

# Traditional Storytelling Today

An International Sourcebook

*Edited by*  
Margaret Read MacDonald

*Contributing Editors*  
John H. McDowell  
Linda Dégh  
Barre Toelken



FITZROY DEARBORN PUBLISHERS  
CHICAGO · LONDON

# ***P'ansori, the Ancient Korean Art of Storytelling***

**Chan E. Park**

*Chan E. Park gives a brief history of Korean p'ansori, discusses features of p'ansori performance, and speaks of the discipline of the performer and the transmission of this tradition. He includes summaries of five p'ansori tales.*

*P'ansori*—from *p'an* (performance, performance space, or performative occasion) and *sori* (sound, voice, or singing)—is a solo-singer type of storytelling that surfaced as a distinctive artistry about three centuries ago in the southwestern part of the Korean peninsula. Its discovery goes back to the mid-eighteenth century, when a government official stationed in Chŏlla province one day witnessed in his village a performance of the Song of Ch'unhyang, one of the most popular stories performed. He later recorded the narrative, the first transcription of its kind.

The conventional performance of *p'ansori* takes place on a straw mat upon which the singer stands, moves around, or sits, while a drummer is seated to the left of the singer. The singer alternates between stylized speaking (*aniri*) and singing (*sori*) to tell the tales of the ancient times, stories that take between three and eight hours if delivered in their entirety. They are sung (with detailed description of the scene, including the thoughts and actions of the characters) and spoken (with plot summaries, scene changes, and commentaries), which serves as a necessary break from the strenuous singing. The drummer beats the barrel-shaped drum called a *puk* on the right side with a smooth birch drumstick in his right hand, coordinated with his left palm and fingers

on the left side. As the singing progresses, the drummer frequently emits a stylized cry of encouragement (*chwimsae*) that blends with the singing and the accompanying rhythm. The members of the audience follow suit and add their own cries, showing both performers their appreciation for their energy and expertise.

Traditionally, the success of a *p'ansori* performance has been evaluated according to such categories as the performer's presence, narrative content, vocal virtuosity, and dramatic gesture, as articulated in the Song of the Kwangdae (circa 1875), composed by the nineteenth-century critic Sin Chaehyo (1812–84). Most essential is the strength of the voice that, through lifelong discipline, has attained the power of portraying even the most intimate details of the story. The narrative richness of the *p'ansori* voice is further accentuated by its aesthetic of minimalism, manifest in its theatrical simplicity: the very subdued costumes of the performers, the bare straw-mat stage, the stylistic gesturing, and the creation of imaginary scenery and ambiance by the use of a folding fan made of bamboo ribs and rice paper.

## **History**

The evolution of *p'ansori* can be discussed in the following sequence: emergence before the eighteenth century, proliferation and gentrification in the nineteenth century, theatrical experimentation, sociocultural challenges in the form's encounter with modernity, and efforts of preservation and transmission in the twentieth century. Because *p'ansori* was developed and trans-

mitted orally, no written documents about its origin have been cited, but it has been established that *p'ansori* emerged as a marketplace entertainment from the periphery of the native shamanistic ritual practice called *kut*. The early singers were among the folk performing artists, *kwangdae*, whose important artistic function included providing musical accompaniment for *kut*. In shaping the basic performance structure of *p'ansori*, they closely incorporated elements of the ritual music and chanting while blending in the multiple vocal, lyric, and narrative traditions of the time.

