Negotiating a Korean National Myth:

Dialogic Interplay and Entextualization in

an Ethnographic Encounter

by Kyoim Yun

2011

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This article examines a discordant, collaborative telling of Korea's founding myth, one accomplished by a traditional singer and two native folklorists, including myself. Highlighting the discursive and intertextual construction of talk, I demonstrate how the event's participants coped with different agendas as we evaluated each other and negotiated our expectations regarding the myth's content and performance. I argue that dissonant ethnographer-performer interactions such as this one warrant more study. Scholarly attention to the ways specific events and texts develop can help us better understand negotiations of power, authority, and participant roles, as well as the intertextual and intersubjective relations that constitute ethnographic encounters.

SCHOLARS OF SEVERAL DISCIPLINES—whether they use ethnography as a primary method of research or not—have drawn attention to the politics of ethnographic fieldwork and writing.[1] If, as these studies have emphasized, ethnography is an encounter among politically conscious human beings, the expectations and interests of field workers can be significantly different from those of our fieldwork partners, especially in initial meetings. While we are increasingly aware of potentially conflicting interests among the people we study, however, we know little about the way varied expectations among ethnographers and *informants* affect dialogic engagement on the ground; we often behave and write as if informants' agendas are congruent with our own.[2]

This article addresses this gap by examining a speech event in which a native folklorist and I interacted with a narrator throughout a *myth-telling* that ended up sounding more like a conversation than a seamless story. Despite the unruly interplay of participant roles in this interaction, we were all striving to produce a mutually acceptable narrative. The resulting text was a product of our immediate verbal exchanges on that specific interlocutory occasion, but it was also shaped by intertextual resonances with previous iterations of Korea's founding myth. Examining the unstated goals and prior knowledge of the myth that each of us brought to the collaborative telling can shed light on how and why the telling emerged as it did.

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I focus on the dissonant talk that we created, not to offer prescriptions for more *ideal* fieldwork—all fieldwork is fieldwork. Rather, I aim to remind readers how divergent perspectives and interests complicate ethnographic situations, and to examine how ethnographers and their field collaborators cope with these sometimes discomfiting situations. Scholarly attention to these aspects can help us better understand negotiations of authority and participant roles, as well as the intertextual and intersubjective relations that constitute ethnographic encounters. I begin by introducing the context of the encounter, summarizing the core content of the myth, and presenting the transcript of our emergent discourse. I then analyze the talk that we produced, incorporating insights offered by scholars of linguistic anthropology, performance studies, conversation analysis, and sociolinguistics that highlight the discursive and intertextual construction of talk in actual situations. I contend that the interplay of dialogism and (en)textualization can be fully addressed only by attending to the contingent features of a specific ethnographic encounter, including genre expectations, participants' knowledge of the topic at hand, and pre-existing or discursively constructed power differentials among ethnographers and their collaborators.

The Story of How a Story Was Produced

The three people involved in this storytelling event are Kim Kyŏngbok, singer of traditional songs, folklorist O Segil, and I. We met for the first time at a shamanic ritual in Inchŏn, a city near Seoul, in 1996. A PhD candidate in Korean literature at the time, O was working as a professional folklore researcher for the National Folk Museum of Korea in Seoul. Having just submitted an MA thesis devoted to shamanic myths, one based on materials collected by other scholars, I felt compelled to observe live shamanic rituals in order to understand the myths in context. So when I learned of the event in Inchŏn, I was eager to attend. Mr. Kim, then in his early eighties, was born and raised in Hwangju, Hwanghae Province in present-day North Korea. After graduating from elementary school, he had been trained for fifteen years in singing and playing traditional musical instruments at the Yonggang *kwŏnbŏn* in P'yŏngyang.[3] He came to South Korea in 1946, leaving his wife and three children behind; when political circumstances changed shortly thereafter, he was unable to return. In order to earn a living in South Korea, Mr. Kim began singing as a street artist and peddler, and at times was part of a traveling medicine show. Although he was not a shaman, some shamans hired him for their ritual performances because of his knowledge of and competence in performing a range of North Korean musical styles, which was an asset to their own work. As Mr. Kim's talents became more widely recognized, he sang at increasingly prestigious venues (such as those broadcast via the national media), and he also taught younger generations—including college students interested in *vanishing* Korean arts.

Although I was at that time unaware of the biographical details of Mr. Kim's life, he seemed to me to embody all the qualities of a tradition bearer. During the event that O and I attended, he performed a playful theatrical component of a grand-scale shamanic ritual, and he accompanied his singing with a bit of dancing. During an intermission in the ritual, Mr. Kim, who wore a Korean traditional costume and held a long

old-fashioned tobacco pipe, attracted students of folklore, including O and me. Although I cannot recall how he got onto the subject, Mr. Kim talked about Tan'gun, the mythological ancestor of the Korean people, insisting that Koreans are descendants of a bear but that many people are ignorant of this fact. His assertion did not especially pique our curiosity, since we already knew both the myth and its prevalence in public discourse in South Korea. However, we were surprised when Mr. Kim referred to a song about Tan'gun; to our knowledge, the myth had been read and told but never sung. It occurred to us that this was the chance to add something to the academic corpus. Assuming that Mr. Kim could sing this Tan'gun myth, O and I excitedly arranged an exclusive meeting with him. In addition, O (a specialist in traditional stories) was interested in him as a potential informant, and because I was considering a PhD in folklore, I wanted to experience what it was like to work in the field.

A few months later we visited Mr. Kim's home, where he lived with his new South Korean wife. Although we had become acquainted at the ritual, this meeting was our first noncasual encounter as part of an ethnographic agenda. In keeping with general introductory procedures, O and I agreed to begin by hearing Mr. Kim's life story, though beyond this—and a determination to hear the Tan'gun myth sung—we had few specific plans for how the interview might develop. Following customary social hierarchy in Korean society, O assumed a leadership role: he was my senior by a few years and more advanced in education and expertise than I. Not having training in fieldwork methods at the time, I was content with this implicit arrangement. Thus, O led most of the conversation and recorded the session on tape. For his part, Mr. Kim proudly revealed that he was quite experienced in dealing with students of folklore; he was at ease in our presence and very willing to respond to our research requests.

