A Study of *Tal-choom* Together with Certain Western Analogies

by

Hye-Soon Kim
B.A. Ewha University, 1981
M.A. University of British Columbia, 1987

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Theatre

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

Dr. A. Hughes, Supervisor (Department of Theatre)

Dr. M. Booth, Departmental Member (Department of Theatre)

Professor L. Hardy, Departmental Member (Department of Theatre)

Dr. J. Osborne, Outside Member (Department of History in Art)

Dr. P. Stephenson, Outside Member (Department of Anthropology)

Dr. S. Bennett, External Examiner (University of Calgary)

© HYE-SOON KIM, 1995
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. Dissertation may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopying or other means, without the permission of the author.
Abstract

Tal-choom is a generic term for various types of Korean mask-dance theatre that have been performed during traditional holidays and festivals over the past three hundred years. Literally 'tal' means mask and 'choom' dance. The purpose of this study is to examine the theatrical conventions of Tal-choom, its development as popular theatre, and its significance in terms of social and political changes in past and present Korea. Four types of Tal-choom continue to exist today, all being derived from their geographic origins. I have chosen to examine the Pong-san Tal-choom, which is the most widely recognized, performed type, and common to the area around north-eastern Korea. In this study, I present not only the nature of Tal-choom and its effect upon its audience but draw parallels with popular theatre. I focus on six main areas:

1. the contemporary context of Tal-choom as popular theatre;
2. the origin and development of Tal-choom;
3. the structure and performance conventions of Tal-choom;
4. the description of the cast, masks, costumes and props;
5. the performer training and the transmission of the oral tradition; and
6. audience participation.
In order to convey *Tal-choom* more vividly, I have also translated and provided a *Pong-san Tal-choom* scenario. While examining the role of the participating audience and the relationship to ancient fertility festivals in *Tal-choom* performance, I have drawn an analogy to the Rolling Stones' "Steel Wheels" concert which took place in 1989, as a means of clarifying *Tal-choom*'s strength as popular theatre. I firmly believe that anyone can come to a *Tal-choom* performance in South Korea with the same confidence he or she brings to a rock concert as an audience member in the West.

Through recognition of both the topical uniqueness and the particular characteristics of *Tal-choom*, this study should enable scholars to embrace more readily the universal nature of theatre. No longer can we, nor should we, ignore the power and influence of the isolated, regional theatre traditions in our study of world theatre.

Dr. A. Hughes, Supervisor (Department of Theatre)

Dr. M. Booth, Departmental Member (Department of Theatre)

Professor L. Hardy, Departmental Member (Department of Theatre)

Dr. J. Osborne, Outside Member (Department of History in Art)

Dr. P. Stephenson, Outside Member (Department of Anthropology)

Dr. S. Bennett, External Examiner (University of Calgary)
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1</strong> Contemporary Context of <em>Tal-choom</em> as Popular Theatre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The Current History of <em>Tal-choom</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 <em>Tal-choom</em> and Popular Theatre</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2</strong> The Origin of <em>Tal-choom</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Literature Review</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Literary-historical Approach</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Historical Context</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Class Structure</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Comparative Approach: Fertility Rites As Origin</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3</strong> Methodology</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Toward the Question — &quot;The Audience&quot; —</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Approaching the Question</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Personal Biases and Perspective</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Description of <em>Tal-choom</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Performance Time and Atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Cast, Costume and Mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>A Prototype Scenario of <em>Pong-san Tal-choom</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Production Arrangements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5</th>
<th>Performer Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>The Oral Tradition and the Role of a Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The Traditional Model of Transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>The Current Practice of Transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>The Foundation of <em>Tal-choom</em> Performer Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6</th>
<th>'Not a Subtle Thing'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Obvious Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td><em>Communitas — &quot;Heung/Ul-ssoo and Good Vibration&quot;</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1</td>
<td>The Elements of Carnival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2</td>
<td>The Worship of 'A Satyr Figure'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Bibliography

262

### Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>Chronological Summary of Korean History</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>Korean Language and its Romanization</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>Results of the Questionnaire 1</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
<td>Video — Highlights of <em>Pong-san Tal-choom</em></td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
<td>Program Note for the 1991 North American Tour</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6</td>
<td>Making the Masks</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Regional Configurations of Tal-choom</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 A Courtly Chu-yong Mask and Dance Performance During the Choson Dynasty</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 A Contemporary Re-enactment of the Courtly Dance Performance</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Contemporary Scenes of Moo-dang-koot</td>
<td>68-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The Intangible Traditional Arts Building</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The Practice of Shamanism in Everyday Life</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Koot</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Traditional Sports of Women</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Ssi-rum</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Musicians in Tal-choom</td>
<td>119-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The Masks of Sang-cha and Mok-joong</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Costumes of Mok-joong</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Ku-sa and Ae-sa-dang Scene</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The Mask of Ae-sa-dang and Sou-moo</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The Masks of a Pedlar of Shoes and his Monkey</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The Mask of Lion</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The Mask of No-jang, the Old Priest</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The Mask of Saen-nim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Masks of Seo-baang-nim and To-ryung-nim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The Masks of Mal-ttu-gi and the Old Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The Masks of Mi-yal and Dul-mo-ri-jip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The Mask of Chi-ba-lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>A Performing Site (&quot;Tal-pan&quot;) in Pong-san</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td><strong>Scene 1</strong>: Sa-sang-cha Choom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td><strong>Scene 2</strong>: Pal-mok-joong Choom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Pal-mok-joong Group Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td><strong>Scene 4</strong>: The Old Priest and his Pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td><strong>Scene 4</strong>: The Old Priest and Sou-moo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td><strong>Scene 4</strong>: A Pedlar of Shoes and his Monkey with the Old Priest and Sou-moo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td><strong>Scene 4</strong>: The Old Priest, Sou-moo and Chi-ba-lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td><strong>Scene 5</strong>: Lion Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td><strong>Scene 6</strong>: Yang-ban Choom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td><strong>Scene 7</strong>: Mi-yal and her Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td><strong>Scene 7</strong>: Mi-yal, Dul-mo-ri-jip and the Old Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td><strong>The Final Scene</strong>: Moo-dang Choom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>A Simplified Ceremonial Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>The Constant Presence of the Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Masters Yoon Ok and Kim Sun-Pong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Master Yang Sou-Un</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
40. The Participants of the Third Annual Junior *Tal-choom* Contest 199-201

41. The 70th Birthday Party for Master Kim Sun-Pong 202-203

42. The First Phase of Training 211-212

43. Refining Process of Advanced Students 214

44. Teachers and (Best) Students in Performance 215

45. Young Female Actors in *Mok-joong* Costume and Mask 217

46. Master Kim Ki-Soo and his Disciple Park Sang-Un in Rehearsal 218

47. Mick Jagger 251

48. Jagger 'The Satyr' 255

49. The Rolling Stones in 1994 256

* All photographs which are not attributed to the sources are taken by the author of this dissertation.
Dedication

To

My father, Kim Kwang-Hae and my mother, Suh Byung-Ham
Acknowledgements

Above all my thanks go to my loving father, mother, late grandmother, sisters and brother. I am indebted for their love, support and unquestioning confidence in me. I am especially grateful to Linda Hardy who, at every stage of this project, has provided invaluable support, guidance, and welcome enthusiasm. I thank Juliana Saxton, "Queen Bee," for her mentoring and for providing me with a wonderful "home." She made sure that her "Worker Bee" was "housed and fed" under her wings. I thank Tony Welch for his encouragement and forbearance; Peter Stephenson and John Osborne for their help and encouragement; Gordana Lazarevich, Alan Hughes and Michael Booth for all they have contributed. I am also grateful to my Canadian and Korean friends for their continuing support and understanding.

None of this work would have been possible without the cooperation and participation of the 181 respondents in Seoul. Above all to the masters and performers of the Pong-san Tal-choom Conservation Society, I owe a debt of deep gratitude. I have been truly blessed in receiving their trust and teachings. It is upon their expertise, concerns, stories, hopes and triumphs that this dissertation is built.
Introduction

Since its liberation from Japan in 1945, questions concerning what is often termed "the-tradition-and-change-theme" in culture and society have been publicly debated in South Korea.¹ The main catalyst for these discussions is the political awareness stirred up in the process of nation building. By implication, if not always by explicit reference, this political awareness not only reflects a need to reclaim a cultural identity — "tradition" — but to respond to the beneficial, yet aggressive presence of the Western forces in Korea — "change."

In the midst of conflicting forces and change, the nation has been beset by the struggles of purging the colonial legacy, while willingly accepting and endorsing the economic and political support of the West. The ramifications of Korea's "tradition," then, not only involve the assertion of its cultural tradition and heritage but also imply reflection on the sharp class divisions and the social disorder prevalent in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Korea. In addition, since Confucius' teachings of obedience to a higher authority are deeply rooted in Korea, unchallenged acceptance of subordination had been a part of the traditional social hierarchy. The dominators and their strong positions were accorded ultimate authority in the minds of the Korean people. Therefore, the Western forces,

¹ Since I have no information about Tal-choom in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), my dissertation can only deal with the Republic of Korea (South Korea).
particularly the power of the United States, have assumed the role of the dominators, and their strong positions have been affixed with authority.

In this social and cultural context, changes and challenges in Korea have been both invasive and immediate. The pressures for change have been felt both from within and without, and the collective response to challenges has been that of appropriation and assimilation of foreign influences — the import of Western-style democracy and infrastructure, its popular culture and consumerism being paramount.

Korea itself was in no position either to choose or prescribe foreign influences or aid. Also, there existed little reflection or examination of the consequences of importing Western values and systems. As a former colony of Japan, Korea's experience of "change" is still associated with a sense of "shame" and reminds its people of their "dishonourable past" which is, at best, to be forgotten. Also, the question of response eventually widened and became considerably more complex as the Korean War engulfed the two Koreas. The major obstacle within the nation was and still is the painfully oppressive awareness of others. Especially now, when South Korea remains the recipient of political support from Western allies and its economic growth depends on the international market, it is unavoidable that this "awareness of others" has been the focal point of often futile public discussions. Today, neither South nor North Korea is a colony to any nation; yet, as Edward Said writes, within a culture "imperialism acquires a kind of
coherence, a set of experiences, and a presence of ruler and ruled."² This imperial legacy still lingers, while South Korea’s economic and political stability continues to encourage cultural assimilation and integration of the tradition in the midst of "foreign or international" influences.

Literally, ‘tal’ means mask and ‘choom’ dance. *Tal-choom* is, therefore, a generic term for various types of Korean mask-dance theatre which were performed during traditional holidays and festivals. This study is based on theatrical traditions and performance conventions observed and researched in most of the contemporary existing models of *Tal-choom*. Similar characteristics and conventions are attributed to all existing types of this theatrical genre throughout Korea. *Tal-choom* is the traditional theatre of Korea, which survived not only the Japanese colonization but also numerous Western influences on Korean society and culture in the late twentieth century. In fact, it is a cultural response to the oppression expressed by the common people. It is a mask-dance theatre which exposes not only human folly and the hypocrisy of religion but also satirizes social injustice and the absurdity of the class system. Within the lexicon of theatre traditions, it can be categorized as a non-literary, spectacle-oriented folk theatre whose performance tradition is orally passed on among performers. Its performers are skilful dancers, singers and mimes. The quintessential aspects of *Tal-choom*, which are of significant interest to me, are the spirit

of rebellion and its association with ritualistic and spiritual practices. In addition, an audience in a *Tal-choom* performance is engaged in the process of experiencing a ritual. Furthermore, their interaction with performers and engagement in the making of an event are similar to those of an audience of a rock concert.

In May 1991 when I interviewed Master Kim Chong-Yop (a leading *Tal-choom* actor and teacher), I heard a fascinating remark about the demography of his *Tal-choom* students. "The majority of my students," said Master Kim, "up to 90% of my classes, consists of youth and females." He continues:

They appear extremely shy and inhibited in the beginning of lessons. Yet, they are most devoted and enthusiastic learners. Their energy and commitment seem to be related to their immediate surroundings at home and work. Despite the changes in our values and society, as you know, still Korean women and young people are, more or less, 'kept in their places' and somewhat oppressed both in public and private domains. These women and youth — homemakers, workers and students — experience vicariously the rebellious spirit of satire and the sardonic humour of *Tal-choom*. Through their limited freedom and subordination to the authority ('the big boss figures' — their fathers, husbands and 'seniors'), they can easily empathize with the characters in *Tal-choom*. Often my students not only find their voice from these characters but also experience a metaphorical triumph over authority. I often relive my own experience through my students, since I also felt
powerless and hopeless within my own family and society as a young man.3

In contemporary industrialized Korea, traditional culture seems irrelevant and its meanings insignificant in the rapidly changing society. Western cultures and cultural products, particularly contemporary popular music, films and television influences of the United States, dominate the cultural market. In this context, traditional Korean culture, particularly the ephemeral arts such as theatre traditions, appears to be fighting a losing battle for attention. Remarkably, Tal-choom has not only survived the colonial policy of Japan but also continued to exist despite domestic indifference and Western influences. Therefore, the continuity of Tal-choom and its current practices not only illustrate the challenges and conflicts which confronted and still confront traditional culture but also authenticate the characteristics of the indigenous Korean expressions which cannot be displaced or substituted.

In this dissertation, I examine the significance and implication of Tal-choom in today's Korea, while introducing its theatrical conventions and performance tradition to Western readers. In Chapter 1, I discuss the contemporary context of Tal-choom as popular theatre. In Chapter 2, I

3 Interview with Master Kim Chong-Yop on the 16 May 1991, Seoul. His parents and older brothers strongly opposed his decision to become a performer and tried to stop him from becoming "a common entertainer." For a long time, they disapproved of his career as a singer, dancer and actor. Today, his devotion and commitment to teaching and to the transmission of the art of Tal-choom are widely recognized and sought after, and appreciated by his own masters and students.
examine various approaches to and discussion of the origin and the historical context of *Tal-choom*. In Chapter 3, I discuss the field research, present my methodology, and address my approach to this study. In Chapter 4, I describe the structure and performance conventions of *Tal-choom*, and include a prototype scenario, the descriptions of the cast along with their masks, costumes and props, and the production arrangement. In Chapter 5, I focus on the performer training and the transmission of the oral tradition. In Chapter 6, I examine the role of an audience and the aspects of fertility festival in a *Tal-choom* performance, while drawing parallels from the Rolling Stones’s concert as a means of clarifying *Tal-choom*’s strength as popular theatre.
Chapter 1

Contemporary Context of *Tal-choom* as Popular Theatre

I find it frustrating that our dance is not well-known to students at all, while Western dances are readily accessible. At school, we are taught even Western folk dances, but not *Tal-choom*. We must learn our own dance tradition first. We citizens must be aware of our own culture.

*(Female university student, 21 years old)*
Prior to the 1960s, the idea of an indigenous Korean theatre was as foreign to the general population of South Korea as it was to the Western consciousness. As the victims of various colonial masters for centuries, the last being the United States of America, South Koreans generally wanted to forget their roots and get on with being good global consumers in a modern industrial context. However, over the last thirty years a growing sense of national pride, culminating in the Seoul Olympics of 1988, has legitimized the study of what once seemed insignificant. *Tal-choom*, the popular folk theatre of Korea, is not only worth investigating for its own sake as a theatrical phenomenon but offers some insight for the Western mind into certain of our own rebellious forms of entertainment which in a modern context presents some formidable parallels. It is, therefore, my intention in this dissertation not only to examine the nature of *Tal-choom* and its effect upon its audience but to draw those parallels which I see as most pertinent to a Western understanding of its main thrust, which is popular theatre.

The most marked parallel in the modern Western context is the phenomenon of rock concerts as performed by such groups as the Rolling Stones. And, in the course of drawing the parallel, I will also make a case for rock concerts as popular theatre.

*Tal-choom* itself received no critical attention until the 1960s. Its vestigial or museum-piece-like existence in modern, industrialized South Korea is a paradigm for many traditional arts and cultural practices which
are in danger of being ignored and lost forever. It still receives very little critical and academic attention from scholars and the general population of South Korea. Therefore, I believe that the mandate of this study is valid for three reasons.

Firstly, as an indigenous theatre of Korea, *Tal-choom* is in itself worthy of research and introduction to World theatre studies. Secondly, as a cultural expression of the repressed common people of Korea, it expresses rebellion to authority and oppression, while celebrating human sexuality, vulgarity and sardonic humour, and as such is a forceful expression of popular theatre. In the modernized, industrialized (or Westernized) contemporary context, South Korean people have only substituted one form of repression for another. While it is true that they no longer live with a rigid class system and obey the ruling class, they nonetheless have had to face often violent political and economical upheavals. From the 1950s on, in South Korea, strict political restraints have constrained the citizens. Here, resurgent interests in *Tal-choom* in the 1960s by university students reflect not only the revival of traditional Korean theatre but also the recognition of its implicit and explicit expressions of rebellion. For example, when political censorship prohibited university students from pursuing their freedom of expression in artistic creation, they turned to traditional theatre such as *Tal-choom* for inspiration and investigation of the repression in which they were mired.
Thirdly and finally, while examining the nature and phenomenon of *Tal-choom* as an expression of rebellion, I would like also in this study to draw a modern parallel as an analogy for Western understanding and to take a look at Western rock concerts as embodied in the Rolling Stones. Many aspects of a live rock concert, particularly the Stones's concerts, are similar to those of *Tal-choom*; most specifically, (1) a theatrical expression of rebellion; (2) licensed or assimilated anarchy; (3) a celebration of male sexuality; (4) a defiance of authority; and (5) direct audience participation on the part of an initiated and cult-like group. These parallels as well as contrasts will be discussed in chapter six. In short, by examining the phenomena of *Tal-choom* and rock concerts, it is my intention to underline certain universal themes in dealing with taboos within the context of popular theatre traditions. In chapter one, therefore, I will begin by discussing the historical, social and cultural context of *Tal-choom* which led to its development as Korea's popular theatre.
1.1 The Current History of *Tal-choom*

With origins in the communal festivities of shamanistic rituals, *Tal-choom* emerged as a theatrical means through which the conflicts between populations found expression. The mechanism by which it addressed and resolved community conflicts remains open to further discussion. However, scholars agree that, as with ancient agricultural festivals, its purpose was to exorcise evil spirits and thus ensure a good harvest and the safety of a community. *Tal-choom* performance, incorporating ritual and festival, served to unite whole communities that were normally sharply divided (both in rank and role in daily life) in a common act of celebration.

The Korean people have virtually no record of aggressive ambition outside their peninsula. "More than a thousand years ago, Korea was a major, but wholly peaceful, influence on the growth of Japanese culture," writes Donald S. Macdonald. Yet the peninsula has endured nine hundred invasions, great and small, in its two thousand years of recorded history.4 The five major occupations (as distinguished from raids or incursions) referred to in the context of this study are as follows: the Chinese extinction of ancient Choson in 108 B.C., followed by the establishment of four

---

4 Macdonald states in his notes that this figure of nine hundred invasions has been cited by such Korean authorities as Dr. Pyung-Choon Hahm. Although Macdonald has never seen a precise list to justify it, he writes: "There can be little doubt that the total sum of incursions across Korea's northern border, Japanese pirate raids, and Chinese border actions over the centuries could add up to some such number" (Donald Stone Macdonald, *The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society* [Boulder: Westview Press, 1990], 23).
commands under Chinese rule (one of which, Nangnang, lasted four centuries); the Mongol domination of Korea in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the Japanese invasion of 1592-1598; the Japanese occupation, 1905-1945; and the Soviet and U.S. occupation, 1945-1948 (see Appendix 1).

During the Choson dynasty, a weakening of the rulers' ability to govern and the propensity of aristocratic landholders to resist central control and taxation, brought troubles to the people — particularly to common people with few resources and without political or spiritual leadership — and then eventual dynastic collapse. As this cycle repeated itself in the decaying Choson dynasty of the nineteenth century, Western influence made itself felt. Foreign occupations and dominance in Korea since the end of the nineteenth century resulted in much social disharmony, historical discontinuity, and eventual cultural disorientation in post-Korean War (1953 onward) society. The rivalry between reawakening China, modernizing Japan, and expanding Russia for hegemony over Korea, led to two wars fought in and around the peninsula. Japan, having beaten both China in 1895 and Russia in 1905, became Korea's imperial master with the blessing of the Western imperial powers.

---

6 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 31-43.
After 1905, the Japanese themselves became the chief instruments of modernization, or what the other Western imperial powers, like Britain, chose to call "westernization," in Korea. Having installed their colonial government administration in Korea, the Japanese brought "modern" industry, transportation, and communications. The world was impressed but the Koreans benefitted little from the process. The people resisted Japanese attempts to assimilate them into the Japanese culture.\(^7\)

In addition to the aforementioned infrastructure, most Western ideas entered by way of the Japanese educational system. While forcing Korean subjects to have Japanese names and banning them from speaking Korean in public,\(^8\) the Japanese permitted Western missionary, educational, and business activity as long as it did not involve politics. Some young people from privileged and wealthy families continued to study in Japan and other Western nations, and many of them returned to Korea to spread new ideas. Even as the Japanese repressed Korean culture, they imposed Western traditions and school systems — which they themselves had accepted and adopted in Japan since the Meiji Revolution in the 1860's — on their

---

\(^7\) They rose up in nationwide unarmed protest in March 1919, responding to President Wilson's ideas of national self-determination, but to no avail. However, the identity of Korea was maintained by nationalists in exile, and the Allies in World War II pledged to restore the country's independence.

\(^8\) Korean people were imprisoned and severely punished if they defied this enforcement of name change. My parents remember that they were beaten when caught speaking Korean at school by their Japanese teachers. In addition, in defiance of the Japanese language policy, some Korean scholars compiled the first Han'gul dictionary and were consequently imprisoned and tortured.
Korean subjects. Thus, Korea's initial contact with, and adaptation of, Western culture came through the Japanese experience and in Japanese translation and/or appropriation. Until the end of the Japanese occupation, the great majority of Korean people, however, were still only superficially touched by Western ideas or their perception of Western ideas; thus their attitudes were basically shaped by deeply rooted Shamanist, Buddhist, and Confucian traditions and by their ardent antipathy toward their Japanese overlords.

Political, economic and social oppression during the Japanese occupation also included the colonial policies on traditional Korean culture. In addition to policies and oppressions, the colonial legacy left a deeply rooted sense of inferiority about Korean people themselves and their culture in the minds of Korean people. Following the 1945 liberation from Japan, the state of Korean traditions and culture was severely affected by colonization and the Second World War.

Western cultural impact has been all the stronger because it came at a time when both the Chinese and Korean traditional orders were weakened by internal strife and threatened by external forces. However, it must be understood that the South Koreans themselves are moving away from traditional motifs toward a new cultural synthesis. The consequent rapid change in values and customs has led to an uncertainty regarding the basic guidelines of behaviour and aspiration, and consequently to personal trauma and
social unrest. For a time after World War II, this cultural uncertainty, coupled with Japanese colonial distortions, misled the Koreans into disparaging their own heritage. For example, the most poignant memories of U.S. military government officials in the post-World War II years were the expressions of shame and inferiority transmitted by many South Koreans when speaking of their own past history. However, since the 1960s, the work of both Korean and foreign scholars has rediscovered Korea's proud indigenous tradition and the Korean contribution to the Chinese heritage. Contemporary South Korean culture is assimilating Western culture as it did Chinese culture in the past, and modern South Korean authors and artists are recovering a sense of cultural and personal identity and pride.

South Korea's own adaptations to the needs of a modern industrial society — notwithstanding the dramatic differences between traditional and industrialized values and ways of life — have been renewed in a demonstration of the nation's vitality. Although still uneven, these adaptations have thus far been fairly successful in spite of the enormous problems involved. South Korea's economic and military achievement since the Korean War has given both the leaders and the public a renewed sense of their own worth. Recent interests in traditional culture, therefore, also can be seen as a direct reflection of this renewed identity and rediscovered sense

---

*Macdonald, 68.*
of worth. Furthermore, cultural borrowings are now being critically re-examined for their relevance to current Korean needs and aspirations.

Nevertheless, despite dramatic progress since 1945, the Korean people still face a bigger issue: that of reunification of the South and the North. The people in both parts of Korea still exhibit an underlying sense of insecurity. This feeling is engendered not only by their historical experience and the present military confrontation, but also by the uncertainties of cultural change. Until the two Koreas can be united, the idea of cultural identity can be only partially reasserted.

In addition, the blind endorsement of Western cultures and the enthusiastic promotion of learning and accepting Western ideas and influences should be understood as a rebuilding process in the post-Korean War economy of South Korea. While the nation's economic confidence was gradually felt in the increased living standard of ordinary people, the South Korean people slighted, ignored or even disregarded their own cultural traditions. Interviews with Tal-choom masters and their students in 1990-93 testify to this domestic indifference. The past has been associated with repression from within and from without. To most of her people, traditional arts represent a living reminder of the painful history of Korea's past.

The economic power and technological dominance of Japan and the United States of America still command the superior position in the Korean economy, technology, national defence systems, trade balances and culture.
In recent decades, while there still exists the ban on the importation of Japanese popular culture, Western influence — particularly the popular entertainment commodity of the U.S. — has been the major cultural import in South Korea. With North American style industrialization and urbanization, this has induced significant changes. Korean values and behaviour patterns — for better or worse — are moving in the direction of the world’s industrialized societies. However, the foreign validation of Korea’s growth and cultural identity is still strongly felt and constantly undermines the renewing process of Korea’s indigenous culture. The opening and closing ceremonies of the 1988 Olympics in Seoul illustrate this process. Presenting an array of traditional dances and spectacles, such an endeavour was an act of affirmation to open a window on national growth and the cultural identity of a Korea that seeks global recognition. Against this complex contemporary social and cultural context, Tal-choom, as Korea’s popular theatre, exemplifies its current place and the future possibilities of indigenous culture, which were and still are largely overlooked by most Korean people.

Plainly, the marriage between the indigenous culture and the borrowed one has not been harmonious. The indigenous theatre such as Tal-choom has been regarded as primitive, regional folk entertainment from the agricultural past of Korea, while leading universities and theatre companies have taught and produced Western plays in Korean translation.\(^\text{10}\) Hence,
Western plays are given superior status as essential subjects which are worthy of teaching and learning, and receive artistic attention from drama educators, theatre practitioners and audiences. Furthermore, the Western ideas embodied in these plays are now associated with higher education and urban refinement.

All literature departments in leading Korean universities offer courses on drama studies, and several theatre departments even provide a range of theatre studies and training such as acting, directing, set-design, lighting-design, film studies, and so on. On the other hand, *Tal-choom* studies were not and are still not part of required theatre study curricula in most Korean universities,\(^1\) while students are required to take Western drama history courses and study plays by Sophocles and Shakespeare. The indigenous popular theatre like *Tal-choom* barely maintains its existence in university theatre departments in Korea, while subsidized performances are offered only during annual agricultural festivals. Therefore, the indigenous culture was and still is connected to and associated with the backward, less "modernized" country life, and bears little significance in the urban setting. The borrowed dictates and dominates the indigenous, while the indigenous strives to get off museum shelves. Even though government intervention in and promotion of the traditional arts plays a role in reintroducing and

\(^{1}\) Master Kim Sun-Pong teaches *Tal-choom* dance and movement in Chung-Joo Teachers' College. Also, several senior performers in the P.T.C.S. teach *Tal-choom* as a non-credit dance-movement-physical training course at various junior colleges and a "dance-exercise" program at clubs in most urban shopping centres.
renewing the indigenous popular theatre such as *Tal-choom*, the absence of an historical and cultural context is scarcely filled by the few individuals engaged in a lonely struggle. The indigenous, indeed, has been continuously marginalized in the process of Korea's modernization or what politicians and economists choose to call "development."

At present, one can experience diverse Western-style theatre seasons in the mainstream theatre of Korea's major cities. Korean theatre companies feature translated plays by Western playwrights such as Sophocles, Shakespeare, Molière, Chekhov, Ibsen, Brecht, Williams, Wilder, O'Neill, Albee, Beckett, Pinter, and also the contemporary box-office hit shows from London and New York. They also produce modern Korean plays by contemporary Korean playwrights, who have often studied dramatic literature at the university level. These modern plays deal with Korean subjects with distinct emphasis on the literariness of the works based on Western models.

---

12 Since 1923, the plays by O'Neill, Wilder and Williams have been the most frequently produced plays in South Korea, both by the professional companies and universities. Shin Chong-Ok, "The Study of American Plays in Korea," *The Study of Korean Drama* (in Korean), ed. The Korean Drama Association (Seoul: Sae-moon Sa, 1985), 109.

13 The leading playwrights such as Yoo Chi-Jin and Lee Kun-Sam wrote numerous plays on the contemporary subjects which addressed historical, cultural and political issues since the 1930s. Yoo Chi-Jin, in particular, wrote 'realistic' plays which dealt with social issues. In two plays, both titled *Sisters* in 1936 and 1955, he explored "the women issues" in changing Korean society. Lee Kun-Sam in the 1960s and 1970s focused on the dark side of the 'modernization' and its impact on society and culture of Korea. His *Touring Troupe* (*You-rang-kuk-tan*) and *Mass Game* were the most frequently produced plays in the 1970s.
The values of industrialized, urban society and culture shape the contemporary Korean outlook on reality. On the one hand, for most Koreans the content and conventions of *Tal-choom* bear little resemblance to their reality. Also, at first glance it does not reflect their immediate concerns and themselves. They find *Tal-choom* as foreign as theatre from other cultures. On the other hand, despite recognized content and language that closely resemble their own, contemporary Korean theatre practice is also challenged by its own literary confines. What is problematic with contemporary Korean theatre is its detachment from the indigenous culture and from the concerns of the ordinary people. It has become an art in isolation from reality. And while theatre can be a forum for debate or moral propaganda, it is primarily a place of entertainment and must be given recognition. It cannot do without emotional response from its audience. It will fail to entertain them unless there are underlying elements both familiar and relevant to the contemporary society and its members. In the theatres featuring translated Western plays, playgoers in Seoul seldom see their lives mirrored on stage, seldom hear their language and seldom interact with the content. They never see reflections of themselves and their lives on stage, as indigenous popular theatre audiences for *Tal-choom* did in the nineteenth century. While, unfortunately, theatre directors and playwrights are also compelled to justify the artistic relevance of their work, when their productions fail to reach their audiences, their artistic passion and
conviction remain fruitless. To compound the problem, every new play written in Korea must be compared, not just with the average product of commercial theatre elsewhere, but with the best classical or contemporary plays from the West. (This phenomenon has been widely observed in many nations, including the contemporary Canadian theatre movements prior to the late 1960s.)

Since the early 1970s a nationalistic fervour for indigenous arts has ushered in numerous cultural policies as Korea secured its economic stability and growth. Primarily, the government initiated a conservation policy for traditional arts. It has also formed numerous councils and committees to promote cultural policies. Resources have been both invested and procured to foster a nation-wide awareness and introduction of indigenous arts to school children. Such governmental efforts are often regarded as token cultural policies by masters and practitioners of various indigenous arts.

However, one can debate the need for and impact of government subsidy, because after twenty years of such interventions and the implementation of cultural policies, there remain both criticism and questions generated by theatre practitioners and cultural bureaucrats. For example, when a Talchoom performance is given under the auspices of a government institution, such as the Ministry of Culture, the inherent and essential spirit is removed from what should be a spontaneous event. It is paradoxical for the
institution to ask performers and audience members to be "spontaneous" and "impulsive" as part of the educational process of learning indigenous theatre forms. However, at present, such government patronage and support are essential in nurturing traditional arts and, therefore, should be viewed as an educative process attempting to authenticate the once-familiar. However, this educative process must include review and revision of nation-wide curricula on arts education.

At present the borrowed theatre, music and visual art of the West form the major portion of arts education in Korean schools, and the indigenous receives token attention as "the traditional arts in the past." This phenomenon is clearly observed in today's *Tal-choom* practice. As long as the indigenous exists as a vestigial remnant at the margin of the mainstream curricula, it is unlikely that traditional theatre forms like *Tal-choom* will regain popular support. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to underestimate the efforts made by various *Tal-choom* conservation societies and their public and private patrons. In fact, because of growing awareness and conscious efforts by a few institutions and individuals, *Tal-choom* still maintains its existence. Although this recognition of the indigenous has been slow and met with reluctance, I am hopeful that gradually a balance between the borrowed and the indigenous will be achieved in education and cultural practice.
1.2 *Tal-choom* and Popular Theatre

Although ignored and marginalized in the recent historical and cultural context of twentieth-century Korea, *Tal-choom* still maintains its presence in Korean society not only because of its ethnic values but because of its universal appeal to the people. In appearance it seems unruly, crude and raw, but it is also fun, surprising, and vital. This mixture of characteristics is not unique to *Tal-choom*, but universal to all forms of popular theatre. For example, many characteristics of popular Korean theatre are commonly found in Western popular theatre traditions.

The term ‘popular theatre’ has several meanings, which include various forms of theatre and popular entertainment. Historically, popular theatre, as an organized theatre form, is theatre for the masses which exists in both the Western and Korean theatre traditions; medieval mystery plays and pageants, the gleemen, Mummers’ plays, *Commedia dell’arte*, fairground plays, *Pan-so-ri*, *Tal-choom*, Korean farmers’ dance, medieval European festivities, puppet shows, circus, the nineteenth-century English melodramas, vaudeville shows, and so on are all contained within the popular theatre tradition. Furthermore, modern forms of popular theatre include Fringe festivals, street theatre, street clowning, docudramas, therapeutic drama, multi-media performance art, stand-up comedy, and rock concerts.

There was very little written about popular theatre until the beginning of the 1980s. It is only since the last decade that there has been more
awareness and interest in popular theatre. In 1983, Michael Booth analyzed characteristics of popular theatre, which are summarized as follows:

1. Popular theatre consistently violates continuity of realistic illusion, characterization and narrative.

2. There is no attempt in popular theatre at unification or ordered sequence.

3. Characters and characterization are established through visual and physical appeal.

4. Language has never been a primary agent of meaning and communication in popular theatre. Popular theatre avoids excessive use of language and is nonliterary.

5. There exists a direct and informal relationship between performer and audience in popular theatre.14

This description seems to be based on the assumption that popular theatre is different from something. This "something" appears to be a literary theatre model. Booth's description tends to focus on the dramatic structure and its media, implying elements of the literary theatre model. My approach to popular theatre is, however, to observe a popular theatre performance as an event distinct in itself, with its own inner workings and unconscious definitions, without referring to the literary theatre. Particularly, I emphasize performance aspects and the social context of popular theatre.

