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The Language of Resurrection Ritual: A Comparison of Korean Shamanism with Blackfeet Beaver Power

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The Language of Resurrection Ritual

A Comparison of Korean Shamanism
with Blackfoot Beaver Power

by Thomas N. Grove and Shin Freedman

Abstract

*The authors present a comparison of the effects and contents of two traditional pieces—the Korean story, "The Abandoned Princess," and a story from the Blackfoot Native American Bullchild's *The Sun Came Down*—about how they console the dead and the living through songs and chanting from these two different cultures.*

The paper demonstrates the resemblance between mystic syllables narrated in a song by a Korean shaman and in a tale by a Native American elder, and how repeating words and following actions revive the souls of the deceased and the beleaguered. The magical powers of transforming the dead and communicating with the living through narratives will be examined as will the effects of oral history on healing and consolation originating from the two different worlds.

The Language of Resurrection Ritual

A Comparison of Korean Shamanism with Blackfoot Beaver Power

Pae Kyongjae, a shaman in Korea, and Percy Bullchild, a Blackfoot leader in America, have delivered traditional narratives of their people which include a ritual for raising the dead. Although Bullchild's account in *The Sun Came Down* (Bullchild 1990) comes from his wish to preserve his tribe's old stories while Pae Kyongjae's in Seo Dae-seok's *Myths of Korea* (Seo and Lee 2000) to help the dead and bereaved at a funeral, their stories resemble each other in several ways as they draw upon the highest power of language, the power to restore life.

Repeating words and describing the same actions over and over again gather the force necessary for profound change in both stories.

Percy Bullchild relates how four-year-old twins repeat one sequence of words and actions in order to bring their mother back to life; in Korea, repetition practically dominates Pae Kyongjae's version of "The Abandoned Princess," who volunteers to seek especial water to resurrect her parents. The Blackfoot twins' feat seems more remarkable: their mother died four years ago; the Korean king and queen's bodies pass in funeral procession when their daughter rushes up to resuscitate them. In the Blackfoot story, the repetition of elements occurs on a smaller scale than the Korean. The twins take turns boiling a pot of water and shooting an arrow in order to revive their mother; the shaman narrator turns from the world of the living to the world of the dead and back again, over and over, in order to lead everyone toward paradise. In both stories the repeated alternation—be it between two children or two worlds—proves efficacious.

Admittedly, the stories contrast markedly. The Blackfoot one, although traditional and frequently told, centers on a private tragedy with a finally private solution only two four-year-olds witness, while the Korean one deals with a royal family's problem and has a necessarily public solution as a royal funeral procession is stopped. The healers in the Blackfoot narrative draw upon their foster beaver parents for power; Princess Pari meets Buddha Sakyamuni. This version of the rather extensive Korean story was retold at a funeral; the relatively short Blackfoot one lies in a large published collection of Blackfoot stories.

As a result, the Korean and Blackfoot chants come from different sources. The Korean princess-turned-shaman finally exhorts her audience to recite a well-known Buddhist prayer line while the Blackfoot twins presumably invent two lines clearly directed to a very specific problem. The Korean public chant offers the promise of a new life to everyone; the Blackfoot private chant returns one person to her old life.

And yet the dynamics of both chants depend on repeating words to transform lives. The essence of efficacy finally arises from a clearly defined sequence of syllables—six for the Korean, sixteen for the Blackfeet.

Once the Blackfeet twins have reassembled their mother's bones on a buffalo hide, a three-part sequence of actions and words begins that will be repeated four times: put a hot stone in a pot of water, shoot an arrow straight up in the air, and as it falls back down shout to mother that her pot is going to boil over. One of the twins, Ashes Near the Fireplace Man, cries out the same words the first three times, repeating the first three syllables once: "nu-waug-aug." But for the crucial fourth and last attempt to revive his mother, he adds four more syllables and his brother, Behind the Tipi Wall Line Man, suddenly joins in, starting with the same eight syllables but changing the rest of his hollering to his mother from the declarative "your pot is going to boil over" to the intense, direct imperative for her to "duck out of the way" of the arrow. (Bullchild, pages 107-108)

Percy Bullchild emphasizes repetition in his version of this evidently traditional Blackfeet drama of children yearning for a lost parent by introducing few variations in his report of the four-fold sequence. The water is always heated by a "red-hot rock" and no synonyms offer relief from the frequent immediate past tense verb, "got." To describe the key third part of the sequence, hollering, the narrator restricts himself to two adverbs, "excitedly" and "loud."

