Aligning tradition and creativity: preserving *pansori* in South Korea

Anna Yates-Lu

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Anna Yates-Lu, PhD
Oriental Institute at the University of Oxford, UK

ABSTRACT

In 2016, the South Korean government implemented the Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Properties (*Muhyeong munhwajae bojeon mit jinheung e gwanhan beomnyul*), thus entering a new stage in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Through tracing the development of the preservation of *pansori*, a sung storytelling art form which was amongst the first to be designated as intangible cultural heritage in Korea in 1964, I discuss how patterns of preservation strategies have emerged, as well as how these are being targeted by the new legislation. Although it is still too early to observe the lasting effects of the new legislation, an analysis of the critiques of the previous system, as well as the hopes pinned on the future, will indicate potential future trends.

Keywords

pansori, *wanchang*, South Korea, ICP legislation, Heungboga, Bak Rokju, Bak Songhui, *weonhyeong* (original form), *jeonhyeong* (exemplary form)

Introduction

With the implementation of the 2016 *Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Properties* (*Muhyeong munhwajae bojeon mit jinheung e gwanhan beomnyul*), South Korea[1] stands at the cusp of a new moment in its long history of the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. While the legislation that was put into place in 1962 has been unquestionably successful in helping numerous art forms survive that might otherwise have perished, over time issues have arisen with the previous system, which the new 2016 legislation hopes to address. Through the lens of *pansori*, a sung storytelling art form that was amongst the first genres to be designated as Intangible Cultural Property (ICP), I trace how trends both within the preservation system and the wider context within which *pansori* was being performed, have formed habits of preservation which even new legislation may find hard to change.

In particular, conceptions of what 'traditional' means, as well as what is considered acceptable 'creativity', highlight the fundamental issues which the renewed focus of the 2016 Act aims to address.

Pansori is particularly suited for an analysis of these broader trends as its long history under the preservation system provides ample evidence to show how its preservation has developed. The genre is generally perceived as traditionally consisting of a single performer (the *sorikkun*) telling a story using a mixture of song (*sori*), narration (*aniri*) and gesture (*ballim*), accompanied simply by a single drummer (*gosu*) playing a barrel-shaped drum (*soribuk*) while providing shouts of encouragement (*chuimsae*); the watching audience also shouts encouragement. Its importance as a traditional genre is highlighted by the priority given to its designation (as National Intangible Cultural Property No. 5, out of 131 current designations), as well as the recognition offered by UNESCO, which registered it as a *Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* in 2003. As will become apparent in this article, debates around the nature of tradition and creativity, as well as how these should be preserved and promoted, have shaped the history of *pansori* preservation, and the 2016 Act can be perceived as the next step in this development.

The history of *pansori* preservation

The history of *pansori* preservation dates back well before the first law for preserving intangible cultural heritage. Intellectually, the activities of the culturalist movement (*munhwa chueui*) during the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945), spearheaded by figures such as I Gwangsu, Choe Namseon, I Neunghwa and Son Jintae, paved the way for a valuing of traditional culture, with their early examinations of folklore, particularly of shamanism and the Dangun myth. Yang Jongsung[2] (2003, pp.20–29) highlights Song Seokha and Im Seokjae as especially important. Song was one of the founding members of the Korean Folklore Society (*Minsok hakhoe*), which actively informed the development of ICP legislation, while Im was one of the designers of the legislation which became the ICP system, as well as being a judge and committee member of the National Folk Arts Contest (*Jeon'guk minsok yesul kyeongyeon daehoe*), a competition which became the first stepping stone for many performance artists seeking national designation. Artistically, the Joseon Vocal Music Research Society (*Joseon seongak yeon'guhoe*) was a collection of the greatest *pansori* performers of the colonial period, who came together in an attempt to combat the waning popularity of *pansori* in the face of the changing tastes of an audience drawn to modern entertainment, as well as repression from colonial cultural policy. While the Joseon Vocal Music Research Society's attitude towards preserving *pansori* tended towards making it relevant to contemporary audiences, even at the cost of adapting performance styles, there were others who feared that this adaptation might lead to the loss of traditional performance culture as a whole. Already during the colonial period, then, there were movements to attempt to preserve traditional arts before they changed completely or were lost forever.

After Korean independence in 1945, a key individual in this movement was Ye Yonghae, who through articles for the *Han'guk ilbo* (*Korea Times*) between 1959 and 1963 – gathered into a book, *In'gan munhwajae* (*Living Human Treasure*), in 1963 – described the various traditional art forms that were being lost. Ye was motivated in this task by his perception of why traditional arts forms were not being valued:

> *I wanted Human Cultural Properties* [Living Human Treasures] *recognised because they knew the old things that had been passed down to us but were considered part of a base culture, a culture to be despised. Koreans thought it shameful that the lowest strata of society had the best knowledge of our music, drama and crafts. But they also felt shameful because they didn't personally know the arts and crafts. We needed to raise the status of these low caste people and I thought this could be done if the government honoured them. Giving them recognition would function as part of a rehabilitation process. It would be like the last breath for those about to die, like an injection of life.* (Interview with Ye Yonghae, cited in Howard: 2006, pp.4-5)

The influence that Ye's work had on the ICP system can clearly be seen in the fact that although individuals designated to preserve certain art forms are officially called *boyuja* (holder), the term *in'gan munhwajae* (living human treasure), made popular by Ye on the basis of an equivalent Japanese term, is still much more commonly used. 'Living human treasure' itself

demonstrates the raised status that traditional artists and performers began to have thanks to Ye's work and the ICP system. Howard (2006, p.5) highlights how Ye's work focused greatly on lineage, a focus which became extremely important in ICP legislation as well.

