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The Revival of Folksongs in South Korea

The Case of *Tondollari*

Abstract

Since the 1960s, activities on the South Korean traditional music scene have been increasingly geared to reaching the same objectives. While singing folksongs has generally become an unpopular form of entertainment, those now actively performing them take their art very seriously. They all hope to increase the status and recognition of their art, and many, particularly the male performers, wish to ensure a proper income. The success of some individuals and groups has given them a status that personified their tradition and enables them to reinterpret their art more freely. This article examines the activities of the Pukch'ŏng Society that has successfully revived the tradition of the folksong *Tondollari* by choosing the right stages, propagating anti-Japanese sentiments, and learning from the success of two *Kanggangsullae* groups that were both appointed Important Intangible Cultural Properties (no. 8) in 1966.

Keywords: folksongs—*Tondollari*—anti-Japanese—folk dance—revived tradition

IN SOUTH KOREA, traditional¹ folksongs have been influenced by many social and technological changes throughout the twentieth century. Ever since the 1930s, when folksongs first began to appear on recordings, local amateur, and professionally produced folksongs have, among other things, been shortened, embellished, and standardized for the purpose of maximizing the entertainment value of albums. As elsewhere, the popularity of recordings not only had an undeniably homogenizing effect on folksongs, but it also personified them. What epitomizes the Korean folksong scene, however, is the fact that since the 1960s a number of social dynamics have shifted the authoritative importance of the recording media to that of their performers. Despite claims of authenticity, folksongs have become seemingly living traditions that are enjoyed primarily by way of the broadcast media. Their performers enjoy a status that allows them to reinterpret their alleged tradition, and they often do so in ways that show both the competitiveness of the Korean folk music scene and its nationalist foundation.

The catalyst to these formative dynamics was perhaps the Korean War (1950–1953), which devastated the country and left it divided into what is arguably two political extremes. The issue of identity had already been much debated during the period of Japanese rule (1910–1945), but the ruin brought about by a war over Korean soil, exacerbated by the interference of foreign powers and culminating in the division of the country, further raised the issue of identity and the importance of the Korean heritage. In the years after the war, South Korea made great efforts to rebuild itself and, in its efforts to optimize its economic potential, it hurriedly industrialized. Machines began to replace manual labor in the countryside, while factories began to fill up the city landscapes. In Seoul, the pace of life increased dramatically. Films and fast, professional performances began to be preferred over turgid “live” performances of folk music, and as a result, film theatres and recording companies prospered.

The popularization of folk music was underpinned by the nationalist cultural policy of Park Chung Hee (r. 1961–1979), which led in 1962 to the

enactment of the Cultural Properties Protection Law (Munhwajae pohopŏp 文化財保護法, hereafter CPPL). On the basis of the CPPL, the government began designating as national treasures those forms of art it considered exemplary. By the 1970s and 1980s, the system already proved to be a great success, in part due to the support of Minjung protagonists,² who, in spite of the system's undeniably political significance, initially regarded it as nothing more than a measure to recover what had been destroyed during the colonial period (CHOI 1995, 111). Due to the success of the comprehensive system of the CPPL, being engaged in folk music came to be regarded as a positively patriotic activity. Many local songs had already become national songs because of their appearance on recordings, but after the enactment of the CPPL their singers could also gain national status as "human treasures."³ Artists began to believe that the more peculiar or grand a tradition, the greater its potential appeal to the Cultural Properties Committee. Hence, folk traditions quickly began to be reinterpreted, dug up and studied, as well as practiced and refined. The Minjung idea served to expand the scope of the folkloric activities and strongly influenced, among others, playwrights, directors, journalists, and painters.⁴

In this paper I will examine *Tondollari*, a local folksong⁵ that has received much media attention since the 1990s. The relative success of the song lies in the enormous zeal of its performers, whose activities reflect many of the social dynamics I have outlined. Since the song still exists in very similar forms in North Korea and Yanbian (i.e., Yŏnbyŏn, the Korean Autonomous Prefecture in China), it is possible to estimate what earlier versions of the song may have existed and when and how the song was altered. Because I lack inside information regarding North Korea and Yanbian, however, I will focus primarily on its forms in South Korea.

GOING NATIONAL

There are nowadays few occasions on which one is able to hear a folksong. An old woman may sing one as a lullaby to her grandchild, or a group of businessmen may sing one at the end of a rough night in one of the many karaoke-style "singing rooms" (*noraebang*), be it for reasons of nostalgia, male bonding, patriotism, or simply because they are too drunk to sing anything more complicated. As a form of entertainment, however, Western-style pop songs or *kayo*, as well as dance-music and forms of *ppongtchak*⁶ have generally taken over, leaving folksongs primarily as a means to express nostalgia and nationalism. The combination of nostalgia and nationalism with the CPPL's socially stratifying effects on folk arts and artists, have made the folksong scene revolve mainly around people with a professional approach to folklore. In this current situation, singers specializing in songs from dif-

ferent regions regularly compete with each other.

Regional and national folk contests, many of which were first held in the mid 1980s (Yi Sujöng 1995; CHOI 1997, 25), have become important competitive events for performers to prove their skills. Scholars such as Hahn Man-young and Kim Kwangöök have pointed out that these contests, which are organized and regulated by the local, provincial government along strict lines, cause traditional performing arts to change. They have shown that the art forms are put in a new context; that, in other words, the original function is lost (HAHN 1989; KIM Kwangöök 1991, 24–27; see also YANG 1988, 157; HOWARD 1989a). This phenomenon is, however, not restricted to Korea only; it has also been recognized to exist at the folk festivals organized in the United States since 1933, and later in Europe, particularly after World War II. There, the festivals have also given rise to a new form of music, created by specific groups who have directed their activities toward public events. Their folklore, which ELSCHKEK defines as “follow-up or imitative” (1991, 40), complies with the standards of tourist folklore.

