

Melding Past and Present
Korean Identities
in Contemporary *P'ansori* Performances

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Abstract

This paper analyzes four contemporary *p'ansori* pieces as a means of elucidating the continuing and changing performance practices and sounds of the genre. These performances are not necessarily representative of all newly-created pieces (*ch'angjak p'ansori*), but by observing certain stylistic and performative qualities we will be able to learn something about the way the genre is changing and what the changes might mean in terms of Korean identity. Thus, by comparing texts, sound aesthetics, performance space, costuming, and physical gestures used in contemporary *p'ansori* performances, we will be able to investigate the ways in which a traditional art form is being re-invented to appeal to young audiences. Additionally, we will observe how *p'ansori* itself is dealing with an era of globalization as the genre absorbs influences from the outside and conversely presents a rearticulated image of Korea to the world.

Keywords: *ch'angjak p'ansori* (newly-created *p'ansori*), performative qualities, sound aesthetics, re-invention of tradition

Korea has long been recognized as a crossroads of culture; a site wherein the ideas and mores of other nations have been woven into a rich, pre-existent nationalistic fabric. The country proudly boasts of resolute characteristics that have withstood the incursion of outside forces, while at the same time readily accepting a wealth of aesthetic norms from its neighbors. Thus it is that Koreans are in a continual state of identity formation-maintaining past traditions while at the same time adapting to contemporary circumstances.

Performance practices of 'traditional' music offers us a lens through which we can clearly observe the interlacing of past and present articulations of identity. Therefore, this study will analyze various facets of performance as well as audience reception by focusing on the genre known as *ch'angjak* (newly-created) *p'ansori* (창작 판소리). By comparing texts, sound aesthetics, space, costuming, and physical gestures used in contemporary *p'ansori* performances, we will be able to investigate the ways in which a traditional art form is being re-invented to appeal to young audiences. Additionally, we will observe how *p'ansori* itself is dealing with an era of globalization as the genre absorbs influences from the outside and conversely presents a rearticulated image of Korea to the world.

1. General Introduction to *P'ansori* and the Rise of *Ch'angjak P'ansori* Performances¹⁾

Although readers of this article are likely very familiar with the historical background of *p'ansori*, it is necessary to emphasize a few key points here so as to better understand some of the ways in which contemporary performances of *ch'angjak p'ansori* both adhere to and diverge from traditional performances. Thus, in order to understand how *p'ansori* has changed over time and the significance of the genre in terms of Korean identity, we must first understand something of the genre itself and traditional performance practices. The typical performance setting of *p'ansori* is minimal; neither stage props nor special costumes are used. The singer (*kwangdae* / 광대) sits and/or stands on a straw mat (which, in addition to a folding screen demarcates the limited space of the performance area), wears traditional Korean clothing, and uses only a folding fan to represent objects (a sword, book, or saw, for instance), ideas (for example, power) or attributes (including bashfulness or sorrow). The fan may also be opened and closed to add to the aural landscape, or to emphasize certain aspects of the text sung. In addition, the drummer and audience add to the soundscape with the words of encouragement (*ch'uimsae* / 추임새) that are called out throughout the performance.

1) Portions of this brief introduction to *p'ansori* are taken from my 2002 dissertation, entitled “The Sound of *Han*: *P'ansori*, Timbre and a South Korean Discourse of Sorrow and Lament,” and a chapter entitled “Destined for Greatness: One Song at a Time” in the edited volume *Musical Childhoods and the Cultures of Youth*, eds. Susan L. Boynton and Roe-Min Kok. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 121-126.

In order to relate musical and dramatic nuances effectively, a *p'ansori* singer must learn to produce a large number of characteristic tone qualities. *P'ansori* favors a rough husky voice that conveys dramatic power and folk-like qualities. A smooth vocal quality is said to lack dramatic expression.²⁾ The harsh vocal quality called for is not easily obtained. A professional performer undergoes years of intensive training to develop a powerful voice capable of many dramatic colors; critics often claim that a singer reaches his/her prime only in his/her fifties. Singers will practice continuously for hours until they become hoarse, eventually developing callouses on the vocal chords. They may sing in the mountains or under waterfalls, attempting to match the sounds of nature, while strengthening their voices and obtaining the desired timbral qualities.

Historically speaking, *p'ansori*, as an independent art form, emerged in the mid-eighteenth century. Originally it was performed by and for people of the lower classes, and did not involve the literate aristocrats who penned the social histories of Korea. Thus, little is known about the exact origins and early evolution of the *p'ansori*. However, two theories have been proposed by music scholars. The first speculates that the genre grew out of the performance practices of itinerant entertainers, and the second claims that *p'ansori* is closely related to the rituals and narrative songs of the southern-tradition shamans. Marshall Pihl has argued that *p'ansori* probably developed from a melding of the two traditions. He writes:

2) Po-hyöng Yi, "P'ansori," *Survey of Korean Arts: Traditional Music* (Seoul: National Academy of Arts, 1973), 217.

From shaman narrative songs [the *kwangdae*] gained rhythmic patterns of drumming and singing, techniques of vocalization, interweaving of sung and spoken passages, and interpolation of songs from other traditions. From solo actors of farce and storytellers they inherited skills of characterization, improvisation, narrative development, and audience management. And the folk culture around them was an abundant source of such materials as myths, legends, stories, ballads, laments, and work songs.³⁾

Because *p'ansori* is rooted in the folk culture of Korea, the tales often contained satirical passages lampooning the noble classes (*yangban* / 양반) and surreptitiously complain of the injustice suffered by the lower classes, including the singers themselves who often lived in poverty as itinerant musicians. Despite the social chasms created by the class system, by the mid-nineteenth century interactions between the *kwangdae* and *yangban* increased as the latter's interest in *p'ansori* grew. A symbiotic relationship developed between seemingly opposite elements: *kwangdae* who sang about the *yangban*'s elitism and subjugation of the lower classes, and the *yangban* who enjoyed, financially promoted, and documented *p'ansori*.

