Hyangga and the Hwarang

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1. Introduction

Hyangga was the first unique historical genre to appear in the history of Korean poetry. In other words, its characteristics as poetry set hyangga apart from other similar genres throughout the world. In spite of such uniqueness, however, hyangga hitherto has been understood and explained solely in terms of its "universality". For instance, scholars have explained away and interpreted any Buddhist language or code to be found in a hyangga, if any, on the basis of philosophical system or logic "universal" to Buddhist cultures without trying to elucidate the nature or significance of that particular poem.¹ Likewise, the dominant tendency in hyangga research up to the present has been to understand and interpret any incantatory language or principle to be found in a hyangga, if any, through the logic "universal" to incantatory cultures of shamanism.² In addition, any symbolism to be found in a

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¹ Because it is the approach most commonly taken to understand hyangga, examples of a Buddhist perspective are numerous. From among them, the most representative studies are Kim Tong-uk, "Silla Hyangga-ŭ Pulgyo Munhwajŏk Koch'al [An Inquiry into the Hyangga of Silla from the Perspective of a Buddhist Culture]," Han'guk Kayo-ŭ Yŏn'gu [A Study of Korean Poetry], Ŭlyumunhwasa, 1961, Kim Chong-u, Hyangga Munhak Yŏn'gu [A Study of the Hyangga Literature], Iu Ch'ulp'ansa, 1975, and Kim Un-hak, Silla Pulgyo Munhak Yŏn'gu [A Study of the Buddhlist Literature of Silla], Hyŏnamsa, 1976.

² From among studies that adopt this perspective, the most representative ones are Kim Yŏl-gyu, "Hyangga-ŭ Munhakchŏk Yŏn'gu Ilban [A Point in the Literary Study of Hyangga]," Hyangga-ŭ Ŭmnunhakchŏk Yŏn'gu [A Linguistic and Literary Study of Hyangga], Sŏgang Taehakkyo Inmun Kwahak Yŏn'guso [Sogang University Research Institute for Humanities], 1972, and Pak Kr-jung, Silla Kayo-wa Kasulmul-ŭ Yŏn'gu [A Study of Silla Poetry and Its Object of Discourse] Iu Ch'ulp'ansa, 1981.
hyangga has been understood and explained away not as one possessing a particular network of meanings unique to the culture which gave birth to it but as a symbolism "universal" to early human history, or as an archetypal symbolism, and its disintegration.  

If the proposition that hyangga is a unique historical genre produced by our own cultural constitution and therefore not to be found anywhere else in the world is true, however, it becomes only too obvious that the world view or sensibility unique to hyangga cannot be examined and elucidated through such "universal" logic.

Keeping these points in mind, I will endeavor in this paper to examine hyangga in terms of the hwarang, the group which played a central role in the creation and enjoyment of this genre, not through a "universal" logic but through a focus on the uniquenes of the literary form. It is my hope thereby to shed light on and add to our understanding of the literary qualities that make hyangga what it is, or, in other words, the poetics of this genre.

2. The Hwarang and the Buddhist Nature of Hyangga

When it comes to hyangga, the role of the hwarang probably can never be emphasized too much. That historical figures such as Masters Yungch'on, Ch'ungdam, and Wolmyong, once understood solely as Buddhist monks, were in fact outstanding composers of hyangga and belonged to the hwarang as well tells us that they cannot be considered apart from their relationship with the youth corps. In addition, the relationship between hyangga and the hwarang has been an object of scholastic attention from early on, as evident from the fact that a follower of the hwarang like T'ugo also composed hyangga. In actual criticism of individual hyangga up to the present, however, scholars have failed to elucidate the nature of this genre on the basis of the philosophical system, world view, or sensibility unique to the hwarang because of their tendency to interpret the poems in terms of an incantatory, Buddhist, or archetypal philosophy.

As an example, let us examine the case of Master Wolmyong, who described himself as a "follower of the kuksön." He has left to us, among the hardly innum-

3 From among studies that adopt this perspective, the most representative ones are Kim Yol-gyu, "Han'guk Munhak-kwa Kŭ Kŏkchŏk-in Kŏk [Korean Literature and What Is Tragic in It]," Han'guk Munso-k-kwa Munhak Yŏn'gu [A Study of Korean Folk Customs and Literature], Il'ogak, 1975, and Ch'oe Chin-won, "Hyangga-ŭi Sŏjongdo [The Lyricism of Hyangga]," Kungmunhak-kwa Chayŏn [Our National Literature and Nature], Sung Kyun Kwan University Press, 1981
able hyangga extant, two works. "Song of Tushita-deva" and "Requiem for a
Deceased Sister." Scholars hitherto have interpreted the former work in terms of
the idea of Maitreya's incarnation or of the philosophy related to the belief in Maitreya,
on the basis of the fact that the ceremony of strewing flowers while singing hymns
praising Lord Buddha, which appears in the poem, implies an invocation to
Maitreya. As for the latter work, it has been interpreted as being based on the belief
in Amitabha since in the last two lines of the poem, "Ah, I, who will see [you again]
in Sukha-vati, I shall await [that day] by cultivating the truth," the poet endeavors
to overcome the sorrows of losing his sister through the belief in Amitabha. With these
two works as examples, Master Wolmyöng consequently has been understood to
comprehend beliefs in both Maitreya and in Amitabha. But if this were true, he can
in fact seem like an unreliable monk without any fixed belief, wavering between the
beliefs in Maitreya and in Amitabha. This is because the belief in the incarnation of
Maitreya is concerned with the present world, whereas that in Amitabha is other-
worldly.

Master Wolmyöng, however, said himself that he knew no Sanskrit songs since
he was a follower of the kūksǒn, thereby firmly stating that he belonged to the
hwarang and not to the Buddhist monks. Of course, we cannot say that all Buddhist
monks knew Sanskrit songs since, both then and now as well as in China and in
Korea, those who know Buddhist songs are but a select group of specialists in

4 For instance, in his "Hyangga-rul Tonghæe Pon Wolmyöngsa-ũ Wich'í [The Position of Master
Wolmyöng as Seen Through Hyangga]," Han'guk Munhak Nongch'ong [Collection of Theses on Korean
Literature], vol 2, Han'guk Munhakhoe, 1979. Kim Chong-u describes Master Wolmyöng as "a talented
artist as well as a lucid Buddhist philosopher of Silla who held a dual belief in Amitabha and Maitreya in
terms of religion and who encompassed social participation and artistic purism in terms of literature."

5 If we may here term the Dharmałaksana school of thought leading from Asanga of India through
Hsuan-tsang of China down to Wonch'uk of Silla and, in particular, the strain of Buddhist philosophy by
which Kim Chu-sông the Chancellor had statues of Maitreya and Amitabha carved for his deceased
parents during the reign of King Sǒngdŏk as "Dharmałaksana school" (Mun Myöng-dae, "Silla
Pöpsangjong-ûi Sǒngnip Munje-wa Kô Misul [The Problem of the Formation of the Dharmałaksana
School in Silla and Its Art]," Yôksa Hakpo [History Journal], combined vol 62 and 63, Yôksa Hakhoe
[Korean Historical Association], 1974), Master Wolmyöng may also be understood as having belonged
to the Dharmałaksana school and, consequently, the fact that he sang of both Maitreya and Amitabha
can be accepted as natural. We must, however, remember that he was a follower of the hwarang and that he
also belonged to Sachi'ŏnwang Temple, a state-protection temple built in Sinyeom. Moreover, this forest
was located to the south of Naongsan, a holy place according to p'ungwolto, the belief unique to the
hwarang. Considering all these points, it seems rather far-fetched to link Master Wolmyöng's philosophical
system with that of the Dharmałaksana school solely on the basis of his two hyangga.
Buddhist music. But whether Master Wolmyǒng was a monk well versed in Buddhist songs or a follower of the kuksǒn with a flair for hyangga is crucial here because this was the moment when he was being promoted to the status of a yǒnṣǔng during an important ceremony held to revert the unnatural phenomenon of the simultaneous appearance of two suns. Amidst such situation, the question of whether Master Wolmyǒng, now promoted to the rank of a yǒnṣǔng, was adept at hyangga or at Buddhist songs was not only a matter of personal talent but of whether the urgency of the circumstance demanded support from Buddhist monks or from the hwarang, and herein lies the importance of the answer to this question. It therefore becomes evident that we understand these two poems by Master Wolmyǒng, who expressly stated that he was a follower of the hwarang, not through a Buddhist philosophical system but through that of the hwarang.