It was in the nineteenth century that *p'ansori* reached its heyday with the emergence of generations of brilliant singers, each singer possessing a distinctive style of singing. They contributed to the expansion of its repertoire and the redefinition of its standard of excellence. This occurred in tandem with sociocultural changes that promoted the development of folk culture away from the dictates of neo-Confucian practices; those practices nurtured only persons of sociopolitical privilege. Disenchanted with the Confucian rhetoric that seemed useless in the face of governmental corruption and national danger, many among the aristocratic literati joined the writers and artists in promoting a popular culture grounded in native folk aesthetics. Many of them participated in further contextualizing and canonizing *p'ansori* by collaborating with the talented singers. In the process, they helped select five narratives (from the 12 that were popular at the time) that similarly represented the five Confucian cardinal virtues: filial piety, chastity, loyalty, respect for older siblings, and faith between friends. The literati went further, matching the linguistic and narrative revision on the selected five to the elitist patrons' ideology and level of appreciation. As a result, *p'ansori* narratives came to offer an interesting blend of multiple cosmologies, values, themes, and narrative styles.

Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, women began to enter what had been the male-only territory of the *p'ansori* discipline. In retrospect, the participation of both genders appears to have been the dawn of an era of theatrical experimentation. The turn of the century marked an important development: the birth of *ch'angguk* (singing theater), performed by multiple singers playing their respective roles. Supported by Emperor Kojong (reigned 1864–1907)

himself, *ch'angguk* was launched, and many prominent singers participated. Their efforts to innovate a dramatic format on the national level, however, were discouraged and restricted by the ensuing cultural persecution by the Japanese imperial police, which continued until the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II. Nor did it help that silent films and Western music and drama were welcomed and gained dominance. In the aftermath of the Korean War (1950–53) it was the Korean government that took on the mission of preserving the traditional folk heritage. Today, the art of *p'ansori* is designated as the intangible national treasure Number Five; its prominent singers are human national treasures. Their official mission is to help preserve the art by transmitting it to the next generation, while the creative perpetuation of *p'ansori* in modern times remains a topic of serious discussion.

### **Synopses of the Five Traditional *P'ansori* Narratives, Retold by Chan Park**

*Song of Ch'unhyang.* Around the beginning of Emperor Sukchong's reign (1674–1720), there is a young gentleman staying in Namwŏn: Yi Mongnyong, the handsome, intelligent, and gallant son of the new magistrate from Seoul. On a brilliant spring day Mongnyong has an urge to take a stroll. He closes his book and rides out to the scenic Kwanghallu pavilion, escorted by his servant Pangja. There he sees in the distance, amid flowers and willow branches, a beautiful maiden on a swing. Her name is Ch'unhyang. It is love at first sight. That night, Mongnyong visits Ch'unhyang's house and succeeds in persuading Ch'unhyang's mother, Wŏlmae, a retired court entertainer, to let them marry. The two exchange nuptial vows. According to neo-Confucian social practice, however, it was unthinkable for a son of a nobleman to take a lover before taking the state examination, nor could he wed anyone but a girl from a noble family, and in a proper ceremony. Nevertheless, their love deepens and time flies.

The magistrate is promoted to a higher position in Seoul, and Mongnyong, like a good son, must accompany his parents back. Pledging to meet again, the lovers have a sad farewell.

A new magistrate by the name of Pyŏn Hakto arrives. Hearing of Ch'unhyang and her beauty, he had petitioned to serve the township of Namwŏn. Immediately following his inauguration, Magistrate Pyŏn begins to harass Ch'unhyang to

serve him. She refuses, saying that she is already married, and the magistrate orders her torture and imprisonment. She is to be beheaded on the magistrate's birthday, with her execution the highlight of the banquet entertainment.

Meanwhile, Mongnyong applies himself wholeheartedly to his scholarship and wins the first-place honor in the state examination. The king dubs him with the royal insignia to serve the state as royal inspector incognito. Mongnyong leads his secret officers to Namwŏn, righting wrongs along the way. On the eve of Ch'unhyang's execution, Mongnyong, incognito in threadbare attire, turns up at her door. Wŏlmae, who has been praying fervently for his return so that her daughter's life might be spared, despairs at his beggar-like state. His return as an official higher than the new magistrate would have been the only recourse, and now that hope is gone. That night, at the prison, the lovers meet.