In the first half of the twentieth century, traditional Korean life and musical enterprises experienced far-reaching changes, the result of political and cultural suppression imposed during Japanese colonial rule and of turmoil caused by the Soviet-American conflict (1950-1953) that eventually divided the Korean nation. Chan Park, a contemporary *p'ansori* singer and scholar, has noted that during the early 1900s many

3) Marshall R. Pihl, *The Korean Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University and the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1994), 8.

Korean musicians adopted nationalistic values and tried to revive interest in traditional music by resuscitating folk genres and cleansing the music that had been ‘corrupted’ by Japanese and other Western influences. “Weary of being knocked about by the current of modernity, they reoriented themselves, promoting fresh interpretations and a revival of *p'ansori*'s ‘old style’ (koch'e / 고체) aesthetics, described as genuine, traditional, unadorned, natural, straightforward, authentic, or dignified. ... They aimed for a distillation of the ‘Korean’ voice and the purging of centuries of social stigmatization.”⁴⁾

In the past and until relative recently, *kwangdae* wove their *improvised* tales⁵⁾ from the strands of the lives, emotions, and experiences of the Korean people—primarily the ‘folk’ or common people. Various records indicate that there were twelve stories or tales (12 *madang* / 12 마당) sung by the *kwangdae*, although it is apparent that more than twelve tales existed, since the records themselves differ as to the names and contents of the core performances. It is quite possible, that a large number of highly varied tales were delivered by the *kwangdae* depending on their abilities and the needs of the audiences. The needs of contemporary audiences are far different from those in the past, a point to which I will return later in the paper.

First, it is helpful to further understand how *p'ansori* has remained the

4) Chan E. Park, *Voices from the Strawmat: Toward an Ethnography of Korean Story Singing* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press and Center for Korean Studies, 2003), 100-101.

5) The notion of improvisation is being emphasized here as it was a performance practice essential to early performances, but somewhat neglected in the mid-twentieth century. However, as will be discussed below, it is once again seen as an important feature of contemporary *ch'angjak p'ansori* performances.

same and a few of the ways its performance practices have changed through the years. Beginning in the 18th century when the elite *yangban* class began taking a keen interest in *p'ansori*, the very nature of *p'ansori* began to be altered. Although the *yangban*'s efforts to preserve *p'ansori* are generally well-esteemed, their influence is also seen as contributing to the “gentrification” of the genre,⁶⁾ and marks the beginning of the demise of improvisation in the art form. It is also due to the Confucian ethics of the elite that today only five of the early tales are still enacted in traditional *p'ansori* performances.

The process of preserving cultural properties, enacted by the Korean government in 1964, has also contributed to the solidification of *p'ansori* performances. Each narrative, as performed by a famous ‘cultural holder’ (performer), has received the, perhaps dubious, honor of being protected by the Cultural Properties Protection Law. As a result, the narrations are often replicated exactly, leaving little room for improvisation and experimentation by even master singers. This law of preservation has also contributed to the stultifying of revised or newly created *p'ansori* performances –until relatively recently, at least.

However, as Charles Darwin most astutely noted (though in far more scientific and precise terms), that which does not adapt, does not survive. Thus it is, that today although *p'ansori* is regularly performed in a traditional manner, there is also an upsurge in *ch'angjak p'ansori*. It has been said that the process of ‘newly-creating’ *p'ansori* is in fact not particularly new. According to Hae-kyung Um, performers have been experimenting with the presentation for more than a century.⁷⁾ Um further

6) Park, *Voices from the Strawmat*, 56-84.

7) Hae-kyung Um, “New P’ansori in Twenty-first-century Korea: Creative Dialectics of

states that from the end of the Japanese occupation era (1910-1945) until at least the late 1970s, *ch'angjak p'ansori* could be divided into three categories: patriotic *p'ansori* (*yölsaga* / 열사가), religious *p'ansori* and sociopolitical *p'ansori*. Those pieces performed in the first two categories were “developed by professional singers with traditional training, closely [following] the stylistic idioms of conventional *p'ansori* with respect to its music and textual organization.”⁸⁾ The sociopolitical performances on the other hand were “developed mainly by nonprofessional or semiprofessional singers, who combine basic elements of traditional *p'ansori* with contemporary Korean literature. ... [The works] came to symbolize the nationalistic movement and political resistance against the dictatorial regimes of the [1970s].”⁹⁾ Despite the diversity of themes within the three categories, nearly all of the *ch'angjak p'ansori* performances of this time period had certain commonalities. Again, referencing Um:

The compositional process in the new *p'ansori* is generally in two stages: the text is usually written first, and then the music is arranged accordingly, although the text may then need some adjustment. The text may be newly written or taken from a source other than that of traditional *p'ansori*. However, the music tends to be arranged and/or improvised with a strong basis in the conventional musical style and idioms of traditional *P'ansori*, such as vocal techniques, rhythms (*changdan*), and modes (*cho*). ... The themes and textual materials featured in the new *P'ansori* of the twentieth century all tend to have

Tradition and Modernity.” *Asian Theater Journal* 25/1 (2008).