The chant Ashes Near the Fireplace Man uses in trying to revive his mother after her murder four years earlier builds both external and internal repetition that makes the changes to the final manifestation of the chant striking. The external repetition comes through four "hollers," as Bullchild calls them, that are firmly established through three perfect replications of a fourteen-syllable sequence:

"Nu-waug-aug, nu-waug-aug, na-ah, goo-ca, awk-saug-su-yi!
Excuse me, excuse me, mother, your pot is going to boil over!" [lines 34-36, page 107]

The words of the sequence fall into two halves: an eight-syllable hortatory address to the twins' mother followed by a six-syllable declarative warning that her cooking pot is about to boil over. The succeeding discussion draws upon the analysis of language into words, which consist of one or more syllables—each syllable having at least a vowel nucleus; any consonants preceding the nucleus form an onset for the syllable and any consonants following the nucleus form a coda.

Through his hortatory address in the first half of his holler—"Nu-waug-aug, nu-waug-aug, na-ah"—Ashes Near the Fireplace Man builds internal repetition in several ways. The address subdivides into three parts: the first two contain three syllables, the third two. He ties his obvious immediate duplication of the first three syllables he blurts out, "Nu-waug-aug," to his direct reference to his mother, "na-ah," through reproducing the same

onset, the alveolar nasal “n,” to start each of the three parts. Furthermore, both the first and second parts exhibit internal binding through repeating the mini-sequence of vowel nucleus, “au,” and consonant coda, “g.” And for the third part of his opening address to his mother, “na-ah,” Ashes Near the Fireplace Man uses another device of repetition to draw the two syllables together. Its second syllable begins with the same sound that ended the first: the nuclear vowel, “a.”

The shorter, six-syllable second half of Ashes Near the Fireplace Man’s chant, which gives his warning about the boiling pot, does not have such internal binding through repetition, although the double “s” onsets just before the boy ends his shouting anticipate his dramatic expansion of the same sound in the double holler he will make with his brother to bring his mother back to life.

This fourth holler expands on the first three, adding between the two halves three syllables, “iss-som-iss,” a direct imperative for the mother to look after her pot. Another two syllables come to the middle of the initial sequence in this final version as “ugh-ass” replaces “awk.” (page 108, line 26)

The new sounds the boy, Ashes Near the Fireplace Man, make heighten the force of the fourth chant through internal repetition, a device already used in the first three. In opening all of his chants, he hollered “nu-waug-aug” twice, but in this climax of the action, where the twins have agreed to muster all of their combined power in one last attempt to bring back their mother, he compresses internal repetition into just three syllables. After respectfully excusing himself, the boy launches into more piercing sounds of command: “iss-som-iss.” The first and third syllables end with the same seething doubled voiceless alveolar “s” ‘s, stressing the sound of water that will boil over the top of the pot beside his mother if she does not obey his warning. The second syllable—the only one of the triad with a complete set of onset, nucleus, coda—receives the force of boiling in its first sound: the same “s” from the double coda it follows.

Ashes Near the Fireplace Man has not finished with the sound. Replacing the eleventh syllable, “awk,” from his first three hollers, he shouts “ugh-ass,” two more syllables without onsets—the second mimicking the repetitive triad’s doubled “iss.” Boiling over is no longer a warning but fact—a fact registered syntactically as he changes his description of the water activity from a future progressive tense “is going to boil” to present perfect “has boiled”. Exhortation for the twins’ mother to return to her traditional task of cooking has indeed reached high pitch.

The pitch must be zenith too because of what Ashes Near the Fireplace Man’s hitherto silent brother does in this final, all-out surge to arouse their mother. Tipi Wall Liner Man is now hollering too. It sounds at first like a shortened form of what has been his brother’s chant: “Nu-waug, nu-waug, na-ah”—“Excuse, excuse mother”—leaving out the more polite expression of whom to excuse: the first person masculine singular objective

form of the personal pronoun, an omission that in itself conveys the remarkable urgency of the moment.

But Tipi Wall Liner Man's corrupted version of his brother's relentlessly unwavering final request for their mother to excuse his having to remind her of one of her primary responsibilities—namely, tending her pot—makes it impossible for the twins to reproduce the chant that has twice shown some power. (After Ashes Near the Fireplace Man's second holler, her foot may have moved; after the third, her knees did bend.) Even if Tipi Wall Liner Man paused twice for his twin to insert his “aug,” the twin boys cannot produce a perfectly synchronized combined rendition of Ashes Near the Fireplace Man's final holler because Tipi Wall Liner Man leaves the earthbound object of the pot and mother's duty to it, the topic his brother has confined himself to. In place of that, Tipi Wall Liner Man shouts a stronger warning about an object in the sky that harbors a magic paradox. In his attempt to revive his dead mother he yells that the arrow he shot may hit her. The only compelling reason she would comply is if she believes she is not dead and wants to avoid being killed by the arrow. His holler seems even more inspired than his brother's triple repetition of a chant which has at least slightly moved their mother. The comparison cannot be ignored because the twins start hollering at the same time with the same two words, “nu waug,” “excuse.”

Repeated words, especially in compact phrasing with only short interruptions between repetitions, intensifies the force of new words.

