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School of the Arts of
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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Hyung Don Lee entitled COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE RITUAL ASPECTS OF WESTERN AND ASIAN PERFORMANCE has been approved by his committee as satisfactory completion of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE RITUAL ASPECTS OF WESTERN AND ASIAN
PERFORMANCE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE RITUAL ASPECTS OF WESTERN AND ASIAN PERFORMANCE

By HYUNG DON LEE, MASTER OF FINE ARTS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2009

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This comparative study focuses on ritual aspects of Western and Asian performance. We may say that ritual in contemporary theater production has limitation to become realization. The limitation arises from contemporary period's nature. We know that these days we do not have common or collective psyche. However, some theatre artists are trying to get back ritual function and process to recover real communion between spectator and performer throughout performance.

Chapter 1

Introduction

As a Korean, I have studied Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University since 2006. I am being newly influenced by Western culture, and I also think that life and study in the United States has given me the opportunity to think about my identity as not only Korean but also Asian, and about both Asian and Western performance with a new perspective. One of the most interesting issues to me during the years is what the differences and similarities of ritual aspects between the West and Asia in performance are, and why. If my memory serves me right, when I studied and worked in Seoul, Korea, I hardly thought of these aspects carefully, though I was interested in it. There is no doubt that Western circumstances, theatrical, and educational settings in both Virginia Commonwealth University and the United States have made me ponder over the question seriously.

These days, it is recognized that many Asian performances have been influenced by the style of Western performances. We can say that Western performances have brought a number of modernized benefits to Asia, especially Korea. Also, many Western artists have tried to connect with Asian and non-Western performances and their ritual aspects by means of cultural interaction and artistic necessity. Some artists like Artaud and Grotowski were preoccupied with Asian or non-Western performances and their ritual aspects. Since Artaud, in the early twentieth century, certain ritual aspects of Asian or non-Western

performance have worked its way through Western performance. Overall, I will limit the discussion to the Asian context. The majority of traditional Asian performances have strong oral traditions. In other words, performing techniques are usually communicated not only mouth to mouth but also body to body like athletes. Even though many traditional Asian performances, as a result, have weak text bases, they also have strong tendencies to focus on, to quote Turner, “immediate context-sensitive ritual” (8). A series of those facts have attracted my attention and curiosity. As a result, I chose this subject as my thesis.

We know that nowadays many artists use ritual frequently in their performances. It is clear that ritual is one of the most important aspects related to performance. Several studies have demonstrated that it is hard to separate the characteristics of between ritual and performance.

Rituals are usually divided into two categories, the sacred and secular. However, we can say that there is no clear separation between secular and sacred. Also, there is no question that rituals closely accompany human beings’ lives:

The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another...Life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death. (Schechner 63)

We know that both ritual and performance guide people, to some extent, into a separate situation from every day life. They provide a departure from the usual habit and experience. Also, they give people the opportunity to reflect and refresh their lives. If it is

so, we have to remind ourselves that some artists have mentioned the crisis in the contemporary theatre in which the ritual function has disappeared. To quote Grotowski:

I do not think the crisis in the theatre can be separated from certain other crisis processes in contemporary culture. One of its essential elements-namely, the disappearance of the sacred and of its ritual function in the theatre...What we are talking about is the possibility of creating a secular sacrum in the theatre. (49)

Some theatre artists, recently, are trying to get back ritual function and process between spectator and actor throughout experimental performances, but we may say that in contemporary theater production, to some extent, it has limitation to become realization. The limitation arises from the contemporary period's nature that we do not have common or collective psyche. Also, many performances rarely give audience the opportunity to encounter each other directly, nakedly in the face-to-face intimate encounter, even though they have tried.

We may say that the real functions of ritual in performance in both Western and Asian performance have disappeared by degree. However, I think that today the Western cultural context is somewhat different as compared to Asian cultural aspects which are more rooted in "Spontaneous communitas"(qtd. in Schechner 63):

Spontaneous communitas happens when a congregation or group catches fire in the spirit. It can also be secular, as when a sports team is playing so well that each player feels inside the other's heads. (Ibid)

One of the most important reasons of it is that many Asian cultures not only still preserve the aspect of group-oriented cultures to some extent but also are not so reason centered as Western cultures, even if nowadays many Asian people and cultures have

slowly changed into the tendency of individualization and rationality; although there are a few exceptions, the situations, as a consequence, have influenced the context of Asian performances.

The purpose of this study is that I as an Asian would like to compare ritual characteristics between Western and Asian in performance from this point of view.

Chapter 2

What is Ritual?

It has been recognized that performances consist of ritualized gesture and sounds, “twice-behaved behaviors” (Schechner 22). It is reasonable to suppose that not only performers but also spectators train to perform and adjust each role by means of tacit promise in given circumstances. Seemingly, even the behaviors in the majority of rituals, which have both sacred and secular aspects, look like they are happening for the first time or spontaneously, they are usually ‘twice-behaved behaviors’ or ‘restored behavior’. The ritual process to elevate into unordinary status demands substantial trainings and magical techniques. For instance, many female shamans in Korea practice knife-blade walking and dance in her bare feet without bleeding in ordinary life; it is called *JackduChum* in Korea (*Jackdu* means Knife or straw cutter, *Chum* means dance). The behavior is usually performed in the most climatic moments in the real ceremony of exorcism or shamanic religious service. In other words, when shamans are possessed by evil or good spirits in the middle of ceremony, blade walking and dance is performed in the front of spectators. Simultaneously some spectators encourage shamans to perform joyfully and efficiently; spectators sometimes say to shamans “Awesome” “Good job” “Oh My God” with various exclamations to stimulate shamans for the ceremony. By contrast, some people just pray to gods for someone’s recovery and what they want silently but fervently.

Not only performances, but also sports, and the behaviors of everyday life also consist of ritualized gestures and sounds. We can say that there is no clear distinction not only between ritual and performance, but also between ritual and everyday life:

Performances occur in eight sometimes separate, sometimes overlapping situations: 1) in everyday life-cooking, socializing, 'just living'. 2) in the arts. 3) in sport and other popular entertainments. 4) in business. 5) in technology. 6) in sex. 7) in ritual-sacred and secular 8) in play... The performing arts, sports, and games are playful, but they often use the processes of ritual. We cannot go through a day without performing dozens of rituals. There are religious rituals, the rituals of everyday life, the rituals of roles, the rituals of profession, the rituals of politics, business, and the judicial system. (Schechner 25)

Recently the assumption that performance and everyday life accompany rituals is now widely accepted, for instance:

A mother lifts spoon to her own mouth and then to a baby's mouth to show the baby how to eat cereal. The performance is the action of lifting the spoon, bringing it to mother's mouth, and then to baby's mouth. The baby is at first the spectator of its mother's performance. (Ibid 24)

We can say that the performance between mother and baby is the transmission of ritual behavior in ordinary life from generation to generation. Even though ritual has a close relationship with people's life, it is hard to confine ritual into one definition. Because, as I mentioned earlier, we should notice that rituals are usually divided into two categories, the sacred and secular, and there is no clear separation between secular and sacred:

Even to say it in one word, ritual, is asking for trouble. Ritual has been so various defined-as concept, praxis, process, ideology, yearning, experience,

function- that it means very little because it means too much. In common use, ritual is identified with the sacred, another slippery word. But scholars have long discussed 'secular ritual'. Current opinion holds that the barriers between sacred and secular, like those between work and play, are both extremely porous and culture specific. (Schechner, *The Future of Ritual* 228)

That is why ritual is hard to define into one word, even if it is very close to us like air. I will devote some space to the discussion of ritual from a somewhat simplified angle. Schechner gives a good account of ritual's aspects:

