

P'ungmul Kut (Percussion Music Rituals):
Integrating Korean Traditions with Modern Identities

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Abstract

***P'ungmul Kut* (Percussion Music Rituals): Integrating Korean Traditions with Modern Identities**

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While exploring the relationships between tradition, modernity, and identity, I focus on *p'ungmul kut*, which are Korean rituals featuring percussion music and dance. Although *p'ungmul kut* is sometimes referred to as “farmers’ music” (*nongak*), it actually encompasses much more (see Chapter 2). *P'ungmul kut* is the basis of the popular genre of music known as *samul nori* (named after the group SamulNori who began performing on concert stages in 1978). A key feature of *p'ungmul kut* is audience participation in the form of dancing and cheering. In Chapter 3, I examine the differences between rituals of *p'ungmul kut* and concerts by SamulNori as “participatory” and “presentational” performances (Turino 2008).

P'ungmul kut are an integral part of the Korean *mu* religion (which is often misleadingly translated as “shamanism”). The Korean word *kut* means “ritual” and often refers to *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals), therefore *p'ungmul kut* is sometimes misunderstood as being a type of *mudang kut*. But *p'ungmul kut* are not shaman rituals and they are quite distinct from *mudang kut* (Chapter 4).

The South Korean government’s policy of preserving “Intangible Cultural Assets” is a model for UNESCO’s policy of “Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.” Ironically, in order to be designated and “preserved” as a Cultural Asset, *p’ungmul kut* has undergone significant transformations (Chapter 5). In contrast, there has been a renewal of *p’ungmul kut* as contemporary rituals in political protests as part of the People’s Cultural Movement (Chapter 6).

The music of *p’ungmul kut* represents Korean concepts about the cosmos. To illustrate these concepts, Video Examples (Supplementary Material) and music notations of key rhythmic cycles are included (Chapter 7). I focus on a regional style of *p’ungmul kut* known as *kun’go* (literally, “military drums”) from the southwest coast, which provides valuable insights into other regional styles.

P’ungmul kut may be seen as rituals that transform people into an integrated community of individuals, thereby developing each individual’s sense of self as well as a collective group identity or *communitas* (Turner 1969). When participating in *p’ungmul kut*, people often have optimal experiences of “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) and a connection with nature and the cosmos.

Supplementary Materials: Video Files¹

1. Beginning. Excerpt from *chiphap kut* (gathering ritual), part of *Changjwari tanggut* (Changjwari village ritual, Intangible Cultural Asset No. 28 of South Chölla Province).

2. Flow. Excerpt from *Wölp’o tangsan kut* (Wölp’o village ritual) in South Chölla Province.

¹ For more information about the video examples, see List of Video Examples (page ii) and Chapter 7.

3. ***Ilch'ae Kut.***² Excerpt from *Wǒlp'o mun'gut* (Wǒlp'o village gate ritual, Intangible Cultural Asset No. 27 of South Chǒlla Province).
4. ***Hwimori (with duple division of beat).*** Excerpt from *Samdo Nongak Karak* (rhythms of farmers' music from three provinces). Performed by SamulNori at University of Washington.
5. ***Slow Ilch'ae Kut.*** Excerpt from *Changjwari tanggut*.
6. ***Variation of Slow Ilch'ae Kut.*** Excerpt from *Wǒlp'o tangsan kut*.
7. ***Samch'ae Kut.***³ Excerpt from *Changjwari tanggut*.
8. ***Slow Samch'ae Kut.*** Excerpt from *Wǒlp'o mun'gut*.

² *Il* means “one,” *ch'ae* means “stroke,” and *kut* means “ritual.” *Ilch'ae kut* features one stroke of the large gong (*ching*) per rhythmic cycle.

³ *Sam* means “three” and *samch'ae kut* features three strokes of the *ching* (large gong) per cycle.

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List of Video Examples

The Video Examples are available as supplementary files to the dissertation. They are discussed in Chapter 7. The recordings are shared here for educational purposes with permission from the musicians.

1. Beginning

Chaos (0m00s-0m36s), **slow *ilch'ae kut*** (0m36s-1m41s), **fast *ilch'ae kut*** (1m41s-2m14s), and ***samch'ae kut*** (2m14s-2m52s).¹

Excerpt from *chiphap kut* (gathering ritual), part of *Changjwari tanggut* (Changjwari village ritual, Intangible Cultural Asset No. 28 of South Chölla Province). Performed by musicians from the village of Changjwari on Wando Island in the Wando district of South Chölla province. Recorded by Park Heung-Ju in 1993 (shared here with his permission).

2. Flow

Brief excerpt (16 seconds) from *Wölp'o tangsan kut* (Wölp'o village ritual). Performed by musicians from the village of Wölp'o on Kögümdo Island in the Kohüng district of South Chölla province. Recorded by author in 2000.

¹ *Il* means “one,” *ch'ae* means “stroke,” and *kut* means “ritual.” *Ilch'ae kut* features one stroke of the large gong (*ching*) per rhythmic cycle. *Sam* means “three” and *samch'ae kut* features three strokes of the *ching* per cycle.

3. *Ilch'ae Kut*

Excerpt (1m08s) from *Wǒlp'o mun'gut* (Wǒlp'o village gate ritual, Intangible Cultural Asset No. 27 of South Chǒlla Province). Performed by musicians from Wǒlp'o. Recorded by author in 2000.²

4. *Hwimori* (with duple division of beat)

Brief excerpt (21 seconds) from *Samdo Nongak Karak* (rhythms of farmers' music from three provinces). Performed by SamulNori at University of Washington. Recorded by author in 1997.

5. Slow *Ilch'ae Kut*

Brief excerpt (28 seconds) from *Changjwari tanggut*. Performed by musicians from Changjwari. Recorded by Park Heung-Ju in 1993 (shared here with his permission).

6. Variation of Slow *Ilch'ae Kut*

Brief excerpt (37 seconds) from *Wǒlp'o tangsan kut*. Performed by musicians from Wǒlp'o. Recorded by author in 2000.

² For an extended audio excerpt (7m23s) of *Wǒlp'o mun'gut*, see Track 14 on *Han Madang: Musical Traditions of Korea* (Northwest Folklife Recordings, 2001).

7. *Samch'ae Kut*

Brief excerpt (12 seconds) from *Changjwari tanggut*. Performed by musicians from Changjwari. Recorded by Park Heung-Ju in 1993 (shared here with his permission).

8. *Slow Samch'ae Kut*

Brief excerpt (21 seconds) from *Wölp'o mun'gut*. Performed by musicians from Wölp'o. Recorded by author in 2000.

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Pronunciation and Romanization of Korean Terms

There are various ways to represent Korean words for English readers. Many scholars use the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system while the South Korean government uses the Revised Romanization system.¹ Each system has certain strengths and weaknesses in terms of clarity for English readers.² In this dissertation I use the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system (with some minor modifications that have been introduced and accepted by other scholars).³

Table 1. Romanization and pronunciation

Romanization	Pronunciation
a	father
ae	aerodynamic
b	boy
ch'	child
d	dog
e	egg
g	girl
h	hat
i	elite
j	jet
k	bookworm
k'	kite
l	nail
m	more
n	next
ng	ring
o	only
ö	like o in love
oe	like we- in well
p	top
p'	pat
r	red

Continued on next page

¹ For detailed explanations of these systems, see McCune and Reischauer 1939 and Korea (South), Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2000.

² Pronunciation is approximate. Accurate pronunciation of Korean is best learned by ear.

³ For example, *shi* (instead of *si*) indicates actual pronunciation (Howard 1990 [1989]:viii).

Table 1 continued

Romanization	Pronunciation
s	so
sh	she
t	hat
t'	ten
u	flute
ũ	like u in pull
w	well
y	yes

Certain Korean words have commonly accepted spellings in English (ex: Seoul [Söul] and Lee [Yi]). For clarification, the McCune-Reischauer romanization is added in brackets.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to so many people who contributed to my understanding of *p'ungmul kut* and made this dissertation possible. There are three individuals that I would like to thank in particular: Dr. Maria K. Seo, my mentor as well as my mother; Dr. Heung-Ju Park [Pak Hŭng-ju], my teacher in Seoul; and Dr. Ter Ellingson, my advisor. Words cannot fully express my heartfelt gratitude for their exemplary guidance, invaluable insights, and generous encouragement over the years.

Introduction: Traditional Ritual Music and Modern Identities

How are historically-rooted traditions relevant to modern identities? In today's world of modernity and globalization, what are the significance and meaning of traditional values and cultural heritage in people's senses of self and identity? How do people use music to develop and express their identities? These questions about traditional music and identity have shaped the direction of my research and writing for this dissertation.

As an Asian American, I am interested in learning about Korean culture as it relates to my family heritage, which forms a significant part of my sense of self and identity. I have been studying Korean traditional music for the past nineteen years as a way to learn about Korean culture. In the process, I have had the pleasure of meeting many people born and living in South Korea who are also interested in learning about traditional music and culture as part of their own modern identities.

In order to discuss and illustrate broader issues such as identity formation and the relationship between tradition and modernity, I will focus on *p'ungmul kut*, which are rituals that feature percussion music and dance.¹ In simplest terms, the word *p'ungmul* means "percussion instruments" (or "percussion music")² and *kut* means "ritual" (or

¹ The Korean term 𪎐 is romanized as *kut* and *-gut* (when used as a suffix) according to the McCune-Reischauer system. The letter *g* reflects actual Korean pronunciation (McCune and Reischauer 1939:27 n.1).

² Similarly, the term "string quartet" in Western classical music can refer to a set of musical instruments or the music played on those instruments.

“rituals”).³ *P’ungmul kut* are performed by a group of people dancing and playing various drums and gongs.

P’ungmul kut are traditionally performed as village rituals, although nowadays they are also performed in cities. *P’ungmul kut* used to be performed in a wide variety of contexts, which may be divided into three types: religious ceremonies (for example, village cleansing rituals, village shrine rituals, and agricultural rituals), work accompaniment (for farming, fishing, communal labor, fund-raising, and military functions), and entertainment-oriented performances. Many people nowadays are more familiar with contemporary performances of *p’ungmul kut* as entertainment rather than *p’ungmul kut* as traditional village rituals.

P’ungmul kut is often simply called *p’ungmul* (omitting the word *kut*). It is often described in English as “percussion music and dance” (omitting any reference to “ritual”). Many people have heard the term *p’ungmul* used in reference to a genre of percussion music, but they have never heard of *p’ungmul kut*. Many people think that the word *kut* refers only to *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals).⁴ But *p’ungmul kut* are distinct from *mudang kut*. They are not performed by *mudang* (ritual specialists). They are performed by ordinary people—including community residents, local farmers, university students, and so on.

Although the terms *p’ungmul* and *p’ungmul kut* may refer to the same thing, there is an important difference in their implications—either hiding or highlighting the ritual

³ The word *kut* may be singular or plural. In Korean there is a plural marker analogous to the English suffix “s,” but it is usually omitted since one can often infer from context whether a word is singular or plural.

⁴ The Korean term *mudang* is often translated as “shaman,” but not all *mudang* are shamans, as I will discuss in Chapter 4.

aspects of *p'ungmul kut*. If one omits the word *kut* (ritual) and refers to *p'ungmul kut* as simply *p'ungmul*, then (whether intentionally or not) one emphasizes the percussion instruments and music (*p'ungmul*) while effectively obscuring any connection with ritual (*kut*). The discussion of ritual aspects of *p'ungmul kut* in Chapters 2, 4, and 7 clarifies the importance of including the word *kut* and using the term *p'ungmul kut*.

P'ungmul kut is often referred to as “farmers’ music” (*nongak*), although *p'ungmul kut* encompasses much more (see Chapter 2). *P'ungmul kut* is the basis of the popular genre of music known as *samul nori* (named after the group SamulNori⁵ who began performing on concert stages in 1978). Many people living in cities away from the village rituals are more familiar with the terms *nongak* and *samul nori* than either *p'ungmul* or *p'ungmul kut*. I explore the connections and the differences between *nongak*, *samul nori*, and *p'ungmul kut* in Chapters 2 and 3.

In this dissertation, I consider the following questions: How is *p'ungmul kut* relevant to people today? What does *p'ungmul kut* mean to people who did not grow up with this tradition? How is *p'ungmul kut* used to express or develop a sense of identity? What kinds of identities are being expressed with *p'ungmul kut*?

My understanding of *p'ungmul kut* has developed over the years, and in order to share what I have learned, I will discuss the process of learning in the following chapters. Like many other people, I began learning about *p'ungmul kut* by listening to the group SamulNori. In Chapter 1, “Turning Towards *P'ungmul Kut*, Korean Heritage, and Asian American Identities,” I explain how seeing SamulNori for the first time in 1986 was a

⁵ The group’s name “SamulNori” is usually written as a single word with two capital letters. It is sometimes written with a hyphen (Samul-Nori) or space (Samul Nori). It is usually not in italics.

significant turning point for me. SamulNori’s virtuosic display of music and movement—full of energy and strength—gave me a sense of pride in my heritage and I turned my attention towards learning about Korean culture.

I soon learned that the performances by SamulNori are rooted in *p’ungmul kut*, and I began to explore the connections between SamulNori and *p’ungmul kut*. There are many ritual elements in SamulNori’s performances that come from *p’ungmul kut*, as I discuss in Chapter 2, “Rooted in *P’ungmul Kut*: Ritual Aspects of SamulNori.” The members of SamulNori sometimes identify themselves as “shamans” (*mudang*). The group’s complex identity has various aspects, including their roots in professional itinerant troupes (*namsadang*) as well as their connection with ordinary people and farmers’ music (*nongak*).

There are also significant differences between *p’ungmul kut* and SamulNori, as I discuss in Chapter 3, “Tradition and Modernity: Participating in *P’ungmul Kut* versus SamulNori.” Although SamulNori is rooted in traditional *p’ungmul kut*, they have made changes for their performances, which some people find problematic. I examine “tradition” in the discourse of modernity and the relationship between change and authenticity.

A key feature of *p’ungmul kut* is the emphasis on dance as a form of participation. In his book *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino writes about the importance of participating in musical performances as an integral part of social life.

[M]usical participation and experience are valuable for the processes of personal and social integration that make us whole. (Turino 2008:1)

Turino makes a useful distinction between “participatory” versus “presentational” types of performance:

Briefly defined, *participatory performance* is a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role. *Presentational performance*, in contrast, refers to situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing. (Turino 2008:26; emphasis in original)

Turino also recognizes that many performances combine participatory and presentational aspects.

In Chapter 3, I apply Turino’s terms to examine the contrast between how *p’ungmul kut* as village rituals are traditionally “participatory performances” and how the group SamulNori has transformed and incorporated music and dance from *p’ungmul kut* into their “presentational performances.” The value of participating in *p’ungmul kut* as a part of social life is also discussed.

P’ungmul kut rituals are often confused with Korean “shaman” rituals (*mudang kut*). I try to clarify how *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* are related but distinct in Chapter 4, “*P’ungmul Kut* as Village Rituals versus ‘Shaman’ Rituals.” *Mu*, the Korean traditional religion, is often described as “shamanism,” and *mudang* are usually called “shamans,” but these translations are problematic. I review some of the early usages of the term “shamanism” for *Mu*, including Korean folklorists focusing on “shamanism” as a symbol of cultural nationalism in reaction to Japanese colonialism. I also discuss the importance of *kut* (rituals)—both *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*—for restoring and

maintaining the harmony and balance of heaven, earth, and people (*samjae*).⁶ In addition to studying and performing *p'ungmul kut*, I have also studied and performed music in shaman rituals. My experiences of learning about *mudang kut* have contributed to my understanding of *p'ungmul kut*, ritual, and identity.

In Chapter 5, “*P'ungmul Kut* as National Cultural Assets: Shifting from Sacred Ritual to Secular Art,” I examine the South Korean government’s policy of preservation and promotion of “Intangible Cultural Assets,” which is a model for UNESCO’s policy of “Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.” I question the rhetoric of “preservation” of tradition in the context of modernization, cultural nationalism, and identity politics. I also explore the relationship between tradition and change, particularly in the omission of ritual features in the (re)presentation of *p'ungmul kut* as secular entertainment and art.

Many people are familiar with *p'ungmul kut* used in political protests, especially in the 1970s and '80s in South Korea, as part of a populist movement called the “People’s Cultural Movement” (*minjung munhwa undong*). The term *minjung* refers to “the people” as opposed to the elitist, foreign-influenced government; *munhwa* means “culture” and *undong* means “movement.” The *minjung* movement promoted cultural nationalism focusing on Korean traditional culture, especially folk music and dance (as opposed to court music and dance), including a renewal of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* as rituals. In Chapter 6, “The People’s Cultural Movement: Renewing *P'ungmul Kut* as Community Rituals,” I review the revival of *p'ungmul kut* as rituals in contemporary, urban contexts. This raises questions such as: Are *p'ungmul kut* still rituals when performed in cities,

⁶ *Samjae* literally means “three elements.”

away from their traditional village contexts? How have *p'ungmul kut* changed, and perhaps more significantly, how have people's ideas about *p'ungmul kut* changed?

The revival of *p'ungmul kut* as ritual also raises broader issues such as the discourse of folk revival, tradition, and modernity, as well as the relationship between authenticity and change. In sharp contrast to the government's system of Cultural Assets, the people's *minjung* movement developed a radically different approach to cultural nationalism and identity politics.

P'ungmul kut continue to be performed as village rituals, as I discuss in Chapter 7, “*Kut* (Ritual): Music and the Cosmos.” I focus on a particular regional style of *p'ungmul kut* known as *kun'go* (literally, “military drums”) from the southwest coast of the Korean peninsula. This is a different style from what is discussed by most other scholars (in Korean as well as English). This regional style is being learned and performed by various groups based in Seoul, which include many people who are not from that particular area. Learning about *kun'go* often provides valuable insights into other regional styles of *p'ungmul kut*.

The music of *p'ungmul kut* represents Korean concepts about the cosmos (such as chaos, *yin* and *yang*, and the balance of heaven, earth and people). In order to illustrate these concepts, I will analyze key rhythmic cycles (*changdan*) selected from the variety of complex rhythmic patterns that are played in *p'ungmul kut*. Video Examples are provided as Supplementary Material and discussed in Chapter 7. Korean music is often taught using onomatopoeic oral syllables (*kuŭm*) and Korean music notation (*chŏngganbo*), and I use both of these systems in Chapter 7. While there are certain

rhythmic structures, there are also endless variations as musicians improvise and create multiple layers of rhythms.

An important feature of ritual is the development of community and identity, as I discuss in the Conclusion, “Community and Identity in *P’ungmul Kut*.” *P’ungmul kut* may be seen as participatory rituals in which people play music and dance together, creating a shared sense of community and identity. Identity may be defined as the (re)presentation of selected attributes of oneself or of a group, as Turino explains:

Identity involves the *partial* selection of habits and attributes used to represent oneself to oneself and to others by oneself and by others; the emphasis on certain habits and traits is relative to specific situations. (Turino 2008:95; emphasis in original)

The identity of a community is often expressed and strengthened through music and dance, especially by participating, as Turino discusses:

The performing arts are frequently fulcrums of identity, allowing people to intimately feel themselves part of the community through the very act of participating together in performance. (Turino 2008:2)

By participating in *p’ungmul kut*, people can develop a sense of community and identity, as I discuss in the Conclusion.

In order to understand the feeling of community in *p’ungmul kut*, it is helpful to consider the concept of *communitas* as developed by anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner uses the Latin term *communitas* to refer to a special kind of community experienced in rituals—one in which people are transformed from a community divided by class or status into a community of “equal individuals” (1969:96). I apply the idea of *communitas* to explore the relationships between music, ritual and community in *p’ungmul kut* in the Conclusion.

Learning about *p'unngmul kut* has taught me about the connections between ritual and playing, especially playing with music. In *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, musicologist Christopher Small defines “to music” as a verb:

To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. (Small 1998:9)

Musicking is participating in musical performance. There are many forms of musicking, including playing music, listening and dancing. The Conclusion includes a discussion of musicking in *p'unngmul kut* as a way of participating in the community.

Chapter 1. Turning Towards *P'ungmul Kut*, Korean Heritage, and Asian American Identities

Like many other people, I began learning about *p'ungmul kut* by seeing and hearing the group SamulNori, whose music and dance are based on traditional forms of *p'ungmul kut*. Learning about the similarities and differences between SamulNori and more traditional types of *p'ungmul kut* has contributed significantly to my overall understanding of *p'ungmul kut*. Therefore, in order for me to explain my perspective on *p'ungmul kut*, it will be helpful to discuss some of my experiences with SamulNori.

In this chapter, I will describe the first time I saw SamulNori. I will also examine the impact of that experience on how I became interested in learning more about my Korean heritage as part of my identity as an Asian American and how it led to the next stage in my journey of learning about *p'ungmul kut*.

Seeing SamulNori in Vancouver: A Turning Point

I first saw the group SamulNori in 1986 in Vancouver, Canada, at the World Exposition, as part of a concert that featured percussionists from dozens of different music cultures around the globe. I enjoyed the whole concert but the highlight for me was the performance by SamulNori. Their music was full of energy and there was also a great deal of visual excitement. Whereas the other musicians were either seated or standing while playing various percussion instruments and they sometimes accompanied dancers, the members of SamulNori actually danced around the stage while playing their instruments.

The Korean group consisted of four men playing various drums and gongs, which were either strapped over their shoulders or held in their hands, allowing all of them to

dance and move around the stage while playing their instruments.¹ Each of the musicians also wore a hat with a white ribbon, around two meters long, which they spun in the air above their heads to form graceful circles and dynamic figure 8s as they danced and played (see Figure 1). Years later I would learn that the sounds, movements, and energy of SamulNori are all important features of *p'ungmul kut*.



Figure 1. SamulNori in Vancouver (from *Vancouver Sun*, July 28, 1986)

I was quite impressed by their virtuosic display of musical abilities and physical coordination. The audience expressed their appreciation and enjoyment with enthusiastic applause and cheering. I felt proud of my Korean heritage. Even after all these years, the performance by SamulNori has had an enduring, positive impact on my life.

¹ I will discuss the group and the instruments more fully in Chapter 2.

Looking back now I can see that attending SamulNori's performance was a significant turning point in my life. It sparked my interest in Korean music and encouraged me to learn about my Korean heritage, eventually leading me to study ethnomusicology in graduate school, focusing on *p'ungmul kut* and writing this dissertation.

The young musicians projected energy, strength, and power with their music and movements. Whereas I was used to stereotypical portrayals of Asians in American film and television as usually being quiet and either obsequious or mysterious, the members of SamulNori are strong, full of vitality, open and engaging. Their music is loud and exciting. Their bodies are strong and powerful. They provide a positive image for Asian and Asian American identities.

After that initial experience of seeing SamulNori, several years would pass before I even heard about *p'ungmul kut*, but during those years I devoted much of my time and energy towards learning about Korean traditional music and culture. I also explored related issues and broader themes in ethnomusicology such as traditional music and change in relation to national and ethnic identities within the context of modernization and globalization. These themes flow throughout this dissertation and come together in the development of my own identity as an Asian American.

By examining my own experiences, I have gained some insight into the process of identity formation. Playing Korean traditional music has become a significant aspect of my identity. I have also met many other people in North America and South Korea who feel that playing *p'ungmul kut* is an important part of their identities. In the following

pages, I will discuss my own process of identity formation in order to explain how *p'ungmul kut* is a meaningful feature of many other people's identities as well.

Changing Attitudes

Over the years, my attitude towards my Korean heritage² has gone through various changes in an ongoing process of development. I have had mixed feelings about identifying myself as an Asian American (or more specifically as a Korean Canadian).³ There are various reasons why I used to (and occasionally still) want to avoid identifying myself as Asian American or Korean American. Primarily, there is the desire not to be labeled, put into a category or box, stereotyped, essentialized, and judged based on things such as race, ethnicity, or nationality. I do not want to limit or reduce myself to simply being a member of a group that is often misperceived as homogeneous.

Rather than identifying myself as a member of a group, I want to emphasize my sense of identity as an individual. I want to maintain a sense of individualism, a sense of self, and a sense of unique identity.

Yet I also think that my Korean heritage is one of many important aspects of my identity as an individual. In some ways, I do identify with other Asian Americans and Korean Americans. There is a recognition of shared experiences and a sense of group identity.

² My parents immigrated from South Korea to Canada and I was born in Ottawa, the capital of Canada.

³ Although the term "American" often refers narrowly to people living in the U.S., excluding people in Canada, Mexico, and all of Central America as well as South America, it may also refer more broadly to people from America (North, Central, and South). As a Canadian, I used to think that the narrow sense of the term "American" was strange and confusing, some sort of arrogant misappropriation of the term, but perhaps it's simply for lack of an alternative term, such as "United Statesian."

I have also come to realize that individuality can be maintained while being part of a group. A group consists of individual people, each person having a unique personality and self. Instead of being reductive, a collective identity can be pluralistic, multi-faceted, and enriched by the diversity of individual members.

Race and Ethnicity

“Where are you from?” “What country are you from?” Many people, including myself, have been asked these questions (and similar ones) so many times. Over the years, my responses have changed, partly in terms of the words of my answers, but more significantly in terms of my attitude and reaction. When I was living in Canada and being asked by fellow Canadians, I used to reply “I was born in Ottawa” or “I’m Canadian.” Sometimes those answers were enough, but usually people would repeat or rephrase their questions, obviously not satisfied. They might try emphasizing certain words differently (“No, I mean, *where* are you from?”) or they might ask, “What is your ethnicity?” They were directing attention to the fact that I looked different from them. I would tell them, “My parents are from Korea.”

I used to resent such questions. It seemed like the people asking these questions were just wanting to find a label and to put me in some sort of category, instead of trying to get to know me as an individual, and this category was one of difference. Furthermore, the questions were directed at my physical appearance. Although they might use the word “ethnicity” instead of “race,” it still felt like they were pointing a finger at my physical appearance and I thought that they were racist, i.e. discriminating and making judgements based on race.

Many scholars and scientists now recognize that race is not a biological fact or reality, but rather it is an artificial construction. Although race is often assumed to be a physical reality, scientific research has shown that racial categories do not actually have any biological basis. Racial divisions are instead part of an artificial construction to support racial inequalities. In the American Anthropological Association's statement on "race," Audrey Smedley explains:

In the United States both scholars and the general public have been conditioned to viewing human races as natural and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences. With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge in this century, however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. (Smedley 1998)

For instance, research in genetics has shown that "there is greater variation within 'racial' groups than between them" (ibid.). Smedley discusses race as a social invention of colonial America in the 18th century, created to support European superiority, domination of Native Americans, and slavery of Africans (see also Smedley 1999 [1993]).

Smedley turns upside down the general understanding of race as physical reality and culture as intangible or abstract, pointing out the "myth" of race and highlighting the "reality" of culture.

Racial beliefs constitute myths about the diversity in the human species and about the abilities and behavior of people homogenized into "racial" categories. (Smedley 1998)

Racial myths are contrasted with realities of culture.

At the end of the 20th century, we now understand that human cultural behavior is learned, conditioned into infants beginning at birth, and always subject to modification. ... Studies of infant and early childhood learning and behavior attest to the reality of our cultures in forming who we are. (Smedley 1998)

Although race has been shown to be an artificial construction, racism continues to be a social problem. The concept of race persists and it is important to be aware of its political uses and implications. For example, Tim Libretti places the word “race” in quotation marks in his discussion of racial oppression, apparently recognizing that race itself is not a biological reality and, at the same time, recognizing the significance of the concept of race and “the reality of ‘race’ as a principle of organizing the U.S. society of structured inequality” (Libretti 1999:2).

In the introduction to *Music and the Racial Imagination*, Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman write:

The essays in this book militate against the rhetoric that foresees an end to race and racism. (Radano and Bohlman 2000:37)

Initially I was surprised that Radano and Bohlman appear to want to perpetuate the concept of race despite its lack of biological reality. But perhaps they are trying to show the artificiality of race and to take away its power (or rather the power that some people have over others by using and reifying difference and “race”) by better understanding how people have constructed and given significance to “race.” Perhaps it’s naive to imagine and wish for an end of race and racism, and it’s better to deal with the problem, to confront it and find a solution. The end of race and racism is a long-term goal, and there are still many steps to deal with first, such as the issue of difference between “the West and the rest” in ethnomusicology (Radano and Bohlman 2000:39).

Race and ethnicity are often conflated and confused. Ethnic categories such as Asian American, African American, and Latino American tend to perpetuate and

reinforce racial categories. Race and ethnicity are often considered as equivalent, as pointed out by Deborah Wong:

Race is now discussed by social and natural scientists as a cultural construct, not a biological reality, and yet race and ethnicity are consistently collapsed and made equivalent. (Wong 2004:118)

The concept of “Asian Americans” was developed in the 1960s as part of the broader social and political movement for civil rights and the struggle against racial oppression in the United States. As Wannu W. Anderson and Robert G. Lee explain:

Asian America was conceived in the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s as an act of resistance to the dominant U.S. racial hierarchy. ... Deeply influenced by the Black Power movement in the United States and by revolutionary currents in the Third World, the Asian American movement was rooted in the support of community struggles against racial and class oppression. (Anderson and Lee 2005:7)

Ironically, the category of Asian Americans, which began as a form of resistance against racism and racial oppression, tends to reinforce the idea of race as an identity marker. As Wong writes:

Asian Americans are a problematic social category, apparently race-based, but actually one forged from a multiethnic activist response to institutionalized racism in the 1960s. (Wong 2004:4)

The category of Asian Americans appears to be based on race but the intention was to unite different ethnic groups (Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and so on) in a struggle against racism.

When people choose to identify themselves as Asian American, they may be trying to shift the focus away from race towards cultural heritage. They are choosing to define *themselves* instead of being defined *by others*. Racial stereotypes about a particular

group are usually created by people outside of that group. In contrast, ethnic identities are developed by people within the group.

Freedom of choice is an important feature of self-identification. People are free to choose how to identify themselves. As Wong explains:

Not all Asians in America choose to self-identify as Asian American: the “Asian American” is an emergent identity involving a choice to identify across particular Asian ethnicities in resistance to the cultural politics that have made race a shaping social force. To identify as Asian American suggests some consciousness of the Asian American movement and activism. (Wong 2004:125)

Although I agree with Wong that people choose whether or not to identify themselves as Asian American, I disagree with her assumption that choosing to do so indicates an awareness of the cultural politics and activism of the Asian American movement. Rather, the term “Asian American” has entered the vocabulary of the general American public without people necessarily knowing or thinking about the political movement.

Although Asian Americans are often considered as a single ethnic group, they are actually a multiethnic category, including Korean Americans, Chinese Americans and so on. Anderson and Lee use the term “ethnonational” to refer to the different ethnicities (for example, Korean American) within the broader category of Asian American:

This ethnonational self-definition, which ties the immigrant subject to a specific (if sometimes only imagined) national homeland rather than to a collective ethnic or racialized American history is deeply embedded in the discourse of diaspora. (Anderson and Lee 2005:9)

Such ethnonational self-identifications tend to emphasize ties to the homeland that are central to ideas of diaspora in contrast to the multiethnic identity of Asian Americans.

My resentment of being judged based on race or ethnicity is part of a general reluctance to be stereotyped, to be denied my individuality. Even a stereotype such as the

“model minority” myth that attributes positive qualities is still a stereotype. As Helen Zia (2000:47) writes, “The ‘model minority’ myth presented its own quandary: should Asian Americans accept, if not embrace, this ‘good’ stereotype as an improvement over the ‘inscrutable alien enemy’ image of the previous hundred years?” Zia continues, “In the 1960s, a new generation of Asian Americans was preparing to reject all stereotypes, preferring instead to find its own self-definition” (Zia 2000:47). Inspired in part by this earlier generation of Asian Americans, I also want to reject all stereotypes and instead find my own self-definition.

In some ways, when I was younger, I wanted to be different (I wanted to maintain a sense of unique identity), but in other ways, I didn’t want to be different (I wanted to be “normal”). I resented being asked about my ethnicity because I did not like being made self-conscious of my appearance, of looking different. Unfortunately, I think that I began to internalize the resentment. Instead of being angry at people for asking such questions, I began to blame myself and my parents for looking different. The resentment of such questions turned into shame and anger towards Korea, my parents, and myself.

Such feelings of shame and anger are not uncommon. As Jeffrey J. Santa Ana notes:

[R]acial minority subjects in contemporary Asian American literature do not necessarily or always experience historical connection and placement within ethnic kinship and community, for there are just as many instances of the Asian American subject’s vehement rejection of history and kinship when feeling anger and shame as there are instances of empathic connection to these identificatory claimings. (Santa Ana 2004:41, n.14)

Although Santa Ana is discussing Asian American literature, the subjects are based on real life, and the feelings of anger and shame are real.

I didn't consider myself Korean, in part because of shame or anger, but also because I was made to feel different from Koreans. "Real" Koreans, i.e. people who were born in Korea, would sometimes criticize me for not being able to speak Korean well. In response, I would (silently) criticize them for not speaking English well, even though they were living in Canada or the United States.

Nationality

When my family and I moved to Seattle, it seemed like race and ethnicity were no longer issues. There were large communities of Korean Americans and other Asian Americans in Seattle. People rarely asked me about my ethnicity.

Instead of race or ethnicity, nationality became an issue. Attending school in Seattle, I was often teased for being Canadian. I spoke with a Canadian accent, of which I was at first unaware, but not for long. I soon lost the accent and I certainly didn't bring up the fact that I was from Canada.

Even now, when people from the States find out that I'm from Canada, there is still quite often teasing about being from there. Occasionally there are even insults and hostility. So if a person in the States asks me where I am from, I usually tell them that my parents are from Korea and that I was born "here" (not specifying Canada). Outside of the States, I am proud to be Canadian. In many places around the world, such as South Korea and Europe, people are often more friendly if I identify myself as a Canadian rather than as an American.

Individualism

An American friend once asked me how much of myself I consider to be Korean and how much American. I did not like the question, but he kept asking, so I finally replied: “I’m a third American, a third Korean, and a third myself.” Here again, I was reluctant to identify myself as simply a member of a group (or two groups) and I wanted to emphasize my sense of individualism.

Somewhat paradoxically, I do not feel like I am losing my individuality by identifying myself as an “American,” even though this is a group identity. Individualism is an important part of American culture. This is not the case with all cultures. As Philip K. Bock writes in his discussion of “Role, Self, and Identity,” there are “significant differences in cultural understandings of the self” (Bock 1988:198). For example, Bock considers the Chinese view of self as discussed by Marsella, DeVos, and Hsu in *Culture and Self*:

The Chinese viewed the self as “a developing part of a continuing family lineage [rather than] an individual ego” (Marsella, DeVos, and Hsu 1985:18). (Bock 1988:199; text in brackets added by Bock)

The idea of an individual ego is not emphasized in the traditional Chinese sense of self.

In their discussion of identity, Giovanna P. Del Negro and Harris M. Berger refer to Richard Handler’s work, which also looks at different ideas of identity in various cultures.

Comparing ethnographic examples from native North America, Bali, and India, Handler problematizes the assumption that an individual’s identity is sharply bounded from others, unique to each person, and stable across time. (Del Negro and Berger 2004:126).

By looking at different cultures, we see that the view of an individual's identity as separate and unique is not universal.

It is also interesting to see how the concept of the individual has developed through history, as Del Negro and Berger discuss:

If Handler suggests that the Western philosophical notion of identity is culturally specific, Stuart Hall (1996) and Philip Gleason (1983) illustrate that it is historically emergent as well. ... The notion of the individual as an autonomous and self-willing agent, Hall suggests, came in the eighteenth century after the rising sway of Descartes's rational cogitative subject and the Enlightenment principles of equality, democracy, and private property. (Del Negro and Berger 2004:128)

Asian American Identities: Diversity and Complexity

One of the reasons I did not want to identify myself earlier as a Korean American or Asian American was that I did not want to reduce myself to a stereotype. I was concerned that Asian American identity was rather singular and homogeneous. Lisa Lowe expresses a similar concern in her essay, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," in which she points out that "essentializing Asian American identity and suppressing our differences—of national origin, generation, gender, party, class—risks particular dangers: ... it inadvertently supports the racist discourse that constructs Asians as a homogeneous group, that implies we are 'all alike' and conform to 'types'" (Lowe 1991:30). Lowe argues in favor of a more diverse view of Asian American identity that recognizes differences.

I am relieved to learn that there has been a shift in Asian American studies in recent years from emphasizing common experiences to recognizing the diversity of Asian American identities. In the introduction to *Asian North American Identities*, Eleanor Ty

and Donald C. Goellnicht write that “scholars are less likely today to make such emphatic statements about ‘common experiences,’ recognizing the diversity of identities covered by the umbrella term ‘Asian American’” (Ty and Goellnicht 2004:1).

Asian Americans include people from all over Asia, a vast region of diverse nations and cultures. Within a single group such as Korean Americans, there are various subgroups. There are differences among generations: first generation, “1.5 generation,”⁴ second generation, and so on. There are also Korean American adoptees and hapas,⁵ “the mixed-race children of interracial couples” (Zia 2000:266). As Zia points out, “Korean American adoptees and the hapas have enriched the Asian American mix with a new understanding of ethnic and racial diversity” (Zia 2000:268).

I am also encouraged by the recognition of individual identity and its complexities. For example, Ty and Goellnicht write: “What these essays emphasize are the complexities, the struggles and layering of various facets of one’s identity, which are shaped by the history and the politics of one’s imaginary and adopted homeland(s), as well as the importance of memory, myth, and art in the construction of self” (Ty and Goellnicht 2004:2).

With the recognition that groups are made up of diverse individuals and that each individual has a unique, complex identity with multiple facets, I feel more comfortable in identifying myself as an Asian American. An important part of my identity is my identity

⁴ “The ‘1.5 generation,’ a designation coined by Korean Americans and sometimes used by other Asian groups, refers to those who came to the United States as children, while the ‘2.0 generation’ was born in America. Unlike their parents, both [1.5 and 2.0 generations] were fluent in the ways of America” (Zia 2000:186).

⁵ The word “Hapas” means “half” in Hawaiian (Zia 2000:266).

as a Korean American. I can admit to having similarities with other Korean Americans and Asian Americans while maintaining a sense of self and individualism.

More than a shared ethnicity, it is the sense of shared experiences that I feel I have in common with other Korean Americans. For instance, there is the sense of a common experience of being challenged to balance and integrate one's ethnic heritage with American culture. This is not specific to Korean Americans but rather common to many Asian Americans (and others). As Lucy Tse writes in her study of autobiographical accounts by 39 Asian Americans and their explorations of ethnic identity, there is:

... a pattern of exploration and decision-making that results in greater understanding of self-identity and greater self-acceptance as a member of an ethnic minority. The process revealed by the narrators began with a willingness to face previously unaddressed ethnic identity issues, leading to the search for membership in a new and more satisfying group. After a period of exploration, and finding that they were not fully comfortable with either the mainstream American or ethnic culture, the narrators discovered the ethnic minority American group—Asian Americans. The narrators described their movement through these stages to achieve an Asian American identity as positive and self-validating. (Tse 1999:121)

While there may be a general pattern of exploration, each individual has a unique journey of self-discovery.

Over the years I have learned to come to terms with my own feelings of ambivalence towards my identity as an Asian American and to appreciate my heritage as an important part of my identity. I have also come to recognize the diversity and complexity of individual identities within a group. The exploration of identity and the challenge of integrating different cultural influences within oneself are common experiences shared by many people in today's world of transnational flows of people and ideas.

Family Heritage

In university, like many other people, I became interested in “finding myself.” As a part of this process of self-discovery, I began to explore my heritage, recognizing it as an important part of my identity as an individual. I developed a sense of curiosity about my roots (in contrast to my earlier resentment of being asked by others).

The experience of going away to college (I attended Stanford University in California) and being apart from my family helped me to appreciate the value of family. I began to realize how much of an influence my family had on me growing up as an individual. I wanted to learn more about my parents, grandparents, and ancestors, about their lives in Korea, and about Korean culture in general, as these were all influences in my own life. I began taking Korean language courses and traveling to Korea.

While I was in Korea, people often asked me, “Where are you from?” Instead of asking about my Korean heritage, people were asking about where I grew up and where I live when I’m not in Korea. Whereas I used to perceive this question as being about one’s “race” or ethnicity, I now see it as a general question about one’s personal history, as a friendly way of getting to know someone. With so many people moving to different places around the world, it is common to ask people, “Where are you from?”

