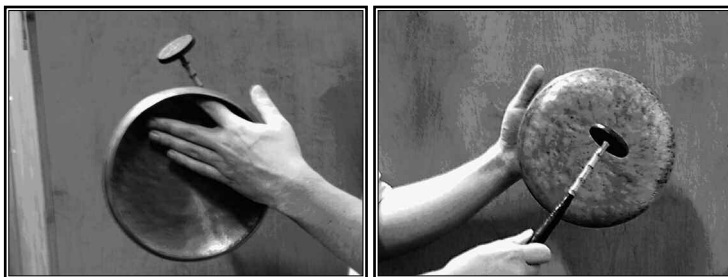


PLAYFUL PATTERNS OF FREEDOM
HAND GONG PERFORMANCE IN KOREAN SHAMAN RITUAL



SIMON MILLS

THE KOREAN HAND GONG – MOST COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS *KKWAENGGWARI* OR *SOE* – only features in two traditional Korean folk genres: the percussion band music and dance genre known as ‘*p’ungmul*’ or ‘*nongak*’ (‘farmers’ music’) and the East coast style of folk ritual music, as performed by troupes of hereditary *mudang* (Korean shamans)¹. In both of these genres, the hand gong is indispensable.



Typical playing position (front and back view). Note the fingers used for damping – preventing ‘blurring’ and modifying phrasing and articulation.

In *p’ungmul*, a group of between one and four hand gong players is responsible for leading the rest of the ensemble – a relatively large number of drummers playing the hourglass drum (*changgo*), the barrel drum (*puk*) and sometimes the small hand drum (*sogo*), and a small number of people who play the large gong (*ching*). In this context, the hand gong players are assigned hierarchial positions of authority; the absolute leader (*sangsoe*) guides the performers through musical and choreographic transitions, playing a smaller, higher-pitched instrument sometimes called a ‘male *soe*’ (‘*sus-soe*’), which makes a brilliant, penetrating sound. Meanwhile, the lower ranking players play supporting material, using larger, lower-pitched instruments – ‘female *soe*’ (‘*amsoe*’) – that produce mellower, softer sounds². For the most part, the hand gong lines remain distinct from one another, yet

closely co-ordinated. Like most Korean folk music, *p'ungmul* employs the fixed frameworks of rhythmic cycles (*changdan*) and, in this context, the cycles used are generally quite short and regular. The hand gong players perform successions of rhythmic variations that begin on the first beat of each cycle and end on the last, generally conforming closely to the cycle's underlying metric structure. Variations are often repeated many times. The overriding effect is thus one of clarity and order.

In the East coast style of folk ritual music, meanwhile, the hand gongs play a very different role. In this context, the ensemble is led by a single drummer, who plays an unusually small variety of double headed drum (*changgo*). He is joined by a single player of the large gong (*ching*), who is responsible for demarcating the most important beats in the rhythmic cycles. Here, there are between two and six hand gong players, who join the texture whenever the officiating ritualist is not singing; while some musical structures are entirely without song and involve the hand gongs throughout, others incorporate a very effective alternation between episodes of hand gong playing and episodes of singing. Some of the rhythmic cycles featured in these structures are amongst the most lengthy, complex, and irregular in Korea.

In great contrast with *p'ungmul* performance practice, there is no hierarchical role-assignment between the hand gong players in East coast ritual; although teachers often have to guide learners, the musical ideal is that all players perform exactly the same roles. Accordingly, all the musicians play hand gongs that have similar (but not the same) pitches and projection levels – relatively soft, medium or low pitched instruments being the standard. Although the players share the same roles, they rarely play the same music; indeed, it is only at the very beginnings and ends of musical structures and at points of transition between sections that people play the same pre-‘fixed’ rhythms. Rather, each performer creates his own independent line, which is generally characterised by a near-constancy of invention happening ‘in the moment’ (– in other words, in improvisation), extremely rapid patterning, a wide range of dynamics and articulation, and an apparent desire to defy all the listeners’ expectations; patterns often diverge radically from the cycle’s underlying metric structure (demarcated by the drummer), regularly ‘crossing over’ from one cycle into the next. When all the hand-gong players perform in this way, their lines intertwine to create a truly bewildering overall effect: a wall of shimmering metallic sound, out of which fragments emerge and then disappear.

Through musical analysis, this article will investigate the ritual style of hand gong playing. What exactly are the hand gong players doing during performance³? How are they organising rhythmic material within the pre-determined musical structures? The article will then go on to address the more difficult question: why is the hand gong patterning like it is?

THE RITUAL CONTEXT

The Eastern coast of South Korea is lined with numerous fishing villages, many of which are enclaves of traditional folk culture and belief⁴. They remain extraordinarily close-knit, a consequence of many sharing the same hazardous occupation, families having histories that interlink back through many generations, and people continuing to participate in a variety of age-old rituals, to mark seasonal events (for example, the beginning of the seaweed-gathering season), to celebrate life-cycle events (for example, the 60th birthday of an elder), and to ensure the continued protection of divine forces. Christian missionaries have been remarkably unsuccessful in this area of the country and, still today, a great many villagers worship the old gods – most importantly Kolmaegi (the village guardian deity) and Yongwang (the Dragon King who presides over the sea).

The type of world-view that Jung famously referred to as “synchronicity”⁵ but which many refer to more derogatively as “superstition” (*mishin* in Korean) is widespread in these enclaves: gods, ghosts and other spirits are thought to actively intervene in everyday life all the time, forging causal links between disparate phenomena and thereby producing a very complex web of interrelationships⁶. Many communities have their own resident *mudang* who specialise in interpreting this web for the benefit of individuals or small groups; through one-to-one discussion and various techniques of divination (often focusing on so-called ‘possession’), they diagnose the true causes of the problems, offer advice concerning possible solutions and provide small-scale ritual (*ch’isöng*) and amulets (*pujök*) as remedies. They also, crucially, perform the role of fortune-tellers (*chömjangi*)⁷.