How then did the philosophical system of the hwarang differ from that of Buddhist monks? I am calling into question the hwarang’s philosophical system here because it directly translated into their ideology and it formed the basis of their perception of the world as well as of beauty. In other words, the hwarang perceived and reacted to the world and reality according to their unique philosophical system. As is well known, the hwarang philosophically were based not on Buddhism but on folk beliefs unique to Silla. Termed “pʻungwoldo” or “pʻungnyudo” in Samguksa (History of the Three Kingdoms) or in Samguk’yusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), the philosophical system of the hwarang came to be called “sŏmp’ung” during the Koryŏ Dynasty and onwards. That pʻungwoldo served the hwarang as their philosophical system is clear from the comment (reasons for establishing the hwarang) of King Chinhŭng, who was the very person to abolish the wonhwa and to establish the hwarang. After first stating that, out respect for his deceased father King Pŏphŭng, he had been serving Lord Buddha with all his heart and that he had had many temples constructed and encouraged many people to become Buddhist monks, King Chinhŭng goes on to say that because both his temperament and his tastes greatly admired “sinsŏn,” he had selected beautiful maidens as wonhwa and had ordered these wonhwa to select and guide aristocratic youths and to teach them filial piety, brotherly subordination, loyalty, and sincerity in order to foster them as key figures in governing the nation. When two wonhwa created problems, however, King Chinhŭng abolished the system altogether and “for many years afterwards, the king also thought that, for bringing prosperity to the nation, pʻungwoldo must first be established and thus ordered that virtuous young men from good families be selected and that they be called the ‘hwarang’ [累年壬又念 欲興邦國 須先風月道更下令選良家男子有德行者 改為花郞],” eventually setting up the hwarang. 6 We
may observe here that "bringing prosperity to the nation" was to be achieved not by promoting Buddhism but by first setting up p’ungwoルド, and hence the establishment of the hwarang as the group that would practice p’ungwoルド. In addition, judging from the fact that the followers of the wonhwahas taught filial piety, brotherly subordination, loyalty, and sincerity, that they were seen as key figures in governing the nation, and that they were linked to the belief in sinsŏn as well as from the fact that the leader of the hwarang was called "kuksŏn" and that competent ministers and brave soldiers were said to come from the hwarang’s training in virtuous and righteous deeds by "mutually cultivating virtue and righteousness," we can conclude that the wonhwasa and the hwarang were indeed from the same roots and that the two had p’ungwoルド, which was linked to the belief in sinsŏn, in common.

From what we have observed above, it becomes clear as to why the manuscript Chronicles of the Hwarang7 called the hwarang "followers of the sŏn" and their leader "p’ungwoルドchu." In other words, they were a group that worshipped sinsŏn (a concept that includes the gods and spirits of heaven and earth) and practiced p’ungwoルド. As is apparent from the passage cited above (from Samguk’yusa, vol. 3, ‘Misi the Maitreya Hwarang’, Chunjasa-jo), however, King Chinhŭng judged that, from between p’ungwoルド and Buddhism, the former was foremost in bringing prosperity to the nation and thus made it the key to governing the nation.

Of course, Buddhism likewise was believed to have as important a function as did p’ungwoルド in bringing prosperity to Silla, so much so that the Buddhism of this kingdom has been called a state-protection Buddhism. This is why the monarchs of Silla held state-protection Buddhist assemblies such as those for sutra recitation by one hundred monks whenever they wished their nation to flourish or whenever they faced great national crises. In other words, because their purpose was the protection of the nation through the deva (which were based on prajña-paramita), such assemblies took on the characteristics of state-protection assemblies.

Since they were essentially Buddhist assemblies, however, they were invariably different from the act of protecting the nation through military and political mechanisms. That is, the former was a method of protecting the state on a level that supposes the protection of the nation, which was perceived as samyag-vipaka, through

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7 Almost immediately after the Chronicles of the Hwarang was discovered in Pusan on February 16, 1989, the Seoul Shinmun obtained the manuscript and ran a complete translation I have here made use of the material that was printed in the Seoul Shinmun at the time.
the cultivation of prajna as being more important than through military and political mechanisms. A Buddhist war waged for the protection of the nation therefore was perceived as a holy war waged for the protection of samyag-dharma. In addition, although mudra assemblies from among various Buddhist assemblies were ones held to fend off enemy attacks by chanting mudra spells, they likewise were obviously related to the protection of dharma.

All of this signifies that, while Buddhist assemblies such as those for sutra recitation by one hundred monks or mudra assemblies were indeed held in order to pray for the peace and well-being of the nation and the royal house, they were done so always in conjunction with the aim of protecting dharma rather than solely for protecting the state. Such aspect of these assemblies is clear from the following facts: the assemblies for sutra recitation by one hundred monks, while being a supplicatory ritual, strongly expressed a desire to protect dharma; mudra assemblies tried to fend off the invading T'ang forces by setting up a Tantric platform in Sinyurim, which was already a holy place according to tradition.8

On the other hand, because state-protection rites in p'ungwoldo were held not as a part of protecting the religion itself but done so under the direct and concrete aim of protecting the nation, they differed in nature from the state-protection rituals held during Buddhist assemblies. And it goes without saying that King Chinhŭng's idea, mentioned above, that p'ungwoldo must come before Buddhism in "bringing prosperity to the nation" comes from such difference between the two philosophical systems.

Moreover, the manuscript Chronicles of the Hwarang shows us that, because they practiced p'ungwoldo, the followers of the sŏn were less than eager to embrace Buddhism in spite of King Pŏphŭng's official recognition of this new faith and King Chinhŭng's policy of promoting it. Such reluctance led Lord Horim, the 14th p'ungwolchu, to instruct the followers of the hwarang that "Because both sŏn and Buddhism pursue the truth, the hwarang too must not be ignorant of Buddhism" and to recommend them to accept the Buddhist faith according to their needs. Afterwards, sŏn and Buddhism gradually came to harmonize with each other.

When we consider that the p'ungwolchu was recommended from among aristocratic youths with exceptional skills in the arts of music, composition, and swordsmanship and with exceptional physical beauty and virtuous character and then

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appointed by the monarch or by the queen consort for a basically three-year term, the 14th p'ungwolchu must have been in active service some forty years since the hwarang system had first been institutionalized. Taking such point into account, we must bear in mind that the hwarang gradually began to accept Buddhism around this time (There are other examples of calling the hwarang “sŏn”. Ch'oe Ch'-i-won's Preface to the Monument to Nan the Hwarang, which states that the origin of establishing p'ungnyudo lay in the History of the Sŏn, four hwarang judged to have been the most outstanding and wisest throughout the four hundred-year history of the hwarang, which included Yong, were called the “Four Sŏn.” When we remember these cases, it should not be strange to see the word “sŏn” in the Chronicles of the Hwarang).

Of course, it goes without saying that the hwarang did not insist solely on p'ungwoldo but went through a historical development while embracing the three faiths of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism according to their needs. Their acceptance of these three faiths, however, was always one based on p'ungwoldo as their central philosophy and not at all one based on a wholesale embrace of foreign faiths at the expense of the native one. This is apparent from Ch'oe Ch'i-won's statement in his Preface to the Monument to Nan the Hwarang: after initially saying, for the sake of simplification, that p'ungnyudo comprehends the three faiths, Ch'oe implies that in fact goes beyond all three and then postpones further explanation to his History of the Sŏn. In other words, because p'ungnyudo had retained characteristics that were too unique to be clearly explained away by any one of the three faiths of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, while at the same time being influenced by and harmonizing with all three even until the last years of Silla during which Ch'oe lived, he had no choice but to leave a more detailed explanation to the History of the Sŏn, which charted the history of the youth corps.