Ye's influence, as well as the continuing efforts of the Korean Folklore Society, helped establish the inclusion of folk culture in the legislation (Howard: 2006, p.6), as Law 961, the Cultural Property Preservation Law (*Munhwajae bohobeop*), was promulgated in 1962, dedicated to protecting traditional culture in four categories: Tangible Cultural Properties (*Yuhyeong munhwajae*: buildings, artworks, documents etc.), Intangible Cultural Properties (*Muhyeong munhwajae*: music, dance, drama, rituals, martial arts, crafts and food), Folk Cultural Properties (*Minsok jaryo*: 'public morals and customs') and Monuments (*Kinyeommul*: including archaeological and natural relics).[3] As has often been highlighted, particularly by Howard (2006; 2012a), this legislation was based on Japanese legislation already in existence: the 1950 *Bunkazai hogohō*, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, which was in turn shaped by previous legislation in the form of the 1871 *Plan for the Preservation of Ancient Artefacts* (*Koki kyūbutsu hozonkata*). However, the Korean legislation differs from the Japanese version particularly in its attitude to folk culture, not only focusing on 'high culture' but also raising the profile of folk culture as well.[4]

Howard (2006, p.6) argues that this demonstrates a nationalistic aim to strengthen Korean identity, particularly in opposition to Japan and China which had historically exerted significant cultural influence on Korea. While this is certainly the case, I would add that it is hard to imagine efforts to preserve cultural heritage without a nationalistic purpose behind them. Obviously, minorities within a nation may choose to preserve their music for their own sake, but I would argue that these efforts will often be co-opted by the nation when arguing for the preservation of culture on the national or international level. This can be seen from examples around the globe, for example in China (Rees: 2012), Georgia (Tsitsishvili: 2009), Greece/Turkey (Aykan: 2015), Thailand (Vail: 2014), or Uzbekistan (Adams: 2013).

The Korean legislation came during a time when much debate was going on about how best to preserve traditional genres, whether to fix a genre in its current (or 'original') state or to popularise it so that it continued to be relevant for contemporary life. Jeong Sujin (2008, p.210) gives the example of *pansori* to demonstrate how *gugak* (traditional Korean music) was popularised. After the colonial period there were two ways in which *pansori* adapted itself to contemporary society: the first was the more active use of *gyemyeonjo* (one of the modes of *pansori*, often associated with sad scenes and female characters) to match the desire in the audience for sadder, more dramatic melodies; this strategy was exemplified by singers Jeong Jeongryeol, I Hwajungseon and Im Pangul. The second strategy, she says, was the change from traditional *pansori* to *changgeuk* (a form of *pansori*-derived musical theatre which is more suitable for the stage), from *listening music to seen music*; this strategy was exemplified by Gang Yonghwan, Jeong Jeongryeol and Gim Yeonsu.

However, the debate around popularisation was not limited to *pansori* alone, but was widely discussed throughout the *gugak* scene. Hence, Jeong quotes I Hyegu stating: *I believe that* [the stagnation of *gugak*] *is due to the fact that there was no changjak* [creation of new pieces] *activity which expressed the emotions of contemporary life. Repetition brings stalemate and changjak is development: since this is a commonly heard phrase, we should pay attention to the example of the past and take care again* (I Hyegu: 1959, p.51 cited in Jeong Sujin: 2008, p.211). The fact that I Hyegu was active with the Kyeongseong (present-day Seoul) Central Broadcasting Station (*Kyeongseong Jung'ang Bangsongguk*, in Japanese *Keijō chūō hōsōkyoku*) in the 1930s might have coloured his perspective to favour more innovative approaches that would appeal to wider audiences.

On the opposite side of the debate stood Jang Sahun, a member of the Cultural Properties Committee at the time, and I's second-in-command at the new Department of Traditional Music at Seoul National University. He lamented the fact that *gugak* artists were gradually moving away from tradition, stating that: *without having deeply researched what the traditional techniques are, they indiscriminately flow along their own line and rely on unacceptable techniques to sort things out* (Jang Sahun: 1966, pp.159–60 cited in Jeong Sujin: 2008, p.214). Jang's history as a former student and member of the I Royal Family Court Music Bureau (*I Wangjik Aakbu*) may have contributed to his more

conservative approach. Taking the middle ground was the concert master of the *Kungnip gugagweon* (nowadays known in English as the National *Gugak* Centre) at the time, Seong Gyeongrin. He argued that: *Whether it be for the contemporisation of gugak, or for the creation of a new national music, our first, most basic task should be the correct transmission of our musical heritage* (Seong Gyeongrin: 1960, p.73 cited in Jeong Sujin: 2008, p.213). Seong was also a former student and member of the I Royal Family Court Music Bureau, and his history of teaching *gugak* at various academic institutions demonstrates his focus on education.

These different standpoints are still debated, but what is important about the debates of the 1950s and 1960s is that they were attempting to justify how traditional genres should be treated in the present and future. While each of these standpoints has stimulated different forms of activity (for example, Killick: 2010, pp.124–49 provides a detailed account of the experimentation that went into making *changgeuk* continue to have both traditional and popular relevance), it was Jang Sahun's point of view that won in the ICP policy, and a firm focus on preserving the *weonhyeong* (archetype or original form) became the guiding principle of the preservation system for many decades.