When I saw SamulNori’s virtuosic performance in Vancouver and the enthusiastic reaction from the audience, I felt a sense of pride in my Korean heritage. The positive effect of seeing SamulNori was felt immediately, and its significance and impact has continued as my sense of identity as an Asian American—and more specifically Korean American—has developed over the years. There were also other positive events and experiences, such as making friends with other Asian Americans, but seeing SamulNori

is still one of the key memories in my mind. It is a vivid memory and it has been reinforced and strengthened with subsequent experiences of seeing SamulNori perform over the following years.

Seeing SamulNori gave me a new image of Korean culture and a positive feeling of pride in my Korean heritage. The energy of the music and dance are exciting and inspiring. The musicians, full of strength, energy, and power, provide a positive image for Korean, Asian American, and cosmopolitan identities.

Over the past nineteen years, I have continued traveling to Korea and learning about my family heritage, and I have been studying ethnomusicology in graduate school. Doing research and fieldwork on Korean shaman rituals and *p'ungmul kut* has helped me with understanding the connections between traditional music, culture, ritual, and identity, as I will discuss in the following chapters.

Chapter 2. Rooted in *P'ungmul Kut*: Ritual Aspects of SamulNori

There is anticipation and excitement in the air. The pulse of the drums and gongs is fast and steady, a flowing stream of sound, a controlled balance of strength and grace, gradually increasing in volume and intensity, and generating energy. Amidst the music and gathering energy, some people are bowing in front of a table with food offerings, expressing reverence and respect. (Based on “headnotes”¹ about Lunar New Year performance, 1997)

As I read the previous paragraph, which I had written some time ago, it sounds to me like a description of a *p'ungmul kut* ritual, but actually what I had in mind when I first wrote those sentences was the beginning of the performance by the group SamulNori at the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle in 1997. Even now, just thinking about it, I feel the energy and the excitement, and my heart is beating faster.

In contrast to my first impression of SamulNori in Vancouver in 1986 (see Chapter 1) as being mainly entertainment with exciting music and dance, I was somewhat surprised to see ritual elements in SamulNori's performance at the UW, including a prayer song (*Pinari*) as well as people bowing in front of a table with food offerings (including fruit and even a pig's head, which is often associated with shaman rituals). The evening's performance was a celebration for the Lunar New Year and included prayers for blessings for the audience and the UW School of Music for the new year. The new year is traditionally celebrated in Korean villages with festivals featuring *p'ungmul kut* rituals with percussion music, dancing, and prayers for blessings for the people.

As I watched the performance by SamulNori, I had many questions: To whom (or what) are the people bowing? Spirits? If so, what kind of spirits? Are the musicians

¹ The term “headnote” was coined by anthropologist Simon Ottenberg to refer to “the notes in my mind, the memories of my field research” (1990:144).

acting as shamans? Are they intermediaries between people and spirits? Are they serving as ritual specialists? These questions eventually led me to learn more about SamulNori and the relationship between Korean “shaman” ritual music and *p’ungmul kut*.

Although I was surprised to see ritual elements in SamulNori’s performance, which I had previously thought of as mainly entertainment, what was really unexpected and intriguing for me was the *combination* of ritual and entertainment, which I had previously thought of as quite separate, even polar opposites. This challenged me to reconsider my (mis)understanding of ritual as being solemn and serious (in contrast to entertainment as being playful and fun). I had to ask myself: What is the relationship between ritual and playfulness? By learning about the music and dance of *p’ungmul kut*, what can we learn about music and playfulness in ritual more generally? These are central questions that I explore throughout this dissertation.

In this chapter I will discuss the relationship between *p’ungmul kut* and SamulNori, showing how learning about SamulNori is essential for understanding *p’ungmul kut* today. SamulNori has created the most popular contemporary version of *p’ungmul kut*. Their music has become a genre in itself (known as *samul nori*). Many people are familiar with SamulNori while being completely unaware of *p’ungmul kut*.

I will examine the origins of SamulNori and its connections with *p’ungmul kut* by looking at SamulNori’s roots in farmers’ music (*nongak*) and the performance traditions of professional itinerant entertainers (*namsadang*), both of which are rooted in *p’ungmul kut*. Learning about *nongak* and *namsadang* and the complex relationships between them will help with understanding *p’ungmul kut*.

A person or group may present or emphasize different aspects of their identity to different people and at different times. In this chapter I will examine some of the various ways that SamulNori has developed their identity over the years, looking in particular at ritual aspects of their performances and the group's complex relationship with *p'ungmul kut*. The members of SamulNori have often emphasized their roots in professional itinerant troupes (*namsadang*) as well as their connection with ordinary people and farmers' music (*nongak*). The musicians of SamulNori have also identified themselves as "shamans" (*mudang*) and their performances often feature ritual elements. By examining the ritual aspects of SamulNori's identity, we will gain a better understanding of *p'ungmul kut*.

Origins of SamulNori

In this section I will look at the origins of SamulNori, including the source and meaning of SamulNori's name, which has connections with Buddhist rituals as well as *p'ungmul kut*. I will also discuss the relationships between playing (*nori*), ritual, and music in *p'ungmul kut*.

The four members² of SamulNori performed music based on *p'ungmul kut* together as a quartet for the first time in 1978 at the Space Theater (*Konggan Sarang*)³ in Seoul (Howard 2006 vol. 2:2). The group of musicians would only later be called

² There have been changes in the group's membership over the years but there are four musicians that I refer to as the "core" members of SamulNori: Kim Duk Soo (b. 1952), Kim Yong-bae (1953-1986), Lee Kwang-Soo (b. 1952), and Ch'oe Chong-shil (b. 1953). These four are often referred to as the "original" members even though Lee and Ch'oe joined after the initial performances and replaced two of the founding members, Ch'ae Taehyön and Yi Chöngdae (Howard 2006 vol. 2:6). The core members started performing together in 1979.

³ The word *konggan* means "space." The word *sarang* here refers to a room for welcoming and entertaining guests in one's home.

“SamulNori.” At this initial performance they were part of a larger group of musicians known as the “Folk Music Society’s Improvisation Ensemble” (*Minsok Akhoe Shinawi*).⁴ The term *shinawi*, which Keith Howard has translated here as “improvisation ensemble,” refers to a genre of folk music that was traditionally performed in “shaman” rituals (*mudang kut*) and it also refers to a genre of secular folk music based on the ritual music.

Even though the original members of SamulNori were part of a larger ensemble called *shinawi*, which has connections with *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals), and the quartet was playing music that was performed in rituals of *p’ungmul kut*, there is no mention of *kut* or ritual in the larger ensemble’s name. This lack of recognition of ritual and *kut* is an important issue in modern performances and representations of Korean traditional music, which I will discuss further in Chapter 5.

After the quartet’s second performance in 1978, their name “SamulNori”⁵ was coined by the folklorist Shim U-sŏng (S. Park 2000:178; Howard 2006 vol. 2:6). In simplest terms, *samul* means “four things” and *nori* means “playing” and “having fun.” The combination here refers to playing and having fun with the four main types of drums and gongs that are used in *p’ungmul kut*, i.e. *changgu* (hourglass drum), *kkwaenggwari* (small gong), *puk* (barrel drum), and *ching* (large gong).

⁴ As Keith Howard noted, “[T]he quartet’s first performance took place as part of the tenth regular concert of this larger group” (2006 vol. 2:2).

⁵ The group’s name is usually romanized as “SamulNori” (a single word with two capital letters) but it is also sometimes romanized as “Samul-Nori” (with a hyphen).

The term *samul*, which consists of two Sino-Korean⁶ words—*sa* (四) meaning “four” and *mul* (物) meaning “object(s)”—existed before the group SamulNori was formed, as did other staged versions of *p’ungmul kut* and the idea of a percussion quartet, as Keith Howard explains:

“*Samul*” ... had formerly been used to signify the four percussion instruments in small-scale staged imitations of outdoor percussion bands that Pak [Hönbong] had encouraged. The concept of the quartet can be backdated still further, as Kim Hönsön (1991:196-220) and Kim Duk Soo (1992:10) do, to so-called *ttünsoe* master percussionists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (Howard 2006 vol. 2:5)

***Samul* in Buddhist Ritual Music**

The term *samul* (four objects) is also used in Buddhist ritual music to refer to two different sets of four instruments. As the Korean music scholar Hahn Myong-hee [Han Myöng-hüi] explains:

In Buddhist tradition, there are actually two sets of objects (not strictly for entertainment purposes) that are also called *samul*. One set is part of the ritual lifestyle of the temple: the *popko* [*pöpko*] (a small drum, covered with cow leather and played in front of the Buddha), the *unp’an* (a type of gong, placed in the kitchen and used to summon the monks to their meals), the *mogo* [*mogō*] (a hollow wooden block, made in the shape of a carp and struck while hung when the sutras are read) and the *taejong* (a large bell). At other times the instruments which accompany ritual dance or *pomp’ae* [*pömp’ae*] are also known as *samul*. These are the *ching* [large gong], *buk* [barrel drum], *t’aep’yongso* [conical oboe], and *mokt’ak* [wooden block]. (Hahn 1992:5)

Of the four instruments that accompany Buddhist ritual dance, three—the large gong (*ching*), barrel drum (*puk*), and conical oboe (*t’aep’yöngso*)—are also played in *p’ungmul kut*.

⁶ Many words in Korean are derived from Chinese and may be written with either Sino-Korean characters or native Korean letters while many other words are native Korean terms and written with Korean letters. Sino-Korean characters indicate meaning while Korean letters are phonetic.

This raises the question, “What is the relationship between Buddhist ritual music, *p’ungmul kut* music, and ‘shaman’ ritual (*mudang kut*) music?” The same musicians may play the same music in all three types of rituals. The music for Buddhist ritual dance is closely related to both *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* in terms of instrumentation, rhythmic patterns, and melodies. I will discuss the connections between *p’ungmul kut*, *mudang kut*, and Buddhist ritual music in Chapter 4. Now that the first part of SamulNori’s name has been explained and examined, let us turn to the second part.

***Nori* (Playing)**

Learning about the Korean concept of *nori* (playing and having fun) contributes not only to an understanding of SamulNori but also to an appreciation of aesthetic values in *p’ungmul kut*. In the process of learning about *nori* and *p’ungmul kut*, it is also possible to gain a fresh perspective on the meaning of “playing” and its relationship with music and dance more broadly in various cultures around the world.

The word *nori* means “playing” as in “being playful” and “having fun.”⁷ Similar to how the English gerund “playing” is formed by adding the suffix *-ing* to the verb “play,” the Korean word *nori* (놀이) is derived from the verb *nolda* (놀다),⁸ meaning “to play, have fun, and enjoy oneself,” by adding the suffix *-i* (ㅇ) to the verb stem *nor-/nol-* (놀).⁹

⁷ *Nori* also means “game.” For example, *yut nori* is a popular traditional game played on New Year’s Day by people of all ages.

⁸ The Korean letter ㄹ at the bottom end of the verb stem 놀 is pronounced like the English letter *r* when followed by a vowel and *l* when followed by a consonant.

⁹ Both *-ing* and *-i* (ㅇ) are nominalizing suffixes, deriving nouns from verbs or adjectives.

Nori is sometimes translated as “play” but I prefer to use the word “playing” in order to highlight the sense of action that is indicated in *nori*. Also, the word “play” may be misleading. As a noun in English, “play” has two main meanings: (1) “action for enjoyment or recreation” or (2) a “dramatic or theatrical performance” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).¹⁰ The Korean word *nori* corresponds only to the meaning of enjoyment and recreation.

In the name “SamulNori,” the term *samul* (lit. “four things”) refers to the four main types of drums and gongs used in *p’ungmul kut* while *nori* means “playing,” so the combination is often translated as “playing four drums and gongs,” and I used to follow this practice. “Playing drums” and “playing music” are common phrases in English, so it sounds like a smooth translation, but *nori* means “playing” as in “being playful” and “having fun,” whereas “playing music” is different from “playing with music” or “having fun with music.” Although the English word “playing” often means “having fun,” it takes on a distinct meaning when referring to music or musical instruments (as in “playing music” or “playing drums”) to indicate “performing music” or “making music,” which is often fun but not always.¹¹

The word *nori* does *not* mean “performing,” even when referring to music or musical instruments.¹² The name “SamulNori” refers to having fun with four drums and gongs. Instead of translating it as “playing drums and gongs,” which means *performing*

¹⁰ There are actually four different meanings of “play” as a noun (with 19 separate definitions or “senses”) in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but I am focusing here on the two main meanings that I consider to be most common.

¹¹ For example, playing and singing Mozart’s *Requiem* at a funeral may be serious and sad.

¹² In reference to performing music, different Korean words (ex: *yŏnju hada* and *ch’ida*) are used.

music on drums and gongs, I prefer “playing *with* drums and gongs” in order to reflect the sense of playfulness and having fun that is meant by *nori*.

In Nathan Hesselink’s book about *p’ungmul*, I find his translation of *nori* and definition of “play” to be slightly misleading and problematic:

“Play,” or *nori* in the Korean, refers to both action and practice as well as entertainment-based activity, though with a subtle leaning toward the “fun” aspect. (Hesselink 2006:227 n.5)

Rather than just a “subtle leaning,” I believe that fun is a centrally important feature of both play and *nori*.

The word “play” may be derived from the Middle Dutch word *pleyen* meaning “to dance, leap for joy, rejoice, be glad” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Dancing is a primary form of playing and expressing joy in many cultures. I will discuss the central value of playfulness and dancing in *p’ungmul kut* in Chapter 4.

The term *nori* is sometimes used in conjunction with the term *p’ungmul* in the phrase *p’ungmul nori*, which literally means “playing with *p’ungmul*” (i.e. playing with the percussion instruments of *p’ungmul kut*) and is used as a synonym for *p’ungmul kut*. In contrast to the term *p’ungmul kut*, which indicates a ritual (*kut*), the phrase *p’ungmul nori* suggests a playful, entertainment-oriented performance. The shift away from ritual to focus only on entertainment is an important issue in understanding changes in *p’ungmul kut* as well as Korean music and culture more broadly, as I discuss in Chapter 5.

The word *nori* is a native Korean term. The use of native terms can have significant implications, as Donna Kwon explains: “In light of its native etymological roots, the word ‘*nori*’ implies that a given genre is also native Korean” (Kwon 2005:108). By calling themselves “SamulNori,” the musicians are identifying themselves and their

music as native Korean. Thus, “SamulNori” means much more than simply “playing with four things.”

In contrast with the Sino-Korean term *samul*, which can be written with either Sino-Korean characters (四物) or native Korean letters (사물), there are no Sino-Korean characters for the native Korean word *nori* (놀이). The name “SamulNori” is often written using a combination of Sino-Korean characters and native Korean letters as “四物놀이” (with *samul* in Sino-Korean characters and *nori* in Korean letters), which allows readers familiar with Chinese characters to understand the reference to four things, while also indicating that this genre of music is native Korean. The visual distinction between the Sino-Korean characters and native Korean letters separates the group’s name into its two main parts. When writing the group’s name in English, the distinction between *samul* and *nori* is maintained by capitalizing both parts (SamulNori).

The group SamulNori and their music have become quite popular and influential, and there are many other groups playing the same style of music, so the term *samul nori* now refers to a genre of music. I have decided to use capital letters for the group name (SamulNori) and lower case letters in italics for the genre name (*samul nori*).¹³ In Korean writing, there is no capitalization, so the names of both the group and the genre are spelled the same. It is usually clear from context whether one is referring to the group or the genre, but sometimes the original group is distinguished from the genre by naming the leader of the group, Kim Duk Soo.¹⁴

¹³ I separate *samul* and *nori* with a space in order to clarify the distinction between the two terms. The genre name is sometimes written as a single word as *samulnori* or *samullori* (the *n* is changed to an *l* following the McCune-Reischauer system of romanization).

¹⁴ The group is sometimes called *Kim Duk Soo SamulNori P’ae* (*p’ae* means group or team).

In 1984, Kim Yong-bae, one of the original members of SamulNori, left the group to lead a new quartet at the National Classical Music Institute¹⁵ (*Kungnip Kugagwŏn*).¹⁶ The new quartet was called “NCMI SamulNori” (*Kungnip Kugagwŏn SamulNori P’ae*). Originally the term “SamulNori” was the name of the group formed in 1978, but with the formation of this new group at NCMI in 1984, the term *samul nori* became the name of a genre of music. There are now many *samul nori* groups in various nations around the world. Groups include women, men, and children of all ages.

Rituals by Professional Entertainers (*Namsadang*)

The four core members of SamulNori each grew up in professional entertainment troupes (*namsadang*), whose performances feature music and dance from *p’ungmul kut*. In addition to music and dance, *namsadang* groups also perform masked drama, puppet plays, acrobatics, rope walking, and plate spinning. Although the performances by *namsadang* itinerant troupes are mainly entertainment, there are some ritual elements. For example, the term *sa* (寺) in *namsadang* means “Buddhist temple.”¹⁷ Many *namsadang* groups were associated with specific Buddhist temples and performed Buddhist ritual music.

¹⁵ The National Classical Music Institute (NCMI) later changed its name to the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts (NCKTPA) and more recently to the National Gugak Center (*gugak* means national music and generally refers to Korean traditional music).

¹⁶ The institute’s director Hahn Man-young [Han Man-yŏng] invited all of the core members but only Kim Yong-bae accepted (Howard 2006 vol. 2:57).

¹⁷ The term *nam* (男) means “male” and *dang* (黨) means “group.” The term *sadang* originally referred to female groups, and so male groups were distinguished as *namsadang*, but nowadays *namsadang* groups often include women while the term *sadang* may also refer to male, female, and mixed groups. Some contemporary lexicographers argue that *sadang* is a native Korean term and the Chinese characters were borrowed later.

Ritual Song (*Pinari*)

The group SamulNori often begins their performances with a ritual song called *Pinari*, which was traditionally performed as a prayer for blessings and a bountiful harvest. While *p'ungmul kut* rituals feature percussion music and dance, they also include songs and prayers such as *Pinari*. The leader of the group (*sangsoe*)¹⁸ is usually also the lead vocalist. The other musicians play their drums and gongs relatively quietly as an accompaniment to solo singing, and they join in singing as a chorus for certain sections, with louder phrases of rhythmic punctuation on their instruments during the chorus sections and between verses.

The song *Pinari* is based on the shaman ritual music of *todang kut* (village shrine rituals) from Kyōnggi province (Shingil Park 2000:178). The word *pinari* may be related to the verb *pilda* meaning “to pray” (Kim Hōn-sōn 1994:147).

Pinari was a well-established piece in the repertoire of itinerant percussion bands in the central provinces of Kyōnggi and Ch'ungch'ōng (Howard 2006 vol. 2:12). At first I thought that Howard was referring here to *namsadang* troupes, but I later learned that not all itinerant percussion bands are *namsadang* troupes. According to folklorist Sim Usōng [Shim U-sōng], *Pinari* was initially performed not by *namsadang* troupes but rather by a different type of itinerant group known as *pinari p'ae* (*p'ae* means “group”) or *kōllip p'ae* (*kōllip* refers to fund-raising, especially for the construction and maintenance of Buddhist temples) ([1974] 2006:39). Sim distinguishes between

¹⁸ *Sang* means “head” or “first” while *soe* means “metal,” referring to the small gong (also known as *kkwaengwari*). *Sangsoe* refers to the leader who plays the *soe*.

namsadang and *pinari* groups (2006:38-40), then notes that there was some interaction and joining of these different types of groups around the 1930s (2006:51-52).

Pinari groups were associated with Buddhist temples and *pinari* was a “ritual offering” that was “recited” as part of household rituals, as explained by Sim:

Köllipp’ae always presented a document (*sinp’yo*) showing their relationship to a particular Buddhist temple when requesting to perform household rituals (such as for a room [*t’ö kut*],¹⁹ house god [*söngju kut*], kitchen god [*chowang kut*], or well [*saem kut*]). If permission was granted, they first began by playing *p’ungmul* (percussion music and dance) followed by various other kinds of performing arts. Once most of the household rituals were completed, they concluded with *söngju kut* (house god ritual), a time when grain and money was placed on a table. After the ritual offering (*pinari*) was recited, the grain and money were collected as income. (Sim 2006:39; bracketed material in original)

Pinari is a musical ritual offering to spirits, with prayers and recitations. Some of the melodies of *Pinari* (as performed by SamulNori) are quite similar to Buddhist chants (like *Hoeshimgok*) that use the musical style of local popular folk songs (*minyö*).

Nowadays *namsadang* performances are generally presented as entertainment—without any ritual elements. I was pleasantly surprised to learn about the connections between *namsadang* groups, Buddhist temples, and *pinari* ritual musical offerings.

Agricultural Rituals: Farmers’ Music and *P’ungmul Kut*

In contrast to their identity as professional entertainers (*namsadang*), the group SamulNori also promotes an image of being connected to ordinary people—farmers in particular—by playing *nongak* (farmers’ music). For example, one of SamulNori’s main suites is called “Rhythms of Farmers’ Music from Three Provinces” (*Samdo nongak karak*).

¹⁹ Actually the term *t’ö* refers to the land or property on which a house is built.

The term *nongak* (farmers' music) consists of two Sino-Korean words: *nong* (農 meaning “agriculture,” “farm,” or “farmer”) and *ak* (樂 meaning “music” or “pleasure”).²⁰ The term *nongak* is often used as a synonym for *p'ungmul kut*. Many people are more familiar with the term *nongak* than *p'ungmul kut*.

When I first heard about *nongak*, I understood it to be farming music, i.e. music for accompanying farming labor (ex: planting rice, weeding, and harvesting) or music performed in harvest festivals. But I later learned that *nongak* also includes music performed in contexts without any agricultural associations such as village purification rituals, military functions, fund-raising, and entertainment. *Nongak* is not limited to farmers, either as performers or as audience members. Everyone in the community (women, men, and children of all ages) is welcome to participate.

There is some ambiguity with the term *nongak*. Sometimes it refers broadly to *p'ungmul kut* in general, including performances by professional entertainers (*namsadang*). But sometimes *nongak* refers more specifically to local village performances by farmers—distinct from *namsadang* performances. For example, the Korean government has designated *nongak* and *namsadang* performance traditions as separate Cultural Assets (as I discuss in Chapter 5).

The term *nongak* is problematic for various political reasons, including an association with Japanese colonialism (as I discuss in Chapter 3), therefore many people

²⁰ The term *nongak* is actually a shortened version of the phrase *nongminŭi ūmak* (farmers' music) in which *nong* is combined with *min* (民 meaning “people”) to mean “farmers,” *ŭi* is a possessive marker (like the apostrophe and letter *s* in English), and *ŭm* (音 meaning “sound”) is combined with *ak* to mean “music” (No Kwang-il 1985:268).

involved with *p'ungmul kut* prefer the term *p'ungmul* or *p'ungmul kut*. SamulNori also refers to *p'ungmul kut* in the titles of several of their works.²¹

A major feature of *p'ungmul kut* is its association with farmers. Korean society was traditionally agricultural and rice fields still cover much of the countryside. The rituals of *p'ungmul kut* are connected to agriculture, villages, and traditional ways of life. *P'ungmul kut* were traditionally performed to accompany agricultural labor such as rice planting and weeding. *P'ungmul kut* are also performed for harvest festivals and Lunar New Year celebrations.

The four main percussion instruments used in *p'ungmul kut* symbolize four elements of weather that are important for agriculture. Wind, clouds, thunder, and rain are represented by the *puk* (barrel drum), *ching* (large gong), *kkwaenggwari* (small gong), and *changgu* (hourglass drum), respectively (SamulNori flyer 1998).²² The wind brings clouds, the clouds bring lightning and thunder, and thunder signals the coming of rain, which is essential for agriculture and a successful crop (Kim Dong Won [Kim Tong-wŏn], drumming workshop, 2010).²³ This four-part model of wind, clouds, thunder, and rain is part of the Korean Sŏngni philosophical tradition, which was embraced by SamulNori (Howard 2006 vol. 2:63).

Although *p'ungmul kut* are now often performed in cities, away from any farming context, players are well aware of the traditional agricultural associations. The

²¹ For example, the recording *Kim Duk Soo SamulNori: The Definitive Collection (Kyŏljŏng p'an)* (1995) features “rhythms of *p'ungmul kut*” (*p'ungmul kut karak*) from four different regions. SamulNori also recorded pieces called *Uttari P'ungmul* and *Udo Kut* on *Samul-Nori: Drums and Voices of Korea* (1984).

²² These four elements are summarized in the Sino-Korean phrase, *un u p'ung roe* (雲雨風雷 [운우풍뢰]), meaning clouds, rain, wind, and thunder (Lee Young-Gwang 2009:8).

²³ Kim Dong Won was the education director for SamulNori for several years (Howard 2006 vol. 2).

connections of *p'ungmul kut* with agriculture, the earth, nature, and the cosmos are an important part of people's understanding of *p'ungmul kut* (see also Chapter 7).

During SamulNori performances, there is often a vertical banner (suspended from a bamboo pole on the side of the stage), which has connections with agricultural rituals. In traditional *p'ungmul kut* rituals, there is a similar banner called *nonggi* (literally “farming flag”), also known as *Sŏnanggi* (flag for Sŏnang, a tutelary spirit). In agricultural contexts, the banner often has Sino-Korean characters that mean “Farmers are the foundation of the world.”²⁴ For SamulNori performances, the banner has the group's name in Sino-Korean and native Korean characters (as discussed on page 35).

SamulNori often includes a table with ritual offerings of food, drink, incense, and candles on the stage. Similar offerings are made in a wide variety of religious rituals in Korea, including Buddhist rituals, Confucian rituals, and *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals). Many Koreans make similar offerings in memory of their ancestors. People traditionally bow and then kneel on a straw mat while making an offering to spirits, such as lighting some incense or pouring a drink. At SamulNori's UW Lunar New Year performance, some people from the audience (including faculty members of UW Ethnomusicology as well as members of the local Korean community) were invited up to the stage where they bowed, kneeled and made offerings.

SamulNori Musicians as “Shamans”

The members of SamulNori are sometimes identified as “shamans” (*mudang*). The leader Kim Duk Soo has actually said that he is a *mudang* (personal communication

²⁴ The banner reads: “農者天下之大本” (*nongja ch'ŏnhaji taebon*).

1997). Many people think that *p'unmul kut* and *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals) are the same, unaware that they are two distinct types of ritual (as I discuss in Chapter 4).

SamulNori tends to blur the distinction between *mudang kut* and *p'unmul kut* by playing music from both. For example, the song *Pinari* is from the shaman ritual music of Kyōnggi province. SamulNori has also performed with *mudang* (“shamans”) and ritual musicians (known by various terms including *chaebi* and *aksa*) who specialize in various types of *mudang kut*.

For instance, SamulNori recorded “Variations on Tong Sal Puri [*tong salp'uri*] (Eastern Exorcism)” with ritual musician Pak Pyōng-ch'ōn for Peter Gabriel's WOMAD (World of Music and Dance) Production, *A Week in the Real World* (1992). SamulNori also recorded a double album, *Ch'ōngbae: Spirit of Nature* (2001), featuring *mudang* and ritual musicians from various regions of Korea, including Kim Sōk-ch'ul from the east coast. Both Pak Pyōng-ch'ōn and Kim Sōk-ch'ul are ritual musicians (*chaebi*), not *mudang*, but they are often called “shamans” (in English).

Ritual musicians (*chaebi*) are often confused with *mudang* (“shamans”). While *mudang* sing, dance, and sometimes play percussion instruments (drums, gongs, cymbals, and bells), ritual musicians often provide musical accompaniment on melodic instruments (such as oboes, flutes, and fiddles) as well as percussion instruments and vocal accompaniment. I will try to clarify the important distinction between ritual musicians (*chaebi*) and *mudang* (“shamans”) further in Chapter 4.

Ritual and Playing

Initially I thought of SamulNori's performance as entertainment in contrast to ritual, but in the process of learning about *p'ungmul kut*, I have come to see the ritual aspects of SamulNori and—perhaps more significantly—the playful aspects of ritual. The Korean concept of *kut nori* (playing with ritual) combines ritual (*kut*) with playing (*nori*), which I used to think of as two completely separate activities. I will discuss *kut nori* and the relationship between ritual and playing in Chapter 6. Playing and entertainment (including music and dance) are often integral parts of ritual in various cultures, as I will discuss in the Conclusion.

Many years after I first heard rhythms of *p'ungmul kut* performed by SamulNori in Vancouver, I went to Korea and was surprised to meet many *p'ungmul kut* musicians who explicitly distinguish themselves and their music from SamulNori. In the next chapter I will discuss how I started to learn to play *p'ungmul kut* in Seoul and how I learned about the differences between SamulNori and *p'ungmul kut*.

Chapter 3. Tradition and Modernity: Participating in *P'ungmul Kut* versus *Samul Nori*

Some people consider *p'ungmul kut* and *samul nori*¹ to be the same, but it is important to be aware of their differences. Although SamulNori's repertoire is rooted in *p'ungmul kut* (as discussed in Chapter 2), the group has made significant changes, which some people find problematic and some people find innovative (as I will discuss in this chapter). Many people who are involved with *samul nori* emphasize the connections between *samul nori* and *p'ungmul kut*, but many people who are involved with *p'ungmul (kut)*² emphasize the differences between *p'ungmul kut* and *samul nori*.

When I started learning to play *p'ungmul kut* in Korea (in 1999), I was surprised to hear people's criticisms about the group SamulNori and their music. In particular, *samul nori* is often criticized for being performed while seated, with an emphasis on technical virtuosity and accelerated tempos that are too fast for people to dance. In contrast, *p'ungmul kut* is traditionally performed while dancing. The musicians carry their instruments, enabling them to move around and dance while they play. People in the audience are inspired and encouraged to dance as well, creating a feeling of community and connection between performers and audience members.

Although the members of SamulNori also dance sometimes, their dancing is often quite virtuosic, featuring long ribbons spinning overhead and acrobatic twirling. This style of dancing is also part of *p'ungmul kut* that are performed by professional itinerant

¹ The term *samul nori* refers to the genre of music that is based on performances by the group SamulNori, which was formed in 1978 (as discussed in Chapter 2).

² I place the word *kut* in parentheses to indicate that people often use the term *p'ungmul* instead of *p'ungmul kut*.

(*namsadang*) groups and in certain regional styles of village rituals. But in many traditional community-based performances of *p'ungmul kut*, the dancing is not technically difficult or virtuosic. Rather, it is more of a free expression of enjoyment, using one's whole body to experience the music and engage with others. At the end of some SamulNori performances, as an encore (*twip'uri*), people in the audience are invited to join the musicians and dance together on the stage. It is this energy of friendly, free and spontaneous interaction generated in this group dance that is the core of *p'ungmul kut*. But many *samul nori* groups focus only on the seated repertoire.

Many people who play *p'ungmul kut* distinguish their music and dance from *samul nori*, and so I sometimes think of *p'ungmul kut* and *samul nori* as two separate genres. But many people who play *samul nori* consider their music to be *p'ungmul kut*, suggesting that *p'ungmul kut* and *samul nori* are the same thing. After several years of learning about *p'ungmul kut* and thinking about these different perspectives, I have come to see *samul nori* as a type of *p'ungmul kut*. There are also other contemporary types of *p'ungmul kut*, including traditional village rituals (*maül kut*), performances by university student *p'ungmul* clubs (*tongari*), performances of *p'ungmul kut* as part of the People's Cultural Movement (*minjung munhwa undong*), and *p'ungmul kut* performed as government-designated "Cultural Assets" (*munhwajae*).

In this chapter I will examine what distinguishes *samul nori* from other types of *p'ungmul kut*, focusing on the importance of audience participation in *p'ungmul kut*—in the form of cheering (*ch'uimsae*) as well as dancing—in contrast with seated performances of *samul nori*. Applying ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino's (2008) terms, I will examine the contrast between *p'ungmul kut* as "participatory performances" and

samul nori as “presentational performances.” I will also explore “tradition” in the discourse of modernity and the relationship between authenticity and change.

Dancing

I began learning to dance in Korea in 1999 with the master dancer Hwang Chae-gi *sōnsaengnim*.³ I was introduced to Mr. Hwang through my main teacher for *p’ungmul kut*, Pak Hŭng-ju *sōnsaengnim*. Mr. Pak is the director of the *Kut* Research Institute (*Kut Yōn’guso*). I first met Pak *sōnsaengnim* in 1999 through ethnomusicologist Maria K. Seo—my mentor as well as my mother—who had met him a few years earlier at a conference about Korean shamanism in Seoul. When we met, my mother showed him a video of me playing *changgu* (hourglass-shaped drum) with Professor Choi Moon-jin [Ch’oe Mun-jin] playing *kayagŭm* (12-string zither).⁴ Pak *sōnsaengnim* said that when he closed his eyes, my drumming sounded okay, but when he watched me play, I looked too rigid and tense.

Pak *sōnsaengnim* recommended that I learn Korean traditional dance in order to feel and express Korean music with my whole body. Following Pak *sōnsaengnim*’s recommendation, I began to focus on dancing in order to improve my understanding of Korean music. He introduced me to Hwang Chae-gi *sōnsaengnim*, a master of the *sogo ch’um* (literally, “small drum dance”),⁵ which is an important part of *p’ungmul kut*. I began to study *p’ungmul kut* and *sogo ch’um* with Hwang *sōnsaengnim* in 1999, first in private lessons and then with a class. Hwang *sōnsaengnim* also gave me private lessons

³ *Sōnsaeng* means “teacher” and *-nim* is an honorific suffix.

⁴ Professor Choi was a Visiting Artist in Ethnomusicology at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1997-98.

⁵ The *sogo* (“small drum”) is a double-headed frame drum (about 25 cm in diameter and 4 cm in depth) with a handle. *Ch’um* means “dance.”

on *kkwaenggwari* (small gong), teaching me variations of the rhythmic cycles (*changdan*) that are played for dancing.

Hwang *sōnsaengnim* criticized SamulNori's music for being too fast for dancing, particularly in the seated pieces (*anjūn pan*). Many rhythms that are traditionally played while dancing in *p'ungmul kut* have been accelerated by SamulNori in a virtuosic display of technical ability and so the audience generally remains seated instead of dancing.

Although Hwang *sōnsaengnim* and other musicians were often seated while playing various percussion instruments in class, they were providing music for dancing. All of the musicians were familiar with the dance, and the movements of the dance determined the tempo and flow of the music. The main criticism of SamulNori is not that the musicians are seated but rather that they often play too quickly for other people to dance. Many *samul nori* groups have learned to play the music at these accelerated tempos and have lost the connection with dance.

Thanks to Pak *sōnsaengnim* and Hwang *sōnsaengnim* I was beginning to understand the importance of dance in *p'ungmul kut*—and Korean traditional music more broadly. Over the years I have come to appreciate the centrality of dance in feeling and expressing the energy and flow of music. I have also learned about the importance of dancing as a way of interacting, engaging and playing with other people.

P'ungmul Kut versus Nongak

Before I started learning about *p'ungmul kut* from Pak *sōnsaengnim* and Hwang *sōnsaengnim*, although I had heard the term *p'ungmul kut*, I was more familiar with the term *nongak* (farmers' music), which is more commonly used in academic writings as

well as in publications about Cultural Assets by the South Korean government. As I started learning to dance and meeting other people interested in Korean traditional music, I was somewhat surprised to hear the terms *p'unngmul* and *p'unngmul kut* being used instead of *nongak*.

The term *nongak* (farmers' music) is problematic and the term *p'unngmul kut* is preferred by many people for several reasons. *Nongak* (farmers' music) is not limited to farmers or farming contexts—performances include the whole community and various types of village rituals. While the term *nongak* focuses only on music (*ak*), the term *p'unngmul kut* refers more broadly to the ritual (*kut*) as a whole, which includes music and dance as well as ritual elements such as prayers, spirit flags, and offerings of food and drink.

There has been a tendency in recent decades to associate the term *nongak* with Japanese colonialism, while *p'unngmul* and *p'unngmul kut* are valued as indigenous and traditional terms. Many people believe that the term *nongak* was introduced into Korean agricultural contexts under the influence of the Japanese during the occupation of Korea (1910-45). For example, many people involved with *p'unngmul kut* refer to an article by Kim In-u (1987:113),⁶ which states that the term *nongak* was created by “imperialists and folklorists” during the Japanese occupation.⁷ In the context of post-colonialism and nationalism in South Korea, there has been a shift away from the term *nongak* toward the

⁶ “Kim In-u” is a pen name for Kim Wŏn-ho (Hesselink 2006:229 n.22).

⁷ Kim Chŏng-ho (1984:169) says that the term *nongak* was first used in Korea in 1902. Although that was before the actual occupation, there was still Japanese influence in Korea at that time (Lone and McCormack 1993:15).

terms *p'ungmul* and *p'ungmul kut*. But the term *nongak* continues to be used by the Korean government in its designation of Cultural Assets as well as by many scholars.

Instead of *nongak*, the term *p'ungmul kut* is preferred by many musicians. Because of the problems with the term *nongak* and the advantages of using the term *p'ungmul kut*, I tend to avoid using the term *nongak* and I prefer the term *p'ungmul kut*. But it is still important to understand the term *nongak* and why many people use it. The main advantage of the term *nongak* (farmers' music) is that it is easy to understand and fairly descriptive, in contrast to the term *p'ungmul kut*, which requires some explanation (about percussion instruments, ritual, and so on).

Even when terms refer to the same general category, they may emphasize different aspects and have different implications. The term *nongak* emphasizes a connection to farmers and their music, while the term *p'ungmul kut* highlights percussion instruments and ritual. The term *nongak* obscures any ritual elements, which are central features of *p'ungmul kut*.

P'ungmul versus P'ungmul Kut

The term *p'ungmul* is sometimes considered to be synonymous with (and simply a shortened version of) the term *p'ungmul kut*, but it is important to be aware of their differences. *P'ungmul* literally refers to the musical instruments used in *p'ungmul kut* (Kim In-u 1987:103 n.1). It consists of two Sino-Korean words: *p'ung* (風), which has various meanings including “wind,” “custom,” and “style”; and *mul* (物), which means

“object” or “matter” and refers here to musical instruments,⁸ i.e. the percussion instruments that are played in *p’ungmul kut*.⁹

Instead of a literal translation of *p’ungmul* such as “wind objects,”¹⁰ I have decided to use the descriptive English gloss “percussion instruments” as an introductory shorthand.¹¹ Similarly, I translate *p’ungmul kut* as “percussion music rituals.” I will give a fuller description and discussion of *p’ungmul kut* in the following chapters, which will hopefully provide a better understanding of what *p’ungmul kut* means to people.

Although the term *p’ungmul* refers to percussion instruments, it is often used to refer to the music that is played on those instruments (as well as the dancing that goes along with the music). Similarly, in English, a term such as “string quartet” may refer to both a set of musical instruments and the music played on those instruments (for example, Beethoven’s “String Quartet Number 1 in F Major”). Many people use the term *p’ungmul* to refer to a genre of music (and dance) and are unfamiliar with the term *p’ungmul kut*.

Some people think that the term *kut* in *p’ungmul kut* simply means “performance” (for example, Howard 1990:29 and Hesselink 2006:16) and they omit it, using the term *p’ungmul* instead of *p’ungmul kut*. For instance, in a translation of excerpts from Kim In-

⁸ Similarly, *mul* refers to musical instruments in the term *samul* (as discussed in Chapter 2).

⁹ The main instruments are drums and gongs. Sometimes there are also melodic wind instruments (as discussed in Chapter 4).

¹⁰ In English, the term “wind instruments” usually refers to aerophones such as flutes, trumpets, and oboes.

