A Basic Understanding of *Hyangga* Interpretation

KIM Young Wook

Abstract

Hyangchal *is an ancient writing system of the Korean language that used Chinese characters. In the early twentieth century, some Japanese scholars studied the vernacular poetry known as* hyangga *as part of an attempt to reconstructing the language of Silla. Later, Korean linguists pursued this topic, researching how to interpret* hyangga. *Their methodology was to locate reference materials that could be juxtaposed with the original* hyangga, *including ancient stories written in Korean with similar themes to those addressed in* hyangga *poems, associated myths, and Chinese translations of* hyangga. *Their research revealed that* hyangchal *includes Silla's unique writing systems, such as* seokdok *(interpretative reading or reading the meaning of a character),* bachim *(transcription using supporting sounds), and* hunju eumjong *(the principle of "meaning value preceding the phonetic value"). With the recent discovery of many Goryeo era materials in* seokdok gugyeol, *another writing system that utilized Chinese characters, the relationship between* hyangchal *and* seokdok gugyeol *could be gradually ascertained. The clarification of the close relationship between* hyangchal *and* gugyeol *affirms that both writing systems occupy an important place in the study of the history of Korean characters and the reconstruction of the ancient Korean language.*

Keywords: *hyangga*, *hyangchal*, Chinese-borrowing writing system, Silla language, *seokdok, bachim* (supporting sound), *seokdok gugyeol*, ancient Korean language

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Introduction

Hyangga (vernacular poetry) from the Silla kingdom are found in *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms).[1] It is believed that the author, the Buddhist monk Iryeon (1206-1289),[2] spent almost 50 years collecting relevant materials[3] before starting to write the *Samguk yusa* at the age of 79 and completing it in five years in the final year of his life.[4] Strikingly, he devoted a lifetime to planning and writing a comprehensive book on the early history of the Korean people, not just Buddhist history, which includes the myth of Dangun and a careful selection of *hyangga* poems.[5]

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1. A total of 14 Silla *hyangga* poems appear in *Samguk yusa*. Their titles, authors, and the approximate composition dates are as follows: "Seodongyo" (Seodong's Song) by King Mu of the Baekje kingdom, during the reign of King Jinpyeong of Silla (before 599); "Hyeseongga" (Ode to the Comet) by Yungcheonsa, King Jinpyeong (579-631); "Pungyo" (Ode to Winds) by anonymous, Queen Seondeok (632-647); "Wonwangsaengga" (Ode for Life Eternal) by Gwangdeok, King Munmu (661-681); "Mojukjirangga" (Missing Jukjirang) by Deokosil, King Hyoso (692-702); "Heonhwaga" (Dedicating Flowers) by an old man driving a cow, King Seongdeok (702-737); "Wonga" (Song of Loyalty) by Sinchung, the first year of the reign of King Hyoseong (737); "Jemangmaega" (Requiem for the Dead Sister) by Wolmyeongsa, King Gyeongdeok (742-765); "Dosolga" (Tusita Song) by Wolmyeongsa, King Gyeongdeok (742-765); "Changiparangga" (Lauding Giparang) by Chungdamsa, King Gyeongdeok (742-765); "Anminga" (Ode for the Peace of People) by Chungdamsa, King Gyeongdeok (742-765); "Docheonsu daebiga" (Ode to the Great Mercy of Avalokitesvara) by Huimyeong, King Gyeongdeok (742-765); "Ujeokga" (An Encounter with Thieves) by Yeongjae, King Wonseong (785-798); and "Cheoyongga" (Cheoyong's Song) by Cheoyong, the fifth year of the reign of King Heongang (879). See Hwang (2008, 283-284).
2. Iryeon entered Buddhist priesthood at Muryangsa temple in Namhae and became a monk at the age of 9. He rose to prominence at the young age of 22, when he passed the government-administered zen examinations with the highest score. At 54, he became a Master Monk. When he was 78, King Chungnyeol wanted to appoint him as the National Master, but Iryeon refused the title. The King instead honored him as the Most Venerable of the Nation and paid him respect accordingly.
3. See K. Chung (1986, 11).
4. See S. Kim (2007, 67).
5. By transmitting the myths of the Korean people and compiling *hyangga*, Monk Iryeon probably sought to instill pride and hope in the people of Goryeo. See Yi (1972, 40).

Yet the value of *Samguk yusa* had remained unrecognized for quite a long time. As its title implies—the literal meaning of *yusa* being "remnant events," the book is a record of alternative history rather than official history.[6] *Samguk sagi* (Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms), written 150 years earlier, is understood as an official account of early Korean history.[7] When the Imperial University of Tokyo released a modern edition of *Samguk yusa* in 1904, the *hyangga* that was included in if caught the attention of Japanese scholars.[8] In their view, linguistic information on ancient Japanese provided by the eighth-century text *Manyoshu* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves) might be compared to the ancient Korean reproduced in *hyangga* of the Silla period.[9] For that reason, contemporary Japanese linguists of that time, including Ayugai Fusanoshin, Kanazawa Shozaburo, and Ogura Shinpei, attempted to interpret *hyangga*.[10]

Initial efforts at translating *hyangga*, which had been transcribed in *hyangchal*, ran into difficulties. Fortunately, "Cheoyongga" (Cheoyong's Song) was transcribed in both *hyangchal* and Hangeul. As the

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6. See Cho (2007, 18).
7. Following the compilation of *Samguk yusa*, Confucianism based on the Learning of Zhu Xi was introduced to the Goryeo dynasty in 1290 by the Korean scholar An Hyang. After the Joseon dynasty replaced the Goryeo dynasty in 1392, Korea became a Confucianism-centered society. As a result, mainstream society grew distant from the worldview of *Samguk yusa*, which incorporated gods with superhuman powers and a mystical world with roots in Buddhism.
8. At that time, the genealogical study of linguistics was a worldwide trend in the linguistics community. Ethnic languages of various countries were classified into families and their common origins identified, an example being the study of the Indo-European language family between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Keeping in line with this trend, Japanese scholars also pursued the study of ancient languages with great interest.
9. See Lim (2008, 370-371).
10. As Sanskrit is important for the reconstruction of the Indo-European language, so is the Silla language for understanding the lineage of the Japanese language. Believing that the *hyangchal* writing system used in Silla *hyangga* in *Samguk yusa* had a very similar linguistic genealogy to the Manyogana writing system, which first appeared in *Manyoshu* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), Japanese scholars thought that it would be worthwhile to examine their historical interrelatedness.