Moving into the 1970s, the focus on *weonhyeong* became more entrenched in the case of *pansori*, with an increased emphasis on *badi* (lineage) rather than *deoneum* (an individual *sorikkun*'s style as exemplified in their rendition of certain parts of the story). In 1964, it was only certain *pansori* singers' *deoneum* of *Chunhyangga* that were designated for preservation, but moving into the 1970s the focus became much more concentrated on an entire story sung in the style of a particular *pansori* school, and at this time Bak Dongjin's *wanchang* (full rendition of a *pansori* piece) performances captured the spirit of the times (Kim Kee Hyung [Gim, Gihyeong] : 2006, p.89). Killick : 2010, p.126 highlights how in the 1960s *pansori* suffered from a lack of patronage due to its perceived inability to compete with the popularity of *changgeuk*, and this might help explain the popularity and support that the idea of the *wanchang* enjoyed in *pansori* circles.

In light of the shift in the preservation agenda, from 1973 the founding members of the Society of *Pansori* Research (*Pansori Hakhoe*) – Jeong Byeonguk, Gang Hanyeong, I Bohyeong and Go Hyeon'guk – worked to promote this extended style of performance, using this as a means to combat the loss of popularity *pansori* had seen due to the rise of *changgeuk* (Howard: 2008, p.170). With the support of *Deep-Rooted Tree* (*Ppuri kipeun namu*), an arts journal and associated company led by Han Changgi, and the *Han'guk Ilbo* (*Korea Times*), where Ye Yonghae was working, this performance style rapidly grew in popularity. However, as Howard describes it, the performances fell prey to their own success:

> *As singers recognised their new status, they demanded higher fees, not least since they were now generously rewarded for performing short pansori segments on television or at festivals in major venues, so felt they should apply some form of multiplier to arrive at an appropriate fee for a wanchang performance. The Pansori Hakhwe* [sic]*, though, used sponsorship to cover what they were unable to raise at the box office, and found it difficult to increase their funding. Several singers refused to perform when offered what they considered inadequate payments, and criticism began to be levelled at the Pansori Hakhoe itself. The performance events, though, had now showcased the entire pansori repertoire as practised within the major lineages that were now documented, and so the decision was taken to suspend the series. The legacy survived, though, for many wanchang recordings had been or were soon made.* (2008, p.170)

Perhaps the most well respected *wanchang* recordings were made by *Deep-Rooted Tree*, in collaboration with *Korea Britannica*. Following the success of their *wanchang* performance series, which concluded in 1978 after a hundred concerts, in 1982 *Korea Britannica* released a series of the five core *pansori* stories over twenty-three LP records, under the title *Ppuri kipeun namu pansori daseot madang* (*Deep-Rooted Tree Five Pansori Episodes*), with *Chunhyangga* sung by Jo Sanghyeon, *Simcheongga* sung by Han Aesun, *Heungboga* and *Sugungga* sung by Bak Bongsul, and finally *Jeokbyeokka* sung by Jeong Gweonjin. These included extensive booklets with explanations of the repertoire, as well as a full transcription of the text with explanation of the more archaic language.

In 1989, *Korea Britannica* began to release a second series of albums, with *Chunhyangga* sung by

Choe Seunghui, *Simcheongga* sung by Jo Sanghyeon, *Sugungga* sung by Jeong Gwangsu, *Jeokbyeokka* sung by Song Sunseop, and finally *Heungboga* sung by O Jeongsuk. In a change from the previous recordings, in the second series well-known *pansori* aficionados (*gwimyeongchang*) were invited to provide *chuimsae* (shouts of encouragement) which were included in the recording as an integral part of a *pansori* performance. Another change from the first series was the title, now *Ppuri kipeun namu pansori daseot batang* (*Deep-Rooted Tree Five Pansori Episodes*). This change of title is revealing: while both *madang* and *batang* translate similarly into English, and are words used to describe the core repertoire of *pansori*, the latter indicates a perceptual shift to a more fixed foundation for the *pansori* genre. This is emphasised in the liner notes, which are quick to point out and praise the fact that the *sorikkun* had shown little to no variation between different recordings. We can see here the power of the 'original form' paradigm taking effect, with the institutionalisation of *pansori* having a marked influence on the aesthetics of the genre.

The focus on lineage, with the *wanchang* as a rite of passage to demonstrate one's mastery of a certain style, has been maintained until the present day. However, with new legislation (the Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Properties, *Muhyeong munhwajae bojeon mit jinheung e gwanhan beomnyul*) enacted on 28 March 2016, while it is too early to establish concrete effects, it will be interesting to see whether and how the system will change in the future. Choe Hyejin (2016, p.419) cites the Cultural Heritage Administration's justifications for this change in legislation, which focuses on the enactment of the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003[5] and the fierce regional competition to claim intangible cultural heritage as one's own, for example when China proclaimed the Korean folk song *Arirang*, also sung by their ethnic Korean minority (*Chaoxianzu/Joseonjeok*), as their own cultural heritage in 2011.

These two events seem to have highlighted the need for new legislation, as within the old system:

> *The narrowing scope of intangible cultural property as well as the principle of maintaining the weonhyeong* (original form) *of intangible cultural properties was causing an impediment to creative succession and development; the challenge of popular demand for traditional crafts was endangering the transmission of arts and crafts;* [and] *the changing societal environment's negative impact on the sustainability of transmission through apprenticeship* (Cultural Heritage Administration, quoted in Choe Hyejin: 2016, p.419, my translation).

These were all considered issues which required rectifying. The 2016 legislation advocates a clear shift in focus, changing *the principle of preserving and promoting intangible cultural properties to attempting to move towards the combination of the traditional and the contemporary* (Cultural Heritage Administration, quoted in Choe Hyejin: 2016, p.419, my translation).

Strategies to be employed to make this happen include introducing a transmission system through university education; the bringing together of traditional crafts with knowledge of contemporary design, management systems and intellectual property rights; and the support of international exchange through overseas exhibitions and performances.