After Kim had told his life story, he inquired about what we wanted to hear. In response to our keen desire to hear the story of Tan'gun, he sang a song, accompanying himself on the hourglass drum. As we listened, O and I anxiously awaited mention of Tan'gun; however, when Mr. Kim finished, we realized that the rather long song was not at all what we had anticipated. Tan'gun made only a brief appearance: his tomb was described in one sentence as a place of interest on the mountain. The song was not a myth but belonged to another genre altogether. Moreover, Kim's construal of this song as one about Tan'gun suggested that he might not be fully acquainted with the myth that we had hoped to hear. This prompted O (and me, to a lesser extent) to try to determine Mr. Kim's knowledge of the myth; a negotiated myth-telling was the result of our concerted efforts. This background will help to explain where and why specific utterances appear in the stream of our speech, within a fuller picture of the event beyond the transcript.

The Myth of Tan'gun

The myth of Tan'gun, the focus of our talk, relates the origins of the earliest Korean state, its ruling family, and the culture of the people.[4] The earliest and most well-known record of the myth is found in the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) compiled by the Buddhist monk Iryŏn (1206–89).[5] A summary of the story told in the book goes like this: Hwanung, the son of the heavenly King, wanted to descend

from heaven to the human world. Accompanied by wind, rain, and clouds, he came down to Earth. At that time a bear and a tiger wished to become human beings and prayed that Hwanung would grant this desire. Hwanung consented, but with conditions: if the animals could live for one hundred days in the dark, eating only garlic and the medicinal herb mugwort, their wish would come true. The tiger could not stick to the diet, but the bear did and became a woman. Hwanung lay with the bear-woman and begat a son named Tan'gun, the father of the Korean people.[6]

I present the bare bones of the story here not to hold up Kim's version of the myth in comparison to the *official* version in *Samguk yusa,* but rather to clarify what O and I expected to hear during this encounter. The comparisons implied in the transcript below are inevitable, especially "[w]hen discourse is linked to a particular genre," because as Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman have noted, "the process by which [the discourse] is produced and received is mediated through its relationship with prior discourse" (1992:147). While comparative inquiry helps us to identify and make sense of texts, its longstanding use as a methodology within the field of folklore also means that some texts may be perceived as inauthentic alongside more canonical examples.

According to Greg Urban, myth is cross-culturally perceived as a more authoritative genre than others (1996), and the myth of Tan'gun is especially hegemonic in the sociocultural history of Korea. It gained enormous symbolic and political weight especially during the Japanese colonial period (1910–45), when it gave rise to an extensive scholarly literature (Pai 2000:57–96).[7] Nationalist intellectuals of the time used the myth to assert the common origin of the Korean people, distinguishing them from the Japanese people, and various social players have continued to appropriate the narrative in constructing an imagined community during the post-Korean-war period (1953–present).[8] The thirteenth-century *Samguk yusa,* which begins with the myth, was designated as a national treasure by the South Korean government in 2003. That the myth was handed down in written form surely made it easy to de- and re-contextualize. Postwar generations have read it in textbooks as part of nationwide public education concerning the origins of Korean culture and people. These authoritative framings undoubtedly influenced the expectations of the participants in the narrative encounter that I investigate here. So did a variety of situational factors.

Notes on the Transcript

In the verbatim transcript to be presented shortly, I have added punctuation, but otherwise our words are unedited. In Mr. Kim's performance of several narrative songs, his one-sided role is dominant—for O and me to have interrupted a song-in-the-singing would have been radically rude. Yet we participate actively in the story-telling, turning the narration into a conversation.[9] Our responses to the narration take the form of not only intermittent phatic expressions (e.g., "ye"), but also of extensive interjections, including questions that yield frequent shifts in turn-taking.

In transcribing this conversational narrative, I have highlighted the dynamics of interaction between researchers and field collaborator. Since our participation as field workers is as crucial as Kim's and the turn-taking (see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson

1974) is frequent in this speech event, I number each turn and identify each speaker by initial letters (K for Kim Kyŏngbok, O for O Segil, and Y for myself). In the complete transcript, I provide both transliterations of the original Korean and the English translation of our talk.[10] I bracket intermittent phatic expressions (< >, { }, and [ ] for O, Kim, and myself, respectively). When phatic expressions are sequential, I place them lineally within utterances; when they overlap with others' utterances, I locate the two in parallel lines. Each line is arranged by pause, and hanging indentations indicate continuation from previous lines. Stressed or emphasized words are capitalized. Following Schegloff's practice, a hyphen marks "abrupt cut-off or self-interruptions of the sound in progress indicated by the preceding letter(s)" and a colon (:) indicates an elongated sound just preceding it, "proportional to the number of colons" (1992:222). These transcription notes are designed to convey the complex dynamics of this particular speech event and to reveal the different degrees of artfulness in Kim's storytelling.

Transcript

01 O
harabŏji, kŭ,
cheil ch'ŏŭm i ŏt'ŏk'e toenŭndeyo, chŏŭm e ŏt'ŏk'e iyagi ga sijak toemnikka?
Grandfather, well,
how does it start at the very beginning, how does the story start?

02 K
cheil ch'ŏŭm e?
At the very beginning?

03 O
ye, ch'ŏŭm sijak i ŏt'ŏk'e toego,
tto kkŭt i ŏt'ŏk'e toe-?
Yes, how does it start
and how does it en-*?*

04 K
eh::chŏ::ŭ:m enŭn chal ŭn morŭgennŭnde, horangi hago <ye> kom hago <ye>
kŭi yennal iyagi ro naonŭn kiya. <ye>
tul isŏ innŭnde
kŭ nuga manŭl ŭl mŏgŭmyŏn saram i toendago kŭraessŏ<ye>
sam nyŏn man mŏgŭmyŏn.
<kŭttae>
Eh::I don't know the be::gi:nning well, but a tiger and <ye> a bear <ye>
well, it is handed down as an old story. <ye>
There were the two;
well, somebody said, if they were to eat only garlic, they would become human beings. <ye>
If they eat only for three years.
<At that time>