Because the twins are shouting at the same time, Tipi Wall Liner Man's twenty-five syllable holler more than likely lasts longer than his brother's, even with its forceful four-syllable expansion of the original fourteen-syllable chant. So the final seven syllables of Tipi Wall Liner Man's shouting rise clearly from the confused joint hollering which—if their dead mother can hear—amounts to a loud sustained garble of noise, the sounds of each syllable one twin yells distorted by the sounds of the other twin's syllable, stripping both of meanings usually conveyed. When meaning returns after Ashes Near the Fireplace Man stops hollering, it returns to the paradox of warning a dead person about a falling arrow.

And the sounds that bear the warning bear unusual features. Three of the seven syllables—almost half—require double lengthening for articulation: two vowels, “oo” and “ii,” and one consonant, “bb.” This intensifies the last exhortation of the twins. Tipi Wall Liner Man connects his last words to all the other hollers as he ends with the same syllable they ended with, namely, “yi”—a move he anticipated by using the same onset of the next-to-last syllable in all the other hollers, “s.”

But in narrating the marvelous sequence of events that led to resurrection of someone who has been dead for four years, Percy Bullchild says that “just before the end of [the twins'] holler . . . [their mother] jumped up.” (page 108, lines 36-37) If she heard

anything before jumping up, it was not the double lengthened vowels and consonants of the last syllables in Tipi Wall Liner Man’s holler but the double volume noise of both twins’ hollering before Ashes Near the Fireplace Man stopped. In his most lengthy and evocative comment on the repetitive chant, Bullchild records that Ashes Near the Fireplace Man was hollering “so excitedly he could’ve scared any spirit back to life” (lines 37-38) Add his twin’s holler and the spirit’s body will come back too.

This simultaneous hollering—in particular, the sixteen incomprehensible syllables of noise after both boys start with Ashes Near the Fireplace Man’s standard “nu waug”—builds on coupling syllables already heard and falls into three sections: a six-syllable opening based on the preceding chants (see syllables 1-6 in the chart below), a three-syllable middle dominated by “s” (syllables 7-9), a seven-syllable ending (syllables 10-).

| syllable number | Ashes Near the Fireplace Man | Tipi Wall Liner Man |
|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | aug | nu |
| 2 | nu | waug |
| 3 | waug | na |
| 4 | aug | ah |
| 5 | na | ah |
| 6 | ah | ni |
| 7 | iss | stub |
| 8 | som | ist |
| 9 | iss | stab |
| 10 | goo | iks |
| 11 | ca | it |
| 12 | ugh | ka |
| 13 | ass | coo |
| 14 | sang | stis |
| 15 | soo | si |
| I 16 | yi | take |

In the opening section, Ashes Near the Fireplace Man is continuing the chant he has repeated thrice while his brother moves through the same sequence, skipping “aug” twice before repeating the “ah” and adding a new syllable, “ni,” constructed of an onset and nucleus from his brother’s original holler. The twins holler the first six incomprehensible syllables this way.

For example, the first double syllable’s onset combines the nucleus from Ashes Near the Fireplace Man’s “aug”—i.e. “au”—with the onset from Tipi Wall Liner Man’s “nu”—i.e. “n;” and the sixth double syllable ends by combining “h” with “i.” The result is strange hybrid syllables not formally described in linguistic analysis that begin and end with both a vowel and a consonant, demolishing the two fundamental categories used in identifying

syllables. The boys insist on continuing to disrupt the meaningful sounds of the original triple repeated chant throughout the first six syllables of their double holler, generating no recognizable semantic field from a phonological baseline that contains only three syllables with potentially recognizable nuclei.

With the seventh syllable, the twins' coordinated chant abruptly shifts from the original chant's sounds as Tipi Wall Liner Man binds his three syllables of the double hollers' middle section to each other with a strident consonant cluster of voiceless alveolars. To form the cluster he forces air through a narrow opening between the tip of his tongue and the alveolar ridge behind his upper teeth, then drives the air out of his constricted lips for the fricative "s" before blocking the air completely for the "t" stop. His brother responds to this decisive opening onset by doubling the length of the "s" to end his opening syllable, then tripling it with another "s" for the onset of his next syllable. Tipi Wall Liner Man, in turn, responds with the same dynamic "st" cluster he used to open this middle section, this time closing his second syllable with it then repeating it to start his third syllable of the section. He has bound all three of his middle section syllables so tightly that only a slight modulation of vowels distinguishes his seventh syllable, "stub," which opens this core syllabic triad, from the ninth syllable, "stob," which closes it.

Ashes Near the Fireplace Man binds his syllabic triad just as tightly by repeating his seventh syllable as the ninth: "iss." The complementary doubling of their hollers yields triple "s" 's in the seventh and ninth syllables, with the enclosed eighth's double "s."