legend associated with "Cheoyongga" appears in *Samguk yusa* and both the legend and dance had been orally transmitted within folk culture, "Cheoyongga" held the key to the interpretation of *hyangga*. Kanazawa Shozaburo translated "Cheoyongga" for the first time in 1918. Later, Ogura Shinpei achieved a breakthrough in the translation of *hyangga*, with Yang Ju-dong and Kim Wan-jin completing the last translations of *hyangga.* Distinguished scholars in this area published major works one after another over several decades. Thus, it looked as though research topics concerning *hyangga* had been exhausted. Recently, however, *hyangga* studies have transitioned into a new direction with the unveiling of new information on vocabulary and grammar, which would help the interpretation of *hyangga*, that is, the discovery of *seokdok gugyeol*. After the initial discovery in 1973, materials recorded in *seokdok gugyeol* were unearthed in large quantities from the 1990s, resulting in an outpouring of research.

The newly uncovered materials written in *gugyeol* garnered much scholarly interest, as its annotation method was related to that of *hyangchal. Gugyeol* used an abridged form of *hyangchal* in some cases (by deleting some strokes in Chinese characters) and kept its original form in others (by using original forms of Chinese characters). To take an example, "心音" (*simeum*; meaning "mind") is a *hyangchal*-style notation of "마ᅀᆞᆷ" (*majam*). Here "音" (*eum*) denotes the consonant /ㅁ/. In *seokdok gugyeol*, "音" is shortened into, but the two have the same phonetic value and function. The character "尸" (*si*) in "道尸" (*dosi*; meaning "road") corresponds to /ㄹ/, and its *gugyeol* form is the same.

Considerably more materials written in *gugyeol* are available compared to that of extant *hyangga* sources. Furthermore, since 2000, more discoveries have been made of materials inscribed with stylus called *gakpil*, epigraphs, and inscriptions on wooden tablets that were recorded by ancient Koreans. The increased availability of reference materials helped improve the accuracy of the translation of *hyangga*. With the aid of these newly discovered materials, difficult words and phrases in *hyangga*, which had been left uninterpreted by previous scholars, could be deciphered via comparison with *gugyeol*

codes.[11] Arbitrary translations arising from the lack of reference sources could be resolved now, with the identification and application of comparable forms of *gugyeol* and other primary letters and codes.[12]


How to Interpret *Hyangga*

Hyangga *and* Hyangchal

The oldest extant *hyangga* material[13] is "Seodongyo" (Seodong's Song), which is believed to have been written before AD 599 during the reign of King Jinpyeong. Among the *hyangga* poems that remain from the Goryeo dynasty are Gyunyeo's "Bohyeon sibwonga" (Chanting of Ten Vows of Samantabhadra Boddhisattva) listed in *Gyunyeojeon* (Tales of Gyunyeo) and King Yejong's "Doijangga" (Ode to Two Generals) written in 1120 in commemoration of Sin Sung-gyeom and Kim

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11. The discovery of new information helped produce advancements in the interpretation of *hyangga*, such as the works of Hwang (2008), Jin-ho Park (2008), and Jaemin Park (2009).

12. According to the historical chronicle in *Samguk yusa*, *hyangga* poems were composed by Silla people from the sixth to ninth centuries. However, the actual poems are not found in the literature from that era; instead, as mentioned before, they made their first appearance in Iryeon's *Samguk yusa* written in 1289 in the Goryeo dynasty (refer to S. Kim 2007, 67). Recorded in the language of the thirteenth century, they provide linguistic information on Goryeo. This assertion is disputed, however, as some Korean linguists argue that *hyangga* poems in *Samguk yusa* were reproduced in the original Silla language. The heart of the matter is whether Goryeo people of the thirteenth century could interpret Silla *hyangga* of the sixth to ninth century. In other words, whether thirteenth-century Goryeo people and more specifically, Iryeon, possessed a complete understanding of Silla *hyangga* when including them in his book. It is unlikely that this issue can be resolved definitively due to the dearth of records on that era. All I can say is that, in light of the conservative nature of transcribing *hyangga*, they possess sufficient value in providing useful clues to understanding the Silla language.

13. The letter "*hyang*" in *hyangga* means "rural or local," but also can indicate Korea as opposed to China, as in the case of *danghyang* (China and Korea). The word *dangsip* was used to refer to Chinese poetry, whereas *hyangga* described Korean poetry.

Rak, meritorious retainers at the founding of the Goryeo dynasty. As "Doijangga" is the most recent *hyangga* that has been found and it is believed that none later survived,[14] translation of *hyangga* into modern Korean is a difficult endeavor.

  Below is a part of "Cheoyongga" reproduced in *Samguk yusa*. This song is believed to have been authored by a Silla man named Cheoyong in 879, the fifth year of King Heongang's reign.
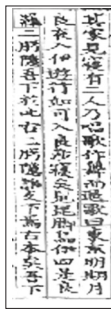
東京明期月良
夜入伊遊行如可
入良沙寝矣見昆
脚烏伊四是良羅

Figure 1. "Cheoyongga" verse in *Samguk yusa*

All *hyangga* verses, including "Cheoyongga," are transcribed in Chinese letters. However, the poems are not, as a matter of fact, written in the Chinese writing. Of course, one could attempt a cursory interpretation of a *hyangga* based on the knowledge of Chinese characters. Let us start with the first word "東京"[15] (*donggyeong*; meaning "capital in

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14. *Gyunyeojeon*, written by Hyeok Ryeon-jeong in 1075, includes 11 *hyangga* poems composed by the Buddhist monk Gyunyeo. This lets us suppose that other Goryeo intellectuals knowledgeable in Buddhism appreciated *hyangga* around the same time when Iryeon published *Samguk yusa*; given this, Iryeon probably did not have much difficulty interpreting them for his book. During the Joseon dynasty, the tradition of *hyangga* disappeared and few records are found on the use of *Samguk yusa* as a reference book of *hyangga*. After the Joseon era, *Samguk yusa* was forgotten and the ability to interpret Silla *hyangga* gradually disappeared. Reevaluation of *Samguk yusa* began in the first half of the twentieth century and the interpretation of *hyangga* became an important task in the study of Korean classical works.