There are many contests for folk arts in Korea (see Yi Sujöng 1995, 303–28), but the National Folk Arts Contest (Chöng’guk minsok yesul kyöngyön taehoe 全國民俗藝術競演大會), which was first held in 1958, is by far the most significant one. This is not just because it is widely covered by the media, but also because its jury is partly made up of members of the Cultural Properties Committee, which scrutinizes possible candidates for appointment. Performers may want to draw attention to themselves with a view to persuading the committee to pursue research. Established performers, on the other hand, may also participate in the event, either for their own enjoyment and that of the audience, or in order to show their dedication to peers. Although none of the changes in the performing styles is exclusive to the contests, the occasions do provide the performers with important and unique opportunities to compare and learn.

HAHN Man-young (1989) points out three main factors at the National Folk Arts Contest that influence many performing arts: time limitation, location, and audience. Performing groups generally wish to use their time slot—between 15 and 45 minutes—to show the most vivid part of their performance and skip parts that may be true to the alleged “traditional form” but are meaningless or simply boring to a concert-hall or stadium audience. Performers and members of the jury consider volume, speed, synchronicity, and quantity conducive to the entertainment value.⁷ This is mainly because, due to the distance between performers and audience, small gestures are invisible and subtle musical variations inaudible. (Some stadiums, however, have tried to reduced the significance of the distance between performers and audience with loudspeakers and TV screens that offer a close-up view

of the performance.) The quality of the sound has often been low because performers frequently have to run around and are thus unable to use hand-held microphones. To improve sound quality headphone-type microphones have started to be used, despite the fact that they impair the traditional “look” of a performance. During the singing of a specific field song, moreover, farmers may have originally had to walk to the side of a field to empty or fill their basket, but since that would disturb the performance’s synchronicity and speed, it is left out. Apart from colorful costumes and large(r) groups, stage props have also become a standard aspect of most performances. In an attempt to recreate the original setting of a specific tradition, many groups have begun to use items such as plastic rice shoots and fake bricks to enhance the visual appeal of their performance (see pictures in MUNHWA CH’EYUKPU 1995, 21–46; see also HOWARD 1989a; HAHN 1989).

The reason for participating in events such as these is two-fold. On the one hand, the performers—both amateurs and professionals—aim to increase the status and recognition of their art, be it for nationalist or traditionalist motives, or reasons of a more personal kind. On the other hand, their efforts are induced by the prospect of being able to charge students more for lessons in their art.⁸ The status and recognition a position in the traditional arts promises are such that performers, both male and female, will go to great lengths to achieve it; but they do not eliminate financial concerns. The number of male professionals that make a living from performing is considerably larger than female ones. Married women can usually rely on the income of their husbands, so they generally have less need to become commercial professionals than their male counterparts (see MALIANGKAY 1999, 167, 248–49). Many young women, moreover, are unable to engage in folk music because the performances often take place outside the city and can therefore be very time-consuming. They are, in contrast, able to dominate the classical music scene in which the learning process is mostly individual and the demand for teachers much greater. In folk music, the competition among female performers seems, however, stronger than that between their male counterparts, though that may be because, in my experience, Korean women are generally more prone to express their dissatisfaction than men.

The promise of increased status has led some to reinterpret the meaning of the lyrics of certain folksongs in order to make their quintessential “Koreanness” stand out more. This is a common phenomenon, and clearly follows from what HOBBSAWM calls an “attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past” (1983, 1). In Korea, alleged anti-Japanese elements and a sense of *han* (which could be described as the typically Korean feeling of deprivation, or of being lost or desolate, often as a result of foreign aggres-

sion) have become popular spices to boost the appeal of many forms of art.⁹ While the Park Chung Hee regime already emphasized the economic and political threat posed by Japan and North Korea, the term *han* first appears to have become popular with Minjung protagonists, to sum up all the suffering of the lower and middle classes.¹⁰

Popular folksongs such as *Arirang* and *Han obaengnyŏn* (Some five hundred years)—a song about a life full of *han*—and *Kanggangsullae*¹¹ are earlier showcases of the culmination of interests mentioned above. Although the origin of the song *Arirang* remains obscure (see IM Tonggwŏn 1980, 363–402; KIM Chŏmdo 1990, 305–306), its early standardization was caused to a considerable degree by the popularity of the 1926 silent film *Arirang* of which it was the theme song (see KIM Yongguk 1928, 34). In this film, which became a source of inspiration for patriots, the central character kills a man, the pawn of a landlord, when he threatens to rape his sister. Actor-Director Na Un'gyu, who played the leading part, managed to circumvent the Japanese censors by presenting a mentally disturbed protagonist. To Koreans, however, the message was clear since in the film the man's mental state is ascribed to torture by Japanese police following his participation in the patriotic March First Movement of 1919 (HO 2000, 38–39). The lyrics of this version of *Arirang* are not blatantly critical of the Japanese. They tell of a man and a woman who struggle to cross the Arirang mountain in the hope of a better future (see KING RECORD CO. 1996, SYNCD–120). The popularity of the song was probably heightened by the fame that many of the film narrators (*pyŏnsa* 辯士) enjoyed at the time. Their great following encouraged record companies to ask them to perform their art for SP recordings (see Yi Pohyŏng et al. 1994 I, 251; HO 2000, 52–55). Although songs such as *Arirang* were presumably at first sung purely for entertainment purposes, Koreans now duly point out their (possibly) anti-Japanese elements (see IM Tonggwŏn 1980, 375; see also MALIANGKAY 1999, 52, 235). Although prior to the 1970s, studies on the origin of the songs revealed little or no patriotic content, since then the songs have gained much in nationalist appeal. An early example thereof is TAE Hung Ha's *Korea Sings: Folk and Popular Music and Lyrics* (1970). This collection includes both popular folksongs and patriotic songs that could easily have been North Korean, such as *Our Wish is Union*, *March First*, and *Song of the ROK Army*. Because in many cases the folksongs' underlying patriotic meaning is “explained,” the idea is created that all folksongs included have patriotic connotations, including *Arirang*. From the 1970s onwards, many studies have surfaced that point out popular folksongs' underlying patriotic or *han* sentiment. Cho Tongil, who by the 1970s was already a well-established professor of literature at Seoul University, appears to have spearheaded the conceptual reform of *Arirang* as

an anti-Japanese folksong (see, for example, CHO 1971, 111). In 1988, KIM Shiöp wrote: “Recently, Cho Tong-il and others clarified in various ways the anti-Japanese spirit contained in *Arirang* and other modern folksongs. It is a welcome and noteworthy fact” (1988, 5).

