

Reflections on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Policy and Folk Culture Politics in the Postmodern Era: An Autoethnographic Account of the Reconstruction of *Kasan Ogwangdae**

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*This study examines the study of folklore and the intangible cultural heritage policy of the Republic of Korea through the lens of the author's personal experience of reconstructing the mask dance drama *Kasan Ogwangdae*. Folklore studies in Korea have been rooted in nationalism for a long time and have served as the basis of the intangible cultural heritage policy. The policy's aim is to preserve Korean culture by identifying valuable items of the country's cultural heritage and by supporting and controlling them in the project of building a modern nation-state.*

Through use of autoethnography, this study illuminates the close relationship between folklore, the intangible cultural heritage policy, and folklore under government control. In the process, the personal experiences of the author in the 1970s are expanded upon through his research on mask dance dramas of the Japanese colonial period and the modern nation-state building project. This study also discusses the appropriation of rural folk knowledge by modern urban elite and emphasizes the need for further introspection in order to understand the postmodern world.

Keywords: Government Manufactured Folklore, *Gasan Ogwandae*, Intangible Cultural Properties, Policy of Cultural Properties, Popular Culture, Politics of Folk Culture, Folklorism

* Translated from the published article in *Cross-Cultural Studies* 16(2): 31-69, 2010 with permission from the Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Focusing on my own experiences of reconstructing a mask dance drama, in this paper I explore folklore and the intangible cultural heritage policy, which is based in folklore studies. It is no longer a new idea that the transcendence of folk culture based on nationalism has prevailed in Korean folklore, and that this has been the basis of the national intangible cultural heritage policy. However, scholars of folklore in Korea only started addressing this issue a few years ago.¹ The project categorizes certain items as Intangible Cultural Properties, or representatives of Korea's cultural heritage that must be preserved and transmitted. It then supports and controls the recognized cultural or art items. This system has been institutionalized only recently in Korea, but it has been regarded worldwide as one of the most important projects of modern nation-states.² In South Korea, this institutionalized project, the intangible cultural heritage policy, placed folklore under government control.³

This project also arose from the need to preserve and transmit Korea's pre-modern cultural heritage, which was on the verge of disappearance in the challenging aftermath of colonial modernization. Such a project was intended to rescue Korean society from the hostilities, tensions, and ideological conflicts that had resulted from the Japanese colonial era by igniting the collective imagination of the nation through a meta-narrative linking the past and the present (Lee, H. 1998: 330-335).

Rooted in this collective imagination, folklore fell into an intellectual predicament caused by an emergent crisis of representation. In recent years some scholars have addressed this situation with research designed to

¹ In May 2004, Hallym University's Asia Research Center held a symposium to systematically examine how the study of folklore has dealt with the connections between nationalism, modernity and folklore. These efforts produced a book entitled "East Asian Modernity and the Emergence of Folklore" (2008).

² See Jung, Soo Jin (2004: 475-508; 2008a, 2008b: 135-166; 2009: 99-128), Nam, Kun Wu (2009c), and Lee, Jang Yull (2005).

³ By this I mean folk culture that is performed according to the wishes and directions of the government.

systematically analyze the correlation between folklore, nationalism, and the intangible cultural heritage policy (Jung, S. 2008a). Others have attempted to expand their arguments to folklorism, which emphasizes the appropriation and objectification of folklore (Nam, K. 2008a, 2009b). These attempts to overcome the crisis of representation have borne some fruit.

Encouraged by these recent trends, folklorists have carried out research exploring new approaches, yet it seems that the relationship between studies of folk culture and government projects related to folk culture has changed little since the 1960s. It is not easy for researchers who are accustomed to this relationship to subvert these foundational ideas and conceive of new approaches. In an attempt to engage with new trends, many scholars pursue active engagement through participation in various government cultural projects and the enhancement of their roles as cultural coordinators. Consequently, although many conventional approaches have been pursued, few scholars have reflected on the fundamentals of folklore.

Researchers continue to discuss problems and solutions related to the preservation and transmission of Intangible Cultural Properties, but always in connection with the policies and actions of the national and local governments. By and large, little has changed in the way that issues of preservation and transmission of Intangible Cultural Properties, as well as of the need for assistance with preservation and transmission, have been addressed, although the cultural contents planning role of local governmental bodies has become more significant since the 1960s.

This research is an extension of various critical approaches surrounding the intangible cultural heritage system, policy, and discourse. In this paper, I provide an ethnographic narrative from the field in order to link the creation and practice of knowledge, essential to the study of folklore, to a discussion of policy. Through this ethnographic narrative, I hope to convey the dynamic and complex nature of folklore, which is otherwise hard to communicate through pure analysis or discourse on the system. Recently there have been studies that address the importance of ethnographic narrative in field research (Ko, J. 2004), yet few personal ethnographic accounts of cultural activists or autoethnographic works have been published.

In 1974, I reconstructed *Kasan Ogwangdae*, a mask dance drama from South Kyöngsang Province's Sachön County near the city of Jinju, which

had ceased to be performed. I also developed conditions favorable for the transmission of the art. At that time, there were a number of people in addition to myself participating in the post-1960s transmission of mask dance dramas as a cultural movement activity. This current study communicates my experiences autoethnographically. I feel it is the responsibility of participant observers (in reconstruction efforts) to report on and communicate their cultural activities.

When I address autoethnography in this paper, I am committed to reflexivity, assessing my impact on the object of study, and vice-versa. Autoethnography-based fieldwork can more effectively convey the researcher's subjectivity as it relates to the public sphere. In other words, autoethnography reveals how the seemingly insignificant actions of an individual can in fact change history by causing a crack in the established system.

In this regard, there are a number of problems that remain to be explored. First of all, when one describes some collective experiences through the lens of one's own experience, it is difficult to include alternative viewpoints. Autoethnographic accounts can therefore fail to communicate the role-sharing experience of the researcher in the field; in fact, in my account as well, I have not been able to incorporate the views and roles of other participants. Second, in such an account, too much emphasis is placed on personal memory as a source of information (Chang 2008). Finally, academics can be critical of the tone in papers written as first-person accounts that include the author as the subject.

However, honest acknowledgement and clarification of the limitations of autoethnography can resolve these issues to some degree. Recently, researchers have taken to using a storytelling writing style in papers utilizing autoethnographic fieldwork. There is a growing interest in how this style of writing can enhance anthropological explanation, and it is now being explored in various intellectual spheres. Some even argue that autoethnographic accounts are postmodern (Reed-Danahay 1997).

Autoethnography regarding the reconstruction of mask dance dramas requires both deconstruction of folklore and folk culture and introspective observation. Research and reconstruction of *Kasan Ogwangdae* necessitated the identification and construction of a hierarchy amongst the reconstruction team, and introspective reflexivity was necessary to observe these facts.

In short, autoethnography is an appropriate method for clarification of the complicated relations among structure, system, and the selections and decisions of individual participants.

The reconstruction of the *Kasan Ogwangdae* mask dance drama was a process of confronting the limitations and the potential of conventional folklore's logical structure and discourse. Therefore, I focus on the issue of the *wŏnhyŏng*, the archetypal form, in describing the reconstruction of *Kasan Ogwangdae* in the following section. In addition, I attempt to broaden my intellectual horizon to address the impact of the formation of a folklore under government control on folk culture and folklore politics after the 1960s. Finally, I discuss the utilization of mask dance dramas in ideological movements during the 1970s, when the reconstruction of *Kasan Ogwangdae* was being carried out.