15. The use of the place name "Donggyeong 東京" in "Cheoyongga" seems to imply that despite its composition during the Silla period, the poem is less likely to have retained the Silla language in its pure form when included in *Samguk yusa* and more likely to have reflected the Goryeo language, at least to some extent. In volume 57 of *Goryeosa* (History of the Goryeo Dynasty), it is stated that "Gyeongju,

the east") in "Cheoyongga." As Silla's capital (京), Gyeongju is located in the east (東), one could reason that "東京" refers to a place, most likely, Gyeong-ju. With the next phrase "明期月良" (*myeonggi wollyang*), we begin to encounter difficulties. The character "明" (*myeong*) means "bright" and "月" (*wol*) means "moon," so it could be interpreted roughly as the "bright moon of Gyeongju." But what do the characters "期" (*gi*) and "良" (*ryang*) mean? They are not easy to decipher.

It is the same with the next line, "夜入伊遊行如可." The character "夜" (*ya*) means "night," "遊" (*yu*) means to "play," and "行" (*haeng*) is to "go." But what about the other characters "入" (*ip*), "伊" (*i*), "如" (*yeo*), and "可" (*ga*)? One cannot arrive at the contextual meaning of the whole sentence by using their Sino-Korean pronunciations or their native Korean translations. If lines in *hyangga* written in Chinese characters—such as "東京明期月良" and "夜入伊遊行如可"—are not, in fact, using the Chinese writing system, then what are they using?

This peculiar writing system is called "*hyangchal.*" The term "*hyangchal*" originates from "Yeokga hyeondeokbun" (Chapter on Translated Songs and Real Virtues), Chapter 8 of *Gyunyeojeon* (The Tales of Gyunyeo), written by Hyeok Ryeon-jeong. In *Gyunyeojeon*, an introduction by Choe Haeng-gwi accompanies his Chinese translations of Master Monk Gyunyeo's *hyangga* poems.[16] Choe's introduction compares Korea with China and juxtaposes writing systems for the Korean and Chinese languages. He calls the former *hyangchal* and the letter *dangmun*.[17]
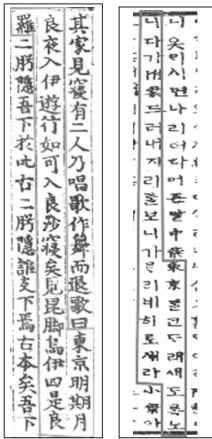
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the old capital of Silla, . . . was renamed Donggyeong in the sixth year of the reign of King Seongjong (987). . . ."

16. Choe Haeng-gwi wrote that one of the reasons why he translated *hyangga* into Chinese characters was that while Koreans understood Chinese poems, Chinese did not understand Korean ones. He continued that it was not a matter of one being superior to the other, but as Koreans could read written Chinese but Chinese could not read the *hyangchal* writing system, he translated the poems into written Chinese.

17. It can be said that *hyangchal* was a Chinese-borrowing writing system in the sense that it transcribed Korean sounds using Chinese characters, as shown in "東京明期月" (*donggyeong myeonggiwol*; meaning "in the moonlit capital"). Before King Sejong of Joseon invented Hangeul in 1443, Koreans relied on borrowed characters to write their language. *Idu*, which is believed to have been created by the Goguryeo people in around the fifth century, is the oldest form of this type of

Searching for Beta

To translate *hyangga* texts, we need a reference to make a comparison. "Cheoyongga" could be translated before any other *hyangga*,[18] because such reference information was available. "Cheoyongga" of Silla included in *Samguk yusa* and "Cheoyongga" of Goryeo in *Akhak gwebeom* (Canon of Music) have some lyrics in common.[19] For convenience of discussion, we call the target of translation α and the material for comparison β. Then, α's and β's can be compared as follows:[20]

"Cheoyongga" (α: β)
  α1: 東京明期月良
  β1: 東京볼ㄱㄹᄃ래
  α2: 夜入伊遊行如可
  β2: 새도록노니다가
  α3: 入良沙寢矣見昆
  β3: 드러내자리롤보니
  α4: 脚烏伊四是良羅
  β4: 가르리네히로셔라

(left) Figure 2. Part of *Samguk yusa*
(right) Figure 3. Part of *Akhak gwebeom*

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writing, and *gugyeol*, which was created by the Silla people and transmitted to Goryeo, is another one.

18. Kanazawa Shozaburo interpreted "Cheoyongga" for the first time in 1918 (refer to Jaemin Park 2009, 1).

19. The "Cheoyongga" appearing in *Akhak gwebeom* is the Goryeo version. Two versions of "Cheoyongga" exist in ancient Korean poetry; one is the Silla *hyangga* and the other is the Goryeo song. The latter has longer lyrics, a more detailed story, and a higher shamanistic tone. Cheoyong is depicted as a far more powerful figure in comparison with the Silla *hyangga* version.

20. Transcribed in fifteenth-century Hangeul, the letters in β's look different from modern Hangeul. Despite that, let us suppose that the vowels and consonants in β's have the same pronunciations as in modern Hangeul and so, " · ," an old Hangeul letter, which is no longer in use, has a phonetic value of [∧].

"東京" (*donggyeong*) is a place name, so we can simply read it using the Sino-Korean pronunciation of the Chinese characters. But "明期" (*myeonggi*) is different.[21] Comparing α1 with β1, we can surmise that Silla people read "明" (*myeong*; meaning "bright") as "붉"(*balg*; an old form of "밝"), "月" (*wol*; meaning "moon"), as "ᄃᆯ" (*dal*; an old form of "달"), and "入" (*ip*; meaning "to enter") as "들" (*deul*). In other words, Silla people read these Chinese letters with their native Korean meanings.