Another more recent example of the nationalist appeal of Korea’s most popular folksong, *Arirang*, can be found in director Lee Jung-Gook’s 1994 *Tu yöja iyagi* (A story of two women). In this film it is reinvented as a working song. There is a scene in which a group of farmers are singing *Arirang* despite the fact that the rhythm of the song clearly impedes the farmers’ work since their movements are slowed down by the song’s turgid 12/9-beat rhythm. The lyrics sung, moreover, appear to be very similar to that of the now popular post-1930s¹² version that was standardized through recordings and is bereft of dialect.¹³ The film tells the story of two honest, diligent farming women whose lives are thrown into turmoil during the post-war years. When one of the women fails to provide her husband with a child, he marries another woman with whom he has a son. Drawn by greed, the man abandons his home, leaving his wives to raise his only child. The son’s growing up at a time of great social change causes the two mothers great hardship. The film is very much in keeping with Minjung ideology not only because it shows the beauty of rural life, but also because it deals with problems imposed by the increasing commercialism¹⁴ and the weakening of traditional morals. Lee comments,

I wanted to portray our local color and the feeling of *han* to the background of those regions in the south that could show this in the most agreeable way, and show as effectively as possible the feeling of *han* among women living with Confucian customs and the extreme poverty in the post-war period.¹⁵

By emphasizing elements such as *han*, performers can make their art stand out more. The renewed interest in *Arirang* and *Han obaengnyön* are likely to have prompted Cho Yongp’il, Korea’s biggest selling singer from the late 1970s up to the mid 1980s, to include the songs in his standard repertoire (see Yi Yöngmi 2000, 257). His versions of the songs are now a standard part of the folksong repertory of *noraebang* menus, which could be considered their ultimate guarantee for survival in this technocratic age.

THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW TRADITION

One group of performers that have followed the above trends is the Pukch’öng Folk Arts Preservation Society (Hamnam Pukch’öng minsok yesul pojonhoe 咸南北青民俗藝術保存會, hereafter Society). This Society

forms part of the Pukch'ōng County People's Association (Pukch'ōng-gun minhoe 北青郡民會), which was initially set up in Unni-dong, in Seoul's Chongno district on 29 June 1947 by former residents of Pukch'ōng County. Pukch'ōng County (Pukch'ōng-gun 北青郡) is located in the center of South Hamgyōng Province. Its population was 224,027 in 1943, the time of the last known count. When the Korean war broke out, the association was forced to move to Pusan, but on 15 October 1974 it moved back to Seoul, to Ch'ōngdam-dong in Kangnam district where it still occupies an office today (PUKCH'ŌNG-GUN CHI P'YŌNCH'AN WIWŌNHŌE 1994, 87, 684–86).

The *Pukch'ōng County History* (*Pukch'ōng-gun chi* 北青郡誌), a book on the county's history and culture that was edited by the Pukch'ōng County History Compilation Committee (Pukch'ōng-gun chi p'yōnch'an wiwōnhoe 北青郡誌編纂委員會),¹⁶ describes Pukch'ōng people as having strong characters, as self-sufficient, diligent, and dedicated (PUKCH'ŌNG-GUN CHI P'YŌNCH'AN WIWŌNHŌE 1994, 421). Many Koreans indeed acknowledge that people from Pukch'ōng County are extraordinarily dedicated in their work and study, and, according to the *Pukch'ōng County History*, the county was therefore often referred to as the capital of education. In the 1930s, the Japanese scholar Takahashi Tōru (高橋亨) also described the people from Hamgyōng Province as the most enterprising in Korea (see SŌNG 1989, 172). The unique nature of Pukch'ōng people is sometimes referred to as *tōmbi pukch'ōng*. Although the word *tōmbi* usually indicates that someone is hurried, unable to be calm, *tōmbinda* also means “to go for something” (PUKCH'ŌNG-GUN CHI P'YŌNCH'AN WIWŌNHŌE 1994, 323, 325). Im Tonggwōn, a folksong specialist and occasional member of the Cultural Properties Committee, told me that it was due to their character that the Pukch'ōng people in South Korea had so quickly become affluent enough to open a society office (Im, interview, 9 Nov. 1995).¹⁷ Considering the strong financial basis upon which the Pukch'ōng County People's Association seems to rely, it is indeed unlikely that financial gain is the driving force behind the Society's activities. Status appears to be its main motivation.