Rituals have been considered: 1) as part of the evolutionary development of animals; 2) as structures with formal qualities and definable relationships; 3) as symbolic systems of meaning; 4) as performative actions or processes; 5) as experiences. These categories overlap. It is also clear that rituals are not safe deposit vaults of accepted ideas but in many cases dynamic performative systems generating new materials and recombining traditional actions in new ways. (228)

It has been reported that the majority of societies in the world accompany rituals in a series of rite of passages, such as birth, a coming of age ceremony, marriage, funeral, entering school, exorcism, ceremony of placatory the gods, and so on. In other words, we can say that life is made up of a series of rituals. Therefore, it is almost impossible to think about life without rituals. Also, we can see the value of ritual as following:

Rituals reveal values at their deepest level...men express in ritual what moves them most, and since the form of expression is conventionalized and obligatory, it is the values of the group that are revealed. I see in the study of rituals the key to an understanding of the essential constitution of human societies. (qtd. in Turner 6)

What should be remembered is that both ritual and play, as I mentioned earlier, guide people, to some extent, into a separate situation from every day life. They provide a

departure from the usual habit and experience. Also, they give people opportunity to reflect and refresh their life:

Rituals are a way people remember. Rituals are memories in action, encoded into actions. Rituals also help people deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies, and desires that trouble, exceed, or violate the norms of daily life. (Schechner 45)

Not only that, we can see the close similarity in intrinsic attributes between ritual and theatrical performance:

Play gives people a chance to temporarily experience the taboo, the excessive, and the risky...Ritual and play both lead people into a 'second reality', separate from ordinary life. This reality is one where people can become selves other than their daily selves. When they temporarily become or enact another, people perform actions different from what they do ordinarily. Thus, ritual and play transform people, either permanently or temporarily. These are called 'rites of passage', some examples of which are initiations, weddings, and funerals. In play, the transformations are temporarily, bounded by the rules of the game. (Ibid)

An important point to emphasize is that even if some people identify ritual with the ceremony of religion, between sacred and secular or between efficacy and entertainment is not so much opposed to each other; for convenience, we, however, may separate them as a assumption that ritual stands for the status of sacred or efficacy, and theatrical performance stands for the status of secular or entertainment. To quote Schechner, as following:

Table 1 EFFICACY VS. ENTERTAINMENT

EFFICACY	ENTERTAINMENT
Ritual	Theater
results	fun
link to an absent Other	only for those here
symbolic time	emphasis now
performer possessed, in trance	performer knows what s/he's doing
audience participates	audience watches
audience believes	audience appreciates
criticism discouraged	criticism flourishes
collective creativity	individual creativity

However, it is clear that this division is for convenience. If people call one side ritual, and they call the other theater, the reason of different calling depends upon certain circumstances or cultural context:

Whether one calls a specific performance “ritual” or “theater” depends mostly on context and function. A performance is called theater or ritual because of where it is performed, by whom, and under what circumstances. If the performance’s purpose is to effect transformations-to be efficacious-then the other qualities listed under the heading “efficacy” will most probably also be present, and the performance is a ritual. And vice versa regarding the qualities listed under “entertainment”. No performance is purely efficacy or pure entertainment. (Schechner, Performance Theory 130)

I will give an example to show this case. Traditional exorcism ceremonies, which usually take place someone's *Madang* (courtyard) in Korea, have a strong characteristic of ritual, transformation, and efficacy. On the one hand its intrinsic value is so grave or sacred, but on the other hand, the ceremony has the inclination of a village festival or event. When the ceremony of exorcism is performed by shamans in someone's courtyard, many inhabitants or passersby participate in the ceremony as spectators. The overall mood of the ceremony is active, cheerful, frightening, vigorous, serious, noisy, and sacred. Sometimes the shaman is possessed by various gods or departed souls. The various gods or departed souls say what they want through the shaman's body. And then the shaman, he or she soothes their resentment. Also, the shaman, as a performer, usually shares food and drink with spectators in the middle of ceremony. Spectators freely could come and go in the ceremony. The majority of Shamans and spectators rarely care about the coming and going of people in the performance. Also, these are common spectacles in the performing space; people could see drunken spectators easily. Mothers, who see the ceremony, lull babies to sleep. Sometimes children fight with each other, even dogs saunter around the places to get food. Nevertheless, the ceremony's main purpose is to effect transformation, cure, soothing gods and departed souls, as well as the other qualities listed under the heading efficacy. However, we can say that the ceremony is neither pure efficacy nor pure entertainment.

I will give an example to show this idea what rituals which have efficacy in one cultural circumstance or context become entertainment in another. Consider *Wayang Kulit* for example. *Wayang Kulit* is one of the most beautiful shadow theaters in Asia:

It (*Wayang*: literally shadow, sometimes puppet; *Kulit*: leather or skin) is still the most popular form of shadow theatre in all Asia. It has been extremely important in the development of Javanese theatre, as most of the other forms of classical theatre have derived their story material, stylization, and many performing techniques directly from it...the stagecraft and equipment are relatively simple; the *primus motor* being a single puppeteer or *dalang*, manipulating the leather puppets on a simple white screen and acting as a narrator to the accomplishment of a *gamelan* orchestra. It is, however, an art form of immensely rich and intricate symbolism and philosophical content. (Miettinen 79)

When *Wayang Kulit*, *The Marriage of Arjuna* was performed in University of Michigan in 1988, the performance in many ways was different from the original artistic focus of *Wayang Kulit*. The aspect of the entertainments, in other words, was much more intensified rather than symbolic and philosophical contents in the performance:

Before Western intervention, especially Dutch, *Wayang*'s originality was more important not only aesthetically, ritually, and socially but also politically than now... but *Wayang* is still high art, total theatre in Java. (Scnechner, *The Future of Ritual* 188)

Not only that, *Wayang Kulit* in Java has been changed from its original nature by the name of modernization, and Javanese also had to consider the taste of foreign spectators, who are not deeply involved in the life of Javanese:

In the villages the tradition changes and thrives as it responds to the current wave of modernization overtaking Javanese life. Motorcycle puppets, colored lights, Western style drums, and English expressions are increasingly woven into all-night performances...materialistic values replace those of village solidarity, and female characters demand new rights and new visibility. Restraints on format and characterization are losing in the villages, and this mirrors the loosening of those restraints in modern Javanese life. (qtd. in Scnechner 185)



Figure 1. *Wayang Kulit*



Figure 2. Indonesian *Wayang* shadow puppet and decoration

From what has been discussed above, we can say that *Wayang*'s ritual, original, and efficacious aspects had been transformed into entertainment for the Western spectator and Western circumstances. Another illustration of the point is that we can see the case of remaking film from Asia to the West. *The Departed* by Martin Scorsese, starring Matt Damon, Leonardo DiCaprio, Jack Nicholson, and Mark Wahlberg, is a remake of *Infernal Affairs*, Hong Kong noir. One of the most important themes of original version, *Infernal Affairs* is Buddhism, which emphasizes the transience of life, circulation of life, and man's original sin. When I saw, however, *The Departed* by Martin Scorsese, I thought that the movie paid little attention to the theme of *Infernal Affairs*, Buddhism. As a result, *The Departed* was more focused on the aspect of violence and entertainment, because Buddhism is less familiar or important to Westerner than Asian.

Another example can be seen in a Korean shaman's exorcism or performance in an international symposium on Ritual and Theatre at Brooklyn's institutional Church of God in 1982. The Korean Shaman, Madame Kim, performed knife-blade walking and dance in her bare feet as she did perform in Korea usually. Madame Kim's performance, *JackduChum* is the ceremony of message from the dead delivered by an exorcist. We can say that the performance of *JackduChum* is usually performed in the moment of summit in the ceremony of exorcism. I think that when the Korean shaman performed in the front of Western spectators, the efficacy aspect in the performance was less important than the aspect of entertainment:

We need to know more about audience-performer interactions. What happens when performances tour, playing to audience that know nothing of the social or religious contexts of what they are experiencing? Certainly Mme Kim found it a bit baffling to be shamanizing for people who didn't speak Korean or need her services. (Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* 15)

With these issues in mind, we will take a look at the ritual characteristic in Asian Performance at next chapter.