As a result of the cultural movements of the 1970s, folk culture, including mask dance dramas, began to attract the interest of the cultural elite, although in the preceding years only a few specialists had been interested. This cultural movement also promoted a conflict between Korea and the West. Folk culture became an important symbol of nationalism in Korea, and research on mask dance dramas was carried out by scholars who adhered to the "internal development theory." The discourse on research on the historical development of mask dance dramas was utilized in promoting collective identity in Korea; but this created misunderstandings of the historical context surrounding the performances.

An important misunderstanding arose because the researchers disregarded the fact that cultural performances developed and spread through the cooperation of the (Chosŏn Dynasty [1392-1910]) ruling class and power structure. People also disregarded the fact that the planning of performances by Chosŏn era performers was driven by their desire for reciprocal benefit from powerful people in the community. This point has been accurately articulated in publications on the historical development of mask dance dramas and their inclusion in rituals during the Chosŏn Dynasty (Lee, H. 1995, 2001).

II. KASAN OGWANGDAE'S RECONSTRUCTION ACCORDING TO AN IMAGINED WŎNHYŎNG

The *Kasan Ogwangdae* reconstruction project started in the fall of 1973 when Professor Kang Yonggwŏn first introduced this mask dance drama to academia (Kang, Y. 1972: 23-32). During further investigation in the field we confirmed that the performance had been discontinued, but we learned that some of the former performers were still alive. Most of the performers were farmers, and some of the key performers had already moved away from Kasan. Kasan used to be an affluent county serving as a hub for collecting, preserving and transporting grain taxes. There were once 200 households in Kasan, but after 1895, when the grain tax-transport warehouse closed, people began to leave; by 1972, there were only 70 households remaining. *Kasan Ogwangdae* had been performed during village rituals, but after 1960 performances had ceased. Additionally, with the beginning of the Saemaül (New Village) Movement, the village ritual ceremony ceased to be observed. At first the villagers were advised that they should perform this mask dance drama voluntarily, but it was difficult for the villagers to afford the reconstruction. After a pilot study, I traveled to Kasan with three other researchers to evaluate the possibility of reconstructing the art. We were, however, met with cold indifference in the village (At that time, as it was raining, we could not find any shelter, and we had to sleep a few days on the floor of the village community center without any blankets). After that trip, we conducted one more pilot study, and then we decided to lead the reconstruction effort ourselves.

The reconstruction project started in the spring of 1974, and it included collecting dialogue, reorganizing the costumes, preparing the masks and other props and cultivating the desire to practice *Kasan Ogwangdae* on the part of the local villagers. Since traditionally the masks were burned after the performances, there were no old masks. At that time we could not find any villagers with experience making the masks. Thus, we had to bring a traditional artist, Kim Manhŭi, from Seoul to Kasan to make the masks according to villagers' descriptions. However, to my disappointment, the villagers were not very enthusiastic. One of the key performers, Han

Yunyǒng, tried to remake the masks based on his own memories, and when the villagers responded favorably, those masks became the standard.

Han Yunyǒng went to the traditional market and bought fabric, and he asked the older married women in the village to make the costumes. All of these preparations were constantly observed and evaluated by the villagers who used to participate in *Kasan Ogwangdae*. We made two copies of each of the props and sent one copy as a donation to the Sogang University Museum. Unfortunately they were destroyed due to poor preservation techniques (It has been less than forty years since we made those props, but I think today's clothes and masks are very different from those we made in 1974. People who participated in the reconstruction project also agree with me on this point).

The memories of pre-1960s performances held by the performers were complicated and contradictory. We tried to reconstruct the script based on these recollections, and then each performer reviewed the reconstructed script. We used this transcript for our rehearsals and continued to perfect the script as time went on, particularly to reduce discrepancies between the memories of different individuals. We spent more than fifteen days, night after night, with the village performers on these rehearsals. While the researchers were being trained by the performers, we also spent our days reconstructing or reorganizing the memories of the performance. In particular, we paid a visit to Pusan, where Han Chaejun and other key performers were living, and persuaded them to return to Kasan to assist in the reconstruction. They confirmed that our reconstruction project had been completed accurately.

When we were sure that our reconstruction project was complete, we went to the Sachǒn County District Office and met with the county commissioner. We explained the necessity of the reconstruction project and finally succeeded in conducting our first post-reconstruction performance on the stage of the Sachǒn County Citizens' Hall. After this performance, in November 1974, we invited the *Kasan Ogwangdae* performers to Seoul, and they performed the mask dance drama with the members of the undergraduate club, Minsok munhwa yǒng'guhoe (Folk Culture Research Society). Later, we taught *Kasan Ogwangdae* to other college drama clubs and guided their performances. This was part of our attempt to popularize *Kasan Ogwangdae* and create a transmission environment.

At first, I did not intend for *Kasan Ogwangdae* to be designated an

Intangible Cultural Property; in reality it was difficult enough for me to pursue the immediate goal of its reconstruction. At that time I did not logically analyze the situation, but I thought that *Kasan Ogwangdae* should not be designated an Intangible Cultural Property, because I felt that the interference of the government in the preservation of folk culture was inappropriate. In general, in the 1970s, college students had a negative opinion of the government and its policies, and the college students who participated in the *Kasan Ogwangdae* reconstruction shared these sentiments. Eventually we came to agree that *Kasan Ogwangdae* should indeed be designated an Intangible Cultural Property, so we tried to popularize and spread awareness of this mask dance drama through various activities.

The other members of the folk culture research club and I had to pay all the costs of the reconstruction as well as the procedural fees for designation of the art as an Intangible Cultural Property. When we conducted this reconstruction project, I was a college sophomore, and I was the founder and president of Sogang University's Folk Culture Research Society. Looking back, I realize that it is hard for people to understand how a college student could have carried out this project, but in 1974, far fewer Koreans attended university, and those students who did proudly considered themselves intellectuals. Furthermore, Korea was a heavily centralized society, and at that time, the fact that we came "down" from Seoul to the countryside was in and of itself impressive to the villagers. It was not difficult to meet with the county magistrate and gain his support for persuading the reluctant villagers to participate in the reconstruction project. In addition, we actively utilized the media, such as TV, in the campaign to have *Kasan Ogwangdae* designated an Intangible Cultural Property. The fact that we were college students also helped us gain media support.

At that time we were filled with pride and zeal that we had given the villagers back a traditional type of play that they had lost. Our attempt was an act of resistance against the government's campaign for modernization that promoted hard work as the first priority. I romanticized the idea of a rural community, of going "down to the countryside" and becoming a long-term contributor to the village through the reconstruction project.

Most of the participants in the reconstruction project were born and raised in the urban environs of Seoul, and so they were called "asphalt kids," who

did not like to walk on dirt roads. My experience with farm life was limited to participating in a high school club that was concerned with the problems of rural communities. Club members, motivated by patriotism, also carried out periodic volunteer activities on farms. After they became members they were educated by their upperclassmen about issues in rural communities. With this training, I believed that it was my duty to confront the modernization project's victimization of farmers. Therefore, as a patriot, I felt sympathy for the farmers, who I felt were the victims of unequal treatment.