The Society uses a separate office in the building of the Foundation for the Support of Important Intangible Cultural Properties (Chungyo muhyōng munhwajae pojo chaedan 重要無形文化財補助財團) in nearby Samsōng-dong. It is here that its activities towards the preservation of typically Pukch'ōng folk traditions such as the *Pukch'ōng Lion Play* (*Pukch'ōng saja norūm*) and *Tondollari*,¹⁸ a large group dance with minor dance movements, are coordinated. The Society first began its activities in August 1960 when it successfully pursued the appointment of its *Pukch'ōng Lion Play* with the help of the noted folklorist Yi Tūhyōn (PUKCH'ŌNG-GUN CHI P'YŌNCH'AN WIWŌNHŌE 1994, 732).¹⁹ More recently, in October 1990, under

the management of Yi Haejin, it began to dig up and research the original form of *Tondollari* in order to “get *Tondollari* appointed as a cultural property” (PUKCH’ÖNG-GUN CHI P’YÖNCH’AN WIWÖNHÖE 1994, 733). Yi Sora, a folk-song scholar and permanent member of the Cultural Properties Committee, came over to document the songs. Yi is a prolific scholar whose publications have shown an increasing accuracy of notation and data over the years. Despite the fact that she has been slated by some of her peers for her musical transcription methodology—several Korean scholars told me with quite some cynicism that Yi started her career studying law—her current work in the field in both Korea and China has rightly earned her the respect of most of her peers, something that is likely to have improved her position within the Cultural Properties Committee. Cho Künñük, who is in charge of the Society, comments:

We unearthed *Tondollari* in 1990. At the time, Yi Sora also came to record the song, but she had nothing to do with it. Since then, we have sung it like it used to be sung in the old days. The costume was made then, as was the banner, but the banner is not traditional.

(Cho, pers. communication, 29 November 2000)

The efforts proved successful. At the 32nd and 35th National Folk Art Contest in 1991 and 1995, the group was awarded the Ministry of Culture and Information Award (Munhwa kongbobu changgwansang) and the Encouragement Award (Noryöksang) respectively (PUKCH’ÖNG-GUN CHI P’YÖNCH’AN WIWÖNHÖE 1994, 440; see also IM Chunsö 1995, 348). The success, however, served to obscure several recent changes in the tradition.

Most recorded versions of *Tondollari* constitute many short songs following either the 3/4-, or the 12/8-meter similar to the *chajün/chajin mori* rhythmic cycle.²⁰ The lyrics and the somewhat Western character of the melody is such that some consider the song a so-called “new folksong” (*shin minyo*), a genre of songs that is generally defined as not having been handed down from one generation to another, but composed by an identified person to the accompaniment of Western musical instruments played for political or entertainment purposes (SÖNG 1989; YI Pohyöng 1992, 102, 170; see also MALIANGKAY 1999, 52). *Tondollari* has little melodic variation and an easy refrain that allows simple improvisation. The core of the song comprises five parts, each consisting of a verse line and a refrain. Yi Sora transcribes the lyrics as follows (PUKCH’ÖNG-GUN CHI P’YÖNCH’AN WIWÖNHÖE 1994, 443–44):

Tondollari tondollari tondollariyo. Morae ch'ōngsan-e tondollariyo, morae ch'ōngsan-e tondollariyo.

The day after tomorrow, over the green hills, *tondollariyo*; the day after tomorrow, over the green hills, *tondollariyo*. #

Tondollari tondollari tondollariyo. Shinae kangbyōn-e tondollariyo, shinae kangbyōn-e tondollariyo.

By the riverside in the city, *tondollariyo*; by the riverside in the city, *tondollariyo*. #

Tondollari tondollari tondollariyo. Morae sanch'ōn-e tondollariyo, morae sanch'ōn-e tondollariyo.

The day after tomorrow, over mountains and streams, *tondollariyo*; the day after tomorrow, over mountains and streams, *tondollariyo*. #

Tondollari tondollari tondollariyo. Pobae ch'ōngsan-e tondollariyo, pobae ch'ōngsan-e tondollariyo.

Over the precious green hills, *tondollariyo*, over the precious green hills, *tondollariyo*. #

Omakṣari ch'ogajip-e morae kangsan-e, Nira-rirari tondollariyo, nira-rirari tondollariyo.

The day after tomorrow, over grass huts and thatched houses, over mountains and streams, *tondollariyo*; the day after tomorrow, over grass huts and thatched houses, over mountains and streams, *tondollariyo*. #

refrain:

Tondollari tondollari tondollariyo. Nira-rirari tondollariyo, nira-rirari tondollariyo.

It is said that from a certain point in time during the Chosŏn period (1392–1910), the song was sung by groups of women on the day after Cold Food (*hanshik*), a national holiday that falls on the 105th day after the winter solstice, towards the end of the first week of April according to the solar calendar (SŎNG 1989; CH'ŎE and CHŎN 1990, 139; PAK 1991, 172; CH'ŎE 1995, 42; MUN 1997, 28).²¹ On this day, families visit the tombs of their ancestors to pay their respects and make an offering of food. The occasion is also used to clean up the graves as they may require tidying up after the winter. Around two o'clock in the afternoon, women from different villages in the Pukch'ōng and adjacent Tōksōng districts would gather on the banks of

the river Namdae and sing songs while picking *tallae* (wild rocamboles). The plays that evolved from this were initially known as *tallaet'ō nori* (rocambole plays) or, in dialect, *tallaet'ōi* (ÖM 1992, 40). With time, men also began to participate—CH'OE Ch'ōl and CHŎN Kyōnguk argue that this was particularly so after the 1930s (1990, 142)²²—though some scholars, including CHŎNG (1993, 50), continue to categorize the song as a women's song. Cho Kūnnūk comments:

Men used to perform it sometimes, but now only women do it. On some occasions, when we practice or perform the dance at private parties, men may also join, but not on official occasions.

(Cho, pers. communication, 29 November 2000)

Nowadays, on official occasions, *Tondollari* is performed by a group of approximately fifty women and five or so men. The women wear the traditional Korean costume (*hanbok*), with a white top, a long blue skirt that reaches to the ground, and long red bows dangling from the chest down to the knees. The women also wear pointy white cotton hats that look like they are made out of a single rolled-up sheet of paper. The baskets that the women used to carry to the riverside are absent (CH'OE Ch'ōl and CHŎN Kyōnguk 1990, 141; CH'OE 1995, 42). The men wear plain white cotton bands around their heads. Characteristically, a woman will beat the rhythm on a gourd turned over in a bucket of water. Among the other instruments that have been used over the years are the small cymbal (*kkwaenggwari*), the gong (*ching*), the barrel drum (*puk*), and the large six-holed vertical bamboo flute (*t'ungso*) (CHŎNG 1993, 136; see also cover picture of HAMNAM PUKCH'ŎNG MINSOK YESUL POJONHOE 1995).