Chapter 3

Ritual characteristics in Asian Performance

There is no question that nowadays many Asian performances and their cultures have been influenced by the West. I do not know exactly that how theater colleges or universities in other Asian countries run curriculums to teach students. In the case of Korea, most theater college's curriculums focus on Western- based courses almost 90%. From freshmen year, young students are taught from Western texts, acting style, and so on. As a result, when they become seniors, many of them are relatively familiar with the works of Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Chekhov rather than Korean and Asian performances. Besides, some of them are not interested in both the style of Korea and Asian performance. In my case, I also did not much care about Korea performance when I lived in Seoul, Korea; once I thought that it was boring. Besides, I thought someone else would succeed in Korean performance, not me. I wanted to avoid it. I decided to pursue only Western- based performance consistently. Now I feel that it was an irony and paradox.

I think that it is ironic that many Western artists have concentrated on Asian performances and rituals to animate their own, but many Koreans who study theatre in colleges or universities, do not much care about both Korean and Asian performances. The situation of many young people in Japan and China is exactly alike. They rarely watch *Kabuki*, *No* and *Beijing Opera*. They rarely care about their traditional performances, even if the government, especially the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, encourages young

people to watch traditional performance. They have no special reasons to watch it except one, patriotic sentiment. In other words, Western performance styles and cultures are much more familiar to them. It is a paradox, however, that many of them do not have the experience of living or studying in the West; they encounter the West and its culture indirectly through media in ordinary life.

Nowadays even if both Korean and Asian performances do not come into the spotlight for young generations in Korea, it is necessary to keep in mind why many Western artists pay attention to Asian performances consistently. We may say that taking notice of Asian performances may be defined as the result of discontent with some characteristics of Western performances of Western artists. It is necessary to keep in mind that why they are focused on ritual aspects in Asian performances to solve the dilemma of Western performance; as I quoted earlier, Grotowski mentioned the crisis of contemporary Western theater which has lost of its ritual function.

Many traditional Asian or non-Western performances are still rooted in ritual aspects, even if it rarely comes into the spotlight to the majority of contemporary Asians and non-Western people. Also, one of its most noticeable characteristics is that there is no clear boundary between performance and every day life. Performances could take place anytime, anywhere, and every rite of passage such as marriage, funeral, birthday party, coming of age ceremony, entering school, exorcism, ceremony of placatory the gods, and so on. Also, we can say that group consciousness and communion is inherent in many traditional Asian performances in the base, because group consciousness and communion are deeply rooted in many Asian cultures. For instance, an Old Korean performance such

as *Talchum- Talchum* is a Korean dance performed while wearing a mask and singing. It is not only just a dance performed by masked dancers but also a drama with masked characters persons, animals, and supernatural beings-and *Namsadang* performance by troupe of strolling players have no specific performing space. They usually performed in the gate of village, outdoor market place, and rich people's courtyard. In other words, performing places, which surrounded by people, were born naturally. Many spectators usually participated in the overall stream of performance aggressively, cynically, actively, and cheerfully. They could interfere frequently in the story and speak to performers directly. We can guess, judging from the above, that the performance places are usually not calm and quiet. In the middle of the performance, between performers and spectators share food and drinking each other. The spectacle is usually very vigorous and noisy. In other words, we can say that the characteristics of chaotic, cheerful, mysterious, energetic, and even consecration are the overall moods in the performing places. It is reasonable to suppose that these performances are based on strong group consciousness and communion. Similarly, Baliness performance has a similar trait like traditional Korea performance:

They do no seasonal plays. They perform in the village square, on temple steps, in courtyards, or on temporary stages throw up for the occasion. And the occasion may be a marriage, a birth, a stroke of good fortune, a Hindu holiday, a need to placate the gods, or the means by which rich man shows how rich he is...there is little formality surroundings a performance. Dogs eat some of the ceremonial food signaling the gods' acceptance of the offering, children play in the street in midst of the trance-dancers, old men doze on their porches, women market, and those who want to watch the play do. (Schechner, *Environmental Theatre* 22)

I think that it is an interesting aspect that performance and everyday life in Bali have so much close relationship to each other like in the case of Korea. From above passage, we realized that performance is not much special event in their life. Every rite of passages and everyday life in Bali people accompany performance. We can say that everyday life sheds light on performance intimately, and performance also sheds light on everyday life closely with each other in their lives.

In Korea, the traditional ceremonies of the offering a sacrifice to spirits and exorcism, which are held in village gate or someone's *Madang* -*Madang*, courtyard in Korea is a space for work, gambling, meeting, playing, and various rituals or religion ceremonies, and even if *Madang* is an individual property in someone's house, it has characteristic of sociality, collectivity, and openness-, not only have the characteristic of ritual, but also public performance. Its sacred aspect is that the ceremonies transform dark and negative spirits into constructive spirits for people's well fare and their peace of mind. Also, the ceremony's secular aspect is that it gave people opportunity to console one another in the vortex of hard life and work throughout the watching and participating of Shaman's ritual performance, and the process of sharing food and wine; sharing food and drink each other is still an important aspect to apprehend both the most of Asia countries and Korea. Many Asian countries suffered poverty in the past, therefore sharing food and drink means to give and take warm-heart, confession, and affection, and to strengthen group solidarity. We can say that the ceremony had played the role of outlet and reunion throughout the processes for old Koreans.



Figure 3 : The ceremony of the offering a sacrifice to spirits in the west coast in Korea for village's tranquility and a rich haul



■ Figure 4 : The ceremony of exorcism by Shamans in Korea



Figure 5. A Shaman in Korea



Figure 6. A Shaman in Korea

Before we discuss more in terms of Asian ritual aspects, let me draw your attention to relationship between shamanism and theatre. It has been studied that between the activity of shamanism and theatre have a close relationship to each other. To quote Schechner, "...no wonder shamanism is so popular among theatre people: shamanism is the branch of doctoring that is religious and the kind of religion, full of tricks, that is theatrical" (Performance Theory 132); we can see the example in the case of *JackduChum*, the ceremony of message from the dead delivered by an exorcist in Korea. Also, he called the ceremony of Shamanism Para theatrical event. "Para theatrical events dissolve the audience-performer opposition, while a whole branch of performance art is aimed at eliminating the 'art-life' distinction" (Ibid).

It is reasonable to suppose that many Asian rituals and performances dissolve not only the barrier between spectator and performer, but also the distinction between performance and everyday life. It is clear that the characteristic is one of the most important aspects in many Asian performances and ritual ceremonies.