¹¹ People usually don’t think about the literal meanings of *p’ung* and *mul* when talking about *p’ungmul* or *p’ungmul kut*, much like people use the term “hip hop” to refer a genre of popular music usually without thinking about the literal meanings of “hip” and “hop.”

u's (1987) essay about *p'ungmul kut*, Nathan Hesselink replaces the term *p'ungmul kut* with *p'ungmul*, omitting *kut* (2006:105ff.).¹²

It was only after several years of learning about Korean music and culture that I realized the significance (both the meaning and the importance) of *kut*—as ritual (not simply performance)—in *p'ungmul kut*. In the process of learning about *p'ungmul kut*, my understanding of the terms *p'ungmul*, *kut*, and *p'ungmul kut*—as well as the English term “ritual”—has changed and developed over time. I used to think that *p'ungmul* are entertainment-oriented performances while *p'ungmul kut* are rituals. I tended to think of rituals as being serious and practically the opposite of entertainment, but I have learned to see ritual (and *kut*) more broadly as being inclusive of entertainment and playfulness. Although I recognize and understand the usage of the term *p'ungmul* to refer to a genre of music and dance, I prefer to limit *p'ungmul* to the musical instruments and use the complete term *p'ungmul kut* to refer to the rituals, which feature percussion music and dance.

***P'ung*: Wind, Scenery and Style**

Learning about the various meanings of the term *p'ung* (wind, scenery, style, custom, influence) helps with understanding *p'ungmul kut*. For instance, wind (*p'ung*) is related to *p'ungmul kut* through the rituals' associations with nature and agriculture.

Wind brings the rain for bountiful crops, and the four main instruments of *p'ungmul kut* are associated with the wind, rain, clouds, and thunder (as discussed in Chapter 2).

¹² This is the same essay in which Kim (1987:103 n.1) distinguishes *p'ungmul* (i.e. musical instruments) from *p'ungmul kut* (i.e. rituals). I will discuss the translation of *kut* as “performance” (and its omission) in Chapter 4.

Ethnomusicologist Nathan Hesselink notes that the Korean musicologist Yi Pohyŏng “proposes that wind in Chinese legend was believed to stir humans to sing and dance, hence the name ‘wind objects’ ... (1995: personal communication)” (Hesselink 2006:15). Wind and playing with “wind objects” (*p’ungmul*) may inspire people to make music and dance.

P’ung (風) can also mean “custom; style; scenery; influence” (Grant 1982:146). The term *p’ungmul* can refer to scenery and nature, as in the following definitions: “(1) scenery; natural features; nature; (2) scenes and manners” (*Dong-A’s New Little Korean-English Dictionary*). Interestingly, there is no reference to music in these definitions of *p’ungmul*. These definitions sound like they may be referring to subject matters for paintings. *P’ungmul* and natural scenery may provide inspiration for various kinds of artistic expression, including painting, music and dance.

The word *p’ung* (風) is also used in several other musical terms, including *p’ungnyu*, which refers to a genre of aristocratic music.¹³ The term *p’ungnyu* can also refer more broadly to “an aesthetic appreciation of nature” (Shaffer 2007:12). Nature is often a source of inspiration for music. Both *p’ungmul* and *p’ungnyu* refer to music and have connections with nature.

The term *p’ung* has various meanings and associations with wind, nature, and inspiration for artistic expression (including music and dance), and *p’ungmul kut* shares these connections. Having discussed the terms *p’ung*, *p’ungmul*, and *p’ungmul kut*

¹³ *Nyu* is a Sino-Korean term (流) meaning “flow” or “current.” This term alone is normally pronounced *ryu* or *yu* but when it follows a term that ends with *-ng* it is pronounced *nyu*.

(especially in contrast to *nongak*), I will discuss the differences between *p'ungmul kut* and *samul nori* in the next section.

P'ungmul Kut versus Samul Nori

Many people distinguish between *p'ungmul kut* and *samul nori* in terms of contrasts such as traditional vs. modern, rural vs. urban, dancing vs. seated, amateur vs. professional, and so on. I used to think of these contrasts as forming two distinct columns in my mind (see Table 2), but I have learned that this arrangement is an oversimplification.

Rather than separating *samul nori* and *p'ungmul kut* as two clearly distinct genres, it is possible to view *samul nori* as one of many different types of *p'ungmul kut*. As mentioned on page 45, other contemporary types of *p'ungmul kut* include performances of *p'ungmul kut* in villages by community members, performances in cities by university students in *p'ungmul* clubs (*tongari*), *p'ungmul kut* performed as part of the People's Cultural Movement (*minjung munhwa undong*), and *p'ungmul kut* performed as government-designated Cultural Assets (*munhwajae*).

Table 2. An oversimplification of *p'ungmul kut* versus *samul nori*

<i>p'ungmul kut</i>	<i>samul nori</i>
traditional	modern
rural	urban
dancing	seated
amateur	professional
ritual	entertainment

The various contrasts in Table 2 are not always clear-cut. Each pair of contrasts may actually be combined in performances of *samul nori* as well as other types of *p'ungmul kut* (see Table 3). For example, instead of contrasting *p'ungmul kut* as traditional versus *samul nori* as modern, one may see *samul nori* as both traditional and modern, being historically rooted in village rituals and incorporating recent changes. Other types of *p'ungmul kut* also combine traditional and modern aspects, such as performances of *p'ungmul kut* in political demonstrations as part of the People's Cultural Movement.

Similarly, the contrast between rural and urban does not always distinguish *samul nori* from other types of *p'ungmul kut*. Although many *p'ungmul kut* are performed in villages and *samul nori* is often performed in cities, *samul nori* is also performed in rural settings while other types of *p'ungmul kut* are also performed in urban contexts.

Table 3. Similarities between *samul nori* and other types of *p'ungmul kut*

<i>samul nori</i>	other types of <i>p'ungmul kut</i>
traditional & modern	traditional & modern
rural & urban	rural & urban
dancing & seated	dancing & seated
amateur & professional	amateur & professional
ritual & entertainment	ritual & entertainment

Samul nori is often criticized for being performed while seated in contrast to the emphasis on dance in other types of *p'ungmul kut*. But (perhaps in response to these criticisms) the group SamulNori often includes dance in their performance. And while dance is important in other types of *p'ungmul kut*, some musicians may be seated while playing, as in rehearsals (and sometimes even public performances) with Hwang Chae-gi

sōnsaengnim and other dancers. There is a general emphasis on dance in *p'ungmul kut* and one of the most distinctive features of *samul nori* is their seated repertoire, but these contrasts are not absolute.

While *p'ungmul kut* are traditionally performed outside, *samul nori* is often performed inside modern concert halls. *P'ungmul kut* are often performed in an open space with the audience forming a circle around the performers while *samul nori* is generally performed on a stage in front of the audience. But again, these distinctions are not absolute. *Samul nori* is sometimes performed outdoors and other types of *p'ungmul kut* are sometimes performed indoors on concert stages.

Whereas a complete *p'ungmul kut* ritual may last several days and nights, a concert performance of *samul nori* is often limited to a couple of hours or even half an hour or less. SamulNori has selected rhythmic patterns from various *p'ungmul kut*—often from different regions of Korea—and arranged and combined the excerpts into pieces. For example, one of the group's main pieces is called “Rhythms of Farmers' Music from Three Provinces” (*Samdo nongak karak*). But performances of *p'ungmul kut* as Cultural Assets (*munhwajae*) by various groups also often consist of arrangements and excerpts from longer rituals.

The original group SamulNori consisted of four members, with each person playing one of the four main percussion instruments—*kkwaenggwari* (small gong), *changgu* (hourglass drum), *puk* (barrel drum), and *ching* (large gong). In contrast, *p'ungmul kut* is traditionally performed by a larger group of people, with several people playing each of the four types of instruments. But many *samul nori* groups now consist of

dozens of members just like other types of *p'ungmul kut*. There is no limit to the size of a group.

The leader of a *p'ungmul kut* group traditionally plays *kkwaenggwari*, but in *samul nori* the leader often plays *changgu*. For example, Kim Duk Soo is the leader of his group and he plays *changgu*. In *samul nori*, the *changgu* is often more prominent than the *kkwaenggwari*. For instance, one of the main pieces of *samul nori* is for *changgu* only. The piece is titled *Sŏljanggu karak*, where *sŏljanggu* refers to the lead *changgu* player in a group and *karak* means “rhythms.” Various types of *p'ungmul kut* include a section when the lead *changgu* player plays a solo that features dancing. But in *samul nori* performances, the rhythms of this *changgu* solo are performed by a whole group of people playing *changgu* together in unison while seated.

Another percussion instrument that is often featured in *p'ungmul kut* is the *sogo* (small frame drum), which is played while dancing. The *sogo* is played in some *samul nori* performances while dancing, but it is not included in the seated performances of *samul nori*.

In order to compare *samul nori* with other types of *p'ungmul kut*, it is helpful to distinguish between the seated and danced sections of SamulNori's performances. The most distinctive part of SamulNori's performances is when they play seated on the stage. This section is called *anjŭn pan* (literally, “seated section”), and it often comprises the first half of a concert. The pieces that are performed while seated consist of traditional rhythmic patterns that have been arranged by SamulNori and the tempos have generally been accelerated.

Samul nori groups often focus only on the seated repertoire. Sometimes they stand (for example, while performing the song called *Pinari*) and occasionally they dance. Many people use the term *samul nori* to refer to the seated repertoire only. But some people use the term more broadly as a synonym for *p'ungmul kut* in general, unaware of the differences. When making criticisms of *samul nori*, people are mainly referring to the seated performances.

After the seated section, the group SamulNori often performs a section (called *p'an kut*) that features dancing.¹⁴ Various members wear hats that have either long white ribbons or flower-like clusters of white feathers, which they spin overhead while dancing and playing their instruments. Kim Duk Soo sometimes plays *nallari* (conical oboe) in this section, standing off to one side of the stage while others dance and move around the stage. Sometimes as an encore (*twip'uri*), SamulNori invites the audience onto the stage to dance together with the musicians. When SamulNori dances (in both the *p'an kut* and *twip'uri*), their performances are quite similar to other types of *p'ungmul kut*.

In their initial performances, SamulNori's repertoire was seated. Later SamulNori added *Pinari* and *p'an kut* (perhaps in response to criticisms about the seated repertoire and the lack of dance). Many *samul nori* groups still focus mainly on the seated repertoire.

Although the hats that are worn by SamulNori while dancing are also worn in other types of *p'ungmul kut*, there is another type of hat which is worn by many *p'ungmul kut* groups but which is generally not worn by *samul nori* groups. These hats (called *kokkal*) feature large, colorful spheres (made of paper) that represent flowers. The paper

¹⁴ The term *p'an kut* traditionally refers to a performance of *p'ungmul kut* in an open gathering space called *p'an*. The *p'an kut* section of SamulNori performances is also called *sŏn pan* (literally, "standing section").

flowers are attached to a white, triangular hat that is similar to a Buddhist hat (also called *kokkal*), which is also worn in rituals of the Korean traditional religion *mu* (often translated as “shamanism”) by some *mudang* (*mu* ritual specialists, often translated as “shamans”). For seated performances, *samul nori* groups do not wear any hats. SamulNori members also often remove their hats for the encore (*twip’uri*).

Another visual cue that might distinguish *samul nori* from other types of *p’ungmul kut* groups is the clothing worn for performances. While all types of *p’ungmul kut* (including *samul nori*) groups generally wear white *hanbok* (Korean traditional clothing) including a long-sleeved top and pants, *samul nori* groups usually wear an additional black, short-sleeved top over the white top, whereas other types of *p’ungmul kut* groups often wear a blue (or sometimes green or red) vest. But these are simply generalizations. Clothing varies among groups and individuals. Sometimes blue vests are worn by *samul nori* groups and black tops are worn by other types of *p’ungmul kut* groups.

Three strips of colored cloth—often red, yellow, and blue—are generally worn over the shoulders and around the waist and tied together at the back.¹⁵ *Samul nori* performers often wear both the blue and yellow strips over the right shoulder (with the yellow strip covering the blue one) and the red strip around the waist. Other types of *p’ungmul kut* players generally wear one colored strip over each shoulder (crossing each other in front and back) and a third strip around the waist.

¹⁵ The number three is important in the Korean traditional world view, which values the harmony of the three elements (*samjae*) of heaven, earth, and people, as will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

In *p'ungmul kut* performances there are often several people dressed in costumes representing various characters (called *chapsaek*), including a Buddhist monk, a scholar, a young woman, and a hunter. They are often humorous and playful, and they encourage people from the audience to dance, participate, and engage with the performers. The *japsaek* characters are not included in *samul nori* performances.

Ultimately, in order to determine whether a group is playing *samul nori* or some other type of *p'ungmul kut*, it is important to listen to what the group members themselves say about their music and find out how the group members identify themselves, rather than simply labeling a group's music based on general observations. Similarly, instead of just listening to people's criticisms of *samul nori*, it is valuable to take into consideration what *samul nori* musicians themselves say about their music.

Although *samul nori* is often criticized for being performed while seated instead of dancing, there is still an emphasis on dance in *samul nori*—even in the seated repertoire. The importance of dance (and movement in general) was often highlighted in several workshops taught by Kim Duk Soo and other members of SamulNori in Seattle at the University of Washington and Northwest Folklife Festival in 1997. They often used the term *hohŭp* (which literally means “breath” or “breathing”) to refer to movement in general as an expression of the flow of rhythm and music. I later learned that the term *hohŭp* is also often used by musicians to refer to a sense of rhythm or groove in music in general, not just movement and dance in *p'ungmul kut* (or *samul nori*).

Another term that Kim Duk Soo and other musicians often use to refer to movement in Korean dance is *ogŭm chil*, which refers to a motion of the whole body that starts with bending of the knees (*ogŭm* refers to knees and *chil* refers to an action). By

using the knees, one can move one's whole body up and down in a cyclical, rhythmic motion. In the SamulNori workshops, the students are first taught to rhythmically move their whole bodies while standing, before learning to play the instruments while sitting on the floor. The general motion and sense of dance is then maintained while sitting. Keith Howard has described this seated motion as "seated dance" (Howard 2006 vol. 2:29).

Although dance and movement are still important in the seated repertoire of *samul nori*, the tempos have been accelerated to such an extent that people in the audience who may be used to dancing to the music of *p'ungmul kut* generally do not feel comfortable dancing to *samul nori*. When people criticize *samul nori*, they often focus on the lack of audience participation, especially in the form of dancing.

Participation versus Presentation

In order to compare *samul nori* with other types of *p'ungmul kut*, it is helpful to consider the general contrast between "presentational" and "participatory" styles of performance as discussed by Thomas Turino (2008). Presentational performances feature "artists" (musicians and dancers) separate from the "audience," whereas in participatory performances there is no distinction between artist and audience—everyone is a "potential participant" (Turino 2008:26). Turino explains participation in performance as follows:

I am using the idea of participation in the restricted sense of actively contributing to the sound and motion of a musical event through dancing, singing, clapping, and playing musical instruments when each of these activities is considered integral to the performance. (Turino 2008:28)

Turino distinguishes between participatory and presentational performances as different types or “fields” of music but also recognizes that many performances combine participatory and presentational aspects.

[T]here are a variety of traditions ... that combine aspects of the different fields. But these combinations ... can be more clearly understood after the fields are delineated as separated types. (Turino 2008:28)

Many performances are more presentational than participatory (for example, Western classical music concerts in which the audience sits quietly while musicians perform on a stage), so the word “performance” often implies “presentational performance.” Turino’s distinction between presentational and participatory performances challenges us to reconsider the meaning (and purpose) of “performance.” Many performances are more participatory than presentational (for example, at rock concerts, people in the audience often enjoy singing and dancing with the music).

In *p’ungmul kut* performances, although there are some differences between musicians and audience members, the ideal is to remove those distinctions and have everyone participating together. Everyone is welcome to dance and be a part of the musical event. In contrast, *samul nori* is often criticized for the lack of dance and audience participation, which reinforces the division between the musicians and the audience.

Whereas dancing by participants (including audience members as well as musicians) is so central to *p’ungmul kut* in general, the main criticism of *samul nori* is the replacement of dancing with seated performances. In particular, the music’s tempo has been changed in *samul nori*, with traditional rhythmic patterns being accelerated and played too quickly for people to dance. A seated performance of *samul nori* is a virtuosic

display of the musicians' abilities, but the audience generally remains seated instead of dancing and participating.

Even when members of SamulNori dance (during the *p'an kut* section), their emphasis is on presentation instead of participation. The musicians often take turns performing solos on their instruments and dancing alone. It is only during the encore (*twip'uri*) that the audience is invited to dance together with the musicians on the stage.

Some people distinguish between *samul nori* and other types of *p'ungmul kut* in terms of audience participation. But instead of a clear contrast between *samul nori* as presentational and other types of *p'ungmul kut* as participatory, the various types of *p'ungmul kut* (including *samul nori*) all combine both presentational and participatory aspects (with different proportions and emphases). *Samul nori* performances tend to emphasize presentation but there are some participatory aspects (for example, during the encore when people are invited to dance with the musicians on the stage). Other types of *p'ungmul kut* performances often emphasize participation, but they sometimes feature presentational aspects (for instance, when they are presented as Cultural Assets, as discussed in Chapter 5).

In addition to dancing, another important form of participation in *p'ungmul kut* is cheering (*ch'uimsae*). People (including audience members as well as musicians) often shout out cheers and compliments as an expression of their enjoyment of the music and dance. The cheering also raises people's spirits and adds to the energy of the performance.

Both dancing and cheering may be seen as types of *nori*, i.e. playing and having fun together.¹⁶ *Nori* (playing together) as a form of participation is highly valued in *p'ungmul kut*. In contrast, performances of *samul nori* are often criticized as being *yŏnju* (meaning “performance”), which corresponds to Turino’s concept of “presentational performances.” It is ironic that the group SamulNori and their music (*samul nori*) are often criticized for emphasizing *yŏnju* (presentational performance) instead of *nori* (playing), even though the term *nori* is in their name.

Samul nori performers are often characterized as professional or virtuosic while other types of *p'ungmul kut* performers are characterized as amateur or community-based. The word “amateur” often has a negative connotation, as being somehow less than professional, but it is important to be aware that:

originally, “amateur,” from the Latin verb *amare*, “to love,” referred to a person who loved what he was doing. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:140)

In general, people who play *p'ungmul kut* (including *samul nori*) love the music and the overall experience of being involved with *p'ungmul kut*.

Many people who play *p'ungmul kut* proudly distinguish themselves from more professional *samul nori* groups. With professional musicians, there tends to be a sense of separation or division between the performers and the audience. Professional musicians tend to be highly skilled and virtuosic in their performances, demonstrating abilities that distinguish them from the audience. Their presentational performances are quite different from participatory performances in which everyone is encouraged to participate together.

¹⁶ *Nori* (playing) is introduced in Chapter 2.

Some people involved in *p'ungmul kut* are complimented for “playing well” (*chal nonda*), not in the sense of “performing well,” but rather in the sense of “having fun” and inviting others to join in and have fun together. An important goal of *p'ungmul kut* is to encourage people to participate, i.e. to “move” people—both emotionally and physically—so that they want to engage and dance with the music and with each other. Participating in *p'ungmul kut* often generates a sense of community and identity, as I discuss in the Conclusion.

Tradition and Change in the Discourse of Modernity

Samul nori may be distinguished from other types of *p'ungmul kut*, particularly in *samul nori*'s featuring of accelerated tempos, which tend to inhibit dancing, thereby creating performances that are more presentational instead of participatory. *Samul nori* is sometimes considered modern and contrasted with other types of *p'ungmul kut* that are considered traditional. But *samul nori* is also rooted in tradition while other contemporary types of *p'ungmul kut* (including performances by rural village communities, urban university students, government-designated “Cultural Asset Bearers,” and diasporic communities outside of Korea) are also modern. In this section I will examine the complex relationship between tradition and modernity.

Thinking about SamulNori's adaptations of *p'ungmul kut* for concert stages, many questions may come to mind: How do performances in modern, urban concerts compare with performances in traditional, rural rituals? What does the music mean to modern audiences? How does traditional music fit into people's sense of identity?

SamulNori's performances have been described as a "re-interpretation" of tradition (Howard 1991) and as "neo-traditional" (Howard 1997). These terms suggest that SamulNori's music is based on tradition but not quite traditional. There is a sense of something different and new, a combination of tradition and change.

The English word "tradition" is derived from the Latin term *traditio* meaning "to transmit, hand down." Similarly, the Korean word for "tradition" (*chǒnt'ong*) includes the Sino-Korean term *chǒn* (傳), which means "transmit" or "hand down," combined with *t'ong* (統) meaning "all" or "unite." While the word *chǒnt'ong* means "tradition" (as a noun), it can also mean "traditional" (as an adjective). For example, when *chǒnt'ong* is combined with the word *ǔmak* (meaning "music"), the phrase *chǒnt'ong ǔmak* means "traditional music."

There is an adjectival suffix (*-jǒk*) in Korean, which is analogous to the English suffix "-al" (as in "traditional"), and which may be added to *chǒnt'ong* to form *chǒnt'ongjǒk* (meaning "traditional"). But this suffix is often omitted when it is clear from context whether *chǒnt'ong* means "tradition" or "traditional."

The term "traditionesque" was coined by ethnomusicologist Andrew Killick in an attempt to translate and convey his understanding of the Korean term *chǒnt'ongjǒk*—the combination of *chǒnt'ong* (tradition) with the adjectival suffix (*-jǒk*). Killick claims that instead of meaning "traditional" it means "with an air of tradition about it" or "smacks of tradition" (2001:52).

In contrast, when the same adjectival ending (*-jǒk*) is added to the word *Han'guk* (meaning "Korea"), Killick translates the combination (*Han'gukjǒk*) as "most typically, authentically, or essentially Korean" (2001:66, n.4). This is completely different in tone

from his translation of *chǒnt'ongjǒk* as “smacks of tradition” (2001:52). It would seem more appropriate and consistent to translate *chǒnt'ongjǒk* as “most typically, authentically, or essentially traditional.”

Killick distinguishes between “traditionesque” and “traditional” as follows:

The criterion by which I would assign a practice to one category or the other is the presence or absence of a commitment to protection from change on the part of the community that shares the practice. (Killick 2001:57)

The main difference is the issue of change, i.e. whether people want to allow change or not. According to Killick, a community is resistant to change in “traditional” practices, while “traditionesque” practices are those in which people are open to change.

But for many people, “traditional” practices often include change.

Ethnomusicologist Nathan Hesselink argues that tradition may include innovation, and that *samul nori* (the genre of music developed by the group SamulNori) is traditional.

[A]n inclusive view of tradition, as comprising both preservation and innovation, is the appropriate model for an analysis of samul nori’s place in the Korean traditional music soundscape. (Hesselink 2004:406)

Hesselink discusses how tradition does not need to be conceived as

“preservationist” in contrast with modernity as innovative:

As many ethnomusicologists have pointed out, this slippery and highly problematic concept [“tradition”] is often posited in terms of a dichotomy: tradition as old and preservationist versus innovation and modernity (Nettl 1983:26-27; Titon 1995:439; Bohlman 2002:63). While such underlying tension is implicit in Hobsbawm’s sense of “invented tradition” (1983) and in Lord’s analysis of epic song (1964), reconciling these two realms seems less problematic in branches of folklore and performance studies, where innovation, re-interpretation, and the like are viewed as integral components of a living tradition (Handler and Linnekin 1984:280; Jackson 2000:12). (Hesselink 2004:406)

Even in the book *The Invention of Tradition* (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), historian Eric Hobsbawm notes that “genuine” traditions are “alive” and undergo changes and adaptations:

[T]he strength and adaptability of genuine traditions is not to be confused with the “invention of tradition”. Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented. (Hobsbawm 1983:8)

The relationship between tradition and change will be discussed further in Chapter 5, which examines the tension between preservation and innovation in the South Korean government’s system of “Cultural Assets” (*munhwajae*).

Tradition is often contrasted with modernity as complementary opposites. Turino argues that the discourse of modernity (and nationalism) needs the concept of tradition (as well as the idea of “folk”) in order to clarify what it is and what it is not:

The discourse that brings the idea of “the folk” into existence is historically tied to nationalist projects, and more broadly to the discourse of modernity, which needs the concepts of “folk” and “traditional” to stand in binary contrast to the conception of “modern” as a cultural category; that is, we understand “modern culture” only in relation to what it is not—the “folk” and “traditional.” (Turino 2008:156)

The ideas of modernity and tradition may be seen as contrasting, dialectical opposites that help to define each other, similar to the way that light and dark areas in a picture contrast and complement each other.¹⁷

Although modernity is often considered to be the opposite of tradition, it is possible for something to be both modern and traditional. The word “modern” is defined as “Being in existence at this time; current, present” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Modernity is focused on the present but it need not exclude traditions. Although

¹⁷ For example, black letters printed on a sheet of paper are legible when the paper is white, but they would be quite difficult to see if the paper was black.

traditions are rooted in the past, they can still be current and a meaningful part of the present. Thus a genre of music such as *p'ungmul kut* may be both traditional and modern (i.e. contemporary and current), gaining new meanings in new contexts.

As mentioned by Turino, the concept of tradition (and “folk”) is closely connected with nationalism (2008:156). When referring to Korean traditional music, many people use the term *kugak*, which literally means “national music,” i.e. Korean music.¹⁸ This term *kugak* (national music) is often translated into English as “traditional music.” Much of the appeal of *p'ungmul kut* is its associations with “folk” and tradition as a symbol of Korean national identity. The music has been called “farmers’ music” (*nongak*) and is designated as a “National Cultural Asset” (see Chapter 5). *P'ungmul kut* was also an important part of the People’s Cultural Movement (*minjung munhwa undong*), especially in the 1970s and 1980s (see Chapter 6), and it continues to be an important symbol of Korean national identity today.

Ironically, while SamulNori is often criticized for changing *p'ungmul kut*, the group has actually kept many traditional ritual elements (including prayer songs and ritual food offerings), which have been removed from some *p'ungmul kut* that are being “preserved” as Cultural Assets (as I discuss in Chapter 5). In the next chapter, I will examine various ritual aspects of *p'ungmul kut* in connection with the traditional Korean religion *mu*. I will discuss the term *kut* (ritual) and clarify the important differences between *p'ungmul kut* (as village rituals) and *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals). I will also

¹⁸ The term *kugak* is written with two Sino-Korean characters 國 and 樂 meaning “nation” and “music,” respectively.

explore issues of cultural nationalism and identity politics in the performance of *p'ungmul kut* as a symbol of national identity.

Chapter 4. *P'ungmul Kut* as Village Rituals versus “Shaman” Rituals

The Korean word *kut* may be translated as “ritual.” More specifically, *kut* are rituals that are associated with the Korean *mu* religion.¹ There are two main types of *kut*: (1) *p'ungmul kut*, which feature *p'ungmul* (percussion instruments) played by a group of musicians; and (2) *mudang kut*, which are led by *mudang* (ritual specialists) who pray, sing, and dance (Seo 2002:3).²

Many people use the term *p'ungmul*—omitting the word *kut* (ritual)—as an abbreviation and synonym for *p'ungmul kut*. They use the word *p'ungmul* to refer to the music, effectively obscuring the ritual aspects of *p'ungmul kut*. Many people are familiar with the term *p'ungmul* but are quite unaware of the term *p'ungmul kut*. When they hear the term *p'ungmul kut* for the first time, they are often surprised and confused. The word *kut* commonly refers to *mudang kut*, therefore the term *p'ungmul kut* is often misunderstood as being a type of *mudang kut*. But *p'ungmul kut* are actually quite different and distinct from *mudang kut*. In general, *p'ungmul kut* do not involve any *mudang* (ritual specialists). While music and dancing are important features of both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*, there are significant musical differences between the two types of rituals, which I will examine in this chapter.

Although much has been written about *p'ungmul kut* and about *mudang kut* separately, these two types of rituals are rarely discussed in relation to each other.

¹ *Mu* is also known as *musok* and *mugyo*, as I will discuss in this chapter. The term *mu* (as well as *musok* and *mugyo*) is often translated as “shamanism,” but this translation is problematic and misleading, as I will explain in this chapter.

² The term *mudang* is often translated as “shaman,” but many *mudang* are not shamans, as I will discuss in the following pages. *Mudang* are also known as *manshin*, *tan'gol*, and *shimbang*. Male *mudang* are also called *paksu*.

Therefore much of the following discussion is based on what I have learned in the process of doing fieldwork in South Korea over a period of several years, starting in 1999. My research on *mudang kut* and *p'ungmul kut* has included attending and recording rituals with ethnomusicologist Maria K. Seo, who started researching *mudang kut* in 1991. I also had music lessons on various instruments—including *p'iri* (cylindrical oboe), *t'aep'yǒngso* (conical oboe), and *changgu* (hourglass drum)—and eventually began performing music in both *mudang kut* and *p'ungmul kut*.

In order to learn about *p'ungmul kut* in its traditional village ritual contexts, let us begin by exploring the religion *mu*. Then I will examine the similarities and differences between *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*. I will also discuss how the *mu* religion and its rituals (*kut*) are often presented as symbols of Korean national identity, which raises issues of cultural nationalism and identity politics.

***Mu* and *Mudang*: “Shamanism” and “Shamans”?**

The term *mu*, which refers to the Korean traditional religion, is often translated into English as “shamanism.” Similarly, the term *mudang*, referring to ritual specialists of the *mu* religion, is often translated as “shaman.” But there is debate among scholars about the appropriateness of these translations. Is *mu* really shamanism? Are *mudang* really shamans? The answers to these questions depend in large part on how one defines “shaman” and “shamanism.” Let us start with the term “shaman.”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes the following definition for “shaman”:

a man or woman who is regarded as having direct access to, and influence in, the spirit world which is usu. manifested during a trance and empowers them to guide souls, cure illnesses, etc. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

In the debate about whether or not Korean *mudang* are shamans (and whether or not the Korean *mu* religion is a type of shamanism), scholars (on either side of the debate) often refer to the classic work, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* by historian of religions Mircea Eliade (originally published in French in 1951, then translated and published in English in 1964). The word “ecstasy” is nowadays commonly thought of as meaning “Intense or rapturous delight” (*Oxford English Dictionary*), but it has earlier associations with spiritual and religious experiences. “Ecstasy” is derived from the Greek word *ekstasis* (ἐκστασις) meaning “out of place” and it has various meanings including “The state of being ‘beside oneself,’” “The state of trance supposed to be a concomitant of prophetic inspiration,” and “An exalted state of feeling which engrosses the mind to the exclusion of thought” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

There are different types of ecstasy in various religions and cultures around the world. In relation to shamanism, Eliade specifies a particular type of ecstasy:

As for the shamanic techniques of ecstasy, they do not exhaust all the varieties of ecstatic experience documented in the history of religions and religious ethnology. Hence any ecstatic cannot be considered a shaman; the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld. (Eliade 1964:5)

According to Eliade, a key feature of shamanism is the shaman’s ability to experience trance and soul journey (ascending to the sky or descending to the underworld).

In order to answer the question “Are all Korean *mudang* shamans?” it is important to differentiate between two main types of *mudang*: spirit-possessed *mudang* (known as *kangshinmu*) and hereditary *mudang* (known as *sesŭpmu*). So there are now two separate questions: “Are spirit-possessed *mudang* shamans?” and “Are hereditary *mudang* shamans?”

Hereditary *mudang* may pray for clients and act as guides for souls, but they do not experience trance or ecstasy, therefore they are *not* shamans (according to Eliade's definition of shamanism as well as many others). Spirit-possessed *mudang* experience spirit possession, but they do not experience soul journey, which raises the question of whether or not spirit possession is a defining feature of shamanism. This question extends far beyond Korean *mudang*. Spirit possession is found in many cultures and religions, but whether or not a person who experiences spirit possession is considered to be a shaman depends on how one defines shamanism.

Eliade recognizes that spirit possession (i.e. the “embodiment” of spirits) is a part of shamanism in many cultures (including Tungus shamanism), but he does not consider it to be a defining feature of shamanism in the “strict sense.”

[T]he specific element of shamanism is not the embodiment of “spirits” by the shaman, but the ecstasy induced by his ascent to the sky or descent to the underworld; incarnating spirits and being “possessed” by spirits are universally disseminated phenomena, but they do not necessarily belong to shamanism in the strict sense. From this point of view, Tungus shamanism as it exists today cannot be considered a “classic” form of shamanism, precisely because of the predominant importance it accords to the incarnation of “spirits” and the small role played by the ascent to the sky. (Eliade 1964:499-500)

Korean spirit-possessed *mudang* do not experience soul journey, therefore they are not shamans in the “classic” sense of shamanism as defined by Eliade. But shamanism is not limited to the “classic” form. As a historian of religions, Eliade recognizes that shamanism has undergone many changes over time.

Spirit possession has become an important feature for a “modern” form of shamanism, as in the case of Tungus shamanism, which is discussed by anthropologist Sergei M. Shirokogoroff and referenced by Eliade.

[A]ccording to Shirokogoroff, it is precisely the ideology and the technique employed to master and incarnate the “spirits”—that is, the southern (Lamaist) contribution—that have given Tungus shamanism its present aspect. Hence we are justified in regarding this modern form of Tungus shamanism as a hybridization of the ancient North Asian shamanism. (Eliade 1964:500)

Ironically, although the word “shaman” comes from the Tungusic word *šaman* (Eliade 1964:4), Tungus shamanism is not considered to be a form of “classic” shamanism, but rather “a relatively recent phenomenon” (Mironov and Shirokogoroff 1924:127, quoted in Eliade 1964:498).

Spirit possession in shamanism is discussed further in *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* by anthropologist I. M. Lewis (first published in 1971).³ Lewis has written:

The Tungus word *shaman* (pronounced *saman* among the adjacent Manchus) means literally “one who is excited, moved, or raised” (and this, incidentally, is very similar to the connotations of other words in other languages employed to describe possession). More specifically, a shaman is a person of either sex who has mastered spirits and who can at will introduce them into his own body. (Lewis 1989:45)

The last sentence, including the phrase “mastered spirits,” reflects the influence of work by Shirokogoroff (first published in 1935).

In all Tungus languages this term [“shaman”] refers to persons of both sexes who have mastered spirits, who at their will can introduce these spirits into themselves and use their power over the spirits in their own interests, particularly helping other people, who suffer from the spirits. (Shirokogoroff 1980:269)

Anthropologist Johan Reinhard has posed a definition of “shaman” that “corresponds to the original use of the term among the Tungus” (1976:18):

A shaman is a person who at his will can enter into a non-ordinary psychic state (in which he either has his soul undertake a journey to the spirit world or he

³ In reference to “shaman,” the *Oxford English Dictionary* includes a quote from Lewis: “We are perfectly justified in applying the term shaman to mean ... a ‘master of spirits.’” (Lewis 1971:56)

becomes possessed by a spirit) in order to make contact with the spirit world on behalf of members of his community. (Reinhard 1976:16)

Reinhard's definition incorporates both soul journey and controlled spirit possession, allowing for either one to be a defining feature of shamanism.

Korean spirit-possessed *mudang* (known as *kangshinmu*) experience spirit possession, therefore they are shamans (according to the original Tungus meaning as well as Reinhard's definition). In contrast, Korean hereditary *mudang* (known as *sesŭpmu*) do not experience spirit possession (or soul journey or any other form of trance or ecstasy), therefore they are not shamans.

The Korean *mu* religion thus includes shamans (i.e., spirit-possessed *mudang*), but shamanism is only a part of *mu* (i.e., non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* are not shamans). In many cultures, shamanism is often limited to a specific part *within* a religion, as Eliade explains:

We shall find shamanism within a considerable number of religions, for shamanism always remains an ecstatic technique at the disposal of a particular elite and represents, as it were, the mysticism of the particular religion. (Eliade 1964:8)

Similarly, Reinhard notes:

Shamanism is only a part of religion, as there are always some religious activities in which the shaman does not have a part, religious beliefs unassociated with shamanism, other religious practitioners, etc. (Reinhard 1976:19 n.2)

Mu is a complex religion that includes elements of shamanism and animism as well as syncretic influences from Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism (or Taoism). Many *mu* rituals are conducted by hereditary *mudang* who are *not* shamans. *Mu* is not limited to shamanism. Therefore, it is reductive and misleading to translate *mu* as simply "shamanism."

Why are Non-ecstatic *Mudang* called “Shamans”?

Many scholars agree that it is problematic to use the term “shaman” in reference to non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang*.⁴ Similarly, they question the use of the term “shamanism” in reference to the Korean *mu* religion as a whole. But many people still translate *mudang* and *mu* as “shaman” and “shamanism,” respectively. Why? “For convenience” is the main reason given by both ethnomusicologist Keith Howard (1990:161) and Korean language and culture scholar Boudewijn Walraven (1994:2), even though they recognize and discuss the problems of these terms. Walraven also says that the use of the terms “shamanism” and “shaman” are “justified by tradition, if not by theoretical considerations” (1994:2). How did this “tradition” begin? What are the advantages of using the terms “shaman” and “shamanism” in reference to Korean *mudang* and *mu*?

In reference to Korean religion, the term “shamanism” was first used by Western missionaries in the late 19th century. As Walraven writes:

The first use of “shamanism” for the *mudang* creed that I have been able to track down is in the *Korea Repository*, published by missionaries, for the year 1895. (Walraven 1998:62)⁵

The meaning of the term “shamanism” has changed over time, as Walraven comments:

What shamanism meant to late 19th-century researchers is not what it means to most scholars in the 1990s. (Walraven 1998:62)

⁴ For example, see S. Kim 1998:33, Seo 2002:57, and Walraven 1998:70 n.1.

⁵ Western missionaries wanted to learn about Korean religion in order to spread the gospel, as Korean scholar Ch’oe Kil-sōng explains: “The early western missionary scholars such as Hulbert (1903, 1906) and C. A. Clark (1932) tended to treat shamanism largely in relation to the capacity of Koreans for authentic religious experience, in relation to the difficulties for spreading the gospel, or in order to understand Koreans’ psychological make-up” (1989:217).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the term “shamanism” was generally used to refer to anything “superstitious,” as noted by Walraven:

[T]here is a general tendency among writers on Korean religion in this period to regard as shamanic anything they considered superstition. (Walraven 1998:63)⁶

Some missionaries noted “parallels” between Korean and Siberian shamanism, as Howard comments:

Parallels with Siberian shamanism were noted in early missionary studies by Hulbert (1903), Underwood (1908), and Clark (1961 [1932]). (Howard 1993:5)

Connections between the Korean *mu* religion and Siberian shamanism were also made by some Japanese scholars during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945).⁷

For example, the work of Japanese ethnologist Torii Ryūzō (1924) is discussed by anthropologist Clark Sorensen:

He [Torii] argued ... that Korean shamanism shared critical traits with the shamanism of northeast Siberia, including the use of mirrors, drums, and bells in ceremonies and a Ural-Altai conceptualization of the world as made up of three parts—heaven for gods, earth for humans, and underworld for malevolent spirits. (Sorensen 1995a:338)

Torii’s work influenced some Korean scholars, including Ch’oe Nam-sŏn (1927), as Sorensen explains:

⁶ Around this time, the term “shaman” was also used widely outside of Korea without a clear definition, as noted by Eliade: “Since the beginning of the [20th] century, ethnologists have fallen into the habit of using the terms ‘shaman,’ ‘medicine man,’ ‘sorcerer,’ and ‘magician’ interchangeably to designate certain individuals possessing magico-religious powers and found in all ‘primitive’ societies For many reasons this confusion can only militate against any understanding of the shamanic phenomenon We consider it advantageous to restrict the use of the words ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism,’ precisely to avoid misunderstandings” (1964:3).

⁷ Japanese studies of Korean religion were often used as a tool for colonial rule: “[A]midst the dominant imperialistic ideology of the colonial period (1910-1945), Japanese studies of Korean culture tended to become a tool for the political and cultural rule of Korea, and several Japanese scholars studied shamanism as a way of understanding Korean social psychology and organization (Murayama 1932, Akamatsu and Akiba 1937)” (Ch’oe Kil-sŏng 1989:217).