At the start of the dance, a small group of approximately five to ten men positions itself on the side of the performing space to accompany the dance. The rest of the group then forms a circle. According to the oldest description of the tradition I found, the group used to sit in a circle (MUN 1997, 28), but later sources say the people used to form a circle standing. While the women begin to sing they stretch out their arms sideways, slightly tilt their head and either loosely twitch their right wrist or clap their hands. They then raise their shoulders and drop them with their elbows pointing to the side. They then again hold out their arms sideways, this time twitching their left wrist. While this sequence of movements is being repeated, the performing space widens. Some women may enter the center of the performing space to show off their skill at the wrist dance. Other women will then eventually move into the center to replace them. When the group has begun to move clockwise, lightly walking on their toes, the women in the center begin to walk

anti-clockwise. Sometimes people may start dancing with a child on their shoulders (*mudongch'um*), or perform the Hunchback (*k̄k̄opch'u ch'um*) or Beggar's Dance (*yugōri*). On the whole, the *Tondollari* dance is lively with fast but flowing movements that create a bright and optimistic mood. It is said that although the dancing was disorganized at first, eventually each village would form a circle and there would be some form of competition (CHŎNG 1993, 467; PUKCH'ŎNG-GUN CHI P'YŎNCH'AN WIWŎNHŎE 1994, 442; see also pictures in HAMNAM PUKCH'ŎNG MINSOK YESUL POJONHŎE 1995, 6–7).

During the dance, many other songs are sung besides *Tondollari*, including *Pomch'ōl nabi* (Spring butterflies), *Haega ttōrōjinda* (The sun falls down), *Kōsūrōmi norae* (Splinter song), *Minari k̄k̄ot* (Dropwort flowers), *Samch'ōlli norae* (Song of the whole of Korea), *Yangyuna ch'ōngsan* (Over the willows or green hills), *Chōn Kapsōm t'aryōng* (Song of Chōn Kapsōm), *Toraemisso* (The Americans and Russians arrive), and two songs named after —what appear to be—the nonsense syllables that form their refrain: *Rarira tondol rittiri* and *Riri hūlliri*. Im Suk-jay claims that after *Tondollari* approximately twenty other songs were sung, including *I k̄angsan sōsan-e* (Over the western mountains of our country), *Chok'u chosso* (It's so good), *Nae ttal pongsōmi* (My daughter Pongsōm[i]) and a song named after the first four nonsense syllables that form its refrain: *Rariraratta* (IM Suk-jay 1997 II, 349–55). CH'OE Ch'ōl and CHŎN Kyōnguk speak of thirty extra songs, including *Toshidoshi nadondo*, but, unfortunately, they do not give transcriptions of their music or lyrics (1990, 141). None of these songs, however, belong to the current, “official” repertoire of the Society.

Among the songs from the official repertoire, *Tondollari*, *Haega ttōrōjinda*, *Samch'ōlli norae* and *Toraemisso* are reported to be patriotic songs expressing the hope for an end to the Japanese colonization. There are, however, three theories regarding the meaning of *Tondollari*. According to one theory, the song is derived from *tolgo tonda* (turn around and return [to your place]), which suggests the song was primarily composed to accompany the dancing. The specific movement described is no longer a distinguishable part of the dance performed by the Society, but that may be deliberate as the now prevailing theory helps to increase the song's status. According to this, then, *tondollari* derives from *tong t'ūl nal* (the day of dawn) and constitutes a cry for independence. This theory is, however, not supported by the remaining lyrics. In his 1980 *Han'guk minyo chip* (Collection of Korean folk-songs) V, for example, Im Tonggwōn categorizes the song as “word play” (*sōnghūi* 聲戲). Im does not elaborate on the (underlying) meaning of any of the songs collected in this series, but his categorization of the song, and the

transcription of the title of the song as *Tondoldari* suggests that neither Im nor the singer of the song believed the song's intent was political (IM Tonggwŏn 1993 [1980], 454; see also PUKCH'ŎNG-GUN CHI P'YŎNCH'AN WIWŎNHŎE 1994, 445; IM Suk-jay 1997 I, 233). Finally, Yi Yŏngmi (2000, 33–34) provides a very different reading of the song, arguing that the song is calling for the sun to shine on the rocamboles. Yi speculates that the word *tondol* must derive from *tolda* (to go round) and *ttang* (ground), and *tari* alternatively from *nal* (day/sun) and *i* (person/man), i.e. “the sun god”, and *naerida* (to come down). It is, however, unlikely that in such a musically simple song as that preserved by the Society, *tondollari* in one instance meant “the ground where we go round, oh sun god,” and in the other “please come down to [i.e. shine on] the ground where we go round.”

The fact that the Society's rendition of *Tondollari* has so often been awarded is somewhat surprising. IM Suk-jay's 1968 sound recording of a performance by the group, for example, clearly differs from that which is currently performed. When comparing Im's recording with an unpublished tape-recording of the song by Yi Sora, dated 6 June 1990, and the commercial CD “*Tondollari*” (Samsung Classics SCO-104CSS, 1996), one finds that while the first is sung faster (110 beats per minute) and in a more uplifting tone with only minor drum (gourd) accompaniment, the latter two are slower (approximately 70–80 beats per minute) and sung almost as accompaniment to the dominating sound of the *t'ungso* and *puk*. Earlier textual transcriptions, including that by Im Suk-jay, constitute a simple song comprising one or two phrases (see CHANG 1975, 236–37; IM Tonggwŏn 1993; MUN 1997, 30; IM Suk-jay 1997 I, 233). The first edition of *Pukch'ŏng County History*, which was published in 1970, also reveals a simple song (see SŎNG 1989, 170). SŎNG Kyŏngnin notes that though the latter source explained the song as meaning “returning to one's place,” an elder Pukch'ŏng native, Hwang Hayŏn, told him that *Tondollari* derived from *ton-i tonŭn*, meaning “money is in the making” or “every dog has its day” (1989, 170).²³ The idea that *Tondollari* referred to the colonial period was therefore not adopted by the Society until 1990.

