

Article

Imported Heroes:
A Comparative Study of the Novel
Sanguozhi pinghua 三國志平話
and the Pansori Novel *Hwayongdo* 華容道

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Introduction

Sanguo yanyi is one of the most read, if not the most read, classics in East Asia. While it has been studied a lot by scholars of the world, the pre-yanyi novel about the Chinese Three Kingdoms, *Sanguozhi pinghua*, was not as extensively analyzed. This paper will explore the text, along with its social impact upon Yuan China, while comparing and contrasting it with the Pansori novel *Hwayongdo*.

Unlike *Sanguo yanyi*, a novel composed with the reading audience in mind, *Sanguozhi pinghua* is a script for a narrated performance not unlike Pansori. Therefore, it can be deduced that the Pansori *Jeokbyokga*, with its later novelized adaptations, is more related to *Sanguozhi pinghua* than to *Sanguo yanyi*, especially in terms of their composition, publication, and circulation. Regarding the formation of the novel *Hwayongdo*, although the text itself might bear more resemblance to *Sanguo yanyi*, in its utilization of a significant portion of *Sanguo yanyi*'s narrative, in terms of its formation, the more proper comparison would be with *Sanguozhi pinghua*. In this paper, I will argue that *Sanguozhi pinghua*, which is the script for *jiangshi*, traditional storyteller, and *Hwayongdo*, which is the written version of the Pansori *Jeokbyokga*, share common factors in terms of their formation. Both *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo* are more closely related to oral performance than they are to written texts. This study attempts to delve into the similarities between these two texts.

Secondly, I will discuss the characteristics of *Sanguozhi pinghua* 三國志平話. I will start by defining what *pinghua* 平話 was in terms of genre convention. I will also explain how different *pinghuas* were circulated either as texts for reading or scripts for storytelling. Then, I will explore the (narrative) structure of *Sanguozhi pinghua*. Also, I will compare *Sanguozhi pinghua* with the later *Sanguo yanyi*, primarily focusing on the differing ideologies of the two texts.

Thirdly, I will examine the textual similarities between *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo* both in style and theme. Although style and theme are not necessarily directly related to each other, I will attempt to show that there are significant parallels between the two works in their styles and themes that result in a convergent evolution.

Historical Backgrounds and Literature Review

Existing Literature on Pansori Jeokbyeokga and Pansori Novel Hwayongdo

One of the most heated debates regarding Pansori and Pansori novel 판소리계 소설 is the question of the textual development of the genre. The more popular and accepted view is that the shared narratives in the root mythology evolved into Pansori first and then Pansori novel later emerged as a subgenre. The competing view is that the root mythology initially appeared in the form of written novel and then became part of the Pansori repertoire. The focus of the debate here is whether the orally performed Pansori preceded the written novel, or vice versa. The four major Pansori—*Chunhyangga* 춘향가, *Simcheongga* 심청가, *Heungboga* 흥보가, and *Sugungga* 수궁가—are all under this debate, and scholars continue to contest which view is correct.¹

Jeokbyeokga 赤壁歌 is a unique exception that deviates from these scholarly views.² The Pansori *Jeokbyeokga* is an oral performance based on *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義. *Hwayongdo* 華容道 is a novelistic adaptation of *Jeokbyeokga*, and its development was almost simultaneous to that of *Jeokbyeokga*. Such development makes it a unique example, because the novel *Sanguo yanyi* existed first, which led to the creation of the Pansori based on it, which then led to the creation of *Hwayongdo*, a work distinct from *Sanguo yanyi*. Previous research on this subject addressed the issue numerous times and led to the same conclusion in general. Because of the evident existence of *Sanguo yanyi*, whose production in 1522 precedes the earliest publication of *Hwayongdo* by more than 200 years (Lee 2002),³ that *Jeokbyeokga* has its origin in *Sanguo yanyi* is generally unquestioned.

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1. The arguments surrounding this particular debate are longstanding; Kim Dong-wook, Kim Heung-kyu, and Yoo Young-dai theorizes that Pansori originated from folktales, and then later branched to the novel genre, while Seong Hyun-kyeong and Jeong Ha-hyeong argue that folktales first became novels, which branched out to form Pansori. For further information, see Yoo 1889.
 2. While a lot of Korean terms do originate from Chinese terms and use Chinese characters, the corresponding Korean literary terms in Korean pronunciation were used for this paper. For example, *Hwayongdo* originates from the Chinese term *Huorongdu*. The novel is called *Hwayongdo* in Korea because it is distinctively a Korean novel.
 3. There is no evidence of when the first version of the novel *Hwayongdo* was written, but it is commonly accepted that it was circulated in print around the mid-eighteenth century.

