

## Trends in Pansori Studies: 1990s Onwards

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### Abstract

There are differing views on the origins of Pansori and its differing aspects depending on the objects of analysis and perspective. Various methods of interpretation and studies would be possible. The purpose of this study was to analyze 422 academic papers published by a pre-eminent academic journal on Pansori according to a number of different criteria by categorizing them both by time period and also by their subject matters. This study categorized trends of research conducted on Pansori between 1990 and 2014 into 7 categories. The most frequently studied topics include singing style of the performers portraying implicit rhythms and story texts and the way in which each school of Pansori has passed down its unique ways and methods. The key implication of this study is that the analysis of research trends on this topic would enable expansion of structured topics on traditional music as well as diversification of topics that could be studied further.

**Keywords:** Pansori; Ethnic; Korean music; Data analysis

### Introduction

Pansori is a comprehensive art form representative of Korean traditional art. It was designated as an 'Important Intangible Cultural Asset No. 5' in 1964 pursuant to the Korean Cultural Properties Protection Law and was also selected as an 'Outstanding Orally Transferred Literature and World Intangible Cultural Asset' by UNESCO [1].

Although certain scholars put forward the theory that Pansori originated in the late seventeenth century, the earliest known documented record of Pansori is from the early eighteenth century during the reign of King Youngjo [2]. Examinations on the origins of Pansori can be approached from a number of different perspectives due to the form it takes as a comprehensive performance art comprising literature, music and acting aspects [3,4]. Some Pansori singers argue that only full performance should be referred to as Pansori and performing excerpts referred to as 'Sori' (i.e. songs)<sup>1</sup> [2]. It is not possible to determine the roots from a form perspective by reference to the earliest records on Pansori originating in the eighteenth century [3-5]. Further, it has been argued that 'danga, byeongchang, and changguk' all fall within the category of Pansori as examples of Pansori performance included not only 'complete' performances but also extracts of parts or even only a few songs [5,6]. In addition, it has also been argued that such forms were sub-categories of Pansori which were derivatives of it [7]. Therefore, it

would be tenuous to categorically state that Pansori originated in the eighteenth century if each of the literary, musical and theatrical aspects of Pansori are separately taken into account [8].

Origins of music and culture can be said to be contemporaneous with the start of mankind and forms an interactive relationship with the sustained development and coexistence of mankind [9]. Numerous studies have mentioned that the musical factor of Pansori emanated from shaman ritual music<sup>2</sup>. However, supplemental evidence would be needed in order to support the argument that Pansori music form originated from shamanistic music [1,10] although it is a natural consequence that Pansori music was influenced by shamanistic music considering that the latter preceded the former in terms of time flow.

There may be some differences in opinions on the establishment process and aspects of Pansori depending on the object of analysis and perspective and various methods of interpretation and studies would be possible [1]. Further, the format of Pansori, namely, singing of stories, suggests the possibility of both preservation of tradition and contemporary creative work. The purpose of this study was to analyze 422 academic papers [11] published by a pre-eminent academic journal on Pansori which may be approached and analyzed according to a number of different criteria by categorizing them by time periods and their subject matters.

### Research Attributes of Pansori by Era

Study of Pansori has focused mainly on two distinct aspects: namely, study of the legends, folk tales and other stories that were used as lyrics

<sup>1</sup> Reference was made to interviews with Pansori singers carried out by Lee, Bohyung in 2002 introduced in Sung, Ki-ryun's 2003 research.

<sup>2</sup> According to interview transcripts of interviews carried by Lee, Bohyung, a prominent scholar of Korean traditional music, there is a plethora of research into the origins of Pansori but all adhere to the notion that Pansori originated from shamanistic stories citing the similarities of its music form to that of the 'Yookjabaegi' key style of the southern region shamanistic stories. However, it also raised the issue of explaining the dissimilar musical structures of shamanistic stories and Pansori. Date: 2005.11.15 11:00~12:30, Location: Office of Lee, Bohyung, Gongnung-dong, Nowon-gu, Seoul, Participants: Lee, Bohyung (Lee), Noh, Jaemyeong (Noh), Kim, Heera (Kim), Editor: Kim, Heera (Member, Pansori Research Association, National Korean Classical Music Record Museum)

and recitative texts on the one hand and singing styles and vocalization methods on the other. One scholar of Pansori examined them from the perspective of both music and literature. The observations made are presented in Table 1 [12] below.