This method of reading the native Korean meaning of a Chinese character is referred to as *seokdok* or interpretative reading. Once it was understood that Silla people read their Korean meanings and not the Sino-Korean pronunciation, significant progress could be made in the interpretation of *hyangga*.[22] Scholars had difficulty deciphering *hyangga* in previous research attempts because of their modern pre-supposition that ancient Koreans would have read Chinese characters only based on the character's phonetic value.

To complicate matters further, the phonetic reading of *hyangchal* differs from that of the modern day. For instance, modern Koreans read "可하다" (meaning "to permit") as "*gahada*," in which "可" is read phonetically with its Sino-Korean pronunciation. But this method of reading diverges from how Silla people phonetically read "可" with no reference to its original meaning whatsoever, as they read "如可" as "*daga*," instead of "*yeoga*," as in modern Korean pronunciation.

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21. When learning Chinese characters, modern Koreans memorize both their Korean meanings and Sino-Korean pronunciations. For example, they read "明" (*myeong*) as "밝을 명" (meaning "bright *myeong*"). In Korean, "明" is an adjective meaning "bright" and its Sino-Korean pronunciation is *myeong* [mjəŋ]. They connect the two words "bright" and "*myeong*" by using the adjective form of the Korean word for "bright." Thus, both the meaning and phonetic value are learned and memorized. In contrast, when they read a Chinese character in a sentence, they read it in its Korean pronunciation only (e.g., "*myeong*") and do not read its meaning (not "bright *myeong*"). In other words, modern Koreans read Chinese characters for their phonetic value. This is referred to as reading phonetically.

22. Kanazawa Shozaburo interpreted "Cheoyongga" in 1918; Ayugai Husanosin interpreted "Seodongyo" and "Pungyo" in 1923; and in 1929, Ogura Shinpei interpreted 25 *hyangga*, including 11 from the Goryeo period.

In phonetic reading, modern Koreans retain the original meaning of the Chinese character. By contrast, although "可" in "Cheoyongga" was read for its phonetic value [ga], its usage here has no relation to the original Chinese character "可" (meaning "to permit") and instead is employed as a syllabary to compose a part of the verbal ending "*-daga*" (meaning "while doing something"). In other words, Silla people pressed Chinese characters into service as a "phonetic alphabet" to denote the grammatical endings of their language.

As such, *hyangchal* may be regarded as a phonetic alphabet.[23] *Hyangchal* functions basically as a syllabary, in the sense that each *hyangchal* character represents a syllable in most cases, as in the cases of /다/ [da] (如) and /가/ [ga] (可). In addition, *hyangchal* included consonants such as /ㅁ/ [m] (音) and /ㅅ/ [s] (叱) and vowels like /이/ [i] (是) and /아/ [a] (良).[24]
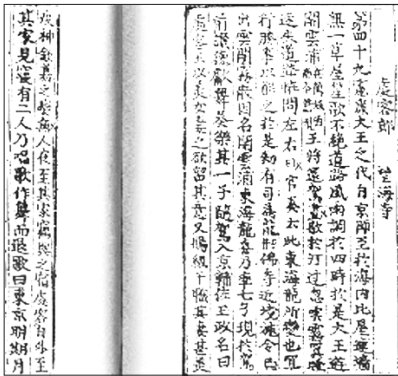
Not only began earlier than

Figure 4. "Cheoyongrang manghae-sa" (Cheoyong and Manghae Temple), *Samguk yusa,* vol. 2.

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23. The new understanding of scholars that ancient Koreans read Chinese characters phonetically provided another crucial clue to the interpretation of *hyangga*, along with the rediscovery of their interpretative reading. In phonetic reading, the pronunciation had some relationship with its meaning in some cases, an example being "東京" (*donggyeong*; meaning "the capital in the east"), and in other cases, which is more important, the pronunciation had no relations to the meaning of the original character, as demonstrated in "可" (*ga*; meaning "to permit") in "如可" (pronounced as *daga*; meaning "while one is doing something"). This shows that Silla people transformed Chinese characters into a phonetic alphabet.

24. The writing style of *hyangchal* had an influence on *gugyeol,* which appeared afterwards. It is directly related to *gugyeol* markings of interpretative reading in the Goryeo era. Its relationship with Hangeul is an important issue in the history of the Korean alphabet. This point will be discussed in more detail later in this paper, so let me just note here that on the Korean peninsula, the tradition of a phonetic alphabet existed in ancient Silla, albeit in primitive form and far from being fully developed like Hangeul.

any other *hyangga*, the translation of "Cheoyongga" also was nearly complete from the outset. The legend associated with "Cheoyongga" appears in the second volume of *Samguk yusa* under the section title of "Cheoyongnang manghaesa" (Cheoyong and the Manghaesa Temple). The story is told as follows: Cheoyong's[25] wife was so beautiful that the God of Disease[26] fell in love with her. One night, Cheoyong was not home and the God of Disease snuck into the house and seduced his wife. Cheoyong came home very late at night. When he opened the door, the God of Disease was in his wife's room. When he saw this, Cheoyong danced, singing a song. Then, the God of Disease knelt down to him and said, "I adore your wife and have committed a sin. But you do not be angry with me. I admire you for your character. I will never reveal myself to you again."

Since then, it became a custom to post a good-luck talisman of Cheoyong on the walls of a house to drive away evil spirits, and Cheoyong's song had been orally transmitted down to us.[27] Below

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25. During the reign of King Heongang, the 49th King of Silla, great houses stood in rows from the capital to provincial towns. It was a time of peace and clement weather, and performances and songs never stopped in the streets. The King went on an outing to Gaeunpo (modern-day Ulsan) and met the Dragon King of the East Sea. Accompanied by his seven sons, the Dragon King danced and played music praising the virtue of the King. On his return to the palace, King brought Cheoyong out of the seven princes. He gave Cheoyong a high-level office and a beautiful bride, wanting him to live in Gyeongju for a long time.