According to the second edition of the *Pukch'ŏng County History*, the Japanese government eventually banned *Tondollari*, *Haega ttŏrŏjinda* and *Samch'ŏlli norae* because of their subversive pro-Korean symbolism (PUKCH'ŎNG-GUN CHI P'YŎNCH'AN WIWŎNHŎE 1994, 441), but there is no evidence to substantiate this. During the colonial period, some songs were indeed banned. Censorship became an issue in the 1920s, when Western-style *ch'angga* (唱歌) with nationalist undertones such as *Pongsŏnhwa* (Touch-me-not), composed by Hong Nanp'a in 1919, were forbidden

(*Chungang Ilbo* 1999). All forms of folk festivals were also banned (CHOI 1997, 25). The Japanese closely monitored all occasions on which groups of Koreans gathered and were quick to arrest those suspected of patriotic activities. *Kösürömi norae*, it is said, used to be sung to warn people of approaching Japanese police, “splinter” being a metaphor for the police’s unusual moustaches. Like many other political or otherwise rebellious songs, *Kösürömi norae* was presumably exempted from being banned because its underlying meaning remained hidden. It is, moreover, unlikely that the Japanese government was prompted to call a ban on the other two songs, since their lyrics—as they are transcribed today—are not specific. The current translation of both song titles seems very much an interpretation based on what the Society alleges to be the origin of both songs (ÖM 1992, 40; PUKCH’ÖNG-GUN CHI P’YÖNCH’AN WIWÖNHÖE 1994, 441–47).

Chön Kapsöm t’aryöng is a traditional women’s song about a girl who has reached the marriageable age and, having received several proposals, ponders on which man to choose. It is a funny song that sees each verse line end with “I hate, I hate [...]” and only the last two verses with “I like, I like,” the object of her desire being *honja salgi* (living on my own) and *haean t’ungso* ([playing] the *t’ungso* on the beach). The remaining songs were presumably sung for entertainment purposes only (PUKCH’ÖNG-GUN CHI P’YÖNCH’AN WIWÖNHÖE 1994, 443–50).

THE NORTHERN TRADITIONS

With Pukch’öng County in South Hamgyöng Province as its center, *Tondollari* first spread south, to places such as Hongwön-gun and Shinch’ang-gun, then north, to the areas of Iwön-gun, Tanch’ön-gun, P’ungsan-gun, and Kapsan-gun, and even to places such as P’ungsan and Kapsan in Yanggang Province and Söngjin in North Hamgyöng Province (CHÖNG 1993, 466; PUKCH’ÖNG-GUN CHI P’YÖNCH’AN WIWÖNHÖE 1994, 441–42). The North Korean scholar ÖM Hajin argues that the song did not spread further because of its strong regional characteristics (1992, 47). Since the start of the *Ch’öllima undong* (Galloping Horse Movement) in 1957, however, all folk-songs in North Korea have been adapted to meet the ideals of socialism (see IM Tonggwön 1991, 47; MALIANGKAY 1999, 171). It appears that *Tondollari* was no exception (IM Suk-jay 1997 I, 233). The *Pukch’öng County History* claims that the adapted version of the song was able to spread to all regions in North Korea after the liberation (PUKCH’ÖNG-GUN CHI P’YÖNCH’AN WIWÖNHÖE 1994, 442). Indeed, although a 1959 collection of folksongs still includes a short single-couplet version of the song that appears to retain its “original” simplicity (KOREAN MUSICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE 1959, 68), ÖM’s article includes a version of the song that he claims is an arrangement used

to accompany a dance performance by four women (1992, 42–46):

San-e ka-myŏn, san-i modu hwanggŭmsanira. Yŏlmae-ga churŏng chyŏ, tondollariyo.

If you go to the mountains, then all the mountains are golden. They yield fruit in abundance, *tondollariyo*. #

Tŭr-e ka-myŏn tŭr-i modu p'unngnyŏn pŏrira. Kŭm nara nŏmch'yŏna tondollariyo.

If you go to the fields, then all the fields look like there will be a rich harvest. It's more than a golden country, *tondollariyo*. #

Chipchipmada ch'aja kamyŏn usŭmkŏch'ira. Kippŭm-i nŏmch'yŏna tondollariyo.

Each single house you visit is like a laughing flower. They are more than happy, *tondollariyo*. #

Il'tŏeda ch'aja kamyŏn noraesorira. Irhagi hŭnggyŏwŏ tondollariyo.

At any work place you visit, you hear the sound of songs. Working is exciting, *tondollariyo*. #

Kan'gotmada kyŏngch'i chok'o salgi-ga choha. Kŭmsura i kangsan tondollariyo.

The scenery is nice and good for living wherever you go. It's beautiful this country, *tondollariyo*. #

refrain:

[...] Over the precious green hills, *tondollariyo*.

This is possibly the only remaining version of the song in North Korea. It is a seemingly operatic piece written for separate singing groups consisting of five male and five female singers. The way it has been performed in North Korea is unclear, but, surprisingly, Cho Kŭnnŭk seemed to know:

They have made it into a revolutionary song, and they dance with too much force, with their hands in front of them. But we dance with our arms stretched to the side, see! That's the special characteristic of this dance. It's very difficult, as it requires a lot of strength. Old women cannot easily do it, but young women can.

(Cho, pers. communication, 29 November 2000)

Ōm (1992, 42–46) describes how the women begin by singing the first three couplets in a “joyous” (*hūngch’wi nage*) tone following the *chajin mori* rhythmic cycle. The men then sing one couplet in a somewhat slower tempo following the *kutkōri* rhythmic cycle (12/8). This part involves several four-tone accords. The song’s final couplet is sung by all singers together and ends with a small climax that involves a few five-tone accords. It is probably the only official version of the song at present.