The Pansori *Jeokbyokga* existed as an oral performance for a common audience, while the novel *Hwayongdo* was intended for the reading public, the literati of the time. The actual texts of the novel *Hwayongdo* and the Pansori *Jeokbyokga* are in the same literary family and continuously exerted influences over each other.

The novel *Hwayongdo*, as it belongs to the subgenre of Pansori novel, retains characteristics of both novel and Pansori. A Pansori performer, or *gwangdae* 廣大, is required to have the ability to transform a given written text into a Pansori text and *Hwayongdo* could be used as a Pansori script in itself. The fact that many versions of *Hwayongdo* contain rhythmic markers shows that *Hwayongdo* itself has often been used as a script for stage performance, despite primarily being reading materials. Even the versions of the Pansori *Jeokbyokga*, both in their content and in their musical grammar, are not different from the written versions of *Hwayongdo*.⁴

Therefore, it is popularly assumed that the novel *Hwayongdo* drew inspiration from *Jeokbyokga* and that it was adapted later in novel form. If one delves into the origin of *Jeokbyokga*, the closest text is *Sanguo yanyi*, written by Luo Guanzhong and later edited by Mao Zhonggang. The novel was introduced to the Korean audience by Ming soldiers in the mid-Joseon period during the Hideyoshi Invasions. Then it was translated into vernacular Korean, and then circulated among readers. Considering the nature of the narrative of *Jeokbyokga*, which was originally a historical tale of the Chinese Three Kingdoms Period, it is safe to assume that *Sanguo yanyi* provides the origin of the Pansori *Jeokbyokga*. This paper will show the evolution of the different novelizations of the narratives about the Chinese Three Kingdoms in order to demonstrate how *Hwayongdo*'s formation as a novel echoes that of *Sanguo yanyi*.

Brief Overview of Sanguozhi pinghua

From the Yuan dynasty onwards, there were professional oral performers called *jiangshi* 講師 (Lim 1976). *Jiangshi* performers had many different works in

4. Most of the *changbon-sung* copies of *Hwayongdo*, including the most well-researched 57-page “Hwayongdoga” 화룡도가, include written markers for rhythm, showing the text’s dual functions as a novel for reading and a script for performance.

their repertoire, the most famous among which was the story of the Three Kingdoms—that is, the competing Wei 魏, Shu 蜀, and Wu 吳 kingdoms, which were preceded by the Han dynasty. This tale had been written down in a written form into *Sanguozhi pinghua* 三國志平話. *Sanguozhi pinghua* was the text the *jiangshi* would refer to in order to stage a performance. *Jiangshi* performers never just read out loud the written text as it was; they also added on to and improvised on the text. For that reason, a *jiangshi* is also called *shuohuaren* 說話人, a storyteller or a narrator. Like Korean *damnang* (a narrator who has “bags of stories” 談囊), or *jeongisu* (an old man who tells strange tales 傳奇叟), the *jiangshi* performed based on a written text, but used stylized modes of improvisation (Hu 1978; Lee 2014). There is a very limited amount of literature regarding *Sanguozhi pinghua*. Further introduction of *Sanguozhi pinghua* follows below.

The Pansori novel *Hwayongdo* is based on the novel *Sanguo yanyi*, but it was neither created nor circulated as an offshoot of *Sanguo yanyi*. Rather, it stood as an independent work, although it is a reworking of *Sanguo yanyi*, borrowing its narrative. The Pansori novel *Hwayongdo* takes the basic structure and storylines of *Sanguo yanyi*, but it contains a lot of themes and expressions that resonated with the common populace of Korea during that time.

The Textual Characteristics of the Script *Sanguozhi pinghua*

Versions of Sanguozhi pinghua

One version of *Sanguozhi pinghua* entitled *Sanguozhi* 三國志 is a story about the period of Chinese history after the downfall of the Han dynasty, which was written by one of the most prominent scholars of Chinese history, Chen Shu. In this story, the history of the warfare between the Wei 魏, Shu 蜀, and Wu 吳 kingdoms was recorded from the perspective of the Wei kingdom, because Wei was the faction that emerged as victors and eventually unified China. The historical *Sanguozhi* then became an inspiration for many different myths and tales, which led to the creation of different novels and songs. The later novels of the Three Kingdoms Period were constructed upon such tales, which were circulated among the common populace and then adapted by *jiangshis* for their repertoires. The narrative tradition of the Three Kingdoms Period was

mostly transmitted in oral form through storytellers during the Song and Yuan dynasties, and *Sanguo yanyi* was the novelized textual compilation of those traditions by Luo Guanzhong. The edited version by Mao Zhonggang was the most commonly circulated version of the novel, which came to Joseon. Mao's version of *Sanguo yanyi* first drew attention from “yangban” the governing class and later the *Hangul* vernacular translation of it came into light, which eventually led to the Pansori *Jeokbyokga*.

