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The Performing Arts Program of The Asia Society  
presents from Korea

# Pongsan T'al-Ch'um

(Pongsan Masked Dance-Drama)

Shortened Version

**anonymous**

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*The Pongsan Masked Dance-Drama, originating in Pongsan, in the province of Hwanghae in northwest Korea, is a festive comedy in which laughter triumphs over the fear and oppression imposed on the commoners by rapacious officials and overbearing gentry. Since the present form came into being around the turn of the century, this dance-drama is an example of the transformation and evolution of ancient ritual into folk entertainment, while still preserving the ancient conventions and techniques of the rituals themselves. The exorcism rites, inspired by awe of the forces of Nature, were dedicated to the expulsion of evil spirits. In the ceremony, masks with demonic expressions were worn by the shamans to frighten these spirits away. As the religious function of the ritual gradually diminished, the fear of the supernatural was replaced by the fear of the tyrannous ruling elite, called Yangban. The demonic expressions of the original masks became emblematic of class archetypes, as the ritual was itself transposed into social satire. The drama consists of a series of seven independent episodes, each satirizing the behavior of some stock character from traditional Korean society.*



# First Episode

Ceremonial Opening by the Four Young Monks

*The four young monks salute the deities of the four directions  
(North, South, East, and West).*

# Second Episode

The Eight Buddhist Monks

*Each monk introduces himself. All eight monks gather and resolve  
to forsake the religious life in favor of singing and dancing.*

FIRST MONK: (dances)

SECOND MONK: Hush! Hush! Shee!

Before I could notice  
Not having a calendar in my mountain temple,  
Blossoming spring has already passed.  
Gone is the summer of the dark shade of green,  
Fall fell with the leaves of paulownia trees.  
Snow is floating over the evergreen pine and bamboo leaves.  
I have been living alone as a recluse deep in the mountain,  
Because I wanted to be a monk,  
Though I was formerly the playboy of the village.  
Now, upon hearing the gay music,  
I no longer care to offer prayers to Amida Buddha,  
I want to go back to my former life.

(sings)

In the Pear-Blossom Tavern,  
In the old capital, Nakyang . . .

THIRD MONK: Hush! Hush! Shee!

Wherever the inspector goes, he finds  
Himself in offices.  
The soldier finds taverns, and the gentleman, pavilions.  
Though I wanted to be a monk in a secluded temple,  
I used to be the playboy of the village.  
When I find myself near a pavilion,  
I want to be a playboy again.

(sings)

The bamboo pipes from Sosang in China  
Have flowery patterns and twelve knots . . .

FIFTH MONK: Hush! Hush! Shee!

Gone to his death is Kolsamyo,  
And his retinue was buried with him.  
His title could not help him  
In the face of death,

Except to transform his spirit into the River Yomna.  
Ojaso had to die, as well, after his revenge,  
Only to become threatening rain over the three rivers.  
The noble brothers, Paegi and Sukje, starved to death  
During the harvest festival on Mount Suyang.  
Men with versatile tongues, Sojin and Chang'i,  
Who charmed the Emperors from the Six Countries  
Have also died. They simply could not persuade  
The King of the Underworld to delay their deaths.  
And what became of them? They became wandering souls,  
Sobbing a lament like the cries of the bird Tugyon  
In a spring rain.  
And what will become of me, a humble creature,  
A pliant weed?  
Though I wanted to be monk in a temple,  
I used to be a playboy of the village.  
When I hear the gay music, I want to go amuse myself  
While it lasts.

*(sings)*

The bamboo pipes from Sosang, China  
Have flowery patterns and twelve knots . . .

SIXTH MONK: Hush! Hush! Shee!

How grand are the mountains here and there!  
The fathomless water is crystal clear.  
Flat is the vast earth, and on it  
Are countless numbers of people.  
The crane is courting the moon,  
While the pines and bamboos add a green hue to the image.  
Isn't this the Mount Kisan  
Where Sobu of China enjoyed himself?  
Isn't this the same river on which Chasok Lee Chok Son floated?  
Or is this the same moonlit river under the red cliff  
Where So Tongp'a composed his immortal poems?  
Though I wanted to be a monk in a temple,  
I used to be a playboy of the village.  
When I find myself in the majestic mountains,  
I'll go and play again in a pavilion.

*(sings)*

Li Paek, the ancient poet,  
Rode high on a whale to the sky . . .

SEVENTH MONK: Hush! Hush! Shee!

As I entered the Fifth Lake, gone was any trace of flood.  
Seagulls from the white sand were flying onto the shore.  
Wild geese from the Third Lake were gliding over the  
Peiny pavilion. When I reached the River Simyang,  
Paek Nakch'on's lute was no longer audible.  
The wind and the moon, which So Tongp'a enjoyed,  
Retain their ancient forms under the red cliff.  
But where has everybody gone?  
Late into the night when the moon is dark,  
A boat is anchored on the outskirts of Castle Koso.  
Only the echoing Hansan Temple's drum  
Echoes over the ferry-boat.  
Though I wanted to be a monk in a temple,

I used to be a playboy of the village.  
When I come to a place as inviting as this,  
I want to go and play again in this world.

(sings)

The moon is dark,  
The crows call,  
The frost obscures the sky.

EIGHTH MONK: Hush! Hush! Shee!