In order to probe the characteristics of popular theatre, I separately chose two leading forms that I am familiar with: Tal-choom and rock

14 Michael Booth, "What is Popular Theatre?" Australasian Drama Studies (August 1982), 3-11.
concerts. In its own way, each contributes to and reflects my cultural and personal identity. They cannot be understood from a literary perspective and must be viewed within their own worlds. While there are some contrasts, rock concerts, particularly the Stones's, present a formidable parallel to the characteristics of a *Tal-choom* performance. From my participation and observations of rock concerts and *Tal-choom* performances, characteristics of popular theatre are manifested in these aspects:

1. an event-centred performance;
2. performance in the present tense;
3. performer’s virtuosity as a focal point;
4. accessible, portable and flexible venue requirements;
5. audiences as co-creators and active participants in the making of an event;
6. celebration of vulgarity;
7. triumph of explicit male sexuality;¹⁵
8. socially licensed act of rebellion;
9. celebration of differences and contrasts; and
10. institutionalized/tolerated vent for repressed feeling.

Popular theatre is event-centred rather than coherently structured, that is it emphasizes the event itself rather than the dramatic

---

¹⁵ *Tal-choom* does not deal with overt female sexuality. Therefore, my comparison with Western rock ‘n’ roll deals only with the aspect of the male sexuality, despite the fact that the female sexuality is obviously very much part of the Western soft and hard rock.
structure, and it explores the implications of the event (Point 1). The event is presented in the present tense through dance, music, songs, mime, spectacle and interaction with the audience, rather than scene changes or special effects. Popular theatre such as Tal-choom and rock concerts focus on performance in the present tense (Point 2). Hence, dramatic conflicts and structural framework are simply not applicable in analyzing a Tal-choom performance or a rock concert. The first scene or episode in Tal-choom and the first set of a Stones's concert stand on their own as separate events featuring and highlighting performers' known skills (Point 3). Within the metaphoric world of the event, the performer becomes the main focal point. Indeed, the metaphor resides in the persona of the performer. Further, a leading performer with his/her virtuosity and particular "stage personality" actually sets the tone of a concert or shapes a performance. This virtuosity, which includes not only talent and performance skills, but ability to interact with the audience, defines the quality of a master performer. What the audience comes to see then are the parameters set by the boundaries of a personality, not canvas or steel or words necessarily.

In addition, the venue requirements of most popular theatre performances are relatively simple and tend to be less dependent on elaborate scenic equipment (Point 4).\textsuperscript{16} Nor are the audience members passive

\textsuperscript{16} Although most large rock and roll concerts from the 1970s onward tend to employ numerous high-tech industrialized sound and lighting equipment, I argue that it is the performers themselves that are at the centre of a concert.
observers in darkness, but the co-creators and informed participants of an event. This is true whether they are featured outdoors in natural light, or in an indoor stadium under artificial light (Point 5). The point is, in this creative process, audience and performers agree on a willing suspension of disbelief and on a set of conventions required by the moment in order to create an improvisational collective.

The actors of popular theatre must be skilful performers: dancers, mime performers, jugglers, magicians, clowns, trapeze artists, buskers, stand-up comics, black-face minstrels, living mannequins, stilt walkers and trick cyclists. Individual performers combine some of these skills with their own personality and stage persona (Points 3 and 5). Audiences' admiration for these individual skills, personalities and stage persona define the nature of the event and also dictate the course of the performance.

Allied to these characteristics, in popular theatre the celebration of vulgarity is not subtle (Point 6); raw emotions and their physical manifestations are blatantly presented and any judgement of them suspended. Moral and social implications such as vulgar, common, lewd, and even obscene expressions, are only applauded and glamorized. In fact, sexuality and the social taboos against public sexual acts are often the most celebrated themes of popular theatre. For example, practically any scene dealing with sexual inhibition receives the loudest applause from the audience in *Pong-san Tal-choom* performance. The same is true in the
Rolling Stones's concert. (Examples of the audience responses at the Stones's concert will be discussed in Chapter 6.)

However, it is the celebration of male sexuality which is particularly emphasized (Point 7). Various phallic objects — costume and props — and pelvic movements indicate the showy triumph of male sexuality, either as fertility symbols in *Tal-choom* or as satyr figures in the Stones's concerts. Also, excessive drinking, dancing, noise, and lewd behaviour amongst audience members are not only tolerated (Point 8), but, furthermore, at such venues, differences and contrasts in social class and status, genders, and ages are exposed and ridiculed rather than criticized (Point 9). Finally, as long as it remains within the boundary of the sanctioned or licensed time and space, such a carnival-like atmosphere is not viewed as civil unrest, but condoned by polite society for a limited time (Point 10). Traditionally, licentious carnivals are institutionalized and organized in order to provide repressed people with a temporary channel of expression. Popular theatre, therefore, can be seen as sites of socially licensed and collective rebellion; it is a scene of temporarily assimilated anarchy and sanctioned "uncivil rest."17

17 These characteristics of popular theatre can be observed in numerous and diverse shapings of events beyond the conventional boundary of popular theatre: there are large sports and recreational events such as the NHL, professional wrestling matches, professional boxing matches, and ultimately, the Olympic games; political rallies and presidential inaugurations; rituals such as weddings and funerals; theme parks such as Disneyworld; and spectacles such as parades.
In summary, with foci on the event itself and performers themselves, both *Tal-choom* and rock concerts contain elements of spectacle, audience participation, powerful physical movements, status inversion, sexuality, satire and artistic virtuosity. While a *Tal-choom* performance is a theatrical experience with greater focus on ceremonial ritual, three characteristics are distinctly common in popular theatre of all forms: the creative process, the spectacle, and audience participation. Firstly, in the creative process, popular theatre is performer-oriented/event-centred, improvisational and collective with a sense of a community. Secondly, in its style, popular theatre directly addresses and interacts with the audience through song and dance as well as simple, clear and allegorical stories. Costumes are colourful, symbolic, clearly identifiable and fantastical.

Performing sites are dynamic and flexible; they can be found anywhere where there are actors and audiences. With open staging, mass media technology can be utilized and employed — film, video, TV, and elaborate sound and lighting systems. Performances are sometimes spiced up with social commentary and political satire. As for the performers and audience, popular theatre is physical, sensual, emotional, visual, energizing and immediate. With its direct comments upon whatever is happening in the present tense, it, therefore, is surprising and relevantly immediate. Also, inversion of status, assimilated chaos, and farcical burlesque of the
status quo are manifested and glorified. Above all, audience participation is essential.

Whereas some popular theatre can be overtly commercial and dependent solely upon the performer's technique and professional skills for its success, some of its aspects cultivate ritualistic associations. In this study, it is the rituals of the audience participation I wish to emphasize. There has been little consideration or study given to audiences and their active role in theatre events. However, since the 1960s there have been many attempts to bring new vitality and dynamic energy to theatre by actively including the audience in the performance. Contemporary theatrical practice continues to include the audience in many different styles of theatrical experiences through renaming and incorporating various theatre forms and ideas from many areas.18

The audience members' spontaneous participation is not seen as intrusive, but invited. Audiences consequently attend every performance as highly informed critics. Their interests lie primarily in the performers' success in coordinating all their skills into an aesthetically refined, harmonious and exciting ensemble generating an act of collective celebration. Moreover, based on my observation of live Tal-choom performances and various rock concerts since 1977, I have noticed that avid spectators of

---

18 The Asian theatre traditions, religion, ritual, philosophy, art, pop music, mass media, and films, the Fringe festivals can be seen as an active site of popular theatre in contemporary theatre practice in Canada.
popular theatre tend to be better "connoisseurs" than average theatregoers: their knowledge is more specialized and they are capable of distinguishing extraordinary performance.

The nature of *Tal-choom* and rock concerts is fundamentally both festive and collective with the audience comprising a willing and informed group. Its performance is basically an act of communication between a live performer or performance and an audience gathered in a place of assembly. Collective activity celebrates the reflection of the audience themselves through their corresponding silences, cheers, freely expressed vocal encouragements and physical expressions of their likes and dislikes. It also enhances a privileged site for revelry and can exorcise the audience's needs and concerns in social and cultural life. This reciprocity of vital interchanges between performer and audience in *Tal-choom* and rock concerts is the most important and distinct characteristic. In both, a sense of community is clearly established.

For this study, I have chosen a Korean popular theatre: *Tal-choom* from the *Pong-san* region, which is a north-eastern area, now located in North Korea. This is one of the most well-known varieties and has maintained the authenticity of traditional characteristics. Also, I have chosen this particular *Tal-choom* because stories and activities of the *Pong-san Tal-choom* Conservation Society (P.T.C.S.) and its members, including
five Living National Treasures, represent the current history and practice of *Tal-choom* in twentieth-century Korean society. Among many rock 'n' roll musicians and bands in the West, I have chosen to examine the Rolling Stones because they remain one of the longest surviving rock bands and also for their performance style, and the personality of the lead singer Mick Jagger with his "stage persona."

---

19 Since the beginning of the 1960s, the government of South Korea began to acknowledge the individual artists with titles of Living National Treasures. These artists are performers (singers, dancers, puppeteers, musicians), craftsmen, and artisans of indigenous arts and crafts which are ephemeral and intangible. The title is given to an individual artist and also to a society of an indigenous art whose tradition is conveyed through the oral transmission. Chapter 5 discusses this tradition of the oral transmission in detail.
In any study of Tal-choom and its introduction to the Western world, first of all, one must emphasize that it is a popular expression by the common people. Although the ruling class has sponsored its production, they have had little influence on the content and production which requires simple set-up and minimal props. The effects of Tal-choom stem from Shin-myong (‘communitas’), its alliance to Koot, and the collective improvisation created by both the audience and the performers. It should be emphasized that the main purpose of Tal-choom is to relieve the tension between the classes and to celebrate the human spirit at a playful site of popular theatre.

(Female graduate student, 23 years old)
*Tal-choom* has been the cultural expression of common people in Korea for the past three hundred years. However, to date no evidence has been uncovered which pinpoints when and how it actually evolved into a form of popular theatre. While the precise date is still unknown, contemporary scholars agree in general that it appeared as popular theatre by the middle of the eighteenth century when the merchants started to sponsor performances in major trading towns and cities.\(^\text{20}\) There is no documentary evidence about *Tal-choom* from the mid-eighteenth century until the twentieth century, except for master-student relationships collected by Professor Doo-Hyun Lee. The remembered chain of relationships is short, usually never more than three links.\(^\text{21}\) Since 1967 the content, performance styles, all masks, costumes and props of *Tal-choom* have belonged to the various *Tal-choom* conservation societies as their sole artistic heritage. At present, there are four distinct regional\(^\text{22}\) variants of *Tal-choom* models, each based on a model from a particular part of Korea, and all of them connected to earlier indigenous agricultural festivals (see Illustration 1).

There are five to eight episodic scenes in a *Tal-choom* performance. Scene division varies in each region and with local traditions, as does the


\(^{21}\) These recollections take the following form: 'I studied with X, X studied with Y, and Y studied with Z,' but never more than three generations. In Chapter 5, I discuss and examine the aspects of master-student relationship and transmission of the oral tradition.

\(^{22}\) The word 'region' in a Korean context refers to areas which are separated geographically and culturally and which maintain different dialects.
Illustration 1: Regional Configurations of Tal-choom

- **North-eastern Type**
  - Puk-chong Sa-ja Nori
  - (Lion Dance)

- **North-western Type**
  - Pong-san Tal-choom,
  - Kang-nyang Tal-choom,
  - Un-nyul Tal-choom

- **Central Type**
  - Seoul
  - Song-pa San-dae No-ri
  - Tang-jo Pyul-san-dae No-ri

- **South-eastern Type**
  - Ha-rih Pal-sin-kut
  - Yong-yeung O-kwang-dal No-ri
  - Ko-sung O-kwang-dal No-ri
  - Ka-san O-kwang-dal No-ri
  - Ko-sung O-kwang-dal No-ri
  - Tong-lae Ya-yoo
  - Soo-young Ya-yoo
number of scenes. The subjects or themes are presented through the use of
colourful and often grotesque masks, bright, even garish costumes, powerful
physical movement and dance, suggestive mime, and very vulgar dialogue.
The narrative subjects, or themes, of every Tal-choom type address the
major restrictions in the lives of the common people from which social,
economic, moral and domestic injustices or inequalities are derived; such as
sharp class divisions, the hypocrisy of the ruling class, the corruption of
religion (Buddhist and Confucian teachings, in particular), and the domestic
disharmony between man and woman. Each separate theme is incorporated
into an independent scenario. Through satire and status-inversion, each
episode illustrates the unfairness of the lives of the common people, their
problems and misery, specifically from their own perspective. There is also
much direct audience participation. In addition, the community presents a
common attitude toward Tal-choom as local cultural heritage.

A local Tal-choom society consists of a master teacher (also master
performers), disciples, patrons and citizens. Its mandate is the maintenance
of community heritage through performances, and training and education.
Since the traditions are passed down orally, the society actually maintains a
living history. Though heavily subsidized by the Korean government, each
society also promotes community support and sponsorship, sometimes solici-
ting this support from outside the community in the form of corporate
sponsoring. Touring beyond the region is rare. However, since the 1960s some societies have toured as ambassadors for the country to the United States, Canada and Europe.

Within the four regional models, there are also local variations each with their own homespun theatrical tradition and authenticity. They are most apparent in the following areas:

1. the choice of colours, styles, and material for masks, costumes and props;
2. the style of dance steps, movements, mime and choreography;
3. the different musical components including the local singing style, locally known songs and musical instruments;
4. the sequence of episodes; and
5. the local festival and revelry traditions.

Historically, each region in Korea developed and inherited its own Tal-choom type in one way or another. The four main regional

---

23 A detailed examination and discussion of Pong-san Tal-choom will be dealt with separately in Chapters 4 and 5.

24 Although the grouping of Tal-choom is problematic and is open to debate, grouping extant variations by region is now common. Woo-Taek Kim confirms this in his Korean Traditional Theatre and Its Inherent Stage (in Korean) (Seoul: Kae-Moon Sa, 1978, 118-119).
configurations\textsuperscript{25} are the south-eastern type, the central type (found in the capital region around Seoul and called \textit{Sandaee Nori} rather than \textit{Tal-choom}), the north-western type and the north-eastern type (also known as Lion dance theatre). In all cases, however, a \textit{Tal-choom} performance is incorporated into community festivals, generally as part of agriculture and fertility festivals.

While this kind of geographical arrangement of \textit{Tal-choom} facilitates academic interests, it also proves relevant to the establishment of an historical frame of reference. Regional differences in \textit{Tal-choom} are directly related to the geography of the country. Over three-quarters of the Korean peninsula is mountainous and until the twentieth century brought railways and better roads, there was very limited communication and transportation between regions. As each region was isolated from its neighbours, it easily maintained its local customs and dialect. In the south, for instance, several mountain ranges divide two regions, known as \textit{Young-nam} (the south-eastern region) and \textit{Ho-nam} (the south-western region). It was not until the mid-1960s that these regions were joined by a highway. Despite regional variations, \textit{Tal-choom} as a generic term is the indigenous popular theatre of

\textsuperscript{25} In 1940, Japanese scholars categorized \textit{Tal-choom} by region, and distinguished between variations mechanically by geography rather than by presentation. This study was conducted by the Folk Arts Research Centre in the Kyongsung Imperial University (the name of the National Public University, now known as the Seoul National University, when Korea was occupied by Japan) under Japanese scholarship. While he maintains regional differences, Professor Doo-Hyun Lee distinguishes variations by region according to their presentational style and content.
Korea, encompassing a broad range of characteristics from theatre, festival and ritual.

After the Korean War, surviving performers and patrons of each regional community formed conservation societies for their region in South Korea. Thus, regional differences were concentrated as never before. Moreover, since the 1960s, regional diversity has actually been individually acknowledged as distinctive expressions of authenticity, and honoured as Intangible Cultural Assets (I.C.A.) by the Korean government. *Pong-san Tal-choom* became I.C.A. #17 in 1967, *Kang-nyong Tal-choom* I.C.A. #34 in 1970, and *Un-nyul Tal-choom* I.C.A. #61 in 1978. Although all these forms originated from the north-western regions of Korea (presently located in North Korea), it is difficult to determine whether or not they continue to survive in North Korea because there has been no direct communication regarding research between the two Koreas since the Korean War, and the situation remains unchanged to date. Therefore, this study will focus on

---

26 The South Korean government not only recognized each regional *Tal-choom* as a form of Intangible Cultural Asset but its leading performers as Living National Treasures. For example, in *Pong-san Tal-choom* Conservation Society, there are five Living National Treasures who are master-performers and teachers.

27 There have been several cultural exchanges between the two Koreas since 1988, either in Seoul or Pyong-yang, and sometimes in Japan. When I interviewed three masters of the *Pong-san Tal-choom* Society in 1991, I asked them about whether or not they had ever viewed or exchanged ideas about *Tal-choom* performances and traditions of North Korea. They confirmed that much to their surprise, North Korean singers and dancers did not seem to be aware of the existence of *Tal-choom*. While South Korean performers presented a mixture of traditional and contemporary pieces, including a section from *Tal-choom*, their North Korean counterparts offered a range of traditional folksongs and dance which portrayed the glorification of their social and political ideology.
the conventions and characteristics of Pong-san Tal-choom which has been performed most successfully in South Korea since the 1960s.

In the past thirty years there have been many debates about the origin of Tal-choom. While most investigations tend to focus on the interpretation of spoken words — dialogue and content — some contemporary studies have also incorporated findings and observations of performance aspects — dance, mime, mask, costume and music — derived from extensive fieldwork. Generally, scholars agree that in tracing the origin of Tal-choom it is important to note its connection to agricultural festivals; for until the beginning of the twentieth century, Tal-choom performances took place during those agricultural festivals in spring and fall, although there was some urban and commercial patronage from the eighteenth century onward in cities such as Pong-san. In general, research and scholarship on the subject comply with two paradigms: (1) a literary-historical approach focused on Korean folklore; and (2) a comparative study of Tal-choom with

---

28 It is common practice with some scholars to trace the origin of Tal-choom back to Chu-Yong Ka-Moo in the seventh century A.D. during the reign of King Hung-kang of the Silla Kingdom. However, in recent studies (post-1970), Professor Dong-II Cho argues that the tendency to trace Tal-choom to the seventh century lacks authoritative evidence. There is little extant written evidence on theatre or performance arts recorded by court historians. If there are written accounts, they are merely chronological statements of court entertainment rather than records of popular theatre or performance conventions of the populace in general. Documentation of Tal-choom as theatrical performance is rarely evident until the beginning of the twentieth century. Research on the origin of Tal-choom still remains speculative for many scholars because of the rarity and lack of reliable material exclusively on popular theatre.

other theatrical forms of the past, including other folk traditions and theatres of neighbouring cultures such as China and Japan.

2.1 Literature Review

The study of *Tal-choom* as a legitimate subject of scholarship is a recent phenomenon in Korea. All major studies on *Tal-choom* have been published since the late 1970s. At present, there are only a few scholars who are engaged in research on the subject. Professors Doo-Hyun Lee, Jin-Tae Park, Han-Kee Chang and Dong-Il Cho are the leading authorities in the field. Along with the published information on *Tal-choom* by these scholars, there is also renewed interest in the subject of traditional festivity and theatre. Sang-Il Lee's *Smile of Tal* (in Korean) (1988) is a compilation of short essays on the use of humour and masks in *Tal-choom*. Kang-Ryul Lee's *Foklore and Festivity* (in Korean) (1990) deals with various folk traditions and festivities.

Professor Doo-Hyun Lee of Seoul National University is a specialist in Korean folk literature and drama. Professor Lee's contribution to the study of *Tal-choom* is valuable for several reasons. Firstly, he was the initial scholar to examine *Tal-choom* from the perspective of folk art, and his *The Mask Drama of Korea* (in Korean) (1979) is the text book for the
study of various forms of mask drama in Korea. Secondly, he transcribed and compiled the scenario of each Tal-choom regional model in his book. Finally, he described the sequence of a Tal-choom performance and the details of each mask. Therefore, The Mask Drama of Korea is an anthology as well as the main source of published information about Tal-choom. His other book on the subject, The Korean Tal-choom (in Korean) (1981), specifically deals with the historical perspective of Tal-choom. He attempts to trace the origin of Tal-choom to prehistoric rites and ceremonies, but unfortunately his evidence is not convincing. Although his knowledge and authority are widely acknowledged in the field, his argument is contested by other scholars. Professor Lee's work is directed at the historical context and restoration of Tal-choom. What he does not address in his books is the aspect of theatrical conventions, performers' training and the oral transmission of the art through the masters.

"Mask theatre is both literature and drama," writes Professor Jin-Tae Park in his The Study of Korean Mask Dance Drama (1985). As literature, Tal-choom is "the literature of an oral tradition," and as drama,
"the folk theatre of the common people."32 Building from the works of Professor Lee, Professor Park's study of *Tal-choom* is focused on the analysis and interpretation of the scenario. While offering a detailed analysis of each scene, he examines the characters and their contribution to the development of *Tal-choom* as 'popular theatre.' He examines the characters as 'types' in eighteenth-century Korean society. He also discusses the implication of social changes which are reflected through the characterization and particularly through the interactions between the classes. His investigation and examination of the characters are integral to the understanding of *Tal-choom* and its major themes.

In his recent *The Origin and Structure of Tal-No-ri* (in Korean) (1990), Professor Park continues to examine the development of *Tal-choom* and its association with shamanistic rites or *koot*. He examines current *koot* practices and extracts the theatrical aspects, which he compares with those of existing *Tal-choom* models. While his comparison of *koot* and *Tal-choom* remains an important contribution to research on the origin of *Tal-choom*, he deals exclusively with the interpretation and implications of the shamanistic connections between *Tal-choom* and *koot*. His studies of *koot* are descriptive analyses of the sequence and interpretation of rites, while his approach to *Tal-choom* relies on the spoken words and the character 'types.' In his comparative approach to the subject, Professor Park's work is

32 Ibid.
a major contribution to our comprehension not only of the origin but also of
the connection of *Tal-choom* to fertility rites.

Professor Dong-Il Cho's *The History and Principle of Tal-choom* (in
Korean) (1988) is an outstanding study of the subject for several reasons.
Firstly, he examines *Tal-choom* as a distinct theatre tradition not as a folk
literature. Secondly, instead of trying to establish a prehistoric origin, he
offers an extensive and comparative examination of *Tal-choom* and other
forms of popular theatre (i.e., *Pan-so-ri* and puppet theatre). "Speculating on
the origin of *Tal-choom,*" writes Professor Cho, "is a waste of time and a
futile exercise." He continues:

> We can no more fix a date of origin than we can
> fix a date for the Dionysian festivals of the ancient
> Greek world. What we must concentrate on are
> the functions of these festivals and their relevance
> to the development of *Tal-choom* as popular
> theatre."34

Prior to presenting his interpretation of *Pong-san Tal-choom* and *Yang-joo
San-dae No-ri* as theatre in *The History and Principle of Tal-choom,* Professor
Cho addresses the major obstacle which he and other scholars face in
their research on *Tal-choom,* namely, the almost total absence of literature
on the subject. He attributes this lack of documentation to deliberate
rejection of the subject on the part of court historians during the *Choson*

---

31 Cho, 46.

34 *Ibid.*, 47.
dynasty, "because they, as members of the ruling class, felt neither the obligation nor the need to record the worthless entertainment of the common people."\textsuperscript{35}

Thirdly, building from and referring to the works of Professors Lee and Park, Professor Cho examines the dramatic and theatrical conventions of *Tal-choom*, the functions of musicians, the performing site, and the themes of *Tal-choom* — particularly in scenes involving the Old Priest, the Aristocrats and the Old Woman. Finally, Professor Cho also was one of the first scholars to compare *Tal-choom* and its theatrical conventions to those of Chinese, Japanese and ancient Greek theatre traditions.\textsuperscript{36}

The works of Professors Lee, Park and Cho are the major contributions to our understanding of *Tal-choom*, its development and its dramatic conventions. Their studies, however, rarely address the question of performers’ training, theatrical conventions, and, most importantly, the interaction between performers and an audience. I believe that these aspects are vital components of *Tal-choom* tradition and that therefore they should be examined accordingly. Having reviewed all published information on the origin and development of *Tal-choom*, I will now focus my discussion on two approaches to *Tal-choom*: the literary-historical and the comparative.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Professor Han-Kee Chang’s *Traditional (Ethnic) Drama and Asian Dramas* (in Korean) (1988) is a collection of essays on various types of drama from Korea, China, Japan, India and other nations in south-east Asia. Unlike the work of Professor Cho, his book does not offer a comparative study of various dramatic traditions from these nations, but presents the introductory information on each type.
2.2 Literary-historical Approach

As a non-literary cultural expression of common people in a pre-industrialized, non-Westernized Korea, *Tal-choom*, with its uncensored delivery of satire and sexuality, was, as I have mentioned, historically considered by the established classes as hopelessly vulgar and consequently unworthy of serious scholarly investigation. A limited literary record was written by Japanese scholars during the Japanese occupation (1910 to 1945). However, such scholars were constrained by orders from the Japanese Governor General, who had a political rather than a scholarly or cultural interest in the culture of occupied Korea. Official Japanese interest in Korean culture and art forms was limited to words and their meanings. Predictably, from a literary perspective, these Japanese researchers, with the help of Korean translators trained in the Japanese school systems, found the narrative subjects of *Tal-choom* unrefined and the physical movements/mime obscene, particularly in the portrayal of sexuality. They, therefore, concluded that it was an obscene and inferior form of Korean folk culture.37 They also assumed that Korean people were inferior and should be justifiably subjugated to superior Japanese control. This derogatory...


...any way, since *Sandae Nori* is performed for ignorant, illiterate masses, the subject matter is vulgar and its sense of humour unrefined. Even the newly added lines seem to lack sophistication....It must be the result of the indifference of Choson scholars and writers, who deplored the play scripts or novels, paid no attention to them and left their creation to the uneducated.

attitude toward *Tal-choom* and other Korean art forms went unchallenged by the Korean people themselves during the Japanese occupation and remained unchanged even after the liberation. The effect of such prejudiced literary documentation has been detrimental to any understanding of the full range of the theatrical experience of *Tal-choom*, especially as the literary-historical approach involves the articulation and documentation of texts alone. Since most *Tal-choom* texts were and still are orally passed down among performers, this has presented a problem of real magnitude. However, since the 1960s, Doo-Hyun Lee, the leading scholar in the field, has interviewed and recorded scripts with the cooperation of surviving elder members of various *Tal-choom* Conservation Societies. Unfortunately, two problems have hampered his research: (1) inconsistency in recollections; and (2) diverse interpretations of words — this is perhaps to be expected considering that the memories of elderly master performers are often hazy. Even ex-members of the same troupe may disagree on salient points. Yet one has to rely on elderly performers for oral history. To compound the problems, since the tradition goes back at least to the early seventeenth century, the translation, interpretation and annotation of the text involve dealing with vocabulary that is not always in everyday use in modern Korean.

In trying to establish the origin of *Tal-choom*, Professor Lee has argued that while existing records of mask dance or performance stretch
back to the fourth century A.D., the present form of *Tal-choom* as popular theatre emerged only during the reign of King *In-cho* (1623-1649). To support his argument, he relates the name of the Central Model — *Yangjoo Sandae Nori* — to that of elaborate, courtly performances during the same period, called *Sandae Nori*. Historical accounts also suggest that *Sandae Nori* may have been a variety of theatrical performance presented for foreign guests and dignitaries on a raised stage at court. The details and venues of this courtly entertainment (see Illustration 2), however, remain largely unknown to us. In tracing its emergence in the central region in particular, Lee claims that *Tal-choom* never had anything in common with its courtly original, although the *Tal-choom* in the central region is called *Sandae Nori*. Rather, it is most likely that performers of *Tal-choom* merely adopted the name to gain greater respect for their performance. Considering that *Tal-choom* is far from being a courtly entertainment, this theory is perhaps the most convincing to date.

Park, Chang and Lee seem to agree with Lee, affirming that folk entertainment such as *Tal-choom* and other traditional cultural expressions emerged after invasions by Japan and China in the sixteenth and

---

38 Professor Lee bases his argument on historical documents about *Chu-yong-ka-moo*, meaning a mask dance of *Chu-yong*.


Illustration 2.1: A Courtly Chu-yong Mask and Dance Performance During the Choson Dynasty

A court painter of the eighteenth century, depicting a Chu-yong-ka-moo performance for a newly appointed governor of Pyong-yang (National Arts Museum of Korea, Seoul).
Illustration 2.2  A Contemporary Re-enactment of the Courtly Dance Performance

Source: A Handbook of Korea
seventeenth centuries. During these centuries the country was devastated by two long wars. By King In-cho's reign (1623-1649), the government was forced to close the Council of National Entertainment because the court could no longer afford elaborate entertainments. After this closure, performers at the court apparently settled in and around the capital, Seoul, and performed for local and national occasions during harvest festivals and traditional holidays.\footnote{Ibid., 36. This view seems to be supported by two history books written by Deuk-kong You in the late eighteenth century and Hyun-suk Chong in 1872.}

But the origin of Tal-choom cannot be solely explained by the closure of the Council of National Entertainment. Contemporary social and cultural changes were also responsible for the gradual spreading of popular expressions, including Tal-choom in the eighteenth century. An understanding of this is essential before we examine the origin of Tal-choom.

2.2.1 Historical Context

Following the reign of the Great Sejong (1418-1450), toward the end of the fifteenth century, there was a noticeable decline in the leadership qualities of Korean kings. Consequently, there were struggles for power and position among cliques of the Yang-ban (the Korean aristocracy of scholar-officials during the Choson dynasty) at court. Alliances developed among these aristocratic factions based on distinct family, regional, economic, and
even educational ties. By the late seventeenth century, the Yang-ban were divided into four hereditary groups, which endured throughout the rest of the dynasty. Their adherents had their own economic base in agricultural estates, lived in separate areas of the capital, and schemed together to gain power.42 The weakening of the royal leadership and the increasing power of factional rivalries at court were partly responsible for the weakness of Korea in the face of the Japanese and Manchurian invasions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.43

The Choson dynasty was already destitute before the Japanese invasion (1592-98). The strain of countering the Japanese invasion of Korea weakened the Ming dynasty in China, as well as Korea, and facilitated the Manchu conquest. The additional years of devastation by a Manchurian invasion (1627-37) maimed and disestablished the nation beyond any hope

---


43 Ibid. In 1592 Toyotomi Hideyoshi, second of the three leaders who consolidated Japan after a century of civil war, decided to invade the Asian continent through Korea. He was initially successful against weak and faction-ridden government forces. In the end, the Japanese were made to abandon their adventure in 1598 by the Chinese Ming dynasty's intervention and the death of Hideyoshi.
of quick recovery." The Jurchen, or Manchus, one of the northern barbarian tribes, had established their own empire before taking over the Ming dynasty in China. After having usurped the Ming throne, the Manchus — the Ching dynasty in China — forced the Koreans to transfer their allegiance to the Manchu Emperor. In 1643, King In-cho was forced to sign a peace treaty with the Manchus, which was in fact an unconditional submission to their military forces.

Soon afterward, a familiar cycle of dynastic decay asserted itself; the aristocratic class quietly entrenched itself in privileged political and economic positions at the expense of the throne and the common people. In the absence of a justice system during the late sixteenth and the rest of the seventeenth centuries, corrupt officials dispatched conscription notices to infant boys, the old, the sick, and even the dead for whom family members had to pay taxes and bribery to avoid criminal charges of draft dodging. None of the sacrifice and suffering of the common people was treated with

---

44 Ibid., 34. Adding insult to injury, the retreating Japanese took with them many of Korea's best artisans and craftsmen. Macdonald states that the Japanese ceramic and lacquer industries, for instance, owe their start in large part to the imported Koreans. The resentment of the Korean people that resulted from the war has never ceased. Nevertheless, peaceful relations were established with Tokugawa Ieyau who succeeded Hideyoshi as leader of Japan under the nominal but powerless emperor. The Japanese were given limited access and residential rights in a small area near the southeastern port city of Pusan, an arrangement that continued into the nineteenth century.

45 Ibid.

46 This event marks one of the greatest humiliations in Korea's history.
any governmental restorative administration. In effect, the treaty ensured that the populace had a government which could not protect the interests of its citizens.\textsuperscript{47} Embezzlement and shameless exploitation of the people were common and continued even after the wars. Repression was severe and the level of the degradation of the poor paralleled the lot of serfs in pre-revolutionary Russia. Religion, whether Buddhist or Confucian, was inadequate to provide spiritual and moral relief or escape. In fact, both faiths provided only the upper classes with spiritual leadership, and were not directed at common people during the Choson dynasty. Therefore, the artistic and literary expressions of the late seventeenth century were a cultural response by the oppressed who were used, abused and rejected.\textsuperscript{48}

By way of contrast, the late seventeenth century was a period of tolerance when the nation experienced a brief, relative peace and welcomed artistic and literary creativity which was sought by a bankrupt and disillusioned aristocracy. There were also significant efforts at reform among intellectuals. One of these was the philosophical movement now referred to as \textit{sirhak} — denoting practical learning — which arose among intellectuals in the seventeenth century. It was inspired in part by deteriorating social conditions and in part by new currents of thought in China, including

\textsuperscript{47} The result was continuous strife amongst various factions during and after the wars with the resultant coup attempts, imprisonment of opposition factions, torture and executions without trial. The Korean king stood powerless while his politicians engaged in bloody power struggles.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Tal-choom} is not a literary expression of social injustice and should not be studied as such, but a theatrical response to immediate surroundings.
Christian ideas, brought home by young members of the official tribute missions to China.\textsuperscript{49} It is, however, more accurate to call it an era of "native expression," the driving force of which had developed from the cumulative experience of the common people, whose deepest material and spiritual needs had long been denied legitimate expression. Indeed, it is likely that this cultural movement included the invention of the \textit{Han’gul} alphabet in 1443, an invention which eventually made cultural expressions of the common people, including \textit{Tal-choom} and \textit{Pan-so-ri}, possible. The subsequent emergence of the \textit{Han’gul} novel implied an important cultural change in seventeenth-century Korean society. Such novels were written in the vernacular language of common people — \textit{Han’gul}\textsuperscript{60} (see Appendix 2).

For over twenty centuries the ruling class had monopolized the Korean literary world, while their subjects remained uneducated and illiterate; they had also embraced written Chinese as the official language for all historical, government documentation as well as for literary texts. The ruling class believed written Chinese to be superior to \textit{Han’gul}, which

\textsuperscript{49} Macdonald, 34-35. At the same time, new agricultural techniques brought about the growth and concentration of wealth and the beginnings of a commercial economy, despite continuing aristocratic disdain for such activity.