Because Silla had managed to retain unique traditions throughout her long history of ten centuries, during which she grew and developed from the Six Clans of Chinhan into an ancient kingdom as we all know well, native beliefs were more alive and deep-rooted here than in any other ancient kingdom of Korea. Moreover, the fact that indigenous groups had gradually grown into a political force and eventually into a nation in Silla, whereas outsiders and refugees had grown into a political force and then into a nation in the cases of Koguryŏ and Paekche, resulted in the endurance of native beliefs in the former. This is why Silla was the last from among the Three Kingdoms to accept Buddhism and, even that, only after strong resistance from the people. Consequently, the so-called three faiths of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism were to emerge and to exert a strong influence on Silla only during
the latter half of her thousand-year-long history. Since extant records on the history of Silla concentrate on this latter half during which the three faiths influenced the kingdom, however, historical data on the situation in Silla during the first half, when her native beliefs exerted a greater influence, are but scanty. But, then again, a dearth of historical material does not mean that we can deny the fact.

That King Chinhŭng, finding the promotion of Buddhism inadequate for bringing prosperity to the nation, sought an alternative in p'ungwołdo; that Ch'oe Ch'i-won defined the Silla tradition of sŏn, or p'ungwołdo, differently from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism alike—these facts all tell us that unique native beliefs, with their origins predating the acceptance of such foreign faiths, held a significant position in Silla and that they continued to be transmitted to posterity. P'ungwołdo that the hwaraeng worshipped and practiced was the very inheritor of the sŏn philosophy, which had its roots in the native beliefs of Silla, and may therefore be called a more "logical" synthesis of primitive folk beliefs into a higher religion. This synthesis and elevation of primitive folk beliefs into a higher religion may have occurred some time during the reign (479-500 A.D.) of King Soji, the 21st monarch of Silla. Grounds for such conjecture lie in the fact that the 9th year of the reign of King Soji saw the following events: Naül Temple was constructed, the followers of the sŏn, the group of professional priests who were to hold ceremonies to the gods of national foundation such as Pak Hyŏkk'o and Lady Aryŏng and to the gods and spirits of heaven and earth at this temple, were institutionalized; the "sŏn" philosophy of this group was eventually transmitted to the p'ungwołdo philosophy of the hwaraeng, who were established during the reign of King Pŏphŏng (or King Chinhŭng). In other words, p'ungwołdo, practiced and worshipped by the followers of the sŏn, was a philosophical system fundamentally different from that of the three faiths such as Buddhism.

In this context, we must take into consideration that, although he was a Buddhist monk, Master Wolmyŏng was above all a follower of the sŏn and a follower of the hwaraeng whose basic philosophy was p'ungwołdo and that his philosophical system therefore was based not on Buddhism but on sŏn. He insisted on defining himself as a follower of the sŏn and not as a Buddhist monk, while at the same time accepting beliefs in both Maitreya and in Amitabha to a degree, because the roots of his philosophical system lay in p'ungwołdo even as he did accept Buddhism. Consequently, Master Wolmyŏng's two poems must be understood according to this philosophical system of his.

In fact, "Song of Tushita-deva" is based on a philosophical system vastly different from that of the belief in the incarnation of Maitreya. According to Buddhist
doctrine, Maitreya is the Buddha of the Future who, after residing in Tushita-deva for an infinite amount of time (5 billion 670 million years), will descend beneath Naga-vrksa in order to enlighten sattva. Welcoming Maitreya in "Song of Tushita-deva," however, is not done for such Buddhist purpose of enlightening sattva. Rather, it is performed in order to revert the heavenly disaster of the appearance of two suns by supplicating to the Buddha of the Future. It may be possible to see the act of supplicating to Maitreya for the reversion of a heavenly disaster itself as one of enlightening sattva. But the former act, as it appears in the poem, cannot be linked to the latter because it is unrelated either to ultimately making sattva take refuge in the Buddhist faith through a negation of this world or to saving and leading sattva from such thisworldly disasters to Tushita-deva. According to the p'ungwoldo philosophy worshipped by the hwarang, disasters in the heaven were directly linked to earthly, or national, ones. Instances of the p'ungwoldo philosophy, which connected national matters with those of heaven, are to be found in the following points: the ancestors of the Six Districts of Silla descended from heaven; King Chinhŭng commented that "the prosperity and downfall of a nation lies in the hands of heaven" and that he had received the jade belt from the high heaven above the cloud ("unsang" [literally, "above the cloud" or "on the cloud"]) through a heavenly messenger, and King Kyŏngdŏk was given a son to continue the dynasty through the mediation of Great Master P'yŏhun, who could freely move between earth and heaven.

The "Maitreya" in "Song of Tushita-deva" therefore is a Maitreya hwarang who repels the ill omen of the appearance of two suns, which is a natural as well as a heavenly disaster, by supplicating to gods and spirits and totally unrelated to the Buddha of the Future. In other words, a Maitreya hwarang is a thisworldly being with the divine power of realizing the ideals of p'ungwoldo, which aims to "bring prosperity to the nation" by accepting the belief in Maitreya, but not a Buddha of the Future. Hence the "Lord Maitreya" of "Song of Tushita-deva" signifies none other than Maitreya hwarang, or the hwarang, and the "flower" scattered in the cer-

9 It is especially noteworthy that "Song of Tushita-deva" calls Maitreya not by the name customarily used in Buddhism such as "Maitreya Buddha (彌勒菩薩, mūlīk puch’ŏ)" or "Maitreya Bodhisattva (彌勒菩薩, mūlīk posal)" but by the appellation "Lord Maitreya (彌勒座主, mūlīk chwajŭ)". This would seem to be because the hwarang, who showed a philosophical system based on p'ungwoldo, defined Maitreya not as a Buddhist entity (Buddha of the Future) but as a Maitreya hwarang (彌勒仙花; mūlīk sŏnhwa), the thisworldly incarnation of Maitreya as a hwarang, or as p'ungwolchu (the leader of the hwarang). Consequently, the "Lord Maitreya" in "Song of Tushita-deva" equals p'ungwolchu, a way of thinking that is doubtless based on the p'ungwoldo philosophy of the hwarang. That p'ungwoldo did in fact
emony of strewing flowers while singing hymns praising Buddha in the same poem signifies the Buddhist faction, which stood in opposition to the hwarang. And the appearance of two suns corresponds to the fierce conflict between these two factions. The hwarang here are the pro-royalists in pursuit of “bringing prosperity to the nation” while the Buddhists are linked to the aristocrats, who not only endeavored to check the monarch but even went on to plot against him. Seen from such a perspective, “Song of Tushita-deva” becomes a hyangga which reflects the strong wish of the hwarang that, by forcefully ordering the “flower” (aristocracy, Buddhists, anti-royalists) to serve the “Maitreya” (the hwarang, pro-royalists) well, they can bring peace and prosperity to the state. Moreover, the following facts once again confirm the p’ungwoldo philosophy of the hwarang, who equated themselves with Maitreya: Master Wolmyŏng was no ordinary Buddhist monk but belonged to Sach’ŏnwang Temple, a state-protection temple that was built in Sinyuri, and this forest was located to the south of Nangsan, a place holy to p’ungwoldo, the appearance of a boy, the miracle that took place immediately after Master Wolmyŏng had reverted the natural disaster of the appearance of two suns by singing “Song of Tushita-deva,” is equated with the incarnation of Maitreya in the poem.

As we have thus examined, the hwarang were indispensable in protecting the nation, or the royal prerogative, and in governing it ever since their establishment during the reign of King Chinhŭng (or of King Pŏphŭng, according to historical records such as the Abridgement of Samgukyusa, New Revision of the Augmented Survey of the Geography of Korea, and Comprehensive Mirror of the Eastern Kingdom), and the most important aspect of their ideologies was none other than that of protecting the state. Keeping this in mind, we come to realize that, from among all fourteen hyangga extant, those directly related to protecting and governing the nation, besides “Song of Tushita-deva” examined above—namely, “Song of the Comet,” “Ode on Benevolent Rule,” and “Song of Ch’ŏyong”—all are based on

equate the hwarang with Maitreya, as in the case of calling Misi the hwarang a “Maitreya hwarang,” is well known (Samgukyusa, vol. 3, ‘Misi the Maitreya Hwarang’, Section on Master Chung). In addition, the fact that not only Misi but all the hwarang under Kim Yu-sin were called “followers of the fragrance of Naga-voikesa [龍麝香徒, yonghwhayangdo],” in a reference to Maitreya, is yet another example of equating the hwarang with Maitreya.