In the middle of the birthday banquet for the magistrate, a loud call announcing the presence of the royal inspector incognito is sounded. Havoc erupts; the magistrate and all his guests scatter, looking for places to hide. Justice is delivered as the royal inspector orders punishment for the corrupt officials and freedom for the innocent. Ch'unhyang, too, is brought before the royal inspector. He asks her if she will serve him instead of the magistrate. Unaware that he is Mongnyong, she criticizes him as being no better than the corrupt magistrate. He produces before Ch'unhyang the jade ring she gave him as a token of unchanging love when they separated. She sees the ring, sees Mongnyong, and the story ends with a happy celebration.

*Song of Hŭngbu.* In a country place where Kyŏngsang, Chŏlla, and Ch'unch'ŏng provinces meet, there live two brothers, Nolbu and Hŭngbu. The younger brother, Hŭngbu, is good, but the older brother, Nolbu, is obnoxious and greedy. According to the Confucian custom, Nolbu inherits everything from their father, including the responsibility of looking after the entire family, but he is not the kind of person to care for anyone else. One winter day, he chases Hŭngbu and his family out into the cold.

After much wandering Hŭngbu and the family settle in a valley among the homeless. The traditional education of a nobleman consisted of learning prose writing and poetry recital, not survival skills, and with the mother having no means to support 11 children and another on its way, life

is hard. The children cry for food and fight for scraps of blanket to keep themselves from freezing. They are on the verge of starvation when they are visited by a Taoist monk. Instead of collecting alms, the monk takes Hŭngbu deep into the valley, points to an auspicious building site, and then disappears. Hŭngbu builds a hut and moves his family there. Life seems a bit more bearable.

One spring day, a pair of swallows fly in and build their nest under Hŭngbu's eaves. Soon, two baby swallows hatch. One of them falls and breaks its legs while practicing flying. Kind Hŭngbu and his wife treat it with utmost care and put it back in the nest. Autumn comes, and all the birds prepare for their journey to their winter homes in the south. Hŭngbu's swallow soars up high and circles the sky in farewell to kind Hŭngbu and his family.

It is the week of homecoming in the great Kingdom of the Swallows. Millions of swallows fly in from all over the world to report their arrivals. Hŭngbu's swallow limps in and recounts his birth in Korea, his leg injury, and his survival thanks to kind Hŭngbu. Greatly impressed, the Swallow King produces a magic gourd seed for Hŭngbu's swallow to take back to Hŭngbu the following spring. The next spring, Hŭngbu's swallow returns with the gourd seed and, with thankful heart, Hŭngbu plants the seed behind his house. In the fall, it yields three huge gourds. One fine day, the family gathers in their courtyard and sees the gourds open. Out pours money, gold, silver, silk, and rice, and they become the wealthiest people in the country.

The rumor that Hŭngbu has become the wealthiest man in the country reaches Nolbu. Seething with jealousy, he comes over one day to see for himself. Having heard the whole story of the swallow and the magic seed, Nolbu is determined to make himself richer than his brother. He catches a dozen swallows and, one by one, breaks and bandages their legs. Next spring, he, too, receives a magic gourd seed. He plants it and harvests three huge gourds in the fall. As they are sawed open, instead of jewels and rice, demons and goblins hop out amid oozing feces and shrill curses. Nolbu becomes destitute overnight. Good Hŭngbu, however, takes in Nolbu and his family to share his wealth and his living quarters, and they live happily ever after.

*Historical background to Song of the Red Cliff.* Toward the end of the later Han Dynasty, the political power of China was divided among

warlords, and the land was looted by bandits. The emperors in the capital were mere puppets in the triangles of power struggle between the eunuchs, relatives of the dowager queens, and the scholar-gentry. As a son of 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 for the puppet emperor. With the imperial authority behind him, he brought one warlord after another to surrender until all of northern China came under his control.