The epic tales of the generals and knights of the Three Kingdoms were told by the *jiangshi* (performers whose roles encompass readers 講讀師, singers 講唱師, and narrators 講談師) in front of audiences mostly made up of commoners. Such tales were called *shuohua* 說話 or spoken narratives. When the stories they told became famous, they were settled into written texts—that is, into *huaben* 話本. Those written volumes were not just written accounts of the oral narratives. Instead, they constituted an intermediate form between the spoken script and the written novel. The relationship between *shuohua* and *huaben* can be said to parallel that between Pansori and Pansori novel.

During the Yuan dynasty, around 1321-1323 CE, *Quanxiang sanguozhi pinghua* 全相三國志平話 was published. *Pinghua* refers to either the *shuohua* of the *jiangshi*, or a novelized text that came out of a *jiangshi's shuohua*. The word *pinghua* itself refers to storytelling as an art form. Professional storytellers performed dramatic retellings in public places and many of their stories were long series that required the audience to come back the following day for the next episode. Each storyteller had his⁵ own repertoire of stories, and master storytellers had apprentices. The stories were often concise summaries in vernacular, just bare-bones retellings of the stories from the late Han to the reunification. *Jiangshi* usually held performances in places such as markets, often crowded with large audiences. *Pinghua* was the most popular genre during the early Yuan dynasty, and the theatrical performances were eventually transformed into novels. *Quanxiang* 全相 refers to a text in which every page contains an illustration. Therefore, *Quanxiang sanguozhi pinghua* indicates both a vernacular script of a narrative of the Three Kingdoms, and at the same time a published book with illustrations (Kim 1996).

Quanxiang sanguozhi pinghua consists of three volumes. *Sanguozhi*

5. All written accounts about *jiangshi* suggests that they were male.

pinghua can be defined as a novel rather than a *jiangshi* script, as every page of the text contains an illustration to entertain readers. In many records from the Song and Yuan dynasties, there are multiple mentions of the phrase “people who love reading *huaben*.” The establishment of the *huaben* novel as a genre is traced back to the late Song to the early Yuan dynasty, and this type of novel was circulated widely during the Yuan dynasty. Currently, there is only one existing version of the *Sanguozhi pinghua*, which is *Xin quanxiang sanguozhi pinghua* 新全相三國志平話. It is currently stored in the Japanese National Diet Library in Tokyo. It is 138 pages long, and there is no other version in existence.



Figure 1. The written title on the cover of the volume is *Xin quanxiang sanguozhi pinghua* 新全相三國志平話 as its title. The cover page shows that it was written and published during the time of Emperor Zhizhi (1321-1323) of the Yuan dynasty, as indicated by the term *zhizhixinjian* 至治新刊. The word *Xin* 新 in the title implies that there was a *Quanxiang sanguozhi pinghua* before this volume. Another piece of information that can be gathered from this page is that the volume was published in the city of Jian'an 建安 by Mr. Wu 虞氏. Jian'an is a city in Fujian, one of the publishing centers during the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties (Jeong 2000). The illustration at the top of the page depicts the iconic scene of Liu Bei who was famously known for having visited Zhuge Liang three times to recruit him.⁶



Figure 2. The actual pages of the volume are constructed as shown above. Each page is divided into two parts: an illustration takes up the upper third of two facing pages; the lower two-thirds of the corresponding pages contain the main text of the volume, with 20 rows of 20 characters each (Jeong 2000). *Sanguozhi pinghua* avoids lengthy descriptions in favor of proceeding quickly with the stories.

6. For consistency, the characters are referred to here by their original Chinese pronunciations, although they are pronounced differently in Korean novels and Pansori.