Behind the reconstruction project, there was an underlying patriotic attitude held by urban intellectuals. As someone from the capital, I viewed the "countryside" as an object of enlightenment and felt a sense of responsibility to uncover the *wŏnhyŏng*, the original form, of the rural communities. The combination of these two ideas motivated me to commit to the reconstruction project and to passionately explain the necessity of the reconstruction of the mask dance drama to the villagers.

In addition, I should mention that other personal experiences contributed to my lack of hesitation in engaging with the reconstruction project. I first experienced mask dance drama and *p'ansori* narrative singing as a high school senior. I was fascinated by these art forms, but I was already deeply involved in drama. Anyone who remembers the situation that the Korean drama industry faced in the late 1960s and early 1970s can recall the empty stages and sense of failure, as some lamented that there was no more room for drama. Despite this situation, my friends and I organized a drama club and promoted a movement for the staging of minor performances. During that time, I participated in the staging of many realistic dramas, and this experience convinced me that I was able to conduct the reconstruction project to determine the *wŏnhyŏng* for a mask dance drama.

My experience as a drama producer and coordinator helped me study the history of mask dance performances; in other words, my experiences with drama enabled me to seriously examine the reconstruction and reproduction, historical development, and the different elements of *Kasan Ogwangdae*. For example, it is common knowledge that mask dance dramas are collective performances in which every single role is important, not only the starring roles; cooperation among all performers is necessary in order to stage a successful performance. However, the process of designating

certain performers “national human treasures” created friction and struggle regarding the hierarchy among the performers. On top of that the process introduced an external authority who attempted to exert some control over the group, a strategic error that was totally counter to the nature of a collective performing art such as mask dance dramas.

On the one hand, in such collective performances, it is vitally important to have leadership or competent individuals equipped with good skills in negotiating solutions within the group and coordinating performances. This might seem to contradict the idea that every performer plays an important role. My own studies on the development of popular culture⁴ during the late Chosŏn Dynasty have proven that certain small groups of people with excellent production skills and the powerful people who supported them made it possible for this kind of folk performance to develop (Lee, H. 2003: 142-147). On the other hand, the Intangible Cultural Heritage policies have ignored the historical inter-group relations and have only shown respect for performers with dominant personalities who do not necessarily have the required production, coordination and leadership skills. This has resulted in friction within groups, even though it is vital for both individual leadership and voluntary participation of all performers to exist in a group. This is not a secondary consideration; rather, this is the most important factor when considering the management of performing arts groups.

One of the biggest dilemmas that we faced in the reconstruction of *Kasan Ogwangdae* was the issue of post-reconstruction transmission. As I mentioned earlier, I focused only on the reconstruction project, because I

⁴ I believe that for mask dance dramas, *p'ansori* and other similar performing arts, “popular culture” might be a better term than “folk culture” because they are representative of the development of popular culture from the mid-19th century onwards. Popular culture is differentiated from mass culture produced after industrialization, but it is not proper to translate this as mass culture because “mass” has been used as a term related to social class. *P'ansori* and mask dance dramas are not cultural forms only enjoyed by a specific class. For example, *p'ansori* was enjoyed by almost everyone, from the king to members of the lowest rung of Korean society. Unlike in Western society, where there were distinct gaps between elite culture and popular culture, in Korea, the line was quite blurry. The translation of this term needs to be discussed further in future publications, but I do not attempt to clarify it further in this paper.

thought that once we reconstructed *Kasan Ogwangdae*, it would be naturally transmitted in the village. I thought that the villagers would pass on *Kasan Ogwangdae* and other traditional entertainment forms after we helped them reconstruct the art. In fact, it was extremely difficult for us to proceed with the reconstruction project, and therefore, we did not have enough energy to think realistically about transmission.

At first the villagers in Kasan were extremely unfriendly, but they eventually became excited about the evening performance, and the villagers and the students from Seoul became good friends. During the day, we helped the villagers in the fields in order to develop our relationship, but even the way we dressed while farming became the subject of disapproving talk. It was not easy for us to follow the local customs. Nowadays, when students volunteer on farms, there are clear directions for behavior, but in the 1970s such a system had not yet been established.

The villagers held high hopes for the reconstruction, but it became clear that if there was no external interest in our reconstructed *Kasan Ogwangdae*, the villagers would not continue performing. The villagers initially did not have much interest in the reconstruction *per se* because they thought that *Kasan Ogwangdae* was not that important. The women in the village thought that the men's claims that they were reconstructing *Kasan Ogwangdae* were really an excuse for them to go drinking. There was also some skepticism as to whether the men in the village should perform without being paid, as the performances would be taking time away from their source of livelihood, farming. Tension arose, for example, between villagers and the key performer, Han Yunyŏng, who was overly enthusiastic about the reconstruction projects and sometimes got involved in conflicts with the villagers. This made it hard to bring agreement between the villagers. Without realistic and visible reward to the villagers, it seemed obvious that *Kasan Ogwangdae* should not continue.

I do believe that outsiders should compensate insiders in order to gain access to the insiders' culture, but usually it takes some time for outsiders to realize this. As is well known, the cultural policy in Kyŏngju is a typical example of a failed cultural policy. The policy makers only focused on the preservation of heritage and ignored the fact that people actually live in Kyŏngju. As a result, we are now confronted with some resistance from

Kyōngju's citizens. Both government organizations and scholars who participated in the design of cultural policy forcibly curtailed the rights of Kyōngju citizens, and in retrospect, I also failed to realize the costs of the reconstruction project. I started the reconstruction project to recover the village community, but I was unaware of the villagers' priorities. Also, I had not been concerned about whether the reconstruction of this drama could contribute to the recovery of the village community. When I started the project, I believed that outsiders could persuade the insiders to join forces in the reconstruction. I perceived the destruction of folk culture to be the result of rapid modernization and, furthermore, viewed folk culture as a symbol of the past that required protection. At the same time, folk culture had been marginalized and objectified. However, I realized too late that I should pay the costs for enjoying this marginalized culture.

At last, I realized that *Kasan Ogwangdae* should be designated an Intangible Cultural Properties and I applied all my energy to that goal. I had to give up all the information and materials that I had found and gathered in the course of reconstruction. People paid a lot of attention to *Kasan Ogwangdae* because, while the performers of other mask dance dramas had mostly passed away, many of the *Kasan Ogwangdae* performers were still alive, and this made it easier for this mask dance drama to be designated as a Cultural Property. However, as I devoted myself to the project, my dilemma became greater, because I was not really enthused about the designation and I had misgivings about the culture of the village community becoming included in the government's project. In other words, I worried that reconstruction would not produce vitality in the village community. I recalled not feeling very excited when I heard that *Kasan Ogwangdae* had been designated a national intangible Cultural Heritage in 1980, and I wondered whether this was the best way to transmit this culture.

In the process of reconstruction, I faced a lot of important issues, especially issues related to this mask dance drama's *wōnhyōng*, or archetypal form. However, it was much later that I discussed this issue as a fundamental problem. At the time of the reconstruction, I felt that *wōnhyōng* was a critical issue, but did not emphasize it or consider it at length. I was not sure whether *wōnhyōng* could actually exist and what should even be considered as *wōnhyōng*.

