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Chan E. Park/Voices from the Straw Mat

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INTRODUCTION

Storytelling takes place in a fundamentally amorphous physical setting, requiring only a teller and a listener. The realm of the story is located within the voice of the teller. A far cry from being behind the “fourth wall,”¹ *p’ansori* contains intriguing layers of “telling.” The locus of the story is in themes, values, characters, and situations, yet the “telling” manifests itself in multiple levels of complex interactions between singing and speaking, language and its vocalization, and meaning and style, as well as between the vocal and the percussive.

Let me start with the classic introduction, the etymology of the term “*p’an-sori*.” In leisure and labor, in playing and praying, in pursuing pleasure or compensation, in contests, sports, games, gambling, as well as in life’s most serious challenges, there is a Korean term, “*p’an*,” that conjures both mental and physical space for wholehearted participation. Compounded with a nominal, adjective, or verb, *p’an* delineates a frame, mold, or situation as exemplified in the words “wood-block print” (*p’anhwa*), “wood engraving” (*p’an’gak*), “new edition” (*shinp’an*), “deathlike situation” (*chugŭlp’an*), and “doglike situation” (*kaep’an*). Suffixed to an action or description, *-p’an* contextualizes the event, occasion, arena, situation, or context. Prefixed to terms of “performance,”² *p’an-* opens a public occasion with time, place, performer, and audience designation. For example, *p’ankut* is an entertainment-oriented performance also known as *p’unngmul* or *nongak*. It also designates the native shamanic ritual of the southern provinces. *P’annorŭm*, “a *p’an* of entertainment,” is a traditional outdoor variety act.

In “*p’ansori*,” “*sori*” refers to all sounds whether real, imagined, agreeable, or disagreeable. In the realm of vocal music, *sori* assumes a more specific identity as “singing.” Some define *sori* as a lengthy narrative with a plot and differentiate it from *norae*, “song” that has more of an “immediate emotional appeal.”³ In *p’ansori*, *sori* goes beyond just “singing” to become narrative expressiveness, a musical metalanguage, or a “second language” that is acquired through method and process. *P’ansori* is the performance of an oral or vocal narrative, that is, *sori* within a given context, *p’an*. Marshall Pihl says about *p’ansori*:

The Korean singer of tales is called a *kwangdae*. His oral narrative is known as *p’ansori*, a long form of vocal music in which he sings a work of narrative literature with appropriate dramatic gesture. *P’ansori*, a folk art and a popular

art, evolved at first without the aid of scores or libretti. Some writers have used the expression “one-man opera” to explain the term. The oddity of the expression aside, it does succeed in conveying the four essential characteristics of *p’ansori*: it is a solo oral technique, and it is dramatic, musical, and in verse.⁴

The *p’an* of *sori* unfolds in the middle of a straw mat—a mat traditionally surrounded by the audience but today mounted on a modern stage. In his or her right hand, the singer holds a *puch’ae*, a folding fan made of rice paper, adorned sparingly with brush painting or calligraphy and then pasted onto bamboo ribs. A performance customarily begins with *tan’ga* as the preamble.⁵ The singer tests his or her voice, the folding and unfolding of the fan, and the set of gestures; the drummer checks the deftness of his hands and fingers, the drum’s tautness and suppleness, and his *ch’uimsae* (or *ch’wimsae*), stylistic cries of encouragement. This is also the time for mutual assessment between the singer and the drummer, and more importantly between singer and audience: the former assesses the level of appreciation, mood, and likes and dislikes of the latter; the latter grades the presence and caliber of the former.

Ah, Youth! My dear young ones!
Waste not your youthful days,
But do what you have to do.
The root of all human conducts is
None but love for your country and parents, is it not?
Wang Sang [Wang Xiang], frozen, prayed on ice,
Out from the fishing hole caught a carp,
Maeng Chong [Meng Zong], on his knees, prayed and wept in the
bamboo grove,
Under snow deep found a bamboo sprout,
With his utmost served his parents.
Another ancient man named Kwakkö [Guo Ju],
Whenever he had a special dish prepared for his parents, his own child
would
Eat it, so to bury his child away,
Was digging a site when a pot of gold he found,
All to better serve his parents.
(From the Chŏng Kwŏnjin version of *Hyodoga*, “Song of Filial Piety”)

At this point the voice is warmed up, and the singer enters the main narrative, alternating between drum-accompanied singing, stylized speaking, and recitative chanting without the drum. As the narrative unfolds, the singer paces the mat or

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sits down as befits the story's context. In speaking, the singer introduces the dramatic context, and in singing or chanting, he or she "paints" in fine detail the scenery or dramatic action, or fathoms the characters' thoughts. The voice alternates between relating in a tone not unlike that of a stern Confucian pedagogue and enacting all moral propositions. Stepping out of storytelling to moisten the throat or wipe off perspiration, he or she is neither a narrator nor a character but a disclaiming performer engaged in personable and often humorous rapport with the audience. Between intense singing when in the narrative frame and informal relaxation outside of it, the cycle of engagement and disengagement provides the performance with elasticity and endurance: the traditional *p'an* may continue for hours on end, as attested by *p'ansori* elders. The vocal richness also contrasts with and complements the minimalist visual aesthetics: simple attire, sparing gesture, and an uncluttered stage delimit a world of imagination with the voice as the principal guide. The only physical prop, the fan, conjures versatile symbolism succinctly through folding and unfolding, demarcating scene changes and character entrances and egresses, and accompanying the action as the narrative evolves.

Equally complex is the role of drummer, the timekeeper through all the singer's transformations. He sits on the floor to the singer's left,⁶ facing the *puk*, a barrel-shaped drum crafted from strips of wood wrapped in hide in the cylindrical middle and leather on the hollows at both ends. *T'ongbuk*, a "whole-piece drum," crafted from a hollowed out tree trunk, is rare and highly prized. With a drumstick fashioned from birch or hardy orange in his right hand, the drummer alternately plays the right side and the top, and gently taps or caresses the left side with his left palm. With his attention glued to the singer's breath, notes, and movement, he spins out the rhythmic fiber referred to as "*changdan*" (lit., "long and short"), widely introduced as a set of "rhythmic cycles." The drummer is far from a passive auxiliary; drumming forms an active repartee to singing—sympathizing, encouraging, rebutting, countering, coaxing, consoling, conjuring, provoking, grappling, and sparring. Less than competent drumming will inhibit a singer's talent, as emphasized in the saying "*il-gosu, i-myöngch'ang*" (first the drummer, second the singer). At the height of mutual reflexivity, the two arts merge into a single flow.