To address the needs of the community at large, many East coast fishing villages also hold large-scale rituals that are open to everyone. By far the most significant communal ritual event is that known either as ‘*Pyölsin Kut*’ (lit. ‘Special god ritual’) or ‘*P’ungöje*’ (lit. ‘Festival for abundant fishing’) – a full *mudang* ritual (*kut*) (or more accurately a long series of rituals), that lasts between two and six days and which, being extensive and expensive, is

only held very rarely – once every 3, 5, 7, or 10 years, according to village custom. For this event, the village is obliged to hire an entire troupe of *mudang* – sometimes as many as 20 ritualists – who specialise in conducting extensive rituals for large audiences. In the East coast region, these troupes are a hereditary institution; each troupe incorporates several generations of ritualists, all of whom are interrelated by blood, marriage, or adoption⁸. During ritual performance, the female troupe members take turns to officiate – performing ritual actions, delivering prayers, sermonizing, singing, and dancing – while their male relatives provide musical accompaniment on the drum (*changgo*), large gong (*ching*) and hand gongs (*kkwaenggwari*). Unlike the vast majority of *mudang*, these hereditary *mudang* are without the ability to act as vehicles for the gods' self expression. Consequently, their rituals do not focus on the delivery of oracles (*kongsu*), but rather on the execution of strictly prescribed efficacious propitiatory procedure and the artful performance of mythic narrative songs, dances, dramas, and instrumental music – all of which are rendered in a distinctive style peculiar to the East coast hereditary *mudang* institution. Although they serve the same gods and clients as the charismatic *mudang*, these particular ritualists seem to fit the description 'artistic priests' much better than 'shamans'⁹.

The overriding ritual objective of *Pyölshin Kut* is strikingly all-encompassing, nothing less than the establishment of total harmony between all gods, spirits and people in the community. To achieve this, the *mudang* troupe address each of the key gods in the pantheon in succession, performing at the village's various tutelary sites and also in a large ritual space temporarily established and lavishly decorated for the occasion – usually a large tent erected on the harbour or the beach. At certain points, the officiating *mudang*'s actions are undertaken in great solemnity, evincing a silent, attentive response from the villagers; this is particularly the case when the *mudang* is revealing the thoughts and advice of the gods via divination¹⁰ or based on their own esoteric knowledge. However, there are also plenty of episodes in which the ritualists encourage the villagers to actively participate in various cathartic activities. Group dancing, karaoke-style singing, laughing, and chatting are regarded as crucial ingredients in the healing experience and a playful, party-like atmosphere often prevails.

The only other large-scale village ritual that similarly requires the hiring of the *mudang* troupe is *Ogu Kut*, conducted to enable the unhappy spirit(s) of the recently deceased to enter the Buddhist paradise (*kūngnak*), and to help enable the bereaved to get on with their lives¹¹. It is believed

that, for the souls of the dead to find peace and avoid becoming ghosts, there must be no lingering resentment tying them to this world. Accordingly, in *Ogu Kut*, the *mudang* summon the wandering spirit(s) of the dead and contain it/them in a spirit vessel (such as a wicker basket), positioned in the ritual space. They then stage ritual psychodramas, sing myths relating to the trials of death, and deliver prayers – helping the deceased and the bereaved work through all unresolved issues. Although the occasion is understandably more sorrowful than *Pyölsin Kut*, here too the *mudang* actively encourage the villagers to indulge in a wide range of cathartic behaviour.

Throughout their rituals, the East coast hereditary *mudang* perform music almost continuously, stopping only for spoken interludes, meal times, short breaks between ritual sections and a rest at night (which sometimes lasts only two or three hours). To help sustain interest, they use a considerable array of different musical structures, most of which are peculiar to the style: *p'unöri*, *türönggaengi*, *tchoshigye*, *chemasu*¹², *samojang* (also known as *samodong*), *ch'öngbae*¹³ (also known as *ch'öngbo*), *tongsalp'uri*, *türönggaengi*, *ötch' öngbae*, *tchoshigye*, *tojang*, *kömuchang*, *samgongjaebi*, *sajap'uri*, *kosam*, *chasam*, *kutköri* and *tunabegi*. The ensuing discussion about hand gong playing will focus on just one of these structures: *türönggaengi*.

TÜRÖNGGAENGI: A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVISATION

Türönggaengi is a purely instrumental structure performed by the male ritualists without any song or dance contributions from their female relatives. Although no scholars or ritualists claimed to know for certain what the etymological derivation of the rather unusual word '*türönggaengi*' is, some suggested that the first part '*türö*' could be related to the verb '*türökada*', meaning 'to enter'. This seems likely, since *türönggaengi* is performed as the very first item in the ritual programs of *Pyölsin Kut* and *Ogu Kut*, serving as a signal to villagers that the ritual is beginning, whilst also cleansing the ritual space in preparation for the ensuing activities¹⁴.