10 I have discussed in detail an interpretation of “Song of Tushita-deva” from this perspective in my “Hyanggu-thû Chango-nul Che-gyeon [A Theory of the Genre System of Hyangga],” Taedong Munhwa Yŏng’gu [Eastern Studies], vol. 27, Sŏnggyuengwan Taehakk’yo Taedong Munhwa Yŏng’gu [Sung Kyun Kwan University Institute of Eastern Studies], 1992.
such “nationalism” (henceforth, this will be the term to describe the ideology that puts the protection of the state and “bringing prosperity to the nation” before anything else) of the hwarang. Although I will be discussing how “Song of the Comet” and “Song of Ch’ôyông” are related to the state-protection ideology of the hwarang in more detail later, that “Ode on Benevolent Rule” is linked to the “nationalism” mentioned above is clear from the following points: like Master Wolmyông, Master Ch’ungdam, the author of this latter poem, worshipped Maitreya (deemed an incarnation of hwarang) on Samhwaryông (the name of this peak [literally, “Three Hwarang Peak”] probably is related to the Three Hwarang also) of Namsan, which was a holy place to p’ungwoldo; Master Ch’ungdam must have been no ordinary Buddhist monk but a follower of the kuksôn, judging from the fact that he was devoted to the hwarang and skilled at composing hyangga, enough to have won renown for his “Ode to Kip’a the Hwarang”; and, above all, his very “Ode on Benevolent Rule” whitewashes the key of governing the nation, under the aim of protecting the state, with a basis on the “nationalism” of the hwarang.

At any rate, Master Wolmyông, who was based on the p’ungwoldo philosophically, accepted the belief in Maitreya not from a Buddhist point of view but from that of the hwarang. In addition, we can confirm from his “Requiem for a Deceased Sister” that he composed the poem not on the basis of an unshakable belief in the idea of Amitabha but on human feelings and thoughts that were slightly removed from religious belief. That is to say, had Master Wolmyông been a firm believer in the idea of Amitabha, he would have perceived this life as dukkha-dhatu and therefore accepted the death of his sister as vimoksha from such dukkha-dhatu, instead of maximizing his sorrows as he did in the work. The poem itself, however, is full of human agony and tragic sentiment, and the “Sukha-vati” that is employed here in order to assuage such feelings is less based on a genuine faith in Amitabha than on a conventional allusion to the Buddha of Infinite Light who is thought to answer the ceremony of praying for the happiness of the dead in the other world and of turning over one’s merits to them, a ritual common to Buddhist cultures of the day. In other words, “Requiem for a Deceased Sister” is a reflection of a philosophical system.

11 Regarding the tragic sentiment in this work, Yu Hyo-sôk has thus pointed out in his P’ungwolgye Hyangga-û Chàngni Sŏngkyŏk Yŏn’gu [A Study of the Nature of the Genre of P’ungwol Hyangga], diss., Sung Kyun Kwan University, 1993 “In lines 1 through 8, the poet only feels an unchecked human sorrow, here, the Buddhist view of life and death is nowhere to be found. The central sentiment of this poem does not lie in confirming or praising such religious doctrines as do appear in lines 9 and 10. Rather, the psychology of lamenting the tragic reality of the death of a sister emotionally overwhelms the predetermined Buddhist view of the other world” (163).
that is somewhat removed from the belief in Amitabha.

3. The Hwarang and the Incantatory Nature of Hyangga

I have said above that p’ungwoldo, cultivated by the hwarang, was their unique philosophical system. This was more so because p’ungwoldo had its roots in the unique native beliefs that had existed in Silla from before the introduction of the three faiths of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Of course, we cannot rule out the fact that even p’ungwoldo went through changes as it accepted, absorbed, and merged with these three faiths of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In spite of such accommodation, however, p’ungwoldo steadfastly retained a basis that was different from that of alien philosophical systems imported from China or from elsewhere. Such uniqueness of sŏnp’ung is attested by the fact that the people of Koryŏ perceived it as a traditional culture that had been transmitted from the Silla period and that was different from foreign faiths such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism and consequently endeavored to promote it (for instance, through their revival of the Festival of the Eight Vows, protection of related cultural remains, and inheritance of sŏnp’ung) as well as by the fact that Yi Kyu-bo

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12 This is clear from the comments of Yi Chi-baek, one of the most representative advocates of open war when Tartar forces invaded Koryŏ in the 12th year of the reign of King Sŏngjong (993 A.D.) and demanded the handover of the northwest region. Strongly opposing the handover, Yi claimed that the best way of protecting the state and of attaining national peace was to revive and to practice once again those customs that the late king had observed, such as the Buddhist Lantern-Lighting Ceremony, the Festival of the Eight Vows, and sŏllang [仙郞, hwarang] instead of following foreign faiths such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism (History of Koryŏ, vol 94, ‘Yŏgŏn’ [Biographies], Sŏ Hŭ-jo [Section on Sŏ Hŭ]) That the likes of sŏllang and the Festival of the Eight Vows, mentioned here, were important national events of p’ungwoldo is a well-known fact.

13 For instance, Wang Kon, the founder of the Koryŏ Dynasty, selected four youths from good families and had them dance in the court, dressed in beautiful clothes, in order to follow the old custom of Silla (sŏnp’ung) (Yi In-ro, P’ahanyup [Collection to D surplus Leisure], vol 2). King Újong’s comments in an edict that he issued in the 22nd year of his reign (1168) show how much he endeavored to maintain p’ungwoldo (sŏnp’ung) “It has been a long time since the time of the first founders of the dynasty that we have worshipped sŏnp’ung. Nowadays, however, the Festival of the Eight Vows has been losing its old forms and our tradition has hence been in decline in the two royal capitals. From this day on, select from among the yangban one with wealth as a household of sŏn [仙家, sŏn’ga] beforehand and then hold the Festival of the Eight Vows according to old customs, so that both heaven and man may rejoice [人天咸悦, inche hamyŏl]” (History of Koryŏ, vol 18, Újong 22 nyŏn-jo [Section on the 22nd Year of the Reign of King Újong]).
defined sŏnp’ung as a culture unique to Silla not to be found in China.

As is well known, the three central ideas in the hwarang’s practice of p’ungwoldo were: (1) mutually cultivating virtue and righteousness, (2) roaming around mountains and rivers, and (3) gladdening one another with music (Samguksağı, vol. 4, ‘Silla Pon’gi’ [Principal Record on Silla], Chinhŭng’wang-jo [Section on King Chinhŭng]). From among these, (1), although it is often explained as the concept of filial piety, brotherly subordination, loyalty, and sincerity found in Confucianism or as that of “selecting good and destroying evil” found in Buddhism and hence understood as an influence from or as an acceptance of Confucianism and Buddhism, in fact differed considerably from either. On the other hand, scholars have often linked (2) with the ideas of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu or of Taoism. The expression

14 Vol. 9 of Tongguk Isangguk Hup [Appendix to the Collected Works of Minister Yi of Korea] likewise understood sŏnp’ung as a culture unique to Silla and one not to be found in China during Chou, Han, T’ang, or Sung Dynasty.