Upon arriving, people ought to announce themselves.  
After the ceremony, the guests are to be entertained.  
Therefore, here is my arrival and my announcement.

(sings)

On Mount Hansan I never age . . .  
Hush! Hey, fellows!

MONKS: Yes, fellow monk.

EIGHTH MONK: We are monks, aren't we?

MONKS: Definitely!

EIGHTH MONK: Why waste this graceful pavilion? Let's amuse ourselves together with the Muttong dance.

MONKS: Agreed!

## Third Episode

Dance and Songs by Sadang and Kosa

*A dancing girl (Sadang) is pursued by an itinerant performer (Kosa). He is chased away by his fellows, who join the dancing girl in a love song.*

SADANG (DANCING GIRL): Ye-e-e-ya, E-e-wol, it's you.

I shall bid the world farewell,  
And go away to the green mountain.

E-e-e-ya, e-e-wol, it's you.

Spring rain is falling.

Wild geese are flying.

When the old pine tree snaps

I am still merry with the remaining twigs,

Yes, I am still very merry.

Hey, there, listen to me.

I shall bid the world farewell,

And go away to the green mountain.

E-e-e-ya, e-e-wol, it's you.

Evening's gray creeps over the streets.

You bird on the village tutelary

Where are you going to invite me?

Where are you going to invite me?

On the mountain, I only hear the cuckoo crying.

Over the next mountain, again only the cuckoo.



E-e-e-ya, e-e-wol, it's you,  
 A young maiden of fair attire,  
 How vividly I see you in my eyes,  
 How vividly I hear you in my ears.  
 I pray, and how I pray,  
 That my wish for you be granted.  
 E-e-e-ya, e-e-wol, it's you.  
 It's spring in the Six Provinces.  
 Yes, it's spring all over.  
 I am merry in spring, very merry,  
 For my love blossoms in bunches.  
 My love, my love, oh, my love.  
 Let my love twine around you  
 Like the vines coil around the rocks and trees.  
 My love is ripening in my heart,  
 Like the vines of the gourd ripen in bunches,  
 Like the tabang plants grow.  
 And with the growing of the round wooden stick,  
 E-e-e-ya, e-e-wol, it's you.

## Fourth Episode

### The Old Priest's Dance

Scene 1: The Old Priest and the Young Shaman

*The old priest falls in love with a young shaman and is seduced. He offers his rosary, which is finally accepted.*

Scene 2: The Shoe Seller

*The shoe seller tries to sell the old priest shoes for him and the young shaman, Somu. As he looks for the shoes in his bag, he is surprised to find a monkey, but quickly makes use of the animal to collect money for the shoes. The monkey comes back with a note in which the priest promises payment "in the alley of firewood." The shoe seller fears the priest will beat him with the "firewood," and runs away.*

SHOE SELLER: Monk! Monk! You, Old Monk!

In the back of your temple,

Stand the majestic mountains.

And what are you doing here,

In this worldly place?

Here are roasted chestnuts, E-hey-ya.

Here are boiled chestnuts, E-hey-ya.

Hush! What a big market it is! I came all the way, a thousand miles.

And I see it wasn't a waste. Let's start with the nuts.

Here are some roasted chestnuts.

Here are some boiled chestnuts.

Those poor daughters-in-law can munch under a comforter

Without getting caught by ferocious mothers-in-law.



Caramel flavored with pepper, too,  
All are laid out here for your midnight snack.

Ha, ha! No customers? Well, I will sell something else like . . . shoes.

Here are straw sandals with three holes, and flowery footwear for fair maidens.

Nobody is buying my shoes either. This market is not going to buy anything from me. Let my feet lead me to the prosperous.

I'm coming, E-hey-ya,

I'm coming back

To the market

Where the money is.

OLD PRIEST: (*Strikes the shoe seller with his fan*)

SHOE SELLER: Oh, you want me, sir? You want shoes, sir?

OLD PRIEST: (*Points to his shoes*)

SHOE SELLER: He, He! Of course I have the ones you wear. What size are they, venerable monk?

OLD PRIEST: (*Shows him the size by spreading his fingers across the fan*)

SHOE SELLER: Oh, I see. Seven and a half inches. Of course I have them.

OLD PRIEST: (*Points to Somu's shoes*)

SHOE SELLER: I knew you would buy a pretty girl a pair of shoes.

Of course I carry pretty shoes for maidens. What size are they?

OLD PRIEST: (*Spreads his fingers on his fan, indicating the size of Somu's shoes*)

SHOE SELLER: Good heavens! Ninety-nine inches? What a big foot that bitch has! She can wear boats on her feet on a rainy day. She can even put a rudder on the boat shoes. I have that size, too.

(*As he takes out a pair of shoes, a monkey hops out of the sack.*)

What on earth are you? What is this creature which sprang out of my shoe sack?

Let me see. You come right here and sit still while I examine you. What a hairy monster.

It has four legs. You are an animal, no doubt. What kind of animal are you? You must be a dog.

MONKEY: (*Shakes his head*)

SHOE SELLER: Deer, then? Rabbit?

MONKEY: (*Shakes his head*)

SHOE SELLER: Neither this nor that . . . you must have screwed yourself. You are your *own* grandfather. Now I've got you. You are, with no doubt, a monkey. As in the old saying, "monkey see, monkey do."