With regards to this more international and promotional outlook, Choe (2016, p.420) highlights two institutions that are to be set up under the new legislation: the Korean Intangible Cultural Property Promotion Centre (*Han'guk muhyeong munhwajae jinheung sent'eo*) in the Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation, to support enterprises and activities related to the promotion of ICP more efficiently (Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Properties, line 46); and the UNESCO Asia Pacific Intangible Cultural Heritage International Information Networking Centre, to support activities protecting the Asia Pacific region's intangible cultural heritage (Act, line 47). This institutional support highlights Korea's aim to become a regional leader in the preservation and promotion of ICP.

Of particular interest in the new legislation is the shift from the focus on *weonhyeong* (원형, 原形, original form) to *jeonhyeong* (전형, 典型, exemplary form), which reflects the more open, less rigid guidelines of the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Other new additions to the official vocabulary are the terms 'honorary holder'

(*myeongye boyuja*), referring to *boyuja* over the age of 80, and 'living human treasure' (*in'gan munhwajae*) – a term which, as already noted, has been in common use since the late 1950s but has only now been taken into the official vocabulary. It is also to be noted that the term 'Important Intangible Cultural Property' is to be replaced with the term 'National Intangible Cultural Property' (2016, p.420); one would presume that this could be a strategy to combat the perceived lower status of regional and city intangible cultural properties. As Choe points out, there is to be a further drive to find and designate further regional and city Intangible Cultural Properties as well (2016, pp.422–3).

However, Choe also highlights certain tasks that still require further focus and development if *pansori* is to develop well under the new legislation: she argues particularly that there is a need for leadership from master singers who can show the representative form of Korean *pansori*. She states that there are outstanding master *pansori* singers who have not been designated within the system, and that particularly in the provinces, these master singers (and master drummers) should actively be sought out, supported and designated as either national, regional or city intangible cultural properties (2016, pp.418). In reality, this is by no means a new argument, as the recordings for the *Deep-Rooted Tree* series described above were already claiming the same aim in the 1980s. Choe also emphasises that although the transmission of good *pansori* lineages is important, the role and responsibility of *sorikkun* should lie with hard work and *deugeum* (the creation of one's true *pansori* voice), as *sorikkun* who work on this will naturally be the ones selected as holders of intangible cultural properties (2016, p.436). These tasks begin to highlight some of the areas that the ICP system, while successful in many areas, has not always been able to address. The following section will examine in further detail some of the criticisms of the ICP system as it has operated so far.

Criticisms of the ICP system

While the ICP is without doubt to be credited for the survival of many genres that would not have otherwise been transmitted until today, no system can be perfect, and there are several critiques to examine. The first comes from Jeong Sujin, who in her 2008 book *Muhyeong munhwajae eui tansaeng* (*The Birth of Intangible Cultural Properties*) addresses two concerns with regard to the current structure of the system. The first is that the system's methods of administration and management are based on the preservation of archetypes and treat intangible heritage as tangible heritage – an issue which is a contradiction in terms and conflicts with the understanding of culture as being *the process of change itself* (from Rapport and Overing: 2000, p.96 cited in Jeong Sujin: 2008, p.14). The second is that the artists within the system lose their artistic agency by participating in it, and are treated only as legal objects for the management of the system:

> *On the one hand, intangible cultural properties are the 'national culture's archetype (weonhyeong)' which protect Korea's distinct national characteristics, and under the premise that they are cultural assets which must be protected at the national level, the producers are not artists possessing artistic creative skills but rather named as 'holders (boyuja)' who must dumbly transmit the intangible cultural properties. They are distinguished from other producers in the artistic world due to their being given the honour of being 'boyuja' (or in'gan munhwajae, living human treasure), along with financial support. Furthermore, the fact that the acknowledgement of being a 'boyuja' is decided in a way that has nothing (or very little) to do with the relationship between art and performance producers, that simply relies on external logic, this is another aspect in which this system also differs greatly from other artistic fields.* (Jeong Sujin: 2008, p.228, my translation)

Jeong goes on to explain that the system works because in a society where art is looked down upon, artists will adapt to it in order to gain the honour of being a *boyuja* rather than 'just' an artist. It is possible to see why artists would buy into the system, but the problem remains that in so doing, the potential for artistic development is severely curtailed.

Seo Yu Seok criticises the broadness of the ICP system, questioning how Music and Dance for the Rite to Royal Ancestors (*Jongmyo jeryeak*), and now the pan-Korean folksong *Arirang*, can be preserved using the same legislation as *pansori* (2016, p.136). He describes how the concept of *weonhyeong* led to the establishment of a need to copy one's teacher exactly, with the emergence of complete repertory performances helping to prove one's faithfulness to the line, and how

this focus on lineage led to the disappearance of the concept of *deoneum* (a term indicating new scenes or styles created by master singers to prove their mastery) thus removing the possibility for artistic development. There is an interesting parallel here with Christopher Small's (1998, p.88) discussion of how only long-gone masters are considered part of the canon of Western classical music. Seo criticises how the designation of certain lineages as intangible heritage meant others were gradually sidelined and forgotten (2016, pp.145–8), a matter that is also criticised by Yoo Youngdai [Yu Yeongdae] (2013) and Choe Hyejin (2016). However, Seo argues that, with the new 2016 law changing the focus to *jeonhyeong* as the exemplary form, there is now room for more creativity and variety to be reintroduced into the genre, although this will depend on how the new legislation is implemented (2016, p.153).