\textsuperscript{50} After three years of experimentation with the alphabet, King \textit{Sejong} officially proclaimed the birth of \textit{Han’gul} on the 9th October 1446, a date observed as a national holiday in Korea. In his preface, written in \textit{Han’gul}, he articulated

\begin{quote}
We have been suffering for a long time for our good common people, whose ignorance and illiteracy are not their fault but that of the complicated writing system of Chinese characters. Our concerns for our people were met by our academy scholars, and with their assistance we researched a new, easy way of codifying the Korean spoken language....(My translation)
\end{quote}
they considered too commonplace and easy to learn. Indeed, *Han’gul* was a language that only women, children and lower classes used extensively. Hence, Chinese philosophy, ethics and politics set the standard by which the intelligentsia measured themselves. Even down to the present day, competence in the Chinese written language is mandatory for Koreans in the research of any documentation written before the late twentieth century. Moreover, the government and people involved in literacy policy are still debating how many Chinese characters are required for literary competence or whether or not it is necessary to teach young children Chinese characters.

Korean, as written, is a phonetic language containing twenty-four vowels and consonants with no systematic tonal differentiation. During the eighteenth century, personal journals and letters were written in

---

51 Chinese characters are an essential complement to the comprehension of *Han’gul*. A syllable in *Han’gul* can mean more than one thing. For example, a *Han’gul* spelling of sound *SOO* (the consonant "s" with the vowel "oo") may mean hand(s), water, brain, beast, number, a name of a Chinese dynasty, a trick, and many others. Although a speaker/reader/listener can comprehend the intended meaning by putting the sound into the context of a sentence, the Chinese character clarifies an intended definition of the sound *SOO*. This is due to the fact that the Chinese spoken language has a four-tone pronunciation system to differentiate each syllable.

52 Korean educational guideline on *Han’gul* fluctuates depending on government policies. It is my understanding that, until the late 1970s, all junior high and high school students were required to learn the basic Chinese characters. In some school districts students were not taught Chinese characters at all throughout the 1980s. Gradually books and periodicals are being published in *Han’gul* with Chinese characters. However, as the graduates from this decade, without the ability to read Chinese characters, enter the contemporary workforce, the literacy debate is renewed.

53 Most Korean words originate from two roots: indigenous Korean wads and Chinese words. The latter dominate the literary vocabulary of the Korean language. Therefore, a minimum of 1,800 to 2,000 Chinese characters must be completely comprehended in order to understand Korean newspapers. In this regard, present Korean language is similar to Japanese. Understanding *Kan-ji* (Chinese characters in Japanese) is essential to speak, read and write Japanese.
Han’gul among women of the ruling class. A three-line Han’gul poem (called Si-cho) also emerged as a popular literary genre among the younger generation of the intelligentsia. Gradually, written Han’gul filtered down to the common people, providing them at last with the means to record and express their own experience. Despite the initial backlash among the conservative scholars, it quickly caught on. By the end of the seventeenth century, Han’gul translations of Buddhist scripts and Chinese classical and popular stories were readily available. Inevitably, a new literature sprang up and so did a new kind of theatre — Pan-so-ri and Tal-choom.

Pan-so-ri is a vocal theatre which is performed by a sole singer-performer and an accompanying musician — a drummer. It is really a dramatized musical of well-known narratives and novels (which are considered to be Korean classics) and emerged in the Ho-nam region (the south-western part of Korea), where there is no Tal-choom type native to the region.54 A singer-performer delivers songs and narratives, enacts stories and directs asides to the audience. However, instead of dealing with the suffering and misery of the common people — the chief characteristic of Tal-choom — Pan-so-ri relates tales of adventure, romance, filial duty, initiation rites, and family reunions. A single plot is divided into seven or eight scenes which take the audience through the picaresque journey of an epic hero or

54 There exists a sense of pride and ownership of this song-drama tradition in Ho-nam region and to this day, the most famous Pan-so-ri performers are exclusively from this region.
heroine. Virtuous and helpless heroes and heroines are duped, tricked by villains and suffer a twist of fate, yet inevitably their tales end happily and the long-suffering heroes and heroines are rewarded, separated family members are reunited and lost fortunes are reclaimed, while villains are suitably punished. Unlike Tel-choom performers, during the Choson dynasty individuals who mastered the required vocal techniques of Pan-so-ri were honoured and rewarded with the title of national artist. They also received social recognition and wealth. The most successful amongst them were also patronized by the upper-class and even by the court.

In comparison to Pan-so-ri, Tel-choom is rooted in ritual and festivities which makes it distinctly different from other popular entertainment. Furthermore, as it is an essential part of seasonal observation with its religious overtones, its production values were therefore not and still are not measured solely by its entertainment value. Secondly, performance success was not and still is not judged by critics or informed theatregoers, but validated by both performer and audience members who are partners in creating a theatrical event for the whole community. Most importantly,

---

55 The structure of Pan-so-ri is similar to the English medieval tradition of gleemen. Glynne Wickham writes:

...gleemen (minstrels) whose talent lay in recording the practical exploits of their masters and then reciting them (with appropriate additions and deletions) on festive occasions accompanied by a harp which they played themselves like modern folk-singers. Nothing precluded such monologues from including passages of dialogue introduced by phrases like 'He said...', 'She replied...,' or 'They said...,' a device which...was employed both by Asian story-tellers, and in Europe by the preaching friars of the thirteenth century.

since it is derived from the community, its needs are generated by community cooperation.

Rather than elaborating tales with picaresque details, *Tal-choom* performers illustrate tales through vocal and physical enactments of the sublime and the grotesque. All tales in *Tal-choom* are allegorical in essence and its subject matter reflects a social satire which depicts the perspective of the oppressed. There is no coherent single plot, no character development, yet all episodes deal with universal difficulties in the lives of common people. Although it does not directly address contemporary social issues, its presentation of satire and humour remains highly metaphoric and refers to how oppressed people respond to immediate social injustice.

2.2.2 Class Structure

Korean society has been strictly class-oriented throughout history. Social and cultural privileges for its citizens and subjects were defined and structured according to status. There were four generic classes: the ruling class or the *Yang-ban*, the *Choong-inn* (the offspring of inter-class union), commoners or the *Pyong-min* (mainly farmers, merchants and

56 Although the class system by birth no longer prevails in contemporary Korean society, there exists the class awareness or social barriers which divide people according to social, political and economic dominance, and educational status.

craftsmen), and the bottom layer or Cheon-in ('untouchables'), which included servants, serfs, pedlars, surviving family members of traitors or political victims, butchers, Kwangdae (entertainers/performers68) (see Illustration 3), and prostitutes.

Until the early twentieth century, performers were isolated from the rest of society because they were "vulgar, common Kwangdae"; they were not regarded as professional artists.69 Initially, performers of Tal-choom belonged to the Kwangdae community, whose performing skills were inherited through non-literary traditions and passed down orally. Performers were forbidden to marry outside their class. Moreover, men who wore masks were thought to be base, even "soiled" (or unredeemable) souls, so they were not permitted to participate in ritual ceremonies for their own

---

68 Successful Pan-so-ri performers and Ki-saeng (educated and trained female entertainers for the upper-class men) are exceptional. Once accepted by and allied to the patronage of the court and the influential families, some artists and Ki-saeng were protected by their patrons. They were not accepted into the higher class, but their reputation and alliance to their patrons allowed them to move freely between the social barriers.

69 Park, 165.
Illustration 3: *Ki-saeng* and *Kwang-dae*

3.1 A painting by Shin Yoon-Bok in the eighteenth century
Kwang-dae—actors and musicians

3.2

A painting by Kim Hong-Do in the eighteenth century
ancestors. Non-performing male members of a Kwangdaes, however, could conduct their own ancestral ceremonies.

This rejected caste formed their own communities on the outskirts of villages: the Korean 'ghetto.' Ironically, even within the Kwangdaes community a social hierarchy of the ruling class, based on a patriarchal paradigm, prevailed. Only men were allowed to participate in performances. Masks were considered to be sacred and women were not allowed to touch them. Nor were they allowed to perform. Performing skills became family traditions, but only sons learned the dance and the music from their fathers. (This may account, in part, for the distinctively male dominance of the themes and content of the plays.) Performers, however, could not earn their living by their performance skills; rather, they belonged to their immediate ruling class as property for whom they farmed, produced crafts, and performed during the community festivals or in private functions at their master’s house. When they performed during agricultural festivals, their audience consisted of every member of the community. Although they were not captives, their financial dependence on the ruling class enslaved them.

In summary, Tal-choom arose from the cumulative community experience of representation. It was a means of cultural expression for innate human needs, and a direct, egalitarian way of experiencing relationships. Tal-choom arose as the cultural expression of common people
emerged in the late eighteenth century, and provided the medium through which they attempted to confirm their humanity and affirm an essential and generic human bond in the face of immediate social injustice beyond their control. In today's Tal-choom performance, the unsympathetic and corrupt aristocratic and religious leaders of the past have been replaced by an indifferent government, uncaring employers and an apathetic urban upper-class. Within the allegorical context, the satire and social commentary are still pertinent.

2.3 Comparative Approach: Fertility Rites as Origin

Regarding the chronology and origin of Tal-choom, Professor Dong-II Cho suggests that the current form of Tal-choom contains theatrical elements in Chu-Yong Ka-Moo from the Silla kingdom in the fourth century A.D.; there are the use of masks, dance, and exorcism (see Illustration 4). Cho suggests that there still remains an essential question, namely, whether Chu-yong-ka-moo was a theatrical performance or a shamanistic

---

60 Cho, 14-15. Essentially, Professor Cho acknowledges the work of Professor Lee in which he traces the origin of Tal-choom back to the fourth century A.D. While acknowledging Lee's approach, Cho also points out several problems in accepting Chu-yong-ka-moo as the quintessential form of Tal-choom.

Although Professor Doo-Hyun Lee already discussed Chu-yong-ka-moo as one of the mask-dance theatre forms, we must first clarify whether or not it is a theatre. Second, we must identify its theatrical structure and characteristics. Third, we also must determine its social functions in the fourth century. Finally, we must examine its place in our theatre history.
Illustration 4: Illustrations of Chu-yong-ka-moo

Source: The History of Korean Drama by Han-Ki Chang
Source: The Mask-Dance of Korea
dance of exorcism. Admitting the problems and the lack of written evidence on the origin and the date of the first Tal-choom performance, Cho's approach is concentrated on the examination of the structure and the principle of the two.

Cho applies a comparative paradigm to identify the origin of Tal-choom as a theatre tradition. His methodology entails a comparative examination of various Tal-choom traditions, shamanistic dance performance and Korean puppet theatre. Cho, first, analyzed dramatic and theatrical elements of Chu-young-ka-moo and compared them with those in the dance-ritual of current shamanistic exorcism. He also examined its characters and their roles, and compared them with those of Tal-choom. Cho's examination of the connection of Tal-choom to the ancient shamanistic exorcism is significant and instrumental in identifying and understanding the history and tradition of Tal-choom.

The shamanistic dance-rituals of exorcism are called "Moo-dang Koot" (see Illustration 5), which were performed and celebrated as fertility rites. In fact, most contemporary scholars concede the connection of Tal-choom to

---


62 Ibid., 157-181.

63 Ibid., 15-24.

64 Ibid., 24-26.
Illustration 5: Contemporary Scenes of Moo-dang-hoot

Source: Folk Traditions and Festivals
Source: Folk Traditions and Festivals
shamanistic dance-chant-musical performances. The discussions are centred around four aspects: (1) the concept of "Nori and Nori-pan"; (2) the use of disguise (masks and/or costume); (3) spiritual purposes; and (4) entertainment values. While there appears to be general agreement on the three latter aspects that are accepted as obvious theatrical components in current practices of Tal-choom, very few historical documents are actually available to establish a comprehensive study of the history of the use of masks and costumes. Also, concrete evidence in defining the roles of ritual and theatre concerning (3) and (4) is singularly lacking. On the other hand, there is a great deal of extant scholarship concerning Nori and Nori-pan. Scholars in literature, folklore, ritual and religious/spiritual studies identify this aspect as the key element that defines the authenticity of Korean cultural expression. Therefore, it is critical for anyone examining Tal-choom to comprehend shamanism and its influence in all aspects of Korean culture. Indeed, I am convinced that any discussion of the origin and establishment of Tal-choom as popular theatre is incomplete without knowledge and understanding of this connection.

In current practices of religious and secular celebrations and ceremonies in Korea, the common indicators of this connection are focused on

---

65 All leading scholars in the field, including Doo-Hyun Lee, Jin-Tae Park, Sang-II Lee, and Dong-II Cho, agree with this argument. Jin-Tae Park, in particular, discusses this connection in The Origin and Structure of Tal No-ri (in Korean) (Seoul: Sae-Moon Sa Publishing Co., 1990), 11-77.

66 Nori is a generic term implying all forms of revelry and festivals. Nori-pan is a term denoting a site or venue for Nori.
the concept of Nori and Nori-pan. The significance of Nori-pan as a connector has been extensively discussed and corroborated by scholars. From October 1986 to February 1988 the U-ri hosted four symposia on the subject of the traditional festivities of Korea. In the course of discussing the notion of traditional Korean "festivities," participants attempted to articulate any common denominators observed in traditional festivities; they concluded that the greatest common denominator was Nori-pan. Although Nori-pan denotes a generic 'stage' or 'performing site,' it is the temporary sacred space within the profane. It is a sacred space where sacred time runs. As a playing site/venue for shamanistic performances, for


68 This is the name of the Centre for Humanities that was jointly established by the Sungkyunkwan University and the Central National Theatre of Korea. Both the professors and the management of the C.N.T.K. exchange current artistic concerns and issues. Papers and discussions from the four symposia were published as a single book in 1988, titled Nori Culture and Festivity and edited by Dr. Sang-II Lee.

69 Over twenty panel members (including Japanese arts and theatre critics) approached the subject from their particular disciplines: anthropology, theatre, dance, music, architecture, literature (Korean and English), and folk arts. What is significant about the symposia is that they signify a Korean-initiated endeavour to discover, or rediscover, traditional Korean theatre, ritual and other forms of entertainment. Western values were accepted with criticism and a backlash against them has arisen in arts education and criticism. As a result, many traditional art forms are beginning to be rediscovered, renewed and reviewed from a contemporary perspective, and Korea's cultural heritage is finally, yet slowly, being promoted to contemporary Koreans as an authentic, valuable cultural expression.

70 Chung, 9-12.
instance, it is where gods and goddesses will arrive, eat, drink, play, and meet with human supplicants. It is also where their celestial battles against evil will take place. It first becomes a celebrated place where victory prevails over evil, and where, by the end of a ceremonial performance, the sacred departs. In addition, it is a class-free, status-free, carnival zone where the whole community can experience a spiritual bonding. It is a place for communal celebration for every member of a community.

Professor Yul-Kyu Kim separates the compound noun *Nori-pan* to *Nori* and *Pan*. The noun ‘*nori*’ is derived from the verb *Nol-da*, meaning “playing.” *Nori* implies a youthful, unattached lifestyle, free of responsibility and boredom. As a noun it suggests fun, jokes, humour, something to see or something to break boredom. It can also mean fumbling, disorder or breaking-away from the norm. In essence, *Nori* embraces all attempts to lessen and trivialize the seriousness and the norm of the status quo. It is the Korean term for suggesting the vital process of playfulness.

The noun *Pan* implies both ‘space’ and ‘event.’ *Pan* is a space in the process of becoming an event, as in *Pan-sori* (*sori* denotes ‘sound’ in Korean). The word ‘*pan*’ implies an emotionally evocative, spontaneous,

---

71 The ceremonial foods included in the performance illustrate a shamanistic tradition in which the Korean people believed. For example, red beans had a power to deter evil spirits. To this date, rice cake with red beans is an important ceremonial food for such events as a baby’s birthday, a house/store/office/building opening ceremony, a funeral and the winter solstice.

involving, vital event and space which contains it. Due to the connotations of the emotional and impulsive, the negative aspects of Pan can be found in many words such as the following: gambling-pan, fighting-pan, chaotic-pan, dog-pan (denoting total chaos), living-pan (meaning a disturbingly exhilarated situation), just to name a few. Both syllables imply human involvement, both as event creators and spectators of created events. Performers are often called ‘persons at Nori-pan,’ which is a derogatory term, denoting the lack of professional respect for their skills.

The trouble with the connection to shamanistic ritual is that it still does not fix the date of the origin of Tal-choom. In fact, the origin of the rituals themselves is shrouded in mystery. If the main question is to define the date of the first Tal-choom performance, it still is unanswerable. The point is that as far as the Koreans were concerned, the origin was unimportant and so was never recorded. However, Cho’s comparative approach offers us a wide range of areas which should be considered vitally important to the study and understanding of Tal-choom as a theatrical and cultural expression. He argues that Tal-choom cannot be studied in isolation, and we must examine the characteristics of other forms of ritual, popular entertainment and theatre. He, therefore, suggests that Tal-choom as popular theatre evolved from the shamanistic dance of exorcism and the village rituals. In his attempt to verify Tal-choom’s evolutionary process, he bases his conclusions on comparative and critical examinations of existing
shamanistic rituals and all regional variations of Tal-choom. His The History and Principle of Tal-choom is an extensive study of Tal-choom, in which he actually establishes the evolution and development of Tal-choom. He concludes that the current form of Tal-choom is complete as an urban entertainment in the mid-eighteenth century. His theory supports and substantiates the earlier theory of Doo-Hyun Lee, suggesting that Tal-choom originated from Chu-yong-ha-moo in the fourth century.

The comparative approach in recent years has also included studies comparing Tal-choom with drama of the West. Some scholars, including Dong-Il Cho, have even attempted to define the aesthetics of Tal-choom using the literary and staging conventions of Greek theatre. Cho, for instance, suggests that the Greek drama emerged from the festival of Dionysus and evolved into a distinct form of drama in the fifth century B.C. By this comparison, he proposes that Tal-choom also emerged out of shamanistic ritual and village festivals. In addition, he compares the role

---

73 In this outstanding study, Cho examines the evolutionary process of Tal-choom, while cross-examining plot, characterization, themes, players, metaphor, lyric, masks, costumes, theatrical conventions and imagery of other folk entertainment and theatre traditions of China and Japan (see pages 45 and 46).

74 Ibid., 81.

75 Neither Lee nor Cho presents sufficient evidence from their sources.

76 Professor Cho also compares the role of on-stage musicians in a Tal-choom performance with that of the Greek chorus, 120-124. He cites extensively from Loomis Havemeyer, The Dramas of Savage Peoples (1916); A.E. Haigh, The Attic Theatre (1907); Jane Harrison, Ancient and Art Ritual (1951); and F.M. Cornford, The Origin of Attic Comedy (1914).

77 Ibid., 67, 116, 124.
and functions of musicians in *Tal-choom* with those of the chorus in ancient Greek tragedy and comedy.\(^7\)

Professor Woo-Ok Kim places *Tal-choom* in 'the first phase of theatre' as defined by Richard Southern's *The Seven Ages of the Theatre*.\(^7\) The characteristics of "the first phase" seem compatible with those of *Tal-choom* regarding simple costuming, masks, small personal props, no scenery, no permanent theatre. As viewed from this perspective, Kim proposes that *Tal-choom* is not a unique, authentic Korean theatre phenomenon, but rather a universal one. According to Kim, the 'first phase of theatre' includes Asian theatres such as *Tal-choom* as well as the British Mummer's Play. However, if one is to follow Southern, *Tal-choom* also belongs to the second phase of 'Great Religious Festivals' because "the element of Special Occasion arising from the time of year of performance, and the significance of the season" place it in this category.\(^8\)

In summary, to this date *Tal-choom* has been a subject for various scholars whose studies range from traditional Korean folk art to contemporary theatre studies. However, due to lack of written evidence, they can only argue about the origin of *Tal-choom* in relation to its

\(^7\) *Ibid.*, 127-130.

\(^7\) in *The Seven Ages of the Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961). Southern presents theatre history in terms of its phases, rather than dated periods. The seven phases with which he deals are: (1) The Costumed Player; (2) Great Religious Festivals; (3) The Rise of Professional Playing; (4) The Organized State; (5) The Roofed Playhouse with Scenery; (6) Illusion; and (7) Anti-Illusion.

\(^8\) *Ibid.*
connection to the ancient rituals and festivities. It cannot be determined when and how it slipped from its moorings in shamanistic dance exorcism and village festivals. Indeed, whether scholars study *Tal-choom* either as part of a literary text or as a part of the lost or neglected traditional art forms which do not speak for themselves in the midst of industrialized, westernized Korea, the diversity of *Tal-choom* studies demonstrates the need and relevance of *Tal-choom* to contemporary Korean society.

Recent efforts in comparative studies of *Tal-choom* by Dong-Il Cho, Sang-Il Lee and Woo-Ok Kim, particularly with Western theatre traditions, are encouraging. This attempt should also be understood as a process of defining a cultural identity for Korea. Since the aim of this study is to examine the theatricality of *Tal-choom* and then articulate its aesthetics as a popular theatre using parallels to rock concerts, I shall simply accept this general premise as a point of departure, at least until new discoveries prove it otherwise. I hope to show, moreover, in Chapter 6, that there is a definite parallel theatricality between aspects of shamanistic ritual in the fertility rites, and the *Chi-ba-lee* character in *Tal-choom* and the behaviour of the rock hero.
While I was taking courses in my doctorate program, a guest instructor from abroad taught us a drama course. She was interested in actual performances, and particularly keen on those of Korean traditional theatres and contemporary Madang-kuk. She often asked us many questions about these subjects. Every Saturday she went to see Tal-choom at Seoul Nori Ma-dang. Watching her, being so interested in Tal-choom and attending every performance available at the time, I felt so ashamed to realize how we, Koreans, have been so indifferent to our own theatre and ignorant of its artistic values.

(Female graduate student, 29 years old)
In this chapter I shall, first of all, explain the perspective which guided my field work in Seoul in 1991 and 1992. I will also discuss the chosen methodology and the background information on which my study of *Tal-choom* is built, and will outline how I came to use the rock concert as a Western analogy to *Tal-choom* and its audience. Lastly, as the specific quality of this study is intrinsically connected to my voice and identity as a researcher and narrator, I will, after examining and discussing questions in my Questionnaires 1 and 2, include my personal frame of reference, my historical biases and personal perspectives.

3.1 Toward the Question — "The Audience"

When I left Korea, like so many of my generation, I left thinking that what I was leaving behind in the native arts of my country was parochial at best and valueless at worst compared to Western arts and culture. Then I went to my first rock concerts in Canada. I was struck dumb. There from the beginning of the concert, even from the ritual of lining up for the tickets, was a parallel to something that I knew well, to something that I responded to on an intellectual and emotional level spontaneously — the *Tal-choom* theatre. There were differences, certainly; the rock concert "hype" with all its expensive "high tech" was superficially far more sophisticated than Korean mask-dance theatre, but on a deeper level, not at
all. There were far more similarities than differences, both in the performance and in my experience as an audience member. In fact, that is what astonished me most — the similarity of audience response. During the course of my M.A. studies at U.B.C. I pondered more and more on what I had stumbled upon. I was fascinated by rock concerts, but the value of what I had left behind was also dawning on me.

Finally, I decided I had to look back at my own roots and draw the parallel that had given me a reverence for what had seemed worthless. I determined to investigate what research, if any, had been done on Tal-choom dance theatre as popular theatre and on rock concerts. Subsequently, I discovered that until recently there has been almost no consideration or scholarship given to Tal-choom nor, most surprisingly, either in the West or Korea to audiences and their active role in theatre events. On the other hand, rock concerts have received some attention, but only as musical or sociological phenomena. The rock hero as a character — "a satyr figure" — in a theatrical rite of passage has yet to be acknowledged. For the sake of practicality and expedience, I have chosen to focus on Pong-san Tal-choom because it is the most celebrated company now performing in South Korea, and I have concentrated on the Rolling Stones as a rock group, mostly because of their longevity and the material available on them.

Any successful Tal-choom performance or rock concert touches common humanity by reaching out, by striking a responsive chord in the
recipient. When a person responds to that input, a reciprocal process takes place. In *Tal-choom* and rock concerts there is no fourth wall; performers directly face the audience and communicate with them. In turn, the audience accepts the role of anticipators, respondents and reciprocators. At the beginning of a *Tal-choom* performance, a ritual takes place; the audience participates in the sanctification of the playing space. From that moment on they are consolidated in their roles. In rock concerts, the audience come as initiates to worship at the shrine of rock. They take part in the creation of a ritual, or what one might call the "intangible, magic thing" that happens between them and the performers in a live concert. The "making of the magic together" is the key connection between *Tal-choom* and rock concerts.

Within the context of *Tal-choom* and rock concerts, the word 'audience' is also limiting and inappropriate. In fact, the Korean word for theatre audience, *kwan-joong*, denotes a "seeing crowd or spectacle beholder," which implies the emphases given to the emotive visual images and spectacle-oriented performance values. This is also true of rock concerts. Though there may be elaborate props in rock concerts, there is no scenery either in both *Tal-choom* or most rock concerts. Indeed, it is the costumes and what the costumes evoke in the minds of the audience that are significant in both *Tal-choom* and rock concerts. Not only do the costumes enhance the theatricality of each performer and his role within a
metaphoric world, they also function as a mobile and visual spectacle, containing the time and space of the dramatic setting. For example, each member of the Rolling Stones wears his signature costume — a pair of black tight jeans and shirt for Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. In *Tal-choom*, the masks themselves are emblems of recognizable types — greed, lasciviousness, stupidity, lust. *Chi-ba-lee’s* is like that of a satyr. Thus, the audience are acutely aware of roles, signals to behaviour, and react in accordance to parameters these signs set up. Consequently, both in *Tal-choom* and rock the external production elements are really secondary. The focus is on the interaction between audience and performers.

Fascinated by audience-performance interactions, I read everything I could find on the subject in both Korean and English. My reading led me to the work of Antonin Artaud, who declared in the first manifesto of Theatre of Cruelty, "The Public. First of all this theater must exist." Then I turned to Bertolt Brecht, who wrote:

> When people in sporting establishments buy their tickets they know exactly what is going to take place; and that is exactly what does take place once they are in their seats: viz. highly trained persons developing their peculiar powers in the way most suited to them, with the

---

81 Their choice of costume, of course, is not random. Rock ‘n’ roll and its association with youth and youth culture are clearly connected with the image of the Rolling Stones as a bunch of ‘bad boys’ from the 1960s. In the 1980s and 1990s, instead of drinking beer on stage, they sport Evian bottles. But, we still see Keith Richards with his Marlboro.

greatest sense of responsibility yet in such a way as to make one feel that they are doing it primarily for their own fun. Against that the traditional theatre is nowadays quite lacking in character.... A theatre which makes no contact with the public is a nonsense.  

Finally, I discovered Victor Turner's theory of the ritual process and his concepts of "liminality" and "communitas" which I think come the closest in modern theory to what I believe happens in Tal-choom and rock. I will refer to this later in my study.

Of course it must be clear, as Theodore Shank pointed out, that the audience does not experience exactly the same emotion as the performers.

There is a considerable difference between what one comes to know of feeling through perceiving a work of dramatic art and grasping its import and what one actually feels as a member of the audience. It has been mentioned that actors do not feel the apparent emotions of the characters they enact, and because of a frequent misconception, it may be worth stressing that the audience does not feel these emotions either. What the characters apparently feel is simply part of the action which embodies the artistic conception. We do not feel the pain of Oedipus having stabbed out his eyes nor the anger of Orgon upon discovering the duplicity of Tartuffe. The audience may come to know how a character feels if the focus is upon his feelings rather than upon some other kind of action such as battle, a

---


witty remark, or ridiculous behavior; but the audience does not experience the character’s emotion.\textsuperscript{85}

What the audience do is "feel" a certain exhilaration that is engendered by what they see and hear. What is happening on stage triggers their own release of inhibition — that is what is exciting and why, in rock in particular, when the performers get "hot" or "steamy" the audience goes wild with their own collective "high" or paroxysm of emotion.

By the mid-1970s, much of the practice of Western theatre consciously included the audience in performance, either by reminding them that they were at the theatre, like Bertolt Brecht and Peter Handke, or by rejecting the "naturalism" of the proscenium arch.\textsuperscript{86} Scholars and directors such as J.L. Styan, Herbert Blau, Susan Bennett, Richard Schechner and Peter Brook have also explored the role of the audience and the vitality and


\textsuperscript{86} Eugene van Erven, in his \textit{The Playful Revolution} (1992), examines and discusses theatre and liberation in Asia. While describing and documenting contemporary theatre practices in the Philippines, South Korea, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Thailand, he reveals that this political action is achieved as results of the intense workshop process of collective creation, compiled from performances, audience interaction and participation in the making a theatre.
dynamic energy it lends to theatrical performance. For theatre is, "in whatever revisionist, futurist, or self-dissolving form — or in the most proleptic desire to forget the theater — " said Herbert Blau, "a function of remembrance". "Where memory is, theater is," he continues,

It represents, for better or worse, an engrailed form of partial knowledge, having the features of an absence that is a failure of memory. What posits itself around this failure is the audience, the agency within us that, in taking on the appearance of being out of sight, more or less fitfully and questionably keeps watch over perception. It can't be taken for granted, because it is never wholly formed. As we move toward other worlds, we will encounter, no doubt, as we already have, another viscosity of perception without any specific gravity. But if there is something remotely there to give the most minimal audience, it will have materialized, anxiously, in the presence of theater, which is — whatever the conditions for life on another planet — the condition of life knowing itself as life, that is, the most minimal consciousness.

---


The use of ritual is found in contemporary theatre practices. Through interpreting the theory of Artaud, for example, in terms of ritual and ceremony, theatrical experiments in America and Europe have attempted to recreate the ritual conditions under which spontaneous communitas may be invoked. As well, efforts have been made to establish a "total communion" between individuals outside of theatre in the area of popular music (i.e., rock 'n' roll, live concerts [Jim Morrison's influence from the Living Theatre], performance art and the youth movement of the 1960s).

Schechner studied performances among Euro-Americans, Afro-Americans, Native American, and Asians. He has examined the details of performative behaviour and has developed models of the performance process useful not only for persons in theatre but to most people fascinated by the multi-channel realities of today's world. Schechner employs inter- and cross-cultural terms to explain how ritual and theatrical traditions become substantial in performance and also reflexive on the life of their times, feeding on it and assigning meaning to its decisive public and cumulative private events.

Specifically, what intrigued me most about *Tal-choom* and rock is the ritual common to both; the direct and immediate response of the audience, the spontaneity of participation, the emphases on the visual and spectacle, and the communal celebration of the carnival atmosphere. For example, in *Tal-choom* the audiences are explicitly reflexive, which means that they no longer just look at a performance, but they are actually considered by the actors as being in and part of it. Master Yoon of the P.T.C.S. instructs her apprentices to "embrace the presence of the audience, absorb their energy and breathe with them."89

In the 1989 Rolling Stones's concert in Vancouver, fans of all ages attended a live performance of one of the most famous/infamous rock ‘n’ roll bands in history. The songs and staging of the concert itself were only in part important to me and the rest of the spectators. The real event was being in B.C. Place, where the real Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were performing on stage right in front of over 72,000 excited people. The audience was a living entity on its own. Most importantly, what this band stands for and is associated with are interrelated to the audience/fans' own lives and lifestyle. As they watch, Mick Jagger and his cult-figure persona in action and Keith Richards with his guitar and his Marlboro in his mouth on stage, their age and aged appearance are of no consequence. What matters is that they embody the symbols and spirit of rebellion, sex and youth. The

89 From the interview with Master Yoon on May 17, 1991, the P.T.C.S. office in Seoul. Audience participation in *Tal-choom* will be described in Chapter 6.
point I want to make in Chapter 6 is that the central character Chi-ba-lee in *Tal-choom* is exactly like Mick Jagger and the audience responds to him in the same way.

In many cultures, ritual is created expressly for the purpose of generating fundamental group bonding. It thus becomes necessary to express direct and immediate connectedness to the collective community and its spiritual beliefs. In contemporary Western and westernized urban societies, collective ritual is rarely practised. Perhaps, as a result, restoration of ritualistic conditions and ceremonial expression has often been embraced by artists. Furthermore, these expressions have been isolated as objects of aesthetic and academic consideration, creating a theoretical discourse involving scholars in such diverse fields as theatre, literature, music, anthropology, sociology, and psychology. The theories of Victor Turner corroborate this necessity for collective ritual and group bonding, which is "a matter of giving recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society."\(^90\)

3.2 Approaching the Question

Recently both the historical research and theoretical concerns of many theatre historians have been directed toward the staging conventions

and the social ramifications of theatre as cultural expression. While dramatic conventions can be analyzed and described by various literary approaches, a method of documenting theatrical conventions and staging traditions remains problematic. Contemporary research requires a more creative approach. I also wish to argue that opening ourselves up to novel methods of gathering material may well lead to new and unconventional tools for conceptualizing and understanding topics in theatre history.

The structure of my dissertation is, therefore, not that of a conventional comparative study. Rather, I have chosen to conduct an ethnographical description of Tal-choom and its audience. Although some studies of rock 'n' roll music and its cultural influence do exist, in most cases they have been examined from the musical, sociological and educational perspective. Since rock as a form of popular theatre remains unacknowledged, I believe that an ethnological approach will reveal the differences as well as the similarities between it and Tal-choom, and illuminate the one in the light of the other.

Ethnography is a term used to cover a wide array of very different research projects in the social world. Ethnography offers students of theatre

---

history a way of seeing the aesthetic dynamics of performance. In our complex society, the need to understand how other people see their experience has never been greater. Ethnography offers all of us the chance to step outside our narrow cultural backgrounds, to set aside our socially inherited attitudes. As a method, it involves extensive fieldwork of various types including participant observation, formal and informal interviewing, document collecting, filming, recording, and so on. The result of ethnographic inquiry is cultural description. It is, however, a description of the sort that can emerge only from a lengthy period of intimate study and residence in a given social setting. It often requires first-hand participation in some of the activities that take place in this setting, and, most critically, it relies on intensive work with a few informants drawn from the setting.²²

The procedures which flow from such a mandate are as follows:

1. Close-up detailed observing to gather primary data (in the process, declaring one's personal bias, perspective and research agenda to the target group is imperative in order to form a collegial relationship with them. For example, I am a single, female, Korean, theatre history student in Canada.)

