respective ropes and offer prayers for victory ; this rite is known as goyu (Hangul : ?? ; hanja : ??) . During this time , the teams guard their ropes against tampering , as well as preventing members of the opposing team from stepping over it (it is believed that a woman who steps over the rope at this time will conceive a male heir) . Punishments can be severe ; there are records of a woman being stoned to death in the early 20th century for such an infraction . The teams then gather at the festival site and perform further prayers , this time for the safety and prosperity of the village ; sacrifices are also offered to Teojushin , the earth goddess . These communal rituals are called gosa (Hangul : ?? ; hanja : ??) . At dawn , after the completion of these ceremonies , the two teams fetch their ropes to the site ; this involves a procession with flags and costumes , accompanied by percussion music . There is then a staged debate over the connection of the two ropes , which has a symbolic sexual aspect ; innuendo and bawdy taunts of the other team are common .

Once the two ropes are lashed together around the binyeomok , the contest begins , to the shouts and cheers of the celebrants . The actual competition is short , with victory usually decided after a single pull (although some contests are played to best of three) . Because of the association of the Western direction with the concept of fertility and fecundity , the match is often fixed to ensure that the West team win (and thus ensure a bounteous harvest) . After celebrating at the house of their team 's captain , the winners will then proceed to the house of the losing team 's captain to offer their commiserations ; this often resembles a funeral procession . Both ropes are taken by the winning team , dissected and sold ; the straw taken from them is believed to have unusual protective or nourishing properties .

A children 's version , known as gosat juldarigi (Hangul : ?????? , " alley tug @-@ of @-@ war ") is often played in the streets before the main event .

= = Regional variations = =

Two forms of juldarigi , from Gijisi (Dangjin) and Yeongsang , are recognised as Important Intangible Cultural Properties of Korea . The Yeongsan ceremony is held later in the year than elsewhere , having been moved from the lunar festival to March 1 in the mid @-@ twentieth century (to commemorate the March 1st Movement) . In 2009 , a special ? 20000 coin was minted in South Korea commemorating the Yeongsan juldarigi . In Gijisi , where the sport has been practiced for at least 500 years , the traditional East / West divide is replaced with a division of teams into upriver and downriver . The centipede @-@ like shape of the rope is said to resemble the way in which the villages of the region are arranged . Gijisi is also home to a museum devoted to the practice of juldarigi .

The Miryang Baekjung Festival features a unique form of this sport called gejuldarigi (Hangul : ??????) or " spider tug @-@ of @-@ war " , which is unique to Miryang . In this version , participants are tied by ropes to a central ring , and pull in all directions .

Similar communal tug @-@ of @-@ war games take place in Laos , Cambodia and Myanmar , in all cases having a connection to fecundity and the prospect of a bountiful harvest . The Kansai region of Japan also has a tug @-@ of @-@ war ceremony which is believed to have been introduced by Korean immigrants .