Narrative Structure of Sanguozhi pinghua

Sanguozhi pinghua is a concise work in which events happen in quick succession. There are 23 “titles” describing each of the 23 illustrations, which serve as markers for different sections or chapters of a volume. Book 1 starts with illustration 1, *handishangchun* 漢帝賞春, and ends with illustration 23, *caocaozhan zhengong* 曹操斬陳宮. Book 2 consists of 24 illustrations, beginning with illustration 24, *han xiandixuan xuande guan zhang* 漢獻帝宣玄德關張, and ending with illustration 47, *wufurenhuimian* 吳夫人回面. The last book starts with illustration 48, *pangtong ye xuande* 龐統謁玄德 and concludes with illustration 70, *jiangxingzui gongmingying* 將星墜孔明營. *Sanguozhi pinghua* can also be divided into 8 acts with 25 chapters in total:

- (1) Prologue: Sima’s trials
- (2) The Yellow Turbans and the Peach Garden Oath
- (3) Liu Bei becomes allies with Cao Cao to fight against Dong Zhuo
- (4) Antagonism between Cao Cao and Liu Bei and Liu Bei’s defeat
- (5) The Rise of Zhuge Liang
- (6) Alliance and conflict between Liu Bei and Sun Quan
- (7) Liu Bei’s settlement and the formation of the Three Kingdoms
- (8) Epilogue: Liu Bei’s downfall and the start of the new generation.

In addition to the difference in structure, compared to the eight acts of *Sanguozhi pinghua*, *Sanguo yanyi* contains 120 acts. In other words, purely in terms of the amount of text, the latter novel is more than 10 times longer. But the length is not the only difference in textual composition between the two novels. The eight acts of *Sanguozhi pinghua* conclude quickly after Liu Bei dies, and even the later tales of Zhuge Liang, who is glorified in *Sanguo yanyi*, are largely omitted, only appearing briefly at the end of act 8. In *Sanguo yanyi*, however, acts 85-103 cover the equivalent part after Liu Bei’s death until Zhuge Liang’s death. Still, even after the death of Zhuge Liang, *Sanguo yanyi* has 17 more chapters before its coda,⁷ with 15 chapters being about the Shu kingdom’s

7. A series of historical facts reveal that both novels begin around the year 184 CE; Liu Bei died in 223, and Zhuge Liang died in 234. However, from Zhuge Liang’s death to the unification of the Three Kingdoms in 280, it still takes 46 more years. This over-representation of the

defeat and absorption into the Wei kingdom. This shows that while *Sanguozhi pinghua* focuses a lot more on the heroic figures of the Shu kingdom, especially those who came before Zhuge Liang, *Sanguo yanyi* focuses on the Wei and Wu kingdoms as well as characters who come after Liu Bei, rather than the Shu Kingdom and the epic tale of Liu Bai.

Distinct Literary Characteristics of Sanguozhi pinghua

Sanguozhi pinghua starts with a very expansive and splendid prologue and ends with the death of Zhuge Liang at the Wuzhang Plains. The unification of China by the Sima clan and Zhen is added almost as an afterthought. *Sanguozhi pinghua* is set almost in the same time period as *Sanguo yanyi*, and its plot is roughly the same as the latter text's. However, *Sanguozhi pinghua* is really a condensed work, spanning only about one-tenth the length of *Sanguo yanyi*. The actual text is even shorter, considering that the prologue takes up one-fifth of the whole novel.

There are two major thematic differences between *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Sanguo yanyi*. The first is the premise of the whole story. *Sanguozhi pinghua* opens with a trial in heaven, where Liu Bang, the first emperor of the Han dynasty, and his subordinates are put on trial by Xima Zhongxiang, a fictional character. As a result of this trial, personages from early Han are reincarnated as the main characters of the Three Kingdoms Period, including Liu Bei, Sun Quan, Cao Cao, Sima Yi, Emperor Xian, and Empress Fu. What happens in the history of the Three Kingdoms was a karmic consequence of what Liu Bang did to his subordinates. For example, Liu Bang is reincarnated as Emperor Xian, while Cao Cao is the reincarnation of one of Liu Bang's lieutenants, Han Xin. Liu Bang killed Han Xin despite his contribution to the building of his empire, and Cao Cao steals Emperor Xian's empire away from him in retaliation.

The major theme of *Sanguozhi pinghua* is retribution. The consequence of Han's failure to govern his empire well was the usurpation of it by Wei, and in turn Wei failed because of its usurpation of Han. Sima Zhongxiang sets the ones who wronged against one another, so that he can come out as a

earlier years of the Three Kingdoms Period in *Sanguo yanyi*, shows that its earlier period and heroes were more popular among the reader.

winner in his afterlife as Sima Yi, who usurps Wei dynasty to establish his own line's dynasty as an emperor.