26. The God of Disease was believed to spread infectious diseases such as smallpox.

27. Middle-age Korean of the fifteenth century functioned as a bridge connecting old Korean with modern Korean. It was more useful than modern Korean for the reconstruction of the Silla language. Silla's *hyangga* poems were composed before the tenth century to the latest. If one attempts a direct translation into modern Korean, there is a millennium gap between the target language and the original tenth-century *hyangga*. One must take into account phonemic changes that had occurred for the millennium and reflect it in the interpretation. Many phonemes of old Korean no longer exist in modern Korean. For example, the half front-tooth sound "△" whose phonetic value was [z], and "·" for [∧] are not used in modern Korean. There is another reason why the fifteenth-century Korean is the choice of language for *hyangga* interpretation. As the β's for "Cheoyongga," the first interpreted *hyangga*, are in the fifteenth-century Korean. For that reason, *hyangga* interpreters of the earlier period employed fifteenth-century Korean to represent the pronunciation of the Silla people; this tradition continued among scholars of later generations.

are presented translations of the whole text of "Cheoyongga" in fif-teenth-century Korean and modern English.[28]

In "月良," "月" (*wol*; meaning "moon") is read as "ᄃᆞᆯ" (*dal*; an old form of 달) for its meaning, while "良" (*ryang*: meaning "good") is read as /ㅏ/ for its pure phonetic value.[29] In "奪叱良乙," "奪" (*tal*; a

"Cheoyongga" translated in fifteenth-century Korean	"Cheoyongga" translated in modern English
東京明期月良	東京明期月良
동경ᄇᆞᆯ기ᄃᆞ라[30]	On a bright moonlit night in the capital
夜入伊遊行如可	夜入伊遊行如可
밤드리노니다가	I come late from carousing
入良沙寢矣見昆	入良沙寢矣見昆
드러사자리보곤	In my marriage bed
脚烏伊四是良羅	脚烏伊四是良羅
가로리[31]네이어라[32]	I see four legs.
二肹隱吾下於叱古	二肹隱吾下於叱古
두흘은나하어ㅅ고	Two are mine
二肹 隱誰支下焉古	二肹 隱誰支下焉古
두흘은누기하언고	But what of the other two?
本矣吾下是如馬於隱	本矣吾下是如馬於隱
미틔나하이다마어은	Once they were mine
奪叱良乙何如爲理古	奪叱良乙何如爲理古
아ㅅ아늘엇더ᇹ리고	But they were taken, so what can I do?

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28. My interpretation and translation of *hyangga* in this paper relies on W. Kim (1980) and Jaemin Park (2009). The preexisting versions and mine do not match com-pletely and I am solely responsible for any errors in the interpretation and transla-tion of the *hyangga* into modern Korean in this paper.

29. "月良" is translated as /ᄃᆞ라/ [dara], not /돌아/ [dala], due to the assumption of the rule of linking.

30. Kim Wan-Jin (1980, 91-92) interprets "月良" (*wollyang*) as "ᄃᆞ라라" (*darara*).

31. According to the translation logic of Hwang (1997), "脚烏伊" (*gagoi*; meaning "leg") might be translated into "허뷔" (*heotwi*; an old word for "calf").

32. As for "四是良羅" ("네이어라"; meaning "there are four"), "良" (*ryang*) is read as [ə], based on the assumption that the rule of vowel harmony existed in old Korean, too. By the same logic, "良" might have been read as [a] or [ə].

Chinese character meaning "to rob") is read with its meaning regardless of its phonetic value as it is used as the stem of the verb meaning "to rob." Therefore, "奪" is translated as "앗다," the Korean word for "rob." The character "叱" (*jil*; a Chinese character meaning "to scold"), used here as a consonant, corresponds to the supporting sound /ㅅ/ of "앗-."

As *hyangchal* functions more or less as a syllabary, in principle one character represents a syllable. In some cases, however, a character is used to make a supporting sound,[33] as in the case of /ㅅ/ (transcribed with "叱"); in this usage, a character represents a consonant, just as in the Roman alphabet and in Hangeul. It is interesting to note that regularities can be found in the way that the supporting sounds of *hyangchal* were written. Let us look at the following examples:

居叱沙 (깃사) (From the 2nd line of "Mojukjirangga" [Missing Jukjirang])
折叱可 (것가) (From the 4th line of "Heonhwaga" [Dedicating Flowers])
修叱如良 (닷ㄱ라) (From the 4th line of "Pungyo" [Ode to Winds])[34]
有叱如 (잇다) (From the 8th line of "Hyeseongga" [Ode to the Comet])
有叱下呂 (이샤리) (From the 10th line of "Bogae hoehyangga" [Ode to Return All My Good Deeds to People])[35]

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33. A letter that supports the frontal sound is called "*bachim*" or supporting sound, which originates from the word "*bachida*" (transcribed by the Chinese character "支"; meaning "to support"). When a *hyangchal* character was used as a *bachim*, it was read phonetically. Meanwhile, if a *hyangchal* character before a *bachim* was a stem, it was usually read with its meaning. The phonetic reading method of supporting and ending sounds was traditionally called "ending sound attachment system" (*mareum cheomgibeop*). In this paper, however, I use the term "*bachim*" in most cases. In modern Korean, too, the ending sound refers to the consonant in the syllable-final consonantal position. Yet in the case of "使以," which is reconstructed as "브리" (*beuri*), it is more accurate to say that here "以" (*i*) is an added ending sound rather than a supporting sound, although it supports its frontal sound.

34. The character "如" (*yeo*) in "修叱如良" could be interpreted as /다/ [da], so, the word could be reconstructed as "곧" [gat]. But in this paper it is transcribed as "돛-" relying on Kim Wan-Jin's method (1980, 109).

35. "有叱下呂" is interpreted as "이샤리" (*ishyari*) in accordance with Kim Wan-Jin's view (1980, 200, 204-205).

These lines reveal that when a *hyangchal* character that appeared in front of a supporting sound constituted the stem of a predicate, it was consistently read for its meaning not its phonetic value.[36] This standard in usage enables us to devise a rule for supporting sounds when translating a *hyangga* song. Being able to determine whether to read a *hyangchal* character by its meaning or by its phonetic sound is a critical step forward in the interpretation of *hyangga*.