In many ways, *türönggaengi* is a typical East coast ritual musical structure. Like almost all other structures in the repertoire, it is multi-sectional, consisting of a fixed sequence of different rhythmic cycles (*changdan*) – referred to as 'chapters' (*chang*) in East coast ritual terminology – each of which is defined by having a metrical framework of specific duration, with expected points of accent, typical tempi and typical rhythmic content. *Türönggaengi* has five 'chapters' in all, which trace a progression from a long,

relatively slow, complex rhythmic cycle (up to 18 seconds in length) to a short, fast simple rhythmic cycle (a single second in length). All ritual structures in the repertoire employ such a progression as a means of instigating a gradual build-up of excitement in the ritual space; throughout, the drummer decides how many times each cycle should be repeated, leads periods of acceleration and instigates transitions from section to section via signal patterns (*shinbo karak*). *Türönggaengi* is also typical in that its first chapter is based on relatively long 'beats' ('*kansal*' in the ritualists' terminology) that have a 3+3+2 rhythmic constitution, and in the importance of 5- and 10-beat subdivisions in the earlier 'chapters'. A substantial proportion of large-scale musical structures in the repertoire share these features.

The five-chapter structure of *türönggaengi* is represented in simplified form in FIG. 1. Metric subdivisions within rhythmic cycles are indicated by vertical lines, omitting the lowest (quickest) level, which is only used for ornamental embellishment; durations (in terms of countable beats) are indicated by arabic numerals; and positions of large gong strokes are marked by 'X's. The way in which the performers manage to create a seamless transition from the second chapter's relatively lengthy ten-beat cycle into the third chapter's fast five-beat cycle, will be detailed later in the analysis.

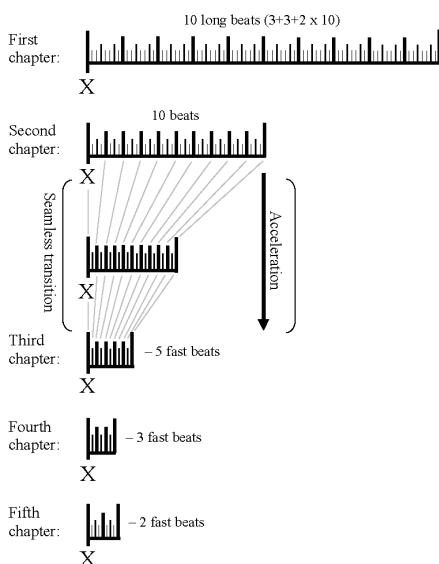


FIG. 1. The five chapters of *türönggaengi*.

To show how hand gong players typically organise material within this framework, analysis will now focus on a performance by Kim Junghee, recorded in the School of Oriental and African Studies in 2005 and originally released on the CD accompanying the author's book, "Healing Rhythms: The World of South Korea's East Coast Hereditary Shamans" (2007). The analysis will not address the contributions of the other hand gong player in the recording – Jo Jonghun (Kim's adopted son and a member of the same troupe); Jo's style is closely related to Kim's and, as mentioned earlier, in this style, hand gong players pursue their own lines independently of one another, without 'dialogue'.



Kim Junghee playing during ritual.

Kim Junghee was born of *mudang* parentage in 1960 and has spent most of his life performing ritual alongside his parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and siblings. Early in 2005, he was promoted to the status of 'candidate' (*hubo*) for the East Coast style of ritual – a position second only to 'holder' (*pojuja*) in the Korean Government's Cultural Asset system. He is a highly respected master of the ritual hand gong.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER OF TÜRÖNGGAENGI

In this particular performance of *türönggaengi*, the first chapter is played for about five minutes, the lengthy ten-beat cycle being executed 24 times before the drummer finally decides to move onto the second chapter. This is a relatively long time to spend on the first chapter – which conveniently helps one to isolate trends in rhythmic organisation.

Each of the cycle's 10 long beats – the principle unit of measurement counted by the performers – is composed of eight pulse level beats, which performers subdivide into a number of short rhythmic cells. In hand gong performance, a great many beats are divided into a 3+3+2 pulse-level organisation – the same organisation that the drummer consistently demarcates throughout the whole chapter. In such cases, the beats are relatively self-contained with patterning not 'crossing over' into the next beat. In his performance, Kim Junghee uses four particular 3+3+2 patterns extensively:



Four 3+3+2 patterns used in *türönggaengi*'s first chapter.

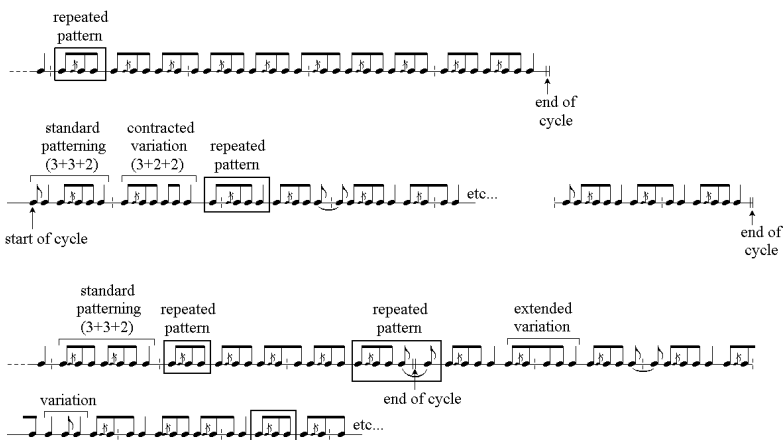
At other points, Kim switches to patterning that transcends the boundaries of the long beat, playing successions of patterns that 'cross over' from one beat into the next. In some cases, Kim simply displaces standard 3+3+2 patterns to create an effect of syncopation (the accenting of metrically weak beats). For example, in the 13th cycle, he plays the following, using an extended variation (3+4+2) to bring about the displacement:



A syncopated episode in *türönggaengi*'s first chapter.