Where does the audience stand? Riding the flow is the third component of the performance, represented by cries of *ch'uimsae* like "*Ölssigu! Chotta!*" (Great! Wonderful!) by the members of the audience. Of critical importance in *p'ansori* is the art of reception, attested in the term "*kwimyöngch'ang*," literally, "great singer in the ear" or "one who sings with the ear." Not too many of these remain, as the *p'ansori*, like other traditional performances, is becoming quickly depleted of its formative and performative habitat. Systematically alienated from the

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sights and sounds that previous generations intimately adhered to, modern Koreans have more or less become tourists on their own soil. In comparison with the expert, expressive, and exigent audience of bygone days that elderly singers nostalgically refer to, they are inhibited and shy. The modern self-consciousness toward traditional vestiges is not unrelated to the recent endeavors at preserving them, and the *p'ansori* mise-en-scène, a straw mat on a modern stage, is but a small reflection of the complex and contradictory cultural construction in twentieth-century Korea that sporadically recruits slices of tradition into modernity.

· · · Rebuilding Tradition in Modernity · · ·

In recent decades, conservation of Korea's cultural heritage has created a new discourse, including intriguing inquiries into modern and postmodern constructions of "the past." Despite the warning "if we celebrate a meretricious past, we cheapen ourselves,"⁷ we have welcomed into our households pieces of material culture from the past. Commercialism aids the process, so "the more expensive, the more solemn the effort to achieve authenticity,"⁸ as testified by the proliferation of antique stores, classified advertisements flaunting "vintage" wares, and strategic exploitation of "classical" melodies to attach authenticity, age, and therefore quality to an advertised product. The capitalistic search for a precapitalistic "authenticity" — as antithesis to mechanized modern existence — began around the 1960s in Korea.⁹ Efforts at preserving tangible and intangible aspects of culture came in the wake of massive sociocultural and technological change, "where a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed,"¹⁰ and where the native is in conflict with the modern. The efforts began with foreign sojourners and antique dealers who were having a heyday in the acquisition of Korean household antiquities that had been expunged as reminders of collective Korean powerlessness at the hands of colonizers in recent history. Soon, urban nationals began collecting antiques and incorporating them in their living and commercial quarters: old doors for decorative screens, blanket chests for coffee tables, wooden mangers for indoor plants, stone mills for outdoor plants, pages torn from ancient books for wallpaper, and chipped rice bowls unearthed from grave sites for tea. Concurrently, the Korean government in 1963 enacted a law designating as "cultural properties" various kinds of arts and crafts from the forgotten past. "By preserving and using cultural assets, the goal is to promote cultural awareness among Koreans and civilization as a whole."¹¹

The excavation of these vestiges of old Korea presaged a venture into the realm of the intangible, following recent intellectual trends in pursuit of primor-

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dial symbols and semantics of humanity, especially the dialectic between ritual and performance. Performers considered outcasts since the dissemination of the Neo-Confucian sociointellectual tenets of the thirteenth century were unearthed on the modern stage and screen to represent the antiquated sentiments and mannerisms of their marginal existence, now valorized as “national culture.” There is a systemic paradox in the “archaeological” preservation of *minsok* (folk) culture, between its social semantics and its relevance to practitioners. In the hierarchies of power, authority, and status that influence the social distribution of cultural resources, folk culture is defined in opposition to the most highly valorized cultural forms, the “fine arts,” “elite culture,” or “high culture.”¹² “Many folk theorists, including most folklorists, have reserved the designation *folk* for peasant people, village artisans, and other occupational groups that constitute the lower, less advanced stratum of a complex society.”¹³ The arts and the artists are categorized as the “lower” until they are researched and promoted by the “higher.” This arrangement has resulted in the coexistence of dual images of folklore: a rationalistic viewing of folklore as folly, superstition, and falsehood, anachronistic leftovers detected in modern civilization, and its romantic counterimage as attractive, colorful, emotional, natural, and authentic.¹⁴

Korean folklore, as a way of searching for the past, often overlaps with a nationalistic quest for preservation. In the fallen Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910), the modernists inherited the Neo-Confucian disdain for native performance tradition—a “vulgarity” performed by “outcast” shamans, *kwangdae* (the traditional name for male performers), and *kisaeng* (the traditional name for female entertainers). In the colonial and postcolonial politics of the twentieth century, Korea’s cultural semantics drifted into an all-encompassing Occidentalism, looking toward the politically and economically dominant West. The Korean government’s preservation policy initiated in the 1960s focuses on the search for *wŏnhyŏng* (archetypes), a Platonic paradigm for cultural authentication. In the midst of torrents of modernization that had swept away much of the habitat that had enabled native expression to evolve with changing times, the government opted for the lesser of two evils: archaeological preservation over imminent extinction if native traditions were left to the already mutating environment. Tangible and intangible cultural objects were unearthed to represent the “folk archetypes.” According to an official involved with the preservation process, the policy “has been favorably received at the working level of UNESCO,”¹⁵ as a model paradigm for “cultural archaeology” among ethnic groups hit by similar floods of modernization.

Reacting to an ever mechanized and fragmented culture, oral storytelling has recently seen a kind of self-conscious revival in the West. Through enactment of ancient narrative traditions, contemporary performers aim to “satisfy mass

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hunger for a restored sense of rootedness . . . a role with expressive, didactic, oracular, and community-binding functions.”¹⁶

In Korea, *p’ansori* is among the selected “archetypes.” It emerged in the eighteenth century; it proliferated and was canonized in the nineteenth century; and it became the subject of theatrical experimentation and preservation in the twentieth century, designated in 1963 as Intangible Cultural Asset Number 5. Both performers and researchers have claimed that the “five *p’ansori* narratives” (*p’ansori obat’ang*) are the voice of a Confucian pedagogue teaching *oryun*, the “five moral rules to govern the five human relations,” respectively, wifely fidelity in the *Song of Ch’unhyang* (*Ch’unhyangga*); filial piety in the *Song of Shim Ch’öng* (*Shimchöngga*); sibling order in the *Song of Hŭngbo* (*Hŭngboga*); loyalty in the *Song of the Underwater Palace* (*Sugungga*); and chivalry in the *Song of Red Cliff* (*Chökyöikka*).¹⁷

SONG OF CH’UNHYANG

Early in the reign of King Sukchong the Great (1674–1720), a young gentleman was staying in Namwön—Yi Mongnyong, the handsome, intelligent, and gallant son of the new magistrate from Seoul. One brilliant spring day, Mongnyong had an urge to take a stroll. He closed his book and rode out to the scenic Kwanghallu pavilion escorted by the servant Pangja. There he saw in the hazy distance amidst dancing willow branches and flitting butterflies the beautiful maiden Ch’unhyang on a swing. It was love at first sight. That evening, Mongnyong visited Ch’unhyang’s house and persuaded Ch’unhyang’s mother Wölmae, a retired *kisaeng*,¹⁸ to let him have her. The two exchanged nuptial vows. Love deepened and time flew.