MONKEY: (*nods*)

SHOE SELLER: What a fine development this is! You are just in time, even though I mistakenly picked a sack containing a mon-

key which my late father brought me from China where he was assigned as an emissary. But I have heard about monkeys. They say this animal is as wise as we are. I will make you my page boy if you will remain faithful to me.

MONKEY: *(nods)*

SHOE SELLER: I sold the old priest some shoes. Go and fetch the money.

MONKEY: *(Goes over to Somu, and starts to make love to her)*

SHOE SELLER: It's past time for this little fellow to come back. Where is he? Could he have gotten away with my money? I'll look for him. But where? I have no idea. Perhaps I should turn to my skill in fortune telling. I'm lucky I was taught how to tell the future.

*(Pulls out a bamboo container with divining sticks. Starts to chant.)*

Prithee, prithee, Heaven and Earth.

Knowing no words could be spoken by you, Heaven,

Nor by you, Earth.

Yet, I pray thee, pray. Be moved by my sincere appeal and respond With swift divination.

This humble creature is going to look for a monkey.

Dispatch all the spirits of sages and gods

To this earth from where you dwell.

Respond to me all together with the first divining stick.

*(Picks out a stick)*

How strange is the divination. It says "Sign of Unification . . ."

Aha! That means this creature couldn't get too far and got stuck somewhere near. I shall go look for him.

Ay, you got stuck in the shaman. Get over here. You mean little thing. Let go of my nose. Let it go. Oh, my poor nose. It hurts. I will free your nose first so that you can imitate me by releasing my nose. By the way, did you collect the money or not? Let me give you the amount you should've gotten from the old priest. Two times eight is sixteen, three times five equals fifteen.

*(Draws figures on the ground)*

MONKEY: *(Interrupts the counting. Erases the figures.)*

SHOE SELLER: You don't want me to give you figures. Aha! That means you didn't get the money yet. Go at once and collect the fee for the shoes.

MONKEY: *(Goes over to the Old Priest and sticks out his hand for payment)*

OLD PRIEST: *(Writes a message on a sheet of paper and hands it to the monkey)*

MONKEY: *(Comes back with the note. Hands it to the shoe seller.)*

SHOE SELLER: You finally got the money. No fee, just a note? Let me see what it says. "If you want to receive payment for your shoes, I will be waiting in the alley of firewood." Oh, for heaven's sake, the old monk is going to beat me with the firewood. Let's flee from this calamity.

### Scene 3: The Prodigal

*As the priest and the shaman dance, the drunken prodigal challenges the old priest for the favors of the shaman. He forces the priest to leave and claims the shaman. After she gives birth to the prodigal's son, she abandons the child, but the proud father takes care of him and teaches him the Korean alphabet and the Chinese classics.*

CH'WIBARI: (*Enters, staggering drunkenly*)

Hush! Hush! Hush! Shee! This damn household of mine is either flu-ridden or set afire. Year by year, month by month, day by day, and minute by minute, my home coils around me.

NOJANG: (*Swats Ch'wibari with his fan*)

CH'WIBARI: Hey! Ouch! I've never been beaten in my life! Who is this beating me so hard? Aha! I've got it. Without concern for worldly affairs, I roamed across the countryside. Mt. Myohyang, one of the majestic mountains, was towering high above me. After receiving the teachings of the Great Sosan Taesa, I was put in charge of the novice monks and was allowed to visit the Water Palace of the Dragon. While I was visiting the Palace, unable to resist the spring breeze, I played with the Eight Fairies. I was scolded for this and ordered to return to the outside world. On my way back, the maidens were lined up on both sides of the road. They were so fair that they could compete even with the beauty of the Princesses Nanyang and Chin Ch'aebong. Tired of admiring the fair ladies, I started for home. On my way, I met an old friend or two with whom I celebrated a long-awaited reunion. Many cups of rice wine were drunk. The alcohol made my face so red that an eagle which was gliding by mistook me for a piece of meat, or so I think.

(*sings*)

Stillness is in the air

As the moon floats above . . .

Hush! Ouch! What a disaster has befallen me.

My careful examination finds your body mantled in a gray robe with a red sash lying across the shoulder. You are holding a large fan which depicts our immortals, and your face is hidden behind the songnak made of mistletoe, which grows over the pine tree. If you are a monk, you should be in your temple, busy with your invocations of Buddha. And what does your presence in this worldly place, dressed like a monk, mean? And why are you playing around with a pretty maiden like her?

(*sings*)

Kkang-kko-rang!

Kkang-kko-rang!

Hush! Hey, you, wayward monk! Listen to me!

Being a monk, your behavior is unforgivable.

So, I have an idea. I suggest a game.

They say you are an expert at mending ironware.

You play the part of a bellows, and I'll pretend to be the ore.

If you lose, your girl is mine, if I lose, my bare behind is yours.

Well, then . . .



(sings)

Let's mend a caldron,  
And let's mend a kiln.

Hush! I can't beat him. Let's dance face to face. If you lose, I will take her. And if I lose, I will take her anyway!

(sings)

White hair is on my head,  
Yet I am young at heart . . .

Hush! I can't beat him in this match either. Well, I have a problem here. They say you can only chase the evil spirits away by beating them madly.

(sings)

A tiger arrived in Kangdom, so  
Geese are beating their wings in flight . . .