I will devote some space to the discussion of the origin of many Asian and non-Western performances. Although there are a few exceptions, it has been studied that many Asian and non-Western performances derived from hunting cultures:

I think drama as it developed in China, Japan, Korea, India, and America, and so on derived from circumpolar hunting cultures (the remnants of which still exist in Siberia and in pockets throughout the Americas) that also developed shamanism. These cultures very early associated hunting-killing, fertility, animality, curing, spirit possession, and crisis initiation through man-made ordeals. Most significantly, they translated strategic, future-oriented hunting behavior into strategic language: story-telling. This story telling was done not merely through words but through songs, chants, dances, drumming, and setting

(such as caves). Ultimately, drama arose as a playful combination of these strategic behaviors. (Schechner, Performance Theory 109)

Another example can be seen in the *Kaiko* celebration of the Tsembage of Highlands New Guinea is a year-long festival culminating. The performance is a transformation of combat techniques into entertainment has been brought to some artist's attention:

All the basic moves and sounds-even the charge into central space-are adaptations and directs lifts from battle...The entry described takes place late in the afternoon, and just before dusk the dancing stops and the food which has been piled in the center of the dancing round (it might be said literally, that the dancing is about the food, for the whole *kaiko* cycle is about` acquiring enough pigs-for-meat to afford the festival) is distributed and eaten...The visitors are asked to stop dancing and gather around while a presentation speech is made by one of the men responsible for the invitation. As he slowly walks around and around the food that had been laid out in a number of piles, the speechmaker recounts the relations of two groups: their mutual assistance in fighting, their exchange of women and wealth, their hospitality to each other in times of defeat...When the speech of presentation is finished they gather their portions and distribution them to those men who came to help them dance, and to their women...After supper the dancing resumes and goes on all night. By dawn almost everyone has danced with everyone else: and this community is a sign of strong alliance. (Schechner, Ritual, Play, and Performance 197)

I will now develop this issue a little further. The *kaiko* performance transforms struggle or combat behavior into symbolic behavior or metaphor. It is necessary to keep in mind that the performance shows their relationship to their neighbor or the opposition. In other words, the performance plays an important role of transforming destructive behavior into constructive alliance without real physical collision.

Let us take another example to show transforming destructive behavior into constructive alliance. *Talchum* (as I mentioned earlier, the performing space of *Talchum* came into existence spontaneously from being surrounded by people in the market place, play ground, courtyard, and so on. it was not fixed performing space but moving freely space by people's moving. This clearly shows that there was no strict distinction between performing space and auditorium. So, spectators could break into the conversation between performers and relatively easily intervene theatrical events) in Korea has characteristics that the will of rebellion to break conventional morality and taboo by the public. In other words, it is based on a sense of rebellion feeling by the common folks toward their harsh lives ;the main themes in *Talchum* are that the humble or working classes denunciate social irregularity, immoral upper classes; it was almost impossible to denunciate and mock upper classes as a common folks in ordinary life for old Korean. The performance could provide public indulgence to them temporarily. Performers and spectators expresses the masses' complain or dissatisfaction through song and dance. One of the most important functions of *Talchum* is that the humble or working classes' dissatisfaction and discord could be dissolved in the process of the performance temporarily. After main performance, performers and spectators dance together, and share food and wine at the stage of the entertainment or after ceremony; the stage of the entertainment or after ceremony will be examined later again. We can say that this is a sign of reconciliation and alliance without destruction. Throughout the performance people not only could break off the yoke in the vortex of hard life but also social oppression for a little while.



Figure 7. *Talchum* in Korea



Figure 8. *Talchum* in Korea

As I have discussed earlier, we can say that transformation in ritualistic Asian performances is one of the most important aspects. Also, according to Schechner, there are two kinds of theatrical transformations:

- 1) The displacement of antisocial, injurious, disruptive behavior by ritualized gestures and displays
 - 2) The invention of characters who act out fictional events or real events fictionalized by virtue of their being acted out (as in documentary theater or film or Roman-type gladiatorial games).
- These two kinds of transformation may occur together, but in the mix usually one is dominant. (Ibid 199)

It is presume that, as we have discussed earlier, many Asian performances like *kaiko* and *Talchum* emphasize the displacement of antisocial, injurious, disruptive behavior by ritualized gestures and displays rather than the enactment of fiction. However, it, to borrow Schechner's phrase, is an interesting aspect:

Theaters that balance the two tendencies-examples can be found in Asia, native America, medieval Europe, Africa, and some western experimental performances-offer, I think the best model for the future of the theater. Much performing among tribal peoples is, like the *kaiko*, part of the society's overall ecology. (Performance Theory 117)

The issue which we have to consider next is performing space and its function in Asian performances like *kaiko* and *Talchum* performances. It is interesting that the performing place of both *kaiko* and *Talchum* are converted into market places, which are traded like furs, pigs, ornaments, tobacco, and so on, after performance, because the performances are usually performed in the middle of market places; the space of many traditional Asian performances, as I mentioned earlier, like *Talchum* and *Kaiko* came into

existence spontaneously from being surrounded by people. In other words, it was not fixed performing space but freely moving space by spectators' touring. This clearly shows that there was no strict distinction between performing space and auditorium. So, spectators could break into the theatrical events relatively easily. To borrow Schechner's phrase as following:

The *Kaiko* entertainments are a ritual display, not simply a doing but a showing of doing. Furthermore, this showing is both actual (=the trading and giving of goods resulting in new imbalance) and symbolic (=the reaffirmation of alliances made concrete in the debtor-creditor relationship). The entertainment itself is a vehicle for debtors and creditors to exchange places; it is also the occasion for a market; and it is fun. The *Kaiko* depends on the accumulation of pigs and goods, and on a willingness to dress up and dance; neither by itself enough. The dancing is a performance-and appreciated as such, with the audience serving as frequently acerbic critics-but it's also a way of facilitating trade, finding mates, cementing military alliances, and reaffirming tribal hierarchies. (Schechner, *Ritual, Play, and Performance* 198)

Usually, performance and trading alternate with each other in market place or they take place simultaneously between several blocks. We can see that ritual performance and trading both as symbolic mean and real function is one of the most important events in many ritualistic Asian performances.

What should remember that there is no clear boundary between performance and every day life in traditional Asian performances. We can say that the relationship of the both is a needle and thread. In other words, it is reasonable to suppose that everyday life sheds light on performance intimately, and performance also sheds light on everyday life closely in Asia as a symbiotic relationship.

Chapter 4

Ritual characteristics in Western Performance

The ritual or primitive aspects of not only Asia but also non-Western societies, as I discussed earlier, have attracted many Western artists. They use songs, stories, themes, cultures, rituals from Asia and non-Western performance for their performance like Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Living Theater, and so on. We can say that they attempted the transformation of the entertainment into ritual processes. Schechner mentioned in terms of this case of transformation the case of Grotowski:

The tendency to transform entertainment into ritual by means of theater has been present in Grotowski almost from the beginning. His works have been played in churches, their themes are religious, the details of the performances are full of Polish Catholicism and Hassidic practices as well as materials drawn from Asian ritual traditions. (Performance Theory 160)

Why have Western artists attempted the transformation of the entertainment into ritual? It is reasonable to suppose that they try to restore relationships and sensibility between performers and spectators like the period of medieval or Elizabethan:

Performers played many speeches directly out to spectators who were crowding in on the action. Asides made sense. A deep identification was possible between spectators and performers. A special kind of rhetorical speaking filled a place between the music and the intimate, private, quiet scenes. (Schechner, Environmental Theater 242)

Also, they have tried to overcome the crisis in contemporary theater and criticize the dilemma of Western culture throughout ritualistic performances. We can say that their trials restore a sort of communion between performers and spectators as opposed to performances that are usually studied reflectively without participation in intellectual Western cultural context.