2. Witnessing and recording first-hand the studied events (photographing, video-taping and note-taking).

3. Not altering the nature of what the target group does by one's presence. For example, it was imperative that the P.T.C.S. members were able to conduct their rehearsal routines without feeling invaded.

4. Putting aside the researcher's personal, theoretical and interpretive framework and bias as much as possible to record the cultural activity and its significant truthfulness and meaning for the social group itself.

5. Focusing on description without evaluation.

Such principles are, of course, quite rudimentary. They may even obscure as much as they sharpen, since to state a principle is not to say how it is used. The aim to produce a description of a given reality and the truths it contains may be shared by qualitative researchers, but there are indeed many ways such an aim can be addressed. Ultimately, a good description is one that makes sense of what it is that is described. However, to agree on what makes more or less sense first requires agreement on what it is that is described. This, in turn, is dependent upon the kind of sense one seeks to make in the first place. Interpretation is, therefore, circular, trapped, as it were, by presuppositions about what is descriptively adequate and descriptively important. In an attempt to avoid this problem, I cite descriptive words of the Tal-choom performers and audience members directly in this study. Chapter 4, in particular, is the result of my interviews with the master performers. Their lived and living experiences as master performers and teachers are indispensable to the transmission of the Tal-choom tradition, especially as it is an oral tradition.

Prior to my field trip to Seoul, I was concerned with two factors that I wanted to avoid in the process of my research: the effect my presence would
have on the *Tal-choom* performance and my biased viewpoint. Fortunately, as with the Rolling Stones’s concert, I did not come across any situations where I felt I held control. Neither a rock concert nor a *Tal-choom* performance could be edited by my presence. To minimize the effect of my biased viewpoint, I explicitly revealed my intention and questions to interviewees prior to any scheduled or spontaneous interviews with them, so distortion of the results would be reduced.

The primary research and source material for my dissertation consists of my fieldwork, and secondary material available at the National Archives in Seoul, the Audio/Video collection of the Ministry of Culture and Information, and the Korea Broadcasting Services (the public television of Korea), and the *Moon-wha* Broadcasting Corporation (a private television network). I attended numerous *Tal-choom* performances in Seoul and also studied its history, movements and mimes. As a performer at Ewha University in Seoul from 1977 to 1980, I practised *Tal-choom* dance and movement as pre-rehearsal preparation, and eventually performed in four *Madang-kuk.* I have also attended over 10 major rock concerts as a participant-observer, including the Rolling Stones’s North American Tour — “Steel Wheels” — in 1989.

---

*Ma-dang-kuk* is a name for an experimental outdoor theatre of the 1970s. As a theatre of social protest, it emerged from university campuses in Seoul. Students learned and adapted the characteristics of *Tal-choom,* particularly the spirit of satire and social commentary.
At most rock concerts, especially the Steel concerts, due to the strict regulations and copyright enforcement, I was unable to take photographs or videotapes. In addition, it was not possible to arrange interviews with members of the Rolling Stones's band. However, I have found that there is ample video documentation of live concerts and interviews in various popular periodicals. Although these video and print media documents have been commercially made, I take them as a valid, primary source for this study since the part that concerns me most is the performer-audience interaction. I will use these to illustrate my own personal experience, not as documentary evidence.

During my trip to Seoul in May and June 1992, I observed and documented nine performances, attending numerous traditional spring celebrations where Pong-san Tal-choom performances by professional performers, high school and university students (either as professionals or amateurs) occurred. I documented these theatrical events through photographs, slides and, with permission, videotape. I interviewed professional performers including seven "Korean National Living Treasures," their disciples, their students at differing levels of the learning stage, and audience members. The components and objectives of my Seoul fieldwork consisted of:
A. Primary Research:

- Observation of *Tal-choom* performances and its audience
- Description of time (duration), place (shape, space, location), estimated size of audience and the cast, audience response (how they participate in a performance, i.e., how many of them get up and dance in the course of a performance, how quiet or noisy/rowdy they are)

B. Audio-visual Materials and Evidence:

- Photographs (slides) of performance, performers and audience members
- Video tapes of a few performances
- Formal and informal interview-tapes

C. Interviews and Questionnaires:

I designed two questionnaires, one for Living National Treasures and teachers (understudies of the masters), another for apprentices and audience.

- With performers: pre- and/or post-performance formal interviews (Questionnaire #1)
- With audience: pre- and post-performance informal and formal interviews (Questionnaire #2)

In order to prepare and facilitate interviews with professional performers of the P.T.C.S. and questionnaires with their audiences, I designed two separate sets of questions in Korean. Questionnaire #1 was given to each performer prior to a scheduled interview. Having agreed to be interviewed, an interviewee signed the Interviewee Agreement document (Questionnaire 1.1). My questions during an interview referred to three
aspects of a live *Tal-choom* performance: aspects on production preparation/rehearsal (Questionnaire 1.2), performer (Questionnaire 1.3), and audience (Questionnaire 1.4).

Questionnaire 1.1

1. Interviewee Agreement

Name: ____________________________ Sex: M ___ F _ _ Age: ___
Status and Experience: ________________________________________
Specialization: ______________________________________________
Talent: _______________________________________________
Profession: ______________________________________________
Address and Phone Number (*Optional): __________________________
Comments: _______________________________________________________

I, Hye-Soon Kim, thank you for sharing your time with me. Your experience and expertise are valuable to my fieldwork on Korean *Tal-choom* research.

__________________________
Signature of an Interviewee

Questions 1 through 11 in Questionnaire 1.2 address various elements of current *Pong-san Tal-choom* productions; performing sites, schedule and the running time of a performance vary from time to time, depending on the venue. It was my intention to collect first-hand accounts
of production and performance arrangements from each individual performer of the P.T.C.S.

Questionnaire 1.2

1. Location(s) of performing site:
2. Performing schedule:
3. Running time of each performance:
4. Preparation/rehearsal period:
5. Production staff/crew members:
6. Production Funding:
7. Admission:
8. Poster, program and publicity:
9. Sources of funding:
10. Production of costume, masks and props:
11. Transportation and storage of costume, masks and props:
12. Etc. and comments: _________________________________

Questions 1 through 9 in Questionnaire 1.3 were intended to help an interviewee to provide his/her personal perspective and views on Tal-choom. It became one of the most vital sources and references for Chapter 4. Protocol demanded that I set up an interview with each individual separately, which would ensure the necessary privacy and confidentiality of intimate discussion. It must be understood that students of Tal-choom are
strictly under the strong guidance of a master and are naturally reluctant to speak on their own behalf.\textsuperscript{54}

Questionnaire 1.3

3. Questions to Performers

1. Background/training and experience:
2. Specialty, role(s), physical training and essential requirements:
3. Occupation:
4. Why do you perform *Tal-choom*? How different is performing *Tal-choom* from other performances? What kind of achievement do you feel in performing *Tal-choom*?
5. What do you think of the role of audience? How does communitas with audience members come across?
6. What do you think of the general knowledge and/or awareness of *Tal-choom* in Korea to this date?
7. If you teach *Tal-choom*, where are those *Tal-choom* lessons offered to the general public?
8. What do you, as a performer, think of the most essential requirement in a *Tal-choom* performer?
9. When do you think that audience applaud and experience communitas?

Questions 1 through 5 in Questionnaire 1.4 were intended to gather performers' views and awareness of the presence and function(s) of the audience in the course of a performance. These questions, therefore, enabled each interviewee to address his/her opinions from the perspective of both a \textsuperscript{54} In front of their masters and senior performers, younger performers often remain silent and spoke very little of their own views, particularly if the young disagree with the old. This can be viewed as deference to the masters, yet it also reflects the non-democratic nature of the system.
performer and a member of an audience. During a performance, Tal-choom performers often vicariously play the role of an ideal audience while remaining on stage. Like the ancient Greek chorus, they interact and respond to the performance in progress as if they were audience members. Therefore, all performers of Tal-choom alternate two roles — their own character and an ideal spectator — while remaining on stage and maintaining their character.

Questionnaire 1.4

4. Questions to Audience

1. Why do audience, including you when you are not performing, come to see a Tal-choom performance?
2. How do they or you respond to a Tal-choom performance?
3. When you go to see a Tal-choom performance, are there any arrangements or preparations to be made?
4. How and when is communitas between stage and audience evoked or experienced?  
5. What do you think of the expectations of Tal-choom audience?

Questionnaire #2 was designed to gather information about the experiences of the Tal-choom audience at performing sites immediately before and after performances. It was administered at four different Tal-

---

95 There are many vocabularies denoting the concept of Turner's term "communitas" in Korean; examples are heung, shin-pa-ram, shin-myung, kong-kam-daeh, kawn-joong cham-ka. For clarity and simplicity, I chose to use "communitas" in this English translation.
choom performing sites in Seoul in 1991 and 1992. Audience members were randomly chosen and sometimes came forward voluntarily.

The main thrust was: what is the nature of audience participation? The majority of contemporary Korean theatre audiences are used to the so-called "typical" theatre attending experiences. However, these steps of theatre-going do not apply to a Tal-choom performance. Therefore and consequently, rather than providing multiple choices, I designed a questionnaire which sought the public's first-hand accounts of Tal-choom experiences. Although this kind of public survey required more time for the researcher and the respondents, the outcome was a variety of handwritten comments, which was and still is informative, more detailed and more personal. As a time-saving measure, prior to handing out Questionnaire #2 (see Questionnaire 2.1), I explained to an individual or a group of respondents a list of characteristics and actions common to the preparation process prior to theatre-going, because the majority of respondents expressed their lack of knowledge in describing their theatre-going

---

96 The verb "to participate" includes "to take a part or share in; to give a share of; and to communicate." This definition encompasses the multiple nature of participation at a theatrical performance.

97 The following is the list of characteristics of typical theatre-going:

- the subscription; purchasing tickets; reading of reviews; word-of-mouth advertising; means of transportation; the process of preparation; and journey to the theatre; the size of the house; audience response; their silences and cheers; audience interaction with each other; (temporary) creation of a community; theatre as social and/or socializing events; the need to be entertained; the human need to experience outside daily routine; the consumption of art and entertainment; and socializing and/or recreational needs.
experience. This preliminary information was given only on request or sometimes in order to assist recipients to respond. In fact, their acquisition of theatrical vocabularies and appropriate phrasing not only relaxed them, but also quickened the administration of questionnaires. A total of 181 people of ages from 16 to 50 (43% male, 57% female) responded to my Questionnaire.

QUESTIONNAIRE #2: ON TAL-CHOOM AUDIENCE

Your opinion, experience and view, which are to be expressed in this questionnaire, would be appreciated and valued for Hye-Soon Kim's research on Tal-choom performances. She is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Victoria in Canada, whose research and dissertation will introduce Tal-choom and its audience to the field of theatre history and hopefully encourage further studies on Korean theatre in North America as well as in Korea. Your valuable time, effort and cooperation would be precious material for her research. Please do not hesitate to write down your honest opinion and advice for her in this questionnaire. Thank you.

Name: Gender:
Age: Profession:
Address:

[Above personal information is to verify the authenticity of the fieldwork. You may omit address.]

1. When did you take an interest in Tal-choom?
2. How many times did you see Tal-choom performances?
3. Why did or do you see Tal-choom?
4. Why do you take Tal-choom lessons (*Optional)?
5. What do you think of the general awareness of Tal-choom? For example, how do your family and friends or neighbours respond to your taking of Tal-choom lessons (*Optional)?
7. What are the most attractive features and charm of Tal-choom?
8. What do you think of the role of Tal-choom audience?
9. How do Tal-choom audiences respond to Tal-choom performance?
10. How do you prepare to come to a Tal-choom performing site? Since it is usually outdoors, describe your arrangement or preparation prior to coming to a performing site.
11. Do Tal-choom audience come alone, or as a group? Describe the scene of typical Tal-choom audience arrival as well as your experience.
12. Describe your anecdotes/experience/thoughts/advice on Tal-choom.
13. It is my perception that among traditional Korean arts, Tal-choom has been largely unknown to the world, although since the 1988 Seoul Olympics there exists growing awareness of Korean culture domestically as well as internationally. What do you think of this research on Tal-choom?

While the demography of Tal-choom audiences shows the wide range of ages and genders, the majority (66%) are students (college/university, high-school and graduate school, respectively). One-half of the respondents (51%) were introduced to Tal-choom through school projects and clubs, while some of the respondents (21%) voluntarily learned about it by themselves. Questions 4 and 5 in Questionnaire 2 were intended to find out the public awareness of Tal-choom lessons, either at schools or other public agencies in Seoul. Results reveal that 66% of the respondents received positive responses from their families and neighbours, while 28% of the respondents experienced indifference or negative ones. Some of these respondents said

---

* See Appendix 3 for the results of the Questionnaire #2.
that their families and teachers even associated *Tal-choom* with radical social activism.

Questions 6 and 7 in Questionnaire 2 were intended to reveal the public's awareness of *Tal-choom* as theatrical entertainment. The majority of the respondents (92%) pointed out the value of liveliness, vitality, excitement and audience-participation in a live performance. They found the dance and movement of *Tal-choom* the most outstanding feature (44%), followed by its satire and humour (15%), the audience participation (12%), costume, mask (10%), and music (7%). Questions 8 and 9 were aimed at informed audience members — enthusiastic fans — who were often taking *Tal-choom* lessons as part of their recreational activities. A large number of the respondents (71%) said that they would go to a *Tal-choom* performance with a small group. The majority of the audience (88%) identified the role of an audience as the co-creator of a performance. The audience participates in the creation of a *Tal-choom* production by physical engagement (61%), such as clapping, cheering and even dancing. Since *Tal-choom* performances often take place at makeshift outdoor sites, questions 10 and 11 were intended to elicit individual experiences of gathering at a performing site. Most respondents (59%) described their preparation ritual, including wearing comfortable outfit and shoes, and bringing food and drinks.

Finally, questions 12 and 13 were intended to invite the respondents' opinions and ideas about contemporary *Tal-choom* practice. Some of the
respondents (48%) emphasized both educationally and emotionally rewarding experiences which they felt after a performance. Also, the spontaneity and dynamics of the audience participation were repeatedly recounted in their answers. Regarding the final question, more than one-half of the respondents (54%) showed their genuine support and encouragement, while some of the respondents (23%) expressed their opinions and suggestions about my study. Only a few of the respondents (3%) showed indifference to the purpose of this study. All responses given in Korean are diverse and rich, which was problematic in accurate translation into English in this study. However, those varying expressions of audience participation and involvement relating to the event support and affirm my conviction that the audience is an important co-creator of the event.

3.3 Personal Biases and Perspective

As a Korean studying theatre history in Canada — mostly Occidental theatre traditions — there can be no disguising the main references by which I am defined initially by others. It is clear that I am identified by Westerners or Occidentals as a Korean or Oriental woman first, and an individual second. On the other hand, I am perceived by Koreans as a Westernized and educated woman who does not necessarily represent the majority of traditional Korean women. I acknowledge that I, Hye-Soon Kim,
may suggest or imply by my appearance and behaviour the product and consequences of Korea's 'modernization' or 'Westernization' in the late twentieth century. This means and has meant my being aware, however vaguely, that my observations and perceptions of Western tradition and socio-cultural practice are influenced by my membership in Korean society and culture. Much of my education and social conditioning has been influenced by the 'Western ways' which Korea has accepted and promoted willingly in the twentieth century. I grew up perceiving that the 'Western ways' were superior and their dominance beneficial.  

As I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, while I was growing up, Korean education consistently emphasized the understanding and borrowing of Western technology and ideas. In addition to Korea's historical and political milieu, Confucius' influence — unquestioning obedience to the father and his authority, which extends to all aspects of Korean society — also pertained to the upbringing of most children of my generation.

As an adult studying in Canada, I belong to a doubly marginalized group; I am a female foreigner — "Occidentalist" whose first language is not English nor French, living on a temporary visitor's visa, which I have renewed every year for the past nine years. The term 'temporary' here defines and reminds me of my 'temporary' status in Canada as if I have

---

99 Perhaps, it is more accurate to state that the West appeared, to me and to most Korean people, politically powerful, economically prosperous, technologically advanced, progressively civilized/cultured and most importantly, the dominant winner of history.
been living in an in-between state.\textsuperscript{100} The disadvantage and advantage of this in-between-two-cultures state has provided me with insights into my own culture and a certain objectivity about Canadian culture or cultures. Against the backdrop of Korea's historical and colonial experiences, I perceive my function as a narrator presenting my participation-observation of both \textit{Tal-choom} and rock concerts. As the narrator, I must select and interpret material chosen for this study, and therefore need to situate myself within the occasion of theatrical events while acknowledging the political, social, historical and theatrical frameworks contained in \textit{Tal-choom} and rock concerts. Therefore, the dual objectives of this dissertation are to examine \textit{Tal-choom} as Korea's popular theatre and outline a case for rock as popular theatre.

\footnote{Consciously and unconsciously I am aware that to many Canadian people I represent my country, society, culture and Korean people/women. After realizing that I am not Chinese or Japanese or Vietnamese, Canadian people attempt to recall their personal experiences and/or contacts with Korea (i.e., the Korean War, made-in-Korea products, the 1988 Seoul Olympics), and so on. Their recollection of stories about Korea reflect how my country, society and culture are viewed in this country, because those stories narrate the individual, collective experiences of Canadians of Korea and even their attitudes towards 'the Orient.'}
The spoken words of Tal-choom — its narrative and dialogues — is not the contemporary language. For clarity and better understanding, I would like to have a detailed program which explains the language of Tal-choom. Also, I would like to see more efforts made to engage the audience in the post-performance dance.

(Male manual labourer, 34 years old)
Pong-san Tal-choom is one of the most popular and best-known types of Tal-choom in South Korea. The P.T.C.S., located in the Intangible Traditional Arts Building in Seoul (Illustration 6), presents two free annual performances for the general public and also offers various levels of Tal-choom lessons to interested people on a weekly basis. Without the efforts of this society, it is unlikely that the integrity of this form of theatre could be preserved. My research on Tal-choom is based on field work and interviews with members of this society from 1990 to 1992.

Since the conventions and characteristics of Tal-choom are broad and cover a wide range of areas, I have divided this chapter into three sections for clarity. In the first, I discuss performance time and the atmosphere of which Tal-choom performances are part. In the second section, I describe the principal characters and their physical appearance. In the third, I have provided a prototype Tal-choom scenario in English, designed to give the reader a sense of the narrative. I want to make it clear, however, that what I have provided is unusual because normally the narrative is transmitted orally from performer to performer. There are no written scenarios for per-

101 Senior members of this Society teach all classes and their master teachers, all National Living Treasures, supervise classes. The continuity and accuracy of each dance and movement are checked by master teachers. The purpose is to promote and spread Tal-choom among contemporary Korean people and to recruit new members of the Society. In addition to lessons within the Intangible National Arts Building, teachers are invited to teach Tal-choom at various institutions (i.e., local schools, YMCA, YWCA, various arts organizations and centres for continuing education. In 1991 and 1992 I went to nine places where Pong-san Tal-choom lessons were held to observe the classes, note the content of lessons and to interview students. During lessons, most students wore comfortable and loose outfits with athletic shoes. The only pieces of Tal-choom costume they wore during the class were the white, extended sleeves.
Illustration 6: The Intangible Traditional Arts Building

This photo was taken in 1992. In 1993, this building was demolished and now a new, larger building for the Intangible Traditional Arts is under construction.
formers in Korean. In recent years, some folklore scholars have transcribed texts from oral interviews. Attached to this chapter as an Appendix 3, I have submitted a short video of the actual progression of the performance, illustrating the highlights as I experienced them.

4.1 Performance Time and Atmosphere

*Tal-choom* performances take place during agricultural festivals: the Spring *Tan-o* festival, and the Fall harvest-thanksgiving festival, *Chu-sok*. Among Korea’s four major traditional holidays (New Year’s Day and *Hansik*, which might be comparable to the Mardi Gras), *Tan-o* is the only one that is not primarily a family-oriented event. The colourful *Tan-o* Festival is a microcosm of Korea’s agricultural heritage. Historical records indicate that *Tan-o*, or *Tan-o-je* ("je" is a ceremony or ritual) as it is known in Korean, was an important local holiday as far back as the middle of the *Choson* dynasty (1392-1910).102

*Tan-o* takes place during a slack period just before the transplanting of the rice seedlings, a time of wishing for a successful season and an abundant harvest. It falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month each

---

102 After a period of decline, *Tan-o* was revived in 1966 and is now considered one of the premier folk festivals in Korea. In 1990, from the nearly 100 the Korea National Tourism Corporation had studied *Tan-o* was one of the six festivals chosen by the agency to be developed as international tourist events.
year, making it a movable feast according to the solar calendar.\textsuperscript{103} The festival includes a spirit ceremony called \textit{koot}, consisting of a shamanistic performance of dance and chant in an attempt to please and appease spirits. It also includes group and individual sports, circus events, theatre performance, selling and buying, eating and drinking and other types of merrymaking depending on local traditions. The \textit{Tan-o} holiday is especially important for women, who are encouraged to engage in sports and participate in merrymaking with the entire community.

Shamanism, one of the ancient indigenous spiritual practices of Korea, is still practised today and plays a major role in everyday life\textsuperscript{104} and in festivals (see Illustration 7). Korean people believe that there are many spirits whose welfare in the world of the dead is directly connected with that of the living. Shaman performance — \textit{koot} — is a much acclaimed performance event, which draws a crowd of merrymakers and curious onlookers (see Illustrations 4 and 8). It is also profoundly important to \textit{Tul-}

\textsuperscript{103} In Oriental philosophy, odd numbers are considered auspicious, and double odd numbers are twice as good.

\textsuperscript{104} One can observe the practice and influence of shamanism in every individual and social ceremony, from choosing names for babies, to selecting dates for moving houses, jobs, doing business transactions, beginning a construction project, wedding days, etc. Before modern Western medicine came to Korea, people took the invalid to local shamans. In those days, Korean shamans were perceived to assume multiple roles ranging from the possessed, the healer, the counsellor, the ritual leader, and the holy person. Doo-Hyun Lee’s article on Korean shamans articulates the process of trance possession in a \textit{kur}. (Doo-Hyun Lee, “Korean Shamans: Role Playing through Trance Possession,” \textit{By Means of Performance}, ed. Richard Schechner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 149-166.)
Illustration 7: The Practice of Shamanism in Everyday Life

Source: A Handbook of Korea, 162-163.
Illustration 3: *Koot*

Source: Kang-ryol Lee, *Folk Traditions and Festivals*
choom and is observed in many aspects of the performance. Although seasonal performance time is observed according to tradition, the closing scene no longer communicates the same religious implications to the modern audience as it did to audiences prior to the 1960s. Therefore, our understanding of a koot is crucial and enables us to comprehend the conventions of Tal-choom.

A koot, usually taking place inside a large open-sided tent, is a shamanistic ritual performed to communicate with the spirit world (see Illustration 8). It is a spectacle in the broadest sense, a combination of dance, drama, and religious ceremony, and a moving experience for those in attendance, or at least, an eerie spectacle of pandemonium and colour for the sceptics. The ceremony is a ritual process which is carried out by a moodang, a shaminist, commonly a priestess, although the accompanying music is customarily performed by a man. Its main aim is to communicate with spirits and to gain insights from ancestors in the other world regarding

---

105 According to my audience survey, the contemporary Korean audience, particularly the younger generation, find the shamanistic elements in Tal-choom performance peculiar. However, the scene of a shaman ritual in performances poses a challenge to the performers and scholars, because in westernized and industrialized contemporary Korea Tal-choom is divorced from the communal merrymaking of the traditional spring festival and presented as a separate performance.

106 Korean shamans can be roughly divided into two types: possessed, or charismatic shamans and hereditary shamans. The former, most of whom are female, called naerim moodang, are typically found in the northern half of the Korean peninsula. After suffering from sinbyong, an illness which is generally interpreted as a sign of a shamanistic calling, a potential naerim moodang apprentices herself to an established shaman from whom she acquires the knowledge and skills appropriate to her new occupation. The hereditary shamans, both male and female, called tangol moodang, are found in the southern half of the Korean peninsula. They are recruited not through possession sickness but simply by being born into a shaman’s family. This type of shaman does not personally undergo trance possession but may cause other persons to become possessed in the course of a rite. Du-Hyun Lee (1990), 149.
worldly matters in which the living are mired. The ceremony encompasses a range of experiences which a shamanist delivers through dance, chant and songs. Participants can take part in the ceremony, or remain as onlookers. Some audience members kowtow and pray for benevolent spirits to visit them, or offer money to the shamanist. Often they slip large bills under the shamanist's belt, so their ritual offering can be seen by the less-involved. Together the performers and audience create the atmosphere in which the ritual observance takes place.

Shamanist *koots* often last for several hours, even days. All the participants are dressed in ancient ceremonial costumes, including the musician, who keeps the air reverberating with sounds to invite a mood for the shamanist's journey to other dimensions. Whereas the primary *moo-lang* does most of the dancing, her apprentices often warm up the crowd and prepare them for the central observance/rite. While the shaman allows herself to become possessed, her apprentices take over the stage at frequent intervals to allow brief respites for both the priestess and the participants. The apprentices, who excel at chanting, pray constantly at an altar and burn small pieces of paper that float upward before turning into ash.

*Tan-o* also features a variety of folk games that have made it a popular social event and carnival. It used to be more of a holiday for girls and women than it is now, and there were specific games and sports for them. Since women spent most of their days in women's quarters ('*nae-sil*'
or ‘ahn-chae’, both denoting ‘inner chambers’) prior to the turn of this century and had to wear long veils\textsuperscript{107} to conceal their faces and be chaperoned when they left their homes, the festival encourage them to express themselves more freely. Women’s sports were, for example, activities such as swinging\textsuperscript{108} and seesawing without wearing veils (see Illustration 9.1). Traditional prizes for women athletes are gold and silver jewellery (e.g., gold rings, silver head pins). The main draw for athletic boys and men is *ssi-rum* (see Illustration 9.2), a sort of Korean wrestling match without the excessive tonnage of *sumo*. It actually has more in common with Mongolian wrestling. The traditional winner’s prize is a calf for the boys, and a bull for the men.

To Western eyes, even to the much westernized younger population of modern Korea, the women’s games may appear quaint and child-like, but originally there was an ulterior motive. These two games supposedly enabled young maidens to soar above the walls of their confines for a quick glimpse of the outside world. At the festival, both of these games are made more colourful by the beautiful traditional Korean costumes worn by the contestants.

\textsuperscript{107} This is an extension of their coat rather than a separate face veil.

\textsuperscript{108} Swinging Korean-style is done by standing on a flat board suspended by thick ropes from a high branch of a tree. The champion is often able to propel herself high enough so as to be horizontal to the branch. Seesawing is also done from a standing position, with contestants on each end of a board jumping into the air in order to propel the person on the other end ever higher.
Illustration 9.1: Traditional Sports for Women

Source: A Handbook of Korea, 146 and 155.
Illustration 9.2:  *Ssi-rum*

Tan-o Day is celebrated throughout Korea in various ways. In Seoul, Tal-choom performances take place at the No-ri Ma-dang and/or at the Olympic Park. Regardless of the location, Tan-o festivities provide locals and visitors with an opportunity, often missed by Korean people who live in an industrialized, urban society, to observe traditional customs and folk-habits that reflect Korea’s agricultural heritage.

4.2 Cast, Costume and Mask

As a whole, a Tal-choom performance, as cultural response, is the perspective of the common people with the emphasis on the spirit of satire on human folly. Unlike characters in Western drama, the characters in Tal-choom are emblematic rather than individual, embodiments of allegorical human essences conditioned by social and historical context. In other words, they are “types,” representing people of all classes in Korean society — except the royal family — with whom common people are in contact in

---

109 All information on masks, costumes and props of Pong-san Tal-choom is based on “Interviews with Master Chin-Ok Kim (1894-1969)” by Dr. Doo-Hyun Lee in Mask Dance Theatre of Korea (Seoul: Il-Chi-Sa, 1979), 197-208.

While I was in Seoul in May and June of 1991, the Pong-san Tal-choom Conservation Society gave me permission to research their masks, costumes and props in their storage. The old masks, produced and used by Master Kim, were mildewy, and deteriorated rapidly. The Society made a set of plaster moulds from which they produce a batch of new masks that are identical in size and shape. The job assignment is not by artistic talent, but by seniority. A person who manages and runs the training, rehearsals and performance preparation becomes the general, artistic manager of the troupe. While Mr. Sang-Un Park, the current general and artistic manager, and members of the Society were working on masks for their annual performance in May 1991 and also their scheduled North American city tour, I photographed the process and details of each step of making masks.
These types include the heartless and leisurely aristocratic landlord, the lecherous old priest, the witty servant, the petty merchant, landless peasants, the old couple, the village shaman, and most importantly, the restless libertine "Chi-ba-lee" and his female conquests — the astute female entertainers/lovers. Chi-ba-lee's pursuit of carnal pleasure and his attitude toward women as sexual objects make an interesting parallel to the signature antics associated with rock 'n' roll performers. In both cases, sex, drink and youth are directly reflected in their characteristics and costume.\footnote{Detailed discussion of their similarities will be dealt with in Chapter 6.}

These characters exhibit no psychological development and do not change. As emblems, their character traits are illustrated through their costumes, masks, dances and movements. Each character has a distinctive mask and costume which allows for doubling and tripling roles shared by a

\footnote{Professor Jin-Tae Park argues that there are seven "type" characters in Han'gul novels, Pan-so-ri and Tal-choom. Based on the class and gender distinction, characterizations, and functions, he defines the seven types as follows:

1. A man of high status who falls for a temptress
2. A witty, clever servant type
3. La femme fatale type
4. A merchant type
5. A bureaucrat type
6. A supernatural messenger type
7. An impotent and corrupt aristocrat type

Based on the content of satire, Park also divides these seven types into three categories:

a) those who are the subjects of ridicule and satire (types 1 and 7)
b) those who actively carry out ridicule and satire (types 2, 3, 4 and 6)
c) those who are merely spectators (type 5)

Park, 179-195.}
limited number of performers. *Tal-choom* masks, however, are not permanent art pieces, rather they are built/crafted for each performance.\textsuperscript{112} Until the latter part of this century, performers believed that their masks were sacred objects which empowered them while they wore them. Acknowledging the positive power of masks, they feared that masks absorbed their souls. Therefore, as a ritual of purification, after each performance all masks had to be burnt. However, as the power of symbols and rituals from the past has now mostly lost meaning in contemporary Korean society, this ritual is no longer observed strictly as part of the closing ceremony nor the burning of the masks as part of a public performance.\textsuperscript{113}

Musicians sit in one corner of the stage on a bamboo mattress (see Illustration 10). They do not wear masks, but wear full traditional formal apparel, dresses for females, suits, coats and hats for males. The musical instruments are a drum, a gong, a hour-glass shaped drum, a band gong, a wind instrument (a small bamboo mouth-pipe which produces high-pitched notes) and a fiddle. The musicians enter first and begin performing.\textsuperscript{114} In addition, they function as the ideal audience which helps to set the pace of a performance.

---

\textsuperscript{112} I will discuss the process of building masks in Chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{113} The company holds a private ceremony to burn the masks.

\textsuperscript{114} Their role is similar to that of the chorus in ancient Greek plays in that they not only provide live musical accompaniment and spectacle but set the mood and interact with performers during the performance.
Illustration 10: Musicians of *Tal-choom*
The minor type-characters are the four junior monks in the opening scene Sang-cha, eight senior monks Mok-joong, the Buddhist devotee Ku-sa, a shaman apprentice So-moo, a young maiden Ae-sa-dang, a pedlar of shoes and his monkey, a lion and a village elder. The major characters are the Old Priest No-jang, three Yang-ban aristocratic brothers (Saen nim, Seo-baang nim, and To-ryun nim, respectively), their witty servant Mal-ttu-gi, the Old Man, his long-lost wife Mi-yal and his young concubine Dul-mo-ri-jip, and finally, a bachelor-libertine Chi-ba-lee.

The Minor Characters

Sang-cha is a term for a junior monk. There are four Sang-chas in most Tal-choom. These monks perform in the opening scene, and are non-speaking characters. Since they enter the performing site carried on the shoulders of other performers, the roles were traditionally performed by junior/younger members of a troupe and nowadays by female performers. It can be interpreted that their Buddhist costume and dance style add a religious undertone to gain popular respect. All four have identical masks and costumes. Their mask is 25.2 cm. high by 16 cm. wide. On a white base, the eyebrows and eyes are defined in black and the lips in red. A head-covering of white fabric is sewn to the mask (see Illustration 11.1). They wear dark blue skirts and long white gowns with extended white sleeves. Over this costume they wear a long red vest. They wear white socks, shoes
Illustration 11: The Masks of Sang-cha and Mok-joong
and a peaked hat.

*Mok-joong* is a term for a senior monk. There are eight *Mok-joong* (Monks) in the second scene.¹¹⁶ *Mok-joongs* are experienced monks, who have finished their initial training and physical hardship and need to gain more spiritual learning. However, they are not intimidated by their master monk and always find a way to play around instead of meditating on the mountain. They can be compared to a group of fraternity boys. They provide much merrymaking and usually experienced senior members of a troupe take this role, because their role demands excellence in singing and dancing as well as improvisational skills with one another. Each *Mok-joong* has an individual dance piece choreographed for him. Although their appearance is similar, there are slight variations. The first *Mok-joong* has a mask 29 cm. high by 21 cm. wide with a red-orange background. Seven moles on his face make a rough, bumpy surface, and there are many black dots on the lower part of his mask. His eyebrows are defined vertically in black and white. His eyes with bulging pupils are defined in gold, black and white. Many pieces of black paper are glued to the mask around the face and a head-covering fabric in black is sewn into the mask (see Illustration 11.2). He wears a bright red and navy costume with long white, extended sleeves

¹¹⁶ *Joong* is a derogatory term for a monk. Dr. Lee suggests that currently all eight monks appear in the same masks and similar outfits. According to Master Kim, however, each monk wore a different mask, costume, and had his own dance style. It is impossible to trace the exact dates and reasons for changes and adaptations that have been made in the previous conventions (*ibid.*, 199). In the current practice of *Pong-san Tal-choom*, I observed in 1991 and 1992 that all eight monks had the same masks, yet each monk wore an individual costume, which was similar in appearance but different in colours.
The first Mok-joong's outfit is slightly brighter than those of the remaining seven. In addition, he wears a large bell on his knee and a piece of willow branch in his belt at the back (see Illustration 12.1 and 12.2).