To summarize what I have discussed so far, *hyangchal* in the Silla kingdom features the following characteristics: First, unlike modern Koreans, the people of Silla often read Chinese characters with their native Korean meaning, instead of merely reproducing the Sino-Korean pronunciation. Second, they also read Chinese characters phonetically without any reference to their original meaning. Third, a *hyangchal* character that appeared in front of a supporting sound and constituted the stem of a declinable word was read with its meaning.

Hyangga *and Chinese-translated Poems*

The text of Weolmyeongsa's "Dosolga" (Tusita Song) appears in Volume 5 of *Samguk yusa*. The Chinese-transcribed version accompanies the legend[37] associated with the song. A comparison of the *hyangchal*

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36. When it is not a stem, a *hyangchal* character preceding a supporting sound is sometimes subject to phonetic reading. In "太平恨音叱如" (태평흔읇다; meaning "peace will come"; from 10th line of "Anminga" [Ode to Peace for People]), "音" (*eum*) comes before "叱" (*jil*), but is translated as /ㅁ/ [m]. This is because it is a suffix, not a stem or a part of it. In "川里叱" (나릿; from the 6th line of "Changiparangga" [Lauding Giparang]), "里" (*ri*) is read phonetically because it represents the second syllable of "나리" (川) and the final sound. This type of *hyangchal* character is called an "added ending sound" and read phonetically even when it comes before a supporting sound. Examples may be "나리" (*nari*) for "川里," "ᄆᆞᄉᆞᆷ" (*majam*) for "心音," "그리-" (*gri-*) for "慕理," and "가식-" (*gasœ-*) for "改衣" (*gaeui*). A frontal *hyangchal* character, which signifies the meaning of the word, is read with its meaning, and another *hyangchal* character is added, following it, to aid in pronunciation; this is why it is called an added ending sound.

37. On the first day of the fourth lunar month in 760 (the 19th year of King Gyeong-deok), two suns rose side by side and did not set for ten days. The King sum-

version and the Chinese-translated version of "Dosolga" is provided below.

"Dosolga" (α : β)

α1: 今日此矣散花唱良
β1: 龍樓此日散花歌

α2: 巴寶白乎隱花良汝隱
β2: 挑送青雲一片花

α3: 直等隱心音矣命叱使以惡只
β3: 殷重直心之所使

Another rule applied in the translation of *hyangga* is that the meaning value precedes the phonetic value.[38] That is, the frontal part of a form represents the meaning with the back part representing the ending sound of the form. Applying this rule to "唱良" (*changnang*; meaning "to sing") in α1, which corresponds to "歌" (*ga*; meaning "to sing") in β1, "唱" (*chang*) is read with its meaning while "良" (*ryang*) is read with its phonetic value. "唱" is "브르다" in middle Korean, while "良" has the phonetic value of /아/ [a] or /어/ [ə] in old Korean. Therefore, "唱良" corresponds to "불러" (*bulleo*; meaning "to sing") in modern Korean and thus could be transcribed as "브러" (*beureo*).[39]

Presented below are translations of the whole text of "Dosolga" in fifteenth-century Korean and in modern English.[40]

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moned an officer responsible for predicting celestial movement and weather and asked him how to make one of them disappear. The officer predicted that the calamity would end after making an altar and having a distinguished monk per- form the ritual of strewing flowers and offering earnest prayers. The King was waiting at Cheongyang Pavilion to meet a monk in order to expel a sun when Wolmyeongsa passed by on the road to the south. The King asked him for prayers and he composed "Dosolga" and dedicated it to the King.

38. See W. Kim (1980, 17-23) for the rule of meaning first and phonetic sound sec- ondary.

39. [a] becomes [ə] for vowel harmony.

40. See W. Kim (1980, 119-123).

"Dosolga" translated in fifteenth-century Korean	"Dosolga" translated in modern English
今日此矣散花唱良 금일이의산화브러 巴寶白乎隱花良汝隱 보보슬보은고자너는 直等隱心音矣命叱使以惡只 고돈마ᅀᆞ미 뎘 브리악 彌勒座主陪立羅良 미륵좌주뫼셔버라.	今日此矣散花唱良 So today I sing a song of scattering flowers 巴寶白乎隱花良汝隱 Make it rise, You! 直等隱心音矣命叱使以惡只 Summoned on my upright mind's command, 彌勒座主陪立羅良 Serve the Seated Buddha Maitreya

A Sino-Korean phonetic reading of Chinese words such as "今日" (*geu-mil*; meaning "today"), "散花" (*sanhwa*; meaning "to scatter flowers"), "命" (*myeong*; meaning "to order"), and "彌勒座主" (*mireuk jwaju*; Seated Buddha Maitreya) is correct, as they are Chinese-written words. Meanwhile, the character "此" (*bi*; meaning "to compare") is read as /이/ (*i*) with its native Korean meaning. "矣" (*ui*; a postpositional particle with no specific meaning) is read purely phonetically as /의/ (*ui*), not as /의/ (*oe*), as a consequence of vowel harmony. The phrase "巴寶白乎" (*pabobaek-hoeun*; meaning "to make it rise") is a difficult phrase to parse. One clue to its interpretation lies in "挑" (*do*; meaning "peach" in β2. In fifteenth-century Korean, it is reconstructed "보보슬본."[41]

The character "花" (*hwa*; meaning "flower") is read as /곶/ (*got*) and "汝" (*yeo*; meaning "you") is read as /너/ (*neo*), with its native Korean meaning, whereas "隱" (*eun*; meaning "to hide") is read as /은/ (*eun*) phonetically. The phrase "直等隱心音" (*jikdeung eunsimeum*) corresponds to "直心" (*jiksim*; meaning "upright mind") in the Chinese-translated version. So, "直等隱" (*jikdeungeun*; meaning "upright") is translated as /고돈/ (*godan*), and "心音" (meaning "mind") as /마ᅀᆞᆷ/ (*majam*).

Here we note that besides /ㅅ/ [s] (transcribed with "叱") and /ㄴ/ [n] (transcribed with "隱"), there is another *hyangchal* character

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41. See W. Kim (1980, 120).