8) Um, “New *P'ansori* in Twenty-first-century Korea,” 27.

9) Um, “New *P'ansori* in Twenty-first-century Korea,” 27-28.

somber overtones.¹⁰⁾

Rather than further delving into the historical background of *ch'angjak p'ansori* we will now turn our focus onto some of the ways in which pieces are executed today, and what we can learn about Korean identity from the contemporary performances of the genre.

2. Types of *Ch'angjak P'ansori*

Although a broad range of *ch'angjak p'ansori* is rendered today, they can generally be divided into two large categories according to stylistic performance practices: namely, traditional *p'ansori* texts that are sung in a new style, and completely new *p'ansori* tales. In the case of traditional texts, the pieces are considered new because rather than performing only with the customary solo drum, the singer is accompanied by either Korean or Western solo instruments, a Korean instrumental ensemble, a Western orchestra, or a jazz band. In the case of the pieces with new texts, the performer is typically accompanied by only the traditional drum (*puk* / 북) although instrumental arrangements can also be found.

The following sections describe four pieces as a means of elucidating the continuing and changes performance practices and sounds of P'ansori. These performances are not necessarily representative of all newly-created pieces, but by observing certain stylistic and performative qualities we will be able to learn something about the way the genre is

10) Um, "New P'ansori in Twenty-first-century Korea," 29.

changing and what the changes might mean in terms of Korean identity. A description of the first two songs, both of which are based on traditional *p'ansori* songs, will be immediately followed by a brief analysis, whereas the second two pieces will be described first, and subsequently analyzed according to their texts, sound aesthetics, costuming, performance space, and physical gestures that are employed by the performers.

(1) Traditional *P'ansori* Texts with New Accompaniments

One can find numerous performances today that showcase traditional *p'ansori* texts—based on the five extant tale—accompanied by a variety of different bands or ensembles, comprised of Korean or non-Korean instruments or a combination of both. Instrumental accompaniment is not necessarily new, as one can find mention and recordings of *p'ansori* performances with shaman-based ensembles (*sinawi* / 시나위) and of course dramatic versions of *p'ansori* (*ch'anggŭk* / 창극) with accompaniment have been in existence for many years. What is worth noting in the following examples, however, is the conscious effort to create something ‘new’, and the inclusion of Western idioms into a traditional Korean musical form.

i. The *Song of Hŭngbo* with Jazz Accompaniment

According to the liner notes of a CD entitled *Korea Pansori: East to West*, the purpose of the recording was to combine traditional *p'ansori* with a jazz ensemble in such a way that a *new* genre might be given

birth—a genre that has the potential of impacting the world music scene. Kim Ki-soon, Chairman of Synnara Records, states:¹¹⁾

It is heart-throbbing indeed for pansori, which is well known as Korean traditional songs, to be *newly* born again in transformation with the performances by renowned artists home and abroad. This sort of projection, recording and release on international level ... has been originally focused on the basic direction of promotion whereby to keep the originality of pansori intact and discover pansori's essence of flavour duly to the world over.

Pansori has been justifiably recognized as a substantial part of world culture heritages that should be preserved forever by all the world villagers. While heartily congratulating on the proclamation by UNESCO, I sincerely hope that this new recording will play a great role in giving pansori another important momentum of a *new re-birth*, thus more appreciated as a new age and world music. Then it would encourage pansori to be loved not merely as a Korean traditional vocal but also as a *newly potential genre* on this ever-changing international music environment.¹²⁾

As is apparent, Kim Ki-soon is recognizing the importance of the past—the historical significance of *p'ansori* and its recognition by UNESCO as a world heritage. He even goes so far as to say that not only Korean performers, but 'world villagers' also should seek to preserve the art. That, of course, raises interesting questions about the very idea of

11) I quote Mr. Kim Ki-soon at length because it is important to recognize the way in which he stresses ideas of continuity and change. The translation of the text into English in the liner notes is at times grammatically and stylistically incorrect; nevertheless, I have maintained the exact wording as written.

12) *Korea Pansori: East to West* (신나라 뮤직, 2004), no page. Emphasis added.

tradition and continuance if non-Koreans (and by extension, individuals who potentially do not even speak Korean) are to join in the process of preservation, does that not in fact change the very nature of performance and alter the notion of ‘tradition’? Kim is equally enthusiastic, however, about wanting to propagate a new kind of *p'ansori*, providing the genre with a ‘re-birth’ that will allow it to be popular, and thus important to the world as a whole.

One of the songs featured on the *Korea Pansori: East to West* is an excerpt taken from “The Beggar’s Song” as found in *The Song of Hŭngbo* (《홍보가》 중 <장타령>). Although this is only one example, and not necessarily representative of all *jazz/p'ansori* collaborations, there are certain practices that are common to such enterprises. Although not always the case, in this recording and others, the *p'ansori* singer and drummer recorded their performance separate from the jazz musicians (which includes the following instruments: saxophone, vibraphone, bass, trumpet, keyboards and percussion) the result of such a practice as a significant effect on the finished product.

For example, at times it seems as if the singer and instrumentalists are at odds with one another. This is caused in part by the limitation of fixed-scale instruments—in this case, the vibraphone and to a lesser extent the saxophone—being pitted against a voice and vocal techniques prone to microtonal fluctuations. As a result, there is little melodic coherence between the two sets of performance; rather the coordination of musical styles rests almost entirely on rhythmic ties.