The second thematic difference between *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Sanguo yanyi* is how the story ends. After Liu Bei's Shu kingdom is eventually defeated, unlike what happens in both history and *Sanguo yanyi*, Liu Bei's great-grandson flees to the north, raises up his own army, and eventually overthrows the Sima clan and reinstates the Han dynasty. While it is true that Liu Yan, a Xiongnu warlord, eventually overthrew Sima's Zhen Dynasty in the fourth century, historically, Liu Yan never come across Liu Bei.

Both differences illustrate the divergence between *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Sanguo yanyi*. *Sanguozhi pinghua* is the version of the story with the thematic focus on retribution. *Sanguozhi pinghua* is a piece of folk literature, a storyteller's script during the Yuan dynasty, and it represents how the common people wanted to understand history. For the common people, politics and economics were too complex to comprehend, and it was comforting to view history as a series of karmic consequences regulated by a deity. Within the worldview of *Sanguozhi pinghua*, the Han dynasty had collapsed because its founder committed wrongdoings. Sima Zhongxiang proved himself an upright judge and was rewarded by being reincarnated as Sima Yi. At the end of the *Sanguozhi pinghua*, one can see that the theme of divine retribution is emphasized even more: Emperor Xian laughs himself to death upon hearing that the Wei throne was usurped by the Simas, and at the very end, Liu Bei's descendant comes back to overthrow the Sima clan. For all its superstitious elements and loose writing style, the theme of *Sanguozhi pinghua* stays solid throughout: history will right itself eventually.

The key thematic elements presented here are the concepts of reincarnation and karmic destiny, which are more Buddhist than Confucian. This show how, compared to *Sanguo yanyi*, the key ideology in *Sanguozhi pinghua* was something more popular among commoners. The audience of the novel *Sanguo yanyi* leaned more toward Confucianism, as many of them were of the literati class who could read.

The notion of good and evil is also more noticeably dramatized in *Sanguozhi pinghua*. Zhang Fei, who is actually the most important figure in *Sanguozhi pinghua*, continually punishes evildoers, many of whom are corrupt public officials. The vivid graphic representations of the visceral punishment that Zhang Fei exacts upon the evildoers reflect the populace's yearning for

social justice. Whereas in *Sanguo yanyi*, Guan Yu, the Confucian literati who is also a warrior, is portrayed as one of the most important characters, in *Sanguozhi pinghua* Zhang Fei, a common butcher, becomes a folk hero. The difference in the degree of admiration (Guan Yu versus Zhang Fei) itself merits further research, but it is significant that the common populace admired Zhang Fei more, while the reading public, Guan Yu.

Similarities and Differences between *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo*

Similarities in Linear Narrative Structure

A comparison between *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo* shows that they share the same basic narrative structure. *Sanguo yanyi*'s narrative has many different dimensions and facets, with Liu Bei, Cao Cao, and Sun Quan all being tightly interwoven into the narrative structure. The textual portions concerning Liu, Cao, and Sun are also relatively similar in length, imbuing the narrative with multiple perspectives (Jeong 2000).

Hwayongdo and *Sanguozhi pinghua* are both structurally linear narratives. *Sanguozhi pinghua* only focuses on Liu Bei and his camp, outlining how the political group was initially formed, grew, and eventually waned. The perspectives of Cao Cao and Sun Quan are never shown, and they themselves only appear when they face Liu Bei's armed forces. Moreover, Liu Bei's victories are overdramatized while his defeats are often depicted as strategic retreats. Liu Bei's camp, even before the establishment of the Shu kingdom, is always called "Han" to endow him with a claim to the empire.

The victories of Cao Cao, Sun Quan, and other warlords are almost unanimously and systematically erased in *Sanguozhi pinghua*, as only Liu Bei's point of view exists. In *Hwayongdo*, the narrative focus is almost exclusively on Liu Bei as well, albeit for different reasons. That *Hwayongdo* only shows Liu Bei's perspective is evidenced by the fact that the novel starts with Liu Bei recruiting Zhuge Liang to his camp and ends with Cao Cao being released by Guan Yu. The entirety of *Hwayongdo* only covers two of *Sanguozhi pinghua*'s eight chapters, and less than 20 of *Sanguo yanyi*'s 120. However, those chapters depict the moment in which Liu Bei truly begins to be politically successful,

and is always victorious in battle. Therefore, by picking certain episodes from the source material, *Hwayongdo* mainly aims to show Liu Bei's victories, while still retaining historical and narrative consistency of *Sanguo yanyi*.