/ㅁ/ [m] (transcribed with "音"), which functioned as a consonant let-
ter. The character "叱" (*jil*) in "命叱" (*myeongjil*) could be a supporting
sound or a grammatical form, for a postpositional particle of determi-
nant case /-ㅅ/ that existed in old Korean. The β for "使以惡只" (*sai akji*:
meaning "to be summoned") is "所使" (*sosa*). It is read as /브리악/
(*beuriak*), as "使" (*sa*) preceding "以" (*i*) is read with its meaning. "惡"
(*ak*) and "只" [g] are read phonetically. "彌勒座主" (*mireukjwaju*; Seated
Buddha Maitreya) is a Chinese word, so is read for its Sino-Korean
phonetic value, whereas "陪立" (*baerip*; meaning "to serve") is read
as /뫼셔/ (*moesyeo*) with its native Korean meaning. "羅良" (*raryang*)
is read as /버라/ (*beora*) in accordance with the rule in which the
meaning is derived from the first character and the phonetic sound
from the second character; that is, the lexical form of a word is read
with its meaning and the grammatical form is read phonetically, just
as "唱良" (*changnang*) is read as /브러/ (*beureo*).

Hyangga *and Hangeul*

As mentioned above, a major characteristic of *hyang-chal* is the usage
of Chinese characters as a phonetic alphabet. Silla people devised a
unique writing system quite different from the Chinese writing sys-
tem that used interpretative reading, phonetic reading, transcription
using supporting sounds, and the principle of "translated main body
and sounded suffix."

These features are observed consistently in *hyangga* poems. Let us
take a line from "Cheoyongga," "入良沙寢矣見昆" (드러사자리보곤; meaning
"Returning home, in my bed"). The verb "入良沙" (*imnyangsa*; mean-
ing "to enter") is composed of the stem "入" (*ip*) and the ending suffix
"良沙" (*ryangsa*). The stem is read as /들/ (*deul*) with its meaning,
and "良沙" is read as "-어사" phonetically.[42] With "寢矣" (*chimui*),

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42. In a word, the stem harbors the meaning of the word, while the suffix functions to
    indicate the grammatical and logical relationship that the word has with other ele-
    ments in the sentence. A notable characteristic of written *hyangchal* is that the
    stem was read with its interpretive meaning in most cases, whereas the suffix was
    read phonetically. This is referred to as the rule of "the meaning value preceding

which is a noun, "寢" (*chim*; meaning "bed") is read with its meaning and "矣" (*ui*; a postpositional particle with no specific meaning) is read phonetically, in accordance with the rule of "meaning value preceding the phonetic value." Applying the same rule to another verb "見昆" (*gyeongon*; meaning "to see"), the stem is read /보-/ (*bo-*) and the ending, /-곤/ (*-gon*). By fusing the two methods of reading by meaning and by phonetic sound, Silla people created a writing system of their own, completely different from original Chinese usage and pronunciation of Chinese characters.

The fact that Silla people used supporting sounds in their writing system is worth noting in the history of Korean language. Their use of supporting sounds is confirmed in this line in "Dosolga," "直等隱心音矣命叱使以惡只" (pronounced as "고돈 마ᅀᆞ미 몆 브리악"; meaning "summoned on my upright mind's command"). In "直等隱" (*jikdeungeun*; meaning "upright"), which reads as /고돈/ (*godan*), "隱" (*eun*) corresponds to the supporting sound /ㄴ/ [n].

As we know, each character corresponds to a single syllable in the Chinese language. Taking this into account, it can be said that in some ways, the modern Korean usage of Chinese characters, Hanja, is a syllabary as well. In *hyangchal*, however, "隱" (*eun*; meaning "to hide") is used to mark a consonant which represents /ㄴ/ [n] in Korean sound. The character "音" (*eum*) in "心音" (*simeum*) corresponds to /ㅁ/ [m] in Korean sound. The character "只" (*ji*) in "使以惡只" (pronounced as *beuriak*) denotes /ㄱ/ [g]. Using the phonetic values of Chinese characters, Silla created a system of marking consonants, albeit not very systematically, a millennium before King Sejong of the Joseon dynasty invented Hangeul.

The invention of Hangeul occupies an absolute status in the history of Korean alphabet to the extent that it serves as the reference point in dividing the periods in terms of development. Prior to the advent of

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the phonetic value." Here, meaning and interpretation are used in the identical sense. In general, the meaning of a character is what is regarded as its most typical interpretation among many. In *hyangchal*, Chinese characters were read with various Korean interpretations, so scholars researching the Chinese-borrowing writing system tend to prefer the word "*seok*" (interpretation) over "*hun*" (meaning).

Hangeul, Koreans use *hyangchal*, *idu*, and *gugyeol* to denote their native language. The history of the Korean alphabet prior to Hangeul can be summed up as "the evolutionary process of transcribing the Korean language (Korean sounds) in Chinese characters."[43]

The discourse on the significance of Hangeul in the history of Korean alphabet can be divided into two major areas. One investigates alphabets in existence in East Asia at the time, and the other examines the traditional transcription methods of the Korean language. Extensive research has been conducted on the former, but relatively scant studies exist on the latter.

Regarding the first area of investigation, I should mention the influence of Chinese phonology. Chinese syllabic system is based on dichotomy. The Chinese used the *fanqie* 反切 method to annotate the pronunciation of Chinese characters. For instance, the pronunciation of "同" (*dong*; meaning "same") is marked as "德紅切" (*deokhongjeol*) in the fanqie practice. "德" (*deok*) corresponds to the initial consonant /ㄷ/ [d], and "紅" (*hong*) forms the coda /ㅇ/ [ɔŋ]. The phoneme /ㄷ/ [d] in "德" (*deok*) is the initial consonant, and /ㅇ/ [ɔŋ] in "紅" (*hong*) is the coda. Combined, "德紅切," which is the phonetic transcription of "同," is pronounced as /동/ [dɔŋ].

As the first letter represents the initial consonant, while the coda possesses a vowel and a consonant, it is difficult to divide a syllable into vowels and consonants in Chinese. King Sejong invented the phonetic concept of neutral sound, which had previously not existed in traditional Korean phonology. In modern linguistic terms, a neutral sound may be understood as a vowel.