Meanwhile, the magistrate was promoted back to the central government in Seoul, and, as a good filial son, Mongnyong had to accompany his parents. In a Confucian society, it was unthinkable for a son of nobleman to take a concubine before passing the state examination and being properly wedded to a girl from a noble family. Pledging to meet again, they sadly parted.

An official by the name of Pyön Hakto, having heard of the beautiful Ch’unhyang, petitioned to be stationed in the township of Namwön as the new magistrate. Immediately following his inauguration, Pyön relentlessly harassed Ch’unhyang to serve him. She refused, saying she was already wed, and Pyön ordered her tortured and imprisoned. She was to be beheaded on the magistrate’s birthday as the highlight of the banquet.

Meanwhile, Mongnyong applied himself wholeheartedly to his scholarship and won the first-place honor in the state examination. He was awarded with the royal insignia to serve the state as inspector incognito. He led his secret police forces to Namwön, righting wrongs along the way. On the eve of Ch’unhyang’s execution, Mongnyong turned up at her gate. Wölmae, who had been

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praying fervently for his return as her daughter's savior, despaired at his beggared state. His return as an official of higher rank than the magistrate would have been the only recourse, and now there was no hope. At the prison cell that night, the lovers met.

At the height of the banquet the next day, the arrival of the secret royal inspector was announced loudly. Havoc broke loose as the magistrate and all his guests rushed around looking for places to hide. Justice was delivered at last, as the royal inspector ordered punishment for the corrupt officials and freedom for the innocent. Ch'unhyang, too, was brought before the royal inspector. He asked her if she would serve him instead of the magistrate. Lashing at him for being no better than the magistrate, she demanded her death without delay. He ordered the lady-in-waiting to show her the jade ring she had given him at parting as a token of eternal love. Moments of happy recognition follow, and the story ends with great jubilation.

SONG OF SHIM CH'ŎNG

Long, long ago, in Peace Blossom Village in the Hwangju district, there lived a blind man by the name of Shim Hakkyu, with his good wife Kwak-ssi. She was diligent and resourceful, and took care of her husband with utmost devotion. Life was good, except they did not have a son to carry on the family name, an unpardonable breach of Confucian filial responsibility, so they prayed for a son. At last they begot a child, but to their great disappointment it was a girl. They named her Shim Ch'ŏng. Kwak-ssi, weakened by the birth, fell ill and died, and Blindman Shim was left alone to care for the newborn baby. Thanks to the kind women of the village who took turns nursing her, Shim Ch'ŏng grew to be a beautiful girl with a filial heart, and Blindman Shim found joy and happiness in her tender loving care.

Shim Ch'ŏng turned fifteen. Having heard of her beauty and virtue, Lady Chang, widow of the late Minister Chang, one day sent for Ch'ŏng to come to her mansion in Arcadia Village. As Ch'ŏng was visiting Lady Chang, the sun was setting. Home alone, Blindman Shim was anxiously awaiting her return. Cold, hungry, and worried, he groped his way out into the drifting snow to look for her. He slipped into an icy stream and nearly drowned, but a Buddhist monk passing by pulled him out of the water. Feeling sorry for Blindman Shim, the monk told him that omnipotent Lord Buddha in his temple would help him regain his sight, but he would first have to donate as many as three hundred straw sacks of sacrificial rice for the prayer. Beside himself with hope and excitement, despite his penniless state and against the monk's warning, Blindman Shim pledged to donate the proposed sum. Back home, he sorely regretted his

thoughtless blunder, but the pledge was final, and, according to the monk, he would become crippled for offering false commitment to Lord Buddha.

When Ch'öng returned home and heard what had happened, instead of scolding her father, she comforted him, urging him not to despair. From that day forth, she prayed to her guardian spirits to help procure the sacrificial rice. Her ardent prayers were answered. One day, a group of merchant sailors entered the village announcing they would pay any price for a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old maiden to be offered to the Dragon King of the four oceans as insurance of their safe and prosperous voyage. Ch'öng committed to follow them to the sea in return for the delivery of the sacrificial rice her father had promised to the temple. Leaving her devastated father and the sympathetic villagers behind, Shim Ch'öng followed the sailors to the sea. At the assigned hour she threw herself into the raging waters of Indangsu.

Virtuous deeds do not pass unnoticed by omniscient Heaven. Shim Ch'öng was sent back to float on the surface of the sea in a magical lotus bud. The sailors, on their way home from a profitable journey, in passing Indangsu, reminisced on the sad end to Shim Ch'öng's life. To console her spirit, they offered a ritual ceremony. Drums and chants were invoking her from the other world and, lo and behold, they spotted a mysterious lotus bud floating toward them from afar. The sailors brought it onto the deck and returned home.

Meanwhile, the empress had passed away, and the emperor, instead of remarrying, tried his hand at horticulture by collecting in his garden all sorts of plants from all over the world. He was delighted when the captain of the merchant ship presented him with the mysterious lotus bud from the sea. One night, the emperor was unable to fall asleep, and he was strolling through his flower garden. He was drawn to the fragrance of the lotus bud, and suddenly it bloomed, and from within emerged Shim Ch'öng. She became the empress.

Though Empress Shim had the whole world at her disposal, she missed her father. To help her find her father, the emperor decreed that all blind men of the country attend the royal banquet for the blind to be held at the palace for one hundred days. Back in the village, Blindman Shim had been living in grief and remorse until a woman by the name of Ppaengdögine appeared and married him. When the royal decree arrived at the village, Blindman Shim set out for the capital with his new wife, but at an inn on the road she took all the valuables and eloped with a younger blind man. After numerous hardships, on the last of the hundred days, Blindman Shim arrived at the banquet. Commotion erupted as his name was announced. Several officers rushed out to escort him to the inner palace where Empress Shim was anxiously awaiting the good news of her father's arrival. Seeing it was her father indeed, the empress dashed down the aisle in

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stocking feet to embrace her father. In the intensity of surprise, Blindman Shim regained his sight. Wonders did not cease! Blessed by Empress Shim's heavenly piety, all the blind people of the country one by one regained their sight. The story ends with great jubilation.