In Yanbian (Yōnbyōn), the Korean Autonomous Prefecture that borders Russia and North Korea in the east of China’s Jilin Province, the song has also been recorded.²⁴ The transcriptions I found are all identical. The four verses that comprise the Yanbian version are identical to the middle three verses and the refrain of the version currently upheld by the Society (see CHUNGGUK ŪMAKKA HYŌPHŌE YŌNBYŌN PUNHOE 1980, 403; KIM T’aegap, CHO Sōngil et al. 1981, 216; SŌ and CH’OE 1982, 535; KIM Namho 1997, 731). An unpublished recording²⁵ of approximately thirty seconds by Kim Namho, the man responsible for the Korean folksong collection in the comprehensive *Folksong Anthology of China*²⁶ also closely follows this transcription. The song, which was sung by Ma Myōngwōl (馬明月) of Helong (和龍) County in Yanbian, very much resembles that sung by members of the Society on IM Suk-jay’s 1968 recording (1995, CD 9410-G615).

THE CHALLENGES OF A CULTURAL ICON

It is likely that the reinvention of *Tondollari* was strongly influenced by the success of the *Kanggangsullae* groups from Haenam and Chindo Districts in South Chōlla Province, which were both appointed Important Intangible Cultural Properties (no. 8) in 1966 and have since become powerful cultural icons. The *Tondollari* team has much in common with these groups. Not only do they all constitute a women’s circle dance whereby several songs are sung besides the main song, but in all three cases, the main song constitutes a “call and answer”-type song that has a simple refrain and allows easy improvisation. As popular theory has it, *Kanggangsullae* was, like *Tondollari*, originally performed by the waterside. It was composed during invasions of Korea by the Japanese ruler Hideyoshi from 1592 to 1598, known as the *imjin waeran* (壬辰倭亂). In 1597, when general Yi Sunshin was being pursued by Japanese ships, women are said to have gathered on the coastal mountains where they performed the dance to make the Japanese believe that the Koreans had a large force waiting for them (see MALIANGKAY 1999, 235). The similarities between *Tondollari* and *Kanggangsullae* probably influenced the *Tondollari* team members when they were designing their costumes and composing their current repertoire, which includes patriotic songs that cannot be traced back to older transcriptions or recordings.

The changes to *Tondollari* have not gone unnoticed, but it is important to note that the discovery of recent changes has not prevented other traditions, including *Kanggangsullae*, from winning prizes at the Contest or being appointed Important Intangible Cultural Properties (see MALIANGKAY 1999, chapter 7.1). Im Tonggwön told me that,

Last year [i.e., in 1994] we [also] gave them the Merit Award, but the *Tondollari* song doesn't have a long history. The aspect of tradition is weak. Because these people played it when they were young, it's called a play. [In regards to] clothes, they wear a uniform when they come here, but that's not a tradition. Village people don't mind wearing what they wear inside their houses, but these people cannot do that. Moreover, *Tondollari* is a team from South Hamgyōng Province, but the people [from that province] have become very rich here in the South and they provided a building and formed the Pukch'ōng Assembly. Because they have money they made this uniform and wear it Because of that, we will definitely not give them the Presidential or Minister of Culture and Sports Award. (Im, interview, 9 Nov. 1995)

When in 1995 I asked Yi Pohyōng, folklorist and occasional member of the Cultural Properties Committee, what he thought of the fact that that year the jury at the National Folk Arts Contest had given *Tondollari* a Merit Award, he replied:

Sometimes juries do not judge well. They believe that something is traditional, but sometimes get it wrong. The judgment is made by scholars who do not know performing techniques. Scholars of performing arts do not know traditional folk arts. They do not know both. "Those [*Tondollari*] performers are good," they say. But it's not the tradition. This year a team from South Ch'ungch'ōng Province won, but their performing technique was not good. Their performance was traditional and their direction was very good, but originally the genre was performed by a much smaller group. The Taejōn rain ceremony should have won in their place. This was a very characteristic rain festival. But a group from this region won last year, so.... (Yi, interview, 29 Oct. 1995)

Tondollari, we may conclude, was manipulated and reconstructed to fit a specific purpose. The recent date on which this appears to have been done may seem odd, but it is by no means the accuracy with which we can pinpoint the date, nor the fact that it happened so recently, that is surprising. Folksongs always change at a specific point in time for some reason, and

when they remain unchanged, it is for a specific purpose that can often be isolated in time. What makes the case of *Tondollari* particularly interesting, however, is the fact that its performers have clearly and successfully studied the mechanics of the Korean professional folksong scene in order to maximize the appeal of their performance. On the basis of their prior experience with the *Lion Play*, and its persuasive effect on the audience, the group has managed to bring together *Kanggangsullae*'s popular performing style and sentiment. Because the memory is a creative apparatus, and the belief in one's construed traditions is common, one could also argue that *Tondollari* was reinterpreted, rather than reconstructed. It is, however, obvious that the Society wishes to "revive" their traditions and is willing to make compromises. Despite the group's claim of authenticity, it has turned *Tondollari* into a folk art that reflects popular sentiment. When I asked Cho Kūnnūk about whether he thought the song might develop in the future, he said, "In the future, the song may become wilder, because young people prefer that. And men may also join" (Cho, pers. communication, 29 November 2000).

The number of people who grew up singing more folksongs than *ḡayo* is decreasing rapidly. Within ten or twenty years of this writing, all potential "primary" informants will have passed away. Most folk performing arts are, however, well documented, so they can become the objects of nostalgia for future generations, including *Tondollari*. There is, therefore, little room for change, even though artists may occasionally rely on their "elevated status" to interpret their art. In the case of *Tondollari*, further work with informants in North Korea is unlikely to take place, and even if it does, it is unlikely to influence the way it is now performed in the South. The important status the group has earned can now only grow by adhering to the form chosen. The Society probably hopes to see *Tondollari* eventually listed on *noraebang* menus, but unless a popular *ḡayo* singer popularizes the song, this is unlikely to happen. Despite Cho's words, then, I surmise that the form of *Tondollari* as it is presently performed will now be preserved more or less unchanged for many years to come.