Ouch! This bastard hit me well. He hit me on the heel so hard that it made my blood run upward. I am bleeding. I remember the saying, "The best remedy is to block your nose with cotton." Well, where is my nose? I can't find it. Somewhere in my face, which is as big as half of Korea, I've lost my nose. But you, nose, you must be in there somewhere. Let's start from the top. Oh, here you are. (*Pushes the cotton inside his nose*) But it's still bleeding. Well, the old doctor says "rub your nose with dirt." (*Rubs his nose with dirt*) Ay! It stopped. I didn't know it was this easy. What foolishness!

I'll drink a glass of cold water to revive myself, then grit my teeth once before I go to beat that old monk.

That's the way it was supposed to be. Hush! Hey, you bitch! What do you think of me? Don't you like me, strong like the teeth of a lion? The old monk stinks of millipedes and I am fragranced with the Sweet-Scented Bush, now you play with *me* . . .

(sings)

When the autumn sky is high,  
The willow tree mellows . . .

(*Flirts with Somu*)

You look down on me because I am a bachelor with braided hair. I will make myself a top-knot. Hush! Ay! You are coy. If you listened to me well, you wouldn't be coy. I am a well-known playboy of the village by the name of Ch'wibari. I drink well, sing well, and dance well. And I spend money well. With money, you can even bribe a ghost. So, let me buy your favors with money. Here is a string of coins.

SOMU: (*About to pick up the string*)

CH'WIBARI: Ha! Ha! Ha! From the way that bitch flings herself at the metal, I'd say that she would have called a candy vendor to trade the iron gate knobs for candy. Now, you listen to me. I went off to the green mountain where I was alone. Even though the wine was overflowing in the Blue Pavilion, there was no glimpse of fair skin. It's been so long since I've seen a fair maiden like yourself, that you make me wonder at your beauty. Can it be real? Let's make a match to the tune of Prince T'akmun's zither and live one hundred years together.



What? You don't want me? Well, I won't play any more jokes. I didn't mean to take that money away from you. No, not from a pretty thing like you. Here, darling, take the money.

*(Throws the string back again to Somu)*

SOMU: *(Quickly picks up the money)*

CH'WIBARI: Good heavens! So fast! Well, eat them up. Eat them all up! With them, eat me too.

*(sings)*

In the Pear-Blossom Tavern,  
In the east of the capital, Nakyang . . .

*(They perform a dance of love together. After a while, Ch'wibari puts his head under Somu's skirt.)*

CH'WIBARI: Wow! It is warm in here. And there are one, two, three, four, and five chambers in here. Let me go, let me go. Oh, I am finally free.

SOMU: *(Suddenly clutches her stomach, starts to go into labor. A child falls out of her skirt. She hands the child to the proud father and leaves.)*

CH'WIBARI: What a miracle! Yoo-hoo, everyone in the village! Listen to me. I have an announcement to make. A baby son is born to me at my age of seventy. Don't you dare come near my house with your diseases. Well, I have to give him a name. How about "second son"? No, it can't be since there is no "first son." He was born on the ground, so I will name him "Matang," the ground. Mommy, mommy, Matang's mommy, feed him . . .

*(sings)*

Ui, doong-doong, my son.  
Where have you been till now,  
That you came to me this late.  
Have you been playing with Sobu  
Or is Lee Chok-son the one with whom  
You spend your time,  
On the moonlit river Haesok.  
Ui, doong-doong, my son.

THE SON'S VOICE: Daddy, you have cuddled me long enough. I want to be educated like the other children.

CH'WIBARI: What a splendid idea, my son.

SON'S VOICE: Please start with Yangso [literally "two treatises," but phonetically "two wests"].

CH'WIBARI: You mean . . . the two western provinces like *Pyongan* and *Hwanghae*?

SON'S VOICE: No daddy, I mean the vernacular *and* classic literature.

CH'WIBARI: Well, whatever you want to learn, I am at your service, son.

*(Recites)* Heaven is "ch'on."

SON'S VOICE: Earth is "chi."

CH'WIBARI: What a boy! He is way ahead of me. When I am reciting the first line, he is already on the second.

SON'S VOICE: No more Ch'on and Chi, daddy. I don't want to learn

how our Korean language is translated into Chinese characters, but how those Chinese characters are composed into poems, daddy.

CH'WIBARI: What smart thinking!

(*Recites*)

At the Hour of the Rat, the very first hour, the vast heaven was created so blue. That's why classic learning always begins with "ch'on." On the second Hour of the Ox, the earth was created.

The earth nursed the one million creatures. The earth is "chi" . . .

SON'S VOICE: Please, daddy, enough of classics. It's time to learn the vernacular.

CH'WIBARI: Yes, of course. Let's go with the alphabet first, ka-kyo-ko-kyo-ku-kyu.

SON'S VOICE: I would enjoy it if you would teach me the poems of the alphabet.

CH'WIBARI: (*Without hearing his son's request, continues*) Ka, na, ta, la, ma, ba, sa, a, ja, ch'a, k'a, t'a . . . Ay, ay, I didn't know what you wanted to learn, dear. You want the song of the alphabet? You will have it.

Ki-ok, ni-un,

I wanted to build a house in the shape of the letter ki-ok ㄱ  
and in it, I wanted to live like the shape of the letter ni-un ㄴ

Alas, the wish didn't come true, in the shape of the letter chi-gut ㄷ . Ka, kya, ko, kyo. Cowering like a beggar, I became miserable. Ko, kyo, ku, kyu, Gone is my body, unbearable to look at. Na, nya, no, nyo, phoenix, you navigating bird, let's make a match, you and I. No, nyo, nu, nyu,

No reason to be born to live,

Like the weeds by the road.