In the meantime, situated in the southwest was Liu Bei, who, although but a minor official, retained his pride as a descendant of Liu Bang, founder of the Han Dynasty, and he felt it was his responsibility to restore the Han court. Meanwhile, Sun Quan was in control of the eastern territory south of the Yangtze River. In A.D. 208 Cao Cao led his 830,000-man army southward in order to fight the allied forces of Liu Bei and Sun Quan, who posed the last hindrance to his unification of China. The background of the *Song of the Red Cliff* is the river battle at Red Cliff (Chibi), on the Yangtze in modern Anhui province, in which Cao Cao suffered devastating defeat.

*Song of the Red Cliff.* Liu Bei, having lost his trustworthy strategist Xu Yuan Zhi to a snare contrived by Cao Cao, seeks the counsel of Zhuge Liang, a tactical genius recommended by the departing Xu. After Liu makes three humble visits that are known as the Three Visits to the Grass Hut, his supplication wins the heart of this wisest man of the time.

The next episode is the Battle of Powangp'o, in which Liu Bei, with Zhuge Liang's help, wins a minor battle. It is followed by Zhuge Liang's visit to Sun Quan's headquarters to reveal one of his clever ruses to instigate Sun's adviser Zhou Yu to join the battle against Cao Cao.

Next comes the eve of the Battle of the Red Cliff. Cao Cao's soldiers are homesick, drunk, and anticipating a bloody battle. Meanwhile, Zhuge Liang performs a ritual prayer to heaven to bring about the southeasterly wind, which would not normally come in the middle of winter. Heaven responds by sending the southeasterly wind, with which Zhuge Liang destroys Cao Cao's force.

The Battle of Red Cliff ends in Cao Cao's utter defeat. In his retreat, Cao Cao is captured on

Hwa Rongdao path by Guan Yu, a noble warrior who, remembering a previous favor, releases Cao Cao.

*Song of Sim Ch'ong.* In Peace Blossom Village in Hwangju district lives a blind man by the name of Sim Hakkyu and his good wife, Kwak-ssi. She is diligent and resourceful and takes care of her husband with the utmost devotion. They do not have a son to carry on Sim's name, however, so they pray for one. At last they beget a child, but to their great disappointment, it is a girl. They name her Ch'ong. Kwak-ssi, weakened by the birth, falls ill and dies, and Blind Man Sim is left alone to care for the newborn baby. Thanks to the kind women of the village who take turns nursing her, Sim Ch'ong grows into a beautiful girl with a filial heart, and Blind Man Sim finds joy and happiness in watching her blossom.

Sim Ch'ong turns 15. Having heard of her beauty and virtue, Lady Chang, widow of the late Minister Chang, one day sends for Ch'ong to come to her mansion in Arcadia Village. While Ch'ong enjoys her visit with Lady Chang the sun sets. Blind Man Sim is home alone, awaiting Ch'ong's return. Cold, hungry, and worried, he gropes his way out into the drifting snow to look for Ch'ong. He slips into an icy stream and is about to drown when a Buddhist monk passing by pulls him out of the water. The monk tells Blind Man Sim that omnipotent Lord Buddha will help him regain his sight if he prays and donates 300 straw sacks of rice to his temple. In spite of his penniless state, Blind Man Sim pledges to donate the proposed sum. Home again, he sorely regrets his thoughtless blunder, but the pledge is final, and offering false commitment to Lord Buddha would be unpardonable.

When Ch'ong returns home and hears what has happened, she comforts her father not to despair. From that day on, she prays to her guardian spirits to help procure the sacrificial rice. One day, a group of merchant sailors enters the village, announcing loudly that they will pay any price for a sacrificial maiden to be offered to the Dragon King of the four oceans. (In the ancient times, human sacrifice was a way of insuring a safe and prosperous journey.) Ch'ong commits herself to the deal in return for the delivery of the sacrificial rice her father has promised to the temple. Blind Man Sim, unaware of this tragedy until the morning of her departure, is beside himself with anger, remorse, and grief, and he breaks down pitifully. Leaving behind her grief-stricken father and the



sympathetic villagers, Sim Ch'öng follows the sailors to the sea. At the appointed hour she throws herself into the raging waters of Imdangsu and is heard of no more.