The subjugation of meaning to sound comes from—except for possibly the fifth doubled syllable of "na" and "ah"—the continual juxtaposition of different vowels in the twins' sixteen doubled syllables, disrupting the very heart or nucleus required of any syllable. Interestingly, their double hollering does not sound as noisy as it could have, since seldom does one twin pit an onset or coda against the other twin's to make nearly unpronounceable clusters of at least three consonants. The significant exception to this occurs in the sizzling core triad of syllables seven, eight and nine, where every syllable sets two consonants against a third.

The repeated "s" of the hollers' middle section gains force as meaning capitulates, leaving pure sound. And the seething noise made by the three paired middle syllables mimics water boiling over: what Ashes Near the Fireplace Man is trying to point out about his mother's pot. Tipi Wall Liner Man tries to stop the hissing boil by injecting a "t" right after it, producing the sound the falling arrow will make upon impact: what he is trying to warn his mother of. By the time Ashes Near the Fireplace Man stops hollering seven syllables later, ending the sixteen-syllables of noise and allowing meaning to return to the last words of his brother's longer holler, "that arrow," their mother has already kicked away the robe they laid over her and has jumped up to stir her pot. Her sons' combined holler of only noise has brought her back to life: the warning about Tipi Wall Liner Man's arrow was unnecessary.

Percy Bullchild signals the significance of these sixteen magic syllables through increasingly long and frequent descriptions of the hollers. Ashes Near the Fireplace Man's first three chants receive narrative comments ranging from just "excitedly" (page 107, line 42) for the second one to "loud and as excitedly as he could." (page 108. Lines 5-6) His fourth attempt, which blends with his twin's holler, "comes out so excitedly he could've scared any spirit back to life." (lines 27-28) Also well over half of Bullchild's direct references to the twins' hollering concern the final double chant, where he moves from the simple past tense of "hollered" to the past progressive, "was hollering," to emphasize the extended shouting of Tipi Wall Liner Man to his mother.

Another most strong signal for the sixteen syllables comes from the twins themselves. Before the fourth chant they say "to one another . . . this is the last chance to bring (mother) back to life and we must use all of our power . . ." (lines 20-22) The words themselves bear less import than the manner of their delivery. The twins "said to one another." This ability of human beings attached as closely as could be conceived, being twins, to speak a long sentence in unison anticipates their syllable by syllable coordination in a double chant that will draw forth all the power of language, crystallized into sound alone.

The fourfold cycle of ritual behavior, concluded each time by Ashes Near the Fireplace Man's hollered chant, builds toward the desired resuscitation through his repeating the first eight syllables. The fourth time he does so, these syllables transform fast as his twin adds his chant, doubling the power to bring life back to the dead. Inside the fourfold cycle lie two other crucial cycles of four: the doubled four syllables with which Ashes Near the Fireplace Man opens each chant and—most forceful—the four-to-the-fourth power, sixteen, doubled syllables that finally revive mother. As might be expected, the number four, with its permutations, carries sacred power for many Native American cultures—a power carried in this Blackfeet story by, appropriately enough, four-year-old twins. (page 106, line 22)

In her rendition (Akamatsu and Akiba 1937-1938) of "The Abandoned Princess," Pae Kyongjae repeats words, scenes, actions much more than her American counterpart, taking advantage of a longer plotline. The four repetitions of the Blackfeet chant more than double for the Korean chants. The relentless manifestation of the shamans' prediction of seven princesses being born to the royal couple who married in a year they were warned was unlucky receives emphasis through two main cycles of recurring passages. The first describes the birth of each princess; the second the rebirth of a dead soul after each birth. The climactic resuscitation of the dead king and queen by the seventh daughter, who as a baby was thrown in the ocean like the Blackfeet twins being put in a beavers' hut, comes shortly before the tenth and final recitation in the rebirth cycle.

The first cycle involving the births of princesses is set in the land of the living; the second in the land of the dead. As the shaman alternates between the two cycles, repeating sections in each one again and again, they move closer and closer together until the seventh princess is uttering sections of the dead soul cycle in the land of the living. Such a blurring of distinction between the two places accomplishes precisely what Pae Kyongjae wants: persuading the listeners gathered for the funeral of their loved one that what they do now can affect what happens after death.

That her version ends with the second cycle instead of the princess's reviving her parents also shows Pae Kyongjae's primary intent to comfort the mourners gathered for the funeral. According to Michael J. Pettid (Pettid 2000, 115), in Pae Kyongjae's province the princess story is usually reserved for only extremely stressful deaths, so listeners would need especially strong consoling.

She prepares them for her final breakdown of conceived boundaries between the living and the dead by introducing her essential message of comfort in a simplified form before finishing the first ten lines: "I lead the living to paradise . . . I lead the dead to paradise." And once the story of the royal family starts the birth cycle and the first offspring receives her name of Princess Pink Peach, Pae Kyongjae interrupts the first cycle of the living to exclaim:

O and alas! One soul among the dead
 Upon the first princess's birth
 Released from three years' mourning, condoling the spirits in the underworld,
 From ancestors' cause of grievance,
 From the karma of earthly existence,
 The dead man sheds his head cover, the dead woman her *yomo* cap,
 With prayers for rebirth in the Land of Happiness,
 Becomes a man and journeys to Amitabha's Pure Land,
 Upon this very day.