In the majority of cases, however, the patterning that 'crosses over' demarcates an entirely independent metric organisation, totally at odds¹⁵ with the 3+3+2 x 10 metrical framework. In the first chapter, Kim typically creates such episodes by repeating short motifs composed of an odd number of pulse beats. There are two particular motifs that he especially favours; these are boxed in the following examples (extracted from the 2nd, 6th, and 20th/21st cycles). In the last example, Kim uses both of his favourite repeated motifs, also adding a little variation, and creates patterning that traverses the beginning of the cycle.

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Repeated patterns that 'cross over'.

To show how Kim typically organises the various types of patterning during his improvisation – 3+3+2 patterns and 'crossing' patterns – the first 15 cycles of his rendition are mapped out in FIG. 2.

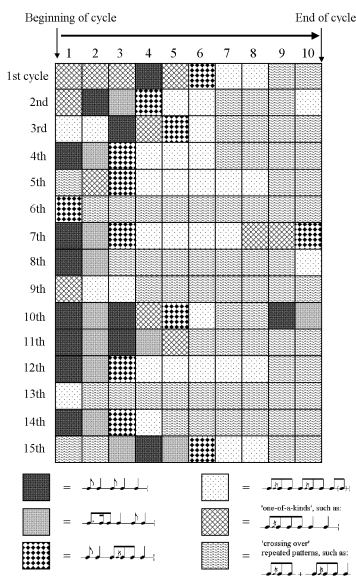
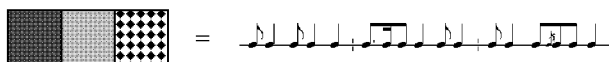


FIG. 2. A map of patterns played in *türōnggaengi's* first chapter.

FIG. 2. reveals certain trends in Kim's patterning, making it relatively easy to extrapolate a model cycle structure¹⁶. In the first portion of the model cycle, Kim plays a succession of the various 3+3+2 patterns, avoiding executing the same pattern twice in a row and often employing set sequences, such as:



Next, Kim switches to the following more rhythmically dense 3+3+2 pattern, often repeating it a number of times:



For the remainder of the cycle, Kim plays the aforementioned 'crossing over' patterns. This model is clearly adhered to, for example, in the fourth cycle.

One can also see from FIG. 2. that Kim is careful not to repeat whole variations. In fact, he never plays the same cycle twice (This holds true for the remaining nine cycle renditions of the first chapter also). In addition, he inserts a considerable number of variations that blatantly contravene the model – thereby maintaining a pleasing balance between unpredictability and predictability.

Each of the sounds in the ceaseless stream is carefully articulated. As in *p'ungmul*, the longer sounds are almost always accented, executed with relative force in the centre of the head. They are separated from their neighbours by rapid damping before and/or after. The shorter sounds are executed more lightly, often at other points of the instrument's surface, creating a variety of less 'open' sonorities. In the East coast ritual style, these weaker sounds tend to be executed in small groups, incorporating rapid acciaccatura-type grace strokes known as 'rolling' patterns (*kyöp karak*), and using only very light damping or no damping at all. It is a stylistic ideal that one should create a stark contrast between the strings of short/weak strokes and the long/strong strokes that punctuate them. This differs somewhat from the *p'ungmul* aesthetic. Although *p'ungmul* hand gong players likewise strive to vary the articulation of strokes, being the leaders of the ensemble, they employ a far greater density of long/strong strokes, which more predictably accent the strong beats of the meter; their loud strokes are consequently perceived as having less impact.

The ritualists have used various analogies to describe the overall effect of their hand gong style to me, for example: "sailing smoothly down a

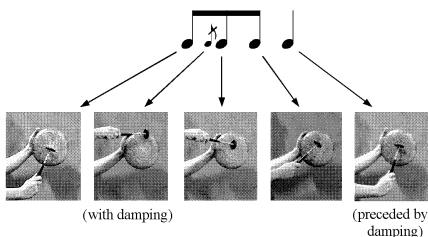
trickling stream but occasionally bumping into rocks” and “running over a succession of peaks and valleys in a mountain range” (– Korea having a famously craggy mountainous terrain). These are wonderful analogies. Not only do they highlight the key features of contrast in movement (flow vs impediment) and contrast in dynamic; they also draw attention to the conspicuous feature of unpredictability, detailed earlier.

To achieve the desired effect – streams of weaker sounds punctuated by strong sounds – the ritualists use a distinctive playing technique that is not to be found in any other genre. Because it involves a wave-like movement of the arm and hand, the ritualists often explain their technique via reference to imagery such as water waves (*mulgyö*) or the curve within the *taegük* symbol – the familiar Taoist yin-yang symbol (*üm-yang* in Korean).



The *taegük* or yin-yang symbol.

The following figure, adapted from the author’s book “Healing Rhythms” (2007:53), shows the wave-like movements and damping used to execute one of the most distinctive ‘building block’ patterns – heard again and again throughout *türönggaengi*’s first chapter.



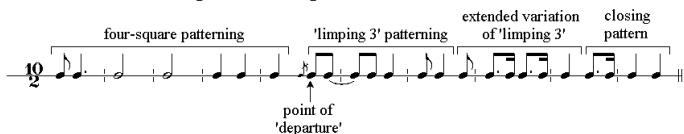
Wave-like technique.

THE SECOND CHAPTER OF TÜRÖNGGAENGI

The second chapter begins without any signal. The drummer simply abandons the 3+3+2 patterning and adopts the new 10-beat cycle, playing an usually sparse variation that closely adheres to the underlying metric structure.

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The hand gong players immediately pick up on the change, similarly playing a simple 'model' variation. As in the previous chapter's model variation, the first part of the cycle is filled with four-square patterning before seeming to 'break free' with patterning based on other groupings – here, mainly 'limping' threes. There is a clear point of departure.