With regards to *weonhyeong*, Yang (2003, p.81) and Howard (2012b, pp.133–8) compare the problem with the concept of an archetype, in that once it is designated it cannot be changed, even if later research discovers that the genre was originally performed a different way. Howard (2006, pp.28–38) also offers a criticism, underlining the arbitrariness of designating something as an archetype when it has often undergone significant change in order to be considered suitable for ICP designation. He offers the example of *Ganggangsullae*, National Intangible Cultural Property No. 8, a form of play combining dance and song, originally done by women. *Ganggangsullae* was restructured, at least partially, by the late Bak Byeongcheon, who came from a shaman family on Jindo Island, and was also involved in restructuring several other genres for designation:

> *Ganggangsullae used to be performed by women to the light of the full moon and could go on for a very long time. I reorganised it totally differently to create a formal genre lasting thirty minutes. In the old days, the women had started, stopped, played, joked, sung and so on. They sang what they felt like singing. If I included everything as it had been, then I could not make Ganggangsullae beautiful for the 1972 National Folk Arts Contest. … In reality, then, Ganggangsullae as it is now performed is my composition. Someday perhaps, people will research the old performance style and reinstate it. But, what we now perform is a professional work, taking elements from the tradition to show its beauty.* (Interview with Bak Byeongcheon in Howard: 2006a, p.107)

The National Folk Arts Contest was at the time considered a ticket to designation within the ICP system. Indeed, Yang (2003, p.38) states that the judges at the contest were predominantly made up of members of the Cultural Properties Committee (*Muhyeong Munhwajae Wiweonhoe*). The practice is heavily criticised by Jeong Sujin, who describes how the demands of judges exacerbated moves towards making traditional arts suitable for stage performance. She cites the comments of judges in the 1963 contest: *The weonhyeong should be preserved as it is, while there should also be change (diversity), teamwork, timing, putting the text in order etc. There should be an elevation as an art form* (I Duhyeon in *Chosŏn Ilbo* 11/10/1963, cited in Jeong: 2008, p.219).

Finally, criticisms of the effect the ICP system has had on genres in regions outside of Seoul have also been raised. I Myeongjin (2015, pp.131–140) addresses the effect on cultural properties designated at the provincial and city levels. Firstly, he notes there has been a decrease of transmission in the provinces as master singers designated as *boyuja* move to Seoul for their activities (this is also addressed in Um Haekyung: 2013, p.53): education, competitions and performances are concentrated in Seoul, and this is also where audiences are based, essentially meaning that performers can make a better income there than in other regions. Secondly, I Myeongjin states that there has been a decrease in the supporters of transmission, as young aspiring *sorikkun* move to the cities to learn from national-level *boyuja* who have already moved there. Thirdly, there is a perceived difference in rank between national and regional *boyuja*, whereby those at the provincial and city levels are considered to be of lesser quality. This leads to fewer people being willing to learn and to their lineages no longer being passed on, resulting in a loss of variety in the genre as a whole (this argument is also made by Yoo Youngdai: 2013, p.375). Finally, I Myeongjin argues that the provincial and city *boyuja* receive insufficient administrative support; their stipends are lower than those of their national counterparts leaving them unable to hold concerts as they have insufficient funds to rent performance spaces; they also do not receive free healthcare (which the national-level *boyuja* do). Again, like Seo above, I

Myeongjin emphasises that the problems were caused by the previous legislation, and that with new legislation coming into force there is the potential that at least some of these problems can begin to be addressed (2015, p.144). It will take time to discover how successful the new legislation will be.

Blaming regional inequality in the ICP system purely on legislation is probably too extreme; after all, it is not surprising that economic and cultural activities tend to gravitate towards metropolitan centres. These issues of the difference in support given to national (concentrated in Seoul) and regional ICP must also be understood within the context of a long history of regionalism in Korea, with Jeolla province in particular (where *pansori* is said to have originated) often perceived to have borne the brunt of regional disparity (Kim Wang-Bae: 2003, p.14 and pp.17–18). In the 2000s, and in fact beginning under the Roh Tae Woo administration more than a decade earlier, there was an increased movement towards the decentralisation of governmental authority. However, Bae Yooil (2016, p.81) argues that the Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun Hye administrations have to a certain extent retrenched on the issue of decentralisation. The change in legislation described by I may thus indicate a return to decentralisation with regard to the preservation of ICP; again, time will tell whether this is the case.

Preservation of *pansori*: the case of *Heungboga*

Having looked at the ICP system in general terms, I will now look in more detail at the preservation of *pansori* in particular. When *pansori* was first designated as an intangible cultural property in 1964, it was only for the story *Chunhyangga*, with different *sorikkun* designated for different episodes (*deoneum*) of the whole. Other designations followed for other stories, until in 1976, the *pansori* designation was unified under Important Intangible Cultural Property No. 5, with different holders designated for each of the five pieces preserved: *Jeokbyeokka*, *Chunhyangga*, *Heungboga*, *Simcheongga* and *Sugungga*. In this section, I focus on *Heungboga*, as this is the story I focused on during the course of my fieldwork (September 2014–2015) in the *Dongpyeonje* (the Eastern school of *pansori*, known for its direct and forceful singing) version, from Min Hyeseong, a student of the late *boyuja* Bak Songhŭi and *isuja* (literally 'graduate', the most junior of ranks in the hierarchy of teachers in the ICP system) in her own right (see Plates 1 and 2).

Plate 1
Tracing the line of transmission: in the present, my teacher Min Hyeseong, *isuja* of National Intangible Cultural Property No. 5 Heungboga.
Photo: Min Hyeseong.

Plate 2
The next link in the chain of transmission: Bak Songhui, *boyuja* of National Intangible Cultural Property No. 5 Heungboga (2002–2017).
Photo: Min Hyeseong.