(Seo and Lee, page 120, lines 17-25)

In what becomes a repeated chant through her story, the words emphasize quick rebirth of one soul and its transformation into a man who immediately heads for a preferred existence the same day the princess is born. Causal connection between what happens among the living and what happens among the dead is suggested by the synchronicity of the two events: a living person's birth has allowed a dead soul to head for the Pure Land. The impact of the release triggered by the birth spreads from three causes as translated by Lee—mourning, grievance, karma—and expands into acts of the dead before their journey to paradise: baring the head, praying for rebirth and—for the woman—changing gender. The synchronicity most powerfully manifests itself through a second soul being released.

The chant contrasts sharply with the much more brief Blackfeet chant. Where this one asserts with confidence the immediate freeing of a soul to get to paradise, Ashes Near the Fireplace Man tries again and again to revive his mother.

At the second princess's birth, the rebirth cycle's chant returns even more quickly as shaman Pae Kyongjae skips the naming, going immediately from the very same five verse lines in which the king orders how the child is to be raised "with utmost care" (compare lines 10-14 on page 120 with 15-19 on the next page) into the rebirth cycle where the soul's journey becomes more defined and short: the "Land of Happiness" moves from the line preceding "Amitabha's Pure Land" to right after the phrase, ending this second rendition of the cycle with the assurance the places are one and the same.

Pae Kyongjae repeats word-for-word this powerful variation on the first description of a soul's release when the third princess is born (note lines 18-22 on page 122), maintaining the speed of alternation between the two cycles.

For the fourth princess's birth, the shaman returns to the first nine lines quoted above—again, word-for-word except for "soul" being dropped from the first line and "this princess's" replacing "the first princess's" in the next (lines 8-16, page 124). The return underlines the lack of change in the royal family's fortune: the queen still has not been able to produce a male heir. Pae Kyongjae pushes the point by modifying the word, "time," which has always followed her rendition of the rebirth cycle, with "heartless" (line 1, page 125). The unremitting repetitive succession of female births continues with the birth of the fifth and sixth princesses, whose numerical sequence is announced, as with the first, in the second line of the rebirth chant that began the cycle (line 27, page 125; line 10, page 127).

The rebirth cycle appears the seventh time under unusual circumstances. At the birth of the heroic seventh princess it was not heard, ending the seemingly unending birth-rebirth cycles. When Pae Kyongjae finally repeats the chant, she nearly halves it to an essence, recalling what Blackfeet Tipi Wall Liner Man does to his twin brother's recurring eight-syllable holler:

O and alas, one among the dead,
 If it follows the seventh princess,
 With prayer for rebirth in the Pure Land of the West,
 Then it becomes a man and enters the Land of Happiness
 Upon this very day.

(lines 29-30, page 139 and 1-2, page 140)

The shaman is preparing the funeral mourners for this last princess's future role (Seo 2001) as "progenitor of shamans" (line 30, page 145) because what has immediately preceded the seventh chant, replacing the usual birth of a princess, is the seventh

princess's second—now voluntary—departure from her family in the palace to search for the sacred water that will save her parents' lives. Her power is underlined by the second line in the chant that had always referred to the birth of a princess. Now it places a condition upon a dead soul's achieving happiness: "if it follows the seventh princess."

At this moment in the shaman Pae Kyongjae's song, the cycle of rebirth merges with the cycle of birth: the inhabitants of a land beyond death must come with the living. Or, perhaps more accurately, the princess has become able to leave the land of the living and lead the dead to a land beyond either of the first two. Such a skill will be manifested right now as she heads beyond the familiar world of the living to find a cure for her ailing parents.

On her search for the saving water, she encounters Buddha Sakyamuni and receives a silk flower from him that she waves in front of a sky-high wall of thorns and iron blocking her way. The eight thousand four hundred hells open, as the shaman continues:

Souls headed for the hell are sent there.
 O and alas! One soul among the dead,
 With rotten ears and rotten mouth,
 If it hears prayers and repeats them to all the bodhisattvas,
 It follows Princess Pari and enters
 The Pure Land of the West, the Land of Happiness
 On this very day.

(lines 12-18, page 141)

Her eighth chant in the rebirth cycle blends even more closely with the plotline than earlier versions as hell-bent souls give way to one which is offered the chance for lasting joy. The condition for such an end has changed from a dead soul simply following the seventh princess, Pari, to repeating prayers it hears. Pae Kyongjae has increased the importance of words themselves, preparing her listeners for her order before she ends her song to utter the mystic syllables of Buddha Amitabha's name if they want to reach paradise. The second line of this eighth version introduces physical details that—modified by the repeated "rotten"—heighten the marvelous transformation into someone who can pray and follow the princess into bliss.