It is also reasonable to suppose that when many Western artists encountered ritualistic Asian performances, they paid attention to the opportunity of participation and communion between performers and spectators. Not only that they, furthermore, wanted audience to experience meaningful transformation:

What happen to a performance when the usual agreements between performer and spectator are broken? What happen when performers and spectators actually make contact? When they talk to each other and touch? Crossing the boundaries between theater and politics, art and life, performance event and social event, stage and auditorium? Audience participation expands the field of what a performance is, because audience participation takes place precisely at the point where the performance breaks down and becomes a social event. In other words, participation is incompatible with the idea of social-contained, autonomous, beginning-middle-and-end artwork. (Schechner, Environmental Theater 40)

It is necessary to keep in mind that that those movements in theater have a deep connection with Western anti-intellectualism:

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century social theorist were haunted by this impending cultural transition. Max Weber pondered the nature of rationality, its manifestation in bureaucracy, and the resulting disenchantment of the world. Emile Durkheim focused on the change from mechanical to organic forms of solidarity. As these and other theorists searched for the ills of modern society, their ideal types approximated the polarized ideals of primitive and the civilized. (Barkan 2)

What needs to be emphasized is that anti-intellectualism, which is a product of Western intellectual tradition, may be defined as the result of discontent with Western civilization by Western people. Also, we may say that the phenomenon is a sort of homesickness that Western people have missed since the industrial society. To quote Turner's phrase:

Rapid advances in the scale and complexity of society, particularly after industrialization, have passed this unified liminal configuration through the analytical prism of the division of labor, with its specialization and professionalization, reducing each of these sensory domains to a set of entertainment genres flourishing in the leisure time of society, no longer in a central, driving place. (Turner, *By means of Performance* 8)

If it is so, there is a further question which needs to be asked. That is, what is the cause for the participation of audiences that has been brought to Western artists' attention again? To quote Schechner:

Why has audience participation appeared at this moment in Western theater history, reintroducing methods that have been dormant since medieval times? Because participation is extra-aesthetic (according to orthodox aesthetics), the answer cannot be found in aesthetics. The theater is a particularly sensitive measurement of social feeling and action. It is also a holdout, technologically speaking: the last of the hand-crafted entertainments. In society in general, and in entertainment in particular the movement is to self-contained, electronically processed, unresponsive systems-closed systems on which the individual can have little effect. Shout as you will at the TV set, Johnny Carson does not hear you. And even the phone-in programs have the famous 'five-second delay', giving the broadcaster absolute control over what goes out over the air. Closed, one-way systems are inherently oppressive. They are even more maliciously so when they wear the costume of openness, as so much of 'media programming' does. Orthodox theater is much more open than TV or films but much more closed than environmental theater. Environmental theater's attempts at audience participation are both last-ditch stands, and tentative first-tries at creating and enhancing entertainment, art, and actual situations by opening system, making

feedback not only possible but delightful. (Schechner, Environmental Theater 45)

However, vigorous audience participation did not always take place in the performance. His experiment for audience participation had a sort of limitation:

The most extraordinary participatory moments happened when people came to the theater in groups, or when individuals gave over to the performance so fully that for the duration of the performance they joined the Group as if they were members. (Ibid 40)

Why does this limitation take place more in Western ritualistic performance rather than Asian performance? I think that the core of the question is caused by strong intellectual cultures or context in Western society; it has been recognized that Western cultures are so reason centered:

We have lost our sense of joy; we are overwhelmed by our seriousness and by commitment to the intellect. And yet the sense of joy is fundamental not only to play, but to those extension of play, ritual and drama. (Pronko 179)

Another example can be seen in Grotowski's works. It is clear that one of the most important themes inherent in Grotowski's works is ritual. He wanted to achieve honest communication and participation between actor and spectator throughout public performance. We can say that building a new relationship between actor and spectator like ritual ceremony by theatrical activities is the long-cherished desire of Grotowski to solve and criticize the dilemma of Western culture. As a result, he was faithful in achieving his principles during his life; what he meant was not imitation of the ceremony of ritual or

religion but ritual effect and spirit itself. He warned against the imitation of ceremony of ritual without reconsidering. However, Grotowski experienced the limitation of the public performance to achieve honest communication and participation between actor and spectator:

Spectators tended to be passive and the physical proximity throughout his spatial experiment generated a metaphysical distance...Cruelty of suffering within the action does not agitate anyone looking on. The cruelty and suffering is studied passively and reflectively without engagement. (Kerr 151)



Figure 9. Grotowski's *The Constant Prince* (1965)

Grotowski's expectation was that when spectators see an actor, who exposes the revelation of the self extremely, they would feel the impulse to do the same thing. He, however, realized through trial and error in performances that honest communication or strong communion between the stage and auditorium rarely could be achieved within the frame of Western mundane value, public performance. As a result, he tried to bring some people back to the source of life or ritual perception during Post-Theatrical periods.

Grotowski could not overcome the critical distance- both physical and meta-physical- between stage and auditorium, no matter what he tried to do; we may say that his spatial experiment to achieve the honest communication, revealing hidden impulses, and audience participation was not successful, because not only "Modern European-American culture is prejudiced in favor of rectangular, hard-edged spaces with clear boundaries and definite senses of right and left, up and down" (Schechner, 20), but also, many artists, even though, try to give audience opportunity to encounter each other directly, nakedly in the face-to-face intimate encounter, there is still the dilemma in the Western context:

How deeply do performers need spectators to support the illusion of character and situation? Can this support suddenly be removed, a new situation created, and then transformed back into the support? Why does a performer feel threatened when a spectator 'moves into' the performance space? Why does a spectator feel threatened when directly addressed by a performer? What is clear is that the relationship between the performers and the spectators needs to be straightened out by being painstakingly scrutinized-examined not in theoretical discussion but by means of many, many experiments in participation...On both sides are reservoirs of doubt and trust. There are many causes for this, but not the least are the conventions of the orthodox theater that separate audience from performers and which make the performers into sellers of pleasure-services, depriving them of self-respect. (Schechner, *Environmental Theater* 60)

I lay emphasis on this matter again. That is, spontaneous participation between performer and spectator has limitation to become realization, to some extent, in contemporary theater production. Since the mid twentieth century some artists like Grotowski and Schechner have experimented with spontaneous participation and the relationship between performer and spectator to dissolve audience-performer opposition throughout their theatrical activities. There is no doubt that even though the summit of the new movements from 1960s to 1980s was not too long, but “a strong non-western influence has worked its way through western theater from the avant-garde to the mainstream” (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 72). An important point to emphasize is that the non-western influences from Asia societies are quite different from western context:

They rooted in religious and ethical world views unfamiliar to the tradition deriving from Athens-Rome-Jerusalem, which encompasses our Euro-American outlooks and articulates the texts, scenarios, mise-en-scene, training, and symbolic codes of our familiar cultural performance from film, telescreen, to stage. (Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* 2)

Most of Western artists would accept that, most of all, the rising of new movements are the result of self-examination in the Western cultural context:

The Living Theatre regarded the traditional theatre as merely a salve for society, enabling the public to return in safety to its bourgeois way of life. ‘We feel that our whole culture has to be changed’, challenged Judith Malina who, with her husband, Julian Beck, founded the Living Theatre. ‘It has to grow away from what is destructive to what is creative. We have become over-intellectualized, divorced from our bodies, from real feeling’. The same statement was to be made, in varying ways, by other pioneers of theatre in the 1960s: Richard Schechner, Peter Schumann, Anna Halprin, Jerome Savary, Joan Littlewood, Ariane Mnouchkine, Luca Ronconi, Tom O’Horgan, and many more, as well as by such teachers, psychologists, and writers as Carl Jung, Krishna murti,

R.D.Laing, Fritjof Capra, Arnold Toynbee, Theodore Rosjak...when so many are saying the same thing, it is no longer an isolated utterance but the symptom of an urgent need in our society. (Evans 104)

With these issues in mind, we will now take a look at the peculiar sequences of Asian performance compared with Western performance. It has been recognized that many Western artists more have paid attention to Asian performance itself rather than warm-up, the process of cool-down, and aftermath:

Theater people have investigated training, rehearsals, and performances but have slighted workshops, warm-up, cool-down, and aftermath. Just as phases of the public performance itself make a system, so the whole genres and cultures, one or the other of the parts of the sequence is emphasized. (Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* 16)

I think that *Madang Nori* is a good example to illustrate whole performance sequences in Asian performance compared with Western performance. *Madang Nori* in Korea has been performed by Theatre Company 'Michoo' since 1981. Although *Madang Nori* has a short history in Korean Theatre history, it has gained wide popularity relatively, drawing about 200,000 audiences each year in Korea; '*Madang*' means outdoor or yard and '*Nori*' means play in Korean. Actually, *Madang Nori*, although, is usually performed in indoor theater, but *Madang Nori* captures the spirit of Madang in Korea. Once upon a time almost all homes had at least one Madang in Korea. Madang is a still very important space of Korean life, especially in rural regions. Madang is a place for gathering, party, meeting, work, cutting the umbilical cord for new born baby, marriage, funeral, and ceremony like exorcism, and religious rites. For these reasons, Madang is a place for

various rites of passages for Korean. Also, Madang in one home is an open place for neighbors and even passersby. They could see almost all events freely. We can say that relationship between Madang and Korean life is inseparable- is composed of the front play, the main play, the end play, and After ceremony; each episode and Act are connected one another loosely by song, dancing, narration, and crown show.