Collecting the lines and organizing the dialogue required much compromise and ran counter to the principle of *wŏnhyŏng*. I, as a Seoulite, could not understand well the Sachŏn dialect, but I believed that I should collect the dialogue in the original dialect. This was problematic as I could not converse with the performers in the dialect, and they were forced to use standard Korean to communicate with me, especially when using the most complex vocabulary. Furthermore, I created a dialogue in accurate standard Korean and had the performers practice this dialogue.

It was only twenty years ago that I realized the problem of standardizing the Korean language in mask dance dramas. I started thinking about the hegemony exercised on the locals by the center and about the “othering” of the outlying areas. I became aware of the problems with the policy of standardization of Korean, employed as a part of centralized planning.⁵ However, I was confused about the standards of *wŏnhyŏng* from the very beginning, and I am still curious about how other researchers overcome this problem when dealing with the preservation and transmission of other Intangible Cultural Properties. Although there are some studies that problematize the documentation of *wŏnhyŏng*, I have not found any research specifically focused on such issues.⁶

Like all the other mask dance dramas, the length of the performance was problematic, too, an issue directly related to *wŏnhyŏng*. The most senior performer told me that *Kasan Ogwangdae* was previously performed all night long, but he did not remember the contents of such a long version of *Kasan Ogwangdae*. It was revealed that in the past the performers would invite a *p'ansori* singer from outside of Kasan who would sing between two acts in the drama. They related how during the Japanese colonial era, the *Kasan Ogwangdae* team had traveled to perform in other areas. Outside Kasan, they had to end their performance within a certain period of time, but at home they had the freedom to perform all night long. Considering these circumstances, when carrying out the reconstruction project, I thought that

⁵ In this regard, see my study on the “othering” of rural areas and the hegemony of the central government in Korea (Lee, H. 2000).

⁶ Jung, Soo Jin's research on this topic is worth reading. She pointed out the issues concerning the documentation of *wŏnhyŏng*, specifically focusing on the case of the *salp'uri* dance.

the *wŏnhyŏng* of *Kasan Ogwangdae* should be dramatized by focusing on its theatrical elements. With this in mind, I composed the script and had people perform with that script. In short, I created a kind of standardized version.

At that time, I was positive that I was approaching the reconstruction project in an objective and realistic way, but in retrospect, it would be fair to say that my perspective of the reconstruction project had been formed by the intellectual framework in Korean society at that juncture. I thought I was setting an example of preservation and transmission by granting the newly made script canonical authority. However, I paid relatively less attention to such characteristics of folk culture as the involvement of the audience and the standard performance conditions, since I regarded those as accessories to the play.

My understanding of *wŏnhyŏng* was rooted in what I knew of the intangible cultural heritage policy.⁷ When an item of folk culture is designated an Intangible Cultural Property, it is supposed to be preserved as it was at the time of designation. However, in reality, the people involved try to preserve the oldest possible version, which they consider to be *wŏnhyŏng* (Jung, S. 2004, 2008a, 2008b; Lee, S. 2007). Furthermore, only one type of the performance is regarded and accepted as *wŏnhyŏng*, despite the existence of multiple versions. In this regard, I must confess that before getting involved in the reconstruction project, I was fascinated by the scholarship on religion by theorists such as Carl Jung and Mircea Eliade. Through their theories, I was convinced that there was an essence in a folk culture called *wŏnhyŏng* that could be given new life. I appropriated Eliade's arguments on archetypes and made them the theoretical foundation for the reconstruction project.⁸

From the current point of view, the theoretical foundation for the reconstruction of *wŏnhyŏng* was based on an imagined understanding of the past, which can be remembered and rearranged at the time when a folk culture is designated. Thus, it reflects the transcendental cognition of folklore. *Wŏnhyŏng* theory is based on the essentialization of knowledge. When

⁷ For a better understanding of originality or the intellectual genealogy of theories of *wŏnhyŏng*, I recommend Jung, Soo Jin's recent work (2008a). She addresses these issues in several places in her work. In particular, see pages 207-224.

⁸ This also is addressed in Jung, Soo Jin's work (2008a: 52).

participating in the reconstruction project, I was a firm believer in *wŏnhyŏng*. That is to say, the reconstruction project was designed in order to create a canonical version of the art.

Although I became doubtful after *Kasan Ogwangdae*'s designation as an Intangible Cultural Property, I still believed that the performers should conform to such an imagined *wŏnhyŏng*. In this sense, *Kasan Ogwangdae* is not unique. Once *wŏnhyŏng* is established, the law insists on action in accordance with *wŏnhyŏng*. This runs contrary to the nature of folk culture, which continues to transform, adapting itself to changes in the environment.⁹ Nevertheless, it must be admitted that this conception of *wŏnhyŏng* has been an intellectual foundation for transmitting Intangible Cultural Properties.

People think that once an art is designated an Intangible Cultural Property and is put under the custody of the government, the *wŏnhyŏng* of a folk culture will be transmitted intact. However, transmission of *wŏnhyŏng* is not always successful because it transforms, prioritizing the views of the government and the wishes of interested parties. For example, in *Kasan Ogwangdae*, P'ojol, one of the characters who is a Chosŏn Dynasty policeman, becomes Sunsa, a Japanese police officer. *Kasan Ogwangdae* is the only art form that includes a role from the Japanese colonial period. When reconstructing *Kasan Ogwangdae*, all the performers remembered that the character was Sunsa, not P'ojol.

However, when *Kasan Ogwangdae* was designated an Intangible Cultural Property and nationalistic discourses were addressed, the performers in *Kasan* changed the Sunsa character back to P'ojol. I heard that it was not a problem in the further evaluation for designation. Lampooning Sunsa in their play would have been the villagers' cultural response to the Japanese colonial occupation. Yet the performers in *Kasan* dramatized the play in an older and more nationalistic version by including P'ojol, a character from the Chosŏn Dynasty (Lee, H. 2004: 78). This change is a kind of new cultural response and once again it makes us question what *wŏnhyŏng* is. We can witness similar occurrences in the developments of Miryang City's *paekjungnori*

⁹ Lee, Gyung Yup addresses various aspects of transmission, pointing out the problems with the intangible cultural heritage policy's selection of and standardization of all possible versions of an art (2004: 298-304).

celebration (Lee, S. 2007: 306-336).

In addition, looking back, I realize a process of acculturation occurred in conjunction with the reconstruction. I remember that my colleagues and I consistently used expressions such as ‘national culture’ or ‘culture’ in order to persuade the village performers to join the reconstruction project. Those who did not show any interest in the reconstruction were exposed to such expressions repeatedly and later internalized them. Through the villagers’ use of these terms in relation to *Kasan Ogwangdae*, they revealed their pride in the art. After the reconstruction, they changed their colloquial term for performing *Kasan Ogwangdae* (*maegunonda*) to the formal standard Korean term for performing (*kongyönhada*). Thus, they appropriated the more elevated expression for themselves as artists and *Kasan Ogwangdae* as an art.

The reconstruction of *Kasan Ogwangdae* was the most significant event both in the history of Kasan village and in the lives of the individuals there since the abolition of the grain-tax collection warehouses. For the reconstruction, about fifty college students came down to the small village and spent a long time there on research and practice. Further, we persistently endeavored to get the play designated an Intangible Cultural Property and coordinated its public performance in Seoul. It was not a momentary event. Our efforts to reconstruct the drama resulted in having the performance and memories about it standardized. This standardization was further reinforced by the village performers, who repeated their knowledge about the performance outlined through the reconstruction to new researchers visiting their village.