Pae Kyongjae's emphasis on words parallels the evolution of the Blackfeet story in which finally neither the boiling water nor the falling arrow revive the mother, but a magic double holler of noise. And her unusual, privileged encounter with Sakyamuni resembles the twins' contact with nearby beavers: both experiences invest the protagonists with extraordinary power.

The ninth chant of Pae Kyongjae in the rebirth cycle comes like the eighth: the Princess Pari finds a temporary obstruction before her, the River of Yellow Springs. When she asks about the boats on the water, she is told they carry souls that conducted themselves

well on earth. And—also like the eighth chant—the ninth grows out of the plot as it immediately follows the description of souls unlike the previously hell-bent ones:

O and alas! One among the dead goes forth
 At the first shrine receive the ritual coins,
 At the second the preliminary purification ritual,
 At the third the ritual to three messengers of the underworld,
 The iron gate, the bamboo gate, lotus hall,
 The forth-ninth day ritual to the soul of the dead.
 He receives gold and silver coins,
 Invokes the name of the Buddha, and
 Rides the boat to the Pure Land of the West,
 The Land of Happiness.

(lines 18-27, page 143)

Details of the actual journey of the redeemed soul to the joyful land finally emerge as the climax of the princess's story nears. Shrines and gates mark the person's progress; he prays to the Buddha, fulfilling the stipulation brought up in the previous version of the cycle. And fitting into the river scene the princess is studying, he rides the boat destined for joy. The line after the ninth chant has the princess's next question about boats on the river, embedding the cycle firmly into the plot.

Culmination of the rebirth cycle starts as soon as the princess announces she "will become the progenitor of shamans" after gracefully declining her grateful father's offer of half his kingdom for restoring him to life (line 30, page 145). The next two lines return to the opening of Pae Kyongjae's narrative, not only reviewing the first rebirth of a dead soul but also introducing its complement:

Above on the hundredth day, she leads the living to paradise,
 Below on the six fast days she leads the dead to paradise.

Shaman Pae Kyongjae has brought her listeners back to the message of comfort she delivered in the ninth and tenth lines of the song. Simultaneously she has included the attendants at the funeral in her redemptive act and defined the principal roles of her successor shamans. No one has been excluded from the beneficial power of this woman who—as the stanza ends—"governs all shamans" (line 3, page 146).

Contrast the consistently constricted effect of the Blackfeet twins' resuscitation: not even their father knows how his wife was revived. And no repetition of their successful act is indicated.

After Pae Kyongjae concludes the princess's story in the next stanza with the king's formal reception of her husband and children, she launches into what she has been building toward since she began her ritual narrative: a chant with prayers to insure the efficacy of the rebirth cycle she has repeated nine times. In this tenth and last rendition, she replaces the usual exclamatory signal of "Oh and alas!" with direct exhortations to

ten Great Kings, the last being—suitably—Great King Who Turns the Wheel of Rebirth. The move from a narrator’s detached declarative to a shaman’s involved imperative recalls a similarly decisive moment in Percy Bullchild’s story where Behind the Tipi Wall Liner Man moves into the same mood, suddenly joining his brother’s shouting and ordering his mother to watch out for the arrow.

Shifting dramatically to the possessive first person, “my,” Pae Kyongjae repeats three lines in her personal petition to each king:

Hear the prayers of my myriad subjects,
Preach the dharma to ferry all living beings across.
Homage to Buddha Amitabha and Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha.

(lines 1-3 and following, pages 147-148)

Her repeated use of the first person melds the current shaman, once just the narrator, with the first shaman, once the Princess Pari, as they speak with one voice. The power thereby achieved recalls the crucial moment in the Blackfeet story when the twins holler together, producing the sounds that revive their mother. But Percy Bullchild never enters the plotline. The Korean transformation of the narrator into protagonist opens the story to full manifestation of ritual language’s power. She can bring her parents’ old life back to them and new life to the dead one in the funeral before her, as well as all dead souls. The public dimension achieved here contrasts starkly with the private one in the Blackfeet narrative.

Her insistent pleading emphasizes the dimensions of the original rebirth cycle chant—dimensions still in place with the ninth rendition—extend far beyond one or two souls to include everyone, as she focuses on the vivid river scene where the princess saw three groups of boats. Repetition builds the force of her words. She concludes the extended stanza with one last recitation of the three-line petition before returning to the familiar lines from the opening of the rebirth cycle:

Released from three years’ mourning, condoling the spirits in the underworld,
From ancestors’ cause of grievance,
From the karma of earthly existence,
The dead man sheds his head cover, the dead woman her *yomo* cap,
With prayers for rebirth in the Land of Happiness,

What follows sounds like the climax the shaman Pae Kyongjae has been working for. She delivers the most detailed account of a reborn person’s journey to bliss and directs her instructions to not just anyone but to “you,” each one of the gathered mourners: “When you go to the Pure Land . . .” (line 13, page 148). She has joined the living with the dead; the two cycles—birth and rebirth—have become one. And she punctuates stages of her instructions with subordinate clauses:

When you go to the Land of Happiness . . .
 When the road spirit detains you . . .
 When the lady of grave detains you . . .
 When an evil spirit detains you . . .
 When the mountain spirit detains you . . .
 When you meet the earth spirit . . .
 When you come to the great rocks
 When you reach the twelve gates . . .
 When you reach the great king's hall . . .