Ta, tya, to, tyo,

Touched was my love,

But none is left now.

To, tyo, tu, tyu,

Toying around with this old body of mine,

How sad to leave it behind.

## Fifth Episode

### The Lion Dance

*The lion threatens to devour the monks for leading a venerable old monk astray. As the monks run away, one monk, who is also a horsegroom, remains and explains to the lion that the prodigal has made the monks go astray. He promises that all the monks will fulfill their religious vows from that day on. The lion and the monk rejoice together.*

EIGHT MONKS: A beast is chasing us!

MONK-HORSEGROOM: Hush! A beast? What kind of an animal is

this? This creature resembles neither a deer nor a stag, nor a tiger. Well, better ask the creature. What kind of animal are you? We never saw you around here before, even in my ancestor's time. Are you a deer? If you are not a deer, a stag? Not a stag? Then a tiger? Neither this nor that? Well, you must have screwed yourself and you are your own grandfather. Aha! I've got it right this time. It was in the time of the prosperous T'ang Dynasty. People in Oge were, however, suffering from the drought. The King of the Dragons favored you with magic power which enabled you to produce some rain. The King of Oge gave you a great reward, an extravagant entertainment. You are that very lion, aren't you?

You buried the King of Oge alive in a well, and for three years you were on the throne disguised as the king. You are the very lion who played favorites when you accompanied Bodhisattva Munsu to India in search of Buddhist scripts. Now I've got it right this time, don't I? Have you come here to dance to the melodious tune and hide from the eyes of the Bodhisattva which have been on you since the incidents of the palace of Oge?

You, Lion! Be frank. Were you sent here by the Bodhisattva to punish us for our sin of leading the venerable Old Monk into the Apostate? Are you going to eat all of us up? Help! Hush! Hush!

Hush! You, Lion, listen to me carefully. We are not guilty of corrupting the old monk. It was a trick that the prodigal, Ch'wibari, played on him. We are innocent. I promise that we will be good from now on. Could you forgive us all? As we part company, let's rejoice together to the tune of T'aryong. In the Plum-Blossom Tavern in the east of the capital, Nakyang . . . Hush! Hey, you Lion. Let's dance to the tune of Kutkori.

## Sixth Episode

### The Noblemen and Their Servant

*The servant Maltuggi makes fun of the noblemen with audacious remarks and double entendres. When they all start composing poems, it is the lowly Maltuggi who is the most profound.*

MALTUGGI: Hush! The noblemen are entering!

(sings) Dong-dong-dong-dong-dong-dong-do-kkung . . .

Hush! I address the noblemen. But don't get me wrong! I am not addressing the retired noblemen who once belonged to every faction of East and West, old and young, and enjoyed the fame of being the heads of three ministries and six departments, but rather the noblemen who sit on the cushions made of dogskin and eat from the table with broken legs.

YANGBAN (NOBLEMEN): You rascal! What nonsense are you talking?

MALTUGGI: No, you didn't understand me correctly. The noblemen whom I addressed were the Yi Saengwons who once belonged to every faction of East and West, old and young, and enjoyed the fame of being ministers.



YANGBAN (NOBLEMEN): It was the Yi Saengwons he addressed.

MALTUGGI: Hush! Hey, you fiddlers! Listen to me. No more classic music, five-tone scale and six-rule composition. Run and fetch a reed pipe made from a willow branch and blow it to the rhythm of the gourd.

YANGBAN (NOBLEMEN): You rascal! What nonsense are you talking?

MALTUGGI: Pray, noblemen! You didn't understand me correctly! I said not to play light melodies on the classical haegum, drums, flute and pipe, but to beat lively rhythms.

SAENNIM: Sirrah! Maltuggi, where are you?

MALTUGGI: Yes, my lord. Oh, you incestuous yangban, chotban, cholban (*half of your body*), soban (*a small table with dog's legs*), paekban (*rice with vegetables*). You call me Maltuggi, kkoltuggi (*octopus*), ch'aettugi (*ditch*), milttugi (*middle of June*), mettugi (*grasshopper*), cholttuggi (*lame*) . . . Why do you yangban call me so often like children call their grandpa when they see a candy vendor coming?

SAENNIM: You rascal! You should wait on me all the time. Where have you been? Have you forgotten that you are to arrange a new residence here?

MALTUGGI: No, my lord. I never forget my duty, sir. The new place is ready. (*With his whip, Maltuggi starts to draw a circle.*) Here is a lot big enough for you, oak trees here and there to make a fence, and plenty of dried hay in the pig-pen. The gate of this house is open to the heavens.

SAENNIM: You rascal! What nonsense are you talking?

MALTUGGI: No, my lord. You didn't understand me correctly. What I meant was that you deserve to have a lot opened to the five directions, on which you can build a handsome palace shaped like a square, the foundations of which are made of amber stones, with pillars of coral, and jade beams with golden, glittering lines. A pavilion with railings which are shaped in the letter eight is ready to fly into the air. The ceiling is made of one thousand pieces of wood. Below is the floor of oiled rice paper on which the flowery mat is rolled out. The walls are decorated with scrolls and hangings.