After the designation, the performers were given the responsibility of preserving *wŏnhyŏng* and transmitting it intact. They had to practice the same choreography over and over. In *Kasan Ogwangdae*, the dialogue is much more important than the dance and thus it seems that creativity is stifled. From the local community’s point of view, I doubt whether this *Kasan Ogwangdae* can be appropriated as a new art. Putting aside the cases of those mask dances of North Korea such as *Pongsan t’alchum*, which have long been isolated from their local community, we should pay attention to the fact that the *yayu* field-plays and *ogwangdae* performances from Pusan and South Kyŏngsang Province lost their ability to respond to the changing cultural environment by conforming to the criteria of the central government and researchers.

Since the Japanese colonial period, mask dance dramas appropriated the idea of Western drama and transformed themselves, focusing on dramatic elements, into a major national performing art. Besides, it was recently revealed that they were edited and reinterpreted according to various external opinions, including those of the Japanese Governor-General of Korea. In a word, mask dances during the Japanese colonial period were appropriated according to different contexts in various ways. This polysemy, a major characteristic of mask dances, is believed to be a historical product. I argue that mask dance dramas developed closely interwoven relationships with rituals in small villages and provincial towns called *ŭpch'i* (Chosŏn era term for county seat) during the late Chosŏn Dynasty (Lee, H. 1995: 84-91).

Rituals in *ŭpch'i* were usually carried out according to the politics of local governance. Thus, the development and performances of mask dances should be understood in such contexts. After the 19th century, plays developed dramatically and were included in rituals. Thus, plays and rituals have possessed similarities while maintaining their distinctive characteristics. However, the post-1960 intangible cultural heritage policy and folklore policies backing up such policies have not considered their differences and ambiguities. As a result, local cultures were conflated and placed under the control of the central government.

As is well-known, as with other important Intangible Cultural Properties, only the key performers of *Kasan Ogwangdae* were designated “national human treasures.” Until recently, financial support was directly provided mostly to the “national human treasures.” This support system, through which only a small number of performers receive benefits, runs contrary to the nature of mask dance dramas, which require a large number of performers.

A new hierarchy emerged when the central government granted the special status of “national human treasure” to some individuals. Such a hierarchy did not exist before in the daily lives of *Kasan* villagers, and it is obvious that the policy did not consider the historical background of mask dance dramas in the area. *Kasan Ogwangdae* was formed based on the voluntary participation of villagers. However, the policy employed by the central government generated discord and tension among the performers, and it became an issue in the village with the majority of the villagers over who should perform in *Kasan Ogwangdae*. *Kasan Ogwangdae* is led by a

particular family of local residents, the Han lineage, which is a very unusual case. Amongst the Han lineage, Han Yun Yǒng is the most significant figure, and without him, the reconstruction of *Kasan Ogwangdae* would not have been possible. However, his headstrong nature made it difficult for him to win the villagers' cooperation, and his designation as a "national human treasure" aggravated the situation.

In addition, the methods used to examine and evaluate potential "national human treasures" are problematic. Using particular criteria, a small number of performers are chosen, and outside assistance is provided to them. As a result of this process, the performers of mask dance dramas, including those of *Kasan Ogwangdae*, have been made subservient to a new power: an examination and evaluation regime. Accordingly, order within a performing group is now controlled by an outside authority, whereas in the past, mask dance dramas were planned and led by the performers.

As I mentioned earlier, the fact that one performer has excellent performing skill does not guarantee that that person will also be a good leader who can successfully organize and plan a performance. However, the examination and evaluation from outside and the decisions made according to the said examination and evaluation play a significant role in placing certain people in leadership roles. Moreover, a governmental support system, which revolves around certain performers, has been established. This environment hampers the development of a cultural leadership that can bring new creativity and life to a performance. It must be noted that *Kasan Ogwangdae* is not the only group under this government direction that experiences these problems. It seems reasonable to assert that the problems mentioned above were caused by the intangible cultural heritage policy makers' ignorance of the important historical background of mask dance dramas. The policy of forcing groups to conform to the government-led system has brought about unwanted results. Moreover, because of Korean society's propensity to respect intellectuals, performers subordinated their opinions to those of outside scholars.

There has been research on folklorism that has attempted to overcome *wǒnhyǒng* or essentialization (Nam, K. 2008b). Other research has argued that the idea of preserving any folk plays according to *wǒnhyǒng* should be discarded (Heo, Y. 2009b). Such arguments suggest that we should re-

examine the historical backgrounds of folklore in a broader context, since folklore has been the foundation of the current preservation, transmission and supporting mechanism.

In particular, folklorism itself assumes the existence of cultural elements, and thus, a new study about such cultural elements is needed. This is different from the previous conceptualization of *wŏnhyŏng* and needs further explanation. What are the cultural elements? Should we regard them as prototypes? Should we consider them as something close to authentic? Folklore has not paid much attention to power, class and politics. The notion of a transcendent historicity or continuity of folklore might be related to these elements. This is why I deploy autoethnography and will next discuss the designation of *Kasan Ogwangdae* as an Intangible Cultural Property and its post-designation activities in relation to the politicization of folklore under government control.

III. FORMATION OF A FOLKLORE UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND THE POLITICS OF FOLKLORISM SINCE THE 1960S

It is a well-known fact that since the 1960s modernization policies have accelerated the dissolution of village communal ceremonies. As a part of the modernization project, each village was incorporated in order to mobilize the power of the central state; consequently, many shrines and village ceremonies based on those shrines disappeared, weakening the communal foundation of culture in these communities. The reconstruction of *Kasan Ogwangdae* was carried out in the early 1970s as an attempt to revive this village culture.

Knowledge of village ceremonies or mask dance performances during the pre-modern period is incomplete. However, it is certain that in the 1960s the village ceremony of *chŏllyongje* was regarded as a superstition standing in the way of the government's promotion of modernization, so its role in unifying the village was weakened. Accordingly, *Kasan Ogwangdae*, closely linked to that ceremony, ended up losing its performance context. The restoration of *Kasan Ogwangdae* was conducted after the basis of the performance had been lost, and it was transmitted and incorporated into the system for the

protection of Intangible Cultural Properties in their performance format.

The Folk Arts Contest, originating in the Folk Arts Festival, is a representative example of the projects that have pursued the contradictory goals of modernization and the resuscitation of a vanishing traditional culture. Accordingly, folk arts were incorporated into the purview of the national government. Especially at the end of the 1960s, when national mobilization and industrialization were taking place on a grand scale, the foundation of folk culture was being eroded nationwide. There were a lot of conflicting ideas related to the protection of folk culture and the arts, but no serious tension or friction amongst those ideas and their advocates.¹⁰

It is not proper to solely point to the role of the government as the agent behind the modern project of “protecting” folk arts. The specialists who emphasized the values of folk culture and folk knowledge took the ideological lead in the early years of the policy. They worked to develop and systematize various programs, and the mass media joined the effort.¹¹ In this regard, the intangible cultural heritage policy, promoted as part of a government-driven modernization project, had everyone’s support.