Virtuous deeds do not pass unnoticed by omniscient heaven. Sim Ch'öng is sent back to float on the surface of the sea in a magical lotus bud. The sailors, on their way back from yet another profitable journey, approach the water of Imdangsu, reminiscing mournfully about the life and death of beautiful Sim Ch'öng. Suddenly, they see the magical lotus bud floating afar. Meanwhile, the recently widowed emperor of the country has, instead of remarrying, cultivated a hand at horticulture by growing plants from all over the world. He beams with delight when the captain presents him with the mysterious lotus bud from sea. One night, as the emperor strolls in his flower garden, the lotus bud opens into a marvelous flower and Sim Ch'öng emerges from within. She becomes his empress to enjoy his love, wealth, and luxury. She misses her father badly, however, and the emperor, to help his empress find her father, decrees that all the blind men of the country be invited to a royal banquet 100 days long.

Since Ch'öng's departure, Blind Man Sim has lived in grief and remorse until a woman by the name of Ppaengdögin appears and marries him. Blind Man Sim is happy again in his newly found love, but on the road to the capital banquet, his wife takes everything and runs off with a younger blind man. After a lengthy journey filled with adventures, Blind Man Sim arrives at the banquet. A commotion erupts as his name is announced. Several officers rush out to escort him to the inner palace, where Empress Ch'öng waits anxiously for him. At long last the father and the daughter have a dramatic reunion. In the intensity of his surprise and joy, Blind Man Sim regains his sight. Wonders do not cease: one by one, all the blind people of the country regain their sight, blessed by Empress Ch'öng's filial piety, which moved heaven. The story ends with great jubilation.

*Song of the Underwater Palace.* The Dragon King of the Underwater Palace is bedridden with a grave illness, and all the medicine in the world cannot cure him. One day a Taoist monk appears from the sky and, having told the king that the only cure is a hare's liver, disappears. None among the members of the king's aquatic cabinet has the courage or integrity to venture to the land

to find a hare and bring it to the king, but loyal Pyölchubu, a turtle, volunteers for the difficult task.

After a lengthy journey through the icy waves, Pyölchubu the turtle reaches land. Shivering, he crawls into a valley where all the world's animals are holding an election to determine who among them should be the most respected. Thanking heaven for the occasion, Pyölchubu calls out from his hiding place, "Mr. Hare!" Because his chin is frozen hard from navigating through the cold water, however, the words come out as "Mr. Tiger!" He ends up inviting the tiger, and it is only with wit superior to that of his captor that he narrowly escapes his death. Finally, he encounters a hare and allures him to come with him to the Underwater Palace, where he, the turtle, tells the hare he will be made at least the chief of police.

The vainglorious hare follows Pyölchubu to the Underwater Palace, only to discover that he has been tricked. Gathering himself together, he tells the Dragon King that, regrettably, he has left his liver in his dwelling in the mountain, and he needs to be taken back so that he can bring his liver to the palace. Thoroughly convinced, the Dragon King orders Pyölchubu to fetch him back to the land. Pyölchubu is no fool, but he dares not contradict his king.

Safely back on land, the hare insults Pyölchubu profusely and colorfully before hopping away. In his flighty celebration, the hare gets caught again, this time in the grip of an eagle. Again, the hare outsmarts his captor and survives. Meanwhile, Pyölchubu's loyal heart moves heaven, and he is awarded the heavenly medicine with which to cure his king.

### The Three Vital Aspects of *P'ansori* Singing

In the discussion of *p'ansori*'s musical structure, three concepts have surfaced as the most essential elements: rhythmic cycles, melodic paths, and overall vocal expressiveness. These important musical elements are deftly coordinated in accordance with the general principles of yin and yang—that is, the complements of high and low, long and short, clear and murky, tensed and relaxed, and sorrowful and merry. Termed *changdan* (long and short), rhythmic cycles are a set of rhythmic patterns that prescribes the tone, the pace, and the dramatic mood in each song. The following is a table of rhythmic cycles frequently distinguished in *p'ansori* singing.