On the eastern wall, a scroll with four words vividly written on it reads: "Tranquillity resides in peace." On the western wall a scroll admonishes: "Enduring one hundred difficulties brings peace." On the southern wall: "Humanity, justice, propriety, wisdom," faces the northern wall's scroll, which asserts that "A dutiful son makes a loyal subject." As I look down to the floor, I see a chest of papers, inlaid with mother-of-pearl next to a cabinet upon which a phoenix is carved. A brass chamber pot shines like the morning sun with a matching brass basin beside it. Long pipes made of precious bamboo inlaid with flowery patterns contain tobacco so thinly sliced that it looks like silk threads. The slices have already been marinated in the dung of pigs out in the boat dock in Pyongyang.

SAENNIM: You rascal! What nonsense are you talking?

MALTUGGI: No! You didn't understand me correctly. What I said



was "It was a cigar, sliced thick and dunked in honey."

YANGBAN (NOBLEMEN): *(Singing and dancing)*

"It was the cigar drenched in honey."

*(As the music stops, they stop dancing and enter the imaginary palace Maltuggi has just described. All sit.)*

SAENNIM: Come, my dear brothers. I am tired of sitting idly. Reciting sijo poems seems appropriate to pass a yangban's time.

SOBANGNIM: What a splendid idea, elder brother.

YANGBAN (NOBLEMEN): Lived half way through my life, I would never live my youth again . . .

Ha! Ha! Ha!

MALTUGGI: Sir. May I have the honor of reciting a poem in your presence?

SAENNIM: I give you permission.

MALTUGGI: E-e-e-ra, mansu, e-e-ra.

In those graves high and low,

Miles away from the capital, Nakyang,

Buried were the heroes and warriors,

And what became of the ladies with shining beauty?

We will all be the same when we die.

E-e-e-ra, mansu, e-e-ra.

## Seventh Episode

### The Old Couple

*Miyal is searching for her husband (who has been forced to leave their native village in the wake of a peasant rebellion) by describing his ugly appearance to a musician. The husband encounters the same musician and tells him of his ugly wife. They are thus reunited. When the husband's concubine appears, the two women fight. Miyal decides it is best to separate from her husband. During the fight over the division of the husband's property, Miyal is killed.*

MIYAL: *(cries)*

MUSICIAN: Who is this old woman crying aloud?

MIYAL: Who else could I be? I am an old woman who heard the gay music and came to play.

MUSICIAN: Well, then. Let's play a tune or two.

MIYAL: I am not in the mood to play now. I am in search of my poor old husband.

MUSICIAN: How did you happen to lose your husband?

MIYAL: When there was civil revolt, we were forced to run away in order to save our lives. Since then, I haven't found a trace of him.

MUSICIAN: Where are you from, old woman?

MIYAL: I am from Nowhere Village in Cheju Island.

MUSICIAN: Give us a description of him. I might be of some help.

MIYAL: What's the use of giving you my old husband's description? Even if I give a good one it wouldn't do any good.

MUSICIAN: Well, if the description is accurate, we may find him.

MIYAL: (*chanting*)

Here is the description. He has the face of a new hunter's bow. His eyes are in sunken sockets below a forehead which protrudes like a railing. His nostrils are open to heaven, his whiskers are so worn out that one could use his beard as a paste brush. A top-knot on his head competes with a worn-out donkey's penis. He is short: three feet, four inches.

MUSICIAN: Yes, yes. That's him. Your husband went over the hill to mine the worn-out stone quarry.

MIYAL: Heavens, that old thing. They say a miser bites on a willow branch when he is dying and this old husband of mine is still picking stones!

MUSICIAN: Why don't you call him?

MIYAL: What is the use of calling a person when he is not in sight?

MUSICIAN: Well, you never know. Call him.

MIYAL: Da-a-a-ling!

MUSICIAN: It's no use calling him in that lingering way.

MIYAL: Is there a better way?

MUSICIAN: Call him to the tune of Sinawi, a popular tune in your village.

MIYAL: Jol-ssi-gu, Jol-jol-ssi-gu.

To look for you, my darling husband,  
One night was spent in the city of Wonsan,  
Two nights in Kankyong,  
Three nights in Puyo, and four in Pobsong.  
But there was no trace of you, darling.  
When I find you, I will put my ears to your ears,  
My nose to your nose, my eyes to your eyes,  
And my mouth to your mouth. I will put you on  
My back and I will hold you very tight.  
*Where are you, my darling husband?*  
Don't you even try to look for me?  
Oi, oi, oi.

YONGGAM: Shee! I just drifted in and now find myself in the midst of a festive gathering. How nice it is! This gay music reminds me of my old wife and makes me crave her. Since she was a shaman, she may be around this place during its festivals. Well, I will inquire about her. Hey, you fellow!

MUSICIAN: Who is this calling me?

YONGGAM: I am calling you not about a big, but a small matter. I lost my old wife and am looking for her. By any chance, have you come across an old miserable-looking woman?

MUSICIAN: How did you happen to lose your old wife?

YONGGAM: When civil revolt swept our village, we ran for our lives east and west. Since then, I haven't heard a thing about her.

MUSICIAN: Where is your native place?

YONGGAM: The Nowhere Village in Cheju Island.

MUSICIAN: What does she look like?

YONGGAM: Well, there is no use in giving you her description.

MUSICIAN: Strange things can happen in this world. And besides, we may be of help in finding your wife.