SONG OF HŪNGBO

Long ago in a valley where Kyōngsang, Chōlla, and Ch'unch'ōng provinces meet, there lived two brothers, Nolbo and Hūngbo. The younger brother Hūngbo was good, but the older brother Nolbo was obnoxious and greedy. As the Confucian law of inheritance dictated, Nolbo inherited the family assets with which he was to fulfill his basic responsibilities of caring for his family. Instead, he chased Hūngbo and his family out into the cold.

After much wandering, Hūngbo and his family settled in a valley among the homeless. The children sang for food daily, and they were about to give up when one day a *Tosa* (Taoist monk) visited them. Seeing the family had nothing to spare for alms, the monk instead took Hūngbo deep into the valley, found an auspicious home site for him, and disappeared. Hūngbo assembled a mud hut there and moved his family in. Life seemed a bit more bearable indeed, and all of them survived the harsh winter.

One fine day next spring, a pair of swallows flew in and built a nest under Hūngbo's eaves. Soon two babies were hatched. During the first flight one of them fell and broke its legs. Kind Hūngbo and his wife treated it with utmost care and put it back in the nest. Autumn came. All the birds began preparing their journey to their winter lands in the south. Bidding farewell to his benefactor, Hūngbo's swallow took his leave.

It was homecoming in the Great Hall of the Swallow Kingdom, as millions of swallows from all over the world flocked in to report their arrivals. Hūngbo's swallow limped in and recounted to the Swallow King his birth, broken leg, and resuscitation thanks to the man Hūngbo. Greatly impressed, the Swallow King presented a magic gourd seed for Hūngbo's swallow to take back home the following spring. Next spring, Hūngbo's swallow returned home with the gourd seed. With a thankful heart Hūngbo planted the seed behind his house. The plant climbed and climbed and soon yielded three beautiful gourds on their thatched roof. Ch'usōk, Korean Thanksgiving, was approaching, and having nothing else to celebrate the holiday with, the family one day gathered and sawed the gourds open one by one. Out poured money, rice, gold, silver, and silk, and they become the wealthiest family in the country.

Nolbo heard in the wind that Hūngbo had become very wealthy. Seething with jealousy, he came over one day to see for himself. Determined to become

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wealthier than his brother, he caught a dozen swallows and, one by one, broke and bandaged their legs. The next fall, he, too, harvested three beautiful gourds. When they were opened one by one, instead of treasures and rice, demons and goblins rushed out amidst oozing feces and shrill curses. Nolbo became destitute overnight. But good Hüngbo took in Nolbo and his family to share his wealth and his living quarters, and they lived happily ever after.

SONG OF THE UNDERWATER PALACE

The Dragon King of the Underwater Palace was bedridden with a grave illness, and all the medicine in the world could not cure him. One day, a Taoist monk descended from the sky to tell him that his only cure would be a hare's liver. None among the members of the king's aquatic cabinet had the courage or integrity to venture to the land to find a hare for the king except loyal Pyölchubu the Turtle. With nothing except a portrait of a hare folded and inserted deep in the folds of his neck, Pyölchubu left the Underwater Palace for the sea. After a lengthy journey through icy waves, Pyölchubu landed on a shore and looked around. In the valley, on land and on air, animals and beasts were engaged in a heated argument: "Who among us is the oldest and deserves the highest seat of honor?" Confident that there had to be at least one hare among them, Pyölchubu called out from his hiding place, "Mr. T'o [Hare]!" But his chin was locked and his tongue was numb from navigating through the icy water, and the words staggered out as "Mr. Ho [Tiger]!" Inadvertently he had invited trouble upon himself! After many more life-threatening hardships, Pyölchubu found a hare and by hook or by crook succeeded in luring him to the Underwater Palace. Arriving at the palace, the hare realized he had been tricked. Gathering his wits together, he told the Dragon King that regrettably he had left his liver in his mountain dwelling and had to go back for it. Desperate for survival, the Dragon King ordered Pyölchubu to take him back to the land. Pyölchubu was no fool, but he did not dare contradict his king. Landed safely, the hare insulted Pyölchubu profusely before hopping away. In his flighty celebration, however, the hare let himself get caught again, this time in the grip of an eagle. Again, the hare outsmarted his captor and survived. Meanwhile, Pyölchubu's loyal heart had moved Heaven, and he was awarded with the heavenly medicine with which to cure his king.

SONG OF RED CLIFF

Historical background: Toward the end of the Later Han dynasty, the political power of China was divided among warlords and its land looted by bandits. The emperors in the capital were mere puppets in the triangles of a power struggle among eunuchs, relatives of dowager queens, and the scholar-gentry. As a son of

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an adopted son of a eunuch, Cao Cao had no family background to boast of, yet through a series of conquests and brilliant strategic manipulations, especially against the Yellow Turbans, he rose to the position of prime minister to the puppet emperor. With imperial authority behind him, he brought one warlord after another to surrender until all North China came under his control.

In the meantime, situated in the southwest was Liu Bei, who, although a minor official, retained his pride as a descendant of Liu Bang, the founder of the Han dynasty, and felt it was his responsibility to restore the Han court. Meanwhile, Sun Quan was in control of the eastern territory south of the Yangzi River. In A.D. 208, Cao Cao led his 830,000-man army southward against the allied forces of Liu Bei and Sun Quan, the last hindrance to “his” unification of China. The battle at Red Cliff (Chibi) along the Yangzi River in modern Anhui province in which Cao Cao suffered devastating defeat, as recounted in the Chinese *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, is the background of the *p’ansori* the *Song of Red Cliff*.

P’ansori version: Yu Pi (Liu Bei),¹⁹ having lost his trustworthy strategist Sŏ Wŏnjik (Xu Yuanzhi) to the snare contrived by Cho Cho (Cao Cao), at the recommendation of the departing Sŏ sought out Chegal Yang (Zhuge Liang) to replace Sŏ. With three humble visits to Chegal Yang historically known as the “Three Visits to the Grass Hut” (*Samgo ch’oryŏ*), Yu was able to win the heart of the era’s wisest man.

In the next episode, the battle at Pangmangsŏng fortress, Yu Pi with Chegal Yang’s help won a minor battle. Chegal Yang subsequently paid a visit to Son Kwŏn’s (Sun Quan) headquarters to reveal another of his clever ruses to instigate Son’s advisor Chu Yu (Zhou Yu) to join the battle against Cho Cho. At Cho Cho’s camp on the eve of the battle at Red Cliff, the soldiers were drunk, homesick, and in anticipation of a bloody battle. Back in his camp, Chegal Yang performed a ritual prayer to Heaven to bring about a southeasterly wind, an unlikely phenomenon in the middle of winter. But Heaven helped, by sending the southeasterly wind with which Chegal Yang would destroy Cho Cho’s force.