Nevertheless, in this example even the rhythm of the two groups does not appear to be fully in sync. Although in all performances *p'ansori* singers closely follow the various rhythmic patterns (*changdan* / 장단)

used in the genre, there also tends to be some rhythmic elasticity, according to the demands of the text and the singer. The rhythmic pattern used in “The Beggar’s Song” is in 4/4 (*dongsalp’uri* / <동살풀이>), however, the accent—based on the text—does not always fall on the first beat. Despite the fact that most jazz musicians are inclined toward rhythmic flexibility, in this case the accompaniment seems determined to always strongly emphasize the down beat, whether or not the singer does the same. In any case, it is apparent that although the singer is performing in a traditional style, the inclusion of Western jazz instruments creates an entirely new aural effect.

ii. The *Song of Shimchǒng* with Orchestral Accompaniment

The next example was heard live by the author at a concert that was intended to not only demonstrate Korea’s heritage, but also tout its important place in the globalized world scene. The song, *Pǒmp’i chungryu*, is based on the traditional *p’ansori Song of Shimchǒng* (《심청가》 중 <범피중류>), specifically, the scene in which is heard an onomatopoeic description of waves hitting a boat, where the title character, *Shimchǒng*, is staggering about as if hit by strong winds, immediately before she throws herself into the *Indang* Sea as a virgin sacrifice.

The solo *p’ansori* performer is accompanied by a large philharmonic orchestra, comprised solely of Western instruments. Even when accompanied only by a drum, the commencement of this excerpt is particularly melodic, however, the melodic movement is emphasized or amplified by the inclusion of the orchestra. Additionally, due to the use

of a Western orchestral accompaniment, there are some unique differences to the melody, even despite the fact that the orchestra is not at the forefront, nor playing a particularly melodic tune at the beginning of the piece.

Compared to the jazz collaboration described above, in this piece the vocalist and orchestra blend very smoothly together—there is a true consonance created despite the differences in Western and Korean performance styles the singer blends her voice not only with the stringed instruments, but the brass and woodwinds as well. In listening to this performance, it was observed that despite the fact that the performer claims to strictly adhere to traditional performance practices of *p'ansori*—most notably the methods of vocalization—it is possible to hear certain tones, timbres, and an elongated vibrato that is reminiscent of Western techniques, somehow producing an aural effect that seems ‘lighter’ or ‘smoother’ than the traditionally harsh timbres of *p'ansori*. In other words, it appears that the singer was to some extent melding her voice to the playing style of the Western instruments, rather than performing precisely the traditional ornamentation and vibrato of *p'ansori* (*shigimsae* / 시김새). This is of particular interest since many Korean instruments are said to imitate the sound of the human voice. Because this concept is so deeply engrained in Korean music aesthetics, it can be speculated that the opposite might also be possible. That is, when a Korean traditional singer is accompanied by Western instruments there is the possibility that the voice—purposefully or inadvertently—takes on some of the characteristics of the foreign instruments.

These two examples, although not intended to be representative pieces of the breadth of *ch'angjak p'ansori*, do reflect certain trends in the

newly created *p'ansori* performances. For instance, whether real or an illusion caused by the aural effects of non-Korean instrumentation, we can hear differences in the vocal presentation of *ch'angjak p'ansori*. At times a Western-style vibrato seems to be used, while at other times the traditional raspy tone colors of *p'ansori* seem to be softened or suspended altogether. Also, because the key is fixed when performing with a jazz or orchestra ensemble, the performer has far less flexibility in terms of pitch range and poetic license. The performances, including vocal production, must not vary, since people other than just the singer and drummer are involved in the presentation.

(2) Newly-created *P'ansori* Songs

The next two examples fall into the second category previously mentioned; namely completely new *p'ansori* texts, which use both traditional and new vocal and musical techniques. There are many such pieces in existence today; the majority of which are quite brief—no more than 15 minutes in length—and which tend to be comical or satirical in nature, as compared to the sometimes heart-wrenching tales of traditional *p'ansori*. For instance, there is a parody based on a battle scene from the traditional *p'ansori*, *The Song of Red Cliff* (*Jōkbyōk-ga* / <<적벽가>>). In the *ch'angjak p'ansori* version the warriors, rather than fighting along the Red Cliffs of China, are characters from the Internet computer game *Star Craft*. Thus war and *p'ansori* take on a contemporary or even futuristic view.

Another song, entitled “A Baby Dinosaur, Durli” (*Agi Kongryong, Dulli* / <아기공룡둘리>) recounts the adventures of a popular comic

book dinosaur. The singer on one recording of this piece is quite young—about ten years of age at the time of the recording. It is not uncommon for relative young children to be trained in the art of *p'ansori*. What is unique in this piece is that the song is specifically written for, and directed toward children. The liner notes of the CD indicate that difficult traditional ornamentations were deliberately omitted from the song so as to be more ‘palatable’ for young audiences.

The following two examples to be analyzed were live performances observed by the author at the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts. I make note of the performers in these two examples, because although traditional *p'ansori* text formation is mostly anonymous, in *ch'angjak p'ansori*, composer and performer (who are often one and the same) are clearly emphasized and meant to be given proper credit for his/her creation.

i. “The Song of the Confectionaries” by Pak Ji-young (박지영의 <과자가>)

This is one of the more humorous *ch'angjak p'ansori* performances personally observed. The singer begins by introducing the characters who live all live in the Confectionary Village (*kwaja-maül* / 과자마을).¹³⁾ Anyone who as lived in Korea or has been to an Asian grocery store no doubt will be familiar with most of the characters in this *p'ansori* tale, including *ppeppero* (빼빼로, pretzel sticks with chocolate coating),

13) To be honest, the term confectionary seems a bit too high class for this particular tale, so if you will excuse the somewhat derogatory appellation, from henceforth I will refer to *kwaja* as junk food.

ojingoddangk'ong (오징어땅콩, squid and peanut crackers), *hoppang* (호빵, bun with sweet red bean paste filling), and *k'anch'o* (칸초, bite-sized cookies with chocolate in the center), to name just a few.