Rhythmic cycle	Beats per phrase	Dramatic effects
<i>Chinyang</i>	slow six beats, frequently forms four-phrase lyrical line	doleful, peaceful, or magnanimous
<i>Semach'il</i>	a bit faster than <i>chinyang</i>	<i>chinyang</i> with added resolution and dynamism
<i>Chungmori</i>	medium 12 beats, stress on the ninth beat	peaceful or sorrowful
<i>Chungjungmori</i>	faster 12 beats, stresses on the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth beat	dynamic, comic, or hurried
<i>Chajinmori</i>	medium or faster four beats	dynamic, comic, undulating
<i>Hwimori</i>	fast four beat	sweeping or chasing
<i>Ōnmori</i>	medium ten beats in two five-beat parts	crosswise or asymmetrical, a mysterious appearance
<i>Tanmori</i>	medium six beats, the first half of <i>chungmori</i>	finalizing, adopted in the final summary of a narrative

In *p'ansori* singing the pace and the flow of dramatic mood prescribed by the rhythmic cycles find a channel in the intricately complex melodic paths. The most fundamental are the following three interrelated and often interchangeable concepts: the melodic modes (*cho*), the specific style of singing (*che*), and individual narrative or vocal innovation (*tŏnŭm*).

Of the extant melodic modes, the most frequently adopted are *ujo* and *kycmyŏnjo*, terms that originally referred to a set of modes in court music. They have helped define the course of folk melodies in vocal and instrumental music alike. The ambiance of *ujo* is described by the singers as grand, magnanimous, and masculine, and that of *kycmyŏnjo* is doleful, nostalgic, and feminine.

Two of the best-known styles of singing are the Eastern School (*Tongp'yŏnche*) and the Western School (*Sŏp'yŏnche*). The division between the schools is demarcated by the Sŏmjŏn River, which flows through the hills and plains of Chŏlla province. The two schools grew apart from one another in the nineteenth century. Centered in the townships of Unbong, Kurye, Sunch'ang to the east of the river, the Eastern School was established by the singers trained in the style of the nineteenth-century singer Song Hŭngnok. West of the river, Posŏng, Kwangju, and Naju became the center of the Western School by singers following the style of another nineteenth-century singer, Pak Yujŏn. The Eastern School of singing manifests the strength and stately bravery of *ujo*, and the

Western school adopts *kyemyŏnjo*, pronounced in the doleful melodic movements that linger at sentence endings.

Throughout the centuries following the birth of *p'ansori*, anonymity has been ascribed to the singers who have contributed their narrative or vocal innovation (*tŏnŭm*) to help build the existing canon. It was formerly customary during performance, however, for singers to cite the name of a specific singer known to have composed the segment. Such practice is rarely observed today. *P'ansori* performance is less an intimate storytelling than a classical musical presentation. Furthermore, the future of *p'ansori* has been invested in the preservation of its antique heritage rather than in its existence as a creative storytelling in the changing social context. Accordingly, its narrative and musical creativity has been waning, making the composition of new *tŏnŭm* an atypical and inauthentic phenomenon.

The culmination of the musical venture lies in the overall realization of the unique *p'ansori* vocal expressiveness, termed *sŏngŭm* (the music of the voice). The *p'ansori* aesthetic, grounded in the principle of yin and yang, requires a voice capable of projecting all ranges of pitch, tone, and movement—high and low, clear and murky, slow and swift, and comic and sad, regardless of the singer's gender. A well-trained *p'ansori* voice is invariably husky, resonant with strength and subtlety simultaneously. Corresponding to both vocal mechanism and vocal aesthetics, the concept of

*sŏngŭm* defies simple definition. The concept is further complicated as the term is applied to explaining such metaphysical concepts as *imyon* (the picture within), the poetic or dramatic imagery portrayed by the voice. Several categories are used to evaluate the vocal strength of individual singers: inherent vocal or tonal quality, authentic discipline, and tonal and rhythmic variation that reveals the interpretive as well as aesthetic sensibility of the singer. In sum, *sŏngŭm* is the culmination of the singer's vocal skill, dynamism, and artistic sensibility. It refers to all vocal qualities the singer is born with and has cultivated through discipline. So how does one acquire such a voice?