The battle at Red Cliff ends with Cho Cho’s utter defeat. Kwan U (Guan Yu) the noble warrior captured him on Hwayongdo (Huarongdao) path but, remembering a previous favor, released him.

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Since the era of *Chosŏn ch’anggŭk sa* (History of Korean singing drama, 1940),²⁰ the first known text rich with insider testimonies, reiterated and supplemented by Pak Hwang (1974, 1976) and Chŏng Pyŏnguk (1981), the “informants” of the

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fading past have passed on. Their absence coupled with the massive substitution of oral culture with print culture has led to categorical mistrust of their oral testimony by a number of modern-day researchers demanding proof in print, particularly on the emergence of *ch'anggŭk*.²¹ It is ironic that their devotion to an oral tradition is accompanied by skepticism of oral accounts of the very tradition. Since the leading singers of *p'ansori* and *ch'anggŭk* “handed down their scripts orally, for the most part, it is almost impossible for us to verify them today.”²² Situated at the crossroads of the past and the present, *p'ansori* study has nevertheless been blessed with a number of master singers, drummers, and connoisseurs to recount the “old days.” The study of *p'ansori* has been extensive—as attested by the exhaustive listings in the annual *P'ansori yŏn'gu* published by P'ansori hakhoe (Association of P'ansori Study)—evolving around the origin, history, singers, styles and schools, texts, musical characteristics, aesthetics, discipline, transmission, modern adaptation, and emergence of *ch'anggŭk*, dramatized *p'ansori*. In the 1966 symposium “The P'ansori Genre Question” multiple disciplines contested its ownership, focusing on the art's origin, genre, narrative themes, and musical and theatrical elements, but concluded that “*p'ansori* is *p'ansori*.”²³

The failure to hang a genre on *p'ansori* is a reminder that Western intellectual classification is by no means a “universal point of reference in relation to which others recognize themselves as particularities.”²⁴ The question of genre also rests on the coexistence and relationship between handwritten texts—mostly of singers—and printed texts frequently categorized as “*p'ansori* novels” (*p'ansori sosŏl*): Was singing constructed from the novels, or are the novels transcriptions of singing with literary embellishment? How are they like or unlike? In rationalizing *p'ansori* as a singular narrative genre, Cho Tongil dissociates it from the classical novel, “because it has the characteristics of dramatic oral prosody.”²⁵ Discussion is ongoing, but it fails to address a key issue: examination of the term “*sosŏl*” for the traditional Korean written narrative and its conceptual difference from the English “novel.” At one time in the West when “literature” meant poetry, the novel was “a modern upstart . . . a popular form that could not aspire to the high callings of lyric and epic poetry,” but as narrative claimed cultural centrality “in the twentieth century the novel has eclipsed poetry.”²⁶ The modern Korean *sosŏl*, developed with direct influence from the Western “novel,” fills the role of a genre as defined in Western literature. The *sosŏl* of the traditional era, a product of the traditional Korean language and narrative style, cannot be expected to conform to the constitution of the Western novel. Furthermore, *p'ansori* is an amalgamation of the poetic, the dramatic, the narrative, the vocal, and the musical, a unity impossible in the standard genre divisions. Its literary transcription may have a

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resemblance to the written novel, but it cannot be equated with the hegemonic notion of the novel as incompatible with poetry or drama. The application of the “hopelessly novel-centered” Western-derived views of narrative literature are of questionable utility, as “their assumptions about what a narrative should be are derived from their understanding of the novel.”²⁷

In *p’ansori*, the scope of the narrative expands beyond language to the realm of vocal music. Kim Hŭnggyu asserts that the study of *p’ansori* should free itself from obsessive novel-centeredness toward inclusion of musical as well as literary study.²⁸ Since the works by Pak Hŏnbong (1966), Yi Pohyŏng (1969, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1979, 1980, 1982), and Paek Taeung (1982), despite the growing sophistication in the field, the study of *p’ansori* as the performance of *sori* seems stalled, largely owing to the schizophrenic treatment of *p’ansori* as an object of literary discussion and not of practice. Subsequent scholarship “did recognize its vocal presence as singing, but incorporated neither its aspect nor its performative context.”²⁹ Although writing is a highly effective channel of conversion to “reconstruct for ourselves the pristine human consciousness which was not literate at all,”³⁰ literacy may be adequate to preserve, in a limited way, oral but not necessarily vocal works. Numerous ethnographers have endeavored to describe in writing such performative knowledge as rhythmic structure, performer-audience dynamics, vocal styles, aesthetics, composition, and transmission, but the knowledge of the interior—acquired only through somatic encounter with the art—is mostly missing, limiting creative works to the reiteration of the already iterated.

Would musical literacy help better document the interior? Since the 1969 trial with the *Song of Hŭngbo*,³¹ Western staff notation has established itself as a standard requirement in a master’s thesis on *p’ansori*, a far cry from the picturesque and free-form “voice maps” singers create as a mnemonic device in the process of acquiring *sori*. Staff notation may be able to preserve the basic movements to a limited extent but not the essence or the aesthetics of the voice. In the realm of vocality, both writing and notation are rarely more than a crude reminder to the ear already familiar with its performance. The textual and aesthetic contents of the voice evade the notational skeleton, just as stress, pitch, and other suprasegmentals of a spoken language escape linguistic transcription. Especially in Korean traditional music, where individual notes are typically elongated into melismatically undulating “play,”³² staff notation fails to describe the in-between movements rendering character to the music. Confessing the discrepancy in his preface to the transcription of the *Song of Ch’unhyang*, Kim Kisu limits his task to revealing the bare bones structure and “general” flow.³³ On differentiating between *ujo* and *kyemyŏnjo*, the two prominent melodic modes in *p’ansori* singing,

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Chŏng Noshik resorts to the human ear. “These terms, designating the quality of tones, are hard to define in words. One can only discern the difference in hearing it as sound.”³⁴ Complicating the description of *p’ansori* singing further is its interfacing with a reflexive dimension termed “*imyŏn*” (lit. “picture within”), the realm of interpretive aesthetics that projects not only the story but the inner dimension of story. Sources of insight into aspects of the performantance of *p’ansori* comprise critical essays and ethnographies written by practitioners of *p’ansori* singing or drumming, including Im Chint’aek (1981 and 1990), the late Kim Tonggae (1983), Yi Kyuho (1984), Kim Myŏnggon (1984), Chŏng Hoech’ŏn (1991), Wang Kich’ŏl (1992), Chŏng Hoesŏk (Chung Hoi Suk, 1994), and Kim Sŏngnyŏ (1995). The bibliography is expected to grow with many universities offering master’s programs in *p’ansori* and attracting young practitioners into academia.