Period	Literature		Music	Total
	1st half	2nd half		
1950s	1st half	15	None	37
	2nd half	22	None	
1960s	1st half	34	2	36
	2nd half	60	2	62
1970s	1st half	63	20	83
	2nd half	99	27	126
1980s	1st half	135	35	170
Total	427		85	512

**Table 1:** Analysis of Papers on Pansori (1987).

There were notable studies carried out on the origins of Pansori in the 1950s to the 60s and the research results on Pansori in the 1970s have been analysed by dividing the decade into two halves. During the first half of the 1960s, the studies were expanded and particular focus was given to analyses of Alternative Version<sup>3</sup> [13]. Amongst the 34 papers categorized as literature studies, one focused on Shin Jae-hyo,<sup>4</sup> [14] one of the most prominent scholars who formulated theories and carried out education on Pansori. Another examined background of Pansori and 2 research papers were also published. It can be seen that discussions were initiated on different genres of Pansori in the second half of the 1960s.

Pansori has been handed down the generations orally and lacked any form of comprehensive written musical records. In fact, this was the case for other forms of Korean traditional music. This was the reason why early research into Pansori was heavily biased towards the literary aspects rather than the musical side. The first half of the 1970s saw proliferation of research into the musical aspects of Pansori and systematic categorization of Pansori (e.g. in terms of traditions, rhythm and key) [15]. At the same time, particular research into structures of the stories' plots and personalities of the main characters were undertaken.

Studies on 'Singer Group Theory' which examined the social status of Pansori singers in addition to music theory came into prominence in the second half of the 1970s. This was a period when in-depth studies were conducted into societal characteristics, aesthetics, Korean grammar handed down through Pansori literature. First half of the 1980s experienced expansion of research topics in both literature and music aspects and also more in-depth studies as well as significant increase numerically [16].

### Distribution by Period Since 1990s

The analysis of papers on Pansori as shown in Table 1, above covers the period commencing from the 1950s until the early part of the

1980s and divided the subjects into two, namely literature and music [12].

This study focused on the period from 1989 up to 2014. The period was divided both into (1) 5-year blocks as follows: Period 1 (1989~1994: No research papers were published in 1990); Period 2 (1995~1999); Period 3 (2000~2004); Period 4 (2005~2009) and Period 5 (2010~2014), and (2) into the following categories: Music, Literature, Singer, Utility, Character, Hierarchy and Genres/Aesthetics.

Topics on music analysis of Pansori were included in the 'Music' section and those studies which covered both music and discourse were sub-divided into music and discourse categories depending on the weighting of each category.

Category	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Total
Music	8	3	10	9	18	48
	16.67%	6.25%	20.83%	18.75%	37.50%	100.00%
	16.67%	5.36%	11.11%	7.14%	17.65%	11.37%
Literature	17	18	30	33	33	131
	12.98%	13.74%	22.90%	25.19%	25.19%	100.00%
	35.42%	32.14%	33.33%	26.19%	32.35%	31.04%
Singer	2	8	21	22	14	67
Style	2.99%	11.94%	31.34%	32.84%	20.90%	100.00%
	4.17%	14.29%	23.33%	17.46%	13.73%	15.88%
Utility	1	8	5	23	11	48
	2.08%	16.67%	10.42%	47.92%	22.92%	100.00%
	2.08%	14.29%	5.56%	18.25%	10.78%	11.37%
Character	3	1	3	4	3	14
	21.43%	7.14%	21.43%	28.57%	21.43%	100.00%
	6.25%	1.79%	3.33%	3.17%	2.94%	3.32%
Hierarchy	7	7	14	19	22	69
	10.14%	10.14%	20.29%	27.54%	31.88%	100.00%
	14.58%	12.50%	15.56%	15.08%	21.57%	16.35%
Genres/	10	11	7	16	1	45
Aesthetics	22.22%	24.44%	15.56%	35.56%	2.22%	100.00%
	20.83%	19.64%	7.78%	12.70%	0.98%	10.66%
Total	48	56	90	126	102	422
	11.37%	13.27%	21.33%	29.86%	24.17%	100.00%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Table 2:** Breakdown of the research categories.