YONGGAM: Well, then . . . Her forehead protrudes like a railing, matching perfectly her jaws which are shaped like a scoop. In between are sunken eyes and a bug's flat nose. Her hair is thinned like a worn-out broom. She carries a fan in her right hand and a bell in her left. She is short: three feet, four inches.

MUSICIAN: Oh, yes, yes. You have described the old woman who just passed by here a while ago. She went to the village over the hill to perform a ritual.

YONGGAM: Damn it! That old woman is always busy performing a ritual.

MUSICIAN: Call your old wife.

YONGGAM: There is no use calling someone who is not in sight.

MUSICIAN: Strange things can happen. Call your woman.

YONGGAM: Da-a-a-ling . . . !

MUSICIAN: What a lingering way of calling your woman.

YONGGAM: Is there any better way?

MUSICIAN: Call your woman with the tune of Sinawi. It is a popular tune in Nowhere Village of Cheju Island.

YONGGAM: Jol-jol-sol-ssi-gu.  
 To look for you, my darling wife,  
 One night was spent in the city of Wonsan,  
 Two nights in Kangkyong,  
 Three in Puyo and four in Pobsong.  
 Still I could not find you anywhere.  
 I long for you my darling,  
 As the seven year flood longs for sunshine.  
 When I find you I will put my  
 Eyes to your eyes, my ears to your ears,  
 My nose to yours, and my mouth to yours.  
 I will squeeze your breast, big as an inkstone  
 And bite your tongue, big as a sandal.  
 Where are you, my darling wife?  
 Don't you even try to find me?

MIYAL: (*sings and dances*)  
 Jol-jol-jol-ssi-gu.  
 Who is this calling me so loudly?  
 I have no one to call me.  
 Could it be Li Po, the drunken poet,  
 Inviting me over for drinks with him?  
 Or is that you, crane?  
 Inviting me to join you in dance?  
 Or are you Liche of Mt. Suyang  
 Inviting me for an outing over the mountain?



YONGGAM: Who else could it be calling you, my darling? It's me, darling, your old husband.

MIYAL: Who is this? Are you my husband? I can see that you are my husband. They say that heaven will answer your prayers, and it surely did answer mine at long last. Oh, I have found you. At long last, I have found you . . .

YONGGAM: My darling wife. At last we meet again with the help of heaven. Let us rejoice with dance, arms around each other. Joy is me, and let's make love . . .

MIYAL: Well, that's that. By the way, where have you been and what have you been doing since our separation?

YONGGAM: Since I lost you, darling, in that horrible revolt I have been roaming all over, encountering every possible hardship.

MIYAL: What is that thing you put on your head?

YONGGAM: Are you really anxious to know the story about what's on my head?

MIYAL: Very anxious, dear.

YONGGAM: Here is my story about the hat. Listen. In the course of wandering around, I journeyed down south. I couldn't start any business since I had no capital. I ended up with a tool box for mending ironware. One day I happened to come across a Sandae Togam official. He said to me, "There is no tiger which doesn't know where Mount Inwangi is, nor is there a Sandae Togam tax collector who doesn't know where the ironware menders are. And he ordered me to pay the tax. I asked him how much my tax was and he answered, "One jon and eight p'un." "Good heavens," I gasped and told him I couldn't pay the tax because my daily earnings were only eight p'un. Then he began to collect the clothes I was wearing. I had nothing to put on my head. Then I happened to find a piece of dogskin in the bottom of my tool box. I made a hat out of the skin and put it on my head. So I made myself an official, *Tongji*.

MIYAL: You, an official?

Jol-jol-jol-ssi-gu . . .

What a sight my old husband has become.

Where went the hat from Tongyong with one hundred layers of silk underneath?

A fine felt hat padded with tortoise shell which covered his head is gone and now he wears a dogskin instead.

Well, there is no use lamenting the hat. We haven't seen each other in so long! Let's not cry over anything. Let's celebrate our reunion by dancing.

CONCUBINE: (*enters dancing*)

YONGGAM: (*Runs over to her and they dance together*)

Hush! My darling old wife. It has been such a long time. I am dying to hear about the household.

MIYAL: Of course. But what happened to your face? It's all broken out like the dried ground under the scorching sun. It used to be as smooth as a silk sack.

YONGGAM: I have been eating so many acorns that my face has



become like the trunk of an oak tree. Anyway, I am dying to hear about the children. How big is Moongol, our oldest son?

MIYAL: Ugh! Don't ask me about him.

YONGGAM: Why do you sigh? What happened to him? Tell me quickly.

MIYAL: My darling husband! We were so poor that I had to send him to the mountain to gather some firewood. A hungry tiger was waiting for him and carried him away.

YONGGAM: Heavens! Mercy! You killed our boy. We will have nothing to do with each other now that our son is dead. Let's separate forever.

MIYAL: Darling, dear. What harsh words to say to me at our reunion after such a long absence.

YONGGAM: Shut up! What's the joy of living together without our son?

MIYAL: If you say so, you old scoundrel. (*Looks at his concubine.*) Now I know why you want to leave me. You have been playing around with that thing. Pretty and young. You loathe me. (*To the concubine*) You whore. What wrong have I done you that you made that old scoundrel lose his head? I am not afraid of dying if I can kill you first.

CONCUBINE: Help! I am being beaten to death.