· · · An Epic Voice · · ·

A narrative poem is a verse that tells a story, and an epic is “a long narrative poem on a serious subject chronicling heroic deeds and important events.”³⁵ With reference to the established epic canon, mainly including the ancient Babylonian *Gilgamesh* saga, the Sanskrit *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, and the Greek *Illiad* and *Odyssey*, the *New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* explains the term:

Epic usually develops in the oral culture of a society at a period when the nation is taking stock of its historical, cultural, and religious heritage . . . often focuses on a hero, sometimes semi-divine, who performs difficult and virtuous deeds . . . involves the interaction between human beings and gods. . . . Typically long and elaborate in its narrative design, episodic in sequence, and elevated in language . . . employs a range of poetic techniques, often opening with a formal invocation to a muse or some other divine figure, and frequently employing elaborate formulaic figures . . . and other stylized descriptive devices such as catalogues of warriors, detailed descriptions of arms and armor . . . descriptions of sacrifices and other rituals. . . . [It] incorporates within it not only the methods of narrative poetry, but also of lyric and dramatic poetry. It includes and expands upon panegyric and lament. With its extended speeches and its well-drafted scenic structure, it is often dramatic and is perhaps with the choral ode the true ancestor of ancient drama.³⁶

The epic as described above corresponds to many of the basic characteristics of *p’ansori*. Formulaic invocations and chants do contribute to the “telling” world of *p’ansori* narrative, along with cataloging of things, scenes, and actions in lyrical, dramatic, and rhythmic variations. There are differences as well. Battle

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scenes and warriors, though not totally absent as attested in the *Song of Red Cliff*, are not a typical feature in *p'ansori*. Heroic deeds, conquests, and godly blessings enter the story world in *p'ansori*, but the heroes are typically not warriors but principled men and women, their conquests less likely a nation or a people than human frailty and fate through faith and self-sacrifice. From the narratological point of view, *p'ansori*, if not prototypical, is most definitely “an” epic or close to what the English term “epic” implies.

What is the performative status of the epic? Bakhtin situates the epic in the “absolute past of national beginnings and peak times,” to be valorized and deprived of any “relativity,” an inheritance in “completed and finished generic form.”³⁷ For Scholes and Kellogg, the epic poem is as dead as the dinosaur. “We can put together a synthetic epic with a superficial resemblance to the originals . . . but the conditions which produced the originals have passed.”³⁸ Defining oral epic song as “narrative poetry composed in a manner evolved over many generations by singers of tales who did not know how to write,”³⁹ Lord focuses his study not on the oral performance but on the composition during oral performance. An epic preserved word for word not in sacred texts but orally and repeated much the same way in each performance, *p'ansori* offers yet another dimension to the abstraction of the epic as known today. Situated in the nexus between the past and the present, *p'ansori* has not yet been completely sealed off as the absolute past but continues to evolve with time, attested by the *ch'anggük* experiment, some new compositions, and efforts at translational and cross-cultural adaptation. Perpetuating a quaint story-singing art against the tide of modernity is a challenge, and *p'ansori* indeed thrives much less on improvisation or new composition than on collective tradition and confirmation of its past. Still, its performance is far from synthetic or superficial, as it is not a surgical reconstruction of the past but a continuing past. It is not valorized posthumously in fixed literary form but as the live performance of a “national treasure” by a living “human national treasure.”⁴⁰ The singers are recognized for their aesthetic sensibility, vocal competence, and authenticity in reenacting the tradition. In sum, the epic life of *p'ansori* includes the entire process of its tradition making and tradition bearing: ancient formation, proliferation, modernization, preservation, valorization, pedagogy, acquisition, adaptation, and performance here and now.

· · · Reflexivity of Embodiment · · ·

In constructing a performance-centered text about an oral and verbal tradition, the ultimate challenge is the conceptualization in writing of what is deeply oral. The “elusiveness of verbal art itself challenges the creation of its folklore text.”⁴¹

In fieldwork, an ethnographer stands between his or her personal world and the world experienced. In writing, he or she balances “poetics” and “politics,”⁴² in the thoughts provoked and the strategies of representation. The conventions of ethnographic writing as an established genre impose restrictions on the personal voice in their adherence to “the impersonal standards of observation and ‘objective’ distance,” forbidding “too close a connection between authorial style and the reality represented.”⁴³ But a branch of ethnographic writing has acknowledged “reflexivity” as a way of “knowing” by delimiting and empowering the voice of the lived experience. Reflexivity has been interpreted as “the capacity of any system of signification to turn back upon itself, to make itself its own object by referring to itself: subject and object fuse”;⁴⁴ and it has been acknowledged that “total reflexivity requires full and uncompromising self-reference.”⁴⁵ “To be reflexive is to be at once one’s own subject and direct object”:⁴⁶

Cartesian dualism has insisted on separating subject from object, us from them. It has, indeed, made voyeurs of Western man, exaggerating sight by macro- and micro-instrumentation, the better to learn the structures of the world with an “eye” to its exploitation. The deep bonds between body and mentality, unconscious and conscious thinking, species and self have been treated without respect, as though irrelevant for analytical purposes. . . . We will have to become performers ourselves, and bring to human, existential fulfillment what have hitherto been only mentalistic protocols.”⁴⁷

For reflexivity to enhance ethnographic awareness, it should be layered together with the objective ability to separate between “self and experience, self and other, witness and actor, hero and hero’s story,”⁴⁸ promoting, not denying, objectivity as partner to subjectivity. Babcock explains reflexivity as “identity with a difference,”⁴⁹ different from Narcissus’ inability to detach from himself. For Davis, the desired result is “informed by reflexivity and assessed by a critical scholarly community . . . a reality that is neither accessible directly through native texts nor simply a reflection of the individual anthropologist’s psyche.”⁵⁰

Reflexivity in ethnographic research has assumed multiple forms and attitudes, resulting in diverse strategies in interviews and other techniques. To reduce what Davis terms the “dangers of reactivity” in social encounters while eliciting information, researchers have adopted the role of either an “inconspicuous bystander” or a committed participant, “trying to become invisible in their role as researcher if not as human participant.”⁵¹ Regardless, ethnographic research is a surreptitious and voyeuristic operation. “In its most transparent guise, reflexivity expresses researchers’ awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it.”⁵² Some reject the cloak

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of objective invisibility entirely, accepting that in social research, “the specificity and individuality of the observer are ever present and must therefore be acknowledged, explored and put to creative use.”⁵³ Entering an ethnographic tradition with a preformulated academic or intellectual agenda shapes and conditions the researcher’s experience to meet epistemological and interpretive modes or expectations. Likewise, those within the tradition formulate their acceptance, answers, and commitments as appropriate to their reading of those entering their social realm. While we assess them, they assess us. Exposed to the kinds of questions researchers typically ask in the course of a six-month to two-year grant period, some provide preformulated packets of information. In a formulaic interviewer-interviewee relationship, the latter situates his or her availability with reference to the voyeurism manifested by the former. In their unsubtle assumption of a position at the opposite end of evasive objectivity, these informants display an inflated and unreflexive subjectivity.