The mask of the second Mok-joong is similar to that of the first Mok-joong. His mask is 30 cm. high by 22 cm. wide and a strip of blue rope is added to his mask along his head. The masks for the remaining Mok-joong vary from 25-28.5 cm. high by 18-19 cm. wide. The details appear similar. They also wear similar costumes in different colour combinations. They use red, dark blue, chrome yellow, purple, pink, green and pale blue with wide, bright belts. They all wear long white, extended sleeves and straw shoes.

Ku-sa is the term for a Buddhist devotee or an itinerant entertainer. Seen from the context of scene three, the latter definition is suitable. They form a circle and perform a group dance and are not given many individual characteristics or lines. Six Ku-sa characters engage in singing and dancing with Ae-sa-dang. All six use the masks and costumes of Mok-joong, except the leader — a widower called Ku-sa — who wears an additional straw mat or shabby blanket over his shoulder. They carry the female singer Ae-sa-dang on a palanquin. Together they sing regional folksongs in a call and response fashion; the female singer leads the tune and the rest respond to her (see Illustration 13).

116 Like pilgrims, they seek temples in which to meditate and listen to famous monks' sermons.
Illustration 12: Costumes of Mok-joong
Illustration 13  
*Ku-sa* and *Au-sa-dang* Scene
Ae-sa-dang (or Sa-dang for short) and Sou-moo are two young women characters in Pong-san Tal-choom, who are not innocent virgins. Ae-sa-dang is a singer who appears in Scene 3. She leads the merrymaking scene of singing and dancing. Her name means literally "a baby shaman" (a shaman apprentice) and she appears in a bright shaman costume. She sings regional folksongs as a solo and leads the chorus. Sou-moo appears in Scene 4 with the Old Priest, brought in by Mok-joongs. She is young and pretty with a dubious reputation. She represents both female vanity and the traditional Korean view of women. She serves men and bears children, preferably male heirs. As a 'material girl,' she bargains her youthful beauty with the Old Priest. As long as the price proves sufficient, she is a willing partner to any man. When Chi-ba-lee lures her, she wants to find out how much money he has. She bears his baby — a son. After the delivery, she disappears from the scene.

These two female characters are often played by the same performer and often in the same mask and costume. Her mask is 23.5 cm. high by 15.5 cm. wide. Her hair has a central parting and is painted black. Her eyes and eyebrows are also defined in black. Three round red dots are painted on her forehead and cheeks. Her lips are shaped in red. She wears a bright

---

117 Masters Yang Sou-un and Kim Sun-bong, both female National Living Treasures, told me that Ae-sa-dang is an euphemism for a prostitute who followed festivals and hung around koot sites to attract potential customers. Korean female entertainers were to be skilful in singing and dancing. They were invited to private parties to perform and serve male clients as escorts. (My interview tapes with Masters Yang and Kim, May 1991).
outfit with red skirts and a multi-coloured top with white extended sleeves. Her hair is done with a large hairpin and she wears a floral crown on her head (see Illustration 14).

_A Pedlar of Shoes_ is a comic character. The social class of a travelling pedlar was lower than those of peasants and craftsmen in feudal Korean society. His role is to portray the typical life of a commoner. He sells cheap shoes to common people who do not have much money. He is quick at numbers and adept at amusing his potential customers. His physical and vocal humour is earthy and familiar to the audience. His mask has a pale-peach flesh tone background on which eyes are painted in black and white. He has a large mouth around the mouth hole and red lips. His mask is 26 cm. high by 17 cm. wide (see Illustration 15.1). He wears a pair of white pants and a black loose jacket. He carries a back-pack in which a monkey hides. Sometimes, one of _Mok-joong's_ masks is used.

_Monkey_ is the travelling companion and sale partner of the Shoe Pedlar. Frequently travelling pedlars carried a range of exotic animals to attract clients. A small monkey, when trained, can charm village people. This role is usually performed by a child of performers in the troupe. The monkey mask is 21 cm. high by 16.5 cm. wide and has a red background. The eyes are defined in black and white around the eye holes and there are many small dots under the nose. A piece of fur, and ears, are added around the face (see Illustration 15).
Illustration 14: The Mask of Ae-sa-dang and Sou-moo
Illustration 15: The Masks of a Pedlar of Shoes and his Monkey
A lion is performed by two performers inside the lion costume. The mask is 54 cm. high by 48.5 cm. wide and made of wood and paper. The features are defined with white and gold: eyes, eyebrows, mane, open mouth, and white teeth (see Illustration 16). The body is constructed of long, thin, shaggy pieces of white cloth. Inside the head are wooden handles that the front performer (as he stands) manoeuvres (tongue movement, mouth opening, and so on) and directs the lion, while the rear performer (as he bends and holds on to the front performer) balances and follows his direction. The rear performer also steers the tail.

The Major Characters

As part of the farcical satire on Buddhist monks, No-jang, the Old Priest, will break his celibacy vow in the course of the performance. His initial reluctance and awkward gesture suggest his lack of experience in bantering and frolicking freely with women. However, his carnal desire and flirtation soon prove him to be simply a 'dirty old man' who lusts after a young woman. His lofty and respectable appearance is reflected in the choice of colours for his costume and mask. He moves slowly with much grace, and remains speechless. Customary deference to Buddhist monks, particularly Zen masters, derives from Koreans' acknowledgement of the strict, ascetic lifestyle required for their pursuit of enlightenment and truth. Celibacy, a vegetarian diet, and simple clothing deny physical needs for
Illustration 16: The Mask of Lion
comfort. Nor are monks free to seek pleasurable activities. Therefore, once
the Old Priest fails to remain imperturbable and enters a bargain with Sou-
moo — a young prostitute — his religious status no longer furnishes him
with the customary respect in the secular world. He ceases to be perceived
as a holy person, a Zen master. When he engages in a physical fight with
the young libertine, Chi-ba-lee, who also desires the young woman and is
defeated, Chi-ba-lee and the audience hurl insults at him.

His mask is 28 cm. high by 20 cm. wide and has a blue-black back-
ground. White and gold dots cover the lower part of his face under his
eyes.\textsuperscript{118} His eyebrows are defined in white; his eyes in black and white.
Thick lips in red are at the bottom of his mask. Two large bumps protrude
between his eyebrows, two on each cheek, and three under his chin. All
bumps are painted in gold. These bumps and facial lines represent the signs
of his old age. Holes on each side of his nose function as eye holes (see Illus-
tration 17). He wears a dark grey priest’s robe and 108-beaded rosary.\textsuperscript{119}
He wears a straw cap on his head. He carries a large fan in his left hand
and a priest’s staff in his right. His huge and impressive staff represent his
authority, status and old age.

\textit{Yang-ban} (Aristocrat) brothers are landlords who are extremely bored
with their leisurely life. Each of the three brothers depicts the lifestyle of
Korean aristocrats.

\textsuperscript{118} Masters of the P.T.C.S. told me that these dots denote ‘fly shits’ on his face while he sat still in
meditation.

\textsuperscript{119} According to Buddhist teaching, the number 108 is that of human suffering.
Illustration 17: The Mask of the Old Priest
1. *Saen-nim* is the oldest of the brothers. *Saen-nim* is not his name, but a title that was given to a man who had passed the preliminary national examinations for a junior-rank government official during the Choson dynasty. However, it is a title acknowledging class and authorized literacy, not a bureaucratic title. With this title, the character is not given any administrative job of any importance. Essentially, the aristocrat class of the Choson dynasty was land-based and did not have to work to earn money. The Korean aristocrat, in fact, detested physical labour of any kind. Reading, political debating and commanding their subjects were the usual pastimes. Only those who passed the higher levels of governmental examinations and had family connections to the court could be high-ranking officials.\(^{120}\) Since aristocrats did not engage in any physical labour during the Choson dynasty and stayed out of the sun, the faces of their masks are white and they wear meticulously pressed, clean white or pale blue costumes which are made of fine cotton, silk or linen. *Saen-nim*’s mask is 23 cm. high by 16 cm. wide. White facial hairs are glued to his mask, while his eyes are tiny and outlined in gold. Two red scar lines, running along his nose, indicate that he has suffered from syphilis (see Illustration 18). He

\(^{120}\) Low clerical work was carried out by the *Joong-in* class, who were half *Yang-ban* and half commoner. Most wealthy *Yang-ban* men had concubines and mistresses, and children from the union of an aristocratic father and non-aristocratic mother were not considered to be legitimate heirs. All children, particularly sons, born to a Korean aristocrat belonged to the father. Illegitimate male children of an aristocrat received education, yet could not enter any high-ranking government office. Their in-between status was identified by their costume. All adult Korean men during the Choson dynasty wore an outdoor hat, and the width of the brim and the material of the hat indicated the class to which they belonged.
Illustration 18: The Mask of Saen-nim
wears Mang-kun (a hat) on his head and a long white coat and white pants with matching gaiters. He carries symbolic objects of his class — a fan, a staff, and wears an indoor cap.

2. Seo-baang nim, again, is not the name of the second brother. Literally it means an "unmarried brother" or an adolescent boy. "Nim" is an honorific addendum in Korean which can be attached to names, titles, and professional or relationship ranks of people. Sometimes it means a husband, but he is addressed as such by his wife alone. It is also an honorific address to a younger brother-in-law by his sister-in-law and by his servants. Since the eldest son inherits the title and property of the family, the second son has no hope for his future. He tries to please his father and his older brother and hopes for generous handouts. He resembles his older brother, and also has a scar on his nose, which suggests that he too suffers from syphilis. His mask is 24.5 cm. high by 17 cm. wide (see Illustration 19.1). The costume is the same.

3. To-ryung nim is the youngest of the brothers. To-ryung nim is not a name, but a term of address for a younger brother, brother-in-law, or

---

121 It is very common for Korean adults not to use first names in addressing each other in formal circumstances. Even in informal situations, they use as appropriate forms of address names that reflect the addressee's relation to the addressed. At work, people use their business titles, 'Manager Kim.' Only children are addressed by their first names. Often, married people with children are called "so and so's mother, father, uncle, or aunt." At home, children never call their parents by their first names, not even their full names. It is considered rude for a younger person to call a senior by his or her name. At school, teachers address students by their full name and students never call their teachers by their first name or even by their full name. Instead they call their teachers "a person's family name-Sun-saeng nim" (Sun-saeng is teacher in Korean): e.g., "Kim Sun-saeng nim" and in deference to their teachers, students always put the nim addendum after the professional title.
Illustration 19: The Masks of Seo-baang-nim and To-ryung-nim
younger master. This title applies to a boy under ten. He still wears a bright navy-blue child’s outfit. This character is the youngest of the aristocratic brothers. His mask is 24 cm. high by 17 cm. wide and peach-flesh in colour. His eyebrows and hair, with a central division, are painted in black. His lips in red are considerably crooked toward the left side of his face. Around the eye holes, almond-shaped eyes with round pupils are defined in black (see Illustration 19.2). He appears not to be alert or bright; rather, his behaviour suggests that he is mentally and physically challenged. He wears white basics with a blue vest, a black hair cloth and black gaiters, and he carries a fan.

_Mal-ttu-gi_ is a witty, clever servant who teases and tricks his masters, but also rescues them from social embarrassment. His agile and alert movements contrast with his masters’ unhurried, awkward and commanding attitudes. Verbally, _Mal-ttu-gi_ outwits his masters. While he keeps his low-status profile and abases himself, he amuses his masters pretending to be one of them and intentionally makes mistakes to please them. His three masters order him around and in trying to serve all of them at the same time he fumbles and curses them. Abuse of, and dominance over,

---

122 It is a convention in traditional Korean stories and folk tales that aristocratic children, particularly sons, appear either fat or physically imperfect. Aristocratic families overuse a range of preventive herbal medicine for their male heir which creates unwanted side-effects. A strong dose of a certain herbal medicine concoction from Ginseng, or an antler of a young deer, or the gall bladder of a bear contains powerful substances which can be toxic to young children. Commonly known side-effects of overdose are any combination of various symptoms such as obesity, mental retardation, emotional instability, or physical handicaps.
the servant by the masters is depicted comically only in a theatrical perfor­
formance such as *Tal-choom* where status can be reversed. A humiliated, 
miserable servant transforms himself into a triumphant hero of social satire 
through his superior sense of humour and wits.

His mask (25 cm. high by 17 cm. wide) is painted in earth-tone brown 
and in white and black where the facial lines are defined. There are white 
dots around his mouth (see Illustration 20.1). He wears white pants and a 
black top with a small straw hat. He carries a horsewhip and slaps it to co­
ordinate with his dance steps.

The **Old Man** is Mi-yal's long-lost husband. His appearance is insigni­
ficant — he is thin, old and weak. He looks for his long-lost wife. He 
expresses worries and concerns about his family which he has left behind. 
He has never found his fortune and is still poor. However, he has a new 
woman, *Dul-mo-ri-jip*, much younger and more attractive than his old wife. 
In the past, it was customary for Korean wives to live with their husband's 
"other women." The official wife is still in charge of the household, while the 
others are concubines or mistresses.\(^{123}\)

The Old Man mask is 28.9 cm. high by 18 cm. wide. Against a white 
background, his small eyes are defined in gold. White, short facial hairs are 
attached to his face (see Illustration 20.2). He wears white pants, a jacket

\(^{123}\) There are seven deadly sins in Korea that apply only to women. Among them, jealousy toward 
her husband's other women was considered to be the most wicked and made a jealous woman unaccept­
able and undesirable.
Illustration 20: The Masks of *Mal-tu-gi* and the Old Man
and a long coat with a small leather hat on his head. His props are a fan and a staff.

*Mi-val* is an old woman who looks for her long-lost husband. Her wrinkled and sad face implies her hard life. She and her husband were separated during a war. As a faithful wife, she waited a long time for him, and finally decided to look for him in person. Her country accent, coarse language and unsophisticated physical mannerisms indicate she is a commoner. Even though it is comically delivered, her sad story was common enough among the poorest people in Korea in the past. Common men were subject to both military conscription and labour recruitment for government construction projects. When a family was broken up, family members were left to support themselves. Sometimes, men left their families to look for jobs elsewhere. The women, who were left behind on their own without male protection, experienced physical hardship and emotional estrangement. Accepting her primary duty as a mother, *Mi-val* raised her children alone during her husband's long absence. Her mask (25 cm. high by 16.5 cm. wide) has a black or dark navy-blue background; many white and red dots cover her face. Her tiny eyes are lined in white and gold, and her lips in red (see Illustration 21.1). She wears a shabby dress made from untreated raw cotton and completed with a red scarf on her head. In the past, only peasant women and manual labourers wore head coverings. She carries a fan and a set of bells.
Illustration 21: The Masks of *Mi yal* and *Dul mo ri jip*
Du-mo-ri-jip is the young concubine. Her name contains the name of her hometown. In the past, common adult women in the labour force were often named after their hometown.\textsuperscript{124} She is interested in the Old Man’s wealth, about which he seems to have bragged in order to attract her. She does not have many lines to say or her own dance number, but her presence is significant in the struggle between the Old Man and Mi-yal. She stands behind the Old Man, occasionally responding to conflicts between the Old Man and his first wife. When they celebrate their reunion, Dul-mo-ri-jip shakes her head expressing discontentment and disapproval.

Her mask (24 cm. high by 15 cm. wide) has a white background on which her eye holes and hair lines are painted in black. Her lips are painted in bright red. Her voluminous hair is tied up with a large red ribbon (see Illustration 21.2). She wears a yellow top and red skirt. While her appearance indicates youth and vitality, her seductive and flirtatious mime reveals her experience with life and men. During her aggressive fight with the Old Man and his wife, she reveals her real intention — material security through her alliance with the Old Man.

Chi-ba-lee is the bachelor-libertine character, who is a drunk, obnoxious male constantly seeking diversion and female company. He is attractive and vigorous, yet restless, and brags of his sexual prowess. He is the embodiment of sexual vigour and carnal lust. He indulges in excessive

\textsuperscript{124} Dul-mo-ri seems to indicate the name of the place where she lived or came from, and the literal translation of the addendum jip is a house or a dwelling place.
drinking, eating and womanizing, and revels in violating law and order. He enters dancing while holding up a green branch. His pelvic thrust with the standing branch 2-3 feet high suggests not only his sexual potency but also the blatant display of male sexuality. His red mask, wild hair and zig-zag walk demonstrate that he is utterly drunk and ready for action. His behaviour reflects his deliberate ignorance and indifference to socially acceptable behaviour. His movements are jerky yet controlled, and deliberately provocative. His characteristics are also depicted through his mask and costume. His mask is large (34 cm. high by 25 cm. wide) and painted in bright red. Large moles are placed on the forehead, between his eyebrows, at each corner of his mouth, and under his chin. A lock of hair falls over his face (see Illustration 22). He wears red pants and a jacket with bright green sleeves and holds two willow branches in his hand. There is a large bell on his knee. Several round patches of gold-coloured fabric are sewn on his chest and the back of his jacket. The contemporary costume uses a shiny satin-like fabric with a large polka-dot print.125

4.3 A Prototype Scenario of a Pong-san Tal-choom

*Pong-san Tal-choom*, as a four-part mask dance theatre, is composed of a road performance, an opening ceremony, a main performance, and a

---

125 No one in the P.T.C.S. was able to explain since when and why they used the polka-dot print for the costume of *Chi-ba-lee*. Masters told me that the use of polka-dot print was more or less accidental. They suggested that it probably became part of the costume in the late 1960s, when one of their costume specialists constructed the costume of *Chi-ba-lee* in bright satin-like polka-dot print.
Illustration 22: The Mask of Chi-ba-lee
closing ceremony. The entire performance lasts 3-4 hours. Masks and costumes were (and are still) considered sacred, when a *Tal-choom* performance was part of an agricultural festivity in every region where *Tal-choom* traditions existed. The road performance, as well as the opening and the closing scenes, are ceremonial rites which are incorporated into the performance. Ancestor worship and pantheistic worship of natural objects are consolidated into the opening and closing scenes. The union of human beings with nature and society is reflected in all aspects of performance. During the road performance, all performers wear masks and costumes and tour around the village starting from the village shaman-shrine, visiting important landmarks and arriving at the performing site. In contemporary practice, performers in full costume and masks tour around the performing site (i.e., for indoor performances, they tour around the theatre building and enter through the aisle; for outdoor performances, they tour around a performing site and its neighbourhood).

There are three main purposes for this pre-performance parade or prelude. First, it is a shamanistic ritual in which all performers pay tribute to various spirits, gods and goddesses (ancestral, local and national) and orient themselves to the space around the performing site. Dominantly rhythmic music, played on drums and gongs, awakens the spirits in the air, and festive dancing makes direct contact with the spirits of the earth and
the sky. In fact, this dance is called "the treading excursion of spirits of the earth."\textsuperscript{126} This convention is observed even in overseas performances.

The second purpose is to raise funds. Performers stop in front of wealthy houses and usually receive generous contributions. Formerly, they received rice, grain, money, rolls of fabric (for these items functioned as a currency in the market), and drinks. Upon their receipt of donations from patrons, performers expressed their appreciation by demonstrating some from highlighted moments from their repertoire. In contemporary practice, the fund-raising aspect is not strongly emphasized at all. The P.T.C.S. offers free performances twice a year, which are funded by national and municipal government offices. In addition, the production costs are paid by sponsors for any private engagements and for tours.

The third purpose, which combines with the second, is purely functional — publicizing and promoting the performance to villagers and/or visitors. In contemporary practice, this is important for all \textit{Tal-choom} performances that take place outside of the homebase. Since south-eastern \textit{Tal-choom} societies are still based in their hometown (i.e., \textit{Yangjoo}, \textit{Hawhe}, \textit{Donglai}, etc.), their road performance is an essential prelude to the main performance, and takes more than two hours in the case of \textit{Yangjoo Sandae Nori}. But, in the case of \textit{Pong-san Tal-choom}, whose hometown is now in North Korea, the duration and extent of the road performance is flexible.

\textsuperscript{126} Ycon-ho Suh, \textit{Sandae Mask Drama of Korea} (in Korean) (Seoul: Yelwhadang, 1987), 45.
and depends on the performing site and performance engagements with their sponsors. Publicly-funded performances are to promote better understanding and educate the contemporary audience about Tal-choom. Prior to a performance, posters and notices are sent out to local schools and newspapers to announce an upcoming, free performance. In fact, the road performance serves to attract urban citizens who have never seen such a live traditional theatre performance.

While the road parade/performance creates a festive mood in the community, a group of staff sets up a changing tent and a ceremonial table with food and drinks for the opening ceremony called Ku-sa — a generic name for appeasing ceremonies that are observed as a way of life in Korea. Ceremonial food is stylized and includes steamed cow or pig head and pork hocks, three kinds of fruit and rice cakes with red beans. The cow or pig head and pork hocks denote sacrificial food, indicating the ritualistic origin of a village festival. Fruits and rice cake are also ceremonial food.

---

127 Pong-san masters said that they felt frustrated and torn when a corporate sponsor asked for a one-hour performance of Tal-choom as part of a company party or a conference. On the one hand, the P.T.C.S. members are delighted to perform for new audiences, but on the other, they find it difficult to compromise by turning their performance into an entertainment product. Much to everyone’s dismay, corporate directors commodify their art and even order a series of scenes to their taste. Often, they do not want the road performance, or the opening and closing scenes.

128 According to my audience survey in 1991 and 1992, 30% of an audience came by when they saw and heard "colourful costumes and pandemonium"; they just followed to see what was going on.

129 The latter, in particular, illustrates a shamanistic tradition in which Korean people believed that red beans had a power to deter evil spirits. See Footnote 71.
When the performers arrive, they dance into the performing space toward the changing tent, where they hold a private ceremony for masks prior to the opening scene (see Illustration 23). After this ceremony, a head performer leads the opening ceremony. He wishes both performers and audience members good health, luck and a successful performance, which is followed by the offering and sharing of food and drink. In addition, audiences eat and drink at their seats as they watch the performance which follows. Unlike the solemn opening dance, the closing dance is jovial, an open invitation to audience members to dance with performers. Frequently, the closing dance marks the beginning of a community festival.

_Tal-choom_ does not have a central plot. The separate scenes are episodic. Characters belong to each scene and their dramatic action does not contribute to any linear progression. Religious rites and ceremonies are part of the performance and a scenario of oral tradition outlines the basic storyline. Often the storyline refers to folk legends and Korean classical stories. Most of these literary references have ceased to be familiar to contemporary Koreans. With the acceptance and adaptation of Western literature in Korea from the beginning of the twentieth century, contemporary Korean audiences and performers need to be educated about classical Korean literature and literary conventions.\(^{130}\) Both contemporary performers and

\(^{130}\) As English-speaking students in Canada do not automatically understand expressions from Shakespeare's plays, Korean students have difficulty comprehending literary, idiomatic expressions from classical Korean literature.
Illustration 23: A Performing Site ("Tal-pan" of Pong-san Tal-choom in Pong-san Region)

This diagram is based on the recollection of late Master Kim Jin-Ok in 1967.
Source: The Mask Dance of Korea, 132.
audiences need to be informed of the literary expressions from classical writings to appreciate their implication within this context.

*Tal-choom* remains the popular theatre of oral tradition. There is no physical set, yet through language and movement scene changes are conveyed. Although the P.T.C.S. has a synopsis of the *Pong-san Tal-choom* scenario in English, it is a brief plot outline of each episode which is attached to their program note for their overseas performances. To my knowledge, there was no comprehensive written text, even in Korean, until Professor Lee transcribed from several accounts of the *Pong-san* masters in the 1960s. The *Tal-choom* script translated below is a transcript of a performance which had been passed down orally and compiled by Professor Lee. Observation of eight performances in 1991 and 1992 and my interviews with masters and members of the P.T.C.S. provide the context on which I have based this English adaptation of *Pong-san Tal-choom*.

**Scene 1: Sa-sang-cha Choom (Four Junior Monks’ Dance)**

Following the prelude performed by musicians, the main performance begins with a slow, solemn ceremonial Buddhist dance, preparing performers and audience alike for the subsequent performance. Four young monks enter carried on the shoulders of senior monks. They dance toward the four directions (east, west, south and north), which is a tribute to the

---

131 See Appendix 5.
abiding spirits of the site prior to the main performance. This scene lasts about 25 to 30 minutes (see Illustration 24).

**Scene 2: Pal Mok-choong Choom (Eight Senior Monks’ Dance)**

The sombre first scene is followed by a lively, energetic and rowdy second scene. Eight monks enter one at a time, all dressed in bright costumes and grotesque masks. Unlike the first, this scene seems chaotic and celebrates the sheer joy of freedom from restraint (see Illustration 25.1). The first monk appears with his long sleeves covering his mask and falls to the ground on his back. He slowly moves one limb at a time and gradually makes attempts to get up. Three times he tries and fails. On the fourth attempt, he barely gets up and looks around him. This dance piece is extremely demanding and usually performed by a skilful dancer. Up to this point the red mask of a *Mok-joong* remains still unseen by the audience members. Slowly, he lifts his arms and one leg, and moves around the stage dancing to a fast tune. Every movement of this dance is choreographed with careful control and requires agile body movements.

The second monk runs onto the stage and sees the first dancer. Then, he places himself behind the first performer while the first is still dancing. With his extended white sleeves, the second dancer hits the first on the shoulder (see Illustration 25.2). The first performer acknowledges the presence of the second and exits. The second performer’s lines express his bore-
Illustration 24: Scene 1: *Sa-sang-cha Choom*
Illustration 25: Scene 2: Pal Mok-joong Choom
dom with monastic life on the mountain. He says: "I didn't realize the season (Spring) while I was wasting my life on the mountain. Since I recognize spring in trees and delightful scenery, why not play around and enjoy myself!" His tone is rude and licentious.

The consecutive entries of the remaining six monks follow the same pattern; while one remains on stage, another enters. All of them recite phrases and anecdotes from classical Korean literature about feasting and parties. When the eighth monk finishes his solo, he calls his friends, who answer unanimously off stage and enter. They exchange comedic dialogue, which expresses their willingness to take advantage of this free time on their own without their master overlooking their behaviour. Their dance is energetic, fast and makes a stark contrast to the previous serene one (see Illustrations 26.1 and 26.2).

Scene 3: Sa-dang Choom (Revelry of Song and Dance)

A colourfully dressed and lavishly decorated Sa-dang enters, carried by male dancers. (In the past, all roles were performed by male actors, but from the beginning of this century this role has been performed by a female.) All male dancers remain onstage, and she leads the group in singing. Seven male dancers engage in antiphonal singing with the lead

---

132 In Korean, "being on the mountain" means living a religious life. Monasteries are located in remote areas on the mountain adjacent to Buddhist temples. When someone joins the monkhood, they say: "So and so left the secular world or went to the mountain."
Illustration 26:  Scene 4: *Pal Mok-joong* Group Dance
singer. (The seven dancers are doubled by the monks in the previous scene.)
The lyrics of their songs are about playing and enjoying life and numerous
literary references are made from Korean classical and folk legends (see
Illustration 13).

**Scene 4: No-jang Choom (Old Priest's Dance)**

This is the most popular scene and consists of three parts: the Old Priest's
wooing of **Sou-moo**, the Pedlar of Shoes and his Monkey, and the **Chi-ba-lee**
scene. Three stories all revolve around the young woman and two men —
the Old Priest and **Chi-ba-lee** — who want to take her as a lover.

**Part 1: Dance of No-jang and Sou-moo**
(The Old Priest and the Young Woman)

Eight monks played hookey and were apprehensive about being dis-
covered. Instead of pleading to their master, they decided to get him
involved in their party. They enter with their master — the Old
Priest. The Old Priest appears calm and contained and does not
understand what is going on. They pull him by his impressive staff.
He is dragged to the scene of festivity, his body movement indicating
reluctance and even mild resistance. While the monks are singing a
familiar tune, the Old Priest drops his staff and sits down on the
ground, keeping his face hidden behind his large fan. While his pupils
keep on singing and playing, making fun of their master and
exchanging humorous lines, the Old Priest does not move or respond to the harmless mockery of his pupils. It is a convention that although the Old Priest and his rowdy pupils are on stage, they are not aware of each other's presence but the audience knows of their proximity. The Old Priest's presence during this scene serves a dramatic purpose to counter the naughty behaviour of his pupils and contributes to the comic elements of the satire (see Illustration 27).

When the Mok-joong characters call to their master, they entertain him with his favourite songs. Their idea of entertainment extends to introducing him to a young woman, Sou-moo. While dancing and merrymaking, they leave the stage and enter with her on a carriage. Sou-moo is excessively decorated and made-up and appears to be coy behind the fan covering her face. The monks leave as she steps down from the carriage.

The remainder of the scene is between Sou-moo and the Old Priest, enacted through dance and mime. She is coy, yet seductive in her gesture and dance movements. At seeing this pretty young woman, he is initially shaken; noticing his pupils' absence, he decides to woo her. His mime and movement indicate that he can scarcely believe what he is seeing. He admires her and looks away when she sees him. This exchange is repeated and eventually he gets up, nodding as if he has decided to enjoy this moment.
Illustration 27: Scene 4: The Old Priest and His Pupils
The Old Priest is a figure of spiritual authority, yet in this scene it does not take long for him to break his vow. Sou-moo and the Old Priest dance and mime and eventually negotiate the terms — her terms of material gain. Much to the surprise of the Old Priest, he does not have the means to satisfy her. He offers his rosary and she throws it at him. He examines his face in a mirror and grooms his hair to make himself attractive to her (see Illustration 28.1), as if she rejects his present because of his old and ugly appearance. In his attempt to gain her attention, he walks up to her and puts his rosary around her neck. Sou-moo does not pull it off and continues to dance as if she had decided to accept his offer. They both seem satisfied and the Old Priest indulges himself in admiring her and contemplating his next step (see Illustration 28.2).

Part 2: The Pedlar of Shoes and his Monkey

While the Old Priest and Sou-moo dance together happily, the Pedlar of Shoes with luggage on his back (in which a monkey is placed) enters. Noticing the holy figure flirting with a woman, the Pedlar of Shoes expresses his contempt. However, when the Old Priest beckons to him, pointing at the shoes, the Pedlar of Shoes seizes the opportunity for a sale and becomes friendly. At first, he looks for shoes for the Old Priest. Shaking his head, the Old Priest points at Sou-moo's
Illustration 28: Scene 4: The Old Priest and Sou-moo
feet. Soon, gauging her foot size, the Shoe Pedlar comments on her large, un-lady-like, feet. While he looks for a pair of shoes for her in his luggage, a monkey pops out of it. Not knowing what kind of creature it is, the shoe pedlar asks it a series of riddling questions such as "Are you a dog? A pig? A cat? A deer? A rabbit?"

When he tires of questions and pushes the monkey aside, the monkey imitates him by pushing the shoe pedlar aside. From then on, the monkey mimics every action/gesture of the Pedlar of Shoes, while he is rummaging his bag to look for shoes for her. Soon, he recognizes the creature to be a monkey. He asks the monkey to get the money from the Old Priest. Although the Old Priest and the young woman remain on the stage, only a few steps away, it is a convention that the Pedlar of Shoes and his monkey cannot see him.

The monkey goes over to the other side of the stage. When it sees Sou-moo, it stands behind her and pretends sexual intercourse with her. Meanwhile, the shoe pedlar gets impatient and looks for his monkey. Upon seeing the monkey, he seizes it by its nose and pulls it toward him. The monkey does the same to him. After threatening the monkey physically, the shoe pedlar sits on the back of the monkey, which implies a sexual act. The monkey also imitates the same act. Eventually, remembering that the Old Priest has not paid for shoes,
he sends the monkey to the Old Priest to collect money (see Illustration 29).

Instead of sending money, the Old Priest sends a letter to the merchant via his monkey. The letter, read by the shoe pedlar aloud, states that "You are expected at a place behind an alley called 'a firewood shed' near my temple where you will receive the payment." This means that the disciples of the Old Priest would lynch him with wooden stakes in the remote corner of the temple. As he decides to run away from his troubles, lively, energetic music is heard, to which the Old Priest and the young woman dance peacefully and amorously until Chi-ja-lee appears (see Illustration 30.1)

**Part 3: Chi-ja-lee takes Sou-moo from No-jang**

Chi-ja-lee slowly steps onto the stage and his movement indicates his intoxication. He swears and explains his personal journey briefly in his song. Chi-ja-lee, a former monk, is a drunk, a womanizer and a bully. As he sees Sou-moo dancing with the Old Priest, he shakes his head as if he cannot believe what he is seeing. He walks over to the Old Priest and starts teasing him, then insults, attacks and ridicules him. The Old Priest threatens him with his staff, which infuriates Chi-ja-lee. He soon provokes the Old Priest into a fight (see Illustration 30.2).
Illustration 29: Scene 4: A Pedlar of Shoes and his Monkey with the Old Priest and Sou-moo

Source: The Mask Dance of Korea
Illustration 30: Scene 4: The Old Priest, *Sou-moo* and *Chi-ba-lee*

Source: *The Mask Dance of Korea*
Chi-ba-lee is known for his obnoxious and violent temperament. His dance requires a lot of jumping and leaping. He attacks the Old Priest and receives a frontal blow on his face by the Old Priest’s fan. More determined, Chi-ba-lee attacks the Old Priest and wins. He then starts to woo Sou-moo, boasting of his youth and potency, and his money. At seeing her rapid reception of his money, he expresses his contempt for her material obsession. Eventually, he pays her and they dance and mime. He lifts her skirt under which he puts his head and states how hot the place is.

Their mime, dance and his jesting all indicate sexual intercourse. Soon, So-moo mimes a terrible pain in her stomach and delivers a baby boy. She pulls out a doll from under her skirt and exits. Upon receiving his first-born son, Chi-ba-lee talks and sings to his son. He sings traditional and familiar lullaby tunes and leaves the scene without commenting on Sou-moo’s sudden disappearance from the stage.

Scene 5: Sa-ja Choom (Lion Dance)

The eight monks from Scene 2 are chased by a lion. The lion attacks the monks until they exit. In the middle of the stage, the lion sits down. An old

---

133 It is said that formerly female spectators departed before this obscene dance began. However, it seems likely that those female spectators were not supposed to be seen at this part of the performance, rather than not being allowed or not actually wanting to see the suggestive dance.
man, dressed as a horseman, tries to figure out what this large creature is.
Once again, the Old Man and the lion engage in a game of identification.
The questioning formula used by the Pedlar of Shoes and the Monkey is
repeated. Through the Old Man’s lines, the audience learns that the lion is
a divine messenger who comes to punish the rowdy monks and the Old
Priest, and to restore secular order in the community (see Illustration 31).
Having learnt the lion’s mission, the Old Man persuades the lion not to be
harsh with the foolish monks. The Old Man appeals to the lion’s mercy and
succeeds in persuading the lion to forgive the sins of imperfect mortals.
Then, the lion and the Old Man dance together and peacefully exit.