(lines 13-4, pages 148-149)

Once in the hall, the shaman tells the traveler, “Transmit . . . the cultivator’s mystic syllables,” invoking the Buddha “with wet rotten mouth and wet rotten ears. The added then repeated adjective “wet” amplifies the eighth chant’s version of the phrase. When she has finished geographical directions, the shaman makes sure her listeners know how to pray, with the same words she used in her ten royal exhortations:

Homage to Buddha Amitabha and Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha.
 Word by word, line by line, with rotten ears and mouth,
 Recite the prayers as you go:
 Homage to Buddha Amitabha and Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha.

(lines 18-21, page 149)

Soon Pae Kyongjae resorts to her first of two uses of the first person in the forceful subjective case, dispelling any doubt she has become the shaman she was describing: “I recite without ceasing the wondrous mystic syllables,” the syllables with which she incisively ends her own three-fold invocation, simplified to its core:

Homage to Buddha Amitabha,
 Homage to Buddha Amitabha,
 Homage to Buddha Amitabha.

(lines 30-32)

The triple line grows hypnotic when returned to its original Sanskrit (Lee 2002, 166) six-syllable prayer as heard in Korea (Akamatsu, Akiba, and Sim 1991):

Namu Amitabhul,
 Namu Amitabhul,
 Namu Amitabhul.

The sounds the simple core line of two words make in the instruction offered by the shaman amount to just nine: three vowels, six consonants. The consonants spring from only two areas of the mouth, both easily accessible—the alveolar ridge behind the upper teeth for “n,” “t,” “b” and the Korean final coda of “l;” the lips themselves for bilabials “m” and “b.” Unlike the jarring, unprecedented clustering of consonants in the codas and onsets of the Blackfeet twins’ double chant, the shaman’s recommended prayer consonants arise as clear, single sounds and—with one exception at the end of the holy name, “Amitabhul”—always at the beginning of syllables. The smooth and quiet alternating conjunction of the naturally voiced nasal consonants, “n” and “m,” with

voiced vowels in the first four syllables of the line enhance the reverent delivery of the prayer with no interruptions in breathing, unlike the proliferation of less soft voiceless consonants in the final chant of *Ashes Near the Fireplace Man*.

One of the vowels, the open and relaxed low back “ah,” dominates as the most frequent and evenly distributed sound of the line, forming the nucleus in half of the six syllables: a most basic rhyming repetition. The secret of the hypnotic effect lies in the consistent back-and-forth sway between one consonant and one vowel, moving within a limited range of sound.

Following the path of a devotee’s tongue through the chanted vowels that rest at the heart of each mystic syllable provides instruction in prayer. The tongue rises from its low back “ah” to high back “oo” to low back “ah” again as the vowel nuclei of the first three syllables flow out of the mouth. By the time it returns to its starting position, it has already begun pronouncing the hallowed name of the Buddha longed for. For the fourth syllable or second syllable of the holy one, the tongue ascends toward the lips themselves for the high front “ee”—traveling the farthest distance possible in the mouth— before returning to the familiar open and relaxed low back place where the chant originated. The final nucleus in the Buddha’s name inspires the tongue to rise once again to high back “oo.” But the motion which began the prayer also ends it, as the tongue returns to its first place and the core line has begun, without pausing. In this mesmerizing sway, every other syllable rests upon the original vowel sound.

The mystic path revealed through articulating the four vowels in the sequence of six syllables is not a straight one but one that brings the seeker of paradise back to where she or he began, over and over again, no matter how far away the previous vowel may have been. This clearly describes the repetitive, seemingly endless concentration necessary to enter into contemplation. The pleasure, satisfaction waiting for those who follow the princess shaman toward Buddha Amitabhul resides in the very sound of the most constant base of the prayed syllables, the low back “ah.” Repetition of this sound has its reward.

That the farthest distance the tongue travels in chanting the vowel nuclei occurs as soon as the devotee begins the first two syllables of the Buddha’s name, the low back “ah” to high front “ee” of “Ami,” offers subtle assurance that the paradise ahead offers all imaginable dimensions of existence, unlimited happiness. Amitabha encompasses all distance. Thus, Amitabhul can be sought by everyone, as the deity’s first and preeminently accessible syllable indicates, especially where it appears in the shaman’s chant. The pure, simple opening syllable of the Buddha’s name, the solitary nucleus “ah,” is the only syllable in the prayer without another sound realized by an onset preceding the nucleus. No formidable clashing jam of Blackfeet consonants is necessary for the dead to find new life.