The first variation in *tŭrŏnggaengi*'s second chapter.

For the remainder of the second chapter, Kim Junghee switches and changes between three types of variation. As in the previous chapter, he never plays any variation twice.

Firstly, there are 'regular' variations that closely resemble the model, using the same point of departure (33% of variations). For example:

Some 'regular' variations for *tŭrŏnggaengi*'s second chapter.

Secondly, there are 'regular' variations that share the characteristics of the model but which use different points of departure (25% of variations). The following examples demonstrate all the points of departure that Kim employs:

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standard model version

Other 'regular' variations for *türönggaengi*'s second chapter.

Lastly, there are 'irregular' variations that do not resemble the model but rather follow their own logic (42% of variations). It is in these variations that Kim particularly exploits techniques of motivic manipulation. Some of the main techniques are marked in the examples on the next page. Kim continues to make ample use of the first chapter's main 'crossing over' motifs (boxed in the first example). However, he now exploits a great many other motifs also.

Several ritualists, including Kim Junghee himself, have explained to me that the very best hand gong players 'tell stories' with their playing. The examples in Notation 7 seem particularly story-like. In each, one can clearly perceive a linear progression through a sequence of transformations, with an over-riding sense of continuity and cohesion. As in a story, one thing seems to lead to the next in a logical fashion. And, as in a particularly good story, there are also unexpected turns of event, achieved through more abrupt and/or unpredictable transformations.

expansion contraction

repeated pattern repeated pattern repeated pattern

displacing standard patterning (off beat) motif A motif B combining motifs (A+B) extension (with 'tag' phrase)

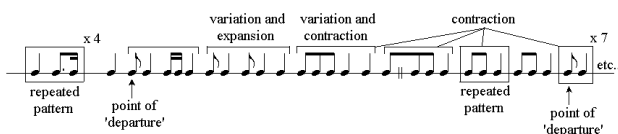
simple variation - question and answer (with contraction from 3+2 to 1+2)

question answer q a q a q a

repeated pattern repeated pattern

Techniques of motivic manipulation in irregular variations.

In this performance, some stories continue through many variations. Being a particularly skillful hand gong player, Kim is able to sustain the process of continuous transformation even through the more predictable 'regular' variations – as in the following example:



Story-telling in 'regular' variations.

Like all good ritual hand gong players, when 'telling a story', Kim makes sure that the first beats of cycles are left un-emphasised. This prevents them from seeming like 'new beginnings', enhancing the sense of linear flow by undermining cyclicality¹⁷. There are two main strategies for achieving this:

- ~ Introducing new material towards the ends of variations (rather than at their beginnings);
- ~ Ensuring that patterning traverses the end/beginning of the cycle, leaving the first beat entirely un-marked or marked only by a weak stroke (as in many of the second chapter variations notated earlier).

At a point of his choosing, the drummer begins the transition into the next chapter. Unlike the transition between the first and second chapters, which happens abruptly, this particular transition is one of seamless transformation. Over the course of the second chapter, the tempo has already accelerated a little, cycles shortening in duration from about six seconds to just under five. From the beginning of the transition, however, the rate of acceleration greatly increases, becoming like a 'head long rush' into the third chapter, led by the drummer.

As the music speeds up, it soon becomes impossible for the hand gong players to execute strokes on the lowest metrical level. Yet the pace continues to accelerate until, once again, the lowest metrical level becomes too quick to punctuate. At this point, the cycle has almost halved in duration and the musicians are unambiguously dividing it into five beats – introducing the cycle of *türönggaengi*'s third chapter. This process of transformation is intended to be a smooth and organic 'telescoping' process, rather than a succession of clear-cut stages. Kim Junghee's handling of the transition is typical (see overleaf). To prevent the third chapter's inception from being too prominent, the tempo continues to accelerate well into the new chapter.

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The musical score displays a series of rhythmic patterns across several staves. Vertical dashed lines indicate the beginning of each cycle, labeled 'start of cycle', '1 second', '2', '3', '4', and '5'. A box labeled 'Third chapter' is positioned at the start of the third cycle. The notation includes various rhythmic values and rests, with some notes marked with 'x'.

The transition between the second and third chapters.

When the third chapter's five beat cycle becomes a mere one and a half seconds in duration, the acceleration of the preceding transition section finally ceases and the tempo stabilizes.

In the third chapter, Kim Junghee switches between three distinct approaches to playing. Firstly, there are episodes of constant variation in which all the variations are exactly a cycle length in duration and in which the sequence does not seem to chart any linear development – as at the very beginning of the chapter (see above, in Notation 9). During these episodes, Kim not only avoids playing the same variation twice in a row, but also

ensures that the variation he is playing accents different points of the cycle to the preceding variation; avoiding predictability is once again clearly a key concern. In this performance, Kim uses 11 different variations, all of which feature different points of accent:

Variations for the third chapter.

On several occasions, when discussing improvisation techniques with me, Kim has pointed out that this way of playing employs quite different processes from the story-telling style detailed earlier; with each cycle, one merely makes a single choice – selecting a variation from a relatively small fund of options. Kim likens this process to the way one picks food from the side dishes of a traditional Korean meal: “a bit of this one... a bit of that one... a bit of this one”.

Secondly, Kim performs episodes of exact repetition – an approach that is obviously the opposite of constant variation. As in the ‘crossing over’ episodes of the first chapter, he particularly favours the following pattern, usually displacing it so that it traverses cycles:

The main repeated motif in the third chapter.