Scene 6: Yang-ban Choom (The Aristocrats’ Dance)

Mal-ttu-gi leads his masters onto the stage. Their slow dance steps are
highly stylized, which appears awkward because their movement, on pur­
pose, is not coordinated to the music.\textsuperscript{134} Mal-ttu-gi’s introduction of his
masters is cheeky and he makes a bluff behind their backs. He teases his
masters and mocks their manners. Repeatedly, the servant outwits his
masters through his quick humour and physical movements. The scene pre­
sents a day of the ruling class, their idle, non-productive life. It is

\footnote{\textsuperscript{134} According to Pong-san masters, this indicates that the aristocrats do not understand the music of
the common people. Although they want to enjoy the festivities, they cannot move and dance. The
Yang-ban consider activities such as singing, acting, dancing and sports not suitable for their class. They
are reserved in expressing emotions and in physical activities. They consider those who show emotions
weak and vulgar. An old Korean proverb says: “A Yang-ban should not run when he is hit by a tropical
thunder storm” and should resume his leisurely walk as if nothing had happened.}
Illustration 31: Scene 5: Sa-ja Choom (Lion Dance)
31.2: Source: The Mask Dance of Korea
understood that the rulers are perceived as useless, yet powerful bullies of the common people. While the brothers recite poems to each other, Mal-ttugi is allowed to take part. His poem is a parody of the lofty poems recited by his masters.

While they laugh at Mal-ttu-gi, Chi-ba-lee sneaks in and is noticed by one of the brothers. He remembers that Chi-ba-lee has committed a fraud against the aristocrat's family, and asks the servant to arrest him. The brothers already have an arrest warrant. Upon the arrest of Chi-ba-lee, Mal-ttu-gi suggests that the brothers are better off receiving a bribe of a considerable sum from Chi-ba-lee. The aristocrats agree with their witty and corrupt servant, and exit dancing together (see Illustration 32).

**Scene 7: Mi-yal and the Old Man**

Holding a fan in one hand and bells in the other, Mi-yal enters and weeps in front of the musicians. With one musician, she starts speaking about herself. "Don't laugh at me, you young man / Shiny skin, pink cheeks I had yesterday! / Wrinkled up, white haired I am today!" She has been looking for her long-lost husband from whom she was separated in a war (see Illustration 33.1). She describes her husband as an ugly, old and short person. Lamenting her loneliness and her love for her Old Man, she exits. Holding a fan and a staff, her husband appears as she leaves the stage (see Illustration 33.2), also looking for his wife. He and a musician engage in the
Illustration 32: Scene 6: *Yang-ban Choom*

From Far Left: *Mal-ttu-gi, Saen-nim, Seo-baang-nim* and *To-ryung-nim*

Source: *The Mask Dance of Korea.*
Illustration 33: **Scene 7: Mi-yal and the Old Man**

Source: *The Mask Dance of Korea.*
same dialogue and the audience learn the same tale of separation told by the Old Man. He also offers a derogatory description of his wife. As he moves around the stage dancing and singing, his wife appears from the other side of the stage. They both look for each other, circling around the stage, and finally meet. They embrace each other. Next, they engage in a dance which suggests sexual intercourse. While he stays on the ground on his back, she steps over his feet and moves on toward his head and crosses his body. They celebrate their meeting and rejoice briefly in a sweet moment of reunion, sharing events and stories of their past. Their stories are extremely farcical and narrated in a stylized way — almost as a chant or a recitation of a call-and-response style to the drum beat.

Their happiness, however, is brief for Mi-yal notices Dul-mo-ri-jip, the young concubine, who stands behind her husband. She attacks the young woman, and in turn the Old Man abuses his wife verbally and physically. Beaten into submission, Mi-yal asks her husband for a divorce and a half of their property. The following lines entail their meagre, extremely limited assets and property, which are satirical and comically delivered. The list of their 'wealth' is laughable and reflects how poor the common people are.

The way in which the Old Man divides their meagre property indicates how selfish and unfair he is. When Mi-yal accuses him of miserliness, he rants and mimes his anger. He yells at her that he would rather destroy
everything than divide it in half. His mime suggests that he throws and
smashes things. Her reaction is shock. Yet, when he is about to smash the
ancestral monument of his family, *Mi-yal* attempts to stop him. In this
scene, the audience learns that it is the wife who keeps the family name
and heritage, not the husband.

Meanwhile, *Dul-mo-ri-jip* intervenes expressing her disappointment
at the reduced wealth of the Old Man and asks for her portion which may
be offered to *Mi-yal*. He strikes *Mi-yal* and a physical fight ensues between
the old couple. When *Dul-mo-ri-jip* realizes that the Old Man has nothing
and that he simply lied to her, she is furious. She too leaps into the fight
(see Illustration 34). Meanwhile, the Old Man frees himself from the grip of
*Mi-yal* and stands back watching the two women going at it. Both assume
that they are fighting with the Old Man, who betrayed them in love and
commitment. Suddenly, *Mi-yal* falls to the ground and her husband finds
out she is dead. The Old Man regrets and laments briefly his wife's violent
death. *Dul-mo-ri-jip* responds to *Mi-yal*'s death with evident delight. She
beckons to the Old Man and soon they exit together arm in arm.

A village elder with a long white beard enters and sees the body of
*Mi-yal*. He sympathizes with the poor Old Man and offers his compassion to
her soul. He collects the village people and their shaman to console the soul
of the old woman (see Illustration 35). The whole cast come on and partici­
perate in the final scene, which is followed by a closing ceremony. A table
Illustration 34: Scene 7: Mi-yal, Dul-mo-ri-jip and the Old Man

Source: The Mask Dance of Korea.
Illustration 35: The Final Scene: Moo-dang Choom

Source: The Mask Dance of Korea
with drinks and food is brought in. All performers put down their masks and burn one or two of them in deference to the old tradition. After this ceremonial ritual, music invites the cast and audience members to join together in a dance.

3.4 Production Arrangements

The company purchases, produces and stores each entire costume and mask. All members of the P.T.C.S. learn to reproduce and repair their masks in the Society office. When the government recognized Pong-san Talchoom as one of the intangible traditional arts in 1967, their masks, costumes and props were registered as its authentic properties. Therefore, masks, costumes and props are properties of the P.T.C.S. and no individual can own them. They do not sell their masks or costumes to outsiders. From their original mask collections and with the help of their masters, they have made clay moulds of each mask.\textsuperscript{136} Multiple layers of coarse paper are glued together to construct a solid base for the replica using water-based starch. The dried papier mâché is then removed from the clay, and the surface of the mask is refined and finished with white rice paper, preparing it for base coats of paint. Since the masks are meant to be disposable and

\textsuperscript{136} Nobody in the P.T.C.S. could tell me the year when the master moulds were made. Masters told me that it was around 1967. Due to lack of extensive archival records regarding production arrangements and performance history before 1989, I had to rely on verbal information and oral accounts from masters and members of the Society.
are burned after each performance, the original masks were not made to be durable. Through my inspection of the few remaining original masks and interviews with the P.T.C.S. members, I believe that rice paper, starch and water, and natural colour paints were used in the past. In contemporary practice, latex paints are used and a senior member of the company instructs the junior members in the process of defining expressions. Although the colours and defined features of the masks last more than one performance, repairing and replacing masks is one of the major preparations for a performance.\(^{136}\) (See Appendix 6 for photographs taken during the process of creating Pong-san masks.)

The company contracts a specialist to produce the costumes. Like masks, the costumes are also registered as the sole property of the P.T.C.S. since 1967. By this means, the authenticity of Pong-san Tai-choom costuming is protected and the traditions are maintained. Thus, the design and colour combinations adhere to the authorized version. Unlike the antique costumes made of raw cotton and hemp cloth, contemporary costumes are constructed using refined cotton, linen, washable silk and shiny polyester.

\(^{136}\) I witnessed this process when the P.T.C.S. prepared for their North American Tour in May and June of 1991. They performed in Montreal, Toronto, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Due to rough movements and a lot of jumping in Pong-san Tai-choom dances, their papier mâché masks have to be, at least, reconditioned or recreated for each performance. Masters told me that when they were younger, they burned all masks after a performance as a closing ceremony and always used new masks for each performance. Until recently, women were not allowed to be part of the mask-making work. This antique convention was observed as a customary superstition until more women performers began to participate in the twentieth century. When I asked for permission to witness and photograph the process of creating masks, the manager of the P.T.C.S. told me: "You are lucky to be born as a woman in the late twentieth century." In fact, I was the first researcher who had the privilege of taking photographs during mask production.
satin. They are durable and much brighter than the original ones. Each cast member is assigned to her/his costume, and it is their responsibility to clean, press and take care of the costume during a tour.

Although the origin of the costumes is largely unknown and non-verifiable, their proportions, colours and design transform Tal-choom dancers into a 'miniature set' in constant movement on the stage. Tal-choom performers' costumes are not just an embellishment, but the costume and mask function as a partner, which assists the performer's body, and dilates it. While continuously transforming the performer's body, the costume and mask also conceal the gender and age of a performer.\textsuperscript{137}

The company arranges the purchase of musical instruments for rehearsal — usually a drum and an hour-glass shaped drum, as well as props. Musicians are not necessarily members of the P.T.C.S. They are invited from outside and work as adjunct members of the Society. Some of these guest musicians are virtuosos in the traditional Korean music field.

Props for Pong-san Tal-choom cover a wide range: two canes, several fans of different shapes and sizes, women's hair ornaments, ceremonial offerings which include a sacrificial ode required in the official ceremony, plates, drinks and food. Traditionally acquired ceremonial foods include a pig's head (steamed or boiled), a large rice cake layered with the red bean

\textsuperscript{137} Hence, the effect of power and energy which the performer is able to manifest is reinforced and heightened by the metamorphosis of the costume and mask themselves in a reciprocal relationship of exchange: performer-body, performer-costume-mask, performer-in-the-costume-and-mask.
paste, a couple of dried fish, rice wine, seasonal fruits and water. There is a small table, candles, candle holders, an incense burner, plates, wine cups, and a sacrificial ode (which is to be burnt after recitation) (see Illustration 36). All the North American Tour was performed in proscenium theatres. The opening and closing scenes were simplified and the closing ceremony, in which the audience was usually invited to take part and share drinks and food, was modified. They substituted with models made from paper and plastic for real food.

Although on-stage musicians, masks, costumes and props are integral to the creation of each character and each movement, we do not find any type of set in a Tal-choom performance, insofar as a set is a device which represents, in a more or less realistic way, the locations where dramatic actions take place. The stories told in these performances are such fantastic tales of voyages, battles, hunts and loves, taking place at the four corners of the heavens and the earth. In Tal-choom, the scenic space ranges from a mountain side to a market square to a picnic. The only common factor in various locations is that all scenes take place outdoors. Often props are used to indicate places and situations for the spectator. A simple foldable fan, for example, is used to point a direction and location, portray the waves of the ocean, wind and tree shade, and can also convey various meanings depending on how it is utilized by a dancer-performer.
Illustration 36: A Simplified Ceremonial Table
It is also thanks to the omission of setting and especially to the craftsmanship of the performers, that they are able to make these places vivid by means of their physical responses and reactions. They use conventional gestures understood and accepted by the spectators, and they execute them with skill and dexterity.\(^{138}\) In the scene of the Old Man and Mi-yal, for example, the characters enact their long journeys to seek each other. Although there are only a few steps between them, once they enter separately, the audience understands the imaginary distance and time lapse between these characters, despite the proximity of the performers.\(^{139}\)

---

\(^{138}\) For example, the famous scene ‘in the park’ from *Peking* Opera. These scenes are, in fact, performed in full light: the actors feign obstacles and engage in duels without seeing each other.

\(^{139}\) Similar techniques are used in Occidental pantomime and *Commedia dell’Arte* performances, or the rudimentary *mise-en-scène* of mystery plays in the Middle Ages, or theatre tradition from the Elizabethan era.
I remember a senior performer who used to beat us up. When he taught us *Tal-choom*, with good intention — of course — , he was a strict and ruthless ‘master’ to serve. Anyway, I love dancing and particularly dancing with the audience at the end of a performance. I will always cherish two performances in which I danced in front of the city hall in Seoul and also in front of the Parliament building.

*(Male high-school Tal-choom actor, 17 years old)*
In the P.T.C.S. office in Seoul, there are framed black-and-white pictures of the deceased masters (see Illustration 37). Visitors to the office are always introduced to these pictures, and then the legendary anecdotes attached to each master are recounted. When I visited the office of the P.T.C.S. in May 1991, the first thing the executive manager did was direct my attention to these pictures. He explained that *Pong-san Tal-choom* is an oral tradition passed on for hundreds of years, from one generation to the next, from master to student. The silent presence of the pictures was a testimony to this heritage and I, as an outsider, stood in awe of them and what they represented. Each picture is a reference to a certain style or a specialized virtuosity in the performance skills of the master. Since each master’s knowledge is carefully passed on, the relationship between master and student serves as the vital link in the continuity of performance conventions. However, it is not just the skills that are transmitted, the unique attitude of the master and his/her personal inspiration are the real catalysts in the transmission of the art which gives it its vitality, allowing for subtle growth and change over the years without loss of the distinctive form. Thus, *Tal-choom* continues even today, despite tremendous pressures on modern South Korea to assimilate Western culture. In recent years, such masters have been honoured with the title of Living National Treasure. As of 1992,
Illustration 37: The Constant Presence of the Masters
there are five such treasures in the P.T.C.S. — four women and one man. Their average age is 68 years (see Illustration 38) and most are retired. Many, however, continue to share their skills and traditional heritage by teaching and occasionally performing.

In this chapter I will examine how this oral tradition works, discussing the traditional model of transmission and also the current practice of the traditional model. Firstly, I will discuss the traditional master/student relationship — the three D's (discipline, devotion and deference). Secondly, I will discuss the current practice of transmission and diversion from the traditional model — the three C's (conviction/commitment, cooperation and communal sharing). Finally, I will describe the process of performer training which derives from the traditional model of transmission and is still exercised in the current practice. Based on my research and interviews, I have identified it as the three phases of performer training: the individual phase; the group phase; and the performance phase.

5.1 The Oral Tradition and the Role of a Master

P.T.C.S. student/performers call their masters Sun-saeng-nim, which means "a person who was born before you." This word Sun-saeng-nim is also widely used denoting "a teacher" and also "a senior person." Its latter use,

---

140 The five Living National Treasures of the P.T.C.S. are Sung-Pong Kim, Ae-Soon Ahn, Ok Yoon, So-Eun Yang, and Ki-Soo Kim.
Illustration 38: Masters Yoon Ok and Kim Sun-Pong
referring to a senior person, is often found in a casual social context as a general form of addressing the other person. *Sun-saeng-nim* within the *Tal-choom* community refers specifically to the masters who are honoured with the Living National Treasure titles. Within this context, rather than just implying a profession in education, this term denotes a person from whom students can learn special skills in *Tal-choom* performance and more importantly, whose achievement and virtuosity become the source of inspiration. *Tal-choom Sun-saeng-nim* is, therefore, a *Tal-choom* master, who is a star-performer and also an expert in his/her art. Instead of *Sun-saeng-nim*, for clarity and consistency, I will use the term 'master' in this chapter.

Since *Tal-choom* communicates through non-verbal means and the nuances of its theatrical expression lie beyond words, it is especially indebted to the living oral tradition. This oral tradition demands a master. A master is an artist regarded as great and as an embodiment of virtuosity and artistic vision, whose own performance style and vision stand by themselves within the *Tal-choom* heritage. There are three qualities of a master that I have identified: a master embodies *Tal-choom* as a certain theatre tradition, models the manifestation of its unique characteristics, and finally, is committed to the passing on of the art of *Tal-choom*.

Students’ learning begins with their recognition of the aforementioned three qualities. Also, their ability in finding and acquiring a master itself is
an important task. Because his/her commitment and respect to the art give a master the moral authority over the art and also performer training, while a master's performance itself sets a standard in the curricula of performer training, a master stands as a role model and serves as a medium in the transmission of the performance tradition and conventions. Students rely on their chosen masters for their training. It is not a matter of finding a master and applying for an apprentice position, but a rite of passage. Students must endure numerous tasks which are devised by masters to test their vocal and physical skills, their submission and devotion, and also their understanding of their own resources and potential. Stories of finding masters are often described in personal legends of famous masters. For example, Master Kim at the age of eight ran away from home to join a touring company when she saw a master performer. Her middle-class family did not approve of her talent in dance and singing, and tried to stop her from engaging in any training. Her devotion to her dance and singing was met not only by her family's opposition but also looked down upon by polite society. When she approached the head of the touring troupe, she performed for the star-performer, and told him that she was a poor orphan. Her talent impressed the master, and she was adopted by his family. For the next 10 years, she lived with them, received training and performed with the
touring company. In this relationship, a master is viewed as a second parent, sometimes more than a parent — almost a god, and is revered accordingly. Therefore, his/her blessing and recommendation are essential for current and future success in a student's career.

5.2 The Traditional Model of Transmission

The process of training creativity in the traditional model was family- and village-oriented. Children, particularly male children, grew up in a performer’s family learning the family trade at a very early age. However, from the turn of the century, performers volunteered, actively sought out and were also referred to master-teachers by family or village members. From the early part of this century, even women performers started to be an accepted part of performer training. According to Masters Kim and Yang, early women performers were professional entertainers, ki-saeng, who often belonged to a public brothel or operated independently. Not unlike Japanese gei-sha or ancient Greek hetaerae, ki-saeng girls and women were not just

---

141 In 1932, when the company performed in a city near her hometown, her uncle in the audience recognized Master Kim and sued the company for abducting her 10 years earlier. Eventually, her family brought her home and confined her to the house. Her brothers shaved her head and watched her as if she were a prisoner. She bought her freedom with a promise not to perform again and agreed to marry whomever her family approved of. Within a couple of years, she married a bank clerk. She also promised her husband and his family she would never disgrace them by performing. She stopped performing for almost 20 years. After World War II and the Korean War, her family moved to South Korea. Despite her peaceful family life, she suffered depression. In the early 1960s, her husband gave her her freedom back by telling her on his death bed that she had suffered long enough and could perform again. Ever since then, she has been performing, is respected and recognized as a National Living Treasure.
escorts, but professionally trained entertainers who played musical instruments, danced, sang and received literary education to serve the educated clients who were to be their financial patrons (see Illustration 3).

The characteristics of the training in *Tal-choom* are found in two key areas: one is the traditional master-student relationship; and the other, the apprenticeship model of training. These two aspects are inseparable and reciprocal. The former indicates the attitude and philosophy of the training on which both the master and students base their training curriculum. However, this system of transmission is really an indenture system based on a relationship between a star-performer and his/her understudies. As a one-to-one relationship between master and student, it is the cornerstone of the learning system. It implies a close and lasting contact between the two based on reverence and devotion. Throughout a performer's career, the allegiance to his/her master retains its impact. Yet, while the relationship is intimate, it is also hierarchical rather than a meeting of friends or equals. In addition, the process of practice and discipline involves complete "fidelity" to the master's tradition and absolute obedience to his/her instructions in art and life. Therefore, what emerges in practice is a ranking system based on various levels of performance skills. While a skilled performer may form a partnership with his/her master and become an important contributor to the conservation and promotion of *Tal-choom*, the hierarchy within the system dominates the disciple's artistic innovation and monitors his/her
degree of artistic interpretation. On the other hand, it is obvious that a master's career is evaluated according to his/her teaching/training commitment and thus the art is transmitted through the virtuosity and excellency of his/her disciples. For example, students of dance and voice come to Master Yang to hear her extraordinary vocal delivery and singing skills. Her performance of Ae-su-dang and Mi-yal is perceived as the finest delivery of these characters. Today, in her seventies, she still performs not only as a master teacher and a Living National Treasure in Pong-san Tal-choom but also as a renowned example of actor virtuosity. In addition, she is revered for her performance of the north-western traditional folksongs (see Illustration 39).

Before the mid-twentieth century, according to masters of the Pong-san Tal-choom Society, it was customary and central to the system of ancient education for a student to live with a teacher or at least live in the same village. Also, as they repeatedly emphasized, this intimate system of learning/teaching often allowed the master to misuse his/her authority over students' training and career. The close proximity with the master also meant that the student was to perform various services for the master: washing clothes, or preparing food, and even running errands for his/her family members. Master Kim Sun-Pong, for example, explained that while in training she served as a secretary/clerk to her master as well as running errands for her troupe. However, as masters of the P.T.C.S. explained,
Illustration 39: Master Yang Sou-Un
service and obedience in mundane tasks also demonstrated the dedication and humility of the student and his/her worthiness to receive the knowledge and skills embodied in the teacher (the three D's — devotion, discipline and deference).

There were no prior arrangements for fees in the ancient system of education and the Pong-san masters actually condemned teachers who stipulated payment as a condition for accepting students. However, the giving of gifts to the master is a long accepted and traditional practice in Korea. Current Pong-san masters suggest that the gift, as a token of gratitude, was simply to please the teacher, and never viewed as an equivalent to compensation for the knowledge received. Today, however, Living National Treasures do receive annual honoraria. It is based on the belief that the knowledge of the master is so precious that she or he could never be adequately recompensed with worldly wealth, yet deserves to be monetarily recognized. In Korea, it is considered to be rude to discuss money with the elders and the respected teachers. Teachers never discuss personal finances with their students. In my interviews with masters, I therefore attempted to ask the sum of money they received from the government in a most discreet way. They told me that the honoraria paid their transportation and very minimal expenses. When I approached a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Culture, he also did not reveal the exact amount.
Almost all masters in *Tal-choom* exhort their students not to involve themselves in other disciplines while they are in training. Masters alone can decide when their students are ready to observe and study other forms of theatre or dance. Such strict guidelines seem exclusive and closed toward other forms of theatre. However, this is not a question of narrow-mindedness or intolerance. On the contrary, the masters maintain that this is the only way both to preserve the purity of the performers' style and demonstrate complete dedication to their own art. This attitude has, at least, the merit of conserving and maintaining aesthetic traditions. In addition, it is an acknowledgement that the foundations of a performer's work, and also the points of departure, must be defended as precious possessions, even at the risk of isolation. Otherwise, they will be irretrievably polluted and destroyed by syncretism. However, the negative aspects are obvious. Those masters who isolate their students in a fortress of rules which, in order to be strong, cannot be relative, are inevitably excluded from the usefulness of comparison. While they may preserve the quality of their art, they also jeopardize its future by contributing to its museum-piece-like status. Some senior performers and

---


executive managers of other Tal-choom societies\textsuperscript{144} expressed their concerns about this, regretting their masters' exclusive attitude and approach to the art. They even acknowledged their own frustration with some masters who openly criticized selling-out or compromising Tal-choom practice for the sake of promotion and public education.

I believe that a theatre tradition should be open to the experience of other theatres, not in order to mix different ways of making performances, but in order to find basic common principles and to transmit these principles through experience. An opening up to diversity does not necessarily mean falling into rootless eclecticism and confusion within the genre. After all, theatrical arts resemble each other because of their principles, not because of their works. Studying these principles in an open way will render a service to both the Western and the Asian performer, to those who have a codified tradition as well as to those who suffer from the lack of one. This view is also corroborated by Barba.\textsuperscript{145}

5.3 The Current Practice of Transmission

Unlike practice in the traditional model of transmission, there are no performers and students who now live with their masters. Instead, most

\textsuperscript{144} Since they talked to me in confidence, I cannot reveal their names in print nor the names of their society.

\textsuperscript{145} Barba, 9.
performers begin learning *Tal-choom* through the recommendation of teachers, actors, directors and friends. Today’s students come to meet with a master at and through *Tal-choom* conservation societies. The high-school student performers of *Tal-choom* whom I interviewed were introduced to *Tal-choom* at school as an extra-curricular activity (see Illustration 4Q). Nonetheless, the tradition of strict discipline and deference to a master remains the cornerstone as the essential requirement of membership acknowledged by performers/students at all ranks. Anyone who fails to observe this unspoken tradition is either isolated within a society or asked to leave it. A dedicated and senior dancer-teacher told me that the respect, obedience and service rendered to a master are meant to break down the ego until gradually the ego subsides and the true self fully emerges. Thus, within the contemporary context, it is possible to interpret the intimate yet hierarchical system of the traditional attitude as a vehicle to personal achievement in spiritual terms.

I observed one memorable expression of gratitude and deference to a master in May 1991. Master Sun-Pong Kim celebrated her seventieth birthday in May 1991 (see Illustration 41). Her birthday party was arranged,

---

146 There are annual *Tal-choom* contests for high-school students which are organized and supported by the Ministries of Culture and Education and also by *Tal-choom* conservation societies. For the 1991 Spring contest, I met and interviewed 57 high-school boys of ages between 15 and 18 from three different technical/vocational high schools representing their provinces. The *Tal-choom* activity for these high schools is an important art program for students in technical/vocational training, who will directly enter the workforce immediately after the graduation. While appreciating the value of learning a traditional art and social experience as performers, most of these students found the "discipline" aspect, including various forms of fagging and even beating from senior students, the hardest part of learning.
Illustration 40: The Participants of the Third Annual Junior Tulchoom Contest at Seoul Nori Ma-dang (May 25-26, 1991)
Illustration 41: The 70th Birthday Party for Master Kim Sun-Pong, Seoul (June 19, 1991)
organized and carried out by the P.T.C.S. and her disciples, some of whom are famous educators and performers of Tal-choom. Acknowledgements consisted of speeches, gifts, performances, and an elaborate banquet for all guests. The Korean government and local dignitaries even sent representatives to present gifts in recognition of her contribution to the national arts. There were more than 200 guests attending this party, which was held in the rehearsal hall of the Intangible Traditional Arts Building in Seoul. In addition to this party, the spring 1991 performance of the P.T.C.S., in which she also performed, was dedicated to her in commemoration of her long service to the conservation and education of Pong-san Tal-choom. She is a master teacher who has given her students her art. Now they, in turn, carry her reputation and the aesthetics of Tal-choom forward.

The majority of today's Tal-choom apprentices in the P.T.C.S. are mostly university students who are theatre/drama majors, teachers, housewives and office-workers. They pay their membership fees including the tuition to the Society\textsuperscript{147} and are allocated to a class.\textsuperscript{148} The P.T.C.S., for example, offers different levels of lessons ranging from the beginning level to the advanced one, and also arranges meetings with a master for highly skilled students. There is no formal audition requirement to get into the

\begin{itemize}
  \item As of 1992, the monthly membership fee to the P.T.C.S. was 20,000 won (approximately $33 in Canadian funds).
  \item The average class size in the P.T.C.S. is 5-10 students in each class. However, in the advanced class, there are only two students.
\end{itemize}
Society. Once students enrol in a chosen class, they take 2-3 lessons per week. According to senior instructors of the P.T.C.S., it usually takes 2-3 years to prepare a novice for a first meeting with a master. In this sense, current practice is arranged to meet students' needs and is more accommodating to today's lifestyle. In addition to rigorous exercise and physical training, at times students are expected to run errands such as posterering, office duties, delivering messages, and getting official letters and memos to and from various organizations. They also work as stage-hands for productions. As in the traditional model of training, their first-hand experience as stage-hands provides them with opportunities to encounter the practical aspects of performance and production arrangements.

Whereas in the traditional model of transmission students were seen and not heard, today's students have more opportunities to engage in direct dialogue with their instructors and masters. Post-rehearsal discussion over dinner or drinks is common in the current practice of transmission, and selected or invited students are encouraged to attend this informal yet important educational session. This is where students, among instructors, senior performers and masters, listen to and sometimes take part in theoretical discussion, philosophical debates concerning the arts, current issues regarding *Tal-choom*, future performance engagements and rehearsals, and exchanges of news and information about other *Tal-choom* societies. Indeed, when students get invited to one of these bulletin-board
information gatherings, they are accepted in the decision-making process and their presence is acknowledged officially. At this social gathering, all members link and exchange their artistic experiences and expertise rather than pull rank or status.\(^{149}\)

Although Pong-san masters express the belief that the students of today would not be up to the hardships and discipline of their own training, the harshness of the old system can no longer apply. Nevertheless, it is natural to expect that there will be some discord and personality friction in any artistic community. Today, conflicts are resolved through compromise rather than confrontation and senior members take the role of nurturer and their responsibilities within the society are those of supervisory caretakers and mediators between masters and students rather than those of disciplinarians. I did observe, however, that there are some discontented performers who have moved out and begun practising their own versions of Tal-choom. They are consequently outcasts with no professional authorization from their own community. Moreover, they are accused of violating traditions and being self-promoting. Because fundamentally the art of Tal-choom is communal, no master claims his/her "star status" in this art form, nor attempts to have his/her own theatre company. Individual virtuosity

\(^{149}\) This type of after-the-working-hour social gathering is culturally imbedded in every aspect of Korean life. In the business world, after-work dinner and drinking parties are essential to business politics. Boardroom discussions are continued with informal, personal exchanges of ideas at this kind of social gathering. In arts communities, post-rehearsal meetings are considered equally political and important for performers to voice their concerns to those in senior ranks.
and excellence are recognized with honourary titles and revered as communal resources which enrich the whole art community. Therefore, performers without an endorsement and/or authorization from their artistic community and masters are perceived to be insolent and deeply ungrateful, and consequently become isolated.

In some extreme cases, masters and student-performers disagree bitterly over the interpretation of certain dances, even over production arrangements. Within this system of learning and teaching, when students openly challenge their masters and their authority, the master-student relationship completely breaks down. Within the Korean context, the act of asking a question is understood as the result of "not knowing" and an admission of one's ignorance. Masters are considered to know the answer and are by that very fact better and more powerful than students. Seen from this perspective, voluntary asking is an act of humility and of deference to the knowledge and wisdom of the masters. In fact, I observed that even when students know the answers, they ask questions and consult with masters. This implies that students always remain humble by staying in their places. In fact, it is almost obligatory to acknowledge the presence and expertise of masters by asking questions. Furthermore, a student's identity is constantly reinforced by outside cues such as his/her association with a Tal-choom society and masters and this relationship with masters and like-minded people around them. Having accepted this training process,
they must acquiesce to voluntary isolation, which is a time-honoured method to loosen the grip of society's conditioning. Hence, they may experience a peculiar blurring of their personality and its boundaries. However, in order to utilize their potential and 'reimagine' their identity, they must understand that external and personal pretentiousness and dogma should be shattered. From this perspective, asking questions is a domination-submission ritual. On the other hand, masters and senior members of the P.T.C.S. also admit that occasional disagreements between their membership and young students' 'attitude problems' simply reflect changing social values and cultural attitudes which in time will dictate change.

5.4 The Foundation of *Tal-choom* Performer Training

There is no split between dancer, actor and stage-hand in *Pong-san Tal-choom*. The nature of the apprenticeship process is an all-round engagement in every aspect of performance including the making of masks, props, and setting of production schedules. There are also no written guidelines or curricula. Instead, students are expected to explore their resources through observing, listening and synthesizing the instructor's lessons and performances. In this both informal and exclusive setting, the prerequisite to training is their keen interest, and willingness and commitment to
themselves in exploring their personal resources. Also, because they are in close contact with their instructors and then later masters, their personal relationship has to be established prior to any teaching or learning.

According to senior members of the P.T.C.S., most of whom teach at the beginner and the intermediate levels, it takes at least eight years to appreciate and absorb the aesthetics and practice of Tal-choom. My observation and analysis of their training process reveals that the performer's work is the result of the fusion of what I have identified as three different phases: the individual aspect, the group aspect and the performance aspect.

First, the individual aspect of training embraces exploration of the performers' resources; trainees are to ascertain their physical adeptness, their awareness of their body, their personalities, their sensibilities, their artistic intelligence and their social personae. These characteristics make each performer unique and define his/her own authenticity. Master Yang, for example, explained that after her master pointed out the weakness of her voice, she practised her vocal exercises behind a waterfall in a mountain behind her village for 3-4 hours every morning before the sun rose. She also recounted an experience in her teens which occurred in the late 1920s during the Japanese occupation, when she and her friend were followed by a Japanese policeman and a Korean collaborator. Every morning they went outside the town to practise behind the waterfall. These men were suspicious of their early morning outing, thinking they were up to some
anti-Japanese activity. They lay in wait one morning to confront and arrest them. Insisting she was innocent and an actor, Master Yang sang them a song. Not only were these men impressed that she and her friend would get up at 4:00 a.m. to practise, they were also struck by the courage and ability of these girls under pressure.

For the first 2-3 years, students learn all the basic dance steps and dance numbers (see Illustration 42). This is called 'the phase of planting the root.' During this phase students learn not only dance steps but also the use of their bodies: breathing, endurance, muscle strength, balance and control. During this process they also learn how to communicate, transform and inform through movement. Instructors also apply various methods to break the automatic and/or reflex responses of daily life. "Kill the breathing. Kill the energy," Master Kim repeated to her students. To 'kill' breathing and to 'kill' energy means to disassociate from the daily or natural context in which a person's body usually functions. Performers must be freed from the domination of daily habits. Often, masters call this phase 'a humbling process.' Students are further encouraged to discover their resources and challenged to utilize those resources. The main goal is to develop a

---

Barba also describes the similar practice of performer training in Japan.

'Kill the breathing. Kill the rhythm,' Katsuko Azuma's master repeated to her as she worked. To 'kill' breathing and to 'kill' rhythm means to be aware of the tendency to habitually link gestures to the rhythm of breathing and music, and then to break this link. The breaking of the habitual actions of daily life has perhaps been most consciously and radically done in Japanese theatrical culture (Barba, 17).
Illustration 42: The First Phase of *Tal-choom* Training
sensitivity to oneself and one's body while interacting with the immediate environment. As the phase 'planting the root' indicates, it is intended to validate one's own inner resources and to nurture what is already there within each performer. At this stage, the curriculum stems from each individual's needs (see Illustration 43). Therefore, students are to set their own learning pace and goals rather than following a general program. There are also no competitions or examinations which are imposed upon their progress. Rather, while trainees focus on their own development, they advance toward planting strong roots. The strength of their roots is monitored closely and challenged regularly by instructors. Also, at this stage, although instructors and masters facilitate and supervise classes, it is really students who inform and teach themselves.

Students are to observe rehearsals of group scenes, working towards observing the entire performance. Their witnessing of the workings of a performance prepares them for the next phase of their training, the group aspect. By taking part in a production, students have a real opportunity to observe their master's own performance. In addition to its educational importance, the performance facilitates conversation with senior members of the company. From the company's point of view, this is the most efficient way of seasoning their new members (see Illustration 44).