One day a tragedy strikes the village; it appears as if someone has kidnapped the *kkameo* (까메오)—Korea's version of the Oreo—but not *all* the Oreo. No, the white cream remains behind, having lost its protective black cookies. The local villagers discuss the situation and determine that the neighboring Ice Cream Empire must be the culprits of this insidious act. The question then arises, who is brave enough to try to save the cookies? Not surprisingly, a unit of *kōnppang* (건빵)—or 'military candy'—volunteers, with the help of the *ch'ok'osongi* (초코송이)—chocolate mushrooms. After what was no doubt a fierce battle our brave little soldiers return to the village, wretchedly defeated. In fact, the *ch'ok'osongi* have been stripped of their chocolate heads, leaving only a thin, bald, pretzel body! This causes great consternation and discord among the villagers and another plan of rescue is sought after. For lack of time and space, I will forgo the further details of the rescue attempts. Suffice it to say that other schemes are made and are met with similar defeat, until the *saekkang* (새우깡)—Korea's oldest and by extension, wisest junk food—devises a plan whereby the inhabitants of the Confectionary Village, and in particular the *kkameo* cream can be successfully reunited with their beloved outer chocolate cookies. The moral of the story? Of course, the remedy is love: everyone should embrace and care for one another. Only tolerance based on love and faith can heal the village and the *kkameo*.

ii. “Song of the World Cup (2002)” by Yoo Su-gon (류수곤의 <월드컵 가>)

This tale is more serious than the one described above—and dear to the heart’s of most Koreans—but poignant in its own way. As one would gather from the title of this piece, the singer tells the tale of the events of one particular World Cup game in 2002: Korea vs. Italy. Throughout the song the male performer describes in great detail the plays of the game. Anyone (and that includes the great majority of Korean citizens) who saw the game will be able to recall or clearly imagine the movements of the players because of his comprehensive description—aided, of course, by the nearly unending barrage of replays in the days following the game. He describes the blatant fouls of Italy’s notorious player, Vieri, as well as the glorious moves of Korean striker, Hwang Sun Hong (황선홍). He explains that in the beginning of the game things were not looking good for Korea, but eventually the tide changed, the atmosphere lightened, and the situation reversed, all to the favor of the Korean team. Interspersed among the detailed analysis of the events of the game, including the winning score that occurred in the overtime play, is the now familiar sound of *taehanmin’guk* (대한민국), chanted to a simple, but riveting dotted-quarter—eighth—quarter—quarter note rhythm. The singer not only describes the game itself, but the audience reaction and their increasing enthusiasm for their national team, including the wild exuberance, untied cheering, jumping for joy, and delighted partying of fans all across the nation.

In the following sections, various components of the performances will be analyzed in order to compare and contrast these two pieces with each

other as well as traditional *p'ansori* performances.

3. Performance Practices of *Ch'angjak P'ansori*

(1) Texts and Emotional Expression¹⁴⁾

As represented by the first example, it has been observed that the majority of *ch'angjak p'ansori* pieces are humorous or satirical. Although humor has always been at the core of traditional *p'ansori* performances, that core has in the past been balanced with a variety of other emotions. However, *ch'angjak p'ansori* seems to have lost some of the emotional depth that made the genre a masterpiece, concentrating on only the lighter more jovial aspects of life, rather than delving into the pain, suffering and/or regret (*han* / 한) of earlier generations. According to Yoo Young-dae (유영대), a well-respected professor of *P'ansori* these new pieces are a reflection of the “unbearable lightness of life.”¹⁵⁾ They deal with trifles or non-serious matters, in part because that is what the young generation wants to hear. They want to laugh and be entertained by topics to which they can easily relate. What is interesting about this phenomenon, however, is that in the earliest stages of *p'ansori*, the tales sought to reflect the everyday life experiences of the common people.

14) As in all *p'ansori* performances, I use the term ‘text’ to mean the lyrics that are sung and spoken: there is no term in English to adequately describe the combined use of *ch'ang* (singing) and *aniri* (recitative) of *p'ansori*. Additionally, in traditional performances of the more distant past, no written records existed, and thus no “text” per se.

15) Young-dae Yoo, Personal Communication, Seoul, Korea. November 3, 2005.

And so, perhaps rather than turning away from its roots, *ch'angjak p'ansori* is once again achieving one of its original goals—the expression of the ordinary.

Ch'angjak p'ansori tends to not only be humorous, but also quite brief, compared to the four to eight hours required for a full-length traditional performance. This can be said to be a manifestation of a contemporary audience's understanding, or lack thereof, of *p'ansori*, its history and traditions. Again, according to Professor Yoo, to fully appreciate a traditional performance, the audience must be educated—armed with the knowledge of the *p'ansori* tales and the intricacy of their performances. They should understand when to yell out the words of encouragement (*ch'uimsae* / 추임새), and have a comprehension of the complex Chinese poetry inserted into the tales. But today's audience are not, and perhaps do not care to be so educated. For many, they simply want to be entertained for a few minutes and then leave, without having to contemplate a deeper significance of life or emotion.