<sup>3</sup> Materials that form part of traditional literature including folk stories which are different from the stories that are sung in performances of Pansori currently [13].

<sup>4</sup> Research into the works of Shin Jae-hyo is continuing [14].

Story and spatial analysis based on the story aspects of Pansori sections were included under the 'Literature' group. 'Singer-Style' is a study on different Pansori singing styles and describes singing expressions, comparison of singer-style for each section and the lives of singers. 'Utility' encompasses studies covering practical implementation methods including instruction methods and future developmental issues. 'Character' refers to the characters that appear in the plot. Studies into periods when Pansori was popular, social groups that enjoyed Pansori, approaches according to periods, styles of Pansori that have been passed down in the regions, changing stages in Pansori were grouped under the label, 'Hierarchy'. 'Genres/Aesthetics' label indicates Pansori studies from an aesthetics perspective and extends to social interaction, outstanding issues for Pansori genres, studies of Pansori both as a performing vehicle as well as new compositions.

Table 2 below is a breakdown of the research categories, (1) by Periods which are shown in the red rows for each Category, and (2) by Categories for each Period which are set out in the blue columns for each Period. The period covered is from 1989 until 2014.

The following conclusions can be reached by analyzing the data presented in the above table. The number of researches conducted shows general increasing trends for each topic other than Genres/Aesthetics from Period to Period. In other words, it can be said that the study of Pansori has become more active as times have passed. There is a clear trend in the topics that have received the most attention,

namely, literature, hierarchy and singer-style in descending order of frequency. As was also observed in the study set out in Table 1 [12] above, studies of the literature in Pansori preceded musical approach and this can be persuasive evidence that such long standing scholarly tradition has enabled sustained studies from a literary perspective. Studies involving topics on utility showed greatest activity in period 4. In other words, studies looking at Pansori from a diverse perspective and also discussing the way forward were most active during the period 2005-2009. This appears to be in the same vein as proposals put forward to actively encourage traditional cultural contents following the 'Korean Wave' which is also commonly referred to as 'Hallyu' [17]. The late 1990s to early 2000s had been the tipping point that launched its popularity around the globe.

Genres/Aesthetics was most actively studied in Period 4. This also suggests that perspective of aesthetics and communications had become important topics of study along with utilizing Pansori in light of the heightened attention on cultural contents.

Period 5 presented a significant decrease in Genres/Aesthetics accompanied by increase in studies of music. This suggests that the study of the music aspects of Pansori became active after 2010.

The distributions of research by 7 labels per 5-year period can be summarized by the following Graph 1. Sum of the percentages of the Labels in each Period is one hundred per cent (Figure 1).