Following Torii, Ch'oe shows ... that a tripartite conception of the world as made up of heaven, earth, and the underworld, which is found in Siberian shamanism and Nordic and Greek mythology, is also apparent in the Tan'gun myth. (This contrasts with the Chinese conceptions of heaven, earth, and man.) (Sorensen 1995a:340)⁸

The Tan'gun myth, in which the grandson of heaven founded the ancient Korean state of Chosŏn more than 4,000 years ago, is important in the context of Korean nationalism during the Japanese occupation, as discussed by Sorensen. He shows that the work of Korean journalist Sin Ch'ae-ho “illustrates how the loss of sovereignty led some Korean intellectuals to reject the traditional Korean elite and their understanding of Korean national identity and search for national identity in folklore among the people” (1995a:334). The rejection of elite culture involved a rejection of Chinese influence, as Sorensen explains:

Sin's early articles published in newspapers in Korea between 1905 and 1910 interpreted Chinese influence on Korea as a force obscuring and distorting a deeper and older continuity with a pure Korean past rather than as a civilizing force. He emphasized the link of Koreans to the early non-Chinese peoples of Manchuria and Mongolia ... and stressed that Korea is properly a descendant of the militarily strong Manchurian-Korean state of Koguryŏ, which had been able to expand, rather than the more southerly and constrained Silla, emphasized in more conventional historical narratives. In this context, the myth of Tan'gun—the grandson of heaven who is said to have founded the ancient state of Chosŏn on the Korean peninsula in 2332 B.C.E., near the time of the mythological founding of Chinese civilization by the Yellow Emperor—assumed special importance. (Sorensen 1995a:335)

Sin Ch'ae-ho's writings influenced Torii's work, which was, as Sorensen explains, “part of a general decentering of China in the history and ethnology of Asia taking place in the Japanese intellectual world” (Sorensen 1995a:338). Korean scholars in turn used

⁸ Chinese ideas of heaven, earth, and people have also been influential in Korean culture, as discussed later in this chapter.

Torii's ideas about the Korean *mu* religion and the “decentering of China” for their own purposes, as Sorensen comments:

[Torii's] project was useful to the Koreans who desperately wanted to be able to believe in their ethnic distinctiveness from the Chinese. Torii also made use of the notion developed previously by Sin Ch'ae-ho that true Korean ethnicity can be discovered only by rejecting Korea's Sinicized upper-class culture. (Sorensen 1995a:338)

Torii has also argued that the Korean word *mudang* (referring to ritual specialists) might be related to Ural-Altaic words for shaman, as Sorensen explains:

Citing the work of the Russian ethnologist Troschchanski, who had noted that the word for shaman in Ural-Altaic languages tended to be similar to the Tungus *utakan*, Torii [1924] hypothesized for the first time that the Korean word *mudang* was not derived from the Chinese *wū* but rather was an ancient native Korean word cognate to the other Ural-Altaic words for shaman. (Sorensen 1995a:338)

Similar arguments are found later in works by Ch'oe Nam-sŏn (1927), Charles Allen Clark (1932), and Akamatsu Chijō and Akiba Takashi (1937-38).

The Korean word *kut* may also be related to Ural-Altaic words. Howard mentions “the equivalence Alan Covell [1983] finds between Korean *kut* and Tunga *kutu*, Turkish *qut*, and Mongolian *qutuq*” and notes that “his [Alan's] mother Jon suggested all four meant ‘happiness’ [1985:5]” (Howard 1990:163).⁹

Korean scholars in the 1920s emphasized the connections with Siberian shamanism in order to distance Korea from Japan, as Howard comments:

In the 1920s, Yi Nūnghwa and Ch'oe Namsŏn, members of the loose affiliation generally known as the *munhwa undong* (cultural nationalists; Robinson 1988), argued that shamanism in Korea came directly from Siberia. In essence, this served an urgent political cause to fight increasing attempts at cultural assimilation by the colonial power, Japan, for it helped develop cultural

⁹ Jon Carter Covell earned her doctorate in Oriental art history from Columbia University (J. Covell 1982: back cover).

connections with mainstream Asia that would distance Korea from its eastern neighbour. (Howard 1993:5)¹⁰
Howard does not mention China here, but in a later version he notes the “distance from both colonial Japan and Chinese influence” (1998:6).

In 1927, Korean scholar Ch’oe Nam-sŏn represented the word “shaman” with Sino-Korean characters (薩滿) that are romanized as *salman*. Ch’oe added the Sino-Korean term *kyo* (教 meaning “religion”) to form the term *salman’gyo*, literally “shaman religion” (Seo 2002:5). Ch’oe used the term *salman’gyo* to refer to the Korean *mu* religion, thereby indicating direct connections with Siberian shamanism.

Ironically, Japanese scholars Akamatsu Chijō and Akiba Takashi (1937-38) used Ch’oe Nam-sŏn’s term *salman’gyo* to refer to shamanism *outside* of Korea. In reference to the Korean *mu* religion, they used the term *musok* (where *sok* means “customs” or “practices”), which had been used earlier by Korean folklorist Yi Nŭng-hwa in 1927.¹¹

Akamatsu and Akiba compared “shamanistic religion (*satsumankyō*, *shamanizumu*),” i.e. shamanism, with “Korean shamanistic customs” (*fuzoku*), i.e. *musok* (Sorensen 1995a:339).¹² A key passage from their discussion about *musok* and shamanism is translated by Sorensen as follows:

¹⁰ Many Japanese scholars agreed that the presence of shamanism in Korea differentiated it from Japan, but Japanese ethnologist Torii Ryūzō (1920) discussed links with Japan, as explained by anthropologist Clark Sorensen: “A careful reading of Torii ... shows that this influential scholar, of whom Ch’oe [Namsŏn] made great use, saw shamanism as linking rather than separating Korea and Japan” (Sorensen 1995a:341). Sorensen continues: “[Torii] makes explicit comparisons between Shintō and Korean shamanism” (Sorensen 1995a:341).

¹¹ Yi’s article about *musok* was published in the same issue of *Kyemyōng* (*Enlightenment*) as Ch’oe Nam-sŏn’s article about *salman’gyo* (Janelli 1986:33; Sorensen 1995a:340).

¹² *Satsumankyō* is “the Japanese reading of the term *salman’gyo*, a word Ch’oe Nam-sŏn apparently coined for his 1927 article on shamanism” (Sorensen 1995b:229 n.51). *Shamanizumu* is the Japanese reading of the word “shamanism.” *Fuzoku* is the Japanese reading of the Sino-Korean term *musok*.

Since Korean shamanistic customs were originally a branch of the commonly held shamanism [*satsumankyō*] of the northern races, in terms of the history of religions they are a type of primitive religion [*genshi shūkyō*]. (Akamatsu and Akiba 1937 vol. 1:i, translated in Sorensen 1995a:339; bracketed material included by Sorensen)

It is interesting to note that the phrase “Korean shamanistic customs” here is Sorensen’s translation of *fuzoku* (i.e. *musok*). I will continue to discuss the term *musok* later in this chapter.

In accordance with the theory that the Korean *mu* religion is related to shamanism from Siberia, some Korean scholars argue that non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* as well as spirit-possessed *mudang* are descended from Siberian shamans, as Howard explains:

Korean scholars tend to see both types [i.e. non-ecstatic and spirit-possessed *mudang*] descending from a common source [i.e. Siberia]. Partly this reflects overlaps in ritual practice and in the spirit pantheon. Partly, though, it has grown from historical, primarily nationalistic concerns [i.e. to distance Korea from Japan and China] Not surprisingly, then, the archetype Korean shaman [i.e. *mudang*] was and is seen as ecstatic [i.e. spirit-possessed] (e.g., Kim T’aegon 1982). (Howard 1993:5)

I will explore the use of the Korean *mu* religion as a symbol of Korean national identity in Chapters 5 and 6. But for now, let us continue to discuss the problems of using the term “shamanism” in reference to Korean *mu* and applying the term “shaman” to non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* in particular.

The idea that spirit-possessed *mudang* are the archetypal (i.e. original) *mudang*, with non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* being a later development, is discussed by Korean scholar Kim T’ae-gon (1982), as mentioned by Howard (1993:5).¹³ In an expanded discussion, Howard (1998) recognizes that some scholars think that spirit-possessed

¹³ In an English publication, Kim T’ae-gon discusses how hereditary *mudang* “evolved” (1998:30) from spirit-possessed *mudang*.

mudang and non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* are distinct and do not descend from a common source.

Korean scholars are divided as to whether the two types [spirit-possessed and non-ecstatic] descend from a common source or are distinct. If they are held to be of different descent, reference is typically made to a southern culture distinct from a northern culture, identified as a division of the East Asian region. Appeals to commonality argue from both sides, most scholars regarding the ecstatic [i.e. spirit-possessed] as the original, but a minority suggesting the hereditary [i.e. non-ecstatic] dates back to prehistoric times. (Howard 1998:6)

For example, Ch'oe Kilsŏng (1978, 1981) argues that non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* in the southern part of the Korean peninsula are distinct from the spirit-possessed *mudang* in the north, with the *mu* religion (also known as *musok*) in the southern area being established before the influence of Siberian shamanism in the north. As Seong Nae Kim explains: “To Ch'oe, then, the non-shamanic [i.e. non-ecstatic] characteristics of southern region *musok* constitute a primordial form of Korean *musok*” (S. Kim 1998:38).

Korean scholar Im Sŏkchae (1971) argues that the Korean *mu* religion is indigenous to Korea and not related to Siberian shamanism, as Seong Nae Kim notes:

Im Sŏkchae (1971) has approached Korean *musok* as a cultural phenomenon specific to the Korean people. (S. Kim 1998:35)

Kim summarizes Im's theory, which completely separates the Korean *mu* religion from Siberian shamanism, as follows:

Musok is a Korea-specific belief system totally different from the shamanism of northern origin represented by Siberian shamanism. (S. Kim 1998:35)

These various theories about Korean *mu* and its relationship with Siberian shamanism challenge the continued use of the term “shamanism” in reference to the Korean religion as a whole. Recognizing the problems of applying the term “shamanism”

to *mu* and the term “shaman” to non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* in particular, let us now turn to the impact of these terms on people’s (mis)understanding of *p’ungmul kut*.

***P’ungmul Kut* as Ritual versus “Performance”**

P’ungmul kut are rituals associated with the *mu* religion, but in general they do not involve any *mudang*—neither spirit-possessed *mudang* (i.e. shamans) nor hereditary *mudang*.¹⁴ In *p’ungmul kut*, people generally do not experience spirit possession, trance, or ecstasy (in the religious sense). Some people may experience *shinmyǒng*, which may be translated as “excitement” and may be considered a form of ecstasy in the popular sense, i.e. “An exalted state of feeling which engrosses the mind to the exclusion of thought” and “Intense or rapturous delight” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). But this sense of ecstasy as delight is quite different from the religious ecstasy of shamans. To be clear: *p’ungmul kut* are *not* shaman rituals.

In order to separate *p’ungmul kut* from *mudang kut*, some people use the term *p’ungmul* instead of *p’ungmul kut*, omitting the word *kut* (ritual) because of its association with *mudang kut*. Unfortunately, this usage of the term *p’ungmul* (as an abbreviation and synonym for *p’ungmul kut*) has become so common that the word *kut* might seem superfluous and almost meaningless to some people, often being explained as simply “performance.” For instance, while discussing *p’ungmul kut*, ethnomusicologist Keith Howard has written:

Kut (-*gut*) commonly referred to shamanistic rituals but an additional meaning, simply as “performance,” was also ascribed. (Howard 1990:29)

¹⁴ Occasionally *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* are performed together (as discussed later in this chapter).

Howard uses the term “shamanistic ritual” to refer to *mudang kut* in general, which is misleading since many *mudang kut* do *not* involve shamans. Referring to all *mudang kut* as “shamanistic rituals” obscures the important distinction between the two different types of *mudang kut*—that is, rituals led by non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* (who are *not* shamans) versus rituals led by shamans (i.e. spirit-possessed *mudang*).¹⁵ Translating the word *kut* as “shamanistic ritual” may also lead to the misconception that *p’ungmul kut* are shamanistic rituals.

In reference to *p’ungmul kut*, some of Howard’s informants may have explained *kut* as simply “performance” in order to avoid any confusion with *mudang kut*. For the same reason, many people avoid using the term *p’ungmul kut* and prefer the term *p’ungmul* (omitting *kut*). Howard notes that “informants in the 1980s did indeed tend to steer clear of it [the term *kut*] in an apparent attempt to distance themselves from shamanistic rituals [*mudang kut*]” (1990:29).

The problem with translating *kut* as simply “performance” (in reference to *p’ungmul kut*) is that it misses the main meaning of *kut* (i.e. ritual), thereby obscuring the ritual aspects of *p’ungmul kut*. Therefore, I translate *kut* as “ritual,” distinguishing between *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* as two different types of ritual. It is also important to recognize that *p’ungmul kut* are rituals associated with the *mu* religion.

In relation to *p’ungmul kut*, Howard generally translates *kut* as “performance,” although he sometimes translates it as “ritual.” For example, the term *maegut*, which refers to a type of *p’ungmul kut*, is translated as “village cleansing ritual” (Howard

¹⁵ In Howard’s book *Bands, Songs, and Shamanistic Rituals* (1990), the discussion of “shamanistic rituals” focuses on rituals led by non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* on Chindo island (located off the southwest coast of the Korean peninsula).

1990:31). But Howard does not discuss the essential connection between *p'unngmul kut* and the *mu* religion. Even in his discussion of the ritual aspects of *p'unngmul kut*, Howard does not mention *mu*. Only several chapters later, in relation to “shamanistic rituals” (i.e. *mudang kut*), does Howard discuss *mu* (1990:159-165).

Following Howard, ethnomusicologist Nathan Hesselink, in his book *P'unngmul: South Korean Drumming and Dancing* (note the omission of *kut*), also translates *kut* as simply “performance” (in the context of *p'unngmul kut*):

One more related term often found in conjunction with the word *p'unngmul* is *kut*, a concept in general Korean parlance broadly inclusive of any activity involving shamanistic ritual. In the context of drumming and dance, the word or suffix *kut/-gut* takes on the additional meaning of “performance” (noted in Howard 1990: 29), a distinction blurred by the fact that ensembles often perform rituals that in nature often parallel those of shamanism. (Hesselink 2006:16)

Like Howard, Hesselink distinguishes between two different meanings of the word *kut*: the general meaning of “shamanistic ritual” (i.e. *mudang kut*) and, within the context of *p'unngmul kut*, the meaning of “performance.” Hesselink, like Howard, uses the term “shamanistic ritual” to refer to *mudang kut* in general, i.e. rituals led by non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang*—not shamans—as well as spirit-possessed *mudang*.

Hesselink recognizes that *p'unngmul* ensembles often perform rituals. He separates *p'unngmul* rituals from *mudang* rituals (“those of shamanism”), describing them as two “parallel” types of rituals. But he obscures the important connections between *p'unngmul kut* and the *mu* religion. There is no mention of *mu* at all. Instead, Hesselink uses the term “shamanism” at various points in his work. For example, Hesselink mentions “influences” from “shamanistic rituals” (i.e. *mudang kut*) in *p'unngmul kut* (2006:89). He also notes “*p'unngmul*’s close association with shamanistic activity” (2006:92).

Then, near the end of his book, Hesselink actually describes *p'ungmul kut* as “shamanistic activity” (2006:212).¹⁶ But there are no shamans (and no *mudang*) involved in the *p'ungmul kut* discussed by Hesselink.¹⁷ This demonstrates the widespread problem of using the terms “shamanism,” “shaman,” and “shaman rituals” in relation to the Korean *mu* religion, *mudang* (ritual specialists), and *kut* (rituals). Referring to *mu* as “shamanism” and *kut* as “shaman rituals” frequently leads to misrepresenting *p'ungmul kut* as “shamanistic activity.”

The common misrepresentation of *p'ungmul kut* as either “shamanistic ritual” or else simply “performance” (without any ritual aspects) is one of the main misunderstandings about *p'ungmul kut* that I hope to clarify and correct in this dissertation. In order to understand the significance of *p'ungmul kut* as ritual (without any shamanistic elements), it is necessary to consider the meanings of *mu* and *kut*, which entails a re-evaluation of the usefulness of (mis)translations such as “shamanism” and “shaman ritual.”

Arguably there are certain advantages to limited usage of the term “shamanism” (and “shaman”), such as suggesting similarities and connections between the Korean *mu* religion and shamanism in other cultures. Spirit-possessed *mudang* may be seen as shamans and part of the *mu* religion may be seen as shamanism. The problem comes when people suggest that all *mudang* are shamans and that *mu* as a whole is reducible and equivalent to shamanism, rather than recognizing the complexity of *mu*.

¹⁶ Hesselink uses the term “shamanistic activity” (2006:212) in reference to a discussion of *p'ungmul kut* by Kim Hyöngsun.

¹⁷ Hesselink also writes about a healing ritual (as described by Kim Hyöngsun), which featured a “shaman” (*chömjængi*) and one musician playing both *changgu* and *soe* (2006:211), but this ritual is not a type of *p'ungmul kut*.

The so-called “tradition” (Walraven 1994:2) of using the terms “shaman” and “shamanism” to refer to Korean *mudang* and the *mu* religion has led to fundamental misconceptions about core features of Korean culture. Important differences between non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* and spirit-possessed *mudang* are often obscured, overlooked, and dismissed. Major parts of the Korean *mu* religion—including the beliefs, worldview, and rituals (such as *p’ungmul kut*) of ordinary people who are not professionally trained ritual specialists (*mudang*)—tend to be either mistakenly characterized as “shamanistic” (because of the incorrect equivalence made between *mu* and shamanism) or else completely left out of discussions about *mu* (because the focus is only on “shamans”).

A diagram may help with indicating the problem of using the terms “shaman” and “shamanism” as well as clarifying the relationship between the rituals of *p’ungmul kut* and the *mu* religion (see Figure 2). There are two main types of *mudang* (ritual specialists): spirit-possessed *mudang* (called *kangshinmu*) and non-ecstatic hereditary *mudang* (called *sesŭpmu*). The first type may be considered shamans, but the non-ecstatic *mudang* are often (mistakenly) referred to as “shamans” as well. The term *mudang* is commonly (mis)translated as “shaman” and *mudang kut* (i.e. rituals led by either type of *mudang*) in general are often misleadingly characterized as “shaman rituals.”

The rituals of *p’ungmul kut* are an important part of the *mu* religion, but *mu* is often (mis)translated as “Korean shamanism,” thus *p’ungmul kut* are often either misrepresented as “shaman rituals” or they are not recognized as part of the *mu* religion (because only *mudang kut* are “shaman rituals”). *P’ungmul kut* are rituals that feature

percussion music and dance. They do not involve *mudang* (ritual specialists). The rituals of *p'ungmul kut* are not shaman rituals.

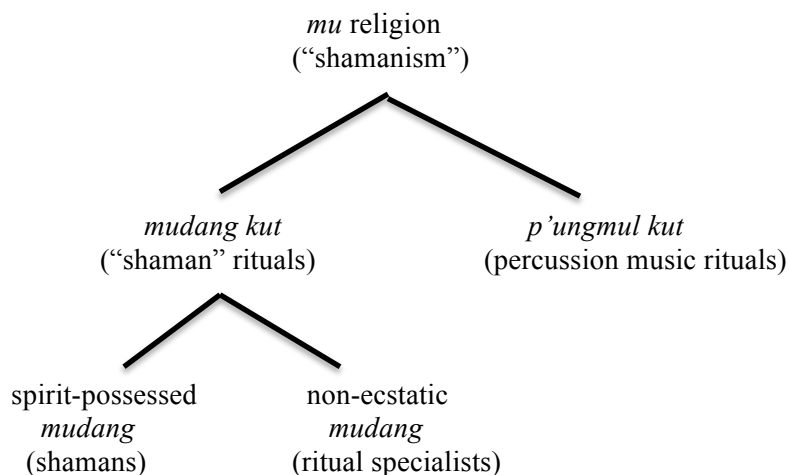


Figure 2. Rituals of *p'ungmul kut* in the Korean *mu* religion.

An essential part of learning in general is being open to the possibility of hearing and incorporating new or different ideas. This involves a willingness to be flexible and open to change, especially when it is possible to make improvements and clarifications that may promote understanding and learning. Rather than continuing to use the terms “shamanism,” “shaman,” and “shaman rituals” as problematic translations of *mu*, *mudang*, and *kut*, let us learn about the Korean terms and concepts themselves. In the following sections, I will explore the meanings of *mu* and *kut* in relation to *p'ungmul kut*.

***Mu*: Music, Dance, and Cosmology**

In order to learn about *p'ungmul kut* as a type of ritual associated with the *mu* religion, it is helpful to have a discussion about *mu*. The term *mu* can actually refer either to the religion or to ritual specialists. In order to distinguish between these two meanings,

some people use the term *musok* or *mugyo* to refer to the religion and the term *mudang* to refer to ritual specialists, as I will discuss in the following sections.

The word *mu* is often written with the Sino-Korean character 巫 (pronounced *wu* in Chinese). There is a different Sino-Korean term that is also pronounced *mu* in Korean (*wu* in Chinese), which means “dance.” The two words are historically related, as explained by Chinese ethnomusicologist David Mingyue Liang:

[T]he ancient pictograph for dance—wu (舞, in modern form 舞) is related to the modern ideogram for shamanness [sic]—wu (巫). The archaic pictorial element *wu* symbolizes a woman in dance movement wearing either a long-sleeved garment or ornaments (charms or feathers). The shaman(ness) whose job was to act as a mediator between the world of the gods and the world of man presided over religious matters such as ceremonies and sacrifices. An important qualification for a shaman(ness) was to be a competent dancer and musician. (Liang 1985:49)

Liang notes the essential connections between ritual specialists, music, and dance. The importance of music and dance in rituals is discussed later in this chapter.

Similarly, Korean scholar Cho Hung-youn [Cho Hŭng-yun] has discussed the combination of ritual specialist and dance in the Chinese character 巫 (*wu*):

According to the old Chinese dictionary from the 2nd century, *Shuo-wen* by Xu Shen, the character *wu* is a pictograph representing a woman who serves “the formless” and can by dancing cause the deities to descend (*Shuo-wen* chap. 5-1:11b). (Cho Hung-youn 1984:461)

Cho also offers another interpretation of the Sino-Korean character for *mu* (巫), which Howard considers to be “revisionist” (although he does not explain why and he does not refer here to any earlier interpretations):

[A]n interesting interpretation of the Sino-Korean character for shaman, *mu*, was recently offered by Cho Hung-youn (1997:26). The character can be seen to consist of two men playing either side of a pole that links heaven and earth. This

is certainly revisionist, but it is intriguing nonetheless, since Korean shamans play in both local rituals and ritual concerts. (Howard 2006, vol. 1:156)

Actually, Cho (1997:26) writes about “people” (*saramdŭl*) who are “dancing” (*ch’um ch’unŭn*) on either side of a “cosmic tree” (Cho uses the English term).¹⁸

Similar interpretations of the *mu* character are also found in earlier writings by other people. For instance, in 1927, Yi Nŭng-hwa explained how, within the Sino-Korean character 𠄎 (*mu*), on both sides of the central vertical line, there are smaller versions of the character 人 (*in*), which means “person” or “human being” (1927:1).

More recently, Korean musician Kim Dong-Won describes the representation of heaven, earth, and people within the *mu* character while discussing *kut* (rituals) and music (1999b:2-3). Kim explains that the gathering of people and energy in rituals and festivals to achieve harmony between heaven, earth, and people is called *kut* (1999b:2-3). This explanation is translated into English by ethnomusicologist Pak Shin-Gil as follows:

The ritual is performed to bring about harmony among the three entities; the heaven, the earth, and the man. The Korean word for *mu* is “*kut*.” (Kim Dong-Won 1999c:2)

Pak makes an interesting direct connection between *mu* and *kut*, which I will explore further in this chapter.

The *mu* character may be interpreted as representing the harmony of heaven, earth, and people, which is an important concept in the Korean *mu* religion, as discussed by Maria Seo:

¹⁸ Cho does write elsewhere about “playing” (*nori*) and rituals (*kut*) (1987:10), as I will discuss in Chapter 6. The “cosmic tree” is an essential part of shamanic ideology in many cultures (Eliade 1964:269ff.). The Chinese model of heaven, earth, and people (mentioned on page 78) is discussed further on page 92.

Mu advocates the harmony of the universe, created by a perfect balance of *samjae* (three elements): *ch'ŏn* (heaven), *chi* (earth), and *in* (humans). (Seo 2002:3)¹⁹

The harmony and balance of heaven, earth, and people is maintained through *kut* (rituals) that feature music, as Seo explains:

Illness, misfortune, or difficulties in life are believed to be caused by an imbalance of *samjae* (heaven, earth, and humans). When the balance is disturbed, the indigenous Korean way of restoring universal harmony is through a large-scale *kut*, a ritual in which music plays an essential part. (Seo 2002:4)

Music is an important part of *p'ungmul kut* as well as *mudang kut*, and both types of *kut* (ritual) are performed to maintain universal harmony (Seo 2002:3).

Kim Dong-Won makes connections between *kut* and the roots of SamulNori (1999b:3). Much of the music of SamulNori is rooted in *p'ungmul kut* while some is rooted in *mudang kut*, as discussed in Chapter 2. Kim also mentions *mudang* (ritual specialists) in connection with ancient rites and festivals (1999b:2). Kim's interpretation of the *mu* character as representing heaven, earth, and people is discussed by Howard as follows:

[T]he Sino-Korean character for things shaman, *mu*, is interpreted by Kim [Duk Soo]'s disciple, Kim Dong-Won (1999:2), as men musicking and dancing between earth and heaven. This allows a useful connection to be made to the Taoist idea of man operating between earth and heaven, which extends interpretations of SamulNori music into the aesthetics of performance. (Howard 2006, vol. 2:14-5)

Howard uses the term “musicking,” which was coined by musicologist Christopher Small (1999). As Small explains, music is an activity: “Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do” (1999:2). Therefore Small proposes to define “music” as a verb:

¹⁹ In addition to the Sino-Korean terms *ch'ŏn*, *chi*, and *in*, many people use the native Korean words *hanŭl* (heaven or sky), *ttang* (earth), and *saram* (person).

I have proposed this definition: *To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.* (Small 1999:9; emphasis in original)

It is interesting to note that musicking includes dancing. As Small comments: “[I]n many cultures if no one is dancing then no music is happening, so integral is dance to the musical act” (1999:8). As with many other cultures, music-making and dancing are often intertwined in Korean culture, especially in *kut* (rituals). I will discuss Small’s ideas about musicking in relation to *p’ungmul kut* in the Conclusion.

Howard says that the model of heaven, earth, and people is “a division or rather an idea of completeness explored in eighteenth-century (and later) Korean philosophical takes on Taoism” (2006 vol. 2:32). But the idea of heaven, earth, and people is actually found many centuries earlier in various ancient Chinese texts, which were (and continue to be) profoundly influential in Korean culture. For example, Hesselink discusses the work of a Chinese philosopher from the first century BCE and its impact on Confucian cosmology in China as well as Korea:

With the writings of the Chinese philosopher Xunzi—compiled during the first century BCE—heaven, earth, and mankind became bound together in a complementary and symbiotic relationship, a view that “became one of the seminal ideas in Confucian cosmological and ethical thought” (deBary et al. 1999:170). (Hesselink 2007a:143 and 2012:89)

[I]t was during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910), when (Neo-)Confucianism was embraced officially, first by Korean elites and then eventually at the folk level, that the crucial belief in the interrelationship and interdependence of heaven, earth, and mankind took hold (Deuchler 1992; Yi Chongsul 1997:87; Choi, Changjo 2003). (Hesselink 2007a:145 and 2012:91)

This cosmology was even influential in the development of the Korean alphabet (*han’gŭl*) in the fifteenth century (Ledyard 1997:62-63; cited in Hesselink 2007a:145 and 2012:91).

Hesselink also notes that the concept of heaven, earth, and people is an important part of the Korean *mu* religion, citing work by Korean folklorist Zo Zayong [Jo Ja-yong]:

In Zo’s 1982 classic on shamanism and folk art, he highlights what he calls the “shamanistic trinity” of heaven, earth, and man [T]his was common knowledge among anyone even tangentially associated with shamanism and/or Korean folklore during that period (Zo Zayong 1982:44). (Hesselink 2007a:150 and 2012:95)

I will discuss the importance of *samjae* (heaven, earth, and people) and other cosmological concepts in *p’ungmul kut* in Chapter 7.

Since the Chinese term *wu* refers to ritual specialists (and is often translated as “shaman”), some people use the term “*wu*-ism” (coined by Jan J. M. de Groot in 1910) to refer to the Chinese *wu* religion (often called “shamanism”). Similarly, in reference to the Korean *mu* religion, some people use the term “*mu*-ism.”²⁰ There are also various other terms used to refer to the *mu* religion, which I will discuss in the next section.

***Mu* Religion and Korean Spirituality**

When referring to the Korean *mu* religion, the term *musok* is used by many people, including *mudang* (ritual specialists) as well as scholars.²¹ As mentioned earlier, the word *musok* consists of two Sino-Korean characters: *mu* (巫, discussed above) and *sok* (俗), meaning “customs” or “practices.” The term *sok* is also combined with *min* (民 meaning

²⁰ For example, see Im Sök-chae 1969. The term *Muism* is used by Chang Soo-kyung in her translation of Kim T’ae-gon’s work (1998a), but Kim did not use the term himself, preferring *musok* and *mugyo* (Kim 1998b; Seo 2002:5 n.7). The term *mugyo* (literally, “*mu* religion”) is discussed below.

²¹ For example, Yi Nüng-hwa 1927, Ch’oe Kil-söng 1984, Kim T’ae-gon 1991, and Maria Seo 2002.

“people” or “folk”) in *minsok* (民俗 meaning “folk customs” or “folklore”) and *minsokhak* (民俗學 meaning “folklore studies” or “folkloristics”).²²

But the term *sok* may have some negative connotations such as “vulgar” and “unrefined” (Grant 1982:124). Therefore the compound word *musok* is problematic for some people. For instance, Korean religions scholar Choi Joon-sik says:

On account that the *sok* of *Musok* is a word that carries the meaning of vulgarity, I do not use the term of “*Musok*.” (Choi Joon-sik 2006:7)²³

Ironically, although Choi does not use the term *musok* because of the term *sok*, he uses the word *p'ungsok* (meaning “customs”)—which includes the same problematic term *sok*—in the title of his Korean book (Choi Joon-sik 2005).²⁴

Even without the sense of vulgarity, the term *sok* may be problematic in that it is sometimes interpreted rather literally to mean “customs” or “practices” as opposed to “religion” (*kyo*). For example, Sorensen translates *musok* as “shamanistic customs” and “shamanistic practices” in contrast with “shamanistic religion” (*salman'gyo*)²⁵ in his discussion of Akamatsu and Akiba’s (1937) work, giving the impression that *musok* is not a religion (1995a:339). But Akamatsu and Akiba themselves (1937 vol. 1:i) actually recognize *musok* (*fuzoku*) as a religion (*shūkyō*).²⁶

²² Folklorist Roger L. Janelli says that Ch’oe Nam-sŏn “may well have been the first in Korea to use the combination of Chinese characters that are now used in Korea and Japan to write *folkloristics* (Kim T’ae-gon 1984:45)” (Janelli 1986:45 n.9; emphasis in original). Janelli uses the term “folkloristics” as a translation of *minsokhak* (1986:47).

²³ Choi prefers the term *mugyo*.

²⁴ The term *p'ung* (meaning “customs”) is also used in *p'ungmul* (as discussed in Chapter 3).

²⁵ As discussed earlier, the term *salman'gyo*, which combines a Sino-Korean representation of “shaman” (romanized as *salman*) with *kyo* (religion), was coined by Ch’oe Nam-sŏn (1927) and used by Akamatsu and Akiba (1937).

²⁶ Akamatsu and Akiba describe *musok* (*fuzoku*) as a “primitive religion” (*genshi shūkyō*) like shamanism (*satsumankyō*) in general (1937 vol. 1:i, translated in Sorensen 1995a:339; quoted earlier in this chapter on page 81).

While discussing Ch'oe Nam-sŏn's (1927) work about the *mu* religion, Sorensen uses the term *kyo* to refer to “religion” as opposed to “practices”:

Ch'oe [Nam-sŏn] treated shamanism as a distinct religion (*kyo*) rather than a set of miscellaneous practices embedded within a heterogeneous folk religion. (1995a:340)

It is unclear here whether “shamanism” refers specifically to Korean shamanism (i.e. *mu*) or shamanism in general (including Siberian shamanism). Interestingly, this blurring of boundaries is precisely what Ch'oe had apparently hoped to achieve by referring to *mu* as “shamanism” or, more literally, “shaman religion” (*salman'gyo*).²⁷ The phrase “miscellaneous practices” might be suggestive of Akamatsu and Akiba's use of the term *sok* (practices) in *musok* as opposed to Ch'oe's use of the term *kyo* (religion) in *salman'gyo*. But there are other passages in Sorensen's writing which give the impression that it may actually be Sorensen himself (not Akamatsu and Akiba) who is characterizing Korean *mu* as “miscellaneous practices” (i.e., not a religion). For instance, Sorensen writes:

[T]he idea that selected elements of Korean folk religion are of importance and add up to a religion that can be called shamanism (*mugyo*) is an intellectual construct that dates from the early years of this century. (Sorensen 1995a:336)

The phrase “selected elements” is similar to “miscellaneous practices” and might be suggestive of the term *sok* in *musok*. The term *mugyo*, which combines *mu* with *kyo* (religion), is used by some scholars to refer to the *mu* religion (in contrast to the term *musok*, literally “*mu* practices or customs”).²⁸ The phrase “intellectual construct” (of

²⁷ Writing a few decades after Ch'oe, Eliade characterizes shamanism as a “religious phenomenon” (1964:4) that exists “within a considerable number of religions” (1964:8; emphasis added), giving the impression that shamanism itself may not actually be a religion.

²⁸ For example, Korean scholar Ryu Tong-shik uses the term *mugyo* to refer to the *mu* religion while using the term *musok* to refer to “folk beliefs” (*min'gan shinang*) (1975:57).

“selected elements” adding up to a religion called “shamanism”) might be referring to Ch’oe’s incorporation of the term *kyo* (religion) when he created the term *salman’gyo* in 1927.

Sorensen goes on to describe the general category of Korean “folk religion” (which includes the “selected elements” that add up to *mugyo*) as follows:

The folk religion one can observe today in Korean villages consists of an unorganized mass of often contradictory folk beliefs and practices of mixed indigenous, Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, and even Christian origin. (Sorensen 1995a:336)²⁹

This characterization of Korean folk religion as consisting of “contradictory practices” and the description of “shamanism” (i.e. *mu*) as “miscellaneous practices” are similar to discussions of Korean religion by various other scholars. For example, anthropologist Griffin Dix writes:

In rural Korea, there are two traditions of religion—Confucianism and shamanism—that coexist with a *miscellaneous* collection of *practices* such as the village Mountain Spirit offering and geomancy. (Dix 1980:47; emphasis added)³⁰

Dix and anthropologist Laurel Kendall, as editors of the book *Religion and Ritual in Korean Society*, write in the introduction:

In our own ways, the two editors of this volume have elsewhere described the religious life of Korean villages as a cozy *occlusion* of traditions (Dix 1980; Kendall 1981). The Janellis (1982) are less sanguine; they suggest that many Korean folk beliefs are *mutually incompatible*, but that discrepancies are overlooked because villagers activate different religious interpretations in different social circumstances. (Kendall and Dix 1987:1; emphasis added)

Folklorists Roger L. Janelli and Dawnhee Yim Janelli use the phrase “*mutual incongruity* of diverse religious beliefs” (1982:viii; emphasis added) in reference to

²⁹ Sorensen also describes Korean folk religion as a “complex, seamless web” (1995b:193).

³⁰ The village offering described by Dix (1980 and 1987) is actually a type of *p’ungmul kut*, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Korean folk religion in general. They then distinguish Confucian “ancestor rituals” (*chesa*)—which they characterize as “ancestor worship”—from “shamanism” (i.e. *mu*), saying that they are “each separate, internally coherent systems” (1982:163-64).

More recently, historian of Korean religions Don Baker writes about Korean “folk religion, including shamanism” (2007:15), describing the general category of folk religion as a “loosely connected assortment of beliefs and practices” (2008:18).

Interestingly, the term “folk religion” itself may be seen as an “intellectual construct.” As Baker says, “The term ‘folk religion’ wasn’t applied to the traditional spirituality of the general population in Korea until the late nineteenth century” (2008:18).³¹ Also, the Sino-Korean term for “religion” (宗教 *chonggyo*) was introduced into Korea in the late nineteenth century from Japan, according to Baker (2007:3 and 2008:30).

These various terms and concepts (“religion” and “folk religion”) may be seen as “intellectual constructs” from the late nineteenth century, but the religions themselves actually existed long before the terms were created. I will discuss the relationship between “folk religion” and the *mu* religion in the next section, but for now let us continue to examine the distinction that some scholars make between *mu* as a religion (*kyo*) versus *mu* as customs (*sok*).

Although Yi Nŭng-hwa (1927) used the term *sok* in *musok* as opposed to *kyo* for imported religions (*pulgyo* for Buddhism, *yugyo* for Confucianism, and *togyo* for

³¹ Baker distinguishes between “spirituality” and “religiosity” as follows: “Spirituality can be defined as attitudes and actions grounded in the belief that there are invisible forces more powerful than we are, and that through interaction with those forces we can better ourselves or make our lives more pleasant or meaningful. Religiosity, in contrast, has a more restricted reference than spirituality. To me, religiosity refers to spirituality expressed within a specific institutional framework and motivated by a more clearly defined sense of the nature of those invisible forces. Thus, all those who are religious are also spiritual, but not everyone who is spiritual is also religious” (2008:5).

Taoism), it appears that he actually considered *musok* to be a religion as well. For instance, he said it is “ridiculous” (*kasoropta*) that these imports are highly respected and called religions (*kyo*) while Korea’s own unique customs (*uri koyu ũi p’ungsok*, i.e. *musok*) are excluded from their ranks (1976:10-12).³² Yi stressed the importance of learning about *musok* in order to understand Korean society, as Janelli explains:

Yi Nŕng-hwa begins his work on Korean shamanism [*musok*] by noting that Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and more recently Christianity, had originally been imported from other nations. Only shamanism was indigenous to Korea, he observed, and even the imported religions eventually absorbed shamanistic elements. Thus, shamanism was so fundamental to Korea, he argued, that an understanding of Korean society required an understanding of its pervasive indigenous faith (1976:11-12). (Janelli 1986:33)

Various scholars consider Korean folk religion (including the *mu* religion) to be indigenous to Korea. For example, Baker writes:

[A]ny belief or practice that appears to be indigenous to Korea, rather than a version of an imported form of spirituality such as Buddhism, Confucianism, or Christianity, can usually be labeled part of folk religion. Indigenous origins are usually considered one defining characteristic of folk religion. (Baker 2008:18)³³

Folk religion has been a central topic in Korean folklore scholarship since the early 20th century. Janelli suggests that this emphasis on folk religion may be the result of theoretical influences from British scholars, including anthropologist Edward B. Tylor:

Both Japanese and Korean folklore scholarship were heavily influenced by the theoretical writings of E. B. Tylor and the British folklore movement, especially as it existed at the turn of the century; and that theoretical influence must be included in any explanation of the emphasis on folk religion and historical reconstructions in the folklore scholarship of both nations. (Janelli 1986:42)

³² Yi Nŕng-hwa’s 1927 work was translated from *hanmun* (Sino-Korean text) to Korean by Yi Chae-gon in 1976.

³³ Baker distinguishes between “shamanism” and “animism” in Korean folk religion, which may (or may not) correspond to *mudang kut* and *p’ungmul kut*, respectively, as I discuss in the next section.

Janelli also discusses political reasons for the focus on folk religion in Korean folkloristics, suggesting it may have been in reaction against the Japanese occupation and the imposition of Shinto:

[P]erhaps the political use of Shinto contributed to making Korean folklore so heavily concerned with finding Korea's indigenous religious traditions, even if the writings of E. B. Tylor provided the theoretical basis for that concern. (Janelli 1986:43)³⁴

Given the importance of Korean folk religion—especially the *mu* religion—in Korean folklore scholarship, it is interesting to note the similarity between the Sino-Korean terms for folklore (*minsok*) and the Korean religion (*musok*). As mentioned earlier, both include the term *sok*, literally meaning “customs” or “practices.” Folklore scholarship may include the study of religion and *sok* may include religious customs and practices. Thus the distinction between practices (*sok*) and religion (*kyo*) may not be as clear as some might suggest. The terms *musok* and *mugyo* may have different implications for some, but they both have the *mu* religion at their core.