15 A comparison of Won’gwang’s Five Secular Commandments (世俗五戒, sesok ogye) (also known as “Five Hwarang Commandments [花郎五戒, hwarang ogye]”), the virtues that must be practiced and kept in the hwarang society (p’ungwoldo), with the Five Human Relationships (五倫, oryun, Chinese wulun), the basics of Confucian morality, yields the following observations. While the former—which are composed of (1) serve the king with loyalty (事君以忠, sagun ich’ung), (2) serve one’s parents with filial piety (事親以孝, sach’im hyo), (3) treat one’s friend with sincerity (交友以信, kyou isin), do not retreat from battle (勉戰勿退, myŏn mut’oe), and (5) be discreet in taking life (殺生有律, salsŏng yuy’ek)—stresses loyalty over filial piety, the latter—which are composed of (5) there should be affection between father and son (父子有親, p’u yuch’im, Chinese futzi yuch’im), (6) there should be righteousness between prince and minister (君臣有義, kunsun yu’i, Chinese chanch’en yu’i), (6) there should be a distinction between husband and wife (夫婦有別, pibu yubŏl, Chinese fu fu yupeh), (7) there should be precedence between seniors and juniors (長幼有序, chang’yu yusŏ, Chinese ch’angyu yusul), and (8) there should be sincerity between friends (朋友有信, p’ung’u yusin, Chinese p’engyu yuksul)—the latter places more emphasis on filial piety to one’s parents than on loyalty to the prince. We can also notice that virtues (5) and (6) are unique to p’ungwoldo and not to be found in the Five Human Relationships of Confucianism (although the Confucian virtues of courage [勇, yong, Chinese yung] and benevolence [仁, m, Chinese jen] are similar to (5) and (6), the latter are far more militant and active). Moreover, (4) and (5) of p’ungwoldo differ from the shila of Buddhism in that the latter forbids the taking of life. In other words, the Five Hwarang Commandments of p’ungwoldo are based on the ideology of “nationalism” related to the protection and government of the state, as in “bringing prosperity to the nation,” and therefore different from either Confucianism or Buddhism. When the question of which of the two virtues—loyalty to one’s nation or filial piety to one’s parents—had precedence was actually raised in the relationships between Kwanch’ang the hwarang and his father P’umul and between Wonsul the hwarang and his father Kim Yu-sin, we can find in the ‘Biographies’ of the Samguksağı examples of adherence to the “nationalist” principle, where loyalty far surpasses filial piety in importance.
"roaming [遊; yu; Chinese yù]" here, however, differed from that of Lao-tzu or Chuang-tzu in that, while it always signified an activity for the purpose of protecting and promoting the well-being of the nation in the case of p’ungwoldo, it meant pursuing a tranquil, distant, and ecstatic mysticism oblivious of one’s own self and the nation in an uninhabited place or living in a state of non-action in the case of the Taoists.

An interpretation which sees the relationship among the monarch, the court official, and the people that appears in “Ode on Benevolent Rule” as one based on a Confucian view of politics or which understands this work as a poetic rendition of the sermon in Suvannaprabhasa-uttamaraja-sutra therefore is a result of disregarding the p’ungwoldo-based philosophical system of Master Ch’ungdam, the author of this poem, who admired Kip’a the Hwarang and worshipped Maitreya. In addition, when we consider that this “Ode on Benevolent Rule” was composed at the occasional appearance of the Goddess of Five Hills and Three Mountains in the courtyard of the temple where the followers of the sön held ceremonies in her honor, it becomes understandable that, in this work, the role of the court official is emphasized above those of the monarch and the people in the relationship among all three.

Moreover, when we take into account the following points in the case of “Song of Ch’öyong,” it becomes obvious that the “frolicking [遊]” in “Frolicking late into the night” is linked to (2) above: the name of the author, Ch’öyong, is that of a hwarang; he is a son of Naga-raja, one of the gods subject to ceremonial rites according to sŏnp’ung (we may remember here the comment in “Section on the Twenty-Second Year of the Reign of King Ŭjong” in vol. 18 of the History of Koryø that “In the old days in Silla, sŏnp’ung reached its zenith. Because of this, Naga-raja greatly rejoiced [昔新羅仙風大行 由是龍天歡悅]”); and his song and dance hold a meaning that is on a par with those of various state-protection gods such as the God of Namsan, the God of Pugak, and the God of Earth. We may therefore say that


17 Focusing on the content of discourse in “Ode on Benevolent Rule” which states that, while the prince is just a parent, the minister is a “loving [ 母, tazasil]’ mother and that what the people need is to be made to “know the love [ 愛, 알고다, tazal algoda],” Yu Hyo-sŏk claims that the poem lessens the prince’s responsibilities and role by imposing the responsibility for benevolent rule more on the minister than on the former (op. cit., 173-180)
Ch’ōyong’s song and dance were not Buddhist song and dance performed under the aim of proselytizing the people but an aspect of above, proselytization song and dance performed by the hwarang in an effort to save Silla from licentious pleasures. Although some scholars have tried to find an incantatory principle from “Song of Ch’ōyong” and to understand this poem as an incantatory song of shamanism on the ground that Ch’ōyong’s song and dance chased away the God of Plague, that the poem per se, as it was sung by Ch’ōyong, had no such incantatory powers is obvious from the legend behind it. In other words, the God of Plague was unable to approach Ch’ōyong not because of his song but because the latter’s face was possessed of incantatory powers. Consequently, while the “Song of Ch’ōyong” that was composed during the Koryŏ Dynasty—which describes Ch’ōyong’s appearance in detail from head to forehead, eyebrows, eyes, nose, all the way down to waist, legs, and feet—may indeed have had incantatory powers, the Silla version did not. We can only say that the face of Ch’ōyong the hwarang, who had been led to the world of shamanism different from that of p’ungwoldo, had come to assume incantatory powers and that the later, Koryŏ version of the poem came to hold such powers as the result of this link with shamanism. As a result, while the Silla version of “Song of Ch’ōyong” is linked to the protection of the state, the central ideology of p’ungwoldo, the Koryŏ version is an incantatory song which chases away the God of Plague and hence is based on a philosophical system different from that of the earlier poem.

As another example of a hwarang’s deeds creating an incantatory song as the result of his attraction to shamanistic culture, as in the case of Ch’ōyong, we can

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18 It may be possible to claim here that Ch’ōyong’s song and dance were already possessed of incantatory powers even before his face was. If this were true, the people of Koryŏ would have accepted the Silla version of “Song of Ch’ōyong” and of his dance as they were and turned them into a folk custom aimed at chasing away the God of Plague. The actual case, however, stood otherwise. That is to say, the people of Koryŏ deleted the final, crucial part (lines 7 and 8) from the Silla “Song of Ch’ōyong” and revised the poem so as to praise Ch’ōyong’s facial features and virtuous character as well as to endow him with incantatory powers in their version and also newly created the dance, using both the song and the dance in their masked ceremonies to ward off evil spirits. Consequently, if the Silla version of Ch’ōyong’s song and dance was the song and dance of p’ungwoldo aimed at commemorating the virtuous character of Ch’ōyong the hwarang, the Koryŏ version was the incantatory song and dance of shamanism aimed at chasing away the God of Plague (God of Typhoid Fever). I will be presenting a more detailed discussion on this topic in a forthcoming paper entitled “Ch’ōyongga-wa Kwallyŏn Solhwa-ūi Saengsŏng Kiban-gwa Üi’mi [The Basis of Formation and the Meaning of “Song of Ch’ōyong” and Its Related Folk Tale]”
cite Pihyŏng. Although Pihyŏng, the posthumous son of King Chinn, does appear in the Chronicles of the Hwarang as a hwarang, he was led to the world of shamanism and thus gave birth to “Incantation to Pihyŏng the Hwarang,” which was sung to chase away evil spirits. Pihyŏng and Ch’oyong differ, however, in that whereas the former, as a being who could “control gods and spirits,” was led to the world of shamanism and hence became the origin of an incantatory song, the latter, as a being who could “move the God of Plague,” had his virtues praised in hyangga (“Song of Ch’oyong”) and came to possess incantatory powers only during the Koryŏ period after being led to the world of shamanism.

For some time, we have understood our unique native beliefs solely in terms of shamanism. As a result, the main trend among scholars has been to shed light on how incantatory songs or philosophical systems related to shamanism are portrayed in hyangga. Naturally, p’ungwoldo-based songs composed by the hwarang likewise have been explained away in terms of shamanistic principles, as in the cases of “Song of Ch’oyong,” “Song of Tushita-deva,” and “Song of the Comet” examined above. The incantatory songs of shamanism and hyangga of the hwarang, however, differed from one another in their respective philosophical systems and world views. In other words, the shamanistic philosophical system aimed at praying for an individual’s happiness and prosperity, his recovery from illness, or the prevention of natural disasters to him—that is to say, for “repelling evil and advancing happiness”—and, in order to accomplish such aims through incantatory powers, communicated with gods and spirits through song and dance that reached a state of ecstasy. The song and dance of p’ungwoldo, on the other hand, were more linked to the cultivation of one’s temperament and sensibilities, aimed at the protection and prosperity not of an individual but of the nation, and had nothing whatsoever to do with shamanistic incantatory powers or with ecstasy. In addition, even though p’ungwoldo worshipped entities such as the God of Mountain, the God of Heaven, the God of Earth, and Naga-raja and even though there were cases of receiving oracles through direct communication with these beings, all such miracles were related to the safety of the nation and not to that of any one individual (for example, Kim Yu-sin’s communication with the God of Mountain in the stone cave of Chung’ak).