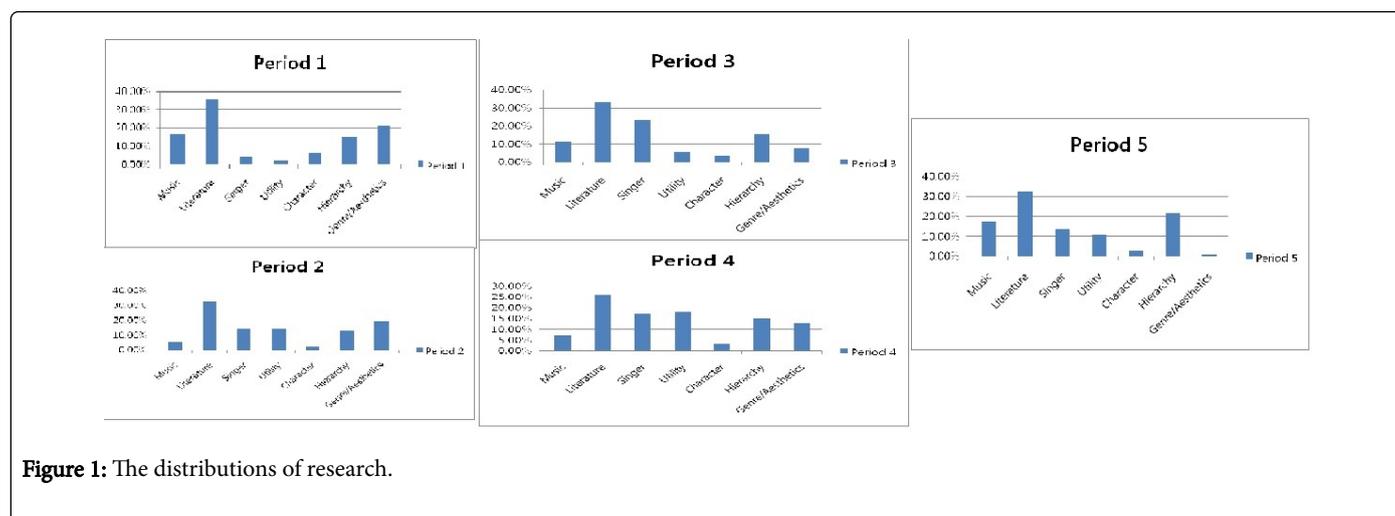


Figure 1: The distributions of research.

### Distribution by Categories Since 1990s

This research involved categorizing studies [11] on Pansori published between 1989 and 2014 into 7 distinct labels and analyzed research trends by periods as shown in Graph 2 below. In addition, the data was arranged into graphs to show studies categorized under which label was frequently studied in any given period. Academic studies on Pansori have increased from one per year between 1989 and 2001 to two per year from 2002 onwards and diverse studies are being conducted which cannot be simply categorized by using the dual categorization method summarized in Table 1 [12] above.

Pansori studies have covered a wide range of topics including the following: the legends, folk tales and other stories that were used as lyrics and recitative texts, singing styles and vocalization methods,

differing repertory of narrative and gestures according to different historical periods, and folk culture by combining analyses of scenario texts with historical materials. At the same time, studies focusing on the music aspect have shown marked increase since 2010 and studies on variation of rhythms within scenarios as well as approaching the evolution of singing style and changes in rhythm from the perspective of the various schools of Pansori have also been conducted. It has been observed that the studies involving literary approach have steadily and continuously progressed which can be attributed to the focus on text studies in the past. In the same vein, we expect that the increased and active study of the music aspect of Pansori will accelerate enhanced interest in Pansori music and more sophisticated research techniques (Figure 2).