The front play has its origin in street Nori (play) which came from *Talchum* and *Namsadang* performance (the troupe of strolling performers) in Korea, and ceremony of offering to sacrifice to spirits. Street Nori arises from the characteristic of Korean folk plays which do not have fixed theater buildings. Originally, street Nori took on the role of public activities of performance to let people know about performance. Not only that, Street Nori had an inclination toward a sort of street exorcism to exterminate sundry evil spirits in villages. When the performers of Street Nori go round with performance flags from place to place in the village, people follow the group performers of Street Nori, and then performance is performed in a specific outdoor place which is surrounded by people. And the band of instrument for folk music is played simultaneously with the ceremony of exorcism or offering a sacrifice to spirits.

Nowadays Madang Nori is performed in fixed indoor theaters. So the traditional concept of Street Nori from place to place in a village is simplified. Performers in Madang Nori play music instruments and traditional acrobatics as a modified Street Nori to titillate audience. Also, offering a sacrifice to spirits is held to supplicate spirits for success of performance and everything turning out as audience wished. We can say that one of the

most important reasons of the warming-up process is for the strengthening of collectivity, spontaneity, and merriment between performers and audience.

After the front play (street Nori and ceremony of offering to sacrifice to spirits), *Coqduseae*, who play a role of master of ceremony or narrator, greets audience or ask after audience; *Coqduseae* is usually not a character in Madang Nori; he sometimes plays several roles, and a character who directly communicates with audience. Quarrels between *Coqduseae* and *Gombangiseae* who frequently crosses the border of theatrical situation and reality often happen for theatrical amusement; he usually plays roles of the main character's servant or friend; we can say that *Gombangiseae* is as a clown in old Korean performance.



Figure 10. *Madang Nori* in Korea

Coqduseae : Come, let's go Madang Nori. (to audience) Shall I play a protagonist?...I Will.

Gombangiseae: What the hell?

Coqduseae: What? Are you wrong in the head? You took rat poison?

Gombangiseae: Wake up, you are behind times. The times is gone that

Coqduseae exercises enormous power.

Coqduseae: I am going to take proper measures.

Gombangiseae: What the hell?

Coqduseae: I am out. I am goanna go home.

Gombangiseae: Go ahead. I will introduce a motion of impeachment against you.

This story is parodied from one of the big accidents in Korea politics. *Madang Nori* usually adopts classical stories in Korea as its main plot. The titles of *Madang Nori* are determined by the main character's name. The main reason is that one of the most important functions in *Madang Nori* is to parody contemporary conventions, politics, and the actual through characters. However, *Madang Nori* adopts classical stories to avoid direct critique parodies of Korea society. We can say that *Madang Nori* scratches an itchy spot metaphorically for Koreans.

The point to observe is that not only Coqduseae but also Gombangiseae's clown skills and improvisation, and the skill of talking to the audience, usually, to control the overall quality of *Madang Nori*. The main play is composed of 6-9 acts or part of the former and the latter. Each story of *Madang Nori* is independent. So even if some specific *Madang* (story or chapter) is abridged, it does not matter for the understanding of the overall stream of *Madang Nori*; *Madang Nori*, as occasion demands, enlarges further some specific scenes or amplifies some characters irrelevant narrative for jest. Insertion of song or *pansori* (solo, chorus) in each *Madang* or act is more than 2, on the whole about 20. There are also, in addition, some kinds of tunes which are like Korean traditional rap by performers; song and dance also plays a bridge role between *Madang* and *Madang*.

The end play is almost always bringing to a non-realistic happy ending settlement through reconciliation and solution for struggle. Ending faithfully follows virtue of promotion of virtue and reproof of vice from old classical stories. This represents the ideal wish in Korean society.



Figure 11. *Madang Nori* in Korea

Now what needs to be emphasized is that the process of the after ceremony or entertainment has an important meaning as much as performance itself. Originally, it was a traditional entertainment between performers and spectators to share food, liquor, and unexhausted fun. This process has implications such as settlement, purification, congratulation, consolation, and so on. Nowadays the after ceremony of *Madang Nori* is

simplified to a sharing of rice cakes and soft drinks, and then performers invite some audiences to play and dance together on the stage; I feel that inviting audience to play together on the stage is sometimes artificial or unnatural in modern Korean society. However, it was an important and meaningful process in traditional performance for our ancestors to congratulate and console each other in the vortex of hard life and work; originally, the after ceremony sometimes lasted in whole night in traditional performances, with mingling between spectators and performers, with no prescribed behavior that everyone follows. We could find a sort of similarity, which is emphasized in whole performance sequences, between *Madang Nori* in Korea and Indian theater:

Sometimes, as in classical Indian theater, preparations before a performance are very important. This seems to have been true in India from the very start... The preliminaries of a play, these include playing drums and stringed instruments as a way of telling the performance is to begin; doing various rituals honoring the gods; performing special kinds of introductory dances; and making circumambulations of the stage. Today, were all these preliminaries performed, they would take several hours; usually they are much abbreviation...after performance, the audience also breaks into several parties. Many go straight home by the most efficient means. A few have rented rooms in Ramnagar for the Ramlia month. These nemis-faithfully, wholly devoted spectators-may read the *Ramcharitmanas*, sing devotional songs, or in other ways continue their worship of Rama. A number of people gather in front of small shrines on the road back to the center of Ramnagar and chant kirtans with sadhus whose singing fills the night. (Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* 17-18)



Figure 12. *Madang Nori* in Korea



Figure 13. Indian Theater, *Jana Sanskriti*

When I studied Theater in MA course in Seoul, Korea, I saw the DVD of Andrei Serban's production of *The Trojan Women* in the 1970s. Later I knew that it was one of the productions of Fragments of *Greek Trilogy* and *Agamemnon* in the 1970s, representing a departure in the production of Greek tragedy in the United States. It gave me unforgettable impression. I thought that it was a quite different style compared with the usual Western performances that I had known at that time; I thought that the production had a sort of ritualistic quality. I still remember that strong images, songs, movements, dance, mingling between performers and spectators which reminded me of ritual. According to The New York Times:

The Trojan Women, based on Euripides, happens all around the audience, which stands as witness to the torments of the women of Troy after being vanquished by the Greeks. (occasionally, in fact, things get a little chaotic, and people end up tripping over fellow theatergoers.) The interpretation is less concerned with historical or literary accuracy than with the primitive emotions aroused in the rituals surrounding the women's defeat and captivity. The intermissionless work merges the touchy-feely 70's and Greek drama. Bare-chested men reciting what sound like ancient mantras and toga-clad women torches push the audience aside to make room for a wagon that carries Helen to her rendezvous with public defilement; later, the audience is herded to the sidelines to witness the murder of virgin. The chants to which Ms. Swados sets her music are at once indecipherable and wildly evocative; by the end of the piece, they seem a clear expression of the Trojan women's terrible struggle to survive with some semblance of dignity. (Marks 17 Dec 1996)