Can reflexivity be less censored to increase the prospects for a human encounter with deeper communication? My recommendation, from the perspective of one who has crossed the line between the oral culture of *p’ansori* singers and the interpretive culture of researchers shaped mostly in a Western epistemological frame, is for amplification of the indigenous voices. In the early history of *p’ansori* ethnography, the oral testimonies of singers provided the primary building blocks, as attested in the texts beginning with Chōng Noshik’s *Chosōn ch’anggyūksa*. Later, the journalistic exposé, prominent from the turn of the twentieth century, reduced researchers’ faith in the oral sources. Today, technology conveniently helps preserve *p’ansori* for future reference at the same time that *p’ansori* discourse tends to deviate from its oral existence as researchers ignore or invalidate its indigenous voices in favor of scientifically situated secondary voices. Departing from notions of *p’ansori* as a dinosaurlike wonder, an archetype, an antique, a national treasure, and an outcast, and against the current that alienates scholarly narrative of *p’ansori* from *p’ansori* itself, I set out to problematize it for what it is and does, as an art of story-singing and tradition making. In so doing, I have gone so far as to embody the tradition through acquisition, performance, and adaptation.

· · · My Personal Story · · ·

When I was in the M.F.A. program in directing at the University of Hawai‘i in 1976, I felt no intellectual urgency to enter the world of *p’ansori* singing, something I had briefly encountered in Korea two years before. As a foreign-born student, it would have been more sensible to enhance my English writing skills.

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Stage was my primary calling, and I had no plan to continue on for a Ph.D.; academia did not inspire me then.

That summer I made my first *p'ansori* trip back to Korea to study with Chŏng-sŏnsaengnim, who was recommended to me by Mrs. Sŏng Kŭmnyŏn, a human national treasure of the *kayagŭm* zither who had given up the honor to immigrate to Hawai'i. After three months in Seoul, I returned proudly home having learned to sing the beginning of the *Song of Ch'unhyang*. After hearing me out in their sitting room, Mr. Chi Yŏnghŭi, Mrs. Sŏng's husband and a former human national treasure of Kyŏnggi provincial ritual music called *sinawi*, warned me: "You sing surprisingly well for an academic. You must be talented. But go no further, or you'll be regarded as a *kisaeng*."

Equipped with neither the hereditary markings of a *kisaeng* nor serious academic ambition, I made the choice to commit myself to a tradition that reciprocated with a sense of fulfillment. Returning to my home soil in 1979 as an alien resident with a graduate degree, a Caucasian spouse, and a newborn child, I submerged myself in *p'ansori* under Chŏng-sŏnsaengnim. In 1981, he began teaching me the *Song of Shim Ch'ŏng*—the narrative he had been entrusted with as a Preserver of Intangible Cultural Assets—and designated me as one of his official students. The Traditional Music Association (Kugak hyŏphoe) disqualified me, because I did not have Korean citizenship. As a naturalized U.S. citizen, I had had to give up my Korean citizenship. A title does not produce a great singer anyway, I figured. During lessons, I occasionally documented what I wanted to remember, but neither religiously nor with a specific agenda. For me, the study of *p'ansori* singing evolved with my life: the birth of my second child, the death of my husband, single motherhood, the death of my teacher, remarriage. Closing the chapter with the birth of my third child, I returned to Hawai'i and to academia. I did not enter *p'ansori* with an academic agenda, but *p'ansori* was my ticket to academic reentry.

The challenge has been to acquire fluency in both the practice and its epistemological interpretation. Unfettered by "the dichotomy between a positivist understanding of social science and various hermeneutic perspectives,"⁵⁴ performance remains the primary informant for my interpretive discourse. Embodiment is a way of deepening understanding rather than expanding "territory" or searching for "applicability beyond the confines of [one's] specific research subjects and sites."⁵⁵ The list of ethnographic questions Clifford raises—"who speaks? who writes? when and where? with or to whom? under what institutional and historical constraints?"⁵⁶—could be extended: "who performs? who listens? who teaches? who learns? who preserves? who innovates? who translates? who performs cross-culturally, and why?"

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· · · Premises · · ·

The premises described below further conceptualize my strategies.

Orality, like a second language, should be embodied for fuller interpretation. “When writing was introduced,” notes Albert Lord, “epic singers . . . did not realize its ‘possibilities’ and did not rush to avail themselves of it. Perhaps they were wiser than we, because one cannot write song. One cannot lead Proteus captive; to bind him is to destroy him.”⁵⁷ The literary world in the past several decades has “newly awakened to the oral character of language and to some of the deeper implications of the contrasts between orality and writing,” according to Walter J. Ong. “Not only communication, but thought itself relates in an altogether special way to sound.”⁵⁸

Inheriting Milman Parry’s conviction that “a comprehension of oral poetry could come only from an intimate knowledge of the way in which it was produced,”⁵⁹ Albert Lord in *The Singer of Tales* (1960) probed the traditional processes of composition of oral narrative poetry among the Yugoslavian singers of the Homeric epic. He looked at how an epic singer composes as he sings, using a “formula,” “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.”⁶⁰ Marshall Pihl in *The Korean Singer of Tales* (1994) applies the Parry-Lord theory to locate a comparable formulaic composition in the Wanp’an text of the *Song of Shim Ch’öng*, concluding that *p’ansori* is “a product of the same art of formulaic oral composition that Lord describes as the genius of the modern Yugoslav epic.”⁶¹

Singing, however, is not merely a bundle of traditional formulas but an actualizing event, a performance. Performance, observes Richard Bauman from a folkloric perspective, is “an organizing principle that comprehends within a single conceptual framework artistic act, expressive form, and esthetic response . . . in terms of locally defined, culture-specific categories and contexts.”⁶² Asserting that tradition is the enabling referent, while performance is the enabling event, John Miles Foley in *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (1995) introduces the notion of “word-power”: “how words engage contexts and mediate communication in verbal art from oral tradition.”⁶³ Foley notes that despite advances in documentation and structural analysis of oral traditional works, “we have yet to appreciate in any thoroughgoing way how these features affect or influence the meaning embodied in the works in question.”⁶⁴ Beyond locating the formulaic technicalities in composition, to view the interior as well as the exterior of orality, one must enter the oral tradition, for performance radically transforms the “text” while simultaneously “actualizing it into a single unique reality or manifestation.”⁶⁵

To grasp *sori*’s inner dimension, one must grapple with the “physicality” of its

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interior in practice. In order to transmit the meaning contained in the works, it is necessary to “embody” the works in question to explore how such kinesthetic conversion affects one’s consciousness and relationship with the art and the society at large.