### Discipline and Transmission

The discipline in *p'ansori* singing is a lifelong process of *nŭgŭm*, translatable as "the attainment of the voice." Throughout the history of the art, many aspiring practitioners underwent all-too-rigorous—life-threatening, at times—ways of training focused on cultivating an accomplished voice that resonated with energy and pathos. Once the singer was finished with the initial stage of apprenticeship under a master singer, he found a study site away from the distractions of civilization and close to nature. Some singers harmonized their voices with the murmuring of water by the streams; some befriended waterfalls so that they might be heard above the thundering of the falling water; and some entered caves to hear the echoes of their own voices. Their progress was monitored by none but the sights and sounds of nature: the sighing winds, the dripping rain, the falling leaves, and the silent poetry in flowering, wilting, and snowing. The legendary self-regimentation by the singers of the past has generated popular tales about them that border between myth and reality; for example, the point at which the vocal chords began bleeding supposedly signified a turning point in the singer's rites of passage. Today, rare are singers who would go so far as to shun the temptations of modern life for a long time in exchange for the genuine voice. Furthermore, the availability of recording technology and mass communication has accelerated the demise of the traditional ways in which *p'ansori* is transmitted to the next generation. As a modern substitute, however, many of the master singers today hold a summer camp away from the city, usually in a Buddhist temple in the mountains.

Who are the learners of *p'ansori* today? In traditional Korean society *p'ansori* and the other

folk performing arts were thought of as being practiced only among the social outcasts—the males referred to as *kwangdae* and females as *ki-saeng* (a traditional female court entertainer). The stigma still continues, but to a lesser degree. Today, the students of *p'ansori* are much more diverse. They include students aspiring to major in *p'ansori*, college *p'ansori* clubs, housewives, senior citizens, working professionals, and folklorists. These amateur practitioners will also help shape the performative identity of *p'ansori* in the next century. Since its designation as a national treasure and its prominent singers as human national treasures, *p'ansori* has been canonized as a classical art to be preserved "as is." From the storyteller's point of view, an even more appealing task would be rehabilitating *p'ansori* as a popular art of storytelling that reflects the zeitgeist of a changing era.

### Further Reading

- Killick, Andrew P., "Putting P'ansori on the Stage: A Re-study in Honor of Marshall R. Pihl," *Korea Journal* 37:1 (Spring 1997)
- Kim Hung-gyu, *Understanding Korean Literature*, Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1997
- Kim Kichung, *An Introduction to Classical Korean Literature*, Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1996
- Kim Woo Ok, *P'ansori: An Indigenous Theater of Korea* (Ph.D. diss., New York University), 1980
- Park, Chan E., "P'ansori in Trans-National Context: The Global Transmission of Korean Performance Tradition," *Korean Culture* (Summer/Fall 1998)
- , "Playful Reconstruction of Gender in P'ansori," in *Korean Studies* 22, University of Hawaii Press, 1998
- , "Why Recitative, Instead of Just Speaking or Singing, in P'ansori Storytelling?" Selected Proceedings of the 3rd PACKS Conference, University of Sydney
- Park, Chan E., et al., *The Ch'anggŭk of Korea*, collection of four *ch'anggŭk* subtitles in English, Seoul, South Korea: National Theatre, 1995
- Park-Miller, Chan Eung, *P'ansori Performed: From Strawmat to Proscenium and Back* (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii), 1995



*sŏngŭm* defies simple definition. The concept is further complicated as the term is applied to explaining such metaphysical concepts as *imyŏn* (the picture within), the poetic or dramatic imagery portrayed by the voice. Several categories are used to evaluate the vocal strength of individual singers: inherent vocal or tonal quality, authentic discipline, and tonal and rhythmic variation that reveals the interpretive as well as aesthetic sensibility of the singer. In sum, *sŏngŭm* is the culmination of the singer's vocal skill, dynamism, and artistic sensibility. It refers to all vocal qualities the singer is born with and has cultivated through discipline. So how does one acquire such a voice?