Because shamanism and p’ungwoldo differed in their respective aims and means and philosophical bases, as we have examined above, it is not valid to interpret the hyangga of p’ungwoldo as incantatory songs of shamanism. Of course, just as it partly incorporated Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, p’ungwoldo may also have accommodated the incantatory principles of shamanism in part. In the way it accepted and utilized the logic and discourses of shamanism, however, p’ungwoldo
differed considerably from the way shamanism itself did so. “Song of Tushita-deva,” which relies on an incantatory language, forces or orders the object of incantation not in a suprarational or threatening way but in a rational and persuasive way and discourses through symbolism or metaphor and not directly, all of which characteristics distinguish this work from the incantatory songs of shamanism qualitatively. In other words, in “Song of Tushita-deva,” “flower [꽃; kọt]” is a metaphor for the anti-royalists who were also the Buddhist faction and the aristocrats, while “Lord Maitreya [彌勒座主; mirük chwaju]” stands for p’ungwolchu or, in other words, the hwarang, who were pro-royalists. Although this poem casts a spell on the object of incantation, it does so in a rational and persuasive language: just as the flower is used in the ceremony of strewing flowers while singing hymns praising Lord Buddha in order to invoke Maitreya, the anti-royalists should kneel before and obey the hwarang for the sake of protecting and of bringing prosperity to the nation.

“Song of the Comet,” composed by Master Yungch’ŏn (or Chŏn) on the occasion of the invasion of Simdaesŏng, the very comet that also stopped short the three hwarang’s journey to Kŭmgangsan in order to “roam around mountains and rivers,” is also clearly a poem which the author composed while relying on the philosophical system of p’ungwoldo. In spite of such evidence, however, this work has traditionally been understood as an incantatory song of shamanism or, on the ground of the code “gandharva” that appears in it, as a poem based on a Buddhist, and in particular Tantric, philosophical system.19 Like the one we examined above, this poem also shuns the incantatory principle or language of suprarational and threatening commands or coercion and relies, instead, on a rational and persuasive language based on the philosophical system of p’ungwoldo and chooses an indirect discourse through the use of symbolism and metaphor. In other words, this work logically debilitates the comet by asking how the “star that will sweep the path [길 빼 귀; k’il psu̇l pyŏl]” (a metaphor for the comet) of the three hwarang could be the evil omen

19 See Kim Sung-gŏl, “Hyesŏngga [“Song of the Comet”],” Hyangga Munhakron [A Theory of the Hyangga Literature], Saemunsu, 1986, 201-209. We must take into consideration here, however, that Tantric Buddhism had yet to be introduced into Silla when “Song of the Comet” was composed, during the reign of King Chinp’yŏng. Early traces of the acceptance of Tantric Buddhism in Silla are evident from incidences such as the healing of Queen Sŏndŏk’s illness by the monk Mirbon and the repulse of T’ang forces by the monk Myŏngnang through the use of mudra spells during the reign of King Munmu. Moreover, the usual method of controlling natural disasters in Tantric Buddhism is to use the incantation of dharam and not hyangga, which is not dharam. It must be remembered that, at least during the reign of King Chinp’yŏng, hyangga was a musical form owned and enjoyed solely by the hwarang, who practiced p’ungwoldo.
of a comet when the “moon”, a symbol of p’ungwoldo, brightly shines over that path. In addition, “gandharva” appears here not as a code for the mystical being that protects Buddha-dharma, as it does in Buddhist doctrine, but as a logically persuasive code for a kind of mirage-like fantasy that debilitating the appearance of Japanese invaders. Thanks to this hyangga of logical persuasion by Master Yungch’ŏn, the spiritual leader of p’ungwoldo, the morale of the three young hwarang rose and they therefore were able to fend off without fear the Japanese forces that had invaded Silla at the same time as had the comet, to continue their journey to Kŭnggangsan afterwards.

4. The Hwarang and the Symbolic Nature of Hyangga

P’ungwoldo, which was practiced by the hwarang, had already attained a high level of culture. Even before it was systemized as hwarang, it was pursuing “nationalism” in earnest by naming the nation as “Silla” and by using the title “wang [“king’]” from the reign of King Chujung, the 22nd monarch, and onwards. In addition, as the new national appellation of “Silla” demonstrates, a “mysticism” that aimed at daily renewing the virtues of the nation (linked to “bringing up sattva” and to “enlightening and guiding sattva”) and a “nationalism” that aimed at conquering and encompassing the nations surrounding Silla (linked to “bringing prosperity to the nation”) had been chosen as the ruling ideology (“‘Sin‘ signifies the daily renewal of virtuous deeds and ‘-na‘ signifies encompassing the four directions [新者徳業日新 羅者網羅四方之義‘, Samguk sagi, vol. 4, ‘Silla Pon’gi’, bk 4), behind all of which lay p’ungwoldo (The logic of shamanistic incantation, in fact, seems to have been all but excluded from the higher culture and diffused into the lower culture during the Iron Age, after it had reached its zenith during the late Neolithic Age and the early Bronze Age, when society changed from one based on hunting to one based on agriculture). Into the reign of King Chinpyŏng, p’ungwoldo became even more elevated as it competed against and in turn was influenced by yet another higher culture of Buddhism. Along with this development, the “nationalist” line became even stronger with the large-scale implementation during the reign of King Kyŏngdŏk, the 35th monarch, of a national code system after it had first brought about the implementation of a national code system (during the reign of King Pŏphŭng, the 23rd monarch) and the establishment of the National Academy (during the reign of King Simmun, the 31st monarch) prior to the unification of the Three Kingdoms by Silla.\(^{20}\)

On the other hand, while “nationalism,” which was based on the p’ungwoldo ide-
ology of protecting the state, came to function as the philosophical system central to King Chinhing’s pursuit of “bringing prosperity to the nation” with his establishment of the hwarang, the principal factor in the philosophical system of p’ungwoldo prior to the establishment of the youth corps was “sinsŏngju’ŭi” or “sinsŏngju’ŭi” (I shall combine these two concepts hereafter and call it “mysticism”). This is apparent from the following facts: p’ungwoldo worshipped divine beings such as the God of Mountain (which was later systemized into the worship of the Goddess of Five Hills and Three Mountains and of notable mountains and rivers), it aimed at a transformation into god-men such as Pak Hyŏkkŏse or Kim Alchi; and it was rooted in the holy rites that had continued since the early days of Silla and that were linked to earthly immortals such as the Sacred Mother of Sŏndosan.21

P’ungwoldo’s such orientation towards holy rites or “sinsŏngju’ŭi” culminated, during the reign of King Soji, the 21st monarch, in the construction of Naül Temple and in the transfer of the right to oversee ceremonies held there in honor of the gods, which had belonged to women since Lady Aro during the time of King Namhae, to the followers of the sŏn, who were men. As a result of such changes,

20 Regarding this point, some scholars have understood King Kyŏngdŏk’s implementation of a national code system and Sinicization policy as a transition or change in the philosophical system or as an acceptance of the rationalism of the Han Chinese culture (Ch’oe Ch’un-won, op. cit., 187). Such political reforms of King Kyŏngdŏk, however, should be viewed more as efforts to revise and to overcome the Bone Rank System by curbing the special privileges of the True Bone nobility, and hence absolutizing the royal prerogative, rather than as being linked to a rationalistic philosophical system (Yi Ki-dong, “Silla Sahoe-wa Hwarangdo [Silla Society and the Hwarang],” Silla Munhwa [The Culture of Silla], vol. 1, Tongguk Taehakkho Silla Munhwa Yŏng’guso [Dong Guk University Research Institute for Silla Culture], 1984, 30). But then King Kyŏngdŏk’s efforts to strengthen the monarchy were possible to a degree only by relying on the state-protection ideology of the hwarang who pursued the peace and wellbeing of the nation and the royal house or, in other words, by relying on their “nationalism.” An example of this dependence can be found in the fact that Master Wolmyŏng, a follower of the hwarang, was called forth as the yŏnsaeng to assuage the natural disaster of the appearance of two suns.