Tradition is the past reborn in a shifting context. Questions have been raised regarding the identity of what is referred to as tradition in modernity: What is tradition? Is it an end, or is it a process? How can a tradition survive, as museum displays or as living practices? “What begins in serendipity ends in ceremony. . . . What happens when the return of the prodigal has been accomplished, when the happy discovery that sparked such shocks of recognition has become a formula to be ritually repeated?”⁶⁶ The notion of tradition has long been suspected of having an ideological component that tends to revise a view of the past through a self-conscious interpretation of the present. Nationalist movements often change the traditions they attempt to revive, since nationalist ideologies create fictitious pasts at the expense of existing syncretic traditions.⁶⁷ A seemingly genuine tradition is in reality symbolically reinvented in an ongoing present, from the conceptual needs of the present.⁶⁸ Locating “tradition” is locating the politics of meaning in the production of a putative homogeneity.⁶⁹

From the canonical, archetypal point of view, *p’ansori* has become something of a ceremony, a fixed immutability, taxonomically designated as the fifth Muhyŏng munhwajae (Intangible Cultural Asset Number 5); chosen singers as Poyuja (“Preserver,” commonly referred to as In’gan munhwajae, “Human Cultural Treasures”); and their repertoires and mannerisms as *wŏnhyŏng* (archetypes). The narratives are no longer acquired in formulaic composition, but as word-for-word artifacts to be bequeathed in their absolute entireties. In a sense, the formulaic scale has been extended from a recurrent sets of words, phrases, stanzas, or songs to an entire narrative, including such imperfections as linguistic corruption and inherited semantic obscurity. But has the serendipity disappeared for good, leaving *p’ansori* encased as an antique reminder of the past, or will it return to allow *p’ansori* to either live or perish, and to change? Are the personnel overseeing the current preservation policy performing taxidermy or rendering a temporary relief measure? What in its vocalism still moves a modern audience, and how can it be better presented to survive a shifting modernity? Could serendipity emerge from ceremony? According to Glassie, yes, since tradition is the creation of the future out of the past, and history is “an artful assembly of materials from the past, designed for usefulness in the future . . . open to endless revision.”⁷⁰

My own attempt treats *p’ansori* tradition as the result of ongoing adaptation and revision, highlighted by the following phases of development: formulaic

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birth from existing ritual, musical, and narrative performances; canonization of the “five narratives”; construction of narrative gender by women singers; theatrical experimentation on a modern stage; depletion of the formative environment and efforts at survival; technological encounter; preservation; rebirth in a modern context with adjustment in pedagogy, acquisition, performance, and reception; and cross-cultural adaptation.

A story-singing tradition is the negotiation of multiple voices. Narrative art has at least two intersecting activities or voices, variously described as linear plot and descriptive elaboration, narrative objectivity and emotive subjectivity, or the straight and the discursive. In the “telling” the individual teller’s narrativity shapes the tale as subjectively variant, reflecting his or her mood, the audience, and spatiotemporal conditions. The two activities have previously been described as “two events—the event that is narrated in the work and the event of narration itself . . . indissolubly united in a single but complex event”⁷¹ and as the distinction between a “taleworld,” inhabited by characters situated in their own spatiotemporal constituencies, and a “storyrealm” of discourse by the tellers who inhabit another space and time.⁷²

The tale of Shim Ch’öng, for example, should be narrated variously depending on the physical and mental space and time the teller occupies at the time of telling, that is, time, place, cultural and performative context, audience composition, familiarity, preference, and the singer’s physical, vocal, mental condition. Where *p’ansori* is fixed as a set of archetypes and a singer is but a carrier, narrative difference from singer to singer and from occasion to occasion is less explicit than implicit and subtle.

How much negotiation is necessary in “traditional” story-singing? In *p’ansori*, vocal tradition adds to the already complex process of storytelling. The discipline focuses primarily on the cultivation of the traditional vocal register to be applied to the descriptive “telling” of characters, plots, situations, settings, and sociopolitical cultures located in the tale world. Communication, even in everyday language, is filled with sociolinguistic complexity. “Telling” using a special “register” that validates the entire corpus of the tradition but is no longer used in everyday linguistic or musical context involves dauntingly complex negotiation as well as vigorous and even dangerous vocal training. To a singer of *p’ansori*, performance is the culmination of a rite of passage of receiving, polishing, and achieving the *sori*, its vocal tradition, in addition to delivering a story.

Text. In studying performance, the performance itself is the text. In *p’ansori*, there is a gulf between the singing text used by the singers and the reading text studied by scholars as *kubi munhak*, “oral literature.” The differences are not readily visible to those outside *p’ansori* singing. In *p’ansori* singing, the notion

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of “text” is linked to the question “whose text?” The texts introduced in this volume are my own oral editions acquired from Chǒng Kwǒnjin, Sǒng Uhyang, and Han Nongsǒn based on the following sources:

Song of Shim Ch’ǒng, Song of the Underwater Palace, Song of Red Cliff

Pak Yujǒn—Chǒng Chaegǔn—Chǒng Ŭngmin (1896–1964)
Chǒng Kwǒnjin (1927–1986)
Sǒng Uhyang (1935–)

Song of Ch’unhyang

Kim Sejong (?–?)
Kim Ch’anǒp (?–?)
Chǒng Ŭngmin—Chǒng Kwǒnjin
Sǒng Uhyang

Song of Hǔngbo

Song Hǔngnok—Song Kwangnok—Song Uryong—Song Man’gap (1865–1939)
Kim Chǒngmun (1887–1935)
Pak Nokchu (1905–1979)
Han Nongsǒn (1934–)

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