In terms of characters, the most important characterization that *Hwayongdo* and *Sanguozhi pinghua* share but is radically different from *Sanguo yanyi* is that of the main villain, Cao Cao. While still the arch-villain of the narrative, Cao Cao, as depicted in *Sanguo yanyi*, shows a lot of characteristics of the anti-hero as well. Cao Cao is heroic in his martial and strategic abilities, and while he is delineated as greedy and ambitious, he is quick to admit his own fault and is charismatic to his own men. Most importantly, in *Sanguo yanyi*, Cao Cao is a very formidable foe. In contrast, in both *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo*, the image of Cao Cao is that of an incompetent coward. Any heroic nature depicted in *Sanguo yanyi* is missing. In *Sanguozhi pinghua*, Cao Cao is often derided by his own men, including his general Zhang Liao, while in *Hwayongdo*, Zheng Yu, Cao Cao's strategist, is dramatized as someone who always mocks Cao Cao. This tendency to belittle Cao Cao is entirely absent in *Sanguo yanyi*, while it exists in similar forms in both *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo*.

However, differences do exist in their focus on heroes. *Sanguozhi pinghua's* heroes, while they are folk heroes antithetical to paragons of virtue in *Sanguo yanyi*, are still larger-than-life heroes such as Zhang Fei. On the other hand, the "heroes" of *Hwayongdo* and *Jeokbyeokga*, who often dominate the narrative, are common heroes without visible heroic feats or authority, a character archetype which emerges in the later stage of novel. For example, the sections titled "Gunsaseorum-saseol" (Grief of the Soldiers), "Gunsajeomgo-saseol" (Roll Call), "Wonjo-saseol" (Song of the Ghost Birds), and "Jangseung-saseol" (Wooden Totem)⁸ are the sections where the themes and expressions for the common populace are dominant; moreover, the common people are the narrative voice, something that never actually happens in *Pinghua* (Kim 2000). While it is still difficult to call it a real-life hero archetype prevalent in modern novels, it is still a notable characteristic that merits further research.

8. *Saseol* 사설 is a term that could roughly be translated as an "aria," and it is mostly used to describe a song from a Pansori. It is also mostly interchangeable with the term *daemok* 대목.

Expressiveness of Oral Literature

Both *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo* are based on the performances of *jiangshi* and Pansori *gwangdae*. The language of both performers, at least before the latter were sponsored by the *yangban* class, was the crude language of the common populace, a language effective to reveal raw emotions and foreground violence. Certain parts of the narrative that were the “crowd favorites” were expanded, while the overarching themes were often downplayed for the sake of momentary enjoyment.

While the oral nature of *Sanguozhi pinghua* is only partly known, as only a small part of the actual performance was supposedly done by a *jiangshi*, the oral nature of the text is evident. For example, Zhang Fei’s military victories are predominant in the novel and how Zhang Fei only took a handful of cavalry to defeat multiple thousands of enemy troops is repeated many times, using exactly the same expression. The numbers of the troops are also exaggerated to an impossible magnitude to dramatize the valor of the protagonists, a characteristic that *Sanguozhi pinghua* shares with *Hwayongdo*, but not with *Sanguo yanyi*.

Moreover, both *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo* serve as important pieces of evidence as to whether a literary text can be used as a tool to better understand the era in which it was written. *Sanguozhi pinghua* is a very rough work with many errors, including inconsistencies in the use or writing of particular characters, anachronisms, and plot inconsistencies. The language is purely vernacular, when compared to *Sanguo yanyi*, which is characterized by its mix of vernacular and standard classical Chinese. In *Sanguozhi pinghua*, the vernacular languages of the late Song and early Yuan dynasties were used.

The rich use of the vernacular shows the language spoken during the Yuan dynasty by the commoners. Therefore, the language and vocabulary of *Sanguozhi pinghua* tell us more about the Song and Yuan dynasties than they do about the actual Three Kingdoms Period. Similarly, both *Jeokbyokga* and its novelized version, *Hwayongdo*, provide linguistic and historical clues about the Joseon dynasty. *Hwayongdo* is a novel that employed a plethora of vernacular idioms from the era, and numerous descriptions of the characters and their actions are borrowed from the existing forms of literature, such as *sijo* and *gasa*. It is for that reason that *Hwayongdo* is considered a historical material for both written and oral literature. This is something that is only visible in *Sanguozhi pinghua*, as each chapter of the novel starts with a poem announcing

the opening of the market 開場詩 and ends with a poem announcing market close 散場詩 by *shuohuaren* narrators (Hong 1981). Also, each story arc opens with the signature terms *Huashuo* 話說, *Yanhua* 言話, and *Chushou* 却說, all of which are used by the narrator to start a story and gain attention. The use of these terms also indicates aspects of oral literature during that time. *Sanguozhi pinghua* is even more overt in its use of the vernacular and terms such as “to spy” 探馬, “green-clothed man” 綠衣郎, “to move” 去來, “to merge” 合當, and “not to withstand” 不忍 are all expressions solely found in late Song vernacular (Chen 1999).