Although the term *sok* may have connotations of being “vulgar” or “unrefined” (as mentioned earlier), many people use the terms *minsok* (for folklore) and *musok* (for the *mu* religion) without any negative intentions. Similarly, the term “folk” in English may have connotations of “peasant” or “illiterate,” but it has a different meaning in folkloristics, as explained by folklorist Alan Dundes:

[T]here is really no connection between the restricted “folk” of *folk* society in which “folk” is used simply as a synonym for peasant and the “folk” of *folklore*. A folk or peasant society is but one example of a “folk” in the folkloristic sense. Any group of people sharing a common linking factor, e.g., an *urban* group such as a labor union, can and does have folklore. “Folk” is a flexible concept which

³⁴ The political significance of the *mu* religion as a symbol of Korean cultural nationalism will be discussed in the next chapter.

can refer to a nation as in American folklore or to a single family. The critical issue in defining “folk” is: what groups in fact have traditions? (Dundes 1969:13 n.34; emphasis in the original)

Other terms that refer to the *mu* religion include *musok-kyo*³⁵ and *shin'gyo* (*shin* 神 means “spirits”).³⁶ In contrast to these various Sino-Korean terms, some people use the native Korean term *kut* to refer to the *mu* religion.³⁷ I will discuss the term *kut* later in this chapter. For now, let us turn to an exploration of the spiritual aspects of the *mu* religion in relation to *p'ungmul kut*.

P'ungmul Kut as Part of the Mu Religion

P'ungmul kut (percussion music rituals) are an essential part of the Korean *mu* religion, but this important connection between *p'ungmul kut* and *mu* is often overlooked. On one hand, ritual aspects of *p'ungmul kut* are frequently discussed without any mention of the *mu* religion. On the other hand, when people do discuss the *mu* religion, many focus only on *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals)—completely excluding *p'ungmul kut*—thereby giving the misleading impression that the *mu* religion is limited to *mudang kut*. I would like to bring these two hands together and discuss how *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* are distinct but interlacing parts of the *mu* religion.

Kut—including *p'ungmul kut* as well as *mudang kut*—are rituals of the *mu* religion. There are many types of *p'ungmul kut* that are traditionally performed as village rituals, including New Year’s festivals and harvest celebration festivals. During these

³⁵ The term *musok-kyo* is used by James Huntley Grayson (2002:216).

³⁶ The term *shin'gyo* was used in connection with *mudang* (ritual specialists) in 1885 in *Mudang naeryŏk* (History of the *mudang*).

³⁷ As mentioned earlier, Pak Shin-Gil writes that “The Korean word for *mu* is ‘*kut*’” in her translation of Kim Dong-Won’s work (Kim 1999c:2).

rituals, community members make music as an offering to entertain local tutelary spirits, along with prayers for blessings and offerings of food and drink. *P'ungmul kut* were also performed regularly by groups of people engaged in communal work, such as farmers and fishermen, to give them energy and raise their spirits as they worked throughout the day, as well as to bring blessings for a bountiful harvest.³⁸

As rituals of the *mu* religion, *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* share common beliefs in nature spirits and ancestor spirits. The variety of spirits in *mu* (or *musok*) is discussed by Kim T'ae-gon:

Around three hundred spirits are venerated in Korean *musok*, and these can be divided into nature spirits and human spirits. The exact canon varies in different parts of the Korean peninsula, but we can say that the former include heavenly spirits, sun spirits, star spirits, mountain spirits, earth spirits, dragon spirits, water spirits, fire spirits, and animal spirits. The latter deities include kings, generals, high officials, and ancestral shamans. (Kim T'ae-gon 1998:22)

Some people overemphasize the division between nature spirits and human spirits, completely separating *p'ungmul kut* as a form of animism from *mudang kut* as a form of “shamanism.” For example, Baker (2007:15-16 and 2008:18-20) distinguishes between animism and shamanism as two distinct parts of Korean folk religion, contrasting nature spirits in village rituals (i.e. *p'ungmul kut*) with human spirits in “shaman” rituals (i.e. *mudang kut*).³⁹ Although *p'ungmul kut* are generally concerned with local tutelary spirits associated with nature while *mudang kut* are often focused on human spirits, it is also

³⁸ There are many different terms for the various types of *p'ungmul kut*, including *tangsan kut*, *ture kut*, *mae kut*, and *p'an kut*. Overviews of the rich diversity of *p'ungmul kut* are presented in Chŏng Pyŏng-ho 1986, Chŏng Su-mi 2001, and Yi Po-hyŏng 2009. English accounts of *p'ungmul kut* performed as New Year's rituals are given in Dix 1987, Howard 1990, and D. Kwon 2005, while an English description of *p'ungmul kut* performed as farming ritual is included in S. Park 2000. For a rare and insightful discussion of the essential connection between the *mu* religion and *p'ungmul kut*, see Pak Hŭng-ju 2004b.

³⁹ Although Baker does not use the Korean terms, his descriptions of village rituals and shaman rituals appear to be about *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*.

important to recognize that *p'ungmul kut* sometimes include prayers and offerings to human spirits while *mudang kut* often include prayers and offerings to nature spirits.⁴⁰

The separation of *p'ungmul kut* (as animism) from “shamanism” may lead to the incorrect impression that *p'ungmul kut* are not part of the *mu* religion, especially if the term “shamanism” is being used to refer to the Korean *mu* religion as a whole.

Alternatively, “shamanism” might be used in a limited sense to refer only to *mudang*-related aspects of *mu*, such as *mudang kut*. But even then, people often do not discuss any other aspects of the *mu* religion and they do not recognize *p'ungmul kut* as an integral part of *mu*.

For instance, Dix separates “village rituals” (i.e. *p'ungmul kut*) from “shamanism” (i.e. *mudang kut* or the *mu* religion) in his discussion of Korean “folk” religion (1980 and 1987). Dix describes a village offering to the Mountain Spirit as a “New Year’s ritual” that includes “drum beating” and does not involve “shamans,” i.e. *mudang* (1987:95). This village ritual is a type of *p'ungmul kut*, although Dix does not use the term *p'ungmul kut* (or any other Korean terms) in reference to it. Shamanism and the village ritual are described as “coexisting” but they are still treated separately, i.e. shamanism does not include the village ritual. Dix says that the village ritual “balances Confucian and shamanistic elements” (1987:95), but still he does not recognize the village ritual (or *p'ungmul kut* in general) as part of the *mu* religion. Similarly, Choi Joon-sik (2005:8-9

⁴⁰ For example, military generals are honored in *p'ungmul kut* known as *tangje* in Changjwa village in South Chölla province (Pak Hüng-ju 2004:58). *Mudang kut* often include spirits of mountains (Sanshin, literally “mountain spirit”) and celestial stars (Ch’ilsöng, literally “seven stars,” referring to the Big Dipper).

and 2006:7-8) separates “village *kut*” (including *p’ungmul kut*) from “Korean shamanism” (*mugyo*), thereby excluding *p’ungmul kut* from the *mu* religion.

Instead of separating *p’ungmul kut* from “shamanism,” some people actually describe *p’ungmul kut* as “shamanistic activity” (Hesselink 2006:212) or “shamanistic practice” (Kwon 2005:68 n.11). They might intend to describe *p’ungmul kut* as part of the *mu* religion when they characterize them as “shamanistic” rituals, but any such intention is distorted by (mis)translating *mu* as “shamanism.” As discussed earlier in this chapter, such descriptions are problematic because they incorrectly suggest that “shamans” (i.e. *mudang*) are involved in *p’ungmul kut*. Also, by omitting the term *mu*, the direct connection between *p’ungmul kut* and *mu* is obscured.

Some scholars oversimplify and create a false dichotomy between *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* by characterizing *p’ungmul kut* as village rituals and *mudang kut* as family household rituals. It is true that *p’ungmul kut* are generally performed for a village community, while *mudang kut* are often performed for an individual family. But it is also important to recognize that *p’ungmul kut* often include rituals inside individual family households within a village and many *mudang kut* are performed for entire village communities.⁴¹

Thus, some household rituals are part of *p’ungmul kut* and some are *mudang kut*.⁴² Similarly, a large number of village rituals are *mudang kut* and many are *p’ungmul kut*, while some actually combine these two types of *kut* together. Such combinations might blur the distinctions between *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*. But we may clarify

⁴¹ Some *mudang kut* are performed for the whole nation (*nara kut*).

⁴² There are also some household rituals (called *kosa*) which are performed privately by individuals as part of the *mu* religion, but which are distinct from *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*.

their differences by learning about the distinct kinds of music that are performed in these two types of rituals.

Music in *P'ungmul Kut* and *Mudang Kut*

Initially, the music of *p'ungmul kut* and the music of *mudang kut* might sound very similar to each other, perhaps even identical, because of the prominence of many of the same percussion instruments in both. But the more we listen and learn, the more we may come to recognize the significant differences between the music of *p'ungmul kut* and the music of *mudang kut*.⁴³

The significance of percussion music in both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* is reflected in the phrase *kut ch'ida*,⁴⁴ which means “to perform *kut*.” The verb *ch'ida* actually means “to hit or strike,” as in “to strike a drum or gong.” Thus the phrase *kut ch'ida* suggests that the term *kut* might refer to the drums and gongs that are played in the rituals.⁴⁵ Even if *kut* does not literally mean drums or gongs, the phrase *kut ch'ida* indicates the importance of percussion music in *kut*—both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*.

A variety of percussion instruments are played in *p'ungmul kut* as well as *mudang kut*. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the four main types of drums and gongs in *p'ungmul kut* are *kkwaenggwari* (small gong), *ching* (large gong), *changgu* (hourglass drum), and *puk*

⁴³ We may also learn to differentiate between the distinctive regional styles and repertoires of music in the wide variety of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* across the Korean peninsula.

⁴⁴ A variation of this phrase is *kusŭl ch'inda*, where *kut* (꺄) is pronounced *kus* (because it is followed by a vowel) and the object marker *ŭl* has been added, while the infinitive of the verb *ch'ida* has been conjugated into the present tense as *ch'inda*. The term *kut* (ritual) may refer to either *p'ungmul kut* or *mudang kut*. It is generally clear from context which type of *kut* is meant.

⁴⁵ A similar connection between rituals and drums is also found in other cultures around the world. For example, in southeast Africa, the “rituals of affliction” in Malawi are called “drums” (Friedson 1996:xiv).

(barrel drum). All four are also played in various kinds of *mudang kut*.⁴⁶ The small frame drum (*sogo*) that is often featured in *p'ungmul kut* is not included in *mudang kut*.

Cymbals (*para* or *chegŭm*) are often played in *mudang kut* and sometimes included in *p'ungmul kut*.⁴⁷ Bells (*pangul* or *chong*) are often used in *mudang kut* but not in *p'ungmul kut*.⁴⁸

Since many of the same percussion instruments are featured in both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*, people sometimes confuse the two types of rituals. One way to differentiate between them may be the size of the music ensemble, i.e. the number of people making music. An ensemble for *p'ungmul kut* is generally larger than one for *mudang kut*. Often there are a few dozen musicians performing *p'ungmul kut* while only a couple of musicians perform in *mudang kut*. But sometimes there are only a few musicians playing in *p'ungmul kut* and a dozen performing together in *mudang kut*. There are no real limits to the size of ensembles in *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*.

A more significant difference between *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* is the actual repertoire of music played in each type of ritual. Although some rhythmic cycles (*changdan* or *karak*) are featured in both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*, many are played in only one type of ritual (and often only in a particular region). I will discuss rhythmic cycles in more detail in Chapter 7.

⁴⁶ They are also played in various genres of Korean court music, including royal ancestral ritual music (*Chongmyo cheryeak*) and royal processional music (*taech'wit'a*).

⁴⁷ The term *samul* (which means “four instruments” as discussed in Chapter 2) is sometimes used to refer to the cymbals, small gong, large gong, and hourglass drum played in *mudang kut* from the east coast (*tonghaean kut*). In contrast to SamulNori, these *mudang kut* include cymbals and exclude barrel drum (*puk*).

⁴⁸ A basket woven from willow branches (*koritchak*) is sometimes played as a percussion instrument in *mudang kut* from Seoul (*Hanyang kut*) but not in *p'ungmul kut* (Seo 2002:126).

In addition to percussion instruments, there is a conical oboe (with various names including *t'aep'yōngso*, *hojök*, and *nallari*), that is often featured in both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*. Sometimes the same melodies are played in both types of *kut*, but there are also many melodies that are unique to one type of ritual. Two oboes are often played together by two musicians in *mudang kut*. This pairing is called *ssang hojök*, where *ssang* means “pair” or “double.” A similar doubling was traditionally featured in *p'ungmul kut* as well, but nowadays it is more common to have only one. There is also a long trumpet (called *nabal*) sometimes included in *p'ungmul kut* but not in *mudang kut*.⁴⁹

One of the most distinguishing features of *mudang kut* is the inclusion of various melodic wind and string instruments that are not played in *p'ungmul kut*. These include *p'iri* (cylindrical oboe), *taegŭm* (flute), *haegŭm* (fiddle), and *ajaeng* (bowed zither). These melodic instruments are played by professional ritual musicians (*chaebi* or *aksa*) rather than *mudang*.⁵⁰

In various provinces, music in *mudang kut* is played by an ensemble called *samhyōn yukkak*, which features six musicians playing two *p'iri* (*ssang p'iri*) along with *taegŭm*, *haegŭm*, *changgu* (hourglass drum), and *puk* (barrel drum). The music that is played by this ensemble is also called *samhyōn yukkak* and consists of a suite of pieces with various melodies and rhythmic cycles.⁵¹ Another style of music played by an

⁴⁹ Pairs of conical oboes and long trumpets (in addition to drums and cymbals) are also played in royal processional music as well as Korean Buddhist ritual music. Similar doublings of oboes (*gyaling*) and long trumpets (*dungchen*), combined with drums and cymbals, are found in Tibetan Buddhist ritual music.

⁵⁰ *Mudang* are also ritual musicians, since they sing and often play percussion instruments. But they are different from *chaebi* (a.k.a. *aksa*) because they recite prayers and perform divinations.

⁵¹ Another name for this music is *taep'ungnyu*, where *tae* means “bamboo,” referring to the material used for wind instruments (including *p'iri* and *taegŭm*), and *p'ungnyu* is a general term for music (as mentioned in Chapter 3).

ensemble of melodic instruments in *mudang kut* is called *shinawi*, which is discussed in the next chapter.

There is some singing in *p'ungmul kut*, but vocal music is generally more prominent in *mudang kut*. Many performances of *p'ungmul kut* do not include any singing, but it would be difficult to imagine a *mudang kut* without any songs. Learning ritual songs is a major part of becoming a *mudang*. This is true for both hereditary *mudang* and spirit-possessed *mudang*. Some *chaebi* (ritual musicians) also sing in *mudang kut* in certain regions.

Dancing is an important feature of both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*, but there are some differences in terms of who dances. In *p'ungmul kut*, musicians often dance while playing their instruments (as discussed in Chapter 3). But in *mudang kut*, ritual musicians (*chaebi*) generally do not dance. They remain seated when they play their instruments or sing. Dancing is done by *mudang*. Audience members also often dance in both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*.

Now that we have discussed *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* as two distinct types of ritual, both traditionally performed as integral parts of the Korean *mu* religion, let us turn to a comparison of how they have been presented in recent years. Nowadays, *p'ungmul kut* are often performed and interpreted as secular entertainment, without any ritual features or connections with the *mu* religion. Similarly, *mudang kut* are often valued for their music as artistic performances rather than as religious rituals. In the next chapter, I will explore the paradox of “preserving” Korean *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* as national Cultural Assets (*munhwajae*) and presenting them in secular contexts as music and dance performances instead of as sacred rituals.

Chapter 5. *P'ungmul Kut* as Cultural Assets: Shifting from Sacred Ritual to Secular Art

Ironically, in order to be designated as Korean “cultural assets” (*munhwajae*)¹ and preserved in their “original form” (*wŏnhyŏng*), various regional styles of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* have actually undergone major transformations. These changes include a fundamental shift away from sacred aspects of *kut* as rituals of the *mu* religion towards an emphasis on secular aspects of *kut* as artistic performance and entertainment, often focusing on music and dance. In this chapter, I will examine this paradoxical shift that numerous types of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* have undergone in the process of becoming recognized as cultural assets.

Cultural Assets and Intangible Heritage

In order to understand the implications of designating various regional styles of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* as “cultural assets” (*munhwajae*), it is helpful to examine the broader context of South Korean government’s system of cultural assets as a whole. It is also useful to compare Korean cultural policy regarding the protection of cultural assets with earlier models in Japan and later versions at UNESCO.

Early examples of cultural policy about preservation can be found in Japan in 1871. As Michihiro Watanabe explains:

The administrative apparatus for the protection of cultural properties in Japan dates back to the Decree for the Protection of Antiquities of 1871. Legal provisions were made in the 1897 Law for the Protection of Old Shrines and Temples, the 1927 National Treasures Preservation Law, and the 1933 Law

¹ The term *munhwajae* (文化財) is often translated as “cultural properties” but I prefer the term “cultural assets” because “cultural properties” may be misunderstood as referring to cultural *characteristics* (such as adaptability or universality). *Jae* refers to wealth and possessions.

Concerning the Preservation of Important Objects of Art. The current Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties was written in 1950. (Watanabe 1999:75)

According to the Japanese Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties from 1950, cultural properties are divided into five categories, including an interesting distinction between “tangible” and “intangible” cultural properties:

1. Tangible cultural properties such as architectural structures and fine and applied arts objects
2. Intangible cultural properties such as theatrical performances, music, craft techniques, etc.
3. Folk-cultural properties such as clothes, implements, and furniture, as well as cooking, festivals and events
4. Monuments such as historic sites, places of scenic beauty and natural monuments, including rare animals, plants, and minerals
5. Groups of historic buildings such as towns, villages, etc. (Watanabe 1999:76)

Although the Japanese law is applied to Japanese cultural properties, it is interesting to look at Japan’s cultural policy in Korea during the colonial period (1910-1945). While the Japanese colonial government in Korea “intensely repressed Korean cultural expression, including research in and performance of traditional performing arts” (Yang 1994:26), there was a notable exception in Japan’s treatment of Korean court music.

The [Korean] national music organizations hovered on the brink of extinction with the collapse of the Joseon Dynasty in 1910. At that time, a Japanese acoustics specialist, who was aware of the history of Japanese court music and its value, likened traditional music of the Joseon Dynasty to “music from Heaven,” and went on to say: “This music is a world heritage which must be preserved under any circumstances.” His conviction ultimately influenced the Japanese colonial government: the court musicians, who were on the verge of being disbanded, were incorporated into a new organization called *Yiwangjik-aakbu*. Subsequently, senior musicians of the *Yiwangjik-aakbu* established a regular training curriculum to foster future generations of musicians. (NCKTPA 2001:8-9)

The Japanese government recognized the importance of Korean court music because of its historical relation with Japanese court music. Therefore the Japanese colonial

government established an organization (called *Yiwangjik aakpu*)² to preserve Korean court music. In 1951, the *Yiwangjik aakpu* became *Kungnip Kugagwŏn*, which is known in English by various names, including National Classical Music Institute, National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts, and National Gugak Center.

In 1962, the Republic of Korea (i.e. South Korea) established The Cultural Properties Protection Law³ (*Munhwajae Pohobŏp*), using the Japanese Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties as a model (Yang 1994:50). Like the Japanese law, the Korean law divides cultural properties into various categories, the two main categories being “tangible cultural properties” (*yuhyŏng munhwajae*) and “intangible cultural properties” (*muhyŏng munhwajae*). “Tangible cultural properties” include buildings, ancient documents, paintings, and sculpture. “Intangible cultural properties” include music and dance, which are transient and exist in performance. Keith Howard translates the Korean term *muhyŏng munhwajae* as “Intangible Cultural Assets” and explains their intangibility as follows: “Genres of traditional music and other performing arts ... may be manifest as an end result in performance” (Howard 1989:242).

According to the Korean Office of Cultural Properties, “The purpose of this Act [*Munhwajae Pohobŏp*] is to seek the cultural progress of the nation and at the same time contribute to the development of the culture of mankind by preserving and utilizing cultural properties” (1995:37). The aims of this Act (or Law) are also discussed by folklorist Yang Jongsung [Yang Jong-sŭng]:

² *Yiwangjik aakpu* may be translated as “Yi Dynasty court music department.” The Yi Dynasty (1392-1910) is also known as the Chosŏn Dynasty. *Aak* (雅樂) literally means “elegant music.”

³ It is also sometimes called the “Cultural Properties Protection Act” or “Cultural Property Protection Law.”

The provisions of the South Korean Cultural Property Protection Law (CPPL) are aimed at the revitalization, promotion, and protection of tangible and intangible indigenous Korean folklore genres for the purpose of preventing the loss of traditional heritage in the face of industrialization, urbanization, Westernization, and modernization. (Yang 1994:3)

There is a dichotomy here between modernization (as well as Westernization, urbanization, and industrialization) on one hand versus tradition and preservation on the other. Traditions such as folk music are being threatened by modernization, and the CPPL aims to revitalize and protect them. This apparent dichotomy between modernization and the preservation of traditions will be examined later in this chapter.

In order for intangible cultural properties to be preserved and performed, it is necessary to have people who are able to perform them. According to an overview of the Korean system by the Office of Cultural Properties:

Preserving and transmitting an intangible cultural property means preserving and transmitting the skill or technique for its performance. Therefore, the designation of an intangible cultural property must be accompanied by the recognition of persons who have prominent skill or technique in the respective field for its transmission. (Office of Cultural Properties 1995:11)

Performers (musicians, dancers, and artists) for various intangible cultural properties are officially designated as *poyuja* (“bearers” or “holders”). They are also called *in’gan munhwajae*, where the word *in’gan* means “person” or “human” while *munhwajae* means “cultural asset(s).” Thus, Howard translates *in’gan munhwajae* as “Human Cultural Assets” (1990:242). These terms are discussed by Yang as follows:

After an item is selected for designation as an important intangible cultural property, then performers of that property are selected for designation as performers and protectors of that item. These performers are called *poyuja* (literally “holders”); another term commonly used which signifies the same position is *in’ganmunhwajae* (living national treasure). The term of *in’ganmunhwajae* was first used by the intangible cultural property committee in

the early 1960s by Ye Yong-hae when he was also a newspaper journalist (Im Chae-chöl 1992). (Yang 1994:59)

Although *poyuja* (holder) is the official term, the term *in'gan munhwajae* (translated variously as “living national treasure” or “human cultural asset”) is generally more common.⁴ As Yang explains, “The term *in'ganmunhwajae* (living national treasure) was first initiated through the media, and has become the common term rather than *poyuja* (holder), which is the official term for a designated performer of an intangible cultural property” (1994:102).

Both the official (*poyuja*) and common (*in'gan munhwajae*) terms are modeled on similar ones used in Japan. The corresponding Japanese terms are discussed by Yang: “In Japan, government designated performers are also called *ningen kokuhou* (living national treasure), instead of the official term *pojija* (holder of intangible cultural property)” (1994:102).

Although both the Korean term *in'gan munhwajae* and the Japanese term *ningen kokuhou* are frequently translated as “living national treasure,” they actually have significantly different meanings. Both the Korean word *in'gan* and the Japanese word *ningen* are written with the same Chinese characters (人間), literally meaning “human” or “person” and often translated as “living.” But the term *kokuhou* is the Japanese reading of the Chinese characters 國寶 (pronounced *kukpo* in Korean), where 國 (*kuk*) means “national” and 寶 (*po*) means “treasure.” This is quite different from the Korean term *munhwajae* (cultural asset), where *munhwa* means “culture” and *jae* means “asset” or

⁴ Instead of “human cultural asset,” some people say “human cultural property.”

“property.” Yet *munhwajae* is often translated as “national treasure” (when combined with the translation of *in’gan* as “living”).

The first cultural asset to be recognized by the new Korean law was royal ancestral ritual music (*Chongmyo cheryeak*), which is performed at Chongmyo Shrine, the Confucian shrine for royal ancestors, located in Seoul. This genre of court music was designated as Important Intangible Cultural Property number 1 in 1964.⁵ It is performed by musicians from the National Gugak Center, which is related to the earlier organization of Korean court musicians (*Yiwangjik aakpu*) that was established by the Japanese colonial government. The rite, which involves offerings of food, wine, and bowing, is Important Intangible Cultural Property number 56 and is performed by descendants of the royal family. The Chongmyo Shrine site is an Important Tangible Cultural Property.

The first regional style of *p’ungmul kut* to be recognized as a national cultural asset was from South Kyōngsang province. It was designated as Important Intangible Cultural Property number 11 in 1966. Other regional styles of *p’ungmul kut* from various provinces have since been recognized as well.⁶ Collectively, they are referred to by the South Korean government as *nongak* (“farmers’ music”). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the term *nongak* is problematic for various reasons, including the way that it literally omits the ritual (*kut*) aspects of *p’ungmul kut*. I will discuss this further later in this chapter.

⁵ The term “important” (*chungyo*) is included when referring to national cultural assets but omitted for provincial and municipal ones. It is a misleading choice of terminology. Provincial and municipal assets are also important, even though they are not officially designated that way.

⁶ Six regional styles of *p’ungmul kut* have been designated by the South Korean government as national cultural assets, with the most recent one added in 2012. An additional twenty-five regional styles of *p’ungmul kut* have been designated as provincial and municipal cultural assets (Cultural Heritage Administration 2013).

In 1972, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) established a World Heritage List, similar to the Japanese and Korean national systems of tangible cultural properties. Chongmyo Shrine in South Korea was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995.

As for intangible cultural properties, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted the “Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore” in 1989 (UNESCO 1989). According to the 1989 Recommendation:

Folklore (or traditional and popular culture) is the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts (UNESCO 1989).

Folklore includes intangible cultural properties such as music and dance, which are transmitted orally or by imitation.

The Recommendation makes an interesting distinction between conservation and preservation as follows: “Conservation is concerned with documentation regarding folk traditions” and “Preservation is concerned with protection of folk traditions and those who are the transmitters” (UNESCO 1989). Conservation involves documentation while preservation involves protecting people who can perform and teach traditions to future generations. The relationship between preservation and conservation was reconsidered in 1999, as discussed later in this section (on page 117).

In 1993, “the decision for the establishment of a system of ‘Living Cultural Properties’ ... was adopted at UNESCO’s 142nd session of the Executive Board” (KNC UNESCO 1998:7). According to a publication by the Korean Office of Cultural

Properties, this decision followed the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea's recommendation for UNESCO's member states to use Korea's system of intangible cultural properties as a model.

The 142nd conference of the Executive Committee of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Social [sic] and Cultural Organization) has adopted a recommendation by the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the UNESCO concerning the preservation of traditional culture and the promotion of international cultural exchanges.

In compliance with the recommendation, the UNESCO will advise its member nations to introduce the intangible cultural properties system of the Republic of Korea.

The member nations will thereby be advised to designate and manage their respective intangible cultural properties and present their inventories to the UNESCO.

Then, on the basis of the inventories submitted by the member nations, the UNESCO will compile and publish a world list of intangible cultural properties, which is similar to its World Heritage List. (Office of Cultural Properties 1995:5)

UNESCO recommended that its member nations each introduce a system of intangible cultural properties based on the system in the Republic of Korea. It also established a list of intangible culture properties. But instead of "intangible cultural properties," UNESCO used the term "Living Cultural Properties."

The UNESCO term "Living Cultural Properties" might be a combination of two common translations of the Korean term *in'gan munhwajae*: "living national treasures" and "human cultural properties." But the UNESCO term refers to intangible cultural assets (i.e. traditions such as Korean court music), whereas both "living national treasures" and "human cultural properties" refer to the people who maintain these traditions (i.e. individual musicians).

Instead of the term "Living Cultural Properties," UNESCO now uses the term "Intangible Cultural Heritage" (or simply "Intangible Heritage"). UNESCO has compiled

and published a list of intangible heritage analogous to its World Heritage List. The “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” is discussed later in this section (on page 118).

Along with proposing the establishment of an intangible cultural properties system in each of its member states, UNESCO is encouraging each member state to establish a system of “living human treasures” (people who maintain the intangible or living cultural properties) based on the Korean system. Beginning in 1998, Korea has been hosting UNESCO International Training Workshops on the Living Human Treasures System “in line with the decision for the establishment of a system of ‘Living Cultural Properties’ ... and the paragraph 03013 of the 29C/5 which calls for Member States’ concern for revitalizing intangible heritage” (KNC UNESCO 1998:7).

Instead of a single international system of living human treasures, UNESCO is encouraging each of its member states to introduce a national system of living human treasures based on the system of “living national treasures” (a.k.a. “human cultural assets,” i.e. *in’gan munhwajae*) in South Korea. According to Huh Kwon, Director of the Culture Unit of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, “During the 1998-99 biennium, Unesco [sic] has been working to establish the system of Living Human Treasure in some 15 further countries” (Huh 1999:9).

Whereas UNESCO’s Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore made a distinction between conservation as documentation and preservation as protection of people who transmit traditions (UNESCO 1989), Huh discusses conservation as one of two approaches to the preservation of intangible heritage:

Roughly speaking, there are two approaches to preserve intangible heritage. The one is to record it in a tangible form and conserve it in archives and the other is to preserve it in a living form by ensuring its transmission to next generations. In order to ensure the real preservation of intangible heritage, both approaches are equally necessary. Until 1990's, Unesco has been undertaking only for the former approach, but since 1993 expert meeting Unesco has been trying to fill the gap by reinforcing the latter approaches. (Huh 1999:8)

Conservation involves preserving a tangible record of heritage while transmission involves preserving a living form of intangible heritage.

The importance of conservation and transmission is also discussed in UNESCO's "Guidelines for the establishment of a 'Living Human Treasures' system," published in 2001:

One of the most effective ways of safeguarding the intangible heritage is to conserve it by collecting, recording, and archiving. Even more effective would be to ensure that the bearers of the heritage continue to acquire further knowledge and skills and transmit them to the next generations. With that aim in mind, the holders of the heritage must be identified and given official recognition. (UNESCO 2001)⁷

The differentiation between conservation and transmission will be discussed in relation to critiques of salvage ethnography in the next section (on page 124).

In 2001, UNESCO made the first proclamation of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." This list includes Korea's "Royal Ancestral Rite and Ritual Music in Jongmyo Shrine" (UNESCO 2003b). The various "masterpieces" have since been incorporated as "elements" in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In October 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This international convention provides "an international

⁷ An updated version was published in 2002 by the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Section and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO.

legal instrument to safeguard intangible cultural heritage,” which was lacking in the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (UNESCO 2003b). According to the Convention, “intangible cultural heritage” includes both intangible knowledge and skills as well as tangible objects and artifacts:

The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (UNESCO 2003a:2)

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage goes on to define “safeguarding” as follows:

measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and nonformal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage. (UNESCO 2003a:3)

Thus the Convention is more explicit in its definition of safeguarding than the earlier “Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore,” which outlined the conservation, preservation, dissemination, and protection of folklore (UNESCO 1989).

The Convention also states that it shall establish a “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” as well as a “List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding” (2003:7). The first list includes the list of Masterpieces that began in 2001: “The Committee shall incorporate in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity the items proclaimed ‘Masterpieces

of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity’ before the entry into force of this Convention” (2003:11). There are now several Korean “elements” in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, including Namsadang Nori, which features *p’ungmul* music and dance.⁸

Richard Kurin, Director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, offers some interesting insights into the process of developing UNESCO’s current cultural policy. Kurin discusses some of the criticisms that were made about the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, which eventually led to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Renewed attention ensued in the mid-1990s with a series of regional conferences on the topic, and culminated in Smithsonian-UNESCO Washington conference in 1999 [organized by Kurin] which found the UNESCO Recommendation to be an ill-construed, “top-down,” state oriented, “soft” international instrument that defined traditional culture in essentialist, almost archival terms, and had little impact around the globe upon cultural communities and practitioners. The Conference called for a more dynamic view of cultural traditions as “living” and enacted by communities. It envisioned a community-involved, participatory approach to safeguarding efforts, and advised that a formal convention be considered. (Kurin 2003)

With regard to “a more dynamic view of cultural traditions as ‘living,’” it is interesting to note that before the 1999 conference, UNESCO had already decided in 1993 to establish a system of “Living Cultural Properties” (KNC UNESCO 1998:7). Also, in 1999, Huh (from the Korean National Commission for UNESCO) wrote about transmission of intangible heritage in “living form” (Huh 1999:8), as mentioned earlier. As for community participation, the formal Convention now states:

⁸ Namsadang Nori was inscribed as an element of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009.

Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management. (UNESCO 2003a:7)

Concerning the archival tendencies of making inventories and lists, Kurin writes that there was “considerable debate among international experts” (2003).

Discussion tended to divide along disciplinary lines[.] Anthropologists tended to argue that the inventories were bad applied cultural scholarship, discredited in many cases during the colonial era. List making, they asserted over and over again, would divert resources and public servants away from the task of working with specific communities on safeguarding activities. Outnumbered in UNESCO meetings, they lost out to managerial types and lawyers who argued that to save cultures you have to know what exists, what is endangered and what is not—suggesting the need for itemized lists of property, tangible and intangible. (Kurin 2003)

The debate between anthropologists on one side and “managerial types” and lawyers on the other is similar to a dilemma that anthropologists have faced with “endangered languages” in relation to critiques of salvage ethnography, as discussed in the next section.

Rhetoric of “Preservation” and Salvage Ethnography

The cultural policies of the governmental organizations discussed in the previous section often use rhetoric of cultural “preservation” and “protection,” which some people find problematic. In order to consider the criticisms of this rhetoric, it is helpful to examine the related critiques of “salvage ethnography” in anthropology and ethnomusicology. In this section, I will look at some of the early roots and later criticisms of salvage ethnography. Then I will explore how these critiques may help us to re-evaluate current cultural policies.

First, let us consider some definitions of key terms. For the verb “preserve,” the *Oxford English Dictionary* includes the following definitions: “To keep safe from injury or harm” and “To keep in its original or existing state; to make lasting; to maintain or keep alive (a memory, name, etc.)” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). When applied to cultures, preservation often becomes an effort to maintain cultures in their original states and to keep them safe from harm.

The definition for “salvage” includes the following: “The saving of property from fire or other danger” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The term “salvage ethnography” is derived from “salvage archaeology,” as discussed later in this chapter (on page 126). Salvage ethnography can be seen as ethnography intended to preserve (in written form, a record of) cultures from loss or destruction. Cultural properties are often considered to be in need of protection from the danger of modernization. In salvage ethnography, the memories of traditional cultures are kept alive through writing.

Anthropologists George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer examine ethnography as a genre of writing and discuss the “salvage motif”:

[T]he main motif that ethnography as a science developed was that of salvaging cultural diversity, threatened with global Westernization, especially during the age of colonialism. The ethnographer would capture in writing the authenticity of changing cultures, so they could be entered into the record for the great comparative project of anthropology, which was to support the Western goal of social and economic progress. The salvage motif as a worthy scientific purpose (along with a more subdued romantic discovery motif) has remained strong in ethnography to the present. The current problem is that these motives no longer serve well enough to reflect the world in which ethnographers now work. All peoples are now at least known and charted, and Westernization is much too simple a notion of contemporary cultural change to support the motif of anthropology’s interest in other cultures as one of salvage. (Marcus and Fischer 1986:24)

Marcus and Fischer see salvage ethnography as being developed during the age of colonialism. In response to the threat of Westernization, ethnographers tried to save cultural diversity. But in the era of postcolonialism, the idea of Westernization is seen as too simplistic and a new motif is needed to replace the salvage motif.

In a discussion entitled “Beyond the Salvage Paradigm,” Virginia R. Dominguez also criticizes salvage ethnography from a postcolonial perspective.

A particular awareness of history—of the subjectification and objectification of different peoples, their cultures and social processes in our Euro-American construction of history—makes the very notion of cultural or ethnographic salvage suspect. Salvaging what and for whom? When we assert the need to salvage, rescue, save, preserve a series of objects or forms, we announce our fear of its destruction, our inability to trust others to take appropriate action and our sense of entitlement over the fate of the objects. Our best liberal intentions do little other than patronize those slated for cultural salvage.

As a postcolonial, poststructural conceptualization of the nature and consequences of our construction of history spreads, salvage becomes symbolic of intellectual, aesthetic and institutional practices we seek to bury rather than to preserve. (Dominguez 1987:131)

Dominguez approaches salvage ethnography with a postcolonial awareness of history and criticizes salvage ethnography on several points: for objectifying other peoples and their cultures, for being patronizing and trying to “rescue” and “preserve” objects instead of trusting people to take care of them, and for assuming that we have the right to control their things.

James Clifford also participated in the discussion “Beyond the Salvage Paradigm,” and he makes the following comment about the phrase “salvage paradigm”:

[T]o some it will recall early 20th-century anthropology, the “salvage ethnography” of Franz Boas’s generation—A.L. Kroeber and his Berkeley colleagues recording the languages and lore of “disappearing” California Indians, or Bronislaw Malinowski suggesting that authentic Trobriand culture (saved in his texts) was not long for this earth. (Clifford 1987:121)

Although Clifford marks the words “salvage ethnography” and “disappearing” in quotation marks, suggesting problems with these terms, it is interesting that he does not mark the phrase “saved in his texts.” We will return to this issue below. In the meantime, let us focus on the association of salvage ethnography with early 20th-century anthropology and Franz Boas among others.

Salvage ethnography is linked with Franz Boas in a discussion of “threatened languages” and “endangered cultures” in an issue of *American Anthropologist*, the journal of the American Anthropological Association:

Anthropological interest in, and concern for, threatened languages is, of course, not new: The mission of “salvaging” endangered cultures and languages was one important motivation for the conduct of research by many early U.S. anthropologists, particularly Franz Boas, his students, and their students. (Mascia-Lees and Lees 2003:710)

Although salvage ethnography is often discussed in connection with early 20th-century anthropology, with Boas as a leading example, Ter Ellingson points out earlier roots of salvage ethnography in mid-19th-century anthropology. Ellingson discusses the changing definition of “ethnology” in the context of “growing racist strength” and the “abandonment of the ethical motivation of helping to ensure the survival of non-European peoples for the neutral ‘scientific’ goal of gaining knowledge about them” (2001:241). As Ellingson explains,

If the “savages” themselves would soon be nothing more than dead relics of the past, then so would their science be a science of the past and of the dead. And this forced ethnology into the salvage-ethnography mode that the most extreme racists found to be proper and acceptable for a scientific model. (Ellingson 2001:241)

If one assumes that the “savages” would soon be dead, then one may conclude that the science of ethnology would soon become a study of the past and that ethnographies should therefore try to salvage whatever they can of these people before they pass away.

As an example of the racist use of the salvage-ethnography mode, Ellingson quotes James Hunt’s address to the Anthropological Society in 1867, in which Hunt asks the following rhetorical question: “Shall we allow them [African races] to pass away without making an effort to preserve for our own and our descendants’ use some record of their form and features?” (Hunt 1867:liv quoted in Ellingson 2001:241). Hunt advocates making a record of the African races before they “pass away” and preserving this record for “our own and our descendants’ use.”

Ellingson goes on to discuss the influence of mid-19th-century racism on salvage ethnography and its use of the term “preservation.”

Late-twentieth-century critics of anthropology’s supposed historical commitment to “preservationism” often are unaware of the historical role of racist ideologues such as Hunt in pushing a salvage-ethnographic orientation on the discipline. Hence they ignore or obscure an important underlying issue inherent in the word *preservation* itself: what difference does it make if, when we see a man drowning, instead of throwing him a life preserver to save his life, we choose instead to take his picture to “preserve” the memory of what he looked like? (Ellingson 2001:241-2)

Clearly the drowning man would see a significant difference. But the racists assumed that the drowning man should not be saved and they chose to preserve a record of his life instead.

Critics of salvage ethnography often overlook the distinction between preserving a culture and preserving a written record of a culture. They criticize the colonial roots, the simplistic notion of Westernization, the objectification of other peoples and their cultures,

and the patronizing attitude of salvage ethnography, but they tend not to question the notion that the “mission of ‘salvaging’ endangered cultures” (Mascia-Lees and Lees 2003:710) can be accomplished by making a written record of them. It is interesting to recall the distinction between conservation as documentation versus transmission of living heritage by people from one generation to the next, which is found in UNESCO’s cultural policy, as discussed earlier in this chapter (on page 117).