YONGGAM: You old hag. She has committed no crime. You dirty stinking hag!

MIYAL: You have sunken low by having her. Since you have mistreated me, I have no love for you anymore. Let's divide whatever we have earned together. Give me my share.

YONGGAM: Very well then. The rice paddies, filled with water to the brim, the field with long rows of crops, are mine. Young maiden servants who move like swallows, serfs strong as bulls are also mine. When they have offspring, these too will be mine. The oxen and cows are mine, and when they multiply they can be thrown in with my lot also. But I will give you the barren land over the hill where no crops grow and I will also give you the sand paddies by the river. Also yours are all the male, female, and baby mice. And you can keep your kids by some other fellows, too. They are good for making you starve to death.

MIYAL: Please, old husband. Don't be so hard on me. Please give me some more.

YONGGAM: What a greedy old woman! You want an even share, Huh? No. I would rather destroy everything than give it to you.

MIYAL: My old husband! Destroy whatever belongs to me, but spare the shrine of the spirits. Please save the shrine. The spirits would punish you severely if you harmed it.

YONGGAM: Well, this is the end of you and me. Who's afraid of the spirits?

MIYAL: Good! He dropped dead. That stubborn old man didn't listen to my advice and went on striking my shrine. I'm sure he died of the devil's revenge. Well, every young boy of the village,

come to me. If you are tall and have a big nose, that's even better. Bury this old corpse first, then live with me happily ever after. Good heavens! The crows have already plucked out his eyes.

YONGGAM: Ouch! It hurts!

MIYAL: Holy spirits! How can a dead body talk?

YONGGAM: Because my body is still warm, you bitch. So, you want to live with a tall young fellow with a big nose, huh?

MIYAL: Ouch! Ouch! Help! Help! Didn't you say you loathe me? If you loathe me, why the beating? Help! Stop! I am dying.

YONGGAM: My goodness! My old wife is dead! My poor, poor old wife. What a pity to die so suddenly.

(sings)

God of Vegetation created one hundred herbs  
To cure all the diseases of the world.  
To cure a lack of stamina,  
The six grains are employed; to cure a weak stomach,  
The juice of the ginseng root;  
For a hangover, tdegum-umja and sokgalt'ang;  
For throat disease, tosidodam medicine;  
For jaundice, onbaekwon;  
For malaria, purium;  
For worms, kolit'ang;  
For constipation, the six immortal pills;  
For gonorrhea, olimsan;  
For diarrhea, the binding medicine;  
For headache, yijint'ang;  
For nausea, pokyongbanhat'ang;  
For a cold, p'aedoksan;  
For indigestion, soch'ehwan;  
And after lovemaking, ssangwhat'ang.  
With all these medicines, I could have  
Gotten you a remedy or two.  
My heart is broken  
Because you are dead, oh, oh!  
With all the medicines, I could have  
Gotten you a remedy or two.  
My heart is broken  
Because you are dead, oh, oh!

*An old man performs the ritual to comfort Miyal's soul and lead it to Nirvana. A shaman is called and becomes possessed by Miyal's spirit. Miyal speaks through her of her sorrow, and desire to attain Nirvana.*

OLD MAN FROM NAMGANG:

What is this raucous name-calling between Yonggam and Miyal? Can this be a lovers' quarrel after a long absence? (*Finds Miyal is dead*) Heaven's sake! What an incident! She is dead. Villagers! I have news for you. Poor old Miyal is dead. Alas! What a pity! She had been leading such a hard life since she lost her husband. The only hope for her was to meet Yonggam again, and now the poor old woman is dead. What can be done? The only thing I can do is to summon Mansin, the shaman, to comfort the dead

soul and lead it to Paradise. I will go in haste and fetch the shaman.

MANSIN (SHAMAN): (*chants*)

Come back, Spirit.

Come back, you dead soul.

E-e-ei-ya.

I bid you to come back, dead soul.

Come back dead soul and spirit,

Hovering in an empty sky,

E-e-ei-ya, hovering in an empty sky.

*(As the dance becomes more and more frantic, Mansin is transformed into Miyal. Miyal speaks through Mansin.)*

E-e-e-e. I have come, I have come.

Through Mansin's body and mouth, I have come back.

My wish was not fulfilled in my life,

So now I am back as a guest of the Yellow River.

Oh, oh, oh.

Though I longed for my husband to fulfill my wish,

Instead I was murdered.

*(cries sadly)*

Gods of the Afterlife who reside

In the great mountains and rivers.

Grant this humble murdered soul entrance to

The land of Nirvana.

Put the soul on the soul plate, and the

Spirit on the spirit plate,

And carry them to the Mount of Glory

In the land of Paradise.

*(In Pongsan, when the dancing of the shaman reached its height, all the performers entered and threw their masks into a bonfire, thus exorcising the evil spirits.)*



The Performing Arts Program of The Asia Society brings troupes of Asian dancers, musicians, and theatrical performers to the United States and Canada. Impeccable quality and integrity of artistic tradition are the hallmarks of their selection. Although each tour includes an appearance in New York City, the principal purpose of the program is to introduce classic forms of Asian performing arts to audiences at universities and colleges across the country. To assist American audiences in becoming better acquainted with these Asian art forms, the Society publishes annual collections of essays on the Program's presentations, as well as libretti. It also coordinates the production of films, videotapes, and records of the troupes' performances.