The preservation of *Heungboga* as a specific repertory which began in 1971 with a report written by Jeong Hwayeong and Hong Yunsik for the Office of Cultural Properties, which made the case for *Heungboga* to be designated. There are several things to note in this report: first of all, it stated that *Heungboga* was one of the three great *pansori* pieces, alongside *Simcheongga* and *Chunhyangga*, and praised *Heungboga* above the other two for its balance of tragedy and comedy (1971, p.11). This is interesting since, historically speaking, *Jeokbyeokka* and *Sugungga* were usually considered 'higher' pieces, as they required more knowledge of Chinese classics, which made them more popular with elite patrons. In contrast, Jeong and Hong explicitly distance *Heungboga* from Chinese influence, instead making links to Mongolian stories containing similar themes[6] (1971, p.7), and praising *Heungboga* for the local flavour of its location and characters. This is further supported by their description of *pansori*'s origins in shamanism which they describe as being a purely Korean religion (1971, p.28). We can see the origins of this argument in the writings of Choe Namseon and Yi Neunghwa back during the colonial period which were discussed at the start of this paper. Bearing in mind the explicitly nationalistic aim of the ICP system, it is hardly surprising that the reports attempted to portray the story as untouched by external influence.

The report goes on to provide the text of several *sorikkun's* versions of *Heungboga*, before listing several candidates for designation: Bak Rokju (see Plate 3), Bak Dongjin, Jang Yeongchan, Gang Dogeun, Gong Daeil and Hong Cheongtaek. Brief biographical data was provided for each candidate, for example Bak Rokju in Table 1. Although multiple candidates were named as potential holders, it was only Bak Rokju who was designated holder in 1971. What might explain this? Bak Dongjin, also a candidate for *Heungboga*, was already designated as the *boyuja* of *Jeokbyeokka*, but what about the others? Bak Rokju had previously been designated for her version of an episode (*Gisaeng jeomgo*/ 'March of the Courtesans') in *Chunhyangga* in 1964, and was hence already recognised institutionally as a master singer. But as the system changed from a focus on *deoneum* (individual creation of a scene or song) to a focus on *badi* (lineage), it was not possible for all the master singers to remain holders of *Chunhyangga*, hence, most likely, there was a desire for those who were already designated to be given precedence in becoming holders of other stories. Of the six *sorikkun* originally designated as holders of *Chunhyangga*, Gim Sohui, Gim Yeonsu and Gim Yeoran remained holders of *Chunhyangga*, Jeong Gwangsu and Bak Choweol became holders of *Sugungga* and Bak Rokju became the holder of *Heungboga*. Bak Rokju had been one of the most prolific recording artists of the colonial period (according to Jeong Yeongjin: 2004, p.98 and p.118), as well as being a founding member of the Joseon Vocal Music Research Society. She had participated in some of the most famous *changgeuk* performances of the early twentieth century, and her impressive résumé (see Table 1) is given in the report much more fully than those of her competitors.

Bak Rokju passed away in 1979, and although Gang Dogeun was designated a holder for *Heungboga* in 1988 (a post he held until his death in 1996), a successor to Bak Rokju's line was not designated until 2002 when Bak Songhui and Han Nongseon became joint holders.[7] Han

Plate 3
The originator of the lineage - poster for a concert commemorating the birth of Bak Rokju, the first *boyuja* of National Intangible Cultural Property No. 5 Heungboga (1971–1979).
Photo: Min Hyeseong, 30 May, 2015.

Table 1
Information on Bak Rokju from Jeong and Hong (1971, 153, author's translation).

Name	Bak Rokju
Birth date	25th January 1906 (66 years of age at the time of the report)
Studio Address	Seoul, Jongno district, Doneui-dong 21-14
Home Address	Seoul, Jongno district, Nakweon-dong 158
Learning	• Study of Chinese characters • Studied *pansori* under Bak Gihong, Song Man'gap, Jeong Jeongryeol, Gim Changhwan, Gim Jeongmun and Yu Seongjun
Records	• Recorded *pansori* at Columbia, Victor, Okeh, Taepyeongyang Records • Performances of *gukkeuk* (*changgeuk*), member of the Gugak Hyeophoe, teacher of vocal music at the Gugak Yesul Hakkyo, designated as *boyuja* (holder) of ICP No. 5 *pansori*
Prizes received	• 1964: lifetime achievement award *gugak* award (Minister of Public Information) • 1968: cultural heritage lifetime achievement award • 1968: *gugak* grand prize (Minister of Culture and Public Information)
Family	Herself

passed away within only a few months of designation, leaving Bak Songhui as the sole holder. Bak, who celebrated her 90th birthday in 2016, was active as both a performer and teacher until her passing in February 2017. Towards the end, her age was beginning to limit her activities as she jokingly told me in a meeting on 19 December 2014; *pansori* is an art form that ripens with life experience, so aged 90 she felt she was slowly beginning to understand how to sing it properly, but now she was too weak to put her realisations into practice.

According to the new ICP legislation, holders over the age of 80 become honorary holders (*myeongye boyuja*), as they may well be physically unable to carry out their duties (Choe Hyejin: 2016, p.411). In 2013, a call went out for applications to the position of *boyuja* for a variety of different genres, including *Heungboga*. In the call, the following were listed as potential *boyuja* candidates:

(1) *Jeonsu jogyo* (assistant teacher) of the Important ICP
(2) *Isuja* (graduate, the most junior level of the teaching hierarchy) of the Important ICP
(3) *Boyuja* of a city/province level ICP
(4) *Jŏnsu jogyo* of a city/province level ICP
(5) *Isuja* of a city/province level ICP
(6) Any transmitter of the genre (*ilban jeonseungja*)[8]

Auditions were held in which thirteen individuals took part, but no final decision was made, hence a new round of auditions was scheduled for three years later;[9] there has been no declaration of a new *boyuja* as I write this (October 2018).