Thirdly, Kim plays short episodes of simple linear motif development, each based on either contraction or extension. Because the development approach constitutes something of a ‘middle way’ between constant variation and no variation at all (repetition), Kim uses it as an effective means to soften the transition between the latter approaches, as shown in the examples below. The first example incorporates a rhythmic device similar to the

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North Indian *tibai* – a pattern that is repeated a number of times (though not the standard three in this case), so that the final beat falls at the beginning of the cycle, thereby emphasising it.

Episodes of linear development in the third chapter.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER OF *TŪRŌNGGAENG*

The fourth chapter begins without warning, the drummer abruptly establishing the new chapter's three-beat cycle by playing what constitutes one of the only pre-determined rhythmic passages in the entire repertoire (of more than a cycle in length). Kim Junghee responds to the cycle-change immediately, playing the passage in unison with the drummer:

The pre-determined passage at the start of the fourth chapter.

Kim then resumes his improvisation, adopting a style of playing that is more linear than at any time in the previous chapters. There are no more sequences of cycle-length variations (the 'side-dish' technique of the third chapter). Rather, Kim sustains long cohesive streams of sound over many cycles, subjecting short motifs to a succession of manipulations (especially contractions), repeating each motif numerous times at each step of its evolution – more consistently than in earlier chapters.

Most of the motifs that Kim focuses on in the fourth chapter have already featured prominently in earlier chapters, the irregular pattern transcribed in notation 11 remaining a favourite. However, Kim now puts greater emphasis on shorter motifs composed of just two or three starkly contrasting strong and weak strokes. The following are particularly common:

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Important motor rhythms in the fourth chapter.

When repeated many times at such a fast tempo, these motifs function effectively as ‘motor rhythms’, creating the impression of ‘fuelling the music forwards’. Switching from triple-based patterning to the dotted duple motor rhythm (notated above) is an especially effective means of boosting the music’s momentum and many of Kim’s lines culminate in this process.

As in earlier chapters (especially the second), Kim ensures that much of his patterning transcends the framework of the cycle, traversing from one cycle into the next. This is an especially striking feature during the few episodes of less repetitive playing that Kim also includes in the fourth chapter. These short passages incorporate some of the most irregular and unpredictable patterning of Kim’s entire *türönggaengi* performance.

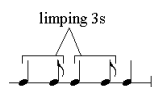
All of the above-mentioned features are clearly distinguishable in the following annotated transcription, which covers the first half and the last section of Kim’s fourth chapter performance.

Final episode

The first and last parts of the fourth chapter.

At a point of his choosing, the drummer switches from the fast three-beat cycle to the fifth chapter's two-beat cycle, the hand gong players responding as quickly as possible.

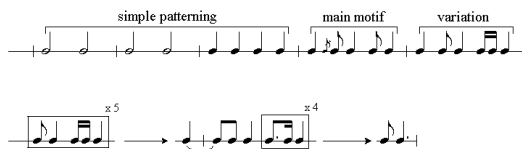
As Kim Junghee and other ritualists have explained to me, the fifth chapter's two beat cycle is essentially the East coast ritualists' version of the pan-Korean cycle commonly known as '*hwimori*'. The rhythm that dominates Kim Junghee's hand gong part and also the drummer's part can indeed be heard in performances of *hwimori* in a great many folk genres, including *p'ungmul*; it incorporates the now familiar limping threes:



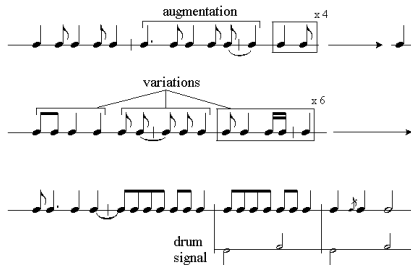
An important rhythm in *hwimori*.

This cycle is used a great deal in East coast ritual, featuring as the final chapter of many multi-chapter structures and also being played in its own right, in which case it is commonly known as '*sajap'uri*' ('death messenger banishment'), '*subuch'ae*' ('death messenger rhythm'), or some other related name. The death messengers of the underworld (*saja*, *subu*, *sajae*, *shinmu* or *ch'asa*), who are responsible for catching human souls and taking them away for judgement, are discussed at great length during the death ritual *Ogu Kut* and the cycle is played extensively during these episodes¹⁸. It is also played whenever the officiating *mudang* performs ritual actions to banish lingering miscellaneous ghosts (*chabkwi*) from the ritual space. As Kim Junghee explained to me, the cycle's rapid speed and pounding beat are ideally suited to its explicitly exorcistic function.

Although the same cycle can be heard in many folk genres, it is probably only the East coast ritualists who would subject the distinctive rhythms to such metre-defying manipulation. In this performance, as usual, the fifth chapter is only played for a short period of time (about 20 seconds), so Kim can only employ a few different techniques; as always, before departing on his elaboration, he begins with some very simple demarcations of the cycle's metre:

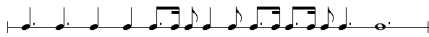


SIMON MILLS # PLAYFUL PATTERN OF FREEDOM



Kim Junghee's performance of *tūrōnggaengi*'s fifth chapter.

Immediately following the drummer's execution of a simple four-stroke signal pattern (*shinbo karak*), the performance of *tūrōnggaengi* ends with all the musicians joining together to perform a pre-fixed finishing pattern (*maennün karak*) in unison:



The 'finishing' pattern (*maennün karak*).