Figure 14. Andrei Serban's *The Trojan Women*



Figure 15. Ellen Stewart's *Electra*

Not only that, it was a quite interesting spectacle to me that spectators and performers were mingled each other in somewhere before performance; it reminded me of some traditional Asian and Korean performances to unite or intensify the relationship between performers and spectators before performance. Later, I knew the place was La MaMa Annex:

Serban's production may represent one of the most successful of all of the Artaudian based experiments of the American avant-garde. One really does recall *The Trilogy* in a series of strong visual and aural images of torches, smoke, chanting, music, and actors mingling with audience in the unconventional space of the La MaMa Annex. Moreover, the audience and performers were united and transformed in a very mysterious and experiential way that defied most analysis. In Artaud's terms, Serban's *Trilogy* explored 'the poetry beneath the text...the actual poetry-through-theatre which underlies the Myths told by the great tragedians...a theatre in which violent physical images crush and hypnotize the sensibility of the spectator...a theatre which abandoning psychology...induces trance. (Menta 1)

We can say that Serban not only had tried to continue Brook's intercultural experiments in his own way but also had been influenced by ritualistic Asian performances and actor training methods:

Serban was attempting to expose the actors to many different physical disciplines including Noh, Kabuki, and the Indian Kathakali, in order for them to develop a new consciousness of integrating voice and body in a fashion that is more spiritual than the Western tradition of actor training. (Ibid 17)

An important point to emphasize is, as I mentioned earlier, that efficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other:

Whether one calls a specific performance ‘ritual’ or ‘theater’ depends mostly on context and function. A performance is called theater or ritual because of where it is performed, by whom, and under what circumstances. (Schechner, Performance Theory 130)

When it comes to Serban’s productions, he expanded the usual boundary of Western performance into backstage procedures like some Asian ritualistic performances as discussed earlier. Similarly, we can find out ritualistic aspects in Broadway musical shows too:

A Broadway musical is entertainment if one concentrates on what happens onstage and in the house. But if one expands the point of view to include rehearsals, backstage life before, during, and after the show, the function of the roles in the lives of each performer, the money invested by the backers, the arrival of the audience, the reason spectators are attending, how they paid for their tickets(as individuals, on expense accounts, as members of theater party, etc.), and how all this information indicates the use they’re making of the performance (as entertainment, as a means to advance careers, as charity, etc)-then even the Broadway musical is more than entertainment, it’s also ritual, economics, and a microcosm of social structure. (Schechner, Performance Theory 130-131)

If some Western artists try to focus on the whole sequences of performance, as I quoted above, they could be called ritual or efficacy. It is also that many Western theater artists in the 1960s and 1970s had emphasized back stage life before, during, and after the show in their whole sequence performance.

In 2001, Ariane Mnouchkine’s Theatre du Soleil (Theatre of the Sun) performed *Tambours sur La Digue*, which was incorporating aspects of Asian performance techniques, *Kabuki*, *SamulNori* (Korea traditional performance of percussion instruments), the traditional performance techniques of Vietnam and Taiwan, in National Theatre in

Korea; especially, it was so interesting to me to see performers played as puppets being manipulated by puppeteers with the techniques of *Bunraku* (traditional puppet theatrical form in Japan). The main stage was composed of polished wooden floor, a sort of Japanese platform stage.



Figure 16. Ariane Mnouchkine's *Tambours sur La Digue*



Figure 17. Ariane Mnouchkine's *Tambours sur La Digue*



Figure 18. performing space of *Tambours sur La Digue*

It is not to be denied that Ariane Mnouchkine has interested in Asian performances with her experience of visiting in Japan. It is a well known fact that her productions are performed in particular spaces such as barns or gymnasiums. In Korea, *Tambours sur La Digue* was performed in a big pavilion; it is famous fact that wherever they perform, dining room, bedroom, rehearsal, and performance spaces are prepared in big pavilions.

It was interesting that when I entered the big pavilion to see the performance, I could see the process of actors' warm-up, putting on make-up, and getting into costume. When I sat down, the performers distributed food to audience. It reminded me of the process of traditional Korean performance. We can say that the whole process between Theatre du Soleil's performers and audiences is called ritual for both efficacy and entertainment. It is also continuous with Western theatrical activates which emphasized and displayed rehearsal and backstage procedures for ritualistic function and meaning between performers and spectators.

As I discussed earlier, the boundary between performance and everyday life could be shifted. Also, "the boundary is varying from culture to culture and situation to situation. Different culture marks the boundaries differently" (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 70). In the 1960s and 1970s Western ritualistic performances, dissolved the boundary between performers and spectators, bringing about the effect of efficacy rather than entertainment, had a relatively short summit, and then "1980s have seen an apparent return to the dominance of entertainment" (Ibid 132).

I could not help wondering what ritual aspects could be refocused again as a mainstream in Western performance like in the 1960s and 1970s. Not only that, I am curious what the next dominant step in the Western performance is.

Chapter 5

What would be the future of ritual in Performance?

Both ritual and performance, as I discussed earlier, lead people to experience the taboo, the excessive, and the risky. In other words, they give people the opportunity to experience a second reality. We can say that both ritual and performance transform people into other selves from their daily selves either permanently or temporarily. They play a role in the recovery of human relationships or alliances which is rarely achieved in ordinary life. Not only that, they could transform destructive behavior into constructive alliance, like in the case of *kaiko* and *Talchum* performance:

Rituals are used to manage potential conflicts regarding status, power, space, and sex. Performing rituals help people get through difficult periods of transition. Ritual is also a way for people to connect to a collective, even mythic past, to build social solidarity, to form a community. (Schechner 77)

There is also no question that it is hard to define ritual into one word. Ritual, as we discussed earlier, has been so variously defined as concept, praxis, process, ideology, function, and so on:

In common use, ritual is identified with sacred, another slippery word. But scholars have long discussed 'secular ritual'. Current opinion holds that the barriers between sacred and secular like those between work and play, are both extremely porous and culture specific. (Schechner, *The Future of Ritual* 228)

It is evident that performances contain aspects which are both sacred and secular.

Also, there is no doubt that performance behavior is twice-behaved behavior or restored behavior:

performance behavior is known and/or practiced behavior-or 'twice-behaved behavior', 'restored behavior'-either rehearsed, previously known, learned by osmosis since childhood, revealed during the performance by masters, guides, gurus, or elders, or generated by rules that govern the outcomes, as in improvisatory theater or sports. (Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* 118)

Unlike the usual traditional Western context, "performance behavior isn't free and easy it never wholly 'belongs to' the performer. In Euro-American theater (Stanislavski and after) much of the work of training and rehearsal makes performance behavior seem 'as if' it belongs to the performer" (118). By contrast, Grotowski was interested in ritual performance whose sources are almost all Asian and non-Western cultures; he tried to break one of the most influential concepts, which is making the performance behavior seem to belong to the performer only, in Western performance. However, Grotowski could not overcome critical distance, both physical and meta-physical, between the stage and auditorium, no matter what he tried to do. As a result, he left public performance in the late 1960s, and he continued the ritual process to reveal hidden impulses and to rediscover honest communication with his audience members.



Figure 19.