### Discipline and Transmission

The discipline in *p'ansori* singing is a lifelong process of *ŭngŭm*, translatable as "the attainment of the voice." Throughout the history of the art, many aspiring practitioners underwent all-too-rigorous—life-threatening, at times—ways of training focused on cultivating an accomplished voice that resonated with energy and pathos. Once the singer was finished with the initial stage of apprenticeship under a master singer, he found a study site away from the distractions of civilization and close to nature. Some singers harmonized their voices with the murmuring of water by the streams; some befriended waterfalls so that they might be heard above the thundering of the falling water; and some entered caves to hear the echoes of their own voices. Their progress was monitored by none but the sights and sounds of nature: the sighing winds, the dripping rain, the falling leaves, and the silent poetry in flowering, wilting, and snowing. The legendary self-regimentation by the singers of the past has generated popular tales about them that border between myth and reality; for example, the point at which the vocal chords began bleeding supposedly signified a turning point in the singer's rites of passage. Today, rare are singers who would go so far as to shun the temptations of modern life for a long time in exchange for the genuine voice. Furthermore, the availability of recording technology and mass communication has accelerated the demise of the traditional ways in which *p'ansori* is transmitted to the next generation. As a modern substitute, however, many of the master singers today hold a summer camp away from the city, usually in a Buddhist temple in the mountains.

Who are the learners of *p'ansori* today? In traditional Korean society *p'ansori* and the other

folk performing arts were thought of as being practiced only among the social outcasts—the males referred to as *kwangdae* and females as *ki-saeng* (a traditional female court entertainer). The stigma still continues, but to a lesser degree. Today, the students of *p'ansori* are much more diverse. They include students aspiring to major in *p'ansori*, college *p'ansori* clubs, housewives, senior citizens, working professionals, and folklorists. These amateur practitioners will also help shape the performative identity of *p'ansori* in the next century. Since its designation as a national treasure and its prominent singers as human national treasures, *p'ansori* has been canonized as a classical art to be preserved "as is." From the storyteller's point of view, an even more appealing task would be rehabilitating *p'ansori* as a popular art of storytelling that reflects the zeitgeist of a changing era.

### Further Reading

- Killick, Andrew P., "Putting P'ansori on the Stage: A Re-study in Honor of Marshall R. Pihl," *Korea Journal* 37:1 (Spring 1997)
- Kim Hung-gyu, *Understanding Korean Literature*, Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1997
- Kim Kichung, *An Introduction to Classical Korean Literature*, Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1996
- Kim Woo Ok, *P'ansori: An Indigenous Theater of Korea* (Ph.D. diss., New York University), 1980
- Park, Chan E., "P'ansori in Trans-National Context: The Global Transmission of Korean Performance Tradition," *Korean Culture* (Summer/Fall 1998)
- , "Playful Reconstruction of Gender in P'ansori," in *Korean Studies* 22, University of Hawaii Press, 1998
- , "Why Recitative, Instead of Just Speaking or Singing, in P'ansori Storytelling?," Selected Proceedings of the 3rd PACKS Conference, University of Sydney
- Park, Chan E., et al., *The Ch'anggŭk of Korea*, collection of four *ch'anggŭk* subtitles in English, Seoul, South Korea: National Theatre, 1995
- Park-Miller, Chan Eung, *P'ansori Performed: From Strawmat to Proscenium and Back* (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii), 1995