The analysis in this article has hopefully heightened the reader's appreciation of Kim Junghee's extraordinarily skilfull hand gong playing. Throughout his performance of *tūrōnggaengi*, he switches unpredictably between a number of different modes of performance, which may be considered as existing on a continuum; on one extreme there is the storytelling mode characterised by linear development, while at the other there is unchanging repetition, usually of a kind that 'goes against the grain' of the cycle (demarcated by the drummer). In between these extremes is the middle way – the constant variation method, likened by Kim himself to selecting morsels from side-dishes. While he switches between these modes, Kim always makes sure that he does not repeat obvious patterning, particularly avoiding repeated accenting of important metrical beats such as the first beat of the cycle. In these ways, he endlessly teases the listeners' expectations. Although every skilled hand gong player cultivates his own 'musical world' (*'kuhwal'* in the ritualists' terminology) as an aid to surpassing competition (– indeed, other performers would play *tūrōnggaengi* rather differently from Kim Junghee), this type of approach is always held to be the ideal. It is an approach that can perhaps best be encapsulated by the word 'playfulness'.

Richard Schechner has defined performance events in general as "ritualized behaviour conditioned/permeated by play"¹⁹. As was mentioned earlier,

in the context of Korean *mudang* ritual, the play element is often very pronounced. It is common to hear the *mudang* make explicit reference to play (*nori*) – for example, joyfully exclaiming “Let’s play!” (“*Nori haja!*”)²⁰.

Some scholars of Korean ritual have analysed what play actually involves. For example, Rhie Sangil (1975) regards play as a form of creativity in which the act of creation is itself inherently pleasurable, providing not only entertainment but also an opportunity for the individual to become self-indulgently absorbed in behavioural patterns that are removed from those of ordinary life. His understanding of play closely corresponds with that proposed much earlier by Huizinga, in his 1938 classic, “*Homo Ludens*”. Other definitions similarly stress the idea of ‘disengagement’, ‘subversion’, and creative world-making.

In the context of Korean *mudang* rituals such as *Pyölsbin Kut* and *Ogu Kut*, playfulness is seen as a very effective therapeutic tool. It makes people feel empowered and is an aid to catharsis, referred to by ritualists as ‘release’ (*p’uri*). The officiating *mudang* accordingly leads her clients through numerous playful activities, which often have the character of what Daniel Kister terms ‘sacramental signs’²¹: they represent what they are supposed to achieve. *Kop’uri* (knot release) is a widespread ritual that typifies this approach to catharsis: knots representing troubles are tied in a piece of cloth and are then joyfully undone²². Kim Junghee and other ritual musicians in his group have often told me that they regard their performance – especially the hand gong aspect – in a similar light; when they play, they are representing the pleasure of being freed from constraints, thereby hopefully encouraging a freeing-up of the attendees’ psychologies also. The ritualists themselves describe this ideal way of playing as ‘*p’urösö ch’igi*’ – literally, ‘releasing hitting’²³.

It is also possible to interpret the extreme independence, freedom and egalitarianism of the hand gong players and the resulting shifting polyrhythmic fabric as depicting an idealised conception of society. As Christopher Small (1998), Victor Turner (1986), and others in the fields of anthropology and performance studies have demonstrated, all the interrelations in the performance event relate to our world and our place in it, providing an image of our desired relationships (now, in the past, or in heaven), showing them to us and bringing them into existence. In this particular case, it is a truly subversive society that is being depicted – the very opposite of the strictly hierarchical system traditionally enforced by Confucian ethics²⁴. Such an interpretation would definitely make sense, given that *mudang* ritual often

involves a great deal of subversive behaviour; here, people can express the normally unexpressable and women – traditionally subservient ‘house people’ (*chip saram*) – can become the representatives of their families and enjoy tales of deified female heroines such as Shimch’öng, Princess Pari and Grandmother Kyemyön. Significantly, the same aesthetic of subversive freedom also pervades the other regional styles of *mudang* ritual music – most obviously *shinawi*, which originates from Chölla province ritual.

The free, egalitarian world represented in the East Coast ritual music contrasts in an extreme fashion with the musical world of *p’ungmul* (and other non-*mudang* folk genres). In the latter genre, the performers cooperate at all times, the group playing as a single organism, with hierarchical role-assignment. This world perfectly reflects the ideal working order of the farming collective (*ture*), within which the genre originally evolved. Of course, shaman ritual music contrasts even more with the highly Confucian ‘classical music’ of the cultural elite.

Other striking features of the East coast ritual style of hand gong playing are unpredictability and intensity; as has hopefully been demonstrated above, one never knows when accents will fall and the stream of sound is both unremitting (with no pauses) and loud, especially when the full ensemble is playing. In the rituals of charismatic *mudang*, the sound of crashing gongs, playing simple rhythms or repeated pulses, is a common means to help induce trance – a state of dissociation from oneself and one’s surroundings²⁵. The charismatic *mudang* is then receptive and able to incorporate a summoned deity into her body. As was detailed earlier, such phenomena do not occur in the rituals of the East Coast hereditary *mudang*. However, this is not to say that the hereditary ritualists’ music has no function in creating an altered state of consciousness. It is in fact highly conducive, though not for the officiating *mudang* herself; when the bombardment of metal sounds is at its height, it is the attendees and the musicians who appear to lose themselves. While the sheer volume and density of the music has a hyper-stimulating effect, the unpredictability of accenting and the complexity of the composite texture allow the mind no clear-cut sonic points on which to concentrate., thereby inducing a state of disorientation²⁶.

Baring no parallels in non-ritual music, these powerful sounds combine with the abundance of luridly bright, deeply symbolic decorations, to help transform the ritual space (and the mind of each person present) into a realm truly separate from normal existence – a liminal space where

gods and people can meet²⁷. Although the gods remain invisible, one can feel their presence. And when the ritual is over and people return to their normal lives, they carry with them a heightened capacity to engage the world in a light-hearted manner.

The playful patterning of the hand gong musicians plays an important role in facilitating this healing transformation.