It is difficult to say what the long-term effects of this performance practice will be: is it a reflection of youth's inability or lack of desire to deal with deep emotional complexities? Will *p'ansori* forever lose its depth of expression and ability to portray the entirety of human expression? Or, will a balance ultimately be found, as in traditional performance, wherein humor and satire can be used as a cathartic release from the otherwise overwhelmingly difficult aspects of everyday life? Perhaps only time will be able to answer these and other questions about the role *ch'angjak p'ansori* will play in telling the tale of the Korean experience.

(2) Sound Aesthetics

As briefly demonstrated in the orchestral example from the Song of *Shimchǒng* above, not only have the texts of *ch'angjak p'ansori* become 'lighter,' but the vocal timbres as well. As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, it was common for the early *kwangdae* to go to great lengths and endure profound physical, psychological, and emotional hardships in order to develop a *p'ansori* voice, particularly the raspy vocal qualities previously deemed requisite for performance of the genre. The majority of *ch'angjak p'ansori* performers heard of late, however, lack the broad range of use of vocal timbres used in the past and in particular is devoid of the harshness of their predecessor.

According to Hae-kyung Um:

A growing number of new *p'ansori* artists now consider themselves to be *ttorang kwangdae* [또랑광대]. The word *ttorang* means a small stream or ditch ... hence *ttorang kwangdae* means a small-time *p'ansori* performer. ... A *ttorang kwangdae* may be able to entertain his or her local audience but never would be able to attain the status of a fully fledged professional artist. ... Some new *p'ansori* artists in the twenty-first century come from a non-*p'ansori* background such as drama, literature, dance, and popular music. ... It is inevitable that the personal and artistic background of the new *p'ansori* artists will influence their performance and creative products.¹⁶⁾

In two examples described above, we can observe that, although somewhat accomplished singers in their own right, the performers Pak

16) Um, "New P'ansori in Twenty-first-century Korea," 37-38.

Ji-young (박지영) and Yoo Su-gon (류수곤) do not employ the traditional vocal timbres of a *p'ansori* performance. For instance, in the Song of the Confectionaries, Pak does not maintain the full chest-voice sound of *p'ansori*, nor does she fully utilize the raspy tone colors central to a traditional performance. There could be several reasons for this. First, it is possible that she consciously chooses to use a somewhat airy voice (at least compared to traditional *p'ansori*) and avoid harsh vocalizations, since the subject matter is light and humorous. However, there is also a complaint among some Master Singers that many young performers today want to only sing the *ch'angjak p'ansori* pieces, without having first perfected the vocal and performative qualities necessary for traditional performance.¹⁷⁾

However, it should clarify that as with the changes in text, the modifications of vocal timbre may in fact be a conscious decision on the part of all *ch'angjak p'ansori* performers, and not a general lack of 'talent' or training. In other words, it has been noted elsewhere that the sound aesthetics of many traditional Korean musics are losing their once predominantly raspy characteristics.¹⁸⁾ For instance, in the past the Korean traditional seven-stringed bowed zither (*ajaeng* / 아쟁) was played with a wooden bow. However, today it is common to use a cello, or similar type bow made of horse hair or other synthetic material, the result of which is a somewhat significant change in timbre, making contemporary sounds of the *ajaeng* far less raspy compared with the past. We can assume that this is a purposeful, aesthetic choice; that Koreans

17) This is a point to which I will return in the conclusion.

18) Heather A. Willoughby, "The Sound of *Han*: *P'ansori*, Timbre and a South Korean Discourse of Sorrow and Lament," Ph.D. Dissertation (Columbia University, 2002).

of today prefer more smooth, sonorous timbres compared to their ancestors. The reasons for this choice cannot be explored in depth at this point, but we can surmise that as life in the twenty-first century is rapidly changing, so too do the aesthetic choices of younger generations. In part because they are exposed to a far greater range of musics from throughout the world, the majority of which do not necessarily employ raspy timbres, and perhaps as well because their very lives are far less harsh compared to the suffering of their ancestors, and thus they are in need of a different sound aesthetic to reflect their own life experiences.

(3) Costuming and Performance Paraphernalia

Although not always the case, in many *ch'angjak p'ansori* the performers tend to wear costumes other than traditional Korean clothing (*hanbok* / 한복) of traditional performances. In the *Song of the Confectionaries*, the performer has fashioned a most creative costume from the wrappers of various junk foods. The cleverness of the singer must be acknowledged in her clothing choice. She is able to capture the essence of the performance piece through a visual manifestation: we can easily imagine all of the characters of the Confectionary Village, because we are exposed to their own 'outerwear' in the form of the cloak worn by the singer. We should also note that in this concert the singer does not use a fan, as is common in traditional performances. There may be several reasons for this. As noted above, the entire aural landscape of this performance is altered by the lack a raspy tone colors. Likewise, it is possible that the traditional sounds created by the opening and closing of the fan would distract from the humorous characteristic of this piece.

And, as will be discussed below, the overall movements of the performer are quite different compared with a traditional performance, and thus the fan could have been a burden to her physical expressions.