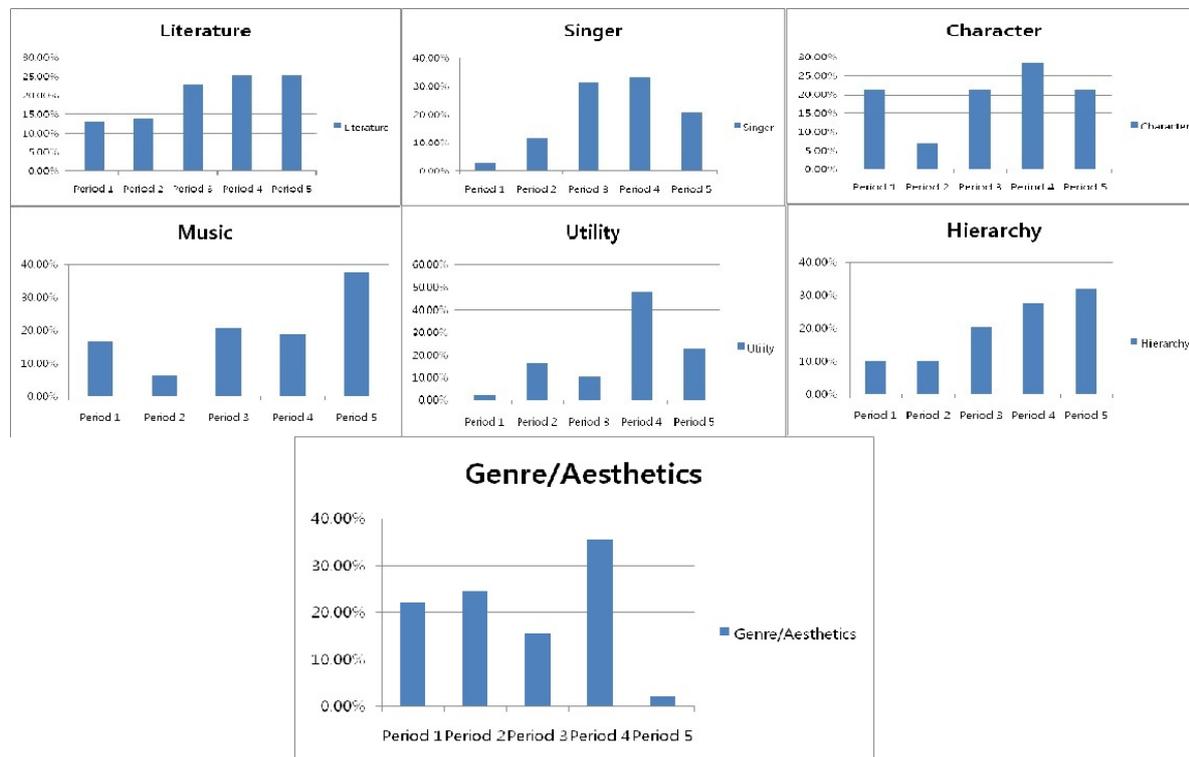


Figure 2: Distribution by categories.

## Conclusion

This study categorized trends of research conducted on Pansori between 1990 and 2014 into 7 groups. The Research Information Sharing Service (RISS) of South Korea was utilized and a total of 1437 research papers on the subject were available as at December 2014. Among those, 422 papers [11] which encompass a diverse range of topics and which were registered with the Korea Citation Index<sup>5</sup> were categorized and labeled by 7 research topics. Research publications which fall outside of the musical and literature categories in the studies into this topic during the period from the 1950s to the first half of the 1980s as shown in Table 1 [12] above may be considered. The most frequently studied topics related to Pansori include singing style of the performers portraying implicit rhythm and story texts and the way in which each school of Pansori has passed down its unique methods. The key implication of this study is the analysis of research trends on this topic which will enable expansion of structured topics of traditional music as well as diversification of research topics.

Music was not invented as an exclusive medium for professional musicians and composers but is an interactive art form involving members of the audience and society as a whole. The term ‘musical elaboration’ [9] may be interpreted as referring to the elaboration within the context of the societal, cultural and historical setting of any given period. This term encapsulates the mutual elaboration/transformational effect of society and music and ‘elaboration’ can be thought of as playing a role.

In this context, Pansori is regarded as an art form with the greatest interactivity involving ‘chumsae’<sup>6</sup> by the audience and the drummer as an intrinsic part of the performance. The ‘chang’ which is the melodic song and the ‘ahnri’ which is the recitative part telling the story signifies the communication between the singer and the audience and is a good microcosm of society reflected in music. The relevance of music in society is not something that can be explained in terms of a ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ concept.

Selecting the social functions of music rather than limiting the scope of Pansori research to theoretical aspects will enable the researchers to discover implications of Pansori to the contemporary world. Examining trends and issues in existing documents is a meaningful process and is an indication of the studies on Pansori that can be shared amongst the audience and other participants in addition to musicians that are interested in the genre.

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<sup>5</sup> A citation index covering research in South Korea.

<sup>6</sup> Improvised, spur of the moment chant-type sound or words emitted intermittently as a response to certain lyrics or passages.

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