Two and a half centuries before Hunt, we find an early example of salvage ethnography in the writing of Marc Lescarbot (1609).⁹ In the preface to his second book of the history of Nova Francia (eastern Canada), Lescarbot explains that he is writing this history of the people in part so that “their children may know hereafter what their fathers were” (1609:146). Lescarbot is assuming that their fathers’ way of life will be no more because of their “conversion” to Christianity and the “reformation of their incivility” (ibid.). Lescarbot is writing his book so that future generations can read it and learn about their ancestors. Lescarbot is “preserving” (a record of) their way of life in his book.

Much of the discussion—or rather, criticism—of “salvage ethnography” appears in the anthropological literature in the 1980s (for example, Marcus and Fischer 1986, Clifford 1987, and Dominguez 1987). The term “salvage ethnography” is generally used to refer to (and to critique) earlier writings, usually from the early 20th-century, but it may also be applied to writings from earlier centuries such as those of racists from the mid-19th-century and even Lescarbot’s work from 1609. These early writings did not refer to themselves as salvage ethnography. Rather, the term “salvage ethnography”

⁹ Ellingson discussed this example in a graduate seminar, “The Myth of the Noble Savage,” at the University of Washington (2004), as well as in his book (2001).

appears later in the 1980s and in an era of postcolonialism, and it is used to criticize earlier ethnography and its colonial roots.

The term “salvage ethnography” is derived from the term “salvage archaeology.” Francis P. McManamon writes about the term “salvage archaeology” while discussing the development of cultural resource management.

In the early 1970s in the United States, CRM [cultural resource management] developed from two related archaeological concerns. First, there was a continuing concern about the destruction of archaeological sites due to modern development such as road construction, large-scale agriculture and housing This concern was an extension of earlier concerns about large-scale federal construction projects, most notably the River Basin Archaeological Salvage programme of the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, which developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The earlier concern had led to a reaction by archaeologists that was termed “salvage archaeology”, by some who viewed it as second-rate work, or, more positively, “rescue archaeology” or “emergency archaeology”, by those who argued that it was necessary and generally successful at saving some of the archaeological data from sites that would otherwise be destroyed without any recording (e.g. Brew 1961; Jennings 1985). Emergency archaeology focused on saving archaeological data and remains through rapid excavation of sites prior to their destruction by modern construction projects. (McManamon 2000:46)

According to McManamon, the term “salvage archaeology” refers to the reaction to concerns about “the destruction of archaeological sites due to modern development” (2000:46). Archaeologists reacted to these concerns by focusing on “saving archaeological data and remains through rapid excavation of sites prior to their destruction” (McManamon 2000:46). McManamon claims that the term “salvage archaeology” was used critically to indicate “second-rate work” as opposed to more positive terms such as “emergency archaeology” (2000:46).

In contrast to McManamon’s perception of the term “salvage archaeology” as suggesting “second-rate work,” let us consider W.D. Lipe’s comment about salvage archaeologists:

[T]he salvage archaeologist thus differs from the academic or “pure” problem-oriented researcher in that he must adapt his problem requirements to the body of sites made available to him by society’s decision to destroy them. (Lipe 1974:242 quoted in Schaafsma 1989:44)

Lipe distinguishes salvage archaeology from “pure” research, with salvage archaeology being limited to sites that have been chosen to be destroyed.

The Lipe quote is from Curtis F. Schaafsma’s article in the book *Archaeological Heritage Management in the Modern World* (Cleere 1989), and the Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data of this book includes the subject heading “salvage archaeology” (Cleere 1989:vi). Other terms such as “rescue archaeology” or “emergency archaeology” are not listed. Although the term “salvage archaeology” may be viewed by some as having negative connotations, it is recognized by the Library of Congress as a legitimate subject heading, which reflects its frequent usage as a keyword in titles and abstracts. The term “salvage archaeology” often has a positive sense, whereas the term “salvage ethnography” is generally used in a negative, critical way.

It is interesting to note the similarity between the term “cultural resources” in archaeology and the term “cultural properties,” which has been used in the cultural policies of Japan and South Korea since the 1950s and 1960s. According to McManamon, “The term cultural resource management (CRM) developed within the discipline of archaeology in the United States during the early 1970s” (2000:45). Initially, cultural resources included arts:

Early proponents and developers of CRM recognized that, conceptually, it was concerned with a wide range of resource types “including not only archaeological sites but historic buildings ... folkways, [and] arts” (McGimsey and Davis 1977:27). (McManamon 2000:45)

But “the term [cultural resource management] frequently has been, and still is, used as a synonym for archaeology done in conjunction with public agencies’ actions or projects” (McManamon 2000:46). Although the term “cultural resource management” originally had a broader sense that included arts, it is now usually used to refer to archaeological projects. In contrast, the term “cultural properties” in cultural policies includes archaeological sites as well as intangible cultural properties such as music and dance.

While the term “salvage archaeology” was developed to refer to the task of “saving archaeological data and remains through rapid excavation of sites prior to their destruction by modern construction projects” (McManamon 2000:46), the term “salvage ethnography” was developed to refer to (and to criticize) writings that try to save ethnographic data of traditional cultures prior to their destruction by Westernization and modernization.

Salvage ethnography is presented by Edward M. Bruner as the first of two different “dominant stories” (about Native American culture change) in order to illustrate his discussion of ethnography as narrative:

In the 1930s and 1940s the dominant story constructed about Native American culture change saw the present as disorganization, the past as glorious, and the future as assimilation. Now, however, we have a new narrative: the present is viewed as a resistance movement, the past as exploitation, and the future as ethnic resurgence. (Bruner 1986:139)

Bruner shows how these two narratives have different representations of the past, present, and future.

In the old story the golden age was in the past and the descriptive problem was to reconstruct the old Indian culture, to create a beginning (Said 1975). The end of the narrative, the disappearance of Indian culture, was not problematic—it was assumed In the 1970s story, however, the golden age is in the future, as the indigenous people struggle against exploitation and oppression to preserve their ethnic identity. (Bruner 1986:140)

In the “old story” (i.e. salvage ethnography) of the 1930s and 1940s, the past was seen as a “golden age,” the present as disorganization, and the disappearance of Indian culture was assumed for the future. In the new story of the 1970s and 1980s, the past is seen as exploitation, the present as struggle, and the future is seen as a golden age of “ethnic resurgence.”

This latter narrative of “ethnic resurgence” is similar to the more recent rhetoric of “revitalization” as discussed in the December 2003 issue of *American Anthropologist*, which has as its focus, “Language Ideologies, Rights, and Choices: Dilemmas and Paradoxes of Loss, Retention, and Revitalization.” In the introduction to this issue, Frances Mascia-Lees and Susan Lees point out how “the contemporary rhetoric of endangerment, which underlies many of today’s claims to language rights, is no less problematic than the one that spurred generations of Boasians” (Mascia-Lees and Lees 2003:710). Just as there are problems with the rhetoric of salvage ethnography, there are problems with the rhetoric of “endangerment” in contemporary discourse.

Although the rhetoric of salvage ethnography has long been criticized by anthropologists, many people today still apply this rhetoric to “endangered languages.” As Mascia-Lees and Lees observe: “Paradoxically, as groups of people today increasingly use their distinctive cultural identities to make claims on resources, they

often invoke linguistic ideologies that anthropologists abandoned long ago” (Mascia-Lees and Lees 2003:710). They go on to explain:

But many anthropologists have long been wary of the simple equation of culture with language on which such rhetoric rests, while at the same time they recognize its increasing salience to the people they study and its political efficacy. The authors of the articles assembled here are acutely aware of this paradox and the dilemmas anthropologists face as their expertise and influence are increasingly enlisted to help restore and sustain threatened languages and to establish the language rights of indigenous, minority, and subaltern people. (Mascia-Lees and Lees 2003:710)

Anthropologists today face the dilemma of using rhetoric that has been criticized in academia but that continues to have “political efficacy.” Although the rhetoric of “preservation” is problematic, it continues to be widely used in the cultural policies of various governmental organizations, including South Korea’s Cultural Assets system and UNESCO’s Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage.

In the postcolonial era, many independent nations are trying to preserve their own cultures from the perceived threat of globalization. As we have seen, Japan, South Korea, and UNESCO have established cultural policies for the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural properties and heritage. Although the use of inventories has been criticized by anthropologists, they are seen as necessary by lawyers and policy makers. For the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO recognizes the importance of documentation (i.e. writing, recording, and archiving) as well as transmission by means of “living human treasures,” i.e. people who can perform and teach their knowledge and skills to students (and future teachers). It is interesting to note that the word “transmission” is related to the word “tradition” (as mentioned in Chapter 3). In

order to ensure the continuation of living intangible traditions such as music, it is vital to have people performing and transmitting their cultural heritage to future generations.

Preservation and Change: Rituals as Cultural Assets

The Korean cultural assets (*munhwajae*) system has often been criticized for preserving static forms of traditional culture, requiring artists to maintain traditions in their “original form” (*wŏnhyŏng*) without allowing for change.¹⁰ Ironically, what is being called the “original form” of a cultural asset is often a transformed version—i.e., what is being preserved is actually a distorted (re)presentation. In this section, I will focus on the major changes that various types of rituals (both *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*) have undergone in order to be designated as cultural assets.

Many genres of Korean music and dance have been selected and designated as cultural assets after they have been chosen as winners of the annual National Folk Arts Contest. In an article titled “Change and Innovation in the Music and Dance Performed at Folk Festivals,” Hahn Man-young (1990) discusses some of the changes that various styles of *p’ungmul kut* (percussion music rituals) have undergone in order to be recognized as cultural assets.

The national folk arts contest sets a time limit of 30 minutes for each item. What once may have taken one or several days must now be condensed to a fixed, short length. (Hahn Man-young 1990:224)

Many performances of *p’ungmul kut* traditionally lasted several days, but for the purpose of the National Folk Arts Contest as well as for the designation of cultural assets,

¹⁰ For examples of such criticisms, see Howard 1990 and Yang 1994. In contrast to the preservation of cultural assets without change, living traditions may be seen as constantly developing and transforming (as mentioned in Chapter 3).

excerpts have been selected and arranged to last no more than 30 minutes. The performances at these contests are so different from traditional *p'ungmul kut* that they are sometimes called *taehoe kut*, where *taehoe* means “contest” (Kim Wŏn-ho 1999:232).

Hahn also discusses another major change in *p'ungmul kut* that have been designated as cultural assets: “Social or ritual functions are lost as entertainment assumes a primary role” (Hahn Man-young 1990:224). In the process of becoming cultural assets, the participatory and ritual aspects of various types of *p'ungmul kut* have been omitted. Instead of being recognized and valued as traditional rituals of the Korean *mu* religion, *p'ungmul kut* are now often misunderstood as simply being entertainment.

The South Korean government uses the term *nongak* (farmers’ music) instead of *p'ungmul kut* in reference to cultural assets (as mentioned in Chapter 3). The term *nongak* literally omits the ritual (*kut*) aspects of *p'ungmul kut* and highlights the music (*ak*), reflecting the general shift away from sacred aspects of *p'ungmul kut* towards secular music and entertainment in their representation as cultural assets.

This moving away from ritual towards entertainment aspects of *p'ungmul kut* is similar to changes in various *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals) that have been designated as cultural assets. Various types of *mudang kut* are presented to the public as cultural assets and performed on stages in concert halls and theaters. When presented as cultural assets, *mudang kut* are often valued as artistic performances for their music and dance rather than as religious, sacred rituals. These secular presentations of *mudang kut* are sometimes called *kut kongyŏn*, where *kongyŏn* refers to theatrical or staged performances.

It is important to note that presentations of *mudang kut* as cultural assets are often secular, but not because they are performed in public or on a stage. Many *mudang kut* are

traditionally performed in public as sacred rituals (not as cultural assets), open to the whole community. They can even be performed in modern concert halls and theaters as sacred rituals.

In order to understand the distinction between *mudang kut* performed as sacred rituals versus secular concerts, let us consider the following example. Seoul *Saenam Kut* is a type of *mudang kut* that is traditionally performed as a sacred ritual to assist the spirit of a deceased person on the journey to the other world (Seo 2002). But when Seoul *Saenam Kut* is presented as Important Intangible Cultural Asset Number 104 and sponsored by the South Korean government's Cultural Heritage Administration, the performance is not actually a ritual for someone who passed away. Instead, it is a staged performance with someone simply pretending to be a family member of an imaginary deceased person. Instead of a sacred ritual, it is primarily a secular performance of selected excerpts of songs and dances.

Although many public presentations of *mudang kut* as cultural assets are secular concerts, it is also important to recognize that some are actually sacred rituals. As Maria Seo notes, many performances of *mudang kut* as cultural assets are “held to wish for the wealth, health, and happiness of the general public” (2002:121). There are also various *mudang kut* that have been presented as cultural assets and performed in public as sacred rituals for real people who have passed away. Many of these rituals have been organized by Pak Hŭng-ju (as discussed in Seo 2002:121-22), including rituals at the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts (now known as the National Gugak Center) in Seoul in 2004 and 2005.

In general, presentations of *mudang kut* as cultural assets are, as Seo explains, “enjoyed by the public as performance of the archetypes of Korean arts incorporating drama, dance, and music” (2002:119). Music in *mudang kut* is often considered to be the root of Korean folk music. In addition to the designation of various types of *mudang kut* as cultural assets (featuring music and dance), some genres of traditional music which are considered to be derived from the music of *mudang kut* have also been designated as cultural assets, including *shinawi* (instrumental ensemble music), *sanjo* (instrumental solo), and *p’ansori* (epic singing). It is also important to recognize the connection between Korean court music and the ritual music of *mudang kut*, especially rituals performed in the capital, Seoul, formerly known as Hanyang (Seo 2002 and P. Park 2003).¹¹

Paradox of the *Mu* Religion: National Pride and Shame

Although the Korean *mu* religion is often seen with pride as a symbol of national identity (as mentioned in Chapter 4), it is also sometimes regarded with shame as “superstition,” creating a sense of ambiguity. This ambiguity is discussed by Keith Howard in relation to the system of preservation of cultural assets:

Shamanism [i.e. *mu*] is, then, an important symbol, fully meeting the nationalist and identity aims of the preservation system. It is, though, ambiguous, representing a pre-modern world, favouring ritual practices widely considered superstitious and practised by specialists who for generations have lived on the margins of society. (Howard 2006, vol. 1:135)

Howard goes on to explain how theatrical performances of *mudang kut* promote the *mu* religion as Korea’s “cultural core” without showing connections to ritual healing:

¹¹ Seoul was known as Hanyang during the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910).

[W]hile state-sanctioned persecution of shamanism has been widespread, particularly against ritualists as healers and shamanism as backward, the result of the promotion of shamanism as Korea's cultural core has been the encouragement of theatrical performance. (Howard 2006, vol. 1:136)

Howard uses the term “paradox” to refer to this ambiguous combination of “state-sanctioned persecution of shamanism” and “the promotion of shamanism as Korea's cultural core” (Howard 2006, vol. 1:136). Howard (*ibid.*) gives credit to Youngsook Kim Harvey for first noting this paradox in 1979 and provides the following quotation:

Unlike previous governments, the present regime makes a distinction between shamanism as an unscientific system of knowledge and shamanism as a part of the Korean cultural heritage. (Harvey 1979:11)

Kim Chongho uses the term “cultural paradox” (2003) in the title of his book about Korean shamanism (i.e. the *mu* religion). Initially I had assumed that Kim uses the term “paradox” like Howard to refer to the ambiguous combination of the stigma of *mudang kut* as superstition with the promotion of *mudang kut* as cultural assets. But Kim does not describe this combination as a paradox. Instead, he characterizes it as a “double standard” (Kim Chongho 2003:217 and 221).

So what is the “cultural paradox”? Kim explains the paradox as follows:

It is the speech of the spirits which gives shamanism its intrinsically paradoxical character. For a spirit to speak is nonsense for ordinary Koreans, but somehow this nonsense is necessary. Shamans are experts in dealing with matters which do not make sense in public Korean culture—with problems which cannot be solved within its traditional framework. Shamanic healing is a kind of paradoxical healing in which the irrational is treated with irrationality. (Kim Chongho 2003:xiii)

According to Kim—who uses the word “irrational” to describe both (1) the problems that shamans treat and (2) the idea of spirits speaking—the paradox is that “the irrational is treated with irrationality” (2003:xiii). Kim goes on to conclude:

What I have argued throughout this book is that we can only make sense of shamanism if we first recognize that, in rational terms, shamanism does not make sense. It is this irrationality of shamanism that makes it unacceptable, but it is the same irrationality that makes it useful to ordinary people, who reject it but still use it when they find themselves in the “field of misfortune”. This is the message from the cultural paradox of Korean shamanism. (Kim Chongho 2003:225)

Kim’s usage of the terms “irrationality” and “nonsense” (to refer to people’s misfortune and Korean shamanism) strikes me as quite disrespectful and rather offensive. Does Kim consider all religions to be “irrational”? Does he consider the “cultural paradox” to be widespread throughout cultures around the world? Kim mentions irrationality in reference to the Zande culture in Africa:

Irrationality is important in the field of misfortune, since the experience of misfortune does not really make sense to the sufferer in rational terms. This is very much the role of witchcraft as an explanatory system in Evans-Pritchard’s famous study of the Zande: “Now why should these particular people have been sitting under this particular granary at the particular moment when it collapsed?” (Evans-Pritchard 1972:69). (Kim Chongho 2003:224)

Let us contrast Kim’s view with Catherine Bell’s perspective on ritual and traditional healing therapies:

While Western medicine is based on the idea that disease is a condition within the individual body system, many other healing therapies are based on the idea that disease takes root when key social relations—among the living or the living and dead—are disturbed. Rectification of these relationships are an important part of what traditional healing is all about. Indeed, even if someone recognizes that diseases like infant dysentery are caused by bacteria and treat it accordingly, bacteria do not explain why one child sickens and another does not. That type of explanation is sought elsewhere, usually in terms of social or cosmological factors. (Bell 1997:116)

Compared with Kim’s characterization of Korean shamanism and other belief systems as simply “irrational,” Bell’s discussion of the importance of social relations and cosmological factors indicates a much richer understanding of traditional healing

therapies in various cultures. The significance of social relations and cosmology in the Korean *mu* religion will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The *mu* religion is often valued as the core of Korean culture, with the ritual music and dance of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* being recognized as important sources of Korean traditional performing arts. In this chapter, I have discussed *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* in the context of the South Korean government's system of cultural assets. It is important to be aware that there are also numerous regional styles of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* that have not been officially designated as cultural assets. There are countless musicians and ritual specialists who have not been recognized as "bearers" (*poyuja*) of cultural assets. The cultural assets system represents only a limited sampling of the rich cultural heritage of South Korea. There are many authentic, living traditions outside of the government's system of cultural assets. In sharp contrast to the presentation of rituals as cultural assets, *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* have also been used in political demonstrations as a form of opposition against the government, as discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6. The People's Cultural Movement: Renewing *P'ungmul Kut* as Community Rituals

In contrast to the South Korean government's system of Cultural Assets (discussed in the previous chapter), a populist movement known as the People's Cultural Movement (*minjung munhwa undong*) has developed a radically different approach to cultural nationalism and identity politics. Although the movement is generally associated with the 1970s and '80s, it actually has historical roots stretching back a century earlier and it continues to be quite influential today. One of the most distinctive aspects of the movement has been the rituals of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*, which have been prominently featured in political protests against the government.

But the ritual aspects of *p'ungmul kut* (percussion music rituals) in the People's Cultural Movement have often been overlooked, with people focusing instead on either the percussive sounds of *p'ungmul kut* or the ritual aspects of *mudang kut* ("shaman" rituals). In this chapter, we will see that performances of *p'ungmul kut* in political demonstrations are more than a sonic emblem of Korean identity. They are not simply displays of traditional music and dance. They are meaningful rituals (*kut*) that bring people together and generate a powerful sense of community and energy for social change. The performance of *p'ungmul kut* as rituals in political demonstrations also raises interesting issues about the complex relationship between tradition and modernity.

Cultural Nationalism and the *Mu* Religion

In order to understand the significance of *p'ungmul kut* performed as rituals in political protests, it is helpful to begin with an introductory discussion of the People's Cultural Movement in relation to cultural nationalism and the Korean *mu* religion. The

People's Cultural Movement (*minjung munhwa undong*) is often referred to in English as “the *minjung* movement” (i.e. the people's movement). In addition to being a cultural movement, it also has important political, economic, and social dimensions.

Beginning with “a very makeshift definition of the *minjung* movement as a form of populist nationalism” (Wells 1995:1), Kenneth Wells has discussed some of the historical connections of the people's movement:

[T]he movement has historically been concerned with nationalistic projects—redefining social relations during the 1860-1895 Tonghak movement, liberating the nation from the Japanese in the period from 1905 through 1945, eliminating military rule in South Korea, and reunifying the country. (Wells 1995:1)

While the term *minjung* is sometimes used in reference to historical movements such as the 19th-century Tonghak (Eastern Learning) movement,¹ it gained more general currency only in the latter part of the 20th century. As Choi Chungmoo explains:

When folk-theater groups were first formed on university campuses [in the 1960s], the term “*minjung*” was not familiar to most Koreans. When a few literary critics used the term, the meaning of *minjung* was loosely defined as “popular masses.” (Choi 1995:111)

The term *minjung* is used to refer to the general public (including farmers, factory workers, and university students) as opposed to the authoritarian government.

The term *munhwa undong* means “cultural movement.” This term was also used in the 1920s to refer to the moderate nationalist movement of that period (Robinson 1988:6). The Cultural Movement of the 1920s (which was in opposition against Japanese colonialism) viewed the Korean *mu* religion as an important source of national identity

¹ The Tonghak movement promoted “universal equality of all people” (Cumings 1997:116) and “social egalitarianism” (Pratt and Rutt 1999:476). It was also nationalistic and opposed to foreign intrusions. “The name Tonghak implied the antithesis of western learning ... but it also made nationalistic reference to the common name for Korea (*Tongguk*, ‘Eastern country’)” (Pratt and Rutt 1999:476).

(as mentioned in Chapter 4). Similarly, several decades later, the People's Cultural Movement (*minjung munhwa undong*) featured the rituals (*kut*) of the *mu* religion as the essence of Korean culture.

The People's Cultural Movement has been described as a form of "cultural nationalism" (Choi 1995:117). The term "cultural nationalism" has been given general definitions by various scholars. For example, according to Thomas Turino:

The use of art and other cultural practices to develop or maintain national sentiment for political purposes is termed *cultural nationalism*. (Turino 2000:14, emphasis in original)

Harumi Befu writes that cultural nationalism "focuses on the creation, crystallization, and expression of the cultural identity of the nation" (1993:2). Befu goes on to say:

I have eschewed giving a formal, one-sentence definition of cultural nationalism. As Michael Robinson points out in his contribution to this volume, myriad definitions have been offered, none of which has satisfied all concerned. (Befu 1993:5)

There are various forms of cultural nationalism. The *minjung* movement's approach to cultural nationalism is distinct from the moderate cultural movement of the 1920s (against Japanese colonialism) as well as the South Korean government's system of national cultural assets (*munhwajae*) in the 1960s, as we will see below.

Cultural nationalism often deals with the complex relationship between tradition and modernity. Many issues of nationalism have arisen in anticolonial contexts. In reference to anticolonial nationalism in both Africa and Asia (particularly in India), Partha Chatterjee makes an important distinction between "material" and "spiritual" domains, which may be helpful with our understanding of cultural nationalism in Korea. As Chatterjee has written:

By my reading, anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the “outside,” of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalism in Asia and Africa. (Chatterjee 1993:6)

People can adopt certain features of modern science or technology (in the material outer domain) while maintaining a distinctive culture of their own (in the spiritual inner domain).²

It is important to be aware that the difference between the spiritual and material domains does not correspond to a simple division between tradition and modernity. Also, modernity is not limited to Western culture. In colonial contexts, national culture in the spiritual domain may be traditional, but as Chatterjee notes, it can also be quite modern (and not Western):

[H]ere [in the spiritual domain] nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a “modern” national culture that is nevertheless not Western. (Chatterjee 1993:6)

Chatterjee also discusses how nationalism often emphasizes cultural differences (within the spiritual inner domain) while trying to erase differences between the colonizer and the colonized (in the material outer domain):

² Chatterjee’s idea of maintaining a distinctive culture in the spiritual (inner) domain while adopting modern technology in the material (outer) domain is reminiscent of the East Asian saying, *tongdo sŏgi* (東道西器), which means “eastern ways and western machines,” referring to the “utilization of the eastern thought and the western technology” (Song 2001:109).

This domain of sovereignty, which nationalism thought of as the “spiritual” or “inner” aspects of culture, such as language or religion or the elements of personal and family life, was of course premised upon a difference between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized. The more nationalism engaged in its contest with the colonial power in the outer domain of politics, the more it insisted on displaying the marks of “essential” cultural difference so as to keep out the colonizer from that inner domain of national life and to proclaim its sovereignty over it But in the outer domain of the state, the supposedly “material” domain of law, administration, economy, and statecraft, nationalism fought relentlessly to erase the marks of colonial difference. (Chatterjee 1993:26)

Chatterjee’s discussion of cultural (spiritual, inner) differences and technological (material, outer) similarities is comparable in some ways to the “twin paradoxes of nationalism” as discussed by Thomas Turino (2000:15). On one hand, nations need cosmopolitan institutions and emblems to be recognized as part of “the global family of nations”:

[N]ew nation-states require cosmopolitan institutions, roles, and emblems (diplomats, finance and foreign ministers, airports, national sports teams and dance companies, flags, anthems) homologous with those of the other members of the global family of nations so as to be recognizably like them. (Turino 2000:15)

These homologous, cosmopolitan institutions may be described as similarities in the material, outer domain (using Chatterjee’s terms).

On the other hand, cosmopolitanism may threaten a nation’s distinctive identity.

Hence the first “paradox of nationalism”:

A basic paradox of nationalism is that nation-states are dependent on cosmopolitanism, but are simultaneously threatened by it: unless nation-states maintain their unique identity, they will disappear as distinct, and thus operative, units on the international scene. (Turino 2000:15)

In addition to sharing cosmopolitan (outer) similarities, each nation requires an individual identity with some uniqueness, i.e. differences in the spiritual, inner domain.

In order to maintain a unique national identity, folk arts—including music and dance—are often used as “key emblems”:

Distinguishing emblems and discourses (e.g., of “national character”) are thus required to circumscribe nations. When available, indigenous or “folk” arts and practices are often key emblems because they offer the sharpest contrast to cosmopolitan forms. (Turino 2000:15)

The use of traditional folk music and dance as emblems of Korean identity by the government as well as by the People’s Cultural Movement will be discussed below.

It is important to note that the term “nation-state” is a combination of two fundamentally different concepts. The term “nation” refers to a group of people with a shared identity that is often based on culture, ethnicity, or religion, while “state” indicates a political or governing body. In many cases, a single state actually encompasses many ethnic groups and nations. For example, Canada is a multi-national state that includes the First Nations and other aboriginal peoples, as well as people of European (including British and French), Asian, and African heritage. Sometimes a single nation is divided into multiple states. For instance, the Korean nation is divided into two states: the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea).

The term “nation-state” suggests a one-to-one correspondence between nation and state, but there are often multiple ethnic groups or nations within a single state. This leads to the second “paradox of nationalism” as discussed by Turino:

A second paradox of nationalism is that nation-states celebrate and are dependent on local distinctiveness [ex: ethnic groups within the state], but they are simultaneously threatened by it. A core doctrine of nationalism is that distinctive cultural groups (“nations”) should be in possession of their own states. Nationalists’ need to celebrate local distinctiveness carries its own dangers since culturally distinct groups within the state’s territory could potentially claim a

separate national status by the orthodox logic of nationalism itself. (Turino 2000:15-16)

When a state consists of many nations (i.e. ethnic groups), it may be threatened by various groups demanding their own separate states. There is often a process of negotiating and balancing of (1) spiritual, cultural differences between ethnic groups and (2) material similarities (including political and legal institutions) that unify these separate groups into a single, common state. “Key emblems” are often selected from each the cultures and arts of the various groups and combined together to represent the identity of the state as a unified whole.

In order to understand the significance of *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* as “key emblems” of Korean identity in the People’s Cultural Movement, it is helpful to discuss the importance of the Korean *mu* religion during the 1920s in the cultural movement against Japanese colonialism. During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), the colonialists made various efforts to impose Japanese culture and erase all signs of Korean identity. The Japanese “cultural assimilation program” included “[d]iscouraging, and in some contexts prohibiting outright, use of the Korean language, requiring Korean school children to bow at Shinto shrines erected for Japanese deities, and requiring Korean families to adopt Japanese surnames” (Janelli 1986:28).

The Japanese colonialists’ cultural policy in Korea resulted in what may be described as “cultural alienation,” a term which Frantz Fanon has used in reference to the

effects of colonialism in Africa.³ Fanon has written about how colonialists often try to distort and destroy the history of colonized people:

[Colonialism] turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it. This effort to demean history prior to colonization today takes on a dialectical significance. (Fanon 2004:149)

In Korea, the Japanese colonialists' efforts to destroy Korean history included attacking the Korean origin myth. As Clark Sorensen notes, "Japanese historians went to great pains to dismiss the historicity and even authenticity of the Korean national origin myth" (1995a:333). According to the myth, the first Korean kingdom (Ancient Chosŏn) was founded by Tan'gun, the "grandson of heaven," in 2333 B.C.E. (Sorensen 1995a:333). But according to Japanese colonialists, the Korean myth was "a fabrication of a 13th-century monk" (Janelli 1986:29). In contrast, as Roger Janelli notes, "the Japanese origin myth, which likewise attributed Japan's origin to the descent of heavenly beings, was not only taught as a factual historical account in Japanese schools but also served as the legitimizing charter for the Japanese political system" (Janelli 1986:34). In reaction, various Korean writers—including Sin Ch'ae-ho, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, and Yi Nŭng-hwa—argued for the antiquity of the Tan'gun myth (Janelli 1986:34 and Sorensen 1995a:335). This had great political significance, as Janelli explains:

If the antiquity of the Tan'gun myth could be demonstrated, it provided an effective argument that Korea had its own legitimizing charter to rival that of Japan. (Janelli 1986:34)

In opposition against cultural alienation, colonized people often search for their national culture from before the colonial period, as Fanon describes:

³ In the original French version, Fanon uses the term "aliénation culturelle" (1961:144). This term has been translated into English as "cultural alienation" (2004:149) and "cultural estrangement" (1963:210).

[T]his passionate quest for a national culture prior to the colonial era can be justified by the colonized intellectuals' shared interest in stepping back and taking a hard look at the Western [i.e. colonialists'] culture in which they risk becoming ensnared. Fully aware that they are in the process of losing themselves, and consequently of being lost to their people, these men work away with raging heart and furious mind to renew contact with their people's oldest, inner essence, the farthest removed from colonial times. (Fanon 2004:148)⁴

In reaction against the Japanese colonialist repression, the cultural movement (*munhwa undong*) of the 1920s promoted Korean culture—especially the *mu* religion—as an important part of national identity. This nationalist movement highlighted cultural differences that distinguished Korea from Japan.⁵

Korean folklore studies were an important part of this nationalist movement, as noted by Ch'oe Kil-sŏng:

During this period native Korean folklorists such as Yi Nŭng-hwa (1927) and Son Chin-t'ae (1948), whose nationalist studies aimed to preserve their indigenous heritage (Janelli 1986), saw in Korean folk culture the essence of a native Korean tradition relatively unsullied by foreign influence. (Ch'oe 1989:217-8)

Korean folklorists in the 1920s (including Yi Nŭng-hwa and Ch'oe Nam-sŏn) often focused on the *mu* religion as a key distinguishing feature of Korean culture and national identity (as mentioned in Chapter 4). The *mu* religion was also seen as “the essence of the Korean people” (Sorensen 1995a:336) several decades later during the People's Cultural Movement (*minjung munhwa undong*), as we will see below.

The Japanese colonial period in Korea ended when Japan was defeated at the end of World War II in 1945. Korea was then divided into American and Soviet zones of occupation, which later became the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic

⁴ It is interesting to note the similarity between “inner essence” and Chatterjee's use of the terms “inner” and “essential” in reference to the spiritual domain (1993:6; quoted above on page 141).

⁵ Also, Korean folk culture was distinguished from the Chinese-influenced culture of Korean upper classes, reflecting the “notion developed ... by Sin Ch'ae-ho that true Korean ethnicity can be discovered only by rejecting Korea's Sinicized upper-class culture” (Sorensen 1995a:338).

People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), respectively. Thus, during the 20th century, there were several decades of intensive foreign influences—first from Japanese colonialists and then American occupation forces (in South Korea)—which seriously challenged Korean people's sense of national identity. As Sorensen explains:

The circumstances of twentieth-century Korean history—forty years of Japanese colonial rule followed by forty years of dependence on the United States during the cold war—have forced successive ruling classes to create new cosmopolitan orientations that, however successful in instrumental terms, continue to create cultural alienation that sharpens the acuteness of the national identity question. (Sorensen 1995a:330)

Sorensen also discusses Fanon's concept of cultural alienation (or "cultural estrangement") and the ambivalence of Koreans towards Japanese colonialists:

Koreans, like the colonized Africans described by Fanon, developed the ambivalent attitudes to their colonial hegemony and their own culture that he calls "cultural estrangement." On the one hand, they hated the Japanese for their dismissive attitude and their refusal to accept Koreans as equal even when they learned to speak and act like Japanese; on the other hand, they had to implicitly admit that the very fact of Japanese economic and military power proved that Japanese culture had some efficacy that Korea had not yet mastered Furious assertion of Korean historicity accompanied equally furious iconoclasm and rejection of those elements of Korean culture deemed responsible for loss of independence. (Sorensen 1995a:334)

In 1961, General Park Chung-Hee seized power in South Korea through a military coup d'état.⁶ Park exemplifies the cultural alienation and ambivalence that were experienced by many Koreans during the Japanese colonial period, as Sorensen discusses:

Like many who had been upwardly mobile during the colonial period, Park is a good example of those most affected by the cultural estrangement created during the colonial period. He accepted most of the Japanese discourse on the inadequacies of the traditional Korean political and class systems. Although strongly nationalist, he was among those who had had close ties to the Japanese. Coming from a farm family of modest means, he had been educated (as everyone

⁶ Park remained in power until his assassination in 1979 and the military regime continued until 1987.

was) in Japanese—through normal schools in Korea, and later through Japanese military schools in Manchuria and Japan. At the time of liberation, he was a lieutenant in the (Japanese) Manchurian army. (Sorensen 1995a:343)

Initially, it appeared that both Park's military government and the People's Cultural Movement were critical of the Japanese colonial administration's suppression of Korean culture, as Choi Chungmoo notes:

[I]n the early stage, the minjung [people's] movement displayed little awareness of the need to mount a critique of the dominant [government's] construction of culture. Rather, what inspired the students was the fact that the Japanese colonial administration had repressed Korea's cultural past through the discourse of modernization. It was precisely this criticism of colonial erasure that was the selling point of the cultural policy of the military government. (Choi 1995:111)

Park Chung-Hee's government supported the protection and promotion of traditional culture and established the Cultural Assets Protection Law (*Munhwajae Pohobŏp*) in 1962 (discussed in Chapter 5).

But, paradoxically, the military regime also required the destruction of village shrines and the prohibition of traditional rituals (*kut*) in villages—all in the name of modernization. The government characterized *mudang kut* ("shaman" rituals) as "superstition," as Choi explains:

By 1972, shamanic ritual became the target of a state-initiated antisuperstition campaign. Shamanic healing practices were condemned as a social evil on the ground that they were unscientific, misleading, and thus unethical superstition. Shamanic ceremonies were often halted by the police. (Choi 1997:26)

The contradiction between the Cultural Assets Conservation Act and the government's emphasis on modernization (including the destruction of traditional village shrines and the targeting of *mudang kut* as "superstition") is explained by Choi as follows:

As the military leader Park Chung-hee contradicted this policy [of conservation] and denied Korea's entire cultural heritage (except the Korean alphabet) almost two years after the enactment of the conservation law, one suspects that the law

may have been a device to win the approval of the nationalistic elite, which was the major monitoring force at the time. (Choi 1997:23)

Similarly, as Keith Howard has noted, this law was “overtly political, for the Park regime regularly evoked ‘nationalism’ (*minjok chuŭi*) in a way that drew attention away from development and control as Koreans were forced to embrace modernity” (Howard 2006, vol. 1:6).

Choi goes on to discuss the government’s paradoxical approach of denouncing *mudang kut* as superstition while preserving them as Cultural Assets (or Properties):

Under these circumstances, shamans in Korea faced two opposing forces: the government’s promotion of shamanic rituals as Important Intangible Cultural Properties and, simultaneously, the suppression of shamanic healing practices. (Choi 1997:26)

These “opposing forces” were partially deflected by shifting the emphasis away from the ritual aspects of *mudang kut* towards the artistic elements, such as music and dance (as discussed in Chapter 5). As Choi puts it, the government had a “cultural policy of eliminating the religious content of shamanic rituals and reducing them to objects of ‘traditional art’” (1997:27).

In sharp contrast to the government’s cultural policy, the People’s Cultural Movement had a radically different approach to the *mu* religion, featuring the performance of *mudang kut* and *p’ungmul kut* as vital rituals in political protests. An important influence in the Korean People’s Cultural Movement was Frantz Fanon’s writing about revitalizing national culture, as Choi Chungmoo notes:

Although Frantz Fanon is not the only source of inspiration to the movement, his emphasis on the necessity of reconstructing national culture for the postcolonial nations has left a deep impression on the discourse of the minjung culture movement. (Choi 1995:107)

While discussing cultural alienation and the reconstruction of national culture, Fanon wrote about how colonized intellectuals often adopt and internalize the values and ideas of the colonialists. Indeed, they often borrow from the culture of colonialists, even when trying to create a nationalistic cultural work, as Fanon explains:

At the very moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country. He contents himself with stamping these instruments with a hallmark which he wishes to be national, but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism. (Fanon 1963:223)

Similarly, Fanon's work is discussed by Choi Chungmoo as follows:

Fanon ... warns against the danger of creating a culture by utilizing techniques and language borrowed from the dominant other. A culture so created, though meant to be national, emphasizes exoticism and makes its purveyor a stranger among his or her own people. In its stead, Fanon proposes a reinvigorated indigenous culture. (Choi 1995:107)

Fanon makes an interesting distinction between culture and customs: customs are static whereas culture should always be changing, modernizing, and new. As he explains, customs are "mummified fragments which because they are static are in fact symbols of negation and outworn contrivances" (Fanon 1963:224). Fanon continues:

In its essence it [culture] is opposed to custom, for custom is always the deterioration of culture. The desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one's own people. (Fanon 1963:224)

Fanon is quite critical of an artificial preservation or revival of traditions. Instead of being frozen in the past, culture needs to adapt and develop for the future of the nation.

The revitalization of national culture is not a mere restoration or replication of earlier traditional culture but rather a revision or modernization of traditional culture as something new for the present and the future. Fanon writes about new culture in the form

of updated, “modernized” (1963:240) versions of traditional culture such as literature, oral traditions, and handicrafts. He also talks about the need for a new national “people’s culture” for the “new humanity” (1963:245-46).

Fanon points out how it is often colonialists who preserve traditions as static, unchanging customs and deny the new forms:

The colonialist specialists do not recognize these new forms and rush to the help of the traditions of the indigenous society. It is the colonialists who become the defenders of the native style. (Fanon 1963:242)

Colonialists often use the natives’ traditions to restrict the natives to their past, preventing them from developing a sense of liberation or a new identity.⁷

Following Fanon’s argument, Choi writes that “This static view of culture leads to the total objectification of popular culture” (1995:111).⁸ Choi goes on to discuss the South Korean government’s “objectification” of traditional culture in its policy of preserving cultural assets (*munhwajae*):

[S]uch objectification was initiated by the military junta in 1962 with the legislation of the Cultural Assets Conservation Act. (Choi 1995:111)

In contrast to the government’s preservation of cultural assets as static, “mummified” objects, the People’s Cultural Movement promoted a modern national culture that featured revitalized rituals (both *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*) infused with contemporary meanings and performed in new contexts, as we will see in the next section.