21 I have already explained that the “sŏn” pursued by p’ungwoldo as “sinsŏnju’ŭi” differed from the “sinsŏnju’ŭi” of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu or of Taoism in China through the example of historical figures such as Ch’oe Ch’i-won and Yi Ch’ubak, who defined the latter as a foreign faith along with Confucianism and Buddhism. Besides these, there also are cases such as that of Yi Chong-ch’ŏl, who pointed out in the “Sillaron [Treatise on Silla]” of his Susanjip [Collection of “Susan”] that, even though she had not learned the teachings of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu during the years stretching from the reign of Pak Hyŏkkŏse through that of King Soji, the 21st monarch, Silla nevertheless was capable of ruling the nation according to the “way of nature” (자연의도 chayŏndŏ) (the “way of nature” here probably signifies p’ungwoldo unique to Silla, which pursued sinsŏn)
“mysticism” became more systemized and ritualized. It then combined firmly with “nationalism,” with the change of the national appellation to “Silla” and of the royal title from dialectal forms such as “isagūm” and “maripka” to “kugwang [“king”]” during the reign of King Chûhung, the 22nd monarch. Following these moves, the state-protection ideology of “nationalism” came to function as an important philosophical system for p’ungwoldo, with the implementation of a national code system and of the p’ungwolchu system during the reign of King Pŏphung and the establishment of the hwarang during the reign of King Chinhung. In other words, the ideologies and philosophical systems that formed the two axes of p’ungwoldo philosophy were “mysticism,” which endeavored to solve the problems of this world through communicating with the gods and spirits of heaven and earth, and “nationalism,” which pursued “bringing prosperity to the nation.” What characterized these two orientations was that, following the establishment of the hwarang, they did not coexist but “mysticism” tended to gravitate towards “nationalism.”

A more in-depth inquiry into the relationship between these two orientations tells us that, among the hwarang, there existed two groups: while the hoguksŏn put more stress on “nationalism,” the unsang’in emphasized “mysticism.” In relation to this distinction, we can observe the slightly differing stances that characterize each of the two major records on the history of the Three Kingdoms extant. Whereas Samgukagsagi focuses more on the former, Samguk’yusa focuses more on the latter, with the result that ‘Yŏlŏn’ of Samgukagsagi deals with the activities of the hoguksŏn and Samguk’yusa relates in detail the lives and works of the followers of the kuksŏn who were the unsang’in.

Amidst such situation, “Song of the Comet,” which was composed during the reign of King Chinp’yong, interpreted the appearance of a comet as a “star that will sweep the path” and hence assist the moon, a symbol of p’ungwoldo, through a logic of “mysticism,” rather than as an evil omen as the conventional perspective would have seen it. On the other hand, “Song of Tushita-deva,” which was composed during the reign of King Kyŏngdŏk, performed a logical incantation based on the unique “mysticism” of p’ungwoldo: just as the flowers scattered during the ceremony of strewing them and singing hymns praising Lord Buddha serve Maitreya, so anti-royalists should serve the pro-royalists, or the state-protection faction.

22 The terms “hoguksŏn” and “unsang’in” have been taken from the Chronicles of the Hwarang (Seoul Shinnun, February 26, 1989) According to this document, the former signified those from among the hwarang who were fond of fencing and were full of martial spirit, whereas the latter signified those who were skilled at composing hyangga and were fond of roaming around scenic spots.
The hwarang, who possessed a logic and a philosophy that were unique, as we have thus seen, interpreted and understood various signs related to the rise and fall of the nation in terms of the divine beings that they worshipped, such as the God of Heaven, God of Earth, and the Goddess of Five Hills and Three Mountains (for instance, the appearance of various deities in connection with the composition of “Ode on Benevolent Rule” and “Song of Ch’ŏyong”). Not only that, but their image of the ideal hero was also that of a god-man (for instance, Kim Yu-sin’s elevation to a heavenly deity with the magic flute and the subsequent appellation of Inbaksan and the stone cave in Chung’ak, where he had cultivated the truth, as “Sinsŏn Temple” or as “Sŏnmam”) That Pak Hyŏkkŏse, a god of national foundation, and Alchi, an ancestor-god of the Kim clan, were linked to the God of Heaven; that King Munmu became the Great State-Protection Dragon, that the Goddess of Three Mountains (a state-protection goddess) endowed Kim Yu-sin with magical powers when he was in great straits after having been lured by a spy from Koguryŏ—the philosophical system which made possible all such cases was p’ungwoldo’s paradigm for perceiving the world.

As a result, the hwarang strived to become and worshipped the image of an ideal hero who approached divinity, and it is here that we can find the reason for the unsang’in’s orientation toward sŏn unlike the hoguksŏn, among the hwarang, whose central ideology was the protection of the nation (for instance, the deeds of the Four Sŏn including Yŏng). However, it goes without saying that there really was no difference between the hoguksŏn and the unsang’in in that they both were based on p’ungwoldo; the difference was only in the details of which line each group stressed (The mention in the manuscript Chronicles of the Hwarang that the unsang’in were skilled at composing hyangga, at playing the flute, and at music and dance, and the mention in the Cultural Geography Found in the Annals of King Sejong that Okpogo whiled away on Kūmosan by playing the kŏmun’go and composed new melodies for the same instrument in Unsang’won on Chirisan and then went up to the heaven after attaining sŏndo all are examples of the hwarang who were the unsang’in)

The hwarang, with the unsang’in skilled at composing hyangga at the center, have left to us many outstanding poems and often employed their unique symbols in these works. One representative symbol is that of the moon. The moon here in all likelihood is not unrelated to the “moon” in the name the “p’ungwoldo [literally the “way of the wind and the moon”].” That Master Wolmyŏng, who like the unsang’in had a flair for the flute, stopped the moon with his flute should be understandable through the paradigm of the unsang’in from among the hwarang. The same goes for
the case of the magic flute, which supposedly could rid the nation of all troubles and disasters.

Let us then turn to the symbolism of the moon in hyangga. First, “Ode to Kip’a the Hwarang” portrays the moon as having “risen in pursuit of the white cloud [형 구름 조조 떠간; haen kurum choch’o ptōgan],” which in turn is a metaphor for Kip’a the hwarang. Upon closer inspection, the moon is above the cloud and the moon that leaves on this cloud (“unsang” [literally, “on the cloud” or “above the cloud”] signifies none other than Kip’a the hwarang, a follower of the unsang’in who practiced p’ungwoldo. Through this poem, we thus can understand the meaning of the term “unsang’in” which appears in the manuscript Chronicles of the Hwarang. In other words, the unsang’in are the heavenly entity that rides on the cloud, or sōn, and this is why the hwarang were worshipped as “sinsōn” (This is turn tells us why King Chinhungh’s temperament and tastes greatly admired “sinsōn” and why he put p’ungwoldo ahead of Buddhism. Likewise, we can now understand why the mountain where Kim Yu-sin the hwarang had cultivated the truth came to be called Sinsōn Temple or why the four hwarang including Yōng were called the “Four Sōn”). Here, the symbolic meaning of the legend of the unsang’in becomes apparent: Master Hyesuk, the hwarang-monk who had followed Hose the hwarang, disappeared on a cloud, leaving just one of his pair of straw shoes. This can be understood in connection with the ascension of Pak Hyŏkköse to heaven, whose body evaporated afterwards. In addition, we can find in Paegun, the name of a kuksōn hwarang in the Abridgement of Sanguksagi, a code of the unsang’in who pursued sōn.