W. L. Idema, a prominent scholar of Chinese literature who first wrote about *Pinghua* literature, argues that while Luo Guanzhong had used *Sanguozhi pinghua* as a reference while writing his masterpiece, *Sanguo yanyi*, he removed the oral characteristics entirely. *Sanguo yanyi* utilizes literary Chinese not vernacular, and yet again it illustrates its stylistic differences from *Sanguozhi pinghua*. Moreover, the term *Yanyi* means “exposition of the meaning,”⁹ which Idema (1974, 154) defines as “[not being derived] from storytelling but from works of a practical or moralistic nature.” Moreover, the poems and signature terms that open and close each “chapter” of *Sanguozhi pinghua* have all been removed, creating a linear narrative more characteristic of a premodern novel.

Satiric Nature of the “Plain Tales”

Sanguozhi pinghua and *Hwayongdo* share the same ideological background; both denounce Cao Cao as a usurper and describe Liu Bei as the true protagonist. This goes as far as calling Liu the true successor of Han, framing Liu as the champion of the common people. In the same vein, Cao Cao in those texts is represented as an epitome of the greedy and corrupt nobles of the time.

Sanguozhi pinghua, which was written and read during the late Song and early Yuan dynasties, foregrounds the yearning for righteous leadership, as the Mongol invasion, which led to the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, triggered the rise of nostalgia for the ethno-culturally near homogeneous Han, a sort of

9. The term *yanyi* is a commonly used title for historical novels, just as *pinghua* for vernacular-script proto-novels. In his (her?) 1974 paper, Idema talks about how both words are commonly used as a term that indicates a particular genre of written novels.

proto-nationalism. Cao Cao, who brought down the Han dynasty, is described in *Sanguozhi pinghua* as being a lot crueler and more cowardly than he is in *Sanguo yanyi*. There is nowhere in the work that he is suggested as a hero; he is uniformly shown as a one-dimensional villain and the epitome of both evil and incompetence.

In the case of *Hwayongdo*, it is important to note that the novel became famous during and after the Hideyoshi and Manchu invasions, both of which had a tremendous impact on the common people. The earlier audience for the Pansori and its subsequent novel adaptations were those who went through the long periods of warfare, as well as those who were distrustful of the kingdom and its rulers. Such a worldview resulted in the satiric nature of the Pansori literature, of which *Jeokbyokga* is representative. *Hwayongdo* echoes *Sanguo yanyi* in its worship of Guan Yu, but the context in which Guan Yu figures as a symbol of loyalty and martial prowess suggests a stronger sense of proto-nationalism. Throughout the late Joseon dynasty, Guan was worshipped as a guardian deity who guards the common people from the foreign forces of the Qing dynasty and Japan. He was also depicted as a viable alternative to the incompetent Joseon Kingdom, which would only exploit them and could not protect them from warfare. In that sense, *Hwayongdo* sees the Joseon ruling elite as similar to Cao Cao, and thus Cao Cao is described as less of an immoral and selfish villain; indeed, he serves as comic relief, and the novel satirically emphasizes his incompetence (Kim 2015).

Another notable characteristic that *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo* share is that the main characters Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei are the representatives of the common class, both in their backgrounds and in their actions. In *Sanguo yanyi*, Liu, Guan, and Zhang are not necessarily the representatives of the common class, as Liu's imperial lineage and Guan's Confucian upbringing are significantly emphasized (Zhang Fei is the only character who still carries his common background as a butcher). In *Sanguozhi pinghua*, Liu Bei the straw sandal maker, Guan Yu the criminal fugitive, and Zhang Fei the butcher are the ones who gather the commoners in order to eventually build a kingdom. The dialogue among these protagonists also places special emphasis on their use of the vernacular language, offering a further sense of their solidarity with those who will listen to or read their story.