Surrounded by soft nasals that even a toothless infant can articulate, the “ah” respectfully opens the prayer to Buddha Amitabha, joining in two ways the honorific ejaculation, “namu,” to the Buddha’s name as it mirrors souls yearning to live with him. The bilabial nasal, “m,” operates twice as an onset right after the “ah,” as the vowel and consonant pair draw the middle of the first word to the beginning of the second.

The last “ah” of the line completes the syllable that lies at the center of the Buddha’s name, “ta,” securing the link between the two words of the prayer. The voiceless stop “t” at the onset—not the startling “st” cluster in the center triad of the Blackfeet sixteen-syllable double chant—comes from the same alveolar region of the mouth as the opening and closing consonants of the line, “n” and “l,” the three consonants of the prayer pronounced furthest back in the mouth, binding the two words of this central prayer even closer.

The utterance has achieved its aim in reaching the Buddha and the alveolar consonant closing the line opens the way to its repetitive chant that begins with another consonant in the same region of the mouth, recalling the shaman’s words, “recite without ceasing the wondrous mystic syllables.”

Another interpretation of the condition expressed in the seventh chant in the rebirth cycle to follow the seventh princess emerges: part of “following” is chanting the syllables, a point the eighth chant clarifies by mentioning heard prayers be repeated. The weaving of the six-syllable prayer’s ending sound into its beginning through voicing two consonants from the same place in the mouth renders the chant infinite, like the life being sought, beyond the confines of earthbound existence. Contrast the strictly defined efficacy of the Blackfeet chant, directed toward restoration of an ordinary life and certainly not intended to be repeated.

The pure repetition of the mystic syllables’ sounds has brought rebirth of the dead into a fresh existence, just as the Blackfeet twins’ shouted syllables did for their mother, but the repetition has also joined them to the living mourners. The historic present tense in which the shaman sang her narrative has, by the force of her last prayer, changed into the immediate present time in which she is repeating the well-known story to her audience. No longer narrating the story, Pae Kyongjae is in the story. A stronger power of language could not be.

She begins her last three lines with her second subjective first person, placed in the immediate present tense:

I lead the former dead, later dead, all the dead ancestors,
 Generation after generation, son after son,
 This is the day they go to the Land of Happiness.

In announcing her final act, the shaman Pae Kyongjae is doing what the progenitor of Korean shamans did: leading the dead to paradise.

The examination of two instances of language used to revive the dead does suggest repetition can produce results. The repetition, however, comes from several methods, ranging from using the same sound in part of a syllable to expressing the same word or even successive lines of words. And whatever the method, it may—at least as usually understood—fail.

In order to revive their long dead mother, the Blackfeet twins finally had to do more than keep repeating one fourteen-syllable chant. Although their successful sixteen-syllable hollering did employ a few words of the earlier one, its power came from their distortion of the repetition—especially Tipi Wall Liner Man’s.

An intriguing aspect of this comparative study lies in the effect of two people voicing different chants simultaneously. From the record of the narrator, the loss of a semantic field does not necessarily diminish the power of a chant. With meaning gone, any listener is forced to concentrate entirely on the phonological field, a field automatically made more complex from the probable overlay of sounds in each part of a syllable. The production of new combinations of sounds into pure noise can prove stimulating enough to rouse even the most dead-eared individual.

In the case of the Blackfeet twins, a double volume chant created two levels of noise, one where syllables could still be recognized, one where they could not. Except for its first syllable, their joint holler opened and closed with several syllables in which both boys were shouting consonants followed by vowels. Although the resulting clusters probably sounded strange and even scary, conventional sequences could be detected of onset-nucleus-coda for second and third double syllables, “nwauug” and “wnaauug,” as well as for the last three—“sstaigs,” “ssooi” and “ytaike.” And the twins doubled their hollering into a conceivable fourth syllable nucleus “aau” with coda “gh.”

When the boys hollered their other ten syllables simultaneously, however, the syllables submerged into an indecipherable stream of sound through confounding of vowels and consonants, leaving no nuclei—much less, onsets or codas. In perhaps the most wayward kind of repetition, every potential syllable began with both vowel and consonant, providing at least one formal definition of a kind of noise that a native speaker of the Blackfeet language would find especially disturbing in its vague resemblance to her or his primary means of communication.

Although the core of the useful chant in Pae Kyongjae’s version of the Korean story, “The Abandoned Princess,” comprises only six syllables compared to the sixteen in Percy Bullchild’s Blackfeet story from *The Sun Came Down*, the possibility of extended, efficacious repetition appears greater. The prayer suggested there, with its limited range

of sounds, is simply easier to utter than the holler. The confident inclusiveness of the shaman's final words about leading all the dead—not just one or two—lies at the very core of the chant she recites, "Namu Amitabha." Only one of these mystic syllables does not repeat the features, according to phonologists, preferred among the world's languages: a single consonant followed by a single vowel.

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