In fact, it was not the policy makers nor the specialists but rather the performing groups and individual performers who first exposed the problems with the intangible cultural heritage system and policy. It is also necessary to note that the discussion of the crisis of representation that folklore is facing, as well as an introspective examination of modernity, existed long before issues with the intangible cultural heritage policy became publicized. When compared to other intellectual sectors, researchers inside and outside of the country began to notice such problems quite late.

Serious skepticism about folklore had already been expressed due to the recognition of the huge gap between the expected results and actual research results and, furthermore, because the researcher’s biases and agendas were obscured in standard research projects (Iwatake Mikkako 1996). This innate contradiction existed from the earliest stage of the development of the field

¹⁰ Jung, Soo Jin (2004).

¹¹ For further understanding, please see the research of Jung, Soo Jin (2008a) and Lee, Jang Yull (2005). In this regard, mass media played a major role, so it is my view that there should be more studies on the role of mass media.

of folklore. Folklore studies were developed with the dual concept that they would leave tradition to modernize independently and at the same time would induce integration by compensating for the loss and alienation created during the modernization process.

Furthermore, the paradox was that the object of attention was the culture of the disadvantaged lower classes, not that of the elites. Yet, the executor of the studies of folklore were the intellectual elite, who carried out the studies according to elite ideals and an elite concept of the nation. The traditional dichotomy between farming/fishing communities and the city is a clear example of the existing structure. Since folklore studies began with intellectuals examining rural areas, the agrarian area was not only an object of study but also the oppositional example that allowed the city to demonstrate its secure modern identity.

In this regard, folklorists obsessed over exotic or unfamiliar things, turning their gaze away from the familiar. The fact that outsiders showed an overwhelming interest in village ceremonies, even when these ceremonies had almost disappeared, continued to unilaterally reflect city intellectuals' viewpoint. Korean folklorists continue to focus on pre-modern customs as an index for modern society without significant discussion, even though the boundaries between the rural and the urban have been significantly weakened because of urbanization and the spread of the market economy.

The project of re-evaluating and theorizing the intellectual tradition of Korean folklore has focused on cultural heritage in agrarian pre-modern society. Although it has now expanded to consider the actions and histories of cities, the research scope still seems insufficient. Early Korean folklorists ignored various formation factors due to their obsession with romanticized origins, an obsession that has made folklore ahistorical by excluding complexity in the relations of power and class.¹² In this respect, it is now a

¹² In this regard, there still exist such trends in recent studies; for example, in 2009 the Korean Folklore Society (Han'guk Minsok Hakhoe) decided to discuss the origin of mask dances in their summer conference. The keynote speakers, Lim, Jae Hae (2009) and Jeon, Kyung Wook (2009), addressed the correlation between the obsession with origin and the obsession with *wŏnhyŏng*. However, the historical discussion of formation was actually disregarded. Basically such an obsession with origin shows that ahistorical mythologization still exists in the study of mask dance dramas.

relief that a proposal by a folklorist emerged for fellow folklorists to conduct research that critically intervenes in the political authoritarian structure of folkloric discourse (Nam, K. 2009a).

The crisis of restoration displays the paradox of folklore. The historical origin of folklore studies in Korea dates to the Japanese colonial era. Because folk culture, including mask dance dramas, was cast as a symbol of cultural nationalism, folk culture was respected as rural art. This process led the arts to take on the characteristics of a government-led folklore under government control (Nam, K. 2004). The polysemic characteristics of performance of the Japanese colonial era originated in the late 19th century, at a time when the proliferation of mask dance dramas along two opposing tracks—continuity and modification—become clear.

Researchers' opinions on the period of development and proliferation of mask dance dramas and on the reason the performances were discontinued are ambiguous. I suspect that, similar to other forms of popular culture such as *p'ansori*, mask dance dramas suddenly spread after the late 19th century. It seems that the proliferating performances, combined with the local governing system of the dynasty and the cultural networks in local society, evolved as a part of *narye* exorcism rites. And driving these ceremonies were local petty officials called *hyangni*. Therefore, as far as the basis of dramatic performance is concerned, I think that there is a considerable difference between the late Chosŏn period and the Japanese colonial era.¹³

Meanwhile, the elderly, such as those who participated in dramatic performances after the Japanese colonial era or those who were in the senior citizens' associations for the *ŭpch'i* local government seats, played an important role in *ŭpch'i* rituals. Those senior citizens groups, or *yangnohoe*, continued to exist in local *ŭpch'i* communities, even as they became incorporated into modern cities. In fact, they became the hub of the revival of mask dance dramas. In this regard, continuity with the late 19th century can be pointed out. Other than the changes to the background of pivotal individuals who restructured the dramatic performances, the Chosŏn

¹³ There is no systematic study of the reproduction of mask dance dramas during the Japanese colonial period. The case of the *Tongnae yayu* mask dance drama demonstrates that we need further studies (Jung, S. 2009).

Dynasty and colonial era were the same in this regard.

It is worthwhile to note that Song Sökha and other early folklorists who became interested in mask dance dramas during the Japanese colonial era started to collect information in this field after hearing Japanese academics make statements such as, “Chosön has no theatre.” Originally they may have intended to emphasize the dramatic composition of mask dance dramas, imagining Western theatrical elements as an index of comparative advantage. During this process, the new term “*kamyön-gŭk*” [literally, mask performance + drama] was used to give mask dance dramas a name that held commonalities with Western theater.

Calling mask dance dramas, which were incorporated as a part of *narye* rites in local society, *kamyön-gŭk* was not simply a change in the name but also an indication of a transfiguration of the dramas.¹⁴ That by thoroughly teaching and studying *Pongsan t'alchum*, mask dance drama could modernize while keeping the ancient rural art illustrates this point. As was mentioned earlier, various factors that constitute dramatic performance other than dramatic composition was often overlooked during this modernizing process.

In 1958, when the first Folk Arts Contest since Korea's independence was held, it was apparent that the artistic aspect of folk culture was highly valued. However, such a focus on artistry runs contrary to folk cultures' core characteristic of simplicity that promotes community-wide participation.¹⁵ This change was a result of the invented tradition in the post-colonial era, which regards theatrical factors as indicators of comparative advantage and the basis for promoting the mask dance drama revival movement.

However, the revival and dramatic performance during the Japanese colonial era is another symbol of the modernization of the dramas. At that time, *Pongsan t'alchum* was protected as one of the recommended rural recreation forms, according to the policy and principle of the Japanese

¹⁴ In contrast to the above point, there is an argument that differentiates *narye* (rites of exorcism) and *kamyön-gŭk* (mask dance drama). In this study, Jeon Kyung Wook argues that *kamyön-gŭk* emerged after *narye* (Jeon, K. 1998). I believe that he disregarded the fact that mask dance dramas are included in *narye* without the need to discuss *kamyön-gŭk* separately.

¹⁵ In this regard, Jung, Soo Jin points out that the Folk Arts Contests cannot disregard the contradiction between artistic merit and adherence to *wönhyöng* (2009).

colonial government, and similar examples are found in other regions. It has been proven that since 1939 the Japanese colonial government conducted research on rural folk arts in each region under the pretext of dissemination and promotion of government-approved rural arts and that *Pongsan t'alchum* was the first art to be so appointed (Nam, K. 2003, 2008a). In short, there was a close correlation between folklore and the nation, and the fact remains that the authority of the colonial government influenced the spread of mask dance dramas. In this context, it is certain that the folklore in the 1960s and the formation of a folklore under government control based on that folklore are closely tied to the experience of folklore appropriated during the Japanese colonial era.