Clearly, the process of designation can be fraught, as members of the Cultural Properties Committee with different interests may support different candidates. As each *pansori* story has multiple versions, first of all justifying which version to preserve can cause significant debate (as we saw in the critique of Seo Yu Seok (2016) above, and as is also discussed in Yoo Youngdai (2013)). Having decided on a particular version by a particular master, each master will have multiple students who may each have multiple students, so the potential pool of candidates for one lineage may be quite large, hence choosing one over the others can be difficult. Also, the candidates themselves will often promote themselves for the candidacy: Yoo Youngdai (2013, p.379) cites the well-known example of Jo Tongdal and Nam Haeseong who competed for the position of holder of *Sugungga* after Bak Choweol passed away. This helps explain why the space between the death of one holder and the designation of the next may often span several years, if not decades. In the late Bak Songhui's case, as there is no officially designated descendant of her line it is likely that the designation of a new holder will take some time.

Table 2
Areas to be examined when testing potential *pansori boyuja* (Choe Hyejin: 2016, p.431, author's translation)

Area	Classification	Areas to be examined	Measurement standard	Distribution of points
Sori (song)	Degree to which expression is based on tradition	Traditionality of singing style	Degree to which traditionality of singing style is retained	50
	Degree of artistic perfection and skill level	Degree of accuracy of lyrics, rhythm (*jangdan*)	Whether lyrics and *jangdan* are accurate or not	15
		Level of command of singing style	Level of command of singing style	25
		Power of expression of song (*chang*), narration (*aniri*) and gesture (*ballim*)	Degree of power of expression of song (*chang*), narration (*aniri*) and gesture (*ballim*)	10
Gobeop (drumming)	Degree to which expression is based on tradition	Traditionality of drumming style	Level to which drumming style is/is not traditional	50
	Degree of artistic perfection and skill level	Degree of accuracy of *Jangdan*	Whether *Jangdan* are accurate or not	25
		Compatibility with *sori*	Whether *chuimsae* (shouts of encouragement) are appropriate to the *sori*	25

What, then, are the standards by which a holder is designated? Choe Hyejin (2016, pp.428–31) addresses these, listing the skills required of a *pansori boyuja* (see Table 2). Choe makes the point that being able to judge these skills requires extreme specialist knowledge from those on the judging committee (2016, p.432). But, as we have seen above, the members of the Cultural Properties Committee come from a variety of backgrounds. When new potential holders audition, even though experts from the genre itself are invited to join the judging panel, the final decision rests with the committee, and this raises the question to what extent decisions are taken through a judgement of the performer's skill. Much of the decision-making process in the committee is opaque and it is hard to know exactly how decisions are made.

What is rather revealing, however, is the vocabulary employed in the standards listed above, and what they reveal about perceptions of tradition within the ICP system, at least prior to 2016. The most important category for song or drumming is the degree to which it is based on tradition, judged by the 'traditionality' of the singing or drumming style. The term 'traditionality' (*jeontongseong*, 전통성, 傳統性) is constructed from the word for tradition (*jeontong*) and the qualifier *seong*, which here implies a state of being. The term *seong* does however have associated meanings of nature, or natural essence: *seongpum* (성품, 性品) refers to a person's nature or disposition, *seongjil* (성질, 性質) refers to something's essence or intrinsic quality, *seongbyeol* (성별, 性別) refers to one's gender or sex. In this sense, we can understand that the tradition that is being judged in potential holders' performance is perceived as something that is intrinsic to the genre, a part of its natural essence that is to be uncovered by the performer. This perception of tradition clearly ties in well with the perception of the *weonhyeong*, the archetypal original form that is supposed to be preserved under the pre-2016 ICP legislation.

This perception of tradition as something essential and intrinsic, while clearly problematic as seen in the criticisms of the *weonhyeong* principle above, also ties in further to who can lay claim to this tradition. By categorising the genres within the ICP system as being essentially traditional by nature, this denies the possibility of this kind of traditionality existing elsewhere. In his discussion of 'authentic' Aboriginal Australian identity, Griffiths shows how a discourse of authenticity *may overwrite and overdetermine the full range of representations* (1994, p.72) through which identities might be represented, hence *disavow*[ing] *the possibilities for the hybridised subjects of the colonising*

process to legitimate themselves or to speak in ways which menace the authority of the dominant culture (1994, p.76). In laying claim to this essentialised form of tradition, the pre-2016 ICP system sets up an 'authentic,' authoritative version of tradition, thus blocking the possibility of alternative or hybrid definitions of tradition being employed. Genres that lay claim to an alternative perspective of tradition often struggle with being perceived as 'inauthentic', while their very existence is a challenge to the dominant rhetoric of traditionality as defined by the ICP system. The categories for judging a potential holder therefore create a situation in which a stake is claimed for defining what tradition in *pansori* is, and how *sorikkun* are to engage with their art.

Although the future of *Heungboga*'s designation is still unclear, the Bak Rokju line[10] remains one of the most popular lineages (Yoo Youngdai: 2013, p.366) and so seems to be in no immediate risk of disappearing. However, there are criticisms of the way *Heungboga* has been transmitted. One that is commonly heard is that the version transmitted by the late Bak Songhui is not the true *weonhyeong*, as the last section, where Nolbo opens the gourds, had been dropped from the repertoire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was only re-created and re-inserted by Bak Rokju in the latter half of the twentieth century (see, e.g., Choe Hyejin: 2016, p.412). Choe Donghyeon (2013, pp.246–7) argues otherwise, stating that it is simply because the narrative structure of *Heungboga* was only stabilised recently, so differences in the way the story was told in the past were simply due to the narrative not yet having reached a stable state.