NOTES

1. I realize that the term "traditional" suggests that a cultural item can be transmitted as it is, unchanged, but I believe that the realization that a specific item is being projected and transmitted from within a specific group's past culture to a modern form thereof, perhaps in an effort to complement modern life, will more often than not change its original significance and with it its form. I therefore see no reason not to use the term in this paper in order to refer to items that constitute projected customs from the past.

2. "Minjung" is an ideology that advocates a return to the pre-industrial agricultural village values. It first began to spread in the early 1970s, largely as a reaction against the mili-

tary governments' blind pursuit of Western values, and gained momentum in the 1980s and early 1990s.

3. The Cultural Properties Protection Law (Munhwajae pohopōp 文化財保護法), which was based on the Japanese Cultural Properties Protection Law, laid the basis for the appointment of so-called "holders" (*poyuja* 保有者)—more commonly referred to as "human treasures"—of Important Intangible Cultural Properties (Chungyo muhyōng munhwajae 重要無形文化財). For details on the law and the system of "human treasures," see MALIANGKAY 1999.

4. For more details on the pursuit of folklore by Minjung followers, see KIM Kwangōk 1991; CHOI 1995.

5. In Korea, the terms *t'osok* (土俗) and *t'ongsok* (通俗) are sometimes used to differentiate between local songs, usually sung by amateur singers, and songs that are popular throughout the country and are sung by both amateurs and professional singers (see MALIANGKAY 1999, 43).

6. *Ppongchak* first emerged in the 1930s and comprises a genre of songs exclusively accompanied by Western instruments. It is hence onomatopoeically, and somewhat condescendingly, named after the sound of the bass and snare drums (see KIM Ch'angnam 1980, 105).

7. For a comparison of the jury members' criteria for judging the performances at the 1995 National Folk Art Contest, see MALIANGKAY 1999, 100–107.

8. Ms. Yu Okpun, a student of Muk Kyewōl, a "human treasure" of Folksongs from Kyōnggi Province, told me that Muk charged each of her eight group students 25,000 won per lesson (Yu, pers. communication, 6 May 2001).

9. Many studies document the extent of these activities and the cultural construction that ensued, but only a few anthropologists such as JANELLI and JANELLI (1993) try to establish the effects these measures have had on post-war generations.

10. For more on the concept of *han*, see DE CEUSTER and MALIANGKAY 2003 (forthcoming).

11. *Kanggangsullae* has been interpreted as meaning "fierce dogs come across the sea" (see KIM Chōmdo 1990, 288, 298).

12. Since the 1930s, most singers have performed a standard version of *Arirang* on recordings.

13. On 16 June 2001, at the Seoul *nori madang* (Seoul's open-air performing ground), I observed the folk music group from Kangnūng (Important Intangible Cultural Property no. 11) performing a weeding song to the music of the same standardized lyrics of *Arirang*. Even more so than in Lee's film, here, the lyrics' description of people walking for miles to cross a mountain seemed very out of place as the monotonous movements seemed to demand either some lyrical reference to the action taking place or nonsense syllables supporting the breathing.

14. According to one of the four truths of Minjung theology, it is greed in particular that leads to oppression (CLARK 1995, 92).

15. Cited from <http://www.pusanilbo.com/PEACE/PIFF/1996/content/retro/re14.htm> (consulted in July 2000, from Korean; italics added by me after translating).

16. A popular historical figure from Pukch'ōng who is much venerated by the Society is Yi Chun (李僑, 1868–1907). Yi's feeling of dignity is said to be representative of that of Pukch'ōng people (PUKCH'ŌNG-GUN CHI P'YŌNCH'AN WIWŌNHŌE 1994, 421). Yi died in The Hague when he was sent there on a secret mission to plead for Korean independence at The Second Hague Peace Conference. He has become a popular martyr whose grave is visited by many Koreans when they go to The Netherlands.

17. In 1980, the Society for the Preservation of the *Pukch'ōng Lion Play* (*Pukch'ōng saja norūm pojonhoe*) received 100,000 won. At the time, this amount equalled that given to “holders” of national cultural properties by the South Korean government. The latter did not financially support performing groups until November 1986 when the play was appointed Important Intangible Cultural Property no. 15 (PUKCH'ŌNG-GUN CHI P'YŌNCH'AN WIWŌN-HOE 1994, 733; MALIANGKAY 1999, 255).

18. In Korean, *Tōdollari* is commonly written either *tondol-nari* or *tondol-lari*.

19. I have not found any relationship between the *Lion Play* and *Tōdollari* in terms of ritual or performing style.

20. For transcriptions of the cycles, see HOWARD 1989b, 169; and Yi Pohyōng 1992.

21. Im Suk-jay and Cho Sōngil say the custom also took place at the time of the Tano festival, which lasts for five days from the first day of the fifth lunar month (CHO Sōngil 1983, 194–195; IM Suk-jay 1997 I, 233).

22. Yi Pohyōng told me Chōn Kyōnguk's father was from Pukch'ōng (Yi, pers. communication, 27 Nov. 2000).

23. The interpretation “turning around,” SŌNG argues, implies regaining Korean sovereignty (1989, 170).

24. I am greatly indebted to Rowan Pease for her help in finding materials on *Tōdollari* from North Korea and China.

25. No date is given, but it was probably recorded after the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) since Kim Namho told Rowan Pease all the earlier recordings were lost.

26. *Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng* 中国民间歌曲集成. For a history of folksong collections in China, see SCHIMMELPENNINCK 1990, 12.

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