⁷ Fanon’s critique of the preservation of traditions raises questions about the Japanese policy of preserving Korean court music during the colonial period and is similar to critiques of salvage ethnography (discussed in Chapter 5).

⁸ The term “popular culture” here refers to the people’s (i.e. folk, traditional) culture rather than pop culture (influenced by global mass media).

Modern Rituals in Political Protests

As part of the modern and revitalized national Korean culture (introduced in the previous section), the rituals (both *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*) of the Korean *mu* religion have often been featured in political protests against the government (especially the military's repressive regime) in South Korea.⁹ The first “protest ritual” was performed in 1963 by students from Seoul National University (Choi 1997:29). This ritual (*kut*) was called the “Ritual to Invite the Spirit of National Consciousness (*hyangt'o ũishik ch'ohon kut*)”¹⁰ and it was performed annually at Seoul National University until 1965 (Choi 1995:109 and 1997:29).

The ritual for the spirit of national consciousness was in large part a reaction against the military government's importing of foreign—especially Japanese—culture.

As Kim Kwang-Ok explains:

Although the military regime of Park Chung Hee had initially declared its special concern for reviving Korean national cultural traditions, it soon became clear that the government was more inclined toward the import of foreign culture when it denounced traditional culture as a feudal legacy and thus a hindrance to the modernization process. (Kim Kwang-Ok 1997:7)

As discussed earlier (on page 148), the military government's promotion of the Cultural Assets Protection Law was soon followed by the destruction of village shrines and the targeting of *mudang kut* (“shaman” rituals) as “superstition.”

Kim goes on to note the government's attitude towards Japan and Japanese culture:

⁹ The military regime began in 1961 with the coup d'état led by General Park Chung-Hee and continued after Park's assassination in 1979 for several more years under General Chun Doo-Hwan until democratic elections were held in 1987.

¹⁰ This ritual has also been called *minjok ũishik ch'ohon kut* (Choi 1987:71). The term *hyangt'o* means “homeland” while the term *minjok* means “people” or “nation.”

[T]he regime's avowed policy to restore diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan encouraged an unrestricted influx of Japanese culture. (Kim Kwang-Ok 1997:7)

As Hagen Koo points out, rituals were performed in the 1960s in student demonstrations “against the normalization treaty with Japan signed by Park Chung Hee's military regime” (Koo 2001:144-45).

The ritual for national consciousness also highlighted the issue of democracy. As Choi notes, “the ritual contained the famous ‘funeral of democracy’ session” (1997:29).

This “funeral ritual” is also discussed by Kim:

In March of the following year [i.e. 1964], about 1,500 college students participated in a performance of a funeral ritual to protest the “nationalistic democracy” (*minjokchŏk minjujuŭi*) which the Park Chung Hee regime invented to legitimize its dictatorial rule based on patriarchal authority. (Kim Kwang-Ok 1997:7)

Kim also notes how this funeral ritual was “a protest against the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan” (1994:208). As he explains: “Specifically the students organized the funeral ceremony in protest against Park's stance toward Japan which they denounced as selling out national dignity and consciousness for token economic compensation” (Kim Kwang-Ok 1997:7).

Rituals (including both *p'unngmul kut* and *mudang kut*) of the Korean *mu* religion were often used in political demonstrations as distinctive features of Korean folk culture in opposition against Japanese and other foreign influences in the government. Decades of Japanese colonialism and American military occupation created a sense of cultural alienation and challenged Korean national identity (as discussed in the previous section). In response to these challenges and changes, the Korean *mu* religion was valued as the essence of Korean identity.

Dramatic transformations throughout South Korea were also brought about by rapid industrialization and urbanization. During the 1960s and '70s, there was massive migration from the countryside to cities as millions of people left farms to work in factories, as Hagen Koo discusses:

It is estimated that between 1957 and 1980 approximately eleven million Koreans migrated from rural to urban areas. As a consequence, the agricultural labor force declined precipitously; in the late 1950s, four out of five working people in South Korea were farmers, whereas in the mid-1980s only one out of four remained on the farm. (Koo 1993:137)

Korean society was drastically uprooted by widespread migration from agricultural villages to industrial cities.

Industrialization and urbanization were initiated by the military government's plans for modernization, as Sorensen explains:

Rapid industrialization, urbanization, and growth in real income for all sectors of society (though not at the same rate for all sectors), based on practical government planning and promotion of exports and economic investment, commenced in the early 1960s and has continued ever since. Equally prominent, however, was the government's promotion of a Westernized, secular, rational orientation. (Sorensen 1995a:344)¹¹

There was also a government program called the New Community Movement (*Sae Maül Undong*),¹² which "came out of rural development experiments in the late 1960s and soon spread to villages, cities, and factories all over the country" (Sorensen 1995a:344). As Sorensen points out:

Announced in 1970, the New Community Movement was designed to be an integrated program that combined spiritual development (*chöngsin kaebal*) and improvement of life attitudes (*saenghwal t'aedo kaesön*) with economic and social development. (Sorensen 1995a:344)

¹¹ It is important to note that modernization is not limited to Westernization, as mentioned in the previous section.

¹² It is also translated more literally as the New Village Movement.

The government's program of "spiritual development" included "avoiding expenditure on unnecessary ceremonies and ornamentation that could otherwise be used for economic investment" (Sorensen 1995a:345).

Traditional village rituals—including *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*—were drastically affected by these changes and government programs, as Sorensen explains:

[C]astigating ritual activity as wasteful and extravagant—when combined with the constant migration of young people to the cities—led to the rapid demise of traditional village ceremonies and the social solidarity of rural life. (Sorensen 1995a:345)

The important connection between village rituals and social solidarity will be discussed below.

Political repression in South Korea increased dramatically in 1972 with Park's imposition of martial law and the establishment of the Yushin Constitution. The term *yushin* (維新)¹³ means "revitalization" or "renewal." The same term was used in Japan (pronounced *ishin* in Japanese) in 1868 by the Meiji leaders, although the Meiji *ishin* is usually referred to in English as the "Meiji Restoration" because "direct rule by the emperor was ostensibly being restored" (Sorensen 1995a:353 n.78). Park, as Sorensen explains, "admired the Meiji oligarchs who between 1868 and 1905 had transformed Japan 'from above' into the greatest power in East Asia" (Sorensen 1995a:344). Sorensen continues:

Park found the Meiji example so potent, in fact, that he even labeled the repressive constitution he introduced in 1972 the *Yusin* Constitution, using the Korean pronunciation of *ishin*, the Japanese term used to designate the Meiji reforms. (Sorensen 1995a:344)

¹³ This term is sometimes romanized as *yusin* according to the McCune-Reischauer system.

The Yushin Constitution removed all limits on Park's tenure in office, allowing him to remain president as long as he wished (Cumings 1997:358; Pratt and Rutt 1999:335). In 1974, as part of the Korean Yushin system, a government decree "more or less made any criticism of the regime a violation of national security" (Cumings 1997:358).

The People's Cultural Movement (*minjung munhwa undong*) was in large part a reaction by the people against the military government's repressive Yushin regime. The term *minjung* means "people" and it "included all those who were politically oppressed, socially alienated, and economically excluded from the benefits of economic growth" (Koo 2001:143). The concept of *minjung* was used to unite various groups against the Yushin regime, as Koo explains:

Although the word *minjung* already existed in the Korean vocabulary, it came into frequent use as a new political term after the early 1970s. With the installation of the Yushin regime in 1972, the term quickly became a symbol and a slogan among diverse groups—students, writers, journalists, church leaders, and opposition party leaders—united by their common opposition to the Park regime. Led by students and progressive intellectuals, the *minjung* movement sought to reach and mobilize workers and farmers in struggles for political and economic democratization. (Koo 1993:143)

As part of the People's Cultural Movement, there were numerous political demonstrations in opposition against the military's repressive government and in favor of democracy and labor reforms. These protests regularly featured traditional performing arts—especially the music and dance of *p'ungmul kut*. While the percussion music of *p'ungmul kut* is often associated with political demonstrations in the 1970s and '80s, this music was actually featured in protests against the government as early as 1961 and continues to be a prominent part of political demonstrations today.

In addition to the music of *p'ungmul kut*, political protests have often featured the music and dance of *mudang kut* as well as masked dance drama (*t'alch'um*), which uses the same percussion instruments as *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*. Korean masked dance drama traditionally features political satire, which makes it especially meaningful for modern protests.

These traditional performing arts were exempt from government censorship—even in political demonstrations against the government—as ethnomusicologist Byong Won Lee explains:

From 1961, following the military coup, until the late 1980s, anti-government student protests against the authoritarian regime were a daily routine on university campuses. Also during this time, many contemporary performing arts were subject to governmental censorship. However, because of the government's pledge to perpetuate and promote the traditional performing arts, traditional performing arts were exempted from censorship despite their often explicit anti-establishment content. Thus, students began to use some of the easily accessible traditional performing arts as means to express their feelings at rallies while avoiding government censorship. (B. Lee 1997:12-13)

It is ironic how the military government's protection of traditional performing arts actually prevented the government from censoring the performance of these arts in anti-government protests—even when they contained explicitly anti-establishment messages.

The music of *p'ungmul kut* is now commonly associated with political protests and the People's Cultural Movement, as Choi explains:

In the late 1980s, South Koreans became accustomed to loud percussion music as students danced to farmers' music, dressed in traditional farmers' white clothes, and battled with riot police. No longer alien to the postdivision Korean public was the mask-dance drama, with its characters who struggled against the exploitative company owners during labor strikes The general public now recognizes social and political protest staged in the form of reconstructed folk culture as a part of the minjung culture movement. (Choi 1995:108)

Choi uses the phrase “reconstructed folk culture” here to refer to Fanon’s concept of revitalized national culture (as discussed in the previous section).¹⁴

Within the context of cultural alienation, industrialization, urbanization, and political repression, the traditional rituals of *p’ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* were significant parts of political protests, as discussed by Sorensen:

In this context, a conjuncture of folk ritual and political opposition begins to make sense. The military regime’s emphasis on creating modern, hierarchical organizations (*Gesellschaften*), along with its emphasis on rationality, science, and technology introduced from abroad, meant that lack of personal autonomy due to political repression and mobilization into an impersonal labor market was experienced as something linked to loss of cultural identity, loss of traditional community (*Gemeinschaft*), and assimilation (particularly at the business level) of Japanese and other foreign cultural forms that had been rejected on the political level. (Sorensen 1995a:345)

Sorensen goes on to discuss rituals in connection with traditional egalitarian communities as opposed to modern hierarchical organizations (using the German terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gessellschaft*):

By reinventing traditional ceremonies, then, the students shaped powerful messages of cultural and social opposition to the government—of solidarity with the common people (*minjung*) rather than with the new modern elites, of valuing what is ancient and uniquely Korean rather than what is foreign and borrowed, of promoting the egalitarian solidarity of traditional *Gemeinschaften* (*kongdongch’e*) rather than the competition and upward mobility of the new *gesellschaftlich* industrial organizations. (Sorensen 1995a:346)

Although Sorensen is discussing the ritual aspects of *mudang kut*, his argument may be applied to *p’ungmul kut* as well, especially in terms of the importance of community and cultural identity.

¹⁴ There were also new works of political theatre (called *madang kut* and *madang kūk*), which incorporated elements of traditional *mudang kut*, *p’ungmul kut*, and *talch’um*.

In order to discuss the connections between ritual and community, Sorensen refers to Victor Turner's theory of *communitas*:

Normally experienced as a structured, differentiated, hierarchical system of social statuses, society during periods of liminality is experienced as an unstructured, undifferentiated solidarity that he [Turner 1969:96-97] terms *communitas* By breaking down conventional status relations and creating a feeling of diffuse solidarity among participants, *communitas* creates the conditions within which new social relationships can be created. (Sorensen 1995a:347)

Communitas creates a sense of solidarity, which allows for the development of new social relationships. Sorensen then goes on to discuss *communitas* in *mudang kut* in political demonstrations of the People's Cultural Movement:

It is as if the specifically religious element of Korean life—the creation of *communitas* through religious ritual—has stepped in with its creative power to create new, though diffuse, social relations to counteract the potential anomie of an imported, urban-industrial life. (Sorensen 1995a:347)

Turner's concept of *communitas* may also be applied to *p'ungmul kut* (as I will discuss in the Conclusion). Interestingly, an important connection between community and *p'ungmul kut* is also stressed in the People's Cultural Movement. For instance, there are two well-known works from the 1980s that discuss *p'ungmul kut* and community (*kongdongch'e*). Their titles may be translated as “*P'ungmul Kut* and Communal Spirit” (Kim Inu 1987) and “A Study of Communal Consciousness in *P'ungmul Kut*” (O Chongsöp 1989).¹⁵

¹⁵ These translations are based on Hesselink's (2006) translations, including “spirit” for the Korean term *shinmyöng*, which consists of two Sino-Korean terms (神明) literally meaning “spirit” and “bright,” and which is sometimes translated as “ecstasy” to indicate a sense of excitement and joy. Excerpts from both works are translated in Hesselink 2006.

***Nori* (Playing) in the People's Cultural Movement**

In addition to the significant connection between community (*kongdongch'e*) and the rituals of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*, the People's Cultural Movement also highlighted the importance of having fun and playing (*nori*) with rituals (*kut*). As Hesselink notes:

Cho Hung-youn has pointed out an additional connection made between shamanistic rituals and the love of play in a significant portion of *minjung* writings (1987:7-8). (Hesselink 2006:92)

Cho has noted the connection between the terms *kut* (ritual) and *nori* (playing) in the Korean language:

Kut is often called *kut nori*, and is expressed as being played (*kut-ül nonda*). (Cho 1987:10)¹⁶

The combination of *kut* (ritual) and *nori* (playing) is exemplified in the compound term *kut nori* (as mentioned in Chapter 2).¹⁷ This combination seemed like an oxymoron when I first read it. I'm used to thinking of ritual as being serious and solemn, i.e. practically the opposite of playing and having fun. Seeing *kut* (ritual) and *nori* (playing) combined together into a single compound word intrigued me and made me reconsider the relationship between ritual and playing.

I recalled how I had sometimes seen shamans (spirit-possessed *mudang*) and ritual musicians (*chaebi*) making jokes and laughing together with the audience during rituals. I thought about how the rituals of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut* often have a festive atmosphere, with people eating, drinking, talking, laughing, and dancing together.

¹⁶ In the phrase *kut-ül nonda* (굿을논다), *-ül* is an object marker and *nonda* is the present tense of the verb *nolda* (to play) from which the word *nori* (playing) is derived.

¹⁷ This compound term is written in Korean as a single word without any spaces: 굿놀이.

I began to realize that although rituals are often serious and solemn, they can also be quite playful and fun.

The term *kut nori* is translated as “ritual play” by Hesselink (2006:97), but this might suggest a ritualized, formalized re-enactment of play-like activity. Instead, I translate *kut nori* as “playing with ritual” in order to indicate the combination of ritual and playfulness, as well as to suggest the idea of having fun with ritual. Indeed, playfulness is often an important and integral element of rituals, as I will discuss further in the Conclusion.

Chapter 7. *Kut* (Ritual): Music and the Cosmos

Before continuing with the discussion of *communitas* and playing with ritual (from Chapter 6), I would like to reflect on the idea of *kut* (ritual) as a way of restoring and maintaining balance and harmony between heaven, earth, and people (as mentioned in Chapter 4). I will also examine the significance of music in the rituals of *p'ungmul kut*, highlighting how certain rhythmic patterns are associated with the cosmos. In order to express my understanding of the interconnections between the three elements (*samjae*) of heaven, earth, and people, I begin by presenting some “headnotes” from my fieldwork in South Korea.¹

P'ungmul Kut at Kasansa Buddhist Temple

It's midsummer (2008) and I've been playing *p'ungmul kut* with a group of people at a camp near Kasansa, a Buddhist temple located in the central mountains of South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province. The head monk, Chisŭng *sŭnim*,² is a good friend of our teacher, Pak *sŏnsaengnim*.³ For the past week, we have been playing drums and gongs and dancing together, surrounded by beautiful trees, mountains, and valleys. We have also been immersed in the rich sounds of nature: birds singing, cicadas chirping, water burbling in nearby streams, and leaves in the trees rustling in the flowing breeze.

¹ The term “headnotes” refers to “the notes in my mind, the memories of my field research” (Ottenberg 1990:144), as mentioned in Chapter 2.

² *Sŭnim* is a term of respect for a Buddhist monk.

³ *Sŏnsaengnim* means “teacher” (as noted in Chapter 3).

On our last night together, at 3:30 a.m., in the darkness, I hear the steady pulse of a wooden percussion instrument (*mokt'ak*)⁴ being played by Chisŭng *sŭnim* at the nearby temple. As I walk toward the temple, down the hillside, on the dirt path, the soundscape around me shifts and changes. First, at the top of the trail, near the main camp site, I hear a group of people talking, laughing and singing, enjoying each other's company this final night before we leave the next day to return to our respective homes in different cities. A few minutes down the hillside, I pass by a group of children and listen to their delightful giggles and laughter as they play games together. As I get closer to the temple, I hear the monk, Chisŭng *sŭnim*, chanting and singing as he plays the wooden *mokt'ak*. He is outside in the darkness before dawn, slowly walking in a wide circle in an open clearing in front of the main temple building.

After a few minutes, Chisŭng *sŭnim* invites me into the temple and performs a ritual. While chanting and playing the *mokt'ak*, he moves gracefully up and down with the music. Toward the end of the ritual, he turns on a red light overhead and as I look up I see a painting on the ceiling, partially hidden among paper lotus lanterns: an image of a person (or a spirit) dancing and playing the *changgu* (hourglass-shaped drum). It is wonderful to see the connections of music and dance in the Buddhist ritual and to be reminded of the music and dance of *p'ungmul kut*.

After the ritual, in the light of dawn, Chisŭng *sŭnim* and I went for a walk and we talked about the connections between music and nature. I was pleasantly surprised when he spoke about *kut* and how it is a combination of people, nature, and music. What he

⁴ The *mokt'ak* (木鐸, meaning “wooden bell”) is spherical, about 6 inches in diameter, hollow, and struck with a stick. There is often a carving of fish (symbolizing wakefulness) around the handle, so the instrument is also known as “wooden fish” (木魚).

said resonated with my own understanding of *kut*. For the past several days and nights I had been playing *p'ungmul kut* with a group of people, outdoors in open fields, surrounded by trees and mountains, immersed in nature. Playing music and dancing together, I felt connected to the people around me and also to the place—the earth beneath our feet, the trees above our heads, the mountains all around, and even the sky above.

***Kut*: People, Earth, and Heaven**

I had learned earlier that *kut* is often thought of as a ritual to restore or maintain harmony between the three elements (*samjae*) of heaven, earth, and people (as mentioned in Chapter 4). While playing *p'ungmul kut* amidst the mountains and trees near Kasansa, surrounded by nature, I thought about heaven as being the sky above—a beautiful blue sky with the brilliant sun and pure white clouds during the day, a black vastness with the bright moon and countless stars shining overhead at night, and the infinite cosmos surrounding our planet. The term “heaven” is not limited to the biblical concept of Heaven. Indeed, one of its primary definitions is: “The expanse in which the sun, moon, and stars are seen ... ; the sky” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

I also thought about earth and its various meanings: as the ground beneath our feet, the mountains around us, the planet as a whole, our home, filled with plants and animals and all the wonders of nature and life. I thought about people as part of nature, closely connected to the earth and immersed in the richness of the universe.

There is a sense that life, nature, and the cosmos are sacred. The distinction between sacred and secular is blurred, similar to what Thomas Turino has described in Peru:

“[R]eligious” aspects permeate daily life to such a degree that a secular/sacred dichotomy is largely irrelevant. Many of the local forces that I would translate as “supernatural” (for example, places of power on the land, on mountains, or in rivers) are conceived as part of this world; things we consider mundane (the earth itself) are thought of as alive and powerful. (Turino 1993:21)⁵

While discussing hierophanies (i.e. revelations of the sacred), Eliade has commented:

The manifestation of the sacred in a stone or a tree is neither less mysterious nor less noble than its manifestation in a “god.” (Eliade 1964:xvii)

The day before we left Kasansa, there was a powerful storm with strong winds, heavy rain, roaring thunder, and brilliant lightning. I was reminded of the four elements of weather (wind, clouds, thunder, and rain) that are associated with *p’ungmul kut* and agriculture (mentioned in Chapter 2). The storm flooded the camp site and knocked out the electricity for several hours. The power of the wind, rain, thunder and lightning, of the weather, of the sky, was a humbling reminder of the power of nature.

At night, with the moon and the stars in the sky, we played various rhythmic patterns, including one which has the following lyrics:

Pyöl ttase pyöl ttase
hanül chapko pyöl ttase

Let’s pick stars, let’s pick stars,
holding the sky, let’s pick stars.⁶

⁵ Instead of the term “religious,” the term “spiritual” may be more appropriate, following the distinction made by Baker (noted in Chapter 4), since this sense of sacredness does not require an “institutional framework” (2008:5).

⁶ The translation is based on Hesselink 2006:108.

Indeed, with the stars shining so brilliantly, it was wonderful to imagine reaching up and plucking them like fruit or flowers from the sky above. There are a variety of rhythmic patterns played in *p'ungmul kut* that are associated with different aspects of the cosmos, as I will discuss in the following section.

Musical Representations of the Cosmos: Rhythmic Cycles in *P'ungmul Kut*

In *p'ungmul kut* rituals, there is often a feeling of connecting with and being a part of something greater than oneself. People often feel connected with each other, thereby generating a sense of community (as discussed in the Conclusion). Playing outside in open fields under the open sky, there is often a feeling of being a part of nature and the cosmos. In a discussion of sacral symbolism as a key feature of rituals in general, Catherine Bell comments that ritual activities often “evoke experiences of a greater, higher, or more universalized reality—the group, the nation, humankind, the power of God, or the balance of the cosmos” (Bell 1997:159). In the following pages, I will discuss concepts about the cosmos (including the harmony and balance of *samjae*, i.e. heaven, earth, and people) as represented in Korean ritual music, particularly in the rhythmic cycles of *p'ungmul kut*.

Chaos

P'ungmul kut often starts with a musical representation of chaos (see beginning of Video Example 1).⁷ The word “chaos” (and its Korean equivalent, *hondon*) often has a general meaning of “disorder,” as in the chaos of a crowded market. But “chaos” also

⁷ For more information about the video examples, see List of Video Examples (page ii).

refers to “The ‘formless void’ of primordial matter, the ‘great deep’ or ‘abyss’ out of which the cosmos or order of the universe was evolved” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Similarly, *hondon* also refers to “the beginning of the creation of the universe, the state when heaven and earth were not yet divided” (Yi Hŭi-sŭng 1998:4411).⁸

In *p’ungmul kut*, chaos is represented musically by everyone playing out of sync. There are multiple flowing streams of sound, overlapping and interweaving. There is no clear, singular, steady pulse or rhythm. The chaotic sound is called *nant’a* (literally meaning “random beating”). Often there is an overall acceleration, with everyone accelerating at slightly different rates, gradually merging together. There is a sense of separate individuals, disconnected from each other, slowly coming together. Often the musicians are spread out at first, then they move closer towards each other as they strike their drums and gongs. They are like individual rain drops, scattered and random at first, then increasing in frequency and intensity, combining to form a powerful torrent of sound. The collective energy is then released and there is a return to calm, like a breath of fresh air deeply inhaled and then let go.

Out of the chaos there emerges a form. The accelerating *nant’a* phrase is usually repeated three times, slightly overlapping like waves on a beach, thereby creating an overall sense of structure (Video Example 2). The beginning of each phrase is signaled by the leader (*sangsoe*) raising the small gong (*soe*). The first phrase is often relatively slow and long, with each of the following phrases starting faster and ending more quickly than the one before. All together, the three phrases are collectively referred to as *hŭllim*,

⁸ This is my translation of the Korean definition, “천지 개벽 초에 하늘과 땅이 아직 나뉘지 아니한 상태” (Yi Hŭi-sŭng 1998:4411).

which means “flow.” As the sounds of the drums and gongs come together and accelerate, there is a sense of direction and moving forward.⁹

At Kasansa, our teacher Pak Hŭng-ju *sŏnsaengnim*¹⁰ described the rhythmic pattern of *hŭllim* (flow) as starting in a state where there is no sound, then developing into sound. He explained how it starts without any form or shape and then it develops into a form. He compared this process of development of sound and form over time to the growth of a fetus in a mother’s womb. It takes time. There is a process of growth.

Pak *sŏnsaengnim* has also written about the significance of the number 3 in Korean culture and how it represents a woman and a man having a child (Pak 2009). Women and men are often symbolized as the complementary opposite cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang* (陰陽, pronounced *ŭm* and *yang* in Korean). The metaphor of pregnancy may be extended to the creation of the cosmos from the combination of *yin* and *yang*. In Taoist philosophy, “the One is divided through the creative powers of the Tao into two opposite energetics and qualities [*yin* and *yang*] which then give birth to ‘the ten thousand things’” (Selby 2003:58), with “the ten thousand things” referring to “everything that exists” (Billington 1997:108). The Tao and the cosmos are discussed by Stephen Little as follows:

In ancient China, the term “Heaven and Earth” meant “the universe.” According to Taoist cosmology (the study of the origin and structure of the universe), in the beginning was the Tao (pronounced “dao”), conceived of as an empty void of infinite potential. Then, over a period of many eons, out of the Tao emerged *qi* (vital energy or breath; pronounced “chee”). Taoists believe that all things are made of *qi*, which is in a constant state of movement and flux. Originally the

⁹ This rhythmic pattern (*hŭllim*) is often played at various points during a ritual as a flowing transition between different sections.

¹⁰ The term *sŏnsaengnim* (meaning “teacher”) is often added after a person’s name as a title of respect.

universe was in a state of chaos, but eventually the light *qi* rose and formed the heavens, while the heavy *qi* sank and formed the earth. (Little 2000:127)

From the Tao (or “infinite potential”) emerged two types of “vital energy” (*qi*), which formed heaven and earth, i.e. the universe.¹¹ Vital energy is constantly flowing and changing in relation to the dynamic balancing of *yin* and *yang*, as Little explains:

The shifting patterns of *qi* are governed by the shifting balance of *yin* and *yang*, two complementary forces that emerged from the primordial Tao, and whose interaction defines and regulates the mechanisms of the universe. (Little 2000:127)

These concepts of Taoist cosmology (including *qi*, *yin*, and *yang*) are also part of the Korean *mu* religion and the rituals of *p’ungmul kut*. Having discussed how *p’ungmul kut* often begins with the musical representation of chaos flowing into the creation of the cosmos, let’s move on to the balancing of *yin* and *yang* (as well as the harmony of earth and heaven) in the next section.

Three Elements (*Samjae*): Heaven, Earth, and People

An important feature of the Korean worldview is the dynamic harmony and balance of *ŭm* and *yang* (*yin* and *yang* in Chinese), as represented by the *t’aegŭk* symbol in the center of the South Korean flag (Figure 3). The term *t’aegŭk* (*taiji* or *t’ai chi* in Chinese) consists of two Sino-Korean characters: *t’ae* (太) means “great” or “supreme” and *kŭk* (極) means “ultimate.” The diagram of the “supreme ultimate” is explained by Little as follows:

The diagram symbolizes the unity of the forces of *yin* and *yang* within the Tao. *Taiji* means “supreme ultimate,” and as such the diagram symbolizes the fundamental Taoist view of the structure of reality, namely that beyond the

¹¹ The term “Tao” (or Dao) is written with the character 道 (pronounced *To* in Korean), meaning “way” or “path.” The word *qi* (氣), meaning “energy,” is pronounced *ki* in Korean.

duality of phenomenal existence, created through the interaction of *yin* and *yang*, is the unity of the Tao, which exists beyond time and space. (Little 2000:131)

The *t'aegŭk* symbol is also known as the *ssang t'aegŭk* symbol (where *ssang* means “twin” or “dual”).¹²

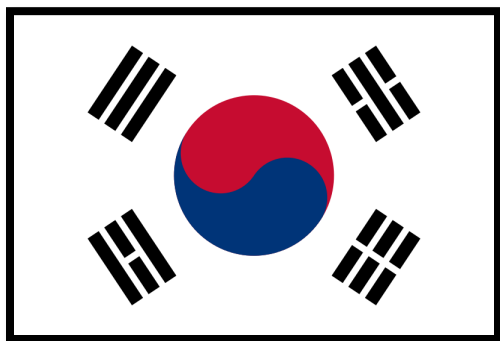


Figure 3. *T'aegŭk* symbol in the center of the South Korean flag.¹³



Figure 4. *Sam t'aegŭk* symbol, representing harmony of heaven, earth, and people.¹⁴

Another significant concept in Korean cosmology is *samjae* (three elements), i.e. the harmony and balance of heaven, earth, and people. These three elements are visually represented in the *sam t'aegŭk* symbol (see Figure 4). The term *sam* (三) means “three” or “triple.” Earth and heaven correspond to the cosmic forces of *ŭm* and *yang*, respectively. Sometimes the three primary colors of the *sam t'aegŭk* symbol are described as corresponding to the colors of the dual *t'aegŭk* symbol (red for heaven and blue for earth) with the addition of yellow for people:

¹² The South Korean flag is called *t'aegŭkki* (where *ki* means “flag”). It also features four trigrams, which “are made up of combinations of broken and unbroken lines, taken to symbolize *yin*, *yang*, and the intermediary stages in the cycle from *yin* to *yang* and back” (Little 2000:139).

¹³ Image of flag is from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_South_Korea.svg (accessed Nov. 14, 2013).

¹⁴ Image from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sam-Taeguk.svg> (accessed Nov. 14, 2013).

[T]he two commas must gain a third to create the *samt'aeguk*, seen throughout Korea in, for example, the doors to Buddhist temples and shaman ritual spaces, where the red heavenly *yang* and blue earthly *yin* are joined by a third comma, the yellow of man. (Howard 2006 vol. 2:32)

But according to Korean folklorist Cho Chayong, yellow represents earth, blue represents people, and red represents heaven (1995:489).¹⁵ Rather than focusing on which color represents which element, it is more important to see the symbol as a balanced, unified whole.¹⁶

The dynamic harmony and balance of *ǔm* (earth), *yang* (heaven), and people are also represented in Korean music, where each beat is often divided into triplets. The three parts (*tchok*) of each beat may be seen as corresponding to the three elements (*samjae*) of heaven, earth, and people. As Seo explains:

I suggest that the triple *tchok* inherent in every beat manifests the essence of the Korean worldview musically. (Seo 2002:238)

For example, each beat is divided into triplets in the rhythmic cycle called *il ch'ae kut* (where *il* means “one” and *ch'ae* means “stroke,” indicating that there is one stroke of the large gong [*ching*] per cycle, and *kut* means “ritual”).¹⁷ There are regional variations of this rhythmic cycle. Much of the following discussion is based on what I have learned by playing *p'ungmul kut* from the southwest coast of the Korean peninsula.¹⁸ Studying

¹⁵ Cho is also known as Zo Zayong in his English publications.

¹⁶ The three primary colors are also featured in the three colored sashes (*samsaek tti*) that many *p'ungmul kut* musicians wear over the shoulders and around the waist.

¹⁷ This rhythmic cycle is also called *ilch'a kut* (where *il* means “first” and *ch'a* means “section”). It is also known as *oech'ae kut* (*oe* means “single”) and *oemach'i kut* (*mach'i* means “beat”). These various names are often shortened to *ilch'ae*, *ilch'a*, *oech'ae*, and *oemach'i* (omitting the term *kut*). I will discuss the significance of the term *kut* later in this chapter.

¹⁸ I began learning to play this regional style of *p'ungmul kut* in January 2000 in the village of Wölp'o on Kögümdo Island in the Kohüng district of South Chölla province.

this particular regional style (called *kun'go*)¹⁹ has provided key insights into my understanding of popular rhythmic cycles and their variations as they are played in more commonly known styles of *p'ungmul kut*.

In the southwest coastal style, each cycle of *ilch'ae kut* may be seen as consisting of only one beat, and every beat is divided into three parts (Video Example 3 and Figure 5). In order to illustrate this rhythmic cycle, I use a modified form of traditional Korean music notation known as *chǒngganbo*.²⁰ Usually each square of *chǒngganbo* represents one beat, but for this discussion of *ilch'ae kut*, three boxes are used to indicate the three parts within a single beat.

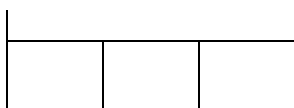


Figure 5. Rhythmic framework of *ilch'ae kut*, consisting of a single beat divided into triplets.

The triplets may be heard most clearly on the small gong (*soe*).²¹ The *soe* is played by the leader (*sangsoe*) and there are often several additional *soe* players in an ensemble as well, contributing to a richly textured soundscape. While there are many variations and the musicians are free to improvise, the main pattern for *ilch'ae kut* on the

¹⁹ *Kun'go* (軍鼓) means “military drums.” This regional style of *p'ungmul kut* from the southwest coast is also known as *kǔmgo* (金鼓), meaning “metal (i.e. gongs) and drums.”

²⁰ The Sino-Korean term *chǒng* (井) refers to “the openings of water wells which are surrounded by four tree trunks placed horizontally in the form of a 井” (Kaufmann 1967:449 n.85), while *gan* (間) means “between,” i.e. the square space between the lines of the 井 character, and *bo* (譜) means “notation.”

²¹ While *soe* means “metal,” the small gong is also known onomatopoeically as *kkwaenggwari*.

soe consists of an alternation between long and short strokes (see Figure 6).²² Korean music is often learned orally, with different oral syllables (*kuĩm*) for various sounds. For the *soe* (small gong), the long and short strokes are called *kaen* and *chi*.²³ Thus *ilch'ae kut* is also known as *kaenji*. In Figure 6, the oral syllables are written below the squares.

In Korean music notation (*chǒngganbo*), different symbols represent various sounds. A circle indicates a stroke on the *soe*. The squares represent duration, with an empty square indicating the continuation of the sound from the previous square. So in Figure 6, the sound of the first stroke (*kaen*) lasts for two thirds of the beat, followed by a shorter stroke (*chi*) in the last third of the beat.

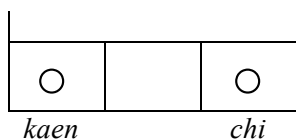


Figure 6. *Soe* (small gong) part for *ilch'ae kut*, consisting of long and short strokes.

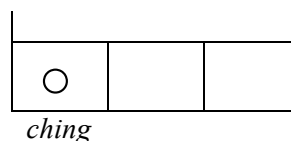


Figure 7. *Ching* (large gong) part for *ilch'ae kut*, consisting of 1 stroke per cycle.

The *ching* (large gong) is struck at the beginning of each cycle. Since there is one stroke (*ilch'ae*) of the large gong per cycle, and the cycle is only one beat long, the *ching* is struck every beat. In Figure 7, a circle indicates a stroke on the *ching*. The oral syllable (*kuĩm*) for the sound of the large gong is *ching*.

Ilch'ae kut is generally played as a repeating 4-beat pattern (Figure 8), often with two accented beats followed by two regular beats. In Figure 8, the two stronger beats are

²² It is interesting to note that the Korean term for “rhythm” (*changdan*) consists of two Sino-Korean terms (長 *chang* and 短 *tan*) meaning “long” and “short.” An endless variety of rhythms may be formed by different combinations of long and short strokes.

²³ Instead of *kaen*, some people say *chaen* or *ch'aen*.

indicated with an accent (>) above the squares. Some *soe* players extend their arms forward while playing the two accented beats.²⁴

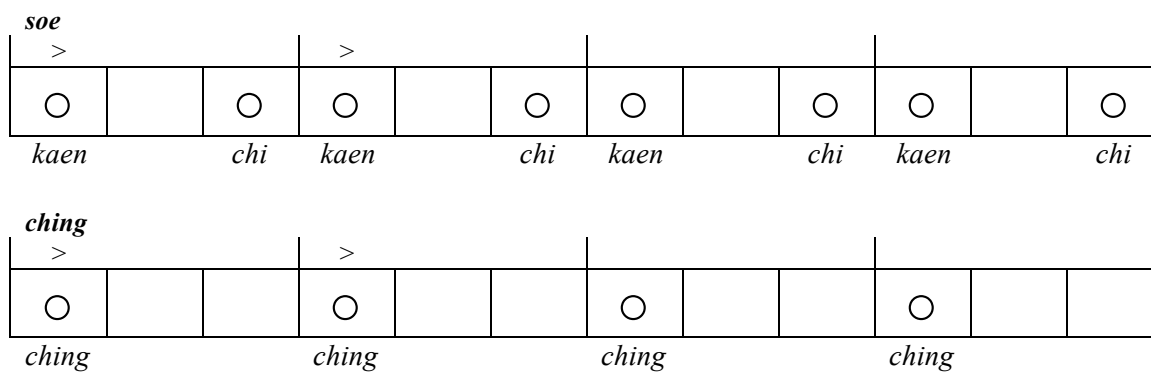


Figure 8. Four-beat pattern of *ilch'ae kut* for *soe* and *ching*.

When *ilch'ae kut* is played in other regional styles of *p'unngmul kut* (outside of the southwest coastal area), it is commonly known as *hwimori*. It generally consists of a 4-beat pattern like the one shown in Figure 8, but instead of striking the *ching* (large gong) every beat, it is struck only once every 4 beats (Figure 9).²⁵

More significantly, when played in other styles, there is often a dramatic increase in tempo, with the result that the triple division of each beat is often obscured and replaced by a duple division (Video Example 4 and Figure 10). In this accelerated version of *hwimori*, the *soe* (small gong) often plays variations of the main pattern, while the *ching* (large gong) is struck once every 2 beats (Figure 10).

²⁴ On the *changgu* (hourglass drum), *puk* (barrel drum), and *sogo* (frame drum), musicians play different 4-beat patterns of *ilch'ae kut* that also tend to accent the first two beats.

²⁵ For example, see the DVD called *Samulnori* produced by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea (Lee Young-Gwang 2009). In some places (for instance, Iri in North Chölla province), there is a variation of *ilch'ae kut* known as *ich'ae* (meaning “two strokes”) as well as *hwimori*, the main difference being two strokes of the large gong (*ching*) per cycle (Hesselink 2006:163). In the southwest coastal style, *ich'ae kut* refers to a rhythmic cycle that is quite distinct from *ilch'ae kut*, featuring different patterns for the small gong (*soe*), hourglass drum (*changgu*), and barrel drum (*puk*).

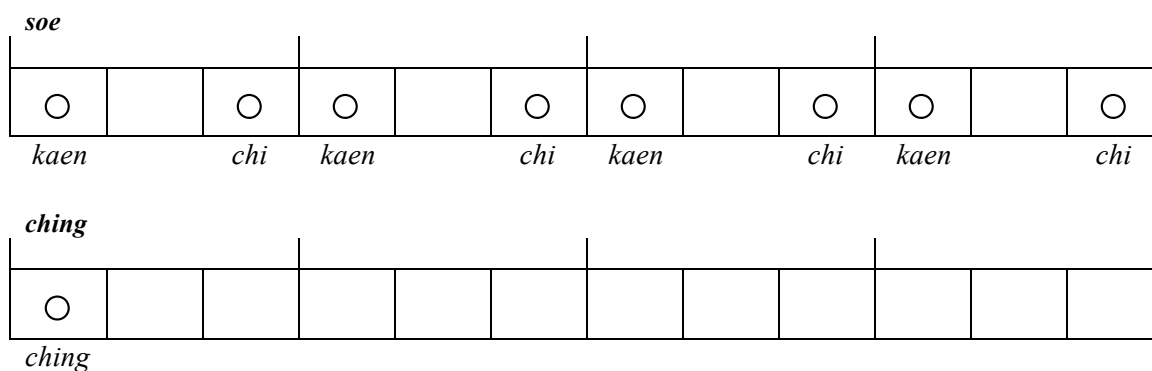


Figure 9. *Hwimori*, featuring only 1 *ching* stroke every 4 beats.