The fact that King Sejong was the first to codify a systematic understanding of the vowel does not mean that no such understand-

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43. Ancient Koreans were able to leave records of the Korean language in Korean, using several types of writing methods, such as the early form of Goguryeo *idu*, Baekje *idu*, and Silla *idu*. The term "Chinese-borrowing writing system" describes the transcription of the Korean language by use of Chinese characters. In this regard, *hyangchal* was a type of Chinese-borrowing writing system. The people of Silla did not have their own writing system and put their language in writing by using Chinese characters, which had been introduced earlier into Korea.

ing had existed prior to that in Korean history. In *hyangchal*, there are many usages in which a letter represents a vowel. As shown above, in "脚烏伊四是良羅" (가로리네이어라; meaning "there are four legs"), "是" (*si*) was used to annotate the vowel [i], and "良" (*ryang*) was employed for [ə] or [a].

Such representations were not limited to vowels. A supporting sound in *hyangchal* can also correspond to a consonant in Hangeul.[44] Some examples are /ㅁ/ [m] transcribed by "音" (*eum*) in "心音" (*simeum*; 마슴; meaning "mind"), /ㄴ/ [n] transcribed by "隱" (*eun*) in "千隱" (*cheoneun*; 즈믄), /ㅅ/ [s] transcribed by "叱如" (*jil*) in "有叱如" (*yujiryeo*; 잇다), /ㄱ/ [g] transcribed by "只" (*ji*) in "使以惡只" (*saiakji*), and /ㄹ/ [l] in "道尸" (*dosi*; 길). In this fashion, Silla devised a way to mark both vowels and consonants, although such indicators were not universally applicable to all syllables, unlike the trichotomy established by King Sejong. These innovations in a Korean writing system hold great significance in the history of the development of Korean alphabet. Though it remains for future research to reveal what extent King Sejong was influenced by the traditional transcribing method,[45]

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44. When the supporting sound is viewed in the context of the binary structure of a syllable, the first and middle sound of a syllable are grouped into one unit and the final sound composes the other unit. For example, /돌/ [dɔl] was written as "乭" in *idu*. This is the way that a Korean word was transcribed in Chinese characters. "乭" is disintegrated into "石" (*seok*) and "乙" (*eul*), and "乙" corresponds to the final supporting sound /ㄹ/, forming a binary structure of "(first sound + middle sound) + final sound." In contrast, Chinese combines the middle and final sounds, showing the structure of "first sound + (middle sound + final sound)."

45. Although King Sejong wanted to promulgate Hangeul to the people for popular use, the officials opposed the innovation. According to *Sejong sillok* (Annals of King Sejong), King Sejong asserted the need for the creation of Hangeul to the officials as follows: "We need Hangeul to help people write in the right way and let them understand each other better. Just as *idu* was created to make writing easier for people, Hangeul was invented for the same purpose." Here, the word "*idu*" might be understood as referring to not just the *idu* of Silla, but to the Chinese-borrowing writing system in a broader sense, encompassing the *idu* of Goryeo, interpretative-reading *gugyeol* and phonetic-reading *gugyeol*. King Sejong was a devout Buddhist himself. Among the books written immediately after the invention of Hangeul is *Seokbo sangjeol* (Episodes from the Life of Buddha), which is a translation of the biography of Sakyamuni Buddha in Hangeul. King Sejong himself wrote

nonetheless we can trace the tradition of *hyangga* through *idu*, interpretative-reading *gugyeol* of Goryeo, and phonetic-reading *gugyeol* in the period from late Goryeo to early Joseon. The use of *gugyeol* has also been confirmed in documents translated in Hangeul after the fifteenth century.

Conclusion

The translation of *hyangga* began by deciphering *hyangchal*, the transcription method. The earliest extant *hyangga* "Seodongyo" (Seodong's Song) is believed to have been composed during the reign of King Jinpyeong of Silla (579-631). "Doijangga," the most recent, was written by King Yejong of Goryeo in 1120 to commemorate the achievements of Generals Sin Sung-gyeom and Kim Rak during the founding of the Goryeo dynasty. No later *hyangga* survive today. The centuries-long discontinuation of the *hyangga* tradition posed difficulties for twentieth-century linguists attempting to interpret them. Luckily, however, a Hangeul version of "Cheoyongga" was written down in the Joseon era *Akhak gwebeom* (Canon of Music) after continual oral transmission of the legend. This text allowed scolars to compare *hyangchal* and Hangeul, eventually leading to the unveiling of the characteristics of the *hyangchal* script.

The usages of interpretative reading, supporting sounds, and the rule of "meaning value preceding the phonetic value" are not found in the original Chinese character source. A unique annotation method invented by Silla, *hyangchal* employs various characters to represent vowels and consonants. These characters were passed on to the later transcription system, *gugyeol* for interpretative reading, providing

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Weorin cheongang jigok (Songs of the Moon's Reflection on a Thousand Rivers). The section on "Understanding on the Making of Characters," which delineates the principles of how the characters were created, records that "Hangeul is not something totally new. It is the result of a systematic observation of the sounds and derived from it." For systematic observation, King Sejong referred to books on Chinese phonology and studied *idu*.

invaluable clues to understanding how Goryeo-era Koreans adaptively borrowed Chinese characters to write native Korean sounds. The tradition of interpretative-reading *gugyeol* continued into phonetic-reading *gugyeol* during the period from late Goryeo to early Joseon and persisted until the fifteenth century when Hangeul was invented. *Hyangchal* has tremendous significance in the history of Korean alphabet as the germination of the tradition of a phonemic alphabet through its system of transcribing vowels and consonants.

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GLOSSARY

Akhak gwebeom	樂學軌範	*Gyunyeojeon*	均如傳
Bohyeon	普賢	*hyangchal*	鄉札
sibwonga	十願歌	*hyangga*	鄉歌
Cheoyongga	處容歌	*Manyoshu* (J.)	万葉集
Cheoyongnang	處容郎	*Samguk sagi*	三國史記
manghaesa	望海寺	*Samguk yusa*	三國遺事
Doijangga	悼二將歌	Seodongyo	薯童謠
Dosolga	兜率歌	*seokdok*	釋讀
gakpil	角筆	*seokdok gugyeol*	釋讀口訣

(J.: Japanese)