Grotowski's *The Constant Prince*, 1965



Figure 20. *The Constant Prince*, 1965

The way of Grotowski was quite extreme. I think that he was very special and extraordinary. There is no doubt that he is one of the most efficient theater artists who got abreast of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, and Brecht in 20th century:

Grotowski's work is influential globally with adherents in all continents. His methods of textual and scenic montage, actor training, staging, vocal work, and using materials from cultures both ancient and contemporary have influenced a great many in theatre, dance, and performance art. (Schechner, 244)

However, it is reasonable to suppose that he was too attached to the aspect of the pure efficacy or ritual; in some points, he tried to narrow his focus on face-to-face encounter between members of the Polish Laboratory. In the 1980s, he only concentrated on traditional ritualistic Asian and non-Western performances and techniques without public performance. As a result, although Grotowski's theatrical activities remain as a matter to be discussed further, it seems reasonable to think that his ritual experiment was limited in achieving complete success:

This move from theater to ritual marks Grotowski's work and that of the Living Theater. But the rituals created were unstable because they were not attached to, or integrated into, ongoing social structures outside theater. Also, the differences among ritual, theater, and ordinary life on the degree spectators and performers attend to efficacy, pleasure, or routine; and how symbolic meaning and effect are infused and attached to performed events. In all entertainment there is some efficacy and in all ritual there is some theater. (Schechner, Performance Theory 152)

Some critics believe that Grotowski lost his sense of the actual. Not only that, several artists have mentioned his limitation when it comes to the experiments of globalization, though not all artists agree with the opinion. To quote Schechner:

There is a big difference separating Grotowski's from other kinds of globalization. Grotowski's reach is vertical, fetching back in time rather than stretching horizontally across cultures. Grotowski assumes a coincidence of origin and finality. This lack of historicity is the Achilles' heel of Grotowski's final work. (Schechner 245)

The relatively short climax of ritualistic performance from 1960 to 1980 in Western theatre already passed like a strong fever unlike some expectations, to quote Schechner, "In the early 1970s I thought efficacious theater would dominate by 1990. That probably won't happen, but certainly a whole range of art-life, personal testimony, and ritual performances have emerged and are multiplying" (Performance Theory 135). This remark is interesting. Schechner and Grotowski's dreams had not come true completely, but they presented the possibility of ritual performances and new direction or vision of performance for contemporary artists.

Nowadays some artists, regardless of being from the West or Asia, say the crisis of performance is its future destiny. They seem to feel nervous like Grotowski that performance's original identity and potential have been exhausted little by little. The majority of contemporary performances rarely play a role as the centre of a sphere, which could join people together unlike the performance of remote past. Now we live in the digital and technology era. People are looking for strong or extreme pleasures and stimuli, magnificent spectacles from the field of public arts or entertainments. I think that nowadays ritualistic performance does not have a sufficient competitive power in comparison with musical show, film, TV show, and other technology mediums, no matter how much performance expands its technological sources. Most artists seem to not

persuade contemporary audience efficiently that we need ritual and its performance in the present. The overall situations are not familiar to performance. ‘What could we do?’ or ‘what should we do?’ at this point. It seems reasonable to borrow Grotowski’s phrase:

What is the theatre? What is unique about it? What can it do that film and television cannot? Two concrete conceptions crystallized: the poor theatre, and performance as an act of transgression. By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up. Without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area, without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, ‘live’ communion. (19)

We do not know what the future of ritual and its performances will be exactly. However, as long as human history is continued, ritual and its double, performance, will survive. It exists closely to us, even if we rarely recognize the existence in ordinary life. I hope that ritual could provide an outlet or alternate way consistently for the desirable direction of contemporary performance, which has an appropriate balance between efficacy and entertainment. Last but not least, I would like to emphasize that ritual and its performance are our self-portrait, mirror, challenge, longing for taboo, the past, now, and dream:

At some point in human history people began performing their dreams and elaborating on them. These were not facts nor were they imaginary. They were performances of events between fact and imagination. These virtual actualities, staged as rituals, shared the authority of recollection with the play of imagination. Artful elaborations found or invented have been decisive in human history at least since Paleolithic times. These performed dreams appear always to have been erotic and violent. Human creativity still works this playfield betwixt and between the ethological, the neurological, and the social. The future of ritual is the continued encounter between imagination and memory translated into doable acts of the body. Ritual’s conservatism may restrain humans enough to

prevent our extinction, while its magmatic creative core demands that human life- social, individual, maybe even biological-keep changing. (Schechner, *The Future of Ritual* 263)

6. Conclusion

We, so far, have seen ritualistic aspects between Western and Asian in performance. It is necessary to keep in mind that I have discussed and compared the subject from the point of view of as both Asian and Korean. We can say that the way of the approaching, therefore, leaves room for other interpretations.

It follows from what has been said thus far that the real functions of ritual in contemporary performance in both Western and Asian performance have disappeared little by little. Even if Asian cultures or circumstances which are more rooted in group consciousness or communion than Western circumstances, it has been recognized that many contemporary Asians and their culture have tended to become individualized by degree; since 1980 studies have focused on the identity of Korean. Even though once the majority of Koreans had a strong group sharing common destiny, but nowadays there is a little room for it because of a changing family system, which is transformed from a large family to a nuclear family, conversion from agricultural country to industrialized country, specialization in many fields, preference for rationality, Westernized living life, and so on. Those transformations make me feel that nowadays many Koreans have lost group consciousness and identity little by little compared with the past.

Since late 1990s a series of musical shows, which especially came from Broadway, have occupied a dominant position in the market of performance in Korea. Many Koreans gladly make a payment for the expensive tickets of musical shows. By

contrast, the majority of Koreans, especially the young generation, rarely care about traditional and ritualistic Korean performances. Most of them just see the performances indifferently through not theater but TV. Some performers, for instance, like the performers of *Talchum*, *Pansori* (traditional Korean song), *SamulNori*, and Shamans are called 'Living National Treasure' in Korea, so the government supports them both materially and morally. However, some of those performers, who are called 'Living National Treasure', have a problem to find successors. As a result, some people seem to agree that nowadays quite techniques of traditional performances encounter the critical situation of extinction. Ironically, many young people try to enter theater departments in college and University in Korea every year; entering theater departments is all the rage among young students. Also, theater departments have increased since 1990s step by step. Competition for admission to the theater departments is keen, but the field of traditional performance suffers a man power shortage.

From these circumstances, one may say that recently there is little room for ritual and its performance in Korea; Even though the majority of our ancestors, old Koreans not only enjoyed but also actively participated in it, nowadays ritual and its performance have tended to be a subject of study and rare spectacle without engagement; I think that many of Asian countries' situation is very alike. Also, we know that some Western artists have acknowledged those today's situation. To quote Grotowski:

As social grouping are less and less defined by religion, traditional mythic forms are in flux, disappearing and being reincarnated. The spectators are more and more individuated in their relation to the myth as corporate truth or group model, and belief is often a matter of intellectual conviction. This means that it is much more

difficult to elicit the sort of shock needed to get at those psychic layers behind the life-mask. Group identification with myth-the equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth-is virtually impossible today. (23)

Even if the short summit of ritualistic performance in the West has passed, it is a desirable phenomenon regardless of it that not only a few Asian artists but also a few Western artists try to reevaluate and recreate ritualistic performances consistently, which have balanced characteristics between traditional and modernized in configurations and sprits like *MadangNori* in Korea and Environmental theater in the West to solve the dilemma and the problem of identity in contemporary performance.

Today we could not expect audiences to engage to ritualistic performance voluntarily. We could not ignore virtual circumstances and the tendency of individualization. Nevertheless it is possible that we could provide opportunities to encounter ritual and its performance consistently for contemporary people. I think that frequent encounters with ritual and its performance, at least, make people take interest in it. We should not deprive people of the minimum chances to experience taboo, the excessive, encountering another myself, collective spirit in performance. I believe that it is one of the most essential tasks for me as an artist who lives in the present.

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