Another criticism is made by Lee Gyu Ho [I Gyuho] (2006, pp.210–12), who argues that the style of *Heungboga* preserved today can no longer be called *Dongpyeonje* (Eastern School) as it is greatly different from the commanding tone and hammering endings of the *Dongpyeonje* sung by Song Man'gap, one of the oldest recorded singers of the style. Lee provides several explanations: firstly, *sorikkun* in the past developed their own interpretation rather than following their teachers exactly, which led to variations in style between student and teacher. Secondly, the influence of the *Seopyeonje* (Western School, known for its delicate ornamentation and expressive emotions, founded by Bak Yujeon) style was very popular in the colonial period, and can be felt even in Song Man'gap's later recordings, so this may have affected later *sorikkun*'s styles.[11] However, Lee argues that while Bak Rokju's recordings already demonstrate some softening, they still contain the essence of *Dongpyeonje* which was lost as the piece was passed on to the next generations - Bak Songhui and her student Chae Sujeong (2006, pp.210–2).

In contrast, Seo Yu Seok (2016, p.149) questions why it is a problem that the style of current students is more similar to Bak Songhui than to Bak Rokju. For him, the original form of Bak Rokju's *Heungboga* is retained in the text of the story, with musical variation coming from each artist's personal development. If people want to learn Bak Rokju's style exactly, he argues, then rather than learning from Bak Songhui they should learn from recordings of Bak Rokju. These two standpoints demonstrate different approaches to how *pansori* should be preserved: Lee Gyu Ho, writing in 2006, argues for a retention of the *weonhyeong* (original form), with too much deviation on the side of the next generation of holders being seen as harmful to that which is preserved. It should be noted that Lee (2006, p.212) seems rather ambivalent on what the *weonhyeong* actually entails, as he criticises later generations for losing the essence of *Dongpyeonje*, while at the same time taking issue with the system for encouraging *sajinsori* ('photographic sound'), that is, the blind imitation of the teacher without creating one's own voice. In contrast, Seo, writing in 2016 on the cusp of the new legislation, is an avid proponent of moving away from the concept of *weonhyeong* to the new guiding principle of *jeonhyeong* (exemplary form), considering that this can enable and encourage more artistic variation. It is clear, then, that discussions on *weonhyeong* as opposed to *jeonhyeong* are a site of contestation, setting the tone for definitions of *pansori* tradition that may have far-reaching effects on the development of the genre.

Conclusion

This article has traced the history of *pansori* preservation, highlighting how the *weonhyeong* principle, and its associated exclusive perception of what constitutes tradition, have become deeply entrenched within *pansori* as it was preserved prior to 2016. This has not been without its problems, which the new post-2016 legislation aims to redress. However, considering that *pansori* preservation has been skewed towards preserving the *weonhyeong* over several decades, it

seems unlikely that this will change suddenly with the introduction of new legislation. So far at least, there seems to be little to no visible difference in how *pansori* has been treated pre- and post-2016. Although the 2016 legislation claims to be *attempting to move towards the combination of the traditional and the contemporary*, any experimentation or deviation from 'traditional' or *weonhyeong pansori* remains compartmentalised away from the auspices of the Cultural Heritage Administration.

New designations of ICP indicate that, for new designations at least, the shift in focus is being taken into account: National Intangible Cultural Property No. 129, the folk song *Arirang*, for example, includes many popular versions which would not have been considered 'traditional' under the previous legislation. There is hope, then, for a gradual broadening of focus away from the *weonhyeong* principle, to allow for the safeguarding of traditional culture in a way that remains dynamic and relevant to contemporary life. For genres that have long been preserved under the old system, however, it seems like long-term engagement at all levels of the preservation hierarchy will be necessary before any significant change in attitude can be observed.

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ENDNOTES

1 The Republic of Korea, henceforth Korea.

2 Names in Korean are romanised according to Revised Romanisation rules unless the authors themselves have provided alternative spellings for their names.

3 This summary is from Howard (2006, p.6).

4 It should be noted that the Japanese system has since become much more accommodating to folk genres as well – for a more detailed discussion on this, see Arisawa (2012).

5 Available online at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17716&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION= 201.html. Accessed 29/01/17.

6 The term 'theme' here is used in terms of Parry and Lord's theory of epic storytelling, referring to *groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale* (Lord: 1960, p.68).

7 By choosing the Bak Rokju line of *Heungboga* for designation, this subsequently has meant that only *sorikkun* who can trace their lineage back to Bak Rokju – either by having learned from her directly, or by having learned from one of her students – are eligible to become *boyuja*.

8 This last category was qualified further, pertaining to individuals who had not been officially recognised by *boyuja* at national, regional or city levels but had one of the following qualities:
(1) Was trained in the genre at a certified traditional culture university
(2) Has won prizes at competitions or exhibitions related to the genre
(3) Has experience of teaching in an education programme related to the practice of the genre
(4) Has received a licence to repair (tangible) cultural properties (this refers more to the crafts category of intangible cultural heritage rather than the performance category).

9 This information came to me from an individual who is intimately involved with this application process, hence I have chosen not to identify the person.

10 The Bak Rokju line is meant here in the wider sense of people who have learned *Heungboga* from Bak Rokju, or one of her students, or one of her students' students, etc. This is not necessarily limited to the Bak Rokju line designated as ICP and transmitted by Bak Songhui, as other *sorikkun* not within the ICP hierarchy might still sing in this style. It is the fact that this style is sung even by those not part of the ICP hierarchy that attests to this style's popularity.

11 Similar arguments regarding *Boseongsori* (a comparatively new school of *pansori* singing centred around Boseong, founded by Bak Yujeon and developed by Jeong Eungmin, also called *Gangsanje*) *Simcheongga* are made by Yeonok Jang (2013, pp.223–6).

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