In this phase of the group aspect, students are expected to refine and polish their dance skills. They learn the context of each movement within a
Illustration 43: Refining Process of Advanced Students
Illustration 44: Teachers and (Best) Students in Performance
scene and interact with each other in a group. Solo dance pieces are also refined under the close supervision of an instructor. Masters of the P.T.C.S. call this phase 'a building the trunk' process. Training at this stage functions as a series of rehearsals. The students are now physically ready, scenically alive and are aware of their will to express through the use of the body. The best example of this, and the high point of a *Tal-choom* performer's art, is the facility to play the opposite sex (see Illustration 45). The performer must be so adept that he/she can express and identify with the specific temperament or the specific cultural conformity of the gender or the age. This is also the moment in which a performer transcends his/her physical habits in daily life and transforms the body into a scenic presence.

Next, the best disciples, who have been understudies, are asked to perform in a group scene with senior performers (see Illustration 46). Those who have successfully passed through the first phase and have moved on to this phase are capable of interacting with the external resources — masters' virtuosity and direction, other performers' execution and style, performance conventions of other *Tal-choom* traditions and dance theatre. Their ability to do so is one of the major aims of training. Not only are they expected to

---

151 "If an actor has the will to express, then he is divided. One part of him is doing the willing and another part the expressing," states Grotowski. "One part is commanding and another is caring out the commands" (cited in Barba, 20).

152 Masters Kim and Yang are in their senior years and still perform young maiden *Ae-sa-dang* and also young male roles. Young male performers often play the role of *Mi-yul* and the Old Man. I observed that the practice of cross-gender and cross-age casting is an essential part of performer training and their performance tradition.
Illustration 45: Young Female Performers in *Mok-joong* Costume and Mask
Illustration 46: Master Kim Ki-Soo and his Disciple, Park Sang-Un in Rehearsal
enhance their performance skills, but to attend to the group dynamics, balance, control and harmony of working in a group scene. The group aspect applies to all those who belong to the same performance discipline. Essentially, it is this phase of training through which students learn the group dynamics and the socio-historical contexts of Tal-choom. This is also the phase in which students are introduced to and involved in all the important issues of production and public relations.

The third phase of Tal-choom is the public aspect; refined performance skills and techniques are essentially put to the test when students participate in a performance. However, Tal-choom masters do not regard a performance as their work's final stage or product. They talk of, and treat a performance as if it were alive. The tree metaphor is often used in describing a performance such as 'This movement lacks energy, it needs a good spring pruning or this audience does not feed nourishments.' At a performance with an audience, performers ultimately meet their biggest challenge. The experience of a live performance cannot be prepared for, or taught. Students must take risks and are subject to criticism on their own. This is where performers have to rely on their own virtuosity. Up to this point, they can rehearse and polish the principles on which their expertise is based, as they are defined by traditions and conventions, but the presence
of an audience provides them with a unique experience which cannot be rehearsed or repeated.\footnote{183}

An outdoor stage, an apron stage, an arena, a fully-lit house, a cramped gymnasium or room — all stages condition a different event. Although the difference may be superficial, a more profound difference can arise when the actor responds to and interacts with the spectator. Indeed, actors can learn to catch the spectator's interest and to coax him/her to an unexpected position or an awareness of a clash of opposing beliefs, making him/her more active. This activity does not demand manifestations — as Peter Brook states, the audience that answers back may seem active, but this may be deceiving — true activity can be invisible, but also indivisible.\footnote{184}

Interaction and interplay with the audience are crucial to the success of a \textit{Tal-choom} performance. The masters of the P.T.C.S. call this aspect 'the flowering stage.' Each performer faces his/her own task to complete a

\footnote{183}{This aspect of a live audience in \textit{Tal-choom} applies to all theatre forms, as Peter Brook describes:}

\begin{quote}

The only thing that all forms of theatre have in common is the need for an audience. This is more than a truism: in the theatre the audience completes the steps of creation. In the other arts, it is possible for the artist to use as his principle the idea that he works for himself. However great his sense of social responsibility, he will say that his best guide is his own instinct — and if he is satisfied when standing along with his completed work, the chances are that other people will be satisfied too. In the theatre this is modified by the fact that the last lonely look at the completed object is not possible — until an audience is present the object is not complete (Brook, \textit{The Empty Space} [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968], 142).
\end{quote}

\footnote{184}{\textit{Ibid.}, 144.}
performance, yet both individual and group contribution to a performance is far greater than the total sum of rehearsal time. "Any director will agree," Brook states, "that his own view of his own work changes completely when he is sitting surrounded by people." All masters of the P.T.C.S. emphasized that interaction with an audience poses obvious difficulties even to them. Successful actors are really only inspired and their "buds blossom" with audience response and energy. However, they also face a great many levels of obstacles and distractions. The anxieties of stage fright, vocal tension, physical clumsiness, the terror of "drying" and of letting his/her confidence sag can all be present simultaneously. "He/she must be spontaneous without thinking about being spontaneous, and without appearing to try to be spontaneous." Finally, all apprentices are instructed to articulate their flaws and mistakes after a performance. It is understood that their job is not only to perform but to assess their performance and audience reaction to it. Some may have gained confidence in the process and secured their position, and some may have come away frustrated and shattered by stage-fright. Thus, this public aspect provides an apprentice with further learning and seasoning. Master Yoon, for example, emphasized the integration of emotion and external technique in training. Her frustration as a master-teacher, as I observed in her classes, derived from

---

155 Ibid.

the apprentices' inability to comprehend this integration. When frustrated performers asked her for advice in dealing with stage-fright, she in turn asked them a question: "What do you see onstage?" They fell into silence for 20 minutes, reflecting and pondering her question. Eventually, she smiled and said:

It is a test. You do not locate yourself in the middle of an audience, but arrive there with a purpose. This purpose is going to be fulfilled with the help of the audience, when and if you let you and them work together. If you see only yourself — your fear, desire and your emotional responsiveness, your body closes down on you and therefore the integration of all your intention and skills fails. Onstage, you must see beyond you and your body. Include the audience in your centre and be part of them. They feed you with energy. Breathe with them. Be one with them and their heart beats.167

This view is not uncommon in a Western actor's training. Robert Cohen corroborates this aspect of training:

Then there are fundamental problems in acting — problems such as self-consciousness, distraction, dropping out of character or out of style, listening to oneself, failures of projection, of understanding, of emotional responsiveness — these problems are caused by unaligned, disordered, confused thinking. By the actor's trying to think about too many things at the same time — too many contradictory things. In order to combat this type of unaligned thinking, many actors try 'not to think,' and coaches of the world overinstruct them 'Don't

167 Interview with Master Yoon Ori, 17 May 1991, Seoul, Korea.
think! Just do!’ But the human being simply cannot not think — any more than he can wilfully not hear, or not feel a pinprick. The fact is that people think continuously, and actors are people. The problems of acting do not require that actors stop thinking, but that they find out what to think about. Properly aligned thinking must be the goal of every actor.¹⁶⁸
I don't understand the connection between music and violence. Donald's always trying to explain it to me and I just blindly carry on. I just know that I get very aroused by music, but it doesn't arouse me violently. I never went to a rock-and-roll show and wanted to smash the windows or beat anybody up afterward. I feel more sexually than actually physically violent. I get a sexual feeling and I want to fuck as soon as I've been playing.

(Mick Jagger)\textsuperscript{159}

Masked dancer-performers of *Tal-choom* and enthusiastic audience members danced together in a frenzy of emotions with the persistent beats of drums and gongs in Seoul *No-ri Ma-dang* in May 1991. Under the intense heat of late spring, performers and audience members had come together from two o'clock in the afternoon. A few hours earlier, they had arrived separately as strangers who gathered in a performing site; performers entering from stage entrances and audience from separate conduits, either alone or in small groups. By mid-performance, all social formality had been dissolved. By the end, only the mutual desire to celebrate ruled the crowd.

During the Rolling Stones's concert of 1989 in Vancouver, I was particularly reminded of being in a *Tal-choom* performing site. Fans of the Stones were diverse in age, gender and social status, yet dressed in their concert uniform (jeans and T-shirts), they presented a uniform mass. In addition, they danced, clapped, yelled and sang together as if they had collectively rehearsed their concert behavior. It struck me immediately that the spirit of communal celebration and festivity was the common denominator of both *Tal-choom* and rock concerts. This observation profoundly touched my curiosity. What are these strangers celebrating? What is it that triggers them to act in such a way? What is the drive behind the force which brings them together at a concert or a performance? What is the force which transforms their interrelationship with performers and audience members?
In this chapter while reviewing the attributes of popular theatre (discussed in Chapter 1), I will address the obvious dramatic differences in performances of Pong-san Tal-choom and the Stones’s concert: the promotion and publicity, the preparation journey, the size of the event, and the "non-representational" set and staging devices. Secondly, I will examine the nature of festivity in Tal-choom and the spontaneous experience of Tal-choom audiences, while drawing an analogy to that of rock concert audiences. Finally, I will discuss the celebration and ramifications of the "satyr figure" in Pong-san Tal-choom and the Stones.

6.1 Obvious Differences

While one can observe the 10 characteristics of popular theatre in both Tal-choom performances and rock concerts, the apparent differences also are obvious. From the outset, these obvious differences are dramatic and also pose many difficulties in comparing the theatrical aspects of Tal-choom with those of the Stones’s concert. However, while these differences are important and deserve some attention, I will be able to show that they are indeed superficial and that there are more profound similarities to be taken into consideration. The major differences between a Tal-choom performance and the Stones’s concert are observed in the following areas:
1. the promotion and publicity;
2. the preparation journey;
3. the size of the event itself;
4. the set and staging devices; and
5. rock stars as cultural icons vs. Tal-choom performers as cultural treasures.

First of all, the promotion and publicity of the Stones's concert is thoroughly handled by a group of professionals, involving the Stones themselves, their manager(s), a concert promotion company, lawyers, corporate sponsors and various ticketing agencies.160 Rock concerts are 'big business' designed to generate mega-profits for the group itself and their investors. It is also important to note that while both Tal-choom and rock concerts provide their audiences with an occasion for pleasure, 'having a good time,' the fundamental distinction between the two resides in the way a performance is marketed and present. As Mick Jagger says:

I get a lot of buzz out of doing other things — I get really involved in what I call business. I just love all the graphics and the stage design and all that. If it wasn't for that, it would be really quite boring, because you're doing the same songs. I mean I can do 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' in the bath at midnight, on my head. I don't need to rehearse to

160 The Rolling Stones’ "Steel Wheels" tour in 1989 was organized with corporate sponsorship under the promotional management of Brockum, one of the world’s biggest rock-merchandising companies, MTV and Budweiser in the U.S. and MuchMusic and Labatt’s in Canada. The Stones averaged more than $1 million per show and also profited from merchandising sales and pay-per-view cable-television special in December 1989 (Rolling Stone, 506, September 1989, 43).
do that, I really don't. But to make it different, from the stage to the T-shirts, it's a tremendous amount of work, but it's also fun because it's not something you do everyday. To me, that keeps the interest going, as well as the music. The music's great and all that, but it isn't 100 percent of the show. It might be for Keith, but it really isn't. It's a huge show and it's got lighting plots and gimmicks. It's like going to see a musical? — you want hit songs but that isn't going to be enough.¹⁶¹

Unlike a rock concert, Tal-choom is 100% subsidized by the Korean government as an essential cultural activity. The members of the P.T.C.S. themselves are involved in all publicity and promotion for a performance which generates no box-office profits, because performances are free to the general public. Also, the pre-performance road parade is not only an integral part of the performance ritual, but functions as a focal point of the publicity in attracting incidental spectators. All performers, dressed in their full costume, go around the performing site, announcing the upcoming performance and also signifying the beginning of communal celebration. This road parade defines the boundaries of the festival's time and space, while announcing the event and inviting potential spectators. Even in today's urban performance, the loud chanting, music and extravagant costumes draw much attention, attracting by-standers around the site. Thus, a mood of festival is automatically generated and a precinct created into which both

¹⁶¹ Spin, vol. 5, no. 9, December 1989, 52.
performers and audience may enter with safety — safety to mutually act out their ritual.\textsuperscript{162}

Another difference is the way in which the audience obtain admission. Admission is free to the \textit{Tal-choom} audience, but the rock ‘n’ roll audience partakes of its own ticket ritual, which almost invariably involves lining-up. Sometimes, the experience can be almost as exciting as the event itself. As one fan put it:

\begin{quote}
I will remember the date July 19, 1994, for the rest of my life. I was one of 1,100 fortunate ones to see The Rolling Stones live at RPM nightclub in Toronto….In sweltering heat, I lined up in the club’s parking lot for 7-1/2 hours. The wait was worth every minute. Their performance will be an experience never forgotten. My plastic wristband that guaranteed me a $5 ticket will be framed to show my future children. Yes, indeed, The Rolling Stones are the greatest rock ‘n’ roll band in the world!\textsuperscript{163}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{162} With its excitement and anticipation, therefore, this simple act prepares performers and audience members to enter a precinct into a safe zone of festivity. According to the masters of the P.T.C.S., when they performed in their villages, \textit{Pongsan}, before the Korean War, the whole community, regardless of the class differences, was involved and gathered at a place for the single purpose of recreation and revelry. It is uncertain whether or not the whole community is really involved in the urban, subsidized performances that I observed in Seoul. Nonetheless, the parade itself still provides effective promotion and publicity, while remaining an important pre-performance ritual.

\textsuperscript{163} Maclean's, vol. 107, no. 34, August 22, 1994, Letter by R. Gray Douglas (Toronto: Maclean Hunter), 4. Although one can sometimes purchase rock concert tickets through a telephone using a credit card, often this sale is exclusively available only to those with a certain credit line and also these special tickets are costly and limited in numbers.
This engaging experience starts when a popular rock group announces an upcoming concert tour. At this stage, the fans of the Stones remain faceless and unidentifiable until the date of ticket sale. Some fans even camp out in front of the designated ticket agencies. The line-up consists of several nights' camping or at least lasts several hours. This long waiting process spontaneously turns strangers into a community of devotees, while providing them with opportunities to exchange their mutual admiration for their heroes. It is through their devotion to and mutual passion for their cult figure or hero that once complete strangers are identified as collective fans. The line-up becomes a market square and a holiday festival site. In addition to dissolving their social barriers and affirming their membership to a community of their choice, fans also experience an act of humility which demands great patience, for there is no guarantee they will get their tickets. The 1994 concert, for example, sold out in 15 minutes. However, like religious pilgrims, they wait in hope and their anticipation engenders its own excitement.

According to my audience survey, three different groups attend a Tal-choom performance. The first group is composed of students of Tal-choom. Their ages range from nine to 82 years old; they are students of various Tal-choom societies, high schools, colleges and universities. Due to their personal interests and educational purposes, they are particularly

---

A concert agenda of the tour, dates and cities are announced.
knowledgeable about the theatrical conventions of *Tal-choom* and, therefore, the most emotionally immersed in and committed to the performance. They make up about 45% of the audiences in most urban subsidized performances. Their active physical responses and interactions contribute to the vitality of the performance, and are much appreciated by performers and other less-engaged or reserved audience members.

The family, relatives and friends of performers make up the second group — some 30%. They attend a *Tal-choom* performance literally as a support group. Not only are they advocates through their presence, they are often donors as well. Indeed, their role is significant in fostering and expanding the profile of *Tal-choom* among the public. The remaining portion of the audience (25%) consists of the incidental spectators and by-standers, who drop in at a performing site attracted primarily by the noise and spectacle.

These three groups gather at a performing site, where there are virtually no line-ups, bouncers, or admission fees to deal with. Their faces reflect a cross-section of theatre-goers of both genders from diverse backgrounds; in a wide age range (from toddlers to grandparents), and of occupations from students at various educational levels, to teachers and arts educators, office workers, business people, housewives, pensioners, labourers and tourists. They knit together as a temporary community within the context of the festival.
There are also wide differences in the scale and the scope between *Tal-choom* and the Stones's "Steel Wheels" tour. The former is a local, authentic, and single event which takes place as part of an annual festivity. In addition, the content of a *Tal-choom* performance remains essentially unchanged, while performers and audiences are variables in each performance. The audience number of 200 to 2,000 is smaller than an audience of 60,000 to 72,000 at the Stones's concert. As a tour, the latter is an event of great magnitude. In 1989, for example, the Stones travelled through more than 56 cities and performed 65 or more shows in North America.

Most importantly, the obvious differences in the staging and conventions of *Tal-choom* and the Stones's concert at the beginning of each performance should be noted. Unlike the experience of the Stones's concert audience, that of *Tal-choom* audiences is the direct, immediate contact with the performers themselves. The *Tal-choom* audiences are involved and immersed in the ritual of the performance: the opening ceremony and the first scene.\(^\text{165}\) Except the bamboo mat for the musicians, there is no scenery or setting on stage (see Illustration 10). Spoken or sung words and dance identify the location of the opening scene. The slow dance and subdued music of the ceremony is in stark contrast to the paraphernalia of

\(^{165}\) After the noisy pre-performance on the road, *Tal-choom* performers enter the site quietly and prepare for an opening ceremony. The ceremony itself is brief, yet its religious implication is seriously understood by both performers and spectators. As I discussed previously, this is followed by the entrance of musicians and the religious, serene Four Junior Monks' dance.
noise and music in the road parade. The opening scene of religious dance signals the beginning of the main performance. It also quiets down the audience and provides them with a focal point which rivets their attention and moulds them immediately into respondents.

At the Stones’s concert, the multi-media technology and devices corroborate the product-oriented marketing strategy. The caravan of 18 steel-wheeled trailers rolled across North America in 1989. The high-tech, large-scale stage set — a daunting 250 feet wide — is highlighted with the twin towers, each soaring 130 feet up. There are 550 lights and a searing armoury of 80 laser units, a five-camera, three-screen video system, a 60,000-watt sound system, and a crew of 200 behind the operation. From the industrial-sized and -strength speakers, popular songs of the Stones saturate B.C. Place, while gigantic TV screens flash images of the Stones and choreographed lights flood the stage and the spectators. The elaborate, high-tech light show brings the dimensions and complexity of the on-stage equipment to the audience’s attention. It is a grand construct of girders, metal-lattices, ducts, scaffolding, catwalks, and an elevator. The dry ice, streaming from the ducts, fills up the spaces between various props and equipment on stage. The soaring twin towers, particularly, are unmistakably phallic.

At the Stones’s concert, the warm-up band normally enters first. As they move onto the stage crowded with equipment and microphones, the
audience cheers. Connoisseurs of concert routine, they are fully aware that this band is there to warm them up for the main event. One could say that this too has its ritual element, especially as the crowd is fully cognisant of the honour accorded any band warming up for the Stones. By the end of the first set, the audience is fully prepared and ready to respond as a pulsing unit of emotion to the heroes of the hour.

The moment the Stones enter the audience jumps to a standing ovation. Along with all members of the Stones, the female back-up singers dance to their place on stage, immediately taking up their instruments. The juxtaposition of the Stones as a cultural icon and a working band in real time is woven into the scenario of their concert. The band on stage is both real and legend-making; a bigger-than-life sized projection of Mick Jagger or Keith Richards on the giant TV screen is juxtaposed with the tiny real-life performers. When the Stones play "Honky Tonk Woman," a pair of inflatable 50-foot dolls pop up on each side of the twin towers. One is blonde and sits with her legs crossed and a mini skirt riding high on her thigh, cigarette in one hand, a hot-pink shoe dangling seductively from her toe. The other is black, or maybe Hispanic; she wears short shorts and sparkly sneakers, sits with legs apart, and swings right along to the beat.

Finally, there are dramatic differences in the status of performers of Tal-choom and the Stones. Tal-choom performers are voluntary

---

166 In musical terms, a 'set' is also an interval of playing, like an act in the theatre.
practitioners of the indigenous theatre of Korea. The majority of young *Tal-choom* performers have full-time jobs outside the Conservation Society. Master performers are honoured with the title of Living National Treasures by the government. Yet, this status does not pertain to financial gain. Also, this is the crux of the matter, regardless of their age, while their faces are unseen and their dance is agile, these actors can successfully embody perpetual youth. As long as the body is agile, even a septuagenarian can perform a maiden of sixteen. Thus, a career is not affected by age.

Unlike *Tal-choom* performers, without the protective mask, rock singers are vulnerable to age. At least one would assume this to be the case, especially as they display their bodies as overt sexual objects. Mick Jagger, for example, as a singer and dancer is an adored object of the audience's gaze. Yet, he is a man now firmly entrenched in his fifties. Nonetheless, his lithe body and frantic gyrations belie his years. Even the face which still constantly affects his youthful teenage pout seems more mask than real. More importantly, however, maybe it is not the performer but the audience who provide him with a safety net. They may be caught up in collective denial that their rock hero can ever grow old. In that case, the more Jagger's face takes on the lines of a satyr, the more he will ensure his own

---

167 In calling attention to himself as sexual — that is, in presenting himself as an object of sexual incitement or excitation — he not only violates the taboo against male sexual display but also makes his image vulnerable to age.
immortality. (Later, I will present evidence to show that Jagger's need for a mask is indeed developing and already integral to the Stones's image.)

6.2 Communitas — "Heung/Ul-ssoo" and "Good Vibration"

The foremost similarity between performances of Pong-san Tal-choom and the Stones's concert is the direct and immediate interaction between performers and audiences. In the course of a performance, both audiences not only participate in the theatrical spectacle, but their dramatic contribution is integral to its success. As Shumway says: "Rock performers are never merely musicians."\(^{168}\)

They are to a greater or lesser extent also actors playing characters they have invented. Rock audiences do not come to appreciate nor merely listen to the music being performed; they come to participate in an event and to establish some kind of relationship with those characters. That is why rock audiences usually sing along, shout, whistle, stomp, and clap, regarding it as much their right to be heard as the performer's.\(^{169}\)

Fundamentally, the characteristics of both performances are allied to the attributes of a fertility festival, including its dominant themes; the

---


\(^{169}\) Ibid., 122-123 (italics mine).
celebration of male sexuality and rebellious attitudes toward social and ethical values.

6.2.1 The Elements of Carnival

The rock concert dictates not only a single spatial relationship between audience and performers, but even the dress and behaviour of each group, both of which reflect reverence for the object being presented. As participants of a festival, audience members are dressed in their casual 'uniform': blue jeans and T-shirts, and comfortable shoes (running shoes and sandals). This clothing is almost mandatory and dissolves not only the appearance of social status, but the age and gender boundaries as well. With social taboos dissolved, antic behaviour is condoned, even celebrated at all levels. This condition is what Victor Turner calls a "liminal" state, enhancing a sense of "communitas." He suggests this condition occurs when people move freely between fixed status positions in society, and via ritual, enter an intermediate position.\textsuperscript{170} By "communitas" Turner means an active, voluntary group-bonding which one can experience at a theatrical performance, or the Stones's concert. This seems to me to be exactly what

\textsuperscript{170} In Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors, he extended his argument to see certain social movements — at least in metaphorical terms — as encompassing the same process and form. These social movements began by placing a high value on the experience of "communitas" as a spontaneous experience and concluded by becoming rigid social forms. Among the examples he chose to illustrate this process were the origin and consolidation of the Franciscan Order, and various pilgrimages.
happens at a *Tal-choom* performance and a rock concert. An audience entering a performing site\(^{171}\) experiences a "liminal" state. They leave their membership in their world — their status, their personal and social attachments — behind and join a voluntary group who are gathered through their common interests in the same type of music or theatrical preference.

*Tal-choom* audiences arrive early — sometimes two hours ahead of the performance time — at the Seoul *Nori Madang* in order to find much coveted front seats. Around the site, there are vendors selling food, drink including alcohol, paper hats and fans. However, there are no souvenir shops or stalls from which one can purchase various *Tal-choom* memorabilia.\(^{172}\) For rock concert audiences, souvenirs of the event and tokens of their pilgrimage await them the moment they get inside the doors of B.C. Place. Unlike *Tal-choom* performance sites, the souvenir items at a rock concert are significant.\(^{173}\) T-shirts, CDs, tapes, posters, key chains, bottle openers and other memorabilia bearing the Stones's insignia are not only

\(^{171}\) For example, a market square or a village hillside or a stadium transforms into a site through the audience's preparation for and participation in a live event.

\(^{172}\) In deference to the religious connotation of masks and costume, performers and audience believe that even the thought of souvenir items is offensive. Also, they believe that its innate ceremonial nature and experience cannot be translated into a souvenir.

\(^{173}\) Ticket prices for the Stones' 1989 tour averaged $28.50 and a merchandising substructure featured 14 kinds of T-shirts at between $12 and $18, sweatshirts for $36, posters and bandannas fetching $5, and oversized programs at $13. Also, major U.S. retail outlets, including Macy's, featured a full line of Rolling Stones' sportswear. In addition, the Stones' new album brought in an additional $20-$30 million during the four months of the tour.
commodities, but emotive icons to be cherished by these participants of the concert.

There are actually three phases of audience participation in a Tal-choom performance. The first occurs during the opening ceremony, the second during the performance itself through verbal response to the performers, and the third as post-performance dancing following the closing ceremony. In Pong-san Tal-choom, the raunchy Eight Monks’ Dance signals the beginning of festivity. Unlike the preceding scene, this scene lacks any religious overtone, despite the fact that the characters themselves are monks. The scene transition takes place through and is initiated by loud music. To the beat of pounding drums and gongs, each character dances his signature piece and recites his intention, to which the audience responds enthusiastically — and especially, verbally. Call-and-response patterns encompass audience throughout the performance. Shouts of "Awesome! Super! You Fellahs are great!" reverberate through the crowd. Most audiences know precisely when to respond; shouting only between beats of each dance unit. Since most dances and movements in Pong-san Tal-choom are choreographed to the unit of a six-count beat (tung-duck-ky/tung-ta-kung), the response takes place in between the end of a beat and before the beginning of a new beat.

Usually musicians, particularly drummers, call for responses at the end of the first beat, leading and encouraging the audience to follow suit.
This is to give a signal for a performer to get the rhythm and also to engage the audience. Like the chorus of ancient Greek tragedy, musicians in Tal-choom interact with performers, and create a bridge between them and the audience. These verbal encouragements, therefore, are instrumental not only to unite performers and audience members but also to assist their synchronization in the rhythm of the performance. Frequently uttered verbal encouragements are "Ul-ssoo," "Ul-ssi-koo," "Chal-han-da" and "Chot-ta." "Ul-ssoo" denotes "I hear you" or "I see you" or "I am here with you" and similarly, "Ul-ssi-koo" means "right on" and "I am with you." "Chal-han-da" means "(You) do it well." "Chot-ta" translates as "good" and "I like (what I am seeing or hearing)." For example, after the first monk enters and recites his first line in the eight-beat count (pa-pam/pa-pam/pa-pam/pa-pam), a musician or an audience members responds with "Ul-ssoo" or "Chal-han-da."

In the annual Spring performance of Pong-san Tal-choom of May 1991, some enthusiastic members of the audience came onstage and danced while the eight monks danced together. This caused some concern to the actors since their playing space was blocked, yet they did not attempt to stop the dancing. Unlike the Stones’s concert, there are no bouncers at Seoul Nori Madang. Eventually, several people from the audience came up to usher these enthusiasts from the playing space.

In the Stones’s concert, the audience participation is also direct and physical; fans stand up and constantly dance, offering their screaming
approval. Compared to the responses of the Tal-choom audience, these fans are more rowdy. Indeed, the scene seems actually chaotic, even frenzied — full of throbbing sounds, flickering lights and laser beams, bigger-than-life projections of performers on giant TV screens and the constant screams of 72,000 fans. From a distance, a thousand hands wave from one direction to another, the wave is picked up and washes over the crowd. They quiet down and settle into a comfortable rhythm.\textsuperscript{174}

The chaos is never real, only apparent. In fact, crowd control was anticipated from the outset. Guards and fixed seats are the keys to this control. Hundreds of guards or bouncers, wearing the same red T-shirts and flexing their muscles, have been planted all around B.C. Place. It is impossible to mistake them and they can easily intimidate or, at least, pull down the high spirits of the spontaneous and unpredictable mob. Also, the seats are carefully laid out, spaced, chained and bolted to the floor. In case the overexcited fans move forward, forcing bouncers aside, these fixed seats work as barriers. In fact, the only thing the tamed audience can do is stand up, dance and head toward the aisles, only to be stopped by the bouncers.

\textsuperscript{174} At B.C. Place, along with loud cheering, inexhaustible screaming and dancing, there were also occasional pauses followed by an instant lighting show which started from one remote corner of B.C. Place. In a second, the relay of BIC lights was continued, flickering from all over the spectator’s space. Huge B.C. Place was, then, transformed into a space where everyone was focused on one thing and came together as one entity. It was a marked moment for me to recognize the profound meaning of the invisible, non-verbal communication among 72,000 spectators. No doubt, such transition could be obtained from the use of various intoxicants and alcohol. In fact, many associate rock ‘n’ roll with alcohol, substance abuse, and sexual debauchery. However, no matter what the agents of such a transformation or transition are, what I observed at the concert profoundly touched my curiosity.
At the Stones's concert, the climax is reached in the final set of the show, when Jagger runs the run-ways, placed in each corner of the stage. He frantically moves around the stage, gyrating and running as if he himself is in a state of trance. His face is drenched in sweat, his hair covering his forehead and his T-shirt stuck to his chest. In addition, the rest of the band and the back-up singers support the ecstasy of the hour by coming forward and breaking into a collective dance among themselves. They are careful, however, not to steal the focus from Jagger himself. Surrounded by and facing the enthusiastic fans, he delivers his final song in a most extravagant fashion. His whole body vibrates; his facial muscles contort, his eyes glare, his lips pout, his tongue hangs out of his mouth, his hands reach out, his hips pulse, and his crotch thrusts in and out. Finally, exhausted, he collapses into a heap. There is a second of silence, then the crowd goes wild. He gets up and runs off the stage. Encore after encore ensues while the crowd keeps dancing throughout until ready to drop. They also start throwing things — flowers, even underwear. At the end of the concert, they gradually break up into groups heading towards exits with the house lights up and a loud military march blaring from the speakers. They are docile and content. Most head for subways and parking lots, some for bars, but their mood is definitely subdued. They are tired and returning to their private worlds.
The climax of a Pong-san Tal-choom performance, following the final scene — the Shamanistic Dance of Exorcism — is when the excited audience stand up and dance with the performers. Though they may not throw underwear at a Tal-choom performance, the enthusiasm of aroused fans is equally high. In this final scene, following the death of the Old Woman, a village elder brings a shaman to exorcise the sudden death of the stranger in their midst. The shaman enters in her ceremonial garb, holding an opened fan in one hand and a cluster of bells in the other; later, in the scene, she dances with a knife in each hand. (The bells symbolize enlightenment, and the knife wisdom.) The Old Man brings in an altar, she stands in front of it and starts to pray for the soul of the Old Woman. After a moment of silence, she slowly lifts her arms reaching upward, her feet stamping the ground beneath her. She begins a chant which gets louder and faster accompanied by the stamping and ringing of the bells. Eventually, she reaches a state of trance. She then begins twirling, jumping up and down, and spinning around in all directions. The faster and louder the music is, the more intense her dance of ecstasy becomes. Finally, she stands quietly in front of the altar and turns to face the audience. There is a palpable silence. The audience, in turn, breaks into dance.

Her ritual dance of death touches everyone in the audience. In this context, her homage to the soul of the Old Woman not only serves as a shamanistic dance of exorcism, but invokes the atmosphere for collective
mourning. This collective mourning is not solemn but celebratory. Deeply charged with emotions, housewives and young women scream, businessmen rip off their jackets, and all throw themselves into a communal dance frenzy which may take up to 40 minutes to subside.

According to my field research in Seoul, the first group of *Tal-choom* audiences, previously discussed in this chapter, meets after the post-performance dance with performers, masters and other students of *Tal-choom*. They usually meet at a bar or a restaurant to review the performance. They too are quiet, even reflective, definitely in awe of their own excitement.

The audience in this context is the maker of the form. Each member of the audience is included in the real time of both performance through his or her interaction and participation with it. Each is also unique and its vitality cannot be duplicated, even on video, especially as forms are essentially rooted in spontaneity and celebration. They can, therefore, only be evaluated by the criteria of their own live production and performance values. In a sense, each performance can be compared only to previous productions or concerts. In addition, the vitality and relevance of *Tal-choom* and rock concerts are determined by their adaptability and flexibility to the current need of the fans. Indeed, the Stones provide a high-tech spectacle which, as Guy Debord points out, is an essential food to starving souls in a material- and consumer-oriented society. He writes on the function of the
spectacle, describing the Western model of perception as regulated by the media, as follows:

In the essential movement of the spectacle, which consists of taking up all that existed in human activity in a 'fluid stage' so as to possess it in a congealed state as things which have become the exclusive value by their 'formulation in negative' of lived value, we recognize our old enemy, the 'commodity' who knows so well how to seem at first glance something trivial and obvious, while on the contrary it is complex and so full of metaphysical subtleties....This commodity fetishism reaches its absolute fulfilment in the spectacle where the tangible world is replaced by a selection of images which exist above it, and which simultaneously impose themselves as the tangible excellence.\textsuperscript{175}

While \textit{Tal-choom} performance is an act of affirmation of a once-neglected indigenous theatre, assisting contemporary Koreans to renew and/or rediscover the values of communal celebration and festivity, both forms offer spectators opportunities for verifying and rejuvenating the experience of communal bonding — communitas.

\textbf{6.2.2 The Worship of ‘A Satyr Figure’}

With social satire and sexual stereotypes, \textit{Tal-choom} presents universal themes of human problems which are still relevant concerns in modern Korean society. Also, the illustration of the themes and the charac-

\textsuperscript{175} Guy Debord, \textit{Society of the Spectacle} (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983), 35-36.
teristics of the main characters in *Pong-san Tal-choom* implicitly expose and explicitly reflect cultural surroundings and particularly sexual biases, which are still pertinent today. This is also true in the case of rock heroes. While they themselves become sexual objects to be adored and consumed, their image reflects cultural and social attitudes towards sexuality. Furthermore, although sexuality and the worship of sexual prowess in *Tal-choom* and the Stones's concert manifest as the major driving force, it is dominantly and explicitly male sexuality which is paraded and celebrated. Female sexuality is subordinate and provides no more than a backdrop to the insistent phallus worship. The two pop-up dolls and back-up singers in the Stones's concert are all young, attractive females; their costumes emphasize their receptivity. This is most evident in the open-legged stance of the dark-haired doll.