Yoo Su-gon also makes particular costuming choices for his performance of the *Song of the World Cup*. In this case, the singer is dressed in casual and simple attire. Most notably he has donned a soccer T-shirt—although somewhat surprisingly, not a flashy Red Devils shirt, as would have been worn by the thousands of fans gathered not only in the World Cup stadiums, but also throughout the streets of Seoul and the rest of the nation. In other concert settings he has also traded the traditional horse-hair top hat (*kat* / 갓), for a ‘Be the Reds’ bandana. Like Pak, Yoo also forgoes the use of a fan. However, he has replaced the traditional prop with a small, hand-held, two-headed drum (*sogo* / 소고) painted as a soccer ball—blue on one side and red on the other.

“The various new *p'ansori* themes are derived from urban, popular, translocal, and transnational cultures. The resultant literary, musical, and visual representations produce new intertextuality in which parody, satire, and irony can be fully understood through the dialectics of tradition and modernity at both local and global levels.”¹⁹⁾ Thus, the costuming choices of the performers are obvious in these examples. Rather than donning a traditional *hanbok*, which would likely seem out of place and awkward considering the context of these pieces, the performers have created clever costumes that adequately reflect the message and atmosphere they are trying to portray through their songs.

19) Um, “New P’ansori in Twenty-first-century Korea,” 34.

(4) Performance Space and Physical Gestures

In both examples the performers open, or broaden the performance space, compared with traditional *p'ansori* performances. Although traditional singers do technically have the freedom to move about the entire length and width of the bamboo mat on which *p'ansori* is generally performed, their movements are often confined to a relatively small space, and their gestures are somewhat reserved—often relatively slow, controlled, and meticulous. In the case of the *Song of the Confectionaries*, the performer takes full advantage of the large space she is afforded. She is constantly moving, sometimes almost pacing from one side of the mat to the other (perhaps in search of the missing *kkameo* cookies). Although she never actually steps outside of the designated performance space, it is as if she feels no physical restraints created by the boundaries of the mat. Additionally, her physical movements are broad, energetic, and even comical at times. There is none of the simplistic grace associated with traditional performances, but as noted above, the story being conveyed is far from conventional, and the gestures are apropos for the content of the performance.

In the case of the *Song of the World Cup*, the performer steps outside the natural bounds of the traditional *p'ansori* performing space. He moves freely not only within the stage itself, but breaks the contemporary bound of actor and audience by walking among the crowd at the outdoor performance space.²⁰ It is important to note that in ancient traditional

20) While attending the performance, for example, I was poised to film the song from a perfect location in an open space in the middle of the audience, with a clear view of the stage. However, upon commencement of the performance, the singer left the

performances of *p'ansori*, although the singers were separated from others by the restrictions of the bamboo mat, they were still quite near the audience members, interacting with them face to face, voice to voice. As in times past, in this performance the singer enters the audience space and breaks down the now, all-too-frequent barriers between audience and performer. As a result, the audience sees him more as a cheerleader for the Korea vs. Italy soccer game (readily joining him in chanting and cheering as Korea makes the critical final goal) than as an overly stoic or distant performer. He has entered their world and he has brought them into his—the living space of the 2002 World Cup games.

Both performers are successful, then, in bridging the gap between audience and performer that has arisen with the use of Western-style stages that have unfortunately created a chasm between the participants in a genre that was known for its interactive performances in the early days. In this way, we see that the performers are trying to reconnect with their audience in a very personal, intimate manner.

4. Concluding Observations

There is much we can learn from contemporary performances of *p'ansori*, although only mention a few here. First, as was noted at the beginning of the paper, in its early manifestations, *p'ansori* was primarily an entertainment for the masses—in this case, the lower-class peasants and merchants. Over time that changed, and the genre eventually became

stage and came to perform in the very spot I had positioned myself.

gentrified with the influence of the upper-class *yangban*. Although the same strict social classes no longer exist in Korea, contemporary *ch'angjak p'ansori* performances attempt to return the music to the masses, and in particular are working to attract young people to a genre they might otherwise deem as antiquated, boring, and out-of-touch with the realities of their own lives. And that is what *p'ansori* was originally all about displaying the intricacies of the life and emotions of the common folk through song, satire, humor, and tears. Thus, irrespective of the quality of the performances, contemporary audiences find the *ch'angjak p'ansori* pieces to be entertaining. And, perhaps as they become more aware of the genre, they will also become more discriminating in their taste, and the vocal and performance skill mastery required by performers in previous generations will again become requisite.

Although perhaps not feeling the han of their ancestors, contemporary audiences are also able to become emotionally involved in *ch'angjak p'ansori* productions. As noted above, the performers work diligently to draw the audience into a world that is entertaining, but also relevant to their own daily existence. Particularly in the case of the *Song of the World Cup*, the audience is able to relive the glorious moments of Korea's dominance in an important sporting event seen by millions worldwide. They can forget their disappointment in the 2006 games and simply relish the unity and exuberance felt by their compatriots in the 2002 games. Thus, a profound sense of nationalism is engendered.