Be it the one that shines over the three hwarang in “Song of the Comet” or the one that shines over Ch’ŏyang’s path in “Song of Ch’ŏyang,” the moon in these hyangga is the very moon with which Master Wolmyŏng had rapport and the moon that was a symbolic entity of p’ungwoldo (it may perhaps be possible to understand the moon of Sunch’ung the royalist, that appears in “Song of Regret,” also in this context). Hence viewing the moon that functions as a symbol of p’ungwoldo for the hwarang (“Prayer to Amitabha”) as having the same nature as that of sambodhi in Buddhism or understanding it as a symbol of the vital forces universal to humanity is to disregard its symbolism with a cultural significance unique to p’ungwoldo (besides that of the moon, the symbolism of the pine-nut tree and of Maitreya will be examined in my forthcoming paper entitled “Cultural Symbolism of the Hwarang.

23 See Sanguk’yusa, vol. 4, “Hyetongun-jo [Section on hyetongun].”
24 These are approaches taken by the two papers cited in Note 3 above
as It Appears in Hyangga [Hyangga-e Nat’anan Hwarang Chiptan-üi Munhwa Umikwonjok Sangjung]”

5. Conclusion

As we have thus examined, hyangga was created by the hwarang, in particular by the unsang’in from among them, through their unique philosophical system of p’ungwoldo. In other words, I have demonstrated here that their hyangga therefore should not be understood in terms of the simple incantatory songs of shamanism, of archetypal symbolism universal to man, or of a Buddhist philosophical system. Moreover, it is thus clear that categorizing all hyangga as Buddhist proselytization songs in no way fits their description. Of course, some incantatory sanoega such as “Prayer to Amitabha,” “Hymn to the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteshvara,” and “Ten Vows of Samanta-bhadra” not only were in fact Buddhist in nature but may have gone on to function as proselytization songs.

However, as Great Master Kyunyo put it, hyangga was basically a song of this world or of p’ungnyudo, and instances of proselytization through the use of hyangga, which was the means through which the “people of this world enjoy music” (the unsang’in formed the core of the “people of this world” here), are rare. As with Buddhist songs or dharam, hyangga was not a poetic form that could be composed by any ordinary monk. That is to say, only those who were followers of the kaksan belonging to or at least related to the hwarang such as Masters Yungch’ön, Ch’ungdam, and Wolmyong were able to compose and to enjoy hyangga.

Consequently, whenever they needed Korean-language proselytization songs, Buddhist monks made use of songs with simple rhythms instead of hyangga and wandered all over the country, hoping to convert people to the Buddhist faith, as with the cases of Wonhyo and Tae’an. This was because hyangga was a more elevated form of music that used the flute or the k’omun’go and had highly complicated and sophisticated melody and rhythm, and thus could be composed and enjoyed only by groups such as those who followed p’ungwoldo and were fond of “gladdening one another with music.” Even Great Master Kyunyo therefore composed hyangga not according to its usual, highly sophisticated musical form but according to a form of hyangga called “three lines and six names” so as to enable the latty to chant it or to post it on the wall.

Of course, all this does not mean that hyangga existed solely for the benefit of the hwarang, who practiced p’ungwoldo. At the height of its development, this genre came to be partly accepted and to be created by Buddhist monks as well, examples
of which are the supplicatory hyangga mentioned above.

We must, however, keep in mind Iryŏn's comments in his Samguk'yusa: although Iryŏn does state, in the course of discussing Master Wolmyŏng's "Song of Tushita-deva" and the miracle related to this work, that there have been countless cases where hyangga moved the gods and spirits of heaven and earth, he nowhere mentions that the poems managed to move Buddha or bodhisatva. In spite of the interrelation between the ceremony of strewing flowers while singing hymns praising Lord Buddha and the Buddhist code of "Lord Maitreya" in "Song of Tushita-deva," Iryŏn pointedly stated that hyangga had moved the gods and spirits of heaven and earth probably because hyangga, in principle, was more a poetic form of p'ungwoldo rather than a Buddhist hymn praising Lord Buddha or a Buddhist proselytization song.

As we have observed, hyangga was an elevated musical form that could move the gods and spirits of heaven and earth, as with "Song of Tushita-deva," or the God of Plague, as with "Song of Ch'ŏnyong." And behind this ability to move lay a profound philosophical system unique to Silla, that of the "mysticism" and "nationalism" of p'ungwoldo. In addition, this ability was possible only through "p'ungnyu" originating from the cultivation of p'ungnyudo by the hwarang, who enjoyed "roaming around mountains and rivers" and "gladdening one another with music"; and this p'ungnyu was none other than the rapture and refinement that could communicate with the gods and spirits of heaven and earth. It goes without saying that hyangga was distinguished from the "T'ang music" imported from China or from the Sanskrit songs imported from India via China and was called "native song [hyanggal]" precisely because it was a musical form based on p'ungnyudo, a philosophical system unique to Korea and different from that of Confucianism or of Buddhism.

(Translated by Kim Yoo-suk, M.A., S.N.U.)

GLOSSARY

Amitabha 阿弥陀佛
Aro 阿老
Aryŏn 阿英
bodhisatva 菩提薩(陀)
Buddha-dharma 佛法
Buddhist songs 梵呗
Chunhan 辰韓
Chirisan 智異山
Ch'oe Ch'i-won 崔致遠
Ch'ŏnyong 處容(郞)
Chronicles of the Hwarang 花郎世記
Chuang-tzu 草子
Chung'ak 中巖
dharani 陀羅尼(總持]
deva 仁王[提婆]
dharma [eternal truth; teaching; duty]
(Lord) Maitreya [Buddha of the Future]

Misi 未尸郎
marrpkan 麻立干
Master Chinja 瞻慈師
Master Ch’ungdam 忠談師
Master Hyesuk 惠宿師
Master Wolmyông 月明師
Master Yungch’ón 融天師
Maitreya 未來佛[彌勒菩薩]
Misi the Maitreya Hwarang

彌勒仙花未尸郎

mudra assemblies

文豆婆法會：文豆婆道場
mudra spells 文豆婆秘法：神印秘法
Naga-raja [Sagara]

龍神：龍天[娑伽羅]

Naga-vrksa 龍華樹
Namsan 南山
Nangsan 狼山
Naüll Temple 奈乙神宮
“Ode on Benevolent Rule” 安民歌
“Ode to Kip’a the Hwarang”

讚耆婆郎(詞腦)歌

Okpogo 玉寶高
Paegun 白雲
Paekche 百濟
Pak Hyŏkköse 朴赫居世
Pihyŏng 鼻茼郎
prajna(-paramita) 靭若(波羅密多)
“Prayer to Amitabha” 願往生歌
p’ungnyudo 風流道
p’ungwolchu 風月主
p’ungwooldo 風月道
“Requem for a Deceased Sister”

祭亡妹歌
Sach’ónwang Temple 四天王寺
Samguksagi [History of the Three Kingdoms] 三國史記
Samguk’yusa [Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms] 三國遺事
Samhwaryŏng 三花嶺
'samyag-dharma 正法
'samyag-vipaka 正報
saneega 詞譜歌
sattva 衆生
Silla Pon’gi 新羅本記
Simdaesŏng 心大星
Sinch’ung 信心
sinsonjuŭi 神仙主義
sinsonjuŭi 神聖主義
Sinson Temple 神仙寺
Sinyurim 神遊林
sŏndŏ 仙道
Sŏndosan 仙桃山
“Song of Ch’ŏyang” (處容歌)
“Song of Regret”
怨歌 (桓樹歌: 宮庭桓)
“Song of the Comet” (彗星歌)
“Song of Tushita-deva” (兜率歌)
Sŏninnam 仙人岩
sŏnp’ung 仙風
Sukha-vati [Pure Land; Western Paradise]
(彌陀利 (嚴密) 淨土: 西方浄土; 佛國土)
Suvarnaprabhasa-uttamaraja-sutra
金光明經
Tae’an 大安
T’ang 唐
Tantric Buddhism 密教
Taoism 道教
“Ten Vows of Samanta-bhadra”
善賢十願歌 (善賢十種願往歌)
Tūgo 得鳥
Tushita-deva [Tushita Heaven]
兜率天
unsang’ın 雲上人
Unsang’won 雲上院
vimoksha [vimirkī] 解脫
wŏnhwa 原花，源花
Wonhyo 元曉
Yi Kyu-bo 李奎報
Yŏng 永郞
yŏnsŭng 緣僧