In *Tal-choom*, all female characters are defined in terms of their relationships with male counterparts. They are either the abandoned old wife, the young concubine, the mistress or the prostitute. They are also the receptacles of male seed and even ritual conception takes place on stage, with the female leaving the moment the child has been dropped. For example, immediately after the Old Priest is defeated, *Chi-ba-lee* takes *Sou-moo* to bed. Although their dance of sexual intercourse is consensual, the role of *Sou-moo* remains clearly passive and docile in the course of this ritual conception. However, one notes in the mating scene of the Old Man
and Mi yal that their dance of intercourse alters this ritual of sexual dominance; the Old Man lies on his back and Mi yal walks over his inert body to the rhythm of drum beats. In comparison to the dance of Chi-ba-lee and Sou-moo, Mi yal can no longer be impregnated. Therefore, she is not worthy nor valuable to the Old Man.

Both Chi-ba-lee and Jagger portray eternal youth. Their unattached, "cool," sexy and energetic deeds belong to a metaphoric world where no distinction between reality and play, and between reality and fantasy exists. Yet, while his attitude toward women embodies social cliche and perhaps reflects general attitudes in the male-female relationship, it would be inappropriate to categorize Chi-ba-lee as a typical male stereotype. When he engages in a fight with the Old Priest, he violates three unspoken moral codes: honour the old, respect social rank, and "mind your own business."

Whether or not the Old Priest's behaviour sets a moral example, Chi-ba-lee's challenge to him reveals as much of his own character as it does that of the Old Priest. Both are equally rickety in the moral department. Therefore, Chi-ba-lee's action is not an act of social rebellion. Rather, it is an act of brashness and blatantly lustful theft, particularly as the Old Man is no match for him. On the other hand, the Old Priest, who should represent wisdom and experience, is also a man with a sexual drive. Two men are engaged in a battle for sex and eventually the young, Chi-ba-lee, defeats the old. His victory is an affirmation of youth, lust and greed.
There is also a battle of age between Mi-yal and Dul-mo-ri-jip. When Mi-yal enters, the audience laughs at her as an ugly, poor, and old woman. Her middle is bare, her dress is thread-bare, and her wrinkled face (her mask) denotes her hard life. Her jerky, pelvic movements suggest fatigue, sore muscles and back problems, resulting from her age and long search for her husband. Yet, the audience laughs. When she eventually finds him, he is with a young concubine, Dul-mo-ri-jip. The Old Man has deceived both women, but abuses and even kills his wife. The crowd cheers at her death and the Old Man, then, takes Dul-mo-ri-jip, as if it is his natural right. They exit together as a couple, neither receiving punishment. Indeed, his taking a young wife is cheered on and justified because she can give him more children. As long as she is young, she is valuable. Indeed, the old of both genders are ridiculed and mocked. Similar to the defeat of the Old Priest, the episode of the Old Woman also signifies the triumph of youth.

Although rock singers do not wear masks on stage, the images that are attached to and invoked from their stage personae are similar to those of Chi-ba-lee. Often, rock singers establish their "stage appeal" and indi-

---

176 Despite many social changes and the "modern" lifestyle, women in Korea still live with this ancient attitude toward women. Their identity is still defined by their relationships with and to men. Their virtue is associated with their subordination to the patriarchal structure at home and also in society. Their ability to produce a healthy child — preferably a male child — is still considered significant to their status. For respectable women, their sexuality is instrumental primarily for the purpose of impregnation after marriage. Their "worth" is confirmed through their ability as good mothers and their "value" affirmed by their supportive conformity to the status quo.
vidual characteristics through costumes and physical signatures. There is an insistent phallus worship in rock 'n' roll. As Pattison describes:

Jim Morrison and Iggy Pop are the most prominent of a series of rock stars who have exposed themselves for a grateful public. Other rock stars, intimidated by modesty or the law, have propitiated the ritual demands of their audience by padding their crotches or highlighting their endowments. David Lee Roth, formerly of Van Halen and one of rock's transient sex symbols, usually performs in tight black outfits accented by a bulging red G-string. With minor variations his is the costume of the most [sic] hard-rock idols.¹⁷⁷

Chi-ba-lee may not wear a G-string nor tight black jeans, but he is the quintessential embodiment of sexuality seeking the pleasure of women and drink. He is a libertine — the Don Juan character in a Korean context. As such, he defies deference to religious and social pretentiousness, and is amoral, irresponsible and pleasure-seeking without considering the social, ethical consequences of his action. Since Pong-san Tal-choom is essentially a fertility rite, it is to be expected that Chi-ba-lee is at the centre of this temporary social anarchy. He is a satyr with an uncontrollable sexual desire and a constantly erect phallus. One of his dances actually celebrates sexual climax. In fact, this dance piece is the most demanding and popular. Holding a branch with full green foliage in two hands, as he dances onto the stage thrusting his pelvis, this three-foot branch transforms itself into a

three-foot phallus. The branch held closely in front of his chest pumps up and down with the thrusts of his hips and torso. The more vulgarity he demonstrates, the more enthusiastic the audience becomes. They revel in his prowess and reward him with reverence. As a character he cannot change, and understandably his audience will not permit it.

In this respect, a "bluesman" or a "rock idol" is the same. He is also a hustler, a drunk, a seducer, a "cool dude" or some combination of these stereotypes. Although he wears no phallus, his lyrics and gyration convey clearly that he is always ready for 'action.' In Jagger's case, the synaesthesia is created by the movements of his tongue (see Illustration 47). Indeed, the red open mouth with hanging tongue is the famous insignia of the Stones.

"The ideal rock star is young, male, horny, and well-hung," writes Robert Pattison. Mick Jagger and the other Stones entered the stage unceremoniously in their 1989 concert. Jagger wore a green leather coat, with huge cuffs, vents, and gold buttons, a French-collared silk shirt, and tight black jeans with piping down the outer seams. Keith Richards wore his usual black coat, long pink scarf, and his Marlboro in his mouth. Ron Wood's pink shirt and striped pants made an amusing contrast with

---

178 Ibid.

179 Rock stars are both models and objects to be possessed and fetishized. Jagger's leather jacket, jeans and a T-shirt are essentially his costume of youth which teenagers use to differentiate themselves from others.
Illustration 47: Mick Jagger and his Tongue

Charlie Watt's elegantly embroidered vest and Bill Wyman's sophisticated beige formal suit. In the course of the concert, Jagger throws off his coat and shirt in a kind of strip tease. Eventually, he is only in a tank-top T-shirt and his tight black jeans with a metal decorated belt. As such, the 46-year-old rock star (at the time of the "Steel Wheels" tour in 1989) is reborn as a horny, teenaged boy. Although he does not wear a mask, he and his fans identify him with a fixed image — that of an angry youth full of sexual energy and contempt for the adult world. His attitude is crystallized in his pout. His thick lips and wild, bulging eyes project contempt. Supported on either side by Richards and Wood who hold their guitars upright and jerk their bodies up and down, the sum of his action equals ejaculation at the climax of performance. In response, the crowd breaks into wild dance. Incited and excited by their group hero, they join the mutual celebration of youth and prowess. Age is eclipsed and sex triumphant and glamorous.

Of course, it is understood by all participants that they are in a safe environment and permitted to take part in this fertility rite. Both Chi-ba-lee and Jagger are mediums for Dionysian power. Their licentiousness is not only condoned, but also demanded. They flirt with and tease the audience; celebrating as they do so a notion of the world as being infinite, organic and gratifying. Indulgence is everything (temporarily). Sensation is king. Life is exalted or reduced to (depending on your point of view) a jungle energy, which is untamed, pre-literature, indiscriminate and sensuous. To sustain
the mission, drink helps — hence, *Chi-ba-lee's* intoxication. Anything that smacks of morality, education, religion, order and refinement is rejected as oppressive elements.

Through the stage personae of the Stones and masks, the performers are allowed to express blatantly vulgar, coarse, even repulsive and provocative sexuality. However, as long as it remains contained within the theatrical world, the irresponsible, rebellious and anarchistic actions of *Chi-ba-lee* and Jagger are appropriated as the qualities of youth. Their desire for the public exhibition of strength, sexuality, and vanity are all attributes of youth. Moreover, youth is associated with a phase in life where social responsibility and moral consequences are considered secondary to individual expression and growth. The protection of individuality and individual desire are paramount. The individual is not a unit of society but an end and entity in himself. Therefore, the integrity of the community is secondary. However, while participating in and being part of the theatrical counter-world, the audience experience their own individual desire vicariously and relive their youth. They are, thus, united as a community by their own choices and immersed in "communitas."

Only in the course of a performance, particularly in pre-industrialized Korean society with the rigid class system prior to the 1950s, an actor under his mask was permitted to ridicule and taunt the prevailing social values. A character like *Chi-ba-lee* addresses rebellious youth attacking the
old and confronting social taboos. For the ruling class, the mask allowed their subjects to release and alleviate pent-up frustrations which resulted from the rigid status system. Most importantly, the mask empowers an actor and its sympathetic magic transforms the wearer into a medium. All used masks are burned after a performance to ensure that no actor's spirit can be damaged.

It is interesting to note that of late even Jagger has turned to mask. His most recent promotion shots depict a masked man — in fact, the mask is that of a satyr with horns and curly hair on top of this half-face mask (see Illustration 48). In addition to his 'uniform' — T-shirt and black jeans — his leopard jacket too signifies the attributes of a satyr (see Illustration 49). The animal skin, horns and tongue do not necessarily make Jagger young or hide his age, yet they transform him into a hero who appears to be unaffected by time. Of course, the Stones are fighting a war of attrition with time and age. These days, when Jagger decides to go on tour, "he is undertaking an endeavor," writes Cohen, "that requires months of roadwork and weight lifting with the guidance of a personal trainer who

---

180 Until the early nineteenth century, it was, in fact, the ruling class who sponsored such theatre. Only later in that century did local merchants begin to sponsor Pong-san Tal-choom as marketing promotions.

181 Although this superstitious attitude towards the masks and their power is never openly discussed, still the Tal-choom performers hold a private ceremony of burning masks. The character is reborn with the new mask in each performance, and never recycled.
Illustration 48: Jagger, 'The Satyr'

Source: Rolling Stone.
Illustration 49: The Rolling Stones in 1994

String Us Up and We Still Won't Die

The Rolling Stones

Out for Blood

Barry Diller

The Rolling Stone Interview

Lollapalooza's

Flaming Lips & Luscious Jackson

Source: Rolling Stone.
travels with the tour." Keith Richards too notes, "To some I'm a junkie madman who should be dead, and to others I'm a mythical genius." He continues:

Man, I don't know how long I'm gonna live. I was No. 1 on the death list for 20 years. Here's all I know; I look around and say 'There's Mick, there's Charlie, and here's me, and we're the Rolling Stones, and God knows how that happened.' It's just you and your mates from way back. And then you start playing, and it feels the same as it did in the beginning. You might feel like dog shit two minutes before a show, but the minute you hit the crowd, you feel great. It's a cure for everything, and I recommend it for everybody.

Jagger, now in his fifties, with the satyr mask embodies eternal youth to his devotees. Together they defy age. This group denial also leads to denial of the nature of mortality. Richards puts this very clearly:

On any given night, we're still a damn good band. And on some nights, maybe even the best band in the world. So screw the press and their slagging about the Geritol Tour. You assholes. Wait until you get our age [sic] and see how you run. I got news for you, we're still a bunch of tough bastards. String us up and we still won't die.

---


183 "Stubbing out a cigarette, Richards does not look old and does not look young but instead has entered that land beyond time, where each new wrinkle seems as promising as the folds in a familiar map." Ibid., 61.

184 Ibid.

185 Ibid., 56.
In summary, a *Tal-choom* performance and the Stones's concert are two fertility festivals, essentially sharing many similar attributes of the celebration of Dionysian forces. In degree they are different, but they are not different in kind. While rock 'n' roll concerts are the enormous expansion of the same event, at bottom they are celebrating the same cause and the ecstatic bonding and response are there for similar reasons. Seen from this perspective, the masks and costumes of *Tal-choom* and the Stones indicate permission to do homage to the phallus in no uncertain terms. There is nothing subtle about it.
Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to broaden the historical context of theatre through presenting and examination *Tal-choom*. On the one hand, its vestigial existence in South Korea is a paradigm for many traditional arts and cultural practices which are in danger of being ignored and lost forever. On the other, the story of *Tal-choom*, its survival, and its presence in the contemporary cultural context are remarkable, not only because of its value as an indigenous cultural asset but also its universal characteristics as popular theatre. In this dissertation I have examined the theatrical conventions of *Tal-choom*, its development as popular theatre, and its significance in terms of social and political changes in past and present Korea, and its effect upon its audience. While examining the role of the participating audience and the relationship to ancient fertility festivals in *Tal-choom* performances, I draw parallels with popular theatre, particularly to the Rolling Stones’s "Steel Wheels" concert in 1989 as a means of clarifying *Tal-choom*’s strength as popular theatre.

Through recognition of both the topical uniqueness and a particular characteristics of *Tal-choom*, it is my hope that this study will enable scholars to embrace more readily the universal nature of theatre. I firmly believe that anyone can come to a *Tal-choom* performance in Korea with the same confidence he or she brings to a rock concert as audience in the West. Indeed, it should be clear that I stand united with those who would draw a
global paradigm in theatre through research into audience-performer interaction. No longer can we, nor should we, ignore the power and influence of the isolated, regional theatre traditions in our study of world theatre.

There remain several questions to be explored. Will *Tal-choom* continue to survive as an indigenous cultural expression of Korea? If so, how will it continue to maintain its current form in today's Korea? Given changes in society, today's cultural practices are inundated with modern and Western-influenced media. How, then, will 'the indigenous' be placed within the 'global context' of culture? I am not able to offer any definite answers to these questions at this point. Time will reveal more. *Tal-choom* may be taken over by the very phenomena that I have compared it to. Rock's high-tech values and tremendous spectacle may prove irresistible to Korea eventually. However, it is my hope that, as I demonstrated in Chapter 6, *Tal-choom* may survive on the basis of its own strength as a celebration and rejuvenation of the human spirit. A 40-year-old homemaker and mother in Seoul says:

I told a friend of mine, 'I'm going to dance.' She called me 'a crazy bitch!' I told her again, 'It's not that dance, but *Tal-choom.*' She told me, 'It's the same stuff, isn't it?'

---

186 "I'm going to dance" is an euphemism implying an excuse that a married woman looks for a lover. This woman told me about her newly discovered joy and freedom when she danced *Tal-choom.*
Music is one of the things that changes society. That old idea of not letting white children listen to black music is true, 'cause if you want white children to remain what they are, they mustn't.... You get different attitudes to things...even the way you walk....Remember the Twenties, when jazz in Europe changed a lot of things? People got crazier, girls lifted up their dresses and cut their hair. People started to dance to that music, and it made profound changes in that society....This sounds awfully serious! 187

Bibliography


Fuller, John G. *Are the Kids All Right?* New York: Times, 1981.


**Periodicals**

*Australasian Drama Studies* (August 1982), University of Queensland.


APPENDICES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2333 B.C.</td>
<td>Legendary founding of Korea by Tan'gun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1122 B.C.</td>
<td>Legendary arrival of Kija from China to establish Ancient Choson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108 B.C.</td>
<td>Fall of Ancient Choson to Chinese: Establishment of Chinese commanderies in Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>313 A.D.</td>
<td>Fall of Nangnang (Chinese Commandery) to Korean Kingdom of Koguryo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th-7th Centuries</td>
<td>Three Kingdoms period (Koguryo, Paekche, Silla)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>668</td>
<td>Unification of Korea by Silla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>936</td>
<td>Establishment of Koryo Dynasty by Wang Kon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1231</td>
<td>Mongol invasion, leading to Mongol domination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1392</td>
<td>Establishment of Choson Dynasty by General Yi Song-gye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1446</td>
<td>Korean alphabet (Han'gul) devised by King Sejong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1592-98</td>
<td>Japanese invasion of Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1627-37</td>
<td>Manchu invasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1783</td>
<td>First Christian convert; philosophical reform movement (sirhak) at its height</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>First Western-style treaty signed with Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Failure of modernizers' attempt to seize power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Tonghak Rebellion, starting Sino-Japanese War</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1905  Protectorate over Korea after Russo-Japanese War
1910  Annexation of Korea by Japan
1919  Korean independence uprising
1945  Occupation by United States and USSR; division at 38th parallel
1948  North and South Korea become independent states
1950-53  Korean War
1960  Ousting of South Korean President Rhee by "student revolution"; establishment of Second Republic
1961  Coup d’etat led by South Korean General Park Chung Hee
1963  Civilian government re-established as Third Republic
1965  Normalization of relations with Japan
1971  Kim Dae Jung narrowly defeated in South Korean presidential election
1972  North-South Joint Declaration on peaceful unification; establishment of autocratic Fourth (yusin) Republic in South Korea; North Korean constitution revised
1979  South Korean President Park assassinated
1980  Seizure of political control in South Korea by General Chun Doo Hwan; Kwangju uprising; Fifth Republic
1983  Attempted assassination of South Korean President by North Korean agents in Rangoon; 17 Koreans killed
1988  Sixth Republic established in South Korea; Roh Tae Woo inaugurated as President

Appendix 2
Korean Language and its Romanization

General Description

Korean is a language common to all 60 million inhabitants of the Korean peninsula and is an important element of Korean national identity. It is similar in structure to Japanese, Mongolian, Turkish, Hungarian, and Finnish, with which it is sometimes grouped in a Ural-Altaic family of languages. However, its phonetic structure is unique. Korean differs from the other Ural-Altaic languages even more than English differs from, let us say, Hindi, although both are Indo-European languages.

The Korean language is called agglutinative—that is, syllables are added to verbs, adjectives, and nouns to show relationships of time, place, subject to object, and social position of speaker, hearer, and person spoken about. Word order in a sentence typically puts the subject first, followed by the object, with the verb at the end. Modifiers, or adjectives, behave somewhat like verbs and can take the place of verbs. Particles (usually single syllables) known as postpositions follow nouns in somewhat the same way as English prepositions precede nouns. These differences in structure make translation from Korean to English, or vice versa, rather difficult.

The polysyllabic, agglutinative character of Korean makes it totally unlike Chinese, which is basically monosyllabic and without word inflection. Also unlike Chinese, but like English, “tones” or variations in pitch, play no part in the meaning of individual words in Korean, but do convey feeling and complement grammatical structure, distinguishing questions, statements, and commands.

Phonetically, Korean differs sharply from English in that the meaning of its consonants differs according to whether they are aspirated or unaspirated (that is, whether their articulation is, or is not, accompanied by a puff of breath). It does not matter, in Korean, whether a consonant is voiced (like the English “b” or “d”) or unvoiced (like the English “p” or “t”); voicing depends on the position of a consonant in a word or phrase. This pattern is the reverse of English, which aspirates some consonants and not others without effect on meaning. Additionally, a group of Korean consonants is distinguished by an almost explosive tenseness in pronunciation, somewhat like the French “p.” The Korean alphabet distinguishes fourteen consonants; at least one Korean scholar has identified twenty-four different consonantal sounds.

The Korean Writing System

Until the fifteenth century, Korea had no writing system of its own. Records were kept in Chinese or by using the pronunciation of Chinese characters to represent
Korean sounds. A set of abbreviated Chinese characters, called idu, was developed for this purpose. The great King Sejong convened a committee of scholars who developed the phonetic alphabet now known as han'gul. The new alphabet was proclaimed in 1446, but despite its obvious advantages it was not generally accepted by the Korean scholarly community until the twentieth century; the official records of the Choson Dynasty (1392–1910) were kept in classical Chinese. A page from the original fifteenth-century instructions for the use of han'gul, intermixed with Chinese characters, is shown in Figure B.1; there has been considerable change in spelling and pronunciation since then but not much change in the manner of writing the characters. The modern han'gul characters, with their roman letter equivalents, are shown in Table B.1.

Han'gul is almost always written in syllabic groups, with the initial consonant at the left or top, the vowel to the right, center, or bottom, and the final consonant, if any, underneath. If there is no initial consonant, this fact is signalled with a separate character—the same one used for the “ng” sound. If there is no final consonant, it is simply omitted.

The use of syllabic groups makes it easy to combine the phonetic script with Chinese characters. Literate Koreans in the south still use Chinese characters for words derived from Chinese (which make up about half the listings in Korean dictionaries), and the schools teach a standard list of 1,900 such characters. In north Korea, the use of Chinese characters was abolished many years ago. This was an understandable gesture of nationalist assertion, and it simplified the reading and writing of Korean for the general public; but it also added to north Korea’s isolation from its neighbors.

Traditionally, Korean (like Chinese) was written from top to bottom of the page, and right to left; the pages of a book were therefore in the reverse order to English. Today, both the traditional style and the Western style (horizontally, left to right) are used—the latter particularly in scholarly works where quotations from Western languages are interspersed in the text. Most publications are printed, but calligraphy is still an honored art form in Korea. It is common for noted persons to write short poems or epigrams—usually in Chinese characters, but sometimes in han'gul—for presentation to their followers and friends. The signboard on the Kwanghwamun, the gate in front of the old capitol building in Seoul (now a national museum), was inscribed in han'gul by the late President Park Chung Hee; it is one of the few examples of such inscriptions which reads in the modern manner, from left to right.

Romanization—Writing Korean in Roman Letters

The spelling of Korean in the Latin alphabet for English speakers is made very difficult by differences in the phonetic systems of the two languages, which also make the Korean language difficult for English speakers to learn. After years of experimentation, both the governments of both the Republic of Korea and the United States and many Western scholars have come to accept a romanization system devised by George M. McCune and Edwin O. Reischauer in 1938. Scholarly files in the United States, including the index of the Library of Congress and most university libraries, are based on the McCune-Reischauer system of romanization.
A page of Korean phonetic script from the fifteenth-century document, *Hunmin Chongum*, showing *han'gul* intermingled with Chinese characters (photo by Edward Adams)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Han’gul</th>
<th>Roman (according to position)</th>
<th>Han’gul</th>
<th>Roman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>medial*</td>
<td>final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>n, r</td>
<td>l, n, r</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ng</td>
<td>ng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>ch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>ch’</td>
<td>ch’</td>
<td>ch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>k’</td>
<td>k’</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>t’</td>
<td>t’</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>p’</td>
<td>p’</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>kk</td>
<td>kk</td>
<td>kk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>tt</td>
<td>tt</td>
<td>tt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>pp</td>
<td>pp</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>ss</td>
<td>ss</td>
<td>tt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>ņ</td>
<td>ņ</td>
<td>ņ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵀ</td>
<td>ņ</td>
<td>ņ</td>
<td>ņ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The chart does not show elisions and euphonic modifications resulting from juxtaposition of consonants.

Source: Adapted from Korean Overseas Information Service, Han’gul (Korean Alphabet and Language), Korea Background Series, Vol. 9 (Seoul, n.d.), pp. 56-58.
The McCune-Reischauer system uses roman letters chosen to represent the English sound most nearly approximating Korean. An apostrophe (') after a consonant shows that it is aspirated ("p'", "t'"), and a double letter ("pp", "tt") indicates a "fortis" or explosive pronunciation. In general, an unaspirated consonant is voiced in Korean when it occurs in the middle of a word and is therefore romanized in the McCune-Reischauer system with its approximate English voiced equivalent (b, d, etc.). Most of the vowels in Korean have approximate—but not precise—English counterparts. Two of them, which lack even approximate English equivalents, are spelled in the McCune-Reischauer system with a diacritical mark: "o", a sound between the English "o" in "oh" and "u" in "uh"; and "u", a sound like the French "u." In this book, the diacritical marks have been omitted for simplicity, so that the proper distinction in pronunciation between "o" and "ô," "u" and "û," is lost.

Table B.1 shows the han'gul characters for the Korean consonants and vowels and their roman equivalents according to the McCune-Reischauer system. One special feature of the McCune-Reischauer system must be noted: the additional use of the apostrophe (') to separate "n" and "g" in cases where they are not to be pronounced together. In Korean, there is a separate single symbol for the nasal "ng" sound (as in the English word "sing"); but when this sound is romanized as "ng," it cannot be distinguished from two successive syllables, one with a final "n" and the other with an initial "g." Accordingly, whenever the two romanized consonants appear together without an apostrophe, they are pronounced together as "ng"; when separated ("n'g"), they are pronounced separately. Thus, the Han River, han'gang, has a separate "n" and "g," while "Eastern Sea" or "Oriental," tongyang, has an "ng" sound.

Unfortunately, there has been a great deal of romanization of Korean that does not follow the McCune-Reischauer system. Before that system was devised, writers used their own phonetic interpretations. The nineteenth-century French Catholic missionaries devised a romanization system (from which the present spelling of the capital city, Seoul, is derived). The U.S. Military Government had its own system. The South Korean Ministry of Education established a system that was followed for a decade. Individual Koreans spell their own names according to their own preferences (for example, the former South Korean National Assembly Chairman, whose name would be Sin Ik-hui in McCune-Reischauer, styled himself P. H. Shinicky; people with the family name spelled Yi in McCune-Reischauer use Lee, Rhee, Ri, Leigh).

In this book, the McCune-Reischauer system is used except for proper names commonly romanized otherwise. I have not seen any written rules for the north Korean system of romanization. However, north Korean English-language materials suggest that unaspirated consonants are represented by their voiced English equivalents and aspirated consonants are represented by the unvoiced equivalents, instead of using apostrophes. The South Korean Ministry of Education’s former system employed somewhat the same principle. Some Koreans believe that this method is better than McCune-Reischauer, because to their ears it seems to make English speakers pronounce the consonants better. (The pinyin romanization system of Chinese adopted by the People’s Republic of China to replace the missionary-devised Wade-Giles system also uses voiced English equivalents for unaspirated consonants, and unvoiced equivalents for aspirated ones, rather than the Wade-Giles apostrophes.) North Korean romanizations, insofar as they are known, have been used for North Korean names in this book. Thus, Kim Il Sung’s son’s name is spelled Kim Jong Il, rather than the McCune-Reischauer Kim Chong-il; the capital city is Pyongyang, rather than P’yongyang, in post-1945 references.
# Appendix 3

## Results of Questionnaire 1

Total Respondents: 181

### 1. Demography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemakers</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. First introduction/contact with Tal-choom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction/Contact</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School (Project, Club, Festival, Class)</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby, Personal Interest</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Particular Interest</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **How many times have you seen *Tal-choom* performances?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5 times</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10 times</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ times</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **First *Tal-choom* viewing?**

   - Through School (Project and Festival) 13%
   - Personal Interest 61%
     - learning Korea's culture 28%
     - excellent hobby 14%
     - audience participation, dance, satire and humour 19%
   - By Accident 13%
   - Through Friends and Family 5%
   - Miscellaneous 2%
   - N/A 9%

6. **Opinion poll on *Tal-choom* awareness among the public.**

   - **Negative:** 28%
     - indifferent, unknown 20%
     - hostile, associated with social activism 8%
   - **Positive:** 66%
     - slowly improving 24%
     - welcoming/encouraging 37%
     - regarded as health recreational means 2%
     - must promote more 3%

7. ***Tal-choom* on TV vs. a live performance?**

   - For a live performance: 92%
   - Because of
     - liveliness, vitality 61%
     - excitement, audience participation 28%
     - dance, costume, mask 3%
   - Miscellaneous 4%
   - N/A 4%
8. **Outstanding features of Tal-choom?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costume/Mask</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satire/Humour</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Interaction</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/Recreational</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **The role of an audience?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As Co-creators/Participants</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. **Means of the audience participation?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support/Presence</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Participation (clapping, cheering, dancing)</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. **Audience preparation and/or arrangement?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No special preparation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- learn the story line and convention</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- parasol/cap/cushion/food/drink</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- comfortable outfit and shoes</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- camera or camcorder</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- go early to get a better seat</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ready for fun and a party</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. **Arrival scenes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- of more than 10 people</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- of less than 10 people</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidentally</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. **Anecdotes, comments on personal experiences as an audience member**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience Participation</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding experience of a group bonding</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about better promotion</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty to understand</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. **Comments and suggestions on this study.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive:</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- encouraging support</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- with concerns</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better funding, promotion and education to Korean people</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference and suspicion</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4

Video — Highlights of Pong-san Tal-choom
PONGSAN
Masked
DANCE
DRAMA
KOREA
The Pongsan Talchum ("tal" meaning mask and "chum" suggesting dance) originates from the northeast Korean province of Hwanghae. Although similar mask-dance plays had long been performed by roving players throughout Korea, the Pongsan masked dance-drama with its distinctly regional flavour began to appear in the early eighteenth century.

Pongsan was a thriving market town during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Here, both agricultural and local handicraft industries flourished. Prosperous townspeople fostered the local tradition of masked dance-drama and players were called upon to perform at welcoming ceremonies for visiting Chinese envoys en route to the capital.

The present form, which came into being around the turn of the century, is an example of the transformation and evolution of ancient rituals into folk entertainment while still preserving the ancient conventions and techniques of the rituals themselves. For example, the traditional exorcism rites, originally inspired by awe of the forces of Nature, were dedicated to the expulsion of evil spirits. Masks with demonic expressions were worn by the shamans to frighten these spirits away. In the nineteenth century, the masked dance-drama was incorporated into the magnificent Tano folk festival (held on the fifth day of the fifth month according to the lunar calendar). On the evening of the Tano Festival the drama would unfold on an outdoor or makeshift stage in the village square or marketplace. Usually it began at dusk and continued until daybreak. Since the performance was held outdoors at night, several blazing bonfires were set around the stage area. The lighting was particularly effective for displaying the colorful masks, accentuating their mystic expressions. As the religious function of the ritual gradually diminished, the fear of the supernatural was replaced by the fear of the tyrannous ruling elite, called Yangban. The demonic expressions of the original masks became emblematic of class archetypes, as the ritual itself was transposed into social satire.

Although originally religious, the Pongsan Masked Dance-Drama is now performed purely for entertainment. The most common themes in the repertoire are satirizing an apostate monk given to lust, ridiculing the shortcomings of the upper-class society, and poking fun at the domestic tribulations of the husband-wife-concubine relationship.

The masked dance-drama consists of a series of seven independent acts, each satirizing the behavior of some stock character from traditional Korean society. The dialogue is crude, filled with puns and parody. While the physical gestures are lewd and the mimicry irreverent.

Although there are thirty-four characters in the play only twenty-six masks are used during a performance as some of the characters borrow their masks from other characters. The simple masks used are made of papier-mâché. Their colours symbolize each of the five directions: black/North, red/South, blue/East, white/West, yellow/Centre. They also have interesting realistic features, such as dots on the cheeks and chin, which represent pock marks.

Before the play began, the performers would stage a formal procession in full costume on the way to the performance area. After the parade it was customary to perform a ritual to honour the guardian deities of the performance. Farmer's music was then played and folk dances performed to the accompanying rhythm. When a large audience had assembled, the masked figures of the young monks would appear and the play would begin.

The Pongsan Masked Dance-Drama has been designated an Important Intangible Cultural Property by the Korean Government.
**Synopsis**

**ACT 1.** Ceremonial Opening Dance by the Four Young Monks

Four young Sangiwa (novice monks) are carried on stage one by one on the shoulders of other monks. After the young monks are placed in their appropriate position on stage, the other monks depart. The young monks stand in a line and when the music starts each takes a position facing the points of the compass (N,S,E,W.) and bows to the god of the four directions. The dance is solemn and ceremonial in nature, the purpose being to ward off various types of evil spirits.

**ACT 2.** The Eight Buddhist Monks

Instead of practicing asceticism according to the calling of the Buddhist doctrine, the Eight Buddhist Monks prefer dancing and singing. One by one, each enters onto the stage and recites a song in time with music and then engages in a lively dance. Each individual song and dance has its own special characteristics. At the end, all eight monks join together in a light and nimble dance.

**ACT 3.** Dance and Songs by Sadang and Kosa

A lavishly decorated dancing girl, sadang, is pursued by a kosa, or itinerant entertainer. He is chased away by his fellow entertainers, who then join the sadang in a love song and dancing.

**ACT 4.** The Old Priest's Dance

Scene 1: The Old Priest and the Young Shaman

An old monk entering on stage veiled by other monks spies a beautiful young shaman dancing. Succumbing to his desire, he falls deeply in love with her and offers her his rosary, which she ultimately accepts. The flirtation between the old priest and the shaman employs only dance, body movement and gesture, but the result is superb comedy. This sequence is considered the very best in the Pongsan Drama.

Scene 2: The Shoe Seller

The lovers' dance is interrupted by a shoe seller who tries to sell the old priest shoes for himself and the young shaman. As the seller looks for the shoes in his bag, he is surprised to find a monkey instead, but quickly makes use of it to collect money for the shoes. The monkey comes back with a note in which the priest promises payment "in the alley of firewood." The shoe seller, fearing the priest intends to beat him with the firewood, runs away.

Scene 3: The Prodigal

As the priest and the shaman resume their dance, a drunken prodigal enters and challenges the old priest for the favours of the young shaman. After driving the priest away he claims the shaman. The young shaman bears the prodigal's son, but then abandons it. The prodigal, however, is proud of his son.

**ACT 5.** The Lion Dance

A lion is sent by the Buddha to punish the degenerate old monk and the eight young monks for their acts of impertinences. One of the monks pleads with the lion for forgiveness swearing that the monks will never commit such worldly acts again. They are forgiven, and the monk and lion rejoice together.

**ACT 6.** The Noblemen and Their Servant

This scene depicts three brothers of the aristocracy and their servant, Maltuggi, who continuously makes fun of them. He arranges a pig pen as the lodging place for his masters, but they are so ignorant that they don't even know what a pig pen looks like. When the four start composing poems, it is the lowly Maltuggi who is the most profound.

**ACT 7.** The Old Couple

This final episode concerns an old man and his wife, Miyal. Miyal comes onto the stage looking for her long lost husband who had been forced to leave their native village in the wake of a peasant rebellion. She sees a musician and describes the ugly appearance of her husband to him. When she exits, Miyal's husband enters and encountering the same musician tells him of his ugly wife. The musician tells the old man to call his wife and the two are thus reunited. Miyal, however, finds a pretty concubine standing beside her husband. The three quarrel and fight until Miyal is struck down and killed. An old man enters on stage and performs a ritual to comfort Miyal's soul and lead it to Nirvana. A shaman is also called on stage and, possessed by Miyal's spirit, speaks of Miyal's sorrow and desire to attain Nirvana.
Appendix 6

Making the Masks