As mentioned above, many professional master singers—many of whom are designated as National Cultural Treasures—have complained that contemporary *ch'angjak p'ansori* singer, particularly of the *ttorang*

kwandae variety, lack the vocal and performance abilities requisite to the art. For example, Pak Song-hŭi (박송희, b. 1927) has noted:

[*Ch'angjak p'ansori*] is an imitation not a proper *p'ansori*. Every *p'ansori* artist, even a *ttorang kwangdae*, should be able to sing well because singing is the most important element in this art form. It is not possible to expect everyone to love traditional *p'ansori*, particularly a performance of the entire story (*wanch'ang* 완창) which takes so long. It is also understandable that some audience nowadays like new *p'ansori* because it is easy and entertaining. But is just a 'wannabe' not a real thing. So we should not be won over by it.²¹⁾

There is certainly legitimacy to this claim; a lack of vocal mastery can detract from the overall presentation of *p'ansori* and may result in a lowering of the standard of performance. However, certain *ttorang kwandae* artists would counter that irrespective of the singing abilities, their very purpose is to reinvigorate, revive, and promote the “true” tradition of *p'ansori*. For example, a group known as the ‘Nation League of Ttorang Kwandae’ states that:

The purpose of our league is to regain the spirit and life of *p'ansori* as a living art. ... *P'ansori*, which used to speak for the masses, is now so detached from the life of the people it has become fossilized. ... In order for *p'ansori* to be revived as a live and living art form, it is imperative that *p'ansori* speaks about our modern time and way of life. ... We *ttorang kwangdae*, as progressive artists, will initiate this task of creating and disseminating *P'ansori* art that continues to

21) 김기형. “또랑광대의 성격과 현대적 변모,” 『관소리연구』 18 (2008), 17. Translated in Um, “New *P'ansori* in Twenty-first-century Korea,” 44.

be relevant to our changing world.²²⁾

In the end, we can observe that as with all cultural products, *p'ansori* is adaptable to change. The fusion of past and present traditions is manifest in what some may call an entirely new genre, but what is argued by others to be a re-articulation of the emotions, experience, and nationalism of Korea's forbearers. That is, *ch'angjak p'ansori* is rooted in the past, but expressed in the cultural milieu of the present: an 'invented tradition' as Hobsbawm²³⁾ might claim—but was not *p'ansori* of the 18th century also an invented tradition? Thus we see—or more importantly *hear* the voice of globalization in *ch'angjak p'ansori* performances. They are a manifestation of a changing world in which Koreans relish their long and glorious 5000 year history, while at the same time acknowledge that they exist in a world that is now deeply infused with interaction among all nations, peoples, and cultures. P'ansori has been able to withstand the test of time it has persisted even when some bemoaned that the genre was on the brink of extinction. And so it is today, *p'ansori* is finding a way to tenaciously grasp the richness of its past, while at the same time find meaning and relevance in a rapidly changing global environment.

22) Declaration of Ttorang Kwangdae, 일시구포광광대, <http://cafe.daum.net/NewAgePansori>. Accessed May 28, 2010. Translated in Um, "New P'ansori in Twenty-first-century Korea," 43.

23) Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, editors. *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

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개 요

과거와 현재를 아우르며

창작 판소리에 나타난 한국의 정체성

헤더 윌로비

한국은 이전부터 존재하던 풍부한 전통문화 위에 다른 나라에서 받아들인 문화가 아로새겨진, 문화의 교차로로서 오랫동안 잘 알려져 왔다. 한국은 외세의 침략에도 자국의 문화를 굳건히 지켜낸 점을 자랑스럽게 여기면서도, 이웃나라의 여러 문화 또한 적극적으로 수용해 왔다. 이렇듯 한국은 전통을 보존하는 한편, 시대적 요구를 담아내기 위해 노력하면서 계속해서 자신의 정체성을 형성해왔다.

한국의 전통 음악 공연 형태를 보면, 과거와 현재의 정체성을 어떻게 조화롭게 풀어내는지 엿볼 수 있다. 본고는 창작 판소리의 다양한 공연 양상과 청중의 반응을 고찰하고자 한다. 오늘날 공연되고 있는 창작 판소리의 형태는 여러 가지지만, 일반적으로 공연 스타일에 따라 크게 두 가지로 나눌 수 있다. 첫째는 전통 판소리를 새로운 스타일로 공연하는 ‘다섯 마당’이고, 둘째는 완전히 새로운 장르인 이야기다. 전통 판소리가 북으로만 장단을 맞춰 창(唱)을 하는 반면, ‘다섯 마당’에서는 소리꾼이 한국 전통 악기나 서양 악기의 독주, 한국 전통 기악 합주, 서양 오케스트라, 재즈 밴드 등의 반주에 맞춰서 소리를 하기 때문에, 전통 판소리와 차별화된 새로운 스타일로 간주된다. 이야기의 경우, 대체로 창작(唱者)은 오로지 북 장단에 맞춰 창(唱)을 하지만, 북 장단에서 변주가 나타나는 점이 전통 판소리와는 다르다.

본고는 창작 판소리 작품 네 편을 살펴봄으로써, 시대의 흐름에 따라 계속해서 변화해나가는 판소리의 공연 형태와 소리를 알아보고자 한다.

이 작품 네 편을 창작 판소리의 대표작이라고 보기는 어렵겠지만, 이 작품들의 양식적 특성과 이 작품들이 공연되는 수행적 특질들을 고찰함으로써 창작 판소리가 어떻게 변화하고 있으며 그 변화가 한국의 정체성이라는 측면에서 어떤 의미를 갖는지 알 수 있을 것이다. 창작 판소리에 사용된 가사(歌詞), 소리, 공연 장소, 의상, 발림을 비교함으로써 전통 예술이 젊은 관객의 기호에 맞추기 위해서 어떤 방식으로 재창출되어 왔는지도 살펴볼 수 있을 것이다. 또한 판소리 자체가 외국 문화의 영향을 받으면서 동시에 새롭게 표현되는 한국의 이미지를 세계에 선보이는 과정에서, 세계화 시대에 어떻게 발맞춰나가고 있는지도 알아보고자 한다.

주제어: 창작 판소리, 수행적 특질, 소리 미학, 전통의 재창출, 정체성, 세계화

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