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NOTES

¹ Nowadays, the hand gong also features in *samullori* (a concertized, modernized version of *p'ungmul*), and in various modern 'fusion musics' and other compositions.

² The hierarchical 'male'/female' role assignment in *p'ungmul* hand gong practice has been discussed by many scholars, including Chang Sahun (1984: 188), Pak Pömhun (1992: 292) and Hesselink 1992: 292.

³ The vast majority of scholarship that discusses East coast ritual music simply details the durations of cycles and notates a few common drum patterns. Although Ch'oe Nan'gyöng (1992), Wön Il (1996), and Kim Tongwön (1998) have attempted more detailed analyses, their analyses have focused entirely on the drummer and vocal parts. There are, to my knowledge, no analyses that have gone beyond just mentioning the presence of hand gongs.

⁴ Comprehensive research into the customs and beliefs of East coast villages was conducted by the state-funded Cultural Research Bureau (*munhwa kongbobi*) in 1972 and 1974, led by Ch'oe Kilsöng (see Ch'oe Kilsöng 1972, 1974). Other surveys have followed (for example, Kang Yonggwön 1983). Alexandre Guillemoz has written a wonderfully detailed and evocative book about life in an East coast fishing village (1983).

⁵ Jung outlines this concept in his foreword to Wilhelm's translation of the *I Ching* [*Book of Changes*] (1969).

⁶ Chöng Chinhong provides an unusually elegant unpacking of this belief system (1985). Much can also be gleaned from ethnographies of ritual, particularly those of Kim Myöngja (1984), Kim Inhoe (1985) and Yi Du-hyun (1988).

⁷ Even though most *mudang* spend a large proportion of their time conducting consultations, researchers tend to focus on their activities in large scale rituals. However, there are some studies that focus on more intimate contexts (see, for example, Cho Hüngyun 1985: 49–58 and Yi Chöngyöng, 1983).

⁸ Ch'oe Kilsöng has provided by far the most detailed research into the social institution and kinship practices of the East coast hereditary *mudang* (1978).

⁹ Other scholars have similarly stressed the un-shaman-like nature of hereditary *mudang* (see for example Ch'oe Kilsöng 1981: 97; Kim Inhoe 1985: 78–80; Hogarth 1999: 62).

¹⁰ For example, at a certain point in proceedings, Kolmaegi is summoned into a long bamboo pole, held by a village elder. The officiating *mudang* then asks questions about the villagers' conduct since the previous ritual and asks for advice regarding future eventualities. When the pole shakes in response, the *mudang* then interprets the movements and imparts the god's crucial messages to the assembled villagers.

¹¹ Kim Myöngja (1984), Kim Inhoe (1985) and Yi Du-hyun (1988) – the latter writing in English – provide particularly excellent ethnographies of *Ogu Kut*.

¹² Ch'oe Nan'gyöng (1992) has written an extended analysis of this structure.

¹³ Wön Il (1996) and Kim Tongwön (1998) have provided the most detailed analyses of this oft-used structure, and also of *p'unöri* which always precedes it in ritual performance.

¹⁴ *Türönggaengi* is also performed, in a shortened form, in a later ritual section of *Ogu Kut* – the critical section known as '*Ch'omangja kut*', in which the spirit of the deceased declares that he/she is now ready to embark on the journey to paradise.

¹⁵ Kolinski (1973) coined the term 'contrametric' for this phenomenon – rhythmic patterning that contravenes the standard metric structure. He used the term 'cometric' for those patterns that adhere to the metric structure.

¹⁶ Following a system of representation formulated by Barbara Thornton and Elizabeth Gower to map out rhyme schemes in troubadour poetry (see Thornton 2001: 237), this figure was originally created as a 'colour map', in which colours rather than greyscale textures were assigned to pattern types. The use of colour is preferable because one can perceive colour differences so clearly, rendering patterns in organisation instantly apparent. However, for obvious reasons, the use of colour as an analytical tool is seldom practically and economically feasible.

¹⁷ Clayton (2000: 21) discusses the notion that different forms of music display different degrees of cyclicity.

¹⁸ See also Mills (2007: 60).

¹⁹ Schechner (2006: 50). In this book (2006: 28–51), Schechner provides an excellent explanation of his 'broad-spectrum approach' to performance.

²⁰ Kendall's ethnographies (for example 1977, 1985) are particularly effective in conveying the playful nature of *mudang* ritual.

²¹ Kister 1997: 26

²² Kister 1997: 78. Kister also provides the example of the boat-play episode in *Ogu Kut*, in which a boat representing the deceased travels along a cloth that is subsequently cut in two (1997: 110–112).

²³ See also Mills 2007: 41.

²⁴ It is also possible to view the ritual musical world as a reflection of the *mudang* followers' vision of the real (i.e. non-performance) world, detailed earlier: a complex web of interrelationships in which disparate phenomena are thought to be linked. John Miller Chernoff (1979) similarly interpreted African polyphony as a reflection of religious conception, considering the bringing together of multiple fragmented musical aspects to create a richer whole to be a reflection of the idea that there are multiple forces (human and super-human) co-acting in the world.

²⁵ It is now generally agreed that every person's state of consciousness is sliding along a continuum between the state of disassociation and the state of intuitive knowledge (see, for example, Heinze 1991: 157–168).

²⁶ These same trance-inducing qualities have been noted in ritual elsewhere. See for example Stephen Friedson (1996) and Peter Cooke (2000), writing about trance rituals in Northern Malawi and Busoga respectively).

²⁷ The liminal nature of ritual performance is very well documented in anthropological research. See, for example, Bruce Kapferer's book about healing rituals in Sri Lanka (1983).