05 O
kŭttae sesang e saram i issŏssŏyo? Animyŏn-
At that time were there human beings, or-

06 K
saram i tŭmurŏchi.
ŏlma ŏpsŏchi. <aa> [hahaa] <a:a:a>
<ŏ> kŭrŏnikka <ŏ>, manŭl ŭl mŏgŭmyŏn saram i toendanikkai <a>
sam nyŏn ŭl manŭl man mŏkko salmyŏn saram i toendanŭn parame <ye>
kom hago tul isŏ kŭgŏl mŏkki sijakhaettan mal iya.
horaengi[11] ka han il yŏn ŭl mŏgŏ poni mŏkiji anassŏ. kŭ manŭl man mŏkko
        ha ha maewasŏ. ha haha <a::a>
kŭi: KOM ŬN miryŏnhan nom ijiman
kŭgŏl chʼamassŏ kŭnyang. <ye>
kŭnyang sam nyŏn ŭl naenae mŏgŏssŏ.
Human beings were rare.
There were not many. <aa> [hahaa] <a:a:a>
<uh> So <uh> hearing that if they were to eat garlic they would become human
    beings, <a>
since they heard that if they live on garlic for three years, they become human beings,
the tiger with the bear, the two, started eating it.
The tiger tried to eat it for about one year; he couldn't eat any more. Well, eating only
    garlic,
        ha ha, it was strong. ha ha ha <a:a>
We:ll, even though the BEAR was a stupid fool,
it just endured; <ye>
kept eating garlic for three years.

07 O
ŭ kul esŏyo?
Oh, in a cave?

08 K
kŭrŏm.
Yes.

09 O
Hyangsan kŭ-
        [manŭl]
In the mountain Hyangsan, that one-
            [garlic]

10 Y
manŭl man mŏgŏssŏyo?
Did it eat only garlic?

11 K
ŭng manŭl man mŏgŏ sam nyŏn ŭl sarassande.
Yes, eating only garlic, it lived for three years.

12 Y
ssuk ŭn an mŏgŏssŏyo?
Didn't it eat mugwort?

13 K
an mŏgŏssŏ.
manŭl man mŏgŏssŏ mŏgŏnnŭnde,
<ŭng> <ŭng> <ŭng>
sam nyŏn ŭl mŏgŏ to ka ta chʼanikkani <ŭng>

kŭ chŏ saram ŭro nattan mal iya, CHE KA. [ŭng]
It didn't.
It ate only garlic. It ate and
<ŭng> <ŭng> <ŭng>
after three years, it achieved its ultimate goal, <ŭng>
well, it became a human being, THAT ONE. [ŭng]

14 O
a, yŏja ro nassŏyo? namja ro nassŏyo?
Oh, did it become a woman or a man?

15 K
ama: kŭttae- yŏ-
kŭi kom i nan ke ama namja il kiya. <aa>
Maybe: at that time- wo-
Well maybe, it might have been a man who the bear became. <aa>

16 O
ye, namja ro nassŏyo.
Oh, became a man.

17 K
ŭng namja ro nagajigo ŏttŏke toesŏ ama <ye>
kŏgi sŏ chason i p'ŏjige toessŏ <eŭng>
Yes, it became a man and somehow maybe <ye>
there the descendants came to spread. <eung>.

18 O
kŭŏ: kŭ: kom i namja ka toeŏ kajigo {ŭng}
sesang e nawa-
{kŭrŏndi kŭ} <eh>
Well: well: the bear became a man and {ŭng}
came in the world-
{But well} <eh>

19 K
kŭrŏndi kŭ yŏja nŭn ŏdisŏ nawannŭnji mo:olla. <aa> [hŭm]
But well, we do:on't know where that woman came from. <aa> [hŭm]

20 O
yŏja nŭn ŏdisŏ nawannŭnji morŭgoyo, ye.
{kŭrŭndi hu}
We don't know where the woman is from, ye.
{But hu}

21 K
hayŏgan kŭi: wŏn KŬNBON ŬN kom ŭi chason iran mal iya. <ye>
kŏgisŏ nawagajigo
uri in'gan paeksŏng i p'ŏjingiya kŭ ttae.
Anyway, the: original ROOT is the descendant of a bear. <ye>
From there, we came out;
We human beings came to spread at that time.

22 O
kŭttae cheil mŏnjŏ naŭn chasik i Tan'gu::n:: harabŏji ingayo?
          {Tan'gun:: harabŏjiji} <aa>
Was the firstborn offspring at that time Grandfather Tan'gu::n::?
          {It is Grandfather Tan'gun::} <aa>

23 K

kŭi-
kŭi::chosang ŭn hanŭl esŏ naeryŏ watchiman
kŭ saram kom ŭi:: kom ŭi PAESSOK ESŎ naon saram iya. <aa>
Tan'gun HARABŎJIJI.
Well-
Well:: although the ancestor came down from heaven,
the man is an offspring who came out of the bear's:: bear's BELLY. <aa>
It is GRANDFATHER TAN'GUN.

24 O

kom ŭi paessok esŏ naomyŏn kŭrŏm
kom i yŏjagenneyo kŭrŏm yŏja?
If he came out of the bear's belly then,
the bear should be a female, then, a female?

25 K

kom i yŏjagetchi. yŏjagille kŭrŏk'e toettchi. anya <yŏjaga haha>
    kŭrŏm
The bear should be a female. As it was a female, it did work so. Didn't it <female
  haha>
    Sure

26 O

ŏdisŏ tŭrŏsyŏssŏyo i iyagi?
mwŏ nuga irŏn yaegi hae chusyŏssŏyo?
Where did you hear this story?
Well, who told you this kind of story?

27 K

KŬ: yennal putŏ naeryŏ onŭn yaegi ka issŏ.
WE:LL, it is a story handed down from long ago.

28 O

ŏdi esŏyo ŏnŭ chibang esŏyo?
kŭ-
Where, in which regions?
Well-

29 K

Sŏdo chibang esŏn kŭ ta issŏ.
Everywhere in the Sŏdo area, the story is known.

30 O

<aa>Hwanghae-do yo?
<aa> Hwanghae province?