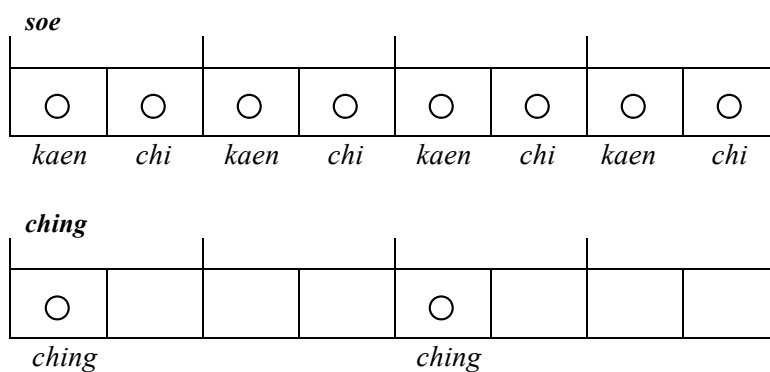


Figure 10. *Hwimori* with duple division of beats (and *ching* stroke every 2 beats).

Ilch'ae kut (from the southwest coast as well as other regions) is fast-paced and exciting, so it is also known as *toen ilch'ae kut* (where *toen* means “fast” or “intense”). There is also a slightly slower version of *ilch'ae kut*, in which the triplet structure may be heard more clearly. This slower version is called *nŭjŭn ilch'ae kut* (where *nŭjŭn* means “slow” or “delayed”).

Like the regular fast-paced *ilch'ae kut*, the slower version may be seen as a 1-beat rhythmic cycle, with each beat divided into triplets (Video Example 5 and Figure 11). Alternatively, it may be heard as a 3-beat rhythmic cycle, since the slower tempo allows

one to hear each of the three divisions of the cycle as individual beats. Either way, the rhythmic cycle is divided into triplets and there is one stroke (*ilch'ae*) of the large gong (*ching*) per cycle.

In order to see the relationship between the slow and fast versions of *ilch'ae kut*, let's imagine slowing down the fast version of *ilch'ae kut* to match the tempo of the slow version (Figure 11). In the fast version, instead of using the oral syllables *kaen chi* for the sounds of the small gong (*soe*), let's use a slight variation, *kaeng kaeng*. Then we may see that the slow version is essentially the same as the fast version, except for the addition of a short pick-up note (*chi*) before the last third of the cycle. The slow version of *ilch'ae kut* is also known as *kaen-chi-kaeng*.²⁶

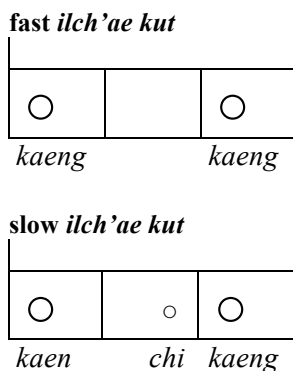


Figure 11. Fast and slow versions of *ilch'ae kut*.

There is also a variation of slow *ilch'ae kut* that features steady triplets on the small gong (see Video Example 6 and Figure 12). Musicians often shift freely back and forth between the steady triplets (Figure 12) and the version with pick-up notes (Figure 11).

²⁶ The slow version of *ilch'ae kut* is often followed by the fast version (see the second and third sections of Video Example 1).

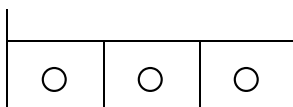


Figure 12. Variation of slow *ilch'ae kut*, featuring steady triplets.

While playing steady triplets, the musicians often accent every other stroke (Figure 13), creating a polyrhythmic feeling of multiple layers interweaving with each other. In Figure 13, an accent (>) is placed over every other box while numbers are written above and below to indicate different ways of counting 3s. Thus all the versions of *ilch'ae kut* feature triplets, which may be seen as musical representations of the cosmic balance and harmony of the three elements (*samjae*) of heaven, earth, and people.

Triplets are at the core of many other Korean rhythmic cycles as well.

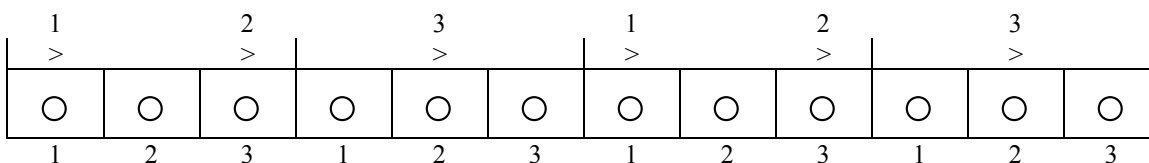


Figure 13. Accenting every other beat in *ilch'ae kut*, creating polyrhythms.

In addition to the triplet division of beats, there are various other ways that the three elements (*samjae*) of heaven, earth, and people are represented in Korean music. Another popular rhythmic cycle in *p'ungmul kut* that highlights the significance of the three elements is called *samch'ae kut*, where *sam* means “three,” *ch'ae* means “stroke,” and *kut* means “ritual.” This rhythmic cycle features three strokes of the large gong (*ching*) per cycle when played in the southwest coastal style (Video Example 7 and Figure 14).

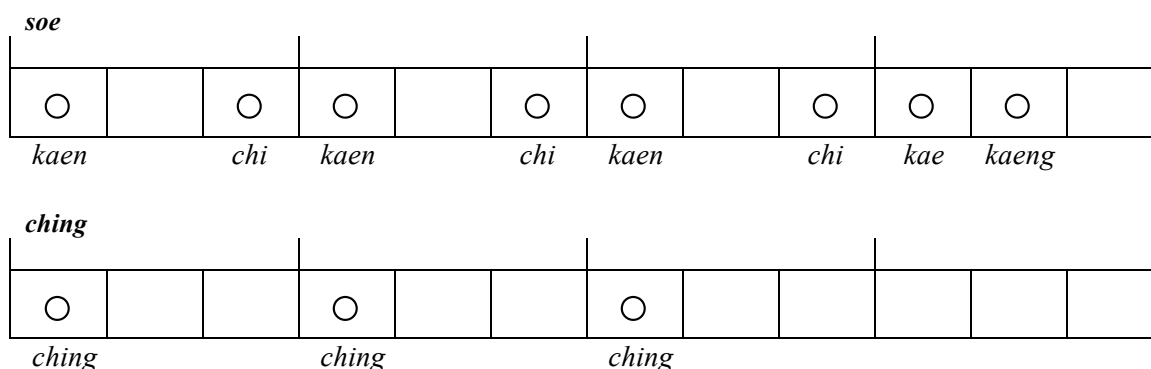


Figure 14. Main pattern for *samch'ae kut*, featuring three strokes on *ching* (large gong) in southwest coastal style.

But when *samch'ae kut* is played in other regional styles, there is only one stroke of the large gong, thereby obscuring the significance of the name of the rhythmic cycle, as well as altering its character (Figure 15). Ironically, the term *samch'ae* (three strokes) has even been called a “misnomer” since some musicians do not play three strokes of the large gong (*ching*) per cycle (Hesselink 2006:165).²⁷ Thus, although I was familiar with this rhythmic cycle from other styles of *p'ungmul kut*, it was only when I learned about the southwest coastal style (*kun'go*) that the name *samch'ae kut* actually made sense.²⁸

By looking at the main form of *samch'ae kut* in Figure 14, we may see that the first 3 beats of *samch'ae kut* are the same as *ilch'ae kut* (Figure 16).²⁹ Then, in the fourth

²⁷ There are two main phrases of *samch'ae kut* (as discussed on page 179), which Hesselink sees as forming a single cycle, with one stroke per phrase: “Made up of two phrases of equal length, the misnomer *kin* (long) *samch'ae* (three strokes)—at least with regard to contemporary performance practice—is a cycle marked by two strokes of the large gong (*ching*)” (2006:165). In the southwest coastal style, each phrase actually has three strokes (see Figure 17 on page 180).

²⁸ *Samch'ae kut* is also known as *samch'a kut* (where *ch'a* means “section”). Like *ilch'ae kut*, it is relatively fast-paced, so it is also known as *toen samch'ae kut* (where *toen* means “fast”). There is also a slower version, which is called *nŭjŭn samch'ae kut* or *nŭrin samch'ae kut*, where *nŭjŭn* and *nŭrin* mean “slow” (see Video Example 8). It is also known as *chajinmori* and *tŏngdŏkkung*.

²⁹ Similarly, in the slow version of *samch'ae kut*, the first three beats are often played like the slow version of *ilch'ae kut*.

beat, instead of playing a long stroke followed by a short stroke (*kaen chi*) on the small gong, *samch'ae kut* features a short stroke followed by a long stroke (*kae kaeng*).

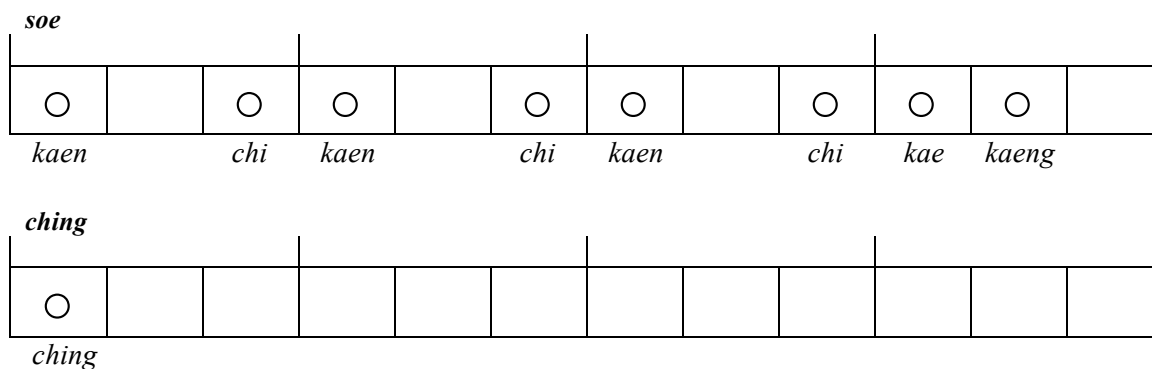


Figure 15. *Samch'ae kut* in other regional styles, featuring only one stroke on *ching* (large gong).

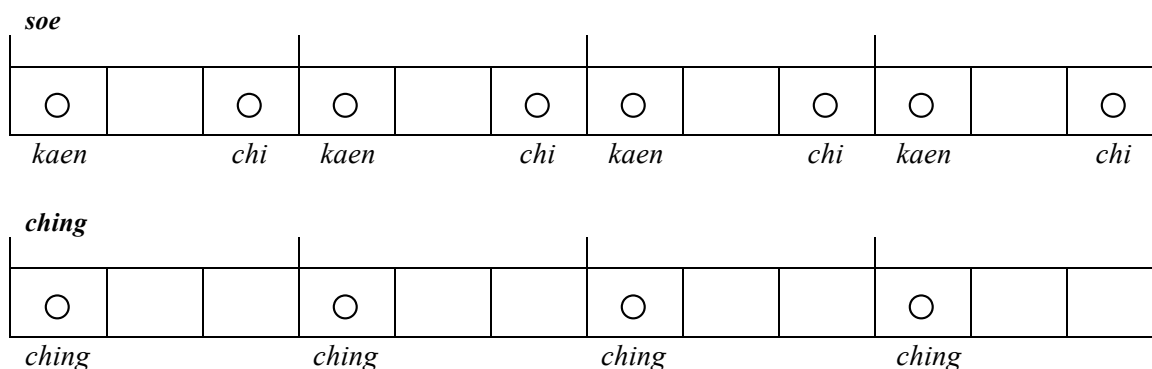
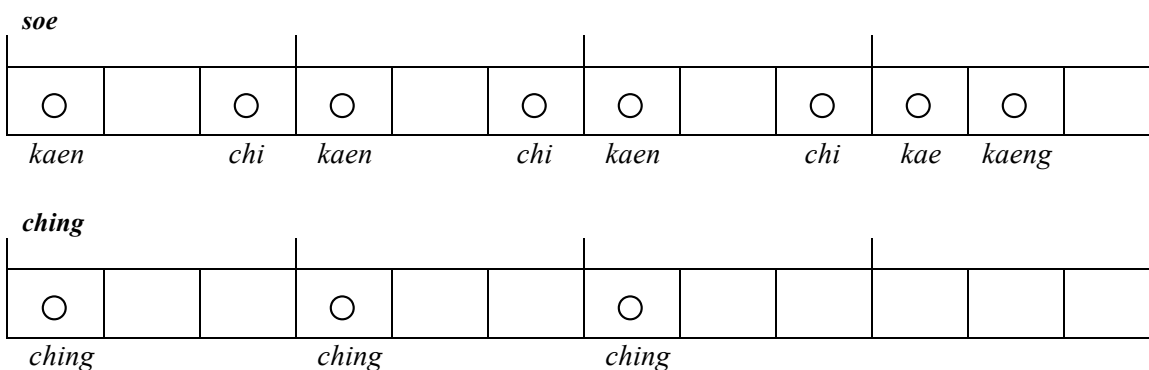


Figure 16. Four beats of *ilch'ae kut* (note the similarity with *samch'ae kut* in Figure 14).

The main pattern of *samch'ae kut* (shown in Figure 14) is often played in alternation with a second pattern (see Video Example 7 and Figure 17). The two phrases are described as *yang* and *ũm*, referring to the complementary opposite cosmic principles (*yang* and *yin* in Chinese), which correspond to pairings such as male and female, sun and moon, light and dark, heaven and earth. The difference between the two rhythmic

phrases is in the first beat: while the *yang* phrase begins with a long stroke followed by a short stroke on the small gong (*kaen chi*), the *ŭm* phrase starts with a short stroke followed by a long stroke (*kae kaeng*).³⁰

***yang* phrase**



***ŭm* phrase**

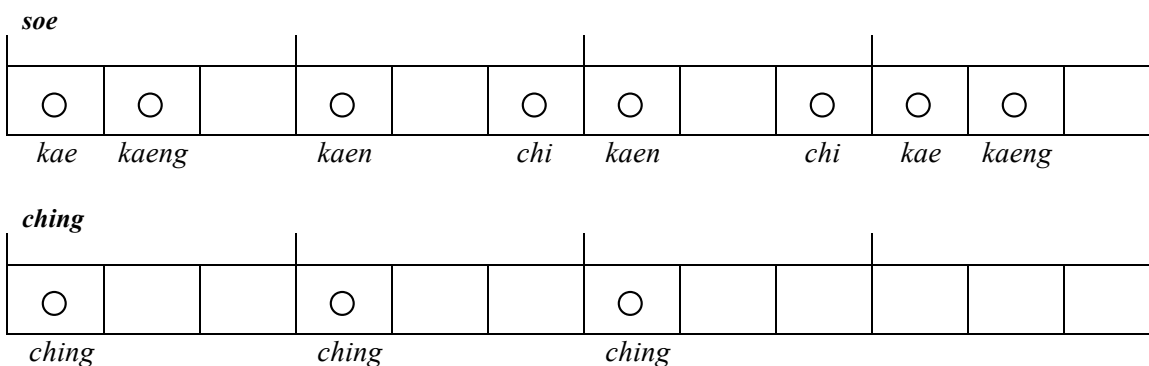


Figure 17. Two phrases (*yang* and *ŭm*) of *samch'ae kut*.

Many rhythmic cycles in Korean music consist of two complementary phrases (*ŭm* and *yang*), which may be seen as part of a musical representation of the three elements (*samjae*) of heaven, earth, and people. The *ŭm* and *yang* phrases correspond to earth and heaven, respectively, while the musicians represent people in general.

³⁰ Musicians also play variations of these two phrases (see last section of Video Example 1).

A similar combination of *ŭm* (earth), *yang* (heaven), and people has been noted in relation to the *changgu* (hourglass drum). The *changgu* has two heads, which are struck with a wooden mallet and a bamboo stick to produce two distinct, contrasting sounds: a low resonant tone and a high crisp sound, which are often described as *ŭm* and *yang*, respectively.³¹ Musicians playing the *changgu* complete the trio of elements (*samjae*, i.e. heaven, earth, and people), combining their energy with the sounds of the drum. As Seo observes:

A changgu is an instrument with *ŭm/yang* components, but the full potential of *changgu* is appreciated only if a human being strikes the heads of the drum to produce sound. (Seo 2002:238)

Thus the rituals of *p'ungmul kut* feature a combination of musicians with *ŭm* and *yang* sounds and rhythms, representing the cosmic balance and harmony of heaven, earth, and people.

There are many other rhythmic cycles in *p'ungmul kut*—and Korean music in general—that also feature triplets as well as *ŭm* and *yang* phrases.³² I have selected only a few rhythmic cycles here in order to illustrate the significance of *samjae* (three elements), i.e. the harmony and balance of heaven, earth, and people, in the rituals of *p'ungmul kut*. Hopefully this introduction will help readers (and listeners) to be aware of musical representations of the cosmos while they go on to explore the wonderful diversity of rhythms in Korean music.

³¹ On one side, the round wooden head of the mallet strikes the center of the leather drum head, whereas on the other side, the thin bamboo stick usually hits the circular edge where the wooden rim of the drum's body presses against the stretched leather head.

³² Many genres of Korean traditional music are rooted in the ritual music of the *mu* religion, i.e. the music of *p'ungmul kut* and *mudang kut*.

Conclusion: Community and Identity in *P'ungmul Kut*

An important feature of *p'ungmul kut* is the feeling of community that is generated and experienced by participants. In order to understand this sense of community in *p'ungmul kut*, it may be helpful to consider the concept of *communitas* (Turner 1969), which was introduced at the end of Chapter 6 (about Korean rituals in the People's Cultural Movement). Turner uses the Latin term *communitas* to refer to a special kind of community—one in which people are “equal individuals,” not structured or divided by class or status (1969:96). Instead of the term “community,” which may refer to a physical space or “area of common living,” Turner prefers the term *communitas* for its emphasis on social relationships (ibid.).

Communitas is often experienced in rites of passage (such as initiation ceremonies), particularly during the middle phase, which Arnold van Gennep ([1909] 1960) has called the “liminal phase” (from the Latin word *limen*, meaning “threshold”).¹ As Turner explains, during the liminal phase:

We are presented ... with a “moment in and out of time,” and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties. (Turner 1969:96)²

¹ The three phrases are separation (preliminal), transition (liminal), and incorporation (postliminal) (van Gennep [1909] 1960:11).

² Turner continues: “It is as though there are here two major ‘models’ for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of ‘more’ or ‘less’. The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals” (1969:96).

This “generalized social bond” may be seen as a relationship of equality where individuals are connected together as members of humanity in contrast to the multiple “structural ties” that pull people apart into separate groups based on social divisions such as class or status.

In his book, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Turner presents ritual as a dialectical process of alternation between social structure and *communitas* (anti-structure).³ As Catherine Bell explains:

Turner recast [van Gennep’s] sequence into a more fundamental dialectic between the social order (structure) and a period of social disorder and liminality (antistructure) that he termed *communitas*. (Bell 1997:40)

Thus rituals may be seen as a dialectical process alternating between social divisions (structure) and the connections of *communitas* (anti-structure). As Turner writes:

There is a dialectic here, for the immediacy of *communitas* gives way to the mediacy of structure, while, in *rites de passage*, men are released from structure into *communitas* only to return to structure revitalized by their experience of *communitas*. (Turner 1969:129)

The revitalizing experience of *communitas* is not limited to rituals. *Communitas* is also a part of social life in general, which features a dialectical process similar to ritual, as Turner points out:

[F]or individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experiences of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality. (Turner 1969:97)⁴

³ The term “anti-structure” initially gave me the impression of something coming apart, of a lack of connection between people, but then I learned that Turner is actually using it to refer to a society where everyone is equal, free of “structural ties” (i.e. social divisions or stratification such as class or status). This lack of fragmentation and social differences allows for people to connect on a more fundamentally human level.

⁴ “Homogeneity” here refers to a lack of social distinctions (class or status), not an erasing of individual differences. As Turner notes elsewhere, “*communitas* preserves individual distinctiveness” (1982:45).

In *Music as Social Life*, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino discusses *communitas* in regard to the experience of feeling connected, “deeply bound,” and having a sense of “oneness” with other people (2008:17), which may happen while participating in musical performances:

This experience [of connecting] is akin to what anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) calls *communitas*, a possible collective state achieved through rituals where all personal differences of class, status, age, gender, and other personal distinctions are stripped away allowing people to temporarily merge through their basic humanity. (Turino 2008:18)

Communitas is often experienced by people participating in *p'ungmul kut*. During performances of *p'ungmul kut*, participants often feel connected together and there is a mutual appreciation of each other's humanity. By participating together in musical activities (and performing arts in general), people often feel a sense of identity as part of a community, as Turino comments:

The performing arts are frequently fulcrums of identity, allowing people to intimately feel themselves part of the community through the very act of participating together in performance. (Turino 2008:2)

In addition to integrating individuals into a community, people often feel a sense of personal integration (integrating parts of the self) while participating in musical activities, as Turino notes:

[M]usical participation and experience are valuable for the processes of personal and social integration that make us whole. (Turino 2008:1)

While considering the integrative function of the arts, Turino refers to Gregory Bateson's (1972) work:

He [Bateson] notes that the arts are a special form of communication that has an integrative function—integrating and uniting the members of social groups but also integrating individual selves, and selves with the world. (Turino 2008:3)

As part of his discussion of music and the integration of the self, Turino also refers to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of "flow":⁵

Further illuminating Bateson's ideas about individuals' developing psychic wholeness through artistic experiences, psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has created a theory of *optimal experience* or *flow* that helps explain how art and music aid individuals in reaching a fuller integration of the self (1988, 1990). (Turino 2008:4; emphasis in original)

Flow is described by Turino as follows:

Flow refers to a state of heightened concentration, when one is so intent on the activity at hand that all other thoughts, concerns, and distractions disappear and the actor is fully in the present. (Turino 2008:4; emphasis in original)⁶

Flow and integration of the self are discussed by Csikszentmihalyi:

Flow helps to integrate the self because in that state of deep concentration consciousness is unusually well ordered. Thoughts, intentions, feelings, and all the senses are focused on the same goal. Experience is in harmony. And when the flow episode is over, one feels more "together" than before, not only internally but also with respect to other people and to the world in general. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:41)

Flow may be experienced in a wide range of activities, including music making (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:111-13). There are several features of flow (i.e. optimal experience), which Csikszentmihalyi discusses:

When people reflect on how it feels when their experience is most positive, they mention at least one, and often all, of the following. First, the experience usually occurs when we confront tasks we have a chance of completing. Second, we must be able to concentrate on what we are doing. Third and fourth, the concentration is usually possible because the task undertaken has clear goals and provides immediate feedback. Fifth, one acts with a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life. Sixth, enjoyable experiences allow people to exercise a sense of control over their actions. Seventh, concern for the self disappears, yet paradoxically the sense of

⁵ The name "Csikszentmihalyi" is pronounced "cheeks sent me high" (Seligman 2002:113).

⁶ Csikszentmihalyi notes that many people use the term "flow" when describing an optimal experience: "We have called this state the *flow experience*, because this is the term many of the people we interviewed had used in their descriptions of how it felt to be in top form: 'It was like floating,' 'I was carried on by the flow'" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:40; emphasis in original).

self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over. Finally, the sense of the duration of time is altered; hours pass by in minutes, and minutes can stretch out to seem like hours. The combination of all these elements causes a sense of deep enjoyment that is so rewarding people feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:49)

All of these features may be experienced while making music. In particular, let's consider the first feature, which will be shown to be especially relevant to *p'ungmul kut*. Dealing with tasks that can be completed—which are neither too difficult (creating excessive anxiety) nor too easy (leading to boredom)—is an important condition of flow and enjoyment, as Csikszentmihalyi explains:

[E]njoyment comes at a very specific point: whenever the opportunities for action perceived by the individual are equal to his or her capabilities. ... Enjoyment appears at the boundary between boredom and anxiety, when the challenges are just balanced with the person's capacity to act. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:52)

Thus flow may be experienced when there is a “balancing of challenges and skills” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:53), which is also an important feature of participatory music, as Turino explains:

Participatory traditions usually include a variety of roles demanding different degrees of specialization, so that people can join in at a level that offers the right balance of challenge and acquired skills. (Turino 2008:31)

P'ungmul kut is often performed as a participatory tradition (as discussed in Chapter 3), allowing individuals with different levels of specialization to join in and experience flow together. As Nathan Hesselink explains:

In *p'ungmul* you essentially play at the level at which you are capable. If someone has only mastered the primary form of the rhythmic patterns, then that is all they are responsible for producing. What is so fascinating in the Korean context, however, is that performers are constantly being pushed to achieve their fullest potential, all at their own speed *but concurrently* during an ongoing performance. (Hesselink 2007b:93; emphasis in original)

Hesselink continues:

What is so potentially profound about such an arrangement is that *p'ungmul* allows for the greatest player who ever lived (however one would establish such a title) to play alongside the true beginner, each taking away with them an equally valuable and rewarding performance experience. (Hesselink 2007b:93)

In addition to the way that people of all levels are able to find a personal balance of challenge and skill, playing *p'ungmul kut* also features several other aspects of flow which were mentioned earlier (on page 185), including “concentration,” “clear goals,” and “immediate feedback” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:49). Making music (as well as listening and moving to music), i.e. “musicking” (Small 1998), also often has the fifth quality of flow: “one acts with a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:49).

This description of flow is similar to what ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon refers to as “a musical way of ‘being-in-the-world’” or “musical being”:

When my consciousness is filled with music I am in the world musically. My experiencing mind tells me that I have a musical way of “being-in-the-world” when I make music and when I listen and move to music so that it fills my body. I call this musical being, and it is a mode of being that presents itself as different from my normal, everyday modes of experiencing, from my self-conscious modes of experiencing, and from my objectivizing modes of experiencing. (Titon 2008 [1997]:32)

Titon is using the German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s term “being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-sein*), which is explained by Dermot Moran as follows:

Heidegger (in *Being and Time*, 1927) introduces the technical term *Being-in-the-world* to express the indissoluble manner in which human existence (Dasein) is bound up with a set of contexts and concerns that make up the personal, social, cultural, historical *environment* (*Umwelt*), surroundings (*Umgebung*) or *milieu*. Traditional philosophy, by assuming the possibility of an isolated subject (e.g. Descartes), ignored this phenomenon of being-in-the-world, but there is no self without world. For Heidegger, inanimate objects do not have a world, and an animal’s world is relatively impoverished, whereas being-in-the-world is constitutive of Dasein, and is communal, always including others: “The world of

Dasein is a with-world” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §26). (Moran 2008:969; emphasis in original)

Ethnomusicologist Steven Friedson also uses Heidegger’s terminology and writes about “a musical mode of being-in-the-world” (1996:5).⁷ Friedson points out that:

Being-in-the-world in a musical way can be a particularly powerful mode of lived experience. (Friedson 1996:5)

Similar to Moran’s characterization of being-in-the-world as “communal, always including others” (2008:969), Friedson notes:

[B]eing-in-the-world is *always* a being-with others, which by its very nature is a cultural mode of existence. (Friedson 1996:7; emphasis in original)

As for musical being-in-the-world, Titon writes:

In my paradigm case of musical being-in-the-world I am bound up socially with others making music. (Titon 2008 [1997]:32)

Making music together in *p’ungmul kut* often creates a strong social bond between people. An essential feature of participating in *p’ungmul kut* is the development of interpersonal relationships, of friendships, and the feeling of being welcomed and included as an integral part of the group and the community.

While discussing the significance of social bonds between people making music, Titon suggests that music may be thought of as a relationship between people:

Music, conceived not as a signifying language⁸ but as a collaborative relationship among the people making it, gives us, at those magical moments of self-

⁷ Friedson notes that “the term ‘mode’ is to be taken not only in its general ontological meaning as a way of Being, but also in a more strictly musical sense as a tonal/rhythmic structuration” (1996:5). As for the term “being-in-the-world,” Friedson explains: “Heidegger uses this hyphenated, prepositional terminology to move away from the metaphysics of interiority and point to the equiprimordiality of human Being and world—both are always given together” (1996:7).

⁸ After introducing Paul Ricoeur’s philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology—according to which “any meaningful action can be considered, or read, as a text; thus, a musical performance, for example, can be understood as the equivalent of a text” (Titon 2008 [1997]:28)—Titon goes

transcendence, a connection among living beings leading to friendship and thus the basis for an epistemology⁹ of fieldwork based in musical, rather than linguistic, being-in-the-world. (Titon 2008 [1997]:38)

Titon's essay (2008 [1997]) is included in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, edited by Timothy J. Cooley and Gregory Barz (2008 [1997]). In the introduction to the second edition of *Shadows in the Field*, Cooley and Barz refer to Titon's contribution:

In the first edition of *Shadows in the Field* we claimed that by actively taking part in a society's music-cultural practices, the ethnomusicologist had the potential for uniquely and truly participatory participation-observation. Jeff Titon phrased this succinctly as musically "being-in-the-world." (Cooley and Barz 2008:4)

Participant observation is an important part of fieldwork for ethnomusicologists, but instead of the term "participant observation," I would like to suggest the term "observant participation" in order to clarify the importance of participation for learning about music and culture.¹⁰ It is the experience of actively participating in *p'unngmul kut* that has been the key to my understanding of Korean music and culture.

Titon stresses the importance of experiencing and making music together with people while doing fieldwork in order to learn about music and culture. For instance, Titon writes:

[O]ur most satisfying knowledge is often acquired through the experience of music making and the relationships that arise during fieldwork. It seems to me that in our ways of being musical, and in our ways of doing fieldwork, we, like

on to write: "I have proposed that we stand Ricoeur on his head, that meaningful actions be experienced as music, not read as text (Titon 1995). In other words, I suggest that we change the metaphor we use for our interpretive acts. The world is not like a text to be read but like a musical performance to be experienced" (2008 [1997]:28-29).

⁹ "Epistemology," as Titon explains, "is that field of inquiry whose subject is the origins, nature, and limits of human knowing" (2008 [1997]:25).

¹⁰ Someone who is unfamiliar with the term "participant observation" might mistakenly think that it means "a person's observation of participants." In contrast, the term "observant participation" does not have that ambiguity.

the subjects (people) of our study, are open to transformations through experience. (Titon 2008 [1997]:36)

The experience of making music in *p'ungmul kut* is often transformative for people. Transformation is also an important feature of rituals in general. In many theories about ritual, transformation must be achieved in order for a ritual to be considered effective or successful, as Catherine Bell explains:

[M]ost performance theorists imply that an effective or successful ritual performance is one in which a type of transformation is achieved. Some have described it as a transformation of being and consciousness achieved through an intensity of “flow” or “concentration.” (Bell 1997:74)

This brings us back to the discussion about optimal experiences of flow. In addition to the experience of flow while making music, Csikszentmihalyi also discusses optimal experiences in rituals, which relates to participating in *p'ungmul kut* as well:

In fact, flow and religion have been intimately connected from earliest times. Many of the optimal experiences of mankind have taken place in the context of religious rituals. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:76)

Csikszentmihalyi refers to Turner’s work in particular:

The anthropologist Victor Turner (1974) saw the ubiquity of the ritual processes in preliterate societies as an indication that they were socially sanctioned opportunities to experience flow. Religious rituals in general are usually conducive to the flow experience. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:256)

In Turner’s article “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual” (1982), Csikszentmihalyi’s writings about flow are examined in relation to ritual and *communitas*. Turner notes that “*communitas* has something of a ‘flow’ quality” (1982:58)¹¹ and goes on to discuss flow in rituals:

In societies before the Industrial Revolution, ritual could always have a “flow” quality for total communities ... ; in post-industrial societies, when ritual gave

¹¹ Turner cites Csikszentmihalyi 1974 and 1975.

way to individualism and rationalism, the flow experience was pushed mainly into the leisure genres of art, sport, games, pastimes, etc. (Turner 1982:58)

Csikszentmihalyi also refers to Emile Durkheim's (1912) concept of "collective effervescence" in his discussion of the experience of flow when participating in rituals.¹²

Such joint participation produces in an audience the condition Emile Durkheim called "collective effervescence," or the sense that one belongs to a group with a concrete, real existence. This feeling, Durkheim believed, was at the roots of religious experience. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:110)

Durkheim's concept of "collective effervescence" and Turner's concept of *communitas* may be closely related, even "equivalent," according to Tim Olaveson:

[Olaveson] delineates a previously unnoticed equivalency between Emile Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence and Victor Turner's *communitas*. ... Durkheim's and Turner's models are compared, including their emphases on the alienating nature of social structure, and the necessity of a dialectical tension between it and collective effervescence/*communitas*. (Olaveson 2001:89)

The terms "collective effervescence" and *communitas* also sound similar to the Korean concepts of "communal spirit" (*kongdongch'ejök shinmyöng*) and "communal consciousness" (*kongdongch'ejök üishik*), which have been discussed in relation to *p'ungmul kut* (Kim Inu 1987, O Chongsöp 1989), as mentioned earlier in Chapter 6. For instance, in his essay "*P'ungmul Kut* and Communal Spirit," Kim Inu (1987) writes about how communal spirit is created when people dance together in *p'ungmul kut*. The following passage from Kim's essay is translated by Nathan Hesselink:

If you step away from a performance of *p'ungmul* that is going very well, just for a moment, and look back, you see that everyone is floating about in a spiritual state or state of oneness {*shinmyöng*}. When the gestures match well, moving up and down in a simple and unreserved way, a group flow full of life takes form. The simple *porittae ch'um* {literally, "barley stalk dance"¹³}, danced by

¹² In the original French version, Durkheim uses the term "l'effervescence collective" (1912).

¹³ As Hesselink notes, "The *porittae ch'um* (literally, 'barley stalk dance') is a dance that is ubiquitous throughout the Korean peninsula in which the arms are held loosely out to the sides,

individuals, when done as a group and well coordinated certainly creates a spiritual state of ecstasy [*muajigyǒng*]. (Kim Inu 1987:114; translated in Hesselink 2006:106; bracketed material in Hesselink 2006; material in braces added by me)

The term *muajigyǒng* actually means “a spiritual state of perfect selflessness” (*mu* 無 means “no” and *a* 我 means “self,” while *ji gyǒng* 地境 means “state” or “condition”).

Selflessness is also a feature of optimal experiences of flow. As Csikszentmihalyi writes, during flow experiences:

concern for the self disappears, yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:49)

When describing the experience of making music, people often talk about “losing oneself” (i.e. becoming completely immersed in the activity, not feeling self-conscious, and being part of something greater than oneself). Somewhat paradoxically, people also talk about “finding oneself” while making music (i.e. being fully present, feeling whole, and having a sense of direction or purpose).

One’s sense of self is often strengthened by the experience of making music. There is a feeling of wholeness and a sense of personal integration (as discussed earlier on page 184). Also, when people make music together as a group, there is often a feeling of connecting with each other and a sense of social integration, of being a member of a community. Both personal and social integration are important for developing one’s identity and sense of self.

accompanied by a gentle up-and-down movement produced by bending the knees” (Hesselink 2006:229 n. 27).

In addition to integration, Csikszentmihalyi also discusses differentiation (i.e. distinguishing oneself as unique) as an equally important process for the development of the self:

It is by becoming increasingly complex that the self might be said to grow. Complexity is the result of two broad psychological processes: *differentiation* and *integration*. Differentiation implies a movement toward uniqueness, toward separating oneself from others. Integration refers to its opposite: a union with other people, with ideas and entities beyond the self. A complex self is one that succeeds in combining these opposite tendencies. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:41; emphasis in original)

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discussed the tension between having a sense of self as a unique individual and being reduced to one of many in a group that might be misperceived as homogeneous. Csikszentmihalyi's discussion about the opposite tendencies of integration and differentiation helps me to reconsider the complex balancing of individual and collective identities within my sense of self, recognizing both similarities and differences between myself and others.

The combination of integration and differentiation, which is central to the development of one's sense of self, is also discussed by Turino in relation to identity:

Identity always involves the twin aspects of unifying ourselves (emphasizing similarities) with some people and differentiating ourselves from others. (Turino 2008:105)¹⁴

In particular, Turino points out the importance of music and dance for identity formation:

¹⁴ While the concepts of identity and self are closely related, Turino clarifies the distinction between them as follows: "Nowadays people use the word *identity* as if it meant the same thing as *self*, yet it is important to differentiate the two terms conceptually because of the ways individual and collective identities function in the social world. The *self* is the composite of the total number of habits that determine the tendencies for everything we think, feel, experience, and do. In contrast, *identity* involves the *partial* and *variable* selection of habits and attributes that we use to represent ourselves to ourselves and to others, as well as those aspects that are perceived by ourselves and others as salient" (Turino 2008:101-102; emphasis in original).

Music and dance are key to identity formation because they are often public presentations of the deepest feelings and qualities that make a group unique. (Turino 2008:2)

Turino goes on to discuss the feeling of oneness that people often experience when making music and dancing together:

Through moving and sounding together in synchrony, people can experience a feeling of oneness with others. (Turino 2008:2-3)

Making music and dancing together in *p'ungmul kut* often generates a feeling of oneness and “communal spirit” (*kongdongch'ejök shinmyōng*). In addition to the creation of communal spirit when people dance together, Kim Inu also writes about the importance of audience participation and the contribution of energy in the form of cheering (*ch'uimsae*).¹⁵

In a successful *p'ungmul* performance, there is a sound more important than the instruments' sound, one that doubles the spiritual energy {*shinmyōng*}, namely, the sound of people [the audience]. ... These sounds, in the form of simple shouting, *ch'uimsae*, clapping, or the heavy breathing of those actively participating, become another unbroken stream of rhythmic patterns, a flow of enthusiastic sound acting as an additional instrument. (Kim Inu 1987:118; translated in Hesselink 2006:110-111; bracketed material in Hesselink 2006; material in braces added by me)

Interestingly, Christopher Small (who coined the term “musicking”) also writes about the audience’s contribution of energy—in the form of dancing as well as audible responses (such as cheering and clapping)—to musical performances in general:

Listeners and bystanders too may well contribute and certainly have a creative role to play through the energy they feed back ... to the musicians as they play, possibly through dancing and certainly through their visible and audible response as the performance continues. (Small 1998:115)

¹⁵ As Hesselink explains: “*Ch'uimsae* are interjections of encouragement from either the audience or accompanying instrumentalists and performers, the most standard being ‘Ölshigu’ (excellent), ‘Chot’a (nice), and ‘Chal handa’ (well done)” (Hesselink 2006:230, n.38).

Small also notes the connection between music and ritual, which relates to our discussion of *p'ungmul kut* and community identity as well:

The musical performance was part of that larger dramatic enactment which we call ritual, where the members of the community acted out their relationships and their mutual responsibilities and the identity of the community as a whole was affirmed and celebrated. (Small 1998:40)¹⁶

P'ungmul kut are percussion music rituals, which are traditionally performed in sacred contexts as part of the Korean *mu* religion (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4). There are often cosmological concepts represented in the music of *p'ungmul kut* (see Chapter 7). But even when there are no explicitly religious or cosmological aspects, it is still possible to consider *p'ungmul kut* as having ritual features such as *communitas*, collective effervescence, communal spirit (*kongdongch'ejök shinmyöng*), optimal experiences of flow, transformation, as well as models of relationships, identity, and community. *P'ungmul kut* may be seen as rituals that often transform people into an integrated community of individuals, thereby developing and strengthening each individual's sense of self as well as a collective group identity.

In addition to connecting with people, there is often a sense of connecting with nature and the cosmos when playing *p'ungmul kut*, especially when the ritual is performed outside, with people immersed in and surrounded by nature, such as in the seaside community of Wölp'o on Kögūmdo Island (see Video Examples 2, 3, and 8) or

¹⁶ Small also discusses human relationships in music: “The pattern of relationships that is established during a musical performance and connects together its relationships, whether they be first-, second-, third-, or *n*th-order, models in metaphoric form, the pattern which connects us to ourselves, to other humans, and to the rest of the living world, and those are matters which are among the most important in human life. As in all human relationships the pattern is complex and often contradictory, and it is an image of our deepest desires and beliefs. If we would seek a reason for the central position that musicking occupies in human life, it is here.” (Small 1998:200)

amidst the mountains near the Buddhist temple of Kasansa (mentioned in Chapter 7). Participating in the rituals of *p'ungmul kut* often inspires a sense of spirituality¹⁷ and an appreciation for the wonders of life, the universe, and the ineffable.

¹⁷ It may be helpful to recall Donald Baker's definition of spirituality (quoted earlier in Chapter 4): "Spirituality can be defined as attitudes and actions grounded in the belief that there are invisible forces more powerful than we are, and that through interaction with those forces we can better ourselves or make our lives more pleasant or meaningful" (2008:5).

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