IV. MASK DANCE DRAMAS AS AN IDEOLOGY UTILIZED IN MOVEMENTS, AND THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MASK DANCE DRAMAS AS POPULAR CULTURE

During the 1970s and 1980s, mask dance dramas re-emerged as an ideological symbol of resistance and reform. Under the slogan, "Recovery of Community," mask dance dramas became a new symbol of the culture of the masses. It is a well-known fact that the democratization movement led by university students was promoted through a vision encapsulated by mask dance dramas (Kim, K. 1989; Abelmann 1996; Ko, C. 2004; Heo, Y. 2009b). In this regard, there are two eras in which performances were used as vehicles of protest. The 1970s protests used traditional mask dance dramas, and the post-1970s performances on university campuses used *madanggük*, which were new theatrical productions that borrowed heavily from traditional mask dance dramas.

The movements to resurrect mask dance dramas disapproved of the folklore under government control, but their ideology was somewhat similar. In other words, they were both based on nationalism or a myth of national community. In addition, they both agreed that folk culture best represented a national community's culture. Moreover, they frowned on the individualism that was developing through the process of industrialization and urbanization, and suggested the rural village community as an example

of retaining the community-based culture of the past. In this context, popular discourse conflated national culture and folk culture.

In the ethnically homogenous Korean society, the nation has been regarded as the most ideal community. Thus, activists believed that national community could heal all the serious rifts and frictions that Korean society had experienced. In this light, although the mask dance drama movement advocated resistance and reform, it was also deeply connected to social conservatism.

After the end of the 1970s, folk art and culture was portrayed as the resistance and reform-oriented culture of the masses. This view was largely promoted by urban intellectuals, the majority of whom were university students. Activists promulgated a new national culture and art project, *madanggük*, as distinct from the government-led national culture preservation project. However, considering that the two seemingly different projects perceived farming communities of the past as ideal, it is difficult to find any obvious differences in their perspectives on folklore.

Not only were mask dance dramas deemed to be historical symbols of resistance and reform, but they were also appropriated as a vision of the past in order to put resistance and reform into practice. The cultural movement at that time had a teleological perspective on history. In other words, the cultural movement aimed to reinterpret the historical context in which mask dance dramas were performed and then project the spirit of the performance culture of the past onto modern society. The discourse about the development of mask dance dramas in relation to the growth of the masses interacted with the “internal development theory,” which had been very well received by Korean historians at that time. At present, the internal development theory, which had prevailed as the mainstream in Korean historiography since the 1960s, has fallen out of favor, but there are still some historical perspectives based on the internal development theory as a backdrop for explaining the historical development of mask dance dramas.¹⁶

¹⁶ The impact of the internal development theory on Korean studies in Korea has been tremendous, and this theory greatly influenced studies on mask dance dramas. Thus, issues regarding internal development theory should be pointed out if one wants to find a new approach to the studies of mask dance dramas. The internal development theory has been discredited in a systematic way, but there are still quite a number

I argue that if you examine history, this hypothesis can be disproven. It has been verified that mask dance dramas such as *Pongsan t'alchum*, *Yangju byölsandae*, *Kosöng ogwangdae*, *Tongnae yayu*, *T'ongyöng ogwangdae* and *Chinju ogwangdae* spread rapidly after the 19th century, developing in *üpch'i* that became modern cities. After the late Chosön Dynasty, these county seats were found in rural society in general, but they were differentiated from other rural communities in that they were governmentally-led towns housing both government offices and the living quarters of government officers. The more important fact is that government officers, such as the local petty officials, played a large role in the development and spread of mask dance dramas.

Although such local petty officials were of relatively low rank in the Chosön government, they were in positions that wielded strong cultural influence, such as presiding over rites in county seats. For example, the *hojang*, the local headman who conducted *Kangnüng tano kut*, was the head of the local petty officials. The more important point is that the local petty officials played an important role in arbitrating disputes between the central government and local communities or between the literati upper class *yangban* and commoners. In short, the development and spread of mask dance dramas in the late 19th century was closely related to the role of these petty officials in arbitration.

This understanding of power in local society has deconstructed the historical hypothesis that presumed mask dance dramas were a symbol of cultural essence. Since this kind of historical imagination has supported the values of folklorists for a long time, genuine historical discussion of folk culture is even more necessary. Nevertheless, folklorists are still obsessed with the transcendence of folk culture. This is because they cannot distinguish between the subjective desire for an ahistorical world, where power and class do not exist, and the real world.

The case of *Kasan Ogwangdae* also supports this argument. *Kasan* was not an *üpch'i*, but it was a busy center of distribution, because it housed a

of scholars obsessed with it or use it as the starting point for their arguments. My research is critical of earlier research based on internal development theory. In this regard, reading my other papers on social history and the cultural history of Korea would be helpful.

regional grain-tax collection warehouse, an office that administered the taxes sent to Seoul. The Han lineage maintained power in the local government in Kasan. Therefore, even though the rituals and performances realized the imagination of the community, in reality the performances were strongly related to the maintenance of order in the local community. In short, Korean historical imagination, which has long considered mask dance dramas as representations of an ideology of people's protest, does not accord with historical fact. Rather, social integration through the role of arbitration was more important in easing conflicts, which is why mask dance dramas at that time can be defined as a ritualized protest.

Such an argument has led mask dance dramas to be defined under a new category, popular culture, not as a class culture for the masses. The point is that arbitration, which made the coexistence of opposing values possible, is considered an important attribute of mask dance dramas. I argue that the main reason mask dance dramas were a dynamic source of cultural florescence since the late 19th century lies in the mask dance dramas' role in arbitrating various opposing values.

Since the late 19th century, mask dance dramas have been discontinued and resurrected several times due to their powerful popular appeal. The reasons for this are as follows: 1) mask dance drama structure can contain many conflicting values and ideologies; 2) mask dance dramas absorbed the conflicting values differently in each time and context; and 3) the effects of mask dance dramas differ according to their performers. The performers of the mask dance dramas have varied considerably. In addition, the meaning of the mask dance dramas has changed according to various historical contexts.

Not only did local government officials, including the low ranked *hyangni* petty officials, play a vital role in the development and spread of mask dance dramas in the late Chosŏn Dynasty, but they were also the organizers of mask dance dramas. Important performers were at times military officers, itinerant entertainers, butchers, low-ranking petty officials who circulated in the district, and government-employed slaves. People from different social classes joined and organized mask dance dramas. Such diversity shows that mask dance dramas appealed to people of all classes, both rulers and subjects, who may have been engaged in hostile relations with each other in the hierarchical social system of the Chosŏn Dynasty. Such wide participation

also reveals that mask dance dramas could be interpreted differently by each group of participants, an aspect that enabled mask dance dramas to be vital and dynamic over a long period of time. In this regard, we can assume that mask dance dramas were developing into a popular culture sweeping across all social classes and regions, rather than into a culture for a specific class.