Hwayongdo is less explicit in its actual description of the protagonists, as the novel starts when they are full-fledged heroes. However, when Liu Bei's

forces first defeat Cao Cao, he condemns the protagonists for their lowly backgrounds. The condemnation itself is depicted as an act of vanity, which shows that Cao Cao is an incompetent noble who only relies on his higher class status. He belittles Liu Bei for being a lowly tea merchant, Guan Yu for being a pottery maker, Zhang Fei for being a butcher, and Zhuge Liang for being a farmer. It is notable that, like in *Sanguozhi pinghua*, each of the protagonists' low background is re-emphasized in *Hwayongdo*. Except for Zhang Fei who is consistently depicted as a butcher, their occupational backgrounds vary from version to version, which suggests that the similarities between *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo* are a result of parallel developments rather than a linear evolution. Both texts frame the protagonists as folk heroes, defenders of the common people against the oppression and corruption of the established power structure.

Hwayongdo also showcases another character, Cheng Yu, which makes it unique in its rendition. Originally one of the strategists for Cao Cao and a minor character in *Sanguo yanyi*, in *Hwayongdo* Cheng Yu is the most pronounced accomplice and strategist of Cao Cao, and at the same time the most important character who satirizes Cao Cao. He is the character who mirrors Bangja from *Chunhyangga*, a traditional subject archetype who mercilessly mocks his master, mostly of the *yangban* class for his follies in other Pansori repertoires. Along with Cao Cao, his presence in *Hwayongdo* animates the theme of criticizing the *yangban* from the commoners' point of view.

Conclusion

Fiction is fluid across different forms. Today, novels are made into movies, while plays are made into musicals, and then into movies. Even video games and internet memes are being made into novels and dramas. It is interesting to note, though, that there is usually a certain direction to the flow. It is typical for a famous novel to be made into a movie, which will then be treated as a work of its own. However, although novels derived from movies do exist, they are usually considered derivative. Interpreting why this is so requires an understanding of how the public of a given time perceives and consumes different forms of fiction. In order to understand why it was more common for an orally performed Pansori to be written later as a novel and why *Hwayongdo*

was an exception, further research on the forms of cultural consumption during the Joseon dynasty is needed.

Just as Pansori as a genre has branched out and expanded into the genre of the Pansori novel, so has the practice of the storytellers of the Yuan dynasty led to the creation of *Sanguozhi pinghua*. This practice would then lead to the creation of *Sanguo yanyi*, a novel with a literary structure and style. The creation of the Pansori *Jeokbyokga* and its narrative evolution into *Hwayongdo* is closely related to that of the stories told by the *shuohuaren*, which led to the creation of *Sanguozhi pinghua*. In examining the process by which *Hwayongdo* was created, we can draw a parallel between this case and the case of the *shuohuaren*'s oral rendition of *Sanguozhi* and its evolution to *Sanguozhi pinghua*, despite the fact that *Hwayongdo* itself had borrowed more elements from *Sanguo yanyi*. Therefore, it is more suitable to study how *Sanguozhi pinghua* was created in order to understand how *Hwayongdo* came to be.

Nonetheless, in this study I was not able to examine how *Sanguozhi pinghua* itself was introduced to Joseon before *Sanguo yanyi* or how it could have influenced the Pansori *Jeokbyokga*. This requires further investigation in order to better understand how different forms of fiction interact with one another. Additionally, my comparative research about Pansori *Jeokbyokga* and Beijing Opera texts such as *Dingjunshan* 定軍山 and *Hwarongdangcao* 華容擋曹 will continue, concentrating on the oral nature of the performed literature.

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Abstract

A Chinese novel *Sanguozhi pinghua*, and a Korean novel *Hwayongdo* share striking similarities. Both are historical novels dealing with the Three Kingdoms Period in China. Both were written in contemporary vernacular Chinese and Korean respectively and have deep ties to oral literature of the time. *Sanguozhi pinghua* is the inspiration and the prototype of *Hwayongdo* and *Sanguo yanyi*, a work more widely-read than *Sanguozhi pinghua* itself, which provided *Hwayongdo* with its characters and narrative. This paper will analyze and address the characteristics and similarities visible in both novels, and I will argue that those similarities stem from the fact that they were composed in a similar context. *Sanguozhi pinghua* and *Hwayongdo* are the outcomes of convergent literary evolution, as they are written renditions of oral repertoire, re-created into novels.

Keywords: comparative literature, *Sanguozhi pinghua*, *Hwayongdo*, *Jeokbyeokga*, Pansori, Pansori novel