31 K

ŭng Hwanghae-do na P'yŏngan-do chibang enŭn ta kŭgŏi itku <kŭrŏn yaegi rŭl>
ŏh:: ŏh:: Kyŏngi-do man chal morŭji <a>
Kyŏ:: Kyŏngi-do nŭn hana to morŭgo,
Kyŏngi-do nŭn TOCHŎHI molla. <ye>
Ko:: ŏ: Tan'gun harabŏji chosang i nugunji molla.
ha ha ha ha <ye:e>
chosang ŭn kom iya ha ha
Yes, everywhere in Hwanghae and P'yŏngan provinces, there is the story; <those
  stories>

ŭh:: ŭh:: only people in Kyŏnggi province don't know the story well. <a>
People in Kyŏnggi province don't know anything;
People in Kyŏ:: Kyŏnggi province don't know, NOT AT ALL <ye>
the be::ar: [They] don't know who is the ancestor of Grandfather Tan'gun.
ha ha ha ha <ye:e>
The ancestor is a bear. Ha ha.

Analysis

Most previous studies of the myth of Tan'gun have adopted the view that shared texts indicate the existence of a durable and unique polity (cf. Herder [1787] 1966, 1969, 1997; Grimm and Grimm [1816] 1981) and in turn approach this myth as a gateway to understanding Korean culture.[12] To my knowledge, no one has studied the performance of the myth in a specific social situation while relating it to the discourse on the myth in Korea's historical and cultural contexts. My analysis here focuses on how the myth is entextualized and contextualized in an ethnographic encounter (cf. Silverstein and Urban 1996). Inspired in part by Mikhail M. Bakhtin ([1935] 1981), several scholars have noted that as in all speech activity in social life, the encounters between individual performers and ethnographers are composed of cooperative interaction in situated contexts.[13] Congruent with this interactive perspective on the study of oral tradition, I consider this conversational myth telling as a "collective activity of [three] individual social actors" (Duranti 1986:239; cf. Ochs 2004; Baldwin 1985). In exploring the intersubjective and circumstantial construction of the discourse, I employ two complementary notions of context—context as pre-existing "distal" surroundings and context as "intra-interactional" social conduct itself (Schegloff 1992; Duranti and Goodwin 1992). The external circumstances that I sketched earlier—the canonical status of the myth to Koreans, and our different expectations about the encounter—are crucial, but do not determine interaction. One can fully understand interactional motivations and constraints involved in discursive processes of entextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990) only by attending to the dynamics of both kinds of context.

When Mr. Kim sang the song referencing Tan'gun's grave, he upset our vision of what the myth would sound like when set to music; thus, despite what the singer may have expected, O then requested that Mr. Kim tell the myth so that he could test the older man's knowledge, and not so that he could document the (already well-known) narrative. Still, O frames the shift from singing to telling by trying to avoid potential interactional risk (01). In fact, many circumstances already made this situation delicate. First, age hierarchy is strongly held in Korean society, and Mr. Kim was much older than we were. We had met him only once before, during a ritual intermission. Furthermore, Mr. Kim was the host, and we were guests visiting his home for the first time. In soliciting his request while disguising his own knowledge of the myth, O makes an extra effort to set Kim at ease and to maintain rapport by using various linguistic devices. Here (and only here) he addresses Kim using the kin-term *harabŏji* (grandfather), and he prefaces his request with "well." Then, to show deference to the elderly, O gingerly elicits Kim's response by using an interrogative that positions himself as one who needs Kim's knowledge (cf. Goody 1978:32–5; Lakoff 2007:131). Note

also that he enhances the level of politeness by switching the ending from the polite style "-*yo*" to the deferential style "-*mnikka?*"

While an age-graded hierarchy was relevant to the interaction, power relations during this encounter were also affected by the fact that my colleague and I identified ourselves as ethnographers. In addition, the singer's previous experience gave him a sense of the event as an exercise in ethnographic documentation. This overarching context accorded the researchers privileged authority, since asymmetrical power relationships are discursively shaped and embodied in the meta-communicative norms of fieldwork. The content and timing of researcher-directed questions, for instance, allow interviewers to regulate the referential content, length, and scope of responses (Briggs 2002:911; cf. Briggs 1986).

Thus, while being solicitous about Kim's authority, O at the same time firmly holds him to account. He repeats and recasts a specific request: "How does it start at the very beginning, how does the story start?" By using this ostensibly information-seeking question, on the one hand, O pretends ignorance and disclaims his power of knowledge; on the other hand, he assigns Mr. Kim responsibility for telling the entire myth (not just reporting information about Tan'gun's grave site). Also note in turn 3 that after affirming Kim's query (02), O restates his interest in hearing a complete account from beginning to end. This understanding of the textual boundaries of the narrative is based on O's own literate experience of textuality and his familiarity with written versions of the myth.[14] Before our session even began, O already had a particular text in mind, and this expectation contextualizes the emergent process of (en)textualization and moves O to shape Kim's talk. The way in which O solicited the tale—emphasizing "the beginning"—restricted Kim's options with regard to launching the storytelling; thus, O's previous textual experiences and his social role in this interaction influenced the older man's framing of the story.

Mr. Kim apparently imagined a more flexible version of the myth, one not bounded by prescribed beginnings and endings; getting into and out of narration, after all, is a contingent and situated endeavor. In response to O's initial request, Kim repeats the phrase "at the very beginning," using an interrogative intonation. Considering that O had already asked the question twice in turn 01, there is little possibility that Kim did not understand O's request. He may have been bewildered about the task assigned to him on the spur of the moment; as a well-known traditional singer, he no doubt had prepared to share the artful songs that previous journalists, media personnel, and students of folklore had wanted to document. Responding to our interest in a sung version of the tale, Mr. Kim willingly assumed responsibility for singing a piece that alluded to the figure, no matter how brief the reference was. The song may have been the only piece from his repertoire relevant to Tan'gun, and his performance of it was coherent and embellished with great detail. Despite his demonstrated expertise, however, we the audience did not seem to be satisfied and instead pressed him for a narration about Tan'gun, which was not his area of specialization.

Moreover, Mr. Kim might have sensed that we already knew the story and wondered at our motivation for asking him to tell it. Unlike a stage play, in which "the characters projected by the performers *act as if* they possess different information states, differ-

ent from one another" (Goffman 1974:134, emphasis added), the participants in this unstaged, face-to-face interaction did possess differential knowledge of and interpretations of what was going on. Without being fully apprised of our intent, Mr. Kim was definitely at a disadvantage. Neither O nor I revealed that we wanted to test his knowledge of the myth, as that would have been grossly unsuitable.

At the same time, as Esther Goody has observed, questioning is a way of establishing a basis for intersubjectivity (1978:24). In this exchange, O cedes the floor to Mr. Kim even more explicitly by suspending his question without completing it, thus inviting "the teller to build an extended turn" (Schegloff 1992:202). But once given the floor, Kim begins to back away from assumptions of competence; he indicates that he cannot appropriately start the myth. Not only does he admit insufficient knowledge about the beginning of the story, but his speech also exhibits other meta-communicative features.

04 K
eh::chŏ::ŭ:m enŭn chal ŭn morŭgennŭnde, horangi hago <ye> kom hago <ye>
kŭi yennal iyagi ro naonŭn kiya. <ye>
tul isŏ innŭnde
kŭ nuga manŭl ŭl mŏgŭmyŏn saram i toendago kŭraessŏ<ye>
sam nyŏn man mŏgŭmyŏn.
<kŭttae>
Eh::I don't know the be::gi:nning well, but a tiger and <ye> a bear <ye>
well, it is handed down as an old story. <ye>
There were the two;
well, somebody said, if they were to eat only garlic, they would become human beings.
    <ye>
If they eat only for three years.
<At that time>

He starts his narration with the hesitation mark "eh::" and proclaims his lack of knowledge: "I don't know the be::g:inning well." His protest is underscored by the sustaining vowels in "*chŏ::ŭ:m*" (beginning). During this turn, Kim also uses the hesitation mark "well" twice in close succession.

Though he does not quite know how to begin the myth, Mr. Kim does not entirely disclaim his ability to tell the story. In fact, he launches right in by introducing the myth's two central animal characters. Moreover, he claims his responsibility as a teller by appealing to tradition ("it is handed down as an old story"), the "standard of reference for the performer's accountability" (Bauman 1993:183). By linking this telling to its precedents, he traditionalizes the story, legitimizing his telling and creating intertextual continuity between what he is telling and what he has heard. Kim squarely frames his role as a teller and guides his recipients to participate in the storytelling framework. The recipients who already know the story are not merely listening to Kim's recounting; they are also evaluating Kim's competence as a teller. Kim's storytelling sequences become the "interpretive key or context" that allow researchers to monitor the course of his telling (Schegloff 1992:202). The researchers' appar-

ently haphazard interruptions and the kinds of questions, therefore, are not totally unpredictable. O breaks the barely started storytelling frame, which he himself had turned over to Kim, by interrupting the teller (at the end of turn 04).

This interruption appears to respond to Kim's assertion that "somebody said," which implies that human beings existed before the birth of Tan'gun and were able to comment on the event. In fact, in all written versions Hwanung comes down to Earth to benefit a pre-existing mankind by bringing order.[15] However, by implying that it was narratively inappropriate for human beings to appear at the beginning of a foundation myth that purportedly deals with the origin of Koreans, O seeks to make the story more coherent from his point of view.[16] Mr. Kim, for instance, had omitted genealogical information about Tan'gun (his father Hwanung is son of the Heavenly King Hwanin), as well as other expository elements, such as Hwanung's motivation to descend from heaven, the course of his eventual descent to the Earth, the prayer of the two animals to become human beings, and Hwanung's interlocution with them.

O's inquiry about human presence reframed the ongoing speech event, shifting it from a narration to a conversational back-and-forth. This question also changed the participants' footing (Goffman 1981:124–57), so that Kim and O were not narrator and audience, but interviewee and interviewer. Thus, as soon as O projects himself as an interviewer, Kim acquiesces by responding to the question. In this changed frame, Kim has far less control of the interaction, as he feels compelled to answer the interviewer's question.

However, Kim quickly moves to resume his role as a narrator. For the dynamic changes of frame and footing in the single turn, see 06 in the transcript. Using the transitional mark "so" (*kŭrŏnikka*), Kim recovers his role as a narrator by falling back to what he related at the end of turn 04. The syntactic parallels between the ending of turn 04 and the beginning of narration in turn 06 are obvious when juxtaposed:

> **04 K**
>
> . . .
> *kŭ nuga manŭl ŭl mŏgŭmyŏn saram i toendago kŭraessŏ<ye>*
> *sam nyŏn man mŏgŭmyŏn.*
> well, somebody said, if they were to eat only garlic, they would become human beings.
>   <ye>
> If they eat only for three years.
> **06 K**
>
> . . .
> *<ŏ> kŭrŏnikka <ŏ>, manŭl ŭl mŏgŭmyŏn saram i toendanikkai <a>*
> *sam nyŏn ŭl manŭl man mŏkko salmyŏn saram i toendanŭn parame <ye>*
> <uh> So <uh> hearing that if they were to eat garlic they would become human
>   beings, <a>
> since they heard that if they live on garlic for three years, they become human beings,

This parallel construction is a device that helps Kim backtrack to the narration, which was suspended by O's interruption. After this mediation, Kim gets into his most stable and artful narration. He laughs aloud twice while recounting the tiger's failure to

complete the ordeal, and when he talks about the bear's endurance, his tone becomes serious and forceful. By stressing the word "bear," he contrasts the two animals and foregrounds the successful protagonist. This relatively solid narration comprises the longest turn without change of speaker.

However, Kim's exclusion and inaccurate description of vital details soon prompts us to interject again. In his narration, Kim did not specify the place in which the two animals were sequestered (a cave), nor did he mention one of the two vegetables they were required to eat (mugwort). We indicate that his recounting is unsatisfactory by interpolating several questions (07, 09, 10, and 12). Except for O's request that Kim tell the story from the beginning (01 and 03), all of our questions are selective (05) or yes-no (closed) questions (07, 09, 10, and 12); they rely on our previous experience with the myth. For example, my knowledge about the purifying foods led me to examine Kim's answer to my first question about garlic, and I use a negative question about the information I find missing (mugwort). The adjacent pair of exchanges in turns 07 and 08—O's question ("in a cave") and Kim's answer ("yes")—builds up the background detail of Kim's general myth telling. More than affectively responding to Kim's narration, we help constitute the myth-telling sequences by adding and elucidating details. In addition, O begins to pose questions in a way that influences the rhythm of the telling. In contrast to the sentential units employed in previous turns (01, 03, and 05), in turns 07 and 09 O speaks only single phrases. These shortened units become more frequent, creating speedier turn-changes. Along with this acceleration, in turn 09 O and I overlap each other, giving an even more dominant role to our participation in the process of entextualizing the myth.

In spite of the constant interjections by the researchers, Kim persistently strives to continue the narrative and take back the role of narrator:

> **13 K**
> *an mŏgŏssŏ.*
> *manŭl man mŏgŏssŏ mŏgŏnnŭnde,*
> *<ŭng> <ŭng> <ŭng>*
> *sam nyŏn ŭl mŏgŏ to ka ta ch'anikkani <ŭng>*
> *kŭ chŏ saram ŭro nattan mal iya, CHE KA. [ŭng]*
> It didn't.
> It ate only garlic. It ate and
> <ŭng> <ŭng> <ŭng>
> after three years, it achieved its ultimate goal, <ŭng>
> well, it became a human being, THAT ONE. [ŭng]

As he did earlier, Mr. Kim refers back to his previous replies to the researcher's question, thus linking utterances that belong to different frames. He employs parallelism around the transitional point as a device to change footing and frame as he recalls the next narrative episod.

O also interrupts Kim at a point where Kim's narration is too vague. In response to Kim's assertion that the bear metamorphosed into a human being, O asks the sex of the bear-person.

14 O
a, yŏja ro nassŏyo? namja ro nassŏyo?
Oh, did it become a woman or a man?
15 K
ama: kŭttae- yŏ-
kŭi kom i nan ke ama namja il kiya. <aa>
Maybe: at that time- wo-
Well maybe, it might have been a man who the bear became. <aa>

During this segment of the talk, we can observe signals that Kim is not certain about the bear's sex and that his performance is close to breaking down. He uses "maybe" twice, dragging the final vowel in the first instance. He almost says "woman," but hesitates and changes his response to "man." Still remaining indecisive about his choice, he uses hesitation marks such as "well," "maybe," and "might." Kim's stumbling over these utterances demonstrates that he is not entirely free in mediating this story that he has heard from others; he is constrained both by previous texts and by present interlocutors. In this sense, Kim's hesitations stem from his responsibility for telling the traditional tale appropriately and perhaps from realizing that his *audience* might know the story better than he does.

The next three exchanges of talk between O and Kim illustrate this sense of responsibility in the intertextual and intersubjective process of talk. Unlike previous responses to Kim's recounting, O now repeats what Kim says rather than asking questions (see turns 15, 18, and 20). These repetitions of Kim's utterances do not affirm those utterances, but rather indicate O's disagreement. The narrative does not proceed; instead, O and Kim trade talk about the sex of the bear. Throughout this *myth-telling*, then, O not only directs the interaction by interrupting Kim's narration and shifting his participant role, but he also influences the shape of the story by monitoring Kim's telling when he diverts too much from *essential* content. O's agenda of assessment, and the concomitant power of the written *baseline* text, are clearly evident.

If O monitors Kim's narration, then Kim also monitors O's responses in order to see how his own talk is received. Kim reacts to the recapitulations of his prior utterances, even competing for the floor with his interlocutor (see the end of turns 18 and 20). Moreover, Kim begins to preempt questions by saying "we do:on't know where woman came from" (turn 19), even though O does not ask about the origin of woman. This shows how Kim's narration is intersubjectively constructed in the process of the talk, with each participant assessing the other's discursive power and authority.

The next pairs of turns, from 21 to 25, illustrate particularly well how the myth is accomplished and negotiated by the scholar and by Mr. Kim. Despite O's persistent repetition of Kim's talk about the bear's sex, Kim turns back to the narrative, making use of the transitional mark "anyway" without giving O a satisfactory response after all (21). However, Kim's narration has failed to reveal the ostensible point of the story: how human beings came to be the descendant of the bear. Indeed, he does not include crucial plot elements concerning the bear's coupling with Hwanung and the eventual birth of their son, Tan'gun. This omission creates the following turn-taking:

22 O

kŭttae cheil mŏnjŏ naŭn chasik i Tan'gu::n:: harabŏji ingayo?
                {Tan'gun:: harabŏjiji} <aa>
Was the firstborn offspring at that time Grandfather Tan'gu::n::?
                {It is Grandfather Tan'gun::} <aa>

23 K

kŭi-
kŭi::chosang ŭn hanŭl esŏ naeryŏ watchiman
kŭ saram kom ŭi:: kom ŭi PAESSOK ESŎ naon saram iya. <aa>
Tan'gun HARABŎJIJI.
Well-
Well:: although the ancestor came down from heaven,
the man is an offspring who came out of the bear's:: bear's BELLY. <aa>
It is GRANDFATHER TAN'GUN.

O's question about Tan'gun's birth helps Kim bridge the gap in his own narrative. In 22, Kim interjects his knowledge of the subject, even interrupting O before he completes the question. After this cue, Kim clearly states in 23, with a forceful voice, that Tan'gun comes out of the bear's belly. Further, he brings up the fact that Tan'gun's ancestor descended from heaven—an important detail that he has not previously mentioned. This suggests the possibility that Kim knows more than he has told us so far and that the interactive storytelling has both interrupted his thought sequence and helped him recall rarely used information. Kim seems to exit here from the corner of incompetence in which he was trapped. However, the unsolved problem of the bear's sex is again posed by O. In 24, O induces Kim to correct the sex of the bear by asking about the logic of its being female, while attempting to remain polite by using a cautious voice and hesitation. Eventually, Kim hastily agrees that only a female can deliver babies (25). Thus, O and Kim eventually completed a mutually acceptable text.

The rest of the turn-taking moves into an interview about the geographic location and transmission of the story, as O realigns Kim's role from a teller to a hearer of the myth (26–31). Once again, Mr. Kim asserts explicitly the story's authority by referencing its longevity and sharedness ("it is a story handed down from long ago" [27]). Moreover, after clarifying the geographical location of Sŏdo in response to O's question in turn 30, Kim comments extensively about the tale's popularity in areas that only he, an immigrant from North Korea, is familiar with. (Kyŏnggi province physically includes Seoul, where all three of us lived at the time; furthermore, both O and I belong to the post-Korean War generation, and Kim knew we did not have firsthand access to North Korean oral tradition.) Through this rhetorical move, he situates his knowledge in a realm in which O and I cannot possibly claim any expertise. Thus, he also proclaims tacitly his own authority to tell the tale that bears historical ties to the past and social connections to the people in his hometown in the unfolding discursive setting. He reinforces the ignorance of Kyŏnggi residents by switching the words after the verb phrase "don't know," from "*the story well*," through "*anything*," and finally to, "*NOT AT ALL.*" Again, parallel structures come to Kim's aid as he attempts to establish his authority as a transmit-

ter of the traditional story—a status that we have called into question. Note that Mr. Kim is almost didactic here at the tale's close. Thus, he mitigates the awkwardness of a situation in which our consistent interruptions underscored his hesitant narration.

Conclusion

My early fieldwork experience presented here does not correspond with portrayals frequently found in the literature about fieldwork. Such accounts are more likely to emphasize successful encounters (Jones 1975), celebrate nurturing relationships between ethnographer and consultants (Lawless 1993), or relate how artists marvelously fulfilled a researcher's desire to hear their repertoires (Braid 2002:3–7; Kodish 1993:42–3). In the event recounted here, however, my colleague and I had to cope with the disappointment that stemmed from unfulfilled expectations and resulted in a jointly conducted, rather disjunctive narrative.

All participants in this encounter were familiar with the myth, but to different degrees—in part because we were working from different resources. Mr. Kim claimed to have heard the story in North Korea; O and I assessed Kim's competence based on the written text given in the *Samguk yusa*. However, we shared an orientation toward the weight of tradition—all parties felt the authority of previous versions and made an effort to minimize intertextual gaps (cf. Briggs and Bauman 1992:150). Our interruptions of one another during the myth-telling bear witness to the ideological force exerted by prior entextualizations. O policed Kim's narration, pulling him up whenever anything departed too much from his baseline source. Mr. Kim's exclusion of mugwort prompted me to ask about it, but he went on to assert the correctness of his memory. At the same time, all participants tried to construct a mutually acceptable text. Mr. Kim eventually deferred to the logic of the bear's being female in order to shape the story in a way that made sense to all the parties involved. As the youngest (and female) participant, as yet without professional experience in fieldwork methods, I opted not to pursue or correct the relatively minor discrepancy with regard to the two animals' probationary foods in Kim's account. Thus, conflicting claims to knowledge and authority were discursively enacted and worked out during this event.

The negotiation of authority and power during this narrative event had as much to do with context as it did with intertextuality. O and I were not the only ones who understood our meeting as an exercise in ethnographic documentation. In performing other songs that day, Mr. Kim made sure that O was recording his singing by saying "Have you pressed that [button of the tape recorder]?" at least a couple of times prior to his performances. When he made mistakes because he could not recall the proper sequences in a timely manner, he quickly recognized his errors and corrected them; once he even ordered O to pause the tape recorder, using the repeated imperative verb *tada* ("to close") in a low and urgent voice. As Dorinne Kondo found during her own fieldwork, far from being "inert objects available for the free play of the ethnographers' desire," partners in the field "asser[t] their power to act upon the anthropologist" (1990:17). Mr. Kim's conscientiousness demonstrates clearly his awareness of the potential reach of his performances, that is, of his future texts and audiences (cf. Bauman

2004:161; Briggs 2002:914). Although both parties were interested in creating a coherent text, it was the academics, especially O, who directed the interaction that established different participant roles. Established protocols for asking *research* questions and discursive pressure to respond to questions were critical to the power of evaluative norms and the hierarchical arrangement of discourse. In a society where asymmetrical social relations are lodged principally in age-graded relations, this context afforded the scholars, who were much younger than the performer, social authority, however limited. As demonstrated in my analysis of the talk, the ethnographic context was not static. The power and authority among the particular individuals shifted within the concrete process of talk and at specific moments in that interaction.

In Korea, the myth of Tan'gun has primarily been treated as an autonomous object, as an emblem of shared symbols, and as a trope for Korean culture. Such a perspective crops up in fieldwork settings, in which narratives that have been construed as self-contained objects are (re)produced by performers and collected by researchers (e.g., *Han'guk kubi munhak taegye*). From this perspective, Mr. Kim's rendering might be considered merely a *flawed* performance, and the two researchers viewed as violators of *proper* research norms. Moreover, the occasion might be seen as too incidental to be relevant to scholars, since it does not yield a *typical* storytelling performance. A year after this incipient fieldwork experience, I moved to the United States to pursue a doctoral degree, studied fieldwork methods, and conducted a year-long period of fieldwork devoted to the study of shamanism on Cheju Island in South Korea. Although my academic training was undoubtedly helpful, it did not enable me to avoid all incidental, scrappy, and disconnected fieldwork experiences. The individuals I met were particular human beings with different backgrounds and interests; none, in fact, were *typical*. I learned that what is personal cannot be separated from the collective and the institutional (Abelmann 2003:14). At each meeting my field partners and I brought our own histories, which intersected each other in emergent and unexpected ways. Revisiting the occurrence with Mr. Kim and O, I initially dwelt on identifying the *should'ves*, but scrutinizing this interaction at the linguistic level has taught me most vividly about how key theories of expression and power—including intertextuality, intersubjectivity, genre, and entextualization—help to explain why I considered this a *failed* performance in the first place.

However, messy incidents such as this one are rarely presented as a focus of analysis in studies of oral tradition, in part because of a disciplinary concentration on masterful performances (Bauman 2004:109). Although ethnography is fictive and only partially true (Clifford 1986), the academic conventions of ethnographic practice still powerfully influence how we do fieldwork and write about it; they tend to affirm that those who follow in the footsteps of predecessors and de-privilege those who do not (Kodish 1993; Kondo 1990; West 1993). For example, admonitions to respect one's field partners tend to discourage presenting them in a less-than-stellar light. When analyzing this tape, for instance, I wondered whether I should have highlighted Mr. Kim's outstanding song performances, heroizing him as a tradition-bearer (as he might have wished) rather than focusing on the bumpy telling I have transcribed above. Moreover, standard presentations of collected materials may disguise the realities of actual fieldwork, which is replete with complex and contingent particulars. When

ethnographers relate "first encounter" tales, they often only go into detail about their successes, describing unexpected hardships and dilemmas in a predictable and generalized way (Crapanzano 1986:69), or they tend to focus entirely on artistic performances without offering information about the backstage negotiations that led them to locate and select field collaborators.[17] Thus, the tension between "what happens" and "what should happen" probably exists for most field workers. However, I argue that the different interests in and expectations about first encounters between ethnographers and informants deserve more attention precisely because they reveal much about scholarly and lay assumptions, and are thus more in line with ethnography's purported goal to understand the processes of social life.

As noted in the introduction to this article, critical theorists of ethnography in several fields—including folklore, anthropology, sociology, communication, and performance studies—have pointed out that power relations among individuals are discursively embodied. But remarkably little attention has been paid to *how* these alignments are accomplished in particular situations. The unfolding of discourse that I have presented and analyzed in this paper elucidates the construction and enactment of authority and power that played out in a seemingly unimpressive fieldwork encounter, compared to those in which an ethnographer discovers the untapped talent of native field collaborators. Much can be contributed to the existing literature on critical and reflexive ethnography by elucidating the processes and particularities of fieldwork experiences, details essential to understanding and learning from the multidimensionality of ethnographic practice.

Acknowledgments

Notes

Korean names are written according to native traditions, with surnames preceding given names and, in the References Cited, without a comma after the family names. Korean words have been romanized according to the McCune-Reischauer system; all transliterations, transcriptions, and translations are mine.

1. The literature on this topic has grown too expansive to enumerate all the examples. Influential references include Clifford (1983, 1988); Clifford and Marcus (1986); Conquergood (1991); Kodish (1993); Kondo (1990); Pratt (1986); Rose (1982); Stoeltje, Fox, and Olbrys (1999); West (1993).

2. For a critical correction of this view, see Kondo (1990).

3. Derived from *kyobang* of the Koryŏ (918–1392) and Chosŏn (1392–1910) periods, kwŏnbŏn served as training centers where primarily *kisaeng* (traditional, professional female courtesans) learned songs, poetry, music and dance. It seems that other talented individuals, such as Mr. Kim, were also able to cultivate their skills in kwŏnbŏn as apprentices to a master.

4. The myth was recorded in four different sources: the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), the *Chewang un'gi* (Rhymed record of emperors and kings), the *Ŭngje-si* (Poems written at royal command), and the geographical section of the *Sejong sillok* (Veritable records of the reign of King Sejong)—the first two come from the thirteenth century and the last two from the fifteenth century.

5. *Samguk yusa* is one of the primary sources of lore for the Three Kingdoms period (57 BCE–668 CE). Modeling the Sinitic *yishi* literary genre that allowed more freedom in the style and composition than did official histories (*sagi*), Iryŏn included marvels, anomalies, and local narratives of Korean antiquity. Richard D. McBride, a scholar of Korean Buddhism and early Korean history, surmises that the book was first compiled around 1285 (2007a:235) and later revised and expanded by Iryŏn's disciple Hon'gu (also called Mugŭk) and others as they prepared the 1510 edition (2006:182; 2007b:16).

6. For English translations of the myth from *Samguk yusa,* see Grayson (2001:31–2), Iryŏn (1972:32–3), and Lee (1993:6–7). James H. Grayson offers three additional translations of the myth from the aforementioned historical sources, as well as his analysis of each and comparison among them (2001:30–54).

7. For example, the historian Sin Ch'ae-ho (1880–1936) and the folklorist Cho'e Namsŏn (1890–1957) asserted Korea's glorious past based on the myth text (Allen 1990; Em 1999; Janelli 1986; Lee 1984; Robinson 1988).

8. Some historians trace the political importance of the myth to the Mongol domination of the Koryŏ dynasty when the *Samguk yusa* was written (Lee 1984:167; Em 1999:340–1). Grayson offers the most detailed account about the political use of the text from ancient times to as late as 1994, when the North Korean government announced the discovery of the tomb of Tan'gun (2001:54–8).

9. In Korea, scholars occasionally interact with tellers in storytelling sessions by asking questions and responding to them, and they include these interjections in their transcripts. See, for example, *Han'guk kubi munhak taegye* (Compendia of Korean oral literature) consisting of eighty-two volumes of transcripts of myths, legends, folktales, folk songs, and shamanic songs that were collected nationwide in South Korea from 1979 to 1988. However, the level of interaction in our myth-telling was rare, and it was exceptional even during that ethnographic encounter. Mr. O and I were mute for the most part of Mr. Kim's other narrations.

10. For Korean native speakers, please note that my transcription reflects Kim's North Korean dialect, which is manifested most prominently in, but not limited to, conjugations.

11. *Horaengi* is a representation of a variant pronunciation of *horangi* in 04.

12. The myth has been studied extensively (Chang Chu-gŭn 1995:9–42; Chang Tŏk-sun 1975:105–13; Hyŏn 1992:359–77; Grayson 2001:30–54; Kim Yŏl-gyu 1976:21–7; Na 1993:34–42; Song 2005: 256–366). For the most comprehensive studies on the myth of Tan'gun, see Yun et al. (1994), a collection of essays written by scholars from multiple disciplines.

13. See, for example, Bauman (1993), Briggs (1986), Darnell (1974), Goodwin (1990), Haring (1972), Hymes (1981), Silverstein (1996), and Tedlock (1983).

14. I am grateful to Richard Bauman for sharing his insights about how differently Kim and O appear to understand "the text."

15. Like other Korean foundation myths available in surviving documents, the myth of Tan'gun in the *Samguk yusa* and the other three sources assume the pre-existence of the universe and mankind (Grayson 2001:25, 35–6).

16. Indeed, the idea that Koreans descended from Tan'gun is still perpetuated, though not without controversy. For example, the first stanza of the song celebrating the national holiday Kaech'ŏn-jŏl (the day of the opening of heaven) goes like this: if we were water, there would be a source, if we were trees, we would have roots, the big father of this nation is Tan'gun, the big father of this nation is Tan'gun.

17. The aforementioned *Han'guk kubi munhak taegye* includes information about each research area and field partner, as well as reports on various kinds of procedures that field workers experienced in

locating "informants" and some performance contexts. Some of the encounters went smoothly, but not all—for example, many elderly people in Seoul's Tobong-gu, who were engaged in watching TV or playing either mah-jongg or flower cards, expressed their irritation about the scholars' interruptions; some of the elderly construed the field workers as merchants, and one individual even criticized the quality of the field workers' recorder (Academy of Korean Studies, *Han'guk kubi munhak taegye* Vol. 1–1, 1980:6).

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