This assumption can also be applied to *p'ansori* operas. If mask dance dramas and *p'ansori* had been monopolized by a specific class, they would not have been able to survive through the massive transformations of modern Korean society. This seems particularly valid for *p'ansori*, and researchers should examine *p'ansori* as popular culture rather than as folk culture. The intangible cultural heritage policy and the cultural movement in the 1970s did not correspond with the pre-modern popularity of mask dance dramas and *p'ansori*. The intangible cultural heritage policy called for creation of a cultural canon, and the cultural movement in the 1970s regarded mask dance dramas as a culture exclusively for one particular social class.

It should also be pointed out that mask dance dramas flourished after the middle of the 19th century during the late Chosŏn Dynasty, when the incorporation of rituals became standardized in the mask dance dramas. The combination of rituals that reaffirmed and reproduced the established orders and the sarcastic and critical stance that mask dance dramas demonstrated towards the established social order could be redefined as a ritualized protest (Lee, H. 1995). The most serious problem with the earlier studies on mask dance dramas is that researchers separate the dramas from rituals and selectively extract contents for discussion. The following fact shows the validity of my argument: Peasant uprisings did not occur in *ŭpch'i* where mask dance dramas were performed. Rather, *ŭpch'i* where performers of mask dance dramas resided became the target of such uprisings after the middle of the 19th century.

During the Japanese colonial period, mask dance dramas were protected by the Japanese colonial government. I think this is because the severe criticism of the upper class *yangban* literati implied in mask dance dramas somewhat matched well with the Japanese colonial government's stance on the ruling class. The Japanese tried to emphasize the incompetence and corruption of the *yangban* in order to justify their colonial rule. However, it would be erroneous to consider only the connection between mask dance

dramas and the Japanese colonial government while disregarding other various aspects of the dramas. This is because the criticism of the *yangban* in mask dance dramas was not just a belated parody of a historical subject. Although the conventional notion holds that the *yangban* literati collapsed before the demise of the Chosŏn Dynasty, the *yangban* endured into the Japanese colonial period (Wagner 2008; Song, C. 1987). Thus, the mask dance dramas' criticism of the *yangban* should be regarded as a cultural response to changes villagers were experiencing under Japanese colonial rule.

In short, we should not disregard the various layers of meaning in mask dance dramas. It would be erroneous to argue that mask dance dramas were a symbol of Japanese colonialism, simply focusing on Japan's protection of them. It is not surprising to observe that the mask dance dramas evolved during the colonial era because mask dance dramas were already quite diverse in their process of historical development as popular culture.

V. CONCLUSION

The abolition of the grain-tax transport warehouses in 1894 came as a blow to the residents of Kasan. A recollection of this incident is found in a villager's diary (Han, S. 1937), and it describes how the hierarchy of power and the economic structures based on the warehouses suddenly collapsed. Kasan was included in Sachŏn County, but according to the Japanese reform of the local government system, Kasan was originally incorporated into Chinju City, then known as Chinjumok. At the time of the reconstruction, no one in the village remembered that fact.

After the abolition of its status as a grain-tax transport warehouse district, the village seemed to wilt. Nevertheless, it is believed that rituals and mask dance dramas in the village functioned as a fount of culture, acting as a bond for the remaining villagers. This is highly probable considering the fact that at the end of the Chosŏn Dynasty, *Kasan Ogwangdae* performers travelled to neighboring villages to put on road shows as fundraisers for the establishment of a private school in Kasan. In the 1970s, almost sixty years after that tour, people in Kasan still remembered this event. I think having such a tour was a new experience and a precious memory to the villagers. The

fundraising event demonstrates the flexibility of the people in Kasan: Facing difficulties after the abolition of the grain-tax transport warehouses, locals utilized their mask dance, combined with rituals, at a new level.

The development of *Kasan Ogwangdae* during the Japanese colonial period and up until the 1970s is unclear. No one could remember it. Chŏng Inbo and Song Sŏkha, who researched other folk arts in the Chinju and Tongnae area, failed to mention *Kasan Ogwangdae*. Although other mask dances from several different *ŭpch'i* were exposed to a variety of changes throughout the Japanese colonial period, they remained essentially the same; therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the rituals and the mask dance drama of Kasan did not change much until the early 1960s, except during wartime mobilization in the 1940s.

In 1974, *Kasan Ogwangdae* was reconstructed through the leadership and planning of village outsiders. In addition to *Kasan Ogwangdae*, several other mask dance dramas from various parts of Korea were temporarily discontinued and later reconstructed and performed. In this process, although those performers who had actual experience performing mask dance dramas played an important role, the intervention of outsiders such as myself played a vital part.

At that time, everybody was convinced that they had succeeded in reconstructing the mask dance drama through objective research and study. No one broached the subject that the views and education of outside intellectuals could have affected the reconstruction project. In this regard, the use of autoethnography is needed, because it allows for reflexivity in a discussion of the emergence of folk culture and folklorism. The intellectuals organized knowledge and created folk culture; hence, the descriptions of their intention and experiences are absolutely integral to expanding into new intellectual territory.

In the process of designating Intangible Cultural Properties and supporting them, the judgment and ideology of outside examiners became more important than performers' own decisions and agreements. Thus, the outsiders' plans and power became much more influential than expected. In this sense, folklore studies were allied with the hegemony of the central government. In this regard, I believe that researchers or managers who participated in and were involved with the project should produce

autoethnographic accounts of the process.

After *Kasan Ogwangdae* was designated an Intangible Cultural Property, it became an important item of cultural capital that had impact on the villagers' daily life. Most of the villagers were performers of *Kasan Ogwangdae*, and they frequently received invitations to perform. Thus, the villagers' lives become closely related to events in the outside world. *Kasan* used to be secluded, with little change in the local population, but it transformed into a place that was easily accessible. *Kasan Ogwangdae* was appropriated as a rallying point for community building in *Kasan* in the 1970s, causing both tensions and new visions. However, I am not sure if *Kasan Ogwangdae* can be a valuable factor in the present or future of *Kasan*.

Different parties may evaluate the direction of folklore development differently. The methodology for future folklore studies is particularly important. In this regard, I expect folklore to encounter a new intellectual area and experience creative tensions. For this, folklore should part with the current practice of promoting the hegemony of the center and the "othering" of the periphery. Folk culture, including mask dance dramas, is developed as the "other" on the periphery, and this is actually part of the process of creating the ascendancy of the center. In other words, folklore and culture should transcend the rural/urban divide in order to provide knowledge and culture of local areas. The current system of designating mask dances as Intangible Cultural Properties and supporting them is center-oriented. It gives the central government superiority over the folk culture at the periphery, leading the center to reinforce its own superiority.¹⁷

The rhetoric of folklore has changed mask dance dramas into elements of a government-led folklore under government control with added weight accorded to outside perspectives. Thus, local performers are restricted to repeating reconstructed performances constantly. Because of this stance, when I approached the villagers, I saw them as the "other." The purpose of this autoethnography is to confess this perspective and shed some historical light on such experiences.

Autoethnography might give an impression that an author's personal

¹⁷ With respect to the hegemony of the central government and the "othering" of local governments in Korean studies, please see my research (Lee, H. 2000).

subjective experiences are the truth. However, despite such a drawback, its merits include the ability to clarify facts that cannot be seen in a conventional narrative. Autoethnography can address the fact that there is always a space where an individual can move, choose, and change an ideology or an institute or the system. In this regard, it is my hope that this autoethnographic account of *Kasan Ogwangdae* can contribute